

REHAB DIARY: AN EXCERPT*

“SAMUEL”

All persons in this story are real but the names, including that of the author, have been changed to preserve anonymity. All of the events occurred as described.

The excerpts presented here do not make a claim for scenario-like continuity. They are intended primarily to provide a sense of one man's inner experience reported with a measure of literary skill, on context and unfolding of phases in his life and his encounter with alcohol. No definitive conclusion is reached.

MIDWIVES

Four days into the single life I dated a German waitress from a Mexican restaurant. She was almost a spitting image of Sophia Loren, only a little prettier. Our chemistry was fantastic and we imploded on the first date. We fell in love and stopped eating for several days. I took up residence in her apartment, using my own as an official front. When my divorce was final 14 months later, she became Wife₂.

She got off on slain dragons. I was her super-able hero, and was showered with the admiration I had so long sought.

Foremost, she had the ability to celebrate life and get drunk with me. I had found a combination wife and Desmond. A sinning teammate.

We had several home-base bars to whose cultures we added a romantic motif and fancied that all onlookers wished they had a marriage like ours. Our saccharine chatter must have stretched the patience of all within earshot.

*This Experience Report is excerpted with permission from REHAB DIARY, Libra Publishers, 3089-C Clairemont Drive, Suite 383, San Diego, California 92177, 1989 (203 pp.).

Wife₂'s emotional highs were delightful. With a broad grin, a hop off the floor, and her charming German accent, she would chirp, "You be my Zorba . . . and I'll be your Zorbee!"

My pen gathered up my joy with life and proclaimed it in this fable:

Once, before mankind or any other form of life existed, two stones rested near each other on the primeval land.

One stone looked at the other and said, "You know what would be great, Louie?"

"What?" the other stone replied.

"Now, I know it's impossible—and I'm wasting my time thinking about it—but it would be fantastic!"

"Get on with it, Arthur. What?"

"Now, you're not going to believe this, because I know it's impossible. But bear with me, Louie. Let your imagination soar. You know what would be really great? If we could have arms and legs, play handball, listen to Beethoven, experience love, look into the eyes of children, and contribute to our fellow stones."

"You're out of your mind."

"I know. But if it could happen, I would greet each morning sun with such thankfulness and living, that the Creator who gave me that life would look down and say, 'Now there's a stone that knows how to use a gift!'"

"Fat chance."

"I know."

This impossible miracle has actually happened to us all, but the vast majority of people don't see its beauty and choose, instead, to wallow in their troubles, think small, and feel cheated. How can one be cheated by a miracle? Auntie Mame said it beautifully: Life is a banquet—and most people who come to it starve.

We didn't starve. I would come home from work or drinking and be greeted by "Hi, fellow stone!" I had met my euphoric match—in but four days of searching.

Having dispensed with my judges, my drinking became full-time. The mainline substance was pink chablis—from a never-ending supply of gallon bottles. That's a helluva lot of drinking for \$6 a jug. When the wine industry changed from gallons to liters, I complied and drank metrically.

The drinking showed. A few months after leaving Wife₁, she had recovered sufficiently to face me as I picked up the kids for visitation. Her first response was, "What happened to your face? It's as round as a basketball!" I remain full-faced to this day. Not bloated. Just sort of Roy Clarkish.

I enjoyed the relative emptiness of Wife₂'s data bank. It provided an arena for me to astound her with my intellect. I looked upon her as a virgin brain ripe for my Pygmalion skills.

She had had a tortuous childhood in Germany during World War II. Her father was a Nazi SS Officer who was captured and held in a Russian prison ship. Her mother, unable to cope with the child's emotional swings, put her in an

orphanage. She had come to the United States as a timid teenager full of emotional scars.

During Phase One of our relationship, all went swimmingly. The downside of her emotional swings was minimized by our infatuation. But when Phase Two came on, I looked less perfect to her, and she became less interested in masking her downswings. They would come on seemingly without cause. One night we made marvelous love and basked in it. The next morning she was like a spooked racehorse; she shrieked at me and threatened me with the vacuum cleaner. And the only thing we had done in the interim was sleep!

Phase Two sucked.

We did have real financial problems that exacerbated the tension. The divorce cost me my beautiful house and its equity, and I had to sell all my stock before the capital gains holding period could be met. Consequently, my creditors hounded us, my credit cards were again repossessed, my wages were garnisheed, and the hated IRS was after my soul. Although I was an abysmal financier, I held out hope to Wife₂, for I had learned from my parents about the incoming ship: “Just wait, honey,” I said. “I know it’s tough now, but that’s because of the divorce. Imagine how good it’s going to be when we get all this crap behind us and can use my income for fun and investments. We’ll travel a lot.” That went over big when she was on an upswing, but when she went down the curve she lost her memory.

Then she started to criticize my drinking. *She*, who could get blind-ass drunk! I tried pot-calling-the-kettle-black reasoning, but I found that virgin brains do not think in terms of logic.

But we held together. The highs came less frequently—but they came.

My drinking *was* getting dangerous. One Saturday I picked up the kids and came home to watch my alma mater play their crosstown rival in football. I drank and we lost—on a stupid, unforgivable play. I was livid on the return drive, taking my drunken anger out on the traffic. I sped. I cut in. I cursed. My children, to this day, remember that trip with horror.

And the inevitable happened. In my 34th year I was arrested for drunk driving. Desmond and I had lunched and played pool until late at night. As we left the pub, he fell on the sidewalk. Blind drunk. I did the only noble thing: I drove us in his car. He got off with a \$25 fine for public drunkenness. I got \$500 worth of fines plus lawyer’s fees, and a night in jail. It didn’t faze me, though. I looked around the holding tank and made sociological observations of the riff-raff. What, me worry?

Around that time I grew a beard, which I still sport. One reason I kept it was the comment my cute little six-year-old daughter made: “Oh, Daddy. Please keep it. It makes you look so extinguished.”

Wife₂’s downswings became more frequent and intense, and I longed for her to return to the orphanage. She still refused to use logic. She criticized me for not making more progress on my Project. Now who the hell gave her the right to criticize *my* creation, which she couldn’t even understand if I explained it to her?

She was not a virgin brain. She was an airhead! I couldn't understand why she was screwing up the marriage that was potentially the best in the world. By that time, I was infuriated not just with her, but with women in general. Look around, I reasoned. Show me a good marriage. There aren't any. There are more women crapping on good men than you can shake a stick at. *I'm* a good man. And I'm not being appreciated. There are guys that treat their women like dirt and even beat the shit out of them. And they're looked up to! Nice guys are viewed as wimps, and not respected. George Elliot pointed that out in *Mill on the Floss*. And she was a woman!

