BETTER TIMES

November 2015



GTA Archives.

Mission

The mission of the GTA Archives is to document permanently the work of Alcoholics Anonymous in the GTA, to make the history of the organization accessible to AA members and other researchers, and to provide a context for understanding AA's progression, principles and traditions.

Purpose

Consistent with AA's primary purpose of maintaining our sobriety and helping other alcoholics achieve recovery, the GTA Archives ...

- Receives, classifies and indexes all relevant material considered to have historical importance to AA and to the GTA
 - Holds and preserves such material
- Provides access to these materials, as determined by the GTA Archivist, to members of AA and others who may have a valid need, and reviews such material, contingent upon a commitment to preserve the anonymity of our members
 - Serves as a resource and laboratory to stimulate and nourish learning
 - Provides information services to assist the operations of GTA Intergroup
- Promotes knowledge and understanding of the origins, goals and programs of AA and of GTA Intergroup

Frequency of Meetings

Meetings are held monthly on the 2nd Friday of the month in the boardroom at the GTA Intergroup Office.

GTA Archives Committee

The Archives Committee consists of the Chairperson,
Alternate Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, the Archivist
(and members of the Archivist Committee), Alternate
Archivist, the eight GTA District Archives Chairpersons and
their Alternates and Sub-Committee Chairpersons.
All AA members are welcome to attend.

GTA Archives Repository & Display

The GTA Archives Repository is located at the GTA Intergroup Office. The GTA Archives Display (24 feet long by 8 feet high) is located in the boardroom.

GTA Archives Travelling Display

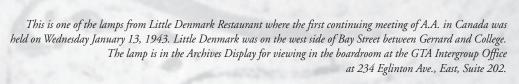
The GTA Archives Travelling Display is set up at group anniversaries, services days, round ups and conferences.

Volunteers

Are you interested in the history of AA and are you willing to be trained? Help is currently needed to catalog material.

Contacting GTA Archives

You can contact the GTA Archives by email at archives@aatoronto.org.





masthead & service

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

234 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 202, Toronto, ON M4P1K5 Telephone: 416-487-5591 Fax: 416-487-5855 TTY: 416-487-5062

bettertimes@aatoronto.org Web: www.aatoronto.org

Editorial Committee:

Jeff D. (Chair)
Marc S. (Editor-in-Chief)
Julie L. (Assistant Editor)
Chris C. (Secretary)
Glenn C. (Desktop Publisher)
Peter B. (Circulation)

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

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 bteditor@aatoronto.org.
Your anonymity will be protected.

Yours in Service, The Better Times Staff.

Jobs & Notices...

- 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!
 - Finance Committee seeking Chair and committee members.

 Please forward resumes to the Finance Committee c/o the Intergroup Office:

 Suite 202 234 Eglinton Ave.E., Toronto M4P 1K5 | e-mail: office@aatoronto.org
 - 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)
 - Access Ability Committee seeking members for a "Buddy List" for members who are homebound or otherwise can't access meetings
 - Winter Season Open House 2015 seeking volunteers (Kitchen Supervisor, etc.)
 - Info AA Day 2016 Committee has started and has positions to be filled
 - Correctional Facilities seeking people for "Bridging the Gap" program
- We have upgraded the GTAI (Greater Toronto Area Intergroup) website! The site has a new look to allow for greater ease of access to information, such as meeting times, submitting events, finding out about the various GTAI committees, etc. It is also more 'mobile friendly' for smartphone and tablet users. The new site is also available in French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Polish, and Russian, with the translations automatically being provided by Google Translate. Behind the scenes, this upgrade provides greater security and stability by allowing us to use the most current web technologies. Please send us your feedback!

– 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.

