

Richmond State Hospital Meetings

Richmond State Hospital has institutionalized alcoholics since it's opening in 1890. During those early times, alcoholic patients were usually simply 'housed' with little hope of recovery. However, alcoholic treatment had improved by 1976 when Joe Lawson took over as the Director of their addictions program. Joe had a firm hand on the reins, to say the least, and he placed a majority of recovering alcoholics on his staff, including staff member, Mary Lou C. A resident physician, Dr. Heckaman, was also an AA member. By the early 1980s, there were as many as seventy residents from various Indiana communities who received much needed help from this stringent and no-nonsense program.



The two buildings above represent typical Richmond State Hospital architecture as existed in the 20th Century.

There was a regular Tuesday Evening Speaker Meeting, another for the residents who were on psychotropic medicine, another on Monday afternoons, plus various, but short-lived AA meetings.

The residents walked about two miles to the clubhouse AA meetings; this was a 45 minute trek, but few complained. A problem arose, however, because as many as thirty residents would crowd into the same meeting, and of course, predictable behavior problems arose. This was finally solved by a mutual agreement to limit only five residents per meeting, but they attended different groups so they *all* were able to attend. This restriction ended during the 1990s because the residents are now afforded bus service to meetings.

~~~~~

### **The Bridge House De-tox**

The 'Bridge House,' located on the hospital grounds, drew those in need of alcohol detoxification from around Indiana. Beginning April 3, 1976, the original board of directors included Dr. Heckaman, Cornie Bragg, Hiram P., and John B. There were AA talks (leads) on Thursday and Saturday evenings. Willard Thomas and Keith G. were regular employees. This interplay allowed AA members to meet wet drunks and often end up sponsoring them. This helped many of us stay sober! AAs from many surrounding communities also participated! This facility had beds for at least ten patients and a long term half-way house was upstairs.

One of the many successes was a Connersville man named Hollie D., who detoxed in the late 1970s. Soon after, he became a board member of the 228 Club; afterward, he became the director of a prison recovery program for the State of Indiana and finally, in the 1990s, Hollie became a practicing minister in southern Indiana. Speak of amazing grace!

To the disappointment of many AAs, the Bridge House closed during the early 1990s.