

History of Alcoholics Anonymous in Fallbrook

Alcoholics Anonymous dates from June 10, 1935 when Bill W., a New York stockbroker gave Dr. Bob S., an Akron physician a beer so he could stop the shaking and preform a surgery. They both remained sober for the rest of their lives.. The membership did not explode worldwide over night. By 1939 when the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* was published there were about 100 men and women in the fellowship. After the publishing of articles in *Liberty* called "Alcoholics and God" in 1939 and an article in Saturday Evening Post by Jack Alexander in 1941 there were approximately 8000 members in the United States, most in around New York and Akron.

In November 1940 a sober alcoholic named Hal S. went looking for another alcoholic who needed help. Hal had been sober for two years and knew that his sobriety depended on helping other drunks to stay sober. He needed a contact in San Diego, and contacted the New York office for help. They put him in touch with the father of Tom B. who had written for help. Along with two women, Marge C. and Alta M. , who were willing to give AA a try, they started the first group in San Diego. The first meeting was held November 7, 1940 in an apartment at 3229 Adams Avenue.

From this beginning, meetings began to appear throughout the county. Escondido, Vista, San Marcos, Oceanside all had meetings prior to the first meeting in Fallbrook.

Jim W., a Fallbrook realtor started attending meetings in these cities and in 1954 ~~and~~ decided to start a meeting in Fallbrook. It was started in his real estate office on Main Street with 3 or 4 other members and continued in his office for several years.. He was heard to say, that one of the recovering members never bathed, and Jim did not look forward to traveling with him to other meetings in the north county, so he started this meeting. It was the Tuesday night discussion meeting.

Dick O., who got sober 7/31/60, told us that when he asked about an AA meeting, he was told to go to Jim's office, but when he got there the meeting had moved to the Women's Club at the corner of north and west Mission where it still is today, so we know that it was about this time that they moved to that location.. The first meetings were held in the small entry hall on the back of the building. They sat their chairs in a circle. There were 8 to 10 people present, including husbands and

wives. Over the years this meeting grew, and became quite large. It was not unusual to have 60 or 70 members present. An old phone list has over 100 names on it. It was a discussion meeting with a speaker every third Tuesday the same as it is today. AA's from around the north county added this meeting to their weekly meetings. Each day they would car pool to a meeting, the usual schedule was; Monday: Camp Pendleton; Tuesday: Fallbrook; Wednesday: Vista; Thursday: Carlsbad; Friday: Oceanside. They had no meetings on the weekends. The step study in San Marcos was also attended by some. The meeting remained at the Women's Club until about 1990, when the Club raised the rent to such an extent that it had to move. It was at Zion Lutheran Church for a while, Hilltop for a while and then moved to the Baptist Church where it is today.

Soon they started meetings at the Rainbow Prison, and Fallbrook members went out there on a weekly basis to carry the message, and to get another meeting for themselves. During this period an Al-Anon meeting was started. Once a year Al-Anon had an anniversary dinner and invited all the local doctors and policeman to attend. They would have speakers from both AA and Al-Anon at these meetings.

For twenty years the members in Fallbrook just had the one meeting to attend. In 1974 they started the second meeting. Again Jim W. was heard to say that a resentment started both the second and third meetings in Fallbrook.. Because the treatment facility at Pendleton was sending people to the Tuesday night meeting, and they included gamblers, drug addicts, overeaters, alonons, etc the Sunday night closed meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous was started. It was held in the bank building opposite Mc Donald's. It is now the Graybill Medical Group. You had to pick up a key from the bank on Friday afternoon in order to open the room, then slip it into the night deposit box after the meeting. They said that some times people would leave the key at the liquor store next door, for the secretary to pick up.

Three years later in 1977, the third meeting was started on Thursday nights at the Presbyterian Church, in a small house.. It was the big book study and was a non smoking meeting, something rather unique at the time. Old timers remember the original format mentioned "no smoking" 4 times. They said it was started to escape the "big meeting" on Tuesday night, where the smoke was so thick you could cut it.

The Saturday morning Step Study meeting was started in 1983. David A. and his wife Carlie A. felt that we needed a step study and they helped get it started on Saturday mornings a 10 AM in the Baptist Church. It has been at that location the entire time and is still going strong.

In late 1970's Margaret S. moved down to Fallbrook from Orange County. She became very active in Fallbrook AA. She with Gail W. was instrumental in starting the Wednesday Night Women's closed meeting about 1982. It was started in the same bank where the Sunday night meeting met. Later when the bank closed, it was moved to the Presbyterian Church. She was also involved with starting the first noon meetings in Fallbrook. They were held at the Catholic Church in the vestry just off the main church and were started about 1984 and were originally just Mondays and Wednesdays. Later the other noon meetings came along. Margaret was also very active with Woman to Woman, and many of the women mentioned that she got them started going to that meeting.

