were established at GSO in New York? Nell Wing, one of Bill's earliest secretaries. became the first

Church St. group

What do you like about your home (at 10:30 a.m. starting in October), the newcomer?

Our newcomer greeters make everyone feel very welcome. The 519 is an animalfriendly location, so it's not rare to see a dog or two at the meetings. It's a safe and inclusive space to share, serve and reflect.

What is the format of your closed and Do you have to be a member of the open meetings?

Every Saturday at 10:30 a.m., we have You don't have to be a member of the an open meeting with a speaker in one room and a Big Book discussion in another room. Every Sunday at 12:30 p.m.

group? What makes it great for the meeting is split into two: one group discusses steps 1, 2, 3, and the second group discusses later steps.

Are there opportunities for service?

We're always looking for volunteers to set up or chair meetings and act as newcomer greeters.

group to get involved?

group to get involved in service. Participation by reading at the front and help with clean-up is encouraged.

Does the location have parking? Is it close to a subway station?

There is paid street parking on Church Street. The group is a brief walk from Wellesley Station.



The Greater Toronto Area is fortunate to have over 500 meetings every week. These meetings come in all sizes, formats and even a few languages. To encourage all members of Alcoholics Anonymous to visit groups from all over the city in addition to their home group, we spotlight a meeting every issue.

Could your group use a few more seats in the chairs? Are there opportunities for service? Is it a new group that we may not know about?

If so, please submit your request for a group feature to bettertimes@aatoronto.org and be sure to mention "Group spotlight request" in the subject line.

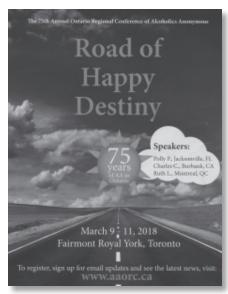
Volunteering at the ORC

(...continued from page 7)

Two years ago, my service sponsor mentioned me to the 2018 ORC chair, Steve A. This time, I was asked to chair registration for the conference. I jumped at the chance.

Last year, I was the shadow-chair and attended the committee meetings, learning the ropes of how the conference is organized. I spent all of Friday and Saturday of the conference in the registration room, overseeing the customer service issues that inevitably occur when two thousand people register over a two-day period. I must say, we, AAs, are a pleasant lot. Of the 2,000 registrants, we only had two unhappy campers, and even their issues were solved to everyone's satisfaction, I hope. And if not, that's what sponsors are for, right? I only managed to attend the banquet meeting and

the Sunday meetings but, once again, I was overwhelmed with gratitude.



This year, I'm in charge of on-site registration and will probably be asked to chair a meeting in the big room on Sunday. Am I excited and nervous? You betcha. But I always love the final three meetings of the conference: they are the grand finale fireworks of the weekend and, of course, there's the countdown.

Every year, coming home after the conference is a crash into reality. It always takes me time to adjust. I find that the best antidote is to attend a meeting as soon as possible. It's not quite the same as a ballroom packed with 3,000 people but I always hear the messages I long to hear: You are no longer alone; Keep coming back; Stay.

If you want to enhance your ORC experience, I highly recommend you volunteer. There's so much to do to throw a party of this caliber with no booze! So, join us on the Road of Happy Destiny in 2018.

Sandy D., Black River

Produced monthly by the AA members in the Greater Toronto Area

The prodigal son returns... again

On the last day of this past July, I attended the Third Tradition service meeting at the Toronto East General Hospital. I was nine days sober at the time.

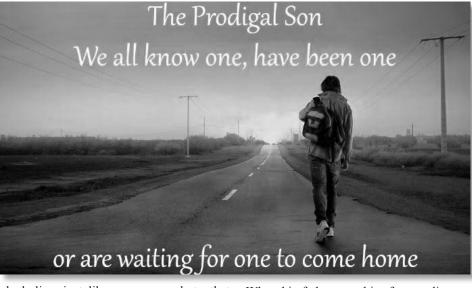
The chap assigned to speak that Monday night was an old friend whom I had met in treatment back in the late autumn of 2002. We were both there for the first time. He stayed sober; I did not. In fact, I returned to the same treatment centre two more times in 2005 and 2007.

