



**Ontario
Regional Conference
of Alcoholics Anonymous
March 13, 14 & 15, 2015
Fairmont Royal York Hotel
Toronto**

Language
of the
Heart

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

*When I stopped living in the problem and began living in the solution,
the problem went away.*

AA Quote



Language of the Heart

How could one conceive, back in February of 1981, when I went into the Erin Mills Group in Mississauga for my first ever AA meeting, that in 2015 I would have the privilege of being elected to chair such a grand event as the Ontario Regional Conference.

“The Language of the Heart” is the 2015 Conference Theme and my heart is pounding as the dates of March 13, 14, & 15 are fast approaching. I’m privileged to work within an incredible organization of volunteers stretching from Oshawa to Cambridge and Mississauga to Barrie.

The work has been done; we are ready and it’s going to be a wonderful conference.

This event has a special relevance for me. Upon arriving from Montreal with a husband and two sons, my alcoholism had taken its toll. The ORC was my first conference. I found the numbers overwhelming, but at the same time it offered the security of a comfortable surrounding where I could hear a variety of wonderful

speakers, identify with their struggles, learn from their stories and take from the Conference a new sense of hope, support and belonging.

Over the following years, I continued to attend the ORCs because they improved my quality of life; both mentally and spiritually.

As your 2015 ORC Chair, I know how exciting and how inspiring this year’s event is going to be. With so many talented people working together, this promises to be our very best conference ever.

I invite you to join us March 13th, 14th and 15th, to come together and share in “The Language of the Heart.”

Yours with Love in Service,

Linda T. Chair, 2015 ORC

From the Editor’s Desk – Time to Pass the Baton

It has been a year now since becoming the Editor of the Better Times and I must say that it has been an honour and a pleasure serving my fellow AA members of the GTA. It has been an experience that brought me back to my college years and it has definitely helped me in my recovery... quelle surprise!

This experience has allowed me to connect with friends, strangers, long timers and newcomers in ways that I never dreamed of. It gave me a sense of belonging. It allowed me to have some healthy pride. To know that in some small way, I had an opportunity to be of service and possibly help another Alcoholic follow their journey.

In the spirit of rotation, this issue will be my last as your Editor. With gratitude to my Higher Power and members of the Communications Committee who have supported my endeavours from the get go, I now pass the baton on to Marc S. (Editor) and Jeff C. (Assistant Editor). I want to graciously thank all of my fellow Committee members for making my job just a little bit easier, one issue at a time.

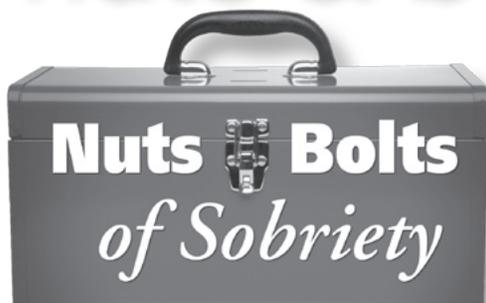
For a list of those members, just see the back page of most issues. A special thanks to the outgoing Chair, Michael B., thanks for a job well done.

I am also filled with gratitude that I will have the opportunity to serve you in another capacity. For the next year, G-d willing, I have been elected by the Executive Committee as the incoming Chair of the Communications Committee. I will be working closely with all members, to produce a top notch Better Times, an informative and user friendly website and publications that will be of benefit to my fellow Brothers and Sisters in recovery. Should you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to write me at communications@aatoronto.org. I try to live my life today on three basic principles – “Trust G-d, Clean House & Help Others.” I am here to serve and I hope I will not let you down.

Yours in service,

Jeff D., Welcome Group

nuts & bolts



Step Three

Turning It over: How calamity helped one AA to make a decision.

