

CHARLES DEDERICH

Dederich: You asked the question about how did Synanon start?

It took on a formal aspect about the beginning of July in 1958, when it became obvious that something was happening that made it possible for some people who were addicted to drugs to get along without using any drugs. The first move was to get an old store building in Ocean Park, California. The store building gave us a little bit more space, and kind of coagulated the thing, so that people were all hanging around the same place--eating, playing the Victrola, arguing, philosophizing, and so on.

I have a business background, and when anything is to be done, I think in terms of setting up a corporation. Other guys might think in some other terms: get a friend instead of a partnership, or something. I always think of a corporation as an entity that has a purpose to do something: handle money, acquire things, and so on. So, we just got hold of an attorney that I knew and he set up the corporation. I think the effective date of the incorporation was September 15th, just a couple of months after we got the store building. Then we had some kind of an entity.

Then, of course, inasmuch as the corporation is set up not to make a profit, we immediately filed for a Federal tax exemption certificate. Well, there were two reasons for clearing the tax exemption certificate. I knew that in order to get this, we would be subject to a pretty close scrutiny on the part of the Federal government. If we could pass through and get that, the very fact of our having the approval, in a sense, of the Internal Revenue Service would be much more valuable than any money that might come in as a result of it.

Actually, we didn't get very much tax exempt money for almost two years. Most of the money that came in to Synanon came in dollars, and fives and tens from the kind of people who don't have any problem of tax exemption; but, of course, the fact that we could always say that gifts were tax deductible did an awful lot.

I think it was about eighteen months after the incorporation date that the Federal government awarded us this thing. After a lot of correspondence, they sent an investigator down who spent a whole day on the basis of this correspondence that had gone back eighteen months. He had never seen anything like it. He didn't know why he liked it. We were most unconventional. Yet, I remember, I took him out to

the car after we'd spent a whole day in my office. He had his coat and his tie off and he was trying to figure out the gimmick.

He seemed to be impressed with the fact that it was sincere and that it was honest, and he said, "If you write me a letter outlining the things we've talked about . . . I have to have something to support my files and you'll get it."

I wrote him about a seven or eight page letter. We were in. So that's the way Synanon started. You asked something about me. As a matter of fact, as I told you, today is my birthday. I'm forty-nine years old today. I was born March twenty-second, 1913. I have very little memory of my early childhood. I suppose it's loaded with all kinds of experiences that were traumatic for me. On the surface it looks pretty good, although my father was an alcoholic. He was killed in a motor accident in 1917. I was four and a half years old, and my mother didn't marry again for seven years, at which time I was twelve. I assume (from some layman's knowledge of psychology) that the fact of my father being an alcoholic; the fact that his death came at the age (my being just short of five) at which time, classically, father is supposed to come into the picture; and the fact that my mother remarried right

at the second Oedipal period (another man came along and took my girl and so on), probably had a lot to do with the fact that I became an alcoholic.

I think of myself as being a pretty rigid person. I was raised a Roman Catholic, by the way, and when I was twelve or thirteen, around that age, I took it very seriously. I remember when the kids would all go to church on Sundays, I was one of the gang. I wasn't a sissy, on the outside. We'd hang around the churchyard before, before Mass on Sunday mornings. Then a lot of the kids would stay out, play marbles, smoke, or whatever kids do, but I would always go to Church, because I believed, literally, that I would go to Hell, if I didn't go to church on Sundays. This is the way it had been laid down to me, and this I believed.

My stepfather was a little bit sophisticated for Toledo, Ohio. He wasn't a Roman Catholic and his library came into the house. When I was about fourteen, I got hold of the Outline of History by Wells, and I read it without any speculation or anything. It just made more sense to me than the literal Genesis story. I immediately became a militant atheist--almost overnight. This was the first sign of a kind of irrational rebellion which took me through high school. For instance, I went

to a Jesuit high school (which is not in existence any more), Saint John's High School in Toledo, Ohio. I went through a Catholic high school as an adolescent militant atheist, and then went on to Notre Dame for a couple of years the same way; apparently, always deliberately making myself a misfit.

There were other factors. My stepfather was way to the right of the Republican Party, although he never voted because he wasn't a citizen. He came over when he was one year old with his parents; but he never became a citizen, himself; but he was, he was that type of guy. He was pretty well fixed. I suppose he was worth about a quarter of a million dollars when he married my mother, very successful construction engineer. I was impelled to take the opposite view of everything that he stood for. We didn't get along. It was just a big war. I got all mixed up in the parlor pitch--never aggressively, but I knew a lot of guys and girls that were mixed up in the Communist movement in the late twenties and early thirties. This had to be, because of the things my stepfather stood for. I quit Notre Dame in the second year. I was thinking about that last night. Some people were over and we were talking about these matters. I think the reason I quit school was that I didn't know how to work and I

didn't know how to study. I had never done any studying. Things came very easy for me. I was a straight A student in grammar school, in high school, and in the first year of college. When I went to college, I was, I was so contemptuous of the thing that I didn't even buy the books. But for the first year, I had no trouble at all; I always seemed to know everything that I had to know to get straight A's. I got to the second year of college and the whole thing caught up with me. I flunked three courses out of the four or five and just quit.

Went back to Toledo. Inasmuch as I didn't know anything except how to be a schoolboy, for no reason at all I went to Toledo University for a semester. That thing is so completely blocked out that I don't even remember one class, or one professor, or one instructor, or what the halls looked like. I was twenty at that time, trying, somehow, I suppose, to become intellectually, socially, and physically mature; and, quite obviously, having a hell of a time doing it. It seems incredible. I can't remember anything about that period; nothing at all. The only thing I can remember is the outside of Toledo University. Well, of course, I passed by it for years; it was right out on the main street of the town. But there's no memory of that thing at all.

Of course, there's another factor: a lot of my memory was destroyed or buried. I really had a, I suppose, real shock experience. I had meningitis when I was about thirty-one. I don't know what I remembered in my twenties, but I know that now, since that thing, I have very, very little memory of those times.

When I got out of school, I never looked for a job. I didn't have to. My mother (and secondarily, my stepfather) was a very prominent woman in the town and her family was very prominent, so I never looked for a job.

I got out of school in 1933, which was in the pit of the Depression, but the problem of my working was very easy. I just went to Libbey-Owens-Ford and, "Oh, Agnes's boy!" well, of course, you give him a job. That lasted about a year. The laminated glass business was just starting and they hadn't fixed the time-study situation very well, so through a crazy sequence of events, I made a lot of money for a kid, at that time. In 1933, I was making between a dollar and twenty and a dollar and a half an hour. That's when people were supporting families on eight and nine dollars a week.

Of course, by this time, I was getting to be a real good two-fisted drinker. I drank always on the

weekends to excess. I got drunk. Then, two or three times a week, I'd go down to the speakeasy and get looped.

As I said, that job lasted about a year, and I eventually wound up with another "Agnes's boy" job. We lived in a swanky part of town (on Butter River Road) and a neighbor of ours was the division manager of the Gulf Refining Company. There was a division point there for four states, and so I stumbled over to Gulf and got a job in the Accounting Department, pulling the handle with an adding machine. By dint of knowing the right people and so on, I got out of that within about a year and got into the Sales Department, and shortly after that, they put me on the road.

Once again, that was easy. I never went out on the road as a salesman. I learned the hard way. I started right in as a merchandising representative, with very loosely defined duties, and so on. There was a department made up of about four men who used to gallop around the countryside with very liberal expense accounts. We called ourselves the "have one on us boys."

I was twenty-five. There was still depression, and I had a ball. A fine expense account, a company car that was my own, and I dashed around real easy.

I didn't have to sell anything. I was always the man from the General Office who had a special price to work with, and so on. I did very well at it, and it was a lot of fun. I had a constitution like a horse (still do) and again I was able to do my work and get drunk every night. You know, money was no problem.

I sold myself on the idea that it was good for business and I could entertain well and so on. I was with Gulf a total of about nine years. I must have gone to work for them when I was about twenty-two. After nine years, I was in very solid. I was way ahead of my age group. Big corporations are an awful lot like the service, seniority is extremely important.

But I was ahead of my age group and doing very well when all of a sudden I got sick. After going through Toledo Hospital and getting my ear cut up a couple of times, I was finally diagnosed as meningitis. I was supposed to die. But I woke up in the medical clinic of Ann Arbor Hospital.

I found out that I had been shipped unconscious from Toledo Hospital to Ann Arbor and had been operated on again, and turned out to be one of the first civilians to get any penicillin. That was kind of an unusual thing. I had been in a double

room of Toledo Hospital, and the other man in my room was the uncle of Dr. [Albert C.] Furstenberg, who was the Dean of Medicine at the University of Michigan and the leading ear man on the planet at that time.

The other man said, "Take him up to Albert."

So my wife arranged all this. I was unconscious when I got up there. It was during the war [WW II] and my wife went to work in the hospital, for free, like people did in those days, because there weren't any nurses.

They were just beginning to play with penicillin and I turned into some kind of a guinea pig. I was supposed to die, but when I didn't they wanted to try some tricks. My wife told me later that she went out on three or four occasions to meet an airplane at the airport to get a package of penicillin and bring it in, and they would shoot it into me, I understand that they had developed a new technique and abandoned it on my case: they put the penicillin directly into my spinal column but found out later it wasn't necessary.

But I got over it. I stayed at the hospital for six or seven weeks and I was some kind of freak. They were always coming up, bundling me into a wheel chair, and taking me down to put me on a stage or

something inside of a lecture room with a group of doctors. They'd use a pointer and show how this had happened to this man, because I had a fatal bunch of symptoms, and so on.

This broke me financially. I went back to Toledo and moved in with my mother and my stepfather. They had moved out of the big house up the river and had moved back into a little house that she had bought in 1919 or 1920. This was about 1942. I moved in with my wife and youngster.

My stepfather was in the midst of a breakdown, diagnosed as involuntary melancholia. He never worked again. He died three or four years later, after I came to California.

I started to go down to the office every day for a couple of hours, and a very funny thing happened. My wife rode in the ambulance with me from Toledo Hospital to Ann Arbor. She left my company car in front of the hospital and forgot all about it. I remember it was one of the first things I thought about when I woke up and began to get a little bit oriented.

I asked her, "where is the car?"

She had one too, but she had used mine, and she said, "Oh my goodness! I left it in front of the hospital."

So I told her to call a friend of mine at the office and have him go out and get that car and put it in my garage. Well, instead of doing that, he just sent somebody and they put it back in the car pool.

Then, to jump ahead again. After I had been coming to the office for several weeks, for a couple of hours a day, I decided I want my company car back. I was ready to drive it, but I had to get license plates for it. So, I went over to the Operating Department and saw a guy by the name of Floyd Williamson, who ran the Operating Department.

I said, "Floyd, I need the slip for my license plates."

"Well, you better ask Nelson about it."

Nelson was my boss.

I said, "What do you mean? I've had a company car for years."

"Well, you better go to him."

So I went to Nelson's office and said, "I'd like to get licenses for my car."

I told him of my plight and that I wanted my car back, and he said, "Well, Chuck, you won't be traveling much."

