

Interview with Chuck Dederick

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

January 9, 1996

Q: -- January 9th, and this is an interview with Chuck Dederick, Jr. Well, Chuck, can you tell me, what, um, brought you to Synanon, how you ended up joining?

A: Well, my dad being the founder, in 1958, uh, he started what was known as the Synanon Game which wasn't called the Synanon, it was, it was group interaction with ex-drug addicts and alcoholics. And, uh, he started doing that because he was a member of AA for, uh, for a couple of years. I went to some AA meetings with him. And he got interested in group interaction with people with AA and then, then some drug addicts started coming around -- I'll, I'll kind of make it quick, because I could go on and get into very fine detail. But I won't -- I'll just kind of give you some rough, broader strokes, if I can -- uh, and I was interested, you know, being his son, I would come around and see him, and he wasn't doing well from time to time, and then the, then the AA came around, and then he started getting the group, groups together, to sit around and just talk about their, their situations. Really, just basic, their situations. And they all had a lot of anger, hostility, alienation, and so on. So they started to express those feelings. And that was the main thing, to get the feelings out, get it out in the open, have other people feed back to them, and that was the idea that he came up with, and then he, being a kind of a, uh, entrepreneur in those days, he was always looking to, looking to do something, and uh, um, make something happen. Uh, being an ex-businessman and so on, salesman, and, but, it kind of interested him to, this process was interesting. [Phone rings]. Anyway, he was, uh, you know, doing the group interaction, which, which he coined the name Synanon and some other people sitting around in those group interactions, and that's what started the, that's, that's the main thing that Synanon started with, is the group interaction. Then some people decided they should live together. Down at, you know, they should live in apartments close by, then he rented a clubhouse, which was an old building, an old [unintelligible] of a storefront, and people started coming around, friends, relatives -- some were old, some relatives, people thought he was crazy, and the police department would come down and look and see what was going on. They couldn't understand what he was doing, he was getting drug addicts together, that was against the law, so they had the fire department there, they tried to zone him out of business, and lots and lots and lots of interaction, but meanwhile, things were, more people were coming around, and more people were interested in sitting around and talking, and pretty soon drug addicts weren't using drugs, alcoholics weren't drinking, they were having fun, they were shopping, people would go out and shop, they, they'd get their money together, whatever there was, they would shop, and get some good things, um, get food, and then one person would be designated to cook, and then, one thing led to another, and it was all down along the ocean, uh, by Ocean Park, California. Then, uh, one thing led to another, being, being the way my dad is, uh, he, he had the wind in his face, and he was really moving along, feeling great, and uh, some people would get little jobs and bring in a little more money, 'cause that's what they needed, then some people saw what was going on, they dropped a little money on the table, say, you know, "great work," he had another building. It's like, one thing led to another. The old armory building. Then, that went on for, then, uh, I was around at that time, living close by in small apartments, I had a job, he said "Why don't you, why don't you move into the building, and give me a hand, and I'll, you know, go to college and work, and do some things," so I said great, and I did that for a little while. I'd been in the army, I'd moved out, um, the tunnel back [?] has a lot of the stories, lots and lots and lots of the stories of all the people and all the interaction of the people, and I was involved in that, in that, in those, in those days, in the early days, just getting things started, and helping him do things. I had a car -- most people didn't have cars, you know, they were kind of flat on

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their back in many cases, so, I'd go pick up things, [people?] would donate things. Many of them, being a, being a businessman type, he started, uh, he got a, uh, he tried to get a tax-exempt certificate, he started using the volunteers of America for donations, they said, OK, yeah, you can, you can use our name for awhile, use our, our, um, our, our, um, tax exemption to get a few donations while you're getting yours. And then he got his in 1961, I believe it was, we got a tax-exemption and um, uh, I didn't live there for, for a long time. But the things, one thing led to another where people were gathering around. A lot of people wanted to be part of this, of this group interaction, because they saw positivity, they saw people getting off of drugs, they saw people, um, uh, prospering, you know, emotionally, for a long time, and a lot of movie stars, being in Los Angeles, they would come around and hang out and C. Allen [?] for instance, would come down and play the piano, and all kinds of musicians would come around, movie stars of all different -- you know, Jennifer Jones came around, and, different, lots and lots of, Lucille Ball --

Q: Wow.

A: Lot of them, lot of, I could go on and on and on. I mean, tons of movie stars came around because they were interested in the, you know, what was happening, because a lot of them had drug, drug, uh, kids that were uh, run off and come back, and some of them, some of them were, weren't doing so well. Some of them, most of them at that point had run, had gone to communes of different kinds, northern California, stuff like that. In the '60s. And, then my dad started some things, up in northern California, in the '60s, the late, well, all through the '60s. There was a movie made, a Columbia movie --

Q: I didn't know that.

A: Was made in 1962, I believe it was, and it had Edmund O'Brien, and Eartha Kitt and Stella Stevens and a whole bunch of movie stars. It was quite heavily, heavily -- Chuck Connors, all these people were in this movie, and it's a movie, it's like a cult movie now, I think. You know, people, it's an old movie, and people look at it from time to time.

Q: Do you know the name of it?

A: It's called Synanon.

Q: It's called Synanon, OK.

A: Then there's all kinds, then the books were written. Dr. Lou Yublonski [?] came down, and The Tunnel Back [?] was written about that time, with my dad, um, um, Gott Andor [?] came around, another writer, wrote a book called Synanon. There were quite a few books. There's more books than, there's all kinds of books, all these books were based on the movement, the drug movement in those days. And then my dad, um, wanted to start, uh, a school up in, up in San Francisco, we had places, we had places on the waterfront up there, we had, on Lombard street, uh, a big, we'd take over warehouses, and old buildings, and refurb, you know, refurb them, and make them -- 'cause one of the things that he was, he was, uh, he had very high standards, no matter what -- if we didn't have any money, still everybody had to be perfectly clean -- that was the idea. It was not a wreckage. Everybody who lived, you know, couldn't, was not a dirty environment, which is, which a lot of the communes, in those days, were filthy, and, and disease-ridden. We had doctors, came around, he would, he'd get ahold of doctors, and say,

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"Listen could you help, help, help us, by donating your services?" And they would -- you know, if we had somebody that needed, needed medical attention, they'd go there. We had great medical attention, great dental. Uh, dental care. All that kind of stuff. He was real, he was not a, you know, quote, a hippie. But, you know, he, the kids would come in, and they'd be, you know, they'd be messed up and so on, and, and, uh, very shortly after, with a lot of people's care and attention, they would get, they would get physically fit, again, running on the beach and using the facilities that we had -- we didn't have big facilities, we just had the natural environment, the beaches and then later on, we had country places, and --

Q: Yeah.

A: But, uh, as years went by, um, in the '60s, you're interested in the '60s and '70s. All in that time, we were acquiring properties in different parts of the, back east, back in New York, we had people, uh, same things started happening back there -- we called them game clubs, people would come around, play the Synanon Game. They'd sit down in a circle. People that didn't necessarily live there. But they'd join the club, and they would put some money in. They would pay, not a tuition or anything, the old man, said well, if everyone paid a penny a month, reversed the whole, it was a psychological thing, you pay a penny, everybody pays a penny a month. OK, well, of course, people as they, some people would pay a lot of money, some people would pay, they'd pay their penny a month, you know? But most people would pay, would come down and put five bucks, ten bucks, fifty, a hundred, you know, whatever they were capable of doing at the time. So they would do that and join the club. Then some, then, in the '60s, the late '60s, I had moved out by then, raised, there was ten years went by between the time I moved in and then I left in about 1960, got married, two children were involved [?] he had two grandchildren, a lot of, I mean there was, like I said, there's so many stories in there, but -- We moved up into 1968. I looked at the school system that we had, I put my, one of my sons, uh Blake [?] here, the one on the right over there, you know Brian [?] over there. He went into, uh, uh, kindergarten, first grade, and I looked at the school system. I didn't care for it, but, but we were developing our own child-rearing situation. I was active, at that time, I would see my dad a lot. So, but I wanted to live, you know, a regular, conventional life style. So I moved out. And, and went to work, and had a little business, and stuff like that. And we uh, but then we looked at the school system, and things started to look, look like they were really a lot better than what we were doing, as far as schooling, and as far as lifestyle, and they were having a lot of fun, and I was running around and [unintelligible] you know, kind of make the house payment and doing that kind of stuff. So we decided to uh, to move in. My wife, my wife really didn't want to move in. My first wife. But, uh, well, I, but I said, "Well, look, I'm selling the house, so you better, you better come along." And I was really, I was determined -- 'cause we were playing the Game at that time -- a lot of things came up in Gaming, and stuff, and that made it, quite a lot more sense for us to move and, and, and, go to work. 'Cause I had some training, and some information and stuff, that at that time they were started to take squares. I was considered square. I wasn't a drug addict, or an alcoholic, or anything, but I had some skills that I could bring in, like property, property. I had an electronics background, I had some physical, automotive background, stuff like that in the Army, and I did building, and I did, I knew about the physical world. My dad said, look, I can use somebody to do, take um, uh, like being a foreman of a lot of our properties, and stuff, you know, taking care of buildings and making sure things got done, and so on. And I said great, so I moved in, brought the kids, put them

