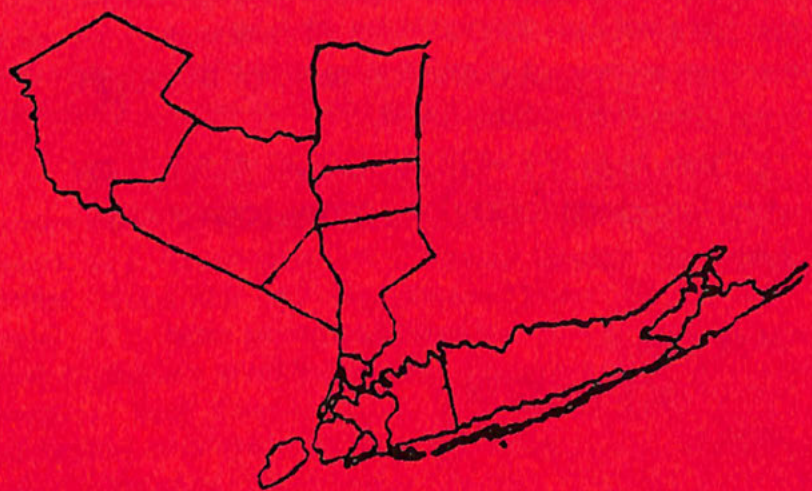


A BRIEF HISTORICAL



LOOK OF S.E.N.Y.

From Archives Committee

We hope that those who read this pamphlet will gain a new understanding of how A.A.'s growth in our area has been growing stronger over time and trial's.

If you, your group, etc. have any questions, please feel free to get in touch with us through your group service rep., or through your district archives chair.

"COME AND SEE HISTORY COME ALIVE", by what happens today becomes tomorrows history.

"PASS IT ON"

██████████ Archives Chair
John L.



A Brief History of Manhattan A.A.

On June 18, 1940 the 24th Street Clubhouse opened and began serving the needs of A.A. members. Prior to that date A.A. meetings had been held at Steinway Hall, 113 West 57th Street at Webster Hall and at Burt Taylors' Tailor shop, addresses unknown. The Clubhouse was located at 334 1/2 West 24th Street.

In April, 1944, the Manhattan Group was formed, meeting at the Clubhouse on Sunday and Thursday nights and at Webster Hall on Tuesdays. Seventy members signed the Manhattan Groups first meeting roster. Manhattan Group members often refer to themselves as "THE DRY MANHATTANS"! By November, 1945 there were thirty A.A. meeting held weekly by seventeen groups throughout the greater New York City area.

In June, 1946, N.Y. inter-group was founded by seventeen groups holding twenty-nine weekly meetings in Brooklyn (2), the Bronx (1), Manhattan (11), Nassau County (5), Queens (4), Staten Island (1), and Westchester County (5). By May, 1947, when N.Y. inter-group published its second meeting list, there were eighty-six weekly meetings throughout the city, adjoining counties, and Connecticut. In addition there were "A.A." luncheons, 12:15pm daily, at three restaurants in Manhattan and one in Bayshore. Published in October, 1947, the forth meeting list boasted on ninety-six weekly meetings and the same four luncheons. The earliest listings of a N.Y.C. Spanish language meeting appeared in the April 1948 meeting list.

Many early groups were named after telephone exchanges or neighborhoods, such as Duffy Hill, Tudor, Murry Hill, and Lenox Hill. It's interesting to note that Bill ██████████ sobered up here under the care of Dr. Silkworth in Towns Hospital in 1934.

In May of 1996 there are over three hundred and eighty groups listed in Manhattan.

A Brief History of A.A. in Putnam County.

Early meetings were in Brewster, Patterson, Cold Springs, Garrison, Mahopac, Carmel and Putnam Lake. The first group was the Brewster Group, founded in 1948.

