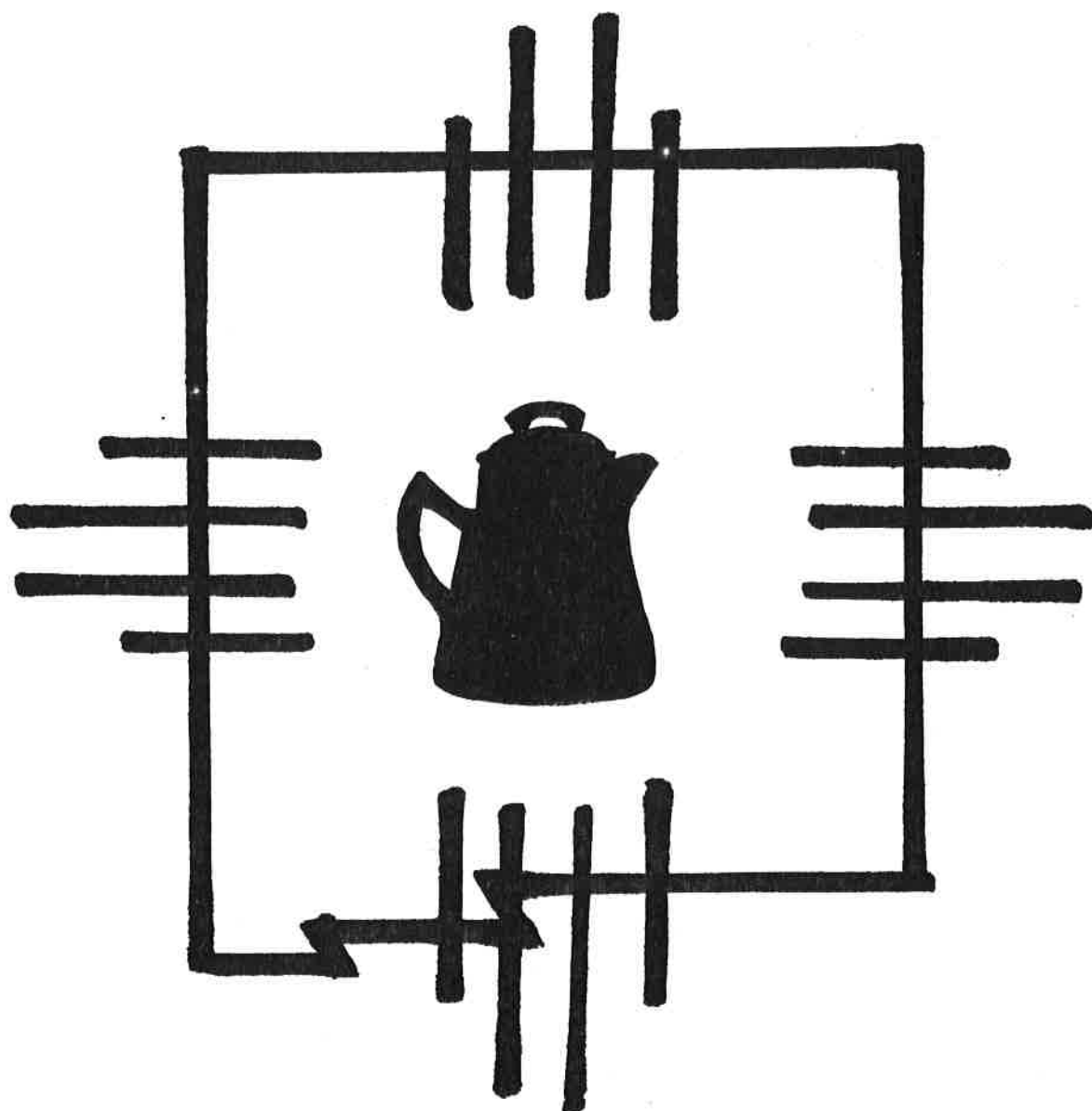


# *History of RA in New Mexico*



In 1943 I was working at the Clovis Army Base (now Cannon Airforce Base) and very sick with alcoholism. Trying the geographical cure, I left Clovis and came to Los Angeles. In early February of 1945, I joined AA here on the West Coast. After some nine months or so of sobriety, I returned to Clovis to re-enter the farm machinery business with my family. This was November, 1945.

Knowing that I must try to start an AA group for my own sobriety, I went down to the Clovis News Journal and ran a "blind" ad requesting anyone interested in staying sober to write the P.O. Box number. I recall that Charley Fisher (then Sports Editor of the newspaper) took my ad and agreed to run it free to try and help. This same ad was given to us free for many years by the Clovis News Journal.

About the first reply I received was from Pete A. who was running his gift shop in the Hotel Clovis. I, of course, promptly went down to see him. I had known Pete and his family for many years since he ran the Clovis Chamber of Commerce for a long time.

