

The Twelve Steps Were My Answer

On a February day, many years ago, I was living in absolute dread of going back to the bar. Just a few weeks previous, I had marched into a saloon just off Hollywood Boulevard with the words, “gin & tonic” pursed on my lips — I was just six months sober. In terror, I rushed home and prayed on my knees for God to help me. I had been going to lots of meetings and trying to figure out how to do the steps from the clubhouse walls. I now realize that I was simply surviving on the fellowship which I have come to believe is untreated alcoholism. I had lots of untreated alcoholism, but on the other hand, if I wouldn’t have gone to lots of meetings I believe that I would have been drunk in short order. Yet, what was my answer? The mental obsession was running rampant!

The answer came with a new sponsor named Carl who took me home and discussed Step One and asked if I believed that God could help me (Step Two); when I answered yes, we prayed the Third Step Prayer and at once had me begin a form of spontaneous (automatic) writing. I was told to go home and pray: “God help me I am doing my inventory.” I was told not to scribble more than one word at a time and surprisingly: “Do not think!” If you think it doesn’t count—the words must come from the God who lives deep down within you. At first nothing happened but all at once floodgates of unthought truth began to pour on that paper. In a few minutes,

more honesty was imprinted than many weeks would have appeared from my good-keen-intellectual-mind. Of course, this was not Step Four, but it was good honest and reliable information to be used for Step Four!

My next visit with Carl resulted in doing Step Four, from the Big Book, then, directly afterwards, in Step Five, he helped me expound, and enlarge, on those blaring character defects so I knew immediately what dangerous character traits to ask God to remove in Steps Six and Seven. Carl had me copy on paper the names of people I had harmed (Step Eight) and prepare to start making amends (Step Nine), of course, asking which ones were appropriate as weeks passed. Steps Ten, Eleven and Twelve were briefly discussed and I was sent home.

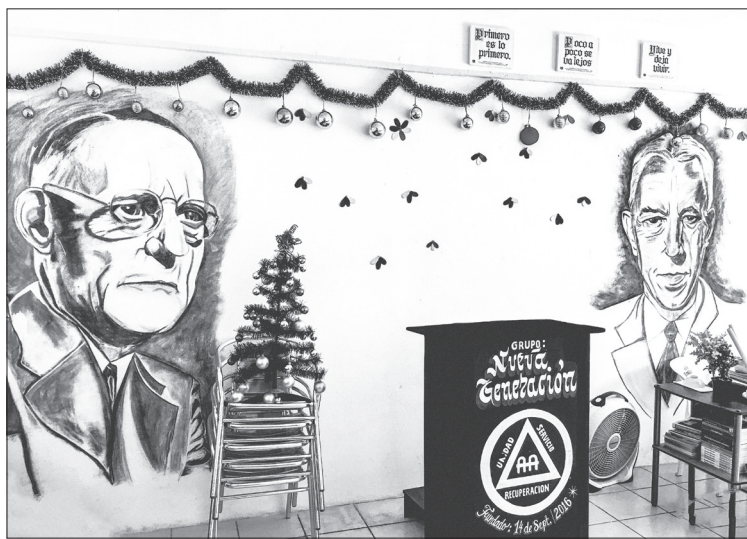
Not much changed right away, except Carl made sure I found a job, but that next summer, I had an amazing release for that dreadful mental obsession, and it has yet to return — “If I should drink” has been removed from my emotional vocabulary! Apparently, I have had a personality change sufficient to recover from the mental obsession. I believe I will remain free so long as I practice the essence of AA: “Out of self—Into God—Into others.”

— Bob S., Richmond, IN



A Slogan in any Language

...continued from page 1



passionate we alcoholics are!” And Jorge smiled, “Si! The more meetings, the better!”

