

Interview
Bob B.
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(By The N.A. Way Magazine)

Bob B.: I'm probably one of the few people that have been here continuously all through that period of time although there are other people that were around. There was not the continuity, perhaps, while see we were here they moved away, or whatever the circumstances were that they were kind of unassociated with what was going on as far as N.A. was concerned. Perhaps (unintelligible) by word of mouth and perhaps that's all. I think our problem was close on hands...

N.A. Way: You were close to the core of N.A on central services right from the beginning....

Bob B.: Yeah. I think probably I had the opportunity to move away and I would think you'd say well that wasn't the case because I had no choices to move away or wanted do you know.

N.A. Way: Well, when was your first exposure to Narcotics Anonymous?

Bob B.: 1959.

N.A. Way: And what happened there? Was that when your wife went out and...

Bob B.: Yeah. She went out to find some help for herself and in the process of going out to try to get some help for herself, she ran into Jimmy's wife at that time at an (unintelligible) AIAnon meeting and that's how she ran into her. She ran into her at an AIAnon meeting and the message was to say that there were people in the Valley that were addicts staying clean and Jimmy's wife at the time, Gladys, was instrumental in you know getting over the message because I think sometimes you know, wives or sweethearts or whatever the case is, go to meetings pleading for help and they plead for help in terms of "what can I do about that person?".

N.A. Way: How can I make this guy straighten up ?

Bob B.: Yeah. Straighten up or what do I do with him or how do I do it.? And there seems to be no place for them to get no help. Because there were very few places talking about affording help to addicts at that particular time because the whole social view about addiction and addicts at that time was "there's no help for addicts". There was medically only a couple of places where they were even attempting to do anything with addicts like Fort Worth and Lexington

N.A. Way: Yeah. Those are the only two that I know of with any national reputation.

Bob B.: Yeah, with any national reputation. The only other thing, there was a Dr. Stewart Knox working with Edgewater Hospital in the private sector that was trying to pioneer some ideas about addicts in recovery. But these we're talking about private-funded situations where you had to have long money to even approach them so to speak.

N.A. Way: Yeah. At that time narcotics addiction was pretty much under cover.

Bob B.: That was exposed you know ... it was like a hopeless condition. There is nothing we can do. We might could dry them out in the hospital; we had one hospital that could do it privately. And probably only one person in the city as far as Los Angeles that was able to service addicts in that respect.

N.A. Way: Who was that?

Bob B.: Stewart Knox. He was in Los Angeles at the time. But he had been associated with Lexington and quite a few other places. So he thought he may have had some answers about how to treat addicts.

N.A. Way: Was it a treatment that ... a psychological treatment?

Bob B.: There were a number of things. He was doing a chemical thing where he was changing of diets and a number of processes that he was going and doing. He was trying a whole lot of things.

N.A. Way: As I recall, Bob Smith and him and his gang, you know A.A., were trying about everything they could do.

Bob B.: Yeah, just trying. You know, trying everything they thought might work you know, change the diet, change the habit pattern ... counseling, put them in a clean environment. Track them over a period of time, you know, there is a number of processes they were doing I call it warehousing of addicts, at that particular time, but they couldn't even touch the problem because if you didn't have money you couldn't even get involved with it

N.A. Way: People with a narcotics habit had more important things to do with their money than...

Bob B.: You better believe it. Most of those that were in treatment, any kind of treatment, were people that had money and didn't have a financial problem but the problem was with people that had nothing and wasn't going to spend money for that anyhow. Where accepting the idea that there was a cleaning up ... we didn't discuss about cleaning up at that particular time, even on the street you

know, all we talked about was where to get some more and where to get some more. Who had it and where to go get it.

N.A. Way: There wasn't really any thought on the street at that time...

Bob B.: It was very low or none. We may have mentioned it on some occasion. I've got to get my shit together, I've got to clean up, you know or I got to cut this habit back. All these things are shortcuts not talking about clean for ever using nothing.

N.A. Way: Clean from heroin long enough to get your health back.

Bob B.: Yeah. Get your health back and get some things straightened out ... those types of things you can imagine that from that standpoint our attitude, that kind of mental attitude about what our addiction was about.

N.A. Way: Well, in 1959 when you attended your first meeting where was that meeting and...

Bob B.: That was in the Valley. They were moving from Shyer's Dryer over on Ventura to, they were trying to get this Unitarian Church in Studio City, the one on Moorpark.

N.A. Way: Do you recall where exactly Shyer's Dryer was?

Bob B.: Well not really knowing the Valley that well at that time. If someone would have asked me, "Where is the San Fernando Valley?", I would not have been able to.

N.A. Way: Well I understand that at that time the Valley was much more separate from the city than it is now.

Bob B.: The only thing being recognizable that I can think of would be Ventura Boulevard. You know as a reference. Where it was, what intersecting street, I couldn't tell you.

N.A. Way: I read the transcript from that dinner that the Trustees had with Jack Prost, and there was some mention of Doc Morris and a meeting on Fairfax Avenue, and Shyer's Dryer and they were all in the same context.

Bob B.: It couldn't be Fairfax because Fairfax doesn't run out there. Colfax maybe. That might have been in the vicinity because Colfax comes out there about approximately in the vicinity where it would have been.

N.A. Way: What was Shyer's Dryer?

Bob B.: It was a sanitarium for alcoholics.

N.A. Way: Do you know what the proper name for it was?

Bob B.: It was something like Shyer's Sanitarium or ... I really don't know.

N.A. Way: I understand the building is gone now.

Bob B.: Is it. The building's gone, yeah. In fact that whole area has been changed you know as far as construction around there, etc.

N.A. Way: But getting back to that first meeting, it was at Shyer's Dryer?

Bob B.: Yeah, It was at Shyer's Dryer. And the attendance was both alcoholics and addicts together. I think my next particular meeting during that period was at the Unitarian Church.

N.A. Way: And that was the same year?

Bob B.: The same year or early '60, because it was in late '59 or early '60 when this occurred.

N.A. Way: The alcoholics who attended, were they there in support or were they thinking of themselves as members of N.A as well as A.A.?

Bob B.: They were maybe thinking of themselves as members of both N.A. as well as A.A. There were people there who had initially had drug problems perhaps intertwined With their alcoholism together; it's all part and parcel of the same thing. So they were in attendance as a supportive unit and that's the way that they came to meetings. Very often It would be a case of once a month at our N.A. meeting a lot of people from the clubhouse would show up.

