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**Families of recovering women alcoholics: A qualitative analysis
of roles, rules, and rituals**

Smith, Kathleen Maurer, Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1993

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FAMILIES OF RECOVERING WOMEN ALCOHOLICS:
A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF ROLES, RULES, AND RITUALS

by

Kathleen Maurer Smith

A dissertation submitted to the
Graduate Faculty in Sociology in
partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
The City University of New York

1993

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate faculty in Sociology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

FAMILIES OF RECOVERING WOMEN ALCOHOLICS: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF ROLES, RULES, AND RITUALS

by

Kathleen Maurer Smith

Adviser: Professor Gerald Handel

This study is a qualitative analysis of intact families of recovering women alcoholics. Four families with women alcoholics who occupied the wife/mother role and who have been in recovery for at least four years were examined using the case study method. The data were collected through extensive interviews with the recovering women and their family members. Since the alcoholic's family had organized its roles around having a wife/mother who was an active alcoholic, and had developed rules and rituals to reinforce the family's role relationships, when the alcoholic made an effort to recover, these roles, rules, and rituals had to be revised. The findings indicated that, in all of the families, it was the alcoholic woman who finally initiated her own successful recovery. This involved the acceptance of the label of "alcoholic" in order for ongoing recovery to be possible. For all of these women, professional help and/or peer support from outside the family was necessary in order to sustain the recovery. The study also found that, after recovery, both formal and informal roles went through a transition from negative to positive interaction. Family rules became more

flexible, less rigid, and were based on more trust and more open communication, especially with regard to feelings. With regard to rituals, the study found that, except for less emotional enmeshment, and less frequent getting together for family functions, the formal ritual behaviors did not change a great deal when the alcoholic woman recovered. What did change was that the tension and anxiety which previously had surrounded these rituals diminished, and openness, enjoyment, and spontaneity increased.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express by gratitude to several people, without whose assistance this dissertation would have been an impossibility. Thanks is extended to my adviser, Dr. Gerald Handel, whose guidance and expertise assisted me throughout every phase of the dissertation process. I am grateful also to Dr. Charles Winick and to Dr. Betty Yorborg, whose valuable suggestions were particularly helpful in the preparation of my final draft.

This study would not have been possible without the families who so graciously gave of their time and unselfishly shared their lives with me in the hope that others might benefit from their experiences. Thanks is also extended to Grace Ann Inyard, Ray Turelli, Susan Sheehan, and Dr. George Mann for their help in obtaining the families for this study. In addition, I would like to thank Dr. Joan Merlo, whose tireless assistance and advice was greatly appreciated.

Special thanks is extended to Lois and Peter Smith, Sara Blessington, and Rebecca Ponessa for their love, moral support, and valuable insights which they have provided over the years. I am also profoundly grateful to my parents, Brenda and Tom Maurer, Brian Maurer, and to all of the Malinowskis: Laurie, Stan, Bill, Elizabeth, Jennifer, Danny, and Michael, for their encouragement, love, and understanding that has always kept me going.

Finally, my deepest gratitude is reserved for my husband, Michael Smith, whose patience, unselfish devotion, and unconditional love has been a great source of strength and inspiration for me.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

In recent years there has been an increase in the number of studies of alcoholism in relation to the family, but there have been relatively few studies that focus on women alcoholics, and well-controlled studies of husbands of alcoholics have been almost nonexistent.

In 1975, Beckman stated that most researchers have studied male alcoholics and have assumed that their findings also can be applied to females. As a result, there has been a dearth of studies that specifically deal with alcoholic women. A more recent look at the literature on alcoholism determined that between 1974 and 1991 only four percent of the 8789 journal articles on alcoholism included female subjects.¹ In addition, according to Bepko (1986), very little of the existing research on alcoholic women has been unbiased and well-designed.

The studies that have been done on the spouses of alcoholics almost always have focused on wives of male alcoholics. Regarding data available on the spouses of women alcoholics, Estes and Baker (1977) stated that "one area that has received minimal attention... involves the spouse of the alcoholic woman" (186) and Jacob, Favorini, Meisel, and

¹Source: PSYCLIT on CD-ROM, Hofstra University, Hempstead, NY, 1992.

Anderson (1978) pointed out that "well-controlled studies of husbands of alcoholics have been extremely limited." (1233) This has continued to be the case with regard to more recent research, since only two articles on husbands of alcoholics could be located that were published between 1974 and 1991.²

In sum, there has been a lack of research which has specifically focused on families of alcoholic women. Gomberg (1976) pointed out that there has been a great need for a study of the family interactions of women alcoholics. She called for the exploration of husband-wife and parent-child relationships in the families of alcoholic women. She strongly believed that one of the most important dimensions of prognosis lies in the familial-social environment. If more can be learned about the familial environment in which a woman alcoholic has successfully recovered, insight could be gained as to what aspects of family life would be supportive of recovery and what kinds of changes would be necessary to accommodate recovery.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to identify the changes that occurred within intact nuclear families of women alcoholics who occupied the wife/mother role when they sought to recover from the disease of alcoholism. A recovering alcoholic could be defined as one "who has stopped drinking

²Ibid.

and regained a sense of self previously lost to alcohol."
(Denzin, 1987, 15)

The prevailing view in the alcoholism literature has recognized that a person's alcoholism does not occur in a vacuum, and that several other people, especially family members, are deeply affected. The onset of alcoholism generally has been a gradual process, and the family has adapted as a unit to coping with the ongoing crisis. In the case of the woman alcoholic's family, the members have organized their roles around having a wife/mother who has been an active alcoholic, and have developed several rules and rituals which have served to reinforce the resulting role relationships. When the alcoholic has made an effort to recover, however, these roles, rules, and rituals have obviously needed some revision. This study hypothesizes that the wife/mother's recovery has affected the entire family, particularly with regard to the ways that family roles, rules, and rituals have been altered. This is based on the assumption that the roles, rules, and rituals that existed prior to recovery were in some ways supportive of the active alcoholism, while the roles, rules, and rituals that have become operational since sobriety have served to accommodate recovery.

Research Questions

The following specific research questions have been explored in this study:

Have family members perceived any changes in roles, both formal and informal, in their families since recovery was initiated? What have these changes been like?

Have family members perceived any changes in rules, both overt and covert, in their families since recovery was initiated? What have these changes been like?

Have family rituals that were associated with holidays, socializing and entertaining, weekends, weekdays, family dinners, religious practices, weddings, and vacations changed perceptibly since recovery was initiated? In what ways have they changed?

Why the Focus of the Study Changed

Originally, this study sought to compare several families where the wife/mother has been successfully recovering for several years with families of women who had attempted recovery numerous times but had continually experienced relapse after only brief periods of sobriety. Although these

women would have been in early sobriety at the time of the interview, they would have been considered unsuccessfully recovering because of their history of relapse. It was assumed that the unsuccessfully recovering women's families would not have been flexible enough to alter their roles, rules, and rituals to accommodate the alcoholic's recovery. The result of this would be that the family would experience strain, to which the alcoholic might respond by resuming her drinking behavior in order to cope with this strain and restore the status quo in the family.

In seeking out families to participate in the research, there was no difficulty whatsoever in obtaining successfully recovering families whose members were willing, and in some cases, even eager to be interviewed. This was not the case at all with the unsuccessfully recovering families, however. Over a five year period, diligent efforts to locate families containing a woman alcoholic who had a history of relapse and who lacked long term recovery yielded no families willing to participate. All of the experts in the field of alcoholism treatment who were consulted in an attempt to obtain subjects for the study frequently expressed pessimism regarding the possibility of obtaining this type of family. These experts included the head of a mid-western substance abuse treatment facility, the director of an alcohol detoxification unit at an area hospital, the clinical director of a local alcohol and drug treatment facility, the executive director of an alcohol

and drug treatment program, the director of a county drug and alcohol abuse department, the director of an alcohol and drug abuse prevention education program, the coordinator of family services at a treatment facility, and several substance abuse counselors and educators.

At one point, two unsuccessfully recovering families appeared to be willing to participate. After just one interview, however, they withdrew. In both cases, one family member had consented to being interviewed, but the other members were not willing at all. One family withdrew after the joint husband-wife interview had occurred because the wife decided that she did not want to participate, and the other family withdrew after the woman alcoholic had been interviewed. She said that the rest of her family had decided not to be interviewed because they did not want to talk about their situation because it was painful enough living through it. In addition, once she knew what the questions were, she seemed to be very reluctant for her family members to be interviewed due to anxiety about how they might answer these questions.

In light of the fact that families of alcoholics are highly likely to be operating on a rule system that involves the following: "don't talk, don't trust, don't feel" (Fisher, 1989), it was not surprising that these unsuccessfully recovering families were reluctant to trust a researcher enough to talk about intimate aspects of their family life

which would be likely to dredge up painful feelings. The successfully recovering families, however, had learned in their recovery process to break these rules and were therefore much more amenable to volunteering for a study such as this one.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Systems Theory

Due to the growing realization in the field of alcoholism research and treatment that the entire family unit has been affected by the alcoholism of one of its members, systems theory has often been used both to study and to treat the families of alcoholics. (Ablon, 1976) Family systems theory has posited that the family system must utilize certain psychosocial mechanisms in order to remain intact and continue functioning in a state of equilibrium. These mechanisms could include the roles, rules, and rituals that develop in each family.

Beckvar and Beckvar (1982) stated that:

the systems perspective would have us see each member of a family in relation to other family members as each affects and is affected by other persons. According to systems theory, it makes no sense to analyze any person independently. To understand each person in a family, one must study how each is in relation to every other family member. (6)

The systems theory has been used by many researchers to gain understanding of families in crisis. (Umana, Gross, and McConville, 1980) Researchers in the field of alcoholism studies have used this approach in order to gain an understanding of the family systems of active alcoholics and to explore what changes in the system are necessary for recovery to occur.

Haley (1976) discovered that, in healthy families, the relationships were mutually satisfying and need-fulfilling, but in families with problems there were shifting alliances and confused patterns of communication. He concluded that if change were to occur in these communication patterns and alliances, there would be change in the overall functioning of the family and the symptoms of the problematic member would be reduced.

In focusing on married couples where one spouse was alcoholic, Ballard (1959) found that "both partners may be gaining a secret gratification and reassurance from the drinking behavior" (541) and that if change did not occur in the marriage, such as the cessation of drinking on the part of the alcoholic spouse, the couple would have "farther to go if they are to achieve a conventionally normal relationship." (544)

Bowen (1974) first used the systems model in relation to the family in his work with schizophrenics, but later applied it to the families of alcoholics. He found that some families deal with the difficulties of day-to-day living by having one spouse become the dominant one and the other the adaptive, compliant one who might eventually lose his or her sense of self if the pattern were to continue long enough. He believed that the spouse in the adaptive role was vulnerable and could develop some type of chronic dysfunction such as physical illness, emotional illness, alcoholism, drug abuse or

irresponsible behavior. He also noted that the tendency to take on such roles or to develop certain patterns of emotional attachment and interaction in the marriage might have stemmed from the fact that they had occupied similar positions in their family of origin.

Steinglass, Weiner, and Mendelson (1971) used the systems approach with regard to the families of alcoholics in their study. They applied this model in several family treatment situations. The basic idea which was implicit to the application of the systems model in this context was that the family members were components of the family system who had learned to function as a unit which has come to contain an alcoholic member. More recently, Steinglass, Bennett, Wolin, and Reiss (1987) proposed the thesis:

that for many families, alcoholism is a condition that has the capacity to become a central organizing principle around which family life is structured. When this occurs, alcoholism becomes an inseparable component of family life - the family becomes an 'alcoholic family'. (9)

When the alcoholism of one of its members has emerged, the family would then progress through several stages, as noted by Jackson (1954): 1) denial, 2) attempts to eliminate the problem, 3) disorganization and chaos, 4) reorganization in spite of the problem, 5) efforts to escape (includes physical and/or emotional separation, or perhaps treatment), 6) family reorganization (either without the alcoholic, or with the alcoholic in recovery).

In the fourth stage, where reorganization has occurred in spite of the problem, the family has reestablished a sense of equilibrium or homeostasis (which refers to balancing behavior in families) in spite of the continued drinking of the alcoholic member. They have learned to live around the alcoholic, since each member has taken on roles that have allowed the family to function even though one of its members has been an active alcoholic. Berlin, Davis, and Orenstein (1988) explained that the alcoholic family could be viewed as a closed system which developed as family members attempted to cope with the alcoholic's behavior and adjusted their own behavior accordingly. This closed system was characterized by despair, isolation, self-blame, and denial, and it would be extremely difficult to extricate oneself from it due to the interdependent nature of the family members' behavior.

Once the alcoholic has made an attempt to remain sober, thus eliminating her previous problematic or "sick" role of active alcoholic, the system would be disrupted and would then necessarily undergo some kind of reorganization once again. The recovering alcoholic could, in this sense, be considered as potentially disruptive to the family system as the initial onset of her alcoholism had been. If the alcoholic has maintained sobriety for an extended period of time and the family has remained intact, new behavioral adaptations would be required of family members.

