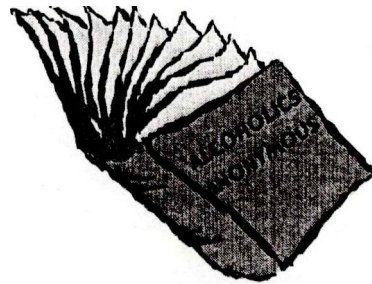
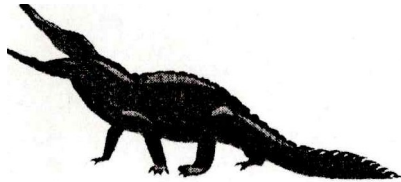


SOUTH FLORIDA
AREA 15
"OUR BEGINNINGS"
BITS OF AA HISTORY



JANUARY 2001

Statement of Purpose
Maria Hoffman, District 1 Archives Chair

These Bits of History have been put together in the interest of promoting a love and knowledge of our precious beginnings.

They are accurate to the best of my knowledge; however, I will be more than happy to entertain any changes or additions you may have to offer.

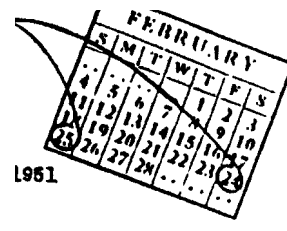
Please contact archivist@area15aa.org

This is a reformatted version of this document that was originally prepared by district 1 archives chair Maria Hoffman. Maria presented this at the January 13, 2001 archives committee meeting in Fort Myers, FL. Maria served as panel 53 area 15 archives chair. She and husband Jim were active in area 15 for many years.

Jack Barden, Area 15 Archivist
January 2024

SOUTHEASTERN ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

WILL MEET IN JACKSONVILLE FOR A REGIONAL CONFERENCE



NORTH FLORIDA GROUPS

As you probably know, the State of Florida has been divided into two sections for the selection of delegates to attend the first panel of the General Service Conference to be held this coming April in New York.

Jacksonville had agreed to act as "Host City" for the northern district of Florida, and in this connection is calling a meeting of the delegates from the North Florida groups to select their delegate to represent them at the General Service Conference. This meeting will be held at 2:30 P.M., Sunday, February 25, 1951 in the assembly room of the Mayflower Hotel.

We have arbitrarily drawn a line across the state of Florida north at Clearwater and extending almost directly eastward across the State. Your group falls into the territory designated as the "North Florida District".

Tell your group please elect a delegate to attend this meeting and if you have not sent your \$6.00 or \$10.00 to the New York Office marked "Conference Funds" we requested in the recent plan for the General Service Conference mailed to all groups, please do so immediately so your group may participate in the election of a North Florida delegate to the General Service Conference in New York this April. Also please have your selected group delegate bring credentials to present to the "Host Committee" showing that he or she is the authorized delegate from your group. It is also requested that your group send along a few extra "bucks" to be deposited with the Treasurer (to be elected) or the North Florida district to help defray traveling expenses of the selected delegate to the General Service Conference in New York.

We are very fortunate that Bill W. has found it possible to spare a couple of days to come down from New York to help us in the formation of the North Florida district, which will act as a "guinea pig" for observers from the Southeastern Region so that they may return to their respective districts with an excellent knowledge of the correct procedure in the formation of their group districts.

In connection with this gala week-end, to make your trip more worthwhile and fitting, the attached sheet lists other activities that are planned.

It is very important that we know immediately if we can expect a representative from your group to attend this meeting, and how many will attend the other activities.

Sincerely,

Jacksonville Host Committee

H E A D Q U A R T E R S - - Hotel Mayflower

ADDRESS: Box 4843

JACKSONVILLE 1, FLORIDA

(Item "C")

Facsimile of original

SOUTH FLORIDA AREA# 15 WORKBOOK
APPENDIX I

AA HISTORY IN FLORIDA

A.A. activity in Florida started to gain momentum in the second half of 1940, especially in the Miami and Jacksonville areas. Somewhat earlier, in November 1939, G.S.O. (then the Foundation), had been in touch with Horace S., the first contact in Florida, living in Daytona Beach. He returned to live in Connecticut, in July 1942, without apparently, leaving any nucleus for a group in Daytona Beach.

In the fall of 1940, Tom S., in Jacksonville, working with Commdr. Junius Cotton, a naval officer who told him about A.A, started activity in the Jacksonville area, and in March of 1941, reported they have a group of five members. Bruce H., described as super-salesman and energetic, arrived in May and the group started a terrific growth, reporting 45 members by June.

Meanwhile, in Miami, A.A. had activity started in early 1940. In April, Roger G wrote to G.S.O. for help and in November. Joe T. did the same. G.S.O. put them in touch with each other and they worked together, answering inquiries for the Miami area. These two were also in touch with the ubiquitous Irwin M., salesman and A.A. member, whose territory covered the Southeastern part of the U.S. Irwin did much to encourage and advise them, by letter and in person when he was in the area.