As we looked up at the slogans on the wall in that familiar calligraphy “Primero es lo Primero” (“First things First”) and “Vive y deja vivir” (Live and Let Live), I felt at home. I asked what the 3rd unfamiliar slogan “Poco a poco se va lejos” meant. Jorge said that it was his favourite and a well known Spanish proverb meaning, “Little by Little, You’ll go Far”. As we chatted, I was reminded of two books my amazing mother, who I lost last spring, used to love - “The Little Engine that Could” & “Oh, the Places You’ll Go”. It was a day of blessings.

I will be adding that new slogan to my spiritual toolkit and always remember that experience with a smile of gratitude. No matter where I am in the world, I am ‘no longer alone’ and our precious slogans in any language will help me stay sober “One Day at a Time”.

* ESTIMATES OF A.A. GROUPS AND MEMBERS AS OF JANUARY 1, 2016

— Maija P., The Hill Group

Produced Monthly for AA Members in the Greater Toronto Area

BETTER TIMES



A Slogan in any Language

When I first got sober, my life was full of statements like “Now that I don’t drink, I can never go on vacation or travel for work and be around booze!”. Everything was very black & white. It was not until I got involved in

“no alcohol por favor” when passed many a glass of champagne because I played the tape out, imagining taking the drink and the chaos that would ensue.



My final ingredient was to find a meeting. Prior to my trip I googled “AA meetings in Mexico” and I found several sites for AA when travelling. I was thrilled to find 3 options less than an hour away from our location.

Mid-week, after shopping, some beach time and lunch it was time for some fellowship. Off the

service at the district and area level and began to listen to AAers who had travelled and lived abroad that I saw that my monotone thinking could turn in to a colourful experience. AA is a global organization with meetings in over 180 countries with almost 120,000 groups worldwide.* Even some cruise ships have “Friends of Bill Wilson” meetings if you ask discreetly. Meetings in English are common and in the case of a recent trip, the language of AA filled in where my broken Spanish could not.

I recently spent my holidays in the Riviera Maya in Mexico at an all inclusive with my partner, also a member of AA. Paying for drinks that I would not be “enjoying” was a short lived resentment when I enjoyed full sunny days of culture and took my daily sunrise beach walks. I was comfortable saying

beaten track in the local part of town, we turned a corner and there it was - a white building with the massive AA logo, a blue curtain blowing in the breeze marking the entrance and a friendly man standing outside in the sun. He saw us and subtly motioned us forward saying “Hola, mi nombre es Jorge y soy un alcohólico.”

With rusty Spanish, I introduced us and we were ushered in to the most amazing AA meeting room I have

ever seen. Stunning Bill and Bob murals were hand-painted on the wall, holiday decorations hung with care and colourful patio furniture made us feel at ease. Jorge gave us a rough history while making us coffee - this location had formed a few months prior after a business meeting at the other group in town resulted in a birth of a sister fellowship. I laughed saying “How

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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. For subscriptions call Alexx at 416-487-8110 or subscribe at: 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 200-500 words, and may be made online at www.aatoronto.org or by emailing bettertimes@aatoronto.org directly.

For any inquiries or comments, please send your name and phone number to the Editor at bettertimes@aatoronto.org. Your anonymity will be protected.

Yours in Service,
The Better Times Staff.

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Jobs & Notices...

■ ORC 2017 website is up and running! Please check out aorc.ca or ontarioregionalconference.ca for more information and to register.

■ Treatment Committee is seeking anyone interested in volunteering at the Toronto East or OCI.

■ Volunteers are needed for both Phone Greeters (1 year of continuous sobriety and 1 phone training session required) and 12 Step List (especially women and speakers of languages other than English).

■ Phone training is now the first Sunday of every month - call the office at 234 or contact the 12-Step Committee to book an appointment.

■ Accessibility Committee seeking members for a “Buddy List” for members who are homebound or otherwise can’t access meetings.

■ Correctional Facilities seeking people for “Bridging the Gap” program. Also, volunteers are required for the correctional facility in District 02. Toronto West also desperately needs volunteers; they have expanded to ‘A’ Tower with special needs and protective custody and hold meetings directly in the units. Donations of literature are also needed: soft-cover materials are accepted (no staples in the binding), as well as Grapevine donations (without staples).

