

## Washington DC "We Agnostics" Group History

The Washington DC Group of "We Agnostics" was founded by Tom J. and Maxine B. (both deceased) and the first meeting took place in mid-September 1988 on either Sunday September 11 or Sunday September 18 of that year.

Tom had attended a "We Agnostics" type meeting (called "Atheists and Agnostics" I believe) in Chicago some years earlier (link at [www.quadachicago.org](http://www.quadachicago.org)) and always wished for such a meeting in Washington. Tom and Maxine (both retired at the time) did volunteer shifts at the WAIA office on Connecticut Avenue, NW and knew each other that way. They mutually agreed that such a meeting needed to get started and placed an ad in the WAIA Newsletter called the "New Reporter" inviting interested AA members to that first meeting that was held at Maxine's Apartment at The Broadmoor Co-Op Apartments at Connecticut Ave & Porter Street, NW.

One of our earliest organizational issues was to decide on how to end the meeting. John H. advocated saying what he referred to as the "Serenity Statement" at the end of the meeting without the use of the word god at the beginning. Others advocated that we "just get up and leave" at the end without further comments or ritualistic activities. The "just get up and leave" faction prevailed and that's the way the meeting ends to this day after a second reading of the preamble.

Likewise the decision was made to omit the word Atheist from the group name in that it was felt (by the group conscience at that time) to be limiting to Agnostics and the odd believer who might want to join our (always open) meeting.

In attendance at earliest meetings (in addition to Maxine and Tom) were John H., Mike N., Mara N., (all still sober and living as of January 2015) as well as a close friend of Maxine's (whose name I forget but who, sadly, kept drinking) and a old-timer (a well-known local AA Atheist) named Joan P. who had about 20 years at the time (she is since deceased) as well as another older gentleman named John M. who is the only AA member I ever met who categorically rejected the First Step and stayed sober till his death anyway. He was a very good man and is sorely missed as are the founders of the group.

There were some other quite eccentric folks in attendance whose names I don't recall several of whom (unfortunately) appeared to be mentally unstable and/or quite hostile to the prospect of there being a place for Agnostics and Atheists in DC AA.

Sometime in the winter of 1989 John H. pointed out that there was a security issue for Maxine having the meeting in her home and he suggested more neutral ground at a secular spot. The group approved of his finding a meeting site that fit that criteria. His office at that time was near the old GW Hospital on 23rd Street NW and he arranged a meeting with the head of the Department of Social Work there who agreed to host an AA meeting in the Hospital in the Radiology Conference Room on the second floor. The meeting remained in this location from 1989 until 2002 when it moved across the 23rd Street to the new Hospital building that opened in that year. Sadly, in 2012, due to changing priorities and new management at the Hospital the group lost its home and has since relocated to the Capitol Hill area of

the City where it meets on Sunday's at 11:00AM at the Hill Center on Pennsylvania Avenue near the Eastern Market Metro Stop.

Over the years many new members have come and gone (and we have lost other dear friends who died sober such as Gaston N. and Red B.) from the group but the core mission of helping another Alcoholic has remained consistent as has the tradition of openness and inclusion for all despite philosophical differences in the interpretation of various aspects of the AA program. There are members who do the AA Steps as written, members who do some and leave the rest as there are members who don't adhere to them as written at all. Likewise there are hard core Atheist members, Agnostic members, Buddhist Members and all shades in between including (as has been mentioned) the "odd" Christian who prefers to attend meetings where the concept of a "higher power" isn't the focus.

The group is self-sustaining, meets its primary purpose admirably and appears to have a solid footing to continue far into the future. The vision that Tom and Maxine had all those years ago appears to have been fulfilled!