



## Travelling? Carry your Program with You

**“... yesterday I came as close as I have in the past 2½ years to drinking. Lost luggage, long days, poor sleep, multiple flights in the same day, ...”**

The above was the headline of an email I awoke to on a Saturday morning! A sponsee was travelling on the adventure of a lifetime. Being sufficiently embedded in program practices, plus a number of previous travels, outwardly there was no cause for this trip to be of concern ... yet that wasn't the message.

He went on to further describe his heightened agitation. A small single prop plane transporting he and his wife to increasingly remote areas, plus no time for or availability of meetings. While he hadn't drank, he was “twichy”. Here we began a regimen of daily emails that would last throughout the remainder of his journey.

A question was, what had kept him from relapse? What tools had he employed? His answer was his wife (she's not one of us). Observing his distress, she had asked, “... don't you guys talk about what happens when you get tired and angry? What are you supposed to do when that happens?” So his wife reminded him of HALT, ... WOW!

At first, I reached to a wallet card I have carried with me since my days at rehab - “Recovery - Support” on one side, “Relapse - Confront” on the other. Relapse behaviours such as “isolation”, “loss of planned structure”, and of course “HALT” jumped to the forefront. For Recovery Behaviours, in the absence of meetings, we began to trade ideas. Emails to his sponsor had begun and we committed to continue. His emails became the content of a “Journal”, supplemented by a wondrous pictorial summary of his adventures. For his “Recovery Reading”, he used a daily meditation book. He was, and would clearly benefit from, “Asking for Help”. There were a few others: “Meditation” with his daily cigar and fundamentally putting in place “Balance & Structure”.

Our first communication finished, I was hopeful and headed out to my Saturday morning meeting at Here & Now. This is a Topic meeting and in keeping with the meeting's name, speakers are selected minutes before they speak. Today's topic was Travelling & AA. Another Wow! (There really is something to this HP stuff J.) Here I was blessed with a number of relevant ideas that translated into email content for the days ahead. Most significantly,

continued on page 8...

# masthead & service

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

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Opinions expressed in **BETTER TIMES** are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of Greater Toronto Area Intergroup.

**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](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 200-500 words, and may be made online at [www.aatoronto.org](http://www.aatoronto.org) or by emailing [bettertimes@aatoronto.org](mailto:bettertimes@aatoronto.org) directly.

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

Yours in Service,  
The Better Times Staff.

## Jobs & Notices...

■ Info AA Day 2016 will be held May 28th, 2016.  
Kitchen helpers for the day of the event are still needed.

■ 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)

Evening phone shifts (7-10:30 p.m.) will be switching to one day every month as opposed to one date every month. Shifts will also be shortened by one hour (to start in April).

A new Greeter Training program will be in place (May) whereby new trainees will be given the training session by appointment only.

■ Access Ability Committee seeking members for a "Buddy List" for members who are homebound or otherwise can't access meetings

■ Twelfth Step Committee seeking secretary and volunteers

■ Correctional Facilities seeking people for "Bridging the Gap" program

■ Winter Season Open House committee is looking for a Chairperson for the 2016 WSOH event. Meetings for this committee commence in September

## NOTICE:

*Eglinton Crosstown construction is at the block which includes 234. Parking in the area will be further restricted and it is being suggested that anyone coming to the Intergroup Office leave plenty of time or take public transportation.*

## Communications Committee is seeking volunteers for the following:

Helpers to assist with managing and updating the website once it is back online.  
Training videos are forthcoming!

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](mailto:communications@aatoronto.org). We'd be delighted to welcome you!

## ALSO:

We are no longer using the [bteditor@aatoronto.org](mailto:bteditor@aatoronto.org) email address. Please send all correspondence to [bettertimes@aatoronto.org](mailto:bettertimes@aatoronto.org). If you've sent any articles for consideration, comments, or questions to the old address over the last two months, please resend.

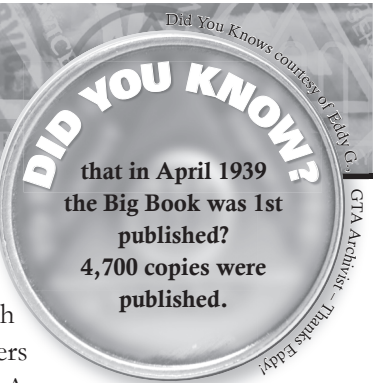
**Thank you!**

## TO CONTACT COMMITTEES PLEASE EMAIL:

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## Thoughts From the Editor's Desk

### Autonomous:

a) undertaken or carried on without outside control, b) having the right or power of self-government.

