



The Wrong Flame

Bill W.'s spiritual experience of mid-December, 1934, was an event of vital historical significance, yet very few relate with it from their own moment of "God-consciousness," however, I suffered the following illusion.

When I was sober about three months, I experienced a similarity to what Bill W. jokingly referred to as a hot flash. Late one November night while in deep meditation, sitting on a pile of rocks protruding into the Pacific Ocean, I was suddenly overtaken with tremendous joy beyond belief and exuberant fiery energy which lasted till the following morning. It occurred to me that I probably had had a similar experience as Bill W.! It seemed plausible that the obsession to drink would have been lifted — I was now a recovered alcoholic! I had arrived! I would never drink again! Actually I hadn't, because the very next month, just after a Christmas Day parade on Hollywood Blvd., I marched right into a bar and almost ordered a gin and tonic — I only have God to thank that I didn't!

Appendix two, "Spiritual Experience" (p.567) tells us that a spiritual experience/awakening causes "a personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism" — well, that obviously wasn't true for me! My exciting episode on those rocks allowed me to become dangerously complacent.

As years pass, these joyous episodes still occur, albeit to much lesser degree, but I have learned not to take them too seriously. The famous monk author, Thomas Merton, referred to such pleasant spiritual episodes as, "the wrong flame."

— Bob S., Richmond, IN

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

We lose the fear of making decisions, great and small; as we realize that should our choice prove wrong, we can, if we will, learn from the experience.

Bill W.

Mind and Body

For him, it was a program of action both spiritual and physical.

I dragged myself to the gym again today. I used to go early so I would get it over with before I was awake enough to know what I was doing to my body. To be truthful, it is different today. I think differently now that I’m sober. I realize that it is good for me to exercise my whole body and not just my elbow. It is important to establish a healthy routine.

I was good at establishing unhealthy routines in the past. In fact, I was so good at it that they became unhealthy habits. It strikes me that there are parallels between my exercise program and my sobriety.

When I start on the elliptical machine or treadmill, I know I have 30 minutes to go. That’s a big slug of time to look at, so I just get started. I ignore the digital time display for as long as I can, but before I know it, five minutes have passed. Let’s see, that’s one sixth of the time. Next time I check, 10 minutes have elapsed, that’s one third of the time! Progress! At 15 minutes, I’m halfway done. At 20 minutes, I’m two thirds done. I know it’s just a mind trick, but it helps me to stay on the machine for the whole allotted time.

I’m not doing it for anyone else. If I cheat, I’m cheating myself. If I complete the time, I mark it on my sheet and go on to the next exercise. I count it as progress, not perfection. That reminds me of my journey into sobriety. At first, I didn’t know if I could last 24 hours without a drink.

I found that if I didn’t drink today – for 24 hours, I had a good chance of continuing on. If I had that 24-hour chip or

coin in my pocket, I had a ready reminder that I had a crossed a milestone. I had a reasonable chance to make it another 24 hours.

I looked forward to the 30-day chip. When I got that one, I looked forward to the 60-day chip. It made me feel like I was making progress. Mind game or not, I was most certainly making progress one day at a time!

On page 85 of the Big Book, it states, “It is easy to let up on the spiritual program of action and rest on our laurels.” The same is true of the physical program of action. Action is the key word in both my physical and spiritual program. I begin each day with prayer and meditation to keep up my spiritual program. I likewise find time to exercise my physical body. Both are important to my recovery.

Terry R., Melbourne, Fla.

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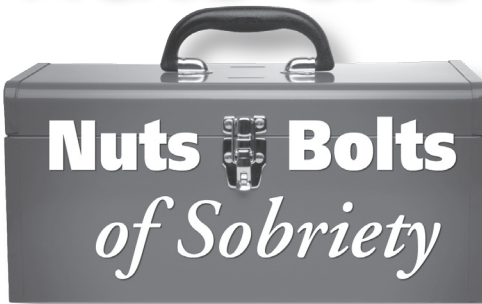
Serenity Chair ...and the wisdom to sit on the beach.