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in a school, which was very difficult for, uh, for my wife, but the older one did fine, the younger one, because of my wife's uh, clinging on to the child, made it more difficult for him. He would have been fine, if she would have been great, he would have been great. But, but, ultimately, you know, they got integrated in the school. She worked in the school, it wasn't like you turn your kids over to a school, a lot of people look at places where, organizations where schools like that, the kids lived in their own, on their own turf, they had people that, that was their job to take care of the children. And my wife worked in the, around the school, and did different things, she was in charge of the clothing and stuff for the school, and she worked in the accounting department, and, but, but there were people in attendance all the time, they just didn't live under our, our, quote, our roof. They lived in a, you know, it was equipped for children. It was a great, great deal. Kids loved it. They thought it was the greatest thing. It was the best move I ever made. Honestly, it was the best move that I have ever made in my life, is, is to make that decision, to do that, get into a communal living arrangement during my kids' formative years, because they got, they got a tremendous education, I mean, they're fantastic kids now, all of our kids are doing very, very well. But what's really the thing is the human relationships that they've developed. They have unbelievable human relationships, all over the country. They go, they can go anywhere and hook up with people. New York -- they have friends there, they have friends in Florida, they have friends in, uh, [unintelligible] there's a lot of people here that they know, San Diego, San Francisco, and they, they meet, and they have parties, and they do things all the time. And we're the same way. We have countless people that we knew at Synanon, worked with for over, over twenty some years, in my case. And my kids, they have kids that, they have relationships that go back to when they were six and seven years old. And they work. My son has a business that's, kind of, came out of Synanon called "Good Source" and that business has people working in it.

Q: Is that the one down in San Diego?

A: That's the one in San Diego.

Q: Wow.

A: It's turned out it's a great business. They love it, they, they all have, it's not all Synanon, ex-Synanon people, but it is, it has a lot of older people with kids in it, I call them kids, they're not kids anymore. They're in their thirties, all of them.

Q: Yeah, right. And they also learned how to get along with people from different racial backgrounds, didn't they?

A: Oh, absolutely. My son has, a, a, their friends are, it's a very integrated, uh, as far as integration, I guess it's, it, it would be like the outer society, in a way, it's that percentage. We have, we have friends that are black, we have friends that are Jewish, we have friends that are Catholics, we have friends, you know, all different kinds, but, but in that same ratio. You know, because of the way the country is. There are not as many black people in, in this town, or, so on . . . so it works that way. That's the way it works. Pretty much that way. You know, the school was integrated and, uh, they have very, very close relationships with people of all races and, you know, that didn't, in their early schooling, that was not a, not a question, or a problem, or anything like that. It's a [unintelligible] say it all, but it wasn't an issue, let's just say that. But it was talked about. Race was al -- race relations were talked about in the Games.

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People would talk about their prejudices, because everybody, everybody, if you're raised in the world, has prejudices. Now some of them, some of the prejudices are, you know, stereotypes, fall, you know, if you have, white trash is white trash, black trash is black trash, yellow trash is yellow trash. And I find that in the property management business. I'm very good at it, because I have all kinds of people that I rent to, but I still, but I, but I discriminate where, where, where it's behavior -- where somebody is, you know, can't pay their bills, I don't, but not because of what their skin looks like.

Q: Sure.

A: And that's what we taught our kids.

Q: Yeah.

A: So they're that way. Yeah. They're -- all of our kids are pretty much that way.

Q: Can you describe some what the Game was like? 'Cause from someone whose never done it, it's really hard for me to imagine it.

A: [Unintelligible].

Q: That's fine.

A: All right.

Q: Beautiful cat.

A: Oh, he's the nosiest guy.

Q: [Laughs].

A: He's got to be in the middle of everything.

Q: [To cat] Are you nosy?

A: The Game is, well, I don't know whether you've seen, I've got tons and tons of pictures and stuff --

Q: Oh, wow.

A: I've got albums and everything. But the philos- the Synanon philosophy, have you seen that?

Q: No, I haven't.

A: OK. That's the Synanon philosophy. Right there. And uh, without . . . well, we did, the Game, let's see, the Gaming, the Gaming was the center of the whole thing. I mean, people would sit in a circle, OK, and, uh, not everybody starts off, I mean, people are very reluctant -- it took me a long time before, before I would sit and talk.

Q: Sure.

A: Freely. With people. And say things to them, and call them names, I mean, back, you get [unintelligible] it was confrontational thing. You try and trigger people, and get them to, get them to react, and then, that was part of the Game. Some people didn't like that part of it. They liked, uh, there

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are other parts of the Game too, Betty, you probably heard Betty, Betty Dederick, my dad's wife of seventeen years, he met as a drug addict, she was a black lady, woman, and uh, [unintelligible] but she, she was like the uh, softening part of the uh, of my dad. My dad was aggressive and hard, you know, he was very, uh, strong, in that way. And she was strong, but she would like, offset it. Like, if he would go after someone in a Synanon Game and really nail them, she might come around the next day and say "Uh, you know, everything OK, you know?" The Game, the Game, in the Game was what was said, and then out of the Game was out of the Game. And uh, it's a confident [?] -- there have been theses written on the Synanon Game, you know, Steve Simon [?] wrote one, got his college, his PhD with a Synanon Game thesis. I mean, there's been books written about it, I have all kinds of brochures -- there's lots and lots of ways -- Leon, you've probably talked to Leon earlier, about the Game, I don't know. People have different ways, Leon's was very good, when he was at Synanon, articulating uh, the Game and the processes and so on. He was a teacher, he taught in school, and stuff. And uh, I know you just talked to him and that's why I mentioned this one person. But Ellen, I remember Ellen was, uh, came into the Synanon, very, had lots of emotion, you know. Ellen, I mean. You know, her and her ex- first husband, I mean, uh, the Game was a great place for catharsis. Get it out. Get it out there, and then, then people feed back to you. You know, they tell you their rude truth, and you say your rude truth, and they say theirs. And another point of view over here, and lots of points of view. It was my dad, came up with the thought, years ago that it was a replacement for psychotherapy. A very inexpensive way for people to get in a room and just get it out in a, in a psych, you know, in a psych- I do this, I've had friends who are psychologists and stuff, and I know what they do. They do the best they can, they get somebody and they get them to talk. And that's what they do. They try and get them to talk. You know, get them to tell them about their sex lives, and all about their business, their, whatever is troubling them, something, something's troubling them, speak about it. Try and dig it up. Dig up the feelings behind the, the thoughts. And that's what they try to do. For a long time. That's what psychologists and psychiatrists try to do. So my dad thought, well, why not do it in a group? That's the biggest, that's probably the biggest thing in the, in the communal, I mean, you talk about communes, that's what makes, that's what made it work. That was the, that was the thing that made the, held, the, the, the glue that held the, uh, organization together. Now, as things grow, my dad told me one time, and I didn't believe him, you know, he said "These things have a life." They have a life. And I said "What do you mean, a life?" He said "They really do. You know, it's an organism. And it dies. It dies." [Unintelligible] going to die. Well, he was right in, in looking back. Because it did go through its transformations, very severe transformations. When you started, for a long time, we didn't, we had what you called WAM, walk-around money. People gave, we gave people money, uh, to use, I mean, they needed, they needed, they needed things, we would provide as much as we could, but people wanted personal [unintelligible] spending money. So we did that -- five dollars a week at one time. It was very low, a dollar a week when we [or they?] first came in, two dollars, five dollars, ten dollars, got up to like [unintelligible] fifty, fifty dollars a month, you know, things like that. So we, 'cause we didn't have a lot of cash. But we had a lot of, uh, doing it, doing things, it's a very economical way -- my dad always talked about one dollar is worth seven dollars -- the ratio, when you get donated food, cast-off stuff, and use it, it's, you know, it would take seven dollars, seven dollars to create one dollar, you know, of stuff. Or, one dollar to create seven, I forget how many, whichever way that goes. But it, but it, it would, it was economical, that was the idea. It was an economical way to live. And you could do a lot. You could have

