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## Tradition Eleven

Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films

# Sobriety in the Military

I'm a grateful recovering alcoholic. I drank my way through my first nine years of military service. I had no motivation to do anything other than decide where to drink that night. My social life revolved entirely around drinking.

Failing at university, I stumbled (probably quite literally) into the local armory where I joined the Army Reserves. What a revelation. It was cheap to drink and I got trained and paid. What more could I ask for! I decided to join the regular forces.

In Lahr, W. Germany I attended my first AA meeting. I went because my housemate asked me along so that I could "understand what she was going through." At that meeting I heard an oldtimer named Pat V. and left the meeting in tears. I

felt a kinship with the people in the rooms - soldiers who couldn't drink. Five years later, I came to the program for me. I never took a drink again. I went to meetings but then tried to do it on my own. I didn't work the Steps.

Four years after, I came to AA "for real". It took this time. In the community of AA in the military, besides meetings off base, I could have mini-meetings in my office, in the coffee shop or canteen, or even on exercise.

Times had changed for the military. There was no longer the pressure to have a drink. As a military AA member, we moved around a lot but usually developed and maintained a wide network within the program. A wonderful moment in 2001 was

when I attended an AA meeting in Petawawa, Ontario. The speaker was Pat V., from my first meeting in Lahr about 20 years before. Pat V. ended up being my sponsor until his death.

Although I've moved a fair bit, I still maintain contact with my sponsor. I currently live in Kabul, Afghanistan where, as a civilian, meetings are scarce. But I have a sponsor who sends me weekly online meetings. I'm incredibly grateful to be sober today and to have had the positive experience in the military. Today I love my life and am so thankful that my Higher Power led me to take the paths I have followed.

*Bev T.  
Kabul, Afghanistan*

# Stephanie's O.C. Experience

Being a part of Toronto Intergroup, especially the Operating Committee, has not been an easy challenge. As a rep, I strongly disliked Toronto Intergroup but over time it grew on me. I gave it a chance. The truth is Intergroup has been hanging on by a thread for years. The last two years, Toronto Intergroup built up some hope for change and this change is slowly starting to happen. Adjustments will happen in the next year or two. These modifications may be drastic, but are needed for Toronto Intergroup to survive in the future. I hope everyone will embrace them. We can't afford to keep butting heads any longer.

It's hard to believe my term has come to an end. My role was to

help assist Toronto Intergroup and be an active part of service. Not many people would ever want this role, but I complete my term having learned many positive things while on the Operating Committee: a lot about myself, about service, and what's right for AA as a whole. I also determined that I can often put my foot in my mouth; tact has not always been one of my strong suits. I hope for the future of Toronto Intergroup, for people to start getting involved in service whether it be in the Group, Intergroup, or at District level. We need to start living in the solution which is at our fingertips. We have principles that were freely given to us; honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness. This is all we need; every-

thing has been laid out before us. It has been a pleasure and an honour serving on the Operating Committee. This role has been so rewarding in my sobriety. I pray the GTA groups of Alcoholics Anonymous will not only continue to support Toronto Intergroup, but will become a part of it. We need people in service to help carry the message to the still-suffering alcoholic. We are at risk of destroying ourselves. We have a chance to make things better. "What do we do when we start to slip back?" Help Toronto Intergroup get back to basics. Our solid foundation is built from the First Step, not the Twelfth Step.

*Stephanie L.,  
past Toronto Intergroup Chair  
Erin Mills Group*

# My most memorable gratitude day

October 16th, 2000 was a most memorable day. Three alcoholics celebrated their gratitude day at the Care and Share Group at Perambu in India: Mohan, two years; Keith: five years, and 'yours truly' twelve years. The chairperson remarked that I brought Keith to AA, Keith brought Mohan to AA and the three of us were celebrating our gratitude day together. This sort of thing must happen in AA many times the world over, but for me, it was a thrill.