By December 1940, Carl C., arrived from Houston, Texas, and settled in Ft. Lauderdale. In November, he wrote the office and expressed a desire to start a group in Miami, and he was put in touch with Joe and Roger. Though there is no formal group yet, newspapers ran a series of articles on A.A and the three men carry on 12th Step work. Activities on behalf of A.A include Ft. Lauderdale and St. Petersburg where there are two men interested.

However, the group formally started in April 1941, and this date is celebrated as the group anniversary.

By the end of 1941, the Directory listings for December carried these two groups in Florida, showing 40 members in Miami and 70 in Jacksonville. Meanwhile, Daytona Beach also reported activity and a group started there in December.

So these were the first three A.A groups in Florida and their membership continued to grow steadily.

In 1942 and 1943, Tampa and Sarasota also had members who were corresponding with G.S.O. (As were members in Ft. Lauderdale and in St. Petersburg). Actually, there was correspondence with Sarasota members as early as November 1940. Both Tampa and Sarasota groups formally organized in January 1944.

Groups in Ft. Lauderdale and Orlando were added to the Directory listing in the spring of 1944.

In 1945 six more groups came into existence:

Pensacola in January, - St. Petersburg in February - Clearwater in March, - West Palm Beach in April, Lake Worth and Gainesville in December.

By February 1946, both Jacksonville and Miami had two groups each. New Groups that year included Tallahassee, Orlando and Atlantic Beach. Over the following twelve months, new groups appeared in Cocoa, Delray Beach, Fernandina, Ft. Myers, Hollywood, Lake Wales, Leesburg, Key West and Ocala.

In the spring of 1947, the total 850 members in 31 groups. in 1970, 23 years later, there were approximately 4873 members in 282 groups.

The South Florida Area was established in time for the first General Service Conference in April 1951. A North and South Florida delegate was selected. * * **See letter attached... Item A**

9/29/00

LIST OF AA GROUPS IN FLORIDA AS OF FEB. 1945

Box 459
Grand Central Annex
New York 17, New York

Contributed by groups
For 2nd period only
8/1/44 - 2/1/45

FLORIDA

Daytona Beach - Box 1382 Secretary - Everett Snow, 110-12 Broadway	23	25.00
Ft. Lauderdale - Box 1236 Secretary - Leticia A. Jordan at Box	12	50.00
Jacksonville - Box 761 Cont. - William Hall, 1937 San Marco Boulevard	70	106.00
Miami - Box 1594 Riverside Station Secretary - F. Basil Abrams, 3058 S. W. 8th Street	50	50.00
Orlando-Central Florida Group - Box 1444 Secretary - Connie Reid, 31 E. Amelia Ave., Orlando	20	
Pensacola - Box 2257, East Hill Sta. Cont. - Cleveland S. Barnes, 1306 E. Jackson	6	
Sarasota - No P.O. Box Secretary - Luke Caraux, 202 Bahia Vista Ave.	4	100.00
Tampa - Box 2455, Zone 1 Cont. - J. E. King, 3210 Wallcraft Ave., Tampa 6	24	25.00
West Palm Beach - No P.O. Box Secretary- C. P. McCauley, % Mrs. J. L. Gleason, 294 Cardova Rd.	2	

ITEM B

9001 SW 77 Ave., #409
Miami, FL 33156
(305) 279-6739
October 24, 1979

Dear District Chairman:

It is an honor and a privilege for me to be selected Chairman of the new South Florida Area Archives Committee, which was approved at our last quarterly. The Conference has also given me the responsibility of choosing the Archives Committee Members, and I now ask each district to select at least one representative to comprise this committee.

I propose to hold the first meeting of the Archives Committee when we gather for our next quarterly in January at Clearwater Beach. Therefore, I'd greatly appreciate your sending me, well in advance, the names, addresses, and phone numbers of these persons from your district, so that I may contact them with details of the meeting which will probably be on Sat., Jan. 19th.

I hope there will be sufficient representation from each of our districts to form an adequate group conscience of South Florida Area. We have many questions to resolve and guidelines to formulate. If each district's Archives Committee Members can bring to our meeting whatever memorabilia has been gathered, articles, documents, photos, taped or written memories of old-timers, etc., we will learn a great deal from one another. Let me reassure you now that these Archives will not consist of eulogies of old-timers.

I hope you will place this on the agenda for your next district meeting and let me know your choices soon.

Yours in sobriety,

Carol Lewis
Carol Lewis
Archives Committee Chairman
South Florida Area
General Service

(ITEM A)

***** also attached is a copy of AA Groups as of Feb. 45, from our office in New York ... Item B**

October 24, 1979, first Archives Chairperson. Carol L. was selected by the South Florida Area. ** See letter attached ... Item C.

