



# A call to service can be a whisper, not a shout

By Peter H., Thornhill

**This past holiday season, I had a few client holiday dinners and an office Christmas party to attend. I considered them a “sobriety walk in the park.”**

You see, to me, office commitments were easier to abstain at because I have a great fear of losing my job. Management had me walking a thin tightrope: stay in line, on time and sober, or find another job. They had good reasons to do this and I had done enough work in the program to see that they had the right to set these conditions based on my past behaviour. They were being very generous, frankly.

Clients and office chums knew I was not drinking. I had made my amends there almost immediately to save my position. My annual Holiday Neighbourhood Open House? Now that, I was dreading. I had not really seen them since my return from rehab in the fall. On the front lawn or at the park – sure; but in a festive setting where I had customarily been the “life of the party?” Not yet. It was a big hurdle for me.

My wife had expressed concerns about me attending and even suggested I make excuses to skip it. My sponsor and I discussed the options, and it was decided that I would attend for an hour, say my hellos and exit quietly to attend a meeting. He was a text away in my pocket for support. I could not hide from this crowd forever and I owed it to my family to show up and behave.

My two best buddies who had been our neighbours for over 10 years jumped on me with a beer and ribbed me when I declined but pressed no further. I was shocked. Did

they know? Were they testing me? Hmmmm. A “remember when” story was shared in the group with much laughter, recalling me flooding my front lawn to build an ice rink for the kids. I was in a blackout and almost destroyed my septic tank in the process. My lawn will never be the same. I am still paying for that foolishness and whinge every time I spy my cracked driveway and my brown patched grass. I blushed and laughed along with the group, promising to keep my garden hose in the garage, even though my fists almost put holes in my pockets from the discomfort.

Just as I was slinking out the side door unnoticed to hit my meeting, I heard a whisper behind me. Damn, I had almost made it.

“Peter, can I grab you for a second?”

Oh, no. It was my wife’s friend’s husband. I knew him only in passing. I wracked my brain to recall an offence, a diss, a theft... “a something” I had done. You know that feeling, right? As an alcoholic in early recovery, I always went there when someone approached me. The fight or flight reaction when possibly faced with a drinking faux pas or blackout screw-up requiring a sloppy apology.

“Hey, how are you? Happy holidays! How are the kids?” I blurted with my hand on the door.

“Yeah great... fine. Listen, can I ask you

(Continued on page 3)

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Submit group news, medallions, other event notices, letters to the editor or articles to BETTER TIMES before the 7th of the month prior to the month of issue by mail, fax or email. Only signed submissions with a means of contact will be accepted. Your anonymity will be protected.  
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Call for submissions:  
The BETTER TIMES publication strives to offer its readership the voice of the Toronto AA community. Your article submissions are a vital part of the BETTER TIMES publication and allow you to share your experience, strength and hope with your fellows.

Submissions should be between 200 and 500 words and may be made online at [www.aatoronto.org](http://www.aatoronto.org) or emailed to [bettertimes@aatoronto.org](mailto:bettertimes@aatoronto.org)

DON'T GET BAFFLED WORD SEARCH

WINTER OLYMPICS WORD SEARCH PUZZLE



- |               |                |             |               |
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| ALPINE SKIING | CEREMONY       | ICE HOCKEY  | SKI JUMPING   |
| ATHLETES      | COMPETE        | JUDGES      | SNOWBOARD     |
| BIATHLON      | CURLING        | LAKE PLACID | SPEED SKATING |
| BOBSLED       | FIGURE SKATING | LILLEHAMMER | ST MORITZ     |
| CALGARY       | GOLD MEDAL     | LUGE        | TORCH         |

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Letter from the Editor

Greetings AA family,

We hope this edition of Better Times finds you settled into the new year with soundness of mind and continued sobriety.

I am going to jump right to my point, or rather plea, to those of you who read this newsletter monthly and truly enjoy it. I recently returned from a wonderful road trip over the holidays. Over some long stretches of road, my squirrely brain pondered some goals for the Better Times for 2018. One of the comments I get more than any other when I mention my service with this newsletter is that newcomers often grab a copy when entering the rooms for the first time - nervous, hesitant and shy - and bury their noses in it, waiting for a meeting to start so that they don't have to speak to anyone. I did it; perhaps, you have, too. That got me thinking...

