

GRASS VALLEY FELLOWSHIP GROUP

Date Founded: June 15, 1987

Prepared by Sarah M.; with help by others, Sept. 2020

Made some slight corrections by Sarah M. on 10-5-2022 &
5-22-24

GSO#: 145620

Founding Members: Harry C., Earl M., Elio C., Bill Was., Kit W., Clayton G., Bill S., Bill P., Doug S., Dan D.

Original Location: Barrel House Bessie's, 341 East Main Street, Grass Valley, California

Current Location in 2020: 154 Olympia Park Way, Grass Valley, California

Day of Week and Time of Meeting: 7:00 a.m., Noon, 5:30 p.m., and 7:00 p.m. Daily - totaling 25 meetings per week.

Exceptions: No Sunday or Monday night meeting at 7:00 p.m., Saturday morning meeting is at 7:30 a.m., Sunday morning meeting is at 8:00 a.m. There is no Friday 5:30 p.m. meeting: this space is available for Steering Committee Meetings and Membership Business Meetings, Thursday 5:30 p.m. Women only, Thursday 7:00 p.m. Men only.

Open or Closed: Open 1/2 hour before meetings and 1/2 hour after meeting times

Zoom meetings started in 2020 and have been going ever since. Updates about this will be added later.

HISTORY:

Grass Valley Fellowship (GVF) The purpose for the foundation of the fellowship was to have meetings every day at regular times each day with the same meeting format so that newcomers had structure, felt safe, and felt more at ease. Prior to the formation, most meetings were held at the Alano Club (prior to Gold Country Fellowship) and each meeting was a separate group where Secretaries were also the Treasurer, and each group had different formats which could be confusing to newcomers.

The guidelines for the meetings at GVF were copied from the Saturday night live group in Campbell, California. The format meaning: Each meeting reads How It Works, from Chapter Five of the Alcoholics Anonymous book, The Twelve Traditions and a reading from the Big Book. Each meeting has the same format readings/guidelines, begins with Serenity Prayer and ends with the Lord's Prayer. Different types of meetings are held at the GVF, but the format of each meeting is the same. The group's first Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous was donated to the group by Elio C. and Earl M.

Barrel House Bessie's 1987: Barrel House Bessie's, 341 East Main Street, Grass Valley was the first location of GVF. In the gold rush days, Barrel House Bessie's was a whore house. The meeting room was small and had a fireplace. Now in 2020, the building is no longer there; at some point it burned down. The foundation is no longer there. The closest commercial business is an empty building at 401 E. Main St.

714 W. Main Street, Downstairs GV 1987: A few months after founding, the GVF moved to the old Baptist Church at 714 West Main Street, downstairs. Neighborhood Center for the Arts was located at the same address. The group was having meetings four times a day: 7:30, 12:00 noon, 5:30 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. (Al-Anon also met at this same location)

Early Members: (From beginning and attending at 714 W. Main Street - some members may not be listed here if unknown): Harry C., Earl M., Elio C., Bill Was., Kit W., Clayton G., Bill S., Bill P., Doug S., Kim, Dan D., Nancy K., Don K., Sarah M., Don H., Rosalie P., Paul M., Mary M., Pam C., Joanne and Hank, Jerry D., Woody, Don and Judy R., Cathy E., Ann G., Susan L., Pat S., Jolly, Victoria B., Glen S., Bill G., Denise G., Maskey H., Paula H., Monte Sue N., Doug G., Rich G., Betty G., Pam S., Tom S., Carolyn C., Larry S., Roger F., Scotty H., Crystal, George S., Dalton C., Steve P.

Saturday Night Speaker Meeting: When we were at W. Main Street, we had a Saturday night Speaker meeting weekly where there were sometimes 150 to 200 people in attendance. Speakers from out of town would be scheduled to speak. There was an uproar after one speaker meeting where an AA member and her spouse from Al-Anon spoke together. That was the only time an Al-Anon got to speak at the Saturday Night Speaker Meeting. Once we moved to Bank Street, there wasn't the room to do this meeting. Members tried to revive it when we moved to Hughes Road, but due to low attendance, it discontinued.

