

# THE HISTORY OF AA IN THE SAN JUAN BASIN

In this report of the history of AA, you will find names of treatment centers, churches, and club houses.

## A A. tradition #6

"An AA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprises lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose."

In following this tradition, A.A. is in no way endorsing, financing or lending the A.A. name to these facilities, we are just reporting the history of A.A. in the San Juan Basin to the best of our ability.

In the San Juan Basin there are 22 groups, each with numerous meetings. These meetings encompass Farmington, Aztec, Bloomfield, Kirtland, Fruitland, Shiprock, Dulce, Durango and Red Mesa.

There are meetings for everyone. Open and closed meetings, book studies, step study, tradition, non-smoking, womens, mens, instatutionalized, and a gay meeting.

For this report we spoke with groups that are active in District #8. There may be other groups that have been omitted from this report due to their low profile.

AA in the San Juan Basin is growing. We are experiencing growing pains, but not unlike the growing pains Bill W. and Dr. Bob had in the early days. At this time we have well over 500 members in the Basin which are enjoying Sobriety and living a happier life.

## HISTORY OF THE BEGINNING OF AA IN SAN JUAN COUNTY

In the spring of 1952, a 13 year old girl in Farmington called AA in Durango, Colorado to see if they could help her mother. A lady from the Durango group came to Farmington, picked up Lola and took her back to Durango, keeping her at her house for a week. This was enough to get Lola solidly on the program and she started going to Durango for meetings. Later that summer, an AA from Wyoming, Al K. was transferred to Farmington by his employer, U.S.G.S. and he started attending meetings in Durango with Lola. That fall, a suffering alcoholic wrote that Durango group wanting to know if there was anyone in Farmington going to Durango, or if he could go to Durango for help. The call was referred to Lola in Farmington and she contacted this alcoholic. This particular alcoholic listened, but was not quite ready. Nevertheless, Lola and Al thought that he would be worth working with. They decided to hold an AA meeting in December 1952, for the benefit of this alcoholic and this meeting was held in the office of the U.S.G.S. Present were Lola, Al and this alcoholic.

This was the first AA meeting, as such, in San Juan County. Lola and Al did not continue the meetings since the alcoholic was not quite ready for the program.

In February 1953, Ed B., an AA member from out of town, and another AA member, also from out of town, happened to meet at the Farmington Daily Times to insert a classified ad in the paper announcing an AA meeting and asking interested people to attend. This meeting was held in the American Legion Hut and I understand that some 20 to 30 people showed. The Farmington AA group was officially started at that time. Meetings were held for this first year in the American Legion Hut, a ramshackled building on the northwest corner of the block where the Civic Center now stands. These meetings were well attended from the beginning, so AA grew. After about a year, it became necessary to find another meeting place and the Episcopal Church allowed the group to meet there for awhile. The group moved around quite a bit during the next few years, going to an old manse that the Presbyterian Church allowed them to use next to a building behind what is now the Office Bar.

On Labor Day in 1954 or 1955 the group received a call from Aztec asking them to call on an alcoholic there. They found in an old trailer house one Scoop G., an alcoholic in sad shape. They gave him the usual treatment of Karo syrup and milk, or honey and milk and Scoop gradually recovered and started coming to meetings in Farmington. After a few months Scoop felt that Aztec needed a group and he decided to start one there. The Aztec group met in Scoop's house for some time before finding a permanent meeting place.

Some time in the latter 1950's, two Navajo Indians from Lybrook went to the Turquoise Lodge in Albuquerque. Upon returning home, they wanted to start a group in Lybrook. They contacted the Farmington AA group and asked if they could bring several Navajos to the meeting in Farmington to see how a group operated. They were told to come, of course. They brought 8 to 10 Navajos to Farmington for several months. Those meetings were rather long.

First, an Anglo would speak and a Navajo would then interpret. Then, a Navajo would speak in his native language and this would be interpreted into English. After several months, the Navajos felt they could start a group on their own. They then returned to Lybrook and the Lybrook AA group came into existence. This was a very active group for many years.

In 1963, the Farmington group located a building on the La Plata Highway that they could buy for a song. A non-profit organization was formed for the purchase of the building, and the Arid Acre Club came into existence for the purpose of buying this building, and renting it to AA groups for meetings.

Not too long afterwards, some members of the Farmington group felt that another group was needed in Farmington and the Downtown Group was formed. After several moves they found a home at the Presbyterian Church.

