



HAPPY JOYOUS FREE

*The 2015
International Convention of
Alcoholics Anonymous will be held
July 2-5, 2015 in Atlanta, Georgia with the
theme "80 Years – Happy, Joyous and Free."
A.A. members and guests from around the world
will celebrate A.A.'s 80th year with Big Meetings
held Friday night, Saturday night and Sunday
morning in the Georgia Dome. Other meetings,
scheduled or informal, will take place
throughout the weekend in the Georgia
World Congress Center and local hotels.
Please visit www.aa.org for
more information.*

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

*Everybody knows that those in bad health, and those who seldom play, do not laugh much.
So let each family play together or separately as much as their circumstances warrant.
We are sure God wants us to be happy, joyous, and free.*

Alcoholics Anonymous, 1st. Edition, The Family Afterward, page 132

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

Yours in Service,
The Better Times Staff.



WE NEED YOU ... for Service!

- The Finance Committee needs three new members and a Finance Chair.
- The Twelfth Step Committee seeking Greeter Captains, committee members, and night shift volunteers.
- The Access Ability Committee informing Fellowship of special service meeting for single parents (child care available).
- Is your Home Group interested in a web page on the Intergroup website?
If so, please send an email to communications@aatoronto.org
- The deadline for articles for the Better Times is being shifted to the 7th of each month before the month of publication.
- 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 Public Information Committee is seeking volunteers.
- Correctional Facilities is seeking people for "Bridging the Gap" program.
- The AA Grapevine Corporate Board will have an opening for the position of Nontrustee Director following the General Service Conference in April 2016. They are asking for completed resumes by July 20th, 2015.

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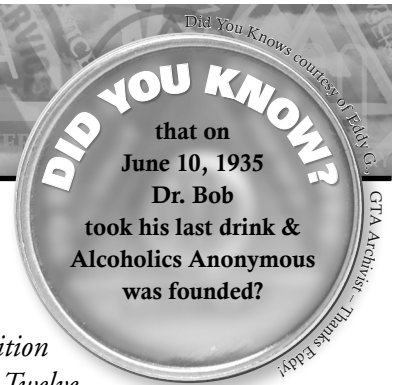
editorial & sharing

Thoughts From the Editor's Desk

The theme of this year's International Conference in Atlanta is "Happy, Joyous, and Free". Looking around the rooms of AA, the business and committee meetings, as well as the coffee shops and restaurants sparkling with fellowship, one can witness miracles of change that reflect this theme. Our lives once filled with misery and desperation, imprisoned by the bondage of addiction, many of us had all but extinguished any spark of joy in life. In my last days of drinking, my existence had become so focused on one thing - the next drink - at the exclusion of all things beautiful and

meaningful. Today, having recovered from a hopeless condition of mind and body through the Twelve Steps, I experience the promise: "We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness." And when I look around at my AA brothers and sisters, I see the same promise manifesting for you.

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



Not Just "Dry" but Meaningful

I got sober in July, 1990. However, I had first gone to AA twelve years earlier. I loved it. What it did was inspire me to spend the next eleven years thinking of getting sober again, starting out for meetings and ending up in bars, heading for a meeting in the US and ending up on a drunken weekend instead, leaving a bar and heading back to drunken violence.

The day I did finally stop drinking was bright and sunny, and I felt almost as if it was an omen. I had, after all, been thinking about sobriety for over a decade. At the time, I had a professional practice, and I was just totally keen. I took new clients; I stayed up late preparing their files. If I got an early morning appointment, involving a long drive to get there, I took it. I was sober, after all, no problem, I'll be there.

One thing I did not do during this new-found sobriety was go to AA. I knew how to find the meetings, but I thought to myself, "look what happened last time." I didn't know what a resentment was then, but I had a big one against AA.