The autonomy of our groups plays a vital role in keeping our fellowship alive and our meeting doors open. Over the past year, the Better Times has shined a spotlight on various groups in the GTA. Each has its own particular group conscience that guides everything from meeting formats to service structure, location to meeting times. No outside influence (barring factors relating to location) can dictate how a group should operate, and this reflects our recovery community's diversity and good health. Individual members are drawn to the various groups based on the features that make it feel like "home" - a safe haven in which to engage in the process of recovery.

The caveat in the fourth tradition - except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole - requires more thoughtful consideration and is open to subjective interpretation. How often do we hear at business meetings questions such as "Will this change in format affect other groups? If so, how?" or "What effect, if any, will this new reading, timing, location, etc. have on this and other groups?" And even more difficult would be to measure any predicted or unforeseen effects that group decisions might have on other groups or AA as a whole. Thankfully, we have Higher Powers that guide us in our recovery, both at the individual and group levels, along with a primary purpose as outlined in Tradition Five.

**Marc S. - Editor-in-Chief** (bettertimes@aatoronto.org)

## Early in Recovery

I wasn't coming back. I was quite determined not to. It had been over a year since my last meeting...but her words cut through me, innocent and unknowing she softly stated, "But A.J., it did work!" Then she said, "I have to go", and before I could tell her I loved her, she hung up the phone.

I was a mess. I looked around my disheveled apartment, and I cried. She didn't care, why should she? I was nobody to her, she had a lot of guys hanging around, available when she wanted, at her beck and call. A beautiful angel, even in the grip of her alcoholism, a faint light flickered! Every once in a while she could look at me and I would melt like vanilla ice cream on a hot summer night. She made me weak and I'm not sure if that was a good thing. They say love is blind and I was truly unable to see. I was the fool in love. I didn't even have the courage to tell her. But A.J., it did work, her kind words echoed over and over.

They say it's a "disease of perception." She knew me back in 2010 and remembered the 18 months of happiness I shared with my friends at the Welcome Group. She saw this as success,

I did not (but A.J. it did work). She promised to call me on Tuesday Feb. 2nd, I don't know why I believed her. I sat by my phone alone in my apartment, rent unpaid, waiting, hoping, wishing - like a fool in love, my heart crushed, my eyes wet, an absolute mess. I did stay sober that day. And I thought how in God's name am I going to do this unless I go back to A.A.? It did work. Three words that resonated within me, finally pierced through my pride and stubbornness.

I went to The Hill group a few days later and Maxine happily signed me up, then assigned me to Dave M. (who recently celebrated 10 years). How did our secretary know how badly I needed help? God knows. In a million years I would never believe that a broken heart could pave the way back to the only place that could heal. I can honestly say I won't ever forget the pain I felt that day, and I am truly grateful for it. My faith has never been stronger. God keeps me sober, that I cannot deny.

**- A.J., The Hill Group, Toronto**



# women in recovery

**DID YOU KNOW?**  
that on  
April 20-22, 1951  
the 1st General Service  
Conference  
took place at the  
Commodore Hotel  
in New York City?

## A Woman's Way Through the 12 Steps

Admitting I was an alcoholic was a matter of much shame for me. I was raised to be an independent woman and admitting that my life was unmanageable equated to complete failure in my eyes. My descent was a slow, sneaky process as I grew more dependent on alcohol to numb my feelings. By the time I was in my mid fifties every morning began with a physical hangover and emotional self-loathing. I would tell myself that today I would stop. Then on my way home my alcoholic GPS would drive me straight into an LCBO.

Sometimes I think I've just been lucky but the program is teaching me that humility is not always about being self-deprecating. Women are actually too good at being humble on occasion. For me, humility is about understanding my strengths and weaknesses and the proper use of what talents I might possess. I first encountered this concept in Stephanie Covington's book *A Woman's Way Through the Twelve Steps*. I felt very comfortable about sharing in my home group but reading this gave me new insight into my recovery.

