

Produced monthly by the AA members in the Greater Toronto Area

# BETTER TIMES

January  
2018



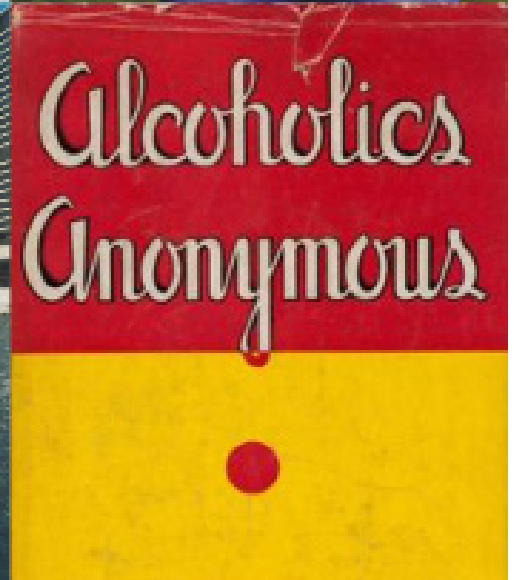
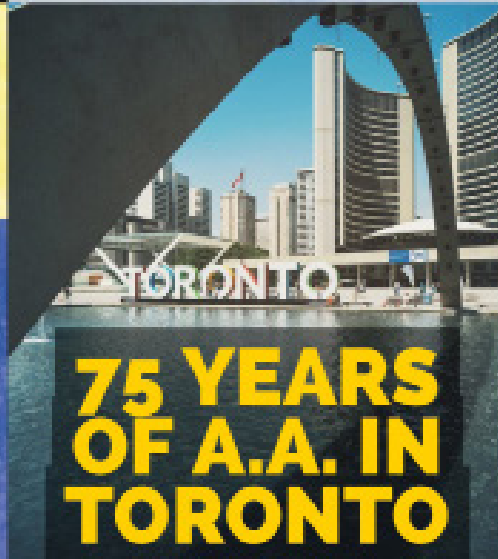
A co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous tells how members recover and how the society functions.

## TWELVE STEPS AND TWELVE TRADITIONS



## ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

This is the Fourth Edition of  
the Big Book, the Basic Text  
for Alcoholics Anonymous



How members of Alcoholics Anonymous  
recover and how the society functions.

## TWELVE STEPS AND TWELVE TRADITIONS



# masthead & wordsearch

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

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Opinion expressed in BETTER TIMES are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Greater Toronto Area Intergroup. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit submitted articles for length, content and grammar in accordance with layout and quality purposes.

#### How to reach us:

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. For subscriptions, please call Alex at 416-487-8110 or subscribe at [www.aatoronto.org](http://www.aatoronto.org)

#### 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 mailed to [bettertimes@aatoronto.org](mailto:bettertimes@aatoronto.org)

## DON'T GET BAFFLED WORD SEARCH

I	F	Q	B	R	F	I	M	E	T	R	O	N	O	M	E	Z	Y	Q	A
G	E	E	C	E	L	L	O	U	O	H	J	W	H	G	G	S	N	L	N
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|----------------|---------------|---------------|
| • QUARTER NOTE | • HALF NOTE   | • WHOLE NOTE  |
| • TREBLE CLEF  | • BASS CLEF   | • STAFF       |
| • EGBDF        | • FACE        | • ACEG        |
| • GBDFA        | • TEMPO       | • DYNAMICS    |
| • PITCH        | • RHYTHM      | • GRAND STAFF |
| • FLUTE        | • HARP        | • VIOLIN      |
| • VIOLA        | • CELLO       | • BASS        |
| • PICCOLO      | • BRASS       | • WOODWINDS   |
| • STRING       | • PERCUSSION  | • METRONOME   |
| • FORTE        | • MEZZO FORTE | • MEZZO PIANO |
| • ORCHESTRA    | • PHRASE      | • STACCATO    |
| • SHARP        | • FLAT        | • NATURAL     |

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**DID YOU KNOW?**

that on  
Jan. 13, 1943,  
the first AA meeting  
took place in Canada  
at the Little Denmark  
Restaurant in  
Toronto?

## Letter from the Editor

Happy New Year to All!