Wegscheider (1981) discussed the theory of family homeostasis with regard to the families of alcoholics and drug abusers. She pointed out that by attempting to maintain balance in the family, members must "compulsively repress their feelings and develop survival behaviors and walls of defense to protect them from pain." (37) They would not be very likely to give up these adaptive mechanisms so easily. Ward and Faillace (1970) also discovered that the members of an alcoholic's family have tended to seek to avoid any actions that would require behavioral changes throughout the family system. Ewing and Fox (1968) pointed out that family homeostasis must be changed if the alcoholic is to recover. They mentioned that each spouse's behavior has been rigidly controlled by the other. If one spouse were to attempt to alter his or her typical role behavior, it would provoke efforts by the other spouse to maintain the status quo. Thus the spouse of an alcoholic might sincerely wish that the alcoholic would stop drinking, but at the same time would feel threatened by the loss of a critical role relationship.

Each person seems to feel secure only if he can force or manipulate the other into satisfying his own needs. Once this lever of manipulation is lost, other means of control must be sought. In short, equilibrium is disturbed and another basis of homeostasis must be sought. (Ewing and Fox, 1968: 88)

In order for the sobriety to be incorporated into a new homeostasis, changes must occur in the marital relationship, which would therefore lead to change in other dimensions of

the family. This would restore the balanced functioning of the entire family unit. Obviously, recovery would be less difficult if changes were to occur in other family members simultaneously. According to Steiner (1967), treatment of a married alcoholic would require bringing about change in two or more persons.

Jacob, et al. (1978) reviewed the literature regarding the personality characteristics of the spouses of alcoholics, the psychosocial status of the children of alcoholics, and family interactions in general when one of its members has become an alcoholic. They concluded that the research has indicated that limited concepts and strategies have been used to analyze the relationship between alcoholism and family interaction. They suggested that systems theory, concepts from family sociology, and social psychological dimensions would help broaden the framework of research on the family and alcoholism.

In addition to the family system itself, several subsystems in each family must also have been taken into consideration. Erikson and Perkins (1989) discussed the importance of observing the interactional patterns that have existed within the context of spousal, parental, and sibling subsystems in an alcoholic family. They believed that it would be essential to explore these patterns of interaction that have occurred in the subsystems in order to gain a clear understanding of the nature of the alcoholic family structure

itself. With this in mind, it would be useful to explore the patterns of interaction that were involved in the formulation, perpetuation, and alteration of certain dimensions of the family, such as its roles, rules, and rituals in order to discover what has happened in the family when its equilibrium has been disturbed due to the attempted recovery of its alcoholic member.

Family Roles

An important dimension of the family system that many researchers have taken into consideration has involved the family members' roles. Roles could be defined as behavioral expectations involving rights and obligations which have been assigned by society or groups to positions that individuals occupy. (Robin, 1974) Role theory could be useful to facilitate an understanding of the existence of family roles. According to Nock (1992):

One of the principles of role theory states that we learn our roles only in relation to their complements. This means that all family roles are intricately bound together - each person depending upon all others to define his or her unique position in the family. Another principle states that we expect all others to perform their roles, since should they not, this would alter our own position. (16)

According to Roman and Raley, (1980) all families consist of formal roles and informal roles. Formal roles are those that have been affected by the individual's age, sex, and the structure of the family. These include roles such as

provider, homemaker, parent, dependent child, etc. Informal roles are those that have served to regulate tension and help to maintain equilibrium in the family. "Examples of informal roles are mediator, manipulator, jester, saint, scapegoat, leader, crybaby, and follower" (36) to name a few. Roman and Raley also stated that "both formal and informal roles change as the family changes and grows... [Families] will have to make accommodations and...systems will have to change to deal with the loss and addition of these...roles." (41-42)

The role that the active alcoholic gradually took on in her family has generally been referred to as the "problematic role" which, according to Paolino and McCrady (1977), has involved behavior that has been unpredictable and often socially unacceptable. As a result, this family member would not be able to function capably and therefore could also be viewed as occupying the "sick role". Parsons (1951) was the first to propose this concept of the "sick role" and pointed out that those who assumed this role were exempt from normal social responsibilities, were not expected to get well solely by an act of will, had the obligation to desire to get well since illness is an undesirable state, and had the obligation to seek competent help in getting well and to cooperate in the process of recovery. Parsons and Fox (1952) later pointed out that for many families, having one of its members in the "sick role" could be a desirable solution to dealing with societal or family pressures. Bursten and D'Esopo (1965) indicated

that in the case of psychiatric illness, the family might have achieved a stable equilibrium around one member's "sick role" where family members' needs were being gratified in some way by sickness. Alcoholism has been officially recognized as a disease by the American Medical Association since 1956, and the disease model has been the basis of a multitude of alcoholism treatment programs (Dean and Poremba, 1983) as well as Alcoholics Anonymous. (Grove, 1984) Roman and Trice (1968) pointed out that, when medical authorities classify an alcoholic as having a disease, they are, in fact placing him or her in a "sick role". The authors expressed concern that, by doing this, they might actually be legitimizing and perpetuating the alcoholic's continuation in that "sick role". Indeed, according to Becker's (1963) labelling theory of deviance, by providing him or her with a label, this would lead to secondary deviance which would entail an alteration in the self-concept of the individual as well as in the social definition that has been imposed on him or her by significant others. According to Dean and Poremba (1983), while many practitioners in the field of alcoholism treatment have viewed the acceptance of the label "alcoholic" by the client as essential to recovery, their study demonstrated that the label has remained highly stigmatized in spite of the prevailing disease concept that was expected to destigmatize alcoholism. Grove (1984), however, pointed to the positive effects of assuming the label "alcoholic", particularly in the group

setting of Alcoholics Anonymous. The individuals in this subgroup have not shared the larger society's stigmatization of this label and instead have upheld the disease model. Indeed, admitting that one is an alcoholic has been viewed as the first step to recovery in A. A. Membership in A. A. has actually involved an intensive resocialization process whereby:

A.A. members teach and support each other in the development of a new sense of self-pride, one founded on a recognition of their alcoholism, and their personal achievement of recovery. (Denzin, 1987: 9)

Thus, when an individual has incorporated the label "alcoholic" into his or her self-image, this could, in certain settings, actually facilitate recovery rather than impede it, therefore actually serving as the impetus for movement out of the "sick role". In this sense, the sociological interpretation of the labelling perspective could actually be considered to be at odds with the disease model of alcoholism that is used by A. A. (Ward, 1985)

Since family members have had to adjust to the alcoholic assuming the "sick role", it would logically follow that if the alcoholic were to attempt to shed her "problematic role" or "sick role" by seeking sobriety, other roles in the family would have to be changed in order to adjust to the new situation. This would not be an easy process, however, since family members had developed their roles in an attempt to survive in spite of alcoholism in the family, and have thus

been likely to cling to them. Lawson, Peterson, and Lawson (1983) indicated that "as a crisis develops in the family system or anxiety about drinking becomes high, each member clings to his or her respective role tightly to brave the storm." (103) Wegscheider (1981a) pointed out that, in effect, family members have actually become addicted to their roles since they have come to view them as essential to their survival.

Rothberg (1986) believed that the dynamics involved in the roles played in the marital subsystem have demonstrated that both spouses have contributed to the alcohol problem and both have been affected by it. Consequently, recovery would involve not only changes in role behavior, but would also require an understanding on the part of both spouses regarding their role changes.

Whalen (1953) discussed four basic roles that have often been taken on by the spouses of alcoholics. These included the sufferer, the controller, the waverer, and the punisher. One of the problems with Whalen's research was that all the spouses who were interviewed for his study were wives of alcoholics, so there really has been no way of knowing whether husbands would be likely to take on similar roles if their wives were alcoholics. Although studies have found that, in fact, men have been much more likely to abandon their alcoholic spouses than women have been (Estes and Baker, 1977), those husbands that have remained in the marriage have

tended to take on such roles as the long-suffering martyr, the punisher, and the dependent husband. (Fox, 1956)

Nardi (1981) used concepts of role theory in his research on families of alcoholics. His findings indicated that, due to the fact that the alcoholic parent has assumed inappropriate roles, this has often necessitated that the children take on roles that involve a tremendous amount of responsibility. He also pointed out that using this perspective in studying children of alcoholics has allowed for a clear analysis of the dynamics of growing up in an alcoholic home.

Mapes Johnson, and Sandler (1984) pointed out that the types of roles taken on by an alcoholic's family members can include the enabler, the scapegoat, the compensator, the surrogate adult, the orphan, and the opportunist. Several other typologies concerning the types of informal roles that could develop in alcoholic families have emerged in recent research. Wegscheider (1981b) indicated that common roles which could be assumed in families of alcoholics have been the dependent, the chief enabler, the family hero, the scapegoat, the lost child, and the mascot. Black (1979) focused on the role behaviors that children of alcoholics have tended to assume. These included the responsible ones (often the oldest children), the adjusters, the placaters, and the acting out child. Rhodes and Blackham (1987) investigated whether adolescents from alcoholic families viewed themselves in terms

of the four roles discussed by Black. Their findings verified Black's theory that rigid role behaviors have been common in families of alcoholics. Apparently, it was not only the nature of the roles that have been taken on in an alcoholic family that was important, but also how rigidly these roles have been performed.

Booz-Allen and Hamilton (1974) have identified several coping mechanisms that have been components of the role behaviors of children of alcoholics, including flight, fight, being the perfect child, and being the supercoper. Lawson et al. (1983) indicated that the role behaviors that have evolved in alcoholic families are not necessarily separate and distinct categories but could actually overlap. Children have been known to even switch to different roles at different times. They also noted similarities between all of the above-mentioned typologies. They saw a correlation between the family hero, the responsible one, and the supercoper; between the lost child, the adjuster, and those who choose flight as a coping mechanism; between the mascot, the placater, and the perfect child; and lastly they noted that the fight coping mechanism is the one most frequently employed by the family scapegoat or the acting out child.

When looking at family roles during the recovery process, systems theory would dictate that some sort of role change would be necessary in order for the recovery to be successful. It should also be noted that there should be agreement and

acceptance among family members regarding the changes that their roles undergo. Otherwise, as Ablon (1976) noted, conflict would occur if discrepancies were to exist among family members concerning what their roles should be. This might, indeed, occur in early recovery, but if recovery were to be successful, these discrepancies would ultimately have to be worked out.

Family Rules

Another important dimension that has been explored in the literature on alcoholic families has involved family rules. Rules in the family, according to Roman and Raley, (1980) outline "what has to be done, how it will be done, when and where it will be done. And these rules are enacted through a family's roles." (23) According to Paolino and McCrady, (1977) families could be viewed as rule-governed systems which have developed their sets of rules based on the needs of the system. These rules have not generally been discussed or deliberately decided upon. Some of the rules could be classified as overt in that they have been specifically recognized and understood by all family members, while others would be categorized as covert, in that they have not consciously been recognized but they have, nevertheless, been operational in the family.

Lawson et al. (1983) noted that families have rules concerning the expression of feelings such as love, hurt, or

anger, including who has been allowed to express them, how they could be expressed, and how they could be reacted to. Barnard (1981) mentioned several areas where family rules have been formulated including what, when, and how family members might comment on what they see, feel, and think; who could speak to whom about what; how members would be allowed to be different; how sexuality might be expressed; what it has meant to be male and female in the family; and how family members could acquire self-worth and how much would be appropriate to possess.

Roman and Raley (1980) believed that a family's rules could be revealed in the way they have treated outsiders, the way families have communicated with each other both verbally and non-verbally, and the way they have delineated boundaries between family members, especially between generations. They stated that rules have formed the basis for the family system's regulation of how power, dependency, love, autonomy, and separation should be expressed in the family. They also believed that "some rules may prevent a family from functioning as well as it can." (33) This has generally been the case in families of alcoholics.

Wegscheider (1981a) believed that the rules that have governed alcoholic families have tended to be unhealthy, in that they have been inhuman and rigid. She stated that the general rules of families with an active alcoholic member have been based on the following:

1. The dependent's use of alcohol is the most important thing in the family's life
2. Alcohol is not the cause of the family's problem
3. Someone or something else caused the alcoholic's dependency
4. The status quo must be maintained at all cost
5. Everyone in the family must be an enabler
6. No one may discuss what is really going on in the family, either with one another or with outsiders
7. No one may say what he is really feeling.

Subby (1987) also discussed rules that would be likely to exist in an alcoholic family. These included rules that would stipulate that family members can not talk about problems, express their feelings openly, or address issues or relationships directly; they must always be strong, good, and perfect; they must not be selfish; the children must do as their parents say not as they do; it is not okay to play; and family members should not rock the boat. The rules that are prevalent in alcoholic families have been summarized quite simply as involving the directives: don't talk, don't trust, and don't feel. (Fisher, 1989)

The "don't talk" rule has generally involved the keeping of family secrets. Avery (1982) posited that such secrets have actually served to hold the family together because they

have generated feelings of loyalty that actually have served to counteract the destructive power of the secret, thereby supporting equilibrium in the family. One such family secret in the alcoholic family has involved the alcoholism itself.