N.A. Way: Which clubhouse was that?

Bob B.: North Hollywood, on Bradford.

N.A. Way: Is that still there?

Bob B.: Yea, It's still there. And they used to come by, you know, and now if we have a big meeting you know once a month we'd have a big meeting with all these people from, oh, all the dignitaries from A.A. come over to support or see what's happening or just to keep their hands you know involved perhaps...

N.A. Way: Did the "jack rabbit meetings," you know, the secret meetings, stop by 1959?

Bob B: Yes and no. I guess you might say they really didn't get started. See, there was a break between about '53 up 'til about '59. Of N.A being very active. Most of the meetings they had were kind of periodic or sporadic.

N.A. Way: Yeah, my understanding from reading the Jack Prost transcript was that from '53 to '59 Narcotics Anonymous was really nothing more than a name that was given...

Bob B.: ... in the mind of people more than anything else ... time devoted to the drug problem so to speak and that type of issue. Not that we established N.A. meetings per se. I think probably one of the forerunners at that time that became very important is when little Sylvia Wexler got out of the penitentiary...

N.A. Way: Do you know if Sylvia Wexler is still alive and around?

Bob B.: As far as I know she may be still be alive. She was sick and moved from the LA. area because of her health. She got out of the penitentiary in '59 and she got very active with Jimmy in terms of trying to start some separate meeting apart from the A.A. Fellowship. She was more or less kind of like a very dynamic figure about doing that you know. About trying to get things going.

N.A. Way: How much do you think she was responsible for helping N.A. to really get going?

Bob B.: I think she was very important; as I say, I think she was one of the important elements that made things cohesive and brought things together. Not only that, I think she spoke a language that the addicts of that day understood. Where perhaps "J" was in a different Instance in terms of playing a more established community-based person, She was dynamic in terms of the "gogetter," she became involved in that respect. She got very active in that concern ... overly so in perhaps some ways.

N.A. Way: How old was she when she got out?

Bob B.: She was around fifty years old.

N.A. Way: O.K. So she would be close to eighty.

Bob B: Yes, 'cause she had to be close to fifty then.

N.A. Way: When was the name Narcotics Anonymous first used?

Bob B.: It was being used at that time; it was called Narcotics Anonymous in '59.

N.A. Way: Sally Evans had something that when it was first started It was called "A.A. for Addicts." Do you know anything about that?

Bob B.: Well, there was a number of other things that had occurred just like this here Danny thing that went on over here in Riker's Island, you know I had a lot of historical you know, so much historical ... there had been a number of attempts around the nation as far as that's concerned to start or establish N.A. or a place for addicts so to speak.

N.A. Way: But this thing that started with Jack Prost, that really started with Jimmy K. and that committee in July of '53.

Bob B.: Well as far as I know they batted a number of things around as far as names are concerned but I think It got pretty well established in '59 during the time of Sylvia and Scott and Jack Gilbert and there was another fellow too, Manuel Delgado.

N.A. Way: Scott Conlan?

Bob B.: Yeah.

N.A. Way: Do you know If any of these people are still around?

Bob B.: One of the brothers is still, oh shit, there's a couple of fellas who were Mexicans that I met fairly recently 'cause of my (unintelligible) last year that were still just trying to clean up once again. They were somewhat involved in terms of carrying the message 'cause they go around to different places and carry the N.A. message

N.A. Way: Do you know If there was any literature at that time?

Bob B.: No more than the Little Yellow Pamphlet basically.

N.A. Way: That was the only literature that we had? The Little Yellow Pamphlet-- was that the same as the Little White Book?

Bob B.: No. There was more to the next edition. The Little White Book had tended to correct, you know, what was left out of the Little Yellow Book. I think it was a case of to add some more things to it. To clean up what was in the Yellow Book. Because the Yellow Book didn't have that many things you know. I did have the excerpts for the White Book but the White Book didn't come about until after...

N.A. Way: Well, what we have in the Basic Text says '62.

Bob B.: About then is right. Jimmy had written some more things. He added to the Little Yellow Book and added some more of his own about recovery and relapse and those types of things in the beginning. So, you know, we're talking about probably, yes, '62.

N.A. Way: Do you know when this (holds up "This is N.A." pamphlet) first came out? Do you have any idea?

Bob B.: I'm not really sure; I know It was prior to '59.

N.A. Way: Do you think Jack might have an idea of when...

Bob B.: I don't think anybody has. 'Cause I don't even know if Jimmy knew exactly. The only person I can even think who may have some idea when that came out ... and I wouldn't even have an idea of how to get in touch with them at the present.

N.A. Way: Do you have any idea of who the printer was?

Bob B.: Yes, I do but I can't think of it right now... Wait, it was a printer down in Venice ... Bill Nolte.

N.A. Way: I'll see if I can track him down.

Bob B.: I think he's dead, So, we're talking about the printing of the pamphlet with these changes incorporated therein. It was about this time when Mother Sylvia came on the scene; she got out I think in '62.

N.A. Way: Is that Sylvia Magdaleno?

Bob B.: Yeah.

N.A. Way: She would've been very young then, wasn't she?

Bob B.: She was, she was probably in her early twenties.

N.A. Way: From '59 to '61 or '62 was there only the one meeting on Moorpark?

Bob B.: Yeah, the one meeting on Moorpark and they had what you called "jack rabbit," you had to be there ahead of time to know where the next one was going to be.

N.A. Way: But, the Moorpark meeting was held every week?

Bob B.: It was hold every week. And if there was going to be a Tuesday meeting or whatever you would have had to have been at the last one, or get on the telephone, in order to know where the next one was going to be.

N.A. Way: And was that done just because it was easier that way to have meetings that way without a location...

Bob B.: Yes, but realize that we're still talking about the social attitude about acceptance of addicts. Anyplace you asked about having a meeting they'd kind of look kind of weird at you. We were getting bad publicity as far as papers were concerned. They talked bad about addicts.

N.A. Way: Would it be like asking a church in a small farm town in Wisconsin if you could have a dance in the church for a group of homosexuals?

Bob B.: That's right. You're getting the idea now. That kinda response. And I think this is one of the reasons why. You find one friend, so to speak, and you speak with them and hope that someone else down the line will hear about your plight and say that you can have a meeting over here. And pretty much that does occur.

