

spotlight on...

Stained Glass Group

The Stained Glass meeting (5:30 Friday) is like Newfoundland: remote yet intimate, a place every one has heard about but where not so many have been. We meet upstairs in the chapel of that little church hemmed in by the Eaton Centre. We meet in a circle of a dozen or so alcoholics sharing our redemptive stories of lost love and recovering connections. It's a service meeting. The Seventh Tradition barely covers the rent.

I love the informality of this group, the quiet acceptance of a circle where all are equal. We are at once sheep and shepherds to one another. It feels like my Creator is right there weeping and smiling, truly listening to our shared hopes, fears and druthers.

I grew up in a military family, always saying "Hello" and "Goodbye". A trailer park kid always trying to fit in rather than feeling like I belonged anywhere from from Maine to California.

At Stained Glass I immediately felt welcome and in place from my first meeting there. It is an oasis of calm, an island of refuge in the rapids of the city's core.

Stained Glass is like Newfoundland: hard-scrabble folks working together to smooth the edges of life's rocky shore. We meet every Friday at 5:30 pm. Come as you are!

— Conrad H.

The Quality of Surrender

...continued from page 1

this does not occur, then there is reason to suspect that, although such people are attending AA physically, they are not working the program. They may be abstinent, but they are not growing in sobriety.

Although it is generally accepted that one cannot take the subsequent Steps until one has taken the First, I submit that the converse is also true: that one cannot take a true First Step without the growth provided by the other eleven. And so working the program turns out to be a circular affair, never ending—except, that is, in greater happiness.

Abraham J. Twerski, MD

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Sponsorship Guide

Step Twelve: Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

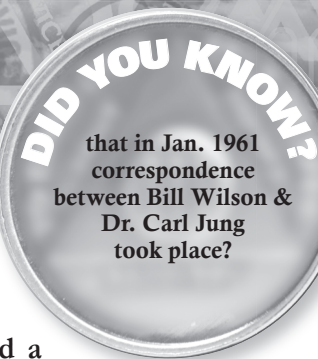
Some years ago, out in Hollywood, California, I was asked to sponsor a guy named Tom. However, I declined by informing him that I was only two years sober; to which Tom replied: "Well, that's all I want!" What to do? I had been studying the Big Book step directions, so I decided it might work out if we stuck to that, maybe page by page. After all, Step Twelve doesn't say that I am to carry my message—my sponsors message—what I think message, etc., but it says to carry THIS MESSAGE—I believe that means the one in the Big Book. I was relieved to be off the hook, and proceeded full speed ahead and all worked out okay. Since, I have only one authority as a sponsor: The Big Book program of action.

Being a history-minded sort of guy, I have spent some time studying the early ingredients of the AA Program of action. A place to start was that November, 1934, "kitchen table" meeting between Ebby Thacher and Bill Wilson (page 9): "Ebby told of a simple religious idea (A vital spiritual experience), and a practical program of action (The Oxford Group's Four Absolutes and several tenets for living). Bill had the idea that his gin would outlast Ebby's preaching, but it did not—shortly thereafter Bill was back in Towns Hospital never to drink again. On Dec 14th, 1934, Bill, while lying in bed, went through the essential elements of our now Twelve Steps (Page 13).

By 1936 these ideas became what was then known as the six-step program (Read Page 263). Although similar, there were several versions of these. Bill started writing the Big book during the spring of 1938, and by December had completed the writing of all Twelve Steps. However, his manuscript was altered somewhat dramatically in January of 1939 and became our Twelve Steps of today. But guess what—it worked! We then had maybe one-hundred members, but now over two-million are staying sober by their use.

Thank God I had these guidelines when I sponsored Tom so many years ago—that was back in the late 1970s.

— Bob S., Richmond, IN



BETTER TIMES

January
2017



The Quality of Surrender

A nonalcoholic considers our First Step

I HAVE COME to the conclusion that the essence of sobriety—the essence of the AA program—is the First Step: accepting one's powerlessness over alcohol. It is important, however, that we understand what acceptance of powerlessness means.

