



NOVEMBER IS

REMEMBRANCE MONTH

Many AA fellows have served in the military and adjacent services over the years. We hope to honour them, their service, and memories in this issue.

In 1916 Bill W., one of AA's founders, was mobilized to serve in the U.S. Army. He was shipped "over there" during World War I as a Field Artillery officer. He did not see any action, but he served his country and was honourably discharged on March 14, 1919.

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Submit Group News, medallions, event notices, letters to the editor or articles to Better Times before the 10th of the month prior to month of issue by email to

bettertimes@aatoronto.org
or contact Alexx at 416-487-8110

Remembering Sobriety In the Military

I am an alcoholic and a veteran of peacekeeping in the Middle East, which has been in the news lately because of the conflict between Israel and Palestine.

I was declared a chronic alcoholic at the age of 21 while in the military, and was only able to stay in the army because I stayed sober by going to AA meetings. At the time there were few options for anyone in Canada unless they had the money to pay for their treatment. In 1978, while in the army, I was sent on a peacekeeping mission to the Golan Heights - situated on the border of Syria and Israel - along with two others. I was stationed in Damascus Syria, a region of 4 million people, who were mostly of Muslim or Christian faith. I was the only sober alcoholic in Damascus because there was no AA.

While there, I could sometimes get a vehicle to visit the Golan region – if I could get a through the six border check points, and get back by six o'clock on the same day. I would get a couple of minutes with Gerry in the admin office, usually just to say hi. I'd also pass by George's office - who was the camp disciplinarian. One did not usually have coffee with George unless you were in serious trouble. During my tour, the area heated up when the Syrian Army marched into Lebanon and stayed for 20 years.

During the Remembrance Day time frame, we wore poppies on our uniforms. But we had to explain to others (like the Austrians) that they were not just flowers, and that they meant a lot more to us.

Remembrance Day ceremonies were held at the Commonwealth Cemetery, often under light rain, with a military chaplain, a military piper and the contingent in Damascus.



One time, at the ambassador's residence, the piper got into trouble with the ambassador. Fortunately, he was forgiven the next morning as he had been drunk during the episode.

I had an opportunity to get to one meeting in Haifa Israel while on leave thanks to a contact from George during one of our 'visits'. Three Israelis and myself tried to help a drunken South African get the desire to get and stay sober. I don't know if it helped him but it helped me for the remainder of my tour.

While there I received on a regular basis Grapevines from my Sponsor in Canada, along with tapes which I shared with the boys on the Golan. It was good to have those as I only had my AA books to help with my sobriety. I met one Syrian border guard who was amazed that there was a Canadian Soldier who did not drink, and I was able to share a little about the program with him.

During many of my assignments I was the only sober member of the program. I was an example to other members on what could be accomplished by staying sober in the program while serving in the military.

-David T.

Service in the Army and A.A.

My grandpa Larry L. was a member of Alcoholics Anonymous. He served in the Canadian Army and helped rebuild Europe after World War II.

Larry was born and raised in an Indigenous Métis community in the Alberta bush. His own father was a trapper and hunter who considered bush skills to be the only things a young person needed to survive. While that may have been true for my great grandpa, the world was changing fast for my grandpa Larry. Many Métis joined and fought in the first world war. Those veterans and their stories fascinated young boys like my grandpa. Receiving his first .22 rifle at the age of 12, grandpa would

play war games with his friends. One boy lost an eye from the shattering glass of a hand mirror used to spy over hilltops. You really could shoot your eye out, or have it shot out, in the 1930's! Yikes.

My grandpa joined the Canadian Army in 1952. The Army was a good place for a young Métis to get a job and provide for the family. My uncle said that grandpa left school around grade five; so not only did the Army teach him to read and write, but also gave him the opportunity to develop professionally. Grandpa was eventually discharged as a Corporal. While Corporal may not be a high rank for someone with 14 years

—cont'd on page 04—



The ORC 2024 is fast approaching kicking off on March 15, 2024.

The theme for this year is "A New Freedom". We're looking for big-hearted volunteer superstars to help us turn up the friendliness... and showcase what "A New Freedom" really looks like!

We're especially looking for GREETERS!

Have you ever been to that AA meeting where no one acknowledged you, no one was excited to see you, and no one GREETED you? I have. And even after years of sobriety, when I don't have someone friendly to anchor me, I can still feel alone and out of place. Doesn't that feel crummy?

But on the flip side, can you remember that AA meeting you attended with GREETERS galore?! That meeting with outstretched hands and smiling faces everywhere you turned? That meeting where the GREETERS were excited to meet you, and to help you feel at home? Didn't that feel great?!

