

JAMES MIDDLETON

I was born on August 13, 1925, Detroit, Michigan.  
I got two sisters and two brothers.

Dixon: Are you the middle? \*

Middleton: I'm right in the middle of two females. It was a classic oedipus triangle. I grew up in basically a slum neighborhood. My father owned a barber shop and a pool room. I used to hang around the pool room, saw all the thugs. It was, you know, prostitutes, pimps; this was the environment of the neighborhood.

I used to think school was for sissies when I was a young kid. I used to think, "Well, that is for sissies; it's not for me." And I'd manipulate anyway I could to get out of school. Any obvious way I could find to get out of going to school. I wouldn't go. I'd get a cold, any kind of a story, you know. Then I'd go up on the railroad tracks. I'd go to school, then maybe I'd miss two days, and the other two days I'd be hiding up on the railroad tracks and everything. And I'd short-stop the notes. I'd forge them, and I'd always get caught. The first time I ever went to the Juvenile Hall, I was about twelve or thirteen. Used to hang around with a crowd of fellows around the corner. The boys were always

stealing out of dime stores and things like that. We broke into one of these big moving vans and stole thirty cases--I remember it so well--we stole thirty cases of tuna fish. What we were going to do with it, I don't know. Twelve or thirteen years. I don't know what I was going to do with it. We stole it anyway. We took it up on the railroad tracks and took it way in between two buildings. If you've ever been in Detroit you could understand it. It's something like New York. Like between two tenements. Well, like we had it down here; we had it all loaded, and the police come and got us. Went to Juvenile Hall, got out, got probation.

It was on probation that hookey caught up with me. Playing hookey from school. Went to Fort Republic as a mild juvenile truant.

I went to Boys Finishing School after this. I can lead up to it. I was along about fourteen or fifteen years old by then. Little petty charges in between.

Dixon: What did they do to you for playing hookey?

Middleton: They sent me to Fort Republic. It's a sort of a short-stop. In Michigan, they have it in stages, you go from Fort Republic to Boys Vocation School--it's a reformatory in Jackson. You see, I worked my way all the way through. Right up to the top. I was

gonna be a big shot. Like the fellas around the corner. I don't remember this stage of my life very well. All I can remember is that I went to Fort Republic. I can't remember. . .it's strange I can't remember when I went to Boys Vocation School, but I was there two years. I can't remember for what. I've tried and tried, but I never could. And between Fort Republic and Lansing, I can't remember; it's just blacked right out. I've done everything I could to remember it. It's on my record, but I can't remember it.

From Boys Vocation School I got to running around the corners and smoking weed, and all the little thug things. I can remember it well; there were four or five of us, and we'd jackroll drunks, you know, knock drunks out--just looking for trouble all the time. Just asking for it. We hung around a place, Cass Park, it's right across from the Masonic Temple in Detroit. We'd catch all these drunks coming out of the Masonic Temple and we'd run the park. The whole park. There was about five of us; we ran the whole park. And we used to lay in the park. You know how little girls and little boys play in the park. We thought we were hell of a guys. We'd sneak in the bushes with the little girls, smoking weed and taking pills. I can remember it real well now.

That's when I had my first prostitute. I started running around with a girl; she was, oh, five or six years older and she was a morphine addict. And then, here it comes. You know, I was smoking weed, I'm one of the regulars. I was about eighteen or nineteen, seventeen or eighteen, right around in there, and I had my first fix of morphine. Made me sick, sicker than a dog. But after a flash, then I'm in a euphoria, I thought.

I went I think, for a year and a half, and then I got busted on this stick--I went to Jackson Prison. The average prostitute runs out, and here you are with the whole burning habit. Then my crime partner, this kid, we tried to stick up Mary Lee Candies, right down in downtown Detroit. My partner got killed. Right in the street. My partner got killed, and I went to prison.

I started out with ten to twenty, but my father had a few little connections back there, and I got it kicked down to a "grand theft," and I did four and a half years. In other words, I had ten and twenty when I first started, but through devious. . .it's crooked back there in Detroit, Chicago. I wound up doing four and one-half years on that "robbery armed"--on the record it says "grand theft," but it was "robbery armed." It cost him quite a bit of money to fix it.



I come right out to addiction again. I was out about, oh, eight or nine months, and I was boosting, using stuff; back to Jackson. I got caught cold turkey right inside, burglarizing a place. Right inside. Pistols all over. Through his friends, I got that to "attempted larceny from a building." And where as that carries five years, I did eighteen months on it.

You want to hear about this riot, don't you?

Dixon: Yes.