We are all familiar with drinking alcoholics' inability to accept their total powerlessness over alcohol, even in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary. Why?

If you have observed little children, who feel so tiny in a world of giant adults, you will recall that they often do things to try to assert their independence and self-sufficiency. They will refuse help with putting on their clothes; they will stand on a chair and point out how big they are; they will even take risks to demonstrate their prowess ("Look, Ma, no hands!"). As they grow and feel bigger, and accepting help is no longer perceived as a threatening revelation of their smallness, they are more likely to accept and even ask for help.

In many instances, even though people are full-grown both physically and intellectually, they may nevertheless feel "little." This phenomenon of harboring unwarranted feelings of inadequacy leads to feelings of insecurity, to low self-esteem, and to an absence of self-confidence. Under such circumstances, these people may feel overwhelmed even by the routine challenges of everyday life, and may escape from what they perceive as a formidable ordeal into the anesthesia of alcohol.

But it is precisely the people who feel insecure and inadequate who are most threatened by an admission of powerlessness. They hang on to the delusion of omnipotence, because recognizing an area of impotence would be too great a blow to their fragile self-esteem. Not until they achieve a positive sense of self-esteem can they afford to relinquish this desperate defense of the omnipotent fantasy that had served, so pathologically, to provide a spuri-

ous sense of self-worth.

This is why I contended in an earlier article ("What's Wrong With Elaine?" in the December 1978 Grapevine) that during the early phase of recovery, the First Step is generally taken out of compliance. When recovery has continued sufficiently for people to begin to feel good about themselves as individuals, they can then begin to surrender.

It follows that since the ability to accept personal powerlessness is contingent on achieving a sense of self-esteem,

the quality of surrender will change as self-esteem increases. The latter can occur when alcoholics work the AA program. Taking inventories and revealing themselves to other persons, making amends and carrying the message—these and the other Steps are the means where-

by recovering alcoholics come to build and strengthen their characters and grow in personal stature. The better and more secure they feel about themselves, the more profound and sincere can be their acceptance of powerlessness.

Human beings rarely remain stationary in character strength for any extended period of time; they either grow or shrink. If they do not grow in personality, they often begin to deteriorate. There are undoubtedly many schemes, within religion or other systems, that can foster personality growth, but the AA program is one of the finest and is of proved efficacy.

Continued active participation in AA should bring about progressive strengthening of character, clearer self-awareness, and an improved self-concept. Since this growth is progressive, and since the ability to accept powerlessness is directly proportional to the degree of positive self-concept, it follows that the quality of surrender at the end of two years' sobriety should be more thorough and meaningful than that at the end of the first year. The perception of powerlessness at the end of the fifteenth year should be of greater depth than that in the fourteenth year. When

continued on page 8...

*The essence
of the AA program
is
Step One*

masthead & service

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

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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...

■ Info AA Day 2017 invites members to get involved!

■ ORC 2017 website is up and running! Please check out aaorc.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.

■ Access Ability 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.

ALSO: We are seeking a new Editor-in-Chief effective immediately. Please contact bettertimes@aatoronto.org for more info!

Thank you!

ORC 2017

Letter from the ORC Chair

Dear Friends,

Your 2017 Ontario Regional Conference (ORC) Committee has been working hard to make this another excellent conference. We have spent the past year in 2016 shadowing an equally amazing set of trusted servants learning how to roll out this year's conference. Over the past 74 years of the Conference the themes that have graced the banner and given a focus to speakers and audience alike have been so diverse and inspirational. The 2017 team put their heads together and out of about 20 possibilities we chose, Action is the Key, as the theme. Carrying the message is what we do as recovered alcoholics in the myriad set of ways available to us and so we are going to celebrate that.

Please re-visit the website often as more information will be added as it becomes available. We'll be adding how you can volunteer, how to pre-register, and as the time comes nearer, the full program of AA, Al-Anon, and Alateen speakers will be added. We hope you are as excited as we are!

There are lots of ways to help us put on this conference and we invite you to volunteer. Just follow the links on the web page and we'll spring you into action. Let everyone know what's happening here in Toronto on weekend of March 10, 11, 12, 2017 at the Royal York Hotel. We are really looking forward to it.

