



**"DOWN THE HATCH"**—Launching the New Year Ship of Good Cheer with steaming cups of hot coffee is a group of members of Alcoholics Anonymous, that group of self-admitted self-reforming drunkards.—Journal Photo.

## Ex-Alcoholics Celebrate 1944 Here—With Coffee

One of City's Gayest Watch Parties  
Held by Society of Reformed Drinkers

By PETE CRAIG

They made the welkin ring up in the second floor club rooms at 57½ Broad Street, N. W., in one of the strangest, but jolliest New Year celebrations you ever heard of—but there wasn't a drink in the house!

The hundred or more men and women celebrators readily admitted that in their time they had consumed enough of the spirits that cheer to float that two-ocean Navy we're getting ready for the Japs.

But that was yesterday.

Today they're members of Alcoholics Anonymous, that growing group of admitted drunkards who have banded together in a frontal attack on old General John Barleycorn.

And the party they pitched to greet the New Year was sparkling in its gaiety, heart warming in its air of friendliness. They met the infant New Year sans headache, sans remorse, and joyful in their liberation from libation.

There were paper caps, noise-makers, refreshments (coffee and cake), a floor show and group songs.

### 74-Day Spree Story

There were stories about that last fling; the fellow who boasted of once holding the marathon drinking championship told in detail how he stayed drunk for 74 days; one of the leading ladies of the group recalled with regret having spent 12 days at the San Francisco World's Fair without sobering up enough to realize where she was until she awoke in Salt Lake.

The fellow who gave away a \$50,000 contracting business to one of his hired men who criticized him for a 10-year drunk told how he woke up the next morning without even a street car token and had to walk six miles to his home. He's building up another fortune now—thanks to Alcoholics Anonymous—and this time he is going to keep it and enjoy it. He's been a member—and sober—for 17 months, the most protracted period of sobriety since he reached voting age.

The bellwether of the local group—a man who was so notoriously a drunkard that the others lean upon his achievement in remaining sober for nearly two years to give them strength in overcoming their own weakness—he's lost that bleary-eyed look; he's lost the flabbiness about the midriff; he's squarely back on his feet and doing well in business; reconciled with his family.

### Confessed Screwballs

It's a strange group. They admit they're screwballs. But they've got something nobody else can give them—mutual realization that they are all drunkards—persons who can not drink, people who must forever shun that first one; folks who can't take it or leave it.

They are princes and paupers. Many are have-beens; as many are will-bes. Money—that which you have or once had—doesn't mean a thing. What they want is the companionship of people like themselves, people resisting the temptation of falling back into the gutter.

They point with pride to the dozen from their midst, resurrected by their own efforts, now officers in the armed services. They boast of the soldier who came from Washington, where he was a pioneer in "AA" work, and began organizing the local club—he's a captain overseas now.

They boast, rightfully, that a number of their group now work in the giant Bell Bomber plant at Marietta, several of them as department heads. In fact, so many Bell people are members that inner-group meetings are held at the bomber plant now and then.

### Reconsecrated Pastor

And they tell you of their former president. He lost his church through drink. He was a pioneer in the local group. Now he has a church of his own again—and he's organizing an "AA" group in conjunction with his new ministry.

One thing they are unanimous in telling you—they've got something in Alcoholics Anonymous, that unique national organization of former drunks who lean heavily upon psychology to keep themselves sober.

They claim that they can take four drunks into their group, and of the four two will be restored to full-time sobriety, the third will show an improvement, but will backslide now and then, and the fourth will prove a hopeless case, even for Alcoholics Anonymous.

The medical profession claims only to salvage one out of 100.

They mix psychology and religion to achieve their goal.

First, a drunkard must come to the realization that he is a drunkard, that he is a person who cannot take even one drink without dire consequences.

Second, a drunkard must come to the realization that he needs someone, or something, greater than himself—God or some supreme power—to aid him in his fight.

Then, the other members of Alcoholics Anonymous are ready to go all-out to aid him in his fight

### They Know the Gutter

They'll get him out of jail, they'll get down in the gutter and help him out. They can talk his language. They know when he's having DTs, that the monkeys are real, terrifying. They offer him the companionship of people like himself—people who must stay away from drink and drinkers.

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