* * * *

You will recall my half-brother died. Even though I was on medication, my blood pressure often hit 170 over 110 (130 over 80 is normal). I just plain don't know what caused the lightness. Whatever it was, the two months of abstinence did have its benefit.

I presume that by now, you have detected the presence of a rather large Egotist within me. "No shit!" you reply. Well, my Egotist evaluated this total abstinence situation and came up with this logic:

There are two ways to control alcoholism. The easiest is total abstinence. The toughest is controlled drinking, for which one has to be a very special person. It just so happens that I am such a person, so if anyone can engage in controlled drinking, c'est moi!

Now, I also have a Scientist within me. And the Egotist turned to the Scientist and said, "I have decided to do it the hard way—controlled drinking. Work out a plan for it, will you?" "Sure thing," the Scientist said. And he did!

At the beginning of my two months of abstinence I had a blood test which showed the significant damage that 20 years of drinking had done to my liver. There were 7 liver indices that were outside the normal range, and the amount by which they were outside those normal ranges *averaged* 123%. For example, transaminase SGP is supposed to be between 1.0 and 60.0. Mine was 132.0, which is 122% above the top of the range. I took another blood test after the two months of sobriety. The result was *only one* index out of range, and that one by a mere 28%. Essentially, this meant that at zero alcohol consumption, my liver functioned normally.

Now my Scientist went to work on the plan. He calculated my average alcohol intake for the years prior to abstinence, which was 85 ounces of pure alcohol per week. Now, that's not 85 ounces of booze. That's pure alcohol. 85 ounces of alcohol is the equivalent of about 141 martinis per week (20 per day); or 118 twelve-ounce beers (17 per day); or 94 tumblers (10 to 12 ounces) of wine (13 per day); or any combination thereof. The World Health Organization defines an alcoholic as one who drinks at least 29.4 ounces of pure alcohol per week. That means I drank enough for *three* alcoholics!

Next, the Scientist reasoned, “If I make a graph where 85 ounces of alcohol per week result in liver functions 123% above normal, and 0 ounces produce liver functions within normal, and I draw a straight line between those two points, where that line crosses the top of the normal liver function zone will determine the amount of alcohol old Sam can drink and still keep his liver functions at the top of the normal range. The result: 18.2 ounces of alcohol per week.”

So the Scientist turned the report over to the Egotist and said, “Think we can limit ourselves to 18.2 ounces of alcohol per week?”

“Can a frog catch flies? Hell, yes. That’s 4 martinis per day, or 4 beers, or 3 tumblers of wine. Any ninny could do that.”

So I set about to drink socially. My first day I had one 4-ounce glass of wine—only 0.6 ounces of alcohol. I wrote it down on my appointment calendar. The next day I had 2.4 ounces. That left 15.2 ounces for the next 5 days. A piece of cake. I finished out the week at 19.4 ounces—only 1.2 over quota. Not bad. In the first three days of the next week, I drank 19.2 ounces and reasoned that I could borrow a little from the following week. In the days that followed I drank up the next few months worth, erased my guilt with the drink itself and thought, “What is this 18.2 shit? That’s a bunch of nonsense. I don’t see Wife₄ rationing herself. At her weight she ought to ration her fuckin’ food. Nothing wrong with my getting a little peace from wine. Fuckin’ assholes ought to leave me alone.”

And I regained my cynicism.

And my anvil.

Wife₄ had seen trouble coming when I told her of my scientific plan. She thought I was conning myself. I thought she didn’t understand science and I became incensed with her lack of confidence in my ability.

When my failed experiment proved her right, I did not perceive it that way. Instead, under alcohol my Scientist turns into a Mr. Hyde and inserts a sick, hateful computer program into the system, which processes reality in an angry, illogical way. And I believe it. And I strike out with hate. Me: 1, her: 0.

One thing you don’t want to be is the recipient of hate from a creative, bright, vengeful, articulate egotist. There is no shelter.

I attacked and attacked, all the while honestly telling her that I loved her. She, in defense, counterattacked, saying, “Sam, I love you, but I don’t know how much of this I can take.”

And I did love her. Very much.

But I attacked. I never hit her, but my words did. Viciously.

Goddam wives are as bad as all the other assholes in the world. But she wasn’t listening to my logic. I’d give her one last chance. I’d make a list of her wrongs and show it to her. She had to see logic when it was written out:

1. You bitch at my drinking, but you drink, and I drink less than I did when we first met in a *bar*!

2. You treat me like a success object. I've earned 85% of our income and you only 15%.
3. You . . . blah blah blah blah blah. . . .

I showed it to her. She read it and said, "You've said all these things before." *Of course* I've said them before, you dumb fuckin' cunt! And they're *still* not getting through to you.

She said, "My friend who is in AA says alcohol by itself can produce cynicism."

"That's a crock of shit that would come from someone in Assholes Anonymous. My cynicism comes from the fact that the world really *does* suck."

"You weren't so cynical when you stopped drinking for two months."

"The hell I wasn't. I just didn't talk about it."

I don't remember how it happened, but she talked me into another scientific experiment—stop drinking for 5 days and see if the cynicism stayed or left.

So I did. I sat in my rocking chair, glowered, gritted my teeth, and made damn sure that the cynicism stayed. Me: 1, her: 0.

I called work and left a message for my boss that I would be on vacation. Then I bailed out of the house, went to a motel, and drank heavily for several days.

In the meantime, my wife had arranged a week at a resort for her mother, her daughter, and herself. When I returned from the motel I found her note:

Dear Sam,

I know this is the last time I can go through this emotional see-saw. I love you dearly but now my mental well-being is starting to be affected. For four years I have put myself on the back burner continually worrying about you and your needs. I have gone up with you and down. I have worried about your financial problems and stuck by you through them all. I now feel that you have a chance to start over again financially and build a good life. I thought you wanted the same things I wanted and we would work for them together. When I come back I've got to start putting my life back together whether it is with you or without you. I know I will survive. I hope you get through this and get back into the mainstream of life whether you are alone or here. Whatever happens I want to thank you for the two beautiful months you gave me when I got to know the real Samuel. I love you and wish you well.

Stupid broad. She leaves this soap-opera drivel and expects me to do something about it? Hell, I gave her a clear list of action-oriented items and she didn't change for shit.

A thought hit me. Power. That's it. My words have no power as long as I'm still in her house. I've got to move to a room of my own, and then she'll have to pay attention to my list because she'll have no power over me and I'll have all the power because she'll know I'm serious about leaving her if she doesn't shape up.