After talking to Pete for a while about AA and my getting sober on the West Coast, much to my amazement he reached under the counter and pulled out an AA Big Book which his daughter Betty had recently sent him from Akron, Ohio. He told me that Betty had met young Bob Smith (son of AA co-founder Dr. Bob) while Smitty was flying B-29 airplanes at the Clovis Air Base. She married Smitty and went back to Akron to live where of course she met Dr. Bob and Anne. Learning about AA from them, and knowing her Dad, Pete, had had alcohol problems for several years, she had mailed him a copy of the AA Big Book.

This began a long and happy relationship between Pete and I though he did not go permanently sober for a year or two. He was an intellectual tough one, but when he finally "got it" he did it well. Pete was an inspiration to all who knew him.

We started the Clovis AA group and both made a personal vow to each other that as long as either of us were alive and living in Clovis, that there would be an AA meeting each week. I think we were able to keep that promise until I moved away and Pete passed on to the Big Meeting in eternity.

Very soon thereafter, I had a call from D.H. S. in Muleshoe, Texas. He had recently returned to Muleshoe from the Los Angeles area where he too had found sobriety in AA. Although we had been to a lot of the same meetings and knew a lot of the same people in the Los Angeles area, D.H. and I had not personally met in California. Pete and I helped D.H. start the Muleshoe group and he regularly attended Clovis AA.

Early in 1946, I went over to try to help an old friend that I chased around with back in the 1930's. He, meanwhile, had become very ill with alcoholism. This was Truman M. He went sober and started a group in Plainview, Texas which is still alive.

Truman went on a Twelfth Step Call to Lubbock, Texas,

helped a chap by the name of Bill W. get sober and Bill later founded the Lubbock group along with Searcey W. and a few others. Pete and I went down to help them with their first meeting. We also attended some of the early groups in Amarillo and saw them off to a good start.

Somewhere along in those early years, I had a letter from a gal in Roswell, Josephine M. She had recently been dismissed from a mental hospital in Colorado and had heard of AA. Pete and I helped her and others start the Roswell group. Later, Guy W. from Tucumcari contacted us and thus began the Tucumcari group.

Somewhere along in this period, we began to hear about a group starting in Albuquerque. I made a trip over there and met Leo B., recently dismissed from the same Pueblo, Colorado hospital as Josephine M. I think it's a toss up as to whether the Clovis or Albuquerque group started first. I know that it had to be pretty close to the same time. As I recall, Leo came back from the Pueblo hospital some time in late 1945 or early 1946 and started a meeting in Albuquerque.

Before I returned to Clovis from Los Angeles, I had an occasion to visit AA General Headquarters in New York City while there on a business trip in early 1945. The only thing they showed in New Mexico was a "loner" in Socorro. I corresponded with him briefly, but am sorry to say I do not recall his name. At that time, I was already planning to start a Clovis group when I got there, so I got all the information from Bobby B. and Anne L. about being recognized and listed as a regular group. I think you will find the Clovis group listed in the 1946 World Directory and, of course, has been ever since so far as I know.

Robert D.  
Malibu, California  
1976

When I returned home from WWII in the fall of 1945 I soon found that my wife, Josephine, was drinking quite heavily. I tried every way but the right way to slow her down, but it only made it worse including alternating from alcohol to various pills including "yellow jackets," a pink and white capsule, and codeine that I know of. I won't go into the gory details as I know you are quite familiar with that part of an alcoholics story. Finally in desperation I learned of a place in Pueblo, Colorado which might help her and arranged for her admittance. She was willing, in fact wanted to go. I think it was August of 1946. Of course by this time I thought she was just mean and no good or maybe crazy. My work required me to be out of town a good part of the time so her parents took care of our three small children when I was out of town.

Some time after she had been in the Pueblo institution I happened to be in Lovington, New Mexico installing an irrigation pump for Bernard L. After we completed the job Bernard pulled out a pint of whiskey to celebrate the job. I had gone to college with Bernard and also his wife, Robbie. After we had consumed most of the pint I started telling Bernard about my problem with Josephine and he told me about his drinking problem. He told me about AA. He had written to AA Headquarters in New York and gotten some literature. He found there was no AA group in his area so he was trying to work the program as a loner. He said he believed in the program and although he had had several "slips" it had helped him and his way of helping others was giving away the Big AA Books. He told me to go by his house and tell Robbie he sent me for one of the AA books. I went by the house and Robbie gave me a book and of course she sensed that Bernard was on a drinking binge and, yes, I was accused of getting him drunk.