Communications Committee is seeking volunteers for the following:

Helpers to assist with managing and updating the website.

The Communications Committee (Better Times, Website, etc.) continues to seek two or three dedicated members to help us carry the message of recovery in print and online. If interested, please email communications@aatoronto.org. We’d be delighted to welcome you!

ALSO: We are no longer using the bteditor@aatoronto.org email address. Please send all correspondence to bettertimes@aatoronto.org. If you’ve sent any articles for consideration, comments, or questions to the old address, please resend.

Thank you!

A Tale of Powerlessness with Untreated Alcoholism

My dad started out great in life back home in Eastern Europe. He got his PhD. and was a great dad to me when I was a kid. Always played with me and was funny. Always loved me and never hurt me. He liked drinking on the weekends with his friends and sometimes overdid it, but it never affected his life. He always took care of me and my mom. She almost never worked, and he fully financially supported us. It was his idea to come to Canada to have more stable life and better future for me.

His degrees were not accepted here, so he decided to become an electrician. He got his first certification very fast, got promotions quickly, and kept getting better and better. For some reason he was still embarrassed of the fact that he couldn’t get a job in his field. Over a couple years he started drinking more and more. Eventually he just stopped going to work and all he did was wake up, go to the wine store next to us and buy a few bottles of the cheapest sherry available.

Me and my mom tried many things. We talked to him, yelled at him, begged... nothing worked and things were getting worse and worse. He never got violent with us, so it’s hard to hate him. But it did become a hateful situation. He would pass out anywhere, soil himself and throw up. Days he couldn’t drink he’d end up in the hospital because he would just collapse, have foam coming out of his mouth or have very high blood pressure, or hallucinations. He also got a criminal record and permanent driving ban for DUI.

We started having financial troubles too, because my dad was the one who spoke English. But he stopped working completely, and I was still studying. My mom got a job at Tim Hortons, and we were renting a 2 bedroom apartment, had a car, and needed support for 3 people. So we couldn’t really make it on a Tim Horton’s employee salary. My mom decided to leave him. It took her 2 years to make that decision after many attempts to make him quit.

We helped him to find a basement apartment. He would find temporary jobs, but whenever he’d get money he would start drinking till it ran out. Soon he became homeless. He lived in a shelter for about 6 months, so he had no



money and sobered up. He got cleaned up and got some clothes, found a job, rented a room then the cycle started again. It continued like this for a couple more years.

Around September he showed up at my mom’s place with a dolly from a grocery store, all his clothes there, unshaved - a typical homeless person and begging for help. My mom took him and fed him. Finally, for the first time, he started telling her how he lost everything and he thinks he is going crazy and has a drinking problem. We were actually happy hoping he accepted that it had been the drinking all along.

We expected that he would start looking for ways to recover. He got back into a shelter and I hoped he’d start to get better. Soon after, his phone stopped working. I worried a bit, but it happened so many times before and I just didn’t want to know if he was drunk again after all that had happened. Today my mom called me and tells me she is with a police officer who wants to talk to me. He told me my father passed away in November. He was at some shelter (not the last one we knew of). He went to sleep and never woke up. They called paramedics, but he was dead already. He didn’t have any I.D. and apparently they were looking for relatives all this time, and somehow found my mom.

Alcoholism took my dad and devastated my family over the 7 years we’ve been in Canada. Such a beautiful country such a horrible death.