Yours in love and service,

Máire O'B

2017 ORC Chair

The 74th Ontario Regional Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous

AA Al-Anon Alateen

Action is the Key

aaorc.ca

March 10, 11, 12, 2017
Fairmont Royal York Hotel, Toronto

Debbie D., Concord CA

Tim H., St. Louis MO

Jo-Anne L., Winnipeg MA

Ruth B., Saskatoon (Al-Anon)

WOMEN IN RECOVERY & BETTER TIMES

Here at your Better Times we publish stories of recovery, struggle, and hope from AAs all over the GTA and beyond.

We have had the pleasure of including many stories FROM women in recovery FOR women in recovery.

We would like to continue doing so.

If you are a woman in recovery in the GTA, please get in touch...we would be happy to publish your story.
bettertimes@aatoronto.org

Harry S.	2	Prince Edward Group	Oct 19	Oct 19	Helen V.H.	5	Willowdale Group	Dec 20	Dec 22
Peter F.	10	Today Group	Oct 16	Oct 25					
Jennifer S.	1	East York Group	Oct 24	Oct 25	Brooke M.	1	Primary Purpose Group	Dec 24	Dec 28
Zack K.	10	Love & Tolerance Group	Oct 25	Oct 25	Colleen B.	10	New Anchor Group	Dec 29	Dec 29
Eddy M.	2	Rexdale United Group	Oct 26	Oct 26	Mary S.	25	High Park Group	Jan 4	Jan 5
Mike B.	25	Bloordale Group	Nov 1	Nov 6	Sue C.	15	Willowdale Group	Jan 2	Jan 5
Marwyn B.	20	King City Group	Oct 13	Nov 7	Kate B.	10	New Anchor Group	Jan 2	Jan 5
Frank M.	30	King City Group	Oct 5	Nov 7	Victoria M.	15	High Park Group	Jan 2	Jan 8
Jeffrey B.	1	King City Group	Oct 2	Nov 7	Jim H.	1	Pine Hills Group	Dec 12	Jan 9
Joe L.	25	Keep It Simple Group	Oct 16	Nov 13	Jeanne E.	5	Markland Woods Group	Jan 7	Jan 12
Taya G.	5	Silverbirch Group	Nov 18	Nov 18	Angela J.	1	New Anchor Group	Jan 4	Jan 12
Brooke L.	2	Leslie Group	Nov 21	Nov 21	Jennifer M.	1	New Anchor Group	Jan 4	Jan 19
Doug H.	1	East York Group	Nov 16	Nov 29	Meta G.	25	Markland Woods Group	Dec 27	Jan 19
Vera M.	1	New Anchor Group	Oct 21	Dec 1	Michelle S.	1	High Park Group	Jan 14	Jan 22
Daniel M.	1		Nov 22	Dec 4	Kingsley I.	1	New Anchor Group	Jan 20	Jan 26
Cathy M.	5	Bloordale Group	Dec 3	Dec 11	Ray P.	20	East York Group	Jan 1	Jan 31
Kristine K.	10	Markland Wood Group	Nov 4	Dec 15	Steve S.	10	East York Group	Jan 22	Jan 31
Tom S.	25	Sat. Morning Discussion Group		Dec 17	Heather N.	1	East York Group	Jan 23	Jan 31
Kevin M.	10	East York Group	Dec 16	Dec 20	Joan A.	40	Half Century Group	Jan 1	TBA
Tom L.	10	Last Chance Group	Dec 18	Dec 20					

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.

HAPPY 74TH AA BIRTHDAY TORONTO, ONTARIO, CANADA!

On Wednesday, January 13, 1943 at 6:00 pm the first meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous in Canada, Toronto, Ontario took place at the Little Denmark Restaurant on 331 Bay Street (on the west side) between Gerrard St. & College St.

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.

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.



