

MARKINGS

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The Unity Group (TUG) Lynnwood, Washington — A Brief History

The Unity Group (TUG) was started on April 6, 1993 as a result of the fellowship hall, called Wanda's Club 4, imposing a minimum rent for each meeting. The daily 7:00 am meeting could not afford the minimum, so we were evicted from the fellowship hall.

Jim W. and Bob N. found a location for the meeting down the road at a local restaurant. The deal we had made with the restaurant was that we would buy breakfasts and leave a tip for the waitress for the use of the room. Steve G. was our first G.S.R. After a time, the restaurant stated that we were not generating enough money, even though the older members had been buying breakfasts every day and several were putting on extra weight as a result. The basket had to be passed several times to get enough money to properly tip the waitress. Many were unable to attend daily, because of the expense, not to mention the group's weight gain.

Once again, we were faced with moving. At this time, Gail S. arranged with a treatment center to have meetings at their location daily for one half of the daily basket, whatever that was. At this time, TUG took over the Monday night meeting that had been started by the treatment center. This gave rise to the statement that you hear to this day, "TUG meets 8 days a week." This arrangement allowed for TUG to exist for years. When the treatment center moved a few miles we moved with them. Eventually the treatment center moved to a facility that did not accommodate a large meeting. TUG, at this time, moved to its current location, another treatment center arranged by Gail S. We have the same agreement that we had with the previous treatment center (50 percent of the basket each day).



Home of Bill W.'s maternal grandparents (north of current Inn), in East Dorset, Vermont. Bill lived here at about ten years of age.

The TUG meeting has always been a popular meeting, primarily with people interested in the A.A. Literature. Our group conscience decided in the very early years to read something from A.A. Literature every day. TUG reads pamphlets, the Big Book — first 164 pages, the stories in the back of the Big Book, the Traditions from the Twelve and Twelve and other literature; there is a Twelve Steps/Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts study. Sunday is the Eleventh Step and meditation meeting. TUG over the years has read *A.A. Comes of Age*, *Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers*, *Came to Believe*, *Daily Reflections*, *The Home Group — Heartbeat of A.A.* and most approved A.A. Literature. The TUG group has always been a large contributor of funds and people to the A.A. structure to help carry the message. Three of the original members regularly attend the meeting and many other old friends from the past drop in occasionally.

Bob N.

Alcoholics Anonymous in South Carolina — A Brief History

Our hope is that when this chip of a book is launched on the world tide of alcoholism, defeated drinkers will seize upon it, to follow its suggestions. Many, we are sure, will rise to their feet and march on. They will approach still other sick ones and fellowships of Alcoholics Anonymous may spring up in each city and hamlet, havens for those who must find a way out.

Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 153

In the archives of the General Service Office in New York there is a letter dated November 13, 1942, from an attorney in Spartanburg named John L. Apparently this is the earliest, written inquiry to the office from someone in South Carolina. The group that later was established because of his inquiry marks the beginning of Alcoholics Anonymous in our state. John L. wrote in part, "A group of us are interested in the book published about 1939 by your society and are interested in forming a local chapter." Other correspondence in the New York archives indicates the group experienced difficulty getting started, but eventually did hold its first official meeting on September 15, 1944, at the Cleveland Hotel in Spartanburg with six members in attendance.

In the summer of 1946, Marvin M. moved to Spartanburg from Atlanta, Georgia and discovered that the group no longer existed. He resurrected the group and the members began calling it the Central Group. The group, however, again had problems meeting consistently and became inactive. In 1955, a

new Central Group was started and began holding meetings regularly at 202 Pine Street and later at 109 Wall Street. In the early 1950s, several A.A. members in Spartanburg formed Alconon Inc. Records indicate the corporation obtained funding and later was able to purchase property and construct a facility at 349 East St. John Street. Members attending meetings at the location started the second group in Spartanburg and named it the St. John Group, after the street. In the early 1970s, the Central Group and the St. John Group merged and became known as the Central-St. John Group.

Information in the South Carolina General Service Committee's Archives indicates a woman in Columbia, named Mary D., wrote the then named Alcoholic Foundation in New York in late November 1944. Mary informed the office that she and two other members of Alcoholics Anonymous had started an A.A. group in the city. She also stated in her letter that the names of the other two members were David H. and John C. and that their little group was holding meetings in the private dining room of the Jefferson Hotel where John C. was employed.

Documentation also relates that the group later began referring to itself as the Central Group and had moved to 819 Harden Street in the mid-1940s. Additionally, records indicate that a club named A Corporation of Alcoholics (ACOA) was registered with the South Carolina Secretary of State's office on January 31, 1947, as a nonprofit organization. Following the corporation's construction of a facility at 2015 College Street, the group began holding meetings there in the fall of 1947.