* * * *

Note: The history that you have just read was written *after* my rehab experience. The following diary was written “live”—on a daily basis—as I lived at the “Dry Farm.” It was not intended for publication in any form. It was intended for the entertainment of my Egotist.

DAY 1—FRIDAY

Twenty-eight days of alcohol detox and rehab not much fun to look forward to, and I don’t even know if it will work because no one is giving The Program to those other four billion assholes out there.

I know I’m an alcoholic, whatever that term means. My record of broken marriages and blown professional opportunities testify to that. But is my problem alcohol or the creeping, insidious cynicism that has engulfed me—or both?

What is the cause of my cynicism? These hypotheses come to mind:

- alcohol
- a high intelligence level
- existential philosophy
- humanity really *does* suck and I am just reporting the truth

I view myself as a good guy. And I’m finishing last. I just lost a sizeable law suit. I’m declaring bankruptcy. I learned that my 19-year-old daughter has multiple sclerosis. I’m getting screwed on the job and at home. The world is nothing but a bunch of assholes screwing each other. There are wars in most parts of the globe. We are inundated with corrupt officials. And we’re *all* corrupt at the personal level. A friend offered me a police union card saying, “Put this in your wallet next to your driver’s license so when a cop stops you and asks to see your license, he’ll see the card and go easy on you.” That is unethical, stinks, and sucks. My friends eat “hot” lobsters with clear consciences even though they know full well that the low price was made possible by the hijacking of a truck. And they *like* the taste of those lobsters! Almost everyone cheats on income taxes. I don’t. And I get screwed with high taxes and interest on those taxes. Virtue is its own penalty. Everyone complains that someone else is corrupt. But they’re *all* corrupt—including the complainers. And I see many of those ugly traits even in me, which means I’m an asshole, too!

The Christophers say, “It’s better to light one small candle than to curse the darkness.” I say, “It’s better to tell one asshole to go to hell than to light one small candle.” When they say, “Contribute to the Cancer Fund,” I’d like to in order to *support* cancer so it can kill off more potential muggers and rapists.

I’ve concluded that I don’t know if there is a God, but if one exists—you got it right—He’s also an asshole! Where did I get this cynicism? Maybe 28 days of self-imposed confinement will squeeze out an answer. So it’s off to the Dry Farm.

My wife packed a huge suitcase and carry-on bag with all my casual-but-sporty L. L. Bean clothes. I suggested that a pair or two of jeans would suffice, but there is no way that she would let me give my new cellmates such a bad image of her. The only thing that upset her was my shortage of handkerchiefs, and she said, "I don't know where all your hankies go." I thought of lying and saying, "Well, look in the back seats of 30 ladies' cars," but I didn't—even though we drunks can get away with saying shit like that.

On the way we picked up jars of hot peppers (on which I'm hooked), a *Reader's Digest*, and other sundries.

On arrival we saw a large, almost run-down mansion with broad, wooded grounds. We said our goodbyes in the lobby, and my wife left me to a 7-day blackout period in which I cannot communicate with the outside world. Even after that I only get to see her on Sunday visiting hours.

Check in was the pits. I was given a physical exam by an internist, who pronounced me a fine specimen for a drunk, and interviewed by a psychiatrist, who asked me what day of the week it was, what month, what date, and what year it was. (I'm proud to say I got most of them right.) Then the shrink built a medical and historical file on me by interrogation. Next a nurse interviewed me and added to the file through more questions, many of which were the same questions the shrink had asked. Maybe they planned to compare notes to see if I could lie consistently. The upshot was, before I had been there 3 hours, I had a fat file that normally would indicate I was ready for discharge.

And of course, while I'm between interviews, I'm standing around feeling as awkward as a drunk at a dry farm.

Then came the check in to my room, and the thorough inspection of my luggage. I guess some people actually try to smuggle booze in with them. But I didn't mind because I was clean. No way in hell would my wife pack booze in there. The customs official was quite amused at the volume of clothing, and I bit my tongue rather than say, "No, you see, it's not me. I have this wife. . . ."

Then he started the "I'll have to confiscate this" routine. No mouthwash or after-shave lotion. "Has alcohol in it." No books—so he took my virgin *Reader's Digest* and the other books I'd packed. "You won't find time for anything but working on your problem here." And no drops for the growths on my eyes which make them red. I pointed out that the drops are sold in any market, but struck out. He just said to have a good cry, and that would wash away the irritation. No safety razor or blades, either. They are afraid that if you have a razor or an extension cord you'll commit suicide. They keep our razors locked up downstairs. I pleaded, "But your rules say I can't wear bedclothes downstairs. Does that mean each morning I have to get up, dress, go downstairs, get my razor, come back, undress, take my shower, shave, get dressed, go downstairs, and put my razor back?" "Yes." "Shit."

Next he took the skin cream I use on my facial rash. That, too, is an over-the-counter product. Funny, I can't convince anyone that my rash is

alcohol-related. Not even the dermatologist. Maybe it isn't. Anyway, I wish I had my skin cream.

The crowning discomfort is that the customs official took my hot peppers. He either thought I might have replaced the jars' fluid with booze, or he, too, likes hot peppers.

It being time for lunch, I sat down in the dining room at a table with three other farmmates, one of whom was Bruno, my designated "buddy." The three men told me how many days they had left until release, assured me that this was a good program, the gang was great, and it's OK to feel nervous on your first day—which I did. They then turned to the bad news: Andy had been kicked out of The Program because they found pot in his urine. And he was due to be released in only a few days. "Helluva shame." There are 2½ printed, single-spaced pages of rules which are given to each patient—no alcohol or drug use being one of them. So goodbye, Andy. Some other rules are: no lying down on beds or sofas during the day, no wearing of shorts or provocative clothing (as of this writing we have 23 men and 2 women as patients), and no "overt sexual activity." I love that phrase. Picture the person who wrote that rule saying to him herself "Now, how do I word it so they can't fuck—but they can jack off in the bathroom?"

During lunch the nurse gave me some pills and water and said, "Here. Take these." Before complying I asked what they were and was told "Dilantin." Now I'm not here just to swap booze for another habit, so I asked why, and was told it was to prevent convulsions during detox and had no other side effects, which made sense, so I complied.

When we were finished with lunch, my jailmate, Bruno, said, "Let's take your tour." And he guided me around, reading from a prepared list. I didn't know at the time, but this was just one of the ways The Program gave alcoholics therapy—by helping their fellow alcoholics. At the end I was given my own set of three Alcoholics Anonymous books with my name penned in.