Early members were Bill S., John G., Vinney P., and Tome G. The place where the first meeting was held was Brewster on Saturday. Croton Falls had a Step Meeting, and a Discussion Meeting on Friday in Carmel. In the early 70's the Step Meeting was held at Saint Joseph's Church in Croton Falls. It eventually split from the United Methodist Church on Man Street in Brewster. The Brewster Group moved several times to old route 6 in Carmel, to Saint John's in Mahopac, and then back to First United Methodist in Brewster.

The first discussion group in the area was controversial because area members felt that the open speakers meetings were where you got your spirituality. Discussion meetings were to talk and not to listen.

The Gong Show produced the first known coffee pot with the groups name engraved in brass.

The Cold Spring's group was founded in 1957 by Bob W. The Garrison group, founded in 1962, at Saint Phillips Church and currently have three group's in Graymore. Putnam Lake was founded in 1972, by Bill M., Winnie D. and Marcia M. Patterson group started in August of 1973. The founders were Larry C. and Bill B. An honorary member Roy Covell passed away, ie. group decided to make him a permanent member.

Footsteps to Serenity was founded 2/5/83. Founders of the group were Agnes K., Marion S., Bill S. and Bob P. Founders were from The Plug in the Jug.

Brewster recovery formerly Carmel recovery moved in 2/87 to St. Andrews Episcopal Church in Brewster 1990.

We are also the home of the New York's famous Plug in the Jug Group at Mahopac.

We are served by Intergroup Association of A.A. of New York, Hospital information, 12 step work, non-medical facilities, meeting book, and institution meetings.

A Brief History of A.A. in Bronx and Upper Manhattan.

At the 1995 A.A. international convention oldtimers meeting in San Diego, of Fifteen speakers chosen at random from among 129 oldtimers with forty plus years of sobriety, there were three speakers who got sober in the Bronx! This is indicative of the great impact that early Bronx A.A. had on our fellowship!

The Bronx had its sober roots in its twenty fourth Street Clubhouse where most of the "outer borough" members went after being twelfth stepped by our A.A. early timers in the late 1930's and very early 1940's. One of these, Joe H., an ex-cop, seemingly doomed to the insane asylums, was twelve stepped by A.A. while in his sixteenth Belvue Hospitalization for his drinking. Joe got sober in 1942. Before his second A.A. birthday, Joe started the first group of Alcoholics Anonymous in the Bronx in 1944. We know from his early postings in the brand new A.A. magazine, The Grapevine, the story of Joe's tireless efforts.

We know from the earliest Grapevine issues that the first Bronx group had its first meeting on August 6, 1944 at 518 Willis Ave. and shortly thereafter, in October, found a "permanent and very spacious" place at 2500 Marion Ave. The Bronx County group came into being with Wednesday night open meetings. Through ardent twelfth step work and great enthusiasm and self sacrifice for "the cause", as Joe called it, membership exploded. With its primarily Irish working class population, there were more than a few bars in the Bronx. So A.A. groups seemed to flourish, not surprisingly, in those very neighborhoods where the bars existed. Within a few years the Bronx saw the beginnings of the South Bronx, Parkchester, Mott Haven, Gun Hill, Woodlawn, University Heights, City Island and Riverdale groups.

These groups usually had Open speaker meetings and often had hundreds of members and "potentials" in attendance. Making coffee and setting up chairs was a BIG job. Joe H. Liked to call his 12th step groups - "combat teams"! Outgoing speaking commitments often were a journey taken by carloads of members

to Brooklyn, Connecticut, New Jersey, Upstate or wherever it was needed to "carry the A.A. message". A very close relationship with the intergroup office because there were almost daily twelfth-step calls coming into the groups.