One day, when I was about three months sober, I was having an excellent day in sobriety, one beautiful day of almost two weeks in succession of good days. I was assisting in a youth basketball camp in which my seven-year-old son was participating. My son was having a very good time, and I was really enjoying watching him. I had just received approval at work to discontinue a project that required me to travel constantly, which I dreaded doing. My finances were beginning to rebound. I was getting healthy again. My life was really beginning to get back on track, and with these blessings, which I did not identify as blessings, came my enormous ego telling me I was fixing my life. I actually remember sitting in the bleachers watching some scrimmages, and thinking, "What a great job I am doing in recovery!" How

cunning this disease can be. It was telling me I was making these wonderful things happen. I actually started thinking I had this thing licked; that someday I would be able to drink like "normal people"; that, with all this wonderful work I was doing in my life, I did not have as big a problem as I thought.

A very short time later, a good friend came up to me looking very distraught. She informed me that my wife and daughter had been in a car accident about three miles away from the school. I asked her to take my son to my sister's home, and I left to get to the scene of the accident. I immediately began planning what I was going to do, who I would call first, how I would take care of my wife and eleven-year-old daughter (who is a quadriplegic), how I would handle my projects at work, what I would need to do to relay this news to the family, etc., etc., etc.

The traffic was backed up for two miles because of the accident, so I pulled over and began to run to the scene. As I ran, I was still planning how I was going to handle everything, never once reflecting on the grave look on my friend's face when she advised me of the accident; I was self-will run riot on the way to this accident. I began to tire and my muscles were fatigued to the point of failure (I was only three months sober and in extremely poor physical condition), but I struggled on. That's when I actually saw the van. It was on its roof; there were no windows left unbroken; it was crushed to the point that it was unrecognizable. I felt a sudden shock and pressure in my chest. Then

I had a very real, very wonderful, spiritual awakening.

I totally abandoned my self-will and reflected on what had been taught to me in the Fellowship of AA. I begged my Higher Power to please help my wife and daughter and asked him to give me the strength to handle what I was about to see. I immediately felt light on my feet, my muscles raged with energy, and I no longer felt fatigued from running. I took my Third Step right then and there, honestly and completely, and realized I could do nothing without help from my Higher Power. I struggled to process what I was seeing, but I knew it was not my will that mattered; it was the will of my Higher Power that would get me through this.

My wife was seriously injured but has made a full recovery, and my daughter, who was in a tie-down wheelchair system, was completely untouched. This occurred approximately one year ago, and I am still living in grateful sobriety today.

Thanks to this event, I no longer take credit for the good in my recovery and my life nor do I waste time planning my will. I have turned my will and my life over to the care of God, as I understand him, and through the rooms of AA he has done with it things I only have dreamed were possible.

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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.

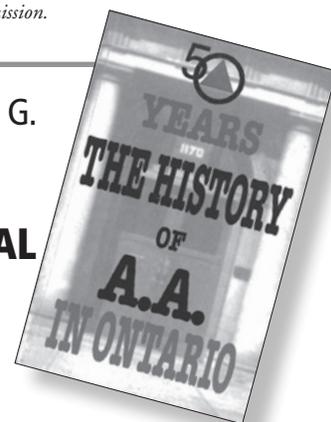
ATTENTION: THE GTA ARCHIVES IS LOOKING FOR ONTARIO REGIONAL CONFERENCE COMMITTEE RECORDS FROM 2006 to 2014.

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.**



that in 1951
the
“Regional Conference”
name was used
(today called
the ORC)?

The Growing Edge

When I no longer could tell the difference between my fear of living and my fear of dying, a tiny consideration sprouted up from somewhere deep inside: maybe I could call AA. While sharing this budding inclination with my therapist one Friday, I felt the hard, thick shell protecting the seed of my authentic self crack. I was broken and shut my eyes in anguish. My stomach tightened in a familiar attempt to push away feelings of shame, helplessness, and fear. But on that morning, the God of my rather feeble understanding was already doing for me what I could not do for myself, in this instance, granting a moment of clarity that would mark the end of an old habit-chained life.

Rarely have I been composed and calm when breaking apart, but resolved as I drove home to phone AA. To my surprise, a calm, kind man answered—he even sounded happy! That could not be right. I thought all alcoholics were miserable, like me. In my darkness, I could not receive his compassion. He asked whereabouts I was living and told me there was a wonderful woman’s meeting nearby the very next morning at 10:30 am. With even more enthusiasm, he added, “You’ll love it!” Though I didn’t know it then, the crack in my shell had widened just enough to waken a long-dormant seed. That night I did not have to drink.