Records in the General Service Office show that a William H. of Charleston, South Carolina began corresponding with the office as early as 1943. He stated in one of his letters that he had been sober for over ten years outside of A.A., but would be glad to help get Alcoholics Anonymous started in Charleston. As often occurred when starting new groups in A.A.'s early days, William H. experienced a great many problems. Finally, after several failed attempts to start a group and with the help of other A.A. members, including Mary D. who had moved to Charleston from Columbia, he eventually was able to have the group hold its first official meeting on March 26, 1946, at St. Phillip's Episcopal Church's Parish House. The group, however, later dissolved. In 1948 two other groups in Charleston, the Mid-Town Group and Tidewater Group, started meeting.

Newspaper clippings, directories and other material in the archives of the South Carolina General Service Committee reveal that Alcoholics Anonymous grew rapidly in South Carolina during the late 1940s and early 1950s. Groups were started in cities across the state, including Greenville (1945), Anderson (1946), Bennettsville (1947), Laurens (1948), Greenwood (1948), Conway (1950), Greer (1951) and Lancaster (1952). Archival material also reveals that the first state convention in South Carolina was held in Charleston, July 16-18, 1948, at the Francis Marion Hotel and approximately 100 A.A. members attended the convention. Data in the archives also discloses that by the end of 1952 the membership of Alcoholics Anonymous in South

Carolina had reached 917 and that there were 44 groups registered with the New York office. In addition, John J. from Cheraw became the first delegate elected from our state and he attended the General Service Conference in New York in 1952 and 1953.

Directories show that the growth of Alcoholics Anonymous in our state continued throughout the 1950s and 1960s. The membership in 1959 had increased to 1,015 and there were 64 groups. By 1969, there were 1,294 active A.A. members attending meetings in South Carolina or, as officially designated Area 62 by New York, divided itself into three regions known as the Upper Region, Central Region, and Lower Region. In the mid-1970s, districts were created in Area 62 and the committee system was initiated which further facilitated growth in our state.

Recorded information states that the first Intergroup office, named the Greater Columbia Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous, opened in Columbia in September 1979, followed by other intergroup offices opening in the 1980s in Greenville, Charleston, and Myrtle Beach. These offices provided members easy access to meeting information and allowed for the quick purchase of literature. In the 1980s and 1990s, a great deal of meeting diversification also came about in South Carolina. In addition to standard speaker and discussion type meetings, A.A. meeting schedules show that Big Book study meetings, Twelve and Twelve meetings, young people's meetings, women's meetings, gay meetings and other specialized meetings became commonplace across the state of South Carolina. Meetings also began to be held in the mornings, at noon, in the afternoons and late at night. Moreover, nonsmoking meetings became the norm in most places. Today, groups can be found everywhere in our state, from large metropolitan areas which have scores of groups and hundreds of meetings, to small towns such as Denmark, Estill, Ridgeway, and Greeleyville that have only one or two meetings a week.

Archival material reflects that the 50th Annual South Carolina State A.A. Convention was held March 20-23, 1997, at the Adams Mark Hotel in Columbia, South Carolina, with nearly 800 members in attendance. Information in Area 62's archives also relates that in April 1997, at the 47th General Service Conference in New York, Betty S. from Columbia was elected Southeast regional trustee. Also, that in October 1999, Darwin H., from Conway, South Carolina, was elected Area 62's delegate and that he attended the 50th General Service Conference.

Bill W. expressed the hope in *Alcoholics Anonymous* when it was first published in 1939, that our Fellowship would one day reach everywhere and that it might provide a means of recovery for alcoholics who wanted to recover. As we enter a new millennium, data shows that we have grown in our state from one group and six members in 1944 to over 300 groups and approximately 6,300 members in the year 2000. It is evident that Bill's hope has been realized to a large extent in our state. May God continue to bless us.

Anonymous March 13, 2001

Churchtown Group Pennsville, New Jersey — A Brief History

The Churchtown Group is believed to be oldest continuing active A.A. Group in Area 45, Southern New Jersey. Oldtimers we have talked to date this group as starting sometime in 1946. Churchtown, which is located in the township of Pennsville, New Jersey, just south of the Delaware Memorial Bridge, most likely received its name due to the number of houses of worship in the vicinity.

Early A.A. members would travel to Wilmington, Delaware, just across the Delaware River from Pennsville, to see and learn how A.A. worked. The group in Delaware was known as the Wilmington Group and, at the time, members held their meetings on Friday evenings at a Jewish Synagogue at 18th and Washington Streets in Wilmington.

Current members of the Wilmington Group now meet on Friday nights at 9th and West Streets in Wilmington and at the time of this writing, the group is 56 years young!

The Jersey A.A.s were Bill D., Jim A., Lew P. and Jim H. At the time, A.A. was in its infancy in this area of South Jersey and information about the particulars of how meetings operated is sketchy at best.

