



2018 Founders' Day perspective

The Founders' Day Convention is not your typical convention of Alcoholics Anonymous in the sense that one gets to enjoy many of the historical sites, some of which we read about in the Big Book. The real magic is experiencing all of this with other AA members who are excited about AA and sobriety. I've been to Akron many times over the years and attending the 83rd Annual Founders' Day Celebration this past June was a special moment for me.

After arriving in Akron, we began by visiting Dr Bob's home. It is best to go to the historical sites of AA before the crowds come and to spend a little more time to savour the experience. Coincidentally, there are 12 steps that lead up to the front porch of the founder's house and they had always been there!



The Gate House Lodge is the place where Bill and Bob were first united. When visiting the actual room where Bill and Bob met and talked on that Mother's Day in 1935, we heard an audio recording of one of their talks together in this room. I got goose bumps hearing their voices.

The Ignatia Chapel at St. Thomas Hospital has a shrine dedicated to Sister Ignatia, a beautiful soul that helped so many alcoholics back in the early days. When I walked into the chapel, I got very emotional thinking about all they did for us.

There is an AA meeting down the hall from the Ignatia Chapel that is held every Friday night at 8 pm in St. Thomas Hospital. During Founders' Day weekend, this Friday night meeting is actually known as the Canadian Meeting and features panel speakers from Canada sharing on a topic chosen by the chair.

The Mayflower Hotel was open to us during the convention weekend and they still had the original phone on the wall that



Bill W used when he made that precious phone call that was to change the course of his life.

On the Akron University campus, where the bulk of the convention is held, there

was a robust program of events, activities, presentations and speakers during this weekend. It really captured the history of our great fellowship.

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BETTER TIMES is published monthly for AA members in the Greater Toronto Area.

234 Eglinton Ave. E.
Suite 202
Toronto, Ont.
M4P 1K5

Telephone: 416-487-5591
Fax: 416-487-5855
TTY: 416-487-5062

bettertimes@aatoronto.org
www.aatoronto.org

Editorial committee:

Chair – Chris C.
Editor-in-Chief – Maija P.
Assistant Editor – Seeking Service
Secretary – Tim S.
Layout Editor – Lisa T.

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How to reach us:

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Submissions should be 200 to 500 words and may be made online at www.aatoronto.org or emailed to bettertimes@aatoronto.org. Only signed submissions with a means of contact will be accepted. Your anonymity will be protected.

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Archives: archives@aatoronto.org
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Correctional Facilities: corrections@aatoronto.org

Cooperation with the Professional Community: cpc@aatoronto.org
Finance: finance@aatoronto.org
Ontario Regional Conference: orc@aatoronto.org
Public Information: pi@aatoronto.org
12th Step: 12step@aatoronto.org



Letter from the Communications Committee Chair

Greetings to my fellow alcoholics in and around the Greater Toronto Area!

I hope that you are finding enjoyment in the hot hazy days of summer.

As chair of the Communications Committee I've usually kept out of writing directly in the newsletter. This is your monthly publication and I have attempted to be a good shepherd for those who do the continuous work of getting it out each month.

In the spirit of rotation, my term is coming to an end. I cannot express the gratitude I have for being allowed to be of service. Very briefly, here is what it was like, what happened and what it is like today for this alcoholic.

Coming to AA broken and miserable from the beatings of alcohol and unmanageability, I thought in my mind that I had nothing to offer. I couldn't imagine that I could be of use to anyone. I had failed, utterly. So full of fear and self-pity, I couldn't see that I was sick and had finally gotten to a place where I had a chance to get better. All that is pretty run of the mill for us. Instead of rejoicing at finding you all in the Fellowship, I despaired.

Yet despite my impossible outlook, some wonderful things started to happen. All I did was not drink and show

up at meetings. I did this every day. It wasn't long before another newcomer I'd befriended told me that this committee he had just joined needed members and that I should go. I didn't like the sound of it but showed up because my other options were even worse.

