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Just to Breathe: Personal Recollections of Synanon founder, Charles E. Dederich

ELLEN BROSLOVSKY

***Introductory comment by the journal editor:** The following memoir by Ellen Broslovsky documents a significant part of her twenty-five year sojourn as a member of the Synanon Foundation.

Synanon itself was one of the most successful communal groups in the United States during the second half of the twentieth century. Over 25,000 people were members at one time or another, including well known jazz musicians, Charlie Haden, Stan Kenton, Joe Pass and Art Pepper. Synanon friends and supporters included psychologist, Abraham Maslow, educational innovator, George Leonard, Senator Thomas Dodd of Connecticut, and United Farm Workers founder, Cesar Chavez.

Alcoholics Anonymous veteran, Chuck Dederich, established Synanon as an innovative drug rehabilitation center near the Santa Monica beach in 1958. Synanon evolved quickly, however, into an experimental commune and "religion," which attracted thousands of non-addict members and was strongly committed to social justice and progressive education.

This constantly experimenting group gave tremendous power, however, to its charismatic founder and to a small group of Chuck Dederich's hand picked, top-level associates. This caused Synanon to be engaged in a number of highly publicized violent actions and radical lifestyle innovations from 1976-1978. The latter events obscured the community's significant successes in other areas, for example, drug rehabilitation, social integration (across class, gender, age, race and professional lines) and the provision of millions of dollars in goods and services to disadvantaged people through its redistribution program.

The Synanon legacy continues most notably in the "therapeutic communities" approach to drug rehabilitation and in the success of Synanon split-off businesses such as AdGap and Good Source. Renditions of Synanon's encounter group "game" are still played at many drug rehabilitation centers. It is also played in other venues. In 1996, for example, Jerry Brown (now the mayor of Oakland, California) played the "game" for a six-month period with a group of former Synanon members and "We the People" foundation personnel.

As an organized institution, community and church, Synanon ceased to exist in 1991, after losing a major tax-related legal case. Chuck Dederich himself died in the town of Visalia in February 1997. My book, *The Rise and Fall of Synanon: A California Utopia*, is scheduled for publication by The Johns Hopkins University

Press, in spring, 2001.

I first read about Synanon in *Life* magazine in the early sixties.[1] My family lived in Highland Park, an upper middle class, predominantly Jewish, suburb of Chicago. I was a lazy, slightly better than average student, concerned with issues of acne, weight, and gossip. On the surface it appeared an uneventful, shallow, teen existence. Yet, I was intensely alienated and isolated. I felt that I was not "normal." I was frustrated by social convention and with obligations that seemed shallow and meaningless. There were frequent, horrible, door-slamming fights within my family.

I felt that I was a disappointment to my parents, unable to live up to and shadowed by the "Great Potential" they seemed to think I had. When compared to brilliant cousins and the children of my mother's friends, I fell short. Somewhere in the far back reaches of my brain a social conscience was emerging. I craved for genuine honest conversation.

A friend and I had started a movement in grammar school, of speaking "frank," saying what was really on our minds, even if it was unexpected. This did not endear us to many of our peers and some of our teachers. I was elected president of my fifth grade class, for example, yet was impeached by our teacher after I told her what I really thought of her, in not the gentlest of terms.

I began to feel even more of an outcast. I often felt people were lying because of convention or politeness and I would goad them into telling the truth or reacting in some way so that the truth would materialize or even explode. The only person I could really talk to was my one good friend who was also dedicated to frankness.

Flipping though magazines in our living room one afternoon, I came across the picture in *Life* of two girls my age. They were yelling at each other -- forehead pressed to forehead, jaw muscles strained, eyes wide, long dark hair streaming down their backs. This was the Synanon Game, where people yelled their guts out, but agreed to hug and walk out of the room, arm in arm, when it was over -- NO MATTER WHAT WAS SAID! This had to be my Heaven on Earth![2]

Reading further, I learned that one had to be a drug addict to play this wonderful Game. I therefore toyed with the idea of using an eyebrow pencil to draw what I thought were needle track marks and trying to "pass" as an addict.