Do you think you are different? Central Toronto Round-up – Saturday November 21, 2015

Hosted by District 10 at 519 Church St, Toronto (Just north of Wellesley, South of Bloor)
9:00 Opening: Registration – Welcome to District 10 Round-up
10:00 Keynote Speaker: Joe Downey, G.S.O. Trustee, Director of AA World Services
11:15 Panel – We are people who normally would not mix
1:15 Panel – The only requirement for membership
2:30 Panel – You are no longer alone

Admission is free - Bring or buy your own lunch

TO CONTACT COMMITTEES PLEASE EMAIL:

Access Ability: accessability@aatoronto.org Archives: archives@aatoronto.org

Communications: communications@aatoronto.org

bettertimes@aatoronto.org

Correctional Facilities: corrections@aatoronto.org

Cooperation with the Professional Community: cpc@aatoronto.org

Finance: finances@aatoronto.org

Ontario Regional Conference: orc@aatoronto.org
Public Information: publicinfo@aatoronto.org
Twelfth Step: twelfthstep@aatoronto.org

Thoughts From the Editor's Desk

The problem? Self-centred fear; resentments; shame, remorse, and guilt; along with my powerlessness over the disease of alcoholism. These are a few manifestations of the dark self, of things that block me from other people, my True Self, and the healing Power of connection and love. Through the process of surrender and honest self-appraisal, along with a willingness to change and make things right, I get the opportunity to have these blocks lessened if not removed.

The solution? An ever deepening conscious contact with the Power that guides and sustains us, that heals and restores. From my very first meeting over fifteen years ago, I've heard the message to pray and meditate on a daily basis (at meetings, in the literature, in phone conversations and text messages, in the echoes

of your shares). The practice that started as a simple routine of asking for help in the morning

and giving thanks at night has evolved and changed over the years. Sometimes I've spent two or more hours in meditation per day, at other times I've been lucky to squeeze in thirty seconds.

November, 1934 Ebby T. visits Bill W. and tells him

his story?

I used to judge myself harshly for not meeting certain goals in meditation, and for praying for things other than God's will for me. Today, I practice self-care and let go of expectations, doing the best I can with what I have. Today, I know that no matter the effort I put in, I am loved and cared for by my Higher Power..

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

A Retreat Experience

Last October, I participated in a retreat, a Twelve Step Study at a centre in Mississauga. Although not far from city life and traffic, this centre feels so far removed from the routines and stresses of daily living, it has a wonderfully serene and peaceful feeling. There were 11 participants in the group, a more or less equal mixture of men and women, from various AA groups from the area. Some were from my own group, others I had never met before.

The format for the weekend begins on Friday evening when the group assembles. We are invited to speak about our expectations for the weekend, and three people are asked to share on Steps One, Two and Three. They are chosen by the weekend chair, who also asks someone to thank them. We then break up into small groups for Buzz Sessions - a more in depth sharing on the steps. Then bedtime and we adjourn to our comfortable and cosy rooms.

The following morning we assemble for breakfast. Coffee, tea and goodies are also provided as early morning snacks. Some of us take the opportunity to have a stroll in the grounds, which are beautifully landscaped with lots of lovely trees, interesting carvings and statues. The Centre is on the Credit River and it is worth descending (and ascending!) the numerous steps down to the river - a wonderful spot to watch the river flow and meditate.

After breakfast (we are really well fed at all mealtimes here), we again assemble and the same format continues with Steps Four and Five, followed by Buzz Sessions, and lunch. In the afternoon, selected people again share on Six, Seven and Eight, and after supper, Steps Nine and Ten. Each session is followed by our breaking up into smaller groups.

On Sunday morning, we conclude with Steps Eleven and Twelve and a mutual sharing about our experience over the weekend, whether our expectations have been met, etc. At the beginning of the weekend we had been asked to write on pieces of paper anything we wanted to leave behind, any negative emotion or feeling, and we gather at the beautiful lily pond in the inner quadrangle to burn these papers together, and recite the Third Step Prayer. We then go our separate ways.