Because of geographic proximity and similar working class roots Upper Manhattan was very much like the Bronx and has always had a special kinship with it. So, when Washington Heights and the original Inwood group got started in 1947, there eventual A.A. association in the General Service structure of South Eastern New York was with the Bronx. And so, in the late 1970's we had the development of the Bronx and Upper Manhattan General Service Committee of Alcoholics Anonymous serving the need of this community of our fellowship. This pairing of the Bronx and Upper MANHATTAN has also allowed some of its members to occasionally wear name cards at service gatherings that proclaim themselves "B.U.M.S."!

Growth of the number of groups in the Bronx and Upper Manhattan has also been astounding. The thirteen groups meeting in 1950 became twenty-six by 1960 and forty-five in 1970. This near doubling in growth continued so that by 1980 and 1995 there was eighty and one hundred and thirty-five groups respectively. Not bad for a bunch of B.U.M.S.!!!

For General Services purposes of organizing to best help the alcoholic who still suffers, the B.U.M. committee has organized into ten districts. Most define A.A. communities (e.g. Woodlawn, Riverdale, South Bronx, Fordham/Bedford Park, North east Bronx). These districts help to carry the A.A. message through committees on Public Information, Cooperation with the Professional Community, Treatment Facilities, Corrections, and Special Needs. They all focus on how best to carry the A.A. message to those who might need our program of recovery. In addition, the B.U.M. committee has sponsored an annual share-a-day event that has scores of workshops on topics of recovery, unity and service, and an annual spiritual breakfast for sharing the fellowship of the spirit.

A Brief History of A.A. in Brooklyn.

After Bill's trip to Akron, Ohio in the spring and summer of 1935, which had resulted in his meeting with Dr. Bob and the beginning of Alcoholics Anonymous he returned to his home at 182 Clinton Street in Brooklyn. There he initiated the weekly meetings which, after several moves, located for a long period of time in the St. George Hotel in downtown Brooklyn. In February of 1942 it declared itself to be the Brooklyn Group, and, by virtue of its origins, considers itself A.A. Group number two, and much the oldest in the New York Area.

But earlier still: in 1934, the seed was planted at that house in Clinton Street when Bill's old drinking companion, Ebby T., visited Bill, and gave him the message that there was a solution. This carrying of the good news to a suffering alcoholic is the essential act of the Twelfth Step, identified as a necessity by Bill and Dr. Bob in Akron in June of 1935, and one which has transpired an infinitude of times, here in Brooklyn, and throughout the world.

By 1946 there were four other groups in Brooklyn, of which three are still active today. In April of that year, Brooklyn's first foreign language group, the Norwegian group, was formed. Since that recognition of the cosmopolitan nature of the disease, Brooklyn has known Spanish groups in good number, of course, and also several Polish language groups, and the Russian meeting in Brighton Beach. It will be noted that all of them spoke with the language of the heart.

New York Intergroup first meeting list, in April 1946, has that solitary at the St. George Hotel (there is a total of 17 groups, 29 meetings, in New York City and vicinity); in 1996, Brooklyn has it's own Intergroup, which in October of 1995 listed 198 groups, most with multiple meetings. Some may see this as reflecting the extent of Alcoholism in Brooklyn; others will see in it the number of Alcoholics who are working on their recovery.

Brooklyn takes pride in it's place in A.A. history: in service in all of its' manifestations, and most fundamentally in the responsibility of having the hand of A.A. always there for the hand that reaches out for help.

A Brief History of A.A. in Queens

Early in 1941 Bill W. suggested to Henry Zola that an A.A. meeting be started in Queens. On March 26, 1941 a group of 10 or 12 alcoholics met at the Zola home in Queens, for the first meeting; within a short time, because of growth, the group moved to Forest Hills Inn and it was shortly after the first meeting there that the group named itself The Forest Hills Group. The group outgrew that location and moved to the Medical Building on Queens Blvd. Eventually they were forced to move from there because the space was needed for other purposes; the members approached the pastor of Our Lady Queen of Martyrs Church in Forest Hills and was given permission to hold meetings there and the group is still holding meetings at that location.