I am hoping this edition finds you safe and sober to kick-off 2018. The holidays can be a time of reunion and celebration for many but for the newcomer or to those who have difficult memories or loss, challenging family dynamics, parties with alcohol and even all-inclusive holiday temptations, the month of December can be harrowing and often tricky to come out the sober side of... We at A.A. can find a daily reprieve in the program and January can also be a time of renewal, fresh starts and re-commitment whether you are newly sober or have years under the belt. Here's how...

Step One asks some interesting questions about all the things that our program appears to ask when we first embark on the road to recovery - a Higher Power? Admitting defeat and powerlessness? Making amends? Rigorous Honesty? Come on... I certainly wanted no part of those things BUT I soon realized that A.A. was not asking me to do these things at the onset. I just had to make the first step of admission that as a group of people, we alcoholics had no control when it came to drinking and that our lives had landed us in trouble because of it. Tradition One tells us that we make no demands of anyone, phew!, and that as an apparent group of “anarchists” it is amazing that we manage at all! The reason millions are sober today in A.A. is because we put saving our lives and the lives of others first.

January is a new start, new year, first step, fresh decision, renewed commitment and above all - no pressure except to try something different!  
Go for it!

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



## A message from the ORC

**As I reflect back on previous ORCs I've attended, each year provided me with something so uniquely different.**

At my first ORC, my sponsor planted the seed early on that this is a must-do event, so I took the plunge and attended. Walking through the fear of my first sober dance on Saturday night was one of those must-do experiences. Now you can't keep me off the dance floor!

Last year, I had the opportunity to shadow the 2017 ORC Treasurer. As the event approached, I had been dealing with some fears and insecurities surrounding my em-

ployment and had just found out that I was being transitioned into another division of the company which I had no experience with. Well, the self-centred alcoholic came out in me. They can't do that to me (angry); don't they know who I am! (indignant); to finally leaving work on the Wednesday with a bad case of the "poor me" (self-pity).

Arriving at the Royal York the next day, I was thrown into non-stop service for four days. By the end of the weekend, I was exhausted, but through all that there was this indescribable joy that I felt in my heart and soul. To lose myself in the service of oth-

ers, a prescription right out of page 68 in the big book: “I asked God to remove my fear and direct my attention to what God would have me be”. And that weekend, God directed and needed me to be of service.

It's an honour to be of service again this year on the 2018 ORC Committee.

And as the 2018 Chairperson often reminds us -- HAVE FUN! 

**Jill Berwick**  
**2018 ORC Treasurer**

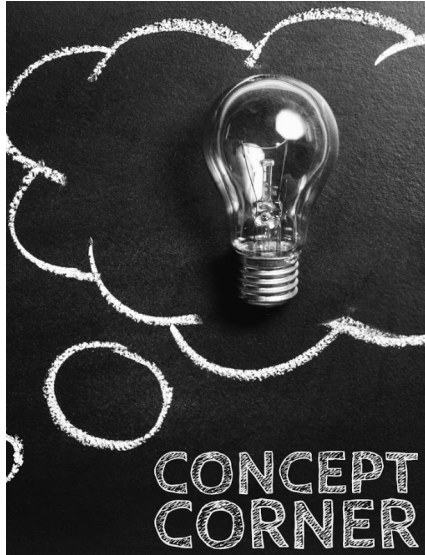
**DID YOU KNOW...** that on Jan. 28, 1943, the first AA meeting took place at Metropolitan United Church in Toronto?





## Concept seven

The Conference recognizes that the Charter and the Bylaws of the General Service Board are legal instruments: that the Trustees are thereby fully empowered to manage and conduct all of the world service affairs of Alcoholics Anonymous. It is further understood that the Conference Charter itself is not a legal document: that it relies instead upon the force of tradition and the power of the A.A. purse for its final effectiveness.




This Concept attempts to clarify the relationship and “balance of powers” between the Conference and the General Service Board. “This ... may look like the collision of an irresistible force with an immovable object.” On the one hand, “the board is invested with complete legal power over A.A.’s funds and services; on the other hand the Conference is clothed with such great influence and financial power it could overcome the legal rights of the board.

“Thus, the practical power of the Conference is, in the final analysis, superior to the legal power of the

board. This superior power derives from the traditional influence of the Conference Charter itself; from the fact that the delegates chosen by the groups always constitute more than two-thirds of the Conference members”; and finally from the ability of the delegates to cut off financial support by the groups. “Theoretically, the Conference is an advisory body only; but practically speaking, it has all the ultimate power it may ever need.”

The Conference “recommends” — though its recommendations have the force of directives to the board. The board executes these recommendations. The board does have the legal authority to veto a Conference recommendation — but in actual practice, it never has done so.