Middleton: Well, I wasn't an actual participant in the riot. I was well-known in the joint because I boxed. I was a boxer. I was real well-known. It's probably lucky, too, I had ninety days left from that original two-year sentence and I was outside the walls. The walls go like this, and Ten Block is outside the walls. It's like looking down into an arena. I'm up on the fourth gallery. You could look from a window right down and see everything going on. I knew everybody that was participating. If I had been inside the walls, I would have been right in the thick of it. Most of the guys who were in the thick, Ray Young, "Crazy Jack" Hyde and most of them guys got fifteen or twenty years out of it. And I would have been right in the thick of it. I was just lucky that I only had ninety days left of

my sentence, or the mob would have sort of forced me in with them. 'Cause I was in with most of the so-called "core" of the place. But I sat there and looked and watched. For a week they had the place. There was no authority whatsoever inside the walls.

Dixon: What started the riot?

Middleton: Well, it was a combination of many things. It was all spontaneous.

Dixon: It wasn't a planned thing?

Middleton: No, no, this homosexual, Ray Young, "Crazy" Jack Hyde, and Earl Ward, were the ones who started it off. It started in Fifteen Block. I could go back to when I first went into the institution and I could lead up and you could see the picture real clear.

Dixon: Please.

Middleton: Well, when I first went into the institution, it was when the Mayor Reading, the police, and the whole city administration went to Jackson. I think that was about '43 or '44. The whole city administration went. Well, before they come into the institution, everything was wide open. Everything was a payoff. From the warden on down was a payoff. You know, this was during the war [WWII], when Joe Medley took some money from war bonds and went to Washington, D.C. and killed those two redheads and got executed.

Well, they fired Warden Jackson before that, and

then they started an investigation. Well, year by year by year, they slowly started cutting the privileges off, slowly taking things away. Guys used to have their girl friends up and have a weekend in the hospital, and have downtown visits to the whorehouse, and things like that. Well, they slowly cut it off. It was getting tighter.

Well, here's all these old hard-core inmates--they are doing life, double life, twenty-five, thirty years--and they are used to all these privileges. Well, you slowly cut them off over the years. Everything that was aboveboard slowly went undercover. As time goes by--this is in a ten-year period--they cut out all these special privileges, slow, one by one by one by one. Well, it's building up all that hostility, and building it up and building it up, over the years. These guys are never getting out.

So here's the hard core; they know they are not going to get out, but they are not going to put themselves out in the limelight, in case of a possibility of something going wrong. Here's the stupid slob standing in the middle saying, "Well, what happened?" Here's the old hep con standing back (I've done this lots of times), and here's the fool standing in the center, holding the shitty end of the stick and wondering, "How the Hell did I get

here?" You can probably understand this better than I can explain it. This manipulation of your environment. Here is this guy, Earl Ward, a homosexual psychopath, and a homicidal psychopath, "Crazy Jack" Hyde.

Well, one night there was new screw come in Fifteen Block, and he had no training whatsoever. So, he was thrown in Fifteen Block, and Ray Young sticks a knife in him. And they open up Fifteen Block and it spread just like swish! It spread all over you know. And there was a north side and a south side. At the time, if they had just left the cell blocks locked up. In fact, to the inmates in the cell, it meant nothing. But I think there was some political pressure. There were six thousand inmates, and Fifteen Block blew up and everybody knew it. So that gives the rest of inmates a chance to express their hostilities. You see, what I mean? I can explain it. . . draw you a picture. The rotunda comes through here, and the north side and the south side spreads out like this. Well, right in the center of the yard is Fifteen Block. They did not have to open any of these other blocks.

So somebody in the prison administration wanted this--they didn't think that it would get this far out of hand. But they wanted this. Because, as I

read books and see it, and talk to Lou [Yablonsky] quite a bit (he's a pretty well-known criminologist and understands these things), I see that the officials wanted this. The Governor, or somebody wanted it. They cut off paroles; they cut off privileges. They have indeterminate sentences there. They sentence you from one to fifteen, or five to fifty. When you have a clean record and go up, they would just say, "Well, give him a couple of years." They were filling up the place, repressing all this hostility in the whole institution. And it had to blow up. The food was getting lousy. You know, it was just everything. Just leading up to it, for a matter of three or four years, and all of a sudden, whish! And I think it was somebody up in the administration that wanted this. They just pushed and pushed and prodded and pushed, and it blew up in their faces. I couldn't explain it any better.

And I sat right up there in the Ten Block, and I'm one of the luckies who watched them. Just like Caesar watching the gladiators. I sat and watched this.

I come out of the institution and whish! I got the starting of a habit, and I'm going to come all the way to the West Coast or something. I don't care what happens to me, but I ain't going back to that

institution. And I've been out here ever since.  
I've been out here ten years.

Here's the strange thing though. I'm out here the first day, I'm just gettin' sick; I haven't got no drugs or nothing. The second day, I was just feelin' pretty bad, and I'm walking down the street, Sixth and Broadway, and I run into the guy who used to work in the tailor shop, dealing dope like peanuts at Sixth and Broadway, ten years ago.

I'm right back in action. All over again. It's just been a repetition of this until I come here. I'd go for "Vag Addict" ~~to the~~ State farm out here, and then I'd get out. Same old cycle. I stopped messin' with the State and I got arrested for failure to register as an addict going into Mexico. They sent me to Fort Worth. I come out of Fort Worth and start using drugs again. I was just about at the end of the line. And I thought, "Well, I'll try this place."