That's the vibe for ORC 2024...

Will you help brighten the weekend by being one of our frontline smiles?

Being a GREETER is a great opportunity to make friends, make a difference, and enhance your ORC experience with the Power of giving back. **Plus each shift is only 2 hours long, so it doesn't take a lot of time.**

We'd love for you to join us!

If you're good at smiling, it will be super easy for you. And all instructions will be provided. Please note, all volunteer positions are for paid attendees only. Thanks for understanding!

Ready to throw your hat into the ring?

If you'd like to join our happy horde of helpful handshakers, please email us at: happytogreet@gmail.com

Let's make ORC 2024 unforgettable. Together.

Adam W. (Prince Edward Group)
Promotions Chair
ORC 2024 Organizing Committee



----- *Alcoholics Anonymous First Major Test* -----

"When World War II broke out, this spiritual principle had its first major test. A.A.'s entered the services and were scattered all over the world. Would they be able to take discipline, stand up under fire, and endure the monotony and misery of war? Would the kind of dependence they had learned in A.A. carry them through? Well, it did. They had even fewer alcoholic lapses or emotional binges than A.A.'s safe at home did. They were just as capable of endurance and valor as any other soldiers. Whether in Alaska or the Salerno beachhead, their dependence upon a Higher Power worked. And far from being a weakness, this dependence was their chief source of strength."

(excerpt from "12 Steps and 12 Traditions", Bill W - Pgs. 38-39)

AGINCOURT ACORN GROUP MARKS 50 YEARS OF SERVICE!

Agincourt Acorn group will celebrate 50 years of service on **November 14th at 2575 Midland Avenue at 8:00pm.**
All are welcome!

AA in the Aftermath of War



It's not hard to see the references and impacts of World War I and World War II in the Big Book and the 12 and 12.

The AA fellowship between the early members crystalized in the aftermath of WWI. The Big Book was published just before WWII protecting alcoholics with more than just a helmet. Then the 12 and 12 was published *after* WWII and recounts the success of AA's in military service "whether in Alaska or the Salerno beachhead". And in fact, Bill W's own story begins, in a way, at the foot of a soldier's grave that reads "Here Lies a Hampshire Grenadier, Who caught his death, Drinking cold small beer." Clearly this soldier did not die of physical battle wounds but of some other ailment. Alcoholism?

Alcohol has long been used to manage some of the effects of war. The American Addictions Centre says "more than 20% of all service members report drinking heavily". Many veterans struggle with what was once aptly called 'shell shock' now called 'post traumatic stress disorder' (PTSD). Dr. Peter Levine, PTSD expert and therapist, recounts how one soldier client preferred to call it 'post traumatic stress injury' implying that he would recover. And there is recovery for many.

The national centre for PTSD cites 14 studies showing the success of group therapy for participants. And the NIH study of Somatic Experiencing showed a 67% improvement of PTSD symptoms. Combined, these two methods add up to a program of sorts. Now while the NIH also states that many disorders cannot be cured, their symptoms can be reduced. Relatable, as in the Big Book it states, "we are not cured of alcoholism" (Big Book p. 85). While AA does not reduce PTSD there is veteran support: <https://veteransinrecovery.ca/>

The founders and influencers of AA like Bill W, Dr. Silkworth and so many early members were war veterans. They forged the foundation of our spiritual program via their the challenges of the war times, and through trial and error. Their discoveries: spiritual life, recovery, unity and service.

- Luke G - High Park Group

FORGIVENESS

It is one of the most difficult acts to perform. It is talked about by many; practiced by few. And needed more than ever.

Writers, philosophers, clergy and others, over the years, have promoted forgiving.

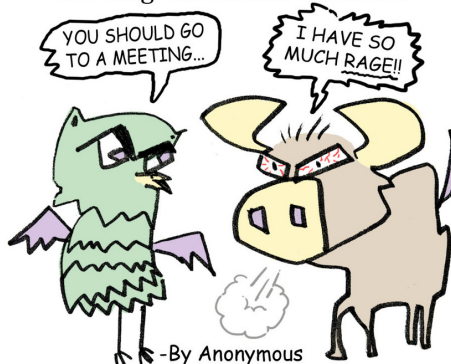
William Shakespeare wrote: "Heat not a furnace for your foe so hot that it do singe yourself."

And author Dale Carnegie adds that "when we hate our enemies we give them power over us....power over our sleep, our appetites and our happiness. They would dance with joy if they knew how much they were upsetting us. Our hate is not hurting them at all but it is turning our own days and nights into a hellish turmoil."