My longest periods of sobriety to date are 15 months after my second trip to treatment and a week shy of two years after my third trip and a year of living in the "dry house." During both of those periods, I had fully abandoned myself to God and the AA program of action. They were the most contented and purposeful brief periods of my life. Since the summer of 2008, significant periods of sobriety have eluded me. I usually crash and burn around four, five or six months followed by about the same number of months out there on drinking misadventures.

I have had profound spiritual experiences during the significant periods of sobriety that I mentioned. Well, significant to me, anyway. No surprise that they occurred as a result of working the steps.

My first step 5 was transformational. My first step 9 reaped spiritual benefits. Helping others along the way filled my spirit. I discovered so many blessings in AA and yet could not maintain or hold onto them.

It's been said that God looks after drunks and fools; and I am both. I don't know why the God of my understanding has cast his graces and mercies upon me. I have always felt that God had a plan and purpose for my lost life but it's been interrupted and thwarted at every turn. I have made it back to the rooms more times than I care to mention. In fact, I've lost track. As we all know, many



alcoholics, just like me, succumb to that dreaded first drink and never make it back. Jails, institutions and the finality of death are often the outcomes. Or, even worse, another decade or more of alcoholic drinking until one's vital organs give out.

The parable that the title of this article refers to has been my favourite since I first read and understood the teachings it conveys. You see, I strongly identify with the son in the story. Very briefly, when the young man comes of age, he asks his father for his share of his inheritance and leaves the comfort and security of his father's house. He ventures into the world at large to do as he pleases and in no time, he is lost amidst a sea of strong drinks and much questionable behaviour.

In a short time, he squanders everything and in a state of brokenness, ends up cleaning pig pens for chump change and often eats the husks intended for the swine. One day, while in the filth, he recalls how good he had it while living at his wealthy, loving father's house. He musters up what little strength he has and with head bowed in a state of humility and feeling unworthy, he heads home.

When his father sees him from a distance, he comes running with open arms to embrace his son on the road. The father welcomes him home, takes him inside and over time, nurses him back to health and bestows many gifts and blessings upon him. I assume that the son learned a valuable lesson and lived out a happy and healthy life in his father's house.

For me, home is the rooms and the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous, especially my home group and the regular local meetings I attend. I have been welcomed back with open arms many times by AA members who are truly trusted servants of God. I appreciate their kindness and love. I am deeply moved by their seemingly endless patience and tolerance as I return yet again from recklessly squandering everything that I am and have.

As I return home and fully give myself to the 12-step program, many gifts and blessing will be bestowed upon me again. With God's help, your help and my efforts at taking right actions, it is my prayer that this time I remain at my father's house.

Virgil F., Danforth

masthead & wordsearch

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

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Opinions expressed in BETTERTIMES are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Greater Toronto Area Intergroup. The editorial staffres erve the right to edit submitted articles for length, content and grammar in accordance with layout and quality purposes.

How to reach us:

Submitgroupnews,medallions,otherevent notices,letterstotheeditororarticlesto BETTER TIMES before the 7th of the monthpriortothemonthofissuebymail, faxoremail.Onlysignedsubmissionswith ameansofcontactwillbeaccepted.Your anonymity will be protected. Forsubscriptions,pleasecallAlexxat416-487-8110orsubscribeatwww.aatoronto.org

Call for submissions:

The BETTERTIMES 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 youtoshareyour experience, strength and hope with your fellows.

Submissions should be between 200 and 500 words and may be made onlineatwww.aatoronto.orgoremailed to bettertimes@aatoronto.org

DON'T GET BAFFLED WORD SEARCH

P	C	T	S	R	Α	В	М	Α	R	K	Ε	R	S
G	L	I	T	T	Ε	R	Ε	N	Ε	С	K	R	С
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ERASER
CALCULATOR
CRAYONS
JOURNAL
SHARPENER
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GLITTER
GLUE STICK
PENCILS
MARKERS
COMPASS
SCISSORS

LUNCH BOX HOMEWORK BOOKS PENS BACKPACK

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BETTER TIMES

haring

Fear and serenity

During active addiction, I felt alone and without hope. I had no faith in anyone, anything or any part of me to live normally. Going through each day with my selfish attitude and idea that nothing else mattered, only gave the darkness strength to remain present.

