

Announcer ([00:02](#)):

C13 originals.

Synanon Member in The Game ([00:09](#)):

[inaudible 00:00:09] a little baby. Anything I say, you will not do. Like a little baby. I want, I want. I want. You're not a man. Your mouth don't make you a man. Could you take an order? [inaudible 00:00:27]

Margo McCartney ([00:27](#)):

Well, when I first moved in, my first game, I was terrified because a couple of guys were mad at each other and they were screaming at each other practically out of their chairs.

Synanon Member in The Game ([00:38](#)):

Tony, please take it easy.

Margo McCartney ([00:40](#)):

And I thought a fight was going to break out. And it didn't.

Synanon Member in The Game ([00:46](#)):

I imagine everybody in this room knows they don't have no friends out there.

Margo McCartney ([00:50](#)):

And after a while they simmered down and they became just like they were before. And the conversation moved to somebody else, and somebody turned it on me and said, why are you here? And I said, because I'm an addict. And they said, no, you're not. You haven't had drugs. How long you've been here? I said, I don't know. A few days. Well, you haven't had any drugs so you must not be an addict. Of course I was new, so that supported my own theory. I don't need to be here. I said, you're probably right. I should leave. So I stood up to leave and they said, oh, for Christ's sake. Sit down, you asshole. I remember this first game. And it was in April of 1963.

Sari Crawford ([01:42](#)):

This is Margo McCartney. She's describing her first time playing the Synanon game. If you want to understand Synanon, you have to understand the game. Never

Synanon Member in The Game ([01:52](#)):

Never really talk to people like people people.

Synanon Member in The Game ([01:58](#)):

I don't because I don't see them.

Synanon Member in The Game ([01:59](#)):

Teaching them something when you're talking to them.

Sari Crawford ([02:02](#)):

Dr. Daniel Casriel, author of the first book written about Synanon in 1963, describes it like this. Each is given a chance to see himself as others see him. And in the eyes of the newcomers, he sees how he affects the image of Synanon.

Synanon Member in The Game ([02:20](#)):

Your responsibility towards Synanon, and you also have a responsibility towards your wife. Where do you draw the line?

Synanon Member in The Game ([02:27](#)):

I haven't drawn a line. I never have.

Sari Crawford ([02:31](#)):

The Synanon game was part therapy, part psychiatry, where a group of people sat in a circle and aired their emotions, their grievances. With their lives and with each other in pursuit of some kind of catharsis. Basically, it was peer pressure.

Margo McCartney ([02:50](#)):

People didn't hold their punches. They just said what was on their minds. This is how I see you. That was my first impression of the game. And then the guy who turned the game on me invited me for coffee afterwards. And that was kind of the deal. If you get angry with someone, leave it in the room. They had every reason to be angry, some people. They had been abused and neglected and kicked around and all you could do was listen. People would just leave their anger in that room and go on with their life.

Synanon Member in The Game ([03:26](#)):

Like you say, thank God there is a Synanon because they have a different outlook now.

Margo McCartney ([03:30](#)):

At that time, there were two major rules. Okay? No physical violence, and no drugs or alcohol. And it worked. Synanon was making headlines because people were staying clean.

News Announcer ([03:51](#)):

The largest group of clean dope addicts freely gathered anywhere in the world. Together they can resist their dope addiction.

Sari Crawford ([04:02](#)):

In the early 1960s, there was something happening on the beach in Santa Monica that nobody had ever seen before. Heroin addicts were walking off the streets and into a house full of other heroin addicts. Only they weren't using heroin. They were helping each other to not use heroin. People started paying attention to what was happening. Everyone from law enforcement to academics, media, celebrities, and even politicians all the way in Washington, DC. On September 6th, 1962, on the floor of the United States Senate, Senator Thomas J Dodd said this about Synanon. Mr. President, there is indeed a miracle on the beach at Santa Monica. My name is Sarah Crawford, and this is The Sunshine Place.

Chuck Dederich ([05:09](#)):

I going to tell you a little story tonight up to a point. I took my last drink 10 years ago today.

Sari Crawford ([05:19](#)):

This is a recreation of a speech made by the founder of Synanon, Chuck Dederich, when he was 53 years old in 1966.

Chuck Dederich ([05:28](#)):

I've never had a rebirth birthday. It was kind of impossible because nobody saw me get born. I saw everybody else get born. So I've never had a Synanon birthday.

