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# The Eighty - Three

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Area 83 Archives Newsletter

**Our Area 83 history through the eyes of those before us... A legacy of gratitude**

**Creating and saving our history**

Linda McQ.

History of Peterborough AA

Robert Gary C

## History of Area 83

### The Benefit of Archives

Like all of AA Service Groups, Archives Area 83, is all about 12th step work - To Carry The Message.

Most of us have an urge to know who we are, where we came from, our roots. In our personal life some may be lucky enough to have family stories, photos, and family keepsakes, others may not, but we do have the potential to access a resource such as Ancestry.com. Knowing who we are is important - it provides a sense of belonging, connection, and sometimes answer important questions such as health challenges.

In our AA life, Archives is our resource. Archives collects, preserves and shares our common heritage, for now and for generations to come. Archives tells our stories - who we are, where we came from, how we got here, and it documents and tracks our progression and growth. It provides a sense of belonging, connection and sometimes important questions such as the health of AA.

In Area 83, our Archives contain our collective experience, strength and hope, provide evidence of our activities, give a context to understand how our area/district/group have applied AA principles and traditions, and provide data for future planning, reference, and decisions. This repository serves to renew our sense of purpose, and keep alive our feelings of gratitude for those who came before us. Without them, and the slender thread that links Bill and Bob to AA members here today, many of us would not have recovered from our alcoholism. We too are links in the chain to those who came before, and those who will come after us.

Our fellowship constantly renews itself. The

Spirit of Rotation was wisely designed to limit the power and prestige from those governing and to ensure that there is a constant influx of newcomers. By rotating service roles at the group, district and area levels, the sharing of AA principles, traditions and concepts continues, and helps us to continue to grow along spiritual lines. The one downside is that with time and turnover, knowledge can and has sometimes been lost.

We have a need to know our AA history, our past challenges, and decisions, our mistakes and successes. This knowledge can assist us in planning and providing support to our fellow alcoholics, and to protect us from repeating our mistakes and thereby undermining our fellowship.

Archives is the glue needed to provide that continuity. It holds our collection of information and provides the context of AA's growth thru the years, and our interpretation of principles and traditions. Archives' contents allow us to consult original sources. We are human. Over time problems/challenges will crop up, so is this situation new, old, how was it handled in the past, why were decisions made in such a way? Do we learn from our successes and our mistakes? Do we remember that today's experience will be tomorrow's archives? Do we continue to build our Archives in order to provide data for future reference and decision at the Area/District/Group level?

### Of Special Interest

Contributions to 'The Eighty - Three' should be sent to:  
[archivisit@area83aa.org](mailto:archivisit@area83aa.org)

## History of Area 83

### The Benefit of Archives

Archives can answer these questions and more. Whether being requested to provide information on contentious issues, or answering how to questions regarding previous assemblies, workshops, and on various service topics - ie. for a group Roundup, what was historically done by the group, what is required to host? Or responding to general questions from members on AA history? Archives can help.

The role of archives is to ensure our past is not forgotten. To do so, the Area and District Archives organize, catalogue, preserve and let people know about it through exhibits, displays, news articles, and answers to AA historical questions.

At the group level the archivist is a collector. What is your group history? Is it a story of a resentment and a coffee pot, or is it a story of a labour of love? Who started it, and why? Was there a need for a special interest group, ie. other language, Young People, LGBT, Agnostic? Was there a day of the week, or a place without a meeting? Archives can help the group document their group history.

What about what to archive? Archives can assist the group in identifying what is important to keep. Perhaps a Big Book autographed by the original attendees, or a Sobriety Date Book, Minutes of Meetings - identifying the challenges, and decisions faced by the group, Flyers, Group Anniversaries, Meeting lists, Group Service Records. What about recording your Longtimers' memories - Your district archives can support you in this endeavour through interviews, and the storage of artifacts.

Our archives is enriched by sharing our accumulated groups' experience. At the district level we are collectors/caretakers.

Within each district with an Archives, we build our archives showing how our community assembled and grew. At the Area level we are caretakers of the overall Area's collection.

I am an alcoholic. I am grateful that Archives preserves our rich history. For myself I know that I am at risk to repeat my past if I don't remember who I am, who my AA family is, and continue to learn and grow. Archives helps me do so,

Whenever a society or civilization perishes, there is always one factor present. They forgot where they came from." Carl Sandburg

### Ladies Freedom & Growth, renamed: Women's Freedom & Growth Meeting, as told by Kathy S.

The original group was formed in 1986, by Jean P., Olive L., Alberna M., Marg D., and Evelyn P. The first meeting, was held at Marg D.'s home on a Monday Night. At that time, there was only one other meeting in Kemptville, on Wednesday night. It was felt at that time, that a closed women's meeting would be beneficial.

