

MARKINGS

YOUR ARCHIVES INTERCHANGE

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c/o G.S.O., 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115

G.S.O.'s Archives Celebrates 25 Years

On November 3, 2000, your General Service Office Archives celebrated its 25th Anniversary. The idea for organizing an historic collection of the Fellowship's records came from co-founder Bill W., in the early 1950s. Bill was becoming increasingly concerned that, "the history of Alcoholics Anonymous is still veiled in the deep fog." Knowing that the office correspondence was loosely maintained in the drawers at the General Headquarters, he set out to straighten out our historic records. He personally recorded oldtimers' recollections in the Akron/Cleveland area; he sent out boxes of blank tapes to others, encouraging them to record their recollections.

Bill's far-reaching vision outlined an archival message that is still sound today. As he said: "Every one of the new and unexpected developments [in A.A.] has, lying just underneath, an enormous amount of dramatic incident and experience — stories galore. . . . It isn't hard to prepare a fact sheet of what happened — that is dates when people came in, groups started and so forth. The hard thing to lay hold of is the atmosphere of the whole proceedings and anecdotal material that will make the early experience alive."

After many decades of tireless organizing and arrangement, the G.S.O. Archives room was opened with a formal ribbon-cutting ceremony. Here are excerpts from the 1976 February/March *Box 4-5-9* article reporting on the event:

"A minimum of myth about A.A. and its co-founders was called for at the 'official' opening of the A.A. Archives here at the G.S.O.

"Lois W., widow of A.A.'s co-founder Bill, spoke briefly, as did John L. (Dr. Jack) Norris, M.D., nonalcoholic chairman of the board, and Tom S., Jacksonville, FL, a former trustee who chairs the archives at-large committee. A blue ribbon was cut to symbolize the availability of the archival library.

"Dr. Jack pointed out that A.A. can continually renew itself by going back to its source. He recalled Bill W.'s frequent admonition that the board and G.S.O. should put everything they do on record.

"George G., trustee, paid special tribute to Nell Wing, our nonalcoholic archivist, who was Bill's secretary for many years and who is a one-woman walking encyclopedia of A.A. lore. She was a strong force for preserving important

A.A. records long before she took her present job. 'I will never again hear the words "labor of love" without thinking of Nell,' said George."

Note: See photos, page 2.

Continental European Region

The following condensed history was sent to us by Dolores R., archivist, Continental European Region/G.S.O., York, England.

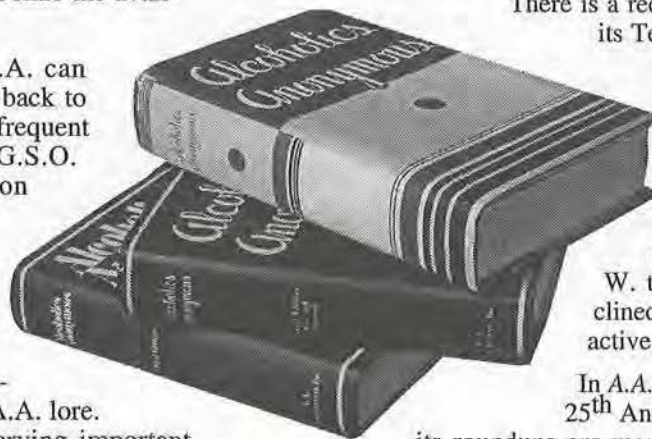
American servicemen stationed in West Germany after World War II brought A.A. with them. Those early meetings were held on various Air Force and Army Bases in Wiesbaden, Frankfurt and elsewhere. There are no known records of these early meetings. The first and formal recorded invitation to an open A.A. meeting in West Germany was on November 1, 1953 in Munich at the Hotel Leopold in Schwabing. Master Sergeant Bob S., who is remembered today for having been very active in carrying the A.A. message, led the meeting and the Germans were heartily invited to attend.