Sari Crawford ([05:43](#)):

Your Synanon birthday corresponds with the day you arrived in the community. It was one of the many things that Chuck came up with to help his followers strengthen their connection to the organization. Basically, remnants of your life before Synanon didn't matter anymore. Not even the day you were born. My parents both had Synanon birthdays. There's still a lot you need to know before we get to my place in this story, but we'll get there. I promise. For now, back to Chuck.

Chuck Dederich ([06:16](#)):

I went to a doctor one time and he told me that if I ever took another drink again, I would die. So I went home and got drunk and stayed drunk for about four years.

Sari Crawford ([06:30](#)):

In this speech, he's doing what he did best. He's pontificating. Or maybe mythmaking is more accurate. And he is going to tell us the Synanon origin story, which is, in essence, his own origin story.

Chuck Dederich ([06:46](#)):

When the end came, it came with a terrible smash. I got pretty sick. So sick that I never wanted to do it again. Somewhere down in my gut. I burst all the blood vessels in my eyeballs because I had the dry heaves all day and all night for about three days. And I really looked like hell. I was picked up about three or four days after my last drink and transported to an AA meeting in Beverly Hills. I suddenly realized that people were making speeches up there and there were people listening to them. So I leaped to my feet and kind of rushed up to the podium and broke into some kind of religious diatribe. It got a terrific hand and everybody laughed. So I said, this is for me.

Sari Crawford ([07:40](#)):

Something about the attention Chuck got from his audience at that first AA meeting had a powerful effect on him. He said, "I had given up the bottle, but I needed a substitute. I found Alcoholics Anonymous." From then on, he went to meetings every night all over Los Angeles, wherever he could find them, but mostly in Santa Monica. For the first time in his adult life, Chuck stopped drinking. But it was too late to save his marriage.

Chuck Dederich ([08:12](#)):

She took the automobile and all my money and threw me out.

Sari Crawford ([08:17](#)):

Chuck was broke. But selfishly, he had never been more free. He could now devote even more of his time to Alcoholics Anonymous. When he wasn't at work, he was almost always at the AA clubhouse in Santa Monica. He didn't have much else.

Chuck Dederich ([08:35](#)):

I had very little left in the way of personal possessions. I was down to a suitcase. In this pile of clutter was a copy of Emerson's essay on self-reliance. So I pulled this thing out and I began to read it. It seemed the most practical thing I'd ever read. The next day I walked into my boss's office and gave two weeks notice. Somehow I had come to the conclusion that I was going to make a business. I was going to go into the business of sobering up drunks. That's all I knew. I was going to start sobering up every drunk that I could find. We jerked them off of bar stools and yanked them out of their homes. They'd still be happily drunk or happily dead if I'd let them alone.

Sari Crawford ([09:25](#)):

Chuck went looking for alcoholics in bars, on street corners, wherever he could find them. And he did what he said he was going to do. He helped them get sober. He was good at his new job, but it was hardly a business. By July of 1957, Chuck had been sober for a year. He filed for unemployment and used the money to rent a cheap room in Ocean Park, a small beachside community between Venice and Santa Monica. There was a theme park in the neighborhood and it was kind of like a west coast Coney Island, but much of the area was run down. And it was an environment that Chuck wasn't used to. He had an upper middle class childhood, and as an adult, he'd always been a functioning alcoholic with a job. Until now, he was never destitute.

Chuck Dederich ([10:17](#)):

I don't know why, but I wanted to live in Ocean Park. I apparently was taking my walk on the wild side sober. Most drunks have lived in the slums and sort of got by when they were drunk. I never had. I was attracted to Ocean Park. And so things kind of got started. I had an idea, and it was very, very amorphous. Of getting people all together in a room and doing something, somehow pursuing a line of inquiry of no line. That was the idea. I don't even know where I got such nonsense.

Sari Crawford ([10:54](#)):

A line of inquiry with no line. What Chuck is describing here is the seed of an idea that would eventually become the Synanon game. These sessions were modeled after Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, but they were more interactive, emotional, volatile, and brutally honest. With Chuck directing the action.

Chuck Dederich ([11:18](#)):

I began to yell and accuse and ridicule and curse and swear, and so on. The bottled up hostility of many years, I suppose. And boy, I felt great. Lo and behold, the next week, the people all came back. They liked it. And that was it. That was it.