— Anonymous

BETTER TIMES

announcements & archives

PAST / UPCOMING MEDALLIONS

Doug H.	1	East York Group	Nov 16	Nov 29	Michelle S.	1	High Park Group	Jan 14	Jan 22
Vera M.	1	New Anchor Group	Oct 21	Dec 1	Kingsley I.	1	New Anchor Group	Jan 20	Jan 26
Daniel M.	1		Nov 22	Dec 4	Ray P.	20	East York Group	Jan 1	Jan 31
Cathy M.	5	Bloordale Group	Dec 3	Dec 11	Steve S.	10	East York Group	Jan 22	Jan 31
Kristine K.	10	Markland Wood Group	Nov 4	Dec 15	Heather N.	1	East York Group	Jan 23	Jan 31
Tom S.	25	Sat. Morning Discussion Group		Dec 17	Joan A.	40	Half Century Group	Jan 1	TBA
Kevin M.	10	East York Group	Dec 16	Dec 20	Sunny S.	30	St. Clement's Group	Nov 15	Jan 25
Tom L.	10	Last Chance Group	Dec 18	Dec 20	David M.	35	St. Clement's Group	Jan 11	Jan 25
Helen V.H.	5	Willowdale Group	Dec 20	Dec 22	Paula C.	10	St. Clement's Group	Jan 4	Jan 25
Brooke M.	1	Primary Purpose Group	Dec 24	Dec 28	Ray R.	10	Last Chance Group	Jan 29	Jan 31
Colleen B.	10	New Anchor Group	Dec 29	Dec 29					
Mary S.	25	High Park Group	Jan 4	Jan 5	Jamie O.	15	Willowdale Group	Jan 30	Feb 2
Sue C.	15	Willowdale Group	Jan 2	Jan 5	Susan S.	1	King City Group	Jan 8	Feb 6
Kate B.	10	New Anchor Group	Jan 2	Jan 5	Brad W.	1	King City Group	Jan 12	Feb 6
Victoria M.	15	High Park Group	Jan 2	Jan 8	Robbie R.	35	King City Group	Jan 26	Feb 6
Jim H.	1	Pine Hills Group	Dec 12	Jan 9	Mark P.	15	Erin Mills Group	Feb 7	Feb 13
Jeanne E.	5	Markland Woods Group	Jan 7	Jan 12	Valerie B.	35	North Toronto Group	Feb 14	Feb 14
Angela J.	1	New Anchor Group	Jan 4	Jan 12	Mike S.	10	West York Group	Jan 6	Feb 19
Jennifer M.	1	New Anchor Group	Jan 4	Jan 19	Gord H.	30	Bloordale Group	Feb 27	Mar 5
Meta G.	25	Markland Woods Group	Dec 27	Jan 19					

IN THE LISTINGS, THE FIRST DATE IS THE SOBRIETY DATE, THE SECOND IS THE DATE OF THE MEDALLION CELEBRATION
Due to ongoing submissions this list may not be current. For the latest information visit: www.aatoronto.org

CARRY THE MESSAGE!

Would you like YOUR Home Group featured in Better Times?

Contact us at bettertimes@aatoronto.org

I FOUND IT IN THE ARCHIVES

BACK TO THE REPOSITORY... with GTA Archivist Eddy G.

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

Recent items donated to the GTA Archives:

- 1 CD with District 06 Mississauga Group Information & GSR Information from 2003- 2004 donated by Kim S. from St. Clements Group.
- ORC 2008, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015 – Minutes from Sept.-May donated by Rick McC. from Six Points Group.
- 2016 Gratitude Conference Program, bookmarker & Name Badge donated by Marrey P. from Streetsville Group.
- A Celebration of the Life of Darlene M. – 1 Program & 1 DVD with photos of Darlene & her friends & photos of Darlene's Service. Donated by Marrey P. from Streetsville Group.

Darlene was a longtime member of the Streetsville Group with 38 yrs of sobriety. She will be missed.

50 YEARS THE HISTORY OF A.A. IN ONTARIO

TO DONATE AA/GTA ARCHIVAL ITEMS TO THE GTA ARCHIVES PLEASE CONTACT THE GTA ARCHIVIST EDDY G. at 416-536-7536.
50 Years – The History of AA in Ontario is for sale at the Literature Department at 234 for \$10.00. This book was produced in 1993 by the Archives Committee of Toronto Intergroup (today GTA Intergroup). It's a great gift to give to a member on their anniversary.
... and please don't forget ...
Old GTA meeting books are needed for the GTA Archives.

BETTER TIMES

editorial

A Letter from the Chair

Learning to swim in the service pool.