N.A. Way: How many of the jack rabbit meetings were held in an effort to (unintelligible)?

Bob B.: Generally, It was one, and then it went from one to two because you had sometime a periodic meeting, like on the weekend or something but generally It was like Tuesday and Friday when they had the meetings.

N.A. Way: And the Friday night meeting was like the regular established meeting; Tuesday night was at somebody's house? How long did that arrangement go on with the Tuesday jack rabbit and the Friday Moorpark?

Bob B.: I'd say up until I went to 'Narn and came back, so that's up 'til about '63. Then they had another meeting up in Hollywood; that was the Yucca meeting at St. Stephen's Church up on Yucca and what ... Yucca and Gower.

N.A. Way: Do you know if that's still there?

Bob B.: St. Stephen's; yeah, that's still there.

N.A. Way: Now was that added on with the Moorpark meeting still being held?

Bob B.: Yeah. That was an additional meeting.

N.A. Way: Was there ever a break in the Moorpark Meeting up until the end of last year?

Bob B.: Not really. The day changed; there were little periodic lapses or date changes, etc. There was also lag time ... I'm not sure what year it was and I'm not sure if they had a meeting there at that particular time. But it's almost been continuous either Friday or Monday almost from the beginning.

N.A Way: I visited Jimmy once before he died. We went for a drive and he took me to a little white church somewhere in the north east valley where he said that they used to have meetings spontaneously. Do you know where that might be?

Bob B.: In the north east valley?

N.A. Way: Yeah, up around Sun Valley ... do you know which one that might be.

Bob B.: No. One in Hollywood off Cole and Melrose. This was tied to neither one of those; this was almost like a regular, this probably became the first second meeting that we had (unintelligible). That was in '60 or '61.

N.A. Way: And how long did that last?

Bob B.: Probably six months to a year,

N.A. Way: Do you have any idea why

Bob B.: (Unintelligible) one is still alive, it was her daughter that was an addict. Sandy used to live there; she was just a youngster, she was only about sixteen or seventeen years old.

N.A. Way: Do you have any idea why that meeting stopped meeting there?

Bob B.: There was probably a number of reasons. We found it difficult to have meetings at people's homes. When they decided to go out, usually the meeting breaks up. I mean cause Sandy went back using or she left town or whatever the story was, the meeting wasn't there anymore.

N.A. Way: So, in '63 the meeting began in St Stephens. How long did that go on?

Bob B: That went on for a long time, the Hollywood meeting.

N.A. Way: For quite a number of years?

Bob B.: Yes.

N.A. Way: What else was going on from '63 on?

Bob B.: Well we went to Glendale over on Colorado.

N.A. Way: And that was in '63?

Bob B.: Yeah, last of '63 and into '64. We started to grow about that time. The number of people, the places that had meetings, like I say you had the Hollywood

Meeting, you had the Glendale Meeting, you had the (unintelligible) downtown, over at Third and Westlake. Probably in '63 and (unintelligible).

N.A. Way: Was it all the same people that were showing up at all these meetings?

Bob B.: Yeah. We just had one in Long Beach when Louie Eckels got out of the penitentiary and he had one in Long Beach at his house that used to get fair publicity because it had soft music and dark lights. (laughter)

N.A. Way: O.K. Was that in '63, '64?

Bob B.: Yeah, right.

N.A. Way: That didn't go on too long?

Bob B.: Well, no, Louie went to the hospital and he died.

N.A. Way: Well, that ended that. Was that in '64?

Bob B.: Yeah.

N.A. Way: About how many people were in Narcotics Anonymous (active) by 1964?

Bob B.: Our meetings at that time probably averaged anywhere from twenty to twenty-five people.

N.A. Way: That's a lot more than I would have imagined.

Bob B.: You have to realize that this is the same twenty-five people but they are pretty active. At any given function we'd all be there, you know.

N.A. Way: Was N.A. something that was pretty much standing on its' own?

Bob B.: Yeah, it was on its' own.

N.A. Way: I understand that everyone was going to A.A. meetings.

Bob B.: Periodically we were all going to A.A. meetings. It wasn't a case that we had cancelled out A.A. out of existence; fact is that they were more supportive in some ways because this was one way they could get away with if they saw an addict they'd say "go over there", you know, "don't come around here with all that bull shit, go over there".

N.A. Way: Well, remember Ron's article that he did for the trustees a few years back for the, no actually it was published in the Grapevine, and he said the position that Bill Wilson had in the late 50's about drug addicts using A.A.'s 12 Steps and 12 Traditions has come true and you guys no longer have to have a problem with what to do with drug addicts.

Bob B.: On nights that there was not meetings or there were meetings too distanced, a person might go to an A.A. meeting, in order to establish the thing of going to meetings. It became like a *haven* in a sense of speaking you know, and I guess that's one of the reasons where many people had developed close ties in that particular circuit.

N.A. Way: What was that N.A. community like in '63 and '64?

Bob B.: We were more intimate at that time then we are now. There was a necessity to have the closeness in things that we done together; we were in each others households or in each others company over considerable periods of time. Weekly or daily, you know. Transportation being what it was it was always the case that when you go to a meeting you collect a car load. You shuttle 'am back home after the meeting; those types of things, you know. We had a lot of that type of involvement with each other over a period of time. We became very intimate in that respect. So, there wasn't much going on that the other person didn't know was going on. We were very enmeshed and entwined in terms of our daily activities.

N.A. Way: And I know its still like that any time an N.A. community starts out in a town anywhere...

Bob B.: Yeah, we become very supportive in that respect. We don't like to be alone so to speak and If you're tryin to stay clean you like to be around someone who's staying clean.

N.A. Way: What you're telling me about Narcotics Anonymous in Los Angeles in the early sixties, It sounds so completely local, but the fact is that for all the other people in all the other different cites all over the world who use the name Narcotics Anonymous and who use the Twelve Steps to try and approach the problem of this disease, this is the only N.A. community that survived and this is the N.A. community that started the world wide movement...

Bob B.: I think one of the unique things is that we didn't try to intertwine with other agencies and I think that's where the downfall in many of the other areas came about is their intertwining with these other agencies as a support or depending upon ... how they met in and how they were supported and how the message was carded. I think all these things were very important.

N.A. Way: Was that just blind luck?

