

AN AMERICAN EPIC—"BIRTH OF A NOTION"

"Another guy lost; and this one a foreman with 16 years seniority. We gotta do something about these drinking problems!"

"Okay, how about Bob over in Personnel. He had a bout with it himself and straightened out. He should know how to handle it. How about having him start some kind of program and see how it goes."

It seems a number of Occupational Alcoholism Programs started that way, especially in the early days (Translation: early days = 60s and early 70s). One of the employees who had experienced a problem himself was grabbed and told to start a program. Faced with this bolt from an unknown blue, the "grabbee" often felt: "My God, where do I get any information on how to set up a thing like this, is there any written information, what kind of training should we do, What Experiences Has Anyone Else Run Into, WHO CAN I TALK TO ABOUT THIS WHOLE THING?"

Many pioneers in the Occupational Alcoholism field recognized very early in their experience these needs to communicate and share program experiences with their peers. As "Sully" Sullivan put it, "I did not get into this new field very far before I crashed into loneliness again. I felt very much alone in almost all the work that I did in those early days . . ."

A group of people, having become aware of these needs, began to act. A meeting was organized for Tuesday, April 21, 1971 and held in the Conference Room of the Alcoholism Council of Greater Los Angeles. Mr. Weldon Butterworth welcomed the group which included: company program representatives, NCA and affiliate labor-management consultants, government program representatives, insurance company consultants and other non-affiliated independent consultants.

Discussions began on forming an organization. Mr. Ross Von Wiegand, Director of Labor-Management Services for NCA summarized some of the reasons and possible objectives for the formation of an association as follows:

- To meet periodically and develop methods of communication so that experiences and methodologies could be shared, and programs improved.
- To develop improved methods of recordkeeping and collection of uniform data and statistics.
- To develop uniform and improved methods of evaluating business and industrial programs.
- To develop job descriptions and job qualifications for labor-management administrators and consultants.
- To develop improved training programs and materials.
- To develop improved standards and techniques in providing consulting services to labor and management.

After a number of comments on these objectives the group unanimously approved the formation of a professional association. The first action taken was unanimous approval of temporary officers and an executive committee:

President: Frank Huddleston

Secretary-Treasurer: James Ray

Executive Committee: Frank Huddleston, James Ray, W.O. Foster, Jr. A.J. Sullivan, Ross Von Wiegand, Don Sandin, Joe Zuska, J.F. MacBeth, Morris Lookout, and Art Stump.

Later that day, the Executive Committee met and, among other things, the following actions were taken: efforts were initiated to draft a set of by-laws; work began on drafting a code of ethics; and after considerable discussion, the Committee recommended the following name to members of the Association:

Association of Labor-Management Administrators and Consultants On Alcoholism.

The Association now had a name, a good group of dedicated officers and an organization. Birth had occurred, the new baby had been christened ALMACA, and the journey of growth, maturation and the drive toward independence had begun—with only a few slight growing pains along the way.

A FEW SUBSEQUENT LANDMARKS

APRIL 10, 1972—First Annual Meeting in Kansas City, Mo. Fifty applications were submitted for membership and approved. The first organizational membership was voted for the American Association Against Addiction. AAAAA offered office space and services for ALMACA on a temporary basis in Akron, Ohio. By-Laws and amendments were presented to the membership and approved. A Code of Ethics was mailed to all members for approval.

1973—ALMACA's Board of Directors submitted a grant application to NIAAA to conduct basic research in the occupational alcoholism field. The grant was awarded effective July 1, 1974.

1974—ALMACA's national headquarters was moved to Atlanta, Ga. during August. A professional staff was secured to conduct the NIAAA grant research. A.J. "Sully" Sullivan of Standard Oil of California was elected as the second President of ALMACA, to serve a two-year term, at the Annual Meeting in Denver, Colo. The 1973 Annual Meeting had been in Washington, D.C.

1975—Work proceeded on the grant research and membership continued to grow as did the number of chapters across the U.S. At the Annual Meeting in Atlanta, Ga., Jim Baxter became Executive Director.

1976—The NIAAA grant expired and ALMACA became fully independent, subsisting on individual and corporate membership fees. The national headquarters office was moved to the Washington, D.C. area to provide better communications with other groups interested in the occupational alcoholism field. Dr. Paul A. Sherman, Director of Special Programs for ITT, became the third President of ALMACA at the Annual Meeting in San Diego, Calif.

1977—Membership and number of Chapters continued to grow. ALMACA strengthened its national leadership as the voice heard concerning the needs of the occupational alcoholism field and on a number of legislative proposals. The Annual Meeting in New York City was the biggest and best yet.

1978—Membership grew to 1,500 with some 30 Chapters across the country, including Hawaii. The Annual Meeting was planned for San Francisco, with some 72 workshops scheduled and attendance estimated at from 600-800.

1979 and 1980—During these two years ALMACA grew to over 2,000 members with 28 legally constituted Chapters and 7 in the process of forming. The Eighth Annual Meeting in Detroit drew more than 700 participants with a substantial increase at the Ninth ALMACA Conference, held in the Nation's Capitol.

1981—Edward Small of the New York Times became President. Membership increased to over 2600 and active chapters increased to 37. The Third Annual Eastern Regional Conference, held in Philadelphia, was a great success with over 400 attendees. Program standards were developed by NCA, ALMACA, OPCA and the AFL-CIO. The word processor went on line and in addition to all this a new Executive Director was appointed, Thomas J. Delaney, Jr.

HOW ONE LOCAL CHAPTER BEGAN

In early December, 1971, A.J. "Sully" Sullivan invited three people to lunch at Sam's Seafood Restaurant on Bush Street in San Francisco to discuss the possibility of organizing a group for the purpose of sharing information on the newly developing field of occupational alcoholism. The three were Bill Livingston, Labor-Management Coordinator for NCA San Francisco; Bob Temer who was heading up the program for the Civil Service Commission in San Francisco; and Mike Meek, M.D. who directed the alcoholism wing at the San Francisco Public Health Service Hospital.

After some discussion, all four recognized an obvious need for some form of peer group activity. They immediately began to develop plans for a meeting and shortly issued invitations for a second luncheon which was held at Jack's Restaurant in San Francisco on January 11, 1972.

Twenty-four attended this second luncheon, representing such employers as: Pacific Telephone, NCA, the PAR Program, Western Electric, Standard Oil, Fireman's Fund Insurance Companies, Sixth Army Program at the Presidio, labor and management representatives of United Airlines, the San Francisco Police Dept. Program and the U.S. Forestry Service. The first local Chapter of ALMACA had begun in San Francisco.

Approximately 75% of this original group are still active in the field and are attenders at the monthly Chapter meetings. Membership has grown steadily and attendance at the monthly meetings is a fairly steady average of 60 to 70. The largest meeting brought some 180 people to hear Dr. Abram Bennett speak on brain damage due to excessive drinking at the executive level. This Program made the front page of the San Francisco Examiner!

The Local Chapters that are the life blood of ALMACA now number 37. Chapters stretch across the country from St. Paul, Minn., to Charlotte, N.C., and from Boston to Seattle. We even have an overseas Chapter starting in London, England. Soon we can all hope to see a Chapter in every area of the U.S. and Canada and may be all over the globe.