

Archives

HISTORY OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS IN LEA COUNTY, NEW MEXICO

AA, as measured by sobriety, began in Lea County, New Mexico, in May of 1947. On May 12, 1947, Bernard L., a farmer and sheep rancher in Lovington, took his last drink. On May 28th he went to the Lea County Jail and talked to Mason G., a cattleman, about the program of AA. On June 10, Bernard and Mason drove to Hobbs and made a 12-step call on Ick C., a salesman in the oilfield.

Bernard had been introduced to AA in 1943 while a flight instructor in the Navy stationed in Norman, Oklahoma. He had been discharged in late 1945 and tried to stay sober between that time and May of 1947 as a loner using the big book and working with other alcoholics. In fact, when discharged from the U.S. Navy they gave him a slip of paper from a Navy Hospital stating that he was not crazy-he just drank too much.

Ick had been introduced to AA in the east while in the Navy and after the 12-step call by Bernard and Mason, Ick took the train back East and stayed 30 to 45 days with his sponsor and attended AA meetings there.

When Ick returned, the three got together and decided to form the "Lea County Group." They decided to meet in Lovington in an old barracks building behind Bernard's house on Mondays and Thursdays and in Hobbs on Tuesdays and Fridays at Ick's house. They immediately bought two hot plates, two-2 1/2 gallon coffee pots, cups and with their big books started having meetings.

With the approval of the county sheriff, they began carrying the message of Alcoholics Anonymous into the jail getting

permission to take ~~prisoners~~<sup>prisoners</sup> out of the county jail twice a week for meetings.

Over the next four years, out of many 12-step calls, five more alcoholics were successfully recruited into the Lea County Group. These were Tom S., a used car salesman in Hobbs, in late 1947 or early 1948; Travis A., owner of a juke box and radio shop in Hobbs, in June of 1948; Raleigh W., a bartender in Hobbs, on January 3, 1950; Bob C. an insurance adjuster, in the summer of 1950; and J.F. McA. an oilman in Hobbs, on February 17, 1951. Of the eight original members, Bob C. was the only one who slipped. However, after two days he came back.

By the mid 1950's there were numerous recovering alcoholics in Lovington and Hobbs. As a result of this growth in membership, the Lea County Group divided and became the Lovington Group and the Hobbs Group. Both of these groups are still meeting today.

Meetings in Lovington were held in the barracks building (where Bernard L.'s wife taught kindergarten) from May of 1947 until 1975 when they moved to St. Mary's Episcopal Church. The alcoholics met in the kindergarten, sitting on benches and chairs designed for four and five-year-old children, while the wives would meet in the house with Robby L. and discuss what they could do to help their husbands.

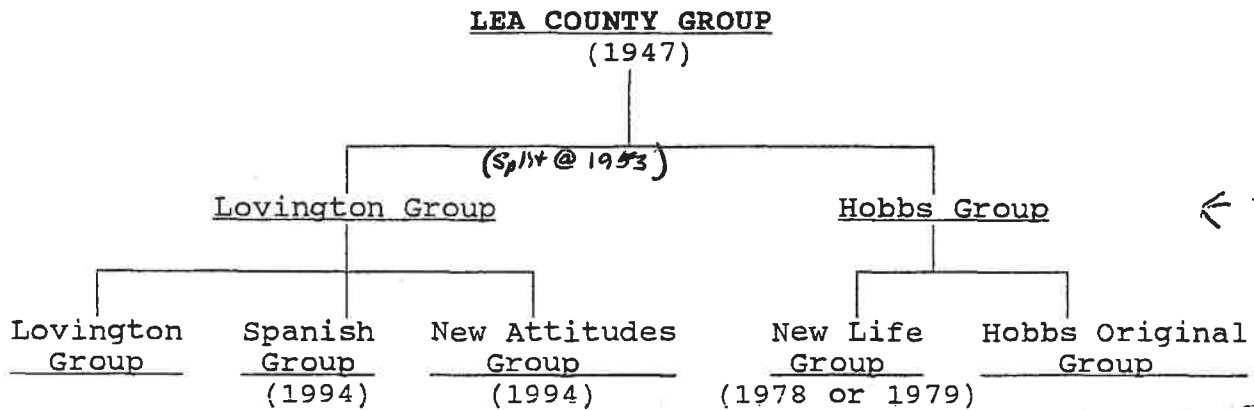
The Hobbs meetings originally were at the home of Ick C., then in 1949 moved to the home of Tom S. and later to a building located on South Turner across from the Mirror Room Bar. This building burned down when a prospect being permitted to sleep there started

a fire. In addition to loosing their meeting place, the prospect died in the fire.