Thoughts from our Outgoing Editor

It has been a great honour and privilege to serve as your editor since taking the helm back in March of 2015. I had been serving as secretary to the Communications Committee since my return from living abroad, and I was excited to take on a new service commitment. Working with a great editing team, we set out to broaden the scope of the publication by adding monthly spotlights on local groups, a 'women in recovery' column, thoughts from the editor's desk, in addition to local members' shares about the steps, traditions, and recovery themes. We also began distributing copies of the Better Times to local treatment centres such as Renascent and Bellwoods.

I've had the pleasure of reconnecting with old friends, while making new connections when working with the many contributors I've met when visiting different meetings in the GTA. It has been a rich experience drawing on the enthusiasm of so many of you, as you demonstrate your willingness to share and help other alcoholics from the various groups, service meetings, and treatment centres around town. Your wisdom and insights have helped a great many of our members on their recovery journeys.

A BIG thank you to all the writers, photographers, and group members who have shared their experience,

strength, and hope in these pages to carry the 12-Step message. Thanks also to InterGroup - committee and subcommittee members - who continue to support the Better Times with their articles, announcements, and other submissions that keep us informed about local events, as well as the history of AA. And thanks to the members of the Communications Committee for entrusting me with this amazing responsibility, assisting me with various duties, and for the opportunity to grow in my recovery. I'm grateful for the help and support of Jeff D., Jeff C., Julie L., Peter B., Glenn C., Seán D., Eddy G., Woody L., Chris C., Alex M., Gail D., Alexx V., Todd S., Bailey B., David W., and Ed V.

As I sign off and vacate the seat at the editor's desk, I leave you with a final thought. Be prepared to live a life beyond your wildest dreams, so long as you show up, follow the path, and learn how to love and forgive yourself and others. Remember that no matter how dark things may seem, your H.P. cares for you and will guide you towards a life of happy and joyous freedom. Come join us!

In Loving Service, Marc S.

Thoughts from our Incoming Editor

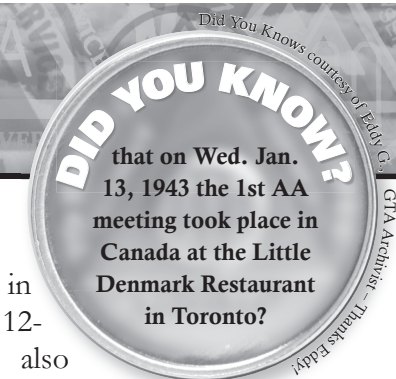


Contact Us

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.



Start the New Year in Service

hand involved someone
meeting Executive G.S.R
Steps intergroup ORC
Correctional helping
offices access area
D.C.M Service
sponsor chairperson
delegate voluntary
no turn millions action
help good

GREATER TORONTO AREA INTERGROUP WORKSHOP MEETING

Tuesday, January 31, 2017 at 8 p.m.

Timothy Eaton Memorial Church – 230 St. Clair Avenue West (west from St. Clair subway on Yonge line)
What you can Learn: How Intergroup works* How the Subcommittees Carry the Message * How Important Your Role as an Intergroup Rep is in Communicating Information to Your Groups

EVERYONE IS WELCOME! WE WILL HAVE PIZZA!

ORC 2017 website is up and running! Please check out aaorc.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

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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).

There is a long time member who is blind and has a new service dog. With the weather getting worse, he would appreciate anyone who can pick him up or bring him to meetings. He would be grateful if people could reach out. He is in the west end of Toronto, but any meetings mainly in the evening would be appreciated. Paul S. 416-880-4894.

January edits of Big Book

The Big Book Manuscript Edit Was Vitaly important!

Bill W. finished the pre-publication manuscript for the book, Alcoholics Anonymous, in December of 1938. It read like a book of absolute prescriptions. A few examples include:

- “Thou shalt under pain of drunkenness,”
- “Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path directions.”
- “If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it - then you are ready to take certain steps follow directions.”
- “At some of these we balked you may balk. We thought You may think we could find an easier, softer way. But we could not We doubt you can.”
- “. . . One who has all power - that One is God. May you You must find Him now!”

offered similar advice). After all, many of the skid row alcoholics had been repeatedly badgered by do-gooder advice at the missions.