After the tour I met with the Institute's Medical Director, Dr. Antonio ____, whom I had been seeing as a patient in his office. I called him "Tony" in those sessions and wondered if I should call him Dr. ____ here. I'll think about it.

As I met my fellow patients, most would look me in the eye and say, "Hi! I'm _____. This is a good program. You're going to like it." Courtesy was everywhere and some of it looked "trained in," as though the staff members had undergone stewardess training. One nurse liked my beard and said, "How old are you?" "48." "Oh, you look much younger than that. You have more hair than my husband, who's in his twenties." Bullshit. Everyone I know thinks I look *older* than 48.

Because of my being only ½ day senior in The Program, my counselor excused me from the afternoon group therapy session, saying, "These sessions can get pretty rough." So I had time to read my three AA books, which I did in a rocking chair that I had staked out first thing upon arrival. I need my rocking even more than my hot peppers. I read before and after dinner. One fellow drunk said soberly, "I don't know if you're rocking more or reading more."

Meanwhile the night nurse gave me my Dilantin (the anticonvulsant) and remarked, in her coffee-tea-or-milk way, how well I was taking my detoxing. No headache. No tingling extremities. No hallucinations. But I've detoxed before, and I knew I would have an easy time of it.

Then came the evening AA meeting. I had never been to one and didn't know what to expect. So I grabbed my rocking chair in the corner for security. The leader this evening was none other than Bruno, who said:

"Hi. My name is Bruno, and I'm a crossy-dicked alcoholic." And the assemblage retorted vigorously:

"Hi, Bruno."

I had neither warning nor inclination to say "Hi, Bruno" with the assemblage and so remained mute. Bruno introduced two other crossy-dicked guys who, in turn, read some charter or something after exchanging Hi!'s with the group. Then Bruno got to the business at hand by sharing with us his "story." And what a life history it was, full of booze and drugs and smashing windows and hitting girlfriends and threatening to throw his boss in the pool and losing jobs. We heard about 20 minutes or so of this and I'm telling you the most sincere lump rose in my throat. My eyes also watered, but I assumed that was because the customs official had taken away the drops and my eyes were now quite red and irritated.

Then the whole crowd except me clapped and said, "Thank you, Bruno."

Then, after more Hi!'s, Martin told his story about how he lost his marriage of 28 years and had to take early retirement and attempted suicide. He had to halt several times because his tears blocked his speech and I ashamedly reached up to quickly wipe my own. I noticed that several other people around the room were wiping, too. Even big, tough guys. Then I remembered I'm a big, tough guy, and with that legitimacy given to crying I whipped out my hanky several times to blow my nose and wipe away the irritating juices from my eye growths.

The third story (after Hi!'s) was Nick's, and involved learning to drink whiskey as a toddler, joining street gangs, almost killing his father, losing job after job, running away to New Orleans, and fighting with cops. And each of the storytellers punctuated his talk with shits, goddams, fucks, and motherfuckers. And here I had been concerned about calling Dr. _____ "Tony." Now I could probably call him a motherfucker and get away with it.

By the end of the third talk my hanky was drenched with nongrowth tears and snot. I wanted to scream and weep without restraint, but thought that inappropriate for the session and swallowed it. My only regret was that I hadn't brought more hankies.

The thoughts that filled my mind at the end of the session (when we all locked arms and the rest of them said The Lord's Prayer and had a moment of silence for the kicked-out Andy) were:

- Was this just another example of the power of brainwashing, which involves: (1) sharing of personal defects, (2) chanting dogma, and (3) love bombing? If so, The Program is no better than a cult.

- Or was it like a California/Big Sur group encounter where phonies mimic genuineness a la “Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice”?
- Why had this coarse, uneducated blue-collar Bruno been able to arrive at the same conclusion that had taken me years of study and thought namely, that the world sucks? And is his proclaimed way out of it a viable option for me?

When the crowd left, I rocked and read the AA books’ sections on humility, self-fault finding, and God’s forgiveness. That really pissed me off. What ever happened to self-reliance and Ayn Rand? We cripple our children’s potential by preaching that Original Sin shit. I felt like convulsing but, of course, my damn Dilantin wouldn’t allow me to.

The nurse called me in to sign a form, and said she’d like me to come back at midnight to take my Dilantin and a tranquilizer. I said I didn’t need a goddam tranquilizer because my detox was going great. She said I appeared much more anxious than I had appeared earlier in the day. I said I’d decide and let her know at midnight when I came down.

Resting on my bed, I vowed to calm down so I wouldn’t have to take the tranquilizer. I opened the Gideon Bible to Psalms. I must have picked the wrong psalms because it didn’t work. So I thought the story of Jesus might be good, and I turned to the gospel of Matthew. When I hit the Sermon on the Mount in Chapter 5 I read, “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.” Horseshit! We have no pure-in-heart people down here only assholes. And the meek will inherit just what they deserve: a world of assholes.

I went down and took my Dilantin and tranquilizer.

My only problems in sleeping were a few chills and some fair sweating. Other than that I slept well.

DAY 2—SATURDAY

I didn’t shave because of the razor hassle.

It’s not “crossy-dicked.” It’s “cross-addicted.” Clubfoot Charlie told me that when I asked. It means stuck on both alcohol and drugs.

Met Nick with a few other cons after breakfast. He blurted out that he had never been to New Orleans and had lied about it in his story the night before. Why the hell would he do that? I felt too junior to ask.

I have to learn a new vocabulary, most of it dealing with drugs, like: garbage head, crank, blotter, and lose your virginity (which I think means being arrested for the first time—not sure, though).

Early in the morning, a lightning-bolt realization hit me. Alcoholics Anonymous is not just an ancillary reference in this program. It *is* The Program! This is nothing but a goddam 28-day crash course in AA. Dr. Tony didn’t tell me that, unless he told me on the phone Wednesday night when I was drunk. I thought I was going to a rehab center where, if you wished, you could consider AA as one of the many options after discharge. What an ignoramus I am. Why didn’t I see that

when they gave me the goddam AA books? Maybe because I'm detoxing. I don't know. It's for damn sure I'm not going to spend my evenings at AA meetings listening to a bunch of brain-damaged assholes talk about what God did for them or who they are currently fucking or which church serves the best coffee. I know several AA members, and they engage in such drivel. It would drive me to drink. I thought last night's AA meeting was sort of a ceremonial exception to honor departing inmates. It wasn't. Looking at the printed schedule I find that we have *four* of those meetings. Not four in the 28 days—four *each week!* And the whole curriculum is designed around AA dogma. It is going to be hard not to blow both my cool and my cover. I am so disappointed. But the Scientist in me says I must keep an open mind.