As Bill tactfully puts it, the trustees “simply refrain from using their legal right to say ‘no’ when it would be much wiser, all things considered, to say ‘yes.’

“If ... the Conference will always bear in mind actual rights, duties, responsibilities and legal status of the General Service Board, and if the trustees ... will constantly realize that the Conference is the real seat of ultimate service authority ... neither will be seriously tempted to make a ‘rubber stamp’ out of the other ... In this way, grave issues will always be resolved and harmonious cooperation will be the general rule.” 

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**DID YOU KNOW...** that on Jan. 15, 1960, “1170 Yonge St. & 77 York St.” closed & the offices moved to “2 Gerrard St. W.”?

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Six Points group celebrates 50 years**  
Monday, January 8 at 8 p.m.  
Our Lady of Peace Church  
3914 Bloor Street West

**Erin Mills group celebrates 40 years**  
Monday, January 8 at 7 p.m.  
Erin Mills United Church  
3010 The Collegeway, Mississauga  
Buffet dinner at 7 p.m., followed by an open speaker meeting at 8:30 p.m.

**Richmond Hill celebrates 63 years**  
Friday, January 26 at 8 p.m.  
St Mary's Anglican Church Hall  
10030 Yonge Street, Richmond Hill

Want to Contribute? The Better Times is always looking for content and would love to publish your stories! Your understanding of the Steps or Traditions, thoughts on the principles of the program or your stories of experience, strength and hope are most welcome!

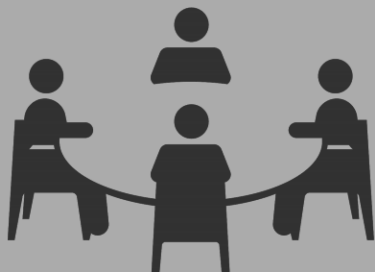
Email your ideas to  
[bettertimes@aatoronto.org](mailto:bettertimes@aatoronto.org)



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



Join us – District 17  
Celebrating  
Recovery Through  
The 12 Steps

On Saturday February 3, 2018

With 6 Al-Anon and 6 A.A. Speakers

Augsburg Lutheran Church

224 Mill Street South, Brampton

HOT & COLD POT LUCK LUNCH

BRING YOUR FAVOURITE DISH TO SHARE WITH US

Registration from 8:30 AM

Program from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM

Tickets are only \$7.00 in advance

\$8.00 at the door

For tickets contact Mary by email at:

[marymartinez@rogers.com](mailto:marymartinez@rogers.com)



# medallions & archives

**DID YOU KNOW?**  
that in  
January 1939,  
the book text & stories  
were compiled? 400  
photo-litho copies were  
sent out to review.

## MEDALLIONS

Glen P.	2	Church St	January 2
Debbie L.	10	Markland Wood	January 4
Rick M.	15	Lansing Grp	January 6
Grace C.	15	King City Grp	January 8
David H.	5	King City Grp	January 8
Chris C.	1	King City Grp	January 8
Christine K.	1	Parkway Grp	January 8
Mike A.	1	Thornhill Grp	January 10
Bob J.	25	Chartwell	January 11
Meghan C.	1	Markland Wood	January 11
Mervyn P.	5	Thornhill Grp	January 17
Dion G.	5	Markland Wood	January 18
Lisa T.	1	Church St	January 20
Steven P.	1	Markland Wood	January 25
Khadijah J.	1	Parkway Grp	January 29
Carrie G.	1	East York Grp	January 30
Jorrit T.	5	East York Grp	January 30



- 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.