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cars, you could have good food, you could have good housing and so on, for a lot of people and, pretty much everyone lived the same, by and large, for a long time. Except then you got started, you started in with a hierarchy of people who ran things, well, they got a little better -- people who had been here longer, uh, time got, you know, people would accumulate, they'd accumulate, they'd get better, if there was housing, there was going to be better, there's going to be a sliding scaled. There's going to be housing that's better than others. So somebody's going to get better housing and not somebody else. And that causes, uh, feelings, why does he get a better house, why doesn't she get a better house, you know, blah, blah, blah. Then that's what's the Game -- the Game was the leveller. And, there was a lot of explanations, and Gaming, a lot of teaching, tremendous teaching lessons -- OK, inter-human, personal interaction lessons, many, many, many lessons. Not, I mean, not somebody teaching you directly, but you'd be sitting there, and there'd be something going on, you'd learn from that situation. You know, and you'd also get involved in some of them. Some of the situations, uh, there's be gut-level lessons, you know. About, if somebody didn't keep their place clean, that would be Gameable, if somebody didn't, if somebody broke something out of stupidity, that would be Gameable. Anything's Gameable, anything was up for grabs. Verbally. The one thing, there was no physical violence in the Game. No use of drugs, and no threat of physical violence. The threat of physical violence got, that was ambiguous, because people could say I want to, I want to beat you up, and then people would react to that, that was always a more ambiguous, uh, ambiguous, that, that particular rule, but the main things -- there was no physical violence in the room, and we didn't permit any physical violence in Synanon. I mean, that, we, that was just [unintelligible] [phone is ringing]. You know, let the machine pick it up.

Q: OK.

A: Anyway, so it worked that way. Let me see here, it will ring four times, and then the machine will pick it up. But uh, that's, that's, that's -- where was I, here?

Q: Just talking about the Game, and how it was a leveler, and --

A: Do you want to ask any specific questions? 'Cause I could ramble on for a long time.

Q: Sure. Well, well you're doing well -- I like what you're telling me. Well, maybe you could tell me a little bit about what your daily life was like, and the kind of work you did, and things like that.

A: Well, we uh, you know, my particular job was uh, was to make sure that the buildings were, were maintained, and that the people, uh, we had a lot of people come in, so I had to find jobs for them. Somebody would come in with a little skill, you know, and I'd try to find a place for them to work. Kitchens and carpentry, electrical, we had everything, everything that a small city has -- automotive -- whatever, whatever it was, we did it. 'Cause we tried to do everything, as much as we could, ourselves. And one thing led to another, until we had [unintelligible] motor shops, we did tremendous training, 'cause we would, say an older guy would come in, an old alcoholic -- they were great, because they had skills. And a lot of drug addicts were young, and they didn't have skills. I was kind of a, but the old, the old alcoholics, women and men, mainly men, in the trades, and some women had, women seemed to not fare so well, as alcoholics. They didn't do well as alcoholics. They, it took them longer to get together, and they were usually housewives, and they didn't have a lot of skills. A lot of them did, though, they had school skills, and stuff. They had, they raised children, a lot of them raised children, so

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they went to the school, [unintelligible] work in the school. They were great there. Some of the guys did that, too. They were better at that than they were at physical trades. So we did, we just looked around, and talked to somebody and said, "Look, what do you like? And what can you do? And this is what we need." You know? And kind of got people doing that kind of work, doing work. And that's what I did. I mean, that's, at first, when I got there, I was, you know, kind of, you know, took me a little while to get acclimated, because I was running an electronics business before, and I hired people, a few people, but I did most of the work myself. So, you know, I learned -- my dad was a, is, well, not now, but he was a really good executive. And, uh, he understood a lot. And uh, he was on fire in the '60s and '70s. He was this really, uh, uh, intuitive -- he was tacked [?] into his, into his real, uh, um, uh, being, and he could really do things. And he was good at the Game, he had a lot of hostility, very articulate, and that's, and a lot of people think the hostility thing, they deny it, that it's a good thing, to get it out, I think it's a very good thing to get out, get rid of it, not hold it inside. Depends on how it's done -- uh, the Game, got too management-oriented later, I think people, most people will agree with that. Uh, I wouldn't have, when I was there, because I was part of the management for a long time. We had, we had a board of directors, I mean, we were a corporation -- we built, we built buildings and we built, I mean, we spent millions of dollars on buildings, we had, uh, my dad got a hold of a, of a advertising gift-specialty business in the '60s. Guy came along, said "Here, little pencil, little pencil, why don't you sell pencils? Start selling . . ." We'd take somebody who looked like they were aggressive when they came in, men and women both, young people, said "Why don't you go out and sell pens and pencils and come back with a little money?" you know? Well, one thing led to another, it was a, it turned into a big business, in fact, it's a big business now. It's like Oneida, in a way, probably.

Q: Yes, yes, there is Oneida.

A: The business still runs, my son's business, Good Source, runs that way. Uh, my daughter and son-in-law have a business like it. They worked at Synanon, both of them, in the advertising gift specialties business, now they have their own, lot of them do. I mean, I could name a lot of people, uh, that run their own businesses now, that, they learned at Synanon. But that, that was the fuel. Then we had fuel, we had money coming in. Uh, my dad turned down government grants, 'cause he didn't want the strings. They come in and tell you what to do, and they tell you, they, they, they don't know anything about what to do, but they, uh, but if you take their money, they can tell you what to do. I mean, it's crazy, you know? The government can do that. They can, I mean, they don't know what to do, but they can just, it's like, over-regulation thing -- we're over-, well, we thought we were over-regulated then, in the '60s. I mean, we're still, we make laws like popcorn, every day -- laws, more laws, more restrictions, more, more uh, you couldn't start the Synanon that way, today. No way. There's too many regulations, they wouldn't let you run it. I mean, you, there are many, many offshoots, but they're not Synanon offshoots. Well, they're Synanon offshoots, but they're not run the way Synanon was run. They just aren't, because they're, they're very, beholden to the bureaucrats. If they can get funds, they write grants -- I'm not saying that's a bad thing, that's the way it is, you know? It's kind of the way it is. Uh, you can't, you can't go backward, I guess. You know?

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Q: Why do you think supporters [?] were attracted to Synanon?

A: Oh, good works, for one thing. They see, something -- I, I was attracted, something bigger than myself, I was involved in something very big, and I could look, you know, expansive, that was my case, I think people liked it because it was economical uh, you know, [unintelligible] attraction was good, because you, I mean, you could really just, just uh, turn all of your affairs over to a general system. Your school was taken care of, your food was taken care of, you didn't have to sit around figuring out a water bill, or an electric bill, or a grant. You just kind of went to work and did your best, and did things, and played the Game and lived. And that was, I think, a very simple, very simple life. Oh, I've moved in [?], my current wife, Maggie, moved in, because she had a very bad marital relationship with her husband, and she had three children, and didn't know what else to do. He brought her, he said, well, she got involved in the Game club [?] and one thing led to another, and she moved in and he didn't. You know? And she loved it. She thrived in that. She was a legal secretary, and went to work in the law office, helped file lawsuits, and -- we went, uh, I mean, we got a lot of lawsuits and stuff, because, you know, somebody would write a nasty article and when we at, at a certain point in our evolution, the old man said look, we don't have to be libelled and slandered and things like that. Let's fight back! Well, you take on big, he took on some big chunks -- we won some and lost some. It's, um, but it was exciting for a lot of people, 'cause we created a law school out of it.

Q: Really?

A: Yes.

Q: Wow.

A: One of our sons is a lawyer because of that school. Maggie's son, Maggie's oldest son is an attorney in Los Angeles, because he was there. He went through the school -- [unintelligible] years old, he went through the school. And he, we graduated about fifteen, eighteen lawyers out of there. Phil Berdet [?] -- you know Phil? [Phone is ringing]

Q: I don't know the name.

A: Phil Berdet [?] is an attorney in town he was [unintelligible] board of directors for three years. Ed Allen [?] was there the other night, at Phil's house. Phil has a little [Unintelligible] Phil and uh, and his wife Miriam -- actually, his wife Miriam is an attorney, also. And she, she was, uh, a young person who came into Synanon about eighteen, and very bright, and Phil came in at about twenty-seven, and Phil started the law school, with my dad, called the C.E.D. School of Law --

Q: What did C.E.D. stand for?

A: Charles E. Dederick, School of Law.

Q: Oh, uh huh.