It was wartime and we weren't doing much traveling anyway. We were very fussy about our B

stamps and all that business, having to be, being an oil company.

He said, "You won't need your car. Just sort of cool it for a while."

I walked out of his office. I didn't walk into it again for ten years. I'd worked for Gulf for about nine years at that time, and I walked out, and went home and decided to come to California.

I had picked up from the hospital, you know, the way one does, that I wasn't going to last very long. I thought I was going to last about six months. The mastoidectomy, one simple and one radical, and the meningitis and everything else that went along with it, was supposed to have put a strain on my heart and knocked me out.

I'd always wanted to come to California. I wanted to lie on the beach. That's what I wanted to do. So, I got on a bus with a patch over my eye. One eye was crossed all over the place. My face was all down. The seventh nerve was severed. That's why I'm dead on this side of the eye.

I came out to California and lived with some friends of the family for a week or so up in Westwood, and then came down to Santa Monica and got a real flea-bag room. That was a real new experience. I had always lived well at home and by myself. I went

down to Muscle Beach here in Santa Monica, and hung around there for a while, and then I got discouraged. I got scared. I called my wife up and said that I better come home.

She said, "Well, you don't sound too well. I'll come out."

So she came out and brought the youngster. I became a real Muscle Beach nut. I went the whole route. I grew a big bushy mustache; my hair got as long as yours is, an Errol Flynn business; and I went on a diet. I weighed then almost as much as I do now--about two hundred and ten or twenty pounds--so I went on a diet and lifted weights and played volley ball. I lost about sixty-five pounds and became a body worshipper. I was a vegetarian and I didn't smoke and I didn't drink.

I understand now that meningitis, more often than not, induces an organic psychosis. I had it; I really had it. I became a real boss nut and I had a bona fide spiritual experience.

Everything went swell for about two years, but it's impossible to tell you how I got by. Gulf Refining Company paid me for a few months. They sent my check out here but finally cut it off. My wife picked up an occasional job, and sometimes I would help somebody move. Later on, I got to caddying

at the Riviera Country Club. And I got a job stabbing paper on the beach--running around and picking paper up for six dollars a day. I don't know how I got by. I know that we were very happy. Got a hold of a trailer, an old piece of junk that couldn't even be moved, a wartime trailer camp situation, no wheels on it. We managed to live and it was a lot of fun.

Then my mother came out to visit us, and she was tickled to death at what she saw. I had straightened out. She'd always worried about me because I was always living too fast. She was tickled to death with what she saw. She was a very unconventional person. She liked things like living in trailers. She got an awful kick out of that, and liked this casual, quasi-bohemian beach business and so on.

But it had a queer effect on me. Her appearance on the scene made me nervous and I thought, "My goodness, what am I doing? Here I am, the great Chuck Dederich, living on the beach in a trailer and all this kind of stuff."

You see, I had to be a big man in my mother's eyes; so I decided (I didn't figure it in those terms, but I suppose) to make a comeback.

Well, the first thing I did was get myself fixed up and tear around to all the oil companies. Because

of my physical condition; because of the fact that I had a great big bushy mustache; because of the fact that I was scared to death and had never asked for a job in my life, I couldn't connect with any of the oil companies. They gave me, as an excuse, that their seniority setup was such that they couldn't hire anybody like me. My background was way ahead of any starting point they had and yak, yak, yak.

And lo and behold! I had no economic worries when I was living as a beach bum. Everything was fine. All of a sudden, I was worried sick (for no reason, in reality), and then I got pretty frantic. I got some jobs. I couldn't get jobs at any of the war plants because I couldn't pass the physical. I tried quite a few of them but I was turned down because of the hole in my head. I really was a good physical specimen. I could run from Santa Monica Beach up to State Beach. I could walk from Santa Monica up to Riviera Country Club and caddy eighteen holes with two bags and walk back again. But there was something wrong with my heart and I had this hole in the side of my head, so they wouldn't hire me. They were hiring anybody that could breathe, but they wouldn't hire me, and this really scared me.

Then I got mixed up in some kind. . . I met some guys on the beach who were thinking of putting

a movie together, and I knocked myself out on that, but we never got to first base. We couldn't get the people that we thought we had a connection with. There was some nephew of Leo Carrillo, when he was on top, but that fell through.

It's almost boring. It's just one crazy deal after another. Somehow, I managed to get hold of enough money to keep us going for the next few years. I didn't have any formal jobs. I promoted this and that. I set up a corporation to develop a weed-killing machine. I set up another one to distribute a kind of paper cloth product called Miracloth, which sells all over the country now. I got mixed up with Alfred Bloomingdale, one of the scions of the Bloomingdale Department Store crowd, who runs the Diners' Club out here. A real crazy situation and getting drunker and drunker all the time.

In the meantime, I walked out on my first wife and youngster and married another girl, who was working for this weed-killing corporation that I set up. We had a God-awful time. It was a terrible mistake. But we had a child, and we moved out to Laguna, and I set up an income tax consulting service and got by on that for a few months. Then I went to work for a contractor. Finally we separated, and she went back to New York with the baby. I think we were

separated about a year and a half.

Then my mother died. She left me with some money, not very much, but I don't intend to go into all that. I went to New York and got Ruth and the baby and we came back to Santa Monica and bought a little house up here in Mar Vista, and I went to work for Douglas Aircraft. I had worked for Douglas before.

When my mother died, I really went to pot. I got to drinking worse and worse. After a lot of crazy circumstances, Ruth finally told me to get lost and made it stick. She had filed for divorce on two or three occasions and I was always able to talk her out of it, but she finally made it stick. I didn't want to be married to her but I didn't know how to get out of it. I thought, as alkie always do, (and really sincerely) that she was dependent upon me and I couldn't leave her, but it was absolutely the reverse. I had a complete, morbid dependency on her, and she threw me out.

I've never had a drink since. She tossed me out when I had been sober for about two weeks. If she had given in to my blandishments, I would probably be dead today; but she just made it stick. When I got into AA, I became, once again, completely compulsive about it, as I am about everything else, as I am now. I threw myself completely into the whole

AA mechanism. I know that I went to at least four hundred and fifty meetings the first year. A lot more than one a day. I never missed a day. That's all I did. I lived in AA clubs, except when I was working, and that went on for about a year.

I wound up with a job for Aero-Physics Development Company, which is a subsidiary of Curtiss-Wright, and worked for them for about a year. They transferred me up to Santa Barbara. I picked up some skills through these crazy years. I became a journeyman tool maker, and then I went to work for Aero-Physics as a pattern maker. They gave me my journeyman rating as a pattern maker.

Then they put me in the office, and I was thinking in terms of this being a good way for me to build another career. I know my way around corporations. I know how to play the politics. I was about to get a set of golf clubs. I hadn't played any golf for ten or fifteen years.

And I was thinking of my youngster in the Army. I was thinking that when he got out of the Army, he could come up with me. I could get a job for him up there, and he could go to the University of California in Santa Barbara. I had been sober about a year, and I was thinking along these terms, but then it all began to turn to garbage.

I got so that I was bored, and boredom has always been my big symptom. I was always completely bored. I began to detect boredom. It lasted for about two weeks. I didn't like what I was doing. It was the first time this had happened since I got sober. It's the last time it ever did happen. It'll be five years in June [1962].

For some reason, I had a copy of Emerson's essay on self-reliance. It was an old copy that my stepfather had got for a graduation present from M.I.T. in 1902, a beautiful calf-bound thing, and somehow, it was in my effects. I had very little left. I had given everything away that I had walked out with. I'd given my clothing and everything else to various AA people, but this thing was kicking around my suitcases. I took this copy of the essay to the office. I had read it two or three times before in my life, and I had read it, of course, in school. I would sit there in the office, bored, and I'd pull this thing out. I'd read it and would embellish it with marginal notes. I did this for about two weeks.

This followed a very, very frightening time. This two weeks I am speaking of was spent working in the office, but the week before that, I couldn't work, and I didn't know why. I had been sober a

year and I was frightened to death. I spent all my time sitting in the AA center at Santa Barbara. I was afraid to go out for meals. I was afraid to go out on the streets. I would be there at nine o'clock in the morning, when the place opened; and I would stay until midnight, when it closed. Then I would go home, or to a little room I had in Santa Barbara, and I would read all night. I did this for about a week.

When I went back to work, I stumbled on this self-reliance essay and I sat there and read it and fooled with it. Then one morning I just walked in and gave notice. I was aware of the fact that I was unemployable, or at least I had always thought that I was. I was too fat to get into the manufacturing plants. I was forty-four and I didn't have any taste for going back into promoting or anything. I had lost my front: I didn't have the clothes or the automobile or anything.

But I quit. I had two hundred dollars and a second-hand automobile that I owed thirteen hundred dollars on, and I left Santa Barbara and came whistling down the highway. I got to Santa Monica and rented an apartment for a hundred and ten dollars a month, north of Wilshire, in a nice section.

I went over to the AA center here in Santa Monica,

and began to get really mixed up in an aspect of the AA fellowship that had never interested me before.

That first year, I had made, oh, I suppose, well over a hundred talks at AA meetings, in hospitals, in jails, as far north as Soledad Penitentiary, south to San Diego and everything in between. I was always in demand. I could be very funny. I could play on peoples' emotions. I could make them cry, make them laugh, and I was everything. Whatever I wanted to be, I would get up and wave my arms and be that thing. I would be an evangelist or a philosopher, a psychologist or anything. It was fantastic. I think I might have set the whole movement back five years.

But when I got back to Santa Monica, I became interested in helping individual drunks. So, I took every call that came in. I took them all. And I loaded my apartment with guys who would call in. I'd money them and feed them and the whole business. Naturally, I ran out of money almost immediately. I realized I needed some money, and I saw an ad in the paper for toolmakers at a little job shop out around the airport. They were advertising a lot of overtime and so on, and I figured that in three or four months, I could make myself about three thousand dollars. They were working seven days a

week and all that business. So I went out and I got a job. I worked for three days and I thought I'd lose my mind. I didn't like it. I was bored. I was very anxious and so on, and they fired me. I was never so relieved in my life. I felt wonderful. I took my tool box and went whistling out of the plant and I felt so good that I stopped and did something which really bugs me to this day. I stopped and got a haircut on the way home. I don't know why. They paid me about a hundred dollars or something, and that's the last money that was ever paid me. That was about July, 1957.

The next two or three years is a tale told by an idiot. It just didn't seem to have any sequence. I don't know how I got by. I never slept in my car. I lost my car shortly after that. I never slept outside. I don't know how I got by. People fed me. People would give me money. I didn't ask for any. Crazy things happened.

Somehow, I got into a Twelfth Step house. I was going to go to work for this guy. I was in there about a week and I was flat busted broke. I didn't know how to get out. I still had my car at this time but there was no gas in it. I couldn't even feed myself.

