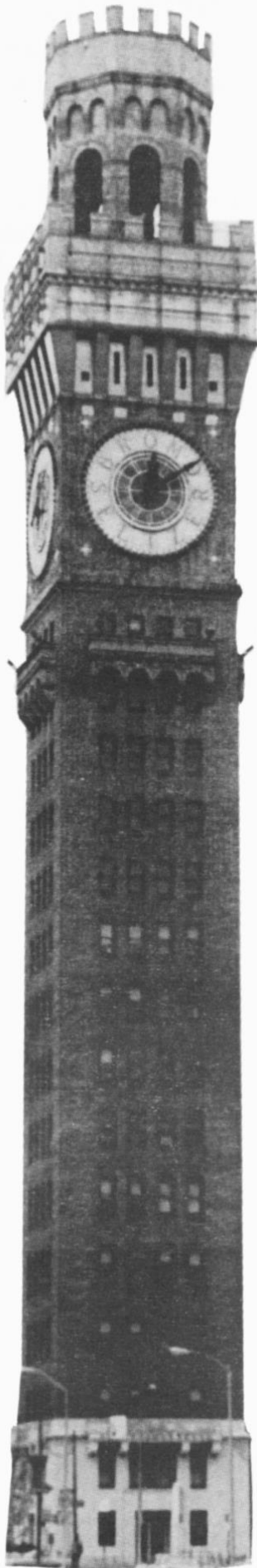


GLEANINGS FROM MARYLAND'S AA HISTORY

**A Regional History of the Growth
of Alcoholics Anonymous**

In Maryland



This booklet is a reprint of AA history articles (written in the 90's) and researched by Bob R. and Bill R. Documentation of AA's early history has been hard to find and doesn't exist, so the authors relied heavily on memory or memorabilia of oldtimers.



The building on the cover is the old Bromo Seltzer Tower Building, Eutaw and Lombard Streets, Downtown Baltimore. The first AA Intergroup Office opened here in a tiny room in 1948.

The Baltimore area's second AA group moved into an apartment building basement at 212 Washington Avenue, Towson in 1945 and remained there for 40 years.



Table of Contents

Part 1: The Birth of AA Pioneers from Maryland	4
Part 2: Two Boyhood Friends Made Crucial Contributions	5
Part 3: How it Happened in Baltimore	7
Part 4: Alcoholics Anonymous Spreads Into Southern Maryland	10
Part 5: AA Tide Flows Into The Eastern Shore	13
Part 6: AA Settlements in Western Maryland	17
Part 7: North Central Maryland: Fertile Field for 12th Stepping	19
Part 8: Northeast Maryland's Beginnings	20

FEATURES:

An Unforgettable Visit to Stepping Stones	22
Was Cumberstone AA Meeting Place Number 3	22
History of the Baltimore Prologue & the AA Preamble	23
The Long Road to the Annual MD State Convention	24
How MCYPAA Began and Grew	25
The Sobriety Show Legacy	27

GLEANINGS FROM MARYLAND'S AA HISTORY

Part 1: The Birth of AA: Pioneers from Maryland (Written Jan, 1994)

Many of us came to AA feeling that a mysterious, malign force would do us in, no matter what we did. Then something strange stirred within us. As we became willing to accept the help of those who went before us, who understood us, good things happened. We followed in their footsteps and found freedom from the bondage of self. What resulted was a sense of identification, of belonging, of unity. But lest we become too clannish, we must remember that without guidance and support of nonalcoholic friends in the early years, AA would not be here for us. Maryland-born Samuel Shoemaker was the first of such friends.

His influence began on December 7, 1934, when a tall, gaunt, drunk – William Griffith Wilson – made his first visit to Calvary Episcopal Mission, where the reverend Samuel Shoemaker was rector.

At this stage, Bill was stealing money from his wife, pawning household items, falling down drunk and having blackouts and delirium tremens.

Bill had visited the mission under stimulus from an old drinking buddy, Ebby Thatcher, who had gotten sober through the Oxford Group, which was headquartered at Calvary Episcopal Mission, on 23rd Street in New York City. Shoemaker had helped convert drunkards at this Calvary Mission using Oxford Group principles.

Four days after he visited the mission, Bill was admitted to Towns Hospital for a one-week stay, during which time he had a profound spiritual experience and never drank again.

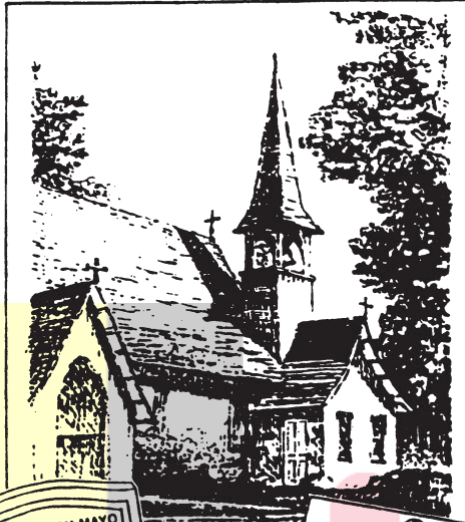
After leaving Towns, Bill associated himself with Shoemaker's Oxford Group, Calvary Mission and Towns Hospital, dedicating himself to other alcoholics.

Born in Baltimore in 1893, Rev. Shoemaker published over 25 books and many pamphlets on spirituality. One pamphlet, "What the Church Has To Learn From Alcoholics Anonymous," is an interesting commentary on how we learn by helping each other. Shoemaker died in October 1963 and was buried in Garrison, MD.

In Language of the Heart, Bill says, "Dr Shoemaker was one of AA's indispensables. Had it not been for his ministry to us in our early time, our Fellowship would not be in existence today. He will always be found in our annals as the one whose inspired example and teaching did the most to show us how to create the spiritual climate in which we alcoholics may survive and then proceed to grow . . ."

For the next few months after meeting Sam Shoemaker, Bill haunted the mission and Towns Hospital trying to help other drunks, but with little success. Then he made his fateful trip to Akron, Ohio.

We AAs say that our program began there on June 10, 1935, when Dr. Bob Smith had his last drink, one month



Christ Episcopal Church in Owensville, MD where two members of our fellowship, miles apart on spiritual philosophy but close family friends, lie at rest.

after his historic meeting with Bill W." But one could argue that it really began in April 1939 when the book Alcoholics Anonymous was published.

Up to the time the Big Book appeared, our program had no name or written guidelines or principles. The early "nameless bunch of alcoholics" followed a "word-of-mouth" program that had evolved mainly from their affiliation with the Oxford Group, a movement based on the philosophy of First Century Christianity. Bill W. summed up the six-point word-of-mouth program as follows:

1. Admit powerlessness over alcohol.
2. Take a moral inventory
3. Confess shortcomings with another person.
4. Make restitution for wrongs done to others.
5. Help other alcoholics with no thought of reward in money and prestige.
6. Pray for power to practice these principles.

After several years of association with the Oxford Group, the small groups in New York and Ohio broke off and started their own meetings.

Up until then, alcoholics were doomed, except for rare cases where they experienced profound religious conversions. But with the AA approach of one drunk trying to help another came hope for the previously hopeless. The several dozen members of the infant fellowship had come across something wonderful. They had discovered a way out, and it had to be documented so alcoholics everywhere could be helped.

Bill agreed to write the book. As he finished the rough drafts of the chapters, Bill would have them read and discussed at the meetings in New York and Ohio so all members could have their say.

The review of the first four chapters generated enthusiastic arguments. But things really became hectic when Bill released Chapter Five. (Bill said by then he had become the umpire rather than the author!)

Members had drifted into two opposite groupings—a pro-religion faction led by Fitz Mayo argued that the book should reflect the teachings of the churches, missions, and, especially, the Oxford Group. An agnostic faction spearheaded by Hank P. and Jim Burwell was passionately against theological orientation, believing in a practical, psychological approach.

Heated discussions went on for days and nights, but out of it all came the answer. The agnostics persuaded the others to accept the compromise language of "God, as we

understand Him." This non-dogmatic idea opened the door to uncountable numbers of alcoholics who otherwise would not have entered our recovery program.

Eventually the book was almost ready for printing, but still hadn't been titled. Various recommendations were dropped from consideration until two choices remained. The Way Out was Ohio's choice; Alcoholics Anonymous was New York's. A check of book titles in the Library of Congress by Fitz showed 12 books named The Way Out and none named Alcoholics Anonymous. The choice was thereby made easy, and both the book and the Fellowship acquired names.

In April 1939, the Big Book was published, and our program was

established. As Bill said in his 1953 *Grapevine* article, "Little did we guess that our Twelve Steps would soon be approved by clergy of all denominations and even by our latter-day friends, the psychiatrists..."

The Big Book is now 55 years old. Over 14 million copies have been published in 27 languages without one word of the basic text being changed. And our program has become the model for some 114 other self-help groups.

Although Fitz and Jim B. were miles apart on spiritual philosophy, they were always close family friends. And their final resting places are also close, just a few yards apart on the grounds of Christ Episcopal Church at Owensville, MD.

The two were born in Maryland and were boyhood friends in southern Anne Arundel County. As previously mentioned, Shoemaker was also a Marylander. Had not this Maryland trio played their critical roles in AA's infancy, our Fellowship in all likelihood would not have been born and survived its growing pains. They are among the many unsung heroes to whom we AAs owe a debt that we cannot repay but partially by continuing to carry the message to alcoholics who still suffer from our devastating disease.

(Future installments will reveal more about these Maryland pioneers and other significant developments in AA's emergence in the Free State.)

GLEANINGS FROM MARYLAND'S AA HISTORY

Part 2: Two Boyhood Friends Made Crucial Contributions (Written March, 1994)

Two friends from boyhood who lie buried in the cemetery of Christ Episcopal Church at Owensville, Maryland, made vital contributions to Alcoholics Anonymous in the Fellowship's infancy. But for their individual input, countless thousands would never have joined AA and the Fellowship itself might have been short-lived.

One of the pair—Fitz M., "Our Southern Friend in AA's **Big Book**"—was among the first few to get and stay sober in New York. The other was Jim B., whose **Big Book** story is "The Vicious Cycle," in the second and third editions. Their early efforts formed the foundation of AA's rich history in Maryland.

The pair's friendship flowered in southern Anne

Arundel County after Fitz's minister father became rector of Christ Episcopal Church at Owensville when Fitz was about four years old. Jim B. was the son of a Baltimore physician and grain merchant with family ties at Cumberstone, just a few miles from Owensville. As teenagers they attended the Episcopal School for Boys at Alexandria, VA.

Alcohol began to take its toll on both in their twenties. Fitz had a promising career with an established firm aborted by the Great Depression and took a teaching position in Norfolk, VA, where he drank heavily, lost his job, and his health deteriorated. Feeling great compassion for Fitz, another friend from childhood gave him part of his own farm at Cumberstone to homestead. Jim's story relates that,



Christ Episcopal Church in Owensville, MD where Fitz M.

and Jim B. began their lifelong friendship and are buried in the churchyard.

after losing several fine positions, he drifted into sales work and lost 40 jobs in eight years "before AA found me."

In the fall of 1935, Fitz heard that Towns Hospital in New York was having some success in treating alcoholics, and he went there for the "cure." This was just a few months after Bill Wilson's historic meeting with Dr. Bob in Akron that marked the founding of Alcoholics Anonymous. On Bill's return to New York, he had set

about trying to "fix" drunks he found at the Calvary Mission and Towns Hospital. His first successful project was Hank P., whom he had rescued at Towns; Fitz was the second to be picked up there and maintain sobriety.

After returning to Cumberstone, Fitz brought a number of prospects into his home in a vain effort to get them sober, much to

the distress of his wife. He also began to make frequent trips to New York to join Bill and Lois Wilson and Hank at meetings of the Oxford Group, a "First Century Christian movement" with which early members of the fellowship were affiliated. When weekly meetings of the small group of alcoholics soon began to be held at the Wilson home, Fitz usually came up to attend.

Fitz formed a close friendship with the Wilsons, who were frequent visitors to his Cumberstone home for several years, starting in 1936. Lois Wilson recalled in her book, **Lois Remembers**, that they often visited "Fitz and Co" at Cumberstone and that on different occasions she was called on to care for Fitz's ailing wife and diabetic daughter. (When queried some years later, Lois said that Bill did not

write any of the **Big Book** at Cumberstone, but some Maryland old timers believe he made notes there as he formulated ideas for the book.)

At least as early as 1937, Fitz was spending much of his time trying to help drunks and gain a foothold for the Fellowship in Washington, DC, where his sister Agnes worked and provided Fitz shelter and a base of operations for his AA work. His early efforts met with minimal success, but by the fall of 1939 he and Ned F. had established the nucleus of a small group with staying power that began to function in Washington as AA's southernmost outpost.

One of Fitz's early reclamation projects was the ill-fated Jackie W. Fitz sent Jackie to see his old chum Jim B., who was just coming off a binge at his mother's home in DC. Jim describes the encounter in his **Big Book** story:

"January 8, 1938—that was my D-Day; the place Washington, DC. This last real merry-go-round had started the day before Christmas and I had really accomplished a lot in those fourteen days. First, my new wife had walked out, bag, baggage and furniture; then the apartment landlord had thrown me out of the empty apartment and the finish was the loss of another job. After a couple of days in dollar hotels and one night in the pokey, I finally landed on my mother's doorstep—shaking apart with several days' beard . . . That is the way Jackie found me, lying on a cot in my skivvies, with hot and cold sweats, pounding heart and that awful scratchiness all over.

"I had not asked for help and seriously doubt that I would have, but Fitz, an old school friend of mine, had persuaded Jackie to call on me. Had he come two or three days later I think I would have thrown him out, but he hit me when I was open for anything..."

Jim and Jackie took the train to New York, where they met Bill and Hank. It turned out that Hank had fired Jim from a job years earlier. Jim was impressed by the sobriety of the New Yorkers and decided to join them "and take all that they gave out except

the 'God Stuff'." He also took a job as a travelling salesman for a business Hank and Bill had started. Jim later recalled that his association with the little band in New York started about the time that Hank began pressing Bill to put something of the program in writing; up to that time, the "program" was carried solely by word of mouth in the New York and Akron meetings.