A: And he became a, uh, a, well, she became a lawyer, and my son, you know, our son, became a lawyer, and then a lot of our friends and, and, uh, and a lot of young people. They have a law firm in town, here. Phil, Phil Berdet [?] has his own law firm with all these young people. There's a lot of people

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in town here that, that are very, that have all kinds of points of view about Synanon. I come from, you only come from your own point of view. I have this, I have my point of view about Synanon.

Q: Do you still do stuff together? The Synanon people at Visalia, I mean . . .

A: We, the one thing that, that slipped away because of the management, too much, too much management, too much uh, uh, people don't want to play the Game. There were a few people that would, but there, nobody's organized it, and I'm not saying, I, I have a feeling that something could happen -- I don't know whether you've heard about Niya [?] Rod.

Q: No.

A: Up the hill.

Q: Uh uh.

A: They were at Synanon for, oh, fifteen, fifteen years. Niya came in as a young, eighteen-year-old, lived there for a long time, and got herself together. Incredible story -- she has an incredible background story, and she and Rod got married, over the years, they were married before, a lot of us had different marriages, this is my, Maggie is my third wife. And uh, uh, they, they acquired, well, actually, they're living up at the old home place site, 360 acre place.

Q: In Badger [?].

A: In Badger. They're up there, and they're, they're uh, they're trying to get something together. Because they stayed with the work. They went out and started Amity house, down in, down in Arizona, Tucson, Arizona. And they had some problems with the, with the, as these organizations, as any organization does, you have, you have boards of directors that don't agree with some people, board people that people own [?] and they were using the Game -- the board probably didn't play the Game down there, which I'm not sure would that would have solved the problems or not, but it would have helped, probably. But anyway, they're on their own now, they're up here, trying to start a, Phil's trying to help them get a, uh, uh, non-profit status so they can, can continue -- so they can do work -- 'cause they, they like to work with prisoners and they write grants, and they're kind of that whole [?] thing.

Q: Would they like to, sort of, revitalize Synanon? Is that a goal?

A: I don't think so. Not, not in that way. They, they're, no, they took off in, kind of another direction. They have a lot of the Synanon tools, that they use, but Niya is more of a, she's kind of a, she's very articulate with, as far as Betty [?] is concerned. Betty Dee [?] is very strong in her, in her, uh, under-, you know, her, her, uh, operating in Synanon. And Betty, Betty was the soft tool [?] we had Games that weren't, that were more introspective, rather than aggressive. That was her role. And they were great. We called them Betty's Games, and we played that too, you know? So that happened there. So she's more in that mode, I think the Game was more, more that way, than, than a hardball, hardball Gaming. And I'm not sure whether it's all, I think you have to do all of it. You can't just do one, you can't just beat on somebody's head forever, you know, in the Synanon Game, which, which some people would get going on somebody, and they'd really go after them, you know, and maybe that wasn't what was, only -- but nobody really got hurt by it. I don't believe people can get hurt with verbal interchange. I really

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don't. Now some people would just differ with me on that. They "Ohh, you're so, people or so sensitive . . ." I don't know, I don't, I don't, I think ultimately, you might get your feelings hurt for a little while, but how long can that last, you know? Really? If you're -- unless you're mentally disturbed and need something else, then that's a whole nother thing, I suppose, you know, take someone that's mental, really mentally disturbed, you know, that needs medication, or something, and verbally go after them, that probably wouldn't be a good thing. That's where, you know, adults and discretion come in. And that's, that's what my dad tried to promote. He tried to promote people with discretion.

Q: Yeah.

A: You know, you don't do things to some helpless situation, you know, you use some sensitivity, and . . . we try and teach that stuff, now how do you teach it without -- you do it, right? You do it, and you try it, and you make some mistakes and blah, blah, blah, that's what happened, you know. I don't, looking back on it, I don't, I think there were much, there were many, many, many things done in the positive than in the negative in the Game. Way overshoots that, I mean . . . 'cause it's, it's used all over the world. The Game is used all over the world in different forms. I mean, I'd recognize it if I went to some of them -- but it's used. I mean, people sit down in enc- they have encounter groups for cancer patients and, I mean, you name it, you see them on TV all the time. People sitting around, circles, expressing their feelings and their thoughts and, and you know, examining things, and whatever.

Q: Yeah, right.

A: That's pretty much the Game. You've, you've never been in an encounter group?

Q: No, I really haven't. Uh uh.

A: No?

Q: [Laughs]. It sounds intriguing though. I'd love to try it.

A: It's, uh, I think, I think, I think it's one of the things that works with a commune, since we're talking about, trying to think about communes. My dad started with drug addicts. And I think he really wanted to get people together, and he just started with drug addicts and, drug addicts and alcoholics. And that's what, he uses, he always used what he had. Something would come along, he would make a, try to make it work, you know?

Q: Yeah.

A: He would try and work it out. So that, uh, he started articulated the people being alienated from each other, and that's why they joined, that's why people would come around. People come around things where they enjoy, where they have fun, and they have, you know, personal relationships develop. It was like a club, big clubs, you know, people would come around, come to parties and organize stuff. People are, they'd put on plays, I mean, all kinds of stuff would happen. Tons of stuff. Make movies, I mean . . . you get enough people together, and you get all the talents, you mix them all up, and that's what tremendous about groups. Groups are incredible, because, by yourself, what can you do? You can't do very much. I'm out here, you know, I don't live in a group anymore, but I have friends, but everything I do, I do the hard way, you know.

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Q: Yeah, yeah. Would you say that the purpose of Synanon changed over the years? In that, your dad started out to help addicts, and then -- do you think that that vision or purpose changed?

A: Yeah, he, in his mind it did. In a lot of, uh, probably did -- he still helped, wanted to help people. He still took newcomers in and tried to change their lives. But as people got older, some people just got, a lot of us, a lot of us kind of, uh, you know, you, uh, maybe you can't do charitable work, just be on, on, on call all the time for, for problems. You want to, you want to, when money started to arrive, in the '70s, people started getting paid. 'Cause we had money to pay people. So we started paying the, paying the, uh, paying the managers and the executives, and then we started paying the, you know, uh, people, a little more money [?], course that, that, that was a, I don't say it was a mistake, it was a way of -- that was a big problem, when you start paying, you start paying money. Then you, then you, then you have the haves, with money, and the have-nots. And then you have problems. Wasn't [unintelligible] -- it wasn't a problem for quite a while, probably, probably five years or some three years, but -- it was very hard to resolve that. If we made a lot of money with our advertising gift specialty business, then everybody, then, then you sit down, if you sit down, I've sat down with uh, with a group of people, said "OK, we have, we have, uh, you know, five hundred thousand dollars or a million dollars here, we have to pay, we're going to pay salaries out of." Now how do you distribute this money? I've been in endless, endless discussions, how do you do that? Well, you start off -- you make all kinds of, all kinds of charts, and you figure out who does what, and then, the time -- do you pay on time only? Well, uh, yes -- so we paid some on time, we paid on skill, we paid on, uh, salesmen brought in a lot of money, so we figured, well, maybe we should pay them, pay them more money than somebody else, because they, they're the ones generating, generating it. They don't live in the community, you know, they don't, they're not home all the time. Then you have the people who work at home, in the kitchen, in the school, so on, and so on. And, uh, we said, well, maybe we don't have to pay them as much, because they don't, you know, they're not out. So, so the people that are out should get a little more, because of their, you know, they don't have the benefits of the community. Let's just say that. I mean, there were some, I mean, the scenarios are endless, 'cause we talked about it hour after hour, day after day, trying to set it up, then we'd, then we'd do it -- and then it wouldn't be right. So we'd do it again, and we'd try again. And then, of course, um, um, -- the money thing is a problem. Trying to distribute wealth, and then, of course, when people got wealth, then they wanted more stuff, they wanted better housing, they wanted more space, they wanted, they wanted their own car, and I say "They," -- us. We all, you know, most, a lot of people wanted, wanted, if they could afford, wanted more for themselves. Wanted to travel, which we didn't do for a long time, most people -- we called, we, we, uh, we contained ourselves, which is very powerful. Containment is a very powerful tool -- 'cause you contain all the money, you contain, you know, you're not spending money, it grows very quickly when you, when you're all, when a group is contained. And uh, like, I guess [unintelligible] people like that. You know. You have your kids, wanting to leave because they see TV and they see other, they see people with big homes and they see people with this and that, and it makes them, it makes them want to go, you know, and that was, that was a problem too, when the kids started getting older.

Q: Did you not have TVs?

A: Oh yeah, we had TVs. Oh yeah, we had everything. We had satellite dishes, we weren't, we weren't trying to hold, you know, keep people from, from getting out in the open --

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Q: Yeah. Experiencing the world?