Traveling and working Americans and Britains were also instrumental in helping start groups in such cities as Frankfurt (1948), Paris (1955), Hamburg (1962, with the help of a Mr. Abel from England), and Dusseldorf (1962, with the assistance of Robert from Chicago). Charlie H., from the Rheinland-Pfalz Intergroup recalled that the Ramstein Air Base held its first meeting there in 1962 at the South Side Chapel. He said that, "in the early days there were about 20 active English-speaking A.A. groups in West Germany. Locally, the Wiesbaden group had the strongest sobriety and its members would carry the message down to Ramstein." The 1961 World Directory lists 20 A.A. groups and about 170 members.

There is a record that in 1962 Wiesbaden held its Tenth Annual Roundup in the High School Auditorium. Frank K., Howard P., Clyde H., and Jerry A. were active in the Roundup.

In September 1963, at Wiesbaden's 11th Roundup, they extended an invitation to Bill W. to speak, but Bill gracefully declined. George G. and Robert O. were active in coordinating the event.

In *A.A. Today*, published on Grapevine's 25th Anniversary in 1970, Wiesbaden and its roundups are mentioned. "Much of A.A.'s spread



around the world, of course, has been accomplished by U.S. servicemen and seamen who – needing to stay sober in strange surroundings – started their own groups. There are several now in Europe and since 1952 there has been an annual A.A. Roundup in Wiesbaden, Germany for any A.A. member in Europe who can get there. Hundreds do—by bus, car, train, plane and even helicopter. During the meetings all military members remove their blouses and caps – so the anonymity of A.A. erases all rank.”

In 1964 at the 12th Wiesbaden Roundup an Intergroup is mentioned. On October 11, 1964 the Intergroup of the Greater Frankfurt Area held its first meeting at the Rhein Main Air Base, “To discuss the needs of the A.A. groups within the area.” The groups represented were Frankfurt General Hospital (Am), Wiesbaden Group (Am), Frankfurt Groups (Am), Area German Group (Ger.), Rhein Main Group (Am), Hanau Group (Am), Friedberg Group (Am), and the Fliegerhorst Group (Am). Bob C. was elected secretary. Also present were Roy T., Gene L., Mary M. and Boyd A.

In 1971, Larry S. from Sembach Air Base sent out invitations to all English-speaking A.A. groups in West Germany to attend an Intergroup meeting at Sembach on November 26, 1971. Larry S. was elected secretary of the new Intergroup. At this meeting the Intergroup was geographically divided into areas with each area to elect its own secretary to represent the areas at the Intergroup meetings. The meetings were held every two months. Larry S. wrote to Beth K. at G.S.O. New York and registered the Intergroup and the groups. In 1972, Dr. Jack Norris, a nonalcoholic trustee from G.S.O. New York, was in Germany to contact the military and met with Intergroup members in Sembach and Wiesbaden.

