Early Indianapolis A.A.
A Pictorial View

by
Bob S.
Foreword

This book was originally designed to offer a photographic essay of the structures used by AA groups in Indianapolis during the 1940s and 1950s. However, further progression expanded interest to other sites of undeniable interest, such as hotels, treatment centers and clubs. Agreed, this edition may be far less than complete in said undertaking, but it is hoped that interested parties will offer more information as years pass. Consequently, this volume may best serve as a magnet to attract needed photos and historical artifacts for our next edition.

The difficult and often tedious research, as well as the editing, for this effort was accomplished by Bruce C., from Muncie, Indiana. Bruce spent many hours in libraries, online and traveling to distant locations. He did all the photography, save for the old photographs and postcards which he derived from PC investigations which included city directories and old phone books.

Much thanks also goes to Neil S., from Fishers, Indiana, for information we derived from his earlier book titled, *History of Indianapolis AA.*, as well as shared knowledge via personal conversations. Thanks also to The Indianapolis Central Office Archives Committee for kindly allowing us to research in their office.

This is a confidential book for AA members only. Last names are not used except for those AA members who have long ago deceased. This book is not for the general public. However, another edition may soon appear minus all last names which will be offered to one and all.

This book does not reflect the opinion of the fellowship of Indianapolis Alcoholics Anonymous, nor the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous, or Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole. The contents of this book are the sole responsibility of the author.

It is my hope that you find this book informative and enjoyable.

Bob S.

Published July, 2009
Disclaimer, Acknowledgments and Credits

The “Trusted Servants” who worked, in service, on this project do not claim to speak for any specific member or group, nor do we infer any representation of A.A., as a whole.

Those who were privileged to assemble the photos and narratives included in this humble effort, would like to respectfully thank all those who previously contributed to the wealth of historical information, on the early years of A.A., which is currently readily available within the Public Domain.

Every effort was been made to maintain the anonymity of all A.A. members, past and present. Fortunately, the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous has made public, many cherished photos and specific information concerning the pioneers and founders of A.A., which often includes first and last names. All such references have been faithfully reproduced and appropriately quoted.

Additionally, several web sites previously published photos and other memorabilia into the Public Domain which also served to augment the images presented herein.

It is hoped that all who view this presentation, will enjoy the story told and that they will receive the information in the spirit of the sharing of A.A.’s “experience, strength and hope,” in which it is provided.
Doherty’s niece, Laura, described him as a devoutly religious family man who was full of fun and steady as a rock. His friends never saw him drunk and received news of his illness with stark disbelief. But in the spring of 1936, Doherty became ill with a damaged liver and had to stop drinking—his life depended on it, but he could not. Consequently, he became a patient in the alcoholic ward of Menninger’s Hospital, in Topeka, Kansas; but he left after few months and began compulsive, destructive drinking. Eventually, Doherty became a patient at Sacred Heart Hospital in Milwaukee where he spent two years. He was released, but only under the care of an attendant. He returned to Indiana, and took residence at the family's country home, nicknamed "The Tangle." (Pictured Below)

The exact address of this location is not known, but research suggests that this remodeled house has most likely been razed or dramatically altered in accordance the now exceptionally upscale standards of this neighborhood.
Doherty’s Struggle for an Alcoholic ‘Cure’

“In the spring of 1936, Doherty became ill with a damaged liver and had to stop drinking – his life depended on it, but he could not. Consequently he became a patient at [the] Mennigner[clinic in Topeka, Kansas;] but he left after a few months and began compulsive, destructive drinking. Eventually, Doherty became a patient at Sacred heart Hospital in Milwaukee where he spent two years.”

From Doherty’s niece, Laura
Doherty had been dry by the skin of this teeth since 1938, then as Indianapolis Historian, Dean L. Barnhart, describes, he read a September 1939 Liberty Magazine article entitled, “Alcoholics and God, by Morris Markey, from which he learned that a new book, “Alcoholics Anonymous” was available (information upon request). Consequently, he wrote the following letter, as follows:

On October 4, 1939 he received this response from Liberty Magazine: “We are enclosing a mimeographed form letter which explains briefly the background of those people who dub themselves Alcoholics Anonymous, their connection with the Works Publishing Company and the Alcoholic Foundation, and origin of the book; also a pamphlet describing the book and how it can be secured.” (Excerpt)*

Then, on April 29th, 1940, Doherty Received a letter from Bill Wilson’s secretary, Ruth Hock, in which she mentioned a small pamphlet that briefly explained the AA program was available, and that AA had grown to 500 members. The cover of this pamphlet is shown on page 22.

