



“Not a reward, but a reminder
of how lucky we are.”

– Krista L. Macon, Ga

“The Bigger the better.”

– Lynn C. Los Angeles, Calif.

“My City is grateful. This will be remembered forever.”

– Bob J. Atlanta, Ga.

“New and Improved!”

“I wish it were every year.”

– Santo M. Houston, Tex.

– Clare G. Boston, Mass.

“A reunion of memories.”

– V. San Diego, Calif.

“Like a family reunion only sober.”

– Dylan R. Charleston, S.C.

“The old timers left the lasting impression”

– Carl K. Syracuse, N.Y.

“The organizers should be commended”

– Tim M. Denver, Colo.

“Like A College for Alcoholics.”

– Caren D. Denver, Colo.

“My first but not my last.”

– Jeff C. Toronto, Ont.

“Indescribable by words.”

“Long lines, little coffee.”

– Paula C. Toronto, Ont.

“I saw more diversity than ever”

– Justin W. St. Augustine, Fla.

“The speakers inspire me to want to do the same.”

– Kelley C. London, U.K.

“Re-focus. Re-charge.”

– Charlotte B. Wesley Chapel, Fla.

“Bigger and Better than imagined.”

– Jack VA. Dallas Texas

“I am eternally grateful.”

– Julie S. Toronto, Ont.

“Breathtaking, inspiring, unforgettable.”

– Mikhail L. Toronto, Ont.

“The fellowship is the finest.”

– Tony A. Toronto, Ont.

“Too Big. But worth it.”

– Charles B. Toledo, Ohio

“Reminds me of what we work hard for; Happiness and Peace.”

– Tracey K. Chicago, Ill.

“Spiritual!”

– Bruce S. Boca Raton, Fla.

“See you in Detroit!”

– Jackson T. Jersey City, N.J.

“I hope I live long enough for Detroit.”

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

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.



WE NEED YOU ... for Service!

■ 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!

■ The deadline for articles for the Better Times is the 7th of each month before the month of publication.

■ The Public Information Committee is seeking volunteers

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

■ Twelfth Step Committee is seeking phone greeters, as well as volunteers for the 12 Step Phone List - especially people who can speak languages other than English (sobriety requirement is two years)

■ Is your Home Group interested in a web page on the Intergroup website?
If so, please send an email to communications@aatoronto.org

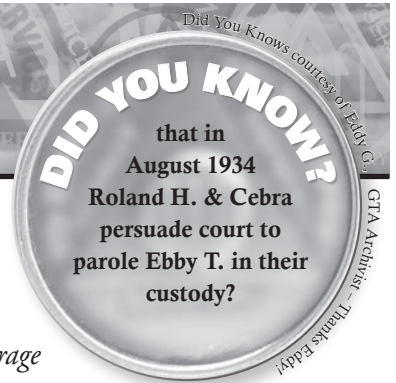
NOTICE:

Eglinton Crosstown construction is coming to 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 to leave plenty of time or take public transportation.

TO CONTACT COMMITTEES PLEASE EMAIL:

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Thoughts From the Editor's Desk

Willingness to make amends comes quickly for some, more slowly for others. Around the time he had his last drink, Dr. Bob went running up and down the streets of Akron making amends to the people he had harmed. He had acquired a willingness to face his fears, look members of his community in the eyes, and take responsibility for the actions he had taken during his years of active alcoholism.

That same willingness came to this alcoholic over time, in my first year in the program. By making a moral inventory of grosser defects, sharing it with another, finding a willingness to change, and growing in conscious

contact with a Higher Power, I had practiced a degree of courage and humility through Steps Four to Seven. When faced with Step Eight, it was suggested that I pray for willingness when lacking; divide the names of my list (mostly taken from Column 1 of my Step Four) into Now, Later, Maybe, and Never; and start at the top of the Now section. With the help and guidance of my sponsor and friends in the program, I slowly became willing to make amends to all the people I had harmed.

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

Defects of Character

I was in love with alcohol because it gave me a profound alteration in my reaction to life. More so, it gave me a profound alteration in my reaction to myself.

Today I'm bottoming out with my 'defects of character'. I quit smoking two months ago, and my tolerance level for these parts of my personality has minimized to the point that I beg God to let me surrender them to him. I just keep picking up the same toxic tactics with one hand and then use the other hand to try and suppress them.

What I really want is to have the same relationship with God and my defects of character as I do with God and alcohol, but I can't stop fighting with them. Somewhere in there, I still believe I have enough self-knowledge to 'talk myself out of them'.