I did take the Book home with me and I did read it. My viewpoint of Josephine's condition immediately changed. Instead of thinking she was mean and no good I realized she was sick and could be helped and could be a good wife. Instead of not caring if she ever came back I wanted her back home. I went after her in the middle of November 1946 and brought her home. She was in good physical shape but other than that about all she learned was she couldn't take that first drink or she would be right back where she had been. Her doctor in Pueblo told her when she left that she would be back there or some similar place in less than a year. I told her of my experience with Bernard and the Book I had left on the living room table. She read the Book and said she believed AA was the answer. She wrote to AA Headquarters in New York and found there was no group in this area but they did give the name of a man in Roswell who had written to them and had purchased a Book. We knew the man, so Josephine called him on the phone. He was very nice; said he thought the AA program was very good. He said he was trying to live by the principles and had been doing pretty good, but was not interested in starting

a group because of his position.

Josephine then decided the only thing left to do was start a group herself. She ran a small ad in the Roswell Daily Record. I don't remember exactly how it read but something like "If you have a drinking problem call (and gave our phone number) or write (and gave our Postoffice Box number.) The letters and calls started coming in. Most of them were wives, calling or writing, regarding their husbands or mothers regarding their sons. She looked forward to making calls. She had lost her drivers license just before going to Pueblo for DWI so I had to be her chauffeur. All the calls were made in the evening after supper or on Sundays. She would tell them she didn't know how the program worked, all she knew it was working for her and if they were interested to come to the house for a meeting and everybody would study and learn the program together.

There first meeting night there were about five. Meetings were held every week at our house on south Missouri. Coffee and donuts were always served. The "steps" would be discussed and everyone had the opportunity to tell "their story." It wasn't long before our house wasn't big enough even though we had quite a large combination living-dining room area. There were about twenty attending the regular meetings with some coming by almost every evening. The meeting place was changed to the Chamber of Commerce Hall on the corner of Main and Fourth Street, and then to a cafe owned by one of the members. The cafe was closed one day each week, I think it was on Mondays, and the meetings were held that evening. By this time there was talk of forming two groups. This later came about after we moved from Roswell to Dexter in the spring of 1947. One group called the Harbor Club was on south Virginia in an old CCC or PW building fixed up by the members and the other was on west Tilden. The meetings were held on different nights so you could go to two meetings a week if you wished.

In Josephine's story she always contended that she believed she was an alcoholic from the first drink she ever took. She ordered all recommended books and reading material that might help alcoholics and we usually read them to each other.

Some of those early calls were quite interesting. A Mrs. J. of Roswell had written to AA Headquarters in New York and they in turn mailed it back to Josephine. As usual I drove Josephine to the address. It was not in too nice a part of town so I went to the door with her. An elderly woman came to the door and invited us in. I thought she looked familiar and asked her if she hadn't previously lived in Dexter and if she was Arvel J. and O.B. J.'s mother. She said she was and that was what she was writing about, her two boys' drinking problem. She gave us their addresses and we drove directly to Arvel's house. Since I had gone to school with both of the boys in Dexter there was no problem in being invited in. Arvel said he didn't think he was an alcoholic because he didn't start drinking

until noon but his brother O.B. was a bad alcoholic. After considerable talking Josephine invited him to the house for the first meeting. Much to our surprise he came and continued to come. I drove Josephine to O. B. J.'s house a few nights later. He was in bad shape and he was ready. O.B. turned out to be one of the strongest AA members and was probably the backbone of Roswell's AA after we moved until his death a few years ago. Another letter was from a woman in Ruidoso. I drove Josephine seventy-five miles to Ruidoso to see her. We found the address and Josephine went in while I sat in the car. When Josephine finally came out she said she didn't think she did the old gal any good but it sure helped her.

Josephine found that Dr. Tom P. had started a small group in Carlsbad. I drove her down there for several meetings. One time we went by the way of Lovington, ninety miles out of the way, to pick up Bernard L. and Robbie (the one who gave me the first AA book.) Robbie and I went to the movie while Bernard and Josephine went to the meeting. Later I attended all meetings just like any other good alcoholic.

Josephine helped start a group in Artesia and later helped reorganize groups that were beginning to fall apart, including Carlsbad. She was always being asked to make talks to various groups in eastern New Mexico and west Texas and tried to do so whenever she could.

When we moved to Dexter in the spring of 1947, Josephine decided there were enough alcoholics in Dexter and Hagerman to start a group here. As before, the meetings were first held at our house and then later at the Presbyterian Church Fellowship Hall. Although the Pecos Valley Group, as it was called, was quite small there were always some members from Roswell, Artesia, Carlsbad, Clovis, Hobbs and west Texas to make a good meeting. Although this group has since disbanded there are at least three that I know of still here that have twenty-eight to twenty-nine years of continual sobriety as a result. Still living one day at a time.

When Josephine had her tenth sobriety birthday in 1956 the groups all up and down the Valley had "birthday" parties for her. In my opinion this excess praise must have upset her humility because shortly thereafter she had her only "slip." She didn't drink but one day and was promptly admitted to the Pecos Valley Lodge. She never drank again but it seemed to me that she lost some of her zeal for AA because of it.