Sari Crawford ([11:42](#)):

People started moving to Ocean Park to be closer to Chuck in his sessions, which were getting bigger and bigger. And it wasn't just alcoholics either. Dope fiends from the neighborhood started joining in. And when they did, something amazing happened. They stopped using heroin. Chuck recognized an opportunity. He had gone into the business of helping alcoholics get sober, but Alcoholics Anonymous

already did that. There was nobody doing anything about heroin addiction. Chuck found a niche. And so he rebranded from then on. He would be in the dope fiend business, but his new business needed a name. Someone in the group was trying to describe the sessions at Chuck's place and blurted out a word that was something in between seminar and symposium. Synanar. Chuck got rid of the AR and added anon, as in anonymous. Synanon. It was a word that didn't exist before that moment. And Chuck liked it. He said, you wait and see.

Chuck Dederich ([12:55](#)):

You wait and see. Those three syllables, Synanon, they're going to be a household word as familiar to the world as Coca-Cola.

Sari Crawford ([13:07](#)):

On September 18th, 1958, a new tax exempt nonprofit organization was incorporated in the state of California. It was called Synanon Foundation, Inc. Chuck was officially in the dope fiend business.

Lena Lindsey ([13:33](#)):

I'm trying to think if I ever went to Ocean Park. If it was, it was at night and I went to pick up. So the neighborhood itself, part of it, now that wasn't all of Ocean Park, part of it was drug infested like LA was.

Sari Crawford ([13:56](#)):

This is Lena Lindsey. Lena is 95 years old. There are very few people on earth who remember being in Synanon as far back as Lena does.

Lena Lindsey ([14:06](#)):

I keep trying to think is there any of my peers now? I don't think so.

Sari Crawford ([14:12](#)):

Especially former heroin addicts.

Lena Lindsey ([14:15](#)):

The way that they did it then that you got interviewed and you were told to come back. And so back in my head I knew that if I left that I wasn't going to come back. Like any other dope fiend, I was going to go and continue to use. But one of the guys said, wait, let me go and talk to Chuck. And he went upstairs and talked to Chuck, and Chuck said, let's keep her. And that was December '59. I was skeptical, but not to the point that I wouldn't say because I had seen the other dope fiends there. They weren't any different than the dope fiends that I knew on the street, only they weren't using. How could they stay clean? And this old guy said keep her here, so I wanted to stay and see what they had to offer.

Sari Crawford ([15:16](#)):

When Lena arrived, Synanon had been in existence for a little over a year. Most of that time was spent in Ocean Park in a rented out storefront that Chuck converted into a headquarters. Down and out dope fiends would come off the street, confused by what they were seeing but feeling welcomed. The first thing they would do is kick their habit old turkey on the couch.

Synanon Member ([15:40](#)):

But everybody in this house has been in the same shape period. A lot of habits kicked on the couch.

Sari Crawford ([15:47](#)):

Like the woman in this scene from a 1961 documentary about Synanon called David.

News Announcer ([15:54](#)):

This is Margarita kicking cold turkey, and in need of all the sympathy Synanon can offer.

Sari Crawford ([16:03](#)):

In the same room, right next to Margarita who's laying on the couch, is a group of addict musicians rehearsing together. Part of what made Synanon so different was that recovering addicts weren't isolated. They were surrounded by the day to day activity in the clubhouse. And once they were done kicking, they became a part of that activity. Everyone worked. Whether it was cooking, cleaning, or hustling for anything that might help the club. Resources were extremely scarce, but Chuck had a phrase for when Synanon really needed something. He said it will emerge. And for the most part, the square community in Ocean Park helped out too, with donations and support. Racial discrimination didn't exist in Synanon. Lena Lindsay is a black woman and she became an influential leader in the community. At the clubhouse in Ocean Park, the letters TLC were inscribed on the front window for tender loving care.

Chuck Dederich ([17:12](#)):

And it was becoming increasingly apparent that this was turning into a real business. By that time, we had people to feed. We had all the things that happened with 65 people to take care of.