My place of employment for the last 25 years offers me the best opportunity to apply the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous. I have spent more time here than anywhere else, over half my life, mostly practicing my character defects. Like anything else practiced repeatedly (it makes perfect, after all), I have gotten very good at being selfish, self-centered, full of self-pity and dishonest. It has been difficult to change in this part of my life. What I do today is try and apply the principles, the key word being try.

Continued on page 4...



nuts & bolts



On the 1st Step...

We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable.

Since nearly all alcoholics are ardent individualists, we frequently stress that there are no “musts” in the A.A. program. However, experience has taught us that without unqualified acceptance of the 1st Step any recovery for the alcoholic is practically impossible. Even those alcoholics, and there probably have been a goodly number over the centuries, who have managed to escape by other means than A.A. from the toils of John Barleycorn, seem to have accepted the principle that alcohol had them defeated and was the primary cause of most of their poor adjustment to normal living.

Many newcomers to the ever growing ranks of A.A. still seem to find an almost

insurmountable obstacle to getting started with the program in the admission that their drinking has gotten completely out of control. Sometimes those who are ready to admit they are powerless over alcohol will not concede that their lives have become unmanageable for that reason. They prefer to blame their difficulties on an unfeeling boss, a nagging wife, an unhappy love affair or inability to pay the rent.

A new member of A.A., who as yet perhaps has not taken a very severe beating, may sincerely wonder what constitutes an unmanageable life. Let us cite briefly one example. A man, who has achieved considerable success in his profession, had just completed a job of which he was justifiably proud. He had, at the moment, no particular worries and some free time ahead which he planned to spend with old friends and to do some pleasant things for which he ordinarily did not have the time. He was resolved not to drink enough to even dull the enjoyment of his little holiday. Within forty-eight hours he made himself so ill that he was unable to leave his apartment for four days. This episode convinced him that his life had become unmanageable through alcohol and, for the first time, he became willing, having now taken the

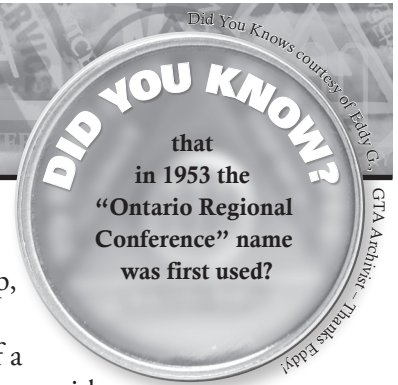
1st Step, to give himself a fair chance with A.A.

Unfortunately some, who have at the start apparently accepted the 1st Step with relief after years of struggle with alcohol, begin to wonder, despite the record, whether perhaps they can now do some controlled drinking. If they wonder long enough, they usually experiment and there has as yet been no recorded case of the experiment turning out successfully.

Into the lives of most members of A.A. are likely to come, at some period, emotional disturbances of such alarming proportions that momentarily the program as a whole may seem of little avail. For those of us who run into such crises, it would seem all important to recall again our initial acceptance of the 1st Step. The storm then will always pass and we can once more chart our course by the entire program.

A.T., Greenwich Village, NYC

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**I FOUND IT IN
THE ARCHIVES**

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

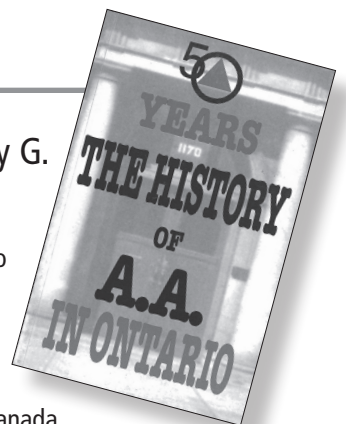
Happy 72nd AA Birthday Canada!