The next morning, head and heart heavy, I entered a spacious sun-lit room with twenty or so women and slunk into the corner of a couch, hoping no one actually had seen me. Several women were talking, laughing, catching up on recent activities. I don’t remember anyone crying, except for me. Listening to each woman introduce herself and say, “I’m an alcoholic,” frightened me. Could I do the same? Though filled with fear, I spoke the truth for the first time in my life. No one gasped or laughed, jeered or even took special notice. Already the woman next to me was speaking, and I tried to remember her name and say, ‘hi, Karen’, in unison with the group—my first lesson in unity and anonymity. A few women gave me their phone numbers and encouraged me to call any time, especially if I felt like drinking. It would take me many weeks to build up the courage to call someone, but these conversations became like water and sunlight for my hungry seedling, nurturing new healing and growth in my body, mind and soul.

As suggested, I found a sponsor and a home group, went to more than ninety meetings in ninety days and read the Big Book. If not for the generous kindness and support of others, I could not have dared the challenging personal work of the steps. Seeing the results in their lives, I strived to pray to a God I hardly knew. Slowly I risked being my authentic self rather than an ideal image. Was this hard? It was, and is, the hardest thing I have ever attempted. Not

drinking is the tip of the iceberg.

What lies below the waterline is a

personality in need of nothing less than

total overhaul; the kind of spiritual experience necessary to bring about recovery from addiction to alcohol. Always there is the next stumble, tumble and fall, but gradually I am learning how to stand back up, ask God for help and thank God for help, take the outstretched hand of an AA friend and move along the path we all make together with each step we take. Days of deep emotional confusion, sorrow or rage give way to moments of peace, gratitude, joy and love. The demons of perfectionism, control-mongering and fear of failure linger, and I continue to battle depression and anxiety. But in sobriety, God and God’s spirit in others do for me what I cannot do for myself, granting just enough courage and grace to break free from the bondage of the false self.

Still, there are moments when painful emotions bring me to the edge, but I know this is the growing edge, the place between, where old ways are being relinquished and before new ways have had enough chance to be dependably established. I call this the half-way-there-place and wonder if many of us alcoholics must move through such spaces from time to time, or indeed, if we are not always half-way-there. Who we once were, the one we spent all our lives forming and fashioning in response to our environments, both internal and external, does not crumble and fall away quickly or easily, but from the first crack of the shell to the present moment, change remains the only constant. To live authentically without taking a drink or acting out in a distractive or destructive way, is the gift of working the AA program. To feel our wounds and yet not wound another is made possible through forgiveness. Resentment, hopelessness and rage are like weeds that must be drawn out so the seeds of new life may germinate in fertile, healthy soil.

Even as the tallest sunflower continuously curves toward the sunlight, still it will also cast a shadow. We are none of us half as good as we want to be, but neither are we half as bad as we have believed. Spiritual progress is our journey, and serenity, courage and wisdom our constant companions and allies. For all of us together and for each of us individually, may continued commitment to the program and to one another crack our shells completely, so that the seeds of our true selves expand into the fullness of authentic life, graciously accepting hardships and blessings with humility, faith, and love.

Julie L., St. Clements Group

I just have to ask whether acceptance... or change... is required.

AA, Daily Reflections

opinion & word search

The Lord's Prayer – Is there a place for it in A.A.?

The chairperson asks that we close the meeting with the Lord's Prayer. We stand, we hold hands, and I do as I have done for years – I do not say the prayer. I stand there patiently, waiting for it to end. I look around. I see others doing what I am doing, feeling uncomfortable – out of place. To me that prayer is a Christian prayer and if AA represents no religion, then why is it said? Am I wrong?

So I do some research. I look at the AA preamble. "A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, organization or institution." I read the Big Book. "A.A. is not a religious organization." We refer to a God of "our understanding." I hear the Third Tradition, "The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking." And I find that the Lord's Prayer is only found in institutions that are based in Christianity.

