

CHAPTER THREE  
OUR HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

As with the other material contained in this manuscript, changes will be required to insure accuracy of dates and various specifics. These changes can be supplied easily as the material develops by informed members. We have to begin somewhere! Also, examples specific to the topics discussed could be useful as illustrations. Many of our historical episodes are sequences of events played out along similar lines in each community within the Fellowship; i.e., original members get used to stepping out on faith and taking charge through the embryonic local structure. We learn surrender! Similarly, at one or more points, the procedural difficulties will foreshorten or overshadow the service effort completely. We learn balance!

EARLY DAYS

N.A. began when the first two addicts seeking recovery got together and found they could stay clean through their common desire. God only knows where and when this occurred. There is a written record of "an organization similar to A.A. which operates among addicts" in 1944. Reference is made to this in Alcohol, Science and Society page 472. The earliest written reference we know of to "Narcotics Anonymous" is from The Addict, page 166 published in 1953 which mentions a founding date of 1948 by Daniel Carlsen in New York City. Articles in the Saturday Evening Post, Newsweek and Time in 1950 and 1951 speak of N.A. spreading to other major cities like Chicago and Los Angeles. More work needs to be done to reference these dates for authenticity and accuracy.

So far no written material from these meetings has surfaced. In time we will know more, but likely the details won't be of great importance since N.A. didn't really begin to grow until the 1970s. What may be of importance to some of us is that the long hard struggle for addicts to be able to live clean lives began some time ago and that many good people have paid a part of the price which has resulted in our being able to live clean today. More than anything else, we are grateful to these men and women. They endured struggles we can only imagine. A

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handful may still be alive today. Most have probably died feeling that their contribution was in vain! They had problems like being arrested, walking out the door after a meetings, valiant support from a few but indifference from the many - all the obstacles which occur when a new idea is taking form. Surely they each made a contribution which encouraged others to carry on and helped them do so.

N.A. as we know it today began in July of 1953 in Sun Valley California with a few members getting together to discuss their needs and visions of a Twelve Step Program for addicts. Little