Josephine died on July 14, 1964 at St. Mary's Hospital in Roswell following a gall bladder operation. The funeral was held in the Ballard Funeral Home in Roswell with early members of AA as pall bearers. The funeral hall was filled with AA members from all up and down the Pecos Valley as well as a host of other friends.

Yes, I would say that she was the one who got AA moving in this area.

John M.  
Dexter, New Mexico  
1976

During World War Two Bernard L. served as a U. S. Naval Flight Instructor. He was drinking when he wasn't flying. I saw where a group of Alcoholics Anonymous was being started in Oklahoma City. I got Bernard to attend their meetings. After the war we moved to Lovington, New Mexico. He was still drinking but thinking of the AAs in Oklahoma. He went back to them for help. When he was honorably discharged from the Navy he took his first pay and ordered twelve Big Books. He wrote Grand Central Annex, New York and asked if there were any AA groups in New Mexico. They wrote back that there was only one. It was in Carlsbad with seven members. This was in 1945.

Bernard went to Carlsbad. There he met Ick C. from Hobbs, New Mexico. Bernard and Ick started meeting first at our house and then at Ick's. This was in 1945 and they called it the Lea County Group.

I gave a Big Book to an old college friend who had his wife, Josephine, in a hospital in Colorado. After reading the book, John went and got his wife and brought her to see us. When she went home she put an ad in the paper and when she got a few calls she called Bernard and he went to Roswell and they started a group there.

A good friend from Alamogordo was visiting us trying to sober up. When we took her home to Alamogordo Bernard went to the barbershop there to get a shave. The barber whispered in his ear, wasn't he an AA from Hobbs. The barber said he had been to some meetings in Hobbs and that he missed the meetings. Bernard took him to our friend Rowena and they started the Alamogordo group.

Bernard went anywhere and anytime he had a call. He got out of bed the night he died to talk with one who needed help. He took people to Albuquerque, Roswell and Silver City where they could enter the treatment centers for help.

The group has always met at our house and he told me to let them meet there as long as they wanted to.

AA was and still is a part of my life.

Robbie L. (wife)  
Lovington, New Mexico  
1977

Bernard L. was buried Sunday afternoon in the Lovington Cemetery near the graves of his parents and grandparents who were pioneers in the area. A Methodist minister, Rev. Edwin Chappel likened him to Paul and said like Paul, "Bernard L. had kept the faith."

There were many moist eyes, some cried openly, and in the crowded sanctuary were members of his family, co-workers in the courthouse and for the county, school personnel (Mrs. L. is a Lovington teacher), ex-convicts he had helped and many members of AA.

The first time I saw Bernard L., he was in City Court

in Hobbs shortly after he was discharged from the Navy at the end of World War II. Before court opened, the judge called me into his office and said, "We have one of those L.s from Lovington, do you know him?" I did not. When he stood before the judge, a kind voice asked, "Young man what is your main trouble?" He answered, "I'm just a plain drunk."

Many of the servicemen were celebrating too much and ended up in Paul Heard's court. He rarely fined or sentenced any of them, but gave them the benefit of the times and realized they were returning from the war.

Later Bernard said after many brushed with the law, all for drunkenness, he decided one day to seek Alcoholics Anonymous help. There was no chapter in Lea County then, and he had to go to Artesia for help.

He said many of the sailors and airmen drank too much, the government was far too tolerant of drinking, and he believed the reason was because so many of their superiors also drank too much.

But Bernard was determined to lick the habit of drinking and he did. But his association with AA did not end there. He went to work, the Lea County AA was started, and in the years there is no way to know how many Bernard helped and he never refused any of them, day or night or regardless of the weather.

The night before he died early the next morning, he was in bed, late at night a man in trouble knocked at his window pane. Bernard got up, put on his robe and had the man enter his kitchen, where they sat talking and drinking coffee until the man had the confidence he needed to go on home.

Bernard used to say he frequented the county jail so much in the courthouse some of the trustees thought he worked for the sheriff. But Bernard's work didn't end with just helping alcoholics, he also worked with their families, their boses, and tried to find the answer to help each disturbed person solve his problems.

His faith in AA and his determination never to drink again is worthy of "Bernard L. Story."

Bernard had observed his twenty-fifth anniversary in AA and his aunt, Miss Mamie recalled when he passed his first anniversary, a celebration was held in her backyard. The late Sheriff Horace Burl Owens gave him a ten gallon hat, he had promised the hat if Bernard could go a year without drinking.

Since then many celebrations were held at Miss Mamie's and in Bernard's backyard.

Before being appointed parole officer for Lea County, Bernard spent his time farming near Lovington. His wife, Robbie, opened a kindergarten which she ran for years before she started teaching school.

