

## History of the Gay AA Groups in DC and Metro Area

### The Founding Years 1971 - 1986

On December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1971 four alcoholics gathered for the first Gay AA meeting in a private home in Washington, DC. They continued to meet on Sundays alternating between Cade Ware's house on Capitol Hill and Blanche's home in Virginia. The two had been sober for two years the other two were newer to AA. One female was married and not certain about her sexuality. The other female was going through a break up and was having great difficulty sharing her problem at meetings. She was also having difficulty staying sober and felt a gay group would help her stay sober. She has not had a drink since attending that first Gay AA meeting. That group continues to meet today.

The four persons who first met were Cade Ware, Bob W., Blanch M, and Gerry Kay T. Sometime during the summer of that year Cade and Bob approached Fr. Goodridgh from St. James Episcopal Church on Capitol Hill requesting meeting space. He gave permission for the group to meet there on Sundays at 7:30. Soon after that the 8:30 Wednesday Step Meeting was added.

According to Fr. Downing, the pastor who succeeded Fr. Goodridgh at the church there was just a simple go ahead from Fr. Goodrich. There seems to have been some concern over the matter and had it gone to the Vestry Council meeting there would probably have been turned down.

Fr. Goodrich had a very close friend who had died of alcoholism and felt that if there had been a Gay AA meeting at the time perhaps his friend would have joined, sobered up and lived. The ashes of the gentleman are buried at the end of the walkway on the left. There is a marker at the site with the date's 1937 - 1972.

The membership grew slowly. Among the early members was Tom Harper, the fifth member, Ray C., Vern W., Barbara G., Andrea, Nancy T., Dennis L., and many others.

Late in 1973 or early 1974, Ray C started an Open Speaker Meeting at St. Margaret's on Friday evenings. When that meeting started it was considered to be part of the St. James Group and was more accessible to the gay community around Dupont Circle. It was some time before it was realized that what had really happened was that a new group had formed. Frequently, Eve along with friends traveled from Baltimore by train to attend that meeting.

By April, 1975 three groups had been formed. George L. Started the Lambda Group in Virginia.. He had sobered up at the St. James Gay Group. He had been married and found his new freedom in Gay AA. He contacted the Church on Quaker Lane and was offered a basement room. About six persons showed up at the first meeting. It remained a small meeting for some time. As the meeting and cigarette smoke grew they moved to a larger room. It was great to have a Saturday

meeting. Later the Live and Let Live group started meeting in Virginia on Tuesdays. Both groups continue to meet today.

During October, 1975 the Primary Purpose Group started meeting at St. Thomas Episcopal Church (The Ruins) on Church Street on Wednesday nights. It started as a Big Book meeting because most felt the need to be more focused on AA rather than on being Gay. This group was started by David P., the Big Book Thumper, Walt McC and David P. Later a Step Meeting started began to meet at 7:15. On Saturday there was a 7:15 Beginner's Meeting followed by an 8:30 discussion meeting.

Also, during October of 1975 a Fifth Step Meeting started meeting at St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Foggy Bottom. Topics centered around a character defect or asset. People started beating themselves up so harshly during their shares that it was jokingly referred to as the S & M meeting.

In Maryland The Montrose Group started meeting on the Tuesday after Thanksgiving Day which was December 2, 1975. Ed S. started the group. Dennis L. lead the first meeting and the topic was "Contributions to AA."

Within the first 15 years 15 groups had been started and about 40 meetings were held during a week in Washington, Maryland and Virginia. In the early days members identified themselves before sharing as alcoholic and gay. That practice brought about controversy and stopped although Tom H. And a few others identified themselves in that manner until their deaths.

Cade Ware remained sober and active in AA until his death on March 20, 1986. He was listed as the gay contact on the 12 step list at WAIA. Bob W. also an early member moved to San Francisco remained sober and active in AA. He died in 1986. Vern lives in Florida. Blanch lives in West Virginia and Jerry K lives in Washington, D.C. Tom Harper was listed as the Gay AA contact in the Blade, the local gay newspaper which had been started many years earlier by Nancy T.

Ray A.

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