During the early years it was not uncommon for members of the group to drive to Deming, Las Cruces, Roswell, Carlsbad, and Artesia in New Mexico and Kermit, Denver City, Andrews, Fort Stockton, and Abilene in Texas to 12-step someone who had called them or written to New York for help.

J.F. MCA was instrumental in bringing about the first State of New Mexico A.A. Convention which was held in Ruidoso, NM in the mid 1950's.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Sobriety Dates</u>	<u>Years Sober</u>
Bernard L.	5/12/47	25
Mason G.	5/28/47	36
Ick C.	6/13/47	40
Tom S.	late '47/early '48	30
Travis A.	6/ /48	40
Raleigh W.	1/3/50	still sober - died 5-29-99 - 49 yrs
Bob C.	mid-'50	6
J. F. McA.	2/17/51	32



Groups as of August 1994

↑  
(1999 - Gove)

(2000 - Prison Group of AA go into jails & prison)

Between 1956 and 1988 at least 4 attempts were made to start a group in Tatum.

Between 1980 and 1994 several attempts were made to start groups in Eunice and Jal. Both have AA group in 2000.

Groups Bernal started on  
caused to start by setting up  
someone in that town.

A.A. group #  
in N.M. & year

#	year	N.M.
3	46	Roswell
4	47	Lovington
48	48	Alamogordo
47	47	Cloudcroft
48	48	Ruidoso
49	49	Los Cruces
50	50	Carlsbad
48	48	Deming
49	49	Silver City
50	50	Mayfield
48	48	Santa Fe
50	50	La Luz
49	49	Hope

(\* - no A.A. groups today)

## West Texas

- 47/48 Seminole
- 47/48 Denver City
- 47/48 Kermit
- 47/48 Andrews

I have never been good at it!  
I know spelling - I have

I have the reel to reel tapes  
of the speakers and they are  
super A.A. talks.

I also have Bernal's 1943 wartime  
issue of the 1st edition Big Book and  
Grape vines back to the early 1950's!

Bob Love

1110 N. Main  
Hobbs, NM 88240  
505-392-3433

The typed article was read and  
approved by Raleigh W. in 1994 before  
any copies were printed and handed out.

I have his lighter given him on 5/12/48 for his first  
year of sobriety! (Bernal L. from Lea Co. Group)  
This was a gift from group members.

Daddy (Bernal L.) and Mac (J.F.) sponsored the  
1st Conference for N.M. They brought in  
speakers from Cal. and only lost 2000. After  
that 1954 Conference in Ruidoso, A.A. took on  
the conference as an A.A. project in N.M.

In March of 1946 a man came from Roswell, NM to Lovington, NM to install ~~three~~ irrigation pumps on a farm at Lovington.

He met the farmer, an ex Navy Fighter pilot and instructor. The man from Roswell was given a copy of the Big Book by Bernard Love, who had been introduced to AA in Norman, Okla. in 1943. Bernard was a lone wolf trying to get sober. (He got sober May 12, 1947 and died with 25 yrs. 6 days sober).

The man took the book home. His wife read it, went to Colorado (the closest treatment center) for 3 weeks, got sober, and returned to Roswell, NM.

She started the 3rd A.A. group in NM at her home in Roswell.

Bernard (in 1947) started the 4th AA group in NM. The Lea County Group met at his house in Lovington on Mondays and Thursdays and in Hobbs on Tuesdays and Fridays.

Bob Love  
1110 Nambé  
Hobbs, NM 88240  
505-392-3433

Bill, I wrote down corrections and expansion of these  
 3 pages. *Bob Cove*  
 392-3433  
 12-2-00

full name, identifying him with A.A. as he testified at a public hearing on impending anti-gambling legislation, in which he defended gambling! The individual involved blamed the press for the Traditions violations, but that did not seem to mollify indignant local A.A. members.

Bill W. and Lois paid a visit to Denver A.A. on October 26-29, 1943, and Bill spoke at a banquet at the YMCA. A Denver A.A. newsletter, "Alky Ally," was published monthly from '47 to the mid-'60s. From June '67 to the present, the Denver Central Committee has published "The Last Drop", another monthly newsletter. The groups grew slowly during the '50s, but virtually exploded in the decades of the '60s and '70s. The growth was given a significant boost when the 40th Anniversary International Convention was held in Denver in July 1975.

In 1955, Colorado had only 54 groups with about 1,800 members. By 1985, the groups numbered 522 with a membership of nearly 10,500.