*These original documents can be viewed at the Indianapolis Central Office Archives.
Fulton Oursler was a magazine editor, religious author, and Hollywood screenwriter, and was an early Oxford Group member and friend to AA. He passed away in the year 1952. His official relationship with AA is as follows: Sept. 30, 1939, the very popular weekly Liberty Magazine, headed by Fulton Oursler, carried a piece titled *Alcoholics and God*, by Morris Markey (who was influenced to write the article by Charles Towns). It generated about 800 inquiries from around the nation. Oursler (author of *The Greatest Story Ever Told*) became good friends with Bill W and later served as a Trustee and member of the Grapevine editorial board. In Oct. 1949, Dr. William D. Silkworth and Fulton Oursler joined the Alcoholic Foundation Board.

From *NEWSVINE* - a book review periodical.

Indianapolis AA membership was among the communities to experience growth in the wake of this article.

In March 1941, the Saturday Evening Post featured an excellent article about A.A., and the response was enormous. By the close of that year, the membership had jumped to 6,000, and the number of groups multiplied in proportion. Spreading across the U.S. and Canada, the Fellowship mushroomed.

By 1950, 100,000 recovered alcoholics could be found worldwide, and Indianapolis membership exceeded 500 in that year – just ten years after the first meeting. (From Group Records of the GSO Archives).
Indianapolis AA Beginnings

What further communication took place between Doherty and the Alcoholic Foundation is not known, but another sort of response arrived in the form of this short 250 pound venetian-blind traveling salesman, who bluntly introduced himself: “I am from Cleveland and I’ve come here to help you get to work.” This connection took place in September 1940. This was a member who was sponsored by well known early A.A. Cleveland founder, Clarence Snyder. His name was Irwin Meyerson, nicknamed ‘Irv,’ who attended the Borton Group when in Cleveland, and sober. (See picture at right)

Although Irv was a frequent slipper, he was enthusiastic about 12th Stepping when he was sober. Despite his regular leaps off the AA wagon, he appears to have been financially successful by the appearance of this nice house in an upscale neighborhood. (Pictured below)

This first action of this ‘work’ was making a 160 mile drive south to Evansville, where J.D. Holmes had started Indiana’s first A.A. meeting only several months previous, on April 23, 1940. Another Indianapolis alcoholic, Mr. Bard, accompanied Irv and Doherty on this venture. J.D. had gained his sobriety in Akron with the early A.A. members in September of 1936. He was counted as A.A. # 8, after Bill W. and Dr, Bob.

The 1940 City Directory address for James D. and Rhoda Holmes as 420 South Denby Street. (Picture below) According to a letter written to A.A. by Mrs. Holmes, the Evansville Group had 24 members in September of 1940. [From a 2007 Archives report by Bob E.] The three visitors must have been quite impressed by the size of this distant and solitary Tuesday night meeting!

J.D. Holmes traveled professionally and was an avid 12-Stepper; He stated: “I used to carry three or four Big Books in my car. If they didn’t have any books at a particular group I would give them one, or some pamphlets.” He would drive miles out of his way to visit a man whose name he received from the New York Office. As years passed, he would often take a train up to Indianapolis on Saturdays, to attend the Indianapolis Sunday Morning 9:00 a.m., Breakfast Meeting at the Hotel Riley. (Dr Bob & the Good Old Timers, page 258)
Irwin Meyerson, started many meetings through the south, he later moved to the west coast; little more is known about Irwin at this time. J.D. Holmes continued to help start new meetings until his demise at Akron on May 27, 1961; he was 66 years old and 24 years sober. The Indiana AA founder, J.D. always gave credit to Doherty for “putting Indiana on the AA map.”

