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Several agencies help alcoholic

Alcoholism has risen dramatically over the past few years, according to recent surveys. Data show that it is especially serious among high school and college students. Since World War II, alcoholism

has increased greatly without attracting much notice. Data show there are 10 to 14 million people suffering from alcohol abuse.

An estimated 5 percent of America's high school students become intoxicated at least once weekly. A recent survey of young people in the military showed that between 60 and 80 percent of Army and Navy personnel had some degree of drinking problem.

Why are people, especially those of high school and college age, drinking more alcohol? Dr. Clessen Martin, head of the psychology department at Texas A&M University, offers several explanations. He recently said the main reason for alcohol abuse is that alcohol offers a means of escape from problems.

He said alcohol seems to produce a "good" effect, but it is in fact a depressant. "It depresses the central nervous system," he said. And alcohol is a "fantastically effective anxiety reducer."

Advertising plays an important role in alcohol abuse, Martin said, adding, "Everything that is good in our culture — beautiful women,

in the gutter, but, Martin said, "This accounts for 5 percent of the 14 million people who are alcoholic."

Martin added that data show alcoholism increases as a person rises up the educational ladder. Dr. Wade Birch, director of the Personal Counseling Service at A&M, said there is a drinking problem among A&M students. He said he suspects moderate drinking during the week, but when the weekend arrives, "drinking just skyrockets."

The counseling service treats only a small number of students with drinking problems. Birch said, "marriage problems, boy-girl relationships, parental pressures are their primary concern."

Birch said he thinks there are more students with drinking problems, but they don't seek help. He said drinking is "accepted and expected among students."

Martin said, "A person who gets drunk sees himself as the wittiest, most intelligent, best looking person in the world."

What does a person do if he or she suspects a drinking problem? Psychologists say he must first examine his own drinking habits. Does he

have a couple of beers or who sours to cope with daily stress there a loss of interest in school job with an increase in social Unexplained accidents while ing and unstable emotional

"Alcoholism is the fourth major health problem in the country, next to cancer, heart disease and mental illness."

such as irrational anger and telltale signs of drinking problem. Depression can also be a sign. Drs. Martin and Birch said the solution to alcohol abuse is counseling. The university personal counseling service offers group and individual therapy. In the Bryan County area, the Mental Health Mental Retardation Center has alcoholic counseling program. Bluebonnet Psychiatric Center offers counseling. There is an Alcoholics Anonymous organization 1007 W. 26th in Bryan.

"Everything that is good in our culture — beautiful women, nice cars, fine homes — is associated with alcohol."

nice cars, fine homes — is associated with alcohol." He named other contributing factors, such as peer group pressures, broken homes, and strain from school or jobs.

The number of popular beliefs and misconceptions surrounding alcoholism is astounding, Martin said. "People have a concept of alcoholism as being a moral problem." He said the church condemns an alcoholic as being morally corrupt. It was not until 1957 that the American Medical Association recognized alcoholism as a disease.

"Alcoholism is the fourth major health problem in the country, next to cancer, heart disease and mental illness," Martin said. In the public's mind, alcohol does not seem to be a drug, but ethynol (the active ingredient in alcohol) is a drug. "It is just as addictive psychologically and physiologically as heroin," he said.

Extensive research has been done on alcoholic personality traits, but there is no unique personality that becomes alcoholic, Martin said.

He said a person may become a problem drinker from the "social" habit of drinking a "few beers" or the nightly martini that becomes three or four. The stereotypical alcoholic is the "wino" on skid row or

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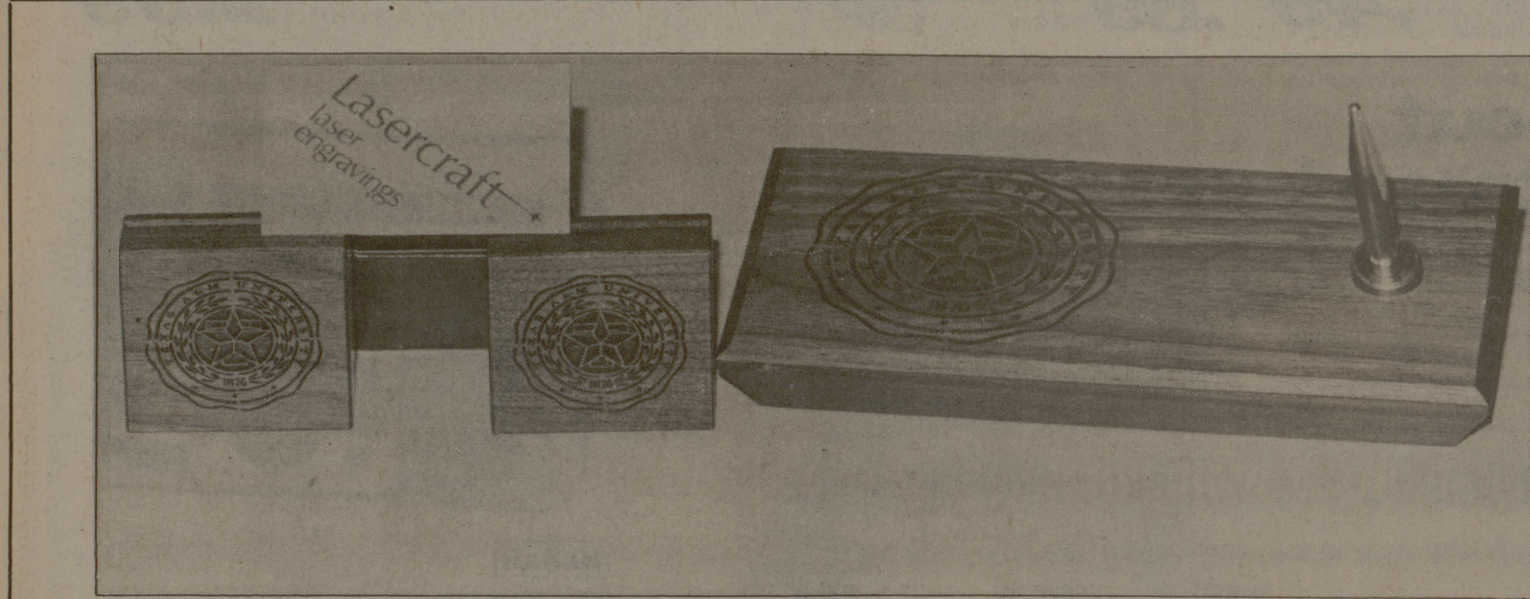
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GOODYEAR

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Omega Phi Alpha, 6:30 p.m., 501 Rudder
TAMU Forestry Club, 7:30 p.m., 115 Forest Science Building
Pentagon Area Hometown Club, 8 p.m., 607 Rudder

Thursday
Town Hall, University Symphonic Band, 12:30 p.m., MSC Lounge
MSC Movie, "The City That Forgot About Christmas," 6:30 p.m., Rudder Auditorium
Children's Christmas Party, 7-10 p.m., 225-230 MSC
Snow Ski Club, 7:30 p.m., 701 Rudder
Cepheid Variable, "Phantom of the

Friday
Saddle & Sirloin Club, Christmas Formal, 8 to 12 p.m., 201 ballroom
Commencement for Graduate students, 7:30 p.m., Rudder Auditorium

Saturday
Commencement, 9 a.m., G. Rollie White Coliseum
Commencement, Gen. Don A. Strickland, 1:30 p.m., G. Rollie White Coliseum

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