

## THE SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

The Honorable Eugene K. Mangam  
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These last eleven years have been most exciting to me and most challenging. I grew up in a little community over in eastern Arizona during prohibition days. This was a strongly Mormon community. I never knew a drunk — we had no town drunk. When you and I were young there was no such thing as an alcoholic — there were town drunks and there were social drinkers; those were the two classifications. But I grew up and went to college. Then came the army stint and after that my life in Casa Grande. I began to see what alcohol can do to the lives of human beings.

Well, eleven years ago, in January, I was appointed to my present position as Presiding Judge of the Phoenix City Court, and here I became almost totally immersed in the problem of alcoholism. I see alcoholism from its most sordid side, really, because every day of the year — Christmas, New Year's, Thanksgiving, Fourth of July — every day of the year, Saturday and Sunday included, we have a 7:00 a.m. arraignment court where we arraign in summertime as many as forty to sixty or seventy, and in the wintertime as many as perhaps 104; of these, about 95% will be there with an alcohol-involved arrest, most of them for public intoxication. Of course, being knowledgeable in the field of alcoholism you realize that this represents about 5% of the alcoholics in our country; but these are the sad derelicts that our society tends to cast aside. They are not hopeless individuals, at least not all of them — and I would like to tell you the stories of two or three of them.

We started eight and a half years ago here in the City Court what we call a court class in alcoholism. I am sure that many of you know of Judge Ray Harrison in Des Moines, Iowa. He inaugurated a program by inviting people to meet with him one evening a week to discuss the problem of alcoholism. We started a similar program. Ours was not quite the same, because there is only one Judge Ray Harrison in the United States. We started inviting these derelicts that came before us. We offered to turn them loose if they would attend four meetings at our court room on Wednesday nights. We have been there now every Wednesday night for eight and a half years.

Here we introduce these people to the program of Alcoholics Anonymous, people who at the time we were dealing with them were discouraged, broken-hearted perhaps, who certainly felt that society was against them. But today there are several hundred of those men and women who have hope, who are living useful and productive lives.

Here is the story of Gar — now Gar grew up in the Middle West and lived the typical life of the alcoholic. He would get a job and lose it; then move somewhere else, get a job and lose it. He said to himself, "Well, if I can get to California I'll find new friends and I won't have to drink so much" — the geographical cure! So, he went to California. In one year he was arrested 32 times, 7 of them for drunken driving.

Then he decided: "I'm going to move to Phoenix. I'll find new friends . . ." He came to Phoenix; he was here about a week when he was thrown into jail for drunkenness. But here his life changed because one of our judges offered him the opportunity of attending our court class on alcoholism. He attended, he listened, he believed; for eight and a half years now he has not had a drink; he is living a useful, productive, happy life.

And then we have the literal reenactment of the story of the Prodigal Son — Harold came to Phoenix in 1950 following his discharge from the army. Between then and my birthday, February 16, 1966, he was arrested somewhere in the neighborhood of 150 times, every single one of them for drunk and disorderly conduct. Now the story of the Prodigal Son: At the time of his last arrest, Harold was feeding pigs for a living; his pay was the food that he could scrounge from the slop that he was feeding the pigs, a place to sleep, and a bottle of wine a day. Now Harold has not had a drink since 1966; he is married, supporting a wife and two children, living a useful and productive life.

On February 9th, a year ago this past February, on a Thursday night, there were two things that took place that are related. In the afternoon of that Thursday we buried Ray. Now Ray was an Indian boy; he was the kind that Bishop McCarthy referred to — calm, placid, you don't know what he thinks, what is going on in

his mind. Just two weeks before we buried Ray, I had him in the early morning court and I said to him, "Ray, when are you going to do something about your drinking! It seems to get the best of you."

After his death, I checked his record. There were 400 arrests in the city of Phoenix, every one of them, practically, for drunk and disorderly conduct. While Ray was drunk on Ardmore South Mountain he fell and killed himself; we buried him on Thursday. That Thursday night we had an AA birthday party for a group that has been meeting for about five years now. Every Thursday night we bring the women prisoners down out of jail and introduce them to the program of Alcoholics Anonymous. We were celebrating the birthday of a very charming, very attractive girl named Gerry. Exactly one year before that Thursday night she was one of the prisoners. She represented everything that alcohol could do to a woman. Today, if she were to walk through the door, some of you would think that a woman from Hollywood had come to visit us. She's a very charming, very attractive girl.

I was walking down the street the other day, coming back from my office, and ahead of me I saw a face. I can't say that I recognized it; perhaps it seemed to me a bit familiar, but as I drew close, a great smile spread across the face of this man. He stuck out his hand and said, "Judge Mangam, how are you?" I just assumed who he must be and I said, "Are you taking care of yourself?" "Yes, Judge," he said, "I have not been arrested, I haven't had a drink for three years."

That same day a man came into my office to see me. "Judge," he said, "I want to come in to thank you. You set me on the path of AA, and for over five years now I have not had a drink; I have not been arrested, I have not been in jail."