The Akron contingent was initially against any publication—it was still closely affiliated with the Oxford Group, from which the New Yorkers had severed ties in September 1937. Akron finally acquiesced, and Bill began writing in the spring of 1938.

As Bill finished a chapter it would be reviewed and discussed by the New York members and a copy sent to Dr. Bob for review in Akron. This procedure brought lively debate in New York, particularly over the language of Chapter Five and the Twelve Steps. As related in Part 1 of this series, Fitz and Jim became central characters in the discussions, with Fitz favoring a Christian religious approach and Jim aligned with those wanting a philosophical text devoid of references to God. The resulting compromise language of "God as we understood Him" was hailed by Bill Wilson as a "ten strike" that opened the way for those of all faiths and little or no faith to embrace and be embraced by Alcoholics Anonymous.

And when disagreement developed over the title of the **Big Book**, it was Fitz to whom Bill turned for help: his search at the Library of Congress found a dozen books titled **The Way Out** and none named **Alcoholics Anonymous**. Thus both the book and the Fellowship were named.

Fitz and Jim were also prototype "service workers." In addition to "Twelve Stepping" prospects and founding groups, they were pioneering institutional and community/public relations emissaries.

Fitz's efforts in Washington led to groups forming in Georgetown, Chevy Chase, Silver Spring, Bethesda, Rockville and Colmar Manor in

Maryland; and Arlington, Alexandria, Fairfax, and Falls Church in Virginia. The travelling salesman Jim B's need for the company of other alcoholics led him to establish groups in Philadelphia, Baltimore, Harrisburg, PA and Wilmington, DE. His seed-planting in Baltimore doubtless eventually sprouted groups in Towson, Glen Burnie and other points in Maryland.

Both developed excellent relationships with hospitals in DC and Philadelphia to the point where AAs could admit and take home alcoholics from alkie wards to which they had access any hour of the day or night. Through his liaison with top government officials, Fitz also gained AA access to the workhouse to which drunks were sent by DC courts.

An invaluable bonus growing out of Jim's founding the first group in Philadelphia was the famous Jack Alexander article in **The Saturday Evening Post**, which Jim B. was instrumental in getting published. Publicity in the immensely popular and widely circulated **Post** brought thousands of letters to AA and spurred phenomenal growth of the Fellowship in 1941 and subsequent years.

Jim B. can also be credited with adoption of AA's Third Tradition—"The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking"—as reported by Bill Wilson in **Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions** (pp. 143-145).

In World War II, Fitz rejoined the army, where he was found to have cancer. He died October 4, 1943, eight years sober. Jim migrated to San Diego and continued active in AA until his death on September 8, 1974. Fittingly they rest a few yards apart just outside the chancel of Christ Church at Owensville, where their paths first crossed as youngsters.

Undoubtedly there were many other unsung heroes among "early timers" whose efforts helped Alcoholics Anonymous through its perilous first years, but few if any made critical contributions like those of the two Maryland men of south Anne Arundel County.

GLEANINGS FROM MARYLAND'S AA HISTORY

Part 3: How It Happened in Baltimore (Written in Sept. 1994)

The first request for help from Baltimore was received by the New York AA office in mid-December 1939, eight months after publication of the **Big Book**. In his letter, Louis M. wrote that he was tired of making and breaking promises to his wife and pastor. He saw himself in many of the stories in the book and wanted, if possible, to get in touch with some of the men who had the same problems.

The Office promptly responded, "... we are sorry that at present we have no members in Baltimore, and we are hoping it is possible for you to make the trip to Washington, DC, where we do have a few members..."

Louis was advised to contact Ned F., who along with Fitz M. (see Parts 1 and 2 of *Margenser* series), had begun the nucleus of a small group in DC several months earlier. This was to be the first on-going group outside the New York and Ohio areas.

About the time of Louis' letter, Jim B. — one of the earliest members to stay sober in New York — got a travelling sales job that took him to Philadelphia. Upon arriving, and recognizing the need to work with other alcoholics to stay sober, he went out into the community to carry the message as was done in New York and Ohio. As a result, he was able to start the first group in Philadelphia on February 26, 1940.

Jim's job also brought him to Baltimore, his old hometown. There he was able to locate a former drinking buddy, Jim R., who had been sober four years after a religious recovery at Keswick Colony, New Jersey. Jim R. had been working with two other alcoholics without success. Jim B.' arrival was timely — he had 12th step experience and had already started up an AA group in Philly.

On June 16, 1940, the two Jims met with three other men at Jim R's home on St. Paul Street. Several days later, Jim B. received a letter in Philadelphia from a Baltimore lawyer who wanted to help his alcoholic brother and offered his office in the Munsey Building on Fayette Street as a meeting place. On June 22, 1940, the six men held the second Baltimore AA meeting in that office.

In early October the group moved to the Altamount Hotel basement on Eutaw St. for several months, after which the group had to leave to make room for processing of World War II draftees into the military.

About that time, the members located a run-down, second-floor mail-order house at 857 Eutaw Street. With only six dollars in the treasury, four members signed a two-year lease at \$45.00 per month. Several sobering-up members removed shelving, painted the interior, and put down a new floor. An employer, who was so pleased that one of his workers got sober, donated 50 chairs to the cause.

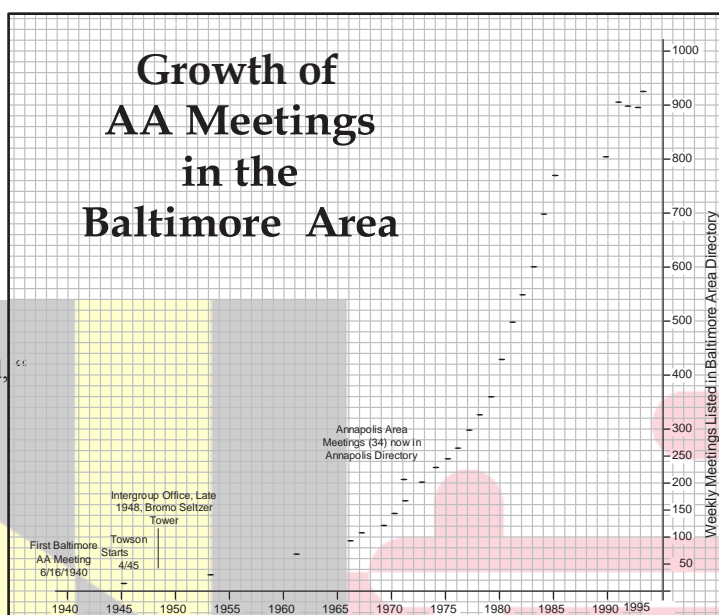
The group moved into "857" in early 1941 and remained there until 1987 when it moved to 123 N. Clinton Street in Highlandtown. Club 857 — the No. 1 group in Baltimore — is still in operation after 53 years.

Publicity contributed greatly to the public knowledge and growth of Baltimore's budding AA group:

- February 16, 1941 — **Baltimore Sunday Sun** article by

Harrison Johnston

- April 1941 — **Saturday Evening Post** magazine article,



"Alcoholics Anonymous" by Jack Alexander

- October 25, 1941 — **Baltimore News American** article by Louis Azreal

Early members said that as each article came out, the phones would start ringing. The AAs were like firemen, always ready to go. "857" — also called the Rebo Club — had grown to about 50 members in 16 months, which included several women.

The group had no traditions to guide them in those early days, so they tried whatever they thought might work. For example, they asked judges to lock up drunks until they got sober and the AAs would then try to help them; they asked the Salvation Army to

provide beds; and they gave out meal tickets, which didn't work because the drunks sold the tickets for booze money.

Looking back, the local and national publicity had an incalculable impact on the growth of AA. By the end of 1941, there were over 50 active groups in the United States, according to estimates provided by AA's New York office.

"857" continued to grow, and the need to start up another group became apparent. Transportation was a problem as trolleys or busses were sometimes not available. People often didn't have automobiles, and gas was limited because of World War II rationing. Because of periodic overcrowding, the Baltimore Fire Department said the club site was unsafe.

Several suburban members decided to start the second group in Towson. The first meeting of seven people was held in the study of an Episcopal minister on April 18, 1945. Two months later, they moved to a rented room above a store on York Road. At that first meeting, the gathering included a judge, a probation officer, a doctor, and two clergymen.

In late 1945, the group found new quarters in an apartment building basement at 212 Washington Avenue, away from streetcar and traffic noise, and large enough to accommodate the growing membership. This location became well known to drunks, as it was only a block away from the police station.

The Towson group remained on Washington Avenue for 40 years. In late 1985, it moved to and remains at the Carver Annex at Jefferson Street and Towson Boulevard. The Maryland General Service Archives are also located at the Carver Annex.

Fifty years ago drunks had little chance for a decent life. They were viewed as psychos by the medical profession and as spiritual lepers by the churches. Now, here was an answer, and the several dozen recovering Baltimore alcoholics were eager to pass it on.

Tom S. and Lib S. — two of our pioneer members — came across a beat-up, downtown Baltimore row house being auctioned off. They were living in a boarding house and had limited assets, but nevertheless made a down payment. Tom recruited 18 friends, each of whom advanced \$1,000 for working capital. One floor would be a club house, one a business office for educating the public about alcoholism, and another for detoxing and housing drunks. Sailors awaiting sea duty would help with the renovations.

At a business meeting requested by Towson members, Tom and Lib representing “857” members faced heated disagreement and squabbling. To muster support for their plan, they and a friend went to New York to see Bill Wilson. Bill said that if he had been asked about it five years prior, he would have been all for it. But now he was against it because experience showed that AA should be self-supporting, should not have any outside affiliation, and should focus on attraction rather than promotion.

As a suggestion, it was noted that Cleveland and Boston were growing faster than other cities and each had an effective central AA office, separate from clubs and groups.

Tom and Lib decided to drop the big plan, to return the \$18,000, and to recommend that Baltimore follow the Cleveland-Boston arrangement. At another briefing of Baltimore members, tempers flared once again. Club house advocates believed they could more effectively handle 12th-step calls and walk-ins. But after about a one-week cooling-off period, the members became agreeable.

A tiny room in the Bromo-Seltzer Tower Building was rented in late 1948. Lib S. stated that if you stood in the middle of the room and extended your hands, you would touch the walls.

Since 1948, the Intergroup Office has moved four times and has been located at 5438 York Road since July 1986.

Operating Intergroup back in the 1940’s was a rather simple but important job. Since then, responsibilities have snowballed. Over 3000 calls ring monthly. The volume of activity requires special workers: one full-time and three part-time. In addition to regular staff, about 30 volunteers answer calls for help and meeting information. The staff coordinates with employers, clergy, media, hospitals, professionals and institutions as required. Intergroup conducts all of its affairs according to the Traditions.

This volume of work would be impossible to handle without the aid of modern technology. A computer data-base helps keep accurate information on meeting locations and times. Twelfth Step lists are kept up to date. The over 900 meetings need constant assistance. All groups receive bulletins and council reports twice monthly. Twenty thousand directories are

printed for distribution every eight months. Also, the office stocks and sells conference-approved literature . . . Action is the magic word in AA and there is lots of action at the Intergroup Office, the Baltimore service hub.

The enclosed graph shows Baltimore’s remarkable meeting growth.

Early members were innovative, carry-the-message activists. They took it upon themselves to get spot information, announcements and interviews on the radio and place simple ads and articles in the newspapers. They informed the clergy, the medical profession, and law enforcement personnel. They took meetings to mental institutions and prisons. One of our early members, Tom B. (see box), was instrumental in starting the first half-way house, the American Council on Alcoholism, and the annual AA Sobriety Show to celebrate recovery.

Along with AA’s growing success came a change in public attitude. People started to recognize alcoholism—once thought to be a moral deficiency—as a health problem. U.S. medical societies, including the World Health Organization in 1954, declared alcoholism a disease.

Recovering employees convinced their companies to implement programs to help alcoholic employees, and labor unions were very supportive. Our own Jim B. provided guidance to the DuPont Company, using AA as the vehicle for recovery. (DuPont may have been the first company to have a viable program.)

Government action had far-reaching impact. James C. of Baltimore was able to develop and have passed the 1968 Maryland Comprehensive Intoxication and Alcoholism Control Act, the first such law in the country. This act preceded by two years the famous U.S. Public Law 96-616, the so-called Hughes Act, which declared that alcoholism, was a disease and all U.S. Government agencies were to have employee assistance programs.

The positive examples set by recovering alcoholics and actions such as those mentioned above generated many calls for help. Members would meet face-to-face with the callers to share their AA experiences and encourage meeting attendance. Membership and meetings spread in all directions, and by 1970

there were about 140 weekly meetings. Then growth increased dramatically to about 900 meetings by 1991.

However from 1991 to mid-1994, meetings increased only by 33. This dramatic decline in growth may surprise AA members, especially since the trend is not simply a Baltimore happening. A review of data from **Box 459**, published by the N.Y. General Service Office, reflects similar trends in the U.S. and Canada. GSO estimated that in 1991 the number of AA groups grew by only 5%, in 1992 by but 3%, and in 1993 by a scant .7%. And a review of estimated data for the same time span shows a similar trend in membership growth.

These statistical snapshots prompt the authors to ponder several questions—

- Is this a natural statistical development and the problem of alcoholism in North America actually levelling out, or is AA starting to go downhill?
- Are we failing in AA’s primary purpose of carrying the message to still-suffering alcoholics?
- Could the trends reflect a serious threat to AA’s future?

We raise these questions not to be alarmists, but to sound a timely alert against complacency and suggest that perhaps AA members and groups need to take inventories and decide what, if anything should be done about the trends.

Reference Material

Early AA in Baltimore, April 1975, written by Henry M. and Don H. of the first Towson Group.

Historical material provided by:

- Ed B., Maryland General Service Archivist
- Susan K., Baltimore Intergroup Office Administrator
- Ray R., longtime member now living in Florida
- Bob M., longtime member, American Council on Alcoholism
- Lib S., interviewed on July 9, 1994. Lib was a pioneer in Baltimore AA development, sober since Sept. 1945, active for years in Baltimore, Washington and New York, having worked in the General Service Office for 11 years.

HOW AA CAME TO SPARKS, MD.