Duke gave the morning lecture. Several of the prisoners had told me he was "right on" and knew his stuff, which he sure proved. He talked about what makes a person fail in The Program. Things like deciding to drink only beer, deciding to drink only on weekends, and thinking that it's the last drink rather than the first drink that gets you drunk. His verbal illustrations were marvelous. Concerning the last drink getting you drunk, he said, "Try to stand on a railroad track and get yourself killed by the caboose." He touched me personally because I have made those beer-only/weekend-only decisions without success. Good man. One thing I noticed in his lecture was that I and the other people cried silently—but at *different* times in the lecture. That means he was reaching each of us with different ideas and examples. Each listener responded to the lecture according to his/her need. When Duke talked about his being near death in a hospital with pancreatitis, I choked up because I had spent 3 days in a hospital 2 months ago with the same disorder. When he said he used to brag about keeping many people employed at Schenley's, I recalled how I used to say, "When I die, Gallo stock will fall 10 points."

But the lecture didn't apply to why I am here. I admit I'm an alcoholic. I know if I continue to drink I'll die. I agree with everything Duke said. But my purpose here is to make that live/die decision soberly. Is it worth it to me to work my ass off in a program so I can function effectively in a shit-ass world?

My eyes were hurting from the tears and the smokey lecture room (I wish they would enforce their own rule on no smoking in meetings), so I went to the nurse. It went something like this:

"You took my eye drops. I followed your advice and had a good cry, but it didn't work. Just look at these eyes. Can you help me out?"

"No. Today is Saturday and the doctor won't be back until Monday to approve it. You should have told the internist during your physical."

"I *did* tell him about the growths."

"But you didn't tell him about the eye drops."

"I didn't know I'd have to because at the time you hadn't confiscated the goddam drops yet!"

"Well, make sure you tell them Monday."

I walked away and was glad they didn't take my blood pressure then, which they do twice a day because I'm hypertensive.

I will admit that the AA reading material is superbly written. If I weren't convinced I was an alcoholic or thought I could achieve sobriety alone, those books would convince me otherwise. The authors did a great job in presenting their cases backwards and forwards.

I also can see the beautiful design work behind this 28-day experience. Having the new patients slotted in over time rather than all starting at once provides a critical mass of believers who, through peer pressure such as, "You'll like it here," cause the newcomer to feel welcome and biased in favor of The Program. And I thought at the time my goods had been confiscated upon arrival, "Why don't they tell us ahead of time what we can't bring?" But if we knew that ahead of time, we'd just find ways of sneaking the stuff in. Someone did an awful lot of planning based upon an awful lot of experience.

At the group therapy session, our leader, Dr. Hans _____, wanted to get to know the new people, so I was forced to speak. I told him what I'd told my boss at a previous company: "You're an incompetent, fuzzy-thinking, mumbling twit," and had been fired. He aptly pointed out that a sober man would have waited until he had another job before doing that. He asked if that was my particular style of handling problems like that. I cutely said, "Yes, as most of my ex-wives will testify." He pointed out that we each have our own "rendition" of the disease. When confronted with stress in a relationship we either leave or force a fight in order to be rejected. Boy, that's me in spades!

Dr. Hans also mused that it would be fascinating to have a patient write of his experiences in The Program. He is about to get his wish because I decided to do just that when coming here in the car yesterday. I wanted to have *some* intellectual stimulation. I don't expect to find many opportunities here to discuss the philosophy of Soren Kierkegaard.

Hans doesn't know of this writing yet. *No one* knows it because if they knew I was writing all this down, they would alter their behavior. And keeping the project unknown has been a bitch. I have to sneak away to my room to write, and that has made me a real loner, which I'm sure the group will shortly question. To conceal my efforts, I am writing this starting from the *back* page of the tablet, so if someone approaches, I can close it and study my legitimate notes on the front page. They tell me here that alcoholics develop complex concealment mechanisms. Like drinking just a little bit from each bottle in the liquor cabinet. And looking to see if a spouse has drawn lines on the bottles' labels. And if he or she has, drinking some anyway and adding water to bring the level back to the line. And hiding booze in water closets or toilets. And letting air out of your tires so you have an excuse to miss work. And paying a bar friend to punch you in the face so you can prove you were late coming home because you'd been mugged. We're clever bastards.

I also had to wrestle with either struggling to write this on a daily basis or waiting until afterwards when I would have more time and privacy. I chose the

daily method because 28 days from now I'm not going to remember how I felt today.

Much of what I have been exposed to so far has informed me that my problem is not unique, that my objections can be met with answers worked out long ago, and that AA has thought of everything. But I *want* to be unique and have unique problems about which someone can say, "Oh, you poor dear."

This afternoon we watched a terrific videotaped lecture by a Father Martin. By using humor very well, he pointed out what alcohol does to the brain and why we drink. It was of no importance to me, though, because I already agree with everything he said. That's not why I'm here.

In the evening we had another damn AA meeting with 5 or 6 outsiders in attendance. Most of them spoke after the main speaker finished his "story." I felt they were shills working on the group's dynamic. I still don't say Hi's or The Lord's Prayer.

I calmly smiled past the nurse so I wouldn't have to take a tranquilizer, and went to bed. Sweated very little but saw some light patterns and had a terrible itching that moved around my whole body. It felt like gnats landing on me, but when I swatted or scratched no one was there but me. That didn't happen last detox. Maybe I'm getting worse. They tell us here that alcoholism is "progressive." That is, if you quit drinking for a while (even years) and go back to it, the damage to your body upon resuming drinking will be as severe as if you had been drinking all along. My increasing detox symptoms tend to verify that.

DAY 3—SUNDAY

This morning was a bitch. I *had* to have a shave, so I pulled the dress-undress-dress bit. Just to get a goddam shave. The shower handles were fighting me, and I got alternately burned and frozen. I suspect the staff is so incompetent that I could hide my razor in my room without their missing it. It's obvious they have no razor inventory system. But I decided that I'm not going to let a bunch of incompetent assholes make me break the rules, so I returned it with disgust. This is like a fuckin' prison here. Now I know what people go through in Army basic training. What must it be like in a real prison? I long for my bedroom and bathroom.

They got Allan. He looked to be my only hope for sharing rational thought—although I'm going by looks and sample statements because I'm a loner here and don't know anyone well. In group, Allan said he realized he couldn't stay sober without a "Higher Power." There goes Allan to The Program. Mike said, "You have to surrender to make it work." Surrender!