I started working with a spiritual mentor 3 years ago. She encourages me to have a loving attitude toward myself, even

my defects of character. They are my 'old ways of feeling safe', and the release of them starts with acknowledging the positive intention behind them.

'Control' for example has a positive intention - to keep me up to date on potential negative circumstances in my life. With 'Procrastination', there are things I'm avoiding that are inevitably the key to my growth and, as I bury myself in avoidance tactics, a starvation for a genuine sense of fulfillment revs louder and louder. Even 'Self-Torment' can operate as a reminder not to get too comfortable.

My solution now is to share. When I share honestly, I feel some space open up inside me. In the honest desire to release these defects, I feel God shifting my relationship with myself.

- Julia C., Here & Now Group

My Steps

Upon joining AA, I was taught by my sponsor to work the steps -in order- from 1 to 12. When I reached steps 6 and 7 which comprised only a few short paragraphs in the big book, I remember thinking that I had worked them, simply by reading the text. I have since come to realize how crucial these often overlooked steps truly are. I need to approach steps 6&7 in the same way I did the first two-with the understanding that I can't and God can.

I pray for the willingness to let go of my character defects, and I practice the opposite behavior. If lying has been

a problem, I practice honesty. If I have been judgmental, I practice tolerance.

Beyond that, I work on the acceptance that I am progressing, one day at a time. When old behavior creeps back in, I work my 10th step.

My willingness to have my defects of character removed has greatly increased by realizing that little, if any, spiritual growth is possible as long as I am holding on to my old ideas.

- Annie M., Here and Now Group

spotlight on PPG

Primary Purpose Group

I joined the Primary Purpose Group (PPG) in the Fall of 2006. The group was only a couple of years old, but it was thriving, young and enthusiastic. In the treatment centre I was residing at during that time, I had been discussing my challenges in finding other young people in meetings (I got sober at 23). Another client suggested that I check out a certain meeting at Yonge and St. Clair. He went on to say that it had a lot of young people, it was something a little different, and had a great vibe. Shortly after, I walked into PPG's Monday night closed-meeting. I sat down and listened to the lead share finish her talk. At the 15-minute break, she came up to me and welcomed me by giving me a reassuring smile and her phone number. I felt a sense of ease that I hadn't felt in a long time and committed to attend the open-meeting the following Wednesday.

The open-meeting format was something that I had not seen at other meetings in Toronto. For the first half of the meeting, the chairperson selected people on the spot at random to share their experience, strength, and hope in under 3-minutes. Then there was a 10-minute break where I was bombarded by women handing me their phone numbers and inviting me to come sit with them for the second half of the meeting—how'd they know I was new!? During the second half of the meeting, a well-dressed speaker shared that they were nervous and was greeted with a sympathetic “awwwwww”, which eased the speaker's nerves and caused a bit of laughter in the crowd. This was just one of the things that made PPG stand out to me as a unique group. After I decided to make it my home group, I learned more about the reasons behind some of the group's unique customs.

Here is what I have since learned from the founding members of the group: the group is very loosely based off of a meeting in Los Angeles, California called the Pacific Group. The reason we clap after people read Chapter 5, the 12 Traditions or the Secretary's Announcements is to keep the newcomer awake - no, seriously. We say “awwww” if a participant says they're nervous to help “deflate the ego at depth”, and to remind them that we need not take ourselves too seriously. We celebrate birthdays annually with cakes. Warning: do not eat the cake unless it's a medallion meeting as I'm pretty sure the cake we use has been in the freezer since I joined the group.

We state our length of sobriety at the closed meetings to show that the program works and to give the newcomer tangible evidence. This also helps the chairperson screen the people he/she selects to share their experience during the discussion part of the meeting. If someone with 14 days of sobriety wants to

share on Step 10, it may be better that they talk to someone after the meeting rather than share it during the meeting's step discussion. This helps keep the flow of the meeting on-point. We have “Watches” when people turn one year sober. A Watch is a custom of PPG where we go out for Fellowship the night before a group member turns one-year sober. We usually go to the 24-hour Golden Griddle at Church and Carlton around 11-11:30pm. At 10-seconds to midnight we do a New Year's Eve style countdown and “Watch” the person turn one-year sober. Then we pay our bills and leave, full of pancakes and milkshakes. Up until recently, we didn't have a group list. You simply became a member when you said you were and became accountable to the group by giving your commitment. This encouraged you to take action in your own recovery. We also have a suggested business attire dress-code when you are participating in a meeting such as speaking, chairing, or being the secretary, taking a cake or giving a cake. My understanding of the spirit behind this is to “suit up and show up”. On the last Monday of the month we have an “ask-it basket” where you can anonymously ask a recovery-related question and have it answered by people in the room who have direct experience with that issue.

