

REMEMBER WHEN

"Remember When" for an Alcoholic is not much different, we fought our own battle with our addiction. We have learned that we are powerless over alcohol, our lives had become unmanageable and working the program can help restore us to sanity. As we work through the program our Remember When's differ each year, as we grow.

SHARE YOUR STORY

Please scan the QR



Code or tap this box and you will be directed to our anonymous content submission page.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Remember When - A Keystone of Recovery.
- I Was Enraged With God
- I Had Zero Coping Skills
- .. and much more!

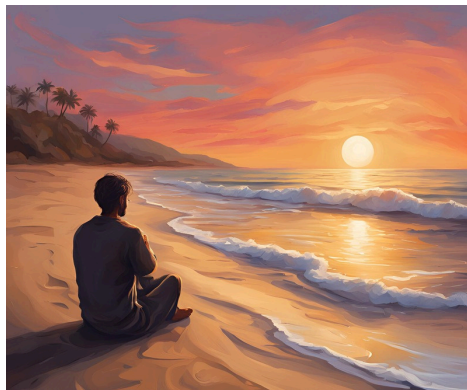
BETTER TIMES is published monthly for AA members in the Greater Toronto Area.
234 Eglinton Ave East, Suite #202, Toronto M4P 1K5
Telephone Number – Literature Department 416-487-9865 Email bettertimes@aatoronto.org

Editorial Committee

Ted D. Communications Chair
Lori C. Better Times Editor
Alice N. Asst. Editor (Temp)
Ann Marie B. Coordinator
Ken M. BT Writer
Latifa A. Graphics & Layout
Imran R. Distributions

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, event notices, letters to the editor and articles to Better Times by the 10th of the current month for publication in an upcoming issue by email to bettertimes@aatoronto.org

REMEMBERING WHEN - A KEYSTONE OF RECOVERY



If I lose a clear image of my past life in addiction, starkly looking back at my "bottom" and the desperate way of life that accompanied it, I am at serious risk of relapse.

And in relapse, I'm certain that I would fall horrifyingly back into the vortex of despair that comes with my addiction, in my misguided and vain effort to escape the realities of not just my own life, but of the very nature of the world, and its myriad of flawed human beings, with all of its contradictions, and challenges, and sufferings.

My decade of sobriety in the AA program, step work, and fellowship, have given me tools to find serenity amidst the storm of life, and I can recall its progress through my years in the program.

Both these things are "remembering". First, remember a life in addiction that I dare not forget, lest my ego and self-centeredness arouse the delusion that "I am in control"; and remember growth in sobriety that provides me with peace and joy, one day at a time. This is serenity, the greatest gift there is. Hence, health, sanity, and wholeness flow.

I receive the gift of remembering by practicing the 12th Step call to work on one with others, sponsees, who in sharing the details of their addiction remind us of the origins and progress of our own, and our shared self-delusion that alcohol was not only a solution but a solvent.

The most powerful way to trigger remembering for me is to listen in a room full of newcomers as they look tremulously at the First Step. Being present to the visceral terror of addiction they bring into those rooms while finding the courage to speak of their addiction out loud – often for the first time. One can feel the vibration in the air. Remembrance is palpable. It is this terror of the bottom they discuss that I must never lose sight of.

Beyond that, in the 12th Step, there is a sense of purpose in sharing some AA experience, strength, and hope with shaking newcomers, so desperately in need of help, as I once was myself. In the presence of these newcomers, I deeply remember how we all identified intimately with one another in fellowship. If it weren't for this part of my recovery experience, I'm not sure my sobriety would have any solidity. I could easily forget that in fact, I am NOT in charge and that my life could quickly become as entirely unmanageable as it once was. We see through their eyes and remember.

Newcomers, remind me of my early days. Of my fear as I tried to claw my way out of despair. Of my sense of unworthiness. Of self-loathing. They remind me of my anger, dread and opposition to help, advice, and good intentions of others. Of my resistance to any change and most of all: to the fearsome concept of AA abstinence that I detested and most certainly could not comprehend at first. They remind me of my alcohol dependence - my tragic love affair with addiction, despite the daily cruelties addiction imposed on me. I knew no other way to live. They remind me of "my solution that no longer worked".