Brown (1988) pointed out that:

The alcoholism becomes a major family secret, most often denied inside the family and certainly denied outside. This secret becomes a governing principle around which the family organizes - its adaptations, coping strategies, and the shared beliefs that maintain the structure and hold the family members together. (27)

If family rules have served the purpose of reinforcing equilibrium in an actively alcoholic family, this could raise a question about what would happen to these rules once sobriety has been attempted. Obviously certain strategies went in to setting up and enforcing these rules, so change in them would most certainly not be instantaneous. According to Kantor and Lehr (1975), the family is viewed as a system in which family strategies are very important. They have defined these strategies as being recurring purposive patterns of interactional sequences which have moved toward a target or goal which has been agreed upon by two or more people who are systematically bound together in a social-biological arrangement. Strategies which have been viewed as competitive or conflict-ridden could also have been collaborative since each member has agreed to play his or her part according to the rules. Even if a member has refused to play the part assigned to him or her, or if he or she has opposed the

patterns involved in the strategy, this opposition or refusal to participate could still be viewed as collaborative if his or her actions have failed to alter the strategic patterns. Only when refusal or opposition has successfully modified or changed the basic strategy would the previous collaborative strategy cease and the result would be a new set of rules to support the new strategy. In the context of the alcoholic family, then, once a person has begun to recover, a new collaborative strategy must be initiated if sobriety were to be maintained.

Kantor and Lehr (1975) also pointed out that scapegoats and victims have shared a systematic responsibility for their positions, which have been part of the overall strategic pattern that has upheld the family system. The authors mentioned the need for an observer of family strategies to isolate enabling and disabling strategies.

In families of alcoholics, some of the most obvious rules have involved such enabling strategies. Family members have been referred to as enablers because they have been doing all the "wrong" things for all the "right" reasons, that is, they have been trying to "help" the alcoholic because of their love for her, but everything they have done has actually enabled her to continue as an active alcoholic. (Jackson, 1954) This might have included shielding her from the consequences of her actions by covering up for her and protecting her, or they might have reacted extremely negatively to her by belittling

her, attacking her, or by heaping guilt upon her in an attempt to get her to stop drinking, but in so doing they would actually be providing her with more "excuses" to drink. Some of the enabling strategies have even been practiced by families after the alcoholic has attempted to recover. Steiner (1967) found that right after the onset of sobriety, the family has been likely to experience a "honeymoon" period followed by a period in which the family members have seemed not only to expect the alcoholic to resume drinking, but actually have appeared to wish that this were the case. Sobriety could be seen as a threat to the existing role differentiation and distribution of power within the family, so the family often has sought to maintain rules that have allowed them to continue functioning in a way that has made it extremely difficult for the alcoholic to recover. If a family's recovery has ultimately been successful, therefore, there would eventually have to be some alteration in these rules.

Family Rituals

The rituals that are a part of family life would also be an important dimension to explore. Rituals have been defined by Bossard and Boll (1950) as patterns of prescribed formal behavior that have been associated with certain occasions whereby few deviations are allowed. They are prescribed, exact, and precise, and generally involve the ceremonial use

of leisure time. They include patterns of behavior surrounding holidays, mealtimes, family outings, vacations, weekends, having visitors, etc. Some rituals stimulate or are the result of healthy family interaction, while others stem from unhealthy interaction and, in turn, may create antagonism and estrangement. Rituals can be viewed as symptoms of certain subjective aspects of family life, including attitudes, values, goals, and ambitions. Bossard and Boll (1950) also pointed out that rituals could stimulate family relations, reveal family roles and statuses, set family techniques, facilitate household functioning, and present opportunities for satisfaction in family display and pride.

In an alcoholic family, the excessive drinking of one of its members could be seen as potentially disruptive to its rituals. Steinglass et al. (1987) explored this issue in their research and discovered the following:

Alcoholism can easily disrupt the carrying out of family rituals. Holiday times, vacations, and similar times are susceptible to being undermined by the intrusion of the alcoholic behavior or the need to accommodate an alcoholic member. Hence, the family often has to work at preserving its rituals in order to not have them disrupted or taken over by alcoholism issues. (66)

These authors also pointed out that the family could deal with the alcoholism by either working hard to keep the drinking relatively isolated from the family's rituals or by incorporating the drinking into the rituals and adapting to it. In some extreme cases, the excessive drinking of the alcoholic family member might actually disrupt or even destroy

the family ritual. In general, the state of family rituals has been:

...a powerful transmitter of a message to all family members about the status alcoholism plays in their lives. And because of ritual's powerful role as a conservator of family values and rules, this message about alcoholism is reinforced every time the ritual is reenacted. (Steinglass et al., 1987: 233)

Wolin, Bennett, and Noonan (1979) and Wolin, Bennett, Noonan, and Teitelbaum (1980) conducted two studies concerning family rituals and the recurrence of alcoholism over generations. The second study (1980) involved an attempt to further clarify the results of the first one (1979) with regard to the original family environment, the family's ritual behaviors, and the attempts of the subsequent generation to develop a new stable family environment. They focused on rituals concerning dinnertime, holidays, evenings, weekends, vacations, having visitors in the home, and discipline. They found that when rituals were altered and abandoned during heaviest parental drinking, alcoholism was more likely to occur in the next generation than in those families where rituals remained relatively stable.

It must be recognized that rituals in families have become patterned, but they could also be subject to change over time. Roberts (1988) pointed out that while rituals could act as a means of maintaining a family's social structure, they could also serve to support transitions that have occurred in the family. Satir (1972) noted that even

though rituals could reflect what is significant in a family, they have not been "written in blood" and could be changed when necessary. Wolin and Bennett (1984) suggested that a family's need for rituals could vary over time at different developmental stages. Bossard and Boll (1950) stated that change should have occurred over time if the family was maturing normally. Obviously, this would also be true if the family were to experience recovery. They would then have to learn to function in a healthy way in order to accommodate a successfully recovering alcoholic, although Steinglass et al. (1987) pointed out that the rituals in a recovering alcoholic's family would vary depending on whether the family's alcoholic identity has remained intact or if it has been transformed to a non-alcoholic identity. The difference between these two situations would depend on whether or not the family has given up on focusing on alcohol and alcohol-related issues. A family that has maintained an alcoholic family identity "continues to organize its life around alcohol even though its alcoholic member is no longer actively drinking" (275), while in a family that has not maintained this identity, "alcohol has been eliminated not only in a physical sense, but also as an emotional issue in the family's life." (285) Since the authors viewed family rituals as being reflective of the family's underlying identity issues, it would be assumed that the way the rituals would have changed

after recovery would be greatly influenced by whether the family has assumed an alcoholic or non-alcoholic identity.

Female Alcoholics

In focusing on women alcoholics, it should also be noted that recovery has often involved a change with regard to her gender role. Interestingly, Farid, Elsherbini, Ogden, Lucas, and Williams (1989) discovered that the severity of a woman's alcoholism was strongly related to her dissatisfaction with the housewife role. In addition, Fellios (1989) pointed to the fact that women today have experienced a great deal of stress because of the contradiction between the expectations of traditional gender roles assigned by society that involve deriving fulfillment through their relationships with men and the more recent societal expectation that women should "develop as independent persons with strong identities." (17) Blume (1982) concurred with this view when she pointed out that the increased stress experienced by women today due to factors such as family responsibilities, sex discrimination, and gender role conflict could certainly make them more vulnerable than ever before to developing a drinking problem.

According to Sandmaier (1979), recovery from alcoholism would be likely to involve the elimination of the passive, dependent, subordinate role, and since this has been the role that women have traditionally been socialized into playing as adults, they would not only have to overcome their drinking,

but they would have to modify their gender role socialization as well. Even though excessive drinking has traditionally been viewed as unfeminine behavior, so too have been the attributes needed for recovery. These have included being independent, self-assured, assertive, and capable. As a result, women have been placed in an ambiguous situation. Their families have wanted them to stop drinking, but often they have also wanted them to remain in a passive, dependent role at the same time. In continuing in this assigned role, woman alcoholics have been collaborating with the previous family strategy by adhering to the old rules. The family system would therefore avoid disruption, but the women would have difficulty remaining sober for very long. However, if they had modified their family roles, ceased playing by some of the family's rules, and altered some of the family's rituals in an effort to accommodate their recovery, this would be perceived by family members as being disruptive to the status quo and might therefore have been initially met with some resistance.

Kinter (1975) specifically discussed the problem of recovery for women alcoholics by mentioning the fact that change in the ongoing patterns of interaction that reinforced the drinking behavior could be very difficult because it could be equally painful for both spouses. This indicated that while changes would be necessary in the family of the woman

alcoholic if she were to recover, these changes would not be easy to implement.

It might be assumed, then, that women have found it somewhat more difficult to maintain sobriety than men have. This assumption has been supported by Pemberton (1967) who compared the outcome of treatment of male and female alcoholics. His findings were that successful patients included only twenty percent of the women, and thirty-six percent of the men. Regarding the small percentage of women who were successfully recovering, Pemberton noted that "it was quite striking that all had succeeded in modifying the structure of their familial group and had established for themselves a personally satisfying role within it." (367) More recently, however, Litman (1986) noted that well-established data have not been generated to either support or refute the notion that there have been differences in the outcomes of treatment for male and female alcoholics. In spite of this, however, women alcoholics apparently have had to deal with issues in their recovery that, in some cases, have been different from the issues that have faced recovering men alcoholics.

One of the problems that women alcoholics have confronted has been the fact that a greater stigma has been placed on them than has been the case for men. As a result, there has been, as Lester (1982) pointed out, a greater tendency for women, with the collaboration of their family members, to

conceal their alcoholism. Those who did finally seek treatment were likely to do so as the result of severe depression or some sort of family crisis.

There has been a dearth of research regarding women in recovery. One study that was conducted by Hunt and Seeman (1990) found that recovering women experienced a clearer definition of self, greater self-other differentiation, a reassessment of their previous relationships, and the establishment of new relationships. Underhill (1986) discussed the necessity of empowerment and the development of a positive self-image for recovering women. Herr and Pettinati (1984) found that a change in occupation following treatment was associated with successful recovery for a small subgroup of both working and homemaking alcoholic women. In addition, Fellios (1989) pointed out that, when an alcoholic woman has begun to recover, this would be likely to lead to a dramatic role shift in her family that would have a profound effect on other family members.

Chapter III

METHOD OF STUDY

Obviously it has not been feasible to observe several families over many years of active alcoholism in the hope that the alcoholic would finally successfully recover. Instead, it was necessary to interview families of women who have been successfully recovering for several years and ask them to report on family life during the active alcoholism as well as what it has been like more recently. With this method, however, actual change in roles, rules, and rituals could not be monitored by the researcher firsthand as they happened. Instead, the subjects' recollections and impressions of family life had to be relied on. In this situation, the individual's perception and interpretation of experience, both during the active alcoholism and since recovery, has been very important. This study sought to focus on the family's sense of who they were during the active alcoholism and who they have become since recovery, rather than on an objective reality of what actually occurred.

Basic Research Design

This study was designed to provide an in-depth analysis of families of recovering female alcoholics, particularly with regard to what the family members' perceptions of their roles, rules, and rituals were, and whether variations could be

detected in these areas between the active alcoholism stage and their present situation in recovery. Therefore, the method was exploratory and qualitative.

Qualitative research refers to "any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification." (Strauss and Corbin, 17) The subject matter of this study lent itself to a qualitative approach because, while there has been a general awareness of the fact that families necessarily have undergone changes when one of its members has recovered from alcoholism, there still has been very little known about the exact nature of these complex changes. As Miles and Huberman (1984) pointed out:

Qualitative data are attractive. They are a source of well-grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of processes occurring in local contexts. With qualitative data one can preserve chronic flow, assess local causality, and derive fruitful explanations. Then, too, qualitative data are more likely to lead to serendipitous findings and to new theoretical integrations; they help researchers go beyond initial perceptions and frameworks. (15)

Indeed, while the present study has used the systems theory model as its starting point and has even brought in other theoretical frameworks such as role theory and labeling theory, using the qualitative approach in the study of four recovering families has helped to uncover a wealth of valuable information about the internal life of these families which could provide new understanding about the process of recovering from alcoholism. The appropriateness of using

qualitative methodology to research a subject such as this has been supported by Strauss and Corbin (1990) who stated that "some areas of study naturally lend themselves more to qualitative types of research, for instance, research that attempts to uncover the nature of persons' experiences with a phenomenon, like illness...or addiction." (19)

In order to gain a deeper understanding of what a recovering family experiences, it has been necessary to learn as much as possible about that family both before and after recovery, even down to the most minute and seemingly insignificant detail of family life. The qualitative approach seemed well-suited to achieving this. As Filstead (1971) wrote:

...sociologists have to devise a methodology that will enable them to take into account the inner perspective as well as the outer perspective of the subjects under investigation. This is what qualitative methodology does. (6)

The information obtained from this method could provide the building blocks of a specific, in-depth, grounded theory regarding the recovery process that has been experienced by a woman alcoholic and her family. Grounded theory has been described by Strauss and Corbin (1990) as:

...one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. That is, it is discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon... The purpose of grounded theory method is, of course, to build theory that is faithful to and illuminates the area under study. (24)

The case study method was especially suited to contributing to such theory building. A case study could be defined as "an in-depth, multifaceted investigation, using qualitative research methods of a single social phenomenon." (Feagin, Orum, and Sjoberg, 1991: 2) According to Yin (1984), this method can provide the basis of theoretical generalization, which involves allowing for innovative ways of looking at previous interpretations and concepts, as well as the possibility of suggesting new ones. Feagin et al. (1991) pointed to the ability of the case study method to identify "the complex web of social interaction" (9) that has existed, and to explore the subjects' own understanding of the action that has been taking place. In addition, "the case study can enable a researcher to examine the ebb and flow of social life over time and to display the patterns of everyday life as they change." (12)

These particular capabilities of the case study have made it an especially appropriate method to use in ascertaining the complexities that exist in families' lives and relationships, as well as the changes that occur in these areas over time. Indeed, Handel (1991) pointed out that "the case study that aims at comprehensiveness is the best method, if not the only method, for trying to understand the breadth of meaning that any family generates." (255) Since Hess and Handel (1959) emphasized the importance of obtaining data from each family member in order to fully understand what the family's life was

like, pertinent comprehensive information could therefore be obtained by extensively interviewing as many family members as possible. By collecting a wealth of such information via the case study method, the present study has been able to provide new conceptualizations and interpretations regarding the experiences of alcoholic families with the recovery process.