The founding members invited other women, by announcing the new meeting at the Wednesday Night Meeting, and by word of mouth. During the years, in response to women's needs, children have sometimes been part of the meetings. The meetings were held for three years at Evelyn P., then moved to Olive L. In the summer of 1991, with so many taking holidays, the meeting was cancelled, and did not resume until 1992. As the original group members reached retirement, the meeting changed to Wednesday afternoon. By 2007, the weekly meeting, was taking turns at various members' homes, Kathy S., Winnie S., Olive L., Linda M.

Originally the meeting was held as a discussion group. Each meeting started with a discussion on how your week had gone, and the problems, successes experienced. The discussion then focused on using the principles and steps of AA in coping with life. In later years, the group focused on the steps via big book study.

In 2012 it was felt that more formal arrangements were required, as the group had grown. Pastor Dan, and his administrator, Suzy, were kind enough to invite the group to meet at the Free Methodist Community Church in Kemptville, next to the Kemptville Hospital. At this point, the group changed its name from the Ladies Freedom & Growth Meeting, to the Women's Freedom & Growth Meeting. We have several members in service. Winnie S. was the first group officer, and registered the group, with GSO, and Linda M. serves as district Archives. Currently, all group members take turns chairing the meeting. Linda M. serves as treasurer.

For the first two years, the group used the Joe and Charlie Big Book CD's, as a study tool for the Big Book. In 2014, the group voted to change format to discussion topics, and a list of 296 topics were printed, and are in use at this time. The meeting opens with a reading from Serenity Prayer, the 12 steps, and the daily reading from Each Day a New Beginning, and closes with the Responsibility Declaration, and the Second half of the Serenity Prayer.

The group has grown over the years. A meeting today varies in size, from 3 - 15 members. New members can now find this meeting on the AA District 48 meeting list. Anniversaries for members are celebrated with a home made cake, medallion, and card. Group anniversary has not been celebrated, but the group does hold a pre-xmas pot luck.

This is a great group. Come join us.

Kathy S. (group member since 1996)

## History of Area 83—Peterborough

### How A.A. Came to Peterborough

In 1947, Norm G. of Peterborough attended A.A. meetings at 1170 Yonge St. in Toronto. (An unused RBC building was rented to accommodate the expanded membership of the first A.A. group in Toronto.) By coincidence, Norm G. met Bill H. of Port Hope and Neil M. from Grafton at these meetings. Bill H. and Neil M. decided to put a classified advertisement in the Port Hope and Cobourg newspapers. One man from the Trenton Airbase answered the Ad. There followed a meeting in Port Hope of three people: Bill H., Neil M. and the newcomer.

Soon after that, Norm G. was doing a flooring job in Port Hope so he called on Bill H. After an animated discussion, they decided to put an Ad in the Peterborough Examiner. Norm G. invited Neil M. and Bill H. to bring their wives and come to Norm's home in Peterborough to meet his wife, Bernice, to socialize, and to make plans. The wives must have thought that this idea was a little dubious, having experienced other wild and wonderful schemes by their husbands while they were drinking. Norm's wife would not allow Norm to use their home phone number as a contact number in the Peterborough Examiner Ad. Based on Norm's many previous fine promises and subsequent poor performances, Bernice felt that she just couldn't trust him.

Fortunately, Norm G. worked for a Mrs. Mason who allowed Norm to use her phone number. She took the incoming phone calls in response to the newspaper Ad. Mrs. Mason acted as a telephone answering service; she wrote down the names and phone numbers and had Norm call them back later at the end of the workday. A.A. has always been indebted to "Third Party" assistance. The list of new recruits with a drinking problem grew.

### The Lift Lock Group

At some point they decided to establish an A.A. group in Peterborough. This first meeting of the Lift Lock group was held at the residence of Mike T. at 23 Park St. S. in April of 1948. Membership quickly grew and, over the first year of existence, included the following; Mike T., Neil M. of Grafton, who was the uncle of Mike T.'s wife, Bill H. of Port Hope, Norm G., George H., Norm S. and his brother Harold S., Jim M. of Keene, Gord H., Percy T. of Coe Hill, Hazel F., Harry A. of Havelock, Pat H., Perce C. of Trenton, Mike R., Jim W., Dr. Reg C. of Lakefield, Red 'Gyp' F., Lou L., Russ M. and Mike M.

