

5 Former Alcoholics Offer to Help Imbibers Climb Aboard the "Wagon"

In contrast to those New Year celebrants who tomorrow will hold their aching heads and say "never again," without really meaning it, are five Indianapolis men who in the past said "never again" and are making it stick.

They were once, to use the ordinary phrase for it, "just plain drunks." But now they are strictly former alcoholics and members of "Alcoholics Anonymous." They know that true alcoholism is a disease and they believe that with their background of experience they can help others who want to say "never again."

Business Executive Member.

It's a strange sort of organization this "Alcoholic Anonymous." In Indianapolis the group is in embryo stage and thus far there are only five members, at least one of whom is a business executive.

But in Cleveland, O.; New York, Chicago, Detroit, Mich., and several other cities the "A.A." has fairly strong chapters and the total membership now is about 500 men and women. They boast that two-thirds of their number have laid the foundation for permanent re-

covery and that more than half have had no "relapse" despite the fact that all were once pronounced incurable alcoholics.

Names aren't often mentioned, but each member stands ready to make himself known to a fellow sufferer and to help him "mount the wagon" with the technique that has worked.

Not Reform Group.

To begin with, the "A.A.'s" say they aren't a reform group, a dry organization or a religious cult. They have no quarrel with alcohol and, in fact, think the fellow who can drink sensibly and keep out of trouble has every right to do so. Their only interest is the "problem drinker," the man—or sometimes the woman—who gets the disease, who baffles every cure and who faces a ruined business career and loss of home life.

The five Indianapolis members think this is a particularly good time to make existence of their loosely-knit organization known because they believe more problem drinkers get into serious difficulties during the Christmas-New Year holiday season than at any other time of the year.

"The alcoholic and his problem seldom are understood," the leader of the A.A. group here says. "The true alcoholic is a very sick man. Too often neither he nor those about him understand that."

Primary reason for the organization's existence is that its members believe the former or non-drinking alcoholic can "talk turkey to a fellow rummie" with considerably more success than the best intentioned, even though trained in such work, non-drinking man.

"Knowing this," says the Indianapolis A.A. leader, "we have band-

ed together in groups over the country and, without fee or obligation, give as much time as our regular business and home life permit to teaching and showing fellow alcoholics how to handle their problem successfully."

Motive Not Unselfish.

Their motive is not entirely unselfish, the A.A. members point out, because they regard their work as "good insurance" for themselves. For the same reason, the recovering alcoholic takes up the work and carries it on to another sufferer.

Such success has crowned the efforts of "Alcoholics Anonymous" that the Alcoholic Foundation of New York has published a booklet about the organization and physicians have written in medical journals about what they consider a new psychotherapy in chronic alcoholism.