My next contact with Synanon took place when I tried to do a term paper on Synanon for an "Uncommon Social Worlds" class at Pitzer College, in Claremont, California. I made the two-hour journey from Claremont to Santa Monica with a friend's mother, who had been in Alcoholics Anonymous when Synanon's founder, Chuck Dederich, was

there. She told me that Dederich was a boisterous, often obnoxious man, who often appeared at A.A. meetings with one woman on each arm. She described them as “bimbos.”

When we arrived at the Synanon House -- which was located in an old beach front armory building -- we were turned away at the door. They held weekly Saturday Night open houses there but apparently they weren't all that open. At the time, hot jazz and soul artists, like Esther Phillips, Frank Rehak and Art Pepper, were Synanon residents trying to beat drug habits. They jammed before the Saturday Night Party Speech. It was a real hotspot, and you couldn't get in without a reservation. I assured the 'greeter' at the door that I did not come to listen to the music. I was doing a paper and just wanted to learn about the place. I told him my paper was due at the end of the week. He sneered and sent us away.

The following year I was working as one of the first female letter carriers in the city of San Francisco, while taking a few electives at San Francisco State. I lived and delivered the mail in the Haight-Ashbury district. This was the “Summer of Love” and one warm Saturday I stuck my thumb out to hitch a ride down Oak Street with no particular place to go. A man on a motorcycle stopped and told me he was going to the Synanon Street Fair. With just a little trepidation about Synanon, I hopped on and joined him. Things were much friendlier this time -- no reservation required. There were exhibits, and booths selling rugs, beads, raffle tickets, cookies and kisses. There was a live band and the Synanon national dance called the Hoop-la, a precursor to line dancing.

Synanon had evolved -- non-addicts were now allowed to play that wonderful Game. They called it the Square Game Club.[3] Synanon was looking for donors and supporters. Someone in my position (no money or skills of use to them) had to 'demonstrate' to become a member. Demonstrating could be anything that proved you really wanted to join and had something to offer. I was advised to call often to see if there was an opening and to make myself valuable in the meantime. I volunteered in the coffee shop and did whatever chores were needed. After a few months I was allowed to come and play.

Members of the Square Game Club were divided into tribes. My tribe leader was Dan Sorkin. Dan had been a popular DJ in Chicago when I was growing up. He was now equally popular in San Francisco.

I was infatuated with the Game, dizzy with the power that accompanied going into a room of total strangers and letting loose with all of my opinions. This was much more then being frank. This was an art form. Even more thrilling, was when the Game eventually got around to you! To know what your fellow gamers really thought and why, was invaluable, though sometimes painful. To me it was exhilarating. Afterward there was always coffee (which I never drank), cookies, other donated food and

socializing. You were to make a special point of seeking out those you played the roughest with and inevitably they became your closest friends. This was where I was meant to be.

After playing in the Game Club for nine months, I was hired by Synanon, which had moved its facility across the Bay into the once exclusive, fourteen-story, Oakland Athletic Club building. This was located in a deteriorating African-American neighborhood. Three months later, I was rotated to the Tomales Bay Academy, where the "Founder," Chuck Dederich, lived.[4]

Gene, my boyfriend at the time, worked in the executive office. One of his duties was to tape and edit "big shot" Games. Often these tapes were sent around to different Foundation locations. There were listening tables in the other facilities fitted with tape recorders and earphones. These were at large low, wooden spool tables, surrounded by soft comfortable chairs -- very inviting places to hear "the word" from on high.