In the years Bernard was parole officer, many young men were counseled in his office, and when it was necessary to revoke a parole, it hurt him as much as the young man who had to return to the State Penitentiary, because he felt that he had in someway failed.

Ofttimes, some young man would have to return to the pen



for only thirty days, then arrive back and make a good parolee.

Bernard not only helped in counseling them, he helped them find jobs, he helped them by talking to their wives and other members of their families and begged them to have tolerance with the one who was on parole.

He often complained of lack of understanding by members of a parolees family, and also of AA members family. He felt the success of a man or woman trying to leave liquor alone, or a parolee trying desperately to live by the hard fast parole rules and regulations, depended largely upon their families and close associates.

In October Bernard was told he had cancer of the lung. He asked the doctor to tell him the truth, and it was hard to take. He was told he probably would not live to eat Thanksgiving dinner.

But this didn't stop him. He was periodically down, but always determined to go again in a few days. He took radiotherapy, cobalt treatments, and when the machine in Hobbs broke down, did not complain at having to make the long drive to Lubbock.

He said he would take each and every day as it came. He did not complain, he was cheerful, and he was determined to keep working. As a result he worked on Thursday before his death early Friday morning.

The Hobbs Flare  
Hobbs, New Mexico  
May 4, 1972

AA was first brought to Silver City by Bill A. in late 1946. Bill was a dark-eyed, intense man, thin and wiry, with a rapid stacatto method of speech. He was from Youngstown, Ohio and a member of the Akron AA Group. With his wife and children he left Ohio seeking a better climate for her health, and hoped to relocate somewhere in New Mexico or Arizona.

When the family stopped off in Deming to look around for a possible location, Bill somehow came in contact with a Silver City family. Learning of his AA membership, this family asked Bill if he would come to Silver City to help their son. As a result of this contact, Bill and his family decided to locate in Silver City. The local family's son was contacted, but he was unable or unwilling (or both) to accept help and eventually died drunk.

Bill A. was not discouraged and continued to carry the message. Other contacts were made, and a small group was formed. Believing it to be the first AA group in the state, they named it the Silver City AA Senior Group. They met at 8:00P.M. on Saturday nights, first in individual homes and later at the Methodist Church. This same group is still in existence in Silver City...same name, same time, same place. In about 1950 Bill and his family moved to California and Bill died there some ten or twelve years later.

Bill had visited the Clubhouse Bar seeking prospective members for Alcoholics Anonymous. A group of men who met there each morning, seeking a remedy for the effects of the night before and fortifying themselves for the day, called themselves the "Rinehart AA Group." Rinehart was the name of the bartender there. Bill S., who was to become the seventh member of the Silver City AA Senior Group in 1948, became acquainted with Bill A. and AA because he was a member of the "Rinehart AA Group."

Irma, who would later become the wife of Bill S., heard about Bill A. from Bill S. Bill S. and Irma had been dating and talking about marriage, but Irma also knew that some answer must be found for Bill's drinking problem before that marriage could become a reality. So when Bill S. finally reached a bottom, Irma called on Bill A., who lived just around the corner from her Bill's boardinghouse, asking if he would help. Bill A. and others of the group sat with Bill S. that night and Irma sat with him the next day until Bill A. could get him into a hospital.

At this time Bill S. was working on the Silver City Daily Press. Several years later he became public relations director for the Kennecott Copper Corporation there, a position he held until his death in 1973. For about ten years this Bill was a member of the New Mexico Commission on Alcoholism.

J.A. J., who now lives in Hagerman, New Mexico, joined AA shortly before Bill S. He ran a service station on College Avenue. The coffee pot there was always plugged in and the station became an informal center for AA members. The fellowship and the moral support, usually unspoken,

found there probably pulled as many through as did the formal meetings.

During the early years of AA in this area, there was a group in Hurley and one in Santa Rita, but neither group remained active for very long. During the mid 1960s, two Silver City members formed a group in Bayard. That group is still active and flourishing, meeting at the Bayard Methodist Church at 8:00P.M. on Monday nights. There is also a meeting at the Arenas Valley Community Church at 8:00P.M. on Wednesday nights.

In September, 1952 the Yucca Lodge (a recovery center) was opened by the New Mexico Commission on Alcoholism in Silver City. More than four hundred patients were treated there before its closing in December, 1952. Recently a new recovery center has been opened at Fort Bayard Hospital and it has been named Yucca Lodge.

Carroll M.  
Irma S.  
Silver City, New Mexico  
1977

In October, 1952, a thirteen year old girl called an AA group in Durango, Colorado and asked if they could do anything to help her very sick mother. That group responded as we should and one of their women members came to Farmington and took Lola to Durango to stay in her house for a week until she could get on her feet physically. After that Lola started attending the Durango meeting regularly driving this one hundred mile round trip twice weekly.