On a personal note, I have attended two previous retreats at this centre. Each has had a different feeling, but I have to say, probably for a number of reasons I felt a strong spiritual connection with the group and my Higher Power. I felt everyone was sharing honestly, profoundly and feeling safe to do so. Everyone came across as so sincere and there was such intensity, especially in the small groups. I felt there was a real feeling of everyone wanting to help each other. It truly did encapsulate the theme of the weekend. It was certainly a most rewarding weekend and I definitely felt I had accomplished my own goal of renewal which I expressed at the beginning of the weekend.

- Ann C., Lakeshore Group

BETTER TIMES

Birds of a Feather

Birds of a Feather took flight on February 23rd, 1963. For 52 years, the group has met at the Native Canadian Centre and its various locations, including Beverley Street and the current spot on Spadina Road just north of Bloor. The group was started by long-time AA members who saw a real need for recovery in the native community. That being said, the meetings have always had a diverse mix of people bringing with them a variety of ethnic backgrounds and spiritual beliefs.



that in November, 1937 AA has 40 sober members in Akron & New York?

The group meets every Sunday at 11 am. The second Sunday of each month is a Big Book

discussion meeting, and all other meetings are open speaker meetings. The formal business meeting - the first Sunday of each month - is well attended and has a rotating array of trusted servants to fill the various service positions. The number of core group members has fluctuated somewhat over the years and currently has between fifteen and twenty committed people.

Attendance has increased over the last year, as people from local treatment centres - both male and female - have started coming in large numbers. About six or seven months ago, group members had gone through the programs, attended aftercare, and invited treatment centre clients to the meeting. Sometimes it's almost standing room only!

The meeting formats and readings are what are generally found at other meetings in Toronto and around the world. However, the group has two spiritual practices that set it apart from other groups and meetings in the GTA. Before the start of each meeting, members line up in the middle of the hall for a smudging ceremony. Smudging is a common practice and fundamental belief of all indigenous people in Canada. Its healing and cleansing effects remove negative energy and help clear the way for a deeper connection to our Creator. At the end of each meeting, a First Nations' prayer - The Great Spirit Prayer - is recited by everyone present. In this way, people leave the meeting with a positive AA message, a cleansed body and spirit, and a strengthened connection to their Higher Power.

- Charlie M. & Marc S.



Living One Day at a Time

Somedays, the concept of living one day at a time can be the easiest concept to grasp and other days it feels devastatingly impossible. Over the years, this has been a slogan that I have done my best to incorporate in my daily life, however it is not something that always comes easily.

In early sobriety, this slogan was what got me through the pain. At times, I took it one step further by working things through one hour at a time. The point was to do my best to live in the moment. The shame of the past and the fear of the future prevented me from moving forward. I learned that we could not move forward if we were not 'living in the now'. By doing our best to live in the moment, to embrace the Here and Now, we allow ourselves to see things, both good and bad, as they really are. We get a new perspective on life which permits us to work a program of recovery that guides us into healthy living - One Day at a Time.

I can't say for sure when my life stopped being so miserable. I cannot tell you precisely when things got easier. But somehow, by working the steps and doing my best to practice them in all my affairs, my life was different. One day at a time, I was able to handle situations that used to baffle me. One day at a time, I was able to not pick up that first drink. One day at a time, I became a person to whom others turned for guidance. I can't tell you exactly when these things happened, because they happened gradually, bit by bit, as I've grown in sobriety.

I'm writing this piece on the eve of the day that marks my 5th year of continuous sobriety. The biggest difference I can see in this moment is that I used to find ways to 'get through the day', but today I plan on how I will 'spend my day'.

- Erin M.

Find the hidden word with the letters left over after completing this puzzle.

Email your answer to *bettertimes@aatoronto.org* or wait until next month's Better Times.

We will publish it there.