Then, out of the clear sky, the guys that I had

known in Santa Barbara, in the AA group up there, arrived. They had located me, somehow, in this Twelfth Step house in Los Angeles. They had an envelope and there was thirty-two dollars in it. Somebody had taken up a collection in Santa Barbara. They had heard that I was running around helping drunks, and they gave me this thirty-two dollars. Well, I immediately backed my car out of the driveway, filled it up with gasoline, and came down to Santa Monica and got a little room for eight dollars a week. That kind of thing kept happening. This was in the summer and fall of 1957, and on August 26th, 1957, through a crazy bunch of circumstances, I got a jolt of LSD over at UCLA. Do you know what LSD is?

Dixon: No.

Dederich: Lysergic acid. It's a schizophrenic drug that psychoanalysts use. I met a therapist that was working with the Volunteers of America on a program subsidized by UCLA. Dr. [Keith S.] Ditman was over there. I think he's still running the Alcohol Study Committee.

They gave me some LSD. I think I was the only person up to that time, at least, that somehow, in the confusion, didn't take any of these pre-LSD tests. They didn't give me any personality test or anything. I know now that they never would have

given it to me, because I'd been turned down in these years when I was so vague in my mind. I applied for a job at the gas company, one time, and did a magnificent job on the tests. When I went back to get the results, written across the thing was "unfeasible," and the girl who handed it to me was kind of terrified as she handed the thing to me. I could never have passed the test to get LSD.

Well, that LSD experience is the most important single experience in my entire life. On that date, I became a different person, really and truly. I took this thing under this experimental program at UCLA. It's one of these things Aldous Huxley was playing with for a long time. I had a bona fide religious experience in the psychological sense. Everything that has happened to me since, Synanon, everything, dates from that point. I had a fantastic experience with the drug. I didn't have the heightened color sense and the distorted perspective and the kind of thing that's described in Huxley's stories to perception in Heaven and Hell. It was on a philosophical level. I seemed, somehow, to . . . This is very difficult; in fact, it's impossible to verbalize, but I'll try by saying that I seemed to know, or sense the resolution of the paradox. Everything seemed exquisitely unimportant and

and exquisitely important at the same time. The only thing unusual about it is the fact that it came suddenly. It came with an impact. It would be like somebody suddenly breaking through into a knowledge of advanced differential calculus, never having known anything but long division before. I suppose I grew up, in a sense; except that, in fact, it happened in a period of two or three months, following this experience. I might have caught up with myself, chronologically.

Now, it's possible that maybe this is what rebirth is. It isn't rebirth at all. It's just a matter of a rapid maturation. The experience of a rapid maturation may be an experience in itself, by the very rapidity of it; the great shock. Possibly one is put into a position where he sees more than someone else at the same level of wisdom, whatever that is, merely because of a very sudden glance at reality, whatever that is. So, this took place in August.

I had one more experience with LSD about four months later. It didn't do anything. I just got mildly tight, like I might on six or seven martinis. Nothing happened. I had the feeling that it was dark, not that I was psychoanalyzed. I think of myself as a paranoid personality. Maybe there's a

transcendence or something. Everything mattered very much, and yet it didn't matter at all.

It was around February that I put together a few alcoholics that I knew, to develop some real vague amorphous ideas that I had on group therapy-- strictly amateur. I had never had any group therapy in my life. I'm now a member of the American Society of Group Psychotherapists. I've never seen anybody work in group therapy.

Dixon: You've read a lot about it?

Dederich: No. I've read nothing about group therapy. I don't know anything about it. I know Synanon, but I've never read anything about group therapy. Most of the people that have come to Synanon, of course, have experienced varying kinds of group therapy, but I never have.

That brings us up to the early part of 1958. We met once a week up till about May, and then an addict came into the picture, a friend of one of the guys that was in the original group. Possibly from an interest in psychology that goes back a long way, I was impressed by the fact that this kid didn't use any drugs. I've always known that drug addicts use drugs. I know that they don't stop. I know this. When this kid didn't use any drugs, and when he ran into a few more, and they kind of joined this group,

and they didn't use any drugs, then I knew that something was going on. I knew that there was some kind of innovation trying to take place. I knew that it was some kind of a breakthrough. You're going to have to clue me again.

Dixon: On one of the group tapes that I listened to, someone mentioned the fact that there'd always been a core of the old standbys, so to speak.

Dederich: Well, naturally, there wasn't any core before there were any dope fiends. The core grew up. This all comes later, of course. The first group was made up of people that I met in AA. There were no drug addicts until this boy, Whitey Walker, came along in May. He was my Number One boy until he went back to the penitentiary, slipped and got fouled up again. I think he stayed clean about three and a half to four months. He's getting out now. I have corresponded with him these past three years or four years that he's been in the Joint.

There's been a change in core, you see. It formed shortly after we got hold of the first place down in Ocean Park. Now all the people that were in that original gang are gone. Two of them are still clean. They were eventually appointed to directorships in the corporation.

Synanon is not a member corporation, by the way.

There are only six members in Synanon Foundation to this day. I've always kept it very small, so that it could be mobile, so that we could do things with it. The only members in the Synanon Foundation are the six members of the Board of Directors. The people like Jack and all the kids who are here are residents or, or something else. None of the original directors are here today. I don't know how many directors have gone through the mill, probably half a dozen or so. They couldn't make it. There would be personality conflicts and with me and so on. This Board is made up completely of people who came off the streets, hooked, and came into Synanon and learned the Synanon method fresh from me. The original board was made up of some alcoholics and a couple of addicts who had been clean for awhile.

I have never been able to put down, as yet, in good sequence some of the thoughts that underlie whatever Synanon is. Whether it's a social movement or a socialization device or a therapeutic mechanism. Someday, maybe I'll get down to business and write a book about it. I can't do it yet. We're too close to the beginning of it, right in the middle. In retrospect, possibly.

I did get a thought down on paper about three and a half years ago, on the occasion of addressing

all the parole officers in Southern California. I was invited to come down and tell them about Synanon, shortly after we were incorporated. It had begun to attract attention, and I got a few thoughts on paper. I made a point, at that time, which I still believe to be underlying the whole thing. It's an assumption about chemically addictive personalities.

Everyone has addictions, but people who have to go way out with chemicals, booze, barbiturates, or heroin or something, might be potentially inner-directed people. Maybe they are oversensitive, or another word which isn't so semantically mushy--maybe they're overaware and they are forced, somehow, to build a callus. They may have a very, very clear picture of the moralities, right and wrong, at each point in space-time; yet, because of this very grasp of it, because of this overawareness, they're forced to build some kind of a callus which will shoot them into an addiction search or escape. Search and escape being the same thing, maybe. They care, therefore, are much more sensitive to hypocrisy and so on. They can't live with it. They're like children: they see too well. Maybe there is a tremendous potential there that can't be realized until the paradox is resolved. Let's put it this way: maybe a person who is addiction-prone must have

a greater understanding, even to survive. You see what I mean? Maybe other people can lie a little, cheat a little, and so on, and get away with it. There's nothing wrong with this at all. It just happens to be that that's the way the cultural evolution has worked out; but these misfits may have, under the misfitmanship, something that's worth tapping.

Maybe you can't communicate with this kind of a person, at least in the beginning, through logic and through the intellect. They have to be, possibly, even hypnotized into doing something without question. "Going through the set of motions" is a term that we use around here. You "go through a set of motions." Maybe you can't communicate with the emotional level through the intellect but you can do it by inducing the person, voluntarily, to go through a set of motions. You accomplish this by the exercise of a hypnotic power or a charismatic factor or something.

I can sell the blue sky. I know this. I can sell the blue sky and these kids are sold, against their will at the time, into doing certain things and considering certain values which are completely repugnant to them. Everybody who comes into this place acts like something that he is not for a long, long, long time. An addict getting up in the morning

and washing dishes and going to a meeting and sitting in a seminar and making his own bed and going to a Synanon and then going to bed at night. . . . You see, he's acting like something else. He's acting like something that he isn't. He's under a terrible, terrible strain because everything in him wants to be completely irresponsible and so on and so on. So, the dynamic is manipulated in an effort to induce a kind of inner direction in the person.

This is done in two ways: one way, with a very rigid authoritarian structure. There's a very, very powerful power structure in Synanon. It's the "old man" and levels and channels and everything else; but at the same time, it's very loose. It's extremely permissive, and, for some reason or other, this seems to produce a person who slowly begins to think for himself and doesn't react to his environment. He acts rather than reacts all the time.

Something that's done deliberately is always keeping the thing off balance, making it unpredictable. No matter what a person hooks on, no matter what the value is, pull the rug out from under it and ridicule it out of existence. Whether the value is conventionally "good" or "bad," doesn't make any difference. If a person begins to get hung up on religion or politics or patriotism or anything else,

ridicule it out of existence. Pull the rug out from under the person. Keep destroying his foundations all the time. Don't let him get hooked on anything, anything at all; because addicts and alcoholics are very compulsive people. They're one-track mind. They're always going to "get well" by lifting weights or eating litchi nuts or studying Zen or taking some kind of a magic pill that's going to do the thing-- some way-out approach to a problem that has nothing to do with the problem, at all. That's the rigidity underlying the very "surfacy" sophistication that that you see.

When you get to know our people, their backgrounds seem so sophisticated. They're bank robbers and five-hundred-dollar-a-night call girls. This, from one point of view, would seem to be the epitome of sophistication. Yet, it's very, very "surfacy;" it's very, very thin; and underneath you have a completely naive child, with a rigid, unconscious "right" and "wrong" structure, completely innocent and naive.

It's most manifest in our girls. Most of them have been prostitutes, and they are the biggest sissies in the world. They have this rigid morality code, the minute you uncover them. It's fantastic. Everybody's picked this up. Psychologists that come down and visit with them say that they're absolutely

naive. They're just black and white, and yet, they live lives, you know, where they run houses of assignation. They're sophisticated call girls, you'd think; but you clean them up and give them an opportunity to be secure in a tribal or a family situation, and this all changes. This all changes. They begin to think like the squarest convent girl. They're all frigid, one hundred per cent, one hundred per cent, one hundred per cent. Half our girls have never experienced orgasm. Professionals. Of course, this isn't anything new; this information has been pulled out of the prisons and bug houses and so on, but this is proof positive. These girls are more impelled, eventually, to tell the truth. It takes a long time for all this to come out; but they're sexual infants.

Dixon: This is something that had never occurred to me.

Dederich: And the same thing with the boys. We have some real rough boys in here; fellows that have been successful gangsters, and have not done too much time behind it, and who have had to handle important amounts of illegitimate money and so on. But under this thin layer is a code of right and wrong and a naivete about the realities that is absolutely appalling.

Dixon: I noticed on one of the tapes--I think it was Reid [Kimball] who was talking about this very thing.

Dederich: Reid is a fantastic case in point. Here is a completely sophisticated, very highly intelligent. . . He's a prodigy. He only went to about the ninth grade in school, and you heard his language; but he has done it all, all of it. Yet, his great-grandfather, I believe, was the second president of the Mormon Church, following Brigham Young, and this is Reid's tradition. Now, Reid is so naive and so shockable on a deep level. He has had strings of girls. He has been in blackmail and the whole works. One girl he was married to was out turning tricks on the streets to make gobs of money. He knows every big shot in Hollywood. He's tricked them all. Yet, he is so naive and has such an innocence underneath that he can't bear to think of any figure of significance in his life, even engaged in a sexual act. The idea that I have a sex life, for instance (I'm a very important figure to him), is offensive to him. How do you like that? And here's a guy that was picked up in Santa Maria, up the coast, with thirty thousand dollars in his pocket! So much money that the cops locked the money in the cell with him. They wouldn't take it from him, you know. Isn't it fantastic?