About two years after the starting of a Women's meeting, The Mike M. and some of the other men decided they needed a men's stag meeting. It also was a closed meeting, and was also held on Wednesday night. It was called the "We R Not Saints" meeting and was started originally at Potter Jr. High School and then moved to the Zion Lutheran Church in 1984 and was quite strong before it folded, perhaps due to resentments, we were told. After a couple of false starts, it got going again at Hilltop Center and has been there ever since.

In 1985 and 86 the mens group sponsored a mens retreat at the Christian Conference Center on Mount Palomar. David A. and Brett S were active in getting it going. Each step was discussed and each member had a chance to tell his story.

The first meeting held at Hilltop Center was a second Tuesday night meeting. It was a step study meeting. It was started because some people felt that the original Tuesday night meeting had gotten too big, and was controlled by a small group. This meeting only lasted about a year.

The Monday night meeting was started about 1986. It was originally a "Podium Participation Meeting", where everyone participating would speak from the podium. It was originally in the Board of Realtors office on Alvarado. After moving several times, it is now at Hilltop and is a Grapevine meeting.

In 1986 Zan W. and Lisa G. decided that Fallbrook needed a speakers meeting. They had had some good speakers at the Tuesday night meeting, and felt that Fallbrook could support a regular speakers meeting. They were both nurses, so they got the hospital to let them have the meeting there. The first speaker was Jack from Fallbrook. It was held in the cafeteria and there were 40 to 50 people present. It continued very strong for a few years, then it got quite small. Then district 20

GSR's decided to try and breath life back into it in about 1992. It was strong again for a while before becoming small again. Recently Margaret and Ken G. who moved to Fallbrook from Orange County have worked hard to bring in good speakers each week, and it is again going strong.

Also in 1986 the first of the morning meeting was started at Hilltop. Mike M. and a young man he sponsored named Jade W, decided we could use a morning meeting. The first meeting was a 7 AM on Monday morning They did not want to be bothered by having Intergroup reports, or GSR reports. So they did not register or participate. They also did not recognize birthdays in the first years. From the one 7 AM meeting it soon grew to having a meeting every weekday morning at 7 AM. In 1992, Marilyn L. decided to be their GSR and started giving reports. For that reason they were not registered until 1992. They slowly joined the mainstream AA.

Fallbrook had been a part of District 1 in Vista, every since the San Diego Area was divided into Districts. In 1992 discussions began on whether there were enough meeting in Fallbrook to support it's own district. On July 11, 1992 District 20 was broken off from District 1 and became the Fallbrook District. The border lines are basically the Fallbrook area plus Rainbow, although Rainbow has never participated in the district.

The Sunday morning Beginners 1, 2, 3 step study was started by Bret S. in about 1995. It was started as a meeting to help the newcomer get the first three steps . Over the years it has been one of our strongest meetings, not just for newcomers, but for oldtimers as well.

About this same time, the noon meetings on Tuesday and Thursday were started by David A. who felt we needed a noon meeting every day. They were held in the Hilltop Center. It was also about this time that we were asked to leave the Catholic Church for the Monday, Wednesday and Friday noon meetings. Something to do with cigarette butts, it is recalled. They moved either to the Hilltop Center or to the Baptist Church.

In 1996 Carolyn S. realized that the only morning we did not have a meeting was Saturday morning. So she started a meeting. You will note that the format is different for the Saturday morning meeting than for the rest of the week. It joined in with the other 7 AM meetings to share coffee and supplies, but still has a separate format and readings.

A second Women's meeting was started in 1998 at the Hilltop Center. It is the Woman's Save Haven (Book Study) Meeting.

The promises meeting at noon on Sunday

In December 1999 at a Christmas Party at Stevie's house Lil T, Mary-Lynn, and Mike K. and Kathy T. were talking and the topic came up, that there was no meeting on Saturday night in Fallbrook and that they should start one. They contacted "me and Charlie's" coffee shop about using the small room at the back of their coffee shop and the Saturday night candlelight meeting was born. It was a closed meeting and originally did not sign court cards, but that did not last long. After the coffee shop shut down it moved to the Mental Health Building on north Mission.

Today, in 2005, there are 24 meetings each week in Fallbrook, plus two meetings in Rainbow. There are also seven hispanic meetings each week, a couples meeting for both AA's and Alanons and three Alanon meetings each week.