----- Step Eleven ------

AMEN | AWAKE | BENEFIT | BIRTH

CHANGE | COMFORT | CONCIOUS | CONTACT

FAITH | FORGIVE | GOD | GRACE | HEART

HOPE | HUMAN | JOY | LIFE | LORD

LOVE | MEDITATION | MIRACLE | MOOD

NECESSARY | PEACE | PRAYER | PURE

REALITY | RELIEF | RESULT | SEARCH

SELF | SOUGHT | SPIRIT | TRUTH

UNDERSTAND | WILLING | WISDOM

Hidden Word:

Η Т S P E E I \mathbf{E} 0 L L U Η Μ 0 D I A Т Ι L I 0 N A D G E L S P P G C L Α U I Α E A Т Ι R B W RRM \mathbf{Z} R 0 Y G A E Ι E N N 0 S E E \mathbf{E} C P R Α Y E R RUT LUSERCHAN

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

Step 11 suggests prayer and meditation. We shouldn't be shy in this matter of prayer. Better men than we are using it constantly. It works, if we have the proper attitude and work at it.

BETTER TIMES

"All the answers you will ever need are in the Big Book."

November 16, 1950 Dr. Bob dies? He is 15 years sober.

Originally called the Joe and Charlie Big Book Study, Wes B. and Jim B. bring the basic text, our Big Book, alive in their presentations. Over the years, so much misinformation and half-truths have spread in regard to our Program as outlined in the Big Book, that varied interpretation has become widespread.

Our old-timers were troubled by such a departure from the exacting path written and edited by the first 100 members of Alcoholics Anonymous. Consequently, when Joe McQ. and Charlie P. met with AA members in Tulsa, Oklahoma, they were asked to present their interpretation. They had met each other in 1973, and their mutual fascination with the Big Book was mainly toward the sequence in which it was written. Soon they began conveying their message over great distances in the USA. Their presentation of interesting tutorial, combined with harmonious banter at AA Conventions, made the session very popular. The tapes of their 'Big Book Study' became widespread. At the 1980 International Convention in New Orléans, Wesley P. from Pompano Beach, Florida, organized a luncheon and gave out Joe and Charlie tape sets for door prizes. The result was that suddenly 36 seminars were scheduled across the country the following year.

In 1990, Joe McQ. had to cut back on his travelling and oddly enough another Joe, Joe McC., active in the group from the beginning, took his place. When Joe McC. retired in 2008, Wes B. from the Long Branch group in Toronto filled in several times with Charlie. Jim B., from Jamestown, New York, came onboard in 1998 and continued the seminars with Wes.



Joe McC. retired in 2008 and Charlie opted for retirement in 2010. Joe and Charlie encouraged Jim and Wes to present the Big Book Study (Canada & northern US) - even while they were actively presenting their seminars - due to its huge popularity. Joe McQ. passed in 2007 and Charlie P. passed in 2011.

At least 250,000 members (a conservative estimate) have experienced the spiritual benefits of the Big Book Study in many areas all over the globe. The particular arrangement of the Book is no accident. Beginning with the list of 'Contents' through the Forewords - first to fourth editions - are brought to light as they were written. Dr. Silkworth, author of the Doctor's Opinion, outlines types of alcoholics and the disease medical model. Delving into Bill's Story, the progression of alcoholism is emphasized, as is his low-bottom fall before his life-altering spiritual experience. Both writings underscore the 'problem', while Chapters 2, 3, and 4 highlight the 'Solution'. Chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8 further stress finding the answer. In clarifying the fourth step, the Study offers a simple approach to the sometimes difficult stages of taking the Steps. Over a day, the strength and hope guaranteed in the Big Book become a reality for many attendees. The pages written by the first recovered members of AA come alive. The precise process for completing the Steps is outlined in a manner accessible to everyone.

The next Big Book Study will be held at the Iron Workers Training Centre at 909 Kipling Avenue on Saturday, November 14th, 2015. Tickets are \$20. The presenters are not paid for their services although travel, meals and lodgings are covered by the independent host committee sponsoring the Big Book Study. This is in accordance with the AA guidelines of conferences & Conventions published by GSO. As always, the committee's books are open to AA's.