I had moved to Farmington from Albuquerque in April, 1952 and continued my alcoholic drinking in Farmington. I had contacted AA in Albuquerque about three years earlier and attended a good many meetings in Albuquerque, off and on, during those three years. The fact that I was drinking while attending those meetings did not help my search for sobriety.

About a month after Lola had sobered up, I wrote the Durango group to inquire about their meetings and they forwarded my letter back to Lola. She called me shortly before Armistice Day and I went to see her. It turned out that I was her first pigeon. The fact that I had been to more meetings than Lola did not slow her down one bit. She was sober and I was not. She wanted me to drop the bottle on that first visit but I told her that I would have to wait until after Armistice Day as I had other plans. My wife had left me and was in Hobbs. I was going to visit her at that time and felt I might need some courage along the way.

Just about that time another member of AA from Montana, Al K., moved to Farmington and immediately associated himself with the Durango group. He and Lola drove to Durango together.

When I returned to Farmington from a disastrous Armistice Day and contacted Lola, she and Al decided that there should be a group in Farmington to work with me. They held the first meeting of a group in Farmington in the U.S.G.S. office and I was present, although not very sober. They then decided to run an ad in the newspaper announcing a meeting for anyone that was interested. This meeting was held in the old American Legion Hut and, surprising to all, about thirty people attended. Not all of them stayed with the group, but they did start out with several good members and one good drunk (me) to work on.

This group stayed with me during that last wretched, miserable year of my drinking and never refused to talk when I called. I was not, of course, the only drunk they worked on during that time. I recall that Lola and her daughter even picked me up when I had passed out on the sidewalk in front of the downtown hotel one night and took me to the skidrow hotel where I was then staying. They came back the next day with food and to see if there was any possibility that I would recover.

This small group worked hard during that first year as there were many calls. This was during the beginning of Farmington's boom. Many people were moving in and many drunks needed to be taken care of. I don't know of a call they refused. Their standard sobering up remedy was a glass of two-thirds milk and one-third honey or Karo syrup. They poured many gallons of this mixture down many drunks.

They never gave up on me, Thank God; and, consequently, a little over a year after the group started, I had my last

drink of alcohol.

Lola baked cookies for that group twice a week for two years before another woman member showed up. Finally, she recieved a call about a woman in the city jail. Lola went to visit her and carried the message. That poor gal never had a chance to drink again as Lola was determined that the group would have another woman member and it did.

Lola and Al practiced AA as it was written in the Big Book and they felt that the steps were there to be worked. There was no compromise in their AA and in the AA they gave to the new members. I believe that this enthusiasm and dedication gave the Farmington Group a very successful start.

An example of how Lola felt about the program occurred when she reached the ninth step. Lola operated a beauty shop with several operators. She called them all together, told them what had happened to her, apologized for some of her actions and told them they were all starting new. The reaction, of course, was terrific.

The group had it's tragedies as well. I had been sober only a few months when one of our members went by to call on another member who was trying to come off a drunk, and found him dead. This particular member who had died was one of us that had gone all the way down. This small AA group took over, arranged his funeral, finally located his wife and made arrangements so that she could attend the funeral. I will never forget that cold, windy day when the only people around that grave, other than his wife and the minister, were members of the Farmington AA group. I was proud of that group at that time and my gratitude that I had not died drunk simply overwhelmed me.

AA grew steadily from that auspicious beginning until Farmington and San Juan County is now blanketed with groups. I firmly believe the growth is due to the hard nosed AA practiced by these early members, their great love for their fellow drunk and, most certainly, their willingness to respond when called with no hesitation.

Many thanks for giving me a chance to reminisce and renew my gratitude for this very wonderful program and the wonderful people that never gave up on me.

Kendall O.  
Farmington, New Mexico  
1977

The first member of Alcoholics Anonymous in Albuquerque, Leo B., was at various times during his life a writer, musician and traveling salesman. His first exposure to AA was sometime prior to 1946. His wife, Dolly, had spotted a copy of the Big Book in her mother-in-law's library. How and why Leo's mother had the book we don't know, but Dolly borrowed it and left it laying around the house for Leo, an avid reader, to read. At first he ignored the book but finally he picked it up and read it.

Sometime after reading the Big Book and probably before 1946, Leo decided to go to Denver to a sanitarium to dry out. He asked his wife to go with him but Dolly, apprehensive that he would back out before he got there, declined, preferring that his father go with him. Leo flew to Denver and was met by hospital personnel at the airport.

While the sanitarium employed a number of methods for the treatment of alcoholism, including Antabuse and Aversion Therapy, it did allow AA members to visit with the alcoholic patients. It was here that Leo met his first AA members. At the time he was in his early thirties.

Leo stayed in the hospital a week, writing Dolly every day, before she came up to join him. On his first night out of the sanitarium they went together to Leo's first AA meeting. After Leo was released, he and Dolly stayed in Denver for a while to soak up as much AA as possible before coming back to Albuquerque.