Sunday Morning Breakfast: Still at W. Main Street, downstairs, George S. started the Sunday morning breakfast held at 8:00 a.m. before the Sunday morning meeting at 9:00 a.m. There was camaraderie with the group of members who served the breakfast. The breakfast continued over the years (possibly off and on depending on location/kitchen) and discontinued in 2019 when too many homeless people were attending, but not staying for the meeting. Later the Sunday morning meeting was changed to 8:00 a.m.

714 W. Main Street, Upstairs GV 1992: GVF moved to a location upstairs of the same building where they had 2000 square feet. Don H. remembers that he became the General Secretary at this time after becoming five years sober. Don. H. got sober one month after the GVF was formed and Harry C. was his sponsor. Bill G. was possibly the General Secretary a year later in 1993 when he was five years sober. (Presently 2020, Charis Youth Center occupies this building. Possibly in 1994, Nevada County Council on Alcoholism moved into the same location and changed their name to Nevada County Substance Abuse).

In September 1994, money was lost from the GVF bank account. The rent was paid for September, but all we had left was the money we had from the landlord - the first and last month's rent. At the November Business meeting most of the steering committee resigned from their positions. The members that didn't resign were to meet at the December business meeting and close the fellowship. The GVF had been given notice by the landlord that December 1994 was to be their last month.

The last week of November, one of the founders asked one of his sponsee's to go to the Business meeting and ask if he could have a month to find a new place for the GVF. He was told he could, if he would stand for election as General Secretary and form a new Steering Committee if he found a place to meet.

During this time, there was a huge controversy regarding smoking in the meeting.

December 1994, the bank balance was \$200. In mid December, a room was found for \$200 a month with no cleaning deposit and no last month needed.

132 Bank Street, Grass Valley - December 1994: We moved to the Old Greyhound Bus Station on Bank Street, on the second floor.

There were about seven people that were calling the GVF their home group. The new General Secretary, possibly Roger F., went to a group of old GVF members of about thirteen people and asked if they would support the Fellowship at the new location. They said that they would if it was a non-smoking room. So a new Steering Committee was elected and voted to have a non-smoking room.

The smoking area was downstairs outside or a few members would step outside - upstairs onto the fire escape to have their cigarette. In the front of the building there were lots of cigarette butts which was a problem, so the members had to have a service position of the "Butt Person" who was in charge of keeping the front of the building clean.

In 2020, the Greyhound Bus Station is no longer here and has been gone for sometime; a nearby building is the UPS business.

132 Hughes Road, Downstairs, GV - April 1999: The GVF went from 20 people to needing a larger place to meet, around April 1999. A new home was found at 154 Hughes Road with about twice the square footage than on Bank Street.

Over the next nine years, members kept renting more space at this location when it became available to us until we had rented most of the building. At some point a wall hiding the bathrooms was torn down to make more space for more seats and a kitchen was built.

The "As Bill See's It - KISS women's group," (Keep It Simple Sisters) moved their group into the GVF building during this time and was suppose to be there just temporarily. They meet Tuesdays at 10:00 a.m. and have been meeting at GVF ever since.

In 2020, the building is a dog-grooming business.

154 Hughes Road, Upstairs - May 2008 In 2008, the building was sold and the GVF had to move with just 30 days to find a new place to meet. They found a room to rent in the same parking lot, upstairs from the previous location, about 100 feet away.

In 2012, at the GVF Business meeting, a member came in and said we were in violation of the state and federal disability laws, fire and safety laws, and if we didn't fix the problems, he was going to turn the members into the authorities. He felt that his program of honesty would not allow him to ignore the situation. It was not possible to fix the problems at this location; we had to find a new place to meet. Basically there were structural problems that were unsafe. Also, there was the issue that newcomers that were disabled, could not climb stairs. In 2020, the building is a dance studio.