In her memoir, **Lois Remembers**, Lois records the “unique way” that an AA group was established in the tiny community of Sparks, MD, a few miles north of Baltimore.

It seems that Tom B.’s wife had long been nagging him to get into AA. Tom was long on promises, but short on action. When Mrs. B. finally applied serious pressure, Tom was moved to put pencil to paper. In his alcoholic deviousness, instead of writing to AA’s General Service Office in New York, Tom addressed AA at the most remote and unlikely place he expected would bring a response—Capetown, South Africa.

Surprisingly, he soon received a reply telling him of the members’ experience and suggesting he write GSO in New York. Tom was so taken aback that he did just that. Lois writes, “He started a group in Sparks, Maryland, and called it Capetown Group No. 2.”

Lois also records that “...all through his long AA life, Tom continued to correspond with ‘his’ group in Capetown.”



857, No. 1 Group

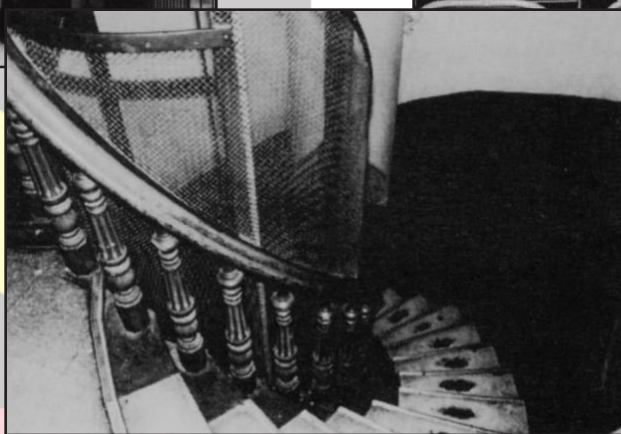
“857 Club, the center of activity at the beginning of Baltimore AA, used to be located at 857 Eutaw Street. The upward winding stairs reminded members of the “road ahead.”



Club 857 Front Entrance

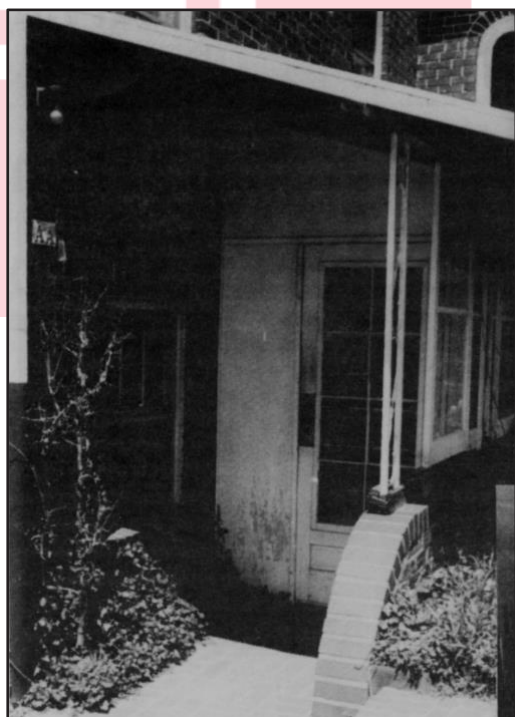


Club 857 Meeting Room



Staircase leading up to the meeting room

Towson, No. 2 Group



The Baltimore area's second AA group moved into an apartment building basement at 212 Washington Avenue, Towson in 1945 and remained there for 40 years.



GLEANINGS FROM MARYLAND'S AA HISTORY

Part 4: Alcoholics Anonymous Spreads Into Southern Maryland (Written Dec. 1994)

The pioneering groups of Alcoholics Anonymous founded in Washington, DC in 1939 and Baltimore in 1940 became the twin hubs for the spin off groups in suburbs south of those cities.

The start of suburban groups spreading from the two cities stemmed partly from wartime gasoline rationing and coincided with the development of GI housing beyond the metro centers. The first Maryland groups spawned by Washington started in Chevy Chase in 1945, in Silver Spring the following year, and in Colmar Manor several years later. Baltimore's initial offshoot was established north of the city in Towson in 1945, but solid data on the founding of first groups south of the city are sketchy.

The two oldest continuing groups of record the authors have found south of Baltimore are the Brooklyn Park group, established in 1952, and Glen Burnie, begun in 1953. Soon after Glen Burnie, the Anne Arundel group started at Sandrocks's real estate office on Ritchie Highway, later moving to Woods Memorial Church at Severna Park.

Charlie M. recalls these three, plus the Health Department meeting in Annapolis, as the only groups in Anne Arundel County when he came into AA in 1957. Other early groups in northern Anne Arundel County starting in the early Sixties included Ft. Meade, Pasadena and Annapolis Interracial.

However, the very earliest meeting south of Baltimore appears to have begun in Annapolis at St. Mary's Catholic Church. Jimmy L. recalls attending his first meeting there in 1950, and the 1953 and 1961 Baltimore **Where and Whens** listed meetings there. Also, church bulletins announced meetings at St. Mary's for several years thereafter, but none have been held there for a long time. So the oldest continuing group in Annapolis is the one started at the County Health Department, which later moved and is now the Heritage Group.

The next group established in south AA County was Tracey's Landing in 1961. Chuck O.'s recollection is that, like many others, "It began with a resentment and a coffee pot" when Duvall A. had a "falling out" with the honcho of the lone Annapolis group, Barse S. Duvall's widow, Queenie, remembers that Frank K. asked Duvall for help in getting a group started in south county, and Tracey's Landing was the result.

The second oldest group still meeting in Maryland's capital city is the Wednesday Night Stag Group, which began in 1965. Chuck O. and George H. are the only survivors of the five charter members (including Duvall, Owen B. and Jack B.). "Not one of the charter members ever found it necessary to drink again," 84-year-old George reports. Chuck was the prime mover in establishing the Annapolis Area Intergroup in 1972. The organizational meetings were held in his home, with 29 groups represented at the charter session. And it was Chuck who had obtained approval of his pastor at the First Presbyterian Church

in 1965 to hold meetings at the now-famous Red House, which became the Intergroup's headquarters. Countless members credit their recovery to a good beginning at the Red House.

Annapolis Area Intergroup files show that groups represented at the charter meeting included: All Saints, Annapolis, AA General Hospital, Asbury, Calvert City Hospital, Dry Dock Eleven, Eastport, Fog Lifters, Ft. Smallwood, Pasadena, St. Anne's Church, St. Margarets, St. Martin's Lutheran Church, St. Phillips Episcopal Church, Severna Park, Tracey's Landing, Twin Beaches, Unity, Wednesday Stag, and 174 West Street.

The thriving Belair-Bowie group apparently was not represented at the Annapolis Area Intergroup kick-off meeting, perhaps because its membership didn't know where it belonged.

In the early Sixties, two large planned suburban community developments got started in the area—Belair-Bowie, just inside the eastern Prince George's County line, and Crofton, across Rt. 3 in Anne Arundel County. Until then the only nearby community was Old Town Bowie. But by 1964, the sprawling Bowie-Belair housing development was well under way and had become a mecca for people from far and wide.

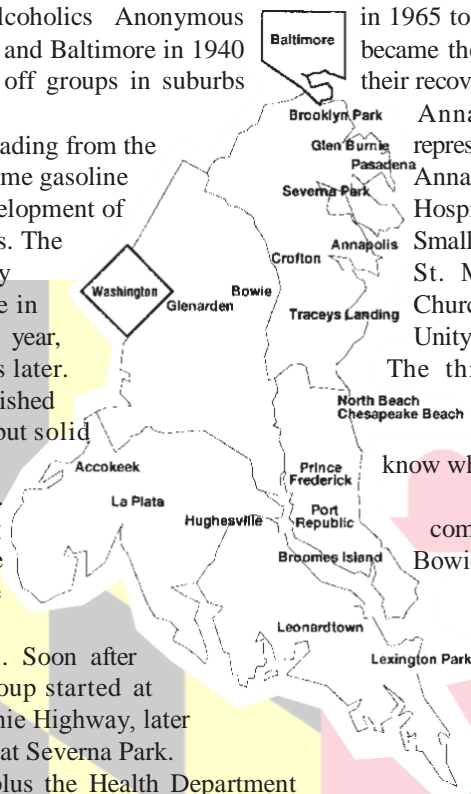
One new resident, five years sober and active in AA in the DC-Northern Virginia area, took the lead in starting the Belair-Bowie group late in 1964. Some months later, another five-years sober member arrived from Baltimore, as did several AAs active in Annapolis. Members coming from the several areas seemed to have first-group loyalty and believed they "really knew how to do it right." To accommodate the diversity, the Bowie group was listed in meeting directories for all three areas—DC, Baltimore, and Annapolis.

The nearest meetings to Bowie at the time were Cheverly, College Park, Ft. Meade, Pasadena, Severna Park, Annapolis, and Tracey's Landing. Bowie members were energetic message-carriers in the fast-growing area, and dozens of new groups evolved from the original group—which still meets at the Sacred Heart Church on Route 450.

How Crofton got started is a message in itself. Ginny B.'s husband had a drinking problem and she became dedicated to Al-Anon. She personally delivered Al-Anon literature to churches in the Crofton community. One minister—Fred Wood of the Prince of Peace Presbyterian Church—wanted to get meetings going at his church. Ginny rounded up interested AA and Al-Anon members, and the Crofton group was started in July 1974.

For some seven years before the operation of the Annapolis Area Intergroup began in 1972, the AA telephone contact in the Annapolis Area was the home phone of Duvall and Queenie A., the latter a founder of Annapolis Al-Anon. The first phone call for help was answered on New Year's Day 1965; the caller got sober and was active in Annapolis for many years.

After being active in AA's No. 1 group—Dr. Bob's Kings School group—in Akron for four years, Bud and Jean Marie L.



landed in Severna Park in 1970 to find only one group close by, meeting at Woods Memorial Church on Thursday nights. The pair became very active in the area, and over the next five years they were involved in starting a number of AA groups in the Severna Park area. Among groups they got under way were the Sharing, Freedom, Early Birds, St. John's Catholic Church, and Benfield Road Baptist Church groups. After the Intergroup Headquarters were established at the Red House, they started and were responsible for holding the nightly beginner meetings there.

Meanwhile, AA had arrived in deep Southern Maryland—at Leonardtown in St. Mary's County in 1948 and at Accokeek in Prince George's County in 1953.

Local legend has it that AA came to Leonardtown in the same way the message was carried to many cities and hamlets in the early days—via a travelling alcoholic salesman. The popular story goes that a salesman visiting Duke's Restaurant in Leonardtown brought the word of AA's way out of alcohol addiction to the then-suffering wife of the proprietor. Encouraged to learn more about and benefit from AA's program, the late Lillian D. had to travel by bus from Leonardtown to Washington for many months.

As Lillian grew strong in sobriety but weary of commuting, she decided to try to start a group in Leonardtown, located not far from the southernmost tip of Maryland. After putting out the word in the area, Lillian sat alone for weeks before another alcoholic, Bart F., ventured to join her and constitute the first AA group in the Tri-County area. Like Duvall and Queenie in Annapolis, she provided the area's AA telephone answering service from her home at the start. She is also given major credit for getting Al-Anon under way in the area.

In the years before Tri-County Intergroup was founded in the mid-Seventies, AA calls for help and information continued to be serviced from homes of a succession of other members, including Bart F., Dave T., Warren K., Francis M., and Gene H.

At a recent covered-dish dinner celebrating the founding of the Leonardtown group, a quintet of

oldtimers recalled how it was in their early days.

"Back then there was only one meeting in each county," recalled Warren K. "To make more than one meeting a week, you had to drive from Leonardtown to Accokeek or Hughesville and Huntingtown."

"Yeah, you could really burn up some gas going to meetings down here then," agreed Dave T.

"Back then if you had eight or ten members, it was considered a big group," remembered Walter O. "But as the pioneer groups grew, others were started in additional locations."

Although the group could not readily pinpoint beginning dates of groups, the consensus was that when the Leonardtown group grew to 50-60 members, a group began meeting at the Southern Maryland Correctional Center in Hughesville—the first group actually located in Charles County—about 1969. Similarly, when the Accokeek meeting got too large, it spawned the Warner group at LaPlata.

The first group located in Calvert County is believed to be the Huntingtown group, followed by the Port Republic group on Broome's Island Road and probably the Sunderland group in the Sixties. Among other early offshoots were groups at Lusby, Cove Point, Tall Timbers, Twin Beaches, Lexington Park, and Placid Harbor.

From the modest beginning in the 50's and 60's, more than 100 meetings are now held weekly, spotted in almost every small community in the Tri-County area.

Asked their views on what led to AA's explosive growth in the 70's and 80's, the quintet of oldtimers came up with a number of contributing causes:

- The appearance of articles about alcoholism and problem drinking in popular prints like **Reader's Digest** and **Parade**, especially the self-test quizzes that increased public awareness of alcoholism as a disease and lessened the stigma attached to it.

- The spotlight frequently turned on celebrities and public figures who began to go public about their alcoholism and their recoveries.

- The softening attitude within AA groups toward "high bottom" drunks, women, and young people being accepted as members.

- The growing public concern about drunken driving accidents, tough new laws to deal with the problem, and the tendency of courts to require offenders to attend AA meetings.

- The law (Hughes Act) requiring Government agencies to start programs to help alcoholic employees, leading to a requirement that Government health insurance plans cover treatment for alcoholism and contributing to membership growth throughout the nation.

"When the police down here pulled you over and found you drunk, they used to just drive you home," said one with experience. "When they started locking us up and the courts began sending people to AA, that got some attention."

The focus on treatment by naval installations and the large population of naval personnel in the area was also a factor, the group agreed. They cited the fact that an officer heading the treatment program at the Patuxent River Naval Air Station was active in the Leonardtown group and that two naval dental technicians had started the AA group at Lexington Park.

Interviewed later, Charlie M. came up with an added reason why AA membership sky-rocketed in the Seventies—the maturing of the Baby Boomers. "By the mid-Seventies, the Baby Boomers were reaching their thirties and beginning to recognize their problem with alcohol, and they started coming to AA," he observed. "Now, 20 or so years later, I'm seeing fathers and sons at the same meeting."