But why would I call this a memorable day. Present at the meeting was that very active member, Sridhar, who, only a few weeks prior to this night brought Harry to AA and Harry had brought Nester to his first meeting. Our 'Higher Power' really works for all.

As if this was not enough, the chairperson Mohan was ex-Navy; Harry ex-Army, Rajan and 'yours truly' ex-Air Force. It was a mini ex-servicemen's AA meeting. Personnel from three 'defense services' were

discussing co-ordination and strategy on how to use the Twelve Steps to defeat our common enemy, Alcoholism.

Another memorable event was that someone misplaced the medallions! AA's are capable of fouling-up too. Similar to military parades and drills, where dummy rifles are used, 'dummy' gratitude medallions were presented to us wrapped in aluminum foil. We accepted them graciously.

What topped this memorable occasion was that the AA member I first spoke with at my first meeting at Balfour Road in June 1988 was present. Jalal presented me with my medallion. A 'dummy' Medallion did not matter. His warm hug was enough.

My friend Venkat, our Trustee and very active member, who was not present at this meeting, would have said: "All this could not have happened if it was not for that Benevolent Force that most of us call God."

*Ronny H.,  
Bellamy group*

## Daily Reprieve

I have (had?) a sponsee who relapsed on Saturday. This woman has fought God every day for the past eight months. Not just the God of my understanding but every form of God. She almost proudly informed me last week that she cannot relate to the chapter to the agnostics, because she is not agnostic, she is atheist. And she is atheist because her mother was, as well.

She phoned me last night, expecting that I would show concern that she is drinking again. I didn't. I told her I was not surprised. She used every form of rationalization and justification to explain to me why AA is not the only way to achieve sobriety. I told her to keep doing the research and that I'm not an expert; that I only know that AA works for me. She accused me of being intolerant and lacking compassion; she said the outpatient treatment centre says "a drug is a drug". I proceeded to tell her the different effects of drugs and alcohol and suggested that she read The Doctor's Opinion. I talked about surrender; I talked about the first step as outlined in the 12 and 12. When I asked "are you drinking right now?" she said she was and I told her that I won't talk to her while she's drinking - to call me back when she's not.

Tough love. It was practiced on me by my sponsors and it wouldn't have worked any other way. For two years before I actually tried the program, I wasn't willing to stop drinking. By the grace of God, I'm one of those who "stopped in time" even though my great intellect had a thousand reasons why I wasn't an alcoholic and why AA wasn't for me.

I am grateful - I mean GRATEFUL - that all I have is a daily reprieve because through that daily reprieve I have found a way of living which works: I practise gratitude; I pray; I listen for answers; I humble myself; and I surrender - again - whenever I need to. There are times when this is still a struggle...until I remember the alternative. As Scott Peck said "Life is difficult. Once we accept that life is difficult, life is no longer difficult." Sobriety works that way, too.

Today the angels cry a thousand tears for my sponsee who so long ago abandoned the God of anyone's understanding. From 'The Cloud of Unknowing', a middle ages mystic's writing on God, I love that "this word love and this word God" can be substituted one for the other. Because love is the answer... and I can't explain that any more clearly to one who is not yet honest, open-minded and willing.

*Heather J., Venture Group, Ottawa*

## When Am I Going to Be Spiritual?

"When am I going to be spiritual?" is the plaintive lament of the newcomer I once was.

Night after night, reciting that Serenity Prayer, wondering when I was going to get some of that serenity. When was I going to be as calm as 'They'?

"Keep going to meetings." Sure. For what? The obsession to drink seems to have been lifted; I'm ready for more. Give it to me.

"When am I going to be spiritual?"

When I was drinking, I did not hear words of a spiritual life. How could I know about a spiritual life?

Alcoholics Anonymous taught me how to stay away from alcohol one day at a time. As a direct result of that, I was able to listen and hear what was said; able to observe people whose calmness I envied, wanted to be like them. I Wanted What They Had - Spirituality.

