

Addict, Alcoholic Find Hope In Synanon's 'Hostile House'

By Ralph Friedman
North American Newspaper Alliance
Santa Monica, June 14—Only a few blocks from where hundreds of "solid citizens" flock to hear Lawrence Welk, a badly painted door leads into a poorly lighted, dilapidated store shell filled with secondhand furnishings, narcotic addicts, and alcoholics.

This is Synanon, whose confused but determined volunteer members have but one mission: to leave heroin and drink as far behind as possible.

Although Synanon is theoretically a cooperative project, the venture centers around the burly, extroverted figure of 45-year-old Charles Dederich, a former public relations and sales promotion executive.

A native of Toledo and an alumnus of the University of Notre Dame, Dederich had come West with a bottle in hand and did not let it down until a year ago, when he vowed to mount the wagon. A group of alcoholics he organized broke up in bickering, but Dederich stayed sober.

Among the original group were several "hypes" (narcotics addicts), who were sweating to "break the habit." Remembering them, Dederich developed the idea of forming a foundation to help addicts. This was in June, 1958. In late autumn the new group was incorporated as Synanon (Sin Anonymous), a clubhouse and living quarters were rented, and the organization was in business.

Hostile House
Today, Synanon has 52 members, one-third women. Seventy per cent of the members are hypes; the remainder are alcoholics. The median age (half below, half above) is 28. Most of the hypes latched onto the habit in youth and were on the needle from five to eight years before coming to Synanon.

The men live in a shabby two-story frame building, near the clubhouse, which they have named "hostile house." The women have a dormitory in an inexpensive hotel, a block away. Food is served in the clubhouse, at the coffee bar. The chow consists of hot dogs, hamburgers, doughnuts some solid fare, and cup after cup of coffee—

mostly black. Room and board is free. "Flush" members are suspect. Synanon's \$500 monthly overhead is met by contributions from persons in all walks of life.

Most of the men and women were married at one time; some have children whom they have not seen for years. The one married couple, both hypes—is kept divided. The husband sleeps at hostile house, the wife at the hotel. "Later on we'll get them a pad," says Board Director Mrs. Adeline Ainlay, "but right now they'd only reinforce each other's cravings for the needle."

Few Do Work

It wouldn't take much walking to get a "fix"—a narcotics injection say most members. "You can get one five minutes from here, at a half dozen spots."

Few of the members work. Synanon doesn't want them to. "They're not prepared to enter the adult world," declares Mrs. Ainlay, who broke the habit after four and a half years of psychoanalysis.

"Mom," to the youngsters. Mrs. Ainlay is a case history of a well-bred woman who plunged down the needle trail. The daughter of a Nebraska governor, she married a prominent doctor, and for years "operated out of his bag"—got narcotics from it, without his knowing it.

Three days a week the prim-faced, middle-aged "Mom" clerks in a local bookshop. (Her boss paid the foundation's rent one month). The rest of the time she devotes "to the emotionally two and three year olds," who come and go at her open, orderly apartment.

Like Adelaine Ainlay, John Barisoff, the third of the four directors of the board, was a narcotic who had liberated himself before Synanon was founded. A tall, quiet, pensive man, Barisoff served time in jail for crimes compounded out of narcotics needs. "Our philosophy is this," says Barisoff. "A guy that has been there and back can point to a positive direction and tell the other hype he can go that way, too, if he wants to."

Good Cure Rate

Fourth on the board of directors

is 35-year-old Jesse Pratt, an open-hearted, powerful and gracious Negro, who has spent 13 years behind bars for one crime or another, all involving narcotics.

Pratt, who likewise had broken the habit by the time Synanon set up shop, is the group's statistician. "Do you know," he says, "that state and federal narcotics hospitals only claim a cure record of less than 2 per cent? So far, my books show we've kept 43 per cent of the addicts who come in here off the stuff. If in the long pull we can really cure 43 per cent, we'll be doing very well, don't you think?"

Police and probation officers who have watched the activities in the clubhouse don't know what to make of the organization, but several privately say that the results are better than anticipated. At least one judge in Los Angeles county has asked Synanon to start a club in his jurisdiction.

"In Santa Monica," relates Dederich, "sharp operators charge you \$500 for a five-week 'cure.' Then they send you back to the street—to start all over again. So what's gained?"

Dederich, who calls Synanon "the largest collection of clean narcotics addicts on the face of the earth not under confinement," describes the group's guiding principle as "empathy between addicts. Addiction is contagious, and so is non-addiction."

Authority Needed

Until a year ago, Dederich had never met a hype. Now he says: "The subject of addiction is full of speculation. Psychologists don't know; we don't know. In five years we'll know." And he wistfully adds: "If we have the money to keep going."

Dederich sees Synanon as combining hard direction and innermost experiences. "Being emotionally immature, these kids need authority," he says. "So we try to fit them into an automatic 'family' existence where they have certain jobs to do, like washing dishes or sweeping or making up beds. This gives them a sense of belonging, and also maybe starts a sense of responsibility going in them."

At nightly group therapy meet-

ings—sometimes three such meetings are held at the same time—the addicts "cop out" (confess) to each other. "Addicts are pathological liars," says Dederich. "They can make a psychiatrist climb walls. Well, they can't lie to us. We know all the answers. We invented some of them. We don't moralize. We just try to help people find themselves."

Impromptu group discussions are held dozens of times daily. When a man or woman has a problem, he or she calls together three or four members who are close by and threshes it out with them.

