

America's society revolves around drinking

By YVONNE B. DEVLIN

Out of 318 hospitals surveyed in the mid-west 27 per cent of the male patients had alcohol problems, as well as nine per cent of the women, says Frank MacDonell, director of the Alcohol Treatment Division of St. Mary Hospital in Livonia.

"In the army everyone is an alcoholic. There are bars on the hospital windows because of the men suffering from the DT's. Alcoholics are resistant to anesthesia and it is very obvious when you have one on the table," says Dr. Richard Horch, chief of staff.

Liquor is served in arm hospitals with the meals because of the demand, he says. Generals' colonels' rights on down are affected.

There is a loss of innocence among junior high students. A high percentage of them have had first-hand experience with alcohol themselves, says Charles Bethea, clinic coordinator.

"Each time we go into schools, there are kids withdrawing from alcohol and the parents say, 'Thank God they're not smoking yet,'" says MacDonell.

When schools start, MacDonell warns people to take a look at the parking lot which is usually littered with beer cans and wine bottles.

"I know a store where they have to back up against the wine shelf so the kids won't steal the wine or the breaks from the cases," he says.

Babies are born of alcoholic mothers

and are also addicted, says Bethea. "Scary" or "incomprehensible" or "is all this drinking a familiar crowd?"

O.A.S. SOCIETY REVOLVES AROUND DRINKING, says MacDonell. There are even dresses made in which to drink in "cocktail dresses."

"There is a tremendous social pressure to drink and a lot of people have found that they have had to make the choice between maintaining friendships or staying sober," says Bethea.

"The people we come across think that they work better when they're drunk. In Detroit, people are keeping up high levels of alcohol in their bloodstreams when they go to work in the factories," says MacDonell.

What is alcoholism? Medically it is a disease, says Bethea. He compared it to an allergy.

"A normal person may need two or three drinks to get a certain effect. The difference is in time the alcoholic is going to have to drink more to get the same effect," he says.

MacDonell's body is reacting the effects of the alcohol and they must progress to maybe seven drinks, he says.

Comparing alcoholism to diabetes, he says that the problem drinker who is drinking for emotional relief may be like the person who goes on an extreme binge and eats primarily sweets when under stress. Too many sweets may cause the allergy; diabetes and too much alcohol may cause diabetes.

The factors involved include how the person reacts physiologically to alcohol or stress, the psychological stress involved

in the social components," says Bethea. While many people drink, less than ten percent have the psychological and physiological dependency that can be categorized as alcoholism, according to the National Council on Alcoholism.

Increasing tolerance and major withdrawal are the symptoms that best describe the alcoholic," says MacDonell.

Animal data suggest that the longer the period of time will develop signs of alcoholism, says the Council.

Studies of young people have a 35 per cent chance of becoming alcoholic. There may possibly be some genetic transmission. Some people are extremely vulnerable to alcohol at the first occasion," says MacDonell.

At least one of the parents has been known to alcoholism, according to Bethea.

In studies with rats, alcoholism which has been induced in the parents has been passed on to future generations. The percentage of alcoholic rats is much higher than in the original non-alcoholic families," he says.

In Sweden a study was done after 200 youngsters were removed from alcoholic homes before the age of six months. 30 per cent of these youngsters became alcoholics which proves the 1 in 3 ratio," according to Bethea. According to the Council, persons at a high risk of alcoholism may include:

- A family history of alcoholism, including parents, siblings, grandparents, uncles and aunts.
- A history of teetotalism in the family, particularly where strong moral overtones were present and, most particularly where the social environment of the patient has changed to associations in which drinking is encouraged or required.
- A history of alcoholism or teetotalism in the spouse or the family of the spouse.
- Coming from a broken home or home with much parental discord, particularly where the father was absent or rejecting, not punitive.
- Being the last child of a large family or in the last half of the sibship in a large family.
- Although some cultural groups (for example, the Irish and Scandinavians) have

been recorded as having a higher incidence of alcoholism than others (Jews, Chinese and Italians) alcoholism can occur in people of any cultural derivation.

"Having female relatives of more than one generation who have had a high incidence of recurrent depression.