The early members of the Lift Lock group came from every walk of life: a saw shop owner, Joe H.; a Bakery owner, Clare G.; a confectioner, Gord H.; a labourer, Pat H.; a clergyman, Father Charlie; a mayor, Norm G.; a taxi cab owner-operator, Gyp F.; a barbershop owner, Wally M.; a dentist from the nearby town of Lakefield, Reg C.; an undertaker, Norm N.; a salesman, Norm S.; a floor sander, John S.; a roofing contractor, Jim W.; a bartender, Tony D., a launderer, Hazel F. and George H. and Harry A., who were barbers.

They met first in the homes of some of the members, such as at George H.'s restaurant. Called the Pines Tea Room, it was located on Highway #7 just east of Peterborough. George H. was one of the early A.A. members in Peterborough who got a One-Year Medallion from the newly formed Lift Lock group.

Some meetings were held in Keene at the home of Jim M. and at the Keene Town Hall. Jim M. came to A.A. by answering an Ad in the Peterborough Examiner in early April, 1948. George H. made the twelfth step call and another member came with him. At the time Jim M. was isolated to the west side of the house where they lived. While Jim M. was recovering, many supportive A.A. members called upon him in the isolated part of the house. His mother, who was visiting at the time, noticed all these comings and goings. She said to Thressa M., probably in a tone of disgust, "What is going on now? Is Jim bootlegging?"

Jim M. was also active as a Reeve in Keene. He had a heightened sense of civic responsibility and he coached the local boys hockey teams. He tried to start an A.A. group in Keene. It was registered with the Toronto Central Office as the Rice Lake Group in 1950. They sent him a letter on Dec. 4, 1950, congratulating Jim M. on the formation of the new Rice Lake Group. They also advised Jim that Neil M. of Grafton could be relied upon to help him get started. Jim wrote to GSO in New York and sent money on several occasions. The 1958 & '59 Ontario Directories lists the Rice Lake Group with phone number and states "Meetings whenever anyone calls." Keene was too small and 'pride' kept new members from joining. Both Ontario Central Office in Toronto and GSO in New York eventually listed Jim M. as a 'Lone Member'.

By Aug., 1948, Norm G. found a more permanent meeting place at the Dixon House where they stayed for more than eight years. Norm G. registered the new group with GSO as follows: "Peterborough Lift Lock group." The group is four months old and has a membership of eighteen. Our meetings are held Tuesday and Saturday evenings in the 'Dixon House' and our chairman is Gord H." Norm G. must have flourished, because he became mayor of Peterborough in 1954. There is an arresting photograph hanging at City Hall of Norm G. wearing a dark grey pinstriped three-piece suit.

George H. and Norm G. often traveled out of town to other meetings. Norm would show up in his new DeSoto and off they went to Toronto, Montreal, and even Akron, Ohio. Many early members, just as today, made the pilgrimage to Akron, the Birthplace of A.A.

The First Anniversary of the Lift Lock group was celebrated at PCVS on March 27, 1949. Within the first year and a half, eight members of the new Lift Lock group of Alcoholics Anonymous were presented with a one-year medallion, including George H., Gord H. and Jim M., who received the 8th one year medallion awarded by the Lift Lock group.

Norman G. was the individual most responsible for A.A. coming to Peterborough. Born in 1900, he was raised and educated in Peterborough and served overseas during WW1 with the Queens Medical Corps. He worked with his father in the building trade. He eventually opened his own business on George St., a flooring and paint supply store. Norm's wife, Bernice, also operated a ladies lingerie store on George St.

## History of Area 83—Peterborough

### The Lift Lock Group Cont'd

Norm was elected city alderman and was inaugurated for the 1951 term. Presumably unaware of the Traditions that were adopted by the A.A. fellowship in 1950, Norm vowed publicly to "fulfill my first term without taking a drop of liquor." A colorful character, he was often at loggerheads with the city administration and handed in his resignation before his term ended in 1952. Nonetheless, Norm later let his name stand for council and was once again elected. Never hesitating to speak his mind, he resigned toward the end of 1953 to run for mayor. Following a lively campaign, Norm upset a popular incumbent to win the mayor's chair for 1954.

After a little more than 4 months as Mayor, Norm fell ill and, after struggling to fulfill his duties, passed away on Dec. 8, 1954. His passing was full front page news and included a description of his "work in starting a local branch of Alcoholics Anonymous."

When Pat H. arrived at the doors of A.A. in March of 1949, the Lift Lock group meetings were held at the Dixon House. They were still meeting at the Dixon House five years later when Pat Hogan was presented with a Five-Year Medallion. However, three years later, when Pat H. had been sober exactly eight years, in April of 1957, the Lift Lock group found a new home at the Stone School on Hunter Street. (Coincidentally, the rear entrance had 12 steps leading to the door.)