The map accompanying this article spotlights nearly a score of the earliest AA meetings started in the five counties south of Washington and Baltimore—Prince George's, Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's. Nearing 60 years after AA was founded by Bill W. and Dr. Bob, 55 years after Fitz M. got a group going in DC, and 54 years after Jimmy B. helped start the first Baltimore group, close to 700 meetings are held weekly in the five-county area.

What a monument to the memory of those who "carried the message" before us! What a responsibility for us to assure that the hand of Alcoholics Anonymous will always be there for those yet to come.

PRINCIPLES BEFORE PERSONALITIES

As AA grew and matured, Bill W. and Dr. Bob were subject to adulation and put on pedestals by members, while both co-founders lamented that they could not “just be members.”

June L. recalls that her late husband, Frank was invited to speak at AA’s 25th International Conference in Long Beach, CA, immediately after Bill W.’s speech.

When Bill’s address lasted much longer than anticipated, Frank was told to limit his talk to bare bones. Frank opened his remarks by stating that he was directed to keep his comments short because the previous speaker had, in effect, been carried away by the sound of his own voice and talked too long.

The crowd of several thousand received the implied criticism of AA’s revered leader with dead silence—until Bill W., seated in a front row—started applauding. Then the whole assembly broke into applause.

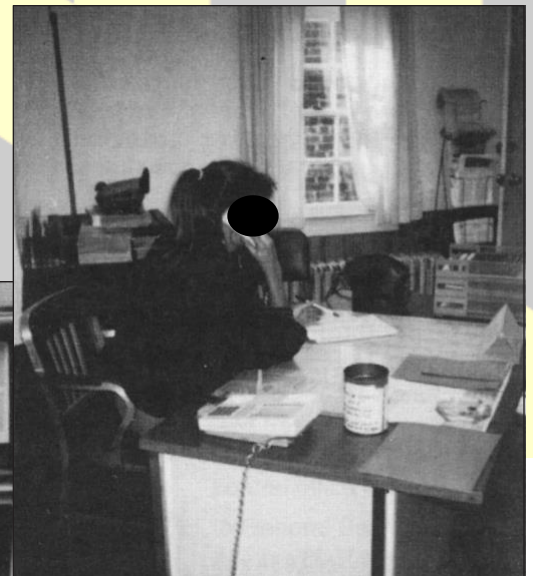
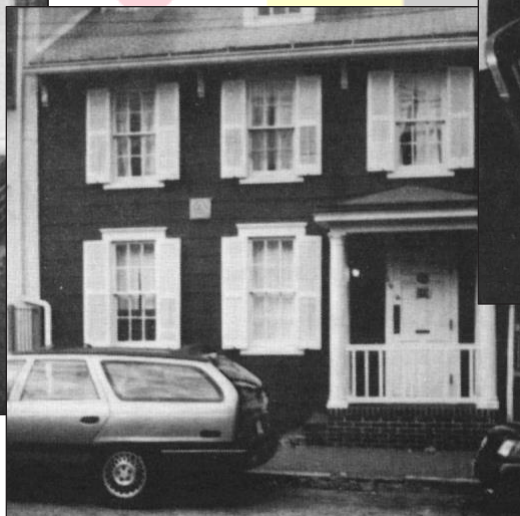
At the break a short time later, Frank was accosted by an irate priest disciple of Bill’s who began lambasting Frank for the perceived affront to AA’s co-founder. Frank’s response was, “Look, Father, I pray **for** Bill, not **to** him.”

It happened that Bill was within earshot, and he turned and said, “We need more members like that!”

Principles before Personalities!

LOOKING BACK . . .

Facade of the famous Red House at 169 Duke of Gloucester Street in Annapolis, headquarters of Annapolis Area Intergroup since 1972. First meeting held there in 1965. Many area AAs credit their recovery to a good beginning at the Red House.



Anonymous volunteer responds to one of thousands of calls for help made to AA intergroups in Southern Maryland each year.

GLEANINGS FROM MARYLAND'S AA HISTORY

Part 5: AA Tide Flows Into The Eastern Shore

When Willis H. came home in 1944 from overseas service in World War II, he looked up an old work-and-drinking buddy and found that Dirk Q. had been in Philadelphia's St. Luke's Hospital for alcoholism, had stopped drinking, and had joined Alcoholics Anonymous.

Upon his discharge in August 1945, Willis wanted a little R & R—Rest and Rehabilitation—and set out for two weeks in Ocean City. "That two-week drunk

lasted a year and a half!" Willis recalled recently.

Totally beat, Willis swallowed his pride and went to see Dirk, who welcomed him with the words: "I've been waiting for you!"

"That's how my AA began," Willis remembered. "I took my last drink on a Thursday morning. My dad and a friend picked me up and took me home. I was „ sittin' there shakin', but I sweated it out."



The Berlin Group Club House, 1962-1974. Donations from members & friends provided resources for the addition.



The Atlantic Club, located on the first floor of this building, is 2 1/2 miles west of Ocean City on Rt 50. The club started in 1986 and now has 25 weekly AA meetings.

were making history—they had founded the first AA group on Maryland's Eastern Shore.

Berlin was a town of about 2,000 people, most of whom were from families that lived there for generations. Willis and his drinking habits were well known.

"I never did have much anonymity around here," he declares. "When the town drunk gets sober, everybody knows it!"

Willis "wanted to sober up all my buddies," and he

became active in 12-Step and other AA activities. He was the long-time treasurer of the Berlin group. He placed simple notices in local papers that AA was available, and had cards printed with the following information:

Alcoholics Anonymous

Meeting - Monday Evenings, 8 p.m.

Library Room - Berlin, MD

P.O. Box 93

Phone 158 or 268

(The Serenity Prayer was printed was printed on the other side)

"There was a little local paper published in Selbyville at that time called the **Delmarva News**. Glancing through the paper one Friday night, I saw a little ad saying there would be a special meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous in the Frankford Methodist Church at Frankford, Delaware, Sunday night at 8 p.m."

That notice became the genesis of AA on Maryland's Eastern Shore.

Willis and Dirk attended the special public meeting and were told by the speaker from Wilmington, Dave M., that a new AA group had started at Dover, Delaware, at the Century Club on the Green, and urged them to attend. Several days later, February 7, 1947, Dirk picked up Willis in his 1947 Pontiac for the 60-mile drive from Berlin, MD.

That was Willis' first real AA meeting, at age 28. For about the next six months the pair and several other new members made the trip to the Dover meeting every Wednesday night.

"There were five of us. We had our meeting up and our meeting back," Willis related. "We discussed the meeting during the week . . . we had a meeting every day by telephone.

Not everyone had a home phone then, so they used a pay phone, which cost only five cents in those days. We called it Nickelitis. Sometimes we had to give nickels to the newcomer."

Getting to meetings on the Shore then was not easy. No busses or trains were available. Only about one in five members had a car. Typical two-lane country roads linked small town to small town; some roads weren't even paved.

Willis and Dirk recognized the need for meetings in their area, and they arranged to hold their first one in the Berlin Library on October 6, 1947. Little did they realize that they

Willis and Dirk visited area doctors and ministers to tell them about AA and left the cards. Local police would sometimes drop off drunks at Willis' home, which in effect became the area's central office.

Mobility and access to meetings improved significantly for Berlin-area members in 1948. Willis bought a brand new 1948 Plymouth, and Frank H. got a Kaiser-Frazer. Now more members could visit groups in Delaware as well as other groups sprouting up on the Maryland Shore.

"Boy, did we travel!" Willis recalls. "Dover, Wilmington, Baltimore . . . wherever we could find a meeting."

In the summer of 1946, a member who had sobered up in Baltimore—Leland S.—moved to Easton. He was able to build up AA interest in the community, and in late 1947, with Art O., started the Easton group. This was the first group on the Western part of the Shore. Its members were oriented toward the Washington-Baltimore area.

Soon the Berlin and Easton groups were joined by two more pioneering groups. In April 1948, Marion M. and his wife Helen started the Salisbury group in the Wicomico Presbyterian Church. They and five other interested members travelled together to Laurel, Del., for six straight weeks to prepare. As happened often in AA's early history, much help was provided by two nonalcoholic friends. Dr. Robert Starr explained to patients and others that alcoholism was a disease that could be arrested, and Rev. Robert Mackey persuaded parishioners to view alcoholism not as a moral problem but as a health issue. (Those men helped reduce the stigma of alcoholism, and AA growth was significant. Now there are 58 weekly meetings in the local Salisbury area.)

And later in 1948, Allen J., his wife Hildegard, and Babe P. started the Cambridge group.

In a span of about one year, four healthy groups were spreading the message throughout the Eastern Shore. Because women helped start the Salisbury and Cambridge groups, women felt more comfortable in those locations; Salisbury women became especially effective at 12-Stepping women.

The early groups were small, and each would take meetings to the other communities. The meeting format was simple. The home-group secretary would read the Baltimore or Wilmington Prologue, then turn the meeting over to the visitors to tell their stories. (The Wilmington Prologue was a slightly modified version of the Baltimore Prologue that was published in 1946. The groups some years later switched to the Grapevine Preamble, first published in June 1947.)

The four early groups would take turns taking meetings to the Eastern Shore State Hospital in Cambridge for one month each. Willis remembers that they would take along a carton of cigarettes to encourage patient attendance . . . a carton then cost only \$2.00.

Sometimes members would attend meetings or special events in the Baltimore-Washington area—a real project in those days. Before the first Bay Bridge was opened July 31, 1952, it was necessary to travel over the bay by ferry or take a long overland route through Elkton, MD.

There were several ferry routes, with Shore departures from Claiborne (near St. Michaels), Matapeake and Love Point (on Kent Island) to Western Shore terminals at Annapolis, Sandy Point, and Baltimore. A trip to Baltimore or Washington would take many hours and cost a considerable sum in those days.

A typical trip from Berlin to Matapeake could take two hours, the ferry to Baltimore another hour, the meeting or banquet from one to three hours, and the return trip another three hours. Sometimes Western Shore friends would meet the Eastern Shore members with cars, caravan to Baltimore, and return to Sandy Point. That was going to any lengths!

A peak ferry load was about 80 autos; even with several ferries operating, only a



Before the Bay Bridge opened July 31, 1952, members going to the Western Shore had to take the ferry, usually the one between Matapeake and Sandy Point.

few hundred cars could cross the bay in a day. With the opening of the Bay Bridge, auto traffic multiplied and paved the way for future waves of visitors from the west. Today up to 8,000 commuters make the crossing daily, and on holiday weekends as many as 4,000 beach-bound cars cross the bridge in an hour!

No new groups were started in the seven years between 1948 when Cambridge started and 1955 when the Chestertown group was started by Phil S. and Jerry M. The second growth phase probably resulted from the opening of the Bay Bridge, when travel to and from the Eastern Shore became easy and migration from the Western Shore got under way. (The map accompanying this article shows the sequence of AA development on the Eastern Shore for the first 40 years.)

During the early years of AA growth, Ocean City was a virtual ghost town, except during the summer months. In 1950 the Berlin group decided to move its meeting to Ocean City during May, June, July, and August to accommodate increasing tourism. These summer only meetings in O. C. continued until 1972.

Meanwhile, in 1957—inspired by Denton's Jerry and Mildred M. and Norman I.—a group of six members decided to have a special wrap-up meeting at O.C. the weekend after Labor Day. The owner of the Plimhimmon Hotel, a retired Methodist minister and long-time friend of AA, agreed to stay open, and Willis and Dirk would help with the logistics. There was a Friday night meeting, a Saturday night banquet meeting and a Sunday morning closing breakfast meeting. Forty-seven attended the first meeting, 95 the second, and 150 the third. Popularity of the get-togethers grew and they evolved into the well-known annual Sessions By The Sea, which now attract capacity crowds of 3500 each year. The Denton group still runs the "Sessions" weekend.

Although Ocean City got off to a slow start, the number of meetings has multiplied with the growth of the year-round population. From establishment of the first permanent group—the Seaside Group—at the Episcopal Church in 1972, there are now more than a dozen weekly meetings. In addition, the Atlantic Club located two and a half miles west of O.C. started in 1986, and is now the site of about 25 weekly meetings.

In 1962 the father of a member died and willed his farmhouse to his son Linwood, who made the building available to local AAs. An addition was added (see photo) so it could serve as a club house. Members chipped in to buy materials, and Willis' employer donated the carpenters.

New members sometimes struggled through withdrawals there when medical help was not available. Home remedies like candy and Karo syrup seemed to help. But when the shakes got bad and convulsions occurred, Willis remembers someone would shout, "Who's got some whiskey? Get some whiskey in him!"

He recalls one case where detox lasted three days, with members working in shifts round-the-clock before the prospect was well enough to leave.

The club house became a favorite coffee stop for members homeward-bound from "Sessions." In 1974 Linwood died, and the property was sold. The group then moved to the Friendship Methodist Church, where it still meets.