#### New Mexico

Robert D. of Clovis, New Mexico, traveled to Los Angeles in 1942 to find sobriety in A.A., and then returned home. In 1945, he met Pete A. who ran the Hotel Clovis gift shop. Pete's daughter Betty had met Bob Smith, only son of A.A.'s co-founder, Dr. Bob, when young Bob was flying B-29 bombers at Clovis Air Base. They married and moved to Akron. Betty had recently sent her father a copy of the Big Book, which he showed to Robert D. They vowed that as long as they lived there would be a weekly A.A. meeting in Clovis.

Albuquerque formed its first group at about the same time, registered by Leo B. Meeting on Gold Avenue, it called itself the Metro group and had 14

He got into A.A. and in 1946 had 17 years of sobriety! He and his mom were present when the day after Bill called an

first met for 2 hours

mom Br. Bob and Bill met the day after Bill called an AA group with him in the coffee with him in the radio station. He had a radio station in Texas. This was the 1st AA group in NM. He got drunk after 17 years for 1 night and then came back to AA and died with over 5 years sobe.

1st AA group in NM was at Clovis

2nd AA group in NM was Albuquerque

and for N.M. formed 2nd AA group and

members in February 1946. Among its pioneers were Garland R., George P., George V., Del J., Les C., Frank K., Fred T. and a woman member, Jane L. In 1950, the Metropolitan group began meeting at Ninth and Kent. The Isleta group also started around 1946. These two groups were still active in 1985, and the total A.A. groups in Albuquerque had grown to about 60.

To the south, in Roswell, Josephine M. was hospitalized in the mid-'40's. While there, her husband obtained a copy of the Big Book and gave it to her. When she got out, she sought other alcoholics and started the Roswell group. They met at Josephine's home in the beginning, then moved to

the Chamber of Commerce building and later to a cafe owned by one of the members. When she got sober there was no treatment center in N.M. That was why she went to in 1948 Colorado for medical and A.A. help to get sober!

A.A. began in Almagordo when an alcoholic named Rowena visited her friends, Bernard and Robbie L., in Lovington in an attempt to get sober. Bernard was in A.A., attending meetings in Lovington nearby Hobbs. When they took

Rowena home to Almagordo, Bernard went into a barbershop to get a shave. The barber whispered in his ear, wasn't Bernard an A.A. from Hobbs? The barber had attended some meetings in Hobbs and missed having any in his home town. Bernard was delighted to put Rowena in touch with him, and together they started the Almagordo group.

In the northern part of New Mexico, an alcoholic woman, Lola P., in Farmington, was in such bad shape that her 13-year-old daughter called for help for her mother in the spring of 1953. She was put in touch with the Durango, Colorado, group about 50 miles away. A woman member responded by driving to Farmington and bringing Lola P. to Durango for a week, where she "grabbed the program for all she was worth." Upon her return, she

from Bernard Love  
in Lovington in March,  
1946. She went  
to Colorado for  
two weeks. Came  
back to Roswell  
and started the  
3rd A.A. Group in N.M.

Daddy lived there  
from 1938 to '41 and  
mom lived there for 25 yr.

and 4 in West T. was between  
1946 and 1957!  
Hedie v 5-16-72 with  
25 yrs & 4 days sober. He started  
or caused to be started over 22 A.A. groups in N.M.  
Bernard was  
from Dexter, N.M. He and  
Daddy started a group there  
in @ 1948-49.



continued driving the 100 miles round trip weekly to attend the Durango meeting. A month or two later, an A.A. member from Wyoming was transferred to Farmington with the U.S. Geological Survey and began driving to the Durango meeting with Lola. In November 1953, a Ken O. wrote the New York office for help and was also referred to the Durango group. At this point, Lola and Al decided Farmington needed its own group and began meeting at Al's office with Ken O., who didn't make the program for about a year. However, Farmington was just beginning to enjoy an oil boom, which brought in a number of A.A. members from other locations. The Farmington group began running a newspaper ad inviting anyone with a drinking problem to attend its meeting, now held at the American Legion Hut. As a result, the Farmington group was healthy and growing from the very start. Farmington sponsored a group in Aztec in 1956 and a Native American group in Lybrook a year or so later. About 15 other groups followed in San Juan County.

In 1955, New Mexico had 38 groups with 761 members. In 1985, it had 218 groups with over 3,200 members.

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1954 — Mac & Bernard Love rented a motel in Ruidoso, NM  
(Hobbs) (Livingston) in June, 1954

and brought speakers from California. These 2 men lost \$20<sup>00</sup> expenses for the 3 day A.A. Conference! The next year (1955) there were enough A.A. groups to take this conference on as the N.M. conference.

I have the 1954 reel to reel tapes of the speakers and they are being very careful copied! They are superb tapes & talks!