

# **EARLY AA HISTORY IN NORTHERN SOLANO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA**

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## **Part I**

The first meeting in the northern Solano County area, as best-remembered by some old-timers, was held at a home in old Waterman Park in Fairfield. This group did not organize, and it soon folded. Shortly thereafter, another meeting was put together by a non-alcoholic chaplain at Travis Air Force Base. It is said that his efforts were also non-productive and he ceased trying when he was able to get only one member at the base to attend. An additional attempt was made to get a meeting going in Suisun City but it was also dropped.

Bill G. says AA was first brought to the northern Solano area by this man of the cloth at Travis. He tried to start a group in Suisun also, but the group didn't fare so well. He did help start the Vacaville Group. This was the first established AA group in northern Solano County and it was formed in 1949. It first met in the Parish Hall at the Catholic Church on Hemlock St. in Vacaville.

When Bill G. moved from Napa to Fairfield in 1963-1964 there were only two meetings in the area at that time, one was the Vacaville Group at the Parish Hall and the other was the Twin City Group which originally met in a member's home in Fairfield. The two groups only had approximately 12-15 members total.

The Vacaville Group moved to the Presbyterian Church on Hemlock St. for two or three years. Bill G. attended meetings at that location when he arrived in the area. Later, the group moved to a member's home for about six months. After that period, it moved to the south side of downtown Vacaville to another church. The group eventually disbanded in about 1969. The original members are all deceased, but Jack W. of Vacaville and Bill G. of Fairfield both attended the meeting before it disbanded. Some of the original members of the Vacaville Group started a new group called The Seekers. Also, before the Vacaville Group disbanded, Jack W. and others started a new group, called Group 86.

Jack W., along with Bill B. and Jerry C., started Group 86 of Vacaville, California on April 15, 1968 after leaving the Vacaville Group. They first met on Tuesday evenings at the Alamo School, 500 S. Orchard St. The meeting later moved to a church on Elizabeth St. in 1977, finally moving to the Epiphany Episcopal Church, 300 West St., around 1979-1980. Jack was the one who suggested the name of the meeting because of all the places they were "86'd." Both Group 86 and the Seekers are still in existence today.

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## **Part II**

The oldest AA meeting in the Fairfield-Suisun area still meeting is the Twin City Group. According to Bill G., when he came to the northern Solano area, Juanita G. was active in AA here. She brought AA to Fairfield-Suisun in 1956 when she started the Twin City Group. She had been in the area for a couple of years before starting this meeting. Juanita joined AA in 1949 and was from San Francisco, where Bill Gardner of the Central Office was her sponsor. In 1963-64 Bill remembers Juanita G., Cordelia Bill, Barney P., Traveling Bill and John M. of Vacaville, and Jack W. of Vacaville coming to this meeting.

The original meeting place of the Twin City Group was at the Gregory Ranch on Mankas Corner Road. The twin cities referred to, of course, were Suisun and Fairfield. The meeting was attended by about 12 people in the beginning, mostly coming from the Vacaville and Travis Groups. After about a year, the group moved to town into the wartime housing in downtown Fairfield where the Civic Center is now located. The group subsequently moved back to Mankas Comer Road, and then back to Fairfield where it met in the upstairs Fireman's lounge area of the Suisun Fire District Headquarters on Jackson Street,. Finally, the meeting moved to the. Episcopal Church at 1st and Kentucky where it still meets today.

Some of the archives notes indicate, that along with Juanita G. in the original group, there was Bill McN. Other early members were Leonard B., Ona W., Red W., Helen C. and Bob G. The original members as recorded by the Twin City group for their 1998 anniversary meeting are listed as follows (courtesy of Jim J.): Jim Mac, Vivian, John C., John K., Fred T., Hazel, Betty, John C., Robbie, Jim P., Jim S., Win S., Mary S., Ray D., Juanita G., Jim O., Jack Mc., Jack P., Jack S., Vince M., Kevin S., and Bill B..

Of the earliest members in the area, Bill G. still attends this meeting. John S. was in the Twin City group in the early days, went away for military duty, then returned to the area and to the Twin City Group.

Groups which eventually split off from this Twin City Group were the Serenity Group, Suisun City Group, Sunday AA Group and the Saturday Nite Group.

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*This history was developed with the help of old notes in the Archives, a few unpublished summaries with no author attributed, and the best memories of some old-timers.*

*Jeannette T., Archives*