I also found a women's group early in sobriety. It has been an unlimited source of support, humour and fellowship. The group is called Sober and Living It and it really speaks to how I feel about my recovery. Life is so much more rich and full than when I was drinking. I'm having more fun than I did in my twenties and I have the courage to try things I never thought

were possible. I'm even dating.

I used to think some of the sayings in AA were corny. I was extremely sceptical about anything to do with a Higher Power. I came to the program as an atheist with a strong scientific bent. Today I have a Higher Power of my own understanding who helps me navigate good times and bad. I love the slogans and all the acronyms. My favourite is HOW - Honesty- Open-minded -Willing. I even have a backup version. Humility- Osmosis- Want.

I believe the program will work if you set aside your ego and ask for help. I believe if you just keep going to a lot of meetings that the program eventually seeps into your bones and you just get it. I believe you have to want it; enough to do the work and enough to put your sobriety first in your life. As they say in the rooms: Keep coming back till the miracle happens. And if you feel like you need a change, check out Sober and Living It at 11:00 am every Saturday at York Mills And Yonge. We are a small but mighty service group and are currently working with A Woman's Way through the Twelve Steps. For those of you who may have concerns, we have received approval from New York for this approach.

I'm very grateful to have found AA and for each day it has given me since.

**- Anonymous, Toronto**

## Step Four - A Woman's View

It was not until I was recently asked to explain Step Four to a woman who is a relative newcomer that I went back to the Big Book yet again and saw it afresh. Bill likes to use words as synonyms, with equal signs between them, like "defects of character" and "shortcomings". In Step Four, he uses "resentment", "anger", "grouch", "brainstorm", and elsewhere, "rancor", more or less interchangeably. But I have learned to understand resentment or rancor as one thing, anger as another, and rage (or "brainstorm") as something else again. What does Bill actually mean?

Here is the problem for me as a woman – though people of any gender can relate to this, I'm sure. Anger is a natural and necessary emotion. It actually clears and focuses the mind, pumps strength into the body, and feels surprisingly calm. It is the energy behind healthy self-assertion. If someone violates our boundaries or those of someone we care about, anger pushes back. It restores justice and creates respect. It prevents us from being a doormat or an apathetic bystander. We need it to protect safety and dignity. This does not belong on a Step Four inventory.

Rage feels quite different, more like anxiety: our mind is swirling and unfocused, our body agitated, with irregular pulse and clammy skin. It stems from frustration and helplessness. That's

why the temper tantrum is common in toddlers: they don't know how to express, let alone get what they want, so they freak out.

When healthy anger is blocked and we cannot restore our dignity, we are left to obsessive circular thoughts and seething discontent. All character defects are habits, that is, stable patterns. This stable pattern is resentment, which leaves us weak, miserable, and stuck. Over time it causes chronic stress and even illnesses. It is the victim stance. I believe this is what Bill Wilson had in mind. Consider this line:

*"We began to see that the world and its people really dominated us." (p. 66)*

This is not good for anyone, but alcoholics, and addicts of all kinds, have a quick fix for intolerable feeling states, and it is deadly. Once the inhibitions are down, we lash out, whether against ourselves or others, in ways that destroy justice and dignity instead of restoring it. Of course, we can do this clean and sober as well.

So the resentment inventory is a way of bringing to light the hidden patterns of victimization, so we can claim our missing "NO" to violations of ourselves, others, and spiritual principles.