Sari Crawford ([17:25](#)):

Syanon was growing quickly. And Chuck was tipped off about an empty three story building in Santa Monica called The Armory that used to belong to the National Guard. The armory was located just down the beach from the Santa Monica pier and steps away from the sand. And it definitely wasn't in the slums. A group of Synanon supporters offered to pay the lease. Lena Lindsay moved in a few months later and she quickly realized that Chuck was figuring things out as he went along.

Lena Lindsey ([17:58](#)):

And [inaudible 00:18:00] Chuck didn't know anything about dope fiends. So I think we all learned together. Didn't know what we were doing, but Chuck said, and we were going to try it. Because we had tried everything else and nothing worked. There was nowhere for us to go but to jail or die. And we all knew it.

Sari Crawford ([18:28](#)):

There were almost no options available for treatment anywhere in the country at that time outside of two federal institutions. One in Fort worth, Texas and another in Lexington, Kentucky. Both of which blurred the line between rehabilitation and incarceration. In California, Camarillo State Hospital had recently opened its doors to addicts too.

Lena Lindsey ([18:53](#)):

Camarillo was a nuthouse. It didn't present itself as a rehab place. I was one of the first girls that went there and I think I used while I was there. I'm sure I did. And you could kick the habit. You could do that.

And we did that more than once without a Synanon. But the staying clean, that was it. That was the biggie big. In Synanon, we were all dope fiends. So we all identified with each other and we could do it together, because we were all supporting each other. And some of us succeeded and some didn't, like dope fiends do. People were coming and going, splitting in, coming back. If they were allowed back in. A lot of people were not allowed back in.

Sari Crawford ([19:50](#)):

Some addicts who had spent time in jail and were on parole weren't allowed back in because the state of California didn't let parolees participate in Synanon. Because it was so new and unique, it didn't fit the established rules and regulations. But to Chuck, those rules and regulations had failed in treating the problem of addiction.

Synanon Member in The Game ([20:12](#)):

Synanon keeps a catalog of its tragic losses. Members ordered to leave by well-meaning agencies. Most of those pulled out by force have gone back to dope. Many are in prison and some are dead.

Sari Crawford ([20:30](#)):

One person who is caught in this cycle who had been to jail and had been to Lexington was a woman named Betty Coleman. Betty was a black woman and a prostitute, which made her even more likely to get trapped in the system.

Betty Dederich ([20:44](#)):

I have learned to laugh. I thought laughter was only to hide something. I never knew.

Sari Crawford ([20:51](#)):

This is Betty. From a 1965 documentary about Synanon called The House On The Beach.

Betty Dederich ([20:58](#)):

I found out that you can just be rather than have a reason for being all the time.

Lena Lindsey ([21:06](#)):

The street I knew Betty. And we didn't hang out or anything on the street. I used to go by her house and pick up or something like that. But in Synanon, it was something completely different. We were together every day. So we became very close. Much closer. But in Synanon, we had to cut all ties loose.. All of our ties on the street. That meant family and all we had to cut them loose. Cause I had a sister that we were both dope fiends together. My sister was my trigger. I knew if we got together, we were going to do something crazy. And it was the only time that I couldn't get my sister to follow me into Synanon. So Betty took the place of my sister.

Sari Crawford ([22:01](#)):

Synanon had become Lena's surrogate family, but she missed her actual family. Her two young children had gone to live with her mother while Lena tried to get herself clean.

Lena Lindsey ([22:12](#)):

Well, I remember going through the feeling guilty because I thought I should be there with my kids. And I would end up in Chuck's office crying my eyes out, and Chuck said go get your kids. So I went and picked up my kids then brought them to Synanon and they stayed in the club with me and they were the first kids in Synanon. It was great. Cause everybody else took care of the kids. I didn't have to. They ended up with so many uncles and aunts and grandpas and grandmas. They loved it. I loved it too, because I had them with me. Can you see that? They're there. That's my crew there.

Sari Crawford ([23:08](#)):

Lena is looking at a framed black and white photograph of herself and her two children, Billy and Yolanda, ages three and seven. At the time they moved in a Synanon in 1960, about a year after Lena got there.

Lena Lindsey ([23:22](#)):

Steve Billy. Where is Billy? There he is.

Sari Crawford ([23:29](#)):

Here's Billy, who now, more than 60 years later goes by Bill.