I got to 234 Eglinton and the other members all started asking if I was the guy. I didn't know what to say and that was new! I soon discovered that they were looking for a secretary for the committee. I hated writing. And I was certainly not going to be a secretary! Surely I could explain it to them. They understood all too well and I spent the next 24 months serving as the committee secretary. I was then asked to serve as chair, a position I was at first equally adverse to. Now it's all too familiar. And that's a sure sign it's time to go.

Added to that life is moving me away from Ontario and I'll become a part of the Fellowship on the west coast of Canada. Change has been thrust upon me and I have (reluctantly, at first) accepted it.

I can't even explain how much I have gained from this particular service. It's real and it's practical and I use what I've gained in my daily life.

And here are what my suggestions are to you: If you are not doing service outside

of your group, get active despite your thoughts. There will always be reasons to not. "Just do it" is my favourite outside slogan.

Here is another suggestion and it's what I am struggling with right now: If you have been involved in the same or similar type of service at Intergroup, maybe it's time for you to be of service elsewhere. Yes, you heard me: get out. I wanted to hang on and my higher power told me to go. I am quite convinced in my mind that those who come after me will make mistakes, go backwards, do it wrong. It seems silly now that I'm writing it, crazy, actually. But, of course, it is. That's our disease. We have a mental health condition that doesn't go away. That's step two. It's more self-centred fear. "I'm needed, they will mess it up." That's the delusion right there. The fact is that I need AA; it does not need me. And who's to say that I haven't been messing it up and the next person will get it right? Yes, the spirit of rotation is one of our greatest assets and I embrace it. AA will be just fine with others doing the service that has given so much to me.

May you cherish your sobriety this day. And I'll see you as we walk this broad highway that is the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Chris C.

DID YOU KNOW... that in Aug. 1934, Rowland H. and Cebra G. persuade a Vermont court to parole Ebby T. into their custody? The presiding judge was Cebra's father Collins G.

BETTER TIMES medallions



MEDALLIONS

Dina B.	25	Erin Mills	July 23
Athena N.	10	Pine Hills	July 30
Mike P.	30	Erin Mills	July 30
Mike L.	1	Marklend Wood	Aug 2
Errol M.	5	King City	Aug 6
Elver P.	5	King City	Aug 6
Monique V.	5	King City	Aug 6
Joel C.	1	Beaches	Aug 7
Tina A.	1	Sisters in Sobriety	Aug 8
Paul D.	40	Golden Mile	Aug 15
Rachel H.	5	Markland Wood	Aug 16
Laura H.	5	Church St	Aug 25
Rita L.	20	Birds of a Feather	Aug 26
Deirdre B.	35	Rexdale	Aug 30
Maire O.	30	Morning Discussion	Sept 1

Due to ongoing submissions, this list may not be current.
For the latest information, please visit www.aatoronto.org

From the archives with GTA Archivist Eddy G.

Recent items donated to the GTA Archives:

- 2018 Toronto South Detention Centre (TSDC) Volunteer Appreciation Week event program (4 pages)
- Email received on April 18, 2018, in regards to TSDC Volunteer Appreciation Dinner invitation (1 page). Items donated by Gord H. (Bloordale group)
- Email received on May 22, 2018, from GTA Intergroup office in regards to the passing of John C., 17 years sober, member of the Half Century Group, served as the GSR, District 18 Toronto East Grapevine Committee & former Chair of GTA Intergroup (2 pages).

