

The Day In Indiana

By MAURICE EARLY

●
**Alcoholics Anonymous.
Membersip Grows.
Proud Of Cures.
Talk Same Language.
Half Stay On Wagon.**
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Indianapolis, July 28.

MANY Hoosiers now on the road to seeing pink elephants soon will be members of a flourishing informal organization which styles itself Alcoholics Anonymous. Only one tie binds the men and women in this fellowship. It is their common experience of definitely having been on the road to ruin through the alcohol route.

TWO HUNDRED eleven days ago—on New Year's eve—five Indianapolis men who had cured themselves through accepting the Alcoholics Anonymous philosophy were given their first and only press publicity in a feature story in the Indianapolis Star.

TODAY THEY have forty members in the group which holds weekly Sunday breakfasts at a north side hotel. In October one of the founders of the A. A. from Akron, O., will be the speaker at a dinner meeting of the fellowship. Experiences of other cities, where the A. A. got started sooner, demonstrate there will be many groups formed in Indianapolis and other Indiana cities. Cleveland, O., now has sixteen groups with a membership of nearly 1,000.

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THERE IS ANOTHER reason why the enthusiasts can predict a spread of the fellowship. They claim the "woods is full" of people who have reached the stage where drinking is an illness. There is not much hope for the bums who fall in the gutter. Rather it is the "nice" people—especially minor executives—who are more likely to see the light and profit by the A. A.

IT IS BELIEVED that the strength of the movement, and its success, comes from the fact that it is not a reform organization. It has no concern about prohibition, liquor regulatory laws, whether or not people drink, nor is it affiliated with any religion.

EACH MEMBER is concerned primarily with his own rescue and in payment for it is willing to assist some other drunk who wants help.

Long faces or pious attitudes naturally do not exist among those boys who would prefer to be on the list of those who can drink with restraint. One leader interviewed for this column extended an invitation to attend a group breakfast and meant it when he said "you don't have to come dry or we will get you a drink if you want it."

THERE IS NOTHING altruistic or secretive about the A. A. It accepts the medical view that an acute alcoholic is sick. Therefore there is no reason to give publicity to those who have overcome the illness.

BUT IN PRACTICE members of the A. A. like to talk about it. While they do not tell the names of other members they have a feeling of pride in their accomplishment.

TO GET LINED up with the A. A. just drop a letter to the post office box 1474, Indianapolis, and one of the fellowship—usually busy business people—will take time out to see you. Cures simmer down to a fellow being honest with himself.

PREREQUISITES for membership, it is explained, are these; that the alcoholic knows that he is sick, that he admits it to someone else, and that he wants to get well. There is no such thing as a pledge. Neither can one get in the fold simply, to satisfy the nagging of a relative.

ABOUT HALF of those who affiliate stay on the wagon. Some of the younger ones, it is found, are more optimistic about their chances of beating the game and relapse. But they can come back after they have "slipped." There is no preaching.

ONE OF THE ODD things discovered is that an alcoholic is not likely to heed advice of a person who is not a drinker. He is cold to sound reasoning of a doctor, a temperance advocate, or a well-meaning wife or mother. But when he gets with another drunk or, as in the case of the A. A., a known ex-drunk, he has absolute confidence in his words. They talk the same language on a practical basis.

ONE OF THE more important aides to staying on the wagon, an A. A. member says, is working to help others.

NO DUES are collected. At breakfast there is a "kitty" to which contributions of not to exceed 25 cents may be made. This is used to support the New York office, which is a central clearing house. It also prints literature which is given prospects and placed in libraries.