That I want what they have probably means that I have begun to turn towards their way of life, not to imitate them, but to travel the same path. I have begun to journey towards spirituality. I can feel a

little bit of spirituality now, not a lot, mind, but I can sense it. I could not sense spirituality when I was drinking, could not know of spirituality when I was drinking, and so I could not want spirituality when I was drinking.

"When am I going to be spiritual?" The answer: "That today you hunger for a spiritual life probably means you already have a spiritual life."

*Chris G., Bloordale Group*

## Joke of the Month:

**What do you call a whining alcoholic?**

**A whine-o.**

## Two 'Little' People

Two 'little' people were eye witnesses to the "Greatest Spiritual Movement of the Twentieth Century" right from the start. Robert and Sue Smith, the children of Dr. Bob and Anne, were teenagers at the naissance of AA in Akron, Ohio in May of 1935. Their book "Children of the Healer" records the story from within the walls of 855 Ardmore Avenue.

Present the day their father reluctantly met with a stock analyst from New York City, 'Smitty', 16, drove his parents to the gate house of the Sieberling Estate. Sue, the adopted daughter of Dr. Bob and Anne, stayed home.

Both dearly loved their parents. Smitty described his mother as a dignified lady who led a protected life. She adhered to proper etiquette and was a true romantic. His mother's unhappiness developed over time due to her husband's alcoholism yet he never heard his parents argue or fight. Sue described her mom as 'heavyset' with beautiful blue eyes and dark hair combed back in a bun who had a great love for fancy hats and classical music.

Dr. Bob was six feet, four inches tall. To Smitty and Sue, he towered above them with a daunting authority and imposing character. They idolized him. Sue said that it was not until she was 13 or 14 that she started having trouble with his drinking although Smitty recognized much earlier that their financial situation was desperate. He was keenly aware of the shame and outcast the resulting poverty caused the family.

For generations to come, both Sue and Smitty were loved for the sacrifices they made during the early days of the program. Both were invited to participate with AA on a national, local and international level for what Smitty would define as: "It's not what I know; it's who I know".

Sue passed away February 9th, 2002. Smitty passed April 22, 2004.

Bernadette Macl., King City Group

### Upcoming Medallions:

Sylvie C.	1	King City	Nov. 5
Richard G.	10	Aurora	Nov. 11
Brock	1	Welcome	Nov. 11
Krista P.	5	Westmoreland	Nov. 13
Frank M.	15	Aurora	Nov. 18
Sheldon O'G	45	Welcome	Nov. 18
Susan L.	5	King City	Nov. 19
James A.	1	Westmoreland	Nov. 20
Barb M.	5	Aurora	Nov. 25
Clara McQ	25	Welcome	Nov. 25
Matti H.	20	Wanstead	Nov. 30

### Things we cannot change

Gloria P. (Brampton New Life Grp.), over 32 yrs. sober, passed away Sat. Oct. 20.

Anne M. Anne was a past Delegate. She served in a District in the U.S., and was the wife of Milner G. our current Area 83 Secretary. Ann shared her service experience with us, was a resource of much wisdom to many of us in Area 83 and her presence will be missed. Please remember Milner in your prayers as he deals with this loss.

### Meeting Changes:

**Promises Group** (St. Timothy's Church 97 Burcher Rd., Ajax) - 12 & 12, Big Book closed discussion meetings change from TUES. to WED. 8 pm, Effective Immediately.

Pourquoi Pas! Group (French) (O/C) 11 am Saturdays  
CENTRAL: **DISCONTINUED**

**Deer Park Grp Discussion** (C) 7:30 pm Wednesdays CENTRAL: **DISCONTINUED**

**Kingsway Group** is moving to Humber Valley United Church, 76 Anglesey Blvd., north of Rathburn, east off Islington, effective Wed. Nov. 14.

**Nova Vida** (Portuguese) Tues & Sat CENTRAL: both meetings now start at 8 pm

**Glen Everest Mtg** (O/C) Fri EAST: 12:15 noon start. 10 Glen Everest Rd, 1st traffic light E of Birchmount Rd, just steps S of Kingston Rd. Meeting held in community room adjacent to elevator.