I haven't used a thing for two and one-half years. Have been here ever since. I've worked outside for a year. I go just about where I please by myself.

Dixon: You came to Synanon when they were at the old place?

Middleton: No, no. They were here about three months when I come here. Just beginning.

Dixon: What did you think of it when you first came?

Middleton: Well, I walked in the door and I ran into three or

four people that I shot drugs with. They used to have their desk right here in front, and there was a girl sitting there who had been a prostitute many years. I used to be her connection on the outside. She's still here--that girl plunkin' on the typewriter. That's the one.

She says, "Hello, Jimmie, how are you?"

And I said, "Baby, I don't know you."

She says, "I'm Donna."

And I says, "Yeah?"

You know, I didn't believe it; she was real healthy lookin'. So I walk upstairs and I ran into another guy, he's married now, Dick Jackson. He says, "What do you know?" We were in the farm a few times together. And Sandy Jackson.

Well, I see Sandy and I say, "Jesus, what happened? There's something wrong here; this isn't supposed to be." Junkies that I know from way back; this isn't supposed to be.

So I go into the office and Chuck and his secretary, Bernice, is in there. Chuck and Bernice and Dick Jackson. And he's telling me, "You're crazy. You know that?" And I want to fight him; I want to fight right there. There was Chuck, and Dick Jackson, Bernice, and Phil Hunt, and I want to fight him. I didn't understand him. He hammered and then he said,

"Take him downstairs."

I just think, "Well, if it works for these guys, it's gonna work for me."

And I just keep going on and on. And the longer I stay, the more I learn. I learn more and more and more and more every time I get in one of these sessions. I listen a lot and say a lot, and I learn more and more and more.

I went to the Eighth grade in school and it kind of inflates my ego to sit around and talk to psychiatrists. At Fort Worth, they used to look down their nose at me, asking me for information.

I was talking to a social worker, and she was telling me all the things she could do, and all this stuff. So I drew her a picture, like this, I drew a circle, I'll put it in half. "Here's the world I used to live in. You know, the cruel world. Now I'm learning your world, and I think I'm learning it pretty good." You know, pretty good. "So, basically I'm further ahead than you'll ever be."

She says, "What do you mean?" You know, got real indignant.

I says, "I've been an addict. I've been an inmate. I know how those people feel; I know how they act. I talk to squares like you, the out-group; I'm in the in-group. And I can bust down the



communication wall 'cause I know both sides of the picture. You've only got half the picture." She got real indignant. If she'd stop and think, it's true.

Dixon: You chipped into her ego and she didn't like that.

Middleton: You run into them, the snotty type, you know. She's just a student, too. And here's what's happening-- she's telling me what I'm doing here! What's going on here! And this is her first visit! You know, you hear it quite often. People are telling you what's going on here. People actually sit down and tell me what's going on here--and it's their first visit! They really do. Saturday night visitors come, and I look at them, you know, and I usually say the "cheese" bit and walk away. But sometimes you get hung up with one, and you have to sort of insult them, with a little diplomacy in between. But this one got the message. I didn't feel too good, and here was a social worker telling me how drug addicts feel, you know, all this "research."

Dixon: Charlie Hamer and Chuck have both mentioned going to Terminal Island. Can you tell me how that got started and what you're doing?

Middleton: Well, the head parole officer, the head psychiatrist, and I think it was another parole officer, come and visited to see what was going on. They couldn't

believe it because they couldn't believe that people could talk like this. So they figured they would try it out. So six of us guys, me, Jimmy the Greek, Candy, Oscar, and I can't remember the others, went to Terminal Island and made a little spiel in front of the group, you know. They spread the word, about here's six guys that the inmates knew. I shot drugs with some of them sitting in the penitentiary. They think we are on their side, and we really are, but we aren't going to tell them what they want us to say. You know, make friends, and the whole bit. We throw them off.

I remember the first synanon I went in up there with a friend of mine, he's doing eight years now. We walked around, and we used to talk--talk about jazz and everything, drugs, and girls, things that guys talk about in jail.

I sort of prodded a little bit at him, and after I come on he says, "Damn! I don't even know you any more. What happened to you?"

"I've been in Synanon."

"You don't even sound like the same person."

You know, I couldn't believe this myself, 'cause I see myself this way. I can't see the picture clear, as somebody else can. It's like, if the world was a mirror, I could see myself as other people see me.

It's basic, really.

And, as time is going, now they are beginning to communicate with the officials; they are beginning to communicate with each other. They are getting human relationships going with other fellows that they have never had before. The races are starting to get along. Mexican, colored, are beginning to talk about their different prejudices, their hates, their likes, their dislikes; why they hate a colored guy, why they hate a Mexican, why they hate a white man; and they verbalize all these feelings. And then they verbalize them to us. They get together after the synanon and talk among each other, and pretty soon they start to dissipate among each other. This is happening inside the walls.