My biggest challenge as editor is procuring new content. We need informative

and inspiring articles, stories, group spotlights and announcements every month. It takes a village to keep a newcomer in the rooms for the first year and that primary purpose must always be the mission of our newsletter. If every person who reads this were to sit down and write 500 to 1,000 words (a mere page!) about their experience in the program, we would have enough content for years! Just think of the possibilities...

Service comes in many forms and we know that it is essential to our program to share our experience, strength and hope, not only from the podiums, in closed meetings and in sponsorship. If you are a sponsor, please consider "directing" your sponsee to write a little something for us or write something yourself. You are an eloquent bunch, you alcoholics, and we would love to hear from you.

Yours in love and service,  
**Maija, Editor-in-Chief**

email us

We would love to publish your stories of experience, hope and strength, your understanding of steps and traditions, and your thoughts on the principles of the program.

Please submit your ideas to [bettertimes@aatoronto.com](mailto:bettertimes@aatoronto.com)

A call for service can be a whisper, not a shout

(Continued from Front Page)

something? I noticed you weren't drinking tonight. I know it's none of my business really but I was curious if that was a new thing? You in trouble at home? Sick or something? You don't look sick, actually - you look really good. I'm not drinking tonight either - my wife gave me an ultimatum... I thought we could hang out, the two non-drinkers," he was rambling. I could barely keep up with

him.

Then I saw it. This guy was struggling, bad. I could see it from a mile away now. He was clammy, bloated and nervous, clutching his soda. I felt as though I was staring at myself half a year ago. It was surreal. I was in front of a man clearly white-knuckling withdrawal.

My instinct told me to get out of there. Run. It's not your problem. I could get triggered. I had a meeting to get to. My

sobriety was on the line. What if this guy needed my help? I was only five months sober. What the heck could I do? Then, I took a breath. What if this was something else? Then it just blurted out of my mouth:

"Listen, let's grab our coats and get some fresh air, ok? You look like you could use a break from the party."

(To be continued next month.)

TELEPHONE GREETERS NEEDED

Phone training is now the first Sunday of every month.  
To book an appointment, please call 416-487-5591 or contact the 12th Step Committee.



**DID YOU KNOW...** that on Feb. 7 & 8, 1948, Bill W. & Lois came to Toronto? Bill spoke on Saturday at Central Technical School & on Sunday at the Tivoli Theatre on Richmond Street.



**DID YOU KNOW?**  
that in  
Feb. 1940,  
the first World Service  
Office (GSO) for AA  
opens at 30 Vesey St.  
in New York?

## Concept Eight

**The Trustees of the General Service Board act in two primary capacities: (a) With respect to the larger matters of over-all policy and finance, they are the principal planners and administrators.**


They and their primary committees directly manage these affairs. (b) But with respect to our separately incorporated and constantly active services, the relation of the Trustees is mainly that of full stock ownership and of custodial oversight which they exercise through their ability to elect all directors of these entities.

This concept deals with the ways the General Service Board “discharges its heavy obligations,” and its relationship with its two subsidiary corporations: AA World Services, Inc. and the AA Grapevine, Inc. Long experience has proven that the board “must devote itself almost exclusively to the larger questions of policy, finance, group relations and leadership . . . . In these matters, it must act with great care and skill to plan, manage and execute.”

The board, therefore, must not be distracted or burdened with the details or the endless questions which arise daily in the routine operation of the General Service Office or the publishing operations, including the Grapevine. “It must delegate its executive function” to its subsidiary, operating boards.

“Here, the board’s attitude has to be that of custodial oversight. . . . The trustees are the guarantors of good management of AA World Services, Inc. and the AA Grapevine, Inc. . . . by electing the directors of these service arms, a part of whom must always be trustees. . . . The executive direction of these functions is . . . lodged in the . . . service corporations themselves, rather than the General Service Board. Each corporate service entity should possess its own bylaws, its own working capital, its own

executives, its own employees, its own offices and equipment.”

Bill draws from earlier mistakes by the General Service Board in trying to run the service functions directly and warns repeatedly against “too much concentration of money and authority.” 

\*Copyright 1986 by Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. All rights reserved.