On Wednesday, January 13, 1943 at 6:00 pm the first meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous in Canada, Toronto, Ontario took place at the Little Denmark Restaurant on 331 Bay Street (on the west side) between Gerrard St. & College St. Present at the meeting were two non-alcoholics, Reverend George Little & Reverend Percy Price and six alcoholics, Tom E., Bruce M., Sam McC., Bus McT., Dorothy C. and Weems C.

We salute you & thank you – All the AA Giants who came before us to help us find AA in the GTA, Ontario & Canada.

The book *50 Years – The History of AA in Ontario* is for sale at the Literature Dept. at 234 for \$10.00.

Old GTA meeting books are needed for the GTA Archives.





At press time the “unapproved” minutes for November were not available.

They will be available at www.aatoronto.org when ready, or call the Intergroup office with any questions.

Serenity Chair continued from page 2...

I have experienced growing pains in sobriety, but I am grateful that God has given me the willingness to persevere. I have gone through the Twelve Steps with a focus on my work relationships, which revealed the deep-seeded feelings I bring to the table, the main one being fear. These feelings get triggered constantly throughout the day. The opposite of fear is faith, and since both cannot live in me at the same time, I practice faith and try to stay in the moment, because that is where I find my High Power.

I keep reminders around my desk at work, like a small picture of a chair on the beach with the first line of the Serenity Prayer, which reminds me to pray and ask for help. Inside my desk, I keep AA pamphlets, reminding me Just for Today and to Let Go and Let God. I also keep a copy of the story on acceptance from the Big Book close at hand. I use program words as the passwords on my PC, such as “patience” and “serene.”

Frustration and fear may always rear their ugly heads. It is what I do with them that counts. I pause when I get agitated, take some deep breaths, invite God into the situation, sit quietly, and then re-enter the moment, which I often find is now a new one.

This morning, my reading said that the best way out of a situation is through it. In my meditation, I asked God, “What is it that you are showing me at work? What is it that you want me to do?” After sitting quietly, the word that came to me was “humble.” I know this had to be from my Higher Power, as this wouldn’t be the word I would conjure up.

Surrender used to mean giving up or giving in. Today, it means accepting whatever is in this moment. That is my destination.

– Elaine L., South Amboy, N.J.

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Another Anniversary

As I approach another anniversary of sobriety, I always reflect on the journey and the miracle given to me. I am an alcoholic but I don’t drink. Let me say I believe I AM a miracle because alkie’s drink! Today I have a choice, actually many choices. As I tell my sponsees, I didn’t quit drinking; I choose not to drink today. I can choose what thoughts I allow to come into my head, and those unwelcome negative ones can be gone the moment I choose to let go. I can choose to have a good or bad day at every moment in time.

I arrived at AA broken, helpless and hopeless. I had no choices and felt powerless in every area of my life. I did not know that I was an alcoholic, but from my first meeting I heard you people tell me with love and concern that was what I am and that there was hope. I could have a life lived well, without alcohol. I found that almost unbelievable, as I could not go one day without it.

I made the best choice of my life that very Sunday night. I came home, poured the booze down the sink, much to the

horror of my children (who had been partying with me), and asked a God, whom I did not have a nodding relationship with, to HELP ME. This was the miracle, the first of many spiritual awakenings I’ve had over the years. I did not go to detox; I did not go to treatment. I went to AA every night for a year, and I surrendered to everything that was “suggested” to do!

Today, I believe I have had the psychic change that is necessary to maintain my sobriety, as a result of continuing to grow spiritually, be of service to others, and remain teachable.

I go to at least four meetings a week and my love of the wisdom and principles of AA continue to inspire and strengthen my mind and spirit. I embrace life as a miracle of discovery of immeasurable proportion. My dry date (and new life) is September 16th 1982.

Andrea W., Aurora Group



The ORC 2015 – Language of the Heart

Alcoholics in Action

In 1951, Bill W. wrote about AA's Legacy of Service. His words ring just as true today.

"Our Twelfth Step – Carrying the message – is the basic service that the A.A. Fellowship gives: this is our principal aim and the main reason for our existence. Therefore, A.A. is more than a set of principles. It is a society of alcoholics in action. We must carry the message, else we ourselves can wither and those who haven't been given the truth may die.