- Included in email was Memorial Visitation details & in great detail John's dedicated service to Alcoholics Anonymous in the GTA. He will be sadly missed. Written & submitted by Glen G. (East York group)
- 57th Kawartha District Conference program, celebrating 70 years of AA in Kawartha District, June 22-23, 2018, and Kawartha District 86 AA meeting list. Donated by Peter N. (Bayview group)
- Three Grape Vine issues: April 2018, May 2018 & June 2018. Donated by Peter P. (New Anchor group)
- Ontario Delegates Committee (ODC) 2014 Toronto (all items in a folder)
- Sat., March 1, 2014, The Ontario 75 Year AA History Ad Hoc Committee, re: anyone interested in being part of a team collected, Ontario's colourful 75 year AA history (1 page)
- Agenda of the Panel 64 GSC PI Committee, items A-I – Mel C. P63 Delegate, Area 83 Eastern Ontario International.
- Nine photos of GSC: room layout, front table with banner in back, photos of Big Book in different languages, Stepping Stones.
- ODC Agenda Feb. 28 - Mar. 2, 2014, preparing for the GSC, Living in the Heart of AA (2 pages), Registration sheets (5 pages). Donated by Amy L. (Liverpool group).
- 13 photos from the Area 83 Archives Workshop in Toronto April 2017 tour of the Hockey Hall of Fame. Donated by Amy L. (Liverpool group)
- Prayer Card of Clara McQ. who passed away on June 18, 2018. Clara was 91 years of age, sober for 51 years and a long-time member of the Welcome group. Clara was a great example of AA and she will be missed.

Eddy G., Archivist



FROM THE ARCHIVES

DID YOU KNOW... that in Aug. 1935, Bill W. returns to New York City from Akron and holds meetings at his house at 182 Clinton St. on Tuesday nights?

service day

DID YOU KNOW?
that
in Aug. 1937,
Bill & Lois stopped
attending Oxford group
meetings & the NY AAs
separated from the
Oxford group?

40 Years of Service - Still Going Strong

Looking back on my service, I recall what those in the program told me when I was new: about the importance of service to my recovery; how it is a “we” program; that one can’t keep it until one gives it away; Big Book stuff about how nothing can ensure our sobriety like working with another alcoholic; or that old favourite about constant thought about how we can help others. I was willing to listen as the dying do, so that the merciless obsession could be lifted.

I thought that service was about getting things done: set up the chairs; clean up; tear down; pitch in. Eventually, I noticed how there always seemed to be more work than there were members to do the work. The opportunity for service was an infinite untapped resource. The primary purpose of a group was to carry the message. Oh, so that’s the point, even though in the Big Book it says that the point is that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines.

It never occurred to me that the long-timers were just using service as an excuse to get me involved. The chairs would get set up or we would hold our meeting sitting on the floor. It was about one alcoholic talking to another.

It was about showing up and getting drawn into conversation with members who were nice to me and seemed to genuinely care. After all the abuse that can get heaped on us during our drinking, wasn’t it kinda strange that they kept telling me to come back? I never noticed. But members talked to me as they got me to help with setting up chairs or taking down. They seemed to understand where

I was coming from — something about cunning, baffling and powerful, or something like that. But I kept coming back and eventually did the Steps. It became a way of life for me, just like drinking had been the only life I had known before I stumbled into the rooms. But this was better. Willingness unfolded into wanting it.

I attended business meetings, which, to me, seemed like a bunch of friends getting together to talk about getting the rent paid, providing coffee, literature for the newcomers and sharing a welcoming Spirit.

Eventually, my involvement in service at the personal group level opened my eyes to the “service structure,” which enables us to carry the message of hope and recovery to those who might still be in pain but not yet recognize that there is a way out: answering the phones; public information; putting on meetings in jails and detoxes; remembering in Archives those who went before us; using gratitude as a tool to be grateful for what we have rather than miserable for what we don’t have. The joy returned. Recovery at last!

“40 Years of Service – Still Going Strong” is the theme of our Scarborough District 22 Service Day on Saturday, September 15, 2018, at the Oakridge Community Recreation Centre, 63 Pharmacy Av. in beautiful south-west Scarborough. A free day event! Doors open at 9 a.m. for coffee and fellowship, featured panels, displays and speakers. Free potluck lunch. Evening social with a DJ is \$10. All welcome!

2018 Founders’ Day perspective

(continued from page 1)

On the Sunday morning, there was a motorcade of at least 100 motorcycles that lead a procession to the gravesite of Dr. Bob and Anne Smith. At the cemetery, we heard a moving service with a speaker.

For me, going to Founders’ Day is quite special. This conference recharges my “spiritual battery” and gives me an understanding for what those early pioneers in AA actually did for us to carry the message of hope in a time that was very different than today. It gives me an appreciation for this miraculous thing we have called Alcoholics Anonymous and all that was born from this simple and effective program of action.

