

PROFILE IN COURAGE

“Men drink for a sense of power, while women drink out of frustration, helplessness and dependency,” says Jean Kirkpatrick, Ph.D., a woman who knows. She was a

drinker, a heavy drinker. Today, at age 66, she is a recovered alcoholic and an author, lecturer, sociologist and founder of Women for Sobriety (WFS, a recovery program for women addicted to alcohol that has grown to 200 chapters nationwide. It took Kirkpatrick 28 years to kick alcohol (a story dramatically told in her book *Turnabout*). That grueling period included a broken marriage, loss of teaching and writing jobs,

a prison sentence for drunk driving, several suicide attempts and twice dropping out of Alcoholics Anonymous—a program she faults for reinforcing women’s feelings of guilt and powerlessness through its emphasis on humiliating confessions.

In 1969, at the age of 45, unemployed and emotionally wrung out, she set out to put her life together again. After five years of intense searching and introspection (“I read everything from Ralph Waldo Emerson to Norman Vincent Peale”), Kirkpatrick founded Women for Sobriety to confront the

problems of America’s 5 million women alcoholics.

The WFS regimen concentrates on group therapy, meditation and nutritional

information.

“Women need to learn to be assertive, express anger and handle guilt,” she says.

“What women really need is the self-confidence to stay sober. It is probably a sad commentary on the times when we realize that we must make an effort to feel happy about ourselves, that we must think about how really nice we are.”

Kirkpatrick, who received her doctorate in 1971, 16 years after she started working on it, says the idea



Jean Kirkpatrick: recovered alcoholic.

behind Women for Sobriety is to empower women so that they can do anything they want. “Our statements of acceptance are things to live by,” she says. “They encourage women to be in charge of their lives and their thoughts. Being in a group seems to help in terms of identification. People need to know they’re not in this alone. They need support and something to give them hope.”

To contact Women for Sobriety, call 215-536-8026 or write to PO Box 618, Quakertown, PA 18951.