## From the archives with GTA Archivist Eddy G.

### Recent items donated to the GTA Archives:

- 1 copy of Grapevine, April 1984, donated by 21st National AA Archives Workshop, Manitoba.
- 2 Birds of a Feather Round Up 2017 program & flyers donated by Peter N., Bayview group.
- 4 programs, 25 bookmarkers, 7 flyers & 7 speaker CDs from the 2016 Toronto Gratitude Round Up donated by James O'D., Early Morning Discussion group.
- 6 St. Clement's group 65th Anniversary History 1952-2017, 6 St. Clement's group 65th Anniversary sleeve with postcard and The Hill Group 60th Anniversary open meeting agenda with group history donated by Maryanne L., St. Clement's group.
- 1 letter from GSO regarding Group Insurance (July 18, 1991), 1 All Around Ontario Newsletter (May-June 1963) and 8 convention flyers: Ottawa 1977, Hamilton 2002, Peel 2002, Guelph 2003 & 2003 Roundup with Clancy I. in Toronto, South West Ontario 2002 & 2003 donated by Joanne M., East Amherst, NY.
- 2 binders R&R Group (group history, business meeting minutes from Feb.1995 to Dec.2014, financial statements, group member lists) compiled & donated by founding member Ken M.
- 1 Big Book (hardcover, 2nd edition, 15th printing, 1973, w/ to Mary H. love Kay O., March 18/1976) & 112&12 book (hardcover, leather bound, 13th printing, Aug. 1974, w/ Mary H. name written) donated by Tom C., Sunnyside group.
- 5 prayer cards & 5 service programs of Bryan D'S., Anniversary group. Bryan passed away on Nov. 29, 2017, with 39 years of sobriety. He was very active in service in District 22 with the newcomers, Registrar, Public Information & DCM District 22 from 2013-14. Also, he was active with the District 22 Archives Committee, compiling all the present group histories, many past group histories, photos of all present groups, creating D22 group photo slide presentation for display, and scanning all D22 minutes from 2000 to 2017, as well as Area 83 Committee & Assembly meeting minutes from 1977 to 2017. He will be missed.



# FROM THE ARCHIVES

**DID YOU KNOW...** that in January 1939, Jim B., a former atheist, gives AA "God as we understand Him" & "Power greater than ourselves"?

# Happy 75th AA birthday, Toronto, Ontario, Canada!

On Wednesday, January 13, 1943, at 6 p.m., the first meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous in Canada took place at the Little Denmark Restaurant on 331 Bay St., Toronto, Ont.

Present at the meeting were two non-alcoholics, Reverend George Little & Reverend Percy Price, and six alcoholics: Tom E., Bruce M., Sam McC., Bus McT., Dorothy C. and Weems C.

We salute you & thank you, all the AA giants, who came before us to help us find AA in the GTA, Ontario & Canada!



## Hard drinker? Not me!

Someone wrote: “Self cannot rid self of self with self.”

This cliché proved doubtless true in respect to my obsession to hit the bottle over and again. No matter how hard I tried to quit forever, I always ended up all soused up in some watering hole. After nearly thirty years of “quitting drinking forever,” I luckily landed in AA. Also, fortunately, I was armed with indisputable evidence that self-will and self-knowledge would not work for an alcoholic such as me. I was helpless and hopeless after I took a shot of whiskey as well as before. Obviously, “Self” was of no avail, so when AA offered me a power greater than myself I grabbed it with near-boundless desperation! Terror led me to exclaim: I believe! I believe! Guess what? It worked! I did the steps and the obsession left me within the first year.

But what about so many of my drinking friends who simply quit drinking or learned to drink moderately on their own? The doctor told one of my friends, who drank worse than I did, that he had sugar diabetes and would soon die if he didn’t quit. He did, and that was that! So, why

couldn’t I? Well, page 21 of the Big Book explains the nature of a “hard drinker” who can stop or moderate. My friend must have been one of those—he was a horse of a different colour! His will-power and knowledge worked just fine and he didn’t need a power greater than “self” to solve his drinking problem. There are such types!

Indeed, I once attended a “We Agnostics” AA meeting where members were prohibited to discuss any sort of supernatural power (especially God). Some were even proclaimed atheists (Of course the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions were not read). A few had been sober many years! I had to wonder whether they were horses of the same colour as me? I had to remember what page 21 inferred that some alkies (hard drinkers) can use willpower and knowledge successfully.

I have no difficulty concluding that I fit into the category of the “real alcoholic,” as also mentioned on page 21, who cannot use self-will and self-knowledge to stop or moderate. What about you?

Bob S., Richmond, IN



God grant me  
 the Serenity  
 to accept the things  
 I cannot change,  
 Courage to  
 change the things I can,  
 and Wisdom to  
 know the difference.





# Erin Mills celebrates 40 years

On a typical Monday evening, when you enter the Erin Mills Group’s meeting room a boisterous party atmosphere surrounds you; people chatting, laughing, catching up with friends and welcoming newcomers. Like the wooden sign at the bottom of the stairs says: **You Are No Longer Alone**. One of the larger groups in Mississauga, Erin Mills’ 100 plus members are clear proof that alcoholism has no boundaries and does not discriminate by age, gender, culture, profession or financial situation. Men and women from all walks of life gather each week at Erin Mills United Church to share their journeys in sobriety.