The Flushing group can trace it's roots to charter members of the Forest Hills Group who started a meeting at The Good Citizens League at Sanford Ave. and Union St. in Flushing. The oldest records of the group are minutes of a business meeting dated March 4, 1943.

The Jackson Heights Group is listed in Intergroup first meeting list dated 1946, this is still another group started by charter members of the Forest Hills Group.

The Jamaica Presentation Group was founded in April, 1946 and is the oldest group in the Jamaica area.

Queens County boasts many, many groups that have been in existence over forty years, mentioned above are only a few of the very oldest.

Thankfully the Higher Power has seen fit to have A.A. groups in Queens grow from the original three shown on the 1946 Intergroup meeting list to over 200 groups listed in today's Intergroup meeting list.. In 1991 Queens Intergroup was formed to also help the suffering Alcoholic in Queens.

A Brief History of A.A. in Rockland

Alcoholics Anonymous in Rockland County can be traced back to the bitter winter of 1939 when Bill and Louis [redacted] moved in with Bob and Mag V. at Monsey N.Y. Bill and Louis relied on the benevolence of friends during their homeless years, which resulted in Bill taking part in the start of many groups country wide.

As with everywhere Bill went, his mission to help other suffering alcoholics continued. Bob V. had approached Dr. Russell E. Blaisdell at the Rockland State Psychiatric Hospital in an effort to carry the message. Soon after the fellow A.A.'s were not only doing twelfth step work within the walls of the hospital, but were starting the first meeting ever in a psychiatric hospital, and the first meeting in Rockland. "Dr. Blaisdell's Rockland State Hospital was the first to enter into full co-operation with A.A." (A.A. Comes of Age, p12).

That meeting which later became known as the Blue Hill Group is still active at the Blaisdell Rehabilitation Center, part of Rockland Psychiatric Center, today. One of Rocklands Oldtimers, Jimmy T., sober 35 years*, spent from 1965 to 1981 chairing that meeting, which he affectionately thanks with helping him stay sober. Jimmy remembers diligent efforts in twelfth step work and always being "on call" to insure his own sobriety and to help another suffering alcoholic to achieve sobriety. The term "ANY LENGTH" seemed to have a very different meaning in those days without the quantity of detox's and understanding of the disease that we have today.

Meanwhile, in 1961, another Rockland Oltimer, Mickey F., was busy trying to get sober at Sobriety Unlimited in Mt. Vernon N.Y. After receiving a strong foundation in the program of action Mickey moved up to Rockland County in 1973. After being in the county for three years Mickey saw a need to start a step meeting; This group is still active in the county today, known as Key to Sobriety, and has three meeting each week.

A.A. in Rockland stretches from Peirmont as far north as Jones Point, and as far west as Sloatsburg. The second oldest group to survive within the county, the Suffern Group, which has four meetings each week, will celebrate fifty years this October 1996. Valentine M., celebrating 26 years sober*, remembers this group back in the 70's being 10-12 people, and today there can be over 100 people at the Tuesday night step meeting. While there are many older groups within Rockland County, we are still expanding. The Step by Step Group that was started by John O. in December of 1988 was the first to meet at the Marion Shrine, Stony Point N.Y. Today there are five meetings weekly there.

Rockland County has an active District, with group GSR's and other A.A.'s meeting once a month, sponsoring such things as Assembly's and Workshops. Rockland also has a 24 hour answering service, sponsored by Intergroup, with professional staff answering phones, and hooking up new comers with older members for twelfth step work. Rockland County boasts much A.A. history, and today has many, many meetings, most of which are out of active groups. Any alcoholic needing help is sure to be able to find us.

* As of printing date (8/96).

A Brief History of A.A. in Nassau County

1940 - The first group in Nassau County started in a member's home in Garden City, Manhasset, or Freeport. Our source agree to when, but not where. Such explains the need for Archives. Many early groups met in group members homes, which is why they were called 'home groups'. The group made it no longer necessary for group members to travel into Manhattan for a meeting. At this time our fellowship was 5 years old.