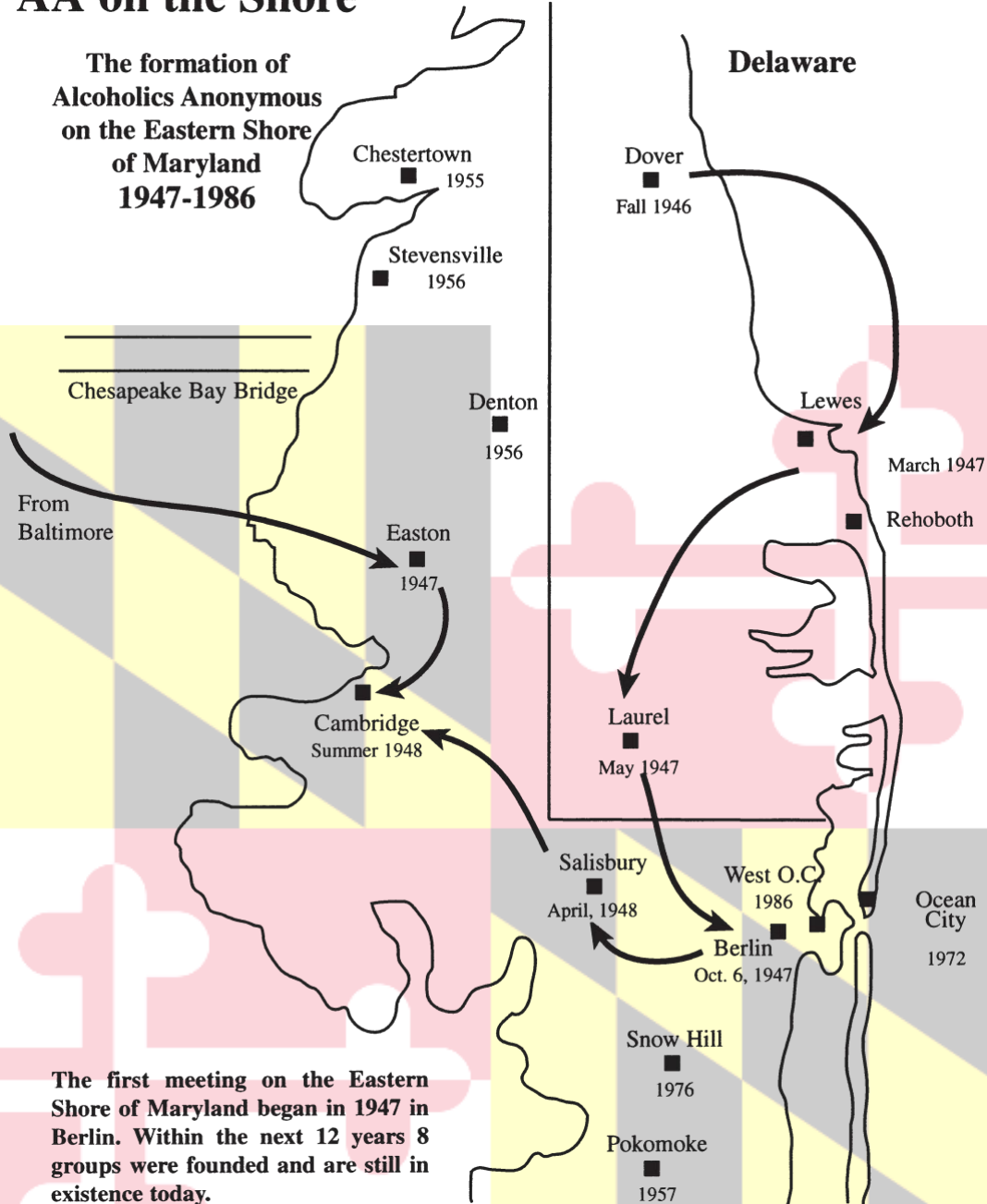
From its tentative beginnings in four scattered towns, AA on Maryland's Eastern Shore has spread and flourished in scores of towns and communities, with about 200 weekly meetings today. The perseverance of the pioneers has paid off beyond anyone's expectations, when the mission was merely to stay sober and carry the message. As it is today.

#

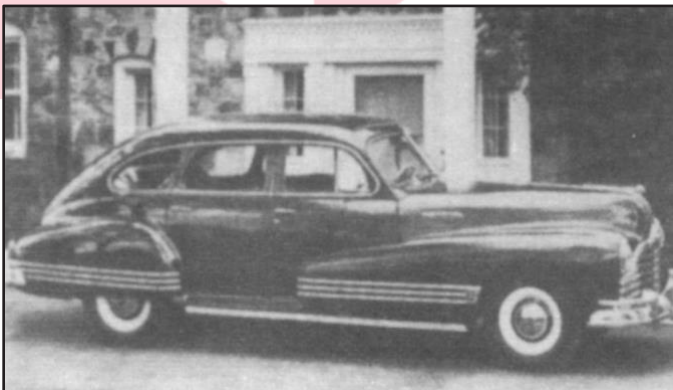
The writers of this article are indebted to Willis H. for providing most of the information during an interview on December 7, 1994. Willis is preparing a detailed history of AA on the Eastern Shore to be published this year. Also our thanks to Nancy H. who provided information from a recent interview with Helen McB., one of the founding members of the Salisbury group.

AA on the Shore

**The formation of
Alcoholics Anonymous
on the Eastern Shore
of Maryland
1947-1986**



The first meeting on the Eastern Shore of Maryland began in 1947 in Berlin. Within the next 12 years 8 groups were founded and are still in existence today.



Eastern Shore's pioneers used a 1947 Pontiac to attend their first meeting in Dover, Delaware.



One member bought a 1948 Kaiser-Frazer that he used to chauffeur members to meetings.

GLEANINGS FROM MARYLAND'S AA HISTORY

Part 6: AA Settlements in Western Maryland (Written March, 1995)

Alcoholics Anonymous came to the principal population centers of Western Maryland—Hagerstown, Cumberland and Frederick—during the three-year period 1946, 1947 and 1948.

HAGERSTOWN

Bob S. got sober off the Bowery about 41 years ago. He sweated it out at the AA club for months, looking for handouts and “guidance” from the sober AA members. “Those were the ‘get tough’ days,” he remembers. “Either you wanted it or you went down the tubes!”

Bob got sober, conditions improved, and he applied for a job with IBM. On the application form was the question: “Have you ever been arrested?” His reply was: “There is not enough space to answer this question.” He got the job!

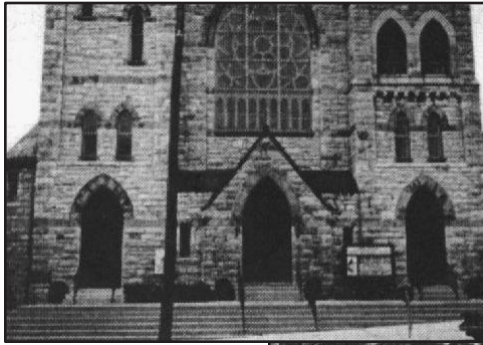
His work took him to Hagerstown in 1955. The one active group was then nine years old. It met at the United Methodist Church and had about six members. “We met in a tiny room in the basement of the building behind the church,” Bob remembers. “One of the guys had the key, but sometimes he didn’t show up. Then we had an outdoor meeting on the four steps.”

Recently Bob S. and Tom A. took action to try to document AA’s development in Hagerstown, but all the area pioneers were gone, no documentation was available, and current members’ opinions were many and varied.

In April, Tom wrote a letter to the GSO in New York to see if they had any information. Their quick response was an eye opener, quoting from a September 26, 1946 in-file letter from Ira H. of Hagerstown, “. . . With the aid of the Towson and Baltimore groups, we have this week started a small group of AA here in this town. We are using my office (115 Washington St.) as a meeting place on Tuesday and Friday nights, until some place else seems necessary or available. Meetings are at 8:30 p.m. . . . We had a tentative organization of ten to start, seven arrived at the first meeting, which I hope may form a nucleus.”

Then in an April 5, 1947 follow-up letter, Ira reported, “. . . At our last meeting, it was decided to write a letter to local clergymen and physicians in order to interest them in our desire to help other sick alcoholics.”

Bob S. played a key role in bringing AA to the workplace at Mack Truck Co. soon after that company came to Hagerstown. As a shift supervisor, he approached the public and industrial relations manager and said, “We’ve got to do something about those drunks.” That started the ball rolling toward establishing AA and an EAP (Employee Assistance Program) in 1964.



The Hagerstown Group has been meeting at the John Wesley United Methodist Church complex, 129 N. Potomac Street, since 1955.



For many years Bob also took AA meetings to the Maryland Correctional Institution’s penal farm. “That was a godsend for me, because I had been locked up so damn many times in New York it wasn’t funny,” he recalled. “Every time I heard those jail bars close down there, it was a constant reminder of how it had been before I came to AA.”

Apparently Hagerstown was the third group in Maryland, following “857” in Baltimore (June 1940) and the Towson group (April 1945), and preceding the first group on the Eastern Shore (Berlin, October 1947) by one year. (Silver Spring, MD was also active, but it is part of the D.C. service area.)

By 1948 the Hagerstown group of about 30 members was meeting at the Club, 56 W. Franklin, which was also the address of the Maryland Motors Building and now is the location of the Post Office.

Tom A. located a 1964 directory showing three active groups. Apparently two of them folded, and by 1969 only the Hagerstown group remained. A second group—Fellowship—started in 1970, and during the 70s several additional groups started. Some were successful, others were not.

The Hagerstown area was once part of the West Central Intergroup located in Frederick. In the mid-1970s, there were enough Hagerstown groups to set up an intergroup committee that provides a 24-hour answering service (301) 733-1109, acts as a communication center for the ten existing groups and for various committees dealing with institutions, newsletters, public information and social activities such as the annual Round Robin with neighboring groups, picnics, etc.

As in other areas of the state, early-timers in Western Maryland did a lot of traveling by carpool to distant towns for meetings. “Monday night we went to Hagerstown, Tuesday night to Frederick, Wednesday to Chambersburg, Thursday back to Hagerstown, Friday to Shepherdstown . . .,” Tom recalls. Other ports of call included Brunswick, Cumberland and Thurmont.

When Hagerstown is mentioned, many members from elsewhere in the state think of the Maryland State Convention or the MCYPAA (Maryland Committee of Young People in AA) Convention, both of which are now held in Hagerstown. (A future article in the *Margenser* will cover these and other “special activities.”) The 25th Maryland State Convention will be held at the Ramada Inn Convention Center on June 8-11, and the MCYPAA on October 26-29, 1995, also at the Ramada Inn.

Early-timers from Hagerstown were among those who helped start Cumberland’s first group in 1947.

CUMBERLAND

Like newspapers in many other locations, **The Cumberland Times** played an important role in AA’s beginnings there. With a

September 4, 1947 headline, "Alcoholics Anonymous Will Organize Locally September 11," the article said that AA was going to have a formal organizational meeting at City Hall, September 11, and then went on to give good background information on alcoholism and AA.

A September 12 follow-up article reported, "Fifty-six persons, including business and professional men, took steps last night to organize a local unit of AA after listening over two hours to testimonials by members from Baltimore, Uniontown, Morgantown and Hagerstown at a City Hall meeting. . . The first meeting of the new group will be held tonight at the home of one of the members . . ."

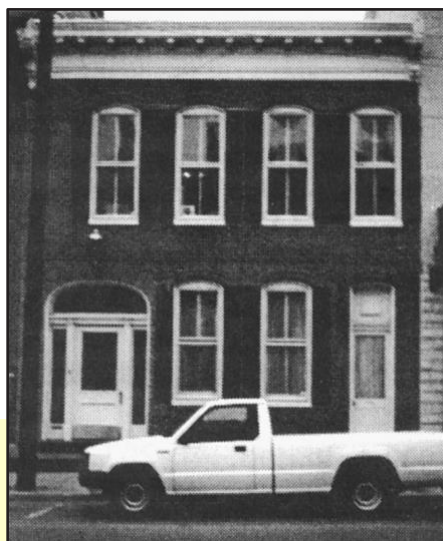
It began this way: In 1947, a prominent man's wife had a close friend from the Cleveland, Ohio area who offered help for her alcohol problem. This eventually led to the two newspaper articles, the public meeting, and the formative meeting in the basement of the wife's home.

The first official group met at St. Mary's Church. After the meetings the members would gather at the home of another member. In the early 1950s meetings were held in the old Union Street School building's health department. Over the years, the most consistent meeting place has been the Emmanuel Episcopal Church.

Original members helped form groups in neighboring communities. Members would car pool to attend area meetings—including West Virginia, and special events such as the spring Clagett Retreat for spiritual growth, held at Buckeystown, MD, and the fall Sessions by the Sea in Ocean City. From the beginning until the present, a devoted cadre of women helped carry the message. An active core of members had their phone numbers listed for 12th Step work.

The Cumberland group from time to time had club rooms in various locations, including the YMCA and the O'Neal Halfway House. For a short time, public meetings were held Sunday evenings in the hospital auditorium and had as many as 100-125 attendees.

Of special note has been the enthusiastic support of members in professional community activities. They worked closely with the clergy and people in industry, law enforcement, and health and social care. They actively



The first meeting in Western Maryland was held in a physician's office at 115 W. Washington Street in Hagerstown, September 26, 1946.

carried the AA message to halfway houses in various ways.

In the early days, members established an effective relationship with mercy Hospital in Johnstown, PA, and were able to admit alcoholics needing inpatient care with little fuss. This same procedure and cooperation was introduced at Cumberland's Sacred Heart Hospital and worked efficiently for a

time. Eventually increasing regulations and bureaucracy made such close cooperation impractical.

About five years ago, the last two attendees at the original City Hall meeting passed away. Both were in their mid-80s and had remained dedicated AA members.

The Cumberland region has 19 weekly meetings (see diagram below). An intergroup committee provides a 24-hour answering service, (301) 722-6110, has a yearly Gratitude Breakfast fund-raiser in May, and meets monthly to discuss service needs.

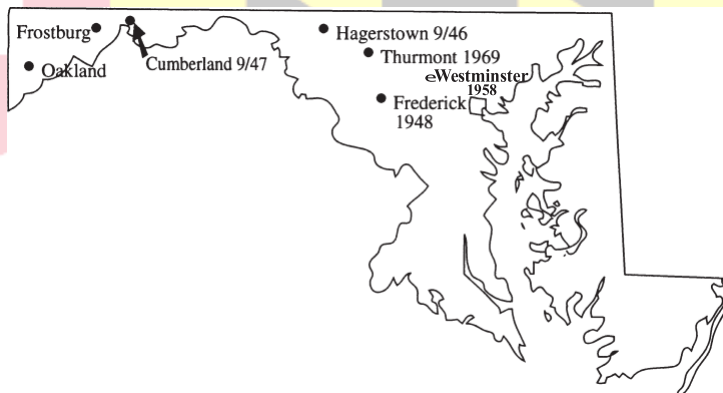
FREDERICK/ THURMONT

Like many pioneer groups, the first Frederick group began in a member's home on West Patrick Street, in early 1948, the third group in Western Maryland.

At first there were four home-group members who had been traveling to Hagerstown and Cumberland, and sometimes to Baltimore-Washington area meetings.