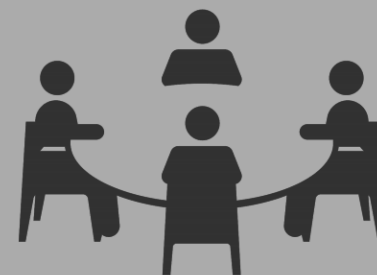
**DID YOU KNOW...** that in Feb. 1940, the first AA Clubhouse opens at 334 1/2 West 24th Street in New York?

**DID YOU KNOW?**  
that in  
Feb. 1938,  
John D. Rockefeller Jr. is  
contacted, gives AA \$5,000  
and refuses to give more  
which saves AA from  
professionalism?

UNITY. SERVICE. RECOVERY.

## CONCEPTS MEETING

A DISCUSSION MEETING ON THE 12  
CONCEPTS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS



~ Starting in September 2017 ~

1st Thursday of the month, 7:00pm - 8:30pm  
3rd Sunday of the month, 1:00pm - 2:30pm



MEETING LOCATION:  
234 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 202

Buzzcode #202



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Streetsville Action group  
celebrates 35th anniversary**  
Wednesday, February 14 at 8:30 p.m.  
Streetsville United Church  
274 Queen St. S, Mississauga

**Annual Bayview  
Young Peoples meeting**  
Sunday, February 25 at 8 p.m.  
Willowdale Christian School  
60 Hilda Ave., North York  
Five speakers under 30 years old.

## TELEPHONE GREETERS WANTED

I am responsible.

When anyone, anywhere,  
reaches out for help,  
I want the hand of A.A.  
always to be there.

And for that, I am responsible.

Phone training is now the first Sunday of every month. To book an appointment, please call 416-487-5591 or contact the 12th Step Committee.



WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE YOUR TORONTO AREA GROUP  
FEATURED IN AN UPCOMING ISSUE OF  
**BETTER TIMES?**

Contact us  
[bettertimes@aatoronto.org](mailto:bettertimes@aatoronto.org)



**DID YOU KNOW...** that in Feb. 1942, Bill W. and seven other AAs ask 60 rich friends of John D. Rockefeller Jr. for money at a dinner at Union Club? They raise \$2,200.



BETTER TIMES

medallions & archives

DID YOU KNOW?

that in 1939, Dr. Harry Tiebout became the first psychiatrist to endorse AA and use AA principles in his practice?

WANTED



- Old books,
- brochures,
- flyers,
- photographs,
- CDs,
- DVDs
- & other materials from AA in Ontario!

To donate AA and GTA archival items to the GTA Archives, please contact the GTA Archivist Eddy G. at 416-536-7536.

MEDALLIONS			
Ed V.	25	Deer Park	Jan. 24
Tonjha R.	5	Deer Park	Jan. 29
Karl H.	1	Markland Wood	Feb. 01
Moe D.	45	Erin Mills	Feb. 04
John W.	50	New Anchor	Feb. 06
Mark A.	1	Erin Mills	Feb. 14
Rafal S.	5	Leslie	Feb. 15
Lyle G.	50	Thorncliffe Park	Feb. 17
Ted B.	40	Bayview	Feb. 17
Tim K.	30	Erin Mills	Feb. 21
Rachel H.	1	Six Points	Feb. 23
Raffaele C.	5	Bayview	Mar. 10
Michelle J.	5	Six Points	Mar. 16
Thane H.	1	New Anchor	Mar. 19
Colin W.	30	Traditional Group	Mar. 23
Teresa R.	30	Traditional Group	Mar. 23
Rob R.	20	Traditional Group	Mar. 23
Jim W.	20	Traditional Group	Mar. 23

Due to ongoing submissions, this list may not be current.  
For the latest information, please visit [www.aatoronto.org](http://www.aatoronto.org)

## A message from the ORC

The 75th Annual Ontario Regional Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous

Road of Happy Destiny

75 years of AA in Ontario

Speakers:  
Polly P., Jacksonville, FL  
Charles C., Burbank, CA  
Ruth L., Montreal, QC

March 9 - 11, 2018  
Fairmont Royal York, Toronto


To register, sign up for email updates and see the latest news, visit:  
[www.aaorc.ca](http://www.aaorc.ca)

**Serving as a member on the 2018 Ontario Regional Conference (ORC) committee has me feeling rather “right-sized.”**

My service sponsor, Elaine H. from the Streetsville group, asked me to participate. She was to be the Secretary for the 2018 ORC and I was very much looking forward to working with her again. Sadly, Elaine passed while we were shadowing the 2017 committee.