AA was really beginning to grow, especially after the coming forth of various treatment centers. A group of people decided another club was needed, so The Well was born and became quite successful. Several different groups have been started since then, and now there is a multitude of groups in this area with meetings every day, and several meetings on some days.

## THE AZTEC GROUP

The Aztec group was started in 1954 or 1955 by Scoop G. The Farmington group received a phone call on Labor Day and some of their members went to see Scoop G. After a few months Scoop felt that Aztec needed a group and he decided to start one there. The Aztec group met at Scoop's house for some time before moving in 1963, to the Geoelectric Building on Main Street.

Scoop G. wasn't the first person from Aztec to reach out for AA. In 1947 Chano J. thru Father Reso of the St. Josephs church called GSO in New York. They answered his letter an sent him a big book. He stayed sober thru his church for 20 years. After slipping, he joined the Aztec group in 1971 after stopping to help a stranded motorist, Bonnie M., an AA member, who referred him to the Aztec group.

The group started with two meetings a week, Tuesdays and Fridays, and they now meet on Monday at 12:00 and Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday at 8:00. They have members with well over 15 years of sobriety and are still helping people stay sober the AA way.

## HISTORY OF THE UNITY GROUP

The Unity Group splintered off of the Aztec group, as a result of a controversial move from the Geoelectric Building, to a larger better ventilated room in the basement of the First Interstate Bank. Some of the members refused to move because the Aztec Alanon Group was going to be meeting in a nearby room. So, part of the group moved to the bank and formed the Unity Group in September of 1982. They met on Thursday and Sunday nights to begin with and later on, a Wednesday night Big Book Study was added. The group has undergone several moves. We outgrew the bank so we moved to a building on West Aztec Blvd., which we occupied for about a year. Then, the building was sold, so we moved to South Main, where we stayed for about 2 years. Then, the owner raised the rent and the group couldn't afford it, so we moved to 101 N. Main in Aztec where we are presently meeting.

## DOWNTOWN GROUP

In 1969, some members of the Farmington group felt that another group was needed in Farmington, and the Downtown Group was formed.

In 1969, the GSO office in New York required four signatures to start a new group. For the Downtown group they were Bob and Gloria P., Kathleen H., and John B.

Their first meeting place was located at the Church of Christ on Broadway on Thursday nights at 8:00 and later on Sunday nights also.

In 1972, they moved to 307 W. Broadway, where they traded cleaning the place for rent. Between 1972 and 1978, they moved 2 or 3 more times until they moved to the Presbyterian Church at 1865 N. Dustin, where they are still having meetings.

## HAPPY HOUR GROUP

In the fall of 1985, I believe it was September or October, some of the younger members of the 8:00 P.M. Farmington group decided to start a new meeting under the Farmington group.

It was a result of conflicts of interest that first started us thinking in this direction. Some of the newcomers felt that a meeting at a new time would better serve their interests.

Not too long after we began the meetings on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 5:00, we decided that it was successful to the point that we should spin off from that 8:00 group and start a new group. Thus, we ended up as the Happy Hour Group, and about six months later we added a Sunday meeting, too.

As a direct result of working on our primary purpose, I am happy to report after almost 5 years it is still being attended regularly by AA's who are mostly addicted.

## Short History of Groups I helped start.

### (Bloomfield Group) 1976

I went to El Paso, Texas, and attended a meeting in Spanish. I came back with the idea of starting a Spanish group. That was in April of 1975. I got with two brothers that were members of the Aztec group from Bloomfield and we got the Bloomfield group started in English. We met in a building that belonged to the Catholic church. That used to be where Ace Hardware is now. We started with three members: me, Carlos J., Marchal D., and Raymond D. That group still meets at the C.C.D. building of St. Mary's Catholic church.

*By Carlos J.*

### (B-Hill Group) 1979

The Bloomfield group has never wanted to participate in District, so I thought that Bloomfield needed a group that would work within the structure of AA. I got permission from the Methodist church to start an AA group in the basement of their church. I held meetings on Thursdays by myself for about four months, then one guy started to come on a regular basis. He became the second member. Me, Carlos J., and Bobby M. The group is still very active, and has grown.

*By Carlos J.*

HOSPITAL MEETING  
about 1978

I was D.C.M. at the time I got a call from Scott D. from Day Break Treatment Center. They had just opened that treatment center about a year earlier. Somebody had told him I could help him get a meeting going at the Hospital. I made an appointment with him at the hospital cafeteria. I called Irv A. to go with me, because he was the hospital and Institution chairman for District #8. We came up with the idea of having a speakers meeting open to the public. Now I needed a speaker so I asked a member of Farmington group. He had been in a treatment center in Albuquerque, and had been sober for quite awhile. George S. from the Farmington group was the first speaker. He is still around. The meeting at the hospital is still going on.