Gene brought me a tape he had just cut and was very excited about. He had titled it "Optimism and Negativity." The title was later changed to "The Gift of Life." He played it for me before I had even unpacked my bags. I heard the "Old Man's"[5] low, intense, gravelly, grumbling voice:

> Just to Breathe is so utterly fantastic. To look and to hear and to eat and to make love and to wash out your mouth with mouthwash! To sleep on a bed and not on the ground!
>
> I am surrounded by this kind of 'Walking Dead' thing... It's never quite good enough...Just not quite the shine...Maybe it's even cellular. Half the people in world lean toward "everything is GOOD" and the other half think everything is BAD. And I can't understand it, that little picking, just the little picking all the time.
>
> To me life is shining. It's been shining, I mean uninterruptedly, since three weeks after I had my last drink! I don't know how to cope with people who don't have that feeling.
>
> This terrible malaise is all over the world. Everybody wants, 'Gimme, Gimme, Gimme.' 'I want, want, want.' There isn't one thing I can see how in the name of God and good conscience they could spend any time thinking or worrying about. But, 'It's just not good enough.'
>
> I want to protect myself from it. I don't want to hear it anymore, because drunk and a failure in life and everything else, I never gave up, not ever! I never had that attitude.
>
> Everything I have is the best. I have the best kids, the best mate, the best job. Everything I have is the best. It can't be any other way.
>
> When I hear ENTHUSIASM gushing all over the place, I just BATHE in it. Positive people are worth billions of dollars!
>
> And the rest of them, in this world that is falling to pieces, I swear to God they are killing the human race. Killing it. Because they don't have an adult appreciation of the phenomenon of existence and consciousness. Religious people would say they are not thankful to God. And I don't understand this, I

> don't. I think that they are sick -- really sick. It's like taking the gift of life and throwing it right back in the face of the Deity.[6]

Listening to that deep, scratchy, resonant voice, I fell under the spell of the "Old Man." I decided to "ACT AS IF" I was a positive, enthusiastic, successful person and to stop operating from a position of envy and "Gimme Gimme."[7] I wanted to be one of the positive people worth "billions of dollars." That was something I could do! I could smile every day. I could act as if I was in control. I could do this as long as I had the Game where the truth could be spoken and heard.

Chuck Dederich wore overalls and a work shirt. He had a big Buddha belly. The right side of his face was caved in from a bout with meningitis. There was a cavernous hole in his right ear from a mastoidectomy. In those days, and for most of the next twenty years that I knew him, he was surrounded by the sounds of construction -- bulldozers, earth moving, hammers pounding. He spoke with a mesmerizing, bellowing, booming, rhythmic roar. When he walked into a room, I watched myself, and others wake up, sit up, poised for the unexpected. Sometimes he would ride a motorcycle right into a building, park it by a chair and join the circle. Standing at a lectern faced with a glass and pitcher of water, he might pour the water into the glass and then take a drink from the pitcher.

He spoke in words as hard as cannonballs but also said: "The greatest gift we have as humans, is the ability to laugh at ourselves."

Chuck has been described as a warrior, shaman, teacher, innovator, father figure, sit-down comedian, philosopher, and as a ruthless, manipulative ogre, an egomaniac, and a manic/depressive.[8] He once said that he built Synanon in a manic frenzy the first twenty years and tried to bring it down with him as he slid into depression.

If I had only one word to use to describe Chuck, that word would be "ROAR." He was a walking ROAR. Either roaring with indignation or roaring with laughter -- rarely sitting, rarely quiet. His influence induced the following: He persuaded thousands of drug addicts and alcoholics to abstain. He attracted sponsors and donors to create facilities worldwide. He attracted business people to donate businesses and expertise to run them and to train residents to be self-supporting. These businesses are still in existence today.

He attracted non-addicts to join the social movement, donate their assets, move in, and raise their children in the unconventional Synanon school. He convinced the entire community, nationwide, to stop smoking, give up sugar, exercise aerobically religiously, and to change marriage partners.

The Game was his tool. The Game was the heart of the community. It may be what differentiates Synanon from any other 20th century community. Starting in the late fifties, AA members sat in circles

confronting each other with the raw truth in no-holds- barred- language. These gatherings attracted drug addicts and Chuck began to notice that drug addicts who played the Game stopped using drugs. This circular setting developed into the first successful drug rehabilitation program and the mother of what are today known as "TC's" or "Therapeutic communities."