**Dry on Danforth Mtg** Mon-Thurs EAST: **ON HOLD** until further notice.

**Markham Tues Mtg** (C) 7:30 pm SUB NE: St. Andrew's United Church, 32 Main St., Markham.

**Spiritual Progress Big Book Disc.** (C) Saturdays 7 pm SUB.NW

**Spiritual Progress Group** (O) Saturdays 8 pm SUB.NW: location change: both Saturday meetings now at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, corner of Church St and Union St, Brampton. Wheelchair accessible. Big book stays at 7 pm. Open meeting start is 8:30 pm. The Mon-Fri Spiritual Progress noon meetings remain at Grace U. C.

**Tuesday Night Discussion** (O/C) 8 p.m. Tuesdays & Thursdays NORTHWEST: as of Nov. 6, time change for Tuesday from 8 pm to 7 pm

### New Meetings:

**Sunday Morning Brunch Mtg** (C) Sun 10:30 a.m. CENTRAL: Minsk Synagogue, 10 St Andrew St (Kensington Market). Meeting held on 3rd Floor. Closed Discussion.

**Augusta Group** (O) Tues 5:30 p.m. CENTRAL: St Stephen's Community Centre, 260 Augusta Ave, 1 light W of Spadina Ave.  
**M.I.A.A.** (Mothers in AA) (Women's) (C) Wed 1 p.m. CENTRAL: St Michaels & All Angels Church, 611 St Clair Ave W at Wychwood Rd. SE corner; enter Wychwood side door near back of church, through gates up to 2nd Floor. Closed Disc.; open speaker 2nd Wed of month. Not accessible. Children/babies welcome.

**Fort York Meeting** (Service) (O) Wed 7:30 p.m. CENTRAL: Fort York Residence, 38 Bathurst St (King St & Bathurst area). Service meeting. Use far left front entrance, meeting held on main floor in Meeting Room. (Men's Residence BUT open to both Men & Women)

**The Prince Edward Group** (O) Mon 8 p.m. WEST: All Saints Kingsway Anglican Church, 2850 Bloor St W at Prince Edward Dr. Royal York subway station - Grenview exit. Walk 2 blocks E. Open Speaker Meeting. Not accessible (due to renovations).

**Half Century Of AA Grp Big Book Disc.** (C) Tuesdays 6 p.m. SUB NORTH: STEPS Place, 10454 Yonge St at Leventdale (beside Coffee Time). Big book study. (service meeting). Not accessible. No sign language interpreters.

### Event notices:

**20th Annual Lakeshore Districts Fall Roundup.** Service Has No Boundaries. November 10, 2007. Newcastle Town Hall (Mill St. and King St.). AA, Al-Anon and Alateen Participation. Doors open at 8:00am /Dance starts at 8:00pm. Tickets - Full Registration \$15 / Dance Only \$5. Contact: Intergroup Office (905-728-1020)

**The Bayview Group Annual Christmas Meeting** on Sunday Dec. 9th - 8:00 pm - Please come & join us.

**The Streetsville Group** will be celebrating 50 years of carrying the message on Tuesday, Jan. 15 at 8:30 pm at the Meadowvale Church Centre in Meadowvale.

**16th Annual Toronto Winter Round-Up** with Clancy I. (Venice, Cal.). Saturday Jan., 9:00 am. Registration 7:45 am. Novotel North York, 3 Park Home Ave., Toronto. 416.733.2929. (North of Sheppard Ave. west off Yonge Street) North York Centre Subway Stop. \$55 includes Dinner & Coffee. Pre-registration by Jan 19. Visa & Mastercard accepted. Speaker Tapes/CDs on-site.