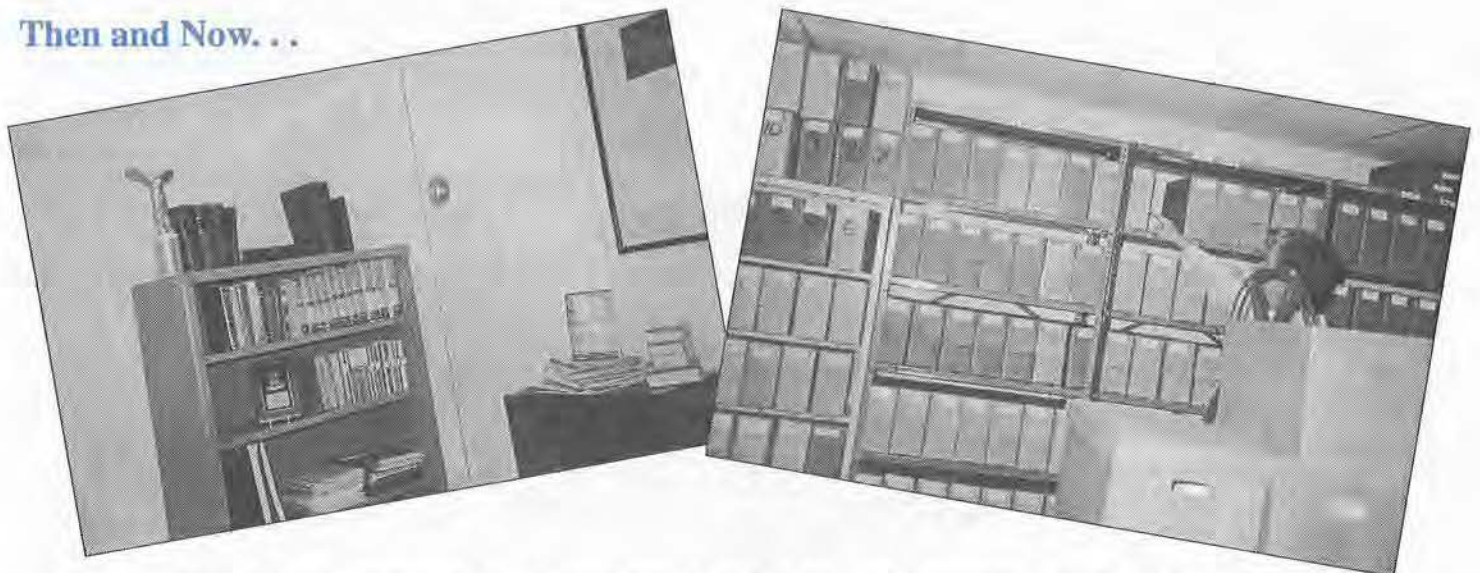
The Intergroup decided to send out Quarterly Newsletters to inform the areas of coming events such as German Conventions, American Roundups, new meetings, the available A.A. films and tapes and the printing of the Intergroup directories. Forrest S., chairman, encouraged the rotation of

Intergroup meetings between the areas. By September 1973 there were nine areas in Intergroup. It was decided that Intergroup sponsor a Roundup each year. The first was held June 29-30, and July 1 in Wiesbaden; Bill K. was the committee chairman.

In 1975 Jack B., Intergroup secretary, wrote to the Fulda Group “that the existence of an Intergroup facilitated problem solving, served to distribute A.A. literature, and provided general service to all A.A.s carrying the message to the still-suffering alcoholic.” By this time, English-speaking A.A. groups were meeting in the larger European cities: Rome held meetings in 1975 in the U.S. Embassy; Paris held its first meeting in 1955 at the Quai d’Orsay; The Hague was the site of the first in Holland in 1975. Rick S. speaks of Igor who, with his friends, made the trip down from Holland to the Nuremberg Roundup in 1975, in search of the A.A. message. Returning to The Hague they started a group which celebrated its 20th Anniversary on October 16, 1995.

Intergroup was growing fast. Roundups in the larger American and Canadian bases were becoming more and more popular. Intergroup Continental Europe now included Finland, Holland, Greece, Italy, Sweden and Switzerland. The growth of the Intergroup brought up the subject of restructuring. David K., chairman in 1980, visited G.S.O. New York in May 1980 and spoke at G.S.O. about becoming part of the U.S. and Canada Conference. Intergroup felt that it was time that the extra-territorial [sic.] service structure in Continental Europe had a say in the whole of A.A. by becoming part of a Conference structure. That same spring, G.S.O. London, G.B., sent out an invitation to Intergroup to attend a conference in Manchester in April 1980. G.S.O. New York wrote to Intergroup stating, “the purpose of becoming a part of the service structure is mainly communications, and it seems to us that your day-to-day dealings are mainly with the European A.A. community, for which the London office functions as a communications coordinator.”

Then and Now . . .



Since the 1970s (when the picture on the left was taken) the G.S.O. Archives has expanded their facilities in order to safely house the Fellowship's treasured materials and make room for today's growing collection (right).

Two delegates were voted to go to Manchester and participate in the General Service Conference of Great Britain. They brought back with them an invitation to join the Great Britain Conference, effective 1981. Intergroup was to send two delegates. The fall 1980 newsletter reported that in July 1980, the Intergroup meeting of area secretaries voted to link Intergroup to the General Service Structure of Great Britain. It was proposed to rename the Intergroup Continental Europe to Continental European Region of English-speaking A.A. February 1981, in Nuremberg, the motion was made to join Great Britain, but there was no second. The motion was withdrawn. Intergroup did continue to send two delegates to Conference.