The closing of the day long seminar is poignant and profound as all in unison declare aloud, as is written on Page 164 of our beloved book, "We shall be with you in the fellowship of the Spirit, and you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny. May God bless you and keep you until then."

- Bernadette MacL., King City Group

Reprinted with permission

announcements

PAST MEDALLIONS

Erika I.	5	Pathfinders Group	Sept 30
Peter P.	30	New Anchor Group	Oct 1
Jane J.	1	Scarborough Group	Oct 2
Cy C.	40	Back to Basics Group	Oct 2
Matt G.	1	Markland Wood Group	Oct 2
Bill N.	15	Richmond Hill Group	Oct 9
Bob S.	10	West York Group	Oct 11
Ron S.	25	Bayview Group	Oct 11
Gabrielle M.	15	New Anchor Group	Oct 15
Denis T.	1	Willowdale Group	Oct 15
Danielle C.	5	Lakeshore Group	Oct 18
Joy G.	35	Lawrence Plaza Group	Oct 18
Alva C.	20	Kennedy Park Group	Oct 19
Richard 0.	20	Fellowship Group	Oct 19
Harry	1	Rexdale United Group	Oct 22

UPCOMING MEDALLIONS

Kaden D.	1	East York Group	Oct 27
Melanie A.	1	East York Group	Oct 27
Ed H.	30	Twelve Steps Group	Oct 28
Glenda C.	1	Anniversary Group	Oct 28
Ed M.	1	Rexdale United Group	Oct 29
Shane C.	1	Noon Rap Group	Oct 30
Carolyn M.	1	Back to Basics Group	Oct 30

Mike E.	1	Birds of a Feather Group	Nov	1
Stephen I.	1	Lawrence Plaza Group	Nov	1
Don S.	45	Bayview Group	Nov	1
Larissa P.	1	King City Group	Nov	1 2
Katharine W.	1	Anniversary Group	Nov	1 4
Andy C.	10	Thornhill Group	Nov	1 4
Judy D.	1	Scarborough Group	Nov	/ 6
David D.	1	Back to Basics Group	Nov	/ 6
Frieda W.	25	Lansing Group	Nov	1 7
Earl W.	1	King City Group	Nov	16
Kim S.	1	Anniversary Group	Nov	18
Norm P.	25	Golden Mile Group	Nov	18
Bernadette M.	25	King City Group	Nov	23
Sonja T.	15	East York Group	Nov	24
Sharon W.	10	East York Group	Nov	24
Jade S.	5	Anniversary Group	Nov	25
Christine P.	5	New Anchor Group	Nov	26
Billy B.	10	Back to Basics (Richmond Hi	II)Nov	127
Chris G.	5	Leslie Group Group	Nov	28

ANNOUNCEMENTS

■ 73rd Ontario Regional Conference: No Longer Alone

March 11, 12, 13, 2016

Fairmont Royal York Hotel, Toronto

AA, Al-Anon, Alateen speakers

Register Online: www.aatoronto.org 416-640-1905 ORC@aatoronto.org Pre-registration Early Bird Draws!

■ 31st Annual GTA Archives Breakfast

Sunday November 8th, 2015

Oasis Convention Centre, 1036 Lakeshore Rd. E., Mississauga

Coffee @ 9 am / Buffet @ 10 am /

Open Speaker Meeting @ 11 am

Tickets: \$25

Guest Speaker: Paul G., Cleveland,

Ohio, whose story is in 4th Edition of the Big Book, "Gutter Bravado"

■ Central Toronto Round-up Celebrating Diversity in AA

Saturday November 21st, 2015 9 am - 3 pm 519 Church Street, Toronto Admission is free

Due to ongoing submissions this list may not be current. For the latest information visit: www.aatoronto.org

Bring or buy your own lunch

I FOUND IT IN THE ARCHIVES

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

Come and join us in this rewarding aspect of AA service. Next meeting is Friday, July 10 at 7pm at 234.