Bob B.: I think it was a combination of both. I think we were lucky in terms that we didn't have to depend on these other agencies exclusively for our survival; we had no whole lot of things that we had to do ... we didn't get grandiose in terms of that we didn't have to go out and rent a hall or need the money for any particular thing; we made do with what we had. We begged, borrowed and connived or whatever the case might be in order for our survival.

N.A. Way: When you couldn't go to any other meeting places besides the Unitarian Church, you didn't go out and rent a clubhouse and

Bob B.: That we couldn't pay for and whenever we went to somebody's house and said here can we have the meeting at your house? We'll bring the coffee or tea and milk or whatever and all you got to do is serve the plates or open the door ... are you going to be around? Or do you have a house? There was a lot of cases like that, you know. The only reason I had a house was that I happened to be married and (unintelligible) had a house because even during that time when someone would say could we meet at my house I would say, Yaaaayl. cause, I was still loaded you know.

N.A. Way: Of those twenty-five or so people in '63 and '64, how many were men and how many were women?

Bob B.: I would say that 75% were men

N.A. Way: So that about eighteen or twenty guys and five or seven women?

Bob B.: Yes

N.A. Way: How many of those people were married?

Bob B.: I'd say 50% of them.

N.A. Way: Had all of them served some kind of prison term?

Bob B: Most of them probably had served time, maybe not prison but jail time ... very few were people you know just street people who happened to walk in and who stayed who never done any time.

N.A. Way: Can you think of anyone like that

Bob B.: Yeah, Elaine Goodrich is one, she's still down in Palos Verdes

N.A. Way: When did she come in

Bob B.: Around '64 and she's still a housewife I mean an upper middle class house wife. She almost crawled in the door. This was her last gasp she'd been to all the hospitals in the world, tried everything else in the world and here she is, you know.

N.A. Way: Most of the rest of them were hippies, right?

Bob B.: Mmmmm, yeah the bigger proportion, the larger proportion were.

N.A. Way: 80%?

Bob B.: Yeah, I'll say 80% were mostly intravenous drug users.

N.A. Way: So the rest were

Bob B.: Combinations, pills, uppers

N.A. Way: What type of welcome did Elaine Goodrich receive, I mean did she find an easy welcome? or was she just in a daze for a while

Bob B.: She was in a daze. I'd say for about the first year.

N.A. Way: How did the folk respond to her? Did they welcome her?

Bob B: She was accepted, you know acceptable. I don't think it was the case where she was abrasive in any way.

N.A. Way: There wasn't any idea that Narcotics Anonymous was only for heroin addicts?

Bob B.: No. I don't think so. A lot of our identity was there, but I think there was enough people that was understanding as to what our plight was you know, she had problems with drugs and she might have a chance, she might have a chance.

N.A. Way: Do you feel like we've gotten a pretty good feel for what the community was like in '63 and '64?

Bob B.: Yeah. We still had a hostile community I think it started to turn around probably in '64 and '65. I'll tell you what happened. There was a big transition in who was using drugs now, who was being exposed as to using drugs. The popular trend in the days of the '60s were that a lot of middle class people had moved into the street and moved into the love scene and moved into the drug scene and drugs were becoming more generally popular and accepted in terms of saying it's here and you just can't ignore me and people with money and influence were being effected by it because relatives and children and everything were being affected by it. So the attitude kind of changed in saying it's not just

them dirty bums living out there on the street that are real dope fiends anymore. It's not the brown, black and blue of the street that are real dope fiends anymore. I think that's when the social attitude did change where it became we're going to have to do something different about the treatment of drug addicts without being only punitive.

N.A. Way: Did this have an effect on the N.A. community insofar as finding meeting places goes?

Bob B.: Yeah, it did, to the effect of Oh, you're going to help drug addicts, come on in. That's why I say, I think it was during that period of time that we found acceptable meeting places as far as churches, etc. who would open their door and say, yeah come on in and we'll try it and see how it works out.

N.A. Way: Let's say by the end of '65 how many meetings were there at that time ... we're talking that at the end of '63 we had the Moorpark, the Hollywood, the Glendale, and the Royal Palms meeting, and then the meeting at Louie Eckels (sp) house, so four maybe five ... how many two years later?

Bob B.: Probably got uh we got very involved with institutional work a big transitional period we started going into a lot of institutions. I tell you what happened about that time '65, '64 and '65 ... We moved North, there was a kind of northern transition. They tried to start a couple of meetings down south. A couple of people had moved down to San Diego and they had tried to start a couple of meetings Mary Vargas and she was kind of like a spokesman around California about the treatment of drug addicts and she worked for another agency but she was a member of N.A. but she was traveling up and down the state and she got hooked into legislators and she got hooked into some of the programs that they were trying to start around the country and so she became very outspoken in terms of doing particular things and she got out a thing that started at JC Berkeley on the study of addicts, called Ad Center, and the Ad Center was staffed by a number of addicts.

N.A. Way: When was this started?

Bob B.: 1965; that's when Sylvia, and Ross and George and all of them went up to northern California to work at ad seller.

N.A. Way: Sylvia Magdaleno ?

Bob B.: Yeah.

N.A. Way: Who else?

Bob B.: Ross Counts (sp), George Romero. The ad seller became very important in terms of saying how northern California got started cause out of those people

that went up north, Sylvia and Kenny and Ross and all of them up there working for ad center between San Jose and the little centers that they had set up as part of a network they started a meeting in Berkeley, they started a meeting in San Francisco, they started a meeting in San Jose and there was a common center that they started meeting because they were like study centers that they were doing surveys and things for ad seller.

N.A. Way: So N.A. meetings were started at the same place as these people set up the ad sellers(sp).

Bob B.: They were in the same area but not necessarily at the same facilities because they had offices up there and they didn't have meetings in the office but they did have meetings in the area that they were established. A lot of people would say that (unintelligible).

N.A. Way: Did Sylvia Magdaleno stay up there?

Bob B.: Yes, she did.

N.A. Way: So, she's been up there continuously since the '60's

Bob B.: Almost continuously, yes.

N.A. Way: So she'll be able to fill me up on a lot of the details...

Bob B.: Oh yeah, she will. Have you caught up with her?

N.A. Way: Yes, I have.

Bob B.: Cause, I had talked to her about this a long time ago, I said we're filling in the holes from that particular time...

N.A. Way: I hope that we can spend some time at least on the phone. Ideally, I'd like to go up there and spend a few days but I don't know if that's possible.