Hence, an A.A. service is anything whatever that helps us reach a fellow sufferer – ranging all the way from the Twelfth Step itself to a ten-cent phone call and a cup of coffee to the A.A.'s General Service Office for national and international action.

The sum total of all these services is our Third Legacy of Service."

Volunteers Needed

If you'd like to participate in our Third Legacy of Service, the ORC needs volunteers. Several hundred volunteers are needed over the weekend of March 13th through 15th, 2015. Greeters assist conference registrants and make them feel welcome. Registration volunteers man the computers to enter registrations. Volunteers man the information desk, providing directions and answers to questions.

This is a perfect opportunity to spend some quality time at the conference being of service. Get your sponsees and friends involved. To volunteer, email us at ORCvolunteer@aatoronto.org or phone us at 416-640-1905. Please keep in mind that volunteers do need to pay their conference registration fee.

Online Registration

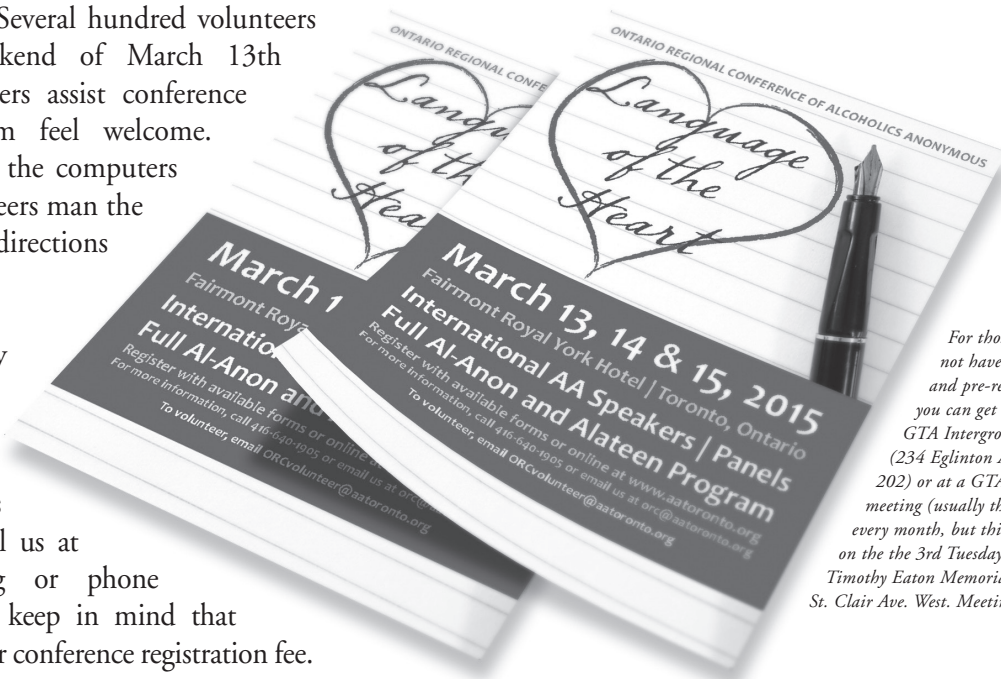
The ORC is once again making online registration available. It's easy – go to www.aatoronto.org and click on the "register here" link on the ORC page and complete the forms. You will be given the opportunity as well, to link to the Fairmont Royal York site to book your hotel room at our exclusive rate of \$165.00 per night. Conference registration is \$35 for the entire weekend and the banquet is \$65 (optional).

Pre-Registration Early Bird Draws

The 2015 ORC is again offering Early Bird prizes – draws are being conducted once monthly from all pre-registrants. Winners receive a set of the 2015 Conference tapes available at the end of the conference.

The 2015 ORC Committee is looking forward to seeing you all at this year's conference.