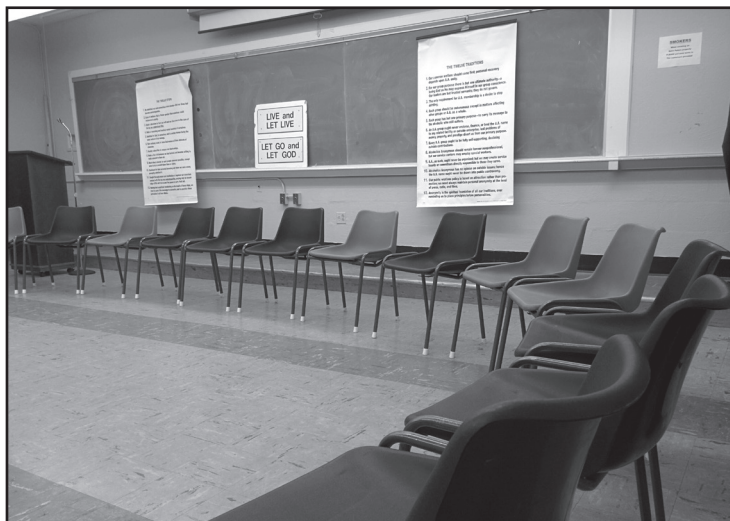
**- Nada C., Toronto**



## spotlight on

## Stepping Stones Group

Like many meetings, a resentment and a coffee pot led to the formation of Stepping Stones in the early 80's. Its founders, Betty H., Walter K., and later Art H., started a meeting that was welcoming to all - from low-bottom, skid row drunks to priests, educators, and other professionals. It was a solution-focused group that met Saturdays at the Holy Rosary Church on St. Clair.



DID YOU KNOW?

that in April 1953  
Adam Capelling was  
made the 1st Canadian  
Trustee?

It quickly gained in popularity as the 'place to be' on Saturday nights, where one could find messages of hope and recovery, along with great fellowship before and after each meeting. It was a great example of a community where anyone could get sober, and there were many rags-to-riches stories to be shared. Meetings were held in the auditorium - a refreshing above-ground space in contrast with the many basement meeting spaces of other local AA groups.

In the early nineties, the group moved to Bloor Street United and began holding two meetings per week. It continued to be popular, albeit with a somewhat transient membership - prospective AAs were brought from the courts and the streets, through the dedicated service work of Joan B., Joe, and others. In the mid-nineties, the meetings were moved briefly to Trinity St. Paul's, St. Peter's, and finally to its current meeting location at the Paulist Centre.

While the locations have changed over the years, a consistent feature of Stepping Stones has been a tradition

continued on page 8...

## Step Four Wordsearch

F I N V S Y C G R M S E Y N S  
A T O L R O L E R E E T Y E Y  
I U O E N U L D C L I S A Z Y  
T T S N T A N U A P U R S U E  
H I E T T E R J N N C S F Y C  
M C O I G I S L K H G O T O N  
T N O N T F A M I L Y E J W A  
Y N A Y L V D E F E C T R E H  
S H V J I A T C N I T S N I C  
C P H V D Q R A I N A M O G E  
L A R U T A N O C D E S I R E  
C U E T M D K A M E X E R T J  
S N G S Q A U E D I R P N C C  
F X N O G S N X D E E R G V H  
S G A L E W O R R Y A W F C Y

Find the hidden word with the letters left over after completing this puzzle. Email your answer to [bettertimes@aatoronto.org](mailto:bettertimes@aatoronto.org) or wait until next month's Better Times, we will publish it there.

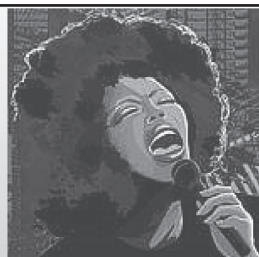
ANGER	FAITH	NATURAL
CAUSE	FAMILY	PITY
CHANCE	GLUTTONY	PRIDE
CHANGE	GREED	PURSUE
CONNECT	HUMAN	RELATIONS
DANGER	INSTINCT	SEARCH
DEFECT	LOST	SECURITY
DESIRE	LUST	SLOTH
EGOMANIA	MESSY	SURVIVAL
ENVY	MISERY	WORRY
EXERT	MORAL	

Hidden Word:

— — — — —

Last Month's Hidden Word:  
GRATITUDE

# archives & announcement



**TOYPAA**

TORONTO ONTARIO YOUNG PEOPLE IN AA

HOSTS

## LIVING LIFE BEYOND AA OPEN MIC NIGHT

YOU BRING THE TALENT

Saturday April 2, 2016

Doors open @ 7:30pm

25 Cecil St.  
United Steelworkers Hall  
(Free parking)

Tickets

\$10 each  
or 2 for \$15  
at the doors

Call Jaz to book your talent times, info or  
tickets @ (416) 712-7472 or  
toypaa@gmail.com

Direction from Spadina Station  
Take streetcar south to College. Cecil is 1 block south of College

## 18<sup>th</sup> Archives Breakfast 18<sup>th</sup>

*Let's Celebrate Our History*

\$20



\$20

**SPEAKER ANGIE P.  
CINCINNATI, OHIO**

Carmen's Banquet Centre  
1520 Stone Church Rd. E., Hamilton, Ontario  
**Sunday April 10th, 2016**

Doors Open at 9a.m.  
Breakfast at 10a.m.  
Speaker at 11a.m.

