

Working Together
(From the February 1980 AA Grapevine)

Twenty years of striving for progress in helping suffering alcoholics and ourselves to attain and maintain sobriety – and it's still a "one day at a time" process.

The South Philadelphia Group has grown, not only in good sobriety, but also in new membership in its span of twenty years. A special group for me, it has continued to exist through sharing and caring, carrying the message of this lifesaving program to alcoholics.

I wanted to find out the early beginnings of my "home away from home," where I made my roots when I started learning the basics for living sober with the principles of AA.

Most of the old-timers are still around, except the ones who have passed away, sober, through the grace of God. Originally, there were nine members in the "mother group," as it was referred to then. At the group's first location, it had permission for only one AA meeting a week. So it decided to find a permanent place in order to reach more alcoholics who truly needed and wanted sobriety.

In February of 1960, two members went to inquire about a small building ten blocks away, consisting of one large room and a kitchen. The two members took their findings to the group. After discussing all the repairs and work that had to be done, all the members decided to vote, and the group conscience was in favor of the move to the new location. Looking at the place, they knew it would take all the nickels and dimes they could scrape together to fix the place up and make it presentable for the new meetings they were going to start. The roof leaked, and a new floor had to be put down. The local Al-Anon group donated a table and chairs. Al-Anons also held a meeting there once a week, and still do. AA members paneled the walls in plywood. Later on, a new bathroom was installed, the members doing the work themselves.

Many unexpected things happened. A fire damaged the two rooms; the people worked together to clean up the mess, and held a meeting the same night by candlelight.

There's a sign above the door that says "Come back" – sincere words from the heart of the South Philadelphia Group. It seems to work, because the membership keeps going up. There are nine meetings a week. Year after year, the steady members celebrate their anniversaries with healthy pride. They know they have received sobriety in this group through a Higher Power.

Holidays are wonderful at our group. We're open twenty-four hours on Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's. The members bring all kinds of good food and soda to eat and drink. Persons without a family, alone and needing our strength to stay sober for that day, are always welcome to share our fellowship and to stay for the meetings. Because ours is a friendly group, more people stay than go back out.

Today, I believe that our Higher Power works through people, that when we work together with sincere hearts, an AA group turns into a family of love – like our group.

J.A., Philadelphia, Pa.