After 20 years, I came to a sudden realization that there must be another way for me to live. I slowly allowed my physical self to come into the rooms not being sure if my mind would follow. But after a few weeks of remaining active and attending meetings, it happened. I found a sponsor, got a Big Book and took action. I got myself into detox

Immediately following those 14 days, I went straight into a 28-day treatment program. It was during these six weeks that my connection to MY Higher Power grew stronger. My belief that my Higher Power will do for me what I cannot do for myself, if only I would pray for what I need, was reaffirmed through the love, support and patience I was receiving through my wife, my sponsor, the fellowship from MY Higher Power. I am grateful to receive this and now live a life of honesty, open-mindedness, willingness, love, patience, tolerance and humility.

These two poems were written during my 28 days in treatment. I'll tell you this: FEAR

was written quite easily because it had been my closest friend for so many years. However, SERENITY was written over a period of five weeks because I had yet to fully understand what it meant or how it would feel. I suppose, SERENITY can be written in different words with each new day I surrender and live outside myself.

FEAR

I HAD A FEAR,

A FEAR THAT WAS ONCE LESS FAR, AND OH SO VERY NEAR. I ONCE HELD ONTO IT NEAR TO ME, VERY CLOSE.

IT WAS A FEAR, THAT OF WHICH IALLOWED NO ONE TO KNOW. I KEPT IT ALL, WITHIN MYSELF. SHARED IT WITH NO ONE. I KEPT IT HIDDEN HIGH AND DEEP UPON MY SHELF. THIS FEAR ITHOUGHT, WAS IT THE ONLY THING REAL? TO EVERYONE ELSE, ITHOUGHT, IT WAS NOT A BIG DEAL. IT ANSWERED TO NOT JUST ONE NAME. YET IT ANSWERED, EVEN WHEN NOT CALLED UPON. JUST THE SAME. ALL IT EVER WANTED WAS TO PLAY A DEADLY GAME. NEVER ONCE DID IT GIVE ME A CHANCE, TO WIN AT ALL COST, IT WOULD KEEP ME DEÉP IN A TRANCE. IT WANTED TO PLAY A GAME, TO PROVE FOR ME IT WAS THE BEST. PLAY UNTIL MY DEATH, FOR ME TO LAY NOT IN PEACE, OR AT REST.

that in Sept. 1948, the first issue of the AA Grapevine is published in pocketbook format?



SERENITY

FREE OF THE CHAINS THAT BOUND MY SPIRIT,

I NOW FEEL LIKE THERE ARE NO LIMITS.
ONCE I FELT LIKE I WAS SURROUNDED BY
DARKNESS.

UNTIL THE DAY CAME WHEN I SAW THE LIGHT.

THE LIGHT OF SUCH AMAZING BRIGHTNESS.
LOVE, PATIENCE AND TOLERANCE ARE PART

OF WHAT FILL ME NOW,
THIS NEW WAY OF FEELING EACH TIME I
BREATH, OPEN MY EYES,
I CAN ONLY SCREAM WOW!
I SHARE MYSELF AND LET OTHERS IN
WHEN THEY NEED A PLACE TO LET IT ALL
OUT.

I STAY CONNECTED AND STAY AS MY TRUE SELF,

THIS IS WHAT LIVING IN THE LIGHT IS ALL

I FOUND THIS NEW WAY TO LIVE MY LIFE.
YES, IT WILL ON DAYS HAVE ITS MOMENTS:
SOME WILL BE A TREMENDOUS STRIFE,
OTHERS WILL SIMPLY FEEL LIKE I'M BEING

CUT UP WITH A KNIFE.
IN TIMES LIKE THESE I SAY MY PRAYER,
TO THE POWER GREATER THAN ME,
BECAUSE THAT IS WHERE AND HOW
I HAVE FOUND A WAY TO BE FREE.

Volunteering at the ORC

I love the Ontario Regional Conference (ORC). I was about four months sober at my first, sharing a room with my sisters and my Alateen nieces. It was fun and inspiring, overwhelming and heartwrenching, and I loved every minute and swore I would always be part of it.

