

Landmarks in the History of AA in Tallahassee

We have started a series of articles for this newsletter on the History of AA in Tallahassee. "WE", all of us, are a part of this history - this journey. This history has been built, just as our sobriety, one day at a time.

(This is the 4th article in the series on the History of AA in Tallahassee.)

Childhood Memories of My Journey with AA

- I have memories of this program long before I understood what AA was. These childhood memories start in the early 1950's.
- I remember many nights, late at night, hearing my Dad , Ed, receive phone calls. Dad would ask lots of questions, then he'd call another person and then he'd leave home for a while. As a child, I didn't understand what was happening. Many years later, I came to understand that those were good old fashioned 12 step calls... Two AA's visiting another suffering drunk.
- Dad's best friend was Norman Stone. Norman was a juvenile judge in Tallahassee. Norman was also legally blind. I remember Dad spending many Saturdays at our home sitting with Norman and reading the Big Book out loud to him. The two of them would sit in our kitchen and talk for hours. Norman was soon able to recite many parts of the big book on his own. He later became the first Delegate to New York from our district... District 5!
- I remember our family driving down to the coast to eat seafood at the Oaks Restaurant which was the best seafood around. On those trips, Dad would stop at an old auto parts/hardware store on the main road in Panacea to visit "Pop" Amundson. He was a dear friend of Dad's in the program. He and Dad would have an AA meeting while mom and his wife talked, often for an hour or more. We kids enjoyed the visit because POP always offered us candy and a drink.
- In my teens, I remember Dad talking about his group moving to a house in 1965. They were excited to have a permanent place they could finally call their own. As we know, this was the Central Group, often referred to as 909 because of the address - 909 Gadsden St. Dad wanted to help more newcomers learn our program, so he started a Big Book study group at Central called the "Big Bend Group". My mother, Lucille; Norman's wife, Alma; and one or two other ladies started Al-Anon in Tallahassee in the small room in the back of the meeting house in the 1960's. Al-Anon's met there until the early 80's until anonymity became an issue for some AA's.
- Most AA events were family events. One stands out most to me. When I was about 8 years old, we attended an AA Christmas Party. Santa was there, and all us kids got presents from his big red bag of toys. That night I remember meeting a tall, slender man with beautiful silver-white hair - not Santa! He asked me who I was, and I pointed to Dad. He smiled with the most sincere look and said, "Ed is your dad? Son, your are one of the luckiest boys in town". He made me so proud of my dad that night.
- It was many years later that I joined the fellowship of AA. That's another story! And, as you can imagine, much has happened over these years. I still have Dad's silver dollar with 30 neatly spaced holes in it. His sobriety date was July 1946. Dad died in February of 1977. He spent many fruitful years in AA. During my first year of sobriety, I purchased a 1922 silver dollar... Dad's birth year. One day at a time, by the Grace of God, as of July 3rd 2019, that silver dollar has 40 holes.
- I am thankful for the memories of the past and the present. I owe AA for my loving father and mother who demonstrated the principles of our 12 Step Program and for the life I have today. Neal B.

The best things in life are the people we *love*, the places we've *been*, and the *memories* we've made along the way.



A Meeting in a Magazine

The first issue of the AA Grapevine was published in June 1944. A new issue has come out every month since. Early AA groups adopted the AA Grapevine as the international journal of Alcoholics Anonymous in 1946. The General Service Conference reaffirmed this designation in 1986. The AA Grapevine is produced by a staff of professional editors, writers, and artists, who are members of AA. Most of the articles are written by members of the Fellowship and the magazine actively solicits articles and art work. All it takes is a little willingness and a desire to share.

Bull W. introduced the Traditions to the Fellowship in a 1946 Grapevine article called "Twelve Suggested Points for AA Tradition." Acting as the senior advisor of the magazine, Bill W. wrote more than 150 articles in the AA Grapevine between 1945 and 1970. His articles are collected in the anthology, *The Language of the Heart*.

In July 1995, a special edition of the Grapevine in Spanish was published, and in July 1996, the AA Grapevine began publishing La Vina, a bimonthly Spanish language magazine. The AA Grapevine is entirely self-supporting through the sale of the magazine and related items. It receives none of the group (Continued)

contributions sent to the General Service Office. The Grapevine magazine is your meeting in print, online, ebook, and audio formats. The Grapevine website contains information on how to be the Grapevine Representative for your home group. You can also find: AA international and national news, a daily quote, and a sobriety calculator. There is always a cartoon on the home page for which you can submit captions, vote on the last month's caption submissions, and view all the previous winners. And, most currently, the Grapevine App is available for your phone for \$1.99 per month (with a 12 month subscription). There's just no reason to miss a "meeting" with all the resources available from the Grapevine!