Allan did say something that was pregnant for me, though. He said alcoholics mentally blow up the facts in a situation and then react emotionally against those blown-up facts—not against the real facts. That is so true of me. I don't think Allan thought of it though. Probably read it in one of the 3 books.

Quiet Quentin said, “To be considerate of others you must be hard on yourself.” Another stupid parroting of a book. I say let the other assholes be considerate of *me* and hard on *themselves*.

And one of the AA books says, “Justified anger should be left to the nonalcoholics, who can handle it.” Bullshit! If some prick does me in, he’s going to receive 10 times the hurt in retribution.

They’re not just trying to change our drinking behavior here. They’re trying to change our *values*.

They are calling alcoholism a disease rather than a failing of character or willpower. I suspect that’s a euphemistic copout designed to make alcoholics feel it’s not their fault so they should concentrate on guilt-free recovery. Hey, I got me here. No germ infected me. The same medical profession that has decided alcoholism is a disease has decided that homosexuality *isn’t*. And they took that opposite posture for the very same reason: to erase guilt.

If I complete The Program and go back to home and work, I’d just be exchanging this prison for two more. If I go back still a cynic, I won’t be able to teach managers how to manage better with that attitude. That’s teaching assholes how to manage assholes better. And going back to my wife is a treadmill. She wants me to support her in the style to which she would *like* to become accustomed. I’ll start working on Plan B. I can’t leave soon. That won’t be giving it a fair shot and won’t prove the point I want to make. Leaving on the 28th day is out of the question. That means they would *expect* me to leave on the 27th day. So I’d leave on the 26th day.

Maybe organized religion has said to itself “Who would be most likely to convert to our cause? Probably people with self-defacing problems. Let’s hit the alcoholics.”

New guy Frank brought a laugh. We were watching a football game on TV, and when the camera close-upped on a beautiful cheerleader, he said, “Turn the camera away!” When I told him he had only 27 days to go, he replied, “Hope my hand holds out. I’m going to go home with one huge forearm.”

Visitor’s day. Lots of ladies and kids came. I didn’t feel lonely, though. All I need is some asshole asking me, “How do you like it here? Are you getting anything out of it?” Collette’s husband came and she bailed out with him. Clubfoot Charlie and Tattoo Tim were fit to be tied, saying, “She only had 14 days to go. She could have made it!” They also said her insurance company wouldn’t pay because she didn’t complete The Program. That upset me because I could dump \$7,000 on either my company or my wife. Hell, I’m going to dump lots more on them anyway.

The nurse returned my eye drops! Maybe my red eyes were testimony to the Institute’s tyranny, and they couldn’t stand to look at Exhibit A.

Itching has gone down. Now I have hemorrhoids.

DAY 4—MONDAY

I've confused happenings these last few days. Wrote some occurrences on the wrong day. I guess it's part of detoxing.

Slept well. Woke up feeling pretty cheerful, like I used to before I became a cynic.

At breakfast one guy said he came down to return his razor but the cabinet door was locked, so he just took it back to his room and hid it. Another said, "Hell, we've got razors lying out in the open all over our bathroom." Shit. There I go fucking myself by following the rules again. I say "fuck" a lot now. Blame it on the other guys.

Oh—one good thing happened yesterday. They served sandwiches with hot peppers. Turns out they were *my* hot peppers, so I ate more than my share. Well, really *less* than my share (which was 100%) but more than the others ate.

Somber Schyler gave a lecture in the morning. Point: there are numerous ways to vent our emotions, like drinking, sex, exercise, and working. The alcoholic drops most or all of them except drinking. That's been true for me. How long has it been that I've been pledging to get back into racquetball? Over 2 years.

Sunshine Sally—who has the most beautiful smiling mouth and eyes—followed with a lecture on eye contact and stress management. I was pulled out of the lecture because Dr. Tony wanted to see me. I wondered what the hell I was going to tell him. I couldn't say, "I'm trying 28 days to see if my cynicism stays," because that's not why *he* wants me here. He wants me in The Program. To his question, "What have you gotten so far?" I responded that the AA meeting where Bruno, Martin, and Nick told their stories moved me to tears. And the tears came back right there in front of Dr. Tony. He said to use a Kleenex from the box that was sitting on the desk next to my chair. You know what that means? He keeps a supply of Kleenex there just for the multitude of assholes who cry in that chair. I can't recall where the conversation moved from there, but I know how it ended. He led me to the possibility that I felt used by women because I had tried, unsuccessfully, to earn my mother's love through accomplishment—and that explains the anger trip I was ready to lay on my wives before I ever met them. He pointed out that my "going bad" with Cloris and her versatile bed occurred just a few months after my mother's death! He said I probably felt cheated because she died before I had earned her love. I don't know if it is a right conclusion. I only know it rang my bell and I left feeling changed. Maybe a little bit liberated. I don't know. He asked me not to leave The Program (probably because I had mentioned my hermit option to him), and I assured him with near honesty that I wouldn't.

I ate lunch with my head low and tears in my eyes, and several fellow patients tried to cheer me up. They could dislike and mistrust a loner, but not a tearful loner.

This whole thing has turned into a serious matter, and I'm both more frightened and more hopeful. I predict guilt will take over as soon as my hatred is diminished by empathy.

Steve brought Frank (with the big forearm) and me up on Sally's lecture, which we'd missed, and had us do the exercises they did in class. One had us face the other while one repeatedly asked, "How do you make your wife wrong?" And each time the other person must come up with a different answer. Here were mine:

- show her data
- manufacture data
- show her elite authority
- shut her off
- call her fat
- criticize her daughter
- leave her for a period
- threaten to leave her permanently

It was an eye-opening exercise.

I opened up to Forearm Frank and told him I trust him. He reciprocated. As a matter of fact, he called his wife and told her of our conversation. Now I'm just a partial loner. I wonder what will happen when I open up to the whole group in session. I'll probably explode and they'll have to pick pieces of me off the walls.

I have a cement cylinder inside me that has had new layers poured around it in each of my 48 years. More than one person has called me a "turtle." It's hard for someone to penetrate my ever-thickening emotional cylinder and it's hard for me to let feelings out. Incoming and outgoing feelings are first run by the managing editor (in my head) and are then allowed to proceed to their destinations in laundered form. I get a rupture in my cylinder now and then when an emotional explosion occurs and the recipient is blasted with pieces of cement and the pus that has festered inside. But I quickly patch the hole in the cylinder and work to catch up on my festering duties. This rehab program is saying, "Hey, Samuel. Dynamite the concrete and lay bare your underbelly. You'll find it's much more rewarding." My internal Congress is now debating the Cylinder Dynamiting Bill with strong and valid arguments being made on both sides. I suspect a compromise bill will be in the offing.