## **Satisfaction in Helping**

And you who are pastors, you know the joy that comes to you when a lost sheep comes back to the fold. That's the kind of joy that my work with these alcoholics has brought me. As I deal with these people and as I see these lives change, it reminds me of a favorite message of Scripture that we have in our Church. It reads in part, "If it so be that you labor all of your days and bring one soul unto me, how great shall be your reward." It goes on to promise that if we bring many souls, our reward will be so much greater. As I see these people, as I meet them, as I learn of their new lives, great joy and satisfaction comes to me, just as your work brings satisfaction to you

There is another program that we have at Phoenix City Court that deals with a little different type of society. Perhaps it more fully illustrates the problem of alcoholism in our country. That is the program that we have dealing with education, the rehabilitation of the drunken driver. Perhaps some of you read the article in the February issue of the Readers Digest that tells of the program that was started in 1966 in the Phoenix City Court. At the time, back in 1964, we were arresting and convicting somewhere in the neighborhood of 3,000 people per year for drunken driving. I conceived the thought, the idea, that some of these people needed special education, special training. I had seen what rehabilitation programs could do for the multiple violator, the person who runs too many red lights, too many stop signs. I knew that education could be of value.

It was my good luck at a safety conference one day to meet Dr. Stewart from Arizona State University. You'll read about him in the story. He is the one who developed the course content and the program that is being taught. And I mentioned to Dr. Stewart my desire to start a program for the education and rehabilitation of these people. He was immediately interested; and, before we left the meeting that day, we laid the ground work that led to the establishment of our DWI School.

Lately I have been in correspondence with a little judge over in Ireland who is carrying on the same program.

The seriousness of drunken driving I don't have to relate to you. We have put some seven thousand people through our school; the evaluation we have made shows that the school has been extremely productive in rehabilitating these people. Last fall, our city became involved in one of the government grant programs, the Alcohol Safety Action Program. It brought \$2.2 million to Phoenix for a concentrated battle to locate and to treat the alcoholic drivers. We picked one hundred at random, just absolutely pure random. We went into the back records of several years ago and pulled out a hundred names of people that had been convicted of driving under the influence of alcohol in the Phoenix City Court. About one-third of them were social drinkers, persons with one arrest; no other contact with the law in any way. About 60-65% of these people — and they are common citizens; they are members of your parishes; they are members of my Church, all the Churches,

all the strata of our society — have an almost incredible record of contacts with law enforcement over the years. Some of them had as high as nineteen arrests for drunken driving, twelve arrests, nine arrests, seven arrests for drunken driving; one hundred, two hundred arrests of one kind or another for drunk and disorderly conduct, assault and battery, petty thefts, and all those crimes on a misdemeanor level that generally flow from the misuse of alcohol.

So one thing that we have uncovered in this school is that the problem drinker is still a functioning member of society in most instances. The skid row derelict doesn't have an automobile but he is still, as you know, able to function — on a level well below a desirable level — but still functioning, holding jobs, driving an automobile, but an incredible record of criminal activity has been built up by these people.

### **Serious Problems in Drivers Who Drink**

One of the great side benefits that has come to us as a result of this work is the realization of how really serious this problem of alcoholism is among those who operate automobiles. And they are the great bulk of the arrests. The federal government will tell you, and I think rightly so, that the alcoholic is the big problem of our highways.\* We can't pass off the social drinker. The social drinker does get too drunk on occasion, and does get involved in drinking and driving, and does get involved in accidents and fatalities; but it is surprising how overwhelming is the percentage of alcoholics among those who are arrested. The average alcoholic content is well above .20, and I think you know what that means from the standpoint of alcohol in the system.

I love the people of Alcoholics Anonymous. I was privileged to speak at the World Conference of AA in Miami Beach a couple of years ago and to see the wonderful, wonderful people who were there. To get acquainted with them, to attend the meetings, and to hear their stories was a beautiful experience. Likewise, it is a beautiful experience to attend AA meetings here in Phoenix and to hear the remarkable stories of those who have come out of the depths of alcoholism into the light and sunshine and beautiful life of sobriety. It was Abraham Lincoln who made the statement — I cannot quote his words exactly — that behind every alcoholic there is a genius, a remarkable person; and I think that must be true as I think of the members of AA that I have known, truly wonderful people that they are. And so I pay tribute to the members of Alcoholics Anonymous. I love them and I love the way they cooperate with us in our program of Alcoholics Anonymous to those who are still involved in alcoholism. It has been a great and challenging experience for me and I would not trade the last ten or eleven years of my life for any other vocation, any other calling, because I do feel that as I have carried out my work, I have tried to feel and to believe and to act as I think our Master would have wanted me to act.

*\* According to The Indianapolis Star (Dec. 16, 1972) a group of students from Butler University conducted a survey on certain streets of Indianapolis on weekends. The survey was conducted under the auspices of the Federally-funded Alcohol Safety Action Project (ASAP). Of 602 who voluntarily submitted to a Breathalyzer test — drunk or not — 170 were found "legally impaired" to drive. Two of every seven drivers interviewed admitted they'd had "a few for the road." Thirty-two sites, all areas with high accident rates were selected for the random checks. At the corner where the highest number of drivers stopped at a traffic light, two and a fourth imbibing drivers passed every minute.*

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