A: No, no, they went out. Because we had salespeople traveling all over.

Q: Right.

A: We had speaking, we, from the very beginning, we had people go out on speaking gigs, telling people about Synanon and the story, the personal story was what sold. Sold product a lot of times.

Q: Right.

A: I mean, they were great -- they'd go into an office, and they didn't -- my dad taught them not to, not to talk to the secretary, go, you want to see the president of the company. And they just acted, OK, that's what we're supposed to do. So you get these young people, and they'd go in there, and they wouldn't stop until they'd been in the president's office and sitting down there and telling their story. And they sold, they sold product. A lot of product. And they got donations and everything. So it made the company very successful, because of those particular aggressive moves, you know?

Q: Mmm hmm. How did you feel about the time period when you had to shave your head and wear overalls and stuff?

A: Well, when we first did that I uh, was not living in Synanon. I was coming around, and I was playing the Game and everything, and everybody, I went to Tomal's [?] Bay [?] for a, for a four day weekend, and we all got Gaming and everything, and the whole, the whole shaving of the heads happened. And I had my head shaved at the first, at a fair, down on Lombard street in the Embarcadero, down in San Francisco, we had a barber chair down there, and we were just all, we all shaved our heads because, all the guys did, and women didn't, at that time. And uh, we did, that was the whole, that was back in 1960, '68. We used to shave heads when somebody would do something that was inappropriate in the community, steal something, use drugs, do something that, you know, was bad, the community, then, then, uh, their tribe leader -- we were organized in tribes -- and things like, we were organized in all different ways. We'd always be changing, changing, changing our organization, how people related to each other, but anyway, the tribe leader might decide to shave somebody's head, because they'd done something wrong. To newcomers. Generally it was new people. And people that had been around a long time that had done something that they shouldn't do. Infidelity was totally out. That was really one of the very, that was very strong, you know, there was no ... you know, mowing a lawn. But it would happen, somebody would, you know, have an affair, or something like that, and shave their head. Uh, I, uh, it was weird. It was a very strange feeling, 'cause I, I came home, I came back to my business in the valley, a stereo store out in Blue Land [or Woodland?] Hills. I remember coming to work on Monday in overalls and a bald head.

Q: [Laughs].

A: My, you know, my, the girls that worked there, "What's going on?" you know, and I would tell them, you know, what we were doing. I was excited about the Game and everything that was going on at the time. And my friends would come around and the customers and stuff, and it was a very strange, very strange, uh, it was a very strange feeling, you know. Trying to explain what you were trying to do at the

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time. You know, trying to, you know, it's, it's been so long, 1968, because there were all, all kinds of demonstrations, we'd call them -- head shaving demonstrations through the years. With women. The women was the big thing. Women didn't -- that was in the 1975, I guess, '74, '75. When a woman stole the camera, came in and copped out on stealing the camera, and everybody looked around, "Well, what do we do with her?" Should we, should we -- we don't shave her head, we used to put stocking caps, you know, on their heads, you know, so they looked different. But the women then got together and said "No, we should shave her head, just like the men do." Whew. You know. It was a big deal. Then all the women shaved their head. It was a big deal. You know.

Q: And the kids, too? Did you shave the kids head, or was everybody shaved?

A: No, the kids did -- kids would follow along, little kids and stuff like that. You know, it was kind of like, it was no big deal to them. But my wife, at that time, I had a, it was my second wife, had long hair, like you, you know. She had real long, you know, beautiful hair. And that was a big deal, you know, she cut her hair off, all this hair you know? It was very strange, 'cause I was, I was, you know, by that time I was aware enough in my life that I should be supportive -- if I'd, you know, wasn't supportive, it would really make her feel terrible, so I, you know, I didn't like the look, gut-level, you know, I mean, she didn't look the same, you know? But, on the other hand, you know, I did, it flipped your, it was a whole mindflipping deal, you know, because she looked great after awhile. You know, it's the whole, you know, it was a very emotional, it was an emotional deal to do that. Even, for the men, too. You know, a lot of men, friends of mine said "Oh, you're making yourself look like an ugly pig," you know, it was like, my friend Ron Cook, he was, he was the controller there, he told his wife that, [Unintelligible] she was getting her hair cut -- "You're going to look like an ugly pig if you do that." He did that and that's, you know, she was one of the head, she was one of the girls that really wanted to do it. My wife followed, and Maggie was there at the time, my, uh, that's [unintelligible] there with very short hair.

Q: Mmm hmm, yeah.

A: That's at that point.

Q: Right.

A: We have all kinds of pictures and stuff, of all [inaudible] course, then, after that, Ellen and you know, my wife, they kept their hair short --

Q: Is that Ellen?

A: No, that's Ellen, Ellen Burke.

Q: Oh, I was going to say I didn't recognize [unintelligible].

A: Ellen Kowzlawski [?].

Q: Um, did you, were you at Synanon during um, change of partners, did you go through that?

A: Yeah, yeah. Maggie's my wife, my wife of eighteen years, 'cause [?] changing partners. And I had a very nice marriage with my second wife. My first wife, you know, she was fine, we had a great, we had a nice fourteen, twelve, fourteen year marriage. But things kind of ran their course, and she wasn't, I don't

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know, we just got a, uh, the divorce after about, we had lived at Synanon for '68, '74. We lived there about five, four or five years, and it wasn't working very well. I was, you know, we were Gaming, lots of Gaming about our marriage, all the time. So, uh, I decided I was going to end it. I had my chance to end it, I was like forty, uh, forty at the time. So I said, well, time to make a move here. If I don't make a move, now is a good time to make a move. It was a very hard thing to do. You know, 'cause we had the kids -- the kids were at Synanon, they were doing OK. I figured this is as good a time to do it as any, you know, and I wanted to. So I got married to uh, to uh, you know, a younger girl. She was, well, she was about ten years younger than me, we had a nice marriage. And then, that was '75, then in '78, '78, we changed partners. Did the whole change of partners. Did you ever hear about change of partners?

Q: Well, just a little bit -- yeah.

A: 'Cause changing partners, that's a whole nother philosophical, religious kind of a move in certain ways. It's a move of faith, it's a, I don't know, I mean [?] you can talk about it in so many different ways and, it's like, you know, nobody's going to get hurt here, let's, let's, uh, we had some bad marriages that we would break up, that was one reason. And they just wouldn't -- they just kept, kept this incessant Gaming and stuff, maybe we shouldn't have, looking back, maybe we shouldn't have interfered with that. Our, but we did. We were, my dad was a social, you know, he called himself that that, an innovator, tried to experiment with different ways of moving, change -- his wife died, of seventeen years, Betty Dee, that's what triggered it off. He had the loss, he had a loss, he couldn't express it thoroughly, I don't believe, I think he was so angry about his loss that he could not get it out. He tried and we tried to work with it, but, I don't know -- personality. So, anyway, he had this idea. Let's, let's, it wasn't really let's change partners, let's, um, it was first, said, well, why do we have to, let's get divorces and everybody, we'll use the Synanon love match, which we, we had the love match, we had our own ceremony and everything, and we were all ministers of the Synanon church, so we would marry people. I did that quite a lot. So, uh . . .

Q: Were these legal marriages?

A: Yeah. Yeah, yeah. We could sign -- but we didn't, for a long time, we didn't do it. We just, we just did the love match and had our own papers and everything else. And people would live together, and they'd have a love match. Now some people went down to the, down to and got their certificate in the, with the county, and we would sign those, as ministers. That makes them legal. It's really not a really complicated process. And so we did that, but for a long time, we just had the love match, the ceremonial [?] love match. And uh, my dad said why don't we just do that, and then, one thing led to another, and then of course the uh, the uh, we started this, a, a group process of people changing partners, changing, started with Gaming, we started Gaming, why don't you do this, why don't you do this, why don't you -- and you know, people would -- it's a very heady [?] experience in many ways, everybody, everybody, all involved and everybody calling, on the wire we had, we had the, did you ever hear the wire, talking about the --

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Q: No, uh uh.

A: We had a telephone system that went all over the country, and all over the communities and everything else, that was, you could pick it up, pick up the telephone, and there'd be a speaker on everybody's table and desk and come out of the radio, you could hear conversations everywhere.

Q: Wow.