I didn't drink again and for about three years overworking was my solution. I was keen. I was out there. I barely slept. Then one day, sitting in my office, I had a brilliant idea. I would drive across the country, Toronto to Vancouver, become a wanderer, like those types in the folk songs I always liked listening to. A week later it hit me: I had an office lease, four employees and a large bank debt. I was not a wandering folk singer. Does anyone recognize that alcoholic clarity of thinking?

Things got worse. I let my staff go, and I took on just enough work to afford the rent on the one-room apartment I decided to move into. I used my office address so that I could hide the fact that I was living in what was basically a rooming-house from my acquaintances. Note that word "acquaintances". I had no close friends. I did not want to get close to anyone.

I felt ashamed, "less-than" and extremely depressed, but I kept faking it. I was still a professional person, after all, don't you know?

I was also still restless, irritable and discontent. I would sit down to work on a file, then literally run out of my office and walk up and down the street for an hour or two. Many evenings I got into my car, plugged in some music and drove for several hours along Bloor Street between Mississauga and The Beaches. Years later, when I attended retreats at Manresa, I found that the route was familiar.

I got lucky and began talking to an addictions counsellor who had me read AA's First Step. Then he pointed out that even though I had admitted I was powerless over alcohol ("Oh, yes," I cried, "I don't ever want to go through my drinking years again!"), that maybe I should consider how my life had become unmanageable.

Somehow I had my moment of clarity. I began going to daily AA meetings, often more than one a day. In spring 1998, I attended my first Ontario Regional Conference. I loved it. I began to build a more manageable life with the help of AA and with friends I began to meet in the program.

However, the first time I heard the phrase "dry drunk", I just dismissed it as pretentious nonsense. I had been "sober" for a long time, not just "dry". I didn't drink, after all. It took a few more years before I connected those dots, before I came to understand that AA is not only about not drinking, but about building, one day at a time, a better life. Not just "dry", but meaningful.

Ruth C., St. Clement's Group

Shaken, But Not Stirred

James Bond Group... My husband and I vacationed in St. Martin, a beautiful Caribbean Island (like many others down there), but it was the terrific A.A. meetings that kept us going back for 13 years. In 1997 we decided we needed a Toronto meeting with the St. Martin format: a 10-15 minute share followed by discussion with minimal reading and no business meetings. Medallion meetings could be closed or open, the recipient of the medallion deciding the format for his or her special meeting.

In my early 20's I lived on Avenue Road and on my way to work each morning I would pass the St. James Bond United Church, smile, and think to myself, '007' has a place to hang in Toronto. We approached the minister at the church and asked if we could rent a room for an A.A. meeting. At first, she was reluctant, but after reading some A.A. literature was impressed with the spiritual aspect of the program and agreed; adding it would hopefully benefit some of her own congregation. We had to insist that we pay for our use of the room, as we are self-supporting through our own contributions, so she said, "Pay what you can." What a blessing that turned out to be as we always remained a small group.

At our first meeting there were about ten of us, speaker included! We read What Is A.A.?, the Twelve Steps, and began and ended with the Serenity Prayer, leaving plenty of time for sharing. Luckily the meeting was held on the 2nd floor with a lot of comfortable couches and armchairs. If a group conscience decision was needed, members stayed after the meeting for 5-10 minutes. That was our business meeting. Service work was determined alphabetically as was our meeting chairperson, who had the honour of asking a member of the fellowship to share weekly.

Change is inevitable. Our church was sold to developers for condos. By this time my loving husband, Rae C., had passed, 49 years and 2 months sober. But our core membership - eight people strong - would march on thanks to Sheila B. and Jean M. among

others. Our group moved one block south to St. Margaret's Church at Avenue Road & Burnaby and instead of losing members we gained a few more. But this was short-lived as that church also closed. Facing yet another move, we were shaken but stirred into action! The group once again came together to find another location. So, the James Bond Group moved to The Holy Rosary Parish Hall on St. Clair Avenue West near Bathurst Street.