*By Carlos J.*

FOUR WINDS TREATMENT CENTER  
1979

I was at a meeting at the Farmington group at Arid Acres. After the meeting, I met two counselors from Four Winds. They had taken the clients to the meeting. They asked me if it was possible to start a AA meeting at Four Winds. Their names were June G. and Alvira. I asked them to give a date and time and I would help start a meeting. They came up with Wednesday at 8:00. I called a friend of mine. I was his sponsor. I told him if he would help me start a meeting at Four Winds, so, Joe S. from Downtown group and I started the first AA meeting at Four Winds. The meetings are still going on at the same time, 8:00 p.m. on Wednesdays.

I am not too sure about the dates.

*By Carlos J.*

## FARMINGTON BEGINNERS GROUP - 4/14/90

The Beginner's Group began in November 1983. It was started by three members who were Ron P., Rancy B., and Irv A. Irv A. was the first G.S.R. By January 1984, there were 7 members and the meetings were growing. The main reason for the Beginners Group was for the Treatment Center people, Court ordered people, and just for people who didn't know about whether they were alcoholics or not. They started with two meetings. Thursday evening and Saturday evening at The Well. Irv A. went to the Judge's Treatment Centers to tell them about the meetings, that they were open meetings and so they could possibly relieve a little of the pressure on the other groups. Bob T was elected G.S.R. in October 1984. The meetings were moving along pretty good and attendance had grown to about an average of 20 people per meeting. In about April 1985 something happened and meeting attendance started getting smaller. It shrunk to about only 2 to 5 people attending. They just kept going like that for about 1-1/2 years. In about the beginning of 1987 another couple of people joined the group and the meetings started growing again. Some of the people wanted to get involved and they got the treatment centers attending again. The group has grown so much that now there are approximately 50 to 70 people in attendance on Thursday and Saturday evenings. In 1988, they started Friday and Saturday midnight meetings. The people were mostly younger people, so we figured weekend nights were the hardest time for these people so we started these meetings. They do fairly well in attendance. In December 1989, they had a group conscience and decided that the well was getting too small for the attendance so they started looking for another place. In March of 1990, they found another place. The Carpenters Union Hall. There are enough chairs and tables for 80 and room for more. The NMCYPAA entertainment committee had located this place and one of the members had suggested to the beginners group that they might check into renting the place for their meetings. There is plenty of room for growth, so they checked into it and voted to move. They will still have the same meetings until further notice. The first meeting is tonight at 8:00 p.m. So we will have to start a new archives, and a new chapter in the History of the Farmington Beginners Group. I personally would like to express my gratitude to the Farmington area A.A. Community for all of the support they have given me, the beginners group in the last 7 years. Without you, the Beginners Group would not be what it is today.

Thank you,

Bob T.

#### 4th Dimension

The 4th dimension originally was the Sunday morning breakfast group - open AA meeting. Betty, Sam and Andy A. started the group in 1980 on Easter Sunday after Jerry C. of Quadco donated a trailer which became the well. A club house that rents rooms for 12 step meetings. Later a meeting was added on Tuesday at noon. As time went on, more meetings were added. At this time, the 4th demension group holds meeting at 12:00 and 5:10, every day of the week. They have open meetings at 12:00 and closed meetings at 5:10

## CENTRAL OFFICE OF SAN JUAN COUNTY INC.

In 1982, some time in the summer, the question of the problems with our 12 Step calls became a big subject of discussion. This was not a new problem, by any means, but has caused the subject of a central office to be raised. We had been using an answering service. The answering service used a 12 Step List that AA was supposed to keep somewhat up to date. The people may leave, or never be home, or for what ever reason, it became apperant that a change should be discussed.

The subject was brought up at the District meetings several times. Larry L. was our DCM at the time. Began to get some interest started. First they discussed location, telephone equipment, office supplies, money and all the other little bothersome things that it became apperant we would have to deal with.

If I remember right, I believe that someone was to check out the telephone equipment first. It was discovered that Mountain Bell had a transfer box. By using the transfer box, upon leaving the office at night, or when we were closed, we could dial in a phone number in someone's home and have our own answering service. This worked great as long as we punched it properly, we learned very quickly.

The office opened on November 1st, 1982. The first volunteer wsa Roy N., and the director was to be Jay G. During the first month we received about 200 calls. Of these calls, some 40 were 12 Step calls. There were all kinds of calls, mostly for information.