Intergroup continued to grow. In 1982, there were 13 registered areas. Communication and distances began to pose problems. A restructure meeting was held in Nuremberg in 1985. Jack, from G.S.O. London, was invited to speak and share about how it works in Great Britain. Jack suggested that Intergroup become a Region for the proposal and Ann C. seconded it. The final vote for the proposal was at the Intergroup meeting in Lahr, 1985. The then existing areas were divided into three Intergroups, covering all of continental Europe. The goal was to cut down the distances to travel and to better the communications between the groups, Intergroup and Region and G.S.O. Great Britain at York, in carrying the message to the still-suffering alcoholic. At Lahr, in the Black Forest, in October 1986, new officers were elected for Region and it was proposed to send six delegates to Conference.

The formal request to Conference to become Region 15 in G.S.O. Great Britain was approved in April 1988. Region 15 consisted of three Intergroups: Intergroup I – Northern Europe; Intergroup II – Middle Europe; Intergroup III – Southern Europe, (generally speaking). Since then, there have been many changes and challenges. At first, we believed we needed our own Guidelines. Then areas were formed to increase communication within the Intergroups. Then Areas were reconverted to become new Intergroups. Distances and communication are still a challenge for all participating in the A.A. structure in Europe. The military drawback – U.S. and Canadian – had decreased A.A. membership and many groups are now nonexistent. Region 15 became Continental European Region at Conference 1995 and now has nine intergroups.

News from Archives In Various Locations

Northern Indiana's Archives at Works

On March 25, 2000, Northern Indiana's (Area 22) Archives committee was invited by Districts 55 and 57 to present a workshop on Archives. During a four-hour program considerable information was transmitted, with members of the committee taking various portions of the program. A complete history was given, including the commencement of temperance; the Washingtonians; various movements and studies; causes and cures by society in general and the medical world, and the Oxford Group. Also covered was the effect of A.A. members in Indiana upon A.A. as a whole, including how the individual

is currently involved and each individual's responsibilities to the future of A.A.

Most information given was gleaned from various sources and was not necessarily material offered by current A.A. publications. The "wrap up" included where we are today and where we are headed. Also pointed out was the importance of the individual, the G.S.R., the D.C.M. and the delegate and how the lines of communication should be kept open. The function and importance of Archives was also explained as to its value to the individual as well as to A.A. as a whole, giving the individual the entire picture that each of us serves in all capacities and that we are *each* a part of *all* A.A. activities.

The program as presented was well received by those in attendance. The Area 22 Archives committee has been offering this program to all districts for quite some time and this was its second presentation. They are anxiously awaiting future invitations to carry their message of the importance of Archives—not only for the preservation of our history but in carrying the message of A.A. into the future—in its purest and undiluted form for those who are yet to come.

Floyd P., Area 22, Archives chairman

B.C./Yukon Archives

In 1982 Area 79 determined that the Archives subcommittee had come of age and it was time to locate a permanent repository for the material gathered and, further, that the responsibility for covering expenses would be an area function.

In November 1984, the area rented space from the Vancouver Intergroup Office to house Archives at Kingsway and Joyce. In 1990, we moved a few blocks east on Kingsway, to the location we continue to occupy. A room without windows, but with storage and display space, houses the pictures, documents, and stories of the history of A.A. in Area 79, British Columbia/Yukon.

The current structure of the area's committee is comprised of a committee chair who is chosen by the area to serve in an appointed position for two years. An archivist is appointed to a five-year term. The chair is responsible to attend area meetings at which appointed D.C.M.s meet with him/her to review the progress of projects, etc. Travel kits are put together by either the archivist or the chair to be taken to rallies, round ups and workshops throughout the area. The chair is responsible for informing the members of A.A. throughout the area about the function and the need for Archives. The area registrar informs Archives whenever a new group requests registration at the area level.