1948 - 1969 - The Manhasset Group Telephone Service fulfilled a need at a time when there were relatively few groups on Long Island and membership was small. The Manhasset-Roslyn Group undertook this service and effort unassisted financially by any other group or by New York Intergroup.

The vast growth in population on Long Island, brought with it a greater demand for A.A. information and a constant increase in activity for the telephone answering service. The burden of handling the service became excessive, more trying, and more than any one group could sustain, no matter how dedicated they were.

1970 - June 24 - The members of the A.A. groups in Nassau County voted overwhelmingly at the church of the Advent, Westbury, to assume the burden of providing a telephone service to help the suffering alcoholic in Nassau County. This service was called the Nassau Answering Service of Alcoholic Anonymous. There were 53 groups in Nassau at this time. With the help of our non-alcoholic clergy friends of the Church of Advent, this telephone answering service was set up in the basement of Winthrop Hall, Advent St, Westbury. It was the intention on this volunteer group to establish better communication for Twelve Step calls, for assistance between all the local Nassau groups and the suffering alcoholic.

1977 - The Nassau Answering Service moved to a new office in Hempstead. The name changed to Central Office of

Nassau. 24 hour phone service was provided.

1980 - Central Office of Nassau moved to a new office in Hempstead. The groups at that time having the 'courage to change', followed their Higher Power's guidance and become the Nassau Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous, Nassau Intergroup was serving 153 groups and answering 1000 calls a month by volunteer group members.

1989 - Nassau Intergroup outgrew the office they occupied in West Hempstead. With continued use on the *Serenity Prayer*, Nassau Intergroup moved to a larger office in the same building.

1996 - As of this writing (5/96), Nassau Intergroup serves 298 groups. We are all volunteer, fully self-supporting through contributions from our groups. We continue to maintain a 24 hour hotline staffed by a volunteer group members since 1977. We distributed 90,000 meeting lists in the last year at no additional charge. We publish a monthly newsletter. We have an active Cooperation with the Professional Community (CPC) Committee, Public Information (PI) Committee and Speakers Bureau. In October of 1994, the Institutions committee serving Nassau, left New York Intergroup and became Nassau Intergroup's largest standing committee. The Nassau Intergroup Institutions Committee brings A.A. meetings to over 25 hospitals, detox facilities, rehabs, and the jail in Nassau County every day of the week, May 18, 1996 was our 19th annual Share-A-Day.

A Brief History of A.A. in Sullivan County

The first meetings in the area in the late forties were held in Middletown and Newburg in Orange County, Kingston in Ulster County and Poughkeepsie in Putnam County, New York. Many of these meetings started at nine pm to allow time for visitors from neighboring towns to arrive as distances to travel were often long and road conditions poor.

On or about 1946, meetings in Sullivan County were held in the Grange Hall in Liberty on Wednesdays. The first anniversary of the Liberty Group was a gala affair held at the Columbia Farms Hotel in Hurleyville (no longer exists). This group currently meets at St. Pauls Lutheran Church on Chestnut St. in Liberty on Thursday and Saturday.

About 1949 or shortly thereafter Orange Counties Port Jervis Group started its meetings in Ulster County, the Kingston Group started a Sunday meeting that was held in the Governor Clinton Hotel. The first official meeting was held in Dr. Crowley's office in Kingston. The first regular meetings in Ulster County (not in a home or office) were held at the Benedictine Hospital in 1941.