"Heavy smoking, heavy drinking is often associated with heavy smoking, but the reverse need not be true.

"Since alcoholism is hereditary and chronic, there are few authorities who claim a complete cure," says the Council.

Society, working through problems and dieting are the best ways to deal with alcoholism," says Bethea.

"I don't know a single true alcoholic who can return to social drinking," he says.

He's a brave man, but alcohol still frightens this former pitching ace

Don Newcombe, at 41 and 360 lbs doesn't admit to being a drinker of much but the one thing he fears most in this world is alcohol.

Newcombe is an alcoholic.

A former major league pitcher and "Rookie of the Year" in 1960, he also won the Cy Young award in 1966 for outstanding pitcher in both major leagues. He now tours the country speaking on alcoholism as a representative for the National Clearinghouse on Alcohol Information.

"I bet my life that 15-20 cent of baseball players drink heavily. It's how they relax after a game and it's something to do to fill their time," he told a group of doctors at St. Mary Hospital in Livonia.

After each game, Newcombe says that he would lose 12-14 lbs. Then he would drink beer to ward off the blues.

"I don't know that drinking beer could lead to alcoholism. My dad brewed beer at home and I started drinking it when I was eight years old. He said it would make us grow big and tall. My three brothers are still alcoholic," he says.

Gaining weight as a consequence of aging, Newcombe switched to whiskey to keep from

pitcher in baseball, running three or four hours a day, he says. Alcohol allowed down has refused to the point where he was frequently getting hit by the ball.

"I just couldn't get my arm up fast enough," he says.

If more athletes knew what alcohol does to one's muscles and nerves, Newcombe believes that it would curtail their drinking.

"I don't pay much attention to what the fans think. We think we're God's gift to the world when we're sitting on top of the ladder."

But one day you come tumbling down and reality hits you when you find out that there really aren't that many jobs available in baseball. A lot of us just can't handle that and the traumatic experience makes us drink more," he says.

Last fall Newcombe was invited by the New York City Commissioner of baseball to travel around the spring training camps and talk about the problem of alcoholism. The contract was signed yet as Newcombe is hoping to be able to go Florida this year.

"Hugh Casey, a relief pitcher for the Dodgers blew his brains out in Atlanta. He was a drinker," says Newcombe.

Alcohol can affect an athlete or a well-known person as well as anyone else, he says.

Five years ago it was a crime that the federal government was not paying attention to what alcohol was doing to the senators and congressmen.

"They turned their heads the other way and this represents the mentality of our society," he says.

Newcombe says that there are 10 million potential alcoholics in the United States.

"A lot of people think that it is self-

deflected but I don't buy that story. I had to start somewhere—look I was being given beer when I was eight," he says.

"Kids are drinking at a young age and I blame the parents for it. I blame them for the moral breakdown of the family structure," he says.

"KIDS NEED DIRECTION and this is the message to the adults. The adults aren't paying attention," he says.

Bringing down the case, restrictions hasn't made one bit of difference, according to Newcombe.

"It's available and if you're gonna get it, they will," he says.

Newcombe had a liquor business in New Jersey for ten years and it was shut down four times for minors possessing alcoholic beverages sold from that store.

"We didn't sell to minors but they got caught on the street. All they had to do was bribe a wino or get someone to buy it for them," he says.

If one of his kids came home drunk, Newcombe says that he would at least try to do something about it.

"I wouldn't worry my head and ask where did I go wrong," he says.

"If my 18-year-old kid would ask me if he should use alcohol or marijuana, I'd tell him marijuana because I've never smoked it," he says.

He's been in 32 states and he sees the same thing happening wherever he goes.

"It's getting worse and we've got to stop it, or at least stem the tide," he says.

"I want to use myself as an example to encourage someone who may be addicted to or recovering from alcoholics. If he has a message, it's directed to the kids."



DON NEWCOMBE

Need help?

By YVONNE B. DEVLIN

If you're an alcoholic or someone in your family in need of help, there is help available.

The Midwest Mental Health Clinic, which has offices at the Quaker Town Medical Arts Center, 32000 Twelve Mile in Farmington Hills, sponsors an Alcohol Treatment Program at St. Mary Hospital in Livonia.