Jimmy Middleton--one of these days we're going to get him a job, working in The Untouchables,

because he has a complete gangster's face. He has not been on the level that Reid was. He's not that smart, but he's a real rough boy; pistol whipping and everything. He was in the Jackson [Michigan] prison riots and everything else. His picture's on the wall in my office. You may have been there. Jimmy is a rough, rough guy: tire iron, bicycle chain, and the whole works. This guy doesn't even use any bad language, at any time. He can't, now that he's cleaned up. He's just like a kid, like a newborn child; fantastic. And there are a lot of them.

As I said, with the girls it's much more manifest because of their sexual attitude. You can imagine the terrible conflict where you have been living on one layer and been forced, impelled, compelled to do something that is completely against their very vivid awareness of what is right and wrong for them. But it's buried, and you've really got a conflict, a complete schizophrenia, you see.

Now, there isn't any answer to this except to try to induce, usually in a younger person, some form of individuation before the time when the normal adult hits this. You know, the "life begins at forty" bit. The individuation thing--you come into the calm. Everything becomes kind of less important and the virtue of patience kind of sneaks up on you.

I mean, in the normal, well-adjusted adult, these things begin to happen at around forty, according to Jung and some other guys that are supposed to be authorities, a little bit earlier in women, and you kind of come into the calm. Now, you have to try to induce this thing in a younger person without killing the normal aggressiveness and ambition and so on that comes with youth. You can't make an old man out of a twenty-eight year old boy, because you kill him, you see? But, somehow you have to put him in possession of the wisdom that comes, say after forty, and you have to get it into this person of thirty or twenty-five or twenty. It almost requires a some kind of a transcendence mechanism.

The paradox has to be. That is, work toward resolution, before the organism is ready for it, you see? So, the theory is that maybe the fact that a person becomes addicted is a clue to a greater than normal potential, you see?

Then how do you induce this? When you hypnotize the person, in a sense. You put him in an environment which is manipulated to produce certain vacuums and pressures and you get him to go through certain motions. You begin to teach him that good boys and good girls get good things, and bad boys and bad girls get bad things. And you have to put it into

his own experience, because, of course, he has no trust, and he cannot trust anybody else's experience until he has begun to trust his own, you see?

Dixon: Now, when such a person is put back into "normal existence," what happens to him?

Dederich: Actually, in a sense, he's put into a "normal existence" for his emotional age immediately, and then, as far as we can determine, up to this time, he grows up more-or-less normally, like a child will grow up. There are kids [from Synanon] living outside, working outside, successful, creative, doing the things that people do; making money right along with their age group, or above; and so on.

I'm not concerned whether people ever leave Synanon, whatever Synanon will be. Who says that people have to live according to a certain norm? We only do this in parts of this country. You know, the normal dwelling machine existence. What's the matter with a kind of a club life? There are all kinds of ways to live. Many people, of course, far more people will go out and live just about exactly like other people of the culture live. Of course, right now, we're building an organization. We have a few sitting out there that we can kind of point to, but, at this time, it's a training school. These things have to be administered and operated.

God knows there is almost an infinite number of careers right within the Synanon framework. It won't be too long--I suppose a year, two years, six months-- before we may start putting people on the payroll. We do now, on an informal basis. We started about a year ago, giving everybody who has been at Synanon for six months, two dollars a week. We call it WAM, Walk Around Money. Something to jingle in their pockets, a little. When a person's been there six months, he's doing from a partial to more than a normal day's work, starting slowly. Why not pay them? Start paying them twenty dollars a week plus room and board, and set them up on work history and social security and everything else.

Quite obviously, any kind of a thing like this, must, if it's going to be successful, fit right into the culture. It shouldn't be encapsulated. We are very much a part of the culture now. We're active all over.

Here's something that people miss. Right now we have about five times as many members of Synanon who have never had any addiction problems. People like you. There are college professors and doctors and lawyers who belong to another corporation which we call Sponsors of Synanon. It's another bona fide California corporation; but the whole thing is Synanon.

So these people are in and out. They come to our Saturday night parties. They're down for lunch. There was a gang down here last night, four couples from the outside and two or three from our gang. It's supposed to be a synanon. Well, last night turned into a more of a general philosophical discussion. We sat here until midnight and yacked it up.

Our gang is invited out to dinner. They reciprocate in the end with dinners down here. Our kids are going out addressing service clubs, youth groups, university seminars. Tonight Jack and one of the girls will appear on a panel at a big ACLU thing with Dr. Brownstein, who, by the way, is an Associate Professor of Psychiatry at UCLA with a practice; a very big, significant psychoanalyst, who also is on the Board of Directors of the Sponsors of Synanon. We're active in politics. We introduce legislation. We do all these things, you see; it's a very important part of this. We're not something that you put on the other side of the moon. Our kids learn to live by living.

And, of course, we've got about fifty people from the Sponsors of Synanon who come down to the Club every Wednesday night, and have a synanon. I mean a real lids-off synanon.

Dixon: I know, Guy [Endore] was telling me about these sessions.

Dederich: Guy is one of the pillars of the square Synanons. Guy has been through analysis, which makes him a psychologist, and he wouldn't miss this.

Dixon: He says this is greater than any psychoanalysis he's ever gone through.

Dederich: Which, of course, brings up something else. You never know how the mind works or what it's trying to do. The Synanon idea must have been blowing around in my noodle for many, many years. I read an article years ago. It seems it was in maybe the middle forties, before I was even conscious that I had any kind of an alcohol problem, and actually, I didn't--I just drank an awful lot more than most people and got it away with it better. I was a good social drinker. I never got out of hand or anything. I didn't think that I had any problems. But, at any rate, I read an article in Cosmopolitan magazine which discussed some things that would come out in the Twentieth Century. One of them was some kind of a universal credit card which would result eventually in elimination of money, as we know it today. It wasn't too long before electronic computing came in and made possible things like the Diners Club and one thing and another. Quite possibly, there won't be much around except maybe some little change tokens in another twenty-five years or so. Money, as we

know it, is on its way out. There were about ten things that this author discussed. Another one was a cheap and effective psychoanalysis, and this idea fascinated me; I thought about it and thought about it. Quite obviously, psychoanalysis is not much of an answer, because you'd have to have a therapist. It takes about thirty years from birth to make one, and you'd have to have a therapist for about every ten people. Well, this is just too expensive in time and so on, but the idea fascinated me. I always used to play with it, you know. There must be some kind of an autonomous mechanism to clean up the neuroses that develop as a result of growing up in a complicated culture. Here it is [at Synanon], you see? The idea fascinated me and I did a lot of speculation on it.

When I threw myself head over heels into the whole AA thing, I was excited as the devil. I didn't know why. It didn't seem to be the answer, but at least it seemed that here's something that can do the impossible. It can stop me from drinking. Well, maybe there's a mechanism that can not only stop people from doing things, but maybe start them doing something else. And the thing gradually took form in my mind. Now, it's possible to get a bunch of people together, and we have the yeast, the yogurt.

All you have to do is take a few people who have some Synanon experience and you put them in a room with some other people that have had no Synanon experience and, given a little bit of courage and some patience, if they'll come around for a little while, they will get hooked. And they do--they get hooked.

Of course, at this time, it's done primarily to give the member of Synanon--the offender (whatever that is), the maladjusted person--a chance to get a look at members in the larger society and to find out that they're just as fouled up as he is, which, of course, they are.

Some truly fantastic things happen as people begin to see themselves in the mirror of other people, and begin to examine their attitudes and motivations and values--they get looser. They get happier. Things seem to straighten out. Their children don't bother them as much. They seem to fall in love with their wives and their husbands, and it's happening right here. These are squares. They're not lunatic-fringe people. They own houses with pictures on the wall and rugs on the floor, and they belong to the PTA and they have successful businesses and so on. So, what the potential is, Heaven only knows.

You see the thing, too, in a penitentiary

situation--one of the most exciting single things that's happening right now. Seven of our boys go to Terminal Island Penitentiary every Wednesday night and join a group of twenty to twenty-five regulars with a narcotic history in the big yard, and they separate into small synanon groups, just like we do here. They retire to small rooms with no supervision, no one in an administrative capacity, just prisoners and Synanon members, and have synanons. Well, we get comments, not only directly from the Warden and some of these other guys, but indirectly, that the thing's absolutely miraculous. These guys are turning. And it's had an effect on the whole T.I. population. It's become a very exclusive club. The vitality and the attitudes, everything, of these kids, in four short months has changed so remarkably, that they're going to put us to work in the women's side.

Of course, there's no dope problem there. I mean, occasionally dope gets into a penitentiary in little trickles, but there's no dope problem. It's a problem of their adjustment, somehow, in making do for a year, two years, or three years, with what they have to do, and it's working. They're very much excited about the thing. Now, this, of course, spells careers, doesn't it?

Dixon: Yes.

Dederich: Actually, the thing is creating a lot of roles, working in penitentiaries and working with parolees and so on. Who would be better fitted to be a parole officer, let's say five years from now, than a few Synanon graduates? I mean, you couldn't possibly duplicate it, you see, with the understanding that they would have. So it's only the beginning, and all we can do is just speculate where it's going.

Dixon: Has there been a change in the police attitude towards Synanon?

Dederich: I don't know what the police attitude is. It seems to be an individual thing. We've made a lot of good friends on various police forces--usually the younger guys, the newer type of policeman, the educated, career-policeman, rather than the political pork-barrel type. I suppose the official attitude of any group is always the attitude of the least advanced of the group. You know, it seeks the lowest level. There's obviously a change, because nothing succeeds like success. Things that they thought and said are, of course, are being proven by time. It's an axiom that you can't have addicts associate with one another because they'll all use drugs. Well, you see, they don't. It's an adage; it's an axiom. Well, it takes a generation to eliminate an axiom completely; but there's an awful lot of power behind

these old ideas because of rapid communication and mass communication and all this kind of stuff. You know, you get to be the darling of Life magazine, and this has an impact, you see. Then, we have the announced position, on a policy level, of the California Department of Corrections that our place is off-limits. In order to justify this, they have to go into all kinds of crazy fictions. On the other hand, you have the Federal attitude, embracing the whole idea; sending their people here, seeing hypes living right in the prison walls, which is completely unheard of.

Now, which is right? One is, particularly when you have a public-level support. One is ridiculous. The position of the California Adult Authority is ridiculous, and more and more and more people are becoming aware of this, and militantly aware of it. Of course, I always keep driving this wedge in all the time. If you're a taxpayer, you're paying the Adult Authority to smash the thing that you're supporting here. Where do you want your money to go? So, we're in a cultural lag. It takes time. We're not mad at anybody, and this is something that is very difficult to get over to people. There's nothing to be mad at.

Dixon: Now do any of the individual police officers ever

bring an addict to you?