While in Denver Leo picked a Sponsor and spoke at his first AA meeting. Dolly had seen him appear before the public many times as a musician, but never sober. For the first time she saw her husband stand up before a group of people without a drink in him. Leo also went on his first twelfth-step call while there and this first call was a "lulu." The drunk had thrown and smashed just about everything in the house while the wife and daughter had locked themselves in a bedroom to get out of his way. As was to happen often during the next several years, Dolly went with Leo. So while he tried to calm the old drunk down, she went in to talk to the terrorized wife and daughter.

Leo and Dolly came back from Denver all enthused about AA. A newspaper man, Emmett F., and his wife had just moved to Albuquerque from Denver. Emmett's wife somehow found out that Leo was in AA and called him. Emmett of course was out on a drunk. He had come here to buy out a newspaper and was supposed to have had over a thousand dollars on him. When Leo found him holed up in some hotel room, Emmett didn't have a dime. Leo helped him sober up and for a while he seemed to be doing fine. A short time afterward Leo answered a knock on his door and there was Emmett, drunk again. Again Leo helped him sober up and that turned out to be Emmett's last drunk. Thus we had AA number two in Albuquerque and what could be considered the start of the first AA group here. This would later become the Isleta Group.

AA number three here was also a Denverite and worked for the Government. He was sober when he arrived in Albu-

querque but got on a good one soon after coming here. Leo and Emmett helped him sober up, and a third was added to the group. Thus it began to grow...slowly, and one at a time.

Before the opening of Turquoise Lodge here in 1952 about the only place an AA member could take a wet drunk to be dried out, other than into their homes, was Nazareth Sanitarium. Leo and Dolly had a woman show up at their door who was down and out. Since Leo did not like to work with women, Dolly was given the chore of taking her out to Nazareth. In the process of cleaning her up, and she was in definite need of being cleaned up, the Sisters found she had a purse full of pills. They told Dolly that alcoholics they could work with, drug addicts they could not! They would get the woman a room at a hotel and give her enough pills for the night and that they were sure the woman would move onto the next town the next day. That was the last Leo and Dolly saw of that poor soul. So even then, the drug problem was around.

As is true today, those early years had their humorous moments as well. Dolly got a call one day from the wife of an old drunk they had been trying to work with. She asked for Leo but since he wasn't in she started talking with Dolly. The drunk could be heard over the phone making one hell of a racket. Finally the wife excused herself, took the poor drunk's bottle from him and hit him over the head with it, knocking him out. Having achieved peace and quiet in the household, she came back and finished her conversation with Dolly.

Leo and Dolly took many into their home to sober up and get on their feet. One young lady they took in liked staying there so well that they became concerned that she had become a permanent fixture of the house. The gal was in love with a married lawyer, and they finally had to get this lawyer to come get her and find her another place to live. The home of Leo and Dolly also became a haven for many traveling AAs during those years. While in Albuquerque they would stay with Leo and his wife, claiming that was the only way they could ensure their sobriety. Leo, himself, was a traveling salesman and well aware of the problems of an AA member on the road. When out of town, he would keep in touch with AA by writing to members in the Albuquerque, Santa Fe area.

An active and effective twelfth stepper, Leo would visit the jail often looking for prospective members. One jailer got to know him so well that the jailer would call Leo if he thought he had a "live one" for Leo to work on. Yet permanent sobriety eluded Leo until his untimely death twenty-six years ago. He would often tell Dolly he seemed to be able to fix everyone but himself.

Bob H.  
(from a conversation with  
Dolly B.)  
Albuquerque, New Mexico  
1977

In 1946, around February, there were fourteen members getting together one night a week at the downtown meeting on Gold Avenue. I believe it was then called the Metro Group. About this time the Isleta Group also started. The Metro and Isleta groups went together as one group for a while in the early years. In 1949 or 1950 the Metro Group reformed and moved to Ninth and Kent and changed it's name to Metropolitan Group.

Also in 1949 the first Commission on Alcoholism in New Mexico was created for the purpose of studying "the problem of alcoholism, including methods and facilities available for the care, custody, detention, treatment, employment and rehabilitation of persons addicted to the intemperate use of intoxicating liquors." The Commission was authorized at that time to promote meetings for the discussion of problems confronting clinics and agencies in the treatment and rehabilitation of alcoholics and disseminate information on the subject. In 1951, the State imposed a tax on alcoholic beverages for the purpose of financing the work of the Commission, including treatment facilities. This tax was later upheld by the State Supreme Court. Funds were held in escrow until the legality of the tax was ascertained.

