

The Jackson Group - "A Place for Faith and Sobriety"

I (Mel B.) came to Jackson in 1952 and lived there until 1972, with the exception of one year in the New York area between September 1963 and September 1964.

When I arrived in Jackson, I began to attend meetings immediately and was active there until moving to Toledo, where I continue to be active in AA. The founder of AA in Jackson was Al C., who came into the program in December, 1939, which makes him one of the first 200 in the entire country. I have Al's book, which was presented to me by the Jackson Group when I moved to the New York area in 1963. It shows his address as 811 Oakridge Drive. He was a city official of some kind, which you might determine by checking a Jackson City Directory for that period. The public library should have a copy. I've heard that Al made contact with a lone member in Detroit at the same time he came into AA. In any case, Al was known to the New York office.

When I met Bill W. in Akron in 1956 and told him I was from Jackson, he immediately brought up Al C.'s name, which really impressed me. Then there was also a fellow named Jack D., who was a plumber or something in the blue-collar line (Al being considered white-collar!). I did hear that things were in the doldrums, more or less, until Jack joined and really got things moving. Roy D., my good friend for many years, always acknowledged the fine work Jack had done. Jack might have even been Roy's sponsor, although I'm not sure of that.

When I came to Jackson, we were meeting in a second story hall on Cortland Street, but soon moved to the old Post Office building, where we stayed only a short time. Then we moved to a small building at 410 Cooper Street, and finally to one on Monroe Street, where we were eventually evicted when the machine-shop occupying the other half of the building offered the landlord more rent. After that, we moved to the second floor of a tuxedo shop, a building that was so flimsy I was afraid our crowds might bring it down.

Later we went to the hall on Mechanic Street, which was pretty good except that neighborhood kids were always throwing bricks through the back window. We had some old timers around, but few of them attended our meetings. Al C. and Jack D. were both gone, so I never had a chance to talk with either of them. A few of these old timers would lecture us about how poorly we were doing with newcomers; then they would disappear and not come back for another six months or so.

We had lots of fine members whom I remember with great affection. I have good memories of Bernie W., Roy D., Butch and Jake (a she) C., Silvanus J., Bill H., Charlie S., Ruth W., Frank Mc., Beck U., and many others whose names don't come up on my screen at the moment, although I could remember them with a bit of jogging. We called ourselves Jackson Group #2, although there was not a #1 in an active state. However, there was a group registered in the national AA directory with Stan S. as a contact, but I never knew him and as far as I knew, it wasn't meeting. I would be happy to review any records you have, but I do think you can use December, 1939, as the starting time for AA in Jackson. It may have taken some time to really get off the ground, but I think we have to call Al C., the founder with later backup from Jack D. I hope this is of some help to you. Please call if you have more questions and I'll try to

help.

All the best, Mel B.

Then we heard from Tom B.:

Bud S. the electrician told me that Jackson Group #1 folded after they lost their meeting place when their landlord padlocked the hall.

The present Jackson Group, official registered in New York as Jackson Group #2, held its first meeting on the first Sunday of September 1945. Where the meeting was held has been forgotten but the date was confirmed by a copy of the minutes of business meetings from 1950, 1951 and 1952 that I got from Bud C. whose late brother-in-law had been group secretary in those years. Barb S. borrowed the notebooks to read over, and lost them all in moving to Texas and then back to Jackson. Tom says that Bud S. also told him that Al C. had a coffee shop in the Otsego Hotel in the early 40's. One night each week, Al closed early so that AA could meet in the coffee shop.