Finally, I am gladly reminded by newcomers, still suffering alcoholic sisters and brothers, that they are witnessing in first glimpses that "there is a solution" that I once dimly perceived myself, and the "Pink Cloud" that came with it. This, in turn, reminds me of the promises that remain in store for us all - if we are faithful to our recovery - and learn over time to "practice these principles in all our affairs". Remember the promises. It strikes me that there are three kinds of remembrance for me in the program. The memory of what it was like, what happened, and what it has been like in recovery. The last is very different than the first two. It inspires gratitude.

Of the first, what it was like: it must be said, I remember the youthful days of "wine and roses" – those early days when a "few drinks" transformed my world into a kind of Never Never Land, of freedom, and frolicking, of romance, and delight. And the favourite question of my cronies: "Are we having fun yet?" Ha Ha. But even out of these memories, I recall that my companions of those days of youth grew up, and grew out of it, got on with their lives and became adults, and faced their challenges and growing into maturity. And then, sadly, I'm reminded: I did not. I remember, now with a regret of wasted years, that the way of Peter Pan was "the life for me", the partying life I clung to, which after a while got very tired, and was one day swallowed up whole by the disease of alcoholism, so that the joy of it was gone, and the problems it created grew year by year, into complete domination of my life – by addiction.

As the disease progressed, I remember there were more and more things in life I found hard, or perhaps chose, not to face. In the end, I couldn't cope with them at all! There's progress for you. Then came the excuses, and more and more rationalizations. And the growing urgency to keep my addiction a secret from everyone, though it was visible to everyone who mattered. And then came the shameful things, the forgetting shameful actions, and that most dreaded question: "Do you remember what you did last night?" And I seldom could. And then the falling, the shaking hands, and the sitting alone in the dark. Are we having fun yet?

REMEMBERING WHEN - A KEYSTONE OF RECOVERY - cont'd from pg. 1

Secondly, what happened? Suffice it to say, even though over the decades I managed to "functionally" keep together some relationships (several intimate relationships were destroyed by booze), a career (albeit with many interruptions and career changes), and comfortable living (with many financially inspired moves), there came a day when ALL OF IT crumbled before my eyes. My addiction was fully ripe – it possessed me. I had wrecked it all, partly as a cruel self-fulfilling prophecy based on my sense of unworthiness.

In the end, I didn't care whether I lived or died. But when I had lost it ALL, relationship, work, home, property, and looking at a bleak February with nowhere to live, I clung to hope and didn't take that final grim option off a bridge. (Unbeknownst to me – the Gift of Desperation). I took instead a tenuous step toward recovery by going to Toronto's deservedly renowned 12-Step Treatment Rehab – Renascent. Boy do I ever remember hating that place at first, and their damned Steps 1,2 & 3 – over and over. And their dreadful AA meetings with their stupid slogans and chips. And all those smiling "grateful alcoholics" – what's with that BS? Remember?

And then, on my 14th night there, I remember, vividly, lying in bed, reading Step 1 (for the umpteenth time), and sadly acknowledging out loud, "I AM an alcoholic, and I AM powerless over alcohol". I remember, Deeply, the very next night taking a silver chip at Stepping Stones, and because the night before had been a life-saving Epiphany, holding that chip in my hand as if it were sacramental. And indeed it was. Something had changed. I remember that I KNEW, in that moment, that this was my chance, and that if I broke that chance – I might well be broken myself – for good. And if I may digress for a moment, here is one piece of advice I received from Resacent that I treasure and practice to this day: "If you think you might have a drink – play the tape forward – where does it lead?" Every time I have done that, my tape has led me to – addiction, sickness, suffering, and death.

In a few words, what do I "remember" about the last 10 years? I come into AA to get sober, but I stay to discover why I am the way I am, who I am, and how I can become my best self. This I know. Looking back, remembering, I can see how in the last ten years, one day at a time, I have become that person.