### GREATER TORONTO AREA INTERGROUP MONTHLY BOARDROOM BOOKINGS FOR SUB-COMMITTEES

\*Subcommittees meet at the Intergroup Office (234 Eglinton Ave E, Suite 202)

#### CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES:

Every first Monday of the month at 7:00 pm

#### SELF-SUPPORT:

Every first Wednesday of the month at 7:00 pm

#### GRAPEVINE:

Every second Thursday of the month at 7:00 pm

#### ARCHIVES:

Every second Friday of the month at 7:00 pm

#### WEBSITE:

Every second Saturday of the month at 1:00 pm

#### COOPERATION WITH THE PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY (CPC):

Every second Monday of the month at 7:00 pm

#### ACCESS ABILITY:

Every third Sunday of the month at 11:00 am

#### PHONE TRAINING SESSION:

Every third Sunday of the month at 1:30 pm

#### PUBLIC INFORMATION:

Every third Monday of the month at 7:30 pm

#### TREATMENT FACILITIES:

Every third Thursday of the month at 7:30 pm

#### INFORMATION AA DAY: Starting Sept. 2007,

Every last Monday at 7:30 pm

#### TWELFTH STEP:

Every last Friday of the month at 6:30 pm

#### FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE\*:

Second-last Tuesday of the month at 4:30 pm

(\*non-committee members: attendance by appointment only)

#### OPERATING COMMITTEE\*:

Second-last Tuesday of the month at 7:30 pm

(\*non-committee members: attendance by appointment only)

#### Better Times NEWSLETTER:

Last Wednesday of the month before the Intergroup meeting, 7:00 pm

#### THE MONTHLY GENERAL MEETING OF GTA

Intergroup is held on the last Tuesday of the month at 8:00 pm at the Glebe Road United Church - 20 Glebe Rd E, off Yonge St. (near Davisville subway)

# What is Intergroup? General Service?

A couple of years ago I was part of a committee surveying AA members in the Greater Toronto area. The survey was to find out members' attitudes towards the Greater Toronto Area Intergroup (GTAI). What we found surprising was the lack of knowledge about what Intergroup was and what it did.

We also found a lack of knowledge about the General Service structure of AA. And this was evident even in many members with years of sobriety.

I will try, in simple layperson's terms, to describe these two entities.

## First: Intergroup

Intergroup is two distinct bodies. (Perhaps the source of much of the confusion.) It is the office: Toronto Intergroup at 234 Eglinton Ave. E. The survey shows that the most valued services from this office are (1) the telephone greeters, (2) the Literature Department, (3) up-to-date meeting books. In other words...Communication! The Website is also highly favoured and work is ongoing on a new, more easily accessible site.

But it is also the group of Intergroup Reps who meet once a month at Glebe Rd. U. C. It is the elected Operating Committee (OC) of this group and the committees formed within this group. At this meeting, information important to AA in the Toronto area is shared; decisions are made, and when necessary, referred to the groups in the area for their approval or rejection based on their group conscience. Initiatives from

the groups themselves can also be brought here by the Intergroup Rep for the group concerned.

A subcommittee of Intergroup also manages the Ontario Regional Conference (ORC). This is also a service most valued by the membership at large.

## Second: General Service

From the earliest days of our own sobriety each one of us hopefully understands the vital role "carrying the message" plays in our own continuing recovery. This is easy to see on a personal level. The General Service structure of AA is the means by which this individual, and/or group activity is extended to the world at large. It is your group's connection through the District Committees, to the Area Assemblies, the Area Committees and to the Delegates to the General Service Conference held annually in New York City.

Closer to home, the General Service District also sees to direct services in its immediate vicinity; service meetings and individual contacts in hospitals, prisons, detox units, treatment centers, half-way houses and other institutions. Other subcommittees of the District provide information to professionals: doctors, lawyers, employers, employee assistance program workers and to the public at large.

And what is a District? It is simply a geographic area. But, in the AA sense of the word, it also means an assembly of the AA groups within that area. There are nine Districts in the GTA which is part of Area 83, also known as the Eastern Ontario Area. This extends from Mississauga through to the Quebec border.

A "District Table" is the meeting held, once a month, by all participating groups in the District. The main busi-



ness discussed at these "tables" is how services are being carried out (or not carried out) in the District and who is responsible for them.