Elaine was an invaluable resource and I adored her very much. She demonstrated how gratitude is an action word. Elaine always had a service commitment to Alcoholics Anonymous. Service was one of the many ways she showed her gratitude to the program and our fellowship.

Elaine reached out and asked me to join the committee at a time when my life felt like it was all falling apart. She knew I was full of despair and she wanted to help. Elaine understood the importance of “staying in the center of the herd.” I reluctantly accepted her offer because I was rather busy isolating at the time.

Life continues to come at me today; it’s just how it goes sometimes. Through all hardships and tragedies, the obsession to drink has not returned only because I practice our “design for living.” I am indebted to Elaine and Steve for taking a chance on me. I now have a really generous way to demonstrate my gratitude to my God and to all of you. 

**Cassandra D., Sisters in Sobriety  
2018 ORC, Newcomer Room**

BETTER TIMES

sharing

DID YOU KNOW?

that in early 1939, Dr. Howard, a Montclair, NJ, psychiatrist, suggests swapping the “you must”s in the Big Book for “we ought”s?

Step One

“Just read page 30 of the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous,” Charlie barked at me when I asked him about step one.

My sponsor, Joe, who is Charlie’s buddy, had asked me to write a summary of the first step in the AA program before moving forward in my work with him. Between Joe and Charlie, they have over 60 years of sobriety. “Beginning with the words ‘we learned.’ That’s all you need to know about step one!”

And so I did. It is right at the start of chapter 3, “More About Alcoholism.” It reads the first step in recovery is admitting “to our innermost selves” that we are not like other (i.e.: normal) people in the way we drink, and the delusion that we could be must be “smashed.”

I have since heard people in meetings refer to such other people as “normies.” I



never wanted to be normal; I always thought I was better than that. I was different. So I could beat this thing. I could handle it myself. I’d show them.

When I finally came into AA, my life was completely unmanageable; of that there was little doubt. I had lost several jobs due to my drinking over the previous 10 years or so, virtually all of my friends, including my old drinking buddies, and I had been taken to the hospital at least four times that I could remember.


One of those times -- and not the last -- I actually died and had to be brought back to life. I spent five days in a coma and four more weeks in intensive care. I suffered permanent brain damage and am now partially paralyzed as a result, and live in constant pain. But was I really powerless over alcohol? I had never felt truly powerless, or even helpless, over anything at all. But I was definitely scared.

I tried everything to quit drinking. Moving far away from my friends and family, changing neighbourhoods and jobs, trying a variety of body cleanses and diets. Nothing worked. In good times or bad, one thing was certain: I was going home, picking up a bottle or two along the way and getting drunk. Just knowing that helped me get through

the day. Knowing that soon enough I would be drunk and I wouldn’t have to feel anything at all. It had become all I lived for.

The fact I could no longer deny was that I could not stop. It was with a great relief that I first realized this when talking with the friend who introduced me to AA. He told me his history with alcohol and it sounded so much like mine. It was only when I first made this admission to him, that I made it to myself. I had become powerless to stop myself from taking a drink and I know now through my readings in the Big Book, as well as the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, that I suffer from an allergy, a disease. Once I take that first drink, I just can’t stop. And in that moment, I was basically taking step one, and was on my path to recovery. I just didn’t know it at the time.

The more I read about step one, the more I see how necessary it is for an alcoholic to not only hit his or her own bottom, but to accept complete and utter defeat at the hands of the conniving, insidious demon that is alcohol. It is only then that we can finally see the “fatal nature” of our drinking and summon the necessary strength and willingness to practice the remaining 11 steps of the program.

And as my sponsor Joe says: “The program of Alcoholics Anonymous only promises you one thing: sobriety. The rest is up to you.” 

**David P., Birds of a Feather**

**DID YOU KNOW...** that in Feb. 1981, the first issue of Markings, the AA Archives newsletter, was published? “The function of archives is to give the Fellowship a sense of its own past and the opportunity to study it.”

**DID YOU KNOW...** that in Feb. 1942, Bill W. pays tribute to Ruth Hock, AA’s first secretary who has resigned to get married? Ruth’s signature appeared on some 15,000 letters sent in response to inquiries about AA by the New York office.