There are hundreds of TC's all over the world.[9] Most are patterned on Synanon. Chuck gave the Game credit for Synanon's strength and growth. This touchstone gave groups of people with varying beliefs, backgrounds and skin colors a common understanding and a way to live productively and peacefully in communities around the world. It was not only helpful for drug addicts. Eventually half of Synanon's membership was composed of 'squares'.[10] Thousands of people from every class and ethnic background were drawn to Synanon's experiments in communal life and interpersonal relationships.

The following description of the Game borrows from *The Human Sport*, a pamphlet written by Guy Endore:

> "The Game is no verbal street fight, or attack therapy. It belongs to no school of psychotherapy. A dozen or so people sit down to play for about three hours, with no trained Doctor, shrink, or appointed leader. The more articulate, astute and comic spirit will emerge. The Game is fun and exciting. Like any sport, some will excel, but all can join. There is only one rule: No physical violence or threat thereof.[11]

Some say The Synanon Game could have roots as old as man. CED[12] was convinced that it was played by Jesus and his disciples: "Confess ye to one another..."

But the Game is no round robin confessional. There is a furious pace, with screams of rage and gales of laughter. You can't hate anyone who is real. And when someone exposes his or her raw humanity, you can't help but love them.

The Game wove through the fabric of our life. We gathered at least once a week in all variety of circles; Work Games, Women's Games, Funny People Games, Black Games, Long Games, Mini Games, 24-72 hour games and ones that lasted a week, called Stews -- also Hi-fi games where a work crew could take a break, stand around a table and just yell at each other for ten minutes. These often began with very real tensions and almost always ended in laughter.

The game grew me up, expanded my vision and connected me with people I might have otherwise feared or walked across the street to avoid. It was a forum for courage and activism built into the fiber of the community. It was a school for the study of human behavior; a safe place to practice taking courageous stands, speaking up, and to test the degree of your conviction on any given issue. For me, it was a pathway to the ability to

hear and trust my own inner voice. Robert Burn's statement, "Oh wad some gift the giftie gie us to see ourselves as others see us," describes the importance of the gift of the Synanon Game.

When I knew Chuck, he was married to his third wife Betty. She had transformed herself from a street hype and prostitute into a strong force in Synanon and a role model for everyone fighting an addiction problem. She reeked with intense and gentle personal power -- graceful, mothering, and poetic. She spoke up when she had to but handled most things with a soft touch. Many believe that she quietly kept Synanon and Chuck together; that her death in 1977 was the beginning of the end.

He was the "Horse" she was the "Bird." In Betty's room -- a public room used for Games and ceremonies -- there was a stained glass circle in deep blues and yellows hanging near a window where the light could shine through. The circle contained a massive white stallion with flowing mane, looking up to a delicate, elegant bird under the words "THE HORSE LOVES THE BIRD."

"We are an Odd Couple," said Betty.

> You said it would be good for Synanon to have an integrated marriage right at the top of the pyramid. We used that as a common cause to bridge the gap because there was no other way for us to get together. You came from the upper middle class, maids in your kitchen. Private school, then Notre Dame. You became a corporate man and followed all of the traditionally white patterns. And here you sit, married to me, a black woman, a reformed one. A hard-shelled primitive Baptist who fell into drugs disgrace and degradation.
>
> It has been hard work. We were shaped differently, colored differently, had different kinds of smells, different backgrounds- differences of opinion . . .
>
> I recommit myself to this magic union. I will always fight for it and what it represents... the fact that Synanon works.[13]

In her last few days, some of us living at the Home Place were invited to sit in her room where she lay on a beautifully made bed; Dior Rose sheets and a down comforter.[14] It was on a platform and there were several rows of soft comfortable seats nearby. Chuck was by her side for days; wiping her brow, holding water to her lips. He was softly saying, "it's all right to let go, it's going to be beautiful." Tears streamed down his face. I was sitting in the middle of the first row of seats next to Chuck's younger brother Bill. Light glinted through the stained glass: "The Horse Loves the Bird."

