

MARKINGS

YOUR ARCHIVES INTERCHANGE

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

North Florida Area Committee (NFAC) Opens Repository

North Florida Area history was made on April 12, 2002 at 1:00 pm, when the North Florida Area Archives Repository was officially opened at a ribbon-cutting ceremony. We were privileged to witness Michael S., alternate delegate, NFAC and Corliss G., chairperson, NFAC, cut the red ribbon. Several area members were in attendance for the ribbon-cutting ceremony, which was followed by an Open House. We have received help from Bruce C., a fellow member and professional archivist. Our members made all of this possible through love and service.

Our area is very excited about our repository, which is equipped with air conditioning, dehumidifier, file cabinet, tables, chairs and display cases. We will be able to display all of our archives, instead of the lesser amounts of items we were able to display at area workshops. We have a wealth of notebooks, folders, group histories, delegate correspondence and notes, and area minutes dating to the 1960s. Our projects include working on a complete collection of the Grapevine and having items restored and placed in archival quality sleeves.

A partial inventory has been completed and our committee will add to that. We hope to have completed the inven-



Michael S. and Corliss G. cutting the ribbon to open N. Florida's Archives.

tory so we can catalog items and determine which items will be restored. This is the first time our area Finance chair will have received an archives inventory.

The goals of the Archives Committee are to keep in tact our rich North Florida Area history, as well as gather material to publish a factual book and thus make this material available to our Fellowship.

*Ellie B.,
NFAC Archives chair, Archives Committee*

A.A. in Colorado Long-Timer Interview Questions

In the G.S.O. Archives Workbook, under the Oral History Collecting Guidelines, there is a list of suggested questions. A number of archives have asked us to expand on that list. Tom S. has shared the following questionnaire with us, which was developed by Area 10, District 24 Archives, and we thought this list might also be of interest to all of you!

Here is a list of questions to guide you in conducting your long-timer interview. Feel free to add questions of your own, allow the interview to take on a life of its own and, most importantly, to have fun! Nevertheless, before you begin taping, explain that our primary interest is in A.A.'s role in the story. The focus is on our A.A. History in Colorado, how we were, what happened and what we are like now. As always, the emphasis is on sobriety, rather than drinking. Perhaps the member can begin his/her story with his/her initial contact with the program.

Begin the tape by identifying yourself, and providing the date of the taping. Then introduce the member.

- How and when did you get started in A.A.? When and where did you sober up? Where did you go to your first meeting?
- How did you first learn about A.A.?
- Did you have a sponsor when you first came in? What type of sponsorship did you have?
- How many groups or meetings were in existence?
- Can you recall the formats used at some of those early meetings? How were they run?
- When was A.A. started in your town or area? How often were meetings held? Who were some of the people

playing important roles in the formation of new groups? What else do you know about the growth of A.A. during that period of time?

- What contributions did you, yourself, make to the growth of the Fellowship? (Don't be unnecessarily modest!)

- We say sometimes that all that's needed to form an A.A. meeting is two drunks, a resentment and a coffeepot. Can you talk at all about the differences that led to new groups being formed in your area?

- In *A.A. Comes of Age* Bill W. writes about numerous issues over which anger and contention arose and threatened the undoing of our Fellowship. The groups nationwide, for example, did not immediately accept spiritual principles we know today as the Twelve Traditions. What controversies over issues addressed in the Traditions can you recall people wrestling with? (How were meeting spaces acquired? Was rent or other funding obtained by gambling sessions? Bingo games? How did the membership resolve these affairs?)

- What individuals were especially prominent in your sobriety?

- How were new members contacted? What kinds of Twelfth Step work were going on? Are there any Twelfth Step anecdotes that stick out in your mind that you'd care to share?

- Today, A.A. is well known to, and supported by, police officers, judges and corrections officials. What kind of relationship did A.A. in your area have with local authorities? How has that changed since you sobered up?