A budget is allotted annually to cover travel and supplies. One method of fund raising is to raffle a hardbound copy of the original work in progress manuscript at rallies and roundups. Furthermore, the area chair requests that financial assistance be provided for travel or accommodation to attend the local functions throughout our vast geographic area. A few years ago the area purchased computer equipment with a scanner for the Archives use.

Some of the favorite stories include:

Alcoholics Anonymous was brought to Vancouver, and thus to the Province of British Columbia, by a nonalcoholic busi-

nessman seeking a solution for a family member. Its structure was quite different from what we now know, in that there was a "president" for each "chapter." There were membership requirements and a member who failed to conduct him/herself according to those rules was dismissed from the Fellowship for a time in order to ponder their misconduct. A letter was sent to the offending member outlining the reason for dismissal and telling him/her how he/she must reapply for membership in writing following a period of time. Archives is in possession of a roll call book designating the level of membership: N was for novice; Q was for qualifier; and A was for active. Each member went through this process and if they had a slip they were dropped a notch, so that an A member would be reduced to a Q. Another slip would cost them yet another level, bringing the member to N. If there was another slip they got "the letter." Thankfully, the system was changed and today the Third Tradition is followed everywhere in the area.

Another famous story is about "The Bottle." It seems members carried a bottle and some "blue bombers" when they called on a newcomer. The novitiate was weaned from booze and if he/she lived, taken to meetings. The son of one of the early members brought his father a bottle of whiskey for this purpose, but the practice was discontinued. It was then decided that the bottle would be passed to the member with the most sobriety at an annual round up held in Kamloops. A lovely holding box was built for it, and it passed for many years. Finally, it was determined that the practice should stop and the bottle rests in the Archives office in its battered box.

To contact Archives in the BC/Yukon Area, write: Archives, BC/Yukon Area, P.O. Box 27150, Kingsway RO, Vancouver, BC, V5R 6A8 Canada.

The Helen Old Timers Group

In 1978 there were very few meetings between Gainesville, Georgia and Franklin, North Carolina – this required driving a great distance to go to A.A. meetings if you lived in the Helen, Georgia area. Two people (Betty Z. and DeWayne W.) were so intent on going to A.A. meetings without driving a great distance that each one ran an ad in the local paper – two people that were intent on maintaining sobriety had a coffee pot and held meetings at each other's houses. That meeting was expanded in 1984 when Deanna M., Chris S. and Sandy H. found that meeting of two people – at that time they had not joined the district and were not listed in the A.A. meeting schedule.

The Helen meeting grew with a few more people and in 1988, Betty Z., Deanna M., Chris S. and Sandy H. decided to become a formal meeting in the district. Since there was a lot of sobriety within this small group of A.A. servants, they named themselves the Helen Old Timers Group and would meet on Wednesday nights at eight o'clock in the Presbyterian Church.

The servants of this group (after many discussions) decided to open a Saturday night meeting in 1989 as an Open Door meeting for the tourists and local halfway house. For several years, the Saturday night meeting almost closed its doors due to lack of attendance – because of the servants of this group (Betty Z., Deanna M., Sandy, Von K. and Alan S.) the meeting started to grow as did the Wednesday meeting.

With Milton W. returning to his home in Helen, after retirement from the U.S.C.O.E. in 1994 and with his service to the group and district, in May 2000, the Helen Old Timers Group now sponsors the Wednesday night meeting at 8:00 o'clock; the Wednesday night Al-Anon meeting at 8:00; the Thursday Night Ladies meeting at 6:30; the Thursday night Step Study at 8:00; the Saturday night A.A. meeting, as well as the Al-Anon meeting, both 8:00, are held at the Helen Presbyterian Church.

The Helen Old Timers Group is grateful to the pastors and The Session of the Helen Presbyterian Church for the use of their Fellowship Hall for the Alcoholic Anonymous and Al-Anon meetings.

Alcoholics Anonymous is alive and well in Helen, Georgia and the surrounding area, and we are grateful to those who have gone before us to the Big Meeting In The Sky: Betty Z., DeWayne W., and Chris S.

Area 16, Georgia, District 16A

A Personal History of A.A.

We celebrate the life and sobriety of Tex B., who sadly passed away after this article was submitted for publication.