In-depth, face-to face interviews that involved open-ended questions were especially useful in collecting the type of data needed for this study. Lofland (1971) pointed out that the object of this type of interviewing "...is to carry on a guided conversation and to elicit rich, detailed materials that can be used in qualitative analysis." (76) According to Williamson, Karp, Dalpin, and Gray (1982), intensive interviews could be useful in probing into sensitive areas whereby the interviewer could cultivate a give and take rapport that would increase the likelihood of frank revelations. This was an appropriate method, therefore, when attempting to collect data about a sensitive topic such as alcoholism.

The open-ended questions were used to introduce a variety of general areas that provided respondents with the opportunity to give an account of what things were like in their families with regard to roles, rules, and rituals during the active drinking phase before recovery was attempted, and what they have been like recently. Many of the questions were designed to be memory triggers which would elicit information

both directly related to the question and tangential to it. Respondents were encouraged to free-associate and talk as long as they wished on a particular subject without interruption.

More specifically, the questions inquired about background information on family members; their activities (occupations, interests, hobbies, etc.); problems or difficulties (physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual); coping mechanisms; expectations of self, family, work, and social life; family relationships and interactions; and outside relationships with friends, relatives, and neighbors. Other areas that were asked about included: roles (division of labor, responsibilities, chores, obligations); rules (regarding behavior, getting together, what to talk about, what not to talk about, covering up the alcoholism, arguing, telling secrets, expressing feelings and affection, giving praise, criticism, support, and attention, privacy, decision-making, dealing with illness, and drinking); rituals (holidays, socializing and entertaining, weekends, weekdays, family dinners, religious practices, and weddings); and finally, looking ahead to the future. Interviews were conducted separately with each member of the family, and each interview generally lasted anywhere from an hour and a half to five and a half hours, either in one sitting or over several sessions, depending on what was feasible and convenient. All family members were asked the same basic questions in order to provide a basis of comparison with other family members. (See

Appendix A, p. 386.) In addition, a general interview concerning basic background information about the family was conducted with the married couple together in order to provide an opportunity to observe their interaction in a more formal situation. These interviews generally lasted about an hour. (See Appendix B, p. 392.) Bennett and McAvity (1985) discussed the advantages of interviewing married couples jointly when they pointed out that "the couple interview generates expanded information. Such expansion, in turn, may lead to the validation of agreement between husband and wife, or result in the clarification of differences." (82)

All interviews were conducted by one researcher in order to ensure consistency. Interviews were recorded on tape and brief notes were taken as well regarding any pertinent observations. Respondents were guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity. To achieve this, the names of all the participants were changed, and places of residence and work were not disclosed at all. This was necessary because the nature of qualitative research generally has involved direct quotations and lengthy descriptions of the subjects, which has meant that respondents could not be guaranteed confidentiality on the basis of the use of statistical summaries as has been the case for quantitative investigations. (La Rossa, Bennett, and Gelles, 1985)

Tapes were transcribed verbatim, and yielded over one thousand pages of data which were then analyzed qualitatively

in order to explore what the roles, rules, and rituals were like in these families, both before and after recovery. While the formal roles, overt rules, and rituals in the four families were explicitly described by the subjects in their interviews, the informal roles and covert rules were not as easily identifiable.

Informal roles, which were those that regulated tension and helped to maintain equilibrium in the family, were determined by examining all of the descriptive words or phrases (descriptors) that were used regarding each family member both before and after recovery, including those that the individual used in reference to him/herself, in order to get a sense of how this person has been perceived by the entire family. Indeed, Hess and Handel (1959) pointed out that "...in studying a family...it is necessary to investigate both the images which the members hold of one another and the ways in which these images are interrelated." (7). Obviously, by focusing on these descriptors, a great deal could be learned, not only about which informal roles developed and changed in the recovering families, but also regarding these roles' interrelatedness with each other.

Similarly, since covert rules could be defined as those that have not been specifically outlined or spelled out, even though they have been operational in the family, it was necessary to determine what these rules were in each family from indirect references that were made in the interviews.

Covert rules were recognized as existing when subjects described what certain things were like in the family or how members generally behaved in given situations even though there were no obvious overt rules that dictated that this be the case. Covert rules were identified as including the following: those that upheld the informal roles in the family, those that were influenced by external expectations that were placed on the family, those that governed what to talk about and to whom, those that directed how family members should interact with each other (i.e. affection, arguing, praise, and criticism), those that governed interaction with families of origin, and those that involved coping with the alcoholism.

The Sample

The sample that was studied was a purposive sample and included four nuclear families containing an alcoholic wife/mother who has attempted to recover from this disease by seeking some sort of outside help such as residential or outpatient treatment, individual counseling, Alcoholics Anonymous, or Women for Sobriety. This indicated that she had acknowledged that she was an alcoholic and had attempted to do something about it. The sample included only families where the marriage was still intact with both spouses living together in the same household at the time of the interview.

The length of recovery for the wife/mother in the family was a minimum of four years. This seemed to be a sufficient

length of time in order to consider the family as being in recovery, since the findings of Cronkite, Finney, Nekich, and Moos, (1990) have indicated that "if an alcoholic patient achieves remission for two years, the functioning levels of his or her spouse and children generally return to normal." (327)

Since a family's race, ethnicity, and social class may have had some effect on its roles, rules, and rituals, the sample was limited to middle and upper-middle class white American-born families. These families were volunteers who were contacted either through counselors that specialized in treating alcoholics and their families, or through members of Alcoholics Anonymous and Women for Sobriety groups. These families were asked whether they would be interested in participating in a study about the families of recovering female alcoholics. Those families that consented were then put in touch with the researcher. Since the study only included families in which the husband, wife, and when applicable, available children who have recollections of family life both before and after sobriety all agreed to participate, the sample could also be referred to as a convenience sample.

An area of concern with regard to the researching of alcoholic families, according to Leonard (1990), has been the fact that most families that participated in such studies have been obtained from clinical settings. A bias could result

here since the "marital and family processes of alcoholic families who present for treatment would be quite different from the processes of families who do not present for treatment." (276) In the present study, however, not all of the families that were interviewed have had experience with treatment. In two of the cases, the entire family had participated in intensive, inpatient treatment, in one case the alcoholic wife had been in treatment for alcoholism but her husband received no treatment or counseling at all, and in the other family the alcoholic woman had no clinical experience with treatment but participated in self-help groups, while no one else in her family had received any counseling or treatment. It was assumed that these variations in the treatment experiences of the subjects would help to alleviate the sort of bias that Leonard (1990) was concerned with.

Research Controls

The controls for this research included the small size of the sample, its non-random nature, and the fact that only intact families were studied. The small size of the sample was necessary in order to conduct the in-depth, extensive research that was needed to obtain information that would provide a comprehensive picture of family life. The non-random selection of these families was dictated by the extremely personal nature of the subject matter. In addition,

the focus on intact families was deliberate, since by remaining together in spite of the problem of alcoholism, it would appear that "alcoholism has more or less been accepted into the family" (Leonard, 1990: 276) which meant that the family had adapted to that reality. Similarly, by remaining intact after recovery as well, the family could be viewed as accepting recovery into the family and, in so doing, adapting itself to the changes that have resulted. It should also be noted that the data which were generated via this method of research have provided a wealth of information about the complexity of the changes that must necessarily occur in a family when one of its members has recovered from alcoholism, even though there may be some variation as to what the specific changes have been.

Chapter IV

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF EACH FAMILY BEFORE AND AFTER RECOVERY

Four families were interviewed extensively for this study. (See Appendix C, p. 394 for a roster of members of each family.) While they all had in common a wife/mother who was a recovering alcoholic, there were some noticeable differences among these families as well. The most obvious differences among these families stemmed from each family's stage in the life cycle. The Higgins family contained a married couple with no children. The Ehrlich family consisted of parents and two young children under the age of ten. The Neilsens were a large family with parents and five children who were in their late teens and early twenties. Three of them were still living at home, one was away at college, and the other was renting an apartment in a building that his parents owned. The Dolan family was even larger, with six children who were all adults between the ages of twenty-seven and forty-two and living on their own. Mr. Dolan had recently retired at the time of the interviews.

Another important difference concerned the recovering women alcoholics themselves. Two of them, Lorraine Higgins and Barbara Ehrlich, began their recoveries in their early thirties, which was relatively early in the progression of the disease, while Joan Neilsen and Rita Dolan did not begin to recover until middle age when they were in the later stages

of alcoholism. In addition, Lorraine Higgins differed from the other three women because she has been recovering from a bipolar affective disorder as well as from alcoholism.

In this chapter, brief general descriptions of each of the four families have been provided, including descriptions of the family members, what the progression of the disease was like, what precipitated the recovery, and what family life has been like since the alcoholic stopped drinking.

The Higgins Family

The Higgins family consisted of Lorraine, a secretary, age 35, who at the time of this study had been in recovery for four years, and her husband Marc, a carpenter, age 37. They have been married for eight years and have not had any children, although they would like to have them in the near future. Lorraine has had three years of college with a major in psychology, and Marc spent a year and a half in college. Both expressed an interest in resuming their education in the future. They were both raised in Catholic, middle class, white families, although they could be described as lower middle class at present. They were living in a comfortable, tastefully furnished three room apartment in a suburban town. It should be noted that, in addition to being a recovering alcoholic, Lorraine also had been diagnosed as having a bipolar affective disorder.

Marc, whose father died a few years ago, was the middle child of three, with one brother and one sister. Marc had disclosed that his brother was an active alcoholic at the time of the interview. Lorraine was the oldest of six children. Her family consisted of two boys and four girls. Her mother was an alcoholic who had been in recovery in A.A. since Lorraine was fourteen years old. She also had two aunts who were alcoholic, one on her mother's side and one on her father's side of the family.

Before Recovery

Although Lorraine said that she hated it when her mother was drinking, she began drinking herself when she was about seventeen because it made her feel good. She said that she used alcohol to deal with depression, shyness, and low self-esteem. At eighteen years old she was hospitalized in a psychiatric unit because of severe depression. At this time a psychiatrist prescribed valium for her.

At age twenty-two, after spending three years in college, during which time she described her drinking as being out of control, she had to come home because she couldn't cope with school due to another serious bout with depression. Her parents sent her away to a residential substance abuse treatment facility because they suspected that she was addicted to valium. At that treatment program she was told that she was an alcoholic who was cross-addicted to valium and

that her depression was the result of her addictions. She stopped drinking and taking valium and began attending A.A. meetings at that time.

After finishing treatment, she lived in a halfway house for recovering women for almost a year. She came out of her depression during this time, but it soon returned. She continued attending A.A. and stayed away from the alcohol and valium, but her depressions kept recurring. Finally, she turned to alcohol in order to self-medicate the depression. Initially, she would feel better after a few drinks, but after heavy consumption of alcohol she experienced a major personality change whereby she became angry and hostile, and in the long run it made her feel worse. Yet she periodically returned to the alcohol when she felt overwhelmed by depression in order to experience some kind of relief.

When she was twenty-six years old, she spent three and a half months at another residential treatment facility in order to deal with the alcoholism. At age twenty-seven she got married. When she felt deeply depressed on her honeymoon in the Caribbean, she finally realized that something was seriously wrong. When she returned home, she sought out a psychiatrist who was well-versed about alcoholism. His diagnosis was that she was an alcoholic who also had a bipolar affective disorder. He then prescribed lithium and the antidepressant Tofranil. She was also told to attend A.A. meetings once again, because it was important to treat the

affective disorder and the alcoholism simultaneously. As soon as she felt better due to the medication, she figured that she really didn't need it anymore, so she stopped taking it. Even though the medication brought great improvement to the way she felt and produced no side effects, she resented the fact that she had to take it to feel normal.