- In 1970, a need was identified in Area 10: doctors were in want of information about alcoholism, recovery, and the program of Alcoholics Anonymous. That was when we first developed the Adopt a Doctor Program, which consists of a short A.A. FAQ sheet, which is distributed to physicians by members as they go in for check-ups and other appointments. This *was* actually being done informally during A.A.'s earliest years — in fact, the first people we contacted were doctors and preachers. But here's the question; in the early years, was *more* outreach being done toward physicians than today? Can you see a need to increase the outreach effort now? Did doctors, in your experience, feel A.A. was encroaching upon their territory?

- Treatment facilities in this millennium frequently host A.A. and other Twelve Step meetings. Did treatment centers exist in your area when you sobered up? Did any of them use a Twelve Step format or incorporate meetings into their structure?

- Did you seek the cooperation of other local community or professional agencies?

- Can you remember the "Ask an Alcoholic" radio show that aired weekly during the 1950s? Today, radio and television public service announcements for A.A., as well as Internet Web sites, are becoming commonplace. When you first got sober, how did A.A.s interact with the media?

Have you had any profound experiences sharing your relationship with alcohol with the public? What cautions might you have for young A.A.s today regarding media exposure?

- During the early years of your recovery, how did the community receive Alcoholics Anonymous?

- Do you think your group(s) has had an influence in your community? If so, how?

- What do you remember of early conferences, assemblies, and conventions? Can you recall opening intergroup or central offices?

- Have you had any contact with G.S.O.?

- Today, Conference-approved literature is available to help A.A. members deal with a wide variety of challenging questions. Back in the old days all you had was the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, common sense and your compassion. How did early A.A.s treat newcomers? How did your group(s) treat constant slippers? Thirteenth steppers? How were people wishing to talk about multiple addictions during your meetings addressed? How about nonalcoholic drug addicts walking in off the street for their first meeting?

- In what ways has A.A. changed over the years?

Thanks, everyone, for your involvement, your energy, and your time. You guys rock! In love and service,

Tom S., Area 10, District 24

Archive for Saturday A.M. Big Book Study Group, Garden Grove, California

The meeting began in late 1993 at the Alano Club in Garden Grove, California. The original motivation came from an overcrowded situation at an ongoing meeting (F-Troop) and a desire to be a nonsmoking meeting. The founding members were: Judy S., Linda N., Charlene M., Tom D., Millie E., Jim M., and Hope C. (Al-Anon). The original meetings took place at the Alano Club on Belfast Drive in California on Saturday at 10:30 am.

The idea for the meeting format stemmed from a meeting held locally in Huntington Beach. The format is to read through the Big Book, one paragraph at a time, starting with the Preface, continuing through the 164 pages including Dr. Bob's story and selecting, by unanimous vote, one story at the end of the Book. After each paragraph is read, any alcoholic who wishes to share may do so. This format was adopted to stay on the topic and understand the information being read. The last 10 to 15 minutes is reserved for the Al-Anons and those with less than 90 days to share.

Originally, there was no hand clapping after the sharing. This was changed soon after the meeting began by a vote of the steering committee.

The format has the benefit of requiring the newcomers



The Alano Club, Garden Grove, California.

to listen and learn from those with more time. The Al-Anons also listen and learn, but often find it difficult to keep quiet. But they have much in common with the A.A.s and benefit from listening to the sharing and sharing helps Al-Anons with living, while at the same time helping to keep A.A.s sober.

The meetings were well established by the second quarter of 1994. Evidence of this is the Certificate of Courage given to one of the founding members, Hope C., on May 3, 1994.

The meeting was listed with the General Service Office (G.S.O.) on October 26, 1994 under the name Big Book Study Group. The first general service representative (G.S.R.) was Narciso P. On April 23, 1997 the name was changed with G.S.O. to Saturday A.M. Big Book Study Group with Charlene M. as the G.S.R. and a membership of 10.

As of the second quarter of 2002, the group still meets at the same place in the "Small Room" at the Alano Club and has 25 members. Bob W. is the G.S.R. and the meeting is still listed in the A.A. Directory as the Big Book Study Group.

