

Individual Oral Histories - Sample Interview Questions

My name is _____ and I am interviewing _____
on this day of _____.

Before A.A.

- Please tell me a little about your life before you found A.A. When and where were you born? What kind of childhood did you have?
- As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?
- How did you start drinking?
- When and how did your drinking get out of control?
- When did you know you had hit bottom?

Recovery

- When did you first hear of AA, and from what source?
- How and when did you get started in A.A.? When and where did you sober up? Where did you go to your first meeting? What did you think of it?
- Can you tell me about your early sobriety, your steps work, and problems you had in those first days of learning the A.A. way?
- What was AA's "reputation" in the community? How was it different from what you encountered through your initial introduction?
- What was your perception of AA's success in the general population when you were first introduced to us? How had that perception changed over time?
- Did you have a sponsor when you first came in? What type of sponsorship did you have?
- How many groups or meetings were in existence?
- Can you recall the formats used at some of these early meetings? How were they run?
- When was A.A. started in your town or area? How often were meetings held? Who were some of the people playing important roles in the formation of new groups? What else do you know about the growth of A.A. during that period of time?
- Which individuals were especially prominent in your sobriety?
- How were new members contacted? What kinds of Twelfth Step work were going on? Are there any Twelfth Step anecdotes that stick out in your mind you'd care to share?
- Would you tell me about your experiences sponsoring others? Who are some of your favorite sponsees?

Unity – Group issues and community perception of A.A.

- Today, Conference-Approved literature is available to help A.A. members deal with a wide variety of challenging questions. Back in the day, all you had was the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, common sense and your compassion. What did you think of the Big Book, and how often did you use it? How did early A.A.s treat newcomers? How did your group(s) treat constant slippers? Thirteenth steppers? How were people wishing to talk

about multiple addictions during your meetings addressed? How about non-alcoholic drug addicts walking in off the street for their first meeting?

- We say sometimes that all that's needed to form an A.A. meeting is two drunks, a resentment and a coffeepot. Can you talk at all about the differences that led to new groups being formed in your area?
- In *A.A. Comes of Age* Bill W. writes about numerous issues over which anger and contention arose and threatened the undoing of our Fellowship. The groups nationwide, for example, did not immediately accept spiritual principles we know today as the Twelve Traditions. What controversies over issues addressed in the Traditions can you recall people wrestling with? (How were meeting spaces acquired? Was rent or other funding obtained by gambling sessions? Bingo games? How did the membership resolve these affairs?)
- Today, A.A. is well known to, and supported by, police officers, judges and corrections officials. What kind of relationship did A.A. in your area have with local authorities? How has that changed since you sobered up?
- Treatment facilities in this millennium frequently host A.A. and other Twelve Step meetings. Did treatment centers exist in your area when you sobered up? Did any of them use a Twelve Step format or incorporate meetings into their structure?
- Did you seek the cooperation of other local community or professional agencies?
- Today, radio and television public service announcements for A.A. as well as Internet web sites are becoming commonplace. When you first got sober, how did A.A.s interact with the media? Have you had any profound experiences sharing your relationship with alcohol with the public? What cautions might you have for young A.A.s today regarding media exposure?
- During the early years of your recovery, how did the community receive Alcoholics Anonymous?
- Do you think your group(s) has had an influence in your community? If so, how?

Service

- How and why did you get into service work?
- What contributions did you, yourself, make to the growth of the Fellowship?
- What do you remember of early conferences, assemblies, and conventions? Can you recall opening Intergroup or central offices?
- Who made the initial outreach to you, in what manner, and in what year?
- What was actually involved in your application process?
- What were your first impressions of the active AA legacies of Recovery, Service, and Unity?
- What was your first impression of AA servants, GSO staff, Delegates? Describe your first encounters.
- What were your impressions of your first General Service Conference? What year?
- Describe some of the major decisions and Advisory Actions that involved your direct participation and your committee activities over your years of service.

- In your memory, what particular Conference agenda items developed into Advisory Actions? Were there any that failed to gain Conference approval?
- Is there anything you regret? Any mistakes you believe you made. Any plans that failed that you wish had been successful.
- What special occasions do you recall during your time of AA service?
- How has AA changed (if it has) since you first found it?
- Do you see any particular changes in the AA fellowship and its service processes, since your start of service?
- Are there any strong similarities in the AA fellowship and its history of service, from your own service time through today?