Our small group has now grown to a core of 18 members (with 8 of the original Bond members) and more than a dozen regular attendees from other groups. What I cherish most about staying small is that everyone gets a chance to share and enjoy serenity and safety. To me, James Bond Group feels like a family within the fellowship. We sincerely celebrate each other's victories and successes, commiserate the difficult times together, while trying to live life on life's terms between occasional sobs and genuine laughter. We witness the miracle of our program and have many longtimers who share their experience and hope with all.

- Marlene C., James Bond Group



Stinking Thinking

In my seventh year of sobriety, "old behaviours" have reared their ugly head. Being the alcoholic that I am, I truly believed I had this "licked". I had forgotten my own rule, to live 'in the now'.

My common-law husband of close to nine years committed suicide on November 27th, 2008. Because of this horrific event I got sober, by the grace of God, on December 31st, 2008. I joined a group, got a sponsor, did what I was told. Then my sponsor of six years let me go days before my sixth year. Can you smell the Stinking Thinking?

I felt sorry for myself. I moped, I cried, I got angry, didn't eat, threw tantrums, did not communicate with my family, friends or A.A. Nor did I attend meetings. I decided I'd be fine on my own. "Who needs this anyway, right?"

Continued on next page ...

archives & word search

**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.

**ARE YOU INTERESTED IN THE HISTORY OF AA
AND ARE YOU WILLING TO BE TRAINED?
HELP IS CURRENTLY NEEDED TO CATALOG MATERIAL.**

Contact the GTA Intergroup Office by phone or by email.

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.



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.

ABNORMAL | ALCOHOLIC | APPEAL | BANKRUPTCY
BODILY | CEASE | CHOOSE | CONCERN | CONTROL
DIFFICULT | DRINKING | DRUNK | HAPPY | INSANITY
INSTANCE | MENTALLY | OBSESSION | PECULIAR
PLEASED | POWER | PURSUE | QUIET | ROBUST
SCIENCE | SPIRITUAL | SUBTLE | SUDDEN | SUFFER

Hidden word:

Last Month's Answer: FORTUNATE

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

Continued from previous page ...

What a fool I was. Stinking thinking had become my crutch. It had taken over my life, just like the bottle. I now relied on misery. I became unreliable, negative, unhappy, stubborn, obstinate... poor me.

God has always been in my life. I surrendered once before, I knew I had to do it again. I had to stop the blame game. I had to stop relying on the Stinking Thinking to get through the day. I found a new group and a new sponsor and started attending meetings. But most of all I found serenity. Once again, I learned to be grateful, love myself and my fellow human beings.

Staying in the now, not wallowing in what has passed, keeps me out of trouble. I am glowing, smiling, enthusiastic and grateful for Alcoholics Anonymous. My life, sanity, and positive thinking have saved me once again.

Namaste.

– Ann H., Mount Royal Group

sharing

Stay

Sometimes one sentence changes our lives, if our mind is open to absorbing the information. One such sentence in my life was, "Guilt is that we have done something wrong, shame is that we are something wrong." I realized in that moment what I had believed for many years: I was all the bad things I had done. I had been defining myself and my future based on past actions and situations. I had started each day thinking I already knew who I was and lived accordingly, rather than seeing each day as a new beginning and another chance to try again.

That one sentence, which I now use as one of my own personal slogans, allows me to put many of the things I have done into perspective. It allows me to stop hating and judging myself so intensely. It allows me to isolate incidents and let them go, so I am not dragging them into every single experience afterward. I can begin to look at my personal places of struggle and start the healing process instead of feeling like everything in my life is just one big mess. I can begin to face others I have harmed and feel like a whole person and not a failure when I make amends to them. It allows me to apply right actions in most situations and be accountable where I fall short.

The truth, as I see it now, is that I was always fundamentally good. I just got sick and made a lot of sick choices for a period of time because I didn't have better tools or, if you will, "a design for living". I know this to be true today, because now that I do have a design for living, I have become a very different

person. I still have places of struggle, but I no longer define myself by them.