“We really need to work on your communication skills, son.” These words spoken to me by my father more than 30 years ago bring a broad smile to my face given my current circumstances as a chairperson of something called the Communications Sub-committee. I am tasked with facilitating some of the logistics for carrying the message of Alcoholics Anonymous in the Greater Toronto Area. What a gift this service position is for me at this point in my recovery!

Of course my response to Dad was something like “I know”, “I got it” or “Don’t tell me what to do.” That was my attitude with a lot in my life even way back before I’d even had my first drink. I know you will understand when I rhetorically ask “how well do you think this worked out when I added alcohol?” Today I get to laugh along with you at that! It’s just some of the joy that AA brings to my life on a daily basis. In this program I get to have a Higher Power with a sense of humour that laughs along with us too.

The 4th Tradition story of Middleton Group #1 comes to mind and rule 62. “Don’t take yourself too damn seriously.”

This has really helped me with my “I know” attitude. It’s really ok not to know things! It can even be a great way to start a conversation. “I don’t know. What is your experience?” or “I don’t know let’s ask so and so.” Then I discover that listening is an all too oft overlooked element of good communication. I’m always the last to know! It’s in AA that I get to find this out.

I am relatively new to the party here with service at Intergroup. And there’s plenty of stuff going on that I think I have an opinion about. My “I know” wants to tell you all. So I set that aside and practise some KMS (Keep Mouth Shut). I listen and ask questions and am sure to have a laugh. My know-it –all attitude softens and I’m able to turn my will over to the care of my Higher Power. I don’t have to agree with everything to have faith in the miracle that is the program of Alcoholics Anonymous.

I look forward to introducing new Better Times editors in the next issue.
— Yours in Service, Chris C. An Alcoholic



Register now at aaorc.ca to qualify your chance to win!

2017 ORC CD Set of Speakers

Congratulations to all our WINNERS...so far!

Nov, 2016 - John B. - Liverpool Group, Pickering

Dec, 2016 - Heather H. - Share and Care Group, Ottawa

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is now.”

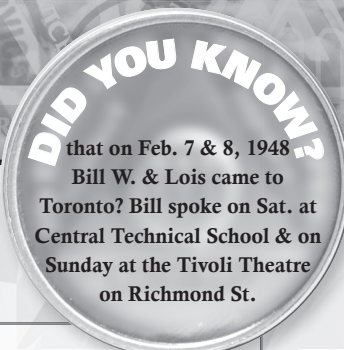
- CHINESE PROVERB

Phone Greeters Needed

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 - call the office at 234 or contact the 12-Step Committee to book an appointment.

Contact Us



Action Is The Key - 2017 ORC

On December 16, 1943, “capping off a year of miracles [in which Alcoholics Anonymous began in Canada] eighty people enjoyed a banquet at the Royal York Hotel and celebrated their new friends and more importantly, their sobriety. Eighty people had renewed their lives, many of them had arrived from the gutter and 12 months earlier, only eight of them had met – now they were tenfold.” (The History of AA in Canada).

The Ontario Regional Conference, as it has come to be known, had humble beginnings in one of Canada’s finest hotels of the time. The Conference moved around a bit for few years – the Central office at 1170 Yonge Street or ‘1170’, the Knights of Columbus Hall on Sherbourne Street and Central Tech High School, and until it became settled in at the Royal York. In 1948, at Central Tech, Bill and Lois W. were in attendance.

“ In 1948, at Central Tech. High School, Bill and Lois W. were in attendance. ”

Al-Anon began to participate as early 1956. In 1959, the first numbered conference noted that it was the 10th Annual Conference though current archivists in their research have found this to be inaccurate.

