

By the spring of 1951 NY records indicate Richmond Group membership of fifteen alcoholics. A new phone was installed in room #205 of their new Hibberd Building residence, but that didn't make it easy to contact an AA member. The club had only two evening meetings (Sunday and Wednesday) leaving no one to answer the phone during the daytime hours – answering machines were yet to be invented. Fortunately, Bill Meier would often spend evenings of reading, prayer and meditation at this new location.

Tom Ross' sister, a well known and respected nurse, tried for three days before she finally contacted Bill Meier at the club one evening. She explained to Bill that 36-year-old Tom had no desire to stop drinking (they called this a 'cold turkey' situation) but would AA please at least *try* to help. Maybe, because of her respected status, Bill and another alcoholic paid Tom a 12-Step call at his farm near Greenville, Ohio. Tom's wife, Thelma, was asked to leave the room, and Tom finally consented, under pressure, to start attending the meetings at Richmond. There was one problem with this arrangement, however, because Tom liked to guzzle beer en route along the 30 mile trip to the Richmond meeting! Tom said the AA members told him they were not sure a 'beer drinker' could even be an alcoholic.

Tom's attendance began in March of 1951, but by November the members changed their minds because Tom was so drunk he couldn't find his car after the meeting. Not knowing what to do, they called the police and had the beer-drinking-farmer tossed in the drunk tank. This seemingly unhappy November 7th, 1951 episode marked the last drink for Tom Ross. The strong-willed Bill Meier remained Tom's sponsor till his demise in 1965. Tom died in 2006 with 55 years sobriety!

Tom's One year Medallion >



This small group really had wonderful times together, according to Thelma R., especially at the continued weekly functions at each others homes; there was the aforementioned turtle soup, fried turtle and an ever-popular pumpkin butter. Among the several homes where these events took place were the those of Bill and Hilda Meiers, Doc. Thompson, Dan and Ester Fitzpatrick, Bob and Mary Jane Behrman, Bob and Ula Murphy, Jerry and Hazel Markey and of course, Tom and Thelma Ross. Obviously, the AA program was for the entire family in those days. Tom tells that Indianapolis physician, Dr. Brodie, (well known for treating alcoholics) told him: "You go home and bring that little lady back with you. This is a family disease!" He refused to treat Tom alone.

Daily social events for these ex-imbibers continued to take place not only down in Sergeant's Store basement 'coffee house,' but also at the Blue Note, Napoli Café, Westcott Hotel restaurants, Millers Cafeteria and Jennings All Night Diner. Other loafing spots were the downtown bowling alleys and card rooms. The pool player contingent hung out at the Waldorf and Kenny & Bob's pool rooms.

The side door was the entrance for Pool playing, while the front door was for drinking - ne'er the twain should meet!