If you ever get the opportunity to go to Founders’ Day weekend, please don’t hesitate to give it a try! I am sure that you will be glad that you did!

Tony A., Hill group



DID YOU KNOW... that in Aug. 1938, the Alcoholic Foundation was created as a charitable trust with a board of five Trustees (three non-alcoholics & two alcoholics)?

What is the AA meaning of “sober”?

On-the-street-speak: May define the word “sober” as: “clear-headed with normal emotions and logical thinking,” eg: A jaywalker who jumps in front of traffic would not be considered sober — he would not be sober-minded!

AA-speak: If an AA member had not ingested an alcoholic drink in 15 years, they would qualify for a 15-year sobriety token. This would apply to schizophrenics, manic depressives, bi-polar personalities, jaywalkers and even Lizzie Borden!

Consequently, I have learned to differentiate between whether the person I am listening to is doing on-the-street talk or speaking the language of Alcoholics Anonymous.

For instance, suppose someone at your next AA meeting concludes that member X cannot come to logical conclusions, lives in great fear, fury and confusion. Therefore, he or she is not sober.

Question: Is this on-the-street-speak or AA-speak? You’re right! This is on-the-street-speak!

It isn’t that one of these statements are right and the other is wrong, it’s just to whom you are listening! This also applies to other Big Book words such as “recovered.” This makes for an interesting study as you listen around the AA tables.

What is the AA meaning of “recovered”?

On-the-street-speak: Often believes the word “recovered” means, as defined from a dictionary, as: “A return to a normal state of health, mind, or strength.” Or “To get back on one’s feet.” Consequently, comes the false notion that if one becomes recovered, they could once again drink like a normal person. An oft-heard statement: “If I thought I was recovered, I might go back to drinking.” This notion is often followed, from a non-Big-Book alcoholic, by a lecture on the danger of using that word at AA meetings.

AA-speak: Members who have studied the Big Book understand the implication of the page 85 statement: “The problem has been removed. It does not exist for us,” understand the physical allergy (phenomenon of craving after a shot of whiskey)

ky) will never be removed. If this is true, then one may ask: “Well, if the physical allergy still exists, then what does the Big Book mean by ‘recovered?’ Does it mean anything?”

Answer: It means that the once-powerful mental obsession to drink has diminished greatly, or perhaps, as one recovered alcoholic expressed: “To drink is no longer in my emotional vocabulary.” What a wonderful freedom for an alcoholic!

Please read how an alcoholic (Fitz Mayo) couldn’t drink even if he would (pp. 56-57). Our co-founder, Dr. Bob, had thoughts of drinking for over two years, yet never yielded.

One might ask whether his great miracle will happen automatically? Well, recovered is only a conditional state of mind, which can rapidly disappear. Page 85 tells us: “This is how we react so long as we keep in fit spiritual condition.”

I knew there would be a trick to it!

Bob S.

Home visit

I had come into Alcoholics Anonymous with little to no expectations. My experience had been nil. My life was nil, consumed with desperation, fear, anxiety, self-hatred and all the seven deadly sins. I had hit bottom and I was encouraged to try AA to get sober.

My spiritual toolkit tells me that today I have 2.77 years sobriety. I feel it. My life has changed. I am full of love to send and receive. I have laughter, joy, pain, sad-

ness and sometimes the deadly sins still rear their heads but I have tools and some simple steps that I follow to ease my way. I have a power greater than myself that I trust that is good that is love.

I belong to two home groups. They provide in my life connectivity, support, fellowship, laughter and love, a lot of love.

Recently, one of our members had catastrophic surgery and was in hospital for

many weeks. Upon his return home to recuperate, I was invited to attend a meeting at his home. It was on a Saturday and I was a bit nervous, as I knew that his surgery had been life-altering. Walking down those stairs to his room, I felt a lump in my throat but I consciously knew this was not about me. There were eight of us together that day, all from the same home group. TK chaired the meeting; we started with the serenity prayer.