“The Indianapolis Fellowship had grown to seventeen members by the following spring and by that summer (1941), to forty! But not all the attendees were from Indy—J.D. Holmes would take a train up from Evansville and people started coming from points far and near. As Bill Wilson might say, “The goose hung high!” Eventually, AAs from Richmond, Ft. Wayne, Anderson, Muncie, and all around Indiana, were dutifully making their weekly Sunday morning trudge to the Sunday Morning Breakfast Meeting in the beautiful Riley Hotel. The Indianapolis AA Breakfast Meeting era had begun!

This era was to last for more than twenty-six years, from 1941 through 1967, and even longer if the Breakfast meetings at the Essex Motel are to be counted.

“In our history, lies our hope!”
Richmond member Tom Ross (DOS 1951), from Greenville, Ohio, stated that the Sunday Breakfast Meeting excursions were considered almost as an audience with the Pope! The only meetings in Richmond were on Sundays and Wednesdays, so Sunday would have been a double feature for those inclined to make said quasi-pilgrimage.

J.D. Holmes spoke of how Doherty would get a lone wolf from one town together with another for the Sunday Breakfast Meeting. Of course, this must have prompted many new meetings around Indiana. AA lore has it that two Richmond, Indiana, businessmen were surprised to discover each other at the breakfast—they later, became home town founding members in 1946.

Ft. Wayne, alcoholic, C.L. Buckley, was having no success getting a meeting started, till he convinced three others into going to the Indianapolis Breakfast Meeting on Pearl Harbor Day (December 7, 1941). This apparently broke the ice, because soon afterward a new AA meeting was established in that northeastern Indiana city.

This Meeting Directory has been reproduced by the editor for the sake of clarity. The exact date is not known, but factual evidence dates it later than 1948. The red bolded print is to illustrate the two concurrent Hotel Breakfast Meetings. Some descriptions have been deleted.
George L., from Anderson, Indiana, was residing in the Ben Hur Sanitarium, in Beech Grove—a suburb of Indianapolis, when he received a visit from AA members Doherty Sheerin and Harry M. George then attended his first AA meeting at the Riley Hotel. After leaving the sanitarium he moved home to Fowler, Indiana. He stayed sober by continuing attendance to the Riley Breakfast Meeting, once a month, and stayed sober by letters of encouragement from his sponsors. He and his wife moved to his home in Anderson by November 1943. (George had obtained a job at Delco - Remy.) He continued to phone Doherty and visit patients at the Indiana Home alcoholic ward. In February of 1947 he helped start Anderson’s first meeting.

A breakfast meeting took place in the Victory Room of the beautiful Grand Hotel (Pictured below) located at 138 Illinois Street, Indianapolis. This event took place on Sunday, Feb.18, 1948. (It would seem likely that this was a one-time affair. From the Anderson Group Ledger.)

This was doubtless a pretty fancy shindig! Charlie Martin (DOS 1950) lamented on the ‘dress code’ of those early days. In a 1992 recording, at the State Avenue Group, he told how that all the speakers during the early 1950s would “never, ever” do so without wearing a coat and tie. One could be assured that, in those days, that the same protocol would be in effect when visiting patients in the alcoholic wards of the Indiana Home or other such institutions. AA was new and most agreed that it needed to be presented in the best light! (Look up early Akron pictures)

But this was about to change during this period. Charlie Martin reminisces on how AA member, Park Bryant, came to a meeting not wearing a coat. When criticized, Park started his own meeting and called it the A-Z-UR Group, meaning come dressed anyway you choose. Charlie claimed this caused “all H ___ to break lose!” Charlie was wearing a Coat & Tie during this talk at the State Avenue Group, forty years later.
Then, at 3:00 am, he phoned every one of those ‘tricksters’ and laughingly stated: “Ha! Ha! Ha! You didn’t keep me sober tonight.”

Charlie sobered up for good and all on June 21, 1950, but he never lost his sense of humor. Some years later he told a group of Al-Anon ladies: “If it wasn’t for us alcoholics, you wouldn’t be here!”

Throughout his early sobriety, his Al-Anon wife, Helen, was always very supportive and often waited in the car during the meetings which might be noted as a thoughtful protective measure.

**A notable event**

Charlie relates that Bill Wilson was to present an AA talk at Shortridge High School on June 5th, 1951, but interestingly enough he decided to do a preparatory talk at a local hotel, because Bill feared his eastern accent might not be well understood by mid-western speaking Hoosiers. Charlie met Bill during this session which began a life-long friendship.