Frank F., sober 43 years, recalls, "We met upstairs at Sam R.'s home. Sam's wife and my wife would sit in the kitchen

AA STATUS IN WESTERN MARYLAND



<u>Location</u>	<u>Start Date</u>	<u>1995 No. Weekly Mtgs.</u>	<u>Population</u>
Hagerstown	1946	10	35,500
Cumberland	1947	15	23,500
Frederick	1948	11	40,000
Westminster	1958		16,000
Thurmont	1969	3	3,400
Frostburg		4	8,000
Oakland		6	1,600

and listen to the footsteps going up the stairs to figure out how much coffee and cookies would be needed.

Membership growth was slow in the early years, but then steadily increased. Frederick became the center of General Service activities for all of Western Maryland, covering all locations west of Frederick. General Service restructured in the mid-1970s and now is made of five service districts.

Today the Frederick area has 11 groups and a West Central IG Office at 12 W. Patrick St., (301) 622-0544, with a 24-hour answering service when the

office is not open.

In the late 1960s, membership north of the Frederick area had increased considerably, and Frank F. started up the Thurmont group in 1969, which still meets at the Volunteer Ambulance Building, North Church St. Two more groups now meet weekly in Thurmont.

AA developed in Western Maryland much like the pattern elsewhere in Maryland. The pioneers started out meetings in offices and members' homes until more permanent meeting places were found. They helped each other stay

sober and recover according to the simple, practical AA program. They informed the public by newspaper articles and radio announcements, and by cooperating with the clergy, business and professional people, doctors and representatives of health care and penal institutions. They had dedicated 12 Steppers, ready to go out into the community and carry the message as needed. Since its first meeting in September 1946, Western Maryland AA now has about 50 weekly meetings and is handy in every community.

GLEANINGS FROM MARYLAND'S AA HISTORY

Part 7: North Central Maryland: Fertile Field for 12th Stepping

Ted J. was 39 years old when he joined Alcoholics Anonymous early in 1958, the youngest Maryland member northwest of what is now the Baltimore Beltway. He lived in Taneytown, about 12 miles northwest of Westminster and five miles south of the Pennsylvania border.

Right off he was told, "Get a sponsor!"

Ed M. seemed to be the right choice. He was pleasant, kind, understanding, and good AA. But once Ed agreed to be Ted's sponsor, he underwent a profound personality change and became a relentless controller.

Sponsor Ed quickly set up this meeting schedule for Ted:

Monday—Meet with sponsor.

Tuesday—Frederick (24 miles away).

Wednesday—Chambersburg, PA (40 miles).

Thursday—Hanover, PA (15 miles).

Friday—Chambersburg

Saturday and Sunday—Baltimore (27 miles) or Washington (54 miles).

Ed didn't agree to sponsor Ted when first asked. In fact, he refused the first few times Ted asked him. Long after Ed finally agreed to sponsor him, Ted learned the reason for his reluctance. It seemed that Ed's first two sponsees had committed suicide, and Ed didn't want to take the chance that Ted would be number three.

Late in 1958, several men started a Monday night meeting in Westminster at the Grace Lutheran Church on Carroll Street. This was the first AA group in rural north central Maryland and is still operating today, same place and time.

Ed said, "Ted, you and I will now go to the Westminster Group on Mondays."

This was Ted's kind of group at the start. They sat around and told dirty jokes, discussed sports, and mentioned AA matters in between the other subjects. One night a guest speaker read poems the entire hour. This was not well received.

Attendance dropped from about six to two members. Sometimes Ted would make coffee, and no one would show up.



Grace Lutheran Church, where the first Westminster Group met in late 1958. The 37-year old group still meets here on Monday nights.

Sponsor Ed came to the rescue and said, "From now on this will be a step meeting group."

The Westminster group became the point of AA contact for the region north and northwest of Baltimore to Frederick.

"Anything west of the Baltimore Zoo was ours," Ted recalls.

Twelfth-stepping became a hallmark of the Westminster group, responding frequently to referrals from Baltimore.

One time early on, Ed called Ted and said, "I've got a present for you. You have to take a package to Johnstown." The "package" was a wet one that Ted was to deliver to Mercy Hall, an alcoholism treatment ward at Mercy Hospital in Johnstown, PA, about 110 miles away.

Detox and treatment lasted seven days. When the patient completed treatment, he was released only to an AA member.

"If it lives, take it to meetings!" had been Ed's instructions to Ted, which he did after the patient's release.

Despite diligent 12th-step efforts requiring lots of travel, membership growth was slow in the sparsely populated area. After five years, attendance at the Westminster group averaged only a dozen or so, including guests.

Then a defining moment occurred: a woman came to the meeting!

"Before that, the only women we came in contact with were at meetings in Baltimore or Washington," Ted remembered. "We didn't know how to act."

Mary Ann O. and her husband left the D.C. area for rural northern Maryland in April 1963 to make a fresh start. "It was a geographical cure," Mary Ann recalled recently.

Not surprisingly, conditions worsened and Mary Ann agreed to drive back to D.C. to talk to her former minister. He told Mary Ann that he knew nothing about drinking problems, but that a nearby church member, Louise, had had a problem, went to AA, and was doing well. The minister called Louise, who said, "Bring her right over!"

Sober herself for 16 years at the time, Louise told her story.

She also made mention of God, which turned off Mary Ann. "God had been an issue in my life," Mary Ann remembers. "Don't form any opinions now," Louise suggested. "But I think you should find something other than yourself as God."

"That's the thing that got through to me," Mary Ann relates.

Louise gave Mary Ann four books—*Twenty-Four Hours a Day* (which she continues to read daily), *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, the *Little Red Book*, and *Alcoholics Anonymous*, which Louise called the "Blue Book."

She gave her one thing more: "That day when I left her, she had given me hope," says Mary Ann.

As Mary Ann was leaving, Louise said, "I'll call you when you get back home and give you some names and meetings."

Mary Ann blurted out, "What do I owe you for all this?" Louise responded, "You owe me nothing except to pass the message on."

Needless to say, Louise became Mary Ann's sponsor, and Mary Ann has been carrying the message far and wide ever since.

Back home, Mary Ann received a call from Louise with names of two male AA contacts in the area, Ted J. and Bernie.

She called Bernie, who, after several contacts, arranged to take her to her first meeting, in Westminster. Her husband was on a trip at the time. "I stayed sober for the two weeks that my husband was away—I had never stayed sober for two weeks before! . . . I did it by reading the 'Blue Book' and talking with Bernie."

When she entered the room at that first meeting—an attractive, stylish but frightened 32-year-old—she was met with unbelieving stares of a dozen men and the question, "What are you doing here?"

Thus began a winter of discontent for some members. Mary Ann became a regular member of the Westminster group, and a new era for AA in north-central Maryland had begun. For six years she was the only woman member of the group.

Early on she asked, "Where are the women?" She was told there weren't any,

except one whose name they wouldn't give her because "she couldn't get sober." When one member told Mary Ann she couldn't be an alcoholic, she privately vowed she'd keep coming back and wouldn't drink just to prove him wrong.

Wives of the other members were supportive. They thought her presence might help the men clean up their act, and they knew of other women around the area who needed AA and might be helped by Mary Ann.

Sponsor Louise routinely called and wrote letters, emphasizing the need to read the "Blue Book" and to carry the message.

Meanwhile, Mary Ann became a tireless worker and did get opportunities to 12th-Step other women. Soon after getting established in Union Bridge, she told her new doctor of her alcoholism and membership in AA, and the doctor became a prime source of referrals. She also offered to help local ministers. And she visited groups far and wide to find women AAs and let members know she was available for 12th-Step work.

Five months after she joined AA, the Westminster group arranged to have an AA meeting for the public and told her she would have to introduce the speakers from York. Members and their wives were there, but only one outsider showed up. When she had only 18 months in the program, she was selected as a speaker at the Frederick banquet.

Two of Mary Ann's 12th-Step calls are especially noteworthy. Once she sat on a garbage pile at the dump while trying to help a woman who lived there. On another occasion, she and her family drove back from vacation in Wisconsin to help an alcoholic from Mary Ann's hometown who had been admitted to Johnstown's Mercy Hall.

She tried repeatedly over the early years to help one particular woman, without success. "She didn't stay sober, but I did!" she declares.

Very slowly, the Westminster group grew and AA took hold in north-central Maryland. A second woman joined Mary Ann after six years, and years later there were six women who started the Tuesday night women's group at the Church of the Ascension on Court Street.

In the early 80s the Westminster group was confronted with the

contentious issue of court slips. "This was the biggest bugaboo in our area," Ted remembers.

Carroll County judges were the first in Maryland to sentence lawbreakers to AA, whose members were then expected to sign attendance verification slips. The judge who started it said publicly that 98% of the cases coming before him would be sentenced to AA.

"In the beginning they came one at a time, and it was no big deal," Ted recalled, "but then they came in like bunches of bananas . . . Some were murderers, wife beaters, child molesters, people like that."

Several group conscience meetings led the group to conclude: The group was autonomous and could make its own decisions. Signing slips was in conflict with their views of the Traditions, so they would stop. They would, however, let visitors know before the meetings that group members would not sign slips.

For many years AA members have been placing meeting notices in the *Carroll County Times*, Westminster's newspaper. Members on the volunteer 12th-Step list get referrals from Baltimore, and more and more from points west.

Rapid population growth has increased the opportunity for AA Service. Since 1958 Westminster has grown from roughly 5,500 to 15,000 now and in Carroll County from 52,000 to 140,000.

Westminster group meetings now number 27 a week and are listed in the Baltimore and Frederick Intergroup directories. One of the 27 was started by a sponsee of Mary Ann's—best evidence of Mary Ann's faithfulness to Louise's injunction to "pass the message on."

##

The writers are indebted to Ted J. and Mary Ann O. for providing the foregoing information during an interview on July 6, 1995. Both continue to be active members of the first Westminster group.

GLEANINGS FROM MARYLAND'S AA HISTORY

Part 8: Northeast Maryland's Beginnings

Because records are inconclusive, it is difficult to pin down when the first group started in what now constitutes Maryland's Northeast area, covering Harford and Cecil Counties.

Archivist Ed B.'s files in Baltimore contain an undated directory with 39 groups, one of which is "Aberdeen" group, meeting at Bonny Wheelock's Drive-In, Rt. 40, Havre de Grace, Tuesday, 8:00 p.m. An analysis of group start-up dates in the

directory suggests that this group began meeting at Bonny's about 1954 and was Group Number One in the northeast.

Bob W., one of the few remaining members of that era, was interviewed to try to piece together the area's AA history.

Bob attended his first AA meeting "under duress" in Germany and was sober four months when he was transferred to the Aberdeen Proving Ground in the summer of 1963.

"I found a little band of eight people who met in Havre de Grace," he recalled. "This was the Tuesday night meeting of the old Aberdeen Group, the one that originally met at Bonny's until they were pushed out.

Bob was told that the members used to come to the drive-in early and stay late, taking up a lot of space and time. Bonny's wife finally had enough and is said to have declared, "We're trying to make a living here, and you guys are taking two of the six tables and much of the counter." That motivated Bonny and Smitty to find a new meeting place—St. Patrick's Catholic Church, starting early 1960.

For a couple of months, Bob attended the meeting at St. Patrick's on Tuesday nights. But he had a slip that ended with a DWI accident on December 20, 1963. "I came out of the Midway liquor store and caught a '60 Galaxy—took the door, quarter panel and back fender completely off that thing!" Bob recalls. "Fortunately, nobody got hurt in that vehicle, and neither did I."

But he did wind up in jail. "My wife began calling friends, but nobody would help. Then she turned to the AA list. The first person she could get in touch with was Scotty, the only black member at that time. He and my wife got me out of jail. We talked all the way home and the next morning, Scotty took me to work."

That evening Scotty took Bob to a meeting at somebody's home in Kingsville, and they continued going to meetings.

"For the first time, I took my inventory instead of everybody else's, and I could see where I was going," Bob said. "I had a 15-year-old son who wouldn't speak to me, and my wife said she was going to get a divorce.

"So I moved out on the post again and stayed there. Every day somebody was calling me and coming to pick me up for meetings all over the Baltimore area. And on weekends we met at somebody's house and had a cookout or dinner.

Smitty also was a big help. "He used to tell us that he was



The first AA group met here in the mid 1950s at Bonny Wheelock's Drive In, Rt. 40 between Aberdeen and Havre de Grace. A-1 Used Car Sales is now located here.

one of the original 25 Cleveland members, but he just couldn't stay sober until he got here," Bob relates. "He stayed sober here nine years before he passed away.

"Smitty was a painter, and I can remember if he was up there on a ladder and you came by, he'd come down and talk for hours and the paint job could wait if you needed help.

"The night before he died, he had his nurse call me to come over," Bob reminisces. "He could not speak, so he wrote on a

pad—a guy he'd tried to help had fallen off the Susquehanna Bridge that day and broke both legs. Smitty couldn't get to him, so he passed him off to me: 'You stay with him as long as he'll stay with us,' he said. I did, and what do you know—the guy and I stayed sober! After Smitty died, I often said I hoped I could work the program the way he did."

The meetings at St. Pat's in Havre de Grace were held in a basement room with a dirt floor and one light bulb hanging from the rafters. "We had to enter through cellar doors and go through the boiler room to reach the meeting room," Bob recalls. In time the group cemented the floor, installed a drop ceiling and lights, fixed the walls and painted. AA had been meeting there for about six years when a new priest arrived and decided that the church needed the room for other purposes—so the AA group was forced to leave. The group moved to St. Joan of Arc Church in Aberdeen for their Tuesday night meeting.

In the early days there were few women members and only one black. The small group Bob joined included two women—Mama Jean and Mae A. Some meetings were held at Mama Jean's home, which "was like a halfway house for anyone who needed help," Bob recalls.

Although there were few blacks early on, today they make up close to half of Bob's home group.

Despite the prominence of army installations in the area and the military's policy on helping troops recover from alcoholism, the record of cooperation with local AA groups is spotty. Despite efforts to work with post authorities, "we never had good rapport with the military."

Bob recalled an incident some years back when a new officer decided to have a "sign in" of personnel attending meetings on post. "I told him there's no names taken at an AA meeting and he said there would be no meeting without names. So we left. Today, however, there are meetings on post."

The only other meeting nearby when Bob arrived was at Kingsville. Although technically not a part of Harford County, Kingsville is regarded by old timers as the second oldest in the area, having been established in late 1961.