Forty years ago, a group of letter carriers from an Oakville station started the group: Paul T., Ray T. and John H., as well as Bruce A. shortly after, Moe D., Ivy C. and Herta S. joined as well. Despite initial opposition from some of the older members of the day (*"we don't need another meeting in this area"*), Erin Mills grew rather quickly into one of the most popular meetings in the west GTA. The first meeting was Monday January 2, 1978 with over 100 people in attendance. Paul T. chaired and the late Blake G. was the first speaker. Within a year, the group had about 50 members and has continued to thrive ever since.

The founders had foresight, as most of Erin Mills was still in the planning stages. Some homes existed south of Dundas but to the north, it was mostly farmland and woodlots. E.P. Taylor and Canadian Equity and Development Limited planned and built the Erin Mills community starting with Erin Mills South in the early 1970s. Construction of Phase 2 Erin Mills West happened in the mid-1980s. Erin Mills Town Centre was the focal point for Phase 3 and opened in 1989. Population growth was rapid. In 2001 Erin Mills’ population was 105,000, by 2016 it grew to over 122,000.

Christ Our King Lutheran Church on Dundas St. in Mississauga was the group’s first home. The Church had just lost an Al-Anon meeting on Monday evening and that space was a welcome opportunity for our group. In addition to the Monday night open meeting, Linda J. saw a need for a closed meeting. She started a Saturday morning meeting in 1987, a Big Book discussion meeting around a ping-pong table. As attendance grew a second room was added, then a third room and ultimately a fourth room, each focusing on the Steps. John F., Carol G. and Jeff H. chaired the Steps meetings. The ping-pong table became known as the *"Magic Ping-Pong Table"* as so many people got sober around it!

There was a good relationship with the church for many years, but with a change in elders difficulties arose. Conditions were imposed and a break-in at the church strained relations beyond reason.

In the summer of 1996, the group asked Linda J. and the late Peter M. to find a new location.

The Erin Mills United Congregation had just built their new Church at Winston Churchill and the Collegeway in 1992. As part of their community outreach program Erin Mills United Church welcomed our inquiry and David H. formalized our rental agreement within a week. The Erin Mills Group adopted its present location in 1996 and is grateful for a good relationship with the Church to this day.

## From the beginning, there were fundamental principles that shaped the Erin Mills Group:

**Service** is a key responsibility: The Group has been a consistent financial supporter of the General Service Office, Toronto Intergroup and District. Group representatives attend Intergroup and District meetings. Erin Mills’ members have chaired every committee and chaired Intergroup itself. The Ontario Regional Conference and the Mississauga Fall Roundup are two events that Erin Mills’ members help plan and execute. Members have managed all key functions and have chaired the overall events.

**Rotation** is an AA principle that keeps the group balanced. Key roles are rotated so that no one person becomes too influential; there is room for new ideas and fresh perspectives. The *"Core does not overpower the Group."* Resentments don’t build up because everyone has a voice.


**Respect:** in the early days, many young women joined Erin Mills as it was a progressive group where they felt safe and welcome. Today our group is diverse in age and gender and enjoys a richness of comradery. This value is championed by many long-term members, especially the late Jeanne B. Things don’t go unnoticed, if someone is having a problem, a member is sure to step up and try to help.

**Group Assets:** the wooden **You Are No Longer Alone** sign, made by one of the early members Bill B., is still in use today.



The late Randy B. made the Lectern; the late Jeanne B. made our white tablecloth displaying our group name and founding date. We were one of the early groups to invest in microphones and a sound system so that all could hear clearly.

**Well Run:** at Erin Mills business meetings, it is obvious that operations and finances are well organized and open to discussion. AA traditions are respected, especially the 7<sup>th</sup> with consistent contributions to AA beyond our own group.

Every group has a personality; at Erin Mills it is respectful, social and energetic. Known for being *"speaker seekers,"* Erin Mills often draws speakers with excellent messages from afar. Sometimes the overwhelming message is simply the *"spirit in the room."* We welcome all to come and join with us as we share our experience, strength and hope: and carry the message to those still suffering from Alcoholism. 

-Mary M., Doug W. Erin Mills Group

**DID YOU KNOW...** that Bill Wilson died on January 24, 1971? He was 36 years sober. The New York Times published his obituary on page one on January 26, 1971.