Central Group - AKA "909" In the last article in the series on the "History of AA in Tallahassee", the beginnings of the Central Group were documented. This group was started in 1945 by Tom Morgan. Of course, the group was not at the current location then. It was in 1965, when Central landed at "909". I personally started attending Central Group in June of 1979 and officially signed the "Membership Book" in 1981. Back then the groups had Membership Books to record first names and sobriety dates. By signing the book you declared that group as your home group. The first "Where and When" that I was given was printed on one side of a business card. In order to attend "90 in 90", you had to go to every group in town including the Lloyd group.

Prior to 1980, the Central Group met 3 or 4 nights per week. The Thursday night group had a different name and was started, if my memory serves me, because of issues having to do with differences of opinion around integration. All of the meetings in town were evening meetings and Central meetings were at 8:15. No one has ever explained to me why that quarter of an hour was established, but it differentiates Central from all the other evening meetings I've ever attended. The break with evening meetings came about when Nat L. from Miami started a Monday noon Meeting. The other meetings in town at that time were the old Southside Group on S. Monroe St., the Grateful Group at the Detox Center on W. Tharpe St., and the newly formed Old St. Augustine Rd. Group. One of the great Tallahassee old-timers, Jack B., used to say that the other groups in Tallahassee were formed because of resentments members acquired towards him at Central. And, he was probably right.

At that time, the front portion of the building had 2 front doors. The door on the left side led into our AA meeting room. The door on the right side led into a smaller room where the District Office was located. Big Books were stored and provided to other groups by District then. A fire happened at Central on March 26, 1988. I can attest to the accuracy of that date because somehow the fire department contacted me that night after my 9th anniversary celebration at 909! No one was ever charged, but the cause of the fire was arson. Someone set the Big Books on fire. After the fire, the Central Group donated significant funds to establish an Intergroup office to serve the groups.

Central Group has not been short of "inside" issue battles! We have fought the smoking issue for decades! The smoking controversy has taken up multiple hours of debate during our business meetings... Voting it out and then back in again at different times. Over the years, various smoke eliminator and air cleaning systems have been placed in the attic. However, the war continued. We have a pretty good air handling system today, and, at least, a "cease fire" has been established over this issue for the most part. As of now, our 8:15 meeting, excluding Saturdays, is still "smoking allowed" and may be the only smoking meeting in the state... Nonsmokers are asked to sit on the right side of the room; smokers to the left. We always try to remember that sobriety comes first.



(Quote from Dr. Bob Smith (Co-founder of AA))

The Central Group is the largest and oldest meeting in town and now has at least 4 meetings a day 365 days a year. On any given day, and in any given meeting, there are numerous "old timers" and a wonderful mix of culture and personalities. Noon meetings often have 40 - 50 people attending and the other meetings have good attendance, as well. Though, I may be just a bit biased, Central (to me) is the best group in Tallahassee!

Jack R. with assistance from Neal B.

"God, I ask you to remove my fear and direct my attention to what you would have me READ..."

Good News from the IG5 Literature Store. Just in time for holiday giving, we brought in a selection of books published by the "Grapevine". Here are but a few. Check these out, go to the website to see the rest we have in stock, and, of course, to order: www.intergroup5.com

Language of the Heart. Bill's Grapevine articles in one volume, including a vivid description of how he came to organize the Steps. \$13.50

Best of Bill. A handsome edition of 5 of Bill's most powerful Grapevine articles sharing his thoughts on faith, fear, honesty, humility, and love. \$5.25

Emotional Sobriety - The Next Frontier. Collection of Grapevine stories describing the "quiet place in bright sunshine" transformations sobriety can bring as sober men and women practice the principles of AA in all aspects of their lives. \$11.50

Happy, Joyous & Free: The Lighter Side of Sobriety. Collection of stories from the Grapevine that shows how, in recovery, AA's have learned to laugh. \$11.50

Young & Sober: Stories from AA Grapevine. Collection of shared stories about the joys and challenges of getting sober at an early age. \$11.50

Making Amends - Finding a New Freedom. 55 candid, firsthand stories of members' experiences with Step Nine. \$11..50 Rebecca H.

It has been my privilege to be the Editor of "The Message" Newsletter for the last 2 years. It has meant a great deal to me. I am stepping away as editor, but I will still continue to contribute articles on the "History of AA in Tallahassee" and help with the group articles, as needed. Thank you for allowing me to be of service.

Happy Trails, Marsha T.