District 1 - St. Petersburg

In July 1940 Ed E. wrote to AA stating he had read of the organization in Time Magazine and ordered a copy of Alcoholics Anonymous book. First meeting in St. Petersburg, The St. Pete group were held in the office of Bob W., attorney on 4th St. in the Coca Cola Building was attended by 7 men. The group seems be registered on 2123145 with a membership of 21, with meetings held on Monday and Thursday. Members of this group visited a sanitarium to see a Dentist from Clearwater, Dr. Fred, who started a meeting at the Women's Club. There were also meetings held at YMCA, 28 Beach Dr. St. Pete. The Central Group, Sunshine Group, San Martin and 2250 group are all sprung off from the original St Pete Group.

District 2 - Tampa

William S. Devereux, (*name used with permission of family*) Who had moved to Tampa after joining AA in Chicago 1941, started a group in Tampa April 13, 1942. In Feb. 44 NY has also a listing for a group, Secy. (Dr.) J.K. Richards, (a nonalcoholic Pharmacist who also owned a liquor store and was able to find new members via his or store and was able to find new members via his business. Dr. Richards was inspired by his alcoholic brother Ralph who was sober in Atlanta AA) In Dec. '43 arrived Roy Y., an Army Sgt. who had found AA in Houston, TX, then stayed sober on his own in Alaska. Once in Tampa, Roy Y. contacted Dr. Richards, and through their efforts, the Franklin or Downtown group became successful enough they entertained Bill & Lois W. May 44. Evidently over time, the Date for celebration in Tampa was mistakenly changed to January 1944. (the above info came directly from GSO) However 4/13/42 is the date recorded by GSO NY as having 3 members, Wm. Devereaux Secty. The DeSoto Hotel/Club came next, followed by Adalia, Leisure House (Electric Co.), And Palmacia 1946

District 3 - Lakeland

In 1947 the Bartow Group was started by Charlie L. (after many detoxes), and Ed from Lakeland who sobered up in Jacksonville AA They received help from a man in Tampa. They first met in a home, then an office across from the courthouse, by the end of the year the members numbered 8. This group still exists today and has had many groups spin off from it. In 1948 The Lakeland Downtown Group began with their help. In 1954 Bob C. And Elise C. Moved to Winter Haven & helped to form the Traditional Anniversary Group, with 7 members. Bob C. Is still hard at work carrying the AA message. In 1964, Dan D. Tired of fighting booze by himself, called on the help of the other 3 groups started AA in Ft. Meade. In 1964 Lake Alfred group began, a spin off from Winter Haven. In 1971 a 2nd group began, that later moved to become the Auburndale Group. Intergroup was started 1986 and is located in Lakeland. Today there are about 180 meetings a week in Dist. 3.

District 4 - Sarasota

Art C., from N.Y.C., spent six months in Sarasota recovering from an operation that almost killed him. He contacted the Central Office in N.Y. to find out if there were any contacts in Sarasota. The names Brooks P. and Will M. were provided. Brooks was dry at the time but had difficulty staying in the program. Will was an invalid almost completely paralyzed except for his right hand and arm. He and Brooks tried to get something started and had success with a Greek gentleman in Bradenton.

In January 1943 Art wrote an article for a local paper that provided a response from Luke C. He had come into A.A in March 1941 in Akron, Ohio via the Jack Alexander article. A friend of Art's in Virginia wrote about a friend, Jack, who was wintering in Sarasota with his wife. Luke and Art pumped him full of the A.A. program and he remained sober.

District 5 - Venice

District 5 was created as a split off of Fort Myers/District 7. The year is not known. We were comprised of Punta Gorda, Port Charlotte, Arcadia and Englewood. Venice and Nokomis split from Sarasota

(District 4) in 1979 and became part of District 5.

The earliest group is the Peace River Group in Port Charlotte, dating back to 10/21/66. Another group is the Venice Wednesday Speakers Group, registered 11/2/66. A member of that group gave us a date of 1963 as being established.

District 6 - Martin, Indian River, St. Lucie, Okeechobee Counties

The first meeting in District 6 was in Fort Pierce; however, this meeting was not registered by General Service but seems to have been formed in 1947. The first listed group was in Vero Beach, had eight members and was formed in 1948.

Currently, Indian River County has 32 groups and 110 meetings per week; Martin County has 80 groups and 125 meetings per week; St. Lucie County has 39 groups and 80 meetings per week; and Okeechobee County has nine meetings per week.