A: It was, New York, Texas, Detroit, I mean, everywhere, you could just pick it up and say I want to talk to so and so, and someone would pick up, and everyone could hear it, hear the conversation. It was like a big open line. [Unintelligible]. A great electronic deal, and we had it down, where it was good quality, I mean, we'd sit there, you could turn on your FM radio and have, have, we used to call it the wire, we'd call it the wire, 'cause my dad, he used to coin words, you know, call things, we had our own words for lots and lots of things. We had books of all those, I mean, people wrote all those things down, meanings and, you know, there were people that did that stuff. We had unbelievable archives -- they're all at UCLA now -- let you know about that.

Q: Oh, OK.

A: I mean, they're unbelievable. We had trailer loads full of records and pictures and film and videotape, miles and miles and miles of audiotape of my dad articulating Synanon and the processes and what we were doing, and a lot of other people, too. He wasn't, you know, he took credit for everything, that was part of his deal. I did everything, and you're in my house, you know? I mean, that's the kind of a guy he was. You know? But people, as they got older, knew, uh, that a lot of people contributed to the processes, you know? And that was the way he arti -- that's the way he did, he was, that was the way he talked. He talked that way, he used to sit at the [unintelligible] table, you know, round tables, and talk, and just pick subjects, controversial subjects, bring them up and talk to people, talk about them, and get reactions, and, you know . . .

Q: What was it like to have your dad in charge and be this really powerful person?

A: Um, well, for a long time, you know, it was very, very intimidating, in a certain way -- it was. I mean, it was, I had to, I was afraid to confront him at Games, got, I mean, like later on, as he got, as he would retire more and more, then I would become, I got more aggressive in that way. Where he would do something I didn't like, I would, I would confront him more as years went by. Mainly into the '80s. We're talking '70s, but '80s. Not in the '70s or anything. He was in control of all situations.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: But it was, it was, uh, humbling, and it was a learning experience and he knew, he knew things that I just didn't know, you know? And that's the way it was. I was in a learning position, and would do what he asked me to do. As far as, I mean, I worked for him, doing the work, getting the place, building the place, working the place, working with people, and so on, for years, and he would tell me what to do. You know, pretty much. And then, but he left us alone. I mean, I had a lot of, I ran the facilities on my own back in New York without him being around or anything. I had a place in upstate New York, we ran a ranch out in Marin county with a hundred and fifty kids and stuff like that, did a lot of stuff like that. Rod and Niya, they're up in the hill, we had a lot of kids -- then Guyana came along. Remember Guyana?

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Q: Oh, Jim Jones –

A: Jim Jones --

Q: Yeah, sure.

A: Well, that happened, and the newspapers went -- you know, everybody was "Whew -- what's going on?" you know? And we had a hundred and fifty kids up at the ranch at the time. So people started looking -- Why, what's -- if he's down there, what's this? And that word cult -- we never used the word cult, or nobody ever used the word cult until that happened. Then Jim Jones, the cult, well, oh, Synanon cult. Then we started articulating, OK, what is really a cult. And then, you know, it's really not what, it's not an evil thing at all. Cults are not, you know, the root of the word and everything like that, it's not an evil concept. Cult. It's just a group, you know?

Q: Yeah.

A: Anyway, things kind of went haywire at that point. Because people started pulling their kids, and they were, and the kids of course, once something like that happens, then the kids that are disordered are going to take full advantage and say things, and make exaggerations and everything they, they, you know. And things aren't always like pure and simple, when you're dealing with [unintelligible] disorders in kids, you know, and you have to discipline them, they don't like it -- they don't like your discipline, they can exaggerate and say whatever they want. Or, [phone is ringing] sometimes [unintelligible] sometimes people disciplining would go past the limit and not do the right thing, either. All that could happen, right?

Q: Sure.

A: But it, but everything became exaggerated. [Unintelligible] normal [unintelligible] if Guyana hadn't come along, those processes, I mean [unintelligible] the parents wouldn't have been so aggressive trying to get their kids out. Playing -- then the kids playing the parents against us, and the, some of [?] the kids felt, in the hundred and fifty group, they, they felt powerful, because we were defensive, because of the deal, and the parents, you know, you you could imagine what, what went on with the kids and the uh, and the organization and the parent relationship.

Q: Now, what age kids were these? Like high school, or something?

A: They were uh, probably ten, eleven –

Q: Oh, younger.

A: Young kids. Some young kids, some older kids –

Q: And these were kids that had gotten into some trouble, maybe?

A: Yeah, the parents would bring them, say "Oh, this kid is unbelievable, we can't handle him anymore."

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Q: So they would live there and you would help clean them up?

A: Clean them up and get them, get them educated and we'd have, we'd uh, march them, run them, boot camps. That's what we had. Boot camps were great. I mean, that's what they're using now, a lot of times -- but they're, but we used boot camps.

Q: Would the kids play the Game, too?

A: Oh, absolutely. All our kids played the Game. You'll, you'll hear different, if you did enough interviews of all the people in Synanon, course, you, see, you could spend the rest of your life --

Q: You could.

A: On this one organization, analyzing it. With all the different points of view. You talk to a kid that's in school, they might, you know, they'll say different things about the Game than I will, 'cause they come from a whole different point of view. But they were, they were, their school, what impressed me the biggest about the school was, in the early '60s, in the early '60s, the school was going, the middle '60s, the school was going, and the kids would be in a circle, Gaming. Little kids. And the teacher would be there, and they would, uh, they would send one kid from a circle to get information and bring information back, and then the kid would articulate the information, and then the other kids would question him, and it was a whole deal. It was a fascinating thing. I thought, boy, what a great room.

Q: Yeah.

A: What a tool this is. And then they would Game, and they would Game their feelings about things, and then they would Game, you know, but it was, uh, the kids would, the kids, you know, for a long time, in Games would just, a lot of chatter and stuff like that, but then the thing would settle down, and there would be some teaching go on. And you know, it was a really interesting process with, uh, with the Game. And of course, the adult Games were that way, too. Because somebody would have a problem, and then the whole group would go to work on the problem. And, or, some bit of information, some piece of knowledge could come in -- 'course, then, then other processes came out of that -- like, like called the unisep [?]. I don't know whether Ellen ever talked to you about --

Q: No, I haven't heard about that.

A: The unisep [?] is a whole tool that, where people would put words, lots of words, random, random, boom, boom, boom up on a blackboard, all these words, words, words. There's a whole, a whole, uh, teaching -- Leon was very good at this, and he was using, [unintelligible] teaching tool, and teachinglearning tool, people would sit in a circle, do that, and it would, it would open up your mind, stimulate thought, you know, things like that. All these tools came out of the Game. The interchange was another big thing, too. Interchanging back and forth, in the circle. People would sit and interchange about a subject -- you had one, one person with knowledge, you know, come in to, sit down, like a lawyer. You might have a lawyer come in, and then, you'd have a polarizer, a person, not necessarily a person who didn't know anything, but they would play that role, of a know-nothing, and ask questions, and, and then it would bounce off other people and get the, pull out information, you'd pull out information from the, from the knowledgeable person across the room. And, and it would go around the circle and people would learn about things. And that's a, that's a, I'm oversimplifying, too, for time,

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because, you know, I can't tell you everything about the Interchanger, everything about the unisept, 'cause the unisept and the Interchanger, was all started off, you know, in a very primitive way, and they were developed, and some times the more primitive way was the more pure, pure way, and then once things got developed, over the years, then you came, [unintelligible] they weren't as, as pure as they were, you know. Like anything else. Got this, this is an example, uh, this book here, is a unisept drill [or rule?] book. See, somebody, you start off with a simple process and then this whole book talks about the unisept.

Q: Wow.

A: Oh wait a minute. That's –

Q: That's fine [?].

A: But anyway, it's a whole, it's a book I have here that, uh, let's see here, pictures and pictures, are incredible, because uh, -- this is it -- I was wanting to show you this, because it gives you an example of, of uh, everything's diagrammed in those, you know? Diagrammed.

Q: Oh yeah.

A: This was done for Crotonville [?] faculty, up in New York, where, you know, introduction to the unisept for GE. We did that for a whole, unisept workshop, for the, our salespeople did this. But that was a tool that came out of our school and started using it, you know, to, uh, as a teaching tool, you know? I haven't done this stuff [?] for so long.

Q: This is fascinating.

A: That's the whole deal, you know? And that's just one example of, of, of a little concept that would come out of, out of Gaming and so on -- and then get more and more developed. It would develop into a whole tool until they were out teaching GE executives that.

Q: That's great.

A: It went boom, boom, boom, you know? Salespeople would do that.

Q: Right.

A: They'd go out and sell that tool. You know.

Q: Right. How long did you live there?

A: From '68 until uh, '89.

Q: Till '89. Was '89 kind of the end?