Dr. Brodie’s wife, Helen, tells that after the main talk at the High School, Bob White, Indiana’s first AA Delegate, invited Bill and about fifteen attendees to his house for coffee and fellowship. But when the word spread, his house was soon filled with AAs and Al-Anons alike (Al-Anon may not have yet been given that title at the time). But Bill lectured them on the importance of living the same 12 Steps as their husbands. Helen said that they were already doing this. One time during the early 1950s, Tom Ross, from Greenville, Ohio, drove all the way to Indianapolis for counsel with the well known Dr. Brodie, but the Doctor told Tom: ‘You go right back home and bring ‘that little lady” back with you—this is a family disease!”
1947 Indianapolis Newspapers report on Alcoholics Anonymous

Indianapolis News reports
Jan. 1, 1947

Indianapolis News Report
June 10, 1947

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Getting in touch with AA

The first discovered newspaper notice of a convenient AA connection was in the Indianapolis Star on July 29, 1941. It told of a PO Box number 1474. This was over seven months after the first Indianapolis meeting started, so it is possible that there was an earlier notice. The Hotel Breakfast meetings had started at the Riley Hotel and a July 29 newspaper article accessed AA’s membership as 40 members (See page 10).

In January 1943, the Telephone Answering Service 24/7 begins. By April 1, 1943 the Indianapolis Star ‘Personal Notices’ listed the same PO Box number, plus a telephone number! MA. 5392.

In May 1944 the Cleveland Central Bulletin listed another phone number: FR 2743, as the number to contact A.A. This was the same number listed in 1945, which was the year the Indiana Home opened.

The 1947, Indiana Meeting Directory listed FR 2743 with the P.O. Box # 1474 for AA. The Directory was printed by The Retreat that was located at 41 West 32nd Street. Its telephone number TA 3021.

In 1948 the FR 2743 number was listed in connection with the Alanon Club (Maybe it was spelled Al-Anon in those days, as it is now) which became the acting Central Office at 124 W. Georgia Street.

In 1953 the same number was used in connection with the new Indiana Home location at 2054 N. Delaware Ave.

In 1955 (approx.) this same FR 2743 number was used for the new Alanon Club location at 2209 Central Avenue.

It is not yet discovered whether this same number was used in 1958 when the Central Office moved to 136 E. Market Street.

Eight years after the first Indianapolis AA meeting the first ongoing center of operations began to develop in the downtown area near the Union Station, as the following article describes:

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Indiana AAs Open Club

(Alanon Club, 124 W. Georgia Street)

A three story brick building is now the new Alanon Club of Indianapolis. The clubhouse is complete with a large room for dancing, lounges and coffee and sandwich bar equipped with a brass rail so that the members will feel at home. The opening was attended by approximately 500 members and friends. The clubrooms are open at all times and groups from all parts of the city hold meetings there. (Excerpt from a July 1948 Grapevine article) [The Alanon Club opened April 3, 1948]

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The Alanon Club served as a recovery social center, AA meeting location and Center for AA business activities, including a telephone service. It was supported by AA meetings around the state and was known simply as the Alanon Club. It was one of the first AA Intergroup Offices in the United States.

This building was razed and is now a parking garage. For the sake of location a photo of the Parish House, which is the next building west, across the alleyway, is illustrated on page 16.
AA Members, Tom Ross, from Ohio, and Bob W, from Batesville, IN, recall attending Sunday Morning Breakfast Meetings in the Severin Hotel during the late 1950s.

St. John Parish House at 126 Georgia Street (the Alanon Club was next door east of this building).
The Club/Central Office remained at the Georgia Street location for approximately seven years, but Harry G. (DOS Jan. 1958) records that it moved to a new location during 1955 while he was still trying to sober up.

**A New location**

(2209 Central Avenue)

Harry G. recalls that the Alanon Club location was in a nicely remodeled older home and continued to serve as both a social club and central office. The caretakers were tagged as Mom and Pop Rhinegold.

A 1958 controversy which developed over a particular racial issue caused much dissention and argument. Sue Ritter, the Central Office Secretary, commented that this sort of thing was inappropriate for Alcoholics Anonymous. The result was moving the Central Office to the fourth floor of 136 Market Street, in the heart of downtown Indianapolis (See next page).