What we are trying to do there is the same thing we are doing here--trying to get people of all kinds--black, white, you know--to communicate on a human level. If you can communicate on a human level, I don't think there is any problem there. I can sit here like we are doing now and communicate on a human level. Drug addicts (I'll speak for myself on this) are emotionally immature people. And if you can learn to get a human communication going, you can sort of find out what's going on down in your stomach, and sort of grow up psychologically. People

are talking, communicating. There in the Yard in the penal institution, you look at a guy and you don't like his looks; that's it, you don't have anything to do with him. After you go to Synanon you get a human communication and you find out he's a pretty nice guy. If you really want to do something about yourself; if you accept each person as a human being, there's no problem--good, bad, or indifferent.

This is Synanon. Crazy! This is what we tried to do. But still, we have these communication difficulties in the building here. Personality conflicts all the time. But the difference is, we verbalize them here; we verbalize them anywhere we go. Even the squares that come here, you know, the out-group; I'm not going to call them squares no more. They are the out-group, really.

It's funny, I see 'em on Wednesday night, and I see 'em on Saturday night; I see them come in here. And some of the things I watch them do, it's so obvious to me. It blares right out at you after you've been in this orientation for awhile. It kind of hits you like a brick bat.

And if you tell the person what he's doing, he says, "Ah, you're nuts! You're projecting. There's something wrong with you."

So I just look and I don't say anything. I'll

tell them if I'm at a synanon, loud and clear, but . . . If you tell a person the truth, the real truth, as you see it, "You're insulting me." You ever tried it?

Dixon: Very few times have I ever tried it.

Middleton: Is that enough on Terminal Island?

Dixon: I wanted to ask if any of the people from Terminal Island have come to Synanon?

Middleton: Well, one come here and stayed for a month. But he never really got his feet inside this dynamic; never really got right in; just stayed on the fringe. And the dynamic just whirled around and threw him right out. He never really got his feet wet, sort of like a kid, peeking over the top of a table, trying to get in, but he never stepped in fully. I'm tired of hearing this constantly, but it's the truth--you can get out of it what you put into it. He didn't put much into it. I hear it so much, and I believe it. But it gets sort of repetitious. But it's the truth. Whatever you put into it, you get out of it.

Dixon: Do you think you may go to New York or some other cities?

Middleton: That's the plans. I'll explain it like this. With my criminal and addiction history, I have no illusions about what can happen outside of Synanon. It's simple--I'm a three-time loser. I have no previous

work experience. The first job I ever had in my life was here. I went out and worked for a year in Santa Monica.

Dixon: What did you do?

Middleton: I went to work for an electronic firm at a dollar an hour. Just to work; just a set of motions; just to see if I could do it. Within three months, the guy gave me all his funds for the whole factory--to take to the bank with his car and everything. He knew my previous history, everything. I told him the complete truth from the beginning. And he hired me at a dollar an hour. But he used me. You know where Federated Purchaser is? Well, I used to take all his money to the bank every day, for that whole plant, and I was there three months. I don't know--the guy just trusted me right off the bat. I worked out there for a year. But it sort of. . .a conflict in me. I had close to six and seven thousand dollars on me, some days. All by myself with the car. I worked there for four months, and I kept telling him, "I don't want to do this."

And he said, "You're one of the few guys I can trust around here."

This is strange; this is real strange to me. Here I got a big bag full of this guy's money and I'm taking it to the bank.

I kept saying, "Well, if you're going to put all this trust in me, give me a raise."

He kept saying, "Well, later, later, later."

So I quit him. I thought like this: what would be my excuse if somebody did rob me, with my background? With my background, what would be my excuse? I would not take a five-cent piece out of there, 'cause guilt would get to me. It sounds strange, coming from me now, but it's the truth--I couldn't take a five-cent piece out of that money.

One time, the cashier was twenty dollars over, and I brought her twenty dollars back and she couldn't believe it. Never happened to her before. She said she had been short before, but she was twenty dollars over; it was in the deposit. I brought it back. I would never get a raise, so I quit that job, and I worked construction for a while.

Then a fellow who comes here Saturday night, give me a job. I had the keys to his whole restaurant. I'd open it; I'd hire and fire busboys, dishwashers, maintainers, and waitresses. And I was in charge of all shipping and receiving.

I was doing that for awhile, and Chuck told me to come on back. "I need you in the house. You are more valuable in here than out there with all those 'mickey mouse' jobs."

I was just doing it to prove that I could work, and I proved it. I proved it; I did it for a year, and came on back. I had some real important jobs, you know. A guy give me his whole restaurant. I had everything, open, money, everything. It sounds fantastic to me, with my history.

Dixon: When you were a kid getting into trouble, how did your parents react?