(continued on page 7)

DID YOU KNOW... that on Aug. 2, 1939, Dr. Bob & Sister Ignatia start work at St. Thomas Hospital in Akron? On Aug. 16, Sister Ignatia arranged for the first AA admission, Walter B., at the request of Dr. Bob. They treat 5,000 cases in the next 10 years.

INTERESTED IN SERVICE ON THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

DETAILS:

* CURRENTLY 4 (OF 10) SEATS ARE AVAILABLE

* SOBRIETY REQUIREMENT OF 2 YEARS

* 2 YEAR TERM OF SERVICE TO COMMITTEE

* POSITION WILL ALSO INVOLVE SERVING AS LIASON TO A

SUB-COMMITTEE OF THE GTA INTERGROUP

* MUST ATTEND MONTHLY INTERGROUP GENERAL MEETING &

ANY ADDITIONAL MEETINGS WHILE SERVING AS LIASON

* FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT:

<https://www.aatoronto.org/about/policies-and-procedures/>

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Email your ideas to bettertimes@aatoronto.org

Home visit

(continued from page 6)I

felt a rush of energy. I was asked to read the 12 steps and by the time I got to step 4, I was in tears, not because I felt sorry for my friend, but because we were all there under the power of love, the power of good, a power greater than myself, because of Alcoholics Anonymous. The energy in that room was palpable. I believe it connected us all. What a gift that these folks were in my life and supporting each other. I will never forget that day as for me it was a God-given moment.

Since I got sober, those “AHA” moments and spiritual awakenings have shown themselves frequently in very different forms. At nine months sober, I got hit head-on by a 1-ton truck going 90 km an hour on the highway. The police and first responders have no idea how my husband and I survived. I do — thanks

to Higher Power, God and spirit of the universe, however we conceptualize it. I have learned that Faith works.

Very recently, I had my own elective major surgery with a three-month recovery time. I was pretty much housebound for the first three weeks. My head told me, “Girl, you got this.” My plan was to go to physiotherapy, read, knit and recover. Sure, I wouldn’t get to meetings but I had my literature at home. I would be just fine... until I wasn’t.

Since getting sober, I had never gone four days without going to a meeting and staying connected to my home group. On day 7, I became restless, irritable and discontent. Day 9 brought on itchy, bitchy and twitchy.

Asking for help was one of those things that I just never did. I could figure out

the world on my own. I could not rely on anyone but myself. That was my old way of thinking. Alcoholics Anonymous, working with a sponsor and working with sponsees taught me otherwise. There is nothing in this world that I need to face alone. No journey needs to be done in isolation with my old partner alienation.

I have a home group. I emailed and asked for help and they came to my house. It was a feeling like no other. There is always a way to find connection. It is inside all of us, it is the power of good, the power of love, the power of Alcoholics Anonymous.

The best thing about the meeting at my house was my brother in sobriety, whose home meeting I had attended months before, was there sharing the message to me.

Unah G., Hill group

group spotlight

DID YOU KNOW?
that
in Aug. 1981,
distribution of Alcoholics
Anonymous (Big Book)
passes the 3 million
mark?

Night Owls group

The Night Owls group was started by a member who saw a need for a meeting on Friday nights at 10 p.m. This member kept the group going by paying the rent up front from personal funds and recouping much of the money from the weekly 7th tradition. This has become the trend to keep this group alive.

While everyone seems to like the idea of a later group on a Friday night, few are actually supporting this group physically or financially. It is NOT the responsibility of a single person to keep the group afloat for the benefit of those who show up. It is the responsibility of the collective as per the 7th tradition.

Night Owls is centrally located right above the St George subway station. The address is 252 Bloor St W., on the second floor across from the elevators.

If you are looking for a small discussion group on a Friday night, we are a better alternative to the bar down the street. Hope to see you there.

MaryAnn B.



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DID YOU KNOW... that on Aug. 6, 1981, the first meeting of the Archives Committee was set up by representatives from Ontario Provincial Committee in the four Areas in Ontario & Toronto Intergroup?