Then, some years later, the Alanon Club moved to this beautiful new location:

![Presently referred to as the Carvel Club](image)

The present club manager, Doug B. explains: “The Carvel Club was founded in 1948 under the name "The Alanon Club, Inc." (two years before Al-Anon came into existence) making it one of the oldest clubs in the world still operating. The current facility at 4627 Carvel was built in 1965 for the sole purpose of providing a new home for the club. Known for years as just "The Club" or "The Northside Club", the name was officially changed to The Carvel Club Inc. on January 28, 2005. Needless to say the history is long and extensive.”
Indianapolis Intergroup Office
(136 E Market Street)

The Indianapolis Meeting Directory listed a Wednesday night AA meeting called the “12th Step Group” in this facility at 8:00 pm. An advertisement read, “Out of town AAs are invited to attend Wednesday night meetings of the ‘12th Step Group’ at THE RETREAT, 41W. 32nd St.”

The Cleveland Central Bulletin, April 1945 Issue stated: “From our good friend, Jim B. of Indianapolis comes the pleasing information that on the first of April, he and Dr. John Nevitt opened a nursing home for the treatment of alcoholics. The Hospital is called Indiana Home.”

The Retreat
(41 W. 32nd Street)

One of the early Indianapolis centers for alcoholic treatment was THE RETREAT. The present location of this building is now a parking lot, but during the late 1940s this must have been a busy haven for recovering alcoholics.

Established in July of 1946, his facility treated both men and women, which was not common practice during those times.

The Indiana Home
1341 N. Alabama Street

Indiana’s latest AA venture, a clinic for alcoholics, also appears to be headed for success. The newly instituted Indiana Home […] with an 18 bed capacity, had six patients during its first week of operation. Managed by AA, gives not only alcoholics a six day treatment, but, like the Knickerbocker Hospital in New York, serves as a focal point for AA members to do 12 Step work via visits to the patients who are being relieved of the jitters and interesting them in the philosophy of AA.

From a June 1945 Grapevine Article
(retyped for clarity)
It should be noted that Doherty Sheerin was an enthusiastic and active participant in the creation of the Indiana Home in the mid-1940s.

Charlie M. spoke of his treatment at the Indiana Home where he was tapered-off with whiskey and then with Paraldehyde, which knocked him out for nearly three days. Charlie only weighed 115 lbs at that time.

Here is an excerpt from a 1951 newspaper article on the Indiana Home by Freemont Powers about another patient:

"When an attendant opened the door of the room where Bill lay, an unavoidable odor rolled out, compounded it seemed, of ether and alcohol. It was paraldehyde, a colorless liquid with great hypnotic powers.

"Oh, he's fallen out of bed," the attendant said. "Two others came in, and with one at his feet, another at his head and one at the middle, they hauled him back up into bed."

Subsequently, it was learned that Bill hadn't rolled out of bed. He had made his way to the bathroom but on returning, had grown so woozy and tired, he just lay down on the floor.

Another excerpt tells us:

"When the property at 1341 N. Alabama, which already had been an Alcoholics Anonymous institution, became for sale in 1946, these AA members, acting as a corporation, purchased the property with the proceeds of a state-wide solicitation of their associates.

These men then surrendered their shares for reorganization whereby any apparent connection between AA as such and ownership of the establishment, would be dissolved.

This was according to the tenets of AA which hold that it should not have property or money or engage in politics."

And further:

"In order that all commercial aspects be removed from the home, the incorporation articles provide that in the event of dissolution, all assets will go to the state of Indiana."

This Center remained active at 1341 N. Alabama for about 13 years, but after a destructive fire, it moved to 2054 N. Delaware Street by 1958.

Indiana Home #2
(2054 N. Delaware Street)

"It was into this scenario that the seeds of the present day Fairbanks Hospital were planted. These men's work formed the Indiana Home, a 12-bed men's detoxification unit. The program began in a house in downtown Indianapolis, 1341 North Alabama Street, and moved several places before finally settling at 2054 North Delaware St., Indianapolis, Indiana.