But forgiving does not mean that we forget what has happened to us. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. put it this way: "Forgiveness does not mean ignoring what has been done or putting a false label on an evil act. It means, rather, that the evil act no longer remains as a barrier to the relationship. We must recognize that the evil deed of the enemy neighbour, the thing that hurts, never quite expresses all that it is. An element of goodness may be found even in the worst enemy."

If you are not yet convinced about forgiveness, consider this - forgiveness is good for our overall health. Late columnist Ann Landers wrote, "forgiving promotes good fellowship, strengthens ties with the family and friends, and best of all, it is good for one's blood pressure, digestive system and general health."

Can anything help us in our journey of self-forgiveness and of others?



-By Anonymous

To forgive those who have violated us is no easy task. But let's remember that we are all in need of forgiveness.

Former president of the University of Notre Dame, The Reverend Theodore M. Hesburgh summed it up nicely: "Why should we be forgiving and merciful without measure? Maybe the simplest answer is that we are all in such need of mercy and forgiveness that we can ill afford not to be merciful and forgiving of others."

"Hatred does not cease by hatred. But only by love; this is the eternal rule." wrote Buddha. - Ken M.

LET BETTER TIMES KNOW

Having a candlelight meeting?
Canceling certain meetings over the holidays?

Email: bettertimes@aatoronto.org



We can put your special meetings and cancelations in the December issue.

DEADLINE: November 10

IS THERE AN UPCOMING MEDALLION?

Better Times would love to celebrate with you!

Please send your medallion details to

bettertimes@aatoronto.org

in the format of:

name - homegroup - year(s) of sobriety - medallion date

Kindly note that Better Times only publishes the first year of continuous sobriety birthday celebrations or every subsequent 5th year of continuous sobriety (i.e. 1, 5, 10, 15, 20, etc)

NOVEMBER MEDALLIONS

- Anna, Hadenuffyet Group, 1 year - **Oct. 22**
- Vivien C., Sat. Morning Discussion Group, 35 yrs - **Oct. 28**
- Denise B., Credit Valley Group, 15 yrs - **Oct. 29**
- Bill M., Mississauga Group, 45 yrs - **Oct. 29**
- Patricia T., Parkway Group, 20 yrs - **Oct. 30**
- Florence V., Beaches Group, 15 yrs - **Nov. 7**
- Joy S., Willowdale Shepherd Group, 1 year - **Nov. 9**
- Mike S., Beaches Group, 40 yrs - **Nov. 14**
- Linda R., Long Branch Group, 20 yrs - **Nov. 27**
- Colette C., Willowdale Shepherd Group, 30 yrs - **Nov. 30**
- Shawn M., High Park Group, 30 yrs - **Dec. 10**
- Reuven A., Willowdale Shepherd Group, 1 year - **Dec. 14**
- Terry R., Willowdale Shepherd Group, 5 yrs - **Jan. 4, '24**

GTA/DISTRICT -

SUBCOMMITTEE MEETINGS

TO ATTEND ONE OF THE MEETINGS,
SIMPLY REQUEST BY EMAIL BELOW

- **Accessibilities** - Sun. Nov. 19 – 11 a.m.
accessibility@aatoronto.org
- **Archives** - Fri. Nov. 10 – 7 p.m.
archives@aatoronto.org
- **Communications** - Tues. Nov. 21 – 8 p.m.
cc.chair@aatoronto.org
- **CPC/PI** - Mon. Nov. 20 – 7 p.m.
cpc@aatoronto.org
- **Correctional Facilities** - Tues. Nov. 07 – 7 p.m.
corrections@aatoronto.org
- **Information AA Day 2024** - Mon. Nov. 27-7 p.m.
infoaa@aatoronto.org
- **IT Subcommittee** - Tues. Nov. 14 – 8 p.m.
it.chair@aatoronto.org
- **Self-Support** - Thurs. Nov. 23 – 6:30 p.m.
self-support.liaison@aatoronto.org
- **Treatment** - Thurs. Nov. 16 – 7 p.m.
treatment@aatoronto.org
- **Twelfth Step** - Wed. Nov. 08 – 7 p.m.
12step.chair@aatoronto.org
- **Winter Season Virtual Alkathon** Wed. Nov.01 -
winterseasonvirtualalkathon@aatoronto.org
- **Winter Season Open House** - Sun. Nov. 19 –
9:30 a.m. - wsoh@aatoronto.org



"Hey there AA groups of the GTA!

The Virtual Alkathon wants you!"

Please sign up to chair a meeting on one of the following days -
Dec 24: noon-1am / Dec 25: 4 pm-am / Dec 31: noon-1am / Jan 01: 7am-4pm

Only 40 meetings so pick your time NOW!

