

HISTORY OF THE TRIANGLE CLUB

(As recalled by David A)

In 1961, the Palm Beach County Group of Alcoholics Anonymous wanted to establish a central meeting place for AA meetings. Reese Currie and Phyllis Ramsdell were appointed to locate such a meeting place. They found 423 4th Street, which was for sale for \$45,000 in downtown WPB. They approached Phyllis' mother, Mrs. Phillip (Miriam) Bryan, and asked if she would be interested in buying the building downtown. Although her first response was "NO", the ladies persisted and Mrs. Bryan purchased 423 4th Street for the sum of \$40,000. Mrs. Bryan then rented the building to the Triangle Club, Inc. for \$250.00 a month.

It is interesting to note that this building at one time was used as a bonded warehouse for whiskey. Mr. Berlin Griffin, a liquor baron in Palm Beach County, sold it to Mrs. Bryan. Its immediate past use, however, was by the Health Dept. of the City of WPB and was said to have been the dirtiest place they had ever seen. The Triangle Club rented it for the \$250.00/month until 1981.

One Saturday afternoon in 1981 there was a devastating fire on the premises, started by a burning cigarette in one of the trashcans downstairs. Mrs. Bryan came to the building the following Sunday afternoon and said with tears in her eyes, "Well, I guess this is the end of the Triangle Club."

I asked Phyllis to bring her mother back to the club the next day around noon. Upon their arrival that Monday, they saw approximately 50 people diligently working to clean and repair the burned-out building—all volunteers. I told Mrs. Bryan that our intention was to repair the building. She told me that she had only \$50,000 in insurance money. I told her that the club would somehow pay the difference. She reluctantly agreed. The Triangle Club never missed a single meeting during the fire ordeal because St. Ann's Catholic Church graciously allowed us to use their cafeteria for our meetings.

During the course of our reconstruction, Miriam Bryan and I had many discussions about 4th Street. One afternoon I asked her if 4th Street had become a problem for her. She told me that it had been a problem for several reasons and she had grown weary worrying about it. It was at that time I asked her if she would be willing to sell it to the Triangle Club. She said she thought it was a great idea.

During the next few days we had several discussions regarding the price of the building. I told her I did not think we would be able to pay the \$125,000 that it was valued. She assured me that money was not her primary goal; that she was very willing to reduce the price to whatever the club members could afford in order to continue our splendid work in helping alcoholics.

We finally agreed upon \$50,000 total for the building, allowing Mrs. Bryan to retain \$10,000 of the fire insurance money for the down payment on the fire damage, assuring her that the building would be completely repaired. Mrs. Bryan generously offered to accept only 6% interest on her mortgage, but we told her 6% was too low and we settled upon 9%.

In February of 1982 the Triangle Club, Inc. (members) became the proud owners of the property and building. In March of 1982, we presented a plaque to Mrs. Bryan to honor her generosity to the Club. While visiting with Mrs. Bryan several years later, she told me that she had placed the plaque on the wall alongside her bed and upon arising each morning, the first thing she saw was the beautiful plaque. She said the plaque was the nicest thing anyone had ever done for her. Mrs. Bryan became a special honoree each year at the annual Steak Dinner until her death in 1986.

We remained in that old 3-story beloved building until November 9, 1997, when we realized the need to relocate into our handsome 1369 Okeechobee Road location. It took approximately seven months to renovate the building pursuant to the specifications of the board of trustees, officers and members.

In July of 2001, in harmony with our friends at Intergroup, the Triangle Club constructed a building for the Palm Beach County Intergroup Association on their property. Charitable donations from our generous members made it possible for us to erect the new building, pursuant to specifications received from the intergroup association members. Fortunately, Intergroup now has a comfortable, convenient and beautiful permanent home. During our negotiations, Intergroup agreed to pay a designated rent of \$400/month, with a twenty-year lease, to insure their future financial security. The Triangle Club members are grateful to share their beautiful property and convenient location with Intergroup.

In 2008, the Club received an anonymous gift designated to provide an extensive interior and exterior renovation. Today, the Triangle Club is recognized as one of the leading AA clubhouses in the U.S., not only for its aesthetics, but also for the vital role they play in unity with the traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous.

On December 13, 2009, CARP, Inc., acknowledged the founding members of the Board of Trustees of the Triangle Club by honoring the club with the prestigious Pioneer Award in the "establishment and continuation of the Triangle Club, the first AA club in West Palm Beach. The Triangle Club has been a vital and very important place of support and encouragement for alcoholics since 1961. It is the members of the Triangle Club who maintain the club's positive and healing atmosphere for those in recovery within our community."

In the spring of 2010 the club was once again the recipient of a donation of the luxurious Pergola located on the east patio of the main building. It is truly a garden of grace and a sanctuary of peace. We are indeed grateful. Very grateful.

DCA/December 1998 & 2010