A: For me it was, because I moved down the hill. But it, Synanon really Synanon, uh, kept [?] on until about '90, '90, '91. See, Synanon, yeah, because people started moving, I mean, off the hill. I say off the hill, from the whole place, property. We were moving, moving people and relocating people, it was, the ending was very hard, because we had hundreds and hundreds of people -- old people, we had old

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people, we had young people, we had businesses, we had properties and stuff that we had to dismantle in a responsible way.

Q: Yeah. Yeah. Can you describe some about the ending, and why it happened?

A: [Pause]. I don't know. Let's see. Why would, why would that happen? The, the uh, well, my dad, my dad was, had deteriorated, very, you know, uh, physically, emotionally, you know, he had pretty much deteriorated at that point. And he was there, uh, uh, the IRS liens on the properties, people, people were finished with, that they didn't want to pay off liens for the rest of their life -- we had a fifty-five million dollar lien against the properties and, we were, uh, I don't say the, see, you can't say one entity put us out of business, uh, it was a whole process that was trying to put us out of business over the last, probably, ten years. Lot of, you know -- when you sue Time Magazine, and you sue big organizations, and win some of them, ABC lawsuits, stuff like that, American Broadcasting Company, um, there are forces that, that none of us even realize there at work. To, to put you out of business. The media, uh, the broadcasting, dried up a lot of our business, but it didn't dry it up -- it made it hard for our salespeople to sell, they had to get into more conventional sales, sales ways. Because they'd become professional sales people at that point. And they said "Why do we want to take our hard-earned money and just pour it back into this, into this shell?" you know? Because other [unintelligible] the restrictions, the, um, the um, restrictions with uh, uh, you know, bureaucracy was really starting to close in on organizations that dealt with groups, because, the tax structure, in '86, made everything very very difficult to to work as a group. You couldn't pay people in kind, you had to pay people -- you had to take the money that you got, um, pay people, pay the taxes, and then, you know, this whole tax, actually, it was in our bills [?]. We were billed as a non-taxing organization, a tax-exempt organization. And, but then the rules started to get more and more strange, and '86 was the big, the tax code changes and everything, very, it got to be very complicated to do anything. It got to be more complicated than it was worth. To a lot of people. Just difficult. Everything was difficult, it wasn't free-flowing, it wasn't fun anymore for a lot of people, because it was too much business, too much, too much law business, we had too many lawyers -- uh, you know, we had all the lawyers in there, and uh, I think that's what happened, just, probably a lot of different . . . we could, we could talk to a lot of people about it.

Q: Sure.

A: But -- Ellen [or Allen?] might say from one point of view, Leon might say from another, uh, might say from another, my sister, my sister was involved, she was the chairman of the board at the time. She wasn't right, not in good shape, because my dad was not in good shape. You know? Emotionally, we had, we even had people come in, consultants, to try to give us a hand. Course, they couldn't figure out what we were, anyway. That was kind of silly. We put, took one of our PhD doctors, and put him in charge, say, well, well, well, what can you do, you know? And he couldn't do anything. It was like, it was time for it to dismantle, I think.

Q: Yeah. Didn't communes always kind of, just sort of run their course, like your dad said?

A: Yeah, I think they do. I think they do. Unless they're, unless they're like, unless they stay with their, with their pure purpose, like I think the Hutterites may do that. I think they're still up -- I went to see -- they were in New York.

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Q: Yes, they still exist, yeah.

A: But it's kind of a dismal existence. I, I would, after a certain point, it's kind of dismal. I mean, I went up there to visit and they make, they make toys and stuff like that, they stopped, uh, they don't make any more money than they can use, I guess at the time. You know, they hold, they hold their, they hold - I have to give them credit, I guess, if that's what they want to do. But it didn't seem -- it wasn't exciting or . . . see, Synanon was more of a forward, exciting, you know, doing stuff, and, and uh, you know, trying to bring down, you know, a, you know, like the media got so, got so outrageous, still outrageous in many ways. You know, the stupid stuff they put in newspapers and stuff, start looking at newspapers in a whole different way, don't believe what they say half the time, and we were challenging all that stuff. We were trying to, you know, make changes. My dad was like, he liked to make, make, make waves and make changes. That was the whole thrust of Synanon. I don't know about other communes, what their, what their reasons are. A lot of people, I've known a lot of people from other, that come from other places and talk, you know -- and they all say that uh, money gets, [coughs] everyone's problem, distribution of the resources, um, organization, people disagree, they have a hard time with the, with the, uh, getting together and making something work. They have a hard time keeping the place clean, because they don't agree that that should be done. And there isn't somebody, see, my dad was certain, well, like, like these -- he was very strong -- you could call him a dictator, you could say, you know -- he dictated what would be, what, what would happen, he was the executive in charge. You know. He said, "Look, I want it done this way, and if you want to live here, you do it this way. That's what I want." And, uh, he taught us to do that. The executives, other executives. We want it done a certain way, we want the school run this way, we want it done this way -- we would come up, I mean, he wouldn't come out of it out of his own, he would listen to Gaming and talking, and stuff like that, and come up with a good idea, and then implement it. That doesn't mean everybody wanted to do it. But if they wanted to live there, they had to do it. They had to play, everybody had to play the Game. You know. We said "No smoking." No one, he said, he just -- his doctor told him he couldn't smoke, he said "Well, that's a good idea. I don't think anybody else should either." And that's the way he did it, for smoking. Now when you get into other things, I think we made some, we made some, uh, you know, you look -- there's some good things, like smoking made sense, but what about, what about telling people they can't have children?

Q: Oh, they did that?

A: We did that. Yeah. We all sat around, some of the people that couldn't have children said "I think it's a great idea." [Laughs] Why'd we want to do that? Why don't we take care of the world's children? That was the concept -- bigger. Let's, aren't there tons of kids out there? What do we need to produce more kids? There's tons of kids to take care of. Why don't we adopt them? Instead of producing more? We got a big problem in the world. Our dad articulated a beautiful vision -- sounded pretty good, you know, makes sense, you know? Then he implemented it, then you tell everybody, all the guys, they had to have vasectomies, to stop the, uh, you know, so we didn't have children anymore. Including our own kids. Young kids, young boys -- young men. They weren't boys, they were eighteen and over, twenty-five, twenty-four, you know. Well, today we're paying the price for that, you know? Our kids, in a way we're paying the price. Maybe, maybe in the long -- what's happened, our kids had the vasectomies, my sons and they've, they're all adopting. And they adopted beautiful, fine children. And they're, they're no

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different than if they would be their own. Now they wanted their own. Gut-level, they wanted their own kids. They tried to get their own kids -- they did everything, reversals, spent a lot of money, blah, blah, blah, they did a lot of work trying -- I mean, that's one right there -- he was adopted by Vicki and John --

Q: Cutie, yeah.

A: And so other kids, I'll show you. You know [Unintelligible] grandson, and, and it looks like my other son, he's, uh, his wife, in Synanon -- they got married in Synanon, they were raised together, as little kids. On the right, they're trying to have children now, and they may be successful or they may not. But it'll be a gold-plated child, I tell you -- it costs a fortune trying to get this done, you know? But he's going to stop at some point, you know, try [unintelligible] adopt. Looking back, uh, I'm not sure enough time has elapsed whether I can say it was a mistake. I feel it was a mistake, 'cause they're going through all this trouble -- I guess you ask them, they'd say it was, but, but I think our daughter and son-in-law would say it was great. 'Cause they have a good son. And she couldn't have children. She was born, she couldn't have, uh, she was born without some parts, you know? So she couldn't have, have any children. So she thinks it's great. She has her son there. So, depends on the point of view. And then, then, when my dad kind of started to relax, and we started taking over, because, the board of, the executive committee was starting to run things, we turned that around, said "Well, you can have kids again." [Unintelligible] people started having some children. It was too late, you know? A lot of those things -- we tried the reversal things -- we weren't taking hard lines on certain things, trying, trying to fix things, in a certain way -- we did a lot of trying to fix things that we thought were wrong. And that's another thing, probably, that made it uninteresting. I mean, we should have been trying to, rather than worry about the stuff we did, we should have been trying to figure out something new. But I'll tell you something -- these things are started by, usually, um, an innovator like my dad. Groups don't, groups aren't real creative, you know? I mean, that's [unintelligible] I mean, that way, I'm talking about executive committees -- they're, they don't know, uh, we couldn't come up with anything, anything much, really. Not like he did. Maybe the time wasn't right. Maybe he'd done whatever there was to do at the time. You know, you think, I mean, it's really something to ponder, I'll tell you -- I do, I think about it a lot, I talk to my friends and stuff, why these things happen, and, different theories, you know, why, why my dad did what he did . . .