Bob B.: Well, when she comes down here tell her to give you a call. But there was a lot of transition and people started spreading out over a big geographical area.

N.A. Way: So we have a Bay Area and down towards San Jose

Bob B.: Right and that was kind of like a general area (unintelligible) and so it was just kind of a natural transition.

N.A. Way: I guess it was like any member would just start a meeting...

Bob B.: Yeah, and addict would say, hey, we need a meeting and then start one

N.A. Way: Was the same kind of involvement going on in the institutional work?

Bob B.: Well, in the institutional work I think if we say carry the message another route they may not have heard it and I think it was a great thing when we were able to get in the institution where there was that institutional attitude that there was no hope and there was no talk about recovering addicts.

N.A. Way: What kind of attitude was that?

Bob B.: Kind of like an attitude of ignorance you know, and I can understand because we thought amongst ourselves that there wasn't any hope and so how can you convince anybody else that there is hope when you don't believe it yourself?

N.A. Way: How was that that y'all didn't even believe it?

Bob B.: Well, I mean, they'd been saying for a thousand years that there's no hope for dope fiends, you know, relapse was common place I think we probably over a period of years in our recovery we talked about every particular time that we were clean for any reason. We couldn't give you the dynamics of why we didn't stay clean. We just knew we had all the great intentions and high ideas and seemingly motivation that when I get out of one of those places I'm going to get my shit together and keep it together and maybe once in a while have a little taste but I'm not gonna get hooked. We had good intentions but always ended up getting hooked, you know. But we didn't have that direction to go. So it's hard to convince another person that you've got your shit together.

N.A. Way: What was the first institution that you got into and how was it that you were able to overcome those areas...

Bob B.: Well, I think the first institution that we got into probably was Tehachapi and it was a combination of CRC becoming very interested because they were trying to find new ways to treat addicts...

N.A. Way: When guys at meetings talk about C.R.C. is that the one they are talking about?

Bob B.: Not particularly because its changed over the years.

N.A. Way: Is there only one C.R.C.?

Bob B.: Now it is, before it was two or three institutions that C.R.C. was using part or all of that institution as a house for their programs and they were part of the regular C.I.M. (California Institution for Men) or women. They were trying to institute the C.R.C. philosophy so to speak.

N.A. Way: How was the contact with the C.R.C. at Tehachapi initiated?

Bob B.: Well, I think probably it was initiated in a number of ways; I was there for one thing (laughter).

N.A. Way: You were in the C.R.C.?

Bob B.: I tell you one of the reasons it became very strong in there was because it had a certain warden there who's philosophy was that he made everybody go to some twelve step program when they first got there. He didn't care if you didn't go no more after you went those (I think it was) twelve weeks but you had to go twelve weeks. If you didn't want to go after that it was up to you. You had what they call a prescription program he made everybody go to meetings so when they started instituting a C.R.C. type of philosophy the first thing we probably say hey we at (unintelligible). They had what they called a combined meeting, an N.A. A.A. meeting in there at the same time. They was just locked in together. There was no outside participation for N.A. A.A. got to have outsiders come in but not N.A.

N.A. Way: This combined meeting was held by people inside ?

Bob B.: Inside the institution, that's right.

N.A. Way: How were those (unintelligible) Did he always use the pamphlet

Bob B.: No, they used the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous; he didn't use the pamphlet at all but then people started coming up from L.A. and bringing the pamphlet with them to read.

N.A. Way: When did that start, that N.A. members from the outside started coming in?

Bob B.: '63, '64; we're talking about kind of opening the doors.

N.A. Way: And that was the first one where outside folks started coming in but really there was a meeting of sorts that existed there already?

Bob B.: That's right there was a meeting of sorts already going.

N.A. Way: I've never heard of anything like that before.

Bob B.: There are still probably a couple of institutions that have what they call N.A. way meeting, they just do their thing, several have NA/AA or AA/NA and ah they don't care what you think about them, dat what they dol What they're saying

is that you can talk about either one, alcohol or drugs this is a forum where you can do either one.

N.A. Way: So, Tehachapi got going...

Bob B.: Tehachapi got going and then when they separated C.R.C. from Tehachapi and moved it down to Narco...

N.A. Way: That's the one that I've heard of, Narco

Bob B.: I took the first panel into there

N.A. Way: Is that so? When were you released?

Bob B.: I was released in '63.

N.A. Way: Did you get clean in Tehachapi?

Bob B.: I got clean before I went to Tehachapi in about '61. See, I got clean and then had to go to jail and do my time see, and then I got out in '63. Everybody remained in contact with me and came to see me and visit me and write letters. So that all the contact was still there and starting the meeting there and trying to get the literature there was part of the what I went to jail about you know what people were bringing in that's when (unintelligible)

N.A. Way: Was Jimmy the recognized leader?

Bob B.: Pretty much so because he was the only source we had as a stable source ... an address you could write to.

N.A. Way: By that time he had been clean for fifteen years

Bob B.: No, not that long.

N.A. Way: Well, how long had he been clean for?

Bob B.: He'd been clean for a couple of years before he (unintelligible) the N.A. thing. So we're talkin bout '52 '53, '51, ten or twelve years. He's the only one who had any time besides Scott; Scott had about five years. Scott was one of the first to talk N.A. He'd go on a A.A. panel and talk N.A. That's where Russ came from, after a panel he talked to Russ and Russ got out and called him up (Scott). So those are the kind of connections we had when we started and people stayed in contact when you were in jail, they wrote letters and came up to see you. Those were the close tea that (unintelligible).

N.A. Way: How did the N.A. community in general in the L.A. area grow from '64/'65 up thru, were there any bug spurts...

Bob B.: I think that was a big spurt in '65 going up north, because many of the people there were secretaries or strong members with time and it was about half the fellowship; these were the people with the skills to start meetings, etc.

N.A. Way: Yeah, and those are the kind of people that a study group like the Ad (unintelligible) would want to hire to do their work for them

Bob B.: That's right because they had some background, and those are the people that they wanted up there because they were doing a lot of the footwork for them at their school up their.

N.A. Way: There was something In San Diego as well, during that time, did you say?

Bob B.: Well, they had meetings ... they tried to start a couple of meetings but they didn't roll ... it was kind of sporadic they would start up and stop. A lot of the people who were there left or their jobs would take them somewhere.

N.A. Way: Did anything really happen that stuck in San Diego in the '60's?