Once she was off the medication, she plunged into a deep depression and felt miserable. Instead of resuming her medication, however, she once again turned to alcohol for some relief. As had been the case in the past, the alcohol provided temporary euphoria, but the following day she would always feel worse.

The mood swings and periodic drinking bouts went on for the first four years of her marriage. During this time she was employed only sporadically since the recurring debilitating depressions often forced her to quit her job. She spent a good deal of time confined to her home, and often to her bed. The Higgins life together in their early marriage was compared to being on a roller coaster.

After Recovery

Finally, at age thirty-one, Lorraine realized that taking the medication was essential if she wanted to feel better and live a normal life, so she resumed taking it. She also began to attend A.A. meetings again, which she has continued to attend, but only sporadically. Since recovery, she has been

employed as a secretary at a drug and alcohol abuse agency. She has come to view alcoholism as her secondary problem, with her primary illness being the affective disorder. Her husband has not been completely convinced that she has actually been an alcoholic, but has agreed that she has had a definite problem with alcohol and should therefore stay away from it at all costs.

In general, Marc and Lorraine have characterized their life together as being greatly improved in the last four years since Lorraine embarked on her recovery. They have described their daily life as being quiet, comfortable, and even boring. They have found that things have certainly been a good deal easier than they were prior to recovery.

Recently Lorraine and Marc have decided that they want to start a family. The problem has been that Lorraine has been advised that she should not be on medication while pregnant. She had once tried going off the medication during an attempt to get pregnant, but this resulted in another depression. At the time of the Higgins first interview, she reported that she was planning to visit a fertility specialist whose practice has dealt with women who have been on medications. At our last meeting a few weeks later, she mentioned that she was off her medication and was attempting to get pregnant, but she reported that she felt some of the manic symptoms coming on, which included a state of high strung agitation. She seemed

willing to put up with it, however, because her desire for a baby was so great.

The Ehrlich Family

The Ehrlich family included Barbara, a full-time homemaker who at age 37 had been in recovery from alcoholism for six and a half years; George, her husband, who was 38 years old, to whom she had been married for thirteen years; and their children, Christine, age ten, and eight year old Jeffrey. Barbara had earned a Master's degree in nutrition and had worked as a dietician until her first child was born. After taking some time off after the birth of each child, she resumed working part-time until a year ago when she decided to quit her job and devote all her time to her home and family. George had obtained a high school education, and at the time of the interview owned an air conditioning and refrigeration business. Both Barbara and George came from white, middle-class backgrounds. Barbara was raised Catholic and George's family was Lutheran, although he has been regularly attending Catholic services with Barbara and the children. The Ehrlich family has been living in a large, center hall colonial house in a middle-class neighborhood.

Barbara hailed from a large, close-knit family. She was the fifth of seven children, with two older brothers, two older sisters, a younger brother, and younger sister. Her father was an alcoholic, as were several of her siblings. At

the time of the interview, Barbara's mother had been deceased for seven years. George came from a small family with one older brother whom he has suspected is an active alcoholic. He saw his parents regularly because they lived only four blocks away from him, but that was not the case with his brother who lived in a neighboring state.

Before Recovery

Barbara began drinking in high school. In retrospect, she believed that she was an alcoholic for approximately fifteen years from the time she was a teenager until she began her recovery at the age of 31. Her husband, George, however, perceived that her active alcoholism period lasted only about five years because that was when its effects were becoming noticeable to him, although he came to recognize it as alcoholism only in hindsight. Barbara claimed that she had been concerned about her drinking when she was in high school, and decided stop drinking for one entire summer because she believed it would prove that she didn't have a problem if she could quit. When the summer ended, she resumed her drinking without worry since she had deluded herself into thinking that she couldn't possibly be an alcoholic. Her drinking continued unabated for another fifteen years.

During their courtship and the first half of their marriage, Barbara and George both drank heavily and often. They thought this was normal because all their friends and

their families did the same thing. They frequently hosted and attended parties, and they drank quite a bit at home, consuming at least three cases of beer a week. Parties with Barbara's family of origin were especially noteworthy for the amount of alcohol that was consumed and for the volatile interactions that often took place between family members.

There was one particular ugly incident at a family party that had occurred about six years prior to Barbara's recovery when her father had pushed her mother in anger, causing her to fall and break her arm. He had felt so remorseful for injuring his wife that he went to confession and then quit drinking for good. He never went to Alcoholics Anonymous or for any sort of alcoholism treatment, however.

During the following year, Barbara's older brother, who had idolized their father, decided to stop drinking himself and began regularly attending A. A. Once this happened, Barbara started to question her own drinking but did not give it up for another five years. As a matter of fact, her alcohol consumption had actually increased. She would often invite friends over in the afternoon and would use that as an excuse to drink. Later, when her husband came home, the two of them would have cocktails together. Then, when her son was born, her doctor had mentioned that beer was good for a nursing mother so she used this as an excuse to drink more. At that time, she would begin drinking beer at noon and continue until she passed out at seven or eight o'clock in the

evening. Her husband chalked it up to her being exhausted from caring for their two small children all day and did not see the connection with alcohol. Even though she frequently became loud and argumentative when she drank too much, and at times embarrassed him, it never occurred to him that she might be an alcoholic.

About a year after her mother died, Barbara became very drunk at a shower for her sister and made a huge scene by screaming at her sister and being extremely cruel to her. Afterward she remembered nothing about the incident because she had experienced a blackout at the time, which was not an unusual occurrence for her. She was so horrified by the things that others told her that she had said and done that night, and she was so tired of not knowing what was going on due to her blackouts, that she called the county department of mental health and asked for help. She was told that it sounded like she had a drinking problem and she was referred to an organization called Women for Sobriety (WFS) which she began attending, and from that moment on she never drank again. At that time, her daughter was four and her son was eighteen months old.

After Recovery

It took two years of sobriety before she could actually admit that she was an alcoholic, and her husband was still uncomfortable using that label for his wife at the time of the

interview. In the six and a half years that Barbara has been attending WFS meetings, she has never experienced a relapse, although she admitted that once in awhile she has felt tempted to have a drink. Within a few years after Barbara began her recovery, one of her sisters quit drinking but did not go to A. A. or receive any treatment, and another sister stopped drinking and began attending A. A. meetings. Barbara observed that it was interesting that none of the sisters stopped drinking until her mother, whom she described as being a very controlling person, passed away. As was mentioned earlier, one of her brothers has been in recovery in A. A., but her other two brothers have continued to drink, one of them alcoholically. She had one other sister who drank in moderation, but who was married to an alcoholic.

Even though George initially had not been convinced that his wife was an alcoholic, he had been extremely supportive of her decision to quit drinking, and would always make sure that he was home to watch the children on Barbara's WFS meeting nights. Interestingly, after Barbara stopped drinking, his own alcohol consumption decreased dramatically. He has continued to have an occasional drink, sometimes at home and sometimes when he has gone out, but it has ceased to be of central importance, as it had once been. It actually had not been a conscious decision on his part to cut back on his drinking, it just had evolved that way over time. George even speculated that his reduced intake of alcohol may even have

contributed to his success in starting up his own business a few years after Barbara began her recovery.

The only complaint that surfaced regarding their family life was that George has had to work extremely hard because of his business which has meant that he could not be home as much as they all would have liked. In general, however, the Ehrlich family has indicated that since Barbara's recovery, they have been a happy, close-knit family who have been getting along well, for the most part, and who have enjoyed spending time together.

The Neilsen Family

The Neilsen family contained two parents and five children. Joan, an alcoholism counselor who was 55, had been in recovery for seven years at the time of the interview. Her husband, Frank, age 59, to whom she had been married for twenty-six years, was an attorney. Their oldest child, Paul, who had served in the military and had taken some electronics courses, was 24 and worked as a grounds-keeper and maintenance mechanic at a country club golf course. Frankie, age 23, was in his third year of college studying engineering. In the summers he worked in construction, and as a carpenter and a mechanic. Twenty-two year old Karen had just graduated from college with a degree in sociology and was planning to pursue a graduate degree in social work or in counseling, but she hadn't decided where to apply yet. In the meantime, she was

working as a waitress at a vacation resort to earn some money for school. Teresa, 20, had attended beauty school, was working as a beautician, and was planning to open up her own store someday. The youngest child, Donna, age 19, was a junior in college who worked as manager of the family's ice cream store during the summer.

Both Joan and Frank hailed from white, Protestant, middle class backgrounds. At the time of the interview, the Neilsen family could be classified as being upper middle-class. Their religious affiliation, both past and present, was Lutheran. Joan had been baptized Lutheran but never really attended church as a child, while Frank did attend church regularly when he was growing up. Joan had a bachelor's degree in education and had taught school before she was married. Frank had a law degree which he attained after serving in the Air Force.

The Neilsen family has actually been residing in two locations. One of their homes was in an upper middle class, suburban community, and the other was located in a summer community on an island which was located about two hours away. Frank had law offices in both places. In the past, the family's main place of residence was the suburban home, but they spent the summers and nearly every weekend at their island home. At the time of the interview, Frankie and Teresa were living there all year round because it was near Frankie's school as well as their places of work, and Karen has been

living there since she graduated from college a few months earlier, and has been working nearby. Paul has also been living on the island, but he recently has been renting an apartment in a building that his parents owned that was located only one block from their home. In that same building was Frank's law office and the family's ice cream store. Donna has been living away at college, but has been spending her summers at their home on the island. Frank and Joan resided in their suburban home during the week, and spent the weekends with the rest of the family at their island home.

Joan had been the youngest of four children who were all close in age. Both of her parents were deceased, with her mother dying recently at the age of eighty-four. Of her siblings, only one brother was still alive. Her sister died of alcoholism, and her other brother, who was a recovering alcoholic, died of cancer. Apparently, alcoholism was rampant in her family. Her surviving brother was a recovering alcoholic, and even though her parents did not begin to drink heavily until they were in their forties, they had become alcoholic as well. In addition, two of her mother's brothers were alcoholics.

Frank, whose father was deceased but whose mother lived near their suburban home, had been the oldest child in his family with two younger sisters, one of whom was six years younger and the other, fourteen years younger. No one in his

immediate family was alcoholic, but there were a few uncles and cousins who were.

Before Recovery

Joan was an alcoholic for nearly thirty years. She had her first drink when she was nineteen. Looking back, she believed that she had been destined to be an alcoholic from that very first drink. She began drinking to be sociable when she went to sorority parties. She also had begun dating a man who was a heavy drinker and who encouraged her to bring liquor into her family's home. Before that, nobody in her family drank except for her father, who, when he got home from work, would swallow a shot from a half pint of whisky that he kept in the pocket of his coat which hung in the closet, and then he would go take a nap. Once Joan began bringing alcohol home, "suddenly everybody in the family drank manhattans and martinis and would get blasted. My father even stashed bottles behind the curtains to hide how much he was drinking."

When Joan first met Frank, she was feeling guilty about how much she drank. She had just returned from a trip to Europe where she and her friends had been drinking from morning until night because alcohol was so cheap and it was the thing to do. She had developed a very high tolerance for alcohol and could carry on a normal life in spite of her heavy drinking, although she did experience headaches, hangovers, and terrible withdrawal symptoms. What she liked most about

Frank when she met him was the fact that he liked to drink. He had money and belonged to the Officer's Club where they could go and drink. Their lifestyle centered on drinking. They never stopped partying. In retrospect, Joan believed that she was an alcoholic at that time, but nobody knew it because she was still functioning and had not yet lost control of her drinking.

When Joan was twenty-nine and Frank was thirty-three, they got married. She had been teaching school at the time, but she quit her job when she married and assumed a full-time domestic role. Two years later, they had their first child, followed in quick succession by the other four children. Joan had given birth to five children in five and a half years. In spite of the addition of parental responsibilities, Joan and Frank actually increased their alcohol consumption. They had a very active social life with many heavy drinking friends. Joan believed that by the time she was thirty-seven, she no longer could control how much she drank once she started.

It was around this time that Frank began to realize that his drinking was affecting his work, because he was having blackouts and missing appointments, so he decided to stop drinking. Joan was unable to quit drinking at this time because she was terrified of what life would be like without it. Once Joan had lost Frank as a drinking buddy, she began drinking with her mother, an alcoholic who was living with them at the time. The two of them would begin drinking in the

morning after Frank and the children had left the house. When Frank would come home for lunch, he would get annoyed when he smelled alcohol on Joan's breath. Once Frank was no longer drinking himself, he was able to see that Joan had a problem with alcohol. At this point, Joan had completely lost control of her behavior while drinking. She never knew whether she was going to be nice or nasty, or if she was going to insult somebody. There was always a sense of relief when she did not create a disturbance out in public when she was drinking.