In 2005, I volunteered at the World Conference, greeting at the bottom of a busy escalator in red pants and a white T-shirt. We

were told to wear red and white so attendees would recognize us. I was proud and happy and overwhelmed (again) with gratitude.

In 2010, I started volunteering in the registration room, helping people fill in forms, typing up registrations, printing off badges and stuffing them in holders, directing the line-up and greeting. It was so much fun. The few hours of work flew by.

After a number of years, I was asked to put a crew together to cover a registration shift. As captain, my responsibility spread to recruit and manage volunteers who would stay on task in the face of hundreds of friendly and distracting AAs passing through the room, chattering, questioning and rushing off to the next meeting.

(continues on page 8...)

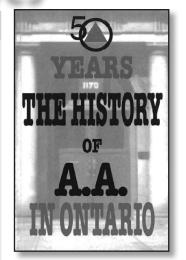
DID YOU KNOW... that in Sept. 1948, the Serenity Prayer was first printed in an issue of the Grapevine?

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that in Sept. 1939, Liberty Magazine runs "Alcoholics and God," a story on AA by Morris Markey?

	MEI	DALLIONS							
Eric S.	45	Markland Wood	Aug. 17						
Jim H.	25	Hill Group	Aug. 17						
Meredith N.	1	Beaches Group	Aug. 17						
	5	Markland Wood	•						
Hartley L.	•		Aug. 24						
Karyn P.	30	St. Clements	Aug. 30						
Rebecca F	5	Anniversary Group	Sept. 6						
Lee-Anne M.	30	Hill Group	Sept. 7						
Oleg S.	1	New Anchor Group	Sept. 7						
Tammy S.	1	Sisters in Sobriety	Sept. 13						
Kim P.	1	New Anchor Group	Sept. 14						
Ben W.	55	Edwards Gardens	Sept. 15						
Maryanne D.	1	Sisters in Sobriety	Sept. 27						
Due to ongoing submissions, this list may not be current.									

For the latest information, please visit www.aatoronto.org



50 Years: The History of AA in Ontario is for sale at the Literature Department at 234 Eglinton Avenue for \$10.

This book was produced in 1993 by the Archives Committee of Toronto Intergroup, known today as the GTA Intergroup. It's a great gift to give to a member on their anniversary.

I FOUND IT IN THE ARCHIVES

Archives Committee meetings are held on the 2nd Friday of each month in the boardroom at the GTA Intergroup Office at 234 Eglinton Ave. E., Suite 202, Toronto.

WANTED: Old books, brochures, flyers, photographs, CDs, DVDs and 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.



Back to the repository

with GTA Archivist Eddy G.

Recent items donated to the GTA Archives:

- One copy of The AA Service Manual combined with Twelve Concepts for World Service by Bill W. 2014-2015 Edition. Donated by District 22 Scarborough.
- 309 flyers and programs from round-ups, conventions and conferences from 1980 to 2017 from the GTA and Ontario Areas. Donated by Jackie M., Mississauga Group.
- Two CDs: Oral History of Audrey G., Whitby Group, Oct. 25, 2007, and Oral History of Dorthea McL., Lighthouse Group, 2006. Donated by Gary C., Stonewall Group.
- Three prayer cards of Billy W. Wanstead Group, Fifth Tradition Group, who passed away on June 18, 2017, with 30 years of sobriety. Billy will be missed. Donated by Lynn E., Fifth Tradition Group.
- Two DVDs, celebration of life photos, prayer cards, AA talk and music concert of Darlene M., Streetsville Group, who passed away on Nov. 15, 2016 with 27 years of sobriety. Darlene will be missed.
- Two DVDs, prayer cards, photos & AA talk of Elaine H., Streetsville Group, who passed away on Nov. 22, 2016, with 22 years of sobriety. Elaine will be missed.
- Two DVDs, photos and AA talk of Randy B., Erin Mills Group, who passed away on July 4, 2015 with 33 years of sobriety. Randy will be missed.
- Two DVDs, photos and AA talk of Maureen N., Streetsville Group, who passed away with 49 years of sobriety. She will be missed. All eight DVDs were donated by Joan S., Streetsville Group.