Bob W., District 7

Note: This story previously appeared in the *Lifeline* newsletter. It is reprinted with the permission of the author and the (California) Orange County Intergroup Association of A.A.

The Gramercy Group, Manhattan, New York 45th Anniversary — 9/26/01

In 1955, at just about the same time that A.A. was celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the Fellowship at the International A.A. Convention in St. Louis, a small group of men and women gathered in an apartment at 6 Peter Cooper Road. They decided that it was time to carry the A.A. message to this area of Manhattan.

In 1956, an announcement appeared in a local newspaper stating that "The Gramercy Group of Alcoholics Anonymous will hold its first meeting on Wednesday, September 26,



The "Small Room" at the Alano Club, where the Saturday A.M. Big Book Study Group meets.

1956, in the Parish House of St. George's Church, 207 E. 16th Street." Thus was born our home group, Gramercy, first called the *Gramercy 8 O'clock Group*.

According to General Service Office Archives, meetings were held on Wednesdays and Fridays at 8:00 pm. Meetings were "open" to all on Wednesdays, but "closed" on Fridays. There were 60 members at that time.

In 1956, there were 47 A.A. Groups in Manhattan. Today, 45 years later, there are 369 A.A. Groups in Manhattan, offering 1,194 meetings weekly.

In contrast to the usual church basement, the first Gramercy meeting place was in elegant quarters in the upper regions of St. George's Church. It was soon nicknamed the "Downtown Lenox Hill." Although St. George's also had one of the first Al-Anon meetings, most of the wives of the A.A. members preferred to attend the Gramercy Open Meeting, participating so vigorously in the group, that one wife was nominated as secretary.

In 1959, Gramercy moved to the Church of the Epiphany on East 22nd Street, where it remained for the next 19 years, attracting a cross-section of members from the local community and the downtown area. In 1959, the A.A. Directory listed the group as the Gramercy Group, which remains our name to date.

Then, in 1978, Gramercy lost its Epiphany meeting place; 1978 and 1979 were hard years for the group — years that tested its spirit and its determination to stay alive and active. Gramercy members trudged up and down local streets and spoke with countless church officials and other community facilities looking for a new meeting room. The increase in the number of A.A. groups in the area had just about filled all of the available meeting places.

Finally, in 1978, the old 24 Hour Club on East 23rd Street offered us space. The first meeting there was Monday, October 30, at 8:30 pm. However, the dark, dingy room and the walk-up stairs turned many members away. At one business meeting, it was announced that if sufficient people would not volunteer to accept officer responsibilities, Gramercy would close its doors the next week.

Fortunately, this crisis passed and in a month or so, Calvary Church, which at that time, also housed the TGIF

Group, offered us meeting space. After three months, however, the church decided that two A.A. groups were too many for them to accommodate, so once again Gramercy had to find another place to meet.

Just when the situation seemed hopeless, one of our members, Niles P., offered us the front of a photo studio on East 23rd Street and Gramercy had another home for a brief period. Things were difficult. Some meetings were attended by only a handful of people. Those who came were determined to hold the group together.

Finally, in September 1979, Cabrini Hospital opened its doors to us. Gramercy met there for 15 years. In the Spring of 1994, Cabrini decided they needed the meeting space for their own use. Once again, Gramercy had no place to go.

For a brief period in May, Gramercy met in the brownstone of a small private school at 208 East 18th Street. Then, in June 1994, room was made available to us at P.S.

104 at 330 East 21st Street. This is our home today where five meetings are held every week.

All of us at Gramercy are very grateful to the members who have remained with the group over the years. We are especially grateful to the newcomers who attend Gramercy. Watching them grow in sobriety, we are reminded over and over again of the miracle that A.A. works!

*The following members have contributed to the compilation of this history since 1976:
Cynthia C., Ethel K. and Irene P.*

The G.S.O. Archives is always looking for local A.A. history stories. If you and your fellow group members would like to have your story printed in a future issue of *Markings*, please write to G.S.O., attn. Archives, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163; or e-mail: archives@aa.org.