Montecello meetings started in either 1948 or 1949 on Mondays and were held, ironically, in the back room of Slim Washingtons Liquor store. About 1946 it is reported that a woman up on Walnut Mountain staid sober by calling Slim every day at the liquor store. The group later moved its meetings to a private home on High St. and then to various churches. This meeting until recently was at the St. John's Church on St. John St. in the village on Montecello but recently moved to the Neighborhood Facility. Also in the late 40's a Dr. Ralph B. who practiced on Broadway in Montecello, was very interested in helping drunks. He gave vitamin shots tot hem. If a dire case showed up he would take them in through the back door ahead of the crowded waiting room. The first "Step" meetings in the area were held about 1970 at the Parksvile School. These

meetings were discontinued in the winter since there was no heat. Some early A.A.'s were heard to say "no soles saved after 10pm". One would think that meetings could go on for hours.

Our Sullivan County Intergroup (SCIA) started in January 1979. There are currently forty-two meetings active in Sullivan County. These meetings range from beginner to Big Book and include but aren't limited to open and closed discussion; speaker, step and tradition meetings. Presently a meeting can be found any day or every day of the week in the County in contrast to the 1960's when it would take 15,000 miles to get to 90 meetings in 90 days.

Intergroup publishes meeting list which are revised quarterly. These include twenty meetings in the neighboring counties and forty-two local Sullivan County meetings. Our Hospital and Institutions committee distributes public information packets and provides information at health fairs which help carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic. Additionally this committee holds six meetings in prisons and rehabs. SCIA also maintains a professional answering service which is available 24 hours a day.

SCIA, in cooperation with SENY (South East New York), sponsors various workshops and informational share-a-days which further our knowledge of our disease of alcoholism. This enables us to educate and inform our members, and to pass along this knowledge to the public at large, so that we may be better able to help those who still suffer.

A Brief History of A.A. in Westchester

Steps! 90 in 90! Big Book! Round-Ups! Unity Breakfasts! Group Inventory Meetings! Anniversaries - BIG Anniversaries!!

That's what Westchester A.A. is all about today! Just as Alcoholics Anonymous in New York and Ohio, then throughout the Nation, we grew to this joyful work by the sometimes hard work of experience. In a warm and witty account of A.A. in Westchester J. S. W. wrote of our birthing from New York City and Greenwich, Ct. Soon after Bill W. finished writing the 12 Steps with the O.K. from the several score of sober ones, 5000 copies of the Big Book were printed, and Sister Ignatia and Dr. Bob treated thousands of alcoholics in St. Thomas Hospital in Akron, Ohio. It was then that Governor Rockefeller and 75 wealthy dinner guests cemented into place for us our tradition of self support and Vesey St. in New York City was set up as the first World Service Office.

Bill W. wasted no time in "carrying the message" and two solid groups appeared - one in Greenwich, Ct. and one in Manhattan. The White Plains group still going strong at Memorial UMC, came into being on May 17, 1941. From the folks in Connecticut where fellowship and caring was strong. From here sprouted Peekskill and New Rochelle in 1944 and the first of the Yonkers groups in 1945.

The Mount Vernon Group came out of people from Bill W.'s old home town of Brooklyn in 1943 while he and Lois were making their first cross-country tour to visit the recovered miracles of our Century. The "city people" brought with them the structure and the sharing of experience, strength and hope with one another. All the groups supported one another, discussing ways and means of living the sober life, and coming together on a daily basis. Bronxville with 12 groups today, absorbed Fleetwood, and sent out many to the East and West. J.S.W. writes, "It is often observed, with the partial accuracy of most Old

Wives' Tales, that there is a "terrific turnover" in Alcoholics Anonymous. And yet, of the many who discovered sobriety in that vintage year of 1948, there are some known to most of us who have never flown far or fatally from the White Plains nest."

Meanwhile, White Plains and Mt. Vernon had continued to produce offshoots. All and all there were now 19 groups: Bronxville, Chappaqua, Larchmont, Mamaroneck, three groups in Mt. Vernon, New Rochelle, Pelham, Pleasantville, Port Chester, Rye, Scarsdale, Tarrytown, White Plains, Yonkers and Yonkers North. By 1959, 8 more had come together including the Bedford Hills Group where Bill eventually landed after first "protecting his anonymity" in Chappaqua.