A community-wide fundraising effort worked toward a new, larger facility in the late 1960's, that could provide services for men and women. A $250,000 grant from the Cornelia Cole Fairbanks Trust Fund, along with many other donations large and small, gave birth to the new Fairbanks Hospital at 1575 Northwestern Ave. in May of 1970. By 1982, Fairbanks opened its doors to a new 96 bed facility, at its present location, 8102 Clearvista Parkway, Indianapolis." (Fairbanks Archives)
Recovery Clubs

The **Alanon Club** at 124 Georgia Street began April 3, 1948 and maintained its identity to this day, although it is now legally titled the Carvel Club.

The **Alanew Club** was located in a building on New York Street, just east of Alabama Street, but it lasted only a short time -- this was during the late 1950s or the early 1960s.

Later, the **South Side Club** started on Selby Street as a key club. Harry G. tells that the key cost a dollar. Later move to Raymond Street. The current address is 259 E. Raymond Street.

The **East Side Club** started a small building on Butler Street, just south of Washington in 1979. It has since move four times and is now located at 441 S. Ritter St.

The **West Side Club** has moved numerous times over the last thirty years but is now located at 4939 W. Washington St.

Medallions

This is a one-year medallion presented to Tom Ross in 1952 for one-year sobriety (Richmond, Indiana)

Doherty Sheerin started the token system in Indianapolis in 1942: a silver rectangular medallion was given for the first year of sobriety with the member’s name and date of sobriety on the front, and the sponsor’s name on the back. Bruce C, from Muncie, researched that the group paid for this symbol, but the lucky recipient got to reimburse the group treasurer. In *History of Indianapolis AA*, by Neil S., it is written that the only place one would receive their chip, in those early days, was at the Sunday Morning Hotel Breakfast Meeting.

In later years, poker chips were used to indicate periods of sobriety less than one year.

Later, stamped metallic chips were presented for both monthly and yearly periods of sobriety.

By the early 1990s the more decorative medallions came into style for special occasions:

Indianapolis AA archivist, Neil S. (Fishers, Indiana, indicates in his book that the AA group in Indianapolis was probably the first in the US to hand out chips or tokens. (*History of Indianapolis AA*, by Neil S.)

The same book speaks of Anniversary Banquets, dating at least back to 1958. These were held in various upscale places, such as the Antlers Hotel, the Pilgrim Hotel and the Murat Egyptian Room.
Q. Why do A.A. members use tokens, medallions, and chips to mark sobriety? When did that practice start?

A. The chip system is thought to have begun in Indianapolis in 1942. The tradition is believed to have started with Doherty S., who introduced A.A. to Indianapolis and who said in a letter to Bill that the practice originated in that city.

Nell Wing wrote in 1962 about the history of the chip system:

"The chip system might have begun in Indianapolis.... reference was made in a letter from Doherty to the start of giving out 'chips' and 'tokens.' This was in 1942. I imagine this would be about right, because most of the early groups started in 1940 and it would take about a couple of years to think of anniversaries and marking any time of sobriety. I asked Bill about this and his memory is that the system started in Indianapolis."

In Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers, it indicates that Sister Ignatia in Akron, working at St. Thomas Hospital, also used medallions: "Sister Ignatia gave each of her newly released patients a Sacred Heart medallion, which she asked them to return before they took the first drink. She would occasionally give out St. Christopher medals as well."

(Page 195)

We don’t know precisely who started this system, or when and how it spread to other groups. As with many things in A.A., the exact nature of the history eludes us.
(From the Markings newsletter Spring 2008)
Fr. Ralph Pfau came into AA at 39 years old and became one of the most prolific writers and well known speakers in AA of his time. He was also known for the 14 Golden Books. A portion of one of his 33 1/3 records is shown below with his books. He wrote under the name of Fr. John Doe.

Fr. Pfau was born on November 10, 1904, and died on February 19th, 1967.

Joan of Arc Catholic Church, 42nd & Central Avenue, where Fr. Pfau served as a Priest.

This small pamphlet, explaining the AA program, was widely read in the 1940s.

