

Reflections from the WSO Archivist on 75 Years of Al-Anon History

As Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. prepares to commemorate 75 years of help and hope in 2026, I reflect on the fellowship's long, remarkable journey and the role of the World Service Office (WSO) Archives in preserving its story.

The Archives began in New York City as a modest effort to safeguard early correspondence, meeting minutes, and literature. What started in a few filing cabinets has grown into a rich historical collection documenting Al-Anon's evolution from its founding in 1951 to its global presence today. These records capture the voices of pioneers, the growth of groups, the publication of recovery literature, and the development of Alateen in 1957—each milestone reflecting courage and unity.

Over time, the Archives have transformed from paper files to a digital repository, making photographs, audio recordings, newsletters, and personal stories accessible worldwide. This work ensures that members, researchers, and the public can connect with the fellowship's legacy through exhibits, publications, and curated resources.

Serving as Archivist has been one of the most meaningful experiences of my service journey. Each letter and photograph tells a story, not just of individuals, but of a collective effort to bring hope to families affected by alcoholism. Handwritten correspondence from early members speaks of isolation and the longing for understanding, reminding me that even the smallest act of service can ripple outward and change lives.

From these stories, I've learned that progress often comes through patience and collaboration. The challenges faced decades ago of limited resources, cultural barriers, and skepticism mirror those we encounter today. Yet, the solutions remain rooted in our principles: unity, humility, and trust in a Higher Power.

Archives are more than records; they are a living testimony that the Al-Anon message transcends borders and languages. They show that no matter where we live, we share common struggles and a common hope. Digitizing these materials brings challenges, but also excitement; technology allows us to connect with our history in new ways and inspire future generations.

If I could share one message with today's members, it would be this: Your service matters. Every experience you share becomes part of a legacy that will encourage someone tomorrow. Preserving our past honors the courage, love, and hope that built this fellowship—and reminds me every day why I serve.

By Jennifer U., Archivist & Conference Specialist

“Inside Al-Anon Family Groups” presents news, policy, and commentary from volunteers, staff and readers sharing experience through service. Please feel free to reprint these articles on your service structure website or newsletter, along with this credit line: Reprinted with permission of Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc., Virginia Beach, VA.