Bob B.: Nope, not that I know of.

N.A. Way: So the N.A. community that's there now had not been established yet.

Bob B.: Correct.

N.A. Way: So through the late '60's we're talking about pretty much the same as what we saw in 1965 with the foundations laid in Los Angeles and Northern California but nothing really growing outwards.

Bob B.: Not yet. Growing inwards but we were getting a lot of responses outside of the L.A. area as to what was going on here. We were getting lots of enquires as to what was going on and where do I get literature, etc.

N.A. Way: Do you know of any meetings that were outside of California that were started at that time?

Bob B.: Perhaps Philadelphia or that particular area was one of the first strong enquirers; Cleveland was another one. Eagleville(unintelligible) hospital in Pennsylvania is another one.

N.A. Way: Now did we have an N.A. number that was working there or how did we get into Eagleville?

Bob B.: Well, we had inquires. People came (unintelligible) and they gave them a (unintelligible). I think (unintelligible name) talks about it somewhere along the way that that's where he first contacted us...

N.A. Way: How long has (unintelligible name) been clean now

Bob B.: I don't know If he was clean at that time or he got clean then

N.A. Way: It seems to me that he's clean about ten years now.

Bob B.: The message I think that came out of there, maybe it was the early seventies, It was either the last part of the sixties or the early seventies, that this occurred. We got, as I say, a lot of out of state communication on where to start, how to start, those things. People were becoming more mobile in terms of moving and moving about was concerned

N.A. Way: So did we have some members moving from California to other places?

Bob B.: Either we had members or people who had been loosely associated with N.A., relatives whatever, because someone would come up with or say, I found this pamphlet and I want to inquire as to what it's all about. I know that (unintelligible) parties will say (unintelligible) clean we're experiencing in Philadelphia.

N.A. Way: Do you have any idea when the Philadelphia N.A. community actually started?

Bob B.: I'd say early 70's.

N.A. Way: I don't know where I've heard it but I have heard that Philadelphia is the oldest N.A. community outside of California, They were there for quite a while with nothing else goin on, on the East Coast.

Bob B.: They were pretty much all that was going on on the East Coast between that hospital there Cleveland had a couple of recovery houses or something around Cleveland that were very involved with that same circle. They were usually associated with some other organization, Salvation Army, (unintelligible) Peirce has all that Information.

N.A. Way: I'm going to be spending some time with him when you all have your meeting in early February. One thing I'd really like to do is make copies of all the papers you have

Bob B.: I thought I had given you most of the copies that I have or someone from your office at one time or another. I might have some correction copies or like that but it's not like I try to keep it in order or anything like that.

N.A. Way: Now there is some sort of

Bob B.: (long unintelligible stretch)

N.A. Way: They have five principles for recovery. It looks like a fairly comprehensive counseling program, vocational, psychological,

Bob B.: (unintelligible) like when I (unintelligible) N.A. treatment

N.A. Way: Interesting. Now is this the first edition, I know the second edition is more the size of the small booklets that we have now the 5.5 by 8.5. Is there any (unintelligible) between this and the second edition?

Bob B.: There was some, it wasn't a whole lot but there was corrections and things. Maybe a little more expansion on some areas, but basically pretty much the same. There was a smaller copy.

N.A. Way: There was some kind of a conference in 1969 that put together an outline of what the N.A. organization ought to look like.

Bob B.: Well, we had what they call the parent organization of Narcotics Anonymous

N.A. Way: The parent general service organization of the Southern California Region. What was that all about?

Bob B.: That was around '65, '66.

N.A. Way: Is that so. Well, what was that about, what happened?

Bob B.: What started that was pretty much Jimmy was trying to establish a basic organizational chart as to what it could be and what it should be and as to its growing sense as a unit and a so that's when (unintelligible) like the Board of Trustees, the different departments or components of how it should work.

N.A. Way: Jack showed me some stuff that he had

Bob B.: Yeah, that was the late '60's. That's what we functioned with at that time was that flow chart.

N.A. Way: Was there a Northern California and a Southern California region or was it...

Bob B.: It was all part of the California Region.

N.A. Way: From time to time did representatives from the groups get together?

Bob B.: Yeah, I think we got together, like the Northern California group tried to form a region

N.A. Way: Was there any other kind of literature besides that white pamphlet? When did the This Is N.A pamphlet come out, that is one thing I actually have a copy of.

Bob B.: No, I don't

N.A. Way: I have no idea where it came from it's just one of those things that happen to be in the file. I believe it shows a Berkeley address on the last page.

Bob B.: It may be something that you'd associate with ad center, because one of the fellas up there used to put out because they had written some things for, an introduction, and it might have been where, I think I might have actually had one of these pamphlets.

N.A. Way: The interesting thing about this pamphlet is that it's a copy of the A.A. pamphlet, This is A.A; and to tell you the truth it's a real nice explanation of what N.A. is about but it's not original

Bob B.: Yeah, but it's kind of like where it came from in a sense. We didn't particularly have any friends called this is N.A. Reason I know is because I was in charge of getting and storing the printing and picking it up and carrying it around. So we didn't have it down here. They might have had it up there, but we didn't.

N.A. Way: The address on that last page says Box 954, Berkeley.

Bob B.: So it came out of that ad center

N.A. Way: Why parent organization? What was Jimmy's idea?

Bob B.: Well I guess he said where it all came from, you know. I guess that what you call the parent organization. And I guess that's his understanding that you have to have a source somewhere.

N.A. Way: It would seem like even then he had a very far reaching vision of what N.A. was and would be and how far it would reach out; he was envisioning a world fellowship in the late 1960's

Bob B.: What happened see, is Jimmy got sick with T.B. for about four or five years and he was confined part of that time partly at home and partly not, because he'd hurt his back and then the tuberculosis too. So for about four or five years he was not really active in terms of N.A. no more than what he could correspond and so forth, and so between Sylvia and Ron Larson and myself and a few others we kind of like had to hold it together and we stayed in conference with Jimmy . That's what was happening at that particular time; he was getting a lot of mail, It would arrive over to his house or to our post office box and one of us would usually pick it up and try to respond.

N.A. Way: By 1970 how many meetings did we have in California in general and in the Los Angeles area?

Bob B.: Probably ten to twelve meetings.

N.A. Way: The year following that was when Narcotics Anonymous held its' first convention; called at that time a world convention.