The Lift Lock Group celebrated 70 Years on April 24, 2018. They continue to carry the message at Sacred Heart Church at the corner of Romaine and Aylmer St. in Peterborough at 8:00 p.m. The Lift Lock Group is the Mother Group of all Groups and Meetings in Kawartha District. Currently there are 22 active Groups in the Kawartha District and 11 Service meetings.

### Central East Area to Kawartha District

In 1961 Pat H. was elected as a Committee Man for the Central East Area. (Central East Area would be like a District is today.) After 3 or 4 ballots were cast, neither Pat H. of Peterborough nor Mike M. of Oshawa had a two-thirds majority. They were essentially tied. Their names were placed in a hat, and Pat's name was drawn. Pat H.'s new position was the equivalent of a DCM. Mike M. became the Alternate Committee Man.

This original Central East Area was much larger geographically than our present day Kawartha District. There were a total of 10 groups from the following locations: Havelock (Belmont), Keene (Lone member), Peterborough (Lift Lock, Stonewall), Lindsay (Kawartha, Victoria), Whitby (Whitby), Oshawa (Central, Friendship), Bowmanville (Bowmanville) and Port Hope (Hope).

At the first meeting in 1961 with all the GSR's present from all the groups in Central East Area, several motions were voted upon. Although they were grateful to Toronto for all its help in the formative years, Central East Area felt it was now time to stand on their own two feet. They also felt Toronto had many groups of its own to look after.

An Institutional Committee was formed to go into prisons. A chairman was elected to head a special Speaker Committee. He would get names of people who were willing and capable of speaking on special occasions.

Since the groups were widely spread out geographically, they had to travel great distances. They passed a motion to meet once each month in different locations. One month the GSR's would meet in Lindsay, the next month in Peterborough, the next month in Oshawa, the next month in Port Hope, and so on. They also established a Service Panel comprised of four people who were GSRs and who were already involved in Service Work, as well as Pat H. who was the Committee Man and could also speak for what was going on in Peterborough and the surrounding area. Mike M., the assistant Committee Man who lived in Oshawa, could report on developments and service in the west. Apparently it was a great success. Each speaker was allotted ten minutes. As Pat H. reported in a talk he gave at the Thirty-Fifth Anniversary of the Lift Lock Group, "We had Service at the Individual level, Service at the Group level, Service at the District level, and we concluded with a report on World Service."

At a Service meeting in Whitby in 1961, a question and answer session followed the meeting. Mike M. addressed a question to Pat H. He asked, "Why couldn't we have a one day Central East Conference like they had recently in Belleville?" Pat answered, "There's no reason why we couldn't have our own Conference." We can assume there was a much excited talk and many suggestions from those in attendance. As Pat reflected on the moment much later, "Right there and then our Kawartha Conference as it is constituted today was born."

At the next GSR's meeting there were three nominations advanced for Conference Chairman: Earl E., George T., and Pat H. All three were sent out of the room and a vote was taken. They chose George T. who went to Toronto and borrowed the 'Book Of Experience' from the Toronto Conference. This collection of practical suggestions based on actual experience was a great help. A Conference Committee was chosen, and the Empress Hotel in Peterborough was selected because it had a new air conditioning system, a built in PA system, as well as the capacity to accommodate and feed hundreds of people from Ottawa to Hamilton at the proposed One Day Conference.

Following a social at the Stone School on Saturday night, the first Central East Area Conference was held in the Imperial Room of the Peterborough Empress Hotel on June 24, 1962, and was appropriately themed "First Things First."

As A.A. grew in Ontario, the Service Structure changed accordingly. By 1970, Central East Area was referred to as Central East District. Redistricting occurred in 1972 with the formation of the Lakeshore District. That year, there was a Conference held both by Lakeshore District in Oshawa and Central East District in Peterborough. In 1973, the Peterborough Conference was a Kawartha District Conference. Kawartha District at that time included what is now, in 2018, Kawartha District 86 plus Victoria Haliburton District 82. GSR meetings alternated between Peterborough and Lindsay. Prior to the lease of the Intergroup Office on Cameron St., GSR meetings were held at the "Coffee Club" located above the Parklaine Variety at the corner of Park and Braidwood. GSR meetings in Lindsay were held at the Queen St. United Church Annex.

By 1980, Victoria-Haliburton redistricted from the Kawartha District. The first D.C.M. for Victoria-Haliburton District 82 was Glenn A. of Lindsay while Jim R. of Peterborough was D.C.M. for Kawartha District 86.