Dederich: Oh yes, sure. We even have had the spectacle of parole officers and probation officers getting their kids into our place under the table, with no record, sticking their necks out to help. Of course, they're not the old "play it safe" type of civil servant. They like their work. And if it requires that they stick their necks out and be subject to criticism or be called on the carpet, they will take that chance--up to a point. We have had probationers slipped in under the table because of the announced policy of the Probation Department. Of course, in most cases where a kid has come down and just refused to move and demanded to be taken to court (you can't demand to be taken to court on probation), in most cases, the judge has sent the kid back, to us.

In fact, one of our directors is on probation; but a funny thing happened. The Probation Department made quite a mess in the case of this young man, Bill Crawford, and they wanted to hang him. They recommended to the court that he spend a "suitable" time in jail for coming to Synanon and cleaning up, and the judge didn't understand this. He got them back into his chambers and gave them hell.

He said, "From now on, this man will not have to come and report to your office. His probation

officer must go down and see him."

So this probation officer, who happened to be sympathetic and liked what he saw, liked the whole thing; yet his superiors hated the whole thing. So, he would come down and see Bill Crawford. In the beginning, he wouldn't even come in the building. He would sit out in the car and Bill would go out and see him.

Then, when Bill got to be a director, I said, "Throw your weight around a little bit. If he wants to see you, he can come up to your office."

So he did. He has to come and see him once a month. For two visits in a row, on the report, the probation officer inadvertently put his name on Crawford's line, and Crawford signed the Probation officer's line. How do you like that? Two in a row! And here is a probation officer that fills those reports out ten times a day, I suppose, sitting in his office down there. And two months in a row, he put his name on the wrong line! Crawford looked at it, and just put his name on the probation officer's line. Now, this indicates a real interesting unconscious confusion on the part of the probation officer. Of course, Bill is now a bigger shot in correction and in sociology than this probation officer can ever hope to be. He happens to be an older man, very

sweet guy, and very close to retirement. And he never comes to town without bringing some supervisor who's never been here, to show the place off, show Bill off, and he feeds him lines. A real doll. So, some of our guys and girls are playing roles very high up in social spheres but nobody knows it.

A funny thing happened. Betty Coleman and I went over to sit in and participate in a post-graduate seminar for Dr. [Lewis] Yablonsky's seminar, and there were three boys coming down on the first investigation for Terminal Island from the Federal facility up there. We all had a good time, a two hour session. After it was all over, some woman in the class, Yablonsky's class, came up--she was an older woman and kind of gushy and effusive. She said, "Oh, Mrs. Coleman, you should go into social service work."

Betty kind of looked at her, and Yablonsky said, "Did you hear what you just said, Mrs. so-and-so?"

He couldn't keep from laughing. It's like suggesting to Bobby Kennedy that maybe he go into politics. This woman only came to one more class, then she quit; but she had missed the whole impact. The whole thing, just missed the whole thing. There was a medical doctor, a psychologist, and the Chief of Classification from Terminal Island, who were

coming down and deferring to Mrs. Coleman. It was the first day, and this woman was sitting there and said, "You should go into Social Service work." An inability to see. There was nothing malicious about it, or anything. She was truly a victim of rigid thinking.

Naturally, this reflects the general attitude. It's going to take some time. Betty gets up there, and she's an addict, former prostitute, former call girl, former madam, one of the big dope dealers in Los Angeles, and the whole works. Well, of course, she [the woman] completely missed the fact that Betty's no longer that at all any more, not in any way, and is engaged in probably the most avant-garde type of social service on the scene today. Well, this is where work begins. It takes some time.

Dixon: It's amazing what a distorted picture many people have of Synanon.

Dederich: Well, it has overtones in it, naturally, of Sax Rohmer, of Fu Manchu, and Peter Lorre in some of his earlier pictures. Of course, many of the people who have any experience with Synanon and then carried this kind of exciting experience out into the larger society, saw it three years ago, four years ago, two and a half years ago, a year and a half ago, and so on. It's like taking a look at Karl Menninger

when he was going to college. He was considered feeble-minded and drooled. Twenty years later, trying to tell his roommate about what had happened to Karl Menninger. Well, the only picture he can have of Karl Menninger is a drooling, feeble-minded nut. Or somebody having a memory of the first hut that Donald Douglas first built his airplanes in, you see, and when you start talking about the Douglas Aircraft Company, of course, the people have that first image. So this is what we're up against. Our problem now, which is being resolved real nicely, is to bring our image up-to-date with things as they are.

People come down on a Saturday night and they see a party going on. There's an orchestra banging away over in the corner. A lot of people are yakking at each other and blowing smoke at each other and having a good time and so on. They get kind of an impact of gaiety and so on, and they don't stop to realize that behind it is a California corporation with a bona fide certificate like the City of Hope or Bellview Hospital or anything else; that there's a fleet of automobiles and trucks; and that eighty-nine people have to be fed, clothed, medicined, teethed, and everything else. Every day there have to be three meals, and that's a gob of food going

through the plates. And there's an active office with girls banging at typewriters and adding machines going and so on. They don't realize it.

Dixon: They think of it as a Topsy sort of undertaking.

Dederich: Yes, which, of course, is ridiculous. If you put a bunch of dope fiends all together in a building some place, they'll all shoot dope. That's what dope fiends do. It'd be like putting a lot of cancer patients in a building and locking the door. Well, they'll all die of cancer, naturally. So now it's a matter of trying to communicate to the whole culture, and particularly the professional fraternity (which means officialdom), the educators, the sociologists, the psychiatrists and so on. And about the only way that it can be done is for people to come down and get acquainted, because if they come down and not get acquainted, but just visit once or twice, they will transmit the most fantastic image. It's interesting that when Yablonsky came out here, he heard about it in England from Doc [Donald] Cressey, and he had an idea that it was probably a house, not as big as this one, with about a dozen people rattling around in it, in sort of an uninhibited, beatnik fashion. How they were getting fed was something that hadn't got into it at all.

When he got out here, he checked in over at

UCLA, got an apartment, and said, "Well, I'm going to have to go and see Synanon."

He was saturated with the idea, and he came down and saw this great big red brick building with cars pulling in and out of the parking lot, and a great big kitchen and a lot of people, and he said, "Well, this can't be it."

Now that's what **Cressey** transmitted to him, and **Cressey** is an educated expert observer of this kind of phenomenon, who had been down on quite a number of occasions, who was one of our biggest supporters, one of our most valuable people on the outside. We've used him mercilessly; made him go up to Sacramento with us; a tremendous guy, but look what he transmitted to Yablonsky. Now, this is through a good mind. And, of course, **Cressey** thinks we're the greatest thing since the wheel. What about the person who is conditioned to hate and fear addicts? Now, that, of course, is what seeps out, you see.

I made a statement to a guy that wrote us up in, oh, one of these True Detective magazines or something like that. It's a very good article, written by Paul Coates' program director, a kid by the name of Moskovitz; a long definitive article, the best thing that had been written up to that time. I pointed out to him that I was the only man in

America running a whore house with a tax-exemption certificate. This was the image--with a Federal Tax-Exemption certificate. He put it in his article. But it's all of these crazy images. The fact that we have instituted a crime wave in the city, yet there has never been an arrest in Synanon. There's never been an arrest of anybody who left Synanon. All fiction. All just a big fantasy. It has nothing to do with anything.

Dixon: A myth that grows up around a prejudice.

Dederich: Walker Winslow, who wrote the Menninger story, was down here for about six months, doing research on a book that he intends to write. He wants to do the Synanon story. He showed me in the Menninger story a page in which he read off the history that he had written about the Menningers ten years ago: every single accusation except the one--it wasn't fashionable in those days to call everybody Communist.

We've had the Communist deal too. Mrs. Grundy, the Communist, the moralities--it's fantastic the way it's been. Of course, with all of these things, we have just turned them around and used them.

Our biggest, our most vocal opposition has been the Evening Outlook here in Santa Monica. They have printed the most God-awful tripe about us for the past two and a half years. We probably could make a

libel case if we had the time and the inclination. But they have been so ridiculous and so absurd about it that we have just been able to bounce all this stuff right off into Life, into Nation. Readers' Digest is coming up. They have made themselves utterly ridiculous in the thing, but they served a purpose. We don't want any more of it, though. It's time to stop. It's a very powerful paper locally, but this is becoming apparent, too. The minute we get out of this area, for instance, before the committees up at the Assembly, the only opposition comes from Santa Monica. The committeemen snapped at this immediately. The same thing happened with the Board of Medical Examiners. The Board of Medical Examiners was warned that we would show up as a bunch of bearded flea-ridden beatniks; that we would put on a great demonstration and everything. Of course, we went down there and stole the show. These guys were absolutely fascinated. Our people get up there, and they're articulate and they're reasonable and they act like ladies and gentlemen. There was some opposition but they made them all sit down. Some self-appointed guardians of the town's morals got down there and the Board of Medical Examiners wouldn't listen to them. Yet, the Board of Medical Examiners was convinced that we were

going to turn up with signs and banners and blue-jeans and bare feet and beards. Something that has never happened. It's never happened. We've never had a demonstration like that, and yet, we're always preceded by this warning, which makes it very good for us because it has a tremendous surprise impact, you see. We always show up with a lot of very significant names in law, sociology, psychiatry, medicine, journalism, and so on.

Dixon: Is it true that the name Synanon came from some man's bastardization of the word seminar? Life says it was a combination of symposium and anonymous, or something like that.

Dederich: Well, this fellow had a habit of getting words mixed up. He would say "solicitate," instead of "solicit," as an example. I used to throw a lot of words at him all the time--seminar, symposium, alanon, anonymous, synagogue, and so on. And he just began to call these meetings that we were having "Synanon meetings." And then we just began to refer to them as Synanons. It was actually a schizophrenic slip. If you take the roots apart, syn-anon, you might say it means "putting together the unknown." But the word has no meaning in any language, which is very good for our purpose--it always leaves an open end, you see. As long as we can keep the word meaningless,

the better off we are. Keep building semantic overtones on the thing, but never confine its meaning. You can say that a small "s" synanon is a kind or a type of group psychotherapy. Well, is it or isn't it, you see? A big "S" Synanon may be a building, or a bunch of people, or it may be a way of thinking, an undefinable word, and it's a good-looking word.

Dixon: It's a very good looking word. I just wanted to establish that it wasn't a deliberate acronym.

Dederich: No, it wasn't. It just came out of this kid's mouth, and I seized on it because it was a beautiful word.

We're beginning now, to build our own myths, of course, which form a very important part in any kind of organization. We're getting some tradition. There's no such thing as a factual tradition, because nobody knows what facts are. Tradition is myth, whatever myth is. Myth is probably the purest reality, as long as you're stuck with a language. We're getting our symbols and our rituals and everything. There are folks who say, "This is bad," and so on. Well, I say, "Good or bad--it is." I don't like to have an aura of mystery or mysticism around this thing at all. I think of myself as being in the business of providing an environment where people are able to behave themselves. It's a

business. We're in the business of manufacturing "clean" man-days. If we got a hundred residents, then we're manufacturing one hundred clean man-days every day. If a person stays for three months, and goes back to the penitentiary or back to dope, so what? If we always keep manufacturing days, it seems that these clean man-days do have a tendency, eventually, without any effort, to pile up in one organism. It's sitting on a guy that's clean for years. The chances of his going back on drugs may or may not be remote. Well, what if he does? There's three years, you see, in the pot. Maybe he won't. Maybe he will. When we discharge a person from a hospital, he is on his own.

