

The Story of How 3 Recovered Drunks Started the Big Country Conference

Pat H., Jackie Y. and Ronnie I. used to troll the bars together in the Abilene, Texas area in the 1960's and 1970's. They all also got sober together about the same time in 1972-74 time frame. Just as they used to run the bars together they then began, at the advice of the Pioneer Group Old Timer's, to travel and attend AA conferences together.

The three of them had just gone to the Lubbock AA conference in July 1978. Shortly after they got back Ronnie and Jackie were building a fence on a ranch east of Abilene. Ronnie asked Jackie if they could try and start a conference. Jackie said it sounded like a good idea to him and they called Pat who agreed to help with the startup. After Jackie and Ronnie got through with the fence they were building and went by the AA club and met up with Pat to drink coffee with her ask the group of old timers who hung around the club before the noon meeting what they thought of the plan.

The Old Timers quickly gave the conference their blessing and encouraged the three younger people to get to work on starting an Abilene conference. The next Monday night the Pioneer Group voted to support the founding of the conference, and then the following Monday the first Big Country AA conference meeting was convened. They elected a board of directors, and it was determined that the board should always have an Al-Anon representatives. Three of the original board members were Al-Anon members.

The board unanimously agreed to hold the first conference on Labor Day weekend of 1981. Then the members of the board began going to conferences all over Texas, Oklahoma, and New Mexico to publicize the upcoming Labor Day Big Country Conference. The first conference in 1981 was well attended, and the event continued to grow until shortly prior to the Covid pandemic when the conference was suspended. In 2023 a few of the former conference board members decided to resume the conference. A new board of directors was elected, and the 39th Big Country conference was held on Labor Day weekend of 2024.

The conference was well attended and it was determined that this Legacy AA conference that began during a fence building project on a ranch in West Texas would continue to be held with the legacy of the spirit of hospitality of the cowboy country of West Texas.

Original Big Country Conference Board Members:

Jackie Y. – President	Becky B. – Set Up
Mith B. – Vice President	Pat H. - Speaker
Robert K. – Chair Woman	Bobbie R. – Treasure
Jackie J. – L	Thomas I. - Registration
Joe M. – Raffle	Glenda - Secretary
Bill W. – Greeter	Steward C. - Coffee
Betty M. – Food	