I believe this caused a major change in the tone of the Big Book—it immediately changed from a book of **pre-scriptions** to one of **descriptions** - from “Thou must” to “This is what we did.” I note that page 58 of our current Big Book announces: “If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it, . . . What an appealing choice!

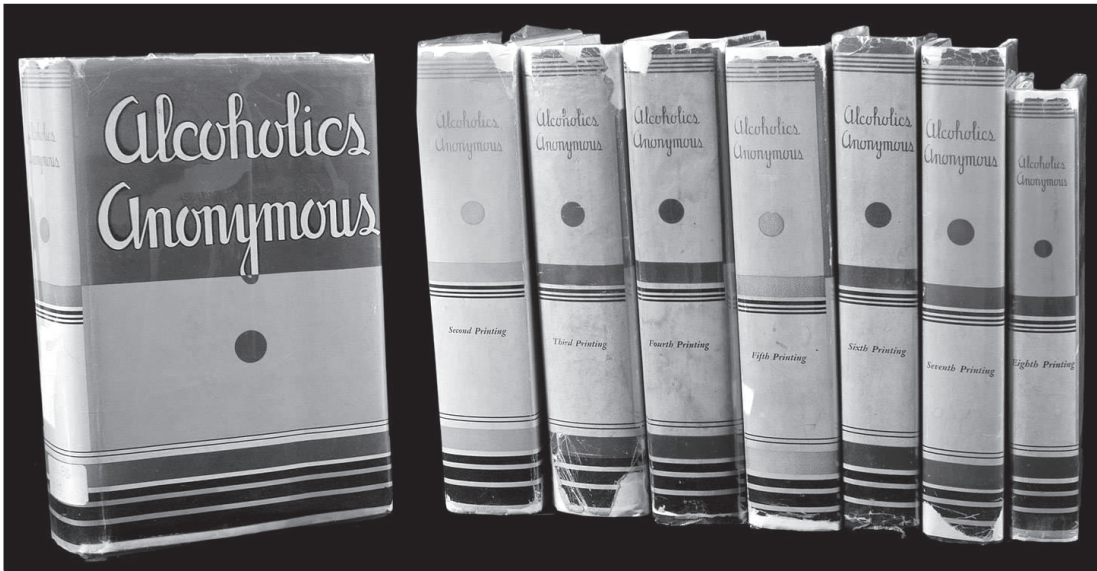
A professor from NY University, Tom Uzzell, was paid \$380 (\$6,419 today) to edit the manuscript in a more professional manner which reduced the pages from over six-hundred to four-hundred.

Another concern was the religious mode. Many wanted a religious tone (mostly Akron members) style while some New Yorkers favored the psychological angle. Arguments ensued! However, Jimmy Burwell came up with the compromising phrase: “God as we understood Him”. Bill called this statement a ten-strike! (Of course, Ebby Thacher told the same to Bill on page 12.).

A scribbled in pencil “Too Groupy” conveyed that a phrase was too much like the religious Oxford Group. An example of this can be found on Manuscript page 43, Bill

had written: “When you awake tomorrow **morning**, look back before the day before. Were you resentful, selfish, dishonest, or afraid?” The words “Oxford Group” are hand written just above these words to signify needed change. This was changed to: “when we retire at **night**...” as on page 86 of our current Big Book. Without the above two major changes, would the Big Book have sold? I doubt it! Bill W. wrote the Big Book, but he had lots of help. Thank you, God!

— Bob S., Richmond, IN



These few authoritarian (Thou must) examples are on page 58, but this theme travels throughout the entire step explanation pages of the Manuscript.

In January of 1939, Bill W. sent four-hundred manuscripts to members, friends and other allies for comments and evaluation. These were returned with only a few suggestions. However, Hank Parkhurst’s friend, Dr. Howard, a psychiatrist from Montclair, New Jersey, recommended toning down the use of “musts” to: “we ought” or “we should”—etc. Also, instead of the authoritarian word “you” to use the word “we.” (Dr Silkworth and Dr. Tiebout