I think the thing that people like so much about the

meetings is how comfortable we feel. Yet the recitation of the Lord's Prayer makes it harder for many of us to feel that way. Maybe, many who are not Christian stay away, fearing that A.A. is a religious organization. How many, like myself, did not come back for years because I heard what I believe to be a Christian Prayer?

Coming back to the Third Tradition, I feel that the groups have to be open, simply to all those who have a desire to stop drinking and should not employ a sectarian religious practice that may exclude those who are not Christian.

More and more groups seem to be ending with the Serenity Prayer. Perhaps that is the answer.

Norman S.

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

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.

- ALCOHOLIC | BIGBOOK | CHIPS
- CONFERENCE | DETOX
- FELLOWSHIP | GIVING | GROWTH
- GUILT | INTERGROUP | LIFE
- MEDALLION | MEETINGS
- PRIDE | RECOVERY | SELFISH
- SERVICE | SHARING | SPIRIT
- SPONSOR | STEPS | TORONTO
- TRADITIONS | TREATMENT

Hidden word:

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

DID YOU KNOW?
that from
1943 to 1949
references to
anniversary and conference
were used
(today called
the ORC)?

The Accidental Drinking Partner (part 3)

(Last episode ended as I ran away from home at 14)

I went to the only other place I knew in the whole world, North Bay Ontario, where my grandparents lived. I had some mad money accumulated by dishonest means and I took the train from Montreal.

I got a room at the Empire Hotel in North Bay. I felt very confused but pleased with myself in my bold defiance and safe away from my abusers. I went to Woolworth's department store and bought or shoplifted model car kits, took them back to my room and spent my days assembling these kits. I really liked the smell of the glue!!

My grandfather had a sporting goods store on Main Street. He lived upstairs and I really loved being there, but I couldn't go in for fear having my escape discovered.

The best I could do was go out at night after the store was closed and peer in the window. It was wintertime, very cold and snowy. This recollection to me is one of the loneliest times in my life.

This went on for what felt like a couple of weeks, it was probably no more than four or five days, but I did have a little fleet of model cars all lined up on the bureau.

One morning a knock came at the door. When I opened it, there was my uncle who also lived nearby, as well as the hotel manager, I was busted! I guess I wasn't that hard to spot; I was just a kid hiding out in a hotel.

I packed my things and my uncle Ray took me back to his house filled with all my cousins who were really happy to see me. I had a great time there, except that soon it was announced that my Dad was coming to get me, which filled me with fear and dread.

I don't remember how the reunion took place, but I just wanted to be anywhere in the world except with my father. My siblings and I were not allowed to call them Mom or Dad, just address them by their surnames, in this case Cora and John.

John and I boarded the train and Dad handcuffed me to the seat, he must have read my mind, because the only thought on my mind was to escape again.

Back at home, my Dad had a hardware store and had uniform khaki shirts made for me and my seven siblings. I remember coming to lunch and seeing my entire family looking like a little militia and I would waltz in wearing tie dye, bellbottoms and sandals. It was quite a sight!

I was driven by my desire to get away from them and was drinking, smoking and drugging. It became a ritual with me running away, and my Dad, like a bounty hunter bringing me back home, and when we got there a huge lecture would ensue, with all my siblings present and listening in gleefully that it wasn't one of them being scolded.

My Dad had a workshop and was quite a talented woodworker. Of course, with four boys around the house, we would borrow his tools and predictably forget to return them. On Saturday morning, which was his shop time, if there was a missing tool he would line us up against the wall in the den and rant and rave until the culprit confessed.

One day he took me for a ride to a nearby penitentiary and said to me if I didn't change I would end up there. This turned out to be prophetic.

The little ritual of my running away and my Dad bringing me home, after I acted out so bad he finally gave up, and I was 16 when I left home for good.

(To be continued...)