Bill ([23:35](#)):

If you remember back to the old Batman TV show, particularly the gangster looking characters, that's what all of the Synanon men, that's what they look like. They were criminals and gangsters and pimps and some murderers, and they looked the part. The women as well were full of character and personality. And these people had really lived some life and looked like it. It was kind of like being in a communal circus. So Chuck was the ringleader of this very strange, bizarre looking, ram shackled community of people. He had a big presence because he was a big man. Always in khaki pants and a white short sleeve business shirt. But he had a face that was scary. I'm not sure if there was a certain level of paralysis or something that had happened at some point, but his face was a little bit distorted.

Sari Crawford ([24:46](#)):

When Chuck was 29 years old, complications for meningitis had left half of his face permanently paralyzed, drooping and lopsided.

Bill ([24:56](#)):

It's like an old lion. I was frightened of him, but then he had this uncanny way of charming you. And he would always do that. Because I think he knew he always scared people. And I think that was probably something he enjoyed. But at the same time, there was a very human part of his character. Sometimes you never knew who you were running into. Was that the grouchy guy or was it the philosophical guy or was it the funny old man? And then this group of people became our family. And that group of people were in all stages of recovery. And sometimes us kids would be involved in that. Whether it be grabbing a cold rag and wiping somebody's brow or maybe even emptying a puke bucket. And then as they did get better, we were able to kind of watch how these sick people became different. They became maybe their true selves.

Sari Crawford ([26:11](#)):

Addicts helping other addicts stay sober. It had never been done before. And it's why Senator Dodd called Synanon the miracle on the beach. But not everybody felt that way. Some of the locals didn't like the idea of a bunch of addicts and criminals living in their neighborhood. Chuck told the media...

Chuck Dederich ([26:33](#)):

Apparently we are now saving lives on the wrong side of town.

Sari Crawford ([26:38](#)):

Here's Margo McCartney, who you heard describing the Synanon game earlier in this episode.

Margo McCartney ([26:45](#)):

When a bunch of middle class people heard that a bunch of addicts were living in a house in their neighborhood and we had no professional people to supervise us, they didn't like it. Everybody had washed their hands of addicts. They stole to get money to buy drugs. That's all people knew about addicts. Once an addict, always an addict.

Bill ([27:10](#)):

There were a lot of issues politically with Synanon's existence. And I think a lot of people didn't like the fact that this was an interracial community. So Synanon needed married couples to become kind of the poster people of a respectable looking Synanon. And that's how Wilbur and my mom ended up getting married.

Sari Crawford ([27:41](#)):

Lena was dating Betty's brother Wilbur, and Chuck asked them to get married. He wanted to set a positive example for the community. Then Chuck decided to lead by example. He asked Betty to marry him, and they became the embodiment of everything Synanon stood for.

Bill ([28:02](#)):

Betty and Chuck were kind of a perfect example of what I was just talking about. They were a wonderful example for everyone in Synanon, and I'm sure outside of Synanon, about integration. And rather ahead of their times as far as interracial marriages. They were role models and it worked on many, many levels. She somehow made him beautiful. Like he cleaned up well next to her.

Sari Crawford ([28:37](#)):

But no matter how progressive Chuck's attitudes were, or how many people's lives he turned around, and despite all his best efforts to appeal to the community, a judge ordered Synanon to vacate The Armory. After refusing, Chuck was sentenced to serve 30 days in jail for zoning violations. As the cell door closed shut, Chuck said to a friend...

Chuck Dederich ([29:02](#)):

For many years, I tore up and down the highways drunk, endangering my own and other people's lives without serving a day of jail time. Now that I'm in the business of attempting to help people, the community locks me up. Maybe on a deep level, some people don't want addicts to quit shooting dope.

Synanon Member in The Game ([29:22](#)):

Heroin in its relatively pure form enters the United States in a variety of ways. The port of New York is by far the most common route and is the main target for a narcotic bureau investigators working hand in hand with customs inspectors. America's known heroin population of over 60,000 collectively shoots nearly two tons of opiates a year. More than half live within the tenement shadows of Harlem and the Bronx.

Sari Crawford ([30:00](#)):

Chuck had taken a stand against Santa Monica. And while his battle with the city would continue for years, all the publicity had put Synanon in the national news. Addicts from as far away as New York city began going west to seek help in Synanon. One of them was Miriam Bourdette.