Larry T. remembers his role as founder—influenced by Father John W. Larry had been to hundreds of meetings in the Baltimore area, but continued to drink. Fr. John, a priest at St. Stephens in Bradshaw and active in the Overley group, told Larry that if he wanted to get sober he had to take on

responsibility in AA by starting a group in the basement of his church.

Arrangements were made to start a Wednesday night Kingsville-area group at St. Stephens. "You wouldn't believe how primitive it was," says Larry. "Down steep steps into a tiny room. No water or toilets. We had to carry in water for coffee, and if nature called, you had to adapt somehow."

Larry and his wife Allee quickly started looking for better accommodations. Finally, in 1963, they got the okay to hold their Wednesday night meeting at St. John's Episcopal Church in Kingsville. The facilities were very good, and the group still meets there after 32 years. Larry stopped drinking soon after the move, is still active in the group, and has 32 years of sobriety.

A search of old records and contacts with long-time members in Bel Air indicates that the first group there was the Harford Group, held Friday night at the Harford Co. Health and Welfare Bldg. on Hays Street. The group was listed in a September 1966 Baltimore directory. An early member says she came into the group in 1968 and believes the group was then two or three years old. According to the 1995 directory, the Harford group after 29 years still meets at the same place and time.

Meeting growth has been healthy. In 1979 there were 8 meetings and now (1995) there are 18.

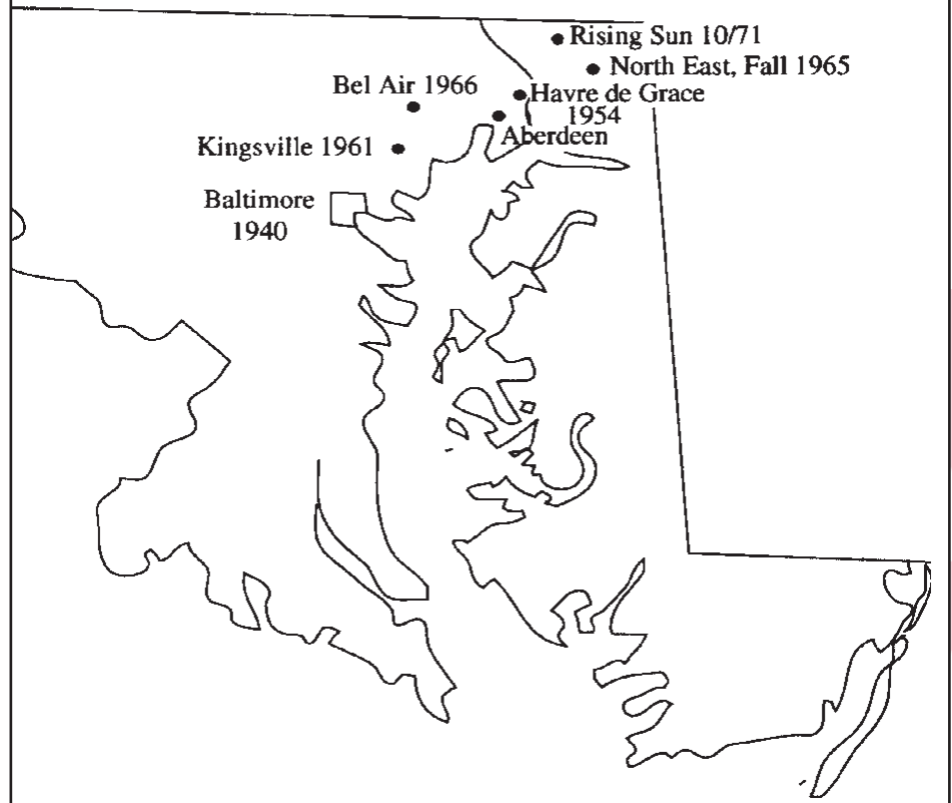
The North East Group was the first in Cecil County, the area northeast of the Susquehanna River. It started in the fall of 1965 in a small basement room of the North East Methodist Church on Wednesday evenings. Royce L. with 18 months of sobriety in Havre de Grace, and his sponsor Smokey, one of the earliest members in Aberdeen were the founders...Three other groups in North East were offshoots of this group.

Cecil County's second group was the Rising Sun Monday night meeting, starting October 1971 at West Nottingham Presbyterian Church, Rising Sun. The Rising Sun 12 & 12 Group, which meets Wednesday night, is an outgrowth of the Monday night group and also meets at the same place.

By the end of 1979, there were five weekly meetings in Cecil County; now there are about 25 in this relatively sparsely populated county.

With the growth in membership and the number of groups in the area by 1974, Bob W. and Bonnie W. recognized that the

GROUP START-UP SEQUENCE BY COMMUNITY AREA



time had come to consider establishing an intergroup for the two counties. They decided to invite representatives of all area groups to a meeting to see if an intergroup service center was wanted or needed.

Representatives of 14 of the 20 area groups attended the meeting at St. John's Episcopal Church on March 16, 1974. The group representatives voted unanimously to found the Northeast Maryland Intergroup to serve Harford and Cecil Counties.

As subsequent meetings in 1974, trusted servants were selected to carry out the following assignments:

- Locate an affordable and acceptable office.
- Arrange to get donated furniture and telephone service.
- Get monthly financial pledges from the groups.
- Line up volunteers to help work in the office, handle Twelfth step calls, and represent groups at intergroup meetings.
- Contact General Service Office for suggestions and prepare guidelines for operations.
- Plan fund raising activities, such as

breakfasts, banquets and picnics.

- Work with courts, hospitals, police and media to carry the message.

In March 1974, the Northeast Maryland Intergroup Office had been established at Aberdeen's Rowe Building. After two subsequent moves, the office settled in in to its present location at 28 Centennial Lane in February 1994.

Jan V., manager of the Northeast Maryland Intergroup Office, summed it all up by saying, "They were right 21 years ago when they started the intergroup. Now there are 125 weekly meetings, we get lots of telephone calls for information and help, and we prepare weekly bulletins and monthly newsletters. Without our computer, we'd have data-handling problems.

"When I took this job six years ago, I had a lot of doubts about handling the job and keeping my sobriety," Jan reflects. "But soon after I started, a young man came in for help and went into seizures. That event helped me focus my attention on the right priorities—the best recovery insurance is to try to carry the message."

They're still "carrying the message" real good in Maryland's Northeast area.

AN UNFORGETTABLE VISIT TO STEPPING STONES

(Written Sept. 1995)

A Maryland member recently told several *Margenser* staff and others about his June 1995 visit to Stepping Stones. Apparently relatively few people know anything about this important place in AA history.

Stepping Stones was the only home of their own that Bill W. and his wife Lois ever had. They moved to the secluded seven-room cottage in Bedford Hills, NY in 1941 and lived there until they died: Bill in 1971 and Lois in October 1988. They had no children.

Until 1939 they lived in a house in Brooklyn owned by Lois' father. When he died the house was sold as part of the estate settlement and Bill and Lois became homeless. For the next two years they lived with a series of friends and, as Lois put it, "We lived from pillar to post."

Except for the Big Book, published in 1939, Bill did most of his AA writings in a tiny cabin he called "Wit's End", poised on a knoll within sight of the house.

When Bill and Lois took possession of their dream house, they named it



Stepping Stones, the home of Bill and Lois Wilson in Bedford Hills, NY, a place of significant AA history.

"Bil-Lo's Break." To get from the house to the garage, we used a shortcut of rugged stone steps up the steep hill," Lois recalled. "Because of the constant climbing up and down, we changed the name of the house from 'Bil-Lo's Break' to 'Stepping Stones.' This also implied a connection with the Twelve Steps."

"People come from all over the world to visit," according to the Estate Manager Paul Lang, "but there are those who live close by and don't know it exists."

The visitor from Maryland explained, "When I was there a busload of Germans had arrived after

visiting the AA General Service Office in New York City, 40 miles away. Later a carload of Mexicans showed up. Paul gave all of us an historical overview.

"I can't explain the feelings I had while I was there—sort of a feeling of reverence and belongingness. . . My reaction is not uncommon," he continued. "I understand that many people start crying when they see Bill's cigarette-burned desk and the cozy fireplace setting where Bill and Lois spent

many hours together. They become over-whelmed in knowing they are in the home of the person who started the program that saved their lives!"

Stepping Stones is available by appointment to individuals and AA and Al-Anon groups for visits and various functions such as anniversaries or outings. Lois' annual picnic is a tradition that continues, drawing hundreds of people every June since the early 1950s.

For more information, write to Stepping Stones, P.O. Box 452, Bedford Hills, NY 10507, or telephone Paul Lang, (914) 232-4822.

WAS CUMBERSTONE "AA" MEETING PLACE NUMBER 3?

(Written Sept. 1995)

The first "AA" meetings outside of Akron and New York/New Jersey in all likelihood took place at Fitz M.'s Cumberstone home in Maryland's Anne Arundel County. And Washington, D.C. can lay claim to being Locale No. 4.

In her memoir, *Lois Remembers*, Lois Wilson records that she and Bill were frequent guests of Fitz M. and his family at their Cumberstone home near Galesville starting in the summer of 1936. Lois writes that the whole family, including the cook, took part in daily "quiet time" and sought "guidance" in the manner of the Oxford Group in

which Bill and Fitz were active until September 1937, when the New York area alcoholics went on their own.

And it has also been established that Fitz was an active 12th-Stepper in D.C. as early as 1937, bringing many drunks home to Cumberstone to the dismay of his first wife.

In those early days, the tiny groups of "nameless alcoholics" in Ohio and New York, plus a few "loners" like Fitz, were all that constituted the infant fellowship.

Washington's claim to being the fourth site of meetings rests firmly on the fact that Fitz began working to

found a group there in 1937 and succeeded in getting at least one drunk sober that year. This is attested in Jim B's *Big Book* story, "The Vicious Cycle." Jim reports that Fitz sent Jackie W. to 12th-Step him at his mother's home in D.C. on January 8, 1938, and brought Jim into the Fellowship.

Fitz continued his work in Washington and, with the help of Ned F., succeeded in establishing a permanent group there in 1939, shortly before Jim B. helped found groups in Philadelphia (February 1940) and Baltimore (June 1940).

HISTORY OF THE BALTIMORE PROLOGUE AND THE AA PREAMBLE (Written Sept. 1995)

Before the Preamble of Alcoholics Anonymous was written, the Baltimore Prologue was being read at the start of AA meetings in Baltimore and elsewhere.

Although the Baltimore Prologue preceded the Preamble by only about a year, it gained wide popularity and use at AA meetings in and beyond Maryland before the Preamble caught on and came to be read at the start of many, if not most, meetings around the world.

Many AA members credit a key phrase in the Prologue—words that do not appear in the Preamble—with convincing them that they fit the definition of alcoholic and belonged in AA.

But that's getting ahead of the story of how and when the Prologue and Preamble came to be . . .

Before either was written there was nothing on the books that briefly described AA and its objectives. Recognizing the need for such a statement, the Baltimore Intergroup in 1946 called on a committee of three—Martie C., Harry S. and Mike W.—to take on the task.

The trio produced an 11-paragraph statement of some 300 words that the Baltimore area members soon began to read at the beginning of meetings in the area. The accompanying text at the end of this article includes both the original and amended language— words appearing in bold type replaced those in parenthesis in a 1969 revision.

As Baltimore members traveled to other cities and states, they took the Baltimore Prologue with them. By 1969, according to a letter Martie wrote to the Baltimore Intergroup Council, its use had spread to many states and parts of Canada.

Meanwhile, the *Grapevine* editor had recognized the need for a statement to portray Alcoholics Anonymous to the magazine's non-AA readers. So he composed the Preamble, first published in the June 1947 issue of the *Grapevine*. It soon also began to appear in other AA publications, and

the practice of reading it at the start of meetings gained wide popularity.

Here is the original 91-word text of the Preamble:

"Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength, and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is an honest desire to stop drinking. AA has no dues or fees. It is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution, does not wish to engage in any controversy, neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety."

Much of the phrasing of the statement, according to *Best of the Grapevine* (pp. 274-275), "was borrowed from the Foreword to the original edition of *Alcoholics Anonymous* where 'an honest desire to stop drinking' is described as 'the only requirement for membership.'"

The "borrowed portion of the original *Big Book* Foreword reads: "There are no fees or dues whatsoever. The only requirement for membership is an honest desire to stop drinking. We are not allied with any particular faith, sect or denomination, nor do we oppose anyone. We simply wish to be helpful to those who are afflicted."

Best of the Grapevine goes on to explain subsequent text changes: "At the 1958 General Service Conference, a delegate asked about the words 'honest desire to stop drinking,' suggesting that since 'honest' does not appear in the Third Tradition, it might be deleted from the Preamble. In discussion, most Conference members felt that as AA had matured, it had become almost impossible to determine what constitutes an honest desire to stop drinking, and also that some who might be interested in the program could be confused by the phrase."

The upshot was the deletion of the word "honest" in 1958. "At the same

time, the phrase 'AA has no dues or fees' was clarified to read as it presently does: 'There are no dues or fees for AA membership; we are self supporting through our own contributions.'"

Martie C., an early female member who settled near Annapolis, sought in 1969 to make a change in the original text of the Baltimore Prologue. In a letter to the Baltimore Intergroup, Martie wrote: "I'd like to throw a suggestion out for the Intergroup Council to consider. The word 'applicant' in paragraph #4 of the prologue has bothered me since I was on the committee of 3 who wrote the thing. I wonder if the Intergroup would consider changing this one word to 'Newcomer' the next time you have some printed up. . ."

She went on to explain that the authoring committee thought "applicant" was satisfactory at the beginning, but that "as I have grown in AA and as AA in the area has grown I have come to regard the word as jarring note. After all, we do not come into a formal organization and make formal application for membership."

The Intergroup Council considered but did not adopt Martie's specific suggestion. Instead, it deleted the sentence containing the word "applicant" and substituted the language of the Third Tradition: "The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking." At the same time, the Council simplified the language relating to financial support of activities to read: "Activities are supported by voluntary contributions of the members."

Significantly, and fortunately, no change has been made—nor even proposed—in the paragraph relating to definitions of alcoholism. The paragraph reads: "Definitions of alcoholism are many and varied. For brevity we think of an alcoholic as one whose life has become unmanageable, to any degree, due to the use of alcohol."