I don't know what's going to happen next. I've done only 4 days and feel like it's been 28. I wish there were only 4 days left because I'm not sure I can hold up for 24 more. But if I know the Institute, they know what they're doing, and intend to run me through that 24-day meat grinder and probably think I'm right on schedule now.

God I love her.

PART THREE — SAMUEL

DAY 5—TUESDAY

This was pick-Sam-off-the-wall day. I sweated a lot during the night and woke feeling purged. I shaved and kept the razor. The shower faucets cooperated. My morning thoughts rambled:

- Writing this hasn't made me a loner here. *I* made me a loner.
- The shower didn't malfunction. I misoperated it.
- The fact that my watch stopped didn't make me late to class the other day. *I* had failed to wind it.

I generate a mental right/wrong structure which others violate, and then I punish them verbally or silently hate them for it. I could argue and, in my own mind, win all my right/wrong cases. But why have all those cases in the first place?

Is "humility" stepping down from being my own God? Shall I replace me in that assignment with a placebo non-god? Will I relax when I don't have to be God 24 hours a day?

Why are the people here so kind to each other? Is it that the Institute started a kindness myth and it grew and was handed down to the newcomers, like keeping a sourdough yeast culture growing?

Duke led the usual Thought for the Day session after breakfast with all in attendance, including some of the staff. I was OK until Bruno read a page that dealt with the world sucking, only in nicer words, and his voice reached right in and pulled my trigger. My tears and groans could no longer be held back, but I covered my face with my hands until the sobs subsided. Needless to say, the proceedings stopped. When I dropped my hands, I saw the hanky that 28-year-marriage Martin had placed on my leg. Several people said words to the effect: "Let it all out." Duke asked if I wanted to talk about it, and I said several things I can't remember now, but including cynicism and my extreme love for my wife. Many of the group offered advice, none of which I can remember. Many congratulated me, and Tattoo Tim said the outburst usually happens on the third or fourth day, but sometimes doesn't get out until the seventh. Damn! Here I am again, non-uniquely going down a predictable path that others knew about all the time.

I'm starting to get the impression that I'm an intellectual champion and an emotional infant.

I learned that because of my blackout period I was not allowed to be with my wife this evening in the couples group therapy. She had said she would sign up for the family support program that started today, and I desperately wanted to know if she had come, and asked a staffer if I could find out. She said she'd check into it, but while she was checking another idea hit me. I looked in the parking lot

to see if our car was there, and sighed with relief upon seeing it. Then the staffer told me both she and my stepdaughter had come. I got two glimpses of her and she of me, and we glanced love to each other. At least I hope it was a two-way message.

Dr. Hans had given us a great talk on the effects of alcohol on one's health, and in the afternoon he called 8 of us to his office—those whose wives had been to the family program. He gave each of us a report on his opinion of the spouse's posture, being encouraging in some cases and cautious in others. I was so eager to hear about my wife's attitude that I didn't hear him when he told me. I don't know if he encouraged or cautioned me, but he said she would visit Sunday and return to the couples group next Tuesday. I'm so scared at again handing her the ability to hurt me. It would have been so easy to leave. It will be much harder to stay and work it out.

But a question hit me. Why did Hans give us those reports in concert? It's not my business where Tattoo Tim's wife is emotionally. By now I've grown to respect Hans' superb professionalism, and suspect that there was a very clear objective in doing so.

At the Step Lecture tonight Paul refused to take AA's Step One (admit that he is powerless over alcohol and that his life had become unmanageable). His honesty and body language proclaimed his sincerity. The leader pressed the point that Step One is the only mandatory prerequisite for getting better. Paul claims he is not an alcoholic and this whole thing is a mistake. And I can picture a situation in which they send me to a maternity ward and say, "Sam, admit that you are pregnant." Against my denials and protestations they respond, "Look, Sam. You're not going to get anything out of this program unless you admit that you're pregnant." Paul is convinced that he is not pregnant. Does AA ever goof and get the wrong person into The Program? If they do, The Program could cause serious emotional damage.

Unlike Paul, it's clear to me that I belong here, and I embrace Step One.

I don't say the closing prayers yet, but I did say, "I'm Sam and I'm an alcoholic" and received the "Hi, Sam's. Would you look at what I just said?" "I don't say the prayers yet." Sounds like I expect them to get me, too. It frightens me to have hope creep in. It means there'll be a greater chance of having hope dashed. Being a cynic was more comfortable. There I go again. Was more comfortable. A cynic has no hope, and thus can't be disillusioned. (As Duke says, a pessimist is a 100% achiever.) But it doesn't make much sense to avoid disillusionment by walking around completely destroyed. My mind hurts. Goodnight.

DAY 6—WEDNESDAY

Didn't sweat last night. I must have cried the fluids out.

Duke was impressed with both "Sam" and my last name being traditional first names, so I told him that with a middle name of "Joseph," I have 3 first names.

This morning he woke me with "Rise and shine, Sammy Joe" and made sure to tell me I'd be able to see my wife soon because my blackout was almost over.

I have almost no sex drive. I've only masturbated once since I've been here, even though I've had plenty of opportunity since my hand has been quite near me all the while.

This morning Duke told us that you don't have to be in the gutter to hit your bottom. He said each of us carries his own form of skid row around in his mind.

I thanked the group for picking me off the wall yesterday, and told 28-year-marriage Martin I may have his gift hanky bronzed. Martin left today. On his way out he gave me two more hankies and said, "These will last you for a while." There is no way—try as I may—that I can call that man an asshole. As a matter of fact, I am pardoning so many people from assholehood that the group is becoming quite dear to me.

Spaced-out Stuart dropped out of The Program after only a few days. Analytical Allan told him, "Put my name in your will." Allan amazes me. We have not developed a friendship, but his laid-back, patient, intellectual words crash in my ears. He said he understands why his wife won't accept him back yet, and why he thus must go to a halfway house. He observed that 80% of the treatment here comes from fellow patients. Allan leaves Saturday, and I've no way of telling him how much I've learned from him. Words won't do it. *Everybody* says those words when someone leaves.

I told Paul (who declined Step One) my "Admit you're pregnant, Sam" analogy. He told me his story, which sounds terribly believable. I know it would be stupid of me to believe it without verifying the facts, but why did the staffmember single him out in public last night if it were not to humiliate him into agreeing? She knew of his denial ahead of time. I see that as a dirty trick. Would Paul's leaving without accepting Step One be a black mark on the Institute?