Middleton: Well, my father was sort of one of these quiet, meek men. He'd chippy around with the girls around the block--sort of a player type, you know what I mean. Four or five prostitutes hung around. Mother was a real aggressive dominating woman. This is my impression: all the hostility that she had for him, she placed on me, the exact replica of him. I got all of her hostilities. I've always, to this day, hated her. To this day, I still have no warm feeling for her whatsoever. Since I was this high.

Dixon: Well, did she blame you for things that you actually didn't do? Did she just pick on you?

Middleton: All her hostility, she displaced it. All the things that she wanted to say to him, she would find some excuse to displace her hostility on me, and I would be put in these situations. I had a lot of trouble with females when I first come here. I displaced a lot of hostility--I'm a typical oedipus triangle--



born between two females who dominated me. Let me see how best I can put it. My sister would pull little tricks, like break something or do something wrong, and say it was me, and it would go right on me.

I was so bitter when I come here. I never knew this thing, I always thought, "Well, I'm a helluva man; I'm a pimp; I'm a bum." You know, the whole thing. And I come here and I haven't got the medicine no more--narcotics--so all this repressed hostility I brought on these females. Females used to all hate me. Any filthy derogatory name I could throw at them, I'd do it, and, of course, the word spreads real quickly. For a year, I couldn't get along with them. For a year, I'd just sort of go through some motions. And now I'm one of the best-liked guys with females in here.

It's hard to tell somebody about your childhood. It seems silly at first. You sit and self-examine and self-examine. It's like in these synanons. Everybody will try and defend, try to look good. But who are you going to defend to, laying on the bed by yourself? No matter what you say, or what's said in synanon, some of it penetrates and filters down and filters down; bounces back and forth in there; comes up and down, up and down, and you gotta come up with something. I've only missed two of them

in two and a half years. I have to learn something even if I don't ever open my mouth.

Now, I sit, and I'm really at ease, sitting and talking to you. I would never think of talking to a person like you before, when I was an addict. I got no time for you; what do I want with a square? I can't be bothered now, really.

A lot of things I used to think were secrets, and things that I was afraid to say, that's a lot of garbage. What difference does it make to you or me? It goes right back to that human relationship thing. If you accept each other as human beings, then there's nothing you can say wrong to each other, really.

Dixon: That's right. Then I imagine you found out that the square is no different than you really.

Middleton: Well, I'll give you the thing we say around here, that is so god-damn true. "That's just the way the neurosis manifests itself." Square, addictive person. . .what's the difference? Somebody may be a TV addict, coffee, anything. But I figure I'm one step ahead of the average square. My neurosis manifests itself in drug addiction. I know this. And I'm not fooling myself a bit either. Two and a half years away from my sickness. I have nothing to do with any narcotics; I want nothing to do with it; I know what it will do to me. Where poor ole "John"

out there in that square culture, he's not even aware of it.

I used to go to these square synanons. You can't tell them that there is something wrong with them. Here's a couple, that have been married for years and know nothing about each other. Nothing. All they got is what we call around here, a "Tender Trap." They are like children playing grownups. And you sit and tell them, they can't believe it, "Impossible! I love her!" "I love him!" And it's such a joke.

Dixon: Ninety per cent of them don't know love.

Middleton: Who does? I don't. I don't think I do. Nowadays it's all based on eroticism. Really, everything is pointed toward eroticism. Everything. And if you go back to the basic love, I don't know it. I don't think I do. I'm trying.

Dixon: Are both of your parents still living?

Middleton: No, my mother isn't living.

Dixon: Does your father know you are here?

Middleton: Oh, yes, he knows I'm here, but there is no communication. I send him a postcard, and he sends me a postcard. Nothing, really.

Dixon: What about your brothers and sisters? Were they addicted?

Middleton: No, I'm the only one. They are all married and have children. I guess I'm just a rebel without--with

a cause, I think. I don't know whether I got a cause or not.

Dixon: Do you think most addicts are rebels?

Middleton: Of course. . . In an odd way, they are rebels. But basically they haven't learned to grow up yet, and accept responsibility. That's the premise we go on when we first come here. As you go along in the dynamic you can see it; it's so obvious. It blares out like that light.

You see this girl here in a bed; right back to a baby; she wants to lay down and have you bring her this and that like mama used to bring things-- wait on her. She's in the regression stage right now. Regress and regress, and progress and regress--you go both ways. When you progress and regress, you don't regress back as far as you were. Progress, regress, progress. The gap narrows, and you sit here and watch it and watch it and watch it. And you see another new person come in, and you watch the regression and progression--it sticks out like a sore thumb. You sit and watch it and you are really interested. A psychiatrist can sit here a whole year and watch this and he will be astounded at what he can see.

I've learned more here in these two years than I've learned all my life in all the schools and

everything that tried to pound it into me. I feel it. You don't read it in a book--you feel it. So, if you can feel a situation (this is only my opinion), it stays with you. If you feel a situation, it's hard to forget it.