It was during this time that Joan's brother, who was himself in recovery from alcoholism, came to visit after not seeing her for a few years. When he saw how much his mother and sister were drinking he was shocked, and he talked about it to Frank. Now that both he and Frank were sober, they could see very clearly what was going on. They decided that Joan's brother would take his mother back home to live with him, and Frank would set up an appointment for Joan with a physician at an alcohol treatment facility. During this appointment, Joan spent an hour denying that she was an alcoholic and she refused to go to Alcoholics Anonymous. After that, Joan and Frank argued constantly about her drinking, and Frank tried to control her supply. Joan reacted to this by becoming very hostile to Frank. Not only had she lost her drinking partner, but now she had to contend with Frank's attempts to limit her drinking. As a result, Joan had to become more circumspect about her drinking. There were

times when Frank would go out to their summer home for the weekend and Joan would make some excuse to stay home. As soon as he left, she would run out and get some liquor and drink all weekend. Sometimes she would go out to their summer home all by herself for a few days and get roaring drunk. Once when she became especially debilitated from one of these binges, a woman she knew who belonged to A.A. took her to a meeting. It was at this time that Joan finally admitted that she had a problem, but she decided that she wanted to sober up in her own way and that she didn't need A.A. She would try to stop drinking, but was only able to remain sober for brief intervals, and then she would go on another binge.

During one of these binges, she backed her car into a neighbor's parked car across the street. She was arrested for this and taken to jail. She felt tremendous shame about this because now she figured that "everyone knew that I was an alcoholic." It was humiliating to be the P.T.A. president with a DWI. Frank bailed her out of jail and used his legal connections to plea bargain the charge down to a speeding ticket. He wanted to keep the whole thing quiet. At this point, Joan went to an alcohol treatment facility for detoxification for a week, but refused to stay longer for rehabilitation. Afterward, she went to an aftercare program and attended A.A. meetings. This period of sobriety lasted for three weeks. As a matter of fact, she never seemed to be able to maintain sobriety for more than three weeks at a time.

For two years she continued having relapses. Finally, she completely gave up trying to achieve sobriety and began drinking constantly. She became socially isolated because no one invited them to parties or other occasions anymore. She spent a great deal of time alone in her bedroom drinking. Frank and the children took care of any household chores that she neglected. Around this time it became evident that the three older children, especially the boys, were using drugs and alcohol. It was also at this point that Frank started going to Al-Anon and some of the children tried Alateen.

One evening, a frightening incident occurred when Joan had trouble swallowing a piece of meat and began coughing up blood. She was then hospitalized, and was told by the doctor that she had to stop drinking because her life was in danger because of potential hemorrhaging from her esophagus due to the irritating effects of alcohol. That slowed her drinking down temporarily, but it didn't stop it. She began drinking beer because she could not tolerate anything else.

What finally compelled her to seek treatment for her alcoholism was the awareness that she was losing her family. Her husband had stopped arguing with her, laying down the law, and trying to control her drinking, and was pulling away from her. She also began to notice the disgust on her children's faces when they looked at her. She was shocked into awareness of how bad things had really gotten when her youngest child, who was eleven years old, made a chilling remark around the

Christmas holidays. When Joan was asking the children what they might like to do next Christmas, Donna had replied, "Mom, I don't even know if I'll be around next Christmas."

This coincided with an ultimatum that Frank had given Joan. Right before Thanksgiving one year, after telling his plans to his children, he calmly informed Joan that unless she went for treatment for her alcoholism by the end of the Christmas holidays, he was going to take the children and move out to their summer home or ask Joan to move out there by herself. He then gave her a list of treatment facilities located all over the country for her to choose from when she was ready, and informed her that if she went for treatment the family would stay and be very supportive of her. Joan didn't really believe that he would take the children and leave, because he had threatened to do so several times before but had never followed through. She drank very heavily over the holidays, and when they ended, she did not stop. Frank responded to this by refusing to bring the children home after the holidays. As a result, Joan saw that she was really losing her family. In her misery and depression, she stayed alone in her bedroom for a few days with the shades drawn and drank. Finally she reached for the phone and called one of the treatment facilities from the list her husband had given her and checked herself in.

After Recovery

The treatment program that Joan went to had a profound effect upon her. Her entire family was included in her treatment. They all attended "family week" where they received intensive counseling and were educated about the disease of alcoholism and how it had affected the family. Following treatment, Joan went home and never drank again. In addition, Paul and Frankie were so affected by the "family week" experience that they stopped doing drugs, which included cocaine, pot, and pills, and Frankie even quit drinking for four years, although he presently has been drinking in moderation.

After treatment, the entire family went to a family counselor for awhile. Joan attended aftercare groups and A.A. meetings and Frank went to Al-Anon meetings. Frank and Joan were still participating in A.A. and Al-Anon at the time of the interview, and have also been seeing a marriage counselor. Karen attended a few Adult Children of Alcoholics meetings, but stopped going after awhile, although she has continued to see a counselor once in awhile.

Shortly after Joan got out of treatment, she decided that she needed something to keep her busy, so the family opened an ice cream parlor in a building that they owned on the island. They operated it as a summer business, with Joan serving as manager and the children helping out as well. After a few years, Joan took some courses on alcoholism counseling and eventually became a counselor at a substance abuse treatment

facility. She also went back to school part-time to take courses for her master's degree in education.

In general, it could be said that the Neilsen family grew closer together after recovery and have remained so even though all of the children have reached adulthood. They have been very involved in each others' lives, and even though the family has been residing in two different towns that are located two hours away from each other, they have kept in touch and have been seeing a great deal of each other.

The Dolan Family

The Dolan family was a large family that consisted of two parents and six children. Rita, age 64, was a housewife and an alcoholic who had been in recovery for nearly seven years. Her husband, Jack, was sixty-five and had just recently retired from his occupation as a theatrical agent. They had been married for forty-three years at the time of the interview. All of their children had gotten married and moved away. Linda, age 42, was the oldest and was a housewife and mother of two children: her daughter, Regina, age 20, who was a dance instructor and was married to Joe, age 19, who was in the Navy, and her son, Nicholas, age 15. Her husband, Neil, at forty-four had achieved a very high rank in the Navy. They lived about four hundred miles away from their parents' home. Steven, age 41, lived about ten miles away from his parents and was employed as a projectionist at a local movie theater,

and had his own catering business. He was married to Eileen, 38, who was a college professor. Matthew, 37, was a salesman of telecommunication equipment who resided approximately fifteen hundred miles away from his parents. He was married to Debbie, age 28, who was employed at a bank. Margaret, 35, resided in the same state as Matthew, about a three hour drive away. She was a housewife married to John, age 35, who was the director of an art gallery. They had three children: Jeannie, age 9, Victoria, age 6, and Benjamin, twenty months. Valerie, 33, was a housewife and non-practicing registered nurse who lived in Germany with her German husband, Kurt, age 40, who was a maker of dental appliances, and her two children, Amanda, age 10, and Max, who was two. The youngest child in the family, Beth, age 27, had returned to school full-time, and was pursuing a degree in social work and a certificate as a drug and alcohol abuse counselor. She also worked part-time in a bank. She was married to Jim, also 27, who worked as a lobbyist. They resided about 250 miles away from their parents, and approximately 150 miles away from her older sister, Linda, in the same state. At the time of the interview, Rita and Jack were living in a large house in an upper middle class suburb. Although Jack was retired and living on a smaller income than he had been used to, they were still financially comfortable.

Joan and Frank had grown up in a part of the country that was located about eight hundred miles away from where they

have currently been residing. Both of their families of origin were white and middle class. Jack had been raised a Catholic, while Rita was baptized a Lutheran, but attended a Methodist church while growing up. Upon her marriage to Jack, she had converted to Catholicism. The Dolan children had all been raised Catholic, but only Linda and Steven had married Catholics. The only children who were practicing Catholics at the time of the interview were Linda and Beth, who had both returned to the faith after a period of noninvolvement with it.

Rita had attended college where she had majored in engineering, but she left school a semester short of graduation to get married. Jack was a college graduate and had attended one year of graduate school to study music. Linda had a semester of college and had also attended secretarial school. Steven had attended electronics school, graduated from culinary school and had taken some courses at a local college. Matthew had spent one very unsuccessful semester at college, while both Margaret and Valerie were college graduates. Margaret had studied education and fine arts, while Valerie received a degree in nursing. Beth had attended two years of college before her marriage and has recently returned to finish her education.

Both Rita and Jack had been the youngest of two children with brothers who were several years older. Their parents were deceased, with Jack's father dying five years earlier at

the age of one hundred. Their brothers were also deceased. As a result, the only extended family relatives that they had were two sisters-in-law and five nieces and nephews, all of whom lived very far away.

Alcoholism had affected every member of their families of origin. Jack's brother had been in Alcoholics Anonymous for eighteen years but he had started drinking again and continued to have relapses until he died. Rita's father and brother were also alcoholics but never experienced recovery. Jack and Rita also had come to realize that Rita's mother and both of Jack's parents had been drinking alcoholically during their lifetimes, although it wasn't recognized as such at the time.

Before Recovery

Rita remembered that she had her first taste of alcohol when she was four years old. Her father occasionally gave her a very tiny glass of beer so that she could sit and drink with him. Rita began drinking socially in college. She drank in moderation and had never tasted hard liquor until she met Jack, who had introduced her to it. When they were first married, they drank only beer, and not very much of it, because they had no money due to the fact that Jack was still in school, and they had two children during the first two years of their marriage. As their financial situation began to improve, they had a daily cocktail hour, during which time hard liquor was consumed.

The Dolans moved far away from their parents to another part of the country in order for Jack to pursue a career as an actor and singer. Rita did not want to move, but she kept silent about it because she knew it was necessary for Jack's livelihood. Shortly after Matthew was born, Jack had gone on the road for eight weeks with a show that was touring around the country. It was a very good opportunity for him, but it meant leaving Rita, who had a broken foot, home alone with three small children, one of whom was a newborn infant. She remembered tying the baby's bassinet to her with her bathrobe cord and dragging it with her from room to room as she limped on a walking cast. It was during that time that Rita had obtained some evidence that Jack was having an affair while he was away. She was devastated by this, but she never said a word to him about it because she thought that she would not be able to survive with three children if she left him. Instead, she began to drink more in order to ease the pain that she felt. At this point, she also found that, if she had a few drinks during the course of the day, it gave her energy to run the house, take care of the children, and stay up late to wait for her husband to get home from a show that he was in, so that the two of them could have cocktails together.

Two years after the birth of Matthew, Margaret was born, and two years after that came Valerie. Jack had quit acting by then and went into the "behind the scenes" area of show business, eventually becoming an agent. Although he no longer

had the irregular hours of an actor, he worked long and hard to establish himself, which meant that Rita was on her own at home. She was also aware that Jack was continuing to have affairs with other women, but instead of bringing it up she drank even more.

It was about that time that Jack became aware of how much Rita was drinking. One time, when he found empty bottles hidden in the closet, he faced the fact that she had a problem. He called a priest that he knew who was in A.A., who gave him the number of a woman who was also an A.A. member, and she took Rita to some A.A. meetings. Rita did not really think that she was an alcoholic, but she went to the meetings in an attempt to keep her marriage together and her family happy. Rita was very compliant, continued to go to meetings, and stayed sober for awhile. Then, according to Jack, "she began having relapses, and with each relapse her personality became more changed." She and Jack began fighting a lot. During this period, when Valerie was six years old, Beth was born.

Shortly after the oldest daughter, Linda had gotten married at age 21, Rita went to her first inpatient alcoholism rehabilitation program at Jack's urging. When she returned home after several weeks, Jack thought that "everything seemed terrific." Within a few months, however, she was drinking again and returned to treatment a second time. Once again she remained sober for a few months but then resumed drinking.

Her drinking pattern was periodic. Jack said that "it seemed that every time a full moon came out, we could always predict that there would be an episode."

About a year after Rita's first experience with treatment, Linda gave birth to her first child, Regina, and Steve left home at the age of twenty-one to move in with a friend. A year and a half later, Rita was arrested for drunk driving when she had a car accident. Jack bailed her out of jail and got her a lawyer who plea bargained the charge of driving while intoxicated down to driving with ability impaired. Her license was suspended for awhile, and she was remanded to another alcoholism treatment facility. Once again, she relapsed shortly after returning home, so she went back for more treatment. She spent a total of five months at that particular facility. It was during one of her stays there that she was let out for two days so that she could attend her son Steve's wedding.

For three years, she continued her pattern of sobriety for a short time and then a relapse. During this time, Matthew went away briefly to college, and then moved out of the house when he was twenty-one, Margaret went away to college at age 18, and Valerie left home at age 17 to go live with a group of people who believed in reincarnation, which her parents perceived to be a religious cult. Eventually she went to college.

When Rita was fifty years old, she went to yet another treatment program, which she returned to again a few months later after she relapsed. Beth, who was thirteen at the time, went to live with her sister Linda for a year, who by now had give birth to her second child, Nicholas.