In 1961, the heads of Toronto’s churches and Mayor Nathan Phillips were invited, bringing a new sense of legitimacy to the program of Alcoholics Anonymous in Toronto and attesting to the fine work of the Public Information (PI) and Cooperation with the Professional Community (CPC) committees in the AA service structure in Ontario. The Conference,

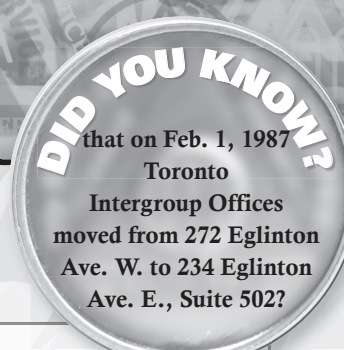
at this time, was co-sponsored by Toronto Intergroup and the Ontario Provincial Committee which was in effect the precursor of the what is now the four Ontario General Service Areas. During the conference, the Delegate would give their lengthy report of the business General Service Conference held each spring in New York City.

In the early 1990s the Ontario Provincial Committee as such was disbanded as the Areas had fully ‘come of age’ and the Conference has since been sponsored solely by Toronto Intergroup. The conference has evolved over the years from an evening event, to one day, two days and now a full weekend with talkathons, a banquet, and a dance.

The location moved a few times in the 1980s and 90s. A few great highlights were in 1965 when the Conference planning was directed to that of the 13th International AA Convention held in Maple Leaf

Gardens, where the Fellowship received the Responsibility Pledge. In 1993, the Conference was again held over in favour of celebrating 50 Years of AA in Canada at the Convention Centre. Toronto was blessed again, in 2005, to host the 21st International Convention celebrating 80 years of AA and renewing the Fellowship’s commitment with the Responsibility Declaration.

Over the years, trusted servants on the annual committee have been chosen by various means and accountability mechanisms have varied. In recent years it seemed wise given the



Action Is The Key - 2017 ORC

size, (average annual attendance hovers around 3000) and scope of the conference, and the enormous financial responsibility, that more stringent protocols be put in place to ensure tighter accountability mechanisms in all operations of the conference.

Each conference has been distinguished by a particular theme and for 2017 the theme is Action is the Key.

Al-Anon and Alateen has always been a significant dimension of the conference program. One Al-Anon member recounts “As an Al-Anon member, it is always nice to attend the ORC because it gives me a chance to catch up and meet members from most parts of Ontario South. We are always gifted with one out of town Al-Anon speaker and some of the best local speakers. It’s a good injection of Al-Anon. Many of us take the opportunity to attend the open AA meetings as the ORC tends to have some of the best AA speakers.

ORC is special because it is a place where all program families are present: AA, Al-Anon and Alateen. For Alateens, young people who have been affected by a family member or friend’s drinking, the ORC has been a key annual. The ORC Alateen program tends to have approximately 30 young people from all areas of Ontario South. This is really special because many Alateen members attend meetings where they are the only member. It is a great time to bond with other Alateens and take in some really good sharing from other Alateen members.

My personal experience of the Ontario Regional Conference is that this was the place of my first AA meeting on March 15, 2008. I was attending this meeting not aware that it was a weekend conference. I wanted to prove

to my wife and my children what a farce this AA business was and that it was a cult. Since attending my first AA meeting at the 2008 ORC, I have been an active AA Member and have attended every ORC since.

To witness over 3000 happy recovering alcoholics, the incredible energy, the vibe and the profound speakers from around the world sharing their experience, strength and hope under the elegant roof of The Fairmount Royal York Hotel. This Conference has a very special place in my heart which planted the AA seed within me where the AA Spiritual Program has allowed me to attain many gifts in life and the greatest of all was to have my wife and children back in my life.

I hope the AA newcomer, or those who are coming back, attending the ORC will be able to attain the riches in life which I have been graced with only through the guidance of the AA Spiritual Program - the gift which keeps on giving.

To sum it up, I would rather quit my job than to miss the AA ORC. I am truly honoured to be part of this specific convention as a 2017 ORC Committee Member to participate at this capacity. This convention was a pivotal moment in my life where it has changed my perspective and outlook on life forever. I hope many others will find the same gifts as I have from our AA Fellowship, and especially from the fabulous ORC. We look forward to seeing you at the 2017 ORC!

William L. - Prince Edward Group
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