I've talked to professors, students, people with all kinds of degrees. And I would call them stupid people. I really do. They can spout you all kind of long verbalizations and all that hogwash, but no feeling. Shallow. They are shallow people.

Dixon: That's it. They don't like people.

Middleton: Well, so many students come down, and it's so obvious to me. You know, you see so many students, teachers, educators, and it's so obvious. Everything they know, they have read in a book. They never lived.

In any given situation, I'm thinking real dogmatic about it, but I can listen to their side of it and give a little bit, be flexible. But still, I've formed my opinion at the beginning, and maybe I can deviate a little bit, but not too much. I have already got the opinion formed, but I'll listen to the other side of the story anyway.

Dixon: That's a big step--the willingness to listen.

Middleton: I'll listen to their side. I've got my opinion formed on mine, but I'll listen to their side. Then I'll think, maybe, it might be, I don't know. And

sort of turn it over in my mind. I might change a little bit, but not very much.

Dixon: You do become a little more flexible.

Middleton: This place here makes you flexible. The thing that gets to me is that I know how it works. I get into some situation here, some personality conflict, and they overemphasize--exaggeration, exaggeration--and I'm so rigid, I want it right down the way it was. The overexaggeration won't let me. I'm caught right up in it. And then, after I verbalize whatever the hostility is, I'll sit back and say, "Jesus Christ, here I go again!" That overexaggeration mechanism, and then underexaggeration.

Here's that rigidity. Everything has got to be clear and concise. But that overexaggeration! Sometimes I'll catch it before it gets out of line. But sometimes I'll be sort of half listening, and I'll come out and say something. Then I realize what I've done, and it gives me a new chance to look at the situation. I can look back and see what the situation is and start analyzing it.

Dixon: Now, you have had an almost classic life, that is, as a criminal and drug addict. Are you more aware now of, let's say, politics and civic activities?

Middleton: Well, of course I am. Basically, this dynamic is involved in civic affairs. The Assembly comes down

here--I've met the California Criminal Procedures Committee. It [Synanon] just makes you get involved. I've met all the members. I have talked to Nick Patrish, the California State Assemblyman from Frisco; he's been here many times. The AB 2626 was passed by him in the legislature. I talked with this guy running for the State Assembly now. I have to. It just forces you into it. I have talked to sports announcers and real significant people. As you get to know these people, it sort of widens your scope a little bit more. See what I mean?

Dixon: Well, I imagine before you came here you couldn't have cared less.

Middleton: I didn't care. I just wondered how much time they were giving for drug addiction or how much time I'd get for thefts. I couldn't care less. I wish I could explain the full picture. As you get to like people, get to know people, it goes like a pyramid--you start at the top, the point of the pyramid, and the pyramid just widens.

Dixon: The base spreads wider and wider and wider.

Middleton: And as the base spreads, you become more interested in the things that are going on around you--civic affairs, athletics, music, and so on.

Dixon: The world really does enter in.

Middleton: And not just Synanon. Synanon is the first thing in

importance, but you have to open up your eyes and expand the base of that pyramid. Here you are at the top point, I'll say six months a year, two years, four years, and on and on and on. And you're sitting on the point. A person that has any kind of intuitive fact, any sense at all, and can't see how basic and simple it is--how he is sitting on top of that pyramid--is pretty stupid. Don't you think so?

Dixon: I think so. I think he would be very stupid. And probably not stay at Synanon.

Middleton: I never thought I could sit in an office and talk to a Doctor of Philosophy. You always look up in the air and say, "Well, this guy is up here and I'm down here." You talk to him; he's just people. And people are people, but I never knew this.

I used to sit in different institutions and look at TV, at Steve Allen, and think, "He's a big swell-head." But he's a pretty good guy. A pretty nice guy. He's just people. Take away all that title, all that garbage, and he's just people. He just earns his living in a different manner, that's all.

Listening to the playback of this, I got to thinking, I guess my values have changed completely. I used to think that the only big shot was the one who used to steal and rob and had three or four whores around the corner. I found that was all bull shit;



it was strictly bull shit--all the big shots are doing time. Nowadays I don't think that going in and out of penitentiaries and stealing and robbing, I don't think it's gotten anybody anywhere. That's the truth. I'm sure it's through Synanon that I learned that everything I used to think, has always been ass-backwards. And the way I look at it now, I was a pretty stupid cat for quite a few years. A number of years. I only wish I knew then, what I know now. My values and ways of life--it's a hell of a realization to listen to yourself and see things the way they used to be. And the way things really are. It's so hard for me to verbalize this thing, to make it so people can understand. I wish I could think of a easy way to make people understand. But I guess everybody has to learn for himself. I was listening, and now I'm sitting here, and it's really sinking in. You know, when I really listen to myself, I think what a damn fool I've been for so many years! And how I've fought society so hard. And I've come to the realization that I'm fighting nobody but myself. What a damn fool I've been! And if you think of it the way I think of it now, people will accept you, if you let them. If you let a person accept you, it's so easy. But if you are so busy looking for this non-acceptance, you say, "Well,

they want nothing to do with me. What the hell! Why even bother." But if you just go on the premise that that person likes me; I like myself; things just seem to roll into place.