District 7 - Collier County

The Ft. Myers group of AA began by Henry D. And Eleanor S. In 1946 meeting in Corbin's Feed Store on Monroe and Main Sts. The Naples Group started in 1954 by Al Mc C. He had gotten his start in Ft. Myers. The first Sanibel Group was started by Sanibel Jack. In Sept. 1953 when he arrived there were no other AA's he was forced to go to Ft. Myers on the mainland via ferry, hitch a 15-mile ride and stay in a hotel for the night, taking the 8 AM ferry back to the island. In 1963 one other man was there and they started a two-man meeting, until the bridge and causeway opened and others from town could join them. In June 1969 The Marco Island Group at King Whites Mobile home with 5 sober people, after 4 meetings they moved to St. Mark's Episcopal Church.

District 8 - Palm Beach County

During the post-World War II period, most of the growth of AA in Palm Beach County took place in the form of "cottage groups" that met in an unscheduled fashion in the homes of some of the early adherents. This was a means of avoiding public knowledge of those who were prominent businessmen and professionals who could be hurt by the lack of understanding of the general population.

One of the major proponents of AA in South Florida was a man known as Steve H. He was a native of Lake Worth and a prominent businessman his mid-thirties.

District 9 - Broward County

AA links to Ft. Lauderdale and Broward County are New York Group 2, a magazine article, a traveling salesman, the Philadelphia group, a health farm, a pre-AA slip, a sister, two nonalcoholic doctors, the Big Book, another drunk, informal meetings and, finally, the first group meeting brought in by a Miami group on February 29, 1944.

This is the path by which John Richie (deceased 1985 with 42 years continuous sobriety) became the messenger for Broward County's first AA group.

Learning there was a group in Miami, the Miami group was contacted and agreed to come up to Fort Lauderdale and hold a meeting. Ads were run in the paper for February 29, 1944, a leap year. Dick R., Fred C. And a woman whose name was not recorded brought the meeting. The Miamian's spoke and Fort Lauderdale AA's listened, closing with the lord's prayer.

After this first meeting, others were held for a short time at night in Bob R' s office before renting the women's club on Andrews Avenue for the weekly meeting.

On the first Wednesday of January 1947, a group started up in Hollywood. Typical of the interest local AAs had in carrying the message, the Hollywood meeting showed up in new group feature column of the March 1947 issue of the AA Grapevine.

On 12 January 1949 Wesley P. started the first Pompano Beach group meeting.

District 10 - Dade County

In 1940 GSO received calls for help from Roger G. and Joe T. They were put in touch and began working together to answer inquiries from the Miami area. They were aided by Irwin M. A salesman whose territory covered the S.E. United States. The first official meeting took place Dec.23, 1940. By the end of '41 GSO lists showed 40 members.

District 11 - Upper Key

Most records have been lost due to hurricanes, but meetings can be confirmed dating back to 1973. The Waldorf group was begun by Ernie M. In the beginning all of the keys were District 12, when the South Florida area was established. In 1983 the keys were divided. Dist. 11 now has 23 groups registered with GSO, and about 60 meetings throughout the district. In 1997 an Area Quarterly was hosted at key West in partnership with Dist. 12.

District 12 - Lower Keys

The Southernmost District 12 early in 1972 in a hardware store in Islamorada by Eddie S. After traveling a long distance weekly to Homestead, a very few people gathered and soon the fellowship began to grow. The Big Book Group was formed in 1976 by Maynard F., Ed D., Ray L, and several others, is thriving today. Ocean Group

District 14 -Virgin Islands

The Aradians (#153038) are the oldest and best documented group. It seems that the group was originally known as the St. Thomas Group, which was first listed with us on October 31, 1957. At the time it had four members and held meetings on Tuesday nights. The Aradians continued to grow, and our records indicate that the group had 35 active members in 1981 and 60 in 1991. Meeting place was badly damaged by hurricane Marilyn (1995) and they now meet in the basement of the Dutch Reform Church.

The Christiansted Group (#153035) - was listed as a new group at General Service on August 21, 1962 under the name, St. Croix Group. According to the records, John Z. Was the contact person for the group, which had three members at the time. By 1967, the group had grown to ten regular members, including John C, Fred O., and James D. Meetings were held in the Holy Cross Rectory in Christiansted. A May 1972 information card states that the group's new name was the Christiansted Group. At the time, meetings were held on Tuesdays and Fridays, and the group had twelve members.

District 15 - Pasco County

In 1987 there was rapid growth of groups in the Pasco area and difficulties in communication/travel created by the distance to Clearwater/St. Pete District 1 - (35 - 40 miles). In order to better serve the alcoholics involved locally, it was decided that a separate District was needed. After careful group surveys and consideration and following the General Service Manual directions a vote by the groups involved was passed unanimously, with much excitement and celebration. District 1 was very generous in considering \$600 contributed by our groups previously and returning the same to us. This was greatly appreciated. The first District 15 meeting was held January 25th, 1988.

SOUTH FLORIDA AREA 15



ARCHIVES
COMMITTEE