- Robert T., The Friendly Group

I Had Zero Coping Skills



When I remember back to the days before AA, a painful and confusing time for me was the time after I stopped drinking but before I walked into my first meeting. Which almost lasted 3 years. I was dry. I hated myself, my thoughts, my body, my skin. My partner and children irritated me. I felt raw, and out of control. Sure, I was no longer drunk all the time, but I was exhausted by life and I was still behaving alcoholically. I exercised to an unhealthy degree. Anytime, I was uncomfortable, I ran out the door or jumped on my peloton. I could not sit still with a thought. I leaned into my nicotine vaping habit and started bingeing sugar, hiding these behaviours and the refuse associated with them, much in the same way I used to hide vodka bottles. I told myself anything was better than alcohol, and there is a lot of truth to that but still, none of my 'fixes' were working. I felt completely disconnected and off-center. Intermittently, a booze-filled memory would pop up in my mind and shame would come crashing down onto me, dripping into my day-to-day life. How had I let myself become such a disaster, and when was this period of punishment going to be over? I felt like I had a never-ending amount of apologies to make. I still could not look anyone in the eye and avoided close connections with people out of fear they would figure me out.

Then one day I was sitting on my front porch with a coffee on a beautiful fall morning and I started sobbing uncontrollably. What is wrong with me? I did the big thing, I stopped drinking. For 2 decades I lived my life KNOWING that my drinking was THE problem, so why was I still not feeling better?

I now know that drinking was not only the problem but also the solution. It's no wonder these last couple of years were so painful, I had zero coping skills. But I wondered if I even belonged in AA. I no longer drank alcohol, would these people understand that I felt worse now than ever? It turns out I did not have to worry about that. I was not so unique.

Cont'd on pg. 4

I Was Enraged With God



My name is Patti and I would like to remember and share what it was like when I joined Alcoholics Anonymous in Halifax, Nova Scotia, April 27th, 1985.

I called the AA Central Service with the help of the operator; I was too drunk to do it myself. A soft-spoken man spent an hour with me explaining how to get to my first meeting. Turns out it was five minutes away from my home. I remember peering into a room full of men, older than I, and a giant cloud of cigarette smoke was hanging in the air. One of the men held out his hand and welcomed me, then helped me to a seat and offered me a cup of coffee. I don't remember much after that other than 90 days and 90 meetings.

I was 34 years old.

I went to as many meetings as I could while the brain fog lifted. I met some women along the way but at that time and where I was, there weren't many around. Not like now.

- Cont'd on pg. 4

GRAPEVINE BOOK OF THE MONTH



FORMING TRUE PARTNERSHIPS

How AA members use the program to improve relationships



Scan this QR code to access [more](#) "Better Times" issues!



Winter Season Open House

~ FREE Event ~

Wed., December 25, 2024

New Location:

Timothy Eaton Memorial Church

230 St. Clair Ave W. Toronto M4V 1R5 *Fully Accessible*

Turkey, Ham, Stuffing, Vegetarian & Vegan Sides, Salads, Desserts, Coffee & Pop
AA/Alanon Meetings, Fellowship, & Service Opportunities!



Looking For Donations:

Turkeys*Hams*Desserts*Pop
Please contact us (see contact info below) if you can help

if anyone is interested in
SETTING UP for the event,
We would love your
service!

Come on Tues. Dec. 24th 8 a.m.
To decorate and/or
slice, dice, chop, and peel veggies
at
Timothy Eaton Memorial Church
230 St. Clair W., Toronto
Dunvegan Rd. Entrance

For More Information, Please Contact:

Zobie, Winter Season Open House 2024 Event Chairperson

416-709-0178

wsoh@aatoronto.org

Ross, Winter Season Open House Volunteer Coordinator

WinterSeasonOpenHouse@outlook.com

GTAI/DISTRICT - NOVEMBER SUBCOMMITTEE MEETINGS

Accessibilities - Sun. Nov. 17 – 11 a.m.

ID: 824 8962 1874 - PW: 799763

Archives - Fri. Nov. 08 – 7 p.m.

