

THE ARCHIVES COMMITTEE AND THE ANNUAL ROOTS MEETING

THE ARCHIVES COMMITTEE was formed to collect, organize, preserve, store, and display records of the vital history of members and groups of Alcoholics Anonymous in San Diego and Imperial Counties, this to further our one spiritual aim of carrying the message to the alcoholic who still suffers. It is a standing committee of the San Diego-Imperial Area Assembly and, as such, is composed primarily of general service representatives.

In the late-1980s, the Archives' collection was housed in cupboards and drawers at the San Diego Central Office. To protect the many irreplaceable artifacts and audio recordings, the Area Assembly approved the purchase in 1990 of a fireproof file cabinet.

As the archival holdings increased in volume and diversity, it was time to make a serious effort to conserve and catalogue them. To meet this need, the Area created the position of Area Archivist. This role has been filled over the years by AA members such as Janet E., Johnny L. and Thom H., Ken G., and currently Joe C. (as of July 2011). The archivist often attends regional and national archives workshops to stay abreast of the most modern methods of preserving priceless objects of great meaning to AA members in our area.

While members of the Archives Committee often show off the traveling archives display at local AA events, it is but a small fraction of the total collection. Through a joint resolution in September, 2004 by the San Diego Coordinating Council and the Area Assembly, the pressroom at the Central Office was converted for use as an archives display room to better house and present the growing collection. A monthly open house is conducted by the area archivist, with a commitment to preserve the anonymity of our members. AA members and researchers are encouraged to come and see the rich history of the Fellowship in our area on display.

Plans are underway to install a computer in the display room so that aging and deteriorating materials, including cassette tapes of oral histories, can be preserved through digitization. Visitors can experience them by means of multimedia software, while keeping the original artifacts safe from frequent handling.

THE ROOTS MEETING IS BORN. In 1975 Larry and Gail N. attended an Oldtimers Meeting sponsored by the Southern California Archives Committee held at the Los Angeles City College cafeteria. They were so impressed with the meeting they hoped that San Diego would one day have a similar meeting. Their dream came true while Gail N. was Chairperson of the Archives Committee. In 1986 the Archives Committee decided to sponsor an "Informal Meeting" devoted exclusively to oldtimers with over thirty years of continuous sobriety who also had a substantial amount of that time in the San Diego-Imperial Area. The first "Remember Our Old Timers Stories" (R.O.O.T.S.) meeting was held on Sunday October 26, 1986 at the Pathfinders' Adolescent Service Center located at 5845 University Avenue, San Diego. Over 500 alcoholics attended the Informal Meeting to hear 17 oldtimers share their memories "about the early days from the 'Early Timers.'"

The following year ROOTS was moved to the Machinists Union Hall located at 5150 Kearny Mesa Road, San Diego. The format was changed to have 6-7 oldtimers speak. In 1990, the location was moved to the War Memorial Building located in Balboa Park. In years past the War Memorial Building was the home of the old Central Meeting hosted by the Program Committee of the Coordinating Council. Many of the oldtimers remembered the meetings of those days gone by, making it very nostalgic to have ROOTS at this location. It was a tradition at the Central Meeting to celebrate members first AA birthday and in increments of 5 years thereafter. With the exception of the 11th Annual ROOTS meeting, which was held at the Balboa Park Club, ROOTS remained at the War Memorial Building until 2009. Starting with the 13th Annual Meeting, ROOTS has been held either the Sunday before Thanksgiving, or the Sunday of Thanksgiving weekend. In 2009 because of challenges securing the War Memorial building on either of these weekends, the Archives Committee held the ROOTS meeting in North San Diego County at the Community Center on Harding Street in Carlsbad. The format highlighted the 30th Anniversary of the North County Intergroup and had five speakers from both North and South County and a member representing the Spanish Intergroups and Districts. Because of the large attendance of North County members, the Archives Committee hopes to alternate having the meeting in San Diego and North County – provided locations can be secured.

(minor revisions July 2011)