Books Widely Read by AAs in the Early Years

Dr. Bob would insist that his "Pigeons" read *Sermon On The Mount*, by Emmet Fox and the *Greatest Thing In The World*, by Henry Drummond. (Dr. Bob & the Good Oldtimers - p. 310)
Alcoholics Anonymous Pamphlet Published by the Indianapolis Groups
First made in 1944

WHAT IS ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

There is nothing occult or mysterious about Alcoholics Anonymous. They avoid drink (the 1st one) one day at a time. No help needed by 12-step program.

Men in his extremity has ever turned to God for help. This is the alcoholic's situation, facing as he does, the mental and physical anguish of the recurring hang-over and the grave danger of loss of reason — even death.

But with Alcoholics Anonymous the turning to God is a personal and individual voluntary act. God as each individual may understand Him. The movement, Alcoholics Anonymous, is not a sect, nor cult, or lapsus. And does not conflict in any way with accustomed religious beliefs and practices. These are never even discussed among us.

It is not an “organization” in the ordinary sense, because it has no constitution, by-laws, officers or fixed meeting place.

It is a close-knit Group of individual alcoholics who wish to use all their knowledge of alcoholism because in doing so they, themselves, also sober. This is the experience of some 90,000 to 100,000 recovering alcoholics.

The “A.A.” Program is in twelve steps. The weekly meetings are not The Program — they are merely a part of the performance of the 12th Step.

Experience is both abundant and convincing that adherence to the 12-step program is rewarded with complete sobriety, but adherence must be voluntary. There is no record anywhere of an alcoholic recovering from addiction to alcohol against his will.

There is, therefore, no effort on the part of Alcoholics Anonymous to “sell” this Program. It is entirely a program of self-discipline, and no one is entitled to expect more from the Group than honest information about the application of such self-discipline and what it has already accomplished for those who apply it with a sincere desire to recover.

Experience is very definite that alcoholics do not recover by proxy, and that no amount of wishful thinking has ever substituted for work in this worthwhile project.

Indianapolis Group of Alcoholics Anonymous
P. O. Box 1474
Phone FR. 2743

Purpose: To be a dependable source of information on recovery from alcoholism. To make the information as broadly available as possible to men who have an alcoholic problem and seek a solution. To lend encouragement and confidence to those seeking a way out of what seems to them a hopeless mess. To give them the benefit of association with many who are following the Program successfully.

To keep sober, ourselves, by doing these things:

Progress: At this writing (Sept. 1947) the group is 7 years old, has about 600 members, and whom more than 200 have been total abstainers from 1 to 7 years.

Not associated with any religious group.
No special advice given by members.
No exhortation practiced.
Not in any sense a “reform” movement — no quarrel with that or those who sell it, nor with those who drink it.

The A.A. Program is a step-by-step statement of the actual experience of sixty thousand people who have used it successfully during the past ten years. It was developed by the “trial and error” method by men determined to free themselves of an addiction to alcohol. It operates JUST ONE DAY AT A TIME.

THE TWELVE STEPS

THE TWELVE STEPS THAT CONSTITUTE THE A.A. PROGRAM

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol — that our lives had become unmanageable.

2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understand Him.

4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

5. Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.

11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and practice these principles in all our affairs.
(This excerpt was retyped for clarity)

**The Indianapolis Star Reports on First Public Meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous**

More than 100 men and women listened with rapt attention to an unidentified speaker in the Cropsey Auditorium of the Public Library last night.

They were attending the first public meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous, an organization composed of former dipsomaniacs who have conquered their mania and are devoted their efforts to help others.

Only person “with a name” in the hall was W. Rowland Allen who consented to introduce the speaker. The speaker is a prominent Akron, Ohio, businessman...

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**Sunday, October 26, 1941**

(A review of Dr. Bob’s presentation)

**Unnamed Man in City to Discuss Beginning, Slow Growth of Organization**

A tall, thin, angular-faced Vermont World War veteran who wrote a book that has saved 6,000 persons from the curse of drink—obsession of drink, as he puts it—spoke at the Evansville Alcoholics Anonymous club meeting last night.

This man—his name shall remain anonymous along with that of the Akron, O., doctor who aided him in founding the national A. A. organization—outlined the origin of the movement, and the psychology which has made it the only effective cure for alcoholics that has been known in the 20,000 years history of fermented juices for drinking.