Q: Was it difficult to make the transition from living communally to living in a single family dwelling?

A: Again?

Q: Yeah.

A: It was for me. 'Cause I had, really -- yeah, I think a lot of people did. It was more difficult, I think, you talk to them, everyone had their difficulties, some, we didn't have jobs when we moved out here. We were, we were like living, you know, being executives for fifteen years, you know? So we didn't have, we didn't have skills that you could come down and say -- but a lot of people did -- some, the lawyers came down and did lawyer work.

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Q: Right.

A: Sales people did sales work. So we came down, we got a real estate license, my wife got a real estate license first, then I got mine, so we just kind of, I mean, you know, we, that's what we'd been doing, in our case. You know, certainly not as good as what we were doing, in a certain way, it's different, you know? Whole different deal.

Q: I would think little things would be hard, even just like cooking for yourself, and stuff like that, when you weren't used to it.

A: Yeah. Yeah. She's a, luckily, we're a, you know, we're older, and had done it before –

Q: You'd done it, yeah.

A: Came -- we raised families -- she's a great cook, so it was not, that wasn't a problem, but a lot of people, that would be harder.

Q: We had friends who talked about at parties, a story about how they'd never had a refrigerator before, and they went in to buy one, and they didn't know what to buy. [Laughs].

A: Exactly. See, oh yeah. Learning how to use a telephone, down the hill. Certain kinds of phones, and stuff. I remember that. Not used to talking to the operator. Certain things you just didn't do.

Q: Looking back on that time, are you, are you glad you did it?

A: Absolutely. It was an excellent decision.

Q: What do you think you learned? What, what were the important things you learned from that time?

A: Just, um, just about how to think about certain things, and how to relate to, how to relate to people, and think, how to think about, how to gather information, how to, uh, learning, just the simple learning things, just, just, we know an awf -- people at work that were living at Synanon for years, know an awful lot of things about people. About how, how to get along and work, you know, work together, and human relationships that we'd never have -- that's the big thing, those are big things, right there. Those are big things.

Q: Would you ever live communally again?

A: Uh, in, in the right situation. I wouldn't, I don't rule anything out.

Q: Yeah.

A: Because, uh, if it were right. I don't know how it would come about. But, but you never know about those things, how . . . you know.

Q: I hear a lot of people say they'd like to do it, maybe, when they got a lot older.

A: Yeah.

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Q: Like after, maybe, they were retired or something?

A: Well, the one way to do it, would be, see, see one of the things, when you get a little older, you become more conservative, and when we were in our thir-, starting in our thirties, stuff like that, well, what's the, you know, we had a house, but, but we looked at things in a different way. Now I look at myself, and I say, you know, do I want to get myself tangled up in a situation where I don't have any money when I'm seventy-five years old and can't do anything. I can do something now, but I'm getting close to sixty. You see? And I have to start thinking about, you know, I don't, I don't want to end up in a mess. So I have to get money. We have to earn money now. And, in communal situations, unless I have a lot of money, I think would be hard, hard to do. I don't want to go in and just be everything is everything again. And throw everything in and say "OK, trust in the way of . . ." you know, like we did, we put everything in the, in the, you know, in the uh, in the pot, in a certain way. Not every-- you don't put everything in the pot, nobody ever does. Little reserve. I may be more reserved than some, but less than others, you know?

Q: As a final question, would you describe Synanon as a success or a failure?

A: Success. Oh yeah. Absolutely. Oh yeah. Totally. Because it's, it's created many many things for a lot of people. It's created stuff all over the world, that's that's benefitted. It was, it was a very, very successful social movement. Oh yeah, absolutely. Oh yeah. All the things that were, that were -- the problems with it, uh, we could talk about those a long time, but you can talk about all the positive stuff a lot longer. I, I mean, we have tons and tons of things, thoughts, I mean, I'm not even sure how the younger people thing anymore. Because our kids are not, they're not interested in communal living now. They're interested in doing their own thing, and uh, at this time. But they're young.

Q: Yeah.

A: Communal living is a, I don't know, I don't know whether it's for everybody. It probably, it isn't, because during the, when we were building, people that had a lot didn't come around. Very few people that had very, had a lot of money would come and move in. But some did. Some did. But by and large, it was people who were --

Q: Maybe younger and starting out and didn't have much?

A: Exactly. Or had problems. Of course, ours was a problem-oriented one.

Q: Right.

A: I think some of the other communes, I mean, you, you've interviewed, probably, other people, with the, you know, they come for different reasons -- they come to get away from home or something. I don't know. Lot of reasons. Have you ever lived on a commune?

Q: Um, I'd, no, just group houses when I was in college. But they weren't communal, just cooperative houses.

A: Yeah.

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Q: But I enjoyed them a lot.

A: Exactly. They're great. Sorority-type things. Yeah. Well, that's what Synanon was like. A big, big thing like that, people lived in all different, all different situations, you know. Had a lot of fun. It was a lot of fun, that's the big thing. When it stops being fun, then the thing, I think, when it gets too serious, I think, when they get too serious is a problem, too. You know.

Q: Yeah.

A: Things tend to go that way, if it's, like I was telling you about the unisept.

Q: Yes.

A: Starts off as sort of a free-flowing interchange of ideas and stuff, and then, then it gets organized. Then it becomes ritualized. The cop-out. The original cop-out, where people all cop-out, and tell all their hidden secrets in a group. That was one thing that happened way back in Ocean Park. My dad started, he says, he grabbed on to that, said this is a cop-out. So every year, we'd have a cop-out ceremony. To talk about that, that, that particular happening, of one night. But it changed the organization in the early days, in the fifties, in the late fifties, early sixties. Called a cop-out. Everybody copped-out. All the people using drugs and doing crazy stuff, all, said that one person started it, and then the whole thing took off. It was a group process. Cleaned the whole place up, the whole place felt better, worked better, everything after that. For awhile. Until it got dirty again. But what happened was, it became ritualized, and then, then it became like, you could sit around, and there was a whole ritual built around that, like it was a ceremony, not to say it was a bad thing, but we did, but everything kind of turned into that. And I'm not saying those are bad things. Ceremonies. We need, we had a lot of ceremonies. We had, people got divorced, we had a separation ceremony, I think it was an excellent thing to do -- 'cause we have a lot of people around, all over, that were separated in Synanon, and they're great friends, because of the way they separated. They didn't do it on an ugly [unintelligible], they brought the good things to the ceremony.

Q: And somebody, I think it was Francie, said you had, like, celebrations of life when people died?

A: Exactly.

Q: That were really --

A: You talk to Francie much?

Q: A little bit, yeah, uh huh.

A: And she's, yeah, she's great. She's one of our kid's teachers. She taught Blake [?] and Tyler [?] both. She was a, you know, they like her a lot.

Q: Yeah. She said the celebrations of life were really wonderful and brought people together in a good way.

A: Exactly. We would do, they used to bring people together. That was always my dad's intention, is to bring groups together to do things. You know, talk, and -- that was his main thing. His circles, his, uh, uh, think [?] tables, which were all talking, the Game, the ceremonies, were all, were involving everybody.

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Not one person would address everybody. It would be everybody involving themselves to the degree that they wanted to be, they could. Are you going to interview a lot of people in town?

Q: Let's see. Well, I've already interviewed Francie and Leon and now you and then Ellen. And that's pretty much it, 'cause I have to head back south. But I'm hoping that I might be able to talk to one of the children when I'm in San Diego, 'cause I'm going there next. I'm going to L.A. and San Diego.

A: Oh, you know who you'd love to talk to?

Q: Who?

A: Kerri [or Carrie] -- Kerri Dederick, my daughter-in-law.

Q: Oh, that would be great.

A: She's fabulous.

Q: Could you put me in touch with her, give me a number, or something? Oh wonderful. Oh, thank you.

A: Oh, she's great. Oh, you'll love to talk to her.

Q: This is your daug --

A: Oh, there's some people down there -- I mean, she's just one that I know, she loves to talk, she'll tell you, she was raised in school -- she'd like thirty, Kerri's thirty-five, and she's, she worked for my dad, did a lot of things. Went to school.

Q: Now this is your daughter-in-law, is that what you said?

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: Daughter-in-law. She's married to Blake, my son.

Q: OK. Oh, I'd love to talk to her. That would be great.

A: Do you live in San Diego?

Q: No, I, actually live in Kansas.

A: OK.

Q: But I'm just doing some interviews down the coast, and so I'm going to end up in San Diego and then fly home.

A: Here, let me give you her --