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 in Sept. 1940, the Journal of Nervous & Mental Disease reviewed the AA Big Book and wrote that "of the inner meaning of alcoholism there is hardly a word"?

Bill W. returned home from his Akron trip and AA began in New York City?

Letter from the Editor

"Oh, the times, they are a-changin" -September is one of my favourite months of the year! There is an energy still lingering from summer but change is in air in the city, marking a metamorphosis for all.

Change is an interesting challenge for the alcoholic practising the principles in all affairs. Adjusting to the uncontrollable and sometimes uncomfortable – the kids going back to school, the weather changing, less daylight and more traffic – can be balanced by the thrill of the leaves changing, pride in our children's accomplishments, making a renewed acceptance to a service commitment or more meetings and possibly taking on a new sponsee. (September sees a spike in newcomer meeting attendance and treatment facility admissions.*)

Our ninth month represents the themes of amendment in step 9 and trusted service in tradition 9.

"Clearing the wreckage of the past" and the freedom that is promised in a thorough step 9 brings a change in our behaviour and attitude. It really must because otherwise, amendments are just empty words and commitments, right?

Tradition 9 asks us to be guided by the spiritual principles of the program and be governed by no one person or hierarchy begging the question: "How will anything get done if no one is in charge?" Well, if we follow the rationale behind tradition 9, things get done with the election and selection of trusted servants like vou.

Whether it is cleaning coffee cups, attending a district meeting as your group GSR or handing out medallions at a meeting, you have been trusted to do the job and do it to the best of your ability. We must stand back and watch you do it well!

How do these things apply in the life outside of the rooms? One could treat September (and all months, for that matter) as a time to step back, let the right folks do the job, honour your commitments and do what you say you are going to do. A tall but liberating order to be sure!

Yours in love and service.

Maiia P. **Editor-in-Chief**

* A.A. WorldService, 2003





BETTER TIMES is looking for content and would love to publish your stories!

Please email your ideas to **bettertimes@aatoronto.org**

Mississauga Fall Roundup

Itinerary:

- 8 a.m.: Registration & coffee
- 9 a.m.: Program starts
- 2:30 p.m.: Closing

Featured speakers:

- April B., AA from Rochester, NY
- Marie P., Al-Anon from Toronto, Ont.
- Wayne F., AA from Toronto, Hill Group
- Tommy T., AA from Staten Island, NY
- Alateen Speaker: TBA

50/50 draw tickets will be sold at the event. \$20 tickets include hot and cold buffet lunch, morning timbits, all-day coffee and tea.

For more information, please visit www.MississaugaFallRoundUp.org

Saturday, September 30, 2017

Vic Johnston Community Centre

335 Church Street, Mississauga Plenty of free parking Accessible by transit

Close to Streetsville

DID YOU KNOW... that on Sept. 5, 1935. Hank P., New York Group's AA No.2, takes his last drink (story in Big Book "The Unbeliever")?

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The right of decision

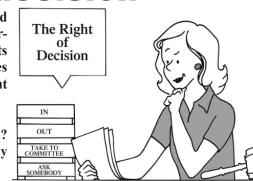
To insure effective leadership, we should endow each element of AA - the conference, the general service board and its service corporations, staff, committees and executives – with a traditional right of decision.

What does the right of decision mean? Is it granted at all levels of service in my home group, my district and my area?

Our trusted servants are not just messengers. They have the right to decide how they will interpret and apply their own authority and responsibility to each particular matter as it arises. The fellowship must have trust in their trusted servants.

Does our delegate know our area's conscience on matters of importance to us?

For example, the area votes that a particular AA pamphlet is unnecessary. Our delegate has heard this, yet while at the general ser-



AT ALL LEVELS OF SERVICE

vice conference, hears information discussed that was not available to us or a debate that convinced them that the production of the pamphlet would benefit AA as a whole. Upon reflection, the delegate decides, using the right of decision, to vote for the production of the pamphlet. It is then incumbent upon the delegate to report back to the area why the decision was made to vote differently than how the area voted.