Miriam Bourdette ([30:19](#)):

Why I got on a prop airplane, believe it or not, at LaGuardia, and then flew to my new Synanon home.

Sari Crawford ([30:30](#)):

I didn't meet Miriam until much later in her life. Our relationship is complicated, but I can tell you this. Miriam is not who you think of when you hear the term dope fiend. She had been educated in Europe before moving to Connecticut where her father was a doctor in an affluent suburb.

Miriam Bourdette ([30:48](#)):

I don't think I intended to be a drug addict, but there I was a drug addict. It just snuck up on me. I realize now how close I was to overdosing on several occasions. I was already sleeping with guys who could get me heroin for the purpose of getting me heroin.

Sari Crawford ([31:22](#)):

Chuck knew Miriam's father, and they were friends. So when she arrived in California, she didn't have to live with the rest of the addicts. She got to move in with the Dederichs.

Miriam Bourdette ([31:35](#)):

I knew it was because they knew my parents, and so I got this special treatment. And when I went to live with them, I got to know Chuck very differently. He was, as he called himself for me, big daddy as opposed to my father who was little daddy. So big daddy was very fatherly, but I noticed that he had very quiet periods where we would sit at the dinner table and Betty and I would sit and talk and he would be completely silent, withdrawn. And then suddenly he would have a burst of energy. And most of it was positive. He would come up with what I considered brilliant ideas. And some of it was a little angry and disruptive. I knew he could be scary, because I would experience that when he would come into a morning meeting and really dress down some people, and I couldn't figure out what they had done to make him so mad. I'm not sure they could figure what they did that could make him so mad.

Miriam Bourdette ([32:58](#)):

At the same time as he got loud and the same time as he dressed people down, he instilled in people a sense of their own worth. Which was not real high on people's scales at that time. You do some time in prison for a few years, you're not coming out really a proud person. I think Chuck gave them a sense that they were worth something and no one had ever done that before. I never met anybody like Chuck. His

personality was overwhelming. I never met a person who had the charisma, the ability just to fold in people into his orbit.

Sari Crawford ([33:57](#)):

Chuck's orbit wasn't just full of dope fiends anymore. He started throwing parties on Saturday nights that were open to the public and anybody who was curious about what was happening at Synanon could see it for themselves. The song you're hearing now is called the hoop blow, named after a Synanon dance. Saturday night parties gave Chuck a whole new audience. People who had money to give or problems to solve. But if nothing else, the parties were fun. Because however their neighbors might have felt about them, a house full of addicts and criminals definitely knew how to have a good time. Here's Bill Goodson.

Bill ([34:48](#)):

So many of the dope themes knew how to dance. Really, really knew how to throw down and cut a rug. And I would just stand there in amazement. I love to see my mother dance. Both my mom and Betty sang. Both of them danced. They were kind of sisters.

Sari Crawford ([35:11](#)):

Saturday night parties generated buzz around Los Angeles, and Synanon was becoming a scene. It was new. On the fringe. Maybe even a little bit dangerous. And celebrities started showing up. A-listers like Jane Fonda, Charlton Heston and Lucile Ball went to Saturday night parties. Steve Allen, who was the original host of the Tonight Show, was a regular at Synanon. Leonard Nimoy, who played Dr. Spock on Star Trek, taught acting classes there. Timothy Leary visited. And Bobby Seale, the leader of the Black Panthers, learned to play the Synanon game. Synanon was becoming a phenomenon. In 1965, a major motion picture opened in movie theaters across the country. It was called Synanon.

Synanon Movie ([36:02](#)):

Get out of that car and shut up. Stand over there. Put your hands against the wall. Get in that cell and stay there. But nobody tells me what to do.

Sari Crawford ([36:11](#)):

It's starred academy award winner Edmond O'Brien as Chuck, and Eartha Kitt as Betty.

Synanon Movie ([36:18](#)):

I was what they call a swinger.

Sari Crawford ([36:23](#)):

It hadn't been that long since Chuck had no money, no family, nowhere to live and nothing but an idea. This thing called Synanon. And now they were making movies about him. So he bought a bigger house. In the summer of 1967, Synanon purchased the \$3.6 million Delmar Club in Santa Monica, just down the beach from The Armory. It was a massive six story Italian Renaissance styled building with an Olympic swimming pool, tennis courts, ballrooms, a private beach, and panoramic views of the Pacific Ocean.

