



Standard Oil Company of California

225 Bush Street, San Francisco, CA 94104

January 23, 1978

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Dear Cal:

You asked that I put in writing some history of the formation of the San Francisco Bay Area Chapter of ALMACA. It is a pleasure to do this, especially in view of the active and growing group that has emerged from those early efforts.

I believe it imperative that I waste a few sentences describing my own alcoholism, wherein the pangs of loneliness, even in a crowded room, were so intense as to fully equal the physical pain and distress of the disease itself. When I finally recovered from active alcoholism in early 1961, that feeling of loneliness slowly left as I again began to "belong to the human race." Nine years later, at the invitation of our Medical Director, I changed careers and started the program which is now identified as the Special Health Services Division, Medical Department, Standard Oil Company of California. I did not get into this new field very far before I crashed headlong into loneliness again. I felt very much alone in almost all of the work that I did in those early days, be it training supervisors or working with the active alcoholic. I also found it difficult, if not impossible, to place myself in a group where common goals and the solution of common problems could be discussed.

In early December 1971, I invited three people to lunch at Sam's Seafood Restaurant on Bush to discuss the possibility of organizing a group for the purpose of sharing the information in this new field as may be, or become, available. The three were Bill Livingston, then Labor-Management Coordinator for the San Francisco office of the National Council on Alcoholism; Bob Te[~]mer, then heading up the program for the Civil Service Commission in San Francisco; and Mike Meek, M.D., who was heading up the alcoholism wing at the San Francisco Public Health Service Hospital. I recall vividly during the lunch turning to Dr. Meek and saying how easy it was for the four of us to communicate since we all knew each other, and, in his case, he was actually a co-federal employee with Te[~]mer. Dr. Meek responded, "It may surprise you to know this, Sully, but I had never met Bob before this luncheon." My reaction, when I realized that two federal employees in a very specialized field in the City of San Francisco had never even met, was almost violent! The other members at the table also realized the obvious need for some form of peer group activity. Plans were developed and invitations issued,

Mr. Cal Kellner

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and on January 11, 1972, a second luncheon was held at Jack's Restaurant. This was attended by 24 people as follows: The original four mentioned above; Gordon W. Richmond, M.D., then Medical Director of Standard Oil of California; Norm Cook, then heading up the alcoholism program for Pacific Telephone & Telegraph in San Francisco and the surrounding territory; Peer Fossen and Dick Baldwin, M.D., both involved in the Western Electric-Northern California program; John Meyer, M.D., Medical Director of Monte Villa Hospital; Jack Lynch who was working with Dr. Meek at that time; Florette Pomeroy, Executive Director of the San Francisco Area National Council on Alcoholism; Robbie Duncan, Postal Alcoholic Recovery (PAR) Program; Fred Newirth, M.D., Medical Director of Fireman's Fund Insurance; Bob Strom and Vee Mathews, Sixth Army Alcoholism Program, Presidio; Betty Elerding, Alcoholism Program, U.S. Forestry Service; Janice McGowan, M.D., and Fred Hudson, M.D., Presbyterian Hospital Alcoholism Clinic; Elise Willson and Phil Rankin from Sacramento; John Devine, San Francisco Police Department Alcoholism Program; Dave Lakey and Bill Combs, representing management and labor at the United Air Lines, San Francisco International Airport; and Richard Shorer, M.D., who then headed up the San Francisco Bureau of Alcoholism.

Approximately 75% of this original group are still very active in the field and are either regular or casual attenders to our monthly chapter luncheon. The attendance grew rapidly to the 50-60 range and seems to have leveled off in that area. Our biggest meeting, bringing almost 180 people, was a talk given by Dr. Abram Bennett on brain damage due to excessive drinking at the executive level. We made the front page of the San Francisco Examiner on that one!

That's about it, Cal. I sincerely feel that, even today, the two biggest reasons for our various chapter luncheons throughout the country are: first, to get to know our co-workers in this field and thereby decrease or eliminate the feelings of loneliness; and secondly, to share with each other any new developments in this rapidly expanding but uncharted field.

I hope the above gives you the background you are seeking, and I look forward to seeing you again on the second Tuesday of February!

Sincerely,


A. J. Sullivan

AJS:ks