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**Bill Wilson Speaks at Evansville**

Friday, October 20, 1941

Above article from Evansville Courier

October 20, 1941
200 At 5-State
A.A. Conference

More than 200 members from five states yesterday were registered at the first Indiana conference of Alcoholics Anonymous in Hotel Lincoln.

Highlight of the opening day's program was a banquet address last night by a nationally-known writer of crime stories, one of a series of speakers throughout the nation who have benefited from A.A. membership.

Mayor Alex M. Clark welcomed members. The meeting will conclude this afternoon.

First Indiana AA State Convention
Indianapolis Star
May 8 & 9, 1954

Coffee-Carousel

300 Alcoholics Anonymous
Down 1,500 Cups At Parley

Alcoholics Anonymous yesterday ended its second annual state convention at the Sheraton-Lincoln Hotel and paid a bill for 1,500 cups of coffee consumed by 300 members during the two-day parley.

Twenty AA distaff members from Ohio, Illinois, Michigan and Kentucky attended the meeting with Hoosier men and women who have eschewed liquor and favor nothing stronger than black coffee.

INDIANA has 1,500 AA members. One of the speakers, a New York woman, who has become nationally-known because of her work in the AA movement, related a graphic and tragic story of her life as an alcoholic.

She said she was born of wealthy Chicago parents, and in the "lush 20s," won a measure of "fame" in her social set for her consumption of whisky in large doses. She wasted away most of her money. Finally, through the advice of a New York physician, she "attained sobriety through the wonderful teachings of Alcoholics Anonymous."

Other speakers included a nationally-known sociologist, and a Baltimore truck driver who has appeared before many AA gatherings from coast to coast.

Yesterday's session coincided with the 20th anniversary of the founding of A.A. in Akron, Ohio.

2nd Indiana State A.A. Convention
May 7 & 8, 1955
Indiana & Indianapolis

The start of more groups than can be recorded here, not only in Indiana but elsewhere, was due to the extensive and prolonged efforts of Mr. S. Included are those with an original impetus from the Indiana Home, an Indianapolis non-profit hospital for male alcoholics, in which he had a deep interest and where A.A. influence is still strong. Dohr was instrumental in forming the Indiana Home. This is the forerunner to Fairbanks, now a facility on the campus of Community Hospital North.

Significantly Dorherty S’s Indiana Home preceded the world renowned Hazelden Facility in Minnesota.

Here are some of the other firsts for Indianapolis A.A.

- Indianapolis had an Intergroup office originally a Club at 124 West Georgia Street, opened on April 3, 1948. Harry L was the first Central Office Manager.

- We were the first in the nation to be incorporated. The attorney who affected this for us is still a very committed member of our Indianapolis Fellowship. Other Intergroups were able to follow our model.

- We were the pioneers of using the Telephone Answering Service to extend our availability. It is an opportunity for those who reach out for help. They can do it here in Indianapolis 24/7 for 52 weeks every year. This was launched in January of 1943.

- The introduction of Tokens or Medallions might have started here. We have the substantiating correspondence over the signature of the Archivist of AA World Services Office.

- We might have been the second group to establish an A.A. meeting in a prison. Late in 1942 or early 1943 we initiated A.A. in the Putnamville Facility. The first AA meeting in prison was San Quentin, CA. - promoted by the Warden Clinton Duffy. A recent re-release article is available from AA Archives via a Grapevine re-print.
March 1963 Meeting List
July 1967 Meeting List
Seven years earlier than the above directory, there existed only one small meeting in the rather isolated southwestern city of Evansville, but when the Indianapolis Sunday Morning Meetings began to flourish, new meetings began to erupt all over the state. I think all of us owe a debt of gratitude to the old timers who held things together through those many periods of often turbulent growth. In our history lies our hope; if those before us would not have maintained sobriety, what hope would we have today?

Only a few names have been mentioned and many photos of early structures used by AA were not, as yet, available. Perhaps more will be made available for the following editions. It is my hope that this small booklet, incomplete as it may be, will inspire the reader, not only to better appreciate the Indianapolis founders, but to follow up with — as Paul Harvey used to say: “... the rest of the story.”

If you would like to offer additional information, please contact:

Bob S.
212 SW 18th Street
Richmond, IN 47374
(765) 935-0130
rstonebraker212@comcast.net