

GUIDELINES FOR WRITING AN AA GROUP HISTORY

Compiling and writing your group's history will be an exciting and rewarding experience. By the time you have finished, you will probably know more about the group's evolution and experience than any other member. You will gain a better understanding of what past members went through to establish and maintain your group and how the local AA service structure developed.

Knowing your group's history will help you better understand how it fits into the total AA experience and you will see that it is a vital part of the living fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. The ideal group history should trace the evolution of your group in story form. For a group that has been in existence for several years, your history might only be a few paragraphs. A long-established active group's history might be several pages long. Don't worry about form; the most important thing is to get the information down on paper. You can worry about literary style later when editing. At this point your history should be a compilation of descriptive data and the group's experience, strength, hope and tribulations. It will become the source we seek out to learn of your group's past involvement without fear that the history might have been distorted.

With the members' consent, you should include their full names and sobriety dates in the original history. The use of full names helps the researchers and historians' separate members with similar or the same first name. It is important to note any nicknames the members used. If copies are distributed for checking etc., it would be wise to have the last names replaced by an initial so as to preserve the member's anonymity. Keeping in mind our Traditions **USE OF FULL NAMES WILL NOT BE REPRINTED IN ANY PUBLICATION.**

When you've finished the following pages, if you want a hard copy, print out 2 copies - 1 for you, and 2 for you to mail in! Note about E-Mailing: If you are viewing this file from within your web browser, save it to your computer before you edit the fields on the following pages, or you may lose your info!

Your first step in compiling a history will be to talk to the old-timers in your group. With their help you can make up a list of names of the earliest members (or their spouse) that still might be around. Many of the key people may no longer attend the group meetings or may have moved to other nearby communities. No source of information should be overlooked - we all have spotty memories! You might want to have a meeting of old timers. You will be surprised how they jog each other's memories when they get to reminisce about the "good old days!" You may also want to consider having a joint meeting of old-timers from a number of groups within your community or district(s). Be sure to tape these meetings, as it would be difficult to keep up with accurate note taking. You could also use an Oral History Kit available from AA.org or your Area Archivist. Please remember to send copies of any tapes made by old-timers to the Area Archivist.

Once you start writing your group history from what you have learned from this first old-timers meeting (or meetings), you will begin to detect gaps in the story. Now is the time to talk to the old-timers on a one-to-one basis. You will know better what questions to ask at this point, and your increasing awareness will help you guide the conversation to fill in the information you need. You may be surprised at how many events outside of the group itself are vital in explaining its history.

As soon as you think your history is nearly complete, share it with old-timers and other members. Remember that it is their history. They will be a lot of help in filling in missing information and putting

that final touch on the group history. When you feel your group history is complete, make a copy for your group, the GSO, and the Area 51 Archivist. This last step is very important. We need to have a central location for the histories of all the groups in our area so we will know where to find them. This will be the resource from which the histories can be retrieved in the event the copy at the group level is lost or misplaced. Our experience has been that the latter is a fairly frequent occurrence.

We are particularly interested in some anecdotes and "character". Our history will be more interesting if it is about people as well as facts. Ask your members to tell about the most unforgettable characters they know in AA. Which members have been the most dedicated and helpful? There must be some wonderful stories in your area. Let's preserve these stories for posterity. Remember that in 10 or 20 years, some Home Group member may look up your completed form and know very little about how your group started or interesting facts.

Please e-mail this completed form to: Area 51 Archivist archivist@aanorthcarolina.org and archives@aa.org

You may mail to:

A.A. World Services, Inc.
Archivist
475 Riverside Drive at West 120th St. - 11th Floor
New York, NY 10115

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