Email your time to -
winterseasonvirtualalkathon@aatoronto.org

WINTER SEASON VIRTUAL ALKATHON



Pathfinders turns 55!

The first meeting for Pathfinders Group was an open meeting held on Friday, November 1, 1968 at St. Ansgar Lutheran Church in Toronto. Since then, we have continued to hold meetings at this location, except on Wednesdays for which we have a closed meeting.

During the pandemic, Pathfinders Group continued to carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic by holding zoom meetings, and then gradually returned to live meetings when it was safe to do so.

Pathfinders group is grateful to our higher power for the longevity of our group and the opportunity to pass on the AA message. Some of the longtime members who have since passed are Bob D., George, and Barb W.

At Pathfinders Group all are welcome, especially newcomers who are given the check list of 20 questions. We then explain the importance of becoming a member of a Home Group and provide support on how they can start their new journey of sobriety.

These days our membership is small, our operating expenses have increased, but we are grateful to still be here. We want to grow and serve AA by keeping the doors open so please join us for our 55th Group Anniversary on Wednesday, November 1, 2023 at 8:00 pm!

-Erika L.



**TO DONATE AA/GTA ARCHIVAL ITEMS TO ARCHIVES PLEASE
CONTACT ARCHIVIST EDDY G. 416-536-7536 or archives@aatoronto.org
OLD GTA MEETING BOOKS ARE NEEDED FOR THE ARCHIVES.**

Service in the Army and A.A. - Cont'd

in the army, for my grandpa it was enough. I believe that grandpa was also a part-time instructor at the Royal Canadian Military Engineering school in B.C. He was called all kinds of names because of his heritage, but all doubts of his competence were settled during weapons and hand to hand combat training. As a part of the Army Engineers, he travelled to Europe and took part in rebuilding war torn countries. They helped build and rebuild bridges, airports, roads, and housing all over continental Europe. Grandpa and Grammy were stationed at a military base in Germany with their children. My aunt told me that she became a fluent German speaker while stationed at the base and that my own father was born over there.

After being discharged in 1966, grandpa returned to Canada to work in construction.

Thanks to his army engineer training, he helped build many homes in the Okanagan Valley. In 1974, the year that I was born, he joined Alcoholics Anonymous. He remained sober for the next 36 years. As part of his sober life he was a councillor at the Round Lake Native treatment centre. All I ever knew of him was laughter, wisdom, and service, he passed on in 2017 at the age of 91. He had 7 children, 29 grand and great grandchildren. I'm grateful to the Canadian Army for giving him a chance, an education, and a career. On November 8th, Indigenous Veterans Day, he will be on my mind and in my prayers. In the Métis language, called Michif, they say, "kaa kishkiske (we will remember)."

Luke G. - High Park Member

Did you Know?

1- On November 19, 1939, Bill W.'s money problems make him want to go back to work, but New York AA's urge him to stay on as head of the movement.

2- On November 16, 1950, Dr. Robert Holbrook Smith (Dr. Bob) at the age of 70, co-founder of AA, dies of cancer at City Hospital in Akron, Ohio. He was cremated in Cleveland & his remains were buried in Mount Peace Cemetery in Akron beside his wife Anne. His funeral service was conducted by the Rev. Walter Tunks whose answer to a phone call 15 years earlier brought Bill W. & Dr. Bob together. In his 15 years of sobriety, Dr. Bob helped more than 5,000 alcoholics & never took any fee for his professional services. In his eulogy Bill described Dr. Bob as "the prince of the Twelfth Steppers". A memorial issue of the Grapevine was issued for Dr. Bob in January 1951. It is still available in facsimile copies today & provides a rich narrative & photographic history of Dr. Bob.

3- On Nov. 7, 1980, The Ontario Provincial Committee & Toronto Operating Committee of Toronto Intergroup as sponsors of the Ontario Regional Conference (ORC) began to get together partially as a result of the ORC Committee unilaterally deciding to move from the Royal York Hotel to the Hilton Harbour Castle & then losing money (\$19,000 for coffee) on account of providing free coffee throughout the weekend!

WINTER SEASON OPEN HOUSE CALLING ON VOLUNTEERS! Monday, Dec 25th 10am - 4pm

Looking for Greeters, Set-up, Kitchen Help, Food Prep, Servers, Meeting Support, and Tear Down.

FOOD, FUN, FELLOWSHIP!

AA and AI Anon Meetings- details to follow

Contact Tony Z. 416-836-7511
or email: wsoh@aatoronto.org