By 1970, there were 30 groups in Westchester. The Old Purdys Group, formed in 1969 out of the "Cops and Robbers Group" in Mt. Vernon, began to carry the message North and West. One of that group had visited the "Big Book Group" in London, and invited the members to visit any time they were in America. Soon after, a young man came, 3 years sober, and led a Step Meeting, using the Big Book as a reference. His joy, and peace were so awesome to behold that after that night the elders said, "We'll have to have 'Book Meetings' if that's what happens in a person's life from studying it!" And so it happened that many groups such as It's Guaranteed, Maryknoll, Katonah, Crow Hill, Patterson, Putnam Lake, Plug in the Jug, and several "step" named groups in Putnam County forming during the seventies and eighties took with them a "Big Book" meeting as well as step and open meetings.

Besides the parent group, White Plains now boasts of 16 A.A. groups, Yonkers has 14, Bronxville has 12, New Rochelle and Rye have 8 each, while Mt. Kisco, Ossining and Yorktown Heights each have 7 groups. All together there is well over 175 groups today.

Bravely touted as the First Annual Round-Up, the Westchester County Wide Service get-together was held in 1979

at the Westchester Community College. A couple of years along saw us move to the County Center. Today, 1996, the Round-Ups are held - fittingly perhaps - at the Memorial Church on Bryant Avenue, home of the original Westchester Group. Putnam County has "come of age" and has left the "service cluster" after learning the ropes to sponsor it's own "Share-A-Day." Topics, workshops, "red-ball" meetings, special speakers, not to mention free lunch, are all part of the day of recovery and fellowship.

While Round-Ups stayed an important part of Westchester A.A. life, the 1980's saw a surge of interest in "Unity Breakfasts" originally arranged so that all the groups of the County could come together in love, fellowship and recovery while enjoying a great speaker and scrambled eggs! Today the events are set for both Spring and Fall and are often a newcomers early recognition that life CAN be fun, even while sober!

A Brief History of A.A. in Staten Island.

Staten Island's place in A.A. history is intimately linked to the first of the Three Legacies of Alcoholics Anonymous - Recovery.

Strange as it may seem, the black clouds of a slip gathered over Staten Island seven months prior to the actual founding of A.A. How did it happen? The year was 1934; - November. Bill Wilson, Co-founder of A.A. has been sober since September, - his latest drying out session at Townes Hospital on Central Park West. Bill's Wall Street office was closed for Armistice Day, but his wife, Louis, was at her job at Loeser's Department store; - Brooklyn. Alone Bill decided to spend the day golfing at one of Staten Island's many golf courses. Once on the Island, he began to chat with a stranger on the bus. At lunch, in a good mood and reminiscing over his experiences in France during World War I, Bill relaxed just enough to pick up a drink. Thus began his last alcoholic binge that lasted until mid-December.

You may think that this incident is a dubious distinction for Staten Island. But look at it another way, Bill's Island golf outing may be viewed as the final turning point from which he finally got the message of *recovery* and could pass it on to us as our First Legacy. Bill's final drinking days are described on the book "Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age" - Chapter II, The Three Legacies - where he went on to write these now famous words; "Suddenly the room lit up with a great white light". Having had a spiritual experience, his true sobriety began.

A.A. marks its founding date June 10, 1935, the sobriety date of A.A. #2, Dr. Bob. Yet, it wasn't until January or February 1945 that Staten Island's first regular A.A. group began to meet. The March 7, 1945 edition of the *Staten Island Advance* headlined an article, "Alcoholics Anonymous . . . has come to Staten Island and has already begun its work quietly and effectively, just as it has in hundreds of other communities." ". . . the Island group held its first meeting only a few months ago.

Within a short time after it began . . . eight Islanders - six men and two women - have been helped." That first group, called the St George Group, initially met at midday in Borough hall to accommodate office workers in the area.