A frequently asked question is, "How do I become involved in this world of service?"

For most positions, either in Intergroup or General Service, two years continuous sobriety is a minimum requirement. Higher levels, on Finance Committees or as District Committeeman or Delegate require five years. Beyond that, you must be elected by your group. The best way to ensure that is to volunteer.

Once you become an Intergroup or General Service Rep, there is a further learning curve. This is not a new situation. There was a learning curve when we came to our first meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous. Ask an old-timer. A good idea is to get a "service

sponsor," someone who has been around and seems to know the game. Our experience tells us willingness is the key that will open the door. Sound familiar?

All Intergroup and General Service meetings are open to any member of AA. You will not have a voice in any decision making unless you are a Rep, or in the Rep's absence, an Alternate Rep, but you need no invitation to attend.

Greater Toronto Area Intergroup meets at Glebe Rd. United Church at 8pm on the last Tuesday of every month.

District meetings of General Service meet once a month at various locations and various times. This information is available from the phone greeters at Toronto Intergroup.

You do know the phone number, don't you? It's **416-487-5591**.

Doug R., St. Clements Group

## September '07 Intergroup Report

**Finance:** Bar Graph for the month of August shows Income of \$13,935.00 and Expenses of \$18,978.00 for a difference of (-\$5,043.00). Year-to-date Income is \$115,057.00 and YTD Expenses of \$127,425.00 with a difference of (-\$12,368.00). Literature Accts. Receivable is just under \$13,000.00. 2 new Finance Committee members needed. 5 years of continuous sobriety and some business background are requested. Resumes to Carole at 234.

**Ad Hoc Committee:** Position paper to be condensed from 12 pages to 1. Looking to make people aware of issues identified in this report by sending volunteers out to meetings and talking to membership at large. Next month a report will be presented to IG Floor showing current structure of committees between Intergroup and District.

**Public Information:** Still putting out pamphlets to various places. Tom will be stepping down. Looking for a new chairperson.

**Accessibility:** Still looking for Secretary. And all is well.

**Archives:** The Archives Breakfast is on Nov 4, 2007 at the Oasis on the Lakeshore. Tickets for sale at \$25.

**Corrections:** Good attendance at last meeting on Sept 4. Currently taking inventory of all programs and will have a detailed list later this fall of all AA activities in our Correctional Facilities. Looking for new volunteers to attend next C.F. meeting this coming Oct 1 at 7:00 pm at 234 to show video developed to encourage more AA members to participate in carrying the AA message in Correctional Facilities.

**CPC:** PSA (Public Service Announcement) called 'Force of Nature' has been received from GSO, and discussions are being held with Area 83 on the employment strategy for this announcement. CPC will be meeting with the Dalton Group (groups of counselors and therapists) at some point for a presentation and a Q&A period.

**ORC 2008:** Have been to Hotel about six times and want to utilize some of the empty rooms. Graphics with the printer is expected to be ready by the next ORC meeting on Oct 3. Pre-registration is looking to set up an e-mail for the conference and a phone answering device for fielding questions for Conference.

Currently looking for Captains and volunteers.

**Self Support:** Meeting of Sept 5. Looking for secretary and treasurer. Group lists are needed or email addresses. Gratitude month is happening!

**Website:** Hoping to have Website close to being finished by Thanksgiving. Membership list is currently being worked on and possibly ready. New IT volunteer is helping out, and possibly one more to help.

**WSOH:** Still needs a chair, but possible candidate for next month.

**Unfinished Business:** Motion presented by Fran H of the Kingsway Group was voted on and passed unanimously on both items.

**New Business:** a) Autumn is Gratitude Month! Any donations members/groups would like to make, please send to Intergroup. Gratitude envelopes were made available for reps to take back to their groups. b) Two members rotating out of the OC executive. Elections will be held next month for Junior OC members and Chairperson.

John P., Welcome Group (thanks to Alexx!)