The right of decision also applies to the general service and intergroup representatives when they attend their monthly meetings.

Sept. 13,1937, Florence R. is the first woman in AA in New York (story in Big

Book "A Feminine

Victory")?

Bill W. said that "our conference delegates are primarily the servants of AA as they should (...) cast their votes (...) according to the best dictates of their own judgment and conscience at that time."

There are 12 spiritual principles for the 12 steps, 12 traditions and concepts. The spiritual principle for concept 3 is trust.

This concept can be practiced daily. We serve by acting on our conscience through our right of decision and we trust others when they exercise their right of decision.

> Joyce S., St. Clement's Panel 65 delegate, Area 83 Eastern Ontario

To the newcomer — Welcome to AA!

I came into AA at a younger age many moons ago but I didn't like what I heard and and when I can. Volunteering in service aldidn't stay in the program. I was a dry drunk for three years. "Dry drunk" means not know my fellow AAers better. If you are a drinking but exhibiting and living with the old behaviours that were not treated through participating in the program. Being miserable. I went out, which means I went back to drinking, and I was out for a long time. My life was one of despair and lack of faith. It gets so much better. Finally, I was ready to return to AA.

In the last seven and a half years of sobriety, I've grown emotionally, mentally and spiritually. I now have many friends and attend meetings on a daily basis. I have found that living life on life's terms, that is, accepting what is, and living the spiritual life are crucial for sobriety. According to the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, the spiritual life is not a theory. We have to live it.

Stick around is what I do. I help others where an active alcoholic. Life is always new and lows me to have responsibility and I get to woman, I recommend finding a women's meeting, so that you may feel more comfortable and at ease. It's important to participate and share, to find a sponsor who has what you'd like, and to KEEP COMING BACK!

There will always be challenges. And there is always a new revelation of understanding and truth; we find it in the AA literature, in the way the program works and in the recovery process. That, you can count on. It's not the same thing over and over again - that's how it was being

inspiring, mainly because YOU ARE NO LONGER ALONE and your Higher Power loves vou.

Giving yourself the chance to heal and recover is a great gift. Please stay. And KEEP COMING BACK!



DID YOU KNOW... that on Sept. 21, 1938, Bill W. & Hank P. form Works Publishing Co. to raise money to write and publish Alcoholics Anonymous, AA's Big Book?

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Rexdale United Group's 45th anniversary

Thursday, September 14 at 8 p.m. St. Benedict's Church 2194 Kipling Avenue

> **Scarborough District 22** 39th annual service day

MY SERVICE - MY SOBRIETY Saturday, September 16, 2017 from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Oakridge Community Centre 63 Pharmacy Avenue (East of Victoria Park station) Free parking, fully accessible; signers welcome.

Free lunch & coffee. Guest speakers, panel & fellowship. Information on A.A. service: Accessibility • Archives • Corrections Grapevine • Public information Self-support • Treatment facilities Co-op with professional community Social gathering 8 p.m. to 12 a.m.

Tickets are \$10 from your group GSR

St. Clements Group's 65th Anniversary

Wednesday, September 20 at 8 p.m. St. Clements Church 70 St Clements Avenue (Yonge & Eglinton)

In service to Alcoholics Anonymous & still-suffering Alcoholic Main speaker • Finger foods Commemorative cards "We absolutely insist on enjoying life"

Danforth Group's 70th anniversary

September 28 at 8 p.m. Holy Name Catholic Church Gough Avenue (on the Danforth, west of Pape Ave.)

West York Group's 60th Anniversary

Sunday, October 1 at 10:30 a.m. Royal Canadian Legion 1050 Weston Rd. (south of Eglinton)



Registered September 29, 1957

Celebrate a Group Anniversary Sixty Years Continuous Service To Alcoholics Sunday October 1, 2017 at 10:30 A.M.

Royal Canadian Legion 1050 Weston Rd. South of Eglinton Ave.

Everyone Welcome





DID YOU KNOW... that in Sept. 1938, Agnes, sister of Fitz M. (AA No. 8 & story in Big Book "Our Southern Friend"), lends Bill W. and Hank P. a thousand dollars to help get them through the Big Book project?

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