I came into A.A. February 6, 1947 in Skokie, Illinois. I made a telephone call to a friend who I knew was in A.A. and she came to my apartment and attempted to tell me about Alcoholics Anonymous. I was drinking and passed out in the middle of the call. I don't remember taking my last drink.

When I woke up, Jo and her husband, Bill, were waiting. They were old drinking companions of mine, but now were in A.A. We did not spend much time on my qualifications as an alcoholic, as this was not in dispute. However, Bill did talk about the nature of alcoholism, that there was no cure, and that I might die an alcoholic. The question was...soon? Or sometime later, sober. Was I willing to do anything to be able to stop my drinking? I thought that this was a rhetorical question but he was insistent, "Are you willing to do anything to stop drinking?" After I gave a shaky, "Yes," he read the Twelve Steps to me.

Back in our drinking days Bill and I had had several boozy discussions of our atheism. But now he was talking about a Higher Power and God. I objected. He didn't give an inch, "This is what we talk about in A.A., and we are not going to change it because you don't like hearing about God. You said that you were willing to do anything to stop drinking...I am asking you to keep an open mind about this. I am not asking you to believe in God, just keep an open mind and respect the fact that some of us do believe. He was willing to risk driving me away from A.A. rather than deny or conceal that A.A. was a spiritual program.

We talked about the strength of the commitment I was willing to make to the program. He reminded me how much I had put into my drinking, that after I took the first drink my commitment was total (I went on long violent sprees). The strength of my commitment to A.A. should equal or exceed the strength of the insanity of starting to drink again.

After I managed to eat a bowl of soup, they left some pam-

phlets and went home. I read, "20 Questions" (19-yes, 1-no) and "So You Can't Stop Drinking?" (three times).

The next night they took me to the home of Bill W. in Mount Prospect and I heard his story and we talked about working the program. I was loaned a copy of the Big Book to read. I first read the book by laying face down on a studio couch with the book on the floor. I shook too much to hold it.

Then we met at Bill and Jo's house, where we talked about the Steps. It was decided that I should start working on the Fourth Step because I couldn't/wouldn't work on Two and Three.

On the third night, I was taken to a meeting. This was done only after I was sober, had the program explained to me, had made a commitment to a serious effort and they had made a judgment that I really did intend to quit drinking. I think that they felt that if I only had one chance to make it in A.A., they didn't want me to waste it by coming in too soon.

At the meeting, they talked about me just like I was not there. "He can't make it, he's too young (29)... You have to be at least 40... He can't have suffered enough." And so on; they really believed that I was too young to get sober in A.A. They wanted me to stay. They hoped I could stay sober but didn't think it would work out. I got mad and this was a blessing. I stayed.

In the suburbs, the meetings were held in homes, usually on Thursday night. Refreshments were served after the meeting. In some groups (i.e. Glenview) the spread was lavish, often by those who could least afford it. A few members got drunk over this. Skokie tended to be prudent.

On Tuesday night, I was taken downtown to the Chicago Open Meeting. This was in the auditorium of the Olympic Building, 80 W. Randolph. We went early to attend the beginners meeting. When we came out the auditorium was full, 1500-2000 people! It was exciting to see this many alcoholics all at once. I had seen 20 at a group meeting...but 2000! It was a very emotional time for me. I knew that I never had to be alone again. One reason that this meeting was so large was that there were no other open meetings in the Chicago area. I asked why and was told that it was not permitted. I didn't question this for several years.

Home group meetings were usually eight to twelve people (what you could get in a living room). The host was responsible for the topic and refreshments. When a group got too big for a living room, the group was split. The group secretary was the treasurer, kept contact with the Chicago Central Office and assigned the Twelfth Step calls. Sometimes they assigned sponsors, who were expected to know why someone had missed a meeting and so on. Sponsorship was formal; the two members making the first call became the new member's sponsors; if for some reason this wouldn't work, the secretary assigned someone else.