My eyes wandered up to it and above it was a small brown bird on the rafter. It began to flitter around the room. There were no windows open, no chimney or fireplace. How could it have possibly gotten in there? I sat frozen, not believing what I saw and not knowing what to do about it. I looked at Bill. The bird flew around for several minutes and Chuck, who

had been speaking so softly to Betty, turned and growled, "Don't just sit there. Let it out of here." We each jumped up and pulled open a side of the glass sliding door. The bird flew out. Betty died later in the night. Every time I saw a bird for the next few months, I felt her presence.

The “Synanon Philosophy” borrows from Ralph Waldo Emerson:

> The Synanon Philosophy is based on the belief that there comes a time in every one's life when he arrives at the conviction that envy is ignorance that imitation is suicide. That he must accept himself for better or worse as is his portion. That though the wide universe is full of good, no kernel of nourishing corn can come to him, but through his toil bestowed on that plot of ground which is given to him to till. The power which resides in him is new in nature and none but he knows what it is that he can do nor does he know until he has tried. Bravely let him speak the utmost syllable of his conviction. God will not have his work made manifest by cowards.
>
> A man is relieved and gay when his has put his heart into his work and done his best. What he has said or done other wise will give him no peace. As long as he willingly accepts himself he will continue to grow and develop his potentialities. As long as he does not accept himself much of his energy will be used to defend rather than to explore and actualize himself.
>
> No one can force a person to permanent and creative learning. He will learn only if he wills to. Learning is possible in an environment that provides the setting materials resources and by his being there. God helps those who help themselves.[15]

There was always be a new book floating around Synanon that would catch on with members. Most of the community would then read and deliberate over it in various formats and sessions. In the late 1960s, Chuck was fascinated with Buckminster Fuller. We began building tensegrites out of toothpicks, progressing to full scale Geodesic Domes. In 1968 Chuck found a way, from reading Fuller, to diagram his thoughts and physicalize how he built Synanon with trust and the Golden Rule. This developed into a three-hour presentation called "Thickened Light," performed or "demonstrated" with a tape and diagrams in all the facilities around the foundation.

The following quotation is from "Thickened Light":

> We've been fooling around for many years with the notion of integrating the human personality of integrating the group--man, woman, young, old, Jew Gentile, black, white- integrating.
>
> I am IN a system that contains automobiles, airplanes and other people . . . I AM a system. My world is full of other systems very similar and possibly exactly like mine, other human beings. The total system, the total human grouping is very similar to one human being. We talk about Synanon as having an ego, a super ego, and ID, an unconscious -- a large organism that contains smaller organisms.

> There are two great ways for human beings to have fun, that is to operate in congress. Sexual congress, intercourse, is the high point of physical pleasure which leads into the spirit. As we develop our species, we have intellectual intercourse. Minds operating in concert -- one other person or many other people. You then create your own society. If you practice the Golden Rule, "Do on to others as you would have them do on to you"; if you act it out to the best of your ability then you have immediately created the society in which you live.
>
> The human head is capable of flights far greater than the speed of light. I am now thinking of earth -- I am now thinking of the sun. It takes eight minutes for light to come from the sun to here. It took a split second for me to make that transition from thinking of earth to thinking of the sun. I can think of July 4th, 1968, and then July 4th, 1716. Boom -- that's how fast I can go with my mind. I can move through space instantaneously. I can move through time, instantaneously. Creation is done by thinking in the metaphysical world and translating into the physical world.[16]

"He liked to make models," said his daughter Jady, "from when he was a tool and die maker at Douglas Aircraft. He experimented with models for marriage, religion the nuclear family."[17] Like at Oneida, our meals were eaten at large round tables with lazy susans to spin the condiments.[18] Men and women kept their own bedrooms even after marriage. Just because you tie the knot does not mean you must give up your space. He liked the economy of scale, of community. We share everything so we can all live a rich and healthy lifestyle. Jady also believes that the only way Chuck could connect with people when he wasn't drinking was in the Game.[19]

Where were we then, ultimately, since we had learned so much about breaking contracts, about speaking up with courage?[20] Why did we let him drink, let him down personally, and let the community slip through our fingers? There are many answers -- both simple and complex. Once I was gently warned, as I raved about my wonderful life in community: "A benevolent dictatorship is the most efficient form of government but absolute power corrupts absolutely."