Dixon: I think that is one of the key things, "I like myself."

Middleton: That is the key, not one of the things, but that is the key. Not just the key thing, it is the key. But it's pretty hard for a person to realize that he really likes himself. Most of us are on this self-destruction kick--masochistic tendencies. Most of our addicts are masochistic. They are real strong masochists. They want to stick that thing in their arm; punish themselves; continually punishing, punishing, punishing. You just butt your head against a stone wall. You find out, if you open up your eyes, there never was a stone wall to begin with. And here you are.

The only thing I can say is (I'll take it out of the drug addiction), if any human being can learn to accept himself, everybody else will accept him if he will let him. That is about as profound as I can get. I wish that I could really accept that myself. I haven't fully accepted that myself yet. It's hard to accept myself. To just accept yourself as you are.

I think, "I wish I had this. I wish I could change

this. I wish I could change my eyes." You can always find fault if you look for it. But I don't think I've met a person who has fully accepted himself. Pretty hard to meet.

Dixon: I don't. I'd like to change myself a lot, but I've learned to live with me.

Middleton: That's the maturity I mean. I was just thinking about that.

I was telling about last night, and it struck me as so profound. I was about eighteen or nineteen, around in there, when I first went into an institution, and I was in there six years. All the time I was in there, I thought, "Well, I'm way further advanced." But as I look back, I see how I vegetated for all those years. I went in there; I came out five or six years older. But when I came out, I identified with the age group I was in when I went in the institution. And it struck me so clear last night, in this synanon. It came right off the top. I remembered real well, I was eighteen or nineteen when I went in, and when I came out of the institution, I went right back and started identifying and communicating and running around with eighteen and nineteen-year olds. I thought I had progressed! But I really had just stayed and vegetated in this spot for five or six years.

I was telling one of the fellows at Terminal Island, and he says, "Well, I'm living."

I said, "Jack, you are doing nothing but vegetating. You don't even know what's going on. This is your world; you are in the crib, in a cage. And here you sit, and you're telling me you're living? When I was sitting here like you and can tell more about it than you know because you're not even out here. You don't even know what's going on."

And it surprised me. In a way it did; and in a way it didn't. I remember this, and it comes just like that (snap), just right out of the clear blue sky. The guy's telling me, "I'm living. I'm this. I'm that."

He has no identification in any group. He is half colored; he's half white; he's sitting in the middle, in a conflict. And it's with him all the time. He has no group to identify with. He's prejudiced toward colored; he's prejudiced toward white; and here he sits. And the conflicts, the drug addiction comes through. And he's real withdrawn. He sits in a group like this, trying to hide. And he's sitting there, and he's thinking nobody is paying any attention to him. And he can just sit up and start talking, and start defending, and trying to bull shit; and it worked. So he finally came

out--and he don't like the black race; he don't like the white race; he don't know what he likes. But he's living. He's living.

Well, here was the key to him. He said, "I'm one of these outsiders." There is no identification with any group. He is sort of a rebel with, in his frame of reference, a cause. He's not white; he is not colored, he is in between. He's got no place for him to identify with.

And I was remembering this vegetation process. And I did it. I think it would be a good thing for most of these so-called guys who think it is so smart to go in and out of these institutions. Lot of kids nowadays think you are a big shot if you've got a criminal record. What stupidity! Stupidity! It's going back to the crib again. Right back to the crib. Right back where they are diapered and bottled and fed. And some day some of us have got to grow up. I would probably still be back in the crib, in an institution, if it wasn't for this environment.

I notice I have not said one swear word all the way through. Not one. And I'm one of the few guys that knows every one. Backward and forward.

I was sitting in a restaurant with one of our squares having a sandwich, and she said, "You must be changing; you act like a square."

And I said, "What do you mean, baby?"

She said, "You act like a square."

I said, "Well, I'm not though. I have another side too, you know."

You see, here's the difference. I'm thinking while I'm talking to you that it's like that circle I drew--I no longer identify with the criminal-addictive personality. And yet I do.

Dixon: You have an empathy, instead of a sympathy.

Middleton: Empathy, that's the word; I have an empathy. I can understand it, and yet I don't want to be like it.

I used to come in here, call 'em the basic curse words; I used them all. All I did was belittle myself. But I never realized it before. I never realized it. I always thought, "Well here, I'm a big swaggering guy, with curse words," and "Look at him; he can swear!" It's childish behavior. You see the guys, male or female, running around this place cursing, and it kind of disgusts you. Two individuals that both curse, one of them will look at the other one, and they are disgusted with each other. But they are too stupid to see what they are doing. That's silly.

Dixon: You were talking about one of the reasons for gangs and addiction and the inability to make an end to the hostility.

