

AA History in Tallahassee: Is Being Made Everyday, One Day at a Time; With Every Meeting, One Meeting at a Time... With God's Help.

(This is the 5th article in the series on the History of AA in Tallahassee.)

AA in Tallahassee in the 1970's

And, Then There Were Two, Three, Four, and Five Meeting Places!

The Central Group was started by a man named Tom Morgan in 1945. And, after many moves to different locations in Tallahassee, found a permanent home at 909 Gadsden Street in 1965. *This was the only meeting in town for several year until the early 1970's.*

In 1973, a group split off from the Central Group over a dispute over how the money was handled. This new group was to become the Southside Group. Shelly Rowe and Bob Peacock had a lot to do with starting this new group. At first, the group met in an old warehouse building at 1905 S. Monroe Street. Now, the Southside Group meets at the Station House in Woodville. The meeting days were on the days the Central Group did not meet. *This was the first time someone could attend 90 meetings in 90 days in Tallahassee!*

The Northside Group was formed in 1974. Walt Eason was instrumental in heading up this group. At first, meetings were held in the Killlearn Methodist Church. They now meet in the Killlearn United Methodist Annex. In 1976, the New Hope Group formed in Lloyd. The first meetings were at the train station. They then moved to the Women's Club where they have been ever since. In 1977, a group started in the town of Crawfordville located in neighboring Wakulla county. This Crawfordville Group initially met in the livestock pavilion right outside of town. They now meet at the American Legion.

It's hard to imagine that, in the beginning of "AA in Tallahassee", there was only one to attend. Now, we have over 30 groups, many of which have several meetings per week in Tallahassee and the surrounding area! We are truly blessed. With much gratitude for the gift of our history to: Bob H. and Neal B.

Lake Jackson Group

To the best of my memory, Jane M., another early member of the group, and I first came to the Lake Jackson meeting sometime in 1990. I had gotten sober in July 1989, and both Jane and I were interested in attending this little meeting since we both lived in a nearby neighborhood. At the time, we learned that a young man named Rick F. had gotten the meeting started within the last six months. He lived in a small mobile home very close to the Crowder Road Unity Church where our meeting was, and is still, held. I later learned that both Rick F. and Bob G. were co-founders of this small meeting. The group, thanks to Rick, has in its possession a Big Book that acknowledges Bob as a co-founder and gives the year of his passing, 1999. Bob was still sober at the time of his death. Rick remained a leader in the group for many years until he moved from the area. He came back several times to visit. This meeting might very well not exist except for these two individuals!

When Jane and I first came to the meeting, we encountered only the leaders and a small group of men - no women present! We asked, "Is this a men's meeting?" We were assured that the meeting was open to women, also. We were just the first! Over the years, we have welcomed many (Continued)

ON THIS DAY You SURRENDERED.
You MUSTERED UP SOME COURAGE
and ASKED FOR HELP.
You BEGAN a NEW WAY of LIFE.
SLOWLY, You BECAME HONEST.
You SOUGHT to HELP OTHERS.
You BECAME a GIVER. You TOOK LESS.
You BEGAN to FEEL... PLEASURE,
PAIN, SADNESS and JOY.
ON THIS DAY... YOU GOT SOBER.

**I WAS ALWAYS THE
BLACK SHEEP. THEN I
STARTED GOING TO
MEETINGS AND FOUND
THE REST OF THE HERD.**

If you want to feel
better go to meetings
*If you want to recover,
work the steps*

~ 12 step member

**DEAR PAST,
THANK YOU FOR
YOUR LESSONS.
DEAR FUTURE,
I'M READY.
DEAR GOD,
THANK YOU FOR
ANOTHER CHANCE**

women and men to our group. Many have stayed sober and have since either moved to other meetings or moved from Tallahassee. There are some former members, that we have lost through death. Many of these friends had maintained long-term sobriety and were examples to us all.