In the course of her treatment there, all family members had to attend "family week", whereby they lived at the hospital for a week and participated in educational sessions and group therapy. Since the entire family could not all attend at the same time, Rita experienced three separate "family weeks" while she was there.

After her second treatment experience at that facility, she went to live in a halfway house for women alcoholics for six months. While she was there, she had made a decision that she was not going to return home. Jack was very upset about this. In an effort to entice her to come back home, he had the house redecorated for her, and knowing how much she liked swimming and gardening, he had a greenhouse built and an in-ground pool installed in the backyard. Finally, he begged her to return for Beth's sake. Rita eventually changed her mind and moved back home. She remained sober for only two months.

It was during his experiences at "family week" that Jack finally gained some insight about alcoholism as an illness, and he began to understand his own part in it. He began to attend Al-Anon meetings regularly at this point, and Beth became very active in Alateen. He had tried Al-Anon several

years before around the time that Margaret and Valerie had become involved in Alateen, but felt that it was not for him because it did not tell him how to get his wife sober. It emphasized instead the importance of working on yourself, and Jack saw this as a waste of time because he felt that he wasn't the one with the problem.

A few years later, Rita went to two other treatment programs in a two year period. During this time, Margaret got married to John, which Rita was not happy about, Linda was raped by a stranger in her home while her children were sleeping and her husband was away, Beth was sexually molested at the age of 15 by Margaret's husband John, Rita had another car accident and was arrested again for DWI and taken to jail, and Valerie, who was unmarried, became pregnant. She attempted to cope with all of these incidents by drinking even more.

During the next year, Valerie gave birth to her daughter, Amanda. She was still single and in school, so her parents had to help her out financially. It was around that time that Jack and Rita went to the shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes in France, which has been known for its curative powers, in the hope that Rita would be freed of her compulsion to drink. Instead, she came back home with a serious ear infection.

During the following year, Margaret gave birth to her first child, Jeannie. A year later, Jack decided to go back to the treatment facility where the whole family had been for

"family week" five years earlier, so that he could attend a week of counseling, even though Rita refused to accompany him. While he was there, the counselor who had worked with the family previously told Jack that he should confess his infidelities to Rita. Jack wondered what the point was, since he had stopped having affairs a few years earlier after he had experienced some sort of spiritual awakening. The counselor told him that it was important to get the subject out in the open, because Rita already knew about it, and it had become like "an elephant in the living room" which they were both pretending was not there. When Jack returned home, he told Rita about his affairs, and she responded by saying that she had been aware for many years that he had been unfaithful to her.

Once this secret was revealed, it set in motion a series of events that eventually led to her recovery. Jack described how Rita reacted to his confession when he said, "what happened from that point was like a slow explosion. It was almost as if I had taken a long syringe and put it into a deep growing abscess, and it just exploded." The anger which she had kept simmering inside for all those years had finally erupted. She went on a binge and then spent five days in a treatment program for detoxification. When she got home, she became extremely drunk almost immediately and a few days later, fell down the basement stairs. When Jack found her, she was unconscious. After he checked to see if she was still

breathing, he just left her there, thinking that if he helped her up he would be enabling her drinking behavior. When she did not get up on her own, Jack called one of her counselors for advice. The counselor told him to get her to a hospital. An ambulance came, and she was hospitalized with a serious concussion.

Right after she was released from the hospital, she began drinking very heavily again. Jack became very angry and physically forced her into the car so he could return her to the last treatment facility that she had been in. On the way there, they almost had a car accident because she was trying to fight him and jump out of the car, and he was trying to restrain her and drive the car at the same time. He stopped at a police station, and while the police were very sympathetic, they could not help Jack by forcing Rita to go to treatment. By this point, Rita had calmed down, and when Jack finally got her to the treatment facility, he "just stopped the car, threw her out and told her 'there it is. Go on in.'" After spending four weeks there, she returned home and was drinking within two days. A counselor had recommended that she spend several more months at a long term treatment program that was about a hundred miles away from her home. Rita spent four months there, with Jack visiting every weekend in order for them to receive joint counseling and to sort everything out. They were both very honest with each other for the first time in their lives. It was at this time that Jack decided to

completely quit drinking, since he began to be concerned that perhaps he was developing a problem with alcohol himself. During this time in treatment, Rita had to come home briefly for two cataract operations.

While Rita was in treatment, Valerie got married to Dick, who was studying for a Ph.D in psychology. Her parents were very unhappy about the marriage because she had only known him a few months, he was fifteen years older, was twice divorced with four children from his previous marriages, and he was Jewish instead of Catholic. Only Jack, Steve, and his wife, Eileen were able to attend the wedding, which was held on very short notice in a distant state.

When Rita returned from treatment, she was sober for a month. It was during that period of sobriety that Beth went away to college, leaving Rita and Jack alone together for the first time since the first year of their marriage. Things seemed fine for a very brief interval, but then she began drinking again. She and Jack attended a spiritual healing conference at Jack's suggestion hoping that it would help her recover, but she continued to drink off and on. Jack said:

She'd binge for a week, then get sick as a dog and stay sober for awhile. Then she'd binge again. Finally I figured that our marriage was over. I had finally come to an understanding that I could not live that way anymore, that what was left of my life I was going to probably have to do alone.

At this point their marriage had completely deteriorated. Rita had thrown all of Jack's clothes out of their room and he had been sleeping in another bedroom. Rita also announced

that she would never go into treatment again. She said, "I'm going to kill myself rather than go back there." Jack had completely lost all hope that she would ever recover, so he decided to leave her. He had discussed this with his friend and spiritual advisor, Richard Kelly, a former priest and recovering alcoholic himself, who was supportive of Jack's decision.

When he could stand it no longer, Jack finally moved out, and when he returned the following day to retrieve some of his belongings, Rita announced that they were having an overnight visitor. Richard Kelly, who was to have conducted a nearby spiritual retreat that had been canceled, needed a place to stay for the night. Jack remained at the house so that he could visit with Richard, and after dinner he went to bed in one of the spare bedrooms. Rita and Richard stayed up all night together talking. The next morning, Rita told Jack that she had decided to go back to treatment. This was the first time that she had made such a decision on her own without any coercion. She went into treatment for four weeks and has not had a drink since then. It has been almost seven years.

In sum, Rita had been in A.A. off and on for twenty-two years, and over a period of fourteen years, she had been to seven different treatment facilities for a total of thirteen separate stays. She had been drinking alcoholically for approximately twenty-five years before she finally recovered.

After Recovery

Early recovery was, according to Jack, "like a honeymoon." Rita pointed out that "it seemed to me that I could do nothing wrong. It was very unrealistic." Rita spent all of her time focusing on her recovery. She became very active and involved in Alcoholics Anonymous, attended meetings of an aftercare group known as "Early Recovery", and saw a therapist. Rita felt that the reason she finally was able to recover successfully was because she had a completely different attitude. She described it this way:

I was grateful for my life because I could see how close I had come to losing it. I felt like I was the result of a little miracle. I had no explanation. In fact, in my group at A.A. they call me "the miracle" because I had gone to A.A. for twenty-two years without success and then suddenly I went into recovery.

Jack and Rita's relationship improved immeasurably in the years since Rita became sober, and the children have become much closer to their parents and to each other. In addition, several events, changes, and milestones occurred within the family since recovery. In the year after Rita returned from her last treatment stay, Margaret gave birth to her second child, Victoria, and for the first time, Rita was able to be there and help one of her daughters when she had a baby. Beth moved in with her boyfriend, Jim, much to her parents' consternation; Matt got into trouble with the I.R.S. for income tax evasion; and Steve experienced a serious bout with depression. During the following year, Linda's daughter,

Regina became involved with drugs and ran away from home when she was fifteen. During the time that Regina was missing, Rita went to stay with Linda to provide moral support for her. After her parents found her, Regina was placed into a residential psychiatric and drug rehabilitation program, and the entire family went for family therapy. In the year after that, Beth married Jim, and Matthew married Debbie. The entire family attended both weddings. In that same year, Valerie became separated from Dick, and later divorced him, because he had been abusive to both Valerie and her daughter, Amanda. During the following year, Jack found out that he had prostate cancer and had to undergo surgery. Valerie met Kurt while she was on a cruise in Greece, and eventually she and Amanda moved to Germany to live with him. She became pregnant and decided to marry Kurt, so they came back to the United States for the wedding, which the entire family attended. A month later, Max was born. A few months after that, Margaret gave birth to Benjamin. The following year, Rita developed a near fatal lung disease that required a long hospital stay and a prolonged recuperation period at home. She never really resumed her involvement with A.A. after her illness. Later that year, Linda's daughter, Regina became pregnant at the age of nineteen, and married Joe, the eighteen year old father of the baby. The baby, named Felicia, was born with a serious birth defect, and after two months in neonatal intensive care, she died in Regina's arms. That same year, Matt was so

seriously injured when his car was hit by a drunk driver that he was unable to work for many months. Almost a year before the interview, Jack had retired from his job and he and Rita have been fixing up their home in order to eventually sell it.

Family members have pointed out that, although there have continued to be some problems in the family, there has been great improvement compared to what life was like for them during the active alcoholism. Before recovery, family life had been very chaotic and painful. There was always a great deal of love, but there wasn't much hope that anything would improve. Since recovery, however, the family has been much happier. In spite of the hardships and tragedies that the Dolan family has faced since Rita's recovery, they have remained close, and the bonds between them have become even stronger, and Rita herself has refrained from drinking in spite of all she and her family has had to deal with.

General Comparisons of the Families

Even though these four families were quite different in terms of size, income, occupations, and their stages in the life cycle, there were also several similarities. All were from white, middle class, Christian (either Lutheran or Catholic) backgrounds. All four alcoholic wives and three of their husbands had members of their families of origin who were also alcoholic. The fourth husband, Frank Neilsen, had a few uncles and cousins who were alcoholic, however. In

addition, all four families had at least one alcoholic from one of the spouse's family of origin who had gone into recovery before the women alcoholics did. Another similarity was that all of the women began drinking socially in their middle to late teens: the two younger women began in high school, and the two older women in college. All four women also had in common the fact that they had the help of support groups, such as A.A. and Women for Sobriety, in their recovery.

It should be noted that Rita Dolan was the only one of the four alcoholic women who believed that the onset of her alcoholic drinking did not begin until she was in her early thirties. The other three women, in retrospect, recognized the onset of the earliest stage of their alcoholism as being very close to the time when they first started drinking. Rita was also the only one who associated the beginning of her alcoholic drinking with a specific event, which was when she found out about her husband's infidelity, but was unable to confront him about it.

Lorraine Higgins, whose alcoholism was compounded by her bipolar affective disorder, was the only one of the women who did not drink heavily with her husband, either before or after their marriage. This was because she had already been identified as an alcoholic and had been to treatment before she even met her husband, so she was already aware that she should not drink, which had not been the case with the other

women in the early years of their marriages. As a result, when Lorraine did drink, it was always when she was alone. This also became the case for Joan Neilsen and Rita Dolan once they were identified as alcoholics, and thus were subjected to family members' scrutiny regarding whether they were drinking or not.

Barbara Ehrlich was the only one of the four who did not go through an alcoholism treatment program, nor did she experience a series of relapses after her initial attempt to stop drinking like the others did. She also was the only one who had perceived herself to be an alcoholic before other members of her family had. Therefore, her first and only attempt at recovery, which she initiated by calling the county mental health office for help and then attending the self-help group called Women for Sobriety, was her own idea, not something imposed on her by a family member. Interestingly, she only became motivated to initiate her recovery after she experienced mortification regarding her outrageous behavior at a family party. In contrast, the other three women did not initiate their recovery until they had reached a state of non-functioning in their families. In general, however, all four women finally were able to experience recovery once they became convinced that they could not continue living their lives the way they had been, and as a result, began to recover because it was something that they truly wanted for themselves.

Differences were also noted in the drinking patterns of the four women. While Barbara Ehrlich and Joan Neilsen were daily drinkers, for the most part, Lorraine Higgins and Rita Dolan were periodic drinkers with periods of sobriety between their binges. Although Lorraine was not as debilitated by the alcoholism as Rita was, she was very negatively affected by the mood swings that accompanied her bipolar affective disorder.

Some differences were noted between the situations of the women who began their recoveries after less than fifteen years of active alcoholism (Lorraine Higgins and Barbara Ehrlich), and those whose recoveries occurred in the later stages, after at least twenty-five years of active alcoholism (Joan Neilsen and Rita Dolan). Joan and Rita had remarkably similar experiences during the progression of their disease that were not shared by Lorraine and Barbara. In addition to the greater length of time that they spent as active alcoholics, both women felt overwhelmed with having to take care of large families, had very successful husbands, and had been arrested for drunk driving. They also drank to the point of complete physical, emotional, and spiritual deterioration, and toward the end, their marriages were failing. This had not been the case for Lorraine and Barbara. In addition, both the Neilsen and Dolan families had become educated about the disease of alcoholism and its effects on the family by attending "family week" at the same alcoholism treatment facility.