Similarly, if you are someone who has come in and out of the rooms for a long time, you are not a failure. In my opinion, you are more courageous than you know. Please don't avoid a meeting because you have relapsed and are ashamed of showing your face there again and seeing the same people. Every single person in that meeting is either in the same place as you, or has been there in one way or another. Besides, most people are relieved to see that you are back and still alive and after that.. they go right back to thinking about themselves anyways!

Until now, you might not have been able to replace alcohol as your Higher Power, which is the defining battle for every alcoholic you see in the rooms. We are not here to judge each other. Whether it is coming in and out of the rooms, or swearing off the bottle and picking it up again before we get here, the insanity of taking that first drink is something we all have fought. Most of us have not had a clear-cut path to getting here. Watching my judgments was one of the best suggestions my sponsor could have passed on to me. It really made me start to challenge the cruelty in my thought process toward myself and others.

My hope for anyone coming in and out, is that they find their bottom before their bottom finds them. I have seen first hand what happens when a bottom finds the person first. I have said goodbye to too many friends, whether it be in caskets or through such severe mental and physical deterioration that they are barely recognizable as the person I once knew. I believe with every fiber of my being that you have something that you need to give to this world and you just might have been brought to us to help you find out what that is.

Don't listen to anyone who tells you people can't change. People absolutely can change, it just depends on how honest they are able to become with themselves and how hard they are willing to work on it. So just today, take that first step instead of that first drink. Fight tooth and nail to keep moving, like your life depends on it, because it does. Keep Coming Back.

- (Ren)ita F., The Friendly Group

DID YOU KNOW?

that in
June 1953
the book
*Twelve Steps & Twelve
Traditions*
was published?

OVERHEARD AT A MEETING!



by Dave N.

announcements



PAST MEDALLIONS

Don B.	10	East York Group	April 28
Orion A.	20	Little Denmark Traditional	April 28
Ken L.	1	Rexdale United Group	April 30
Jim B.	35	Morning Discussion	May 2
Kay F.	35	Kipling Group	May 7
Clara O.	5	Keep It Simple Group	May 10
Tim C.	30	Mississauga Group	May 10
Carole V.	5	Sunnyside Group	May 14
Tim L.	1	Scarborough Group	May 15
Paul C.	1	Bloordale Group	May 17
Norman T.	35	Kingsway Group	May 20
Peter B.	15	Keep It Simple Group	May 24

UPCOMING MEDALLIONS

Catharine S.	1	East York Group	May 26
Sari S.	10	East York Group	May 26
Dora Mae M.	35	Golden Mile Group	May 27
Bob G.	1	New Anchor Group	May 28
Brad H.	10	Rexdale United Group	May 28
Judy B.	20	Scarborough Group	May 29
Ron M.	1	King City Group	June 1
Veronica H.	10	River Drive Park Group	June 1
Colin B.	1	Mt. Royal / York Group	June 2
Erin F.	5	Morning Discussion Group	June 6
Marlene S.	5	Morning Discussion Group	June 6
Scott W.	1	Morning Discussion Group	June 6
Randy	1	Principles Before Personalities	June 7
Chris B.	1	Glenholme Group	June 8
Ron M.	1	King City Group	June 8
Jack R.	1	East York Group	June 9
Jakub C.	1	East York Group	June 9
Marion S.	20	New Anchor Group	June 11
Natasha B.	1	Stepping Stones	June 13
Kyle	1	Stepping Stones	June 13

Tom M.	5	King City Group	June 15
Rose R.	1	Mt. Royal / York Group	June 16
Ciara C.	10	Principles Before Personalities	June 21
Leslie H.	25	King City Group	June 22
Mark W.	1	King City Group	June 29

ANNOUNCEMENTS

■ May 30
Information A.A. Day 2015
 8 am - 4 pm
Tickets \$5.00
The 519 Church Street Community Centre
(Church and Wellesley)

■ June 7
10th Annual
East Toronto Archives Breakfast
 9 am - 12:30 pm
Qssis Banquet Hall
3474 Kingston Rd. (Just West of Markham Rd.)
Ample free parking, fully accessible, signers welcome,
tickets available until Wednesday, June 3, \$20 each,
tickets not available at the door.