Middleton: I don't know whether it's true, it's just my opinion. But, through my experience when I was young, it seemed to me that we never had a place to express ourselves. You know, "Here's a ball park--you play there. Here's a place--you play there." Not what we wanted to do, but what people wanted us to do. This was when I was twelve or thirteen, on up through there. And as I see it now, I get a broader picture. There's no way for a juvenile to express his hostilities, his likes or dislikes. You never heard of juvenile delinquency 100 years ago because there was always something or some way--they could hunt or fish, or always something for them to do. They could express it. Now they got the TV, and movie shows, and necking parties. All this is good, but where does a person express himself? He's either in front of the TV watching the gang wars or watching a movie with eroticism. They want to try it. If that's a man and he does it, or if that's a woman, that's the way she is. I want to try it and see what happens. You see this thing; you read about it in the paper all the time. Juveniles getting shot, you know, the whole story. I don't think they can find a place where they want to go. You hear about places on Zuma Beach where a bunch of juveniles wrecked the place. It's the only chance they get to vent their

hostility. I think Society does this to them.

Dixon: Ya, society puts them in this position, and they resent the authority of society. They have to take some overt action. They can't carry it inside.

Middleton: So they have these gang fights on the beach or beat up some old man. I did it all. I would beat up some old drunk and rob him; I would just do it. Maybe we would get two or three dollars out of him, but we didn't care about the money, it was just something for us to do. And we'd have these little testing parties with females in the bushes. We were testing each other, hiding in the bushes, just because we were told, "Don't do that; that's bad." Never telling us why it's bad; never giving us a plausible reason; never discussing it, just saying, "It's bad." A person like myself, and I think the average juvenile in that stage of his life says, "Well, I'm going to find out why it's bad." It's just like if you start a fire and the stove is hot, and they say, "Bad! Don't touch!" A person is going to touch to see why it is bad. And if he gets burnt once, he learns from his experience. If they could have a place where they could sit down and draw a broad, clear picture of why these things are bad, what to do, and find a reason for them, I think this is the solution.



But to say, "Well, it's bad to hide in the park and neck with the girls." Why is it bad? Who's the judge? It's bad to run up and down the beach. Well, why is it bad? It's bad to fight. Why? How are you going to get rid of your hostility? Have it in a constructive way, instead of destructive. You can take all this destructiveness and channel it into constructive effort, if you can.

But the way it is now, "Don't do that! Go watch TV. Don't do that! Go sit in the movies. Don't do that, Junior; don't do that, Junior."

But why? Why can't I? Besides, the normal reaction to "Don't do that," is to do it, no matter what the age. A boy'll come in and swear, and if you say, "Don't do that," he'll do it just twice as much. Because he is rebelling against your authority. But if you just go the opposite, there is no challenge. Whenever you put a challenge in his way he's going to find out. Or she's going to find out. I'll give you a case: some of these girls in here, were told, "Sex is bad. Don't do it; don't do it; don't do it." They wind up frigid, yet most of them are prostitutes. Where, if they had a basic sex education as a child; if they ask a question, answer them. No secrets about it. Just answer their questions, answer their basic questions, and open it up like the window. I

don't think they would have to be looking for the mysterious and they wouldn't learn it on the street corner, or in the alleyway, or up under the bushes in the park or someplace. They would learn at home where they are supposed to. That's what I think. I may be wrong. I'm just taking all this out of my frame of reference--where I learned it. I learned it from prostitutes, and under the bushes in the park, and look what it's done to me.

So many people are embarrassed about the basic functions of nature. You know, things like hostility--everybody's got it. Everybody has a certain amount of it. Everybody's got hate, everybody's got love--everybody's got a certain amount of it. Everybody has these instinctual drives. And why repress our instinctual drives? I don't understand. I begin to see more and more and more as I stay in Synanon, of how I've always repressed all my instincts. You know, accepting my feminine with my masculine--half and half. But how many people can you sit and talk like this to. Your feminine characteristics, your masculine; we both have them, we come from male and female. And it's so basic and so simple. But you can't tell just any plain John Doe. He thinks that if he's feminine, it reverts right into homosexuality. Everything has the connotation of homosexuality.

But to somebody that's got a little bit of horse sense, just plain horse sense, just put two and two together, you come from a male and you come from a female, so you are both. So you can either have a high masculine, or a high feminine, but you still got both. It's what makes us. That's the way human beings are.

But if you sit and try, and you start talking, and you see that real high feminine, and he starts talking in these high psychological terms. Tell a guy this or tell a female this. .vroom. . . "Oh God, it's not true!" But if they stopped to think, it's right in front of them, the law of nature. Every time I run into a situation, I kind of laugh.

Dixon: What can you say, until they are ready to listen?

Middleton: And who's ready to listen?

Shall we close? Is there anything you want me to say before we close it?

Dixon: Do you have any particular message?

Middleton: Well, the only thing that I want to say, is that these are only my opinions, and taken from my own frame of reference. Most of these experiences I have lived. That's about all I can say.