Bob B.: World as we know it. (laughter)

N.A. Way: What was that like, where did the idea come from?

Bob B.: The trustees got it together. We had a trustees meeting and we said to ourselves we need to have a convention and get everybody together and be recognized as having something new. All the trustees pitched in \$25 each or whatever it was to get it off the ground.

N.A. Way: The trustees started (unintelligible)

Bob B: We formed a parent organization which must have been '65 or '65.

N.A. Way: Were the trustees like the elected leaders of the parent organization?

Bob B.: Yeah, pretty much so. Between the trustees and the group secretary or group representative we formed up in Morehead Park an organization...

N.A. Way: So you had the trustees, and then there was a representative from each of the groups.

Bob B.: Yes. Whoever the secretary of that particular group was usually informed them of (unintelligible) of the parent organization.

N.A. Way: The parent organization and the board of trustees maintained in pretty much the same form until 1971 you saw the same kind of thing as in '67?

Bob B.: Yeah It probably lasted up until that time when we got the office open and then we got more broad coverage in terms of function. I think the trustees

probably pretty much are the ones who ran whatever happened in Narcotics Anonymous.

N.A. Way: So in '71 y'all each pulled \$25 out of your pockets...

Bob B.: And had a convention.

N.A. Way: How many people showed up to that?

Bob B.: Somewhere between 150 and 200.

N.A. Way: Today that would be a pretty good sized first convention.

Bob B.: I think It was well advertised, well taken in terms of an event to be seen at.

N.A. Way: Did anyone show up from outside of California?

Bob B.: I think they did. I believe so. The receipt book is out at the office. Because I gave It to whatchcallit about a year or so ago. I just happened to find the receipt book and I think I'm the first person on the top of the list. Me, George Emerson, who else, Carl Baggie, and all the participants who signed in should be in there.

N.A. Way: Dorothy Gildersleve?

Bob B.: Dorothy Gildersleve, yeah.

N.A. Way: Lewis Quick?

Bob B.: Lewis Quick, yeah.

N.A. Way: What happened at that convention. Just describe it, you had 150, 200 people showing up and...

Bob B.: Jimmy was the speaker, I was the Chairman...

N.A. Way: Jack was telling me, was Jimmy given some type of citation?

Bob B.: A plaque; I gave him a plaque. It had all this here original meeting minutes, etc., in it. I don't know what happened to it. It was closed in glass...

N.A. Way: Do you think that he probably has it over at her place now?

Bob B.: I don't know. I don't know what Betty has. I've often asked where that (unintelligible) plaque is. it was kind of like the original by-laws or what have you

from that first meeting; that first steering committee put together in July of '53. Names and everything and it was enclosed in glass.

N.A. Way: I'm gonna talk with Chuck Gates later and ask him if there is any way that he can approach Betty. She's evidently taken the (unintelligible) pretty deeply and she's pretty ill now.

Bob B.: She is?

N.A. Way: From what I understand, yes.

Bob B.: I saw her not too long ago. Anyhow, I gave him this here plaque as a memento and as a safekeeping.

N.A. Way: What was it, a three day event. Say a Friday nite and Saturday and Sunday morning?

Bob B.: Actually it was only a two day event: Saturday and Sunday morning.

N.A. Way: What happened?

Bob B.: Well, we just had generally some kind of general meeting and as to the areas or needs that had been represented and people that were for instance I think we had Judge Emerson give a little talk and Dorothy (unintelligible). I gave a little history before I introduced Jimmy.

N.A. Way: Was there another meeting Sunday Nite before you all broke up?

Bob B.: There was a meeting Sunday Morning. It was held at La Mirada Country Club.

N.A. Way: Did people stay there or in hotels, or...

Bob B.: No, most people stayed at home or at other peoples houses generally.

N.A. Way: Was there any kind of business meeting that was called a World Service Conference at that one?

Bob B.: We established a date to have a ... the idea for this particular event was to raise enough money to (unintelligible). That was the primary purpose.

N.A. Way: Did it raise enough money to get you going?

Bob B.: Yes and no. We made maybe two or three hundred dollars which was enough to pay the rent at a place that we already had.

N.A. Way: And were you working for Impact at the time?

Bob B.: (unintelligible). I was involved with Impact but I'm still involved with Impact. So I used one of the rooms as the World Service Office.

N.A. Way: Did you have literature there?

Bob B.: Yeah.

N.A. Way: Was there a phone number there, was there a N.A. phone?

Bob B.: We had an answering service out in Hollywood and all of our calls went through our answering service.

N.A. Way: (OK that tape ended off with the office you were using at Impact House on Crenshaw)

Bob B.: The answering service was twenty four hours but there wasn't always someone at this office. But when someone was at the office we could get calls there.

N.A. Way: When did people start using the answering service?

Bob B.: Oh, we had the answering service back in '60.

N.A. Way: Somehow it's just seeming like things were a lot more organized in the '60s then I would have thought.

Bob B.: It started coming together as an organization in the '60s. We may not have had all the how to's and wherefores. We had some questions and were enquiring and trying to do the job at hand. We were getting information from a number of sources.

N.A. Way: Who were some of the people who were telling you what to do?

Bob B.: People like Dorothy Gildersleeve and Dr. Quick and Jimmy was telling us things to do or suggesting some ideas even when he was sick and not there

N.A. Way: How did all these non-addicts get involved, I mean Dorothy Gildersleeve...

Bob B.: Well, she was a social worker

N.A. Way: Was she the one that had been associated with Penny

Bob B.: Penny, yeah but it is Lewis Quick that was associated with Penny.

N.A. Way: Judge Emerson, how did he got tied in?

Bob B.: I'm not even really sure.

N.A. Way: He was the first judge who started referring people to Narcotics Anonymous, wasn't he.

Bob B.: Yes, yes he was.

N.A. Way: He's still sitting on the bench out there in Whittier and if he has time I'm going to sit down with him and get as much of this from him as he can remember.

Bob B.: It might have been because around '69 or '70 they had some parole officers and probation officers that were usually associated because of their clients and they might have seen some things there that they liked

N.A. Way: Gildersleeve must have been impressed.

Bob B.: Also, through her association in the Valley, with all of her clients, she started referring to N.A. as a viable recovery source.

N.A. Way: How was she involved? What type of role did she play?