■ June 15
Founder's Day Celebration
 8 pm
Come and celebrate AA's founders at the King City
Group. 12935 Keele St, King City.

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

Phone Greeter Training

will take place on

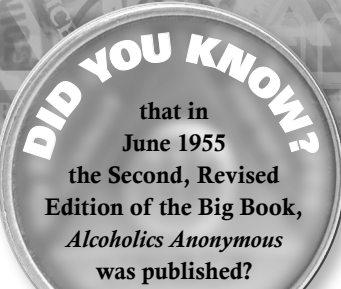
Saturday June 13 and **Sunday June 21**
10:30 am and **1:30 pm**
 at
 234 Eglinton Ave. East, Suite 202



QUOTE OF THE MONTH

*To wish happiness for others, even for those who want to do us harm,
 is the source of consummate happiness.*

Dilgo Khentse Rinpoche



Steps 6 and 7 - Part I

If you've read the beginning portion of Chapter 6 in the Big Book you know that there is very little text dedicated to these steps. In fact, there are only two paragraphs covering all of Steps 6 and 7 in total. There is almost as much written in the Big Book about eating candy to quell drinking urges or going to see a doctor if you're experiencing sexual impotence, as there is specifically about Step 6.

Some 13 years after the Big Book had been written, Bill would draft what is known as the 12&12 (The Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions) - a compilation of essays and letters he wrote on the Steps and the Traditions, which he hoped would act as a compendium of sorts to the Big Book.

In the 12&12 there are nearly 14 pages combined about Steps 6 and 7. He wrote these pages during one of his more difficult periods of deep depression, where he was frequently prone to subjecting himself to harsh disappointment of his own perceived faults and the manners in which he felt he'd fallen short of the very ideals he talked about to others.

Whenever I read through those chapters Bill wrote, I'm often struck by how certain parts of it seem very much like a personal inventory. I imagine it's possible that after more than a decade of sobriety, Bill had acquired a larger understanding of just how monumental a task Steps 6 and 7 would actually be in a life lived where drunken ignorance must be replaced by the practice of spiritual self-awareness.

I was 19 years old in my first year of sobriety when I originally "did" Steps 6 and 7 with my sponsor. After having just gone through the rigorous process of telling another person all of the things I was convinced I would never tell anyone, I was surprised by how little work seemed to be involved with these two steps. I followed the directions in the Big Book and assumed that was it - my defects had been removed. Then something interesting began to happen...

... to be continued ...

- Josh H.

The Fifth Promise - Words of Wisdom from AAs Abroad

Along with the only requirement for membership, a valuable nugget in our literature that has kept me committed to the program has been what is often referred to in our fellowship as the fifth promise. It states that "No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others."

I haven't always been as painstaking about phases of my step work as I should have been, but nonetheless I've been amazed by the all-encompassing wisdom in this particular promise. It is something I fall back on to help me get out of my own way. For me, that usually entails getting caught up thinking about the ways I've fallen short of being a model member in AA, despite multiple years of uninterrupted sobriety owing to the program.

Today, I try to keep in mind that nobody's perfect. Our literature reads that alcohol was but a symptom, and I am going to have problems and make mistakes in life after the

bottle. When I keep Promise Number Five close to heart, I am driven not away from the rooms and members of AA but rather toward them. The promise gives me strength to share my experience honestly, and hope of further fulfillment, provided I keep an open mind and maintain a willingness to do the work.

However quickly or slowly my own progress in the program materializes may be up to me, but by continuing to show up I can benefit others. At times, that benefit may take on the form of a cautionary tale of how not to work the program, or how it will not work if we don't do the work. Along with the desire to stop drinking, it is the fifth promise that has kept me coming back.

- Patrick C., U.S.O. Group, Seoul, South Korea