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## Shelby Group Helps Carolinian Find Himself

In the fall of 1939 the first A.A. meeting was held in Shelby, North Carolina. A group of three men met in the office of Dr. M., the sponsor of the group. Since then the group has moved meeting places several times. At present we have clubrooms in an uptown hotel. This location is ideal, being in the center of town. We have the usual club furnishings, lockers, showers, piano, radio, pool table, reading room and a seating capacity of one hundred and twenty-five.

The membership has grown from three to forty solid members. Since 1939 more than a hundred members have passed through the club, many of whom are now in the armed services; others have gone to work in war plants, while some have moved for business reasons. In the past year, the Shelby group has been instrumental in starting clubs in Ashville, Charlotte, and Gastonia, in North Carolina, and in Spartanburg and Rock Hill in South Carolina. Some of these groups in the larger cities have grown fast and are doing outstanding work; all have got over most of their growing pains. All of these towns and cities being nearby, we have many inter-club meetings, which have been most helpful.

Since Shelby is a small city of some twenty thousand people it is almost impossible to remain anonymous. For this reason we do not reach some who undoubtedly need A.A., but, on the other hand, we enjoy a very close fellowship.

I first heard of A.A. in an alcoholic ward of the State Hospital in the summer

of 1940. It was there that I first saw the A.A. Book. However, I only read a few pages, closed it and thought: this is some more religious stuff and not for me. Some months later I finished reading it in the same hospital and in the same ward. When I left the hospital this time I had high hopes for myself.

Upon my arrival home in a small town, some or most of my dreams faded away - not having anyone to talk A.A. with me. I only lasted a short while. Soon I was back in a sanatorium again. Within a month of my release I had lost my job. My wife needed little persuasion to leave me.

I was fortunate in getting a job in a city some twenty miles from Shelby. In three months I lost that. No job, no family, I was willing to try anything - so I came to Shelby drunk, checked in at a hotel. On my arrival someone must have reported me to A.A., for soon there were several men in my room to see me. Some I had met in various hospitals in different parts of the state; others were strangers. They came day and night. All looked well and happy. It was this that gave me my first hope. Several days later, while still shaky, I secured a job with a local firm.

This all happened a year ago, and since that time many blessings have been mine, I am now living with my wife and children, and needless to say, we are happy. I will ever be thankful to A.A., Dr. M, and Shelby.

*W.B. McL, Shelby, N.C.*