

# The Origin And Early Development of AA in Western Nevada County

By

Clayton G. as told to his Wife Edna

(Updated August 2023 by District 20 Archives)

Note: Original document by Edna is still intact. This edition by Sarah McT. is just an updated version putting this document in a more chronicle order and adding some more info from other resources.

## **Original Gold Quartz Group:**

AA started in Western Nevada County area, in Grass Valley, in 1949 with what is now the Original Gold Quartz Group. This Friday night meeting in Grass Valley in 1956 might have been held at the Woman's Improvement Club, which was an arm of the Congregational Church. At the Improvement Club, there were rows of wooden benches and, as the members were called on to speak, they would go to the front of the room to a podium and give their story from there.

## **Gold Diggers Group:**

The first AA meeting in Nevada City (possibly started in the early 1950's) was started by Tom Osborn (sobriety date: possibly September 1941) who had moved up from Southern California. He held meetings at his home in Nevada City on Tuesday nights at 8:00 p.m. As he recruited new members, they took turns using their homes.

In 1956 (November 24th) at Clayton G.'s first meeting (at the Gold Diggers Group), there were six people: Tom Osborne, Lloyd Cunningham, Deacon Parsons (sobriety date: December 1954), John Milnerrich, Bob Rice and Ty Taylor (possibly spelled Tai Taylor as seen in another archive book).

In 1957, they started meeting in Ty Taylor's business office in Nevada City.

The meetings were open, but only AA members were called on to speak. Wives, Alanons, were supposed to furnish birthday cakes for all the AA birthday meetings plus making and serving coffee and washing up after the meeting. At the non-birthday meetings, one of the members brought doughnuts to each meeting. Clayton G. brought them for many years.

## **Original Gold Quartz Group:**

At Clayton's first meeting, in Grass Valley, there were five local members and six members from Roseville. Floyd Bowers from Roseville brought a car load of members to the Grass Valley meeting almost every Friday night for years. The Secretary of the group in 1956 was Earl Vincent from Alta. He had been Secretary, at this time, for three years. His sponsor was Floyd Bowers of Roseville, (sobriety date: possibly November 5, 1954). Earl had been driving over from Alta, rain or shine, snow banks or storms. Many times having to dig his way through snow banks and chop down fallen trees on the road. His great pride was he had never failed to get through and open the meeting on time. He kept asking for members to take over the

meeting, but to no avail. He was secretary for three more years after Clayton came into the program in 1956.

Then Clayton became Secretary in 1959 and he was Secretary for two years before a new volunteer took over. The two groups had not had a new member stay sober for one year, so Clayton was the pride of both groups.

Clayton did not understand the principle of Attraction rather than Promotion, so he would walk the streets of Grass Valley telling everyone he knew, or anyone who would talk to him about AA and how he loved his sobriety. Soon Clayton started getting calls from troubled relatives about their family members who were in trouble with alcohol. He would go see the person or call the person on the phone. Within his first year of sobriety, he had two new members. Within his first three years, he had recruited six members in one way or the other and many failed attempts, also. He would take a car load of his new babies to out of town meetings twice a week: to Marysville, Citrus Heights, Group 3 in Sacramento, Auburn or Roseville. The Group in Grass Valley began to grow rapidly.

In 1960, Clayton's baby Harry Craig (sobriety date: June 18, 1960) came in and within a year he started our first speaker meeting in the area. It was a great success. At one of these meetings, Harry got Chuck Chambers to speak. He was a great AA speaker who had spoken at the first AA World Conference and received a standing ovation. Chuck, after hearing Clayton's account of how he had gotten his babies; i.e., one from a city dump, one from a parking meter in town, one from a phone call and all the other strange ways he had of getting babies; named Clayton the "Cadaver Grabber," which a few old timers still remember.

Clayton's wife, Edna, started the first Al-Anon meeting in Nevada City in 1959. The Al-Anon's were relegated to the Parson's office.

Another of Clayton's babies, in 1962, started the first closed meeting in Nevada City. He did not appreciate meeting with anyone who was not an AA member. (Most likely this was James Martin Howard Anonymous, as he would call himself in meetings. James sobriety date is March 29, 1962 - taken from Gold Quartz Group birthday ledger book). The Grass Valley Meeting remained open.

Edna G. remembers that the Original Gold Quartz Group would give chips to members with one year or more of sobriety. The chips would be left in a box and turned over to display their names and the year. The longest sober members chips were on the top of the board and newer members at the bottom. This box was displayed every Friday night. Edna doesn't remember what year this display case started.