Since I saw you, we have an advanced copy of the jazz record that the boys made. We have a little jazz group of seven. The record should be on the stands this next week. So, we're pretty much excited about that.

I wouldn't be surprised to see, the band, which is seven guys, and maybe two or three other people, possibly go on tour around the country, as a package. Talk, play music, and the whole business, because we're in demand all over the place. People want us to come. Of course, they're not yet talking about money, but of course, money isn't everything.

They're trying to put together a big meeting of a lot of probation officers, psychiatrists, sociologists in New York. The Kings County Probation Department wants to put together a seminar around Synanon, so they got in touch with me and asked me to wire. I told them there wasn't any money available for that kind of thing. Maybe they'll send some out. Frankly, at this time, I'd just as soon they didn't, 'cause I like it here. I don't want to run around the country yet, or maybe send somebody else. I've done that. I'm old enough to want to sit and look at the ocean.

Dixon: How do you finance Synanon?

Dederich: Well, we have a Federal Tax Exemption certificate, which makes it possible for donors to take donations to Synanon off their income tax, like any other recognized charity. We get some money. I would say that roughly half of the money that's used comes from outside donations spread around pretty well. We've had only one large donation. That was an anonymous donation for two thousand dollars about a year ago. And we've had maybe three or four five-hundred-dollar donations and the rest of it is twenties and fifties and hundreds and tens and fives, from people who just like what they see and want to help. Then, roughly the other half of the money that's required, comes in the form of board paid by kids who have

worked up to the point where they can go out in the community and get a job. The total amounts to. . . well, the figure during our last fiscal year, which ended in September, was thirty-five thousand dollars. For that year, that was enough cash money to take care of a constant case-load of pretty close to seventy people, which, of course, is ridiculous--it was only five hundred dollars per person. Now, that includes everything; clothing, cosmetics, medical care, everything; school expenses, cigarettes. For instance, we buy about a hundred and thirty-five or forty dollars worth of cigarettes a week.

Now the trick, because obviously you don't support people for five hundred dollars a year, is that between two-thirds and three-quarters of everything that we use comes in the form of goods and services. Our grocery bill, for instance, for eighty people--I think it's eighty-seven in residence now--wouldn't be, in cash, a lot more than a well-fixed large family, I think. Cigarettes at a hundred and thirty-five a week, plus groceries, runs about a thousand dollars a month--maybe eleven hundred--which would be four or five hundred dollars for groceries; and we eat very well. We've never figured what proportion of the food we buy, but almost everything in the way of food is donated. We have

two cars out--we have a little pick-up truck and a station wagon that are out all the time. They have their. . .they call them "runs." They have a Valley run, a downtown run, and so on. And they're just out picking up stuff. For instance, the things in this house: we're not in sight of anything that was bought with cash. Nothing in this place. It's all junk, but it's usable. I mean everything--even the tape recorder, and everything is, like our office, I suppose. There are eight or nine typewriters in our office, but we've never bought one. Mimeograph machine, photographic equipment, darkroom equipment, sound-movie equipment, adding machines, everything. We have to buy our coffee and certain staple items, but that's the way it's financed.

That, of course, is, in my opinion, a very important part of what goes on. The stuff not only has to be hustled. We've got a very well-organized "procurement division," if you want to call it that. We call it a "hustling crew." The kids are well-trained to make a nice, courteous approach. And then, because we can't buy just exactly what we want, it constitutes a good problem, for instance, to feed close to ninety people with that kind of stuff. We get tired meat and day-old vegetables and that kind of stuff. So that provides a lot of work for people.

We're constantly improving the furniture. Every time a piece of furniture comes in, if it's better than what we've got, it goes in and down the line, and a piece of junk will go out the back door. Clothing is the same way. We get very good quality clothing. The kids dress better than they ever did, because it just happens to be that well-fixed people bring stuff down. The girls have had beautiful stuff from Saks and Bergdorf and that kind of stuff. And the boys are the same way--they wander around in two-hundred-dollar suits, you know, with just the edges knocked off of them. We have all kinds of ways of making money. Barter, for instance. We clean out the cold room of a meat distributor, in return for a truckload of meat; or sweep off some baker's parking lot. That kind of thing.

Of course, now we're getting to the point where we're going to earn some money. The band will earn some money, and we'll earn some money with a movie. Of course, that will probably be in rather large amounts, and the great bulk of it will go into a building fund and a fund to acquire more locations, you see. It doesn't cost too much to run the place. We handle close to ninety people at annual cost that--well, most institutions would spend our annual bill on just six or seven people. I was reading in a

paper the other day that the Psychiatric Clinic, or the mental hospital, at UCLA estimates twenty-seven thousand dollars per bed--that's the cost to install. Well, we can set up a fifty-bed Synanon for maybe three, four, or five thousand dollars. Grab a building, pick up the telephone, start hustling some beds from an old hotel, and get hold of a couple of automobiles, and you're in business, you see.

Dixon: Did you get this property and the other building by accident?

Dederich: Well, as for the club, the main Foundation headquarters in Santa Monica, the man who owns it read about us about three years ago; knew that we were going to have to move. We had a little store building at Ocean Park, and he came to see me. The National Guard had it at that time, and they were paying six hundred and fifty dollars a month for it. So he came to me about four months before the lease was ready to expire and I went up, took a look at it, and told him I'd take it. Of course, there wasn't any money in the bank. I think I had thirty-five dollars in the bank. Then through a crazy bunch of circumstances, a bunch of people from the Friars Club got together and paid the first month's and the last month's rent and got us in there and we've been there ever since.

Everything else, we've had to look for. We began to take in children of some of the mothers and we got a place at the corner of Seventh and Ashland in Santa Monica, but that landlady complained about a negro girl that we put in. She created such a fuss that we just looked around the neighborhood and got one twice as big and much better right across the street and moved out of her place. Originally, we got this house for the sole purpose of holding the weekly synanons that we have for our friends who are not addicts, non-residents. Sure enough, somebody put in a complaint.

At that time, particularly, we had so many lawsuits, we just backed away from it. I was in jail at the time, on this zoning violation. When I came out of jail, as part of our negotiations with the city of Santa Monica, I agreed to move out of the club. We had this place, so I came down and set it up as a residence. There are six of us living here.

Dixon: What was this zoning fight?

Dederich: Boy, that's a problem! It's so complicated now that nobody understands it. But eight days after we moved into the club, in August of 1959, the City of Santa Monica filed a five-count misdemeanor charge against the Foundation and the then directors--there were three of us then. These charges were all based

on running a hospital: operating a hospital without a license; operating a hospital in the wrong zone; treating an addict in violation of the State Health and Safety Code. Our contention then, and it still is, although we've been convicted, is that we're not a hospital.

This started the famous lawsuit, and we've been all the way to the front door of the United States Supreme Court. The Supreme Court wouldn't hear it. They said that it didn't pose a Federal question and so we've now been convicted of operating a hospital and the Foundation was fined two hundred and fifty dollars. I was sent to jail. I received a sentence of ninety days in jail or probation. The probation being on condition that I serve thirty days and disassociate from the Foundation.

In view of negotiations that I'm in with the City, the definition of disassociation is left more-or-less up to me, except the physical disassociation. So I live down here. However, I'm in the midst of an agreement with the City Attorney, informal of course, and my lawyer, Fred Nicholas. I am permitted to remain active within very loose and ill-defined boundaries. Actually, of course, it's worked out very well; because by getting out of there, I provided some space and I brought some

people with me. I had almost four years of living right in the middle of the fish bowl, you know, so this is working out much more satisfactorily. In the meantime, we're now negotiating. I don't know what we're finally going to wind up with.

Dixon: I was wondering if they were just going to let this conviction just lie back and not press it.

Dederich: Well, they can't, in a sense. I'll be off probation in another six months or so. We've got to move anyway. At least, we've got to expand because we're just loaded right up to the brim. We can't handle any more people and we want a better plant. Did you see that projection that we have--a drawing of a community? We want to build our own community. It's a multi-unit thing with some grounds. As a matter of fact, I'm going up Saturday to look at some property in the mountains behind Malibu. But that, by itself, wouldn't be satisfactory to us because we've got to have some form of accessibility to an urban community. We could build a nice place up there to house, roughly, two hundred or two hundred and fifty people, and have a community. Sort of like a small college--a little miniature campus type of thing--because so many of our activities are expanding. You mentioned puppet shows and Ray Bradbury. We have gobs of lecturers that, that'd be tickled to death to come

down and put on lecture courses. We have a drama group. We have two art classes. We have an English class. We have a mathematics class. We have two dancing classes. And this is only the beginning. But it wouldn't be any good out there by itself unless we had an arm reaching into the community.

Maybe we can negotiate with the City to keep what we've got, just the Foundation building. Then, take on various other houses and abandon them and go on up. Have the main working community up in Malibu, but run an office and a reception center and some vague kind of thing where we are. Which would be good.

It won't be any time before a national headquarters will be required, because it's beginning to blossom out. We'll have some Synanons in other cities, probably before the end of this year. There's no reason why we shouldn't, now that the smoke has cleared. It's only a few people that we're fighting. All the people, the substantial citizens, that were kind of frightened at the prospect of a lot of dope fiends, have found out that there's nothing to be frightened of, and I have an idea that the City of Santa Monica is going to embrace Synanon-- probably before this year is out.

I don't think there's any question about it; because we're getting so much favorable attention from so many people, and our people are all mixed up in the town. I noticed that one of our directors, Reid Kimball, was mentioned very favorably in a column in the Outlook, of all papers, last night, as attending the fights and being there with the Councilmen and the Mayor and all this business. They just started to promote fights here again, once a month, as a kind of a social event in the town. Of course, the fight promotor is a member of the Sponsors of Synanon. A very good friend of ours and we always get ringside seats. I haven't been myself-- I don't like fights--but Reid Kimball has been going and he's kind of getting in with the town's sporting elements, you know, which includes many of the substantial guys in Santa Monica: the fellows with the money, who run the town, and they like us.

Dixon: I would have thought that it would be a natural thing. There's so much favorable publicity for Synanon that Santa Monica wouldn't want adverse publicity for themselves.

Dederich: Well, unfortunately, because of this lunatic fringe, Santa Monica is a conservative town. In fact, it's a town that's way over to the right. But it has a small lunatic fringe, of John Birchers and Minute Men

and just professional ding-bats who have made a lot of noise. Of course, for almost four years now, the citizens of the town have supported Synanon-- another one of the paradoxes. So, I look to see the town begin to take credit for it. I think it's entirely possible that Santa Monica will get more favorable attention on a nation-wide basis as the birthplace and the headquarters of Synanon than it does for the other things it's famous for, like Douglas Aircraft and so on. I think that's going to happen.

Dixon: I think you're quite right. Synanon has a humanitarian quality that a factory never can .

