

## East Bay to Celebrate 53 Years

By Ron R.

The East Bay Group came into existence July 3, 1947. The meeting began as a Thursday Night Speaker meeting held in the dining room of the Naples hotel right in the middle of Naples Island, Long Beach. Known as the Hotel Napoli, the group became home for the easterners, that is those from Seal Beach, Surfside and East Long Beach as opposed to the westerners of the Mother Group then meeting in downtown Long Beach. Among the charter members were Lyman "Boots" Peterson, Cliff Walker, Al M., Bert K, Roland Starrett, Flossie and Clarence Lewis, Jim and Rebecca Hallet, and Curley and Irene O'Neil.

East Bay held special dinner meetings at members' homes during the holiday season of 1947. Opening with songs were Flossie and her daughter Beverly. Clarence joined in on the Thanksgiving dinner party. Instead of invited speakers, members shared.

East Bay quickly outgrew its meeting site. Jack White, the groups secretary wrote to the Parks and Recreation Department requesting the use of the Belmont Recreation Center located at 4104 Allin Way, site now of the Olympic Pool. The first choice was to keep the Thursday night slot with the second choice as Sunday night. East Bay met Jan 6, 1948, at 8:30 PM. Sunday and has continued for 53 years meeting on Sunday nights.

The 55 members in attendance contributed \$50.75 and Jack White agreed to purchase the dishes. (no styrofoam here). Men wore suits and women dresses. Three weeks later the group held "New Baby Nite". On January members were encouraged to bring newcomers. Eight babies were introduced to the 238 in attendance. Last but not least, Gene Scallings celebrated his first year.

The East-West controversy erupted in February 1948 when the Mother Group objected to East Bay's meeting site as the reception center for Bill and Lois Wilson's Long Beach visit, March 20, 1948. The Mother Group reminded the Convention Committee that it was the Mother Group that brought AA into Long Beach. And it was the Mother Group from which all other groups broke off from to form their groups including East Bay. And further, the Masonic Temple in downtown Long Beach should be the focal point. The East Bay site held, and that was that.

All meetings have ups and downs. East Bay was no exception. Due to money problems the group's steering committee held a special meeting May 5, 1949, in the home of Thomas and Mary Young. The committee voted, five for, three against, with two abstaining that the group should be dissolved.

A committee was appointed to contact the 20-40 members of the group to see if they would accept East Bays' dishes, silverware and what little money they had. But, on May 8th, a special meeting was called, and the action taken May 5th was rescinded by a vote of 18 to 0. The second anniversary was held July 10, 1949. "Beckleys ice cream and home-made cake was served as two non-alcoholic women passed the basket." No mention was made of who held the money after the meeting.

Around the spring of 1960 the Recreation Center burnt down and the Group moved to the Lions Club located at the corner of Granada and Ocean. That was home for about the next five years when the group outgrew these quarters and moved into the Bruins Den at 4900 E. 7th Street.

Anywhere from 200-400 regular attendees showed up each Sunday at 8:00 until January 1993. Flossie held the spot as chief coffee maker for years but finally stepped aside to become birthday chairperson. She had everyone's name and sobriety date on index cards and made it a point to call and remind people that they should celebrate their birthdays with the group. Long time member, Hal F. shared that Flossie would sit at the birthday table and make a point of greeting the birthday people and offer a gift. Pat C., now of Casper, Wyoming took over birthdays in 1988. She forwarded the names of 109 attendees representing more than 700 years of sobriety to the Harbor Light for the month of January.

July 11, 1982, marked the 35th anniversary of East Bay. To commemorate that time the group held for the 23rd time its Old Timers Meeting. Co-leaders for the evening were Frank H. and Mary Ellen. Thirty-three people had the opportunity to share. The requirements were 10 years minimum sobriety and over 1,000 years of sobriety were eligible.

August 30, 1998 East Bay held the Young Peoples Meeting. The requirements to participate were entering AA at age 25 or younger and having at least 3 years sobriety. Fifteen people shared entering AA at age 18 to 25 having from 3 years to 18 years sobriety.

There are too many members to name, but special recognition should be given to George Davis who attended nearly every Sunday for 40 years. Bill Hunnicutt (Goobar Red) who presided with his cane over the meeting for so many years. Or Chicago Jack, Eleanor H., Gladys P., Norm and Alexandra S., and of course current member Frank H. Mark S. currently adds color to the meeting playing the piano. But that chore was once held by an alcoholic entertainer named Sylvia.

January 1993, the East Bay Group moved to 5620 Atherton. Many of the colorful characters of yesteryear have passed on to be replaced by new characters. Angela B. was the group's first secretary at Whaley Park.

But still sober and residing in Downey is Claire P who was secretary in 1969, Lou A. in 1979, Dallas E., 1980, Jim R. 1981 and of course Frank H., 1983, Other people who have chaired over East Bay are Ken, Miles, Noel, Patricia, Liz, Andy, Rosemary, Rafe, Robin, Angela, JR, Walter, Sheryl, Carol, James and now Andy.

This coming June, Alcoholics Anonymous will be celebrating 65 years. On July 9 East Bay will be bringing in 53 years. It will be secretary night when all the past secretaries will be invited to share. And who knows, maybe Bob and Patricia from Casper Wyoming will attend or Angela B. from Honolulu. Bob has the distinction of holding the secretary position twice. As he reports, his alternate went out and got drunk and he stayed one more year.

By the way Bob, that was 26 years ago.