Every day the members hold informal reading-aloud meetings, or lie on their backs and listen to tape recordings or inspirational messages such as essays by Emerson. Synanon has dozens of books on psychoanalysis, each of which has been read at least a score of times. Although Dederich says that one of the foundation's purposes is to "understand the society around us and how it functions," there is a stress on introspection.

Work On Backsliders

Not all who come to Synanon stay even a week. Half the addicts return to the habit within two weeks. There is nothing the group can do about it, but it does exert influence on a long-termer who "backslides."

Synanon is open 24 hours a day. Someone is always on watch, perhaps lounging on a battered sofa resting under a painted life-ring bearing the inscription: "S. S. Hang Tough"—which, in Synonese, means—keep trying, don't give up. At any hour the door may open and a sickly, wretched, disturbed person enter. He may be fresh out of jail or have started down the street for a fix. She may be a prostitute, earning H (heroin money), or down to her last cent and cigarette, with the thought of suicide heavy on her mind.

Whoever he is, whoever she is, Synanon asks only one question: Do you want to help yourself be helped?

In the words of a poet, it says: "Come coward, take my coward's hand." And as it was writ in Ec-

clesiastes: "For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope."

TURKVILLE

By Friendly Neighbors Club

Mrs. Faye Rolfe and Marie went to Kansas City Sunday to spend two weeks. Carol Faye will be visiting her grandmother, Mrs. Raye Marlow in Plainville.

Steven Klotz of Kansas City is visiting at the Tom Bemis home.

Mr. and Mrs. Dale Bradley have returned from a vacation in Colorado.

Tuesday evening Mr. and Mrs. Earl Duncan and Judy entertained in their home. Mr. and Mrs. C. W. Yelton of Oklahoma City, and Mr. and Mrs. W. L. Yelton, Nancy, Susan and Gean of Hoisington.

Art Husted went to Norton Thursday to get Mrs. Husted's mother, Mrs. Blakesley.

Mr. and Mrs. Ray Simpson have a new grandson, born Friday morning at the Hadley hospital. The new baby was given the name of Gregg Dean.

Karen and Sherri Feldkamp spent a week in Ellis at the home of Roy Feldkamp.

Mr. and Mrs. Ray Simpson, Bobby Simpson, and Jim Goetz went to Great Bend Saturday to attend the Lario Picnic.

Mr. and Mrs. Burt Flowers and girls of El Dorado spent the weekend at the home of Mr. and Mrs. V. F. Henry.

Mr. and Mrs. Bob Rotach and family have moved into their new home at 802 S. Meridian, Plainville.

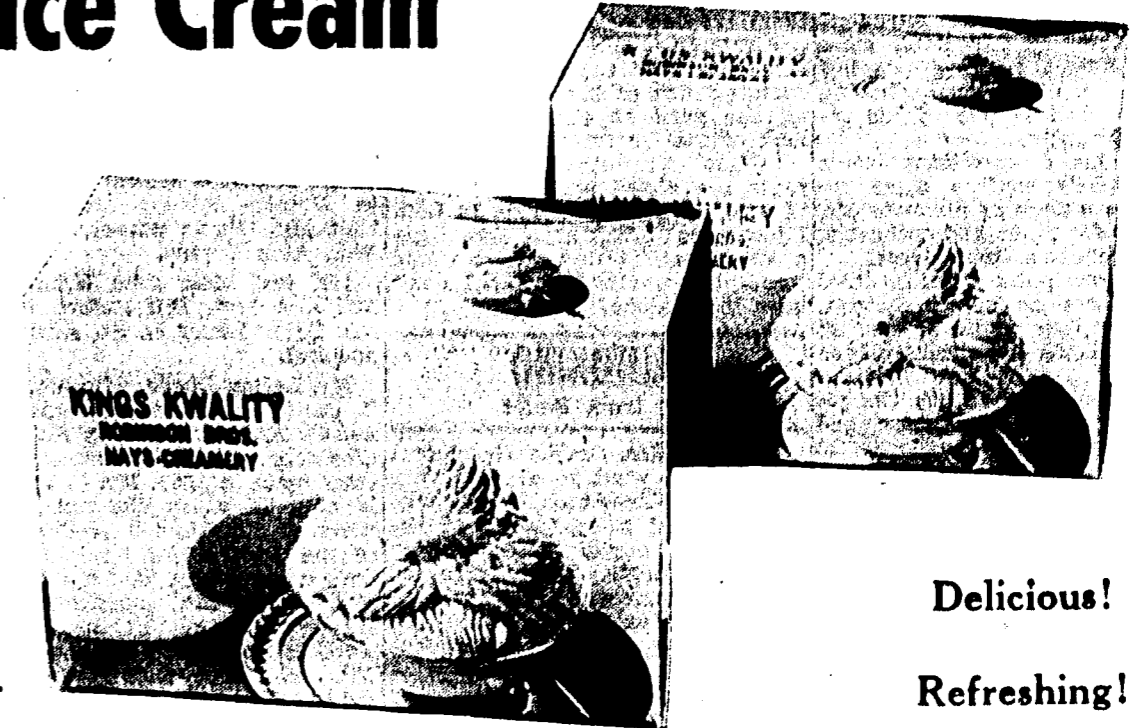
Mrs. Herb Barb left for Buffalo, Mo., to visit her mother and father, Mr. and Mrs. E. V. Rambo.

Mr. and Mrs. Cecil Nahon and John Breir of Hoisington were fishing over the weekend at the Earl Milan home.

President Woodrow Wilson made his noted "The Fourteen Points" speech before the U.S. Congress on Jan. 8, 1918.

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