This is the laundry list of the things that makes PPG the PPG I am eternally grateful for, even if it is a little out of the norm. Although the PPG is currently smaller in numbers than it used to be, it is not lacking in the quality of recovery we have there by any means. We are a very solution-focused meeting, and we aim to create the type of recovery we enjoy all the while fulfilling our “primary purpose”.

DID YOU KNOW?
that in
August 1939
Dr. Bob & Sister
Ignatia were now
treating alcoholics at
St. Thomas Hospital
in Akron?



sharing & word search

Honesty

Honesty isn't something I thought much about prior to coming into Alcoholics Anonymous. I certainly cared about whether or not people were being honest with me though! I don't think I truly trusted anyone enough. I never believed anyone was being honest, and so I strung together a life of little white lies, including the lie I told myself: "I'm not an alcoholic, I can change the way I drink!" I told myself that lie from the ages of 14 to 33.

Of course my lies became much more distorted with my progressive disease of alcoholism, and it became impossible for me to distinguish the difference between what was truly happening and all the lies. Finally, I knew I had only one of two choices left - either go to AA and see what it was all about or die alone in a sea of lies and fears that I tried to blot out with copious amounts of alcohol. I've been sober now for 9 years and 10 months and hey, there are times when I'm not always able to determine the truth right off the bat. But what the program of AA gives to me is the awareness of my distorted thinking and the ability to pause and speak with another recovering alcoholic and my higher power, both of which help me to better understand what direction my thinking is taking. Am I thinking in partnership with God, with humility, honesty and truth in love? Or, am I thinking, "Meredith's got it solo", thinking that is filled with fear, resentment, ego, pride, jealousy and judgment? I'm getting better at seeing the difference these days.

This program has also taught me that when I notice my distorted thinking, it's not a license for me to berate myself for the way that

my brain is wired. Berating myself for my distorted thinking defeats the purpose of the life I'm trying to live today, a life with love. So, what I can do is recognize the way that I think, my tendency towards dishonesty, and then love that part of myself and pray to my higher power for help in creating an honest, humble and joyful life.

Thank God for this program and for the fellows... it's nice to not be alone anymore.

- Meredith F.



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.

80th Anniversary Conference

Countries Represented

AFGHANISTAN | ARGENTINA | ARUBA | AUSTRALIA
 BARBADOS | BERMUDA | BRAZIL | CANADA | CHILE
 CHINA | CUBA | DENMARK | DOMINICAN | ECUADOR
 EGYPT | ENGLAND | ESTONIA | FIJI | FINLAND
 FRANCE | GERMANY | GUYANA | HONDURAS | HUNGARY
 INDIA | ISRAEL | ITALY | JAMAICA | JAPAN | KUWAIT
 MEXICO | NETHERLANDS | NORWAY | PERU | PORTUGAL
 SPAIN | SWEDEN | THAILAND | USA | VENEZUELA

Hidden Word:

Last Month's Answer: HUMANITY

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

sharing & service

Why Gratitude is Everything to Me

Gratitude is EVERYTHING to me. EVERYTHING. I believe it 's the secret to living a happy and fulfilling life and I believe that without it, I won't stay sober. The most beautiful thing about gratitude for me is that it doesn't stand alone. It needs other attributes to exist. Like perception and perspective. Since I suffer from a disease that takes my perception and perspective hostage, gratitude is like an anti-serum; it keeps my perception and my perspective in check. If I am grateful for what is happening NOW, it means I am aware of what ELSE could be happening in my life. Gratitude means I'm grateful for what I've been given because I know what it's like to go without or to go with less. It means I know where I've come from and where I'm at. Gratitude also thrives on humility. Humility for me is knowing who I am in the context of the bigger picture. That I acknowledge there exists a power greater than myself and in doing so, understanding I MUST surrender my will and my life OVER to that higher power if I want to live peacefully. Humility allows me to appreciate and respect the power, support and direction that comes from being connected to the God of my understanding. My gratitude also comes directly from being a recipient of grace – in early recovery, whenever I heard someone say "grace is an unmerited gift", my hackles would go up. What my ears heard was that I don't DESERVE grace. It was only when I dug further into that statement did I come

to understand that what it actually means is that WE DON'T HAVE TO DO ANYTHING

TO DESERVE IT. So grace then, is a gift bestowed upon us by our higher power without any terms or conditions but simply because we are God's children. And then there's love - gratitude simply could not exist without LOVE. Love is who we are, love is where we're from, love is what we are here to do. Love is the basis of our program of recovery. Love heals, love restores, love guides, love rebirths. Love is the birth right of every human being on this earth.