The first meetings were held in the Democrat Club, just a few blocks from where the present day meetings are held. One thing of note about the meetings at the Democrat Club was that they had a fully-stocked bar. What a place to have an A.A. meeting! In spite of conditions, the Churchtown Group did survive and it has made a difference in the lives of countless people over the past 54 years. Today, group members continue to hold meetings on Monday nights at the St. George Episcopal Church, Parish Hall in Pennsville.

Paul P., Archivist, Area 45



St. George, Parish Hall, Pennsville



Churchtown meeting room

Guelph Group's 50th Anniversary Guelph, Ontario, Canada — A Report

Tonight, April 1st, 1996, is a happy and historic occasion for Alcoholics Anonymous in Guelph and the surrounding area. In observing its 50th A.A. Birthday, anything that might be considered a "long form" account dating back to 1946 will be the work of our dedicated volunteers in the archives. Tonight's meeting will also form part of our history, and we are pleased to have Joe C. (Willowdale Group) as our honored guest speaker. Joe was very much a part of the picture in the early days of A.A. in Guelph. I can recall one of our oldtimers, Dave P., from Hespeler (South Waterloo Group, Scout House, Preston) mentioning in his talk that Joe was one of the first speakers, if not *the* first, when the old Guelph Group had its meetings at Homewood. I believe that some simple research would confirm that Dr. Baugh, a longtime friend and supporter of A.A., was director of Homewood at that time. A Sister Isadore from St. Joseph's Hospital often referred to Dave P. as her bald-headed son and on one occasion, when Dave was

being admitted after another battle with John Barleycorn, the only room she had for her son was the flower room.

It is almost impossible to list the many good friends of A.A. in the outside community. These were the doctors, pastors (who allowed us to meet in their churches and to make full use of their kitchen facilities), hospital staff and yes, even the police! This group had its closed discussion meetings at the downtown police station for a considerable time and their consideration and cooperation is well remembered and appreciated.

In the earlier days, prior to answering services, doors were open in the community for those who were active in Twelfth Stepping. The local Y.M.C.A. building on Quebec Street (Park Mall now) was a residence for many who came to their first meetings, who had no place to call home. This tied in, at the same time, with two other very helpful establishments. One of these was the Minute Lunch, also on Quebec Street and the dear lady at the City of Guelph Welfare Office, Mrs. Cadwell. She issued lunch tickets to deserving clients and these were honored at Greg's Minute Lunch. A hot beef sandwich was 45¢ at Greg's at that time.

One could go on and on with writing down recollections, occurrences and some very special days and times from our yesterdays and this would be a labor of love. For our special meeting, a “brief” history must, in fairness, be just that.

Our first member in Guelph, Clair McC., brought A.A. here from Toronto. It wasn't long before he attracted another and then others came. Meetings were held in homes then and our present archivist has material and old members' cards (with sobriety dates) dating to those early beginnings.

One of the early meeting places was at the “Five Points,” above the tinsmith's shop on Woolwich Street. The stairs were numbered 1 to 12 going up and at the top was a clock with the 12 letters of our slogan — Remember When. This was the old Alano Club.

For quite a few years the Guelph Group met at Downtown Knox Church. This is where Punchy and so many others came to their first meeting. Reverend D. Crawford Smith was Pastor (and Padre) and was a great friend of Alcoholics Anonymous.

The group had two meetings a week, one open and the other a closed discussion. In later years, the discussion meeting was held at the Delhi St. Rec. Centre. This group evolved into what is now Pathfinders, which meets Sunday mornings at the Homewood.

Many other groups in the area had their roots in the Guelph Group, including Acton Mobile and the old Elora Group (meeting was across from St. Mary's R.C. Church, in the little school house) and those early members and their groups kept very close ties. There was a lot of visiting between Kitchener-Waterloo and Guelph, i.e. the Highland Road Group and also North Waterloo Group.

One of our members started the inside group (Serenity Seekers) at the Ontario Reformatory, Guelph in 1949. This meeting has been continuous there over the years and the founding member's widow, Alice (in her 90s) and the old superintendent's widow, Greta (in her 80s) have been honored as guests at the annual one-day Round-Up, which happens every September. These special people are a link, a connection, to where we've come from.

There is so much more that will be recorded for those who follow after us. But here we are, by the Grace of God, and mindful of our co-founders Bill W. and Dr. Bob and the great movement that many believe was inspired by a Higher Power.

May we take the liberty of saying that this is a family birthday for all A.A.s in this area and our deep gratitude goes out to those who walked the walk and had the courage to start A.A. in Guelph, not seeking or desiring recognition of any kind.

Some of us were fortunate enough to share with Joe at the Willowdale Group of A.A. on the occasion of his 50th A.A. birthday last year. Thanks Joe, to you and your dear wife, for carrying the message all those days ago and our heartfelt appreciation for making the trip to share in our 50th tonight.

Doug F.

Note: The author wrote that since this history was written, “it has become apparent that the Guelph Group was ‘exported’ here from Toronto and the first meetings began in 1947, so-a year-out.”