Debbie M., PI & Greeters Coordinator, ORC 2015



For those groups that do not have ORC posters and pre-registration forms, you can get them at the GTA InterGroup office (234 Eglinton Ave. East, suite 202) or at a GTA InterGroup meeting (usually the last Tuesday every month, but this month it will be on the 3rd Tuesday [Dec. 16th] at Timothy Eaton Memorial Church, 230 St. Clair Ave. West. Meeting starts at 8pm)

Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

The Accidental Drinking Partner

I grew up in a suburb of Montreal in a very French Canadian Catholic community. I was around twelve and like most boys my age; I was an Altar boy at the Church behind my house. At that time, I thought all houses had a church behind them.

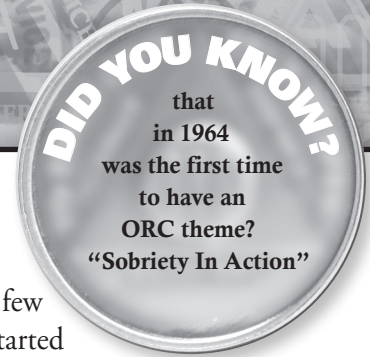
A lot of the masses I served were early in the morning, and they paid us a small stipend for our participation. We also served weddings and funerals, for which we received tips, especially if we looked either elated or somber, depending on the occasion. I would see how pious the community members acted in church but then I also saw how poorly a lot of those same parishioners, including my family, acted during the rest of the week, it confused me and I didn't like it very much.

After Mass, part of the job was to help the Priest to clean up his liturgical implements. I had the occasion to sip the last

drops of the church wine a few times, I really liked it, so I started taking long hauls directly from the bottle and then top it up with water. I would go home with a nice glow in my stomach for breakfast and then school.

One morning I was serving for this one particular rosy cheeked cheerful priest, and I saw him in his chambers taking a swig on the wine bottle and then adding water to it. I felt some form of bonding, like he was my first drinking partner. My bottle started as an acquaintance, we were now becoming fast friends. To be continued!

Bailey B., Welcome Group



I Remember My Whens

I was 14 years old at my first meeting. It was a medallion night. I'll be honest; I don't remember anything about that meeting. That was the meeting after Woodstock music festival outside New York.

Then, I spent some time in jail because I was stopped by the police coming down the Rocky Mountains with two wheels off the road and a bottle of beer. A woman and two others were in the back seat.

When I ended up in court the judge said to me, "You have no points left. I am going to teach you a lesson, \$5000 fine and life without licence."

I got clean and sober overseas in the Philippines; I don't remember how I got the airplane ticket. An older couple

picked me up in a park. They nursed me back to health before sending me back to Canada. I asked them what date it was, they said July 8th, 1989. That was not my first blackout, I had many of them before.

What would Bill W. and the first hundred say today? We call Intergroup asking for help. We get the help. Some of us volunteer for 3 to 4 hours a month on the phones. A lot of us do than one shift a month. Our sisters and brothers are now giving to the newcomers that call 234 and ask for help.

We all grow in the program of AA when we start giving back in sobriety.

Larry V., Fifth Tradition Group

Intergroup January Announcement

Attention all Intergroup Reps and Alternates and new members of the E.C.

The monthly Intergroup meeting to be held on Tuesday January 27th, 2015 will be a Workshop Meeting. Come and get acquainted with the GTA Intergroup Structure, The Procedures and Guidelines, general functions of the Office and Literature Department, and the Subcommittees.

Bring a friend or two from your group; discover our role in communicating to Groups and reaching out to the still suffering alcoholic and how you can be of service.

There will be food! Looking forward to seeing you there.

announcements

DID YOU KNOW?
that
in 1981
the first woman,
Rita O., Hill Group
chaired the ORC?