Bill ([37:05](#)):

Do you remember the theme song from the Jeffersons?

Lena Lindsey ([37:09](#)):

Moving on up.

Bill ([37:10](#)):

Moving on up. That was kind of what moving to the Delmar was kind of like.

Lena Lindsey ([37:16](#)):

That's right.

Bill ([37:19](#)):

We were upgrading things, for sure.

Miriam Bourdette ([37:22](#)):

It was a classier place to be. It certainly was more appealing to people who were used to living nicely, living comfortably. Delmar Club made it possible for squares to move in.

Sari Crawford ([37:39](#)):

Squares, meaning the kind of people who had once rejected Chuck. Now they wanted to move in with him. Chuck called them lifestylers. These weren't addicts that had nowhere else to go. These were people that had something to lose. Careers, homes, families, money. And they were ready to give it all away to Chuck. But even with the Delmar Club, Chuck was quickly running out of space for them. Synanon was outgrowing Santa Monica, and Chuck had bigger ideas in mind. A few years earlier, he had bought 42 acres of land way up the coast in Northern California, past San Francisco off Highway 1 in West Marin County near a place called Tamales Bay. That's where Chuck was going to build his own city.

Synanon Member ([38:34](#)):

Oh, I think he's marvelous. And I've heard him say things like we'll have a city at Tamales Bay. And of course I didn't believe him. And now we have a city, or the beginnings of a city. Everything he says comes true.

Sari Crawford ([38:49](#)):

Chuck, the man who made a miracle happen on the beach in Santa Monica, was making believers out of everyone.

Chuck Dederich ([38:57](#)):

Time is a very peculiar thing. It seems many centuries ago that I had another life. The calendar says it was 10 years.

Sari Crawford ([39:07](#)):

Here's Chuck addressing his followers from the same speech you heard earlier on the 10 year anniversary of the day he got sober.

Chuck Dederich ([39:16](#)):

It seems only yesterday when the only thing that existed in life for me was the possibility and the reality of escape. Of escape from life. And I'm still that kind of person. I'm still the kind of person that could think of nothing better to do but to get drunk every day, as much as I possibly could. I was as broke as you could get in every single area. I'm not broke anymore. I've got more friends than I can use. More enemies than I can use. God help us. It's a fantastic change. It's a new person. It's a complete and total rebirth. I think we're proving that it can be induced, contrived, devised. I think we're developing sets of motions. Buttons to push that make this a reality.

Sari Crawford ([40:10](#)):

Chuck had transformed himself from rock bottom alcoholic to rich and famous visionary. And he brought Synanon from a storefront drug rehab to the beginnings of a sprawling communal society with a trusted team of leaders ready to help him build Synanon beyond his wildest dreams. My father was one of them. He would've followed Chuck anywhere. Until Chuck wanted him killed. Next time on The Sunshine Place, Synanon begins to shift.

Chuck Dederich ([40:52](#)):

Something's changed. I'm going to go for this. I'm going to stay clean. And I'll kill any son of a bitch that tries to bring any dope in here.

Sari Crawford ([41:03](#)):

Chuck turns his followers into fanatics.

Mike Gimble ([41:06](#)):

After staying up for that much time, you're ready to admit to war crimes.

Sari Crawford ([41:12](#)):

Commitments into rituals.

Sylvia Sternberg ([41:14](#)):

You're hallucinating. It does break you down and it turns you into an infant.

Sari Crawford ([41:20](#)):

And he turns Synanon from rehab into religion.

Robert Navarro ([41:24](#)):

I never thought of Synanon as religious. The only thing we took on faith I guess was Chuck.

Sari Crawford ([41:35](#)):

Thank you for listening to The Sunshine Place, a creation and presentation of C13 Originals, a Cadence13 Studio. Executive produced by Robert Downey Jr., Susan Downey, and Emily Barclay Ford for Team Downey, Chris Corcoran and Zak Levitt of Cadence 13, and Josh McLaughlin. Written and directed by Perry Crowell of C13 Originals. Editing by Alistair Schurman and Perry Crowell, with production and editing assistance by Chris Basil and Ian Mandt. Mixing and mastering by Bill Schultz. Narrated by me, Sari Crawford. Original music by Joel Goodman. Marketing, PR, production coordination, sales and

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