## Learning vs living the steps: The event is not the process

During his third day of treatment at Towns Hospital, Bill W. ingested the essence of our twelve steps while being assisted by his schoolmate, Ebby T. Directly thereafter, Bill experienced a radical personality change which allowed a release from his alcoholic obsession. However, this blessed happenstance would have been only temporary unless followed by putting Ebby's "neat little formula" into action, which was, at that time, of course, the tenets of the Oxford group.

Learning the twelve steps is an event. Living the twelve steps is a process.

Directly after leaving the hospital, Bill didn't return to his long-standing passion of Wall Street finances, but was instead guided to Calvary Mission in attempt to carry his new-found sobriety message to drunken sots. Lucky for us, this became a lifetime process which allowed him to maintain permanent sobriety. His spiritual experience event became a lifetime process.

Dr. Carl Jung explained to millionaire, Rowland H.: "Ideas and emotions which were once the guiding forces of the lives of these men are suddenly cast aside, and a new set of conceptions and motives begin to dominate them."

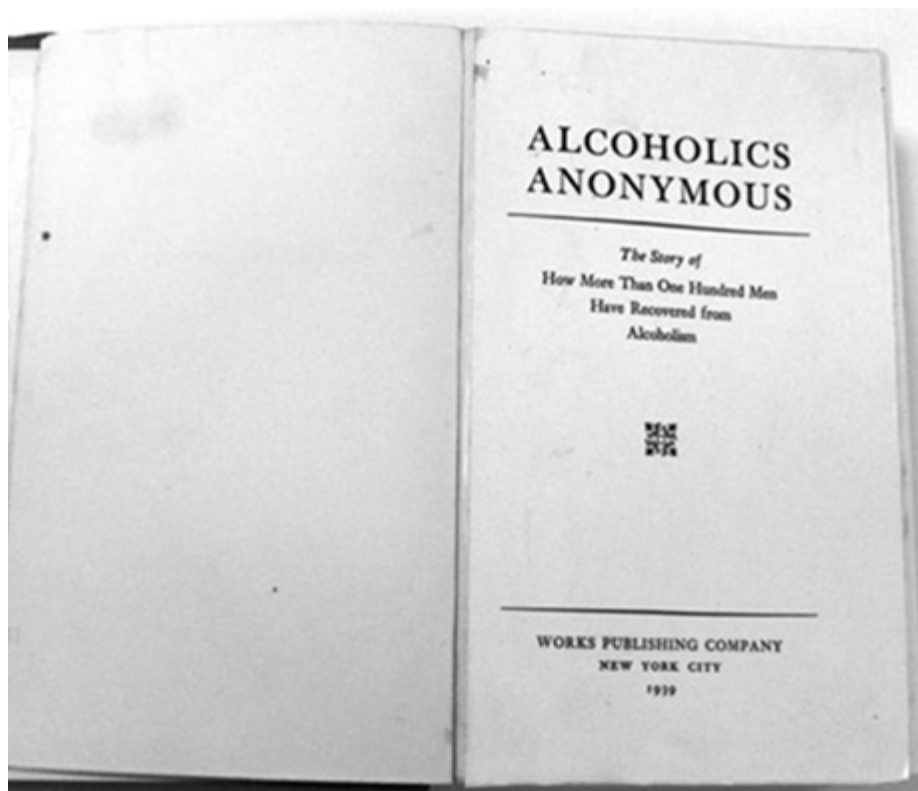
Although armed with this invaluable knowledge, Roland was unable to follow the Oxford group tenets; consequently, he maintained only spotted sobriety. Learning the Oxford group tenets was sadly only an event, but not the necessary lifetime process.

Dr. Bob had been exposed to the Oxford group tenets for over two years before meeting Bill W., but was not actually living in the spirit of them. And no matter how hard he would try, he would end up boiled as an owl. After a five-hour talk with Bill, he experienced a much stronger desire to stay sober. This was an exciting event, but he was unwilling to follow the process of making the required amends. He got drunk! But later, he made amends, and thus began living the twelve steps (as they were later to be called) and he never drank again!

Half measures availed us nothing. 

**Bob S.**

Alcoholics Anonymous, 1939.  
First edition, first printing.



**DID YOU KNOW...** that in Feb. 1943, during WWII gasoline rationing, the Office of Price Admin. recognized the "importance and social significance of the work done by AA" and granted AA right to use cars for 12th Step work in emergency cases?