Dederich: That's right.

Dixon: And I think they'd really scream if you moved out entirely.

Dederich: Well, a lot of people would because they're looking so silly in the national press, which is one of the reasons that the judge got so mad at me. He didn't impose this completely outrageous sentence on me as a zoning violator for the violation. He gave me a terrible haircut\* in court because of my ability to get publicity. Here I was making the town look

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\*Haircut: In the language of Synanon, a reprimand, or bawling out.

foolish. Of course, I maintain that I never made the town look foolish. The town was already foolish. I merely publicized it.

Dixon: What would you have said five years ago if someone had said that you'd be involved in such an operation?

Dederich: Oh, I'd have said they were crazy and recommend they be confined, because I never thought of myself in the class of do-gooders, and still don't. It never occurred to me in a million years that I would become involved in any kind of social service work. I did, however, when I sobered up at Alcoholics Anonymous, like a lot of people. I suppose that twenty-five per cent of the people that get sober and begin to look around them for the first time in their lives, get all imbued with a lot of enthusiasm for doing something connected with the rehabilitation of drunks.

That was the original idea, and I was working along that line. I had, in fact, started the Santa Monica Branch of the National Committee on Alcoholism but it fell apart. It later became absorbed by the Los Angeles Branch of the National Committee on Alcoholism, which was an offshoot of the Santa Monica Branch which I started.

Then I had thoughts about putting up some kind of club for ex-alcoholics, similar to other clubs in town, but something a little bit swankier, a little

bit better, properly financed, decent entertainment and so on. I got started on that in Ocean Park. I promoted a little restaurant and had plans to expand that into such a venture, but that fell apart. And then, of course, sneaking up into my back pocket, or sneaking up behind me was this thing all along. It just grew from a little type of meeting, actually, the psychological technique of group therapy.

Dixon: Could you tell me some stories about some of the people: when they came, or why they came.

Dederich: Oh, it's a big order. The place is just rife with them, but it's kind of hard to get turned on.

Dixon: You mentioned Arlene, for instance.

Dederich: Well, there is a very fine treatment of Arlene and Reid in the first five chapters of a book that was started by Walker Winslow, who wrote the Menninger story. However, the thing has sort of bogged down at this time. His publishers didn't like the treatment or the story line. The individual stories are terrific and they're very exciting and they're comic and tragic and so on. They'd be very good for what you want. They wanted maybe to include those stories, but to get them in a different position in the book. They wanted more of a treatment of the movement and of me. But Winslow started by building up these two characters, with just a sort of side-issue

mention our relationship. It's beautifully written and very exciting; which would be a perfect answer to what you want because they're almost unbelievable.

Dixon: Eventually, I hope they'll talk to me.

Dederich: Oh they will! They love to rap,\* you know. They'll sit and visit with you by the hour.

For instance, there's Pat Hamilton. Pat was a Hollywood call girl; very, very good one. Very expensive, you know, five hundred dollars a trick.\*\* She had two beautiful children, and she'd been through everything that's possible for an addict. In fact, she spent quite a bit of time in the psycho department at UCLA and ran out of the building. She'd had all kinds of treatment and never responded to any of them. But today she lives right down the beach here, I guess within a mile or so, and she's married again to a dandy kid, and has two more children and is the epitome of a housewife. She's put on weight. She's real chunky now. She belongs in a station wagon with a whole flock of kids, and I guess she's got it all but the station wagon. It's a complete adjustment and a complete rebirth almost.

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\*Rap: to talk.

\*\*Trick: a customer.

Dixon: Did she have many problems at Synanon that had to be straightened out?

Dederich: Well, just the normal problems of trying to live without drugs. If you try to understand that a person who's been addicted, lives a life that surrounds addiction. In jail and out. Of course, they're not addicted most of the time. When they're on the streets, they are addicted. In a sense, they're administering their own drug therapy. So, when you take their drugs away from them with the freedom to run if they want to, then you got a very frightened human being. This fear, of course, will come out in a manner that fits the character structure of the person. Some are like children: on the one end you have the tantrum; on the other hand you have complete withdrawal and everything in between. They react for a long, long time. It varies with individuals, but they react for a long, long time with fear. Of course, the fear is decreasing all the time, but you just have a person whose ego is not well-established. The person has to create an ego, you see, because the ego that an addict uses is not a good one. You just assume that by saying, "Well, it's this ego that got you where you are. It got you here, so it's no good."

Now that ego has to be dissolved, destroyed,

peeled away, however you want to picture it; and then when a better ego, a more positive ego (whatever that is) begins to grow, you have to begin to encourage it and build on to it. You have a person just like a child that's incapable of prolonged concentration on anything; that's subject to changing its mind all the time. Lack of ego strength always manifests itself in an inability to stick with anything long enough to get the reward. A constant changing all the time--some little thing in the environment, or someone makes a face at a new person. The reaction can start and roll up, and then the only answer is to run. "Well, I'm going to split\*," you see.

Dixon: When a person has come out of this cold turkey withdrawal and begins to enter into the seminars and synanons, is it usual for them just to sit back or do they sometimes have a violent introduction to the system?

Dederich: On rare occasions they'll jump right in. Nobody foals with them. Nobody picks on them or tries to trigger them into any reaction in the beginning. By the way, new people go right to synanon while they are still in withdrawal. If some kid gets here on a Friday afternoon, he'll go to a synanon Friday

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\*Split: to break away or leave.

night--maybe with a blanket wrapped around him and so on--because, in the first place, withdrawal, as I've mentioned before, is not the violent thing as portrayed in the movies--not at Synanon.

Dixon: Could you describe it then?

Dederich: Well, of course, as I've mentioned to the Board of Medical Examiners, I've never seen an addict kick a habit outside of the Synanon environment. I had the same images that everybody else has: that they climb the walls and beat their brains out and so on. The kids tell me that it's real tough on the floor of the County Jail; virtually impossible in a hotel room or a relative's house. But an addict kicking a habit in Synanon is just a sick person: gives the appearance of running a fever; will have a runny nose; will have a little stomach disorder; will ache in the bones; and have a feeling of impending doom, which is common to withdrawal from everything--alcohol, barbiturates or anything.

Most of what I understand happens in other environments is alleviated by whatever goes on at Synanon. The spectacle of a lot of people who have done it right in the same place; a casual acceptance of it. Nobody there is afraid of an addict in withdrawal; it's just accepted and, as a consequence, it's a pretty calm thing. I've watched maybe two

hundred and fifty addicts withdraw from drugs in the past four years, and I think I've seen maybe four that seemed to be really violently ill, as ill as a drunk would be coming off a good six-weeks' binge.

I think we've had maybe three cases of convulsions. We just shot them right into emergency hospital, but they weren't based on heroin. You don't get convulsions from opiates. You get convulsions from barbiturates. That means an addict will come in who possibly has been trying to withdraw himself by using some barbiturates or tranquilizers or something, or swallowed a handful of goof balls just before he came in the door. We had a girl that came in about ten days ago, and she did that. She's a heroin addict. Everybody knows her. They've known her on the streets for years. She came down about a month ago and kicked her habit but she got frightened and ran off and fixed a few times, and then asked if she could come back in again. We said, "Fine," but just before she came into the door, she took a handful of goof balls. Well, it really clobbered her. She was walking on her heels, like a punch-drunk fighter for three or four days. She didn't have any convulsions, but she could have. Had she had some convulsions, we'd have called a doctor, like anybody else who knows nothing about medicine.

We have a family of over eighty-five people, including about a dozen children. The medical problem to which we give the least attention is the phenomenon of withdrawal. We're much more concerned about some colds getting started in the place. We had a little chicken pox run with the kids a couple of months ago. Withdrawal is just not a medical problem. It's not exciting. It's just a sick person that is scared, you know.

Dixon: Most people think that there's a little room to one side where the addict comes in and goes through this thing that you see on television.

Dederich: I'm glad you brought that up, because our kids kick in the living room. They won't get in bed for the first three, four, five days, depending on how long the withdrawal syndrome will last. We give them a blanket and a pillow and if they're nauseated, we give them a pail. They go in the living room and lie on a couch or, when their bones ache, they like to lie on the floor, sometimes. Lie on the floor for an hour and then lie on the couch, and somebody will rub their arms and legs, or take them down and give them a shower and clean them up. Give a little TLC [tender loving care] or give them a little Hell, too. Your own experience with children will tell you that a person who is, let's say tantrum prone,

if allowed to get started, can actually throw himself right into hysterics. I suppose an adult can do this, particularly one that's weakened by malnutrition, which they all have. So we don't allow that to happen. If somebody begins to whine and howl, somebody will say, "Shut up!" and it's pretty hard not to shut up in that environment. You can embarrass the guy, you know. You can say, "Knock it off! That little girl over there kicked a habit ten times bad as yours three weeks ago."

The people mix them up egg nogs and so on. Girls respond very well to getting cleaned up. Some of the other girls will wash their hair, set it, and get their nails in order. This builds them up, you know. Right at the tail-end of withdrawal might come Saturday night, so they'll get dressed up and be there for the fun, for the Saturday night, shivering.

As soon as they're able to function at all, they get a job in the place. Most of them start in the kitchen because there's a big turnover in the kitchen, which we're trying to stop, by the way, on the service crew, the clean-up crew. Girls iron. We don't put any girls on the dish pan--we put them on our vegetable tub.

Dixon: Have you had expert advice or anything on how to cook for that many people?

Dederich: Well, we've always got somebody who's had some experience. A lot of kids have learned to cook in our kitchen, have learned quantity cooking, starting in from a dead standstill. They never cooked anything, but we always have somebody who has cooked in the penitentiary or the county jail or maybe has worked as a cook.

Right now, of course, the whole cooking and food and entertainment, let's say the whole hospitality thing--the whole commissariat--is under the direction of Bettye Coleman, who is the only woman director. She has had a lot of experience. She owned her own restaurant and so on.

She hasn't done anything in the kitchen herself, for a year, but she's always got a cook--it happens to be her brother now. He's always been a cook in the penitentiary and so on. I suppose he must have ten or eleven people working for him, but he's the only one in the kitchen now that really knows anything about cooking. The rest of it is a matter of training. You wouldn't call him "cook." You'd call him the head chef or steward or something like that. So Bettye is practically out of that now. Some of our kids have started with only a knowledge of restaurant cooking. They wouldn't know how to prepare a meal for five people, but they know how to get one for fifty or sixty.

We have every skill, particularly now that our population is up around seventy-five adults. We have carpenters, office workers, auto mechanics, cooks, bakers, bookkeepers, typists, and very good ones in one sense, in that I would say by-and-large most of the people who come to us are pretty intelligent--they merely lack the ability to concentrate for awhile. But once they get into something, they become very creative.

The kid that's doing the books now, plays in the band, sings. He's a good artist, a good draftsman. He paints all the signs in the place, keeps the books, and is always coming up with some kind of an interesting report for me to look at, revise a little bit, and then he'll come up with something. I used to be a sales analyst and a statistician, and he comes up with trend charts and population flows and all that kind of thing. One of the clichés is "seek and assume"--you can do anything you're big enough to do. As a consequence, he's got a dandy office down there. He's got everything under the sun in it, all the equipment to work with, nice furniture, and he's got a girl typist sitting there with her stand and everything. Looks good, and he's done it all himself, you know. He wheeled and dealed and coned this desk and that adding machine,

and got himself set up.