Chuck was flawed, his genius deserted him long before his followers did, and the community, as we knew it, is gone. "Just because you find out there isn't a Santa Claus," he once said, "Just because you find out there isn't a Santa Claus, doesn't mean you have to stop BELIEVING in Santa Claus."

The following was written after my last visit to Chuck:

> He is senile and harmless. Still, speaks with that deep, clear, mesmerizing voice. He is helpless and approachable at "The Golden Leaves" retirement home where he lives in a tiny room barely large enough for a bed and TV. He is wearing a faded gray cotton robe. Hand-made many years ago to fit comfortably over his head. We used to wear elegant robes like that in ceremonies; Stews[21] Trips,[22] long games.
>
> The last time I saw him in this little room he told me that ‘the best is yet to

come, you have a lot to look forward to when you grow old.'

'Yeah like what?'

'The human condition. From where I am sitting now, it is funnier than ever.'

This visit, however, he greets me, mildly puzzled,

'I know you don't I?'

'Yes Chuck, for almost thirty years, I am Ellen Broslovsky.'

'You live around here?'

'Not far. You've been to my house for dinner.'

'I have?'

He laughs softly, looking down. Then looks up shakes his head and shrugs. He laughs again.

'I don't know. I don't remember. It 's nice of you to come see the old fart.'

'I like the old fart,' I say softly and leave for the last time.

As it says in the Synanon Prayer:

Please let me first and always examine myself.
Let me honest and truthful.
Let me seek and assume responsibility.
Let me trust and have faith in my fellow man.
Let me love rather than be loved.
Let me give rather than receive.[23]

Betty Dederich summed it up like this: "He says Religion is the people business. Religion is the quality of the human spirit which contains its highest quotients -- humanity, dedication, trust, morality, ethics, integration. If a person lives on a plane like that He would have to Glow! I want to go running up a hill and stand there and Glow for Synanon."[24]

NOTES

[1] "Synanon House, where drug addicts join to salvage their lives." *Life* (March 9, 1962), 52-65.

[2] The "Game" was a central sacramental experience for Synanon members. The term is thus often capitalized.

[3] Synanon "Square Game Clubs" were social clubs established in cities across the country, where, for a small fee--and a willingness to abide by certain community regulations-- non-addicts could play the Game.

[4] The Tomales Bay Academy was established in the late sixties for several reasons. Chuck's daughter Jady was attending Santa Monica City College and finding it difficult to make the shift -- from Synanon lifestyle and values -- to the community college. Chuck wanted to start a school that taught the principles of Synanon and trained a new generation. He wanted to experiment with different

forms of education and learning. Also, the sixties had brought a new type of addict to Synanon. Hippie and flower children drug users were generally younger and less street wise than hard-core heroin addicts. The Academy was a way to protect them as well as develop a new cadre of leaders.

[5] Synanon members often referred to Chuck Dederich as "The Old Man," with respect and affection. He was the groups' father figure and also was older then the average member.

[6] Charles E. Dederich, "The Gift of Life" or "Optimism and Negativity," edited audiotape, Tomales Bay Academy (1969).

[7] The "act as if" approach to life was central to the work of Alcoholics Anonymous. In Synanon it meant that if you act as if something is true -- for example, you are happy, successful and you do not need drugs -- it can become true.

[8] "Celebration of Life for Charles E. Dederich," program notes (April 12, 1997).

[9] Therapeutic communities modeled after Synanon exist worldwide. They are groups of people with substance abuse problems who live and work together. They have encounter groups or Game-like settings that help them to learn to live together in a drug free environment. TC's are committed to nonviolence and to a collaborative relationship between professional counselors, peer counselors and residents.

[10] "Square" was the name given to Synanon members who were not drug addicts or former substance abusers.