PHOTOGRAPHS OF EARLY AA MEMBERS, FRIENDS OF AA, LITTLE DENMARK TAVERN, 1170 YONGE ST.

AND MANY MORE • ORIGINAL LITTLE DENMARK LAMP • LETTER FROM BILL D. (MAN ON THE BED & AA

MEMBER #3) • GTA GROUP TABLE COVERS • ORC PROGRAMS (HOW THE ORC NAME WAS FORMED)

ALL ITEMS ARE ON DISPLAY FOR VIEWING AT THE GTA INTERGROUP OFFICE BOARDROOM



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 ...

Step 11 Sought through prayer and meditation...

In Step One, I admit I am powerless over alcohol (and in my case drugs, nicotine, and sugar as well). In Step Eleven, after I've worked Steps Two to Ten, I get "power" back. That power comes from seeking, through prayer and meditation, to maintain conscious contact with a power that is greater than myself. That Power is my spirit, my God. In Step Eleven, I get the power to pray for, to receive, and to carry out God's will for me, not my own.

I know exactly where my will can take me — to a bottle and a bag. At one time, and for a long time, that was IT! That was the best thing I could think of. And some days when I was really shooting for the moon, I'd add a tub of Haagen-Dazs for dinner. I'd close the blinds, unplug the phone, turn on the TV, and drink as much as I could, as fast as I could, then black out on my couch. I'd wake up dreading work, dreading talking to anyone, dreading opening the mail. I was only looking forward to doing it all over again; getting another bottle and drinking as much as I could as fast as I could and blacking out, waiting to die. That was the best thing I could come up with.

Thanks to the Twelve Steps, that's not the story of my life today.

Today, I am confident that I was put here to do more than just drink myself to death.

November 25, 1956 the East Toronto Men's Meeting

started?

In sobriety, following God's will for me, I finished my BA, went on to do two graduate degrees, and now teach students with extremely high and complex needs. I get the power I need to carry out God's will for me through prayer and meditation. Often, when I am working with my students, I am praying and meditating. I say often, but I mean usually. God needs me to be kind and firm, loving and detached, to show up. I alone could not do what I do, and I certainly could not LOVE what I do, without knowing it is God's will for me. I know it is God's will for me because I feel closer to Her when I am teaching than at any other time.

Today I am happy to live in the love that is God's will for me. Today I am happy that I pedal and God steers.

- Sandra, Birds of a Feather

AA On The Road

I woke up in my hotel room in a fog of negativity. It was the first morning of a weeklong visit and I wanted to be anywhere but there. It was a familiar old feeling, but one I hadn't experienced in a while.

After years of program, I knew enough to stop listening to my own thoughts and get down on my knees. I prayed to know what HP's will for me was that day and to have the power to carry it out – the Third Step prayer. It occurred to me then that I'd intended to go to a meeting, and even checked the online listing against Google maps to see where they were.

I felt better immediately. Clearly going to a meeting was what I was supposed to do, and it was easy to make it a priority. I planned to go to a 7 pm closed meeting about 30 minutes away from the hotel.

At a little past six I went down to the car so I'd have plenty of time. But the parking lot was blocked. Guests were having major meltdowns because the street was closed until 10. Outside there was a loud and crazy Shriners' parade, with men in fezzes zipping around in circles on ATVs.

It was pretty intense but I stayed calm: I knew HP's plan for me was to get to that meeting. So I walked a few blocks when I spotted a police captain hanging out by his cruiser, I asked him for help. He stopped the parade, I drove through and arrived just in time for the Serenity Prayer. I said it like I meant it, and I do. I'm awed and grateful for all the ways this program works in my life.

- Lin S.

Phone Greeter Training will take place at 234 Eglinton Ave. East, Suite 202 on

Saturday, Nov. 14, 10:30 am AND Sunday, Nov. 15, 1:30 pm