Sponsorship was serious. The sponsor explained the Steps and gave advice on how to work a Step. He was expected to know what Step the sponsoree was working on, to know what problems he was having and to help if he could. The sponsoree was expected to be honest and open, and to tell the sponsor what was happening in his life.

Groups were fewer than now, so the members were closer and more dependent on each other and the group. Often one

member would call another just to see if they were still there (of course, you didn't say so). Maybe we were not too sure that this thing was really going to work. Two of the effects of this were strong resentments between members (cabin fever), and the emergence (sometimes) of the group strong man or group Führer.

Resentment is the number one offender. It often seemed that the biggest problem we had was resentment of other A.A.s. These resentments were very intense, just why I am not sure. It had something to do with the closeness of the group relationships; we mirrored each others faults. My foibles were monstrous and gross in someone else. Because we were A.A.s I expected a much higher standard of behavior from them (and myself), and I was angry. It seemed that it was very important that we all have the same interpretation of the program. We had heated arguments over minor points of doctrine. Because we didn't know how A.A. was keeping people sober, we were very touchy about anybody with new or different ideas. I suppose we had a gut feeling that they were messing around with the foundations of our sobriety.

Sometimes the group was like a pressure cooker. The same old stories and attitudes, week after week. Group pride and loyalty were high. There was fear of leaving the group just because you couldn't stand someone. You would not be welcomed with open arms at another group if they suspected that you were having trouble in your own group. We learned about resentments fast. Emmet Fox's, *Sermon on the Mount* was as popular as the Big Book. Few people drank over these resentments, the program was supposed to fix things. It usually did. We prayed for each other—a lot.

The group strong man was like a tribal chieftain who saw to the affairs of "his group." Often he was the oldest member, was retired or could devote a lot of time to his chosen task. If he was benign he was the Sponsor and told everyone what to do and how to do it. If this included personal service the job was a killer. One of these living saints worked tirelessly managing the affairs of a large flock of pigeons. One night he died in his sleep. Fifteen of them got drunk.

Another also worked tirelessly, but with A.A. women, always accompanied by his nonalcoholic wife. This was thought to be a great thing until people began to realize that none of the ladies were staying sober. It later developed that he blamed his wife for the loss of a key promotion before he retired. She spent too much money and ruined his credit (this was in addition to his booze bills). He was angry and blamed all women. A different kind of 13th Step work!

One man hung around the Chicago office contributing both time and money. "C" did a lot of good work, but he also took most of the Twelfth Step calls west of Oak Park for his group. "C" controlled this group absolutely. After a couple of years sobriety in the Skokie Group, I attended a meeting of "C's" group. "C" sat in state, with his lieutenants on each side, and the attendance was taken. Someone gave a report on each missing member. One poor wretch, a local barber, was banished because he had questioned "C's" wisdom and authority. Members were forbidden to speak to him or have any contact of any kind. It was a speaker meeting so I did not have much of a chance to sample the quality of their brand of A.A., but I was not impressed. I never went back.

There were two other groups in the area, "S's group" and "the Colonel's group." Groups had the name of their leader. I went to "S's" group; they invited me to join and would take a vote to see if my A.A. wife could join too. Again, I never went back. The "Colonel's group" had two women, so we went there. It was the best choice, several A.A.s with good sobriety moved in and we had a good group after a few skirmishes to redefine the authority.

"C's and S's groups" did not acknowledge any other groups in the area. Members of "C's group" were scattered throughout the area because of "C" taking all of the Twelfth Step calls, and these people were not told that there was a local A.A. group. When they did find out they were told not to associate with any of us. For years after "C's" death they kept apart, until the group just disappeared.

The most absolute of the A.A. "bosses" was "J," the founder of the A.A. group in a nearby city. "J" started and nursed the A.A. group. It was successful and as it grew rapidly someone would suggest a split. "J" would assemble the group and give his "Fellows, you can't do this to me" speech; then he would break down and cry. He earned the name of "Crying J." He was successful in preventing any other groups from being established. "J" had good relations with the local police. As a result, one group of dissidents who held their first meeting in a church basement, came out and found parking tickets on every car. Others were denounced as not "real A.A." and meeting places were denied. Gossip was used as a weapon, one group was described to me as "Black A.A., the women and slippers." Serious A.A.s went to meetings in nearby towns or moved. The founder and his friends hindered the growth of A.A. in this city for two decades. "J" died a few years ago; there are about 20 groups in his city now.