It is that phrase—to any degree—relating to unmanageability of one's life

that has opened the mind and the door to AA for many not yet willing to consider the possibility of their being alcoholic. Many members with more than a few 24 hours of sobriety and a background of "not yet's" have attested that they would have compared themselves out but for the fact they had to admit that alcohol had caused at least **some degree** of unmanageability in their lives.

Although the Preamble has replaced the Prologue as the opening reading at most Maryland meetings, occasionally an old timer with a fondness for it will read or recite the Baltimore Prologue.

And once in a while, the Baltimore Prologue may even be read in a place far removed from its city of origin. Fred F. fondly recalls the Prologue being read at the start of two workshops at the 1990 International Conference in Seattle. "I couldn't help feeling a bit of parochial pride when I heard the Baltimore Prologue read so far from home," Fred reported recently.

Maryland AAs can likewise feel proud of the Baltimore Prologue as one more mark of note in the Free State's rich early AA history. During AA's 60th Anniversary year, let's "celebrate our heritage – and pass it on!"

THE BALTIMORE PROLOGUE

(Boldfaced language replaced the wording in brackets in 1969)

Alcoholics Anonymous is a (group of people) **fellowship of men and women** for whom alcohol has become a major problem and who have banded together in a sincere effort to help themselves and other problem drinkers recover their health and maintain sobriety.

Definitions of alcoholics are many and varied. For brevity we think of an alcoholic as one whose life has become unmanageable, to any degree, due to the use of alcohol.

We of Alcoholics Anonymous believe that the alcoholic is suffering from a disease for which no cure has yet been found. We profess no curative powers, but have formulated a plan to arrest alcoholism.

(Membership requirements demand only a sincere desire on the part of the applicant to maintain total abstinence.) **The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking.**

There are no dues or fees in AA (; operating expenses are met by voluntary contributions from members taken at close of our meetings.)

Activities are supported by voluntary contributions of the members.

Alcoholics Anonymous does not perform miracles, believing that such power rests only in God.

We adhere to no particular creed or religion. We do believe, however, that an appeal to one's own interpretation of a Higher Power, or God, is indispensable to a satisfactory adjustment to life's problems.

Alcoholics Anonymous is not a prohibition or temperance movement in any sense of the word. Neither have we any criticism of the controlled drinker. We are concerned **ONLY** with the alcoholic.

From the vast experience of our many members we have learned that successful membership demands total abstinence. Attempts at controlled drinking for the alcoholic inevitably fail.

We attempt to follow a program of Recovery which has for its chief objectives, sobriety for ourselves; help for other alcoholics who desire it; amends for past wrongs; humility; honesty; tolerance; and spiritual growth.

We welcome and appreciate the cooperation of the medical profession, the clergy, and the public in general.

THE LONG ROAD TO THE ANNUAL MARYLAND STATE CONVENTION

(Written Dec. 1995)

The annual Maryland State Convention has been highly regarded by so many members for so long that we take it for granted, like the sun rising. But a look at the past gives a more realistic view.

Old documents found in Baltimore's Intergroup files show that a committee was formed on May 28, 1963, "to inaugurate, if feasible, a Maryland State Convention of AA ..." The 17-person committee was selected from Baltimore, Easton, Ocean City, Hagerstown and Cumberland.

At the initial planning meeting, June 15, 1963, only six members attended.

John V. was chosen as chairman and Jean P. as secretary. Seven attended the second meeting and only four at the third and last meeting. So the idea died.

It took eight more years before the Convention idea again arose. Why did it take so long to get started?

Jean P. said, "We wanted to encourage state-wide unity, but we just couldn't get support then, in 1963, and I don't know why..." A member since 1953 had this opinion, "When I joined AA and began to come alive, I believed my home group had the answers, and I didn't want 'outsiders' to mess it up...It was some kind of group tribalism."

Early 1970, Nick M. and Tom S., both from Baltimore and Bill C. from Hagerstown generated interest again and recruited volunteers to help. The plan was to have the convention at one location for two years then move to another part of Maryland for two years and so on, thereby encouraging statewide involvement.

Then another impediment arose: Nick, who was the chairperson, had a slip. Tom and Bill stepped in and kept things going.

Planning continued and the first convention was held on July 23-25, 1971 at the Venice Motel, Hagerstown for

about 200 people. The theme was UNITY. The motel marquee showed WELCOME TO ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS. Anonymity was further threatened when reporter Peggy Costion arrived to take pictures and prepare a news article for the Hagerstown newspaper. AA members explained the anonymity tradition and she settled for a close-up photo of a handshake in front of a sign posted in the lobby: SIGN IN HERE, MARYLAND STATE AA CONVENTION.

During a recent interview Tom S. had this to say, "We had a great convention because the new chairperson, Bill C. was the right man for the job. We had good speakers and leaders for the AA, Al-Anon and Alateen meetings. Some of us insisted on having a live band for dancing and entertainment; there was enthusiastic participation in the outside activities, i.e. a golf match, swimming and bus tours to Hagerstown's City Park, the Antietam Battlefield, and last, but not least, to shopping areas.



A Hagerstown newspaper reporter covering the first Convention, July 23-25, 1971, wanted to take photographs of people attending the Convention . . . She yielded to our anonymity principle and settled for the symbol of "lending a helping hand to another." This is a reprint of the photograph shown in the newspaper.

The Convention was again held at the Venice Motel in 1972. Then in 1973, 74, 75 on the Eastern Shore; 1976, 77 at the Hagerstown Elks; 1978, 79 on

the Eastern Shore; 1980 at Towson State College; and 1981 to the present at the Ramada Inn Convention Center in Hagerstown. As our attendance has grown, it has become increasingly difficult to find adequate, affordable accommodations other than the Ramada, Hagerstown. As a result, the Convention Committees have become increasingly comfortable with their operations and have reserved dates at that location well into the future.

The 25th Convention held June 8-11, 1995. The theme was A New Pair of Glasses (Alcoholics Anonymous, page 450). Committee Chairperson, Nancy C. reported, "in spite of competition that same weekend by Founder's Day in Akron and the International Convention which was only two weeks later, our attendance remained above 1000, as it has been for the past few years. Consequently we were able to return the seed money plus \$300 to Maryland General Service."

HOW MCYPAA BEGAN AND GREW

(Written Sept. 1995)

In June, 1983, eight young people in AA climbed into two cars and drove to Cincinnati, Ohio, to attend the International Convention of Young People in AA. That trip provided the inspiration and motivation for holding the MCYPAA—Maryland Conference of Young People in AA—two years later.

"We came back to Baltimore with a desire to become more involved with AA and service," recalls Karen W. "We wanted to attract more young people into service. We decided that our own conference was what we needed, and two years

later we put on the first 3 - day MCYPAA at the Ramada Inn in Hagerstown. The theme was "Pass It On."

"A group of us gathered around a table and we each took a job," Karen relates. "We elected Gary K. as chair and Russ C. as co-chair.

"Then as time went on we continued to recruit people for other important jobs such as coffee person," Karen remembers. "This job became probably the most important responsibility all weekend!" The coffee job was shared by Ed H. and Chris C. that first year.

The first convention was held at the Ramada Inn, Hagerstown on October 28 - 30, 1985. "As the committee headed for Hagerstown, we were really scared," says Karen. "We had around 250 advance registrations, and we knew we needed about 200 more to break even. We sat around and discussed options we had if we did not make expenses. As a committee we decided that if need be we would pass the basket on Sunday morning."

Their financial concerns were allayed Friday evening as late

registrants began pouring in. The flow resumed Saturday morning.

"Lo and behold—we not only broke even; we had money left over to give a donation to Maryland General Service, over and above the seed money they had fronted us!"

"Everything went great that inaugural weekend. We had outstanding speakers, a great crowd, and a lot of happy people," says Karen. "And we began a couple of MCYPAA traditions.

"First, we light a candle at the 8 o'clock meeting on Friday evening and allow it to burn throughout the weekend, giving special meaning to the convention. We also began the tradition of Alkathons, with continuous meetings—a new meeting starting every hour on the hour throughout the weekend.

"By the end of the weekend, the committee was wired!" Karen reports. "Most of us had not slept at all. How could we? All of our hard work had paid off. People were really enjoying themselves and the fellowship and spirit of MCYPAA. I know that if we were asked to do it again, there would not be any hesitations. The convention allowed us to grow emotionally and spiritually. It began relationships that are still growing today. I am so proud to say that I was part of the inception of MCYPAA."

From that firm foundation, MCYPAA has grown through the years and become an annual fall highlight not only for young people in AA but also for hundreds of those who are just young at heart and in spirit.

The second young people's conference was held at Ocean City—the only session not held in Hagerstown. This resulted because the committee was not aware that

the Hagerstown Ramada Inn facilities had to be booked two years in advance.

Despite the change in venue, the 1986 conference was highly successful, even outdrawing the inaugural with an attendance of 696, according to Conference Chair, Russ C.

"A highlight of the Ocean City affair was a Halloween Ball, made the more memorable when six-foot-four Gary K. strapped on styrofoam stilts to appear as a seven-foot-plus Frankenstein monster," Russ remembers.

Returning to Hagerstown in 1987, MCYPAA continued to grow. 1987 was also the last year the conference would be known as the Maryland Conference of Young People in AA. It was felt that by calling the annual event the "young people's conference," traditions were being broken and some of our elder statesmen were avoiding the event. In March 1988, through a decision by the Area Assembly held in Glen Burnie, the name was officially changed. The individuals planning the event would be known as the Maryland Committee of Young People in AA and the event would be known as the Annual Fall Conference. The conference still holds true to the idea that young is not an age, but rather someone who knows they need to grow.

In April 1990 the Assembly decided to change the conference from 3 days to 4 days starting October 1991. There was another Fall Conference held in Hagerstown in October 1991: the 20th Northeast Regional Convention.

Each year the attendance grew, not by leaps and bounds, but a steady incline. Finally in 1993 attendance broke a thousand; 1994 saw a dip in the attendance, but the

1995 Annual Fall Conference again broke the thousand mark.

Returning to Hagerstown in 1987, MCYPAA continued to grow in popularity with the young and not-so-young as people began to bring their sponsors, the first youngsters grew older, and the word spread about what an outstanding event the annual meeting had become. Twice in recent years attendance topped a thousand.

The eleventh conference was held October 26-29, 1995, again at the Ramada Inn Conference Center in Hagerstown.

Chairman Nancy K. and a hard-working group of volunteers held a dozen monthly meetings to decide on the theme (Alone No More), plan what activities would be included and determine who would do what to bring the convention to fruition. Advice was asked of members with prior convention work experience. Special emphasis was directed toward Al-Anon and Alateen participation. Cassettes of various speakers were obtained and screened by the committee to select speakers.

The thoroughness and dedication of the volunteers paid off handsomely.

"This was a super conference—one of the best I've ever attended," reports a long-time member who has attended dozens of conferences in Maryland and around the country. "The speakers were excellent. The workers were enthusiastic and knew their jobs . . . and it was encouraging to see all the teenagers attending. His views were echoed by many of those who were there.

Recommendation: Make reservations early for next October!

THE SOBRIETY SHOW LEGACY

The auditorium lights dimmed and on stage came Larry T., Master of Ceremonies for the 38th Baltimore AA Sobriety Show, presented at Patterson High School on November 4, 1995 before about 900 people who obviously had a fun night of AA.

The program began with a 20-minute AA meeting, then 16 acts until intermission, refreshments, and music by the Anonymity Band—followed by 16 more acts and the finale.

A lot of planning by Chairman Pat F. and enthusiastic volunteers made the logistics and show run smoothly, to the delight of the audience. Entertainers rehearsed every Sunday for about eight weeks prior to the show. The show was free with financial support coming from raffles and sale of memorial chips for a dollar.

This annual event started in 1958. Jean P. was chairperson of Intergroup and its 5-member Advisory Committee. The Committee's duty was to resolve issues that arose in IG meetings.

Tom B. presented to the committee a plan to have an AA party with entertainment that all members could afford to attend. The details were: hire a large hall; charge \$1.00; serve hot dogs, coffee and soda free; donate proceeds to the Valley House at Fells Point that was sponsored by the Episcopal Church

for men from jail and prisons; have a free show by New York City entertainers that Tom knew well; and call it The Drunkards Ball.

Jean remembers, "When Tom finished there was dead silence. The committee really liked the idea, but it had two flaws: Donating money to an outside organization violated Tradition 6, i.e., non-affiliation with outside activities, no matter how good and worthy the cause. I don't believe that issue crossed Tom's mind . . . The other flaw was money. AA pays its own way, and we believed accepting donations of food, drink and the auditorium fee would be wrong."

The Committee, however, wanted to have a show. One of the members, Scotty H., went to the phone and called the rector of St. Joseph's Monastery, who said they could have the hall there and their stage crew for \$50. Members later on went to wholesalers and asked for discounted prices for the needed supplies . . . one of the members, a printer, donated the programs. It was decided to keep the \$1.00 admission to pay expenses and give any leftover money to IG. "But the smartest thing we did was to decide to put on the show ourselves," said Jean.

The Committee took the new proposal to the IG meeting, where it was overwhelmingly approved, except for one contentious issue: the

name Drunkards Ball. Disagreement arose, but reason prevailed, and it was agreed to call it The Sobriety Show.

Jean summed up the results, "The show was held at the Monastery and was a great success. Lots of real talent was uncovered, and those of us without any gave the audience a lot of laughs. I had agreed to participate in an act. I sang 'I Only Want a Buddy, Not a Sweetheart' and wouldn't stop singing. The MC, Barney G., faked disgust and called in two men in white medical jackets to usher me out. When they turned around, on the back of their coats was printed 'Spring Grove,' which was a mental institution. It sounds corny, but people enjoyed it . . . The hall was crowded and there was enough money left over for IG. Most of all, I will never forget the fun and the true spirit of unity we all experienced."

After a year or two at the Monastery on Old Frederick Road, the show was moved to Poly-Western High School on Falls Road for several years, and then to Patterson High School, where the Sobriety Show has been for a long time.

Every November the Baltimore Intergroup Activities Committee has its initial meeting to start plans for the Sobriety Show for the ensuing year.