**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:

- ORC 2011 Treasurer's binder from Steve A. Six Points Group. • Prayer Cards of Glenn J. (Six Points Group), Helen N. (Anniversary Group) from Dave N. Anniversary Group & Frank O. (Royal York Group). • Black Leather Bound Book "The Book That Started It All" The Original Working Manuscript of Alcoholics Anonymous Limited Edition of 1000 Number 26.
- Meeting Books- Dec 1992, Aug 1993, July 1994, Mar 1995, Nov 1997, Sept 1998, Feb 1999, Mar 2008, July 2009 & Oct 2005.
- 1-GSO Inventory 2013-2015 booklet, 2- General Service Conf. Reports 2015 from District 02.

**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.**



# announcements

## UPCOMING MEDALLIONS

Holly P.	5	Scarborough Group	Apr 1
Clayton M.	10	Mississauga Group	Apr 2
Fred MacA.	35	K.F. Group	Apr 2
Rene T.	40	Birds of a Feather Group	Apr 3
Marc S.	10	Tuesday Men's Solution	Apr 8
Jim R.	10	Bloordale Group	Apr 8
Penny L.	1	Sisters In Sobriety Group	Apr 10
Lynn E.	5	Fifth Tradition Group	Apr 11
Amy S.	1	Markland Wood Group	Apr 13
Woody K.	25	Willowdale Group	Apr 14
Jeff M.	10	Markland Wood Group	Apr 14

Carolyn M.	20	A Place to Share Group	Apr 15
George T.	1	Scarborough Group	Apr 15
Eric D.	5	Bloordale Group	Apr 17
Karen M.	25	A Place to Share Group	Apr 19
David Z.	25	Sat Morning Discussion	Apr 23
De R.	5	K.F. Group	Apr 30

## PAST MEDALLIONS

Dorothy T.	15	Golden Mile Group	Feb 17
Marino T.	1	Restoration & Recovery	Feb 20
Brandon B.	1	Mississauga Group	Mar 1

Vawn R.	5	Silverbirch Group	Mar 3
Fernando R.	5	Mississauga Group	Mar 5
Angelo B.	1	Maple Group	Mar 19
Michael G.	20	Leslie Group	Mar 26
Linda U.	25	Leslie Group	Mar 26
Andrew B.	1	Leslie Group	Mar 26
Jeremy K.	5	Bloordale Group	Mar 27
Jim A.	20	East York Group	Mar 29
Ron G.	25	Markland Wood Group	Mar 29

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

**Get a 'Spring' in your step!  
Want to Get into Service & Meet New People?**

**GTA Intergroup SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES might be the answer...**

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (EC)

- Four members are currently needed to serve on this committee.
- You need two years of continuous sobriety for this service.
- Anyone from the total membership in GTA can stand for these positions.
- Monthly Service Commitment: Attendance at both the monthly EC meeting, monthly General Meeting, and as Liaison to one of the monthly Subcommittee meetings.

### FINANCE COMMITTEE (FC)

- One member is currently needed to serve on this committee.
- You need five years of continuous sobriety for this service and some business/accounting background is helpful.
- Anyone from the total membership in GTA can stand for this position.
- Monthly Service Commitment: Attendance at both the monthly FC meeting.

**If you, or someone you know, has a few hours a month and are interested in an integral part of AA Service in the GTA, please contact Gail at [office@aatoronto.org](mailto:office@aatoronto.org).**

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### ■ Living Life Beyond AA

**Open Mic Night**

**Hosted by TOYPAA**

**Toronto Ontario Young People in AA**

**Saturday, April 2nd @7:00 PM**

**25 Cecil Street**

**Info or tickets: [toypaa@gmail.com](mailto:toypaa@gmail.com)**

**\$10 each or two for \$15!**

### ■ 18th Annual Hamilton Archives

**Breakfast**

**Sunday, April 10th**

**Carmen's Banquet Centre**

**1520 Stone Church Rd. E., Hamilton**

**\$20**

### ■ Info AA Day

**Saturday, May 28th**

**519 Church Street Community Centre**

## QUOTE OF THE MONTH

*"Selfishness, self-centeredness! That, we think, is the root of our troubles. Driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking, and self-pity, we step on the toes of our fellows and they retaliate. Sometimes they hurt us, seemingly without provocation, but we invariably find that at some time in the past we have made decisions based on self which later placed us in a position to be hurt. So our troubles, we think, are basically of our own making."*