A rumor is going around that Young Deuce is being sent to a halfway house rather than home because he admitted in the AA meeting last Saturday that he was scared by an urge to drink while on his 4-hour pass. Does that mean we have to guard what we say lest The System pick it up and decide against the future we want? And yet we are encouraged to be honest. I don't know what I would do if they told me I couldn't go home after the 28. I would probably revert to alcoholic rage and tell them to shove it up their asses.

Lionel gave a marvelous talk about why we drink, and the psychological defense mechanisms we use. He told the story of his getting drunk at a restaurant and leading a conga line that grew to 70 or so people who snaked around the tables, and how a great time was had by all. The next morning he said to his wife, "Wasn't that a grand time last night?" only to learn from her that he had led the conga line up and over a table, stepped in mashed potatoes, stepped on an old man on the way down (leaving mashed potatoes all over him), and then had gone over to the glass lobster tank and thrown up his dinner in it, and the poor lobsters had a helluva time trying to swim in the puke. Lionel is another

example of the tremendous talent on this staff. His delivery was at least as good as those of many nationally known speakers. He said: “Everything I looked for in a bottle I found in sobriety.”

Our car was in the parking lot again today!

Performed exercises for Jennie, our physical therapist. Passed or nearly passed four tests, but failed the one on shoulder flexibility.

They gave me suppositories for my hemorrhoids. I’m almost sure how I got them: the hard seated rocking chair.

I had late dishwashing duties today. We all have daily work assignments like washing dishes, vacuuming, setting tables, etc. The cooking is done by Giovanni and the food is delicious—and all you can eat. I’ve gained 5 pounds in 5 days.

My blood test results came back today. My bilirubin was so high Dr. Tony said he’d seen only one or two alcoholics with such elevated numbers in a year. He gave me 5 years to live—max—if I continued to drink. My guess would be 1 year—max. I gave a pleasant, honest status report to Tony, basically saying I was no longer a cynic, although I didn’t know *what* I was. I’m glad The Program is 28 days rather than 7, because I really need those extra weeks to build new habit patterns.

I’m going to bed fairly peaceful and content tonight. Just me and my suppository.

DAY 7—THURSDAY

This is the first morning I woke up without someone waking me. Felt calm. No sweating or other detox symptoms. Had a shower and an illegal shave. My blood pressure was 116 over 76!

When I hit the schedule board the message for the day knocked me out: “Some men storm imaginary Alps all their lives and die in the foothills cursing difficulties that do not exist.” I am that “some” man. I will incorporate this into my personal development plan, which each of us must prepare.

The lecture this morning was on Denial and Enablers. Rosa said 100% of the people who leave The Program without admitting their illness go back to drinking. Was this lecture given as scheduled or was it advanced to pound on Unpregnant Paul before he leaves Saturday? The Institute’s seeming obsession with Paul’s deviant behavior bothers me. Cults do that. One of my friends lost two children to a cult, and had to steal them away and have them deprogrammed. This caused me to study cults, and the case of Paul really bothers me. Why don’t they just show him the AA menu and, if he decides not to order, that’s *his* problem? Why pull dirty tricks to pressure him?

The section on Enablers was eye-opening. I hadn’t thought of how many people reinforced my drinking. That doesn’t lessen my responsibility, but it sure means I’m going to have to buffer the enabling actions somehow when I get out.

New Orleans Nick left yesterday. He was so colorful. A kind of kinky “Rocky” (he claims to have boxed). A funny thought hit me about Nick. In the 6 days I

was exposed to him I came to see a beauty in him. And yet, if I had just met him in passing, I would have had him arrested as an urban blight. That says a lot about me and prejudice.

In group therapy the two counselors, Gentle Glen and Snooty Sonia, decided to work on Evelyn. Under relenting questioning, she froze into her sphinx position and became quietly hostile. But they didn't stop the attack. I felt like telling them to leave the poor lass alone, but didn't because I know I tend to play rescuer when it's inappropriate. I told Analytical Allan of my urge to rescue Evelyn, and he said that seeking rescue was part of her system. That never occurred to me. I later learned that Allan has a PhD in counselling psychology! No wonder I have been amazed by his observations.

Dr. Tony, upon my asking, told me why Dr. Hans gave us husbands the feedback from our wives in concert: because he didn't have time to do it individually! And here I had attributed a master design to it. Oh, well.

Sleepy-eyed Seymour gave the Step Lecture tonight. At each such lecture we explore (and explore, and explore!) one of AA's Twelve Steps to sobriety.

Tonight's Step Lecture was an hour devoted to Step Two (concerning which I have one very large problem). Seymour started by playing one of his homemade tape recordings. Some miscreant has taught him how to splice selected passages into a tape, and the man has gone bananas with that trick. The tape started with several minutes of "On the Sunny Side of the Street" played on the vibraharp. Then Seymour's not-too-disguised voice came on with random sermonic thoughts separated by editing clicks that marked his letting up on the "Record" button and taking a breath. I was embarrassed by the amateurishness of the event. It didn't seem to match the high level prevalent in the Institute. Maybe Seymour is meant to be comic relief—or maybe the Institute, in its omnidirectional approach, employs him to reach that small percentage of alcoholics who are into schmaltz. Whatever the thinking, he is the Rodney Dangerfield of Alcoholic Rehabilitation. In the lecture he asked Young Duece: "If I behaved like such-and-such, wouldn't you think I was insane?" Duece's dead-pan response: "Seems that way to me," sent us all into hysterics. Seymour smiled as though he almost got it. He gets no respect.

While I was in bed looking forward to calling my wife at tomorrow's lifting of my blackout, I was called downstairs to take a phone call—and *it was she!* It was wonderful to talk with her even though the phone was like a glass wall between a prisoner and his visitor. She loves me and is behind me—to the point of going to Al-Anon meetings, which are for the families of alcoholics. Her phrase, "We'll have many good years together" clinched the deal. I'll do whatever it takes to be a contributor to those years.

She also said she had talked to Unpregnant Paul's sisters, and they feel he is an alcoholic and want him to admit it and continue treatment. And he told me that his sisters felt he didn't belong here and it was all a mistake. My god, we alcoholics lie and believe our lies.

I asked my wife to bring me a couple of tablets of paper when she visits Sunday. Told her it was for a project for my company that I work on in my spare time. But you and I know better, don't we? Wait a minute. I'll bet she, in her infinite awareness, knows what I'm writing. Damn! I keep thinking I'm opaque and she keeps proving I'm transparent. I'll ask her if she knew after I get out.

* * * *

Editor's Note: This is not the end.