Bailey B., Welcome Group



announcements

PAST MEDALLIONS

Kevin D.	1	East York	January 27
Bryant MacL.	40	East York	January 27
Diane L.	15	Amazing Grace	January 27
Noell L.	5	St. Clements	January 28
Ashley B.	1	St. Clements	January 28
Lisa	1	St. Clements	January 28
Adam M.	10	St. Clements	January 28
Noelle L.	5	St. Clements	January 28
Lindsie C.	1	St. Clements	January 28
Armando	1	Rexdale United	January 29
Donna W.	5	Willowdale	January 29
Alex Y.	1	Birds Of A Feather	February 1
Zobie G.	1	Bloordale	February 1
"BIG EARL"	40	Lakeshore	February 1
David S.	30	Glenholme	February 2
Ken O.	1	Mt Albert	February 3
Vivian G.	5	Back To Basics	February 6
Donna F.	1	A Place to Share	February 7
Suzanne V.	1	Bloordale	February 8
Jim G.	1	King City	February 9
Angie S.	1	Prince Edward	February 9

Marc D.	15	Fifth Tradition	February 10
Libby C.	1	Sisters In Sobriety	February 11
Tom McP.	20	Rexdale United	February 12
Lauren F.	5	Noon Rap	February 13
Kyle R.	1	King City	February 16
Mary Clare A.	5	Pathfinders	February 18
Dorothy S.	25	Rexdale United	February 19
Tony C.	15	Back to Basics (RH)	February 20
Sonia S.	1	A Place to Share	February 21
Richard P.	5	Keep It Simple	February 22
Lorraine T.	15	Silverbirch	February 23
Gord W.	25	Glenholme	February 23

UPCOMING MEDALLIONS

Brad D.	1	East York Group	February 24
Gary N.	10	Unionville Group	February 25
Kim D.	1	Keep It Simple	March 1
Colin L.	1	Keep It Simple	March 1
Mario F.	1	King City Group	March 2
Maurice L.	20	Pathfinders	March 4
Grant D.	30	Rexdale United	March 5

Martin C.	20	Keep it simple	March 8
Ruth F.	20	Agincourt Acorn	March 10
Flo R.	15	Joy of Living	March 16
Craig G.	20	New Anchor Group	March 19
Jim O.	25	Markland Wood	March 19
Sean W.	10	Keep It Simple	March 22
John D.	5	New Anchor Group	March 26
Roy L.	40	Sunday Northwestern	March 29
Jackie C.	1	Keep It Simple	March 29
Marnie S.	15	Fifth Tradition Group	March 31

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Golden Mile Group 45 Years Anniversary

March 25th, 8 pm

963 Pharmacy Ave, Scarborough



Phone Greeter Training

will take place on

Saturday, March 21, 2015 and Sunday, March 22, 2015
10:30 am and 1:30 pm

at

234 Eglinton Ave. East, Suite 202

Got the Winter Blahs? Want to Get Back 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.



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

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Marc S. (Editor)
Jeff C. (Assistant Editor)
Glenn C. (Desktop Publisher)
Peter B. (Circulation)
Chris C. (Secretary)
Bailey B. (Contributor)

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 10th 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

Are you a member of an FLM? (Foreign Language Meeting)

If so, we would like to hear from you. – We would like to know more about the Foreign Language Meetings, and let people know more about you. – Please send us a contact and a brief note. Hope to hear from you soon at: bettertimes@aatoronto.org

The following service positions with GTA InterGroup Sub-Committees are available to members of AA in the Greater Toronto Area:

Phone Greeters – Archives Committee – Twelfth Step Committee – Communications – Public Information Committee – Treatment Facilities Committee

Phone greeter training will take place on Saturday, March 21 at 10:30 am and Sunday, March 22 at 1:30 pm at 234 Eglinton Ave. East, Suite 202.

Please see www.aatoronto.org for more information & the next committee meeting

The 12 Step Committee is looking for members, a master scheduler, greeter captains and a secretary. Anyone interested can apply through the website and go to the 12 step committee page or contact Fred at twelfthstep@aatoronto.org or call 647-624-7286.

The BETTER TIMES is looking for submissions

The Communications Committee (Better Times, Website, etc.) is looking for two or three dedicated members to help us “pass on the message.” If you can spare one night a month and have an interest, please email communications@aatoronto.org, we’d be delighted to have you.

TO CONTACT COMMITTEES PLEASE EMAIL:

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