154 Olympia Park Road, Grass Valley: So the GVF moved to 154 Olympia Park Road, Grass Valley where they are presently in 2020. There was a lot of work that had to be done as an "assembly hall" to be compliant with disability laws and codes. (Yes, this looks like the same numbered address as Hughes Rd., but this is no mistake - perhaps a God coincidence)

2020 Pandemic: Since March 2020, the GVF has been having all of their meetings over the Internet through a company called ZOOM. On-line meetings were required as the State law forbid us to meet in person during Covid 19 virus. As we isolate at home, ZOOM meetings have been a life-saver and members give kudos to the Secretary Coordinator, the steering committee and many others, (including Secretaries and Zoom Hosts) who made it possible for all of our meetings to still exist and help so many of us still connect during this pandemic. Sunday, June 21, 2020 GVF opened back up to having one meeting per day for in-person meetings abiding to Nevada County guidelines, providing masks, limiting the number of people, and practicing social distancing. At the same time, zoom is continuing on-line for the majority of AA meetings at the GVF. In 2022, in person meetings and zoom meetings are both available. Around 2022, Zoom meetings continue every day at noon except for Sundays.

Anniversary Party: Each June our fellowship has an anniversary party at many different locations. Only one year it did not happen and 2020 it didn't occur due to the Covid pandemic. It's believed that one year it was at the Rough & Ready Grange. The fifth year anniversary in 1992 was at the Love Building at Condon Park in Grass Valley. Other places were the Elks Lodge, Horseman's, etc. Most recent years it has been held at St. Candice Hall in Nevada City. There's usually a dinner with tickets to be bought, a dessert pot-luck, a raffle, a sobriety countdown, a ten minute speaker and a regular speaker meeting. Often the dinner was prepared by AA members. (It's possible there was no anniversary party in 2021 due to the pandemic.) GVF did celebrate their 35th anniversary at St. Candice Hall in Nevada City on June 25, 2022. Their 36th anniversary also held at St. Candice Hall was on July 8, 2023.

Alkathons: Each Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years Eve, the GVF provides Alkathons for the membership over the holidays. In 2019, some of the Alkathons did not go through the night because of safety concerns.

Saturday Monthly Social Event: In 2017, on the third Saturday of the month, the regular Saturday night meeting doesn't meet. Instead there's a predetermined social event that takes place every month. The purpose was to provide unity, socialization, and fun times for its members. Ben G. was the first events coordinator. Some of the events: Holiday dinners/pot lucks/desserts, movie night, dances, Valentine's dance, chili cook off, bingo, and karaoke. The activities were postponed in March 2020 due to the corona virus. By 2021, some activities have started up again. May 2022 GVF hosted a barbecue potluck at Pioneer Park.

Friday Night Birthday Meeting: Weekly, the 7:00 p.m. Friday night meeting presents chips for anniversaries of sobriety. At one time, a raffle took place where people could win a certain book or a ticket to the Sunday morning breakfast. Around 1996, A custom Birthday Card was created by Bill G., Bear, Pam S., and Patty E. and has been given out to every birthday recipient with a birthday of one year or more. Bill G. was the artist for the card that shows: what it was like, what happened and what it's like now, with slogans on a wall. Since this is an open meeting of AA, often family members attended to see their loved one celebrate their AA birthday. In 2020, this meeting still takes place on-line over Zoom. In August 2020, the meeting is still on Zoom, but was changed to only meeting the First Friday of the month. Birthday chips can be mailed out to attendee's, if they choose to give out their address to the Birthday Secretary.

Presently in 2022, the birthday meeting meets weekly on Friday nights at 7:00 p.m. The raffle was brought back. There is no longer a Zoom birthday meeting.

May 2024 the Grass Valley Fellowship came up with a New Member Packet consisting of a few AA brochures and a GVF New Member Brochure. These are given out to new members coming in for the first time along with a 24 hour chip.