I was lucky enough to attend the AA World Conference this month in Atlanta, Georgia. On the Friday night, over 55,000 of us went to the BIG AA speaker meeting at the Georgia Dome. It was one of the coolest, most powerful experiences of my life. To be present in the midst of tens of thousands of SOBER, happy, joyous and free alcoholics was beautifully overwhelming. I sent a silent prayer of gratitude to Bill and Bob, thanking them for the miraculous gift of Alcoholics Anonymous. In doing so, I thanked them for saving my life...for AA not only saved my life, it gave me a whole new one...what greater gift is there than that? So for THAT and for so much more, I am eternally grateful.

– Julie S., St. Clements

DID YOU KNOW?
that it took
Bill W. & Dr. Bob
24 days before
the 3rd member of AA
got sober?

SERVICE OPPORTUNITY!

Are you looking for a new service challenge?

Would you like to be part of a small, vibrant committee?

G.T.A. INTERGROUP Finance Committee needs your help!

FINANCE CHAIR NEEDED IMMEDIATELY!!!

Candidates with a business/accounting background would be a welcome addition to our team. A sobriety requirement of 5 continuous years is essential for this service commitment.

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

e-mail: office@aatoronto.org

address: Suite 202 – 234 Eglinton Ave.E., Toronto M4P 1K5

announcements

PAST MEDALLIONS

Rod I.	40	Mt Royal / York Group	June 30
Gary H.	5	East York Group	June 30
Glenn G.	10	East York Group	June 30
Heinz F.	10	Maple Group	June 30
Donald O'N.	1	Scarborough Group	July 3
Marilyn H.	25	Crossroads Group	July 5
Peter R.	1	Back to Basics (Rmd. Hill)	July 10
Nazli E.	10	King City Group	July 13
Ron S.	1	New Anchor Group	July 16
Marvyn W.	10	Streetsville Action Group	July 22
Michael L.	1	Back to Basics (Rmd. Hill)	July 24
Jimmy H.	35	Keep it Simple Group	July 26

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

UPCOMING MEDALLIONS

Christian C.	5	East York Group	July 28
Helaine M.	25	Thornhill Group	July 29
Bill W.	1	Unionville Group	August 5
Dave McC.	10	Back to Basics (R. Hill)	August 7
Shannon	1	Lighthouse Group	August 7
Sarah M.	1	Fifth Tradition Group	August 11
Happy Ness H.	25	Harbourlight Group	August 11
Cindee G.	5	Golden Mile Group	August 12
Nadia D.	1	Bayview Group	August 16
Mimy C.	15	King City Group	August 17
Rose S.	1	Fifth Tradition Group	August 18
Mike S.	1	Back to Basics (R. Hill)	August 21
John A.	1	King City Group	August 24
Jennifer C.	10	East York Group	August 25
Edward H.	5	East York Group	August 25

ANNOUNCEMENTS

■ Mississauga Fall Round Up

Saturday October 3

Vic Johnston Community Centre
Banquet Hall, 335 Church Street,
Mississauga

Plenty of free parking • Close to Streetsville GO • Accessible by Transit
• speakers from AA, Alateen and AI-Anon • Sobriety Countdown • 50-50 draw • \$20.00 per person includes coffee/treats and a hot/cold buffet lunch.

For more information: info@mississaugafallroundup.org
www.mississaugafallroundup.org



Phone Greeter Training

will take place on

Saturday, August 8 Sunday, August 16
10:30 am and 1:30 pm

at

234 Eglinton Ave. East, Suite 202

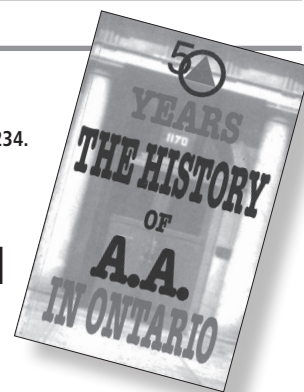


I FOUND IT IN
THE ARCHIVES

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.