PAST MEDALLIONS

Neal T.	1	Living Sober	November 25
Jakub C.	1	East York	November 25
Lynne L.	20	East York	November 25
Doreen	35	St. Clements	November 26
Richard K.	5	St. Clements	November 26
Dee	1	St. Clements	November 26
Sharon C.	1	St. Clements	November 26
Deqa	1	St. Clements	November 26
George B.	1	Noon Rap	November 28
Rachel	1	Armour Heights	November 30
Marjory M.	5	Glenholme	December 1
Danielle H.	1	Tuesday Noon	December 2
Tristan J.	5	Kennedy Park	December 8
Tom L.	10	Glenholme	December 8
Jim R. (JR)	20	Prince Edward	December 8
Sammy D.	10	Unionville	December 10
Marcella C.	20	Rexdale United	December 11
Marcella S.	20	Rexdale United	December 11
Anna A.	1	Back to Basics	December 12
Elizabeth F.	1	Crossroads	December 14
Margaret M.	1	Bloordale	December 14

UPCOMING MEDALLIONS

Erin	1	Noon Rap Group	December 19
Jimmy T.	20	Melrose	December 20
Bill L.	16	Sunday Northwestern	December 28
Walter K.	20	City Central	December 28
Ken C.	1	Fifth Tradition	December 30
Denis P.	10	Joy of Living	January 5
Tom K.	1	Glenholme	January 5
Tracey C.	1	New Anchor	January 8
Dennis M.	15	Rexdale United	January 8
Steven L.	1	Noon Rap	January 9
Doug McA.	20	St Andrews	January 10
Roger L.	1	Sunday Northwestern	January 11
Lise O.	1	Lakeshore	January 11
Amanda W.	1	Glenholme	January 12
Carol M.	25	5th Tradition	January 13
John T.	5	Scarborough	January 16
Dan	1	Rexdale United	January 22
Randy K.	25	N.E.W.	January 26
Linda F.	1	Glenholme	January 26
Donna W.	5	Willowdale Group	January 29

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Anniversary Group, Candlelight

17 December 2014 8:00 pm

Thornhill Group Holiday Meeting

17 December 2014 8:00 pm

Rexdale United Christmas party

18 December 2014 6:30 pm

Sunnyside Christmas Meeting

18 December 2014 8:00 pm

The Hill Annual Holiday Party

18 December 8:30 pm - 10:45 pm

Beverly Hills Group Candlelight

19 December 2014 8:00 pm

Saturday Night Live Candlelight

20 December 2014 8:00 pm

Yorkville Holiday Dinner and Meeting

20 December 2014 8:00 pm

High Park Group Candlelight

21 December 2014 7:00 pm

Welcome Group Holiday Meeting

21 December 2014 8:00 pm

Mount Royal / York Annual Candlelight Meeting

23 December 2014 6:00 pm

Winter Season Open House

25 December 2014 10:00 am

City Central Group Candlelight

26 December 2014 8:00 pm

Traditional Group 50th Anniversary Celebration

02 January 2015 8:00 pm

For up-to-date meeting closures on December 25th, 26th and New Year's Day, Candle Light Meetings and Group Holiday Meetings, please visit www.aatoronto.org.

The Better Times does not endorse any non AA Intergroup Step Study, Round Up or Event.

Intergroup Holiday Office Hours:

Regular Office Hours Dec. 22nd & 23rd

Office Closes at 2 pm on Dec. 24th

Closed December 25th & 26th

Regular Office Hours Dec. 29th & 30th

Office Closes at 2 pm on Dec. 31st

Closed January 1st, 2015

Closed January 2nd for Inventory



Phone Greeter Training

will take place on

Saturday,

January 10 @ 10:30 am

and

Sunday,

January 18 @ 1:30 pm

at 234 Eglinton Ave. East, Suite 202

service opportunities



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

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Peter B. (Circulation)
Glenn C. (Desktop Publisher)

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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 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.**

GTA Intergroup Service Positions

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, January 10** at 10:30 am and **Sunday, January 18** 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 Better Times is always looking for submissions. Please share your story with us and hundreds, if not thousands of others. Stories should be 200-500 words in length, written in a Word document and must include your name and contact number. Anonymity will be respected. Email your story to bettertimes@aatoronto.org before January the 10th.

TO CONTACT COMMITTEES PLEASE EMAIL:

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