In the meantime, the Commission proceeded on the acquisition of its first treatment facility. Turquoise Lodge, a remodeled stage stop, hotel and cantina located south of Albuquerque was opened in July, 1952. Its original capacity of eleven has since been increased to twenty-three. Yucca Lodge, a leased facility, was opened at about the same time in Silver City. Because of its relative inaccessibility, it was closed in 1953 and replaced by the Pecos Valley Lodge in Roswell. The Pecos Valley installation, with a capacity of sixteen patients, was built on donated land expressly for the purpose of alcoholism treatment.

Some of the early members of the Metropolitan Group, 1946 through 1951, were Garland R., George P., George V., Jane L., Del J., Les C., Frank K., Fred T. and John L. Since those early years many more groups have started and some have folded; but, thank God, we now have about thirty-five groups in the Albuquerque area including Alanon and Alateen. All this helps to keep us sober by the Grace of God.

George V.  
Albuquerque, New Mexico  
1976



December 13, 1977

### History of The Heights Club in Albuquerque, New Mexico

The Heights Club was opened at 2314 Wisconsin NE in September 1963 to provide a meeting place for the Northeast Heights Group of Alcoholics Anonymous and the associated members of Alanon. Many of the AA's and Alanons who started the new club had been active at the Desert Club on Monroe Street SE and continued their support of that facility.

The Heights Group had been holding weekly Thursday night open meetings in several churches in the area. The members also were meeting each Sunday morning at a breakfast session at Eby's Restaurant at Louisiana and Menaul NE.

However, in each instance of the Heights Group evening meetings, members of the church congregations complained to their pastors about the presence of alcoholics. Finally, members of the Heights Group -- some eight or 10 -- met in the home of George and Kyda D. to decide what to do. Some of the members had less than a year of sobriety.

It was decided to raise some money, rent a building, fix it up and get a new club started.

A building that had been occupied by a plumbing firm was located at 2314 Wisconsin NE. Finley Pruett, the landlord (who became a good friend and strong supporter of the group), agreed to rent it for \$115 a month if the group would repaint the interior and pay the rent regularly.

George used gold paint to spray 25 keys to the building, Kyda sold them for \$25 each, a lease was signed and the building was occupied. The first key purchaser was Vic W. Bylaws were written and approved by the membership, the

club was organized with George as the first president, and papers of incorporation as a non-profit organization were filed with the State Corporation Commission. David G. was the club's attorney. Monthly meetings of the membership were held.

The interior was completely repainted and decorated by club members. In the kitchen, floor tile was laid and a ceiling was installed. A coke machine and a second-hand gas stove and water heater were purchased. Cooking and serving utensils and a few used metal folding chairs were obtained. Shelves were installed in the kitchen. A bar-and-brass-rail that had been part of stage property for a woman's club play was rebuilt by Howard D. and served as the podium.

Each club-and-group member, both AA's and Alanons, was involved in the renovation and gave generously of themselves. Art P. donated a new wall clock; Eloise and Otho B. contributed several items; several people donated used furniture and helped to recover old furniture. A monthly newsletter was started the first month of club operation with Juanita R., club secretary, as editor. It was fully a group and club team effort and several members experienced their first AA sobriety during their involvement in getting the club started.

The original membership totaled about a dozen and dues were \$5 a month. At first, the building was used only for the Thursday night AA meeting and a Monday afternoon Alanon session. Later, as membership increased, the facility was used for evening social activities and dinners. The energetic involvement of AA's and Alanon volunteers was considerable and made the operation possible.

Each member of the club had a key (and a number of keys were held also by other people) and it was not unusual for an AA member to 12th Step a sick alcoholic at the club late at night, after plugging in the coffee pot.



It also was not unusual for a member, during a meeting, to climb up on the roof and work on the air conditioner, which was constantly breaking down. The atmosphere was very informal and everyone had a strong sense of being important to both the club and group operations.

If a lighting fixture needed repainting, a member (either of the club or the group) might bring a can of paint and brush and do it himself/herself without asking for approval. Members who could afford \$5 a month paid club dues. Those who couldn't afford it, didn't. No list of club members was posted and there was little distinction between members and non-members. Eloise and Otho B. donated a piano to the club, but it saw little use and later was given to the Desert Club for use by performers in the Blackouts production.

The club emphasized "family memberships" --- recognizing that alcoholism is a family illness and that rehabilitation is encouraged through involvement by all family members. This was a guiding principle of the operation from the beginning. It also was recognized that social activities would attract family members to visit the club -- and also would serve to build the membership, which grew slowly and steadily.

Emphasis on "family memberships" offered a different approach at the time for Albuquerque clubs. It seemed to fill a need for many AA's and Alanons and perhaps in part explains the success of the Heights Club from the beginning. Board members also emphasized putting revenues back into the club operations and "not having too much money in the bank" (this was not difficult to accomplish).

In the early 1970's, the club moved to 9919 McKnight NE and, with employment of a manager, became a full-service facility that is open some 12 hours a day for the benefit of AA's, Alanons and Alateens and their families. The active involvement of the Alateens did not occur until the early 1970's.