Bob B.: As a spokesman primarily. She was associated with a lot of people in the legislature, so to speak, or into recovery or social services. Those types of things. And she just had the kind of ability to kind of help people. And Quick being a psychiatrist, he probably had a lot of understanding about people.

N.A. Way: And did he refer Penny to N.A.?

Bob B.: I think he found out about N.A. through Penny.

N.A. Way: And what kind of role did he play once he found out?

Bob B.: He was a trustee initially, but then he got sick and had to withdraw from being a trustee. He had diabetes or something pretty serious and wasn't able to be very active. But he always spoke very well in those places that you associate with people and where word of mouth is applicable.

N.A. Way: It sounds like you had a really nice combination of people who were helping both inside and outside.

Bob B.: And we came by these people just kind of out of the blue.

N.A. Way: I've heard some people call those kinds of things, "God Shots", or gifts. Are there other non-addicts that were helping us in the late '60s and early '70s?

Bob B.: Yeah, there were.

N.A. Way: Were there meeting directories at that time (late '60 early '70's) showing where all the meetings were and if so do we have any copies of them?

Bob B.: No.

N.A. Way: So It started to spread a little bit more from that Hollywood, central L.A. mode

Bob B.: yeah.

N.A. Way: Soft was just the White Book all the way up to '78 except for those five pamphlets and all of those were a direct excerpt from the little white booklet except for the one for those who (unintelligible). What I'm really looking at is N.A. up through the first conference at Valley College because that seems to be the breaking point between (unintelligible)

Bob B.: Greg put this organizational chart together and we spent a couple of weekends up in the San Luis Obispo area finalizing what should be (unintelligible) and who was to see that It functioned like that.

N.A. Way: It looks like the structure, the things that are talked about are expansion and further explanation of the parent organization...

Bob B.: It was but just more organized and concise. I think the biggest argument probably was who was going to be responsible to see that the guidelines were followed.

N.A. Way: When did incorporation finally take place. Jack was supposed to take care of that when he was elected chairman of the board of directors. That is what he was supposed to do but he never did it ... From what I understand you had the office until '73 or '74 and then when Jack came in gradually you were able to let go

Bob B.: They had (unintelligible) who was supposed to have been elected office manager so what he had done was take (unintelligible) up to Crenshaw with all the supplies and everything up to the Suicide Prevention Center where he was working. He was working at the Suicide Prevention Center under some government grant type money. When that folded he left the office unmanned for a while of course our literature they moved over to Cry Help where they had a little sub-office out here in the Valley. Jack probably got involved in it because

they had to move it out to Cry Help's little sub-office out here in the Valley. Bill had a (unintelligible) Jack, ran a little out patient office out here in Van Nuys.

N.A. Way: Do you know the address of that place.

Bob B.: If somebody know where Mary Beck is she probably tell them where it is. I think it was on Victory but I'm not sure. A lot of our stuff (files and things) were lost at the suicide prevention. It was kind of one of these offices there that too many people had access to and a lot of stuff disappeared.

N.A. Way: Crenshaw was the first.

Bob B.: Crenshaw was the first office location; Highland was the second and then to Van Nuys

N.A. Way: Jack said it was a convenient location and that you were paying \$50 a month.

Bob B.: It was convenient for me alright, I lived right around the corner.

N.A. Way: From the place in Van Nuys it went to Jimmy's House. OX Jack recalls that it stayed there until about 1981 is that right. That's what he recalled and then it moved to another location in Sunland.

Bob B.: Well It had two places in Sunland it moved to. The late 70s as I recall because they moved to the storefront, they had two storefronts.

N.A. Way: The second storefront, the last one before it was moved to Wyandotte by Bob Stone, that's the only other office location that I've seen.

Bob B.: There was another one right off Vineland. Vineland and Lankershelm. It moved into the house there was an office right next to Jimmy's house before it moved to Vineland and Lankersheim. That's when we incorporated, just about the same time. Gregg, myself, and someone else were on the incorporation papers. I don't know what year that was.

N.A. Way: So N.A. has been brought up to the meetings at Valley College then. When was the first meeting separate from the World Service Conference, '76 or '77

Bob B.: I don't remember. Valley College should have been the following year.

N.A. Way: One last thing: About how large was the N.A. community in Los Angeles in 1976?

Bob B.: I say it had to be two or three thousand.

N.A. Way: Is there anything that we missed.

Bob B.: Probably lots of things but it will take triggers to get them to click in.

N.A. Way: I'd like to get back with you in a month or so after I've spoke to some others and try and fill in some gaps with you. What about some of these people: Jean Lecacas

Bob B.: He's around; he's still clean. He's a gypsy. That's what he is. From northern California to southern California, that's where you see him.

N.A. Way: Carl Beck.

Bob B.: He's still around. In Aftatena. His last name is spelled Baggett. His office is in Covina. He was a member of the Board of Trustees in '69 or '70. Mel Calvin, he's still out in Whittier, Whittier Electronics. Gilda Hays, I don't know if she's dead or not. I'm trying to think about Jess Loyn , he was alive a couple of years ago at the House of Uhuru in East L.A. Eddie Cochran was back but I don know ... he may be up in Camarillo but I'm not really sure. He was involved in N.A. earlier in the '50s than I was. Pepe would know where a lot of these people are. Russ Counts is in Tulsa, Oklahoma or Norman, Oklahoma. He's the one went up to ad Center with Sylvia in about '65.

N.A. Way: Elaine Goodrich is in Palos Verdes

Bob B.: Yes. Sylvia Magdaleno might know where Mary Vargas is. George Romero is in New Mexico (505) 892-7165, Rio Rancho, New Mexico. He went up north with the Ad Center too and he got sick up there; wandered around in a daze for about ten years ... I know you have the names of the Magdaleno brothers there.

N.A. Way: I just have the names of the husband and wife Magdaleno. There are more Magdaleno's? (laughter)

Bob B.: Yes, all four brothers. Ricks up North, Sylvia will know where Rick is and George is down here, he's gat 25 years, I got George's number you don't have to get It from Hank ... George's number is 372-0446. There are two brothers up north. Rick and Hank and George have been clean ever since. They all have over 20 years. Another person you can catch up with is Ron Larson or Cathy Larson ... I don't know where Ron is, Cathy is in Kansas; Ron was in the L.A. Area Mary Hepbergh has Cathy's number she's been around a long time too her number is (408)293-5751. She is the director of Pathways in San Jose. Bill Beck is down in Washington somewhere.

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