

AA Goes to Jail

I am not a Texan. I graduated with a LAW Degree from Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan, my home state. I have been a sober member of Alcoholics Anonymous for 38 years. Shortly after moving to Texas, I met my loving wife, Sandra, who has been an active member of Al-Anon for 34 years. We have been married for almost 31 years and I have also practiced Law in TX for the same length of time. At the "old" Parkland Hospital, a Dallas County Deputy Sheriff was conducting a class at night for men that were convicted of DWIs and were sentenced with jail time. I asked him if I could attend the class. Fortunately for me, this Deputy Sheriff had another 16 week class that he had to attend, so he asked me if I would take over this class. I said "sure." The time spent doing so went by quickly.

A short time later, the phone rang in my office. It was Chuck Fawns, Director of Inmate Services. He asked me if AA would like to bring a meeting into the new Dallas County Jail. I am not the official leader of AA but I said "sure." The first meeting was held on March 11, 1986.

I asked a friend Charlie A. if he would join me. One night as we were leaving the jail meeting, he said that he would like to go to SMU to become an attorney. I asked him if he had been to the school. He said no. So I advised him to go to the school registrar's office and apply. He did so and graduated and is one of the best attorneys that I have met.

The jail meetings went well and Chuck Fawns suggested that we expand from one meeting per week to more. So several AAs met and we decided to set the teams up to 6 men per team. Two men were assigned to go for 2 weeks in a row. The team concept has proven to be very successful. The first such meeting was held on May 26, 1987.

Next came the women. We didn't know how many of them were "Locked Up" in the Dallas County Jail. There were a lot. Charlie and I and three AA women attended a meeting in the office of Chuck Fawns. One of the three women at this meeting was Katherine H. She conducted the first AA meeting for women in the Dallas County Jail on September 22, 1987.

Many years have now passed and the program of taking the AA Meetings to men and women prisoners in the Dallas County Jail has grown from one to presently 13 meetings per week. It is now run by an AA woman, Sara T. She is doing a first class job. Former prisoners like Alvin R. and Terri H. found sobriety in jail AA meetings over 25 years ago. They and several former inmates have taken, and continue to take, meetings back into the jail and continue to carry the message of AA. Some of the Team Members have been doing this service work for over 20 years. These 12 step opportunities continue to strengthen our AA community and add to the joy of living. The AA Program goes on and on and on and on..."One Day at a Time."

If I ever get to heaven, it will be because of the jail program!

Don. M
Rockwall, Texas