As I think back on my times attending this group, there is no doubt my sober life has been deeply enriched by both my association with the group and my relationships with newcomers and long-time members. One experience comes to mind of a member who used to come to those early meetings on a bicycle. He had lost his driver's license for life, among other things. About 15 years later, I was having lunch at Wendy's on W. Pensacola Street, and in this guy walked. He spied me, and I knew I recognized him. He made a bee-line for my table. He jiggled his keys in front of me and said, "I got my license back and am now able to drive a company truck." This just brings tears to my eyes because, as I learned from him, he was still sober, attending AA, and... he was truly a miracle. I pray he is still a miracle. We just don't forget those with whom we share suffering and recovery.

Like all small groups, there has been times of higher attendance, as well as dwindling attendance. My dear friend, Chuck S., another early AA member, saved the group from closing by continuing to go even when it was just him and a pot of coffee. He remained the essential, dependable AA trusted servant and kept the door open.

There's much more I could say about the Lake Jackson Group. But, instead, I will invite you to come to our open discussion meeting every Monday evening at 7:30. We celebrate birthdays the last Monday of the month. We hope to see you soon.

Claire B.

Answering the AA Hotline is a pleasure... Usually, it is just helping someone find a meeting at a time and place that works for them. So, all that is needed is a copy of the current "Where and When" or access to the "Meeting Calendar" on the Intergroup 5 website, map or location information, and, perhaps, a little knowledge of the bus routes.

The ones that touch me most are the early morning calls from the hungover. That insane conversation is already running a loop in their head... "How to not drink today." Each day starts with a resolution to not drink. And, we all know what happens. These folks are at the crossroads. They don't want to drink again, yet, they go through their litany of day after day, they get drunk. They have failed. They list all the consequences and losses.



I keep in mind the injunction to listen and not to preach. To share my experience, only. And, it is in those moments of describing their losses that they turn the conversation away from themselves. There is always someone they love, and who loves them, who they don't want to lose or continue to hurt. Fear may have led them to make the call, thinking of someone else means they may be willing. That, for me, is the chink in the armor of alcoholism that allows the program to work. For me, the first step and the traditions are then the framework for the conversation.

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. When I tell the caller that every person in AA has felt that desire, yet, been unable to "manage" it, there is always a pause as it sinks into their consciousness.

I share as much of my denial, justification, games, and dodges that I used when drinking until I hear the laugh that lets me know I have established my credentials". Then, comes that question: "How did you quit?"

This is where I work as hard as I can to keep it simple. All you have to do is go to a meeting. You don't need to talk, give anyone your name, tell anyone anything... Just come to a meeting and listen. Whether or not any of these folks attend a meeting isn't my business. I always hope they do.

What I do know is that when someone reached out for the hand of AA, someone from AA was there for them. And, for that, I am responsible, each and every day. Being a volunteer on the hotline ensures that I meet that responsibility. Neat how it works.

Elizabeth W.

The "Primary Purpose" of Intergroup 5 is to assist the AA groups in District 5 to carry the AA message to the alcoholic who still suffers. Providing a 24 hour "Hotline" service is one of our most important functions. To volunteer or for more information on the AA Hotline: message@intergroup5.org

The AA "WELCOME" from the Bradfordville Group

The "Welcome" that a newcomer, or, someone coming back to the meetings, receives can have a lot to do with the "Keep coming back!" part of that greeting. The Bradfordville Group is doing several things, in addition to the warm smiles and the outstretched hands, to encourage these folks to "stay and remain to pray".

We have developed and printed a "Meeting in a Pocket" booklet to give to folks who come to our group for the first time. Included on the title page is the familiar quote, "If you want to continue drinking, that's your business. If you want to stop drinking, that's our business." The contents contain some of the most important parts of the Big Book. They are the: * Serenity Prayer; * AA Preamble; * How it Works; * Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions; * Four Absolutes; * 9th Step Promises; * Vision for You; * 10th Step Questions; * 12 Step Prayers; * Responsibility Prayer"; Acceptance is the Answer text; * Slogans; Topical Index for the Big Book (4th edition); and * Extra pages for names and numbers. The booklet also contains information on the Web Chat Meeting Room for open, real-time AA topic meetings and sober chats, 24/7 (AAOnline.net). In addition, we have a token for visitors with a cup of coffee on one side and Bradfordville Group on the other side.

Barby W.

These items help us say "Welcome" in a BIG BOOK way!