[11] Guy Endore, *The Human Sport* (Santa Monica, CA: The Synanon Foundation, 1967).

[12] The initials, "CED," stand for Charles Edwin Dederich. They were often used as an abbreviated nickname, both verbally and in Synanon's written records.

[13] Betty Dederich, *No Time for "Yeah But"* (Marshall, CA: The Synanon Foundation 1977).

[14] From 1975-1991 the Synanon "Home Place" was located in the tiny mountain town of Badger, in the Sierra Nevada foothills. This is where Dederich, top executives and 50-60 other members resided on a rotational basis. Hundreds of other Synanon people lived at a 3200-acre ranch seven miles away, up a windy mountain road. The larger property was called "The Strip" because an airstrip had been built there. This was in fact the only fog-free airstrip in the area (the near-sea level San Joaquin Valley is often encased in fog in the winter). The Home Place was originally envisioned as a place to recreate and restore. Guests from other facilities were invited to come up for week -long stays and were treated royally while there. It was also a place of experimentation and development, like the Academy at Tomales Bay had been earlier.

[15] "The Synanon Philosopy," taken largely from Emerson's essay entitled "Self Reliance," was read at every Synanon morning meeting and at most public events. The "Synanon Prayer" (heavily based on St. Francis) was read in closing at these events.

[16] Charles E. Dederich, "Thickened Light," edited audiotape transcript (Marshall, CA: 1968).

[17] Jady Dederich, interview with author (September, 1997).

[18] The Oneida Community was founded by John Humphrey Noyes more than a century before Synanon. But there were many similarities. Oneidans practiced "Mutual Criticism," which was much like the Game. They also called themselves a religion (Christian Perfectionists), had very successful business ventures and raised children in a communal school.

[19] After twenty years of abstinence, which was deemed essential both for Dederich and for Synanon members who had been drug addicts, the community approved the consumption of alcohol in 1978. Interestingly enough, the Synanon House in Berlin (Germany) refused to go along with this policy change and is still in existence today.

[20] Chuck Dederich felt that "breaking contracts" was crucial to the health of the Synanon organization. Breaking contracts meant saying the unsayable. For example, if two people were doing something wrong and one of them admitted it, this was construed as a "broken contract." Sometimes a whole group of people held a "contract" and turned on any individual who might try to break it. For years there was a Synanon contract that stipulated that smoking cigarettes was necessary to cure drug addiction. That contract was broken when the entire community gave up smoking in 1970. At this time, many people grudgingly quit smoking; others left the community. In any case, no one was strong enough to break any contract held by Chuck Dederich.

[21] The "Perpetual Stew" was an extended Synanon Game that continued for long periods of time, with different people filtering in and out for "Stew Bits." The usual Bit was 72 hours long with short sleep breaks. The aim was to bring forth dissipation -- to break down defenses. Classes and lectures were also conducted in the Stew and there was a Gallery where members of the community could watch. An invitation to the Stew took preference over work or any other activity. The first Stew in Tomales Bay was led by "Stew Mother," Wilma Motley, an ex-addict and former madam in her sixties. She took care of scheduling, oversaw the "grazing board" which was stocked with soup, fruit, homemade bread and peanut butter and jelly, and often kept a log of events. Subsequent Stew caretakers were called Stew "PODs." This stood for "person of the day."

[22] The Synanon "Trip" was a three-day spiritual journey. Trippers divested themselves of all jewelry and make-up and donned simple white robes. They went into long Games in groups; guides who wore orange and purple robes directed the Gaming. Between Games there were other activities, such as dance or art. Trip "Shepherds" wore white robes with yellow loops and led the trippers to the various activities. They also took care of the trippers between Gaming sessions. The Trip always ended with a "Trip Break". The trippers who had had little sleep -- and usually a variety or insights and revelation -- were brought into a large community room where there was a band playing music and people dancing the hoop-la. Much hugging, laughing, crying and dancing took place there.

[23] The "Synanon Prayer."

[24] Betty Dederich, *I'm Betty D.* (Marshall, CA: The Synanon Foundation, 1977)