

The Detroit Pamphlet The Beginners Meetings set up in June 1943

So many newcomers were coming in, that by 1943 the more experienced members found themselves too few in number to explain the program adequately to each one individually (as they had in the beginning). So in June 1943, they set up Beginners Meetings where a group of members with some time in the program would sit at the front as a panel, facing the newcomers who were all gathered in the room. They would read introductory material they had written and then allow the newcomers to ask questions. The first Beginners Meeting was conducted by the North-West Group at 10216 Plymouth Road on Monday night, June 14, 1943. It has been held every Monday night without exception thereafter.

The beginner needed to go to four meetings to obtain the complete set of introductory lessons, since for easier study, the twelve steps were divided into four discussions. These were held on Monday nights, a different one of these four sections on each succeeding evening, in regular rotation:

Discussion No. 1, "The Admission," Step 1.

Discussion No. 2, "The Spiritual Phase," Steps 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, and 11.

Discussion No. 2, "Inventory and Restitution," Steps 4, 8, 9, and 10.

Discussion No. 4, "Active Work," Step 12.

These Beginners Meetings worked so successfully that they were adopted, first by other groups in Detroit and then in many other communities all over the United States. The materials which the Detroit people had written up, which they originally called The Table Leaders Guide, were first published in printed form by the Washington D.C. groups in a pamphlet called An Interpretation of the Twelve Steps. Detroit quickly came out with their own printed version of the pamphlet, which is still in print today.

Radio and television programs

On March 5, 1945, Time magazine reported that Detroit's WWJ radio station was running broadcasts by AA members in a radio program called "The Glass Crutch":

Alcoholics on the Air

Time, March 5, 1945

One of Detroit's citizens stepped up to the microphone one night last week and told how he had "hit bottom" as an alcoholic. To underline his confession, some of the more melodramatic and sordid aspects of his past were dramatized. Then he told of his regeneration. Summed up the Announcer: "Alcoholism is a disease ... an obsession ... an allergy ... " The man who "hit bottom" was the first in a parade of anonymous Detroiters who will describe their alcoholic pasts over WWJ every Saturday (11:15-11:30 p.m. E.W.T.). The series is the first sustained air flight of the famed organization called "Alcoholics Anonymous" (Time, Oct.23, 1944). Detroit AA's give credit for the broadcast project to 62-year-old William Edmund Scripps, big boss of the Detroit News and WWJ. He was so impressed by AA's reformation of a drunkard friend that he decided to do what he could to boost the organization's Detroit membership (now nearly 400).

(Nearby South Bend, Indiana, which was also deeply involved in the automobile manufacturing industry, had begun the use of A.A. radio broadcasts three months earlier when their founder Ken M., a pioneer in modern advertising, delivered his first Christmas Eve message on December 24, 1944. Word

of the successful South Bend experiment may have been passed along to the AA people in Detroit through the regular everyday business contacts between the two nearby industrial centers.)

The Mr. Hope TV show

In the 1950's WWJ telecast a TV program called "Mr. Hope," aired at noon on Sundays, in which AA members appeared wearing Lone Ranger masks and told their stories. The masks were worn to protect their identities.

The first AA club

The first AA Club in Detroit was started by Miles W. and Bill B. in the early 1940's on Milwaukee Avenue, one block from the GM Building. A lot of members would come in for lunch or after work and hang around and talk AA.

Canadian AA

Before Ontario, Canada, had its own AA meetings, recovering alcoholics from Windsor would come to the Detroit meetings. An early Canadian member describes going to meeting on Plymouth Ave. in Detroit: "We used to have to drive our car to the tunnel (gasoline was rationed), park the car, drop a nickel in the fare box for the tunnel bus, ride through the tunnel, walk several blocks to the Grand River Street Car, ride the streetcar for an hour out to Plymouth Road, then walk about half a mile to Plymouth and Ilene."

On Friday, 1942, the Daily Star of Windsor, Ontario, reported that over 400 AA members attended a testimonial dinner in Detroit for Dr. Bob, co-founder of AA. (Dr. Bob's last major talk was in Detroit).

Information in this section on early Detroit AA history taken from http://silkworth.net/aagrowth/mich_Detroit.html