**BIG BOOK, PAGE 62**

## spotlight on

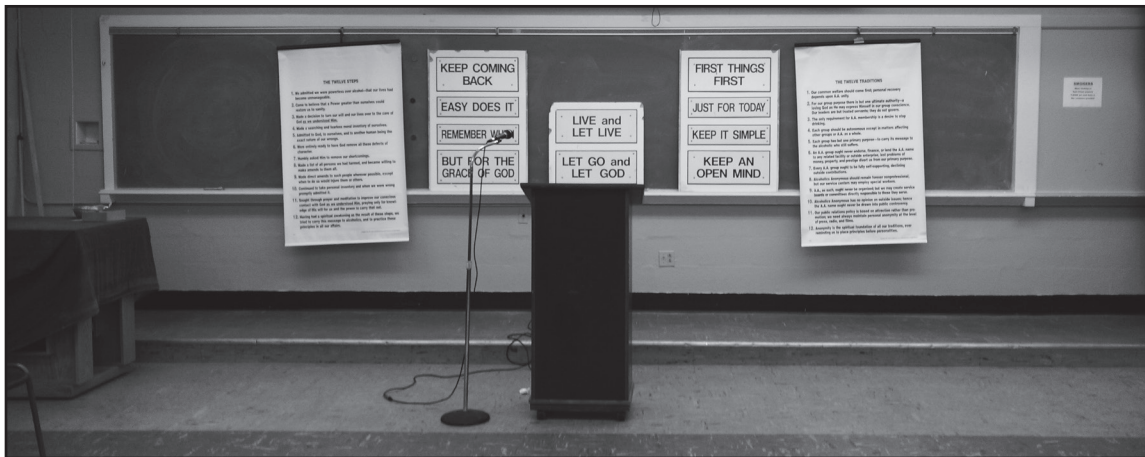
...continued from page 5

## Stepping Stones Group

of always having a “meeting before the meeting”, coffee afterwards, and a non-cliquey atmosphere. The slogan “You are no longer alone” is lived and breathed by the members who choose to call Stepping Stones home.

Over and out!

— **Marc S. (with contributions from Katie K., Roman R., and others)**



## From a Stepping Stones Member

I used to go to SS (Stepping Stones), quite drunk, for about 2 years. Then lighting struck and I got sober. As my sponsor says, “If a drunk can’t go to AA where else can he go?” And AA was the only place taking me in.

That’s SS really - anyone who has a desire not to drink is welcome! If you’re thinking maybe AA can help you out, SS is the place for you. The meeting rooms are alive!

Both with the disease and with the solution.

It is a ‘come as you are’ meeting and group. We’re very welcoming. SS is a popular, youngish group with an especially strong contingent of sober female members. The women have really stepped up in this group - running meetings, taking on service commitments, and taking ACTION! There are also men who are committed members, some with long term sobriety.

I’ve been a member for about 4 years (sober 8 years). I’ve seen the group shrink and grow. I’ve seen people come and go. I go to my home group, I go to the business meetings, I’m active at SS. It took me about 2 years to feel comfortable in SS, but that’s just me. It changes me in spite of myself, as AA does, as the Power does.

I just kept going and things changed for the better.

SS has discussion meetings almost always. We offer a Step 1,2,3 meeting, a Big Book meeting, a Step 4 to 12 meeting and Step 11 meditation meeting (Wednesday only). We have an open meeting once a month (2nd Saturday). If you want to be in recovery on a Wednesday or Saturday night, come to Stepping Stones!

It’s fun! Good ‘crazy’ fun!

— **Tom P.**

...continued from page 1

## Travelling? Carry your Program with You

as people shared upbeat stories of their travels and how AA is ever present if you look for it, a woman spoke a truth that resonated deeply. She said with conviction and experience, that AA is not everywhere! There are places

where distances, language and the inability to travel larger distances, preclude attending meetings.

Her message: No need to fret, just let us remember to have a backup plan and carry your Program with you.

— **Bill S.**

**DID YOU KNOW?**  
that in April 1960  
Bill W. declines  
cover story for Time magazine  
although picture would only  
reveal back of his head?