ID: 841 5376 9412 - PW: 018851

Communications - Tues. Nov. 19 – 8 p.m.

ID: 850 5256 7237 - PW: 984555

CPC/PI - Mon. Nov. 18 – 7 p.m.

ID: 854 7547 0291 - PW: 002060

Correctional Facilities - Tue. Nov. 05 – 7 p.m.

ID: 883 8002 9737 - PW: 950392

Self-Support - Meets every other month.

Next Meeting: Thur. Nov. 28 - 6:30 pm

ID: 820 9238 0206 - PW: 319853

Treatment - Sun. Nov. 17 - 4pm

ID: 868 2207 4860 - PW: 787289

Twelfth Step - Wed. Nov. 13 – 7 p.m.

ID: 813 0646 6967 - PW: 572531

IT Subcommittee - Tues. Nov. 12 - 7 p.m.

ID: 814 0942 9019 - PW: 379691

Information AA Day - Mon. Nov. 25 - 7 p.m.

ID: 811 8277 5978 - PW: 587553

NOVEMBER MEDALLIONS

Dan S., Start Today Group, 10 years, Nov. 2nd

Ajay M., Erin Mills Group, 1 year, Nov. 4th

Marie-Line D., Friendly Group, 1 year, Nov. 4th

Sergio F., Friendly Group, 1 year, Nov. 11th

Kelly H., Friendly Group, 10 years, Nov. 25th



NOVEMBER DRY DATES

Greg A., Birds of a Feather, 1 Year, 02/11/23

Roman, KFC Group, 35 Years, 02/11/89

Cris M. – Rexdale United Group, 20 Years, 03/11/04

Sarah B. – Prince Edward Group, 1 Year, 10/11/23

Chris B., Melrose Group, 1 Year, 11/11/23

Don, West York Group, 35 Years, 12/11/89

David B., Rexdale United Group, 15 Years, 16/11/09

Teo V., Six Points Group, 1 Year, 21/11/23

Dave F., Royal York Group, 5 Years, 25/11/19

Dave G., Kipling Group, 10 Years, 24/11/14



IS THERE AN UPCOMING MEDALLION?

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...)

ARCHIVES CORNER

Did you Know ?

On Nov. 26, 1895, Bill W. was born in a room behind a bar in the Wilson House (formerly the Barrows House aka the Mt. Aeolus Inn & Tavern) a village hotel in East Dorset, VT run by his grandmother Helen Barrows Wilson. Bill was named after his paternal grandfather, William C. Wilson, who was quite prominent in the community. According to Bill's sister Dorothy, their grandfather was an alcoholic who found sobriety through a profound spiritual experience while hiking on Mt. Aeolus.

On Nov. 18, 1912, Bill's schoolmate & "first love" Bertha Bamford, died after surgery at the Flower Hospital in NY City. Bill learned about her death at school the next day. It began a 3-year episode of depression that severely affected his performance at school & home.

Prior to Ebby T's, **November 1934** visit, Bill went to Towns Hospital in July for the second time. Dr. Silkworth explained the obsession and allergy of alcoholism but Bill started drinking again immediately upon discharge. Bill was unemployable, \$50,000 in debt, suicidal and drinking around the clock. In September, Bill entered Towns Hospital for the third time. Dr. Silkworth pronounced him hopeless and told Lois that Bill would likely have to be committed. Bill left the hospital a very broken, frightened man. Sheer terror kept him sober (dry spell) until November 11, 1934, Armistice Day, Bill W. decided to play golf and wound up getting drunk and injured. Lois began investigating sanitariums in which to place Bill.

In November 1934, while in Vermont, Rowland H. introduced Ebby T. to the Oxford Group & later took him to the Calvary Rescue Mission in NY City. Ebby, while at the mission, heard about Bill W's drinking problem. He phoned Lois who invited him over for dinner, Ebby visited Bill at 182 Clinton St., Brooklyn, NY & shared his recovery experience "one alcoholic talking to another." Days later, Ebby returned with Shep C. to speak to Bill about the Oxford Group but Bill did not think too highly of Shep. After Ebby's visit & after a drunken visit to Calvary Mission, Bill returned to Towns Hospital for the fourth time on December 11, 1934 and had his last drink (four bottles of beer purchased on the way).