They need an opportunity to create something. Imposing knowledge or information doesn't seem to work too well. Many people want to come down and start classes, rigid classes, but it doesn't work. They lose interest. They don't want it. They want to do it themselves. This is probably un-American, but they don't respond to supervised play any more than children do of any age. It's just ridiculous, you know. You give the baby a half a break and a busted pie plate and he'll have more fun with it than with some modelling clay and a set-up by a teacher.

For instance, we have our own ham radio thing, transmitting and receiving. Naturally, one of the boys is a ham. He got his license all straightened out and we hustled around and got all the components and he's put it together. Now he's sending and receiving. Chances are, if we have a Synanon some place else, we'll set up another set and have direct communication.

There are a lot of things for them to do. Some of them are getting interested in photography. Our photographer wasn't an addict. He's an ex-alcoholic about my age, who was a chronic. He had tried everything under the sun for years. Hank hasn't had

a drink now for a couple of years and has completed three semesters at Santa Monica City College in photography. He has his own darkroom and all the photographic equipment and he's now going into business with one of the members of the Sponsors of Synanon. They're going to set up a commercial photography shop in Santa Monica.

Dixon: I was so interested in the seminar that I attended the other day. Who selects, and how do you select the topic?

Dederich: Well, we have two seminars going on simultaneously every noon, one down in the foyer and one upstairs in the dining room, and each one is a project under the direction of one of the girls. It's the girl's responsibility in each case to dig up the concept, see that it gets on the board, and appoints a moderator. Moderators change every day and they get the thing going.

Dixon: How do they start it rolling?

Dederich: They just throw a moderator up there. The concept is on the blackboard, and they might ask for somebody to read it and try to interpret what it is saying. Then it becomes controversial. The moderator is not to get involved in it at all. The moderator's function is only to just recognize hands.

Our seminars have been compared favorably with

post-graduate-level seminars and it's another manifestation of this "learning from within" technique. We've discussed hundreds of concepts, and there's a card record kept of every one.

Dixon: Are they repeated?

Dederich: Sometimes. Sometimes they'll go back and pick one up. We always repeat on Saturday night. We have a little seminar of twenty to thirty minutes, just as an ice-breaker on Saturday night and we get the squares in the act, too. So they'll take one that went pretty good, you know, one that caused a little excitement. Of course, for future Synanons, we've got a file box that long. There must be hundreds of quotes dug out of everything conceived of: newspaper editorials, scriptural quotations, philosophy, psychology, economics, poetry, anything.

Dixon: I was wondering if you made use of Bartlett's, for instance.

Dederich: Oh, yes. There's a Bartlett's over there. Current stuff, anything, a few lines from a novel to make a point, or try and make one.

Dixon: As a librarian, I'm always interested in the size of your library. I only saw a couple of book cases; you must have more than that.

Dederich: Oh goodness yes! We have gobs of books. We have a very fine basic library. That bookshelf in the

living room has all the stuff pertaining to this business--philosophy, religion, sociology, and that sort of thing. And then all over the house, there are bookcases with everything: history, novels, biography. All the stuff in the first library I mentioned is reference. We have a little library card system, and I would say that about half of that library is out at all times. You know, it's on bedside tables and places, or being used as a doorstep or maybe somebody's reading it; but we don't lack for books. We got a big score from the UCLA Library. In fact, we've had several big donations, one in particular, from Judge Ben Lindsey.

I have no idea how many books we have; I just know that we've got gobs of books, and we always welcome more because our population is expanding. Of course, if we open up another Synanon, we want to put in a yeast, you know, a starter.

I think we got, we've got a deal with some book-seller up here. We riffle through our stuff and, and then trade. Maybe give him five hard-back novels for an Erich Fromm or something like that.

Dixon: How about children's books? Are your kids big enough to read?

Dederich: Well, they're getting there. My youngster, of course, will be twelve in the summer, and then we have a

couple around seven or eight and six and so on. We don't have too many children's books, because not too many people are aware that we have children.

Dixon: How about toys?

Dederich: Oh goodness! Too much! We were just engulfed at Christmas time. They smother the kids. You know, when people give youngsters too much in the way of toys, there's only one thing they can do--break it.

The Number Two House is a pretty big installation. That's where the kids are. We have seventeen or eighteen people living there, and nine or ten children. It's run just like the club. We have a little squawk box set up, and they've got an office. They have a night man who patrols the place and takes care of the kids, changes them and so on, regular set-up. We have two coordinators over there, a man and a woman, and some other people who live there and who work. Kids have to be taken to school, taken to the dentist, you know. The girl's there and the guy that is the coordinator doesn't drive, so she's just an American housewife: she's behind the wheel of an automobile most of the time, getting kids where they have to go and so on. That's one of the big reasons why I'm interested in getting a community type of thing, and getting it all together. It's two miles from the club to the residence, and it's

not too satisfactory. They're kind of isolated over there, and don't have the room.

Dixon: How do the kids react? Do they get along well, for instance? Do you have the normal amount of fights?

Dederich: The kids react beautifully to community life. I think that they're going to be pretty amazing kids. There's more opportunity for subliminal living. They know more adults intimately. They have many significant figures, rather than just one, two, or three. They have a lot of aunts and uncles--kind of like a tribe.

Dixon: I would think they'd grow up with more tolerance than most children.

Dederich: Well, yes, you know, they'll probably grow up pretty sophisticated children. My daughter is a full-fledged member of Synanon. She insists on it. She came to live with me last summer. When she got six months in, she demanded her WAM, her "Walk-Around-Money." Bettye, who is raising her, gave her money to go to school and so on, but she didn't want that. She wanted the official WAM. She said, "I've been clean for six months," and so she went to Charlie who handles the Walk-Around-Money. It's two dollars a week.

Dixon: How old is she?

Dederich: She'll be twelve in August, and she knows the inner

workings of this place as well as anybody. She could take you on a tour around the club. She knows what synanons are and seminars are. She knows all the gossip, and who's mad at whom. She's right in the community, knows all the people and knows them very well. She happens to be a very aggressive, forward-moving kid, and she, she makes it her business to get acquainted with everybody. She couldn't be intolerant, you know, if she's been over here for any length of time. If she grows up in this atmosphere, she's going to know the facts of life.

Dixon: I think that's wonderful. How did you first get to know Guy [Endore]?

Dederich: I think Elaine Brandchaft, Dr. Brandchaft's wife, brought him down, if I recall. I think he came down with her several months ago. It must be six or eight months ago now; and he just sort of moved in and became one of the family, you know.

We've really got slews of people that treat the place as their club, in a sense.

Last night, I had a what we call "square Synanon" down here. Four of our people, including myself, and three other couples meet every Wednesday night down here and have a regular synanon; discuss all problems that human beings have. They tear each other to pieces and have a real good time. I put this thing

together as kind of an experiment six or eight weeks ago. All married couples. The other Wednesday night synanons we mix them all up, but these people had all been in on the act for quite a while and they felt that their inhibitions had been broken down sufficiently so that husbands and wives could react a little bit honestly in the same synanon. And it's working out very well, very well.

Dixon: I wonder if a lot of marriages might not be saved by such a thing.

Dederich: I have an idea that possibly some have been. A lot of them have been improved. But one of them has been busted up, at least temporarily, maybe permanently: just weren't married to the right people. But the others seem much more comfortable.

It's not a formal thing, like going somewhere for an hour and a half of group therapy and then going home. The people start arriving over at the club at seven or seven-thirty and the synanons, somehow, get put together around eight o'clock and they go maybe until nine-thirty or ten o'clock. Then everybody eats and has coffee; and the band plays; and they yak it up; and the last one goes home at twelve or twelve-thirty. It's a social evening, a very uninhibited, intimate social evening, because the focal point is the synanon and all these people,

of course, know each other.

The synanons are mixed up all the time--they never sit with the same group, and they know each other better than they've known anyone in their lives; brothers, sisters, or husbands and wives. They really know each other, and as a consequence, a pretty deep relationship develops.

It's interesting to observe the level of sound with no cocktails or any uninhibiting devices of any kind. When they come out of the synanon, the level is terrific. You'd think that it was a cocktail party with about six drinks under the belt. Everybody is eating like fury and arguing as the synanons carry on over into the thing; and the band plays; and the guys go down and shoot pool; and everybody has a good time.

We don't have a pool table: we have a snooker table that looks like a football field, a big, old-fashioned, snooker table. You don't see very many of them anymore, because real estate's too valuable. You can't waste the space. You can put two pool tables where you put one of these, so you don't see them any place except at fine clubs. This thing was donated. That was a kind of a cute story.

The people who help Synanon are not in any one category. We've got all social classes, all economic

classes, and everything else. The boys wanted to hustle a pool table, so they went to some pool rooms and a couple of mugs said, "Sure, we got a snooker table." The kids brought it down in the truck and then these guys came down one Saturday night while the meeting was going on and knocked themselves out installing it, and levelling it, and everything; and we've never seen them since. They wouldn't even stop and have a cup of coffee, but they did this. They were impelled to do this. And that kind of thing happens all the time.

Tonight we're having a birthday party for Izzy Cohen who is very active in the Pico-Robertson Lions' Club. Now, Izzy kind of caught fire with a lot of the other guys around that corner. He owns a very fine Jewish bakery and provides a slew of baked goods every week. Most of our Nasch [Jewish term for snack] for our entertaining comes out of Izzy's place. He's a wonderful guy; and we found out that it's his birthday. He always furnishes all our birthday cakes, big things, the size of this table. And he's baked all our wedding cakes. They're beautiful, gorgeous things. They're so big that he has to bring them over and assemble them in our place. So we're going to give him a birthday party.

Here's another thing that happens quite often. People, for some reason or another, want to cook a meal for us. In spite of seeing us (of course, not too many people who know us very well are impelled to do this), people catch fire and get the idea that we never have a decent meal. It doesn't occur to them that we're pretty well organized; so they want to cook a meal for us. Well, this happens quite often. Maybe two couples get together. They bring a job of food down and then they go out in the kitchen and kind of get in the way and our cooks will do the work, but they sort of have a good time. We've had a couple of Chinese guys who own restaurants. Of course, they'll do it right. They'll come down with their help and everything, and take over the kitchen and do a thing. This happens maybe, oh, I don't know, five or six times a year. Somebody wants to cook a meal, so we say, "Crazy! Go ahead. Be our guests."

We have plenty of good friends--it's getting into the hundreds now. It's a funny thing that the do-gooders and the phoneys get squeezed out very quickly. There just isn't anything up for grabs here, and they find that out. More and more are getting stuck. Our dentists are in and out all the time with their wives. There isn't any room for Lady Bountifuls. It just doesn't work that way.

People have a tendency to become an actual part of the thing. If they come down carrying a banner, "I'm going to help the poor unfortunate dope fiend," it begins to dawn on them that the poor unfortunate dope fiend is probably more vital than they themselves are.