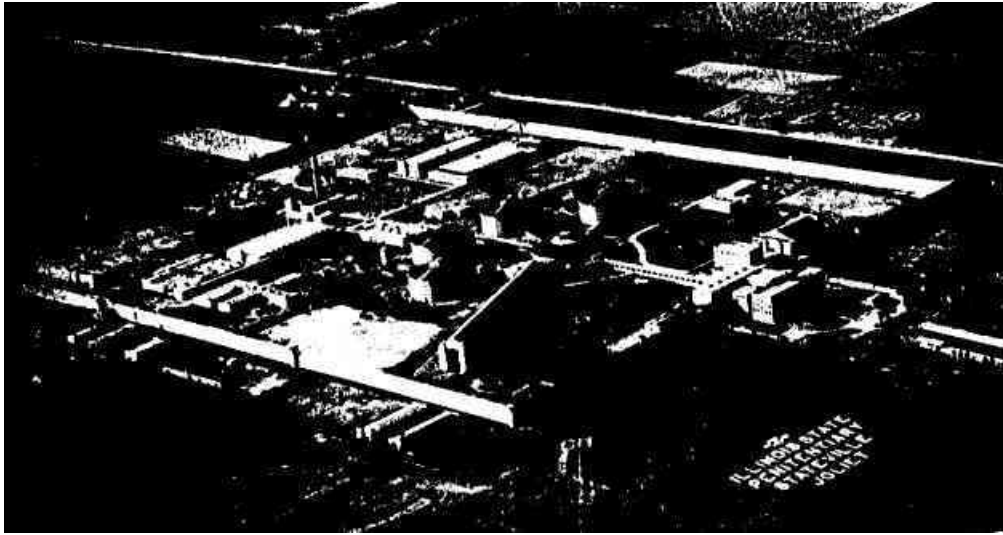


September 1951



Individual effort of 100 AA members has helped hundreds of Alcoholic inmates

PRISONS

AA HAS assumed a role of major importance in Illinois' prison system as the result of efforts of about 100 men within the Chicago group. Launched in April, 1948, not as a group project but as an individual effort by members, the work has taken definite shape, has highly impressed authorities, and has helped hundreds of men.

To those who don't know their way around prisons the thought of alcohol seems remote. But despite the most stringent supervision it

can be obtained or made within most any prison from anything from potato peelings up.

Instill AA Philosophy

Many inmates are there as a direct result of alcohol. It is to these men that AA makes its appeal. The major effort is not so much to dry out a man as to instill in him the philosophy of Alcoholics Anonymous, so that his stay in prison

will be easier to bear, and to prepare him to face the world when he has completed his stretch.

Anonymity Eliminated

Prior to organization of the prison groups articles were published on AA in the Joliet Stateville Time, the penitentiary newspaper. Talks were given over the prison intercommunication system. Anonymity was necessarily eliminated. This, to many prisoners at the start, was a stumbling block. For parole boards look with disfavor on alcoholics because there are so many repeaters among them.

Three groups totaling 47 men out of a prison population of 3,000 were soon formed. This number has now swelled to several hundred, organized in many groups at Stateville, Old Prison at Joliet and at the Honor Farm.

Two Types of Meetings

Two types of meetings are held. One, led by inmates, usually discusses basic AA. A member from the "outside" sits in with the inmate members and takes his turn when called on for remarks. Copies of the *Big Book*, the *Grapevine* and other AA literature are furnished the inmates. Meetings are held in

rooms set aside for the purpose.

A second type is the "speakers" meeting. For these, two or more groups are assembled and visiting AAs and selected inmate members tell their views on how AA works.

Record Cards Marked AA

Names of all members are placed on file with the senior captain of the guard. The bureau of identification marks a man's record card "AA." About a third of the members are Negroes. Two thirds of the members have a year or more to serve before discharge or possible parole. There are even lifers in the group.

New members are added when member turns in the name and prison number of an inmate who wants to join. The applicant is screened by inmate members, who explain the program to him and make sure his purpose is really AA and not some ulterior motive.

Discharged AA Gets Sponsor

On discharge or parole, and members are urged to await discharge the inmate member is given a sponsor in the town to which he is going. Effort is made to induce the men to settle in communities away from extremely large centers of