In November 1936, Fitz M. left Towns Hospital to become NY area AA No. 3. Bill W. & Hank P. are the other two. Fitz came to Tuesday night meetings at Bill's house at 182 Clinton St., Brooklyn, NY until 1937. Fitz looked at the Library of Congress for several books named "The Way Out" and there were 12. There were no books named Alcoholics Anonymous so this name was used for the book. Fitz story "Our Southern Friend" is in the Big Book. In 1940, Fitz M., Hardin C., Bill A., & Florence R. (first women to attend meetings at Bill's house) started AA in Washington.

In November 1940, Bill & Lois moved into a small upstairs bedroom at the 24th St. Clubhouse in New York for about a year.

On November 26, 1943, Six Toronto AA members went to London, Ont. and helped to start London AA Club.

Greater Toronto Area Groups That Started in November

- Nov. 17, 1947 - Oakville Group
- Nov. 24, 1954 - Unionville Group
- Nov. 5, 1967 - West Toronto Men's Meeting
- Nov. 1, 1968 - Pathfinders Group
- Nov. 11, 1969 - Beverly Hills Group
- Nov. 6, 1973 - Agincourt Acorn Group
- Nov. 8, 1977 - Scarborough General Hospital Meeting
- Nov. 8, 1979- Westmoreland Group
- Nov. 5, 1981 - Keep It Simple Group
- Nov. 15, 1994- Noon Rap Group
- Nov. 6, 1999 - St. Andrews Meeting
- Nov. 27, 2012- Little Denmark Traditional Group
- Nov. 30, 2012- We Are Not Saints Group

I Was Enraged With God - cont'd from pg. 2

Most of all I remember crying and being told it would get better as long as I kept coming back. I was also told to get a sponsor who could help me work the steps and adjust to sobriety. I was advised to help out at the meetings and became the official ashtray cleaner, and I DIDN'T smoke. I took my job or as now referred to as "service" quite seriously. I noticed I started to feel a part of the meetings. I read the Big Book of AA cover to cover. My sponsor helped me understand the Steps more thoroughly. At the time I was enraged with God as a whole, so I made AA my higher power. Much later in sobriety and much later with a great deal of work, I was able to find peace with God. I felt good about that.

As I went to meetings all over Halifax, I started to meet younger members. I didn't ignore the wisdom of members from my first meeting because I kept going back.

When I was One Year Sober there were a few young people that formed an AA discussion group which I attended each week. I met quite a few younger members and we started socializing after the meeting. I found this to be very supportive.

When I was three years sober, 1988, the first Canadian National Convention was held in Halifax. There were people from all over the globe there. I was blown away. I volunteered to be a greeter and worked in Reception. I have never forgotten the feeling I had amongst all those people. It was exhilarating!

I was so glad to be a part of AA and I have never felt alone since.

- Patti, Melrose Group

I Had Zero Coping Skills - cont'd from pg. 2

I am now closing in on my 11th month in AA. I walked into a meeting local to me and I got a sponsor. Funny enough, I had clocked the AA sign outside the neighbourhood church about a decade before, storing the little tidbit of information for a later date, it seems. I signed up for service positions, I read the big book and I am working through the 12 steps. I have a home group, and I attend meetings on the regular. I needed to put my ego aside, to get over my desire to control every outcome. Things are not perfect but I feel more connected to my family and community. I have kicked the nicotine habit and toned down the sugar binges. I am finding joy in exercise and not using it as a meter stick of how powerful I am or a tool of self-flagellation. I am meditating and keeping a gratitude journal.

Looking back to the period of time before I found AA, I wish I had the strength to just walk into a meeting without the need to prove I could do it alone. I am grateful to my higher power, that I found my path to my fellows at last.

- Laura S., The Friendly Group

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.