We owe a vote of gratitude to many alcoholics who were very instrumental in helping us. They added a measure of credibility to A.A.'s program of recovery during an era when public opinion concerning alcoholism was low. For Staten Island, one such friend was Father James Griffin, pastor of Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish, Tompkinsville. The priest helped found the first group, lent an encouraging hand and spread the favorable reputation of A.A. among community leaders. Griffin had been a Chaplain at Queen General Hospital, it was there, he began to help suffering alcoholics. An Island drinker, Harry R., went to him for help. This effort was the seed for our first regular A.A. group.

Prior to that Islanders, introduced to A.A. in Manhattan or Brooklyn, held meetings in private homes. We even Had P.I. (Public Information) in the early forties. A few newspaper articles carried comments about Box 301, a Twelfth step P.O. Box at the St George post office. This apparently was a way for Island A.A.'s to reach out to active drinkers and their families before the Intergroup 12th Step phone lines were established.

By 1946, New York Intergroup's first meeting list carried a Wednesday, 8:30pm meeting at the S.I. Institute of the Arts & Science in St. George. In 1947 & 1948 two new groups were listed. Of all the groups in existence today, only one can trace its beginnings to the 1940s. The Sunnyside group was founded in February 1949 at St. Theresa's Church in the Sunnyside section of Staten Island. In those days the group met Tuesday and Friday nights; today, it meets at Moore Catholic High School, Graniteville, Sunday & Wednesday evenings.

Our next, still existing group, the Great Kills group, was founded September 6, 1952. At the time *The S.I. Advance*

reported that it was the sixth Island "Unit", the 161st in the New York Metropolitan area and the 4511th in the World. The group held its meeting on Saturdays and Monday nights. So by 1952 we had at least on A.A. meeting each night of the week. Amazingly this group still meets on the same days. The congregation built a new church in 1952. A.A. was invited to meeting their new parish hall beneath the church; we continue to meet there -- that's 44 years at this writing -- a truly awesome relationship.

During the ensuing years, S.I. A.A. chugged steadily uphill like "the little locomotive that could". By the early eighties, pursuing the legacy of service, the S.I. area General Service Meeting was formed. Since then it has grown dramatically expanding its service ". . . to remain sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety" through some of the following committees: * Public Information, Cooperation with the Professional Community, Treatment Facilities, Corrections, Archives and Literature, and Grapevine. Our General Service also hosts SENY Service Workshops and Traditions Workshops. In 1995, General Services began to sponsor a Holiday Marathon for December 25, providing meetings, cake and coffee throughout the day.

General Services also sponsors the annual S.I. Share-a-day, our biggest 12th step event. First presented in 1983, the workshops and speaker meetings draw crowds of seven or eight hundred people. Al-anon participates. Hot lunch and lots of coffee and cake are provided for the price of a \$3.00 ticket. Invitations are extended to the general public and to the professional community.

Christmas is an important season for S.I. A.A.'a. A Christmas Eve Marathon was started in 1984, it has evolved into an all-day sober celebration with fellowship and open meetings from 10am to midnight. Members contribute their favorite holiday feeds and they come to share fears and joys associated with the holiday. Member's children and other loved ones are invited to attend.

Now, June 1996, we humbly boast of 80 groups providing 105 meetings a week. Our institutions committee, an arm of the Greater New York Intergroup is also very active organizing members to bring 65 meetings a week into institutions such as the Arthur Kill Correctional Facility, half way houses and four local hospitals which house ATCs, detoxes and a sobering up station. The committee also provides meeting lists, Big Books and pamphlets for prisoners and patients as its budget allows.

Today, society has a deeper understanding of alcoholism and the recovery process. The world accomplished by recovering alcoholics designed to help themselves and others has contributed to this understanding. Staten Island A.A. is proud to have done its part to foster The Three Legacies of Alcoholics Anonymous, Recovery, Unity, and Service.

NOTES