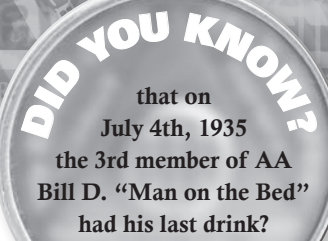
INTERNATIONAL AA CONVENTION DISPLAY PHOTOGRAPHS, PROGRAMS & SOUVENIR BOOKS FROM 1950 to 2010 FOR VIEWING AT THE GTA INTERGROUP OFFICE BOARDROOM



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 don't forget...

Old GTA meeting books are needed for the GTA Archives.



Step 8, we begin to get right with the world. The previous steps are about getting right with ourselves and God, but this step marks the start of a new arrangement and a fresh start with others. It is not about making the amends that is the key to this step, but the willingness to put things right. There is an element of restoring balance in doing this step, and thus a vital benefit of this and Step Nine is a lessening of shame.

An important aspect to working Step Eight is that I had to list all the people I had harmed, not just those I harmed while drinking. I needed to realize that my way of behaving with people, while drinking and while being dry, had been flawed and in need of repair. This step fosters my acceptance that this

has to happen and that my part in the world is going to change.

As part of that change, my role is now to be a part of my community - to give and take as part of that community and to contribute where and what I can. I will make mistakes in life, and I will have to revisit this step from time to time. As long as I have my Higher Power with me, however, and aim not to harm people, I can be among equals and live rightly with the world.

– **Matt G.**

Timeout My alcoholism wants to kill me. It puts me in ambulances and hospital beds and makes my family and friends think about funeral locations. Vodka bottles lead to hanging Intravenous bags. Nurses and doctors with sad eyes take blood and give me back bloodwork that says I’m going to have a heart attack or stroke within 12 hours. Yep, my alcoholism wants me six feet under. It has made that clear every time I relapse. And I say Relapse and I don’t say SLIP. Because where my alcoholism comes from a SLIP is something you do on ice or wear under a dress. When I pick up a drink I’m not right back where I started ...that would be a luxury...when I pick up a drink after not drinking it’s like I never stopped drinking. Weird how that works...deadly too.

But there are some things that have to happen before I pick up that drink. First my alcoholism has to get me alone. Preferably with a resentment. Resentments are like candy to my alcoholism. It just can’t resist and it doesn’t mind taking any from strangers. So give me a resentment and get me alone and my disease locks the door and refuses to answer when anything that looks like a program of recovery comes knocking. It turns up the

volume on the chaos so sounds of serenity can’t be heard. It gives prayer and meetings and my Sponsor and my higher power “the finger”. You see, my alcoholism is childish and resents the daily timeout it gets when I do the things that keep me sober. My alcoholism only wants to play with me, whisper in my ear, share it’s big plans for us to fix the world and all it’s screwed up people and make the ones who hurt us pay...my alcoholism wants me all to itself and loves when my program takes a nap or leaves the rooms.

So “I” have to make sure I become a we. I can’t fight “cunning, baffling, powerful” alcohol alone. It’s too big...this fatal solution that is so sexy and dramatic and advertised EVERYWHERE... but it’s not on my friends in the fellowship’s breath and their shirts and the walls of where they hangout. So I need to go there and hangout with them and laugh with them and call them and text them and do service with them. And now that I’ve been sober a bit I can travel and have found THEM all over the world that help me keep my face in the sun put my alcoholism in it’s place.

– **Tokio**

The Search For God A very important sentence crops up every time we read Chapter Five at meetings: “But there is One who has all power—that one is God. May you find Him now!” The Big Book speaks of the “Great Reality deep within” (p. 55). This infers that this “power greater than ourselves” is not just “out there” in the heavens somewhere, but it is “in here.” This notion is both an intellectually satisfying philosophy and theology; it moves beyond pious sentiment. This insight changes everything! The wondrous God that allows me to stay sober is not something that I invited into my world; it was already there! It’s not about God doing everything from the outside. I now realize that my freedom from alcohol is generated from the inside—once that information became a concrete

spiritual realization, my prayer life became very different. My spiritual growth became an obvious reality.

An alcoholic cannot drink on the truth—an alcoholic can only drink on a lie. Reality is the Truth! I cannot drink so long as I allow the “Great Reality deep within” to remain in charge of my decision-making-apparatus (mind and emotions).

When I am fully resonating with this inside power, I then immediately begin to experience it all around me on the outside as well! First the inside, then the outside. Someone asked: “Why is God so hard to find?” Answer: “Because He ain’t lost!” This is something I need to remember as long as I live.

– **Bob S.**