"If the spouse comes in, we'll help them to change and assist the alcoholic even if the alcoholic isn't motivated. If one person changes and gets healthy, that will motivate the rest of the family to get healthy," says Dr. Charles Bethea, the clinic coordinator.

An alcoholic will usually disrupt the whole family, he says.

The program includes a schedule of classes, counseling groups and individual psychotherapy, says Bethea.

"We also make referrals to Alcoholics Anonymous which assists people in staying sober," he says.

"AA provides a new peer group strictly on a first-come basis," according to Bethea.

It is hoped that the patient will embrace AA as a form of long-term treatment, he says.

All-Sports tourney set

A privately-sponsored All-Sports tournament for men is planned for the last week of September and the first two weeks of October at various sites in Farmington. The tournament involves three sports—softball, basketball and touch football.

The same 12-man team roster must participate in all three sports. There are no residency or age requirements. Entry fee is \$50 per team. The softball games will be played at the Knights of Columbus Field. Basketball games will be played at Bethan Junior High, and touch football contests are set for Farmington's City Park.

Additional information may be obtained by calling Mike Wilson at 477-3773 or 474-7173 after 6 p.m.

Fire fighters see change over years

By CORINNE ABATT

Whoever discovers an out of control fire today usually runs either to a fire alarm box or a phone.

The response is immediate. In Farmington, there are public safety officers trained in fire fighting, two pumper trucks and a rescue vehicle ready to respond as soon as the call comes in.

Once they arrive at the site, there are fire hydrants to produce a steady stream of water. One hose is capable of pumping 1,000 gallons a minute and another 750 gallons a minute on the blaze.

Patrol officers, who arrive before the fire trucks, have fire extinguishing equipment in their vehicles which often is all that is necessary to handle the emergency before the pumpers arrive.

This modern approach to fire fighting is a dramatic change from the old days in Farmington when the community had only volunteer fire fighters, an alarm bell atop a barn, and a lot of buckets for transporting water to the flames.

THE TWO WORST fires in Farmington history took place in the downtown area in 1872 and 1897. During the first, volunteers passed buckets filled from two town wells. They dapped blankets in water and laid them on the tops of the buildings in an effort to save the roofs. Hardly in place, the blankets quickly dried from the intense heat and had to be soaked again.

It looked for a while on that October day 104 years ago as if the whole town center at Farmington and Grand River would be gone.

It was only when farmer Elmer Empton suggested a solution—tear down the house in the fire's path belonging to Thad Kent—when the volunteers did and finally brought the flames under control.

When it was all over, the damage was assessed. Completely destroyed were a hardware store, a shoe store and a saloon. A store owned by J. M. Lester, a store owned by D. P. Warner and occupied by Porter Shepherd, Miss Pierr's military store, two stove stores and the business hall on the second floor. Dr. Ed Woodman's drug store, and a blacksmith shop with a barn and carriage house in the rear. It was all first thought that the whole town would be gone.

The other epic fire started on a cold January day in 1897 in the business block on the south side of Grand River just west of Farmington Road.

FOR NINE HOURS, volunteer firemen fought this blaze which destroyed stores and apartment buildings. Before the last flame was put out, fire fighters from Bedford Township, Redford, Novi, Livonia and Walled Lake had answered the calls for help.

It wasn't until 1899 that a bona fide volunteer fire department was organized in Farmington. Fire Chief T. A. McGee organized the company. Fred Pausan was in charge of volunteers handling chemicals and Amos Otis headed the hook, ladder and bucket company. The buckets were in use until the advent of the truck equipped with hoses.

Farmington Public Safety Director Daniel Byrnes estimates the city's annual fire damage at between \$40,000 and \$50,000 per year.

While no damage figures are available for the first fire, the second, in 1897, was calculated at a loss of \$12,000. In that era of 20 cents a pack cigarettes and 25 cent hamburgers, the damage was heavy.

Editors note: A thanks to Brenda Johnson, whose high school paper on fires was useful in documenting these events. Miss Johnson's paper is in the local history room of the Farmington Community Library on Liberty Street.

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