During the first month, being open 7 days a week and 12 hours a day, we used 42 different people in 4 hour shifts. This was proof that there was tremendous interest in the Central Office. From day one there was always people in the office talking and 12 Stepping each other.

The Central Office got calls wanting speakers at schools, and kids came in to interview us with their tape recorders for class projects. They did a very good job of it. We were very carful about names, or breaking anyone's anonimity.

Location was a problem. Several places were checked out, then we were offered a room in the basement of the Citizens Bank. We agreed to pay a very nominal fee for a monthly rent, and that we would move when the space was needed by the bank. It turned out that we got to stay for over two years.

People were almost always in the office, and eventually we got a fair supply of literature and books. The literature we sold to the groups at cost, but we sold all the books for \$1.00 above cost to help with the operation of the office.

We used the office for the District Meetings, as well as the Central Office Committee meetings. It was decided that each group would send one representative to represent that group and to oversee the operation of the office (this is seperate from the District).

The big problem from day one was money. We had to depend on group contributions, each giving part of their income to support the Central Office. Generally they gave a percentage of their income, some giving more than others, all being appreciated.

Also, we had a commitment form that a lot of people signed agreeing to give \$5.00 or \$10.00 a month, even more. Some of these people were very faithful and kept up their commitment for a long time.

One of the things that helped in setting up the office was that one of our members was in Phoenix, AZ. C.O., Betty S., she talked to the Director there, asked a lot of questions, and was given information and literature that was a great help, for we were starting from scratch. Also, Larry L., Andy A., Jay G., and I went to the Central Office in Albuquerque, and we got some very good pointers from them.

In order to get the most benefit from our Central Office, I started putting out a monthly newsletter. At first it wasn't much, one page with just a report on the amount of phone calls and birthdays. When I had the information later with the help of a lot of people, and especially Angie S., we were putting out a real nice letter.

I have to mention that Maxine B. was a very big help when she put together the first 12 Step list. At last we had a list of people we could get ahold of most of the time.

Also, Martin P. put together the updated schedules of all the meetings in the area.

The 7 day a week, 12 hours a day proved to be more than we could maintain. After 5 months, we had to cut back to 5 days a week from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. each day, putting the phones on home answering the rest of the time.

It became very hard at times to get people to work. More excuses than you can imagine were given, not always legit. However, many people were committed and when they said they would work they generally did.

We were trying to use the Central Office to coordinate the efforts of all the groups in a way to help as many people get sober as was possible. AND IT WORKED. Many people that have been sober for several years, attribute their sobriety to the fact that the Office and the people were there when they were needed.

We've helped a lot of visitors, people away from home that needed a meeting, that would call the office late in the afternoon, saying, "I just got in from Chicago, Dallas, Denver or one time from Old Mexico, I'm at a motel, and sure would like to go to a meeting". Almost always we could get someone to pick them up. This is AA, being willing to do whatever we can to help someone stay sober.

There is no limit to the help we can give people when we work together. Every little thing we can do may ultimately help someone either get sober or stay sober. We may not know it, in fact, very few of our efforts show any direct results. Those that we do see are very rewarding.

At the end of two years, Jay G. resigned and Clay C. was the Director. During his time in the office, we were told to move. The bank needed the space. We got a room in the James Building. It was small, upstairs, and we were the only occupants. It was not liked very much, but the work went on.

For the next few years, several people worked as the Director. Money continued to be a problem, as it is today. The Central Office is now at 339 East Main, we have call forwarding for the phones and the number is 325-0731, the same number from the beginning.

Let us work toward stirring up new and stronger interests and support for the Central Office. How can we pay someone to do the job that is ours to do. The Central Office can always use contributions and workers. DON'T BE A TAKER, BE A GIVER FOR A CHANGE.

Report By:

Jay N. G.  
Feb. 1990

The following is a list of all groups registered with G.S.O. as of April 14, 1990:

Aztec Group  
B-Hill Group  
Beginners Group  
Downtown Group  
Farmington Group  
Fourth Dimension  
Kirtland Downtown Group  
Peaceful Group  
Spearhead Group  
Serenity Group  
Unity Group  
Happy Hour Group  
Chuska Mountain Group  
Gratitude Group (Women)  
Baah-Diliid Group  
Four Corners Lambda Group  
Bitter Medicine Group  
Totah Group  
Jail Meetings  
Surrender Meeting  
The Crossroad Meeting

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Special thanks to members that contributed to this report.