In the beginnings of A.A., these things were possible because we were few in number, and had nobody of experience or tradition to guide us. People would just go to another meeting if this occurred now. We were willing to accept sobriety as evidence of the wisdom and the right to the authority of the founder or oldtimer. We now know that sobriety does not mean that the alcoholic has learned how to control the ego and is now qualified as a trusted servant of A.A.

In 1950, I attended the first International A.A. Convention in Cleveland. This was a wonderful thing and a wonderful time. Everyone was excited about everything—especially getting to see and hear Bill and Dr. Bob. I was deeply affected by what was obviously Dr. Bob's last talk. I was scheduled to speak at the Chicago open meeting the next week, so I attempted to enhance my prestige by being the messenger to bring back the co-founder's last words. I misquoted him as saying, "Keep It Simple!" I completely missed what he was actually saying about "Love and Service." I sincerely and deeply regret this. There is no solace in the fact that many others did the same thing. The slogan, "Keep It Simple" has become a permanent A.A. cop-out. But Dr. Bob did not say it. What he did say was, "There are two or three things that flashed into my mind on which it would be fitting to lay a little emphasis. One is the simplicity of our Program. Let's not louse it all up with Freudian complexes and things that are in-

teresting to the scientific mind, but have very little to do with our actual A.A. work. Our Twelve Steps, when simmered down to the last, resolve themselves into the words 'Love' and 'Service.' We understand what love is, and we understand what service is. So let's bear those two things in mind."

On Sunday morning the Spiritual Meeting was held. I was excited by the prospect that I was going to rub elbows with the real heavy hitters in the God department. I do not remember the name of the main speaker but his topic dealt with the idea that the alcoholic was to be the instrument that God would use to regenerate and save the world. He expounded on the idea that alcoholics were God's Chosen People and was starting to talk about "The Third Covenant," when he was interrupted by shouted objections from the back of the room. The objector, who turned out to be a small Catholic priest, would not be hushed up. There was chaos and embarrassment as the meeting was adjourned. I was upset and was in full sympathy with the poor speaker. I did not realize it at the time, but I had seen Father Pfau in action and Father Pfau was right. I had heard the Group Conscience and I rejected it. The format for an A.A. meeting was much simpler than it is now. Most of the meetings were in homes. The host conducted the meeting, and opened the meeting with a quiet time. Then the topic was introduced (usually a Step), it was discussed and the meeting was closed with the Lord's Prayer. There were no introductory readings and no identification (My name is Jack S. and I am an alcoholic) whenever you spoke. If you had the meeting, you were expected to have a prepared topic. You did not ask, "does anyone have a problem?" hoping to fluff off the fat that you did not prepare anything.

The quality of the program worked by those who were really trying was about the same as it is now. But we had some extra things going for us. In the early days we were closer to the source. I was fortunate enough to be able to talk to the two people who had actually had a spiritual "experience." I think that hearing a second-hand account of Bill's experience in Towns Hospital was a turning point in my life. This was told to me by a close friend and sponsoree of Bill's who had finally had an experience of his own. This kind of contact was available to me. I was able to talk to Bill on the telephone for over an hour. I went on one of Father Pfau's retreats. It was a time of great opportunity. There was a special feeling in being part of something important that was happening. A.A. was beginning its rapid growth and one had the feeling of the Power that was behind the whole thing.

Our attitudes about the program were different and this was due to several causes. We did not know just how the program would work for people who were not sure they were alcoholic. It was often suggested to a prospect that they do more drinking, to be sure that they were ready. The prospects were lower bottom than they are now. They were handled differently, Twelfth Step calls were to tell your stories, to explain the A.A. program, give the prospect a chance to back out and finally to make a commitment. A prospect who regarded their situation as a temporary embarrassment or that they were the innocent victim of circumstance was discouraged. I think that there is a difference in how many are really trying.