Another common experience for these families was that the husbands, Frank Neilsen and Jack Dolan, became actively involved in Al-Anon, a self-help group for families of alcoholics where they learned to work on themselves instead of trying to control the alcoholic. It should be noted, however, that they only began attending these meetings out of complete desperation, when their wives' alcoholism became so bad that they did not know where else to turn. Marc Higgins and George Ehrlich, who were the husbands of the women who recovered after fewer years of active alcoholism, had not reached this point of desperation before their wives had successfully recovered, however. As a result, neither of them had tried Al-Anon or any other form of outside help for themselves. Interestingly, both of them were uncomfortable with applying the label of alcoholic to their wives, although both were acutely aware that they shouldn't drink. Another interesting comparison regarding the husbands was that both Frank and Jack, whose wives recovered during a later stage, had given up drinking entirely before their wives' recovery, while Marc and George had not. Once their wives recovered, however, only Jack Dolan remained abstinent. Frank Neilsen resumed drinking in moderation, Marc Higgins continued drinking and, according to his wife, even increased his consumption, while George Ehrlich's drinking decreased markedly.

In general, while there were certainly some unique aspects to the lives and relationships of the four families

that were interviewed, there were also several notable similarities or patterns. One pattern that was especially evident was the fact that these alcoholic women were only able to successfully recover when they accepted the label of alcoholic and when their recovery was self-initiated by seeking help of some sort outside of the family. Since these four women had been located with the help of clinical professionals and members of self-help groups, these findings were not surprising. In addition, it should be noted that some studies (Drew, 1968; Snow, 1979) have indicated the self-limiting aspects of alcoholism by demonstrating that, for some people, it is possible to mature out of addiction without outside intervention.

Chapter V

FAMILY ROLES BEFORE AND AFTER RECOVERY

All families can be regarded as being composed of roles which exist in order to carry out culturally prescribed tasks. In alcoholic families, members have the additional task of developing roles to compensate for the progressing alcoholism. Similarly, they must reorganize those roles in some way when recovery begins. In this chapter, summaries have been provided regarding what the formal and informal roles were like for each family, both before and after recovery.

The Higgins Family

Formal Roles Before Recovery

The Higgins family consisted of only two people, Lorraine and Marc, who were husband and wife. Prior to Lorraine's recovery, she was unable to hold down a steady job due to her frequent bouts of depression. Therefore, it was mainly Marc who performed the breadwinner role in the family. In spite of this, Marc and Lorraine did not really have a traditional division of labor because Lorraine did not assume the traditional homemaker role even though she was often home all day. They both characterized their performance of household chores as overlapping or shared, with no one being specifically assigned to a particular chore. If something needed to be done, one of them would do it, although it

seemed, for the most part, that if Marc didn't get it done, nothing was accomplished. This was because Lorraine's depression and drinking rendered her unable to consistently perform household chores. Eventually Lorraine completely stopped doing the laundry when she became terrified of running into people in the laundry room of their apartment complex. As a result, Marc did all of the laundry, as well as the cooking and whatever else needed to be done around the home. Lorraine estimated that the division of labor in the family was actually about 80-20, with Marc doing the lion's share.

Both Marc and Lorraine perceived that they were remiss in fulfilling their obligations with regard to chores and responsibilities, and neither of them were satisfied with the division of labor as it existed at that time. Lorraine claimed that they did the bare minimum around the house to survive, and that their apartment looked like "a tenement" and "a pit". During the throes of her depression, she never cleaned because she wasn't functioning and she just couldn't cope with the day-to-day responsibilities.

It also should be mentioned that Lorraine was completely remiss in performing her spousal role. She was so wrapped up in her problems and had so little energy, that she had little if any time left over to meet Marc's needs. Marc, on the other hand, made a supreme effort to fulfill his spousal role. He was very solicitous of Lorraine and seemed very concerned about her. He made every effort to provide her with physical

assistance and emotional support. Unfortunately, due to her alcoholism and mental illness, everything that Marc did for her was never enough to compensate for her pain and inability to function.

Informal Roles Before Recovery

Although Lorraine eventually ceased performing any formal roles in the family, she did perform a very central informal role known as the "sick role". This can be verified by looking at some of the descriptors that Marc and Lorraine used throughout their interviews to characterize what Lorraine was like prior to recovery. Lorraine referred to herself as being sick, depressed, suicidal, non-functioning, afraid to be alone, desperate, withdrawn, unable to concentrate, miserable, dependent, afraid of people, very inadequate, afflicted with bizarre thoughts, and diagnosed at different times as suffering from depression, being a cross-addicted alcoholic, and having bipolar affective disorder. Marc characterized her as experiencing nose-dive depressions, being hypoglycemic, having an illness, experiencing a negative personality change when she drank, feeling lousy and miserable, and having a chemical imbalance. This created a situation whereby Lorraine was unable to function adequately, which necessitated that she assume the informal role of "follower", and that Marc take over the "leadership role". The fact that Lorraine was described as being shy, dependent, and passive reflected her

tendency to be a "follower", while Marc's tendency to be dominant, controlling, outgoing, and responsible made his assumption of the "leadership role" in the family understandable.

In addition, Marc had assumed the "caretaker role" since he spent a great deal of his time taking care of Lorraine. He said that he felt responsible for her, had to cover up for her, and keep an eye on her. He constantly tried to talk her into getting a job and doing something about her problems. He said that he did not feel free to discuss his own personal problems with Lorraine because her problems were always of primary importance. Lorraine saw Marc as a source of comfort who gave her a great deal of hope. She described him as being supportive, encouraging, unself-centered, uncritical and non-judgmental. She reported that he was very kind, always took care of her, and loyally stuck with her through the worst of her illness. All of this, along with the fact that Marc eventually took over virtually all of Lorraine's formal roles in the family, indicated that he also performed the informal role of "enabler", since all of his efforts actually made it easier for her to remain in the "sick role". Lorraine mentioned that Marc himself never got sick, but one time, when he experienced a back injury, all she could think about was "how is he going to take care of me now?" She was totally unprepared to reverse their roles and take care of him.

In describing Marc, Lorraine claimed that "he was almost like a parent to me". Obviously, then, he was performing the informal role of "surrogate parent" to Lorraine's role of "child". She also came to realize that Marc had a great deal of control over her prior to her recovery. This indicated that Marc had also taken on the role of "controller" in the family as well. All of this pointed to a definite dominant-subordinate relationship between Marc and Lorraine.

Marc's perceptions of himself indicated that he also felt that he was performing the "martyr role" in the family. He described himself as being unhappy, frustrated, full of dread, despairing, unable to express his feelings, and felt responsible for everything. In spite of this, he was very loving, supportive, and patient with Lorraine, even though she could often be hostile, resentful, vicious, violent, and unhappy.

It was also interesting to note the informal roles that the Higgins played in their extended families. In Lorraine's case, she also played the "sick role" in her family of origin. She remembered that there was always a great deal of competition for their parents' attention among the six children and that she got a great deal of attention because she was the one in the family with "the problem". At the same time, Marc was perceived to be in a "scapegoat role" in the eyes of Lorraine's family. During their courtship and early marriage, they saw him as a bad influence on Lorraine, whom

they viewed as fragile and vulnerable, and they blamed him for all of Lorraine's problems. Marc claimed that it was mostly Lorraine's mother who saw him this way. Perhaps this served the purpose of allowing the family to avoid blaming Lorraine for her own problems, or even blaming themselves for contributing in some way to Lorraine's difficulties. This would be especially true with regard to Lorraine's mother, since it was entirely possible that she experienced residual guilt due to her own alcoholism that was active until Lorraine was fourteen, and perhaps she could not face the thought that this might have had some adverse effect on Lorraine. At that time Marc was an outsider to the family, and therefore a convenient target of blame. Consequently, Marc's "scapegoat role" served a stabilizing purpose in Lorraine's family of origin.

Formal Roles After Recovery

Since recovery, Marc and Lorraine have both been actively engaged in formal roles that have been, for the most part, shared. Lorraine has been steadily employed in the same full-time position for the past two years, and she has been able to do more in the way of household responsibilities recently. They have had no set division of labor, other than the fact that Marc has been doing all of the cooking, which he has claimed to enjoy, and Lorraine has been mainly responsible for the care and feeding of the dog and cat, which were added to

their household after her recovery. For the most part, they have been sharing many of the domestic chores in that they have been taking turns doing laundry, dishes, vacuuming, etc. Although they have perceived that the household is running more smoothly since recovery, and they have been more comfortable with the way things have been since recovery, both spouses have agreed that there has certainly been room for improvement. They pointed out that they have continued to be somewhat deficient in fulfilling their obligations regarding chores and responsibilities because of their tendency to procrastinate. Marc believed that he has continued to perform more of the domestic chores than Lorraine has because, since she began working all day, she has found that she tires very easily. Since Marc has continued to be more energetic than Lorraine, it has been easier for him to do more of the work around the house.

It should also be noted that both Marc and Lorraine appeared to be performing their spousal roles adequately. Once Lorraine was in recovery, she became less wrapped up in her herself and her problems. As a result, she could devote more time to providing for Marc's emotional needs. Marc, on the other hand, continued being loving, supportive, and encouraging of Lorraine, although he was somewhat less so after her recovery than he was before.

Informal Roles After Recovery

One of the factors that delayed Lorraine's recovery was her reluctance to continue with the medications that were prescribed in order to treat her bipolar affective disorder. The reason she gave for this avoidance was that she resented the fact that she needed to take medication in order to be normal. At the same time she saw self-medication with alcohol as acceptable, because drinking certainly is something that many "normal" people do. Therefore, she did not perceive her use of alcohol to alleviate her negative feelings as an indication that she had a mental illness, as had been the case with her medication, even though, in reality, the alcohol actually served to exacerbate her problem.

In view of this, it appeared that at the same time that Lorraine seemed unwilling to relinquish her "sick role", she was actually rejecting the formal label of being mentally ill. It was as if she desired to continue playing the "sick role" itself, albeit without the specific illness label attached to it. Marc, on the other hand, had accepted the diagnosis and therefore the label, and then prevailed upon Lorraine to take her medication so that she could function normally, thus enabling her to finally give up the "sick role".

Ironically, it wasn't until Lorraine finally accepted the label of being mentally ill that she was able to take the action that was needed in order to relinquish her "sick role" (i.e. take her medications, stop drinking, and go to A.A. and

counseling), and become a "person in recovery". Once she resumed the medication, her body chemistry was altered in such a way that she was able to function in a normal manner which then allowed her to resume playing her formal roles in the family. This meant that she was no longer the needy, non-functioning member of the family who required constant care and concern. Descriptors that were used regarding Lorraine after recovery which reflected this included: confident, getting her act together, more animated, no longer depressed, more comfortable around people, more compassionate, happier, easier to live with, more accepting, more outgoing, talkative, reliable, and trustworthy.

Although both Marc and Lorraine accepted the existence of Lorraine's bipolar affective disorder, and they have been acutely aware of the fact that she must stay away from alcohol at all costs because of its negative affects on her, neither of them has been thoroughly convinced that she was actually physically addicted to alcohol. This has meant that, while they have recognized that she has a problem with alcohol, they have been reluctant to completely accept the stigmatizing label of "alcoholic", in spite of the many professionals who had diagnosed her as such. They have appeared to be more comfortable with the "bipolar affective disorder" label or the "depression" label. There even seemed to be more acceptance of the "valium addict" label that was given to her by substance abuse counselors when she was in treatment during

her college years. Perhaps this was because that drug had been prescribed by a psychiatrist, which led her to feel blameless with regard to the addiction, just as she had learned to believe that she was not at fault for experiencing mental illness. This has not been as easy a view for her to take with regard to the "alcoholic label", however. This was not surprising because, even though alcoholism has been classified as a disease by the American Medical Association since 1956, it still has been viewed by many in society as a self-inflicted illness, and there often has been a tendency to blame the victim who has this disease. In light of the fact that it was necessary for Lorraine to completely embrace the label of being "mentally ill" before she could finally experience long term recovery from that illness, it might be surmised that, as long as she avoids the wholehearted acceptance of the "alcoholic" label, she could be at risk of experiencing a relapse. As a matter of fact, Lorraine even spoke of times when she had fleeting thoughts of drinking again when she said "there's a good part of me that wants sobriety and all that goes with it, but then there's this other little part that still remembers the good feeling that it gave and still wants that." Indeed, since she has gone off her medication while she has been attempting to get pregnant, she could become vulnerable to picking up a drink. For an alcoholic, however, even one drink would be too many.

It should be noted that once Lorraine made the decision to stop drinking and resume her medication, Marc played a major role in encouraging Lorraine to go back to work and to begin functioning as an equal partner in the marriage. This demonstrated an attempt on Marc's part to be less of an "enabler". Since Lorraine has finally begun to function normally, she has been able to take care of herself and to stand up to Marc whenever he has spoken to her in a domineering, or even a nasty, condescending manner. She has even purchased a dog and a cat, and she has lavished a great deal of affection and attention on them and has found their affection toward her to be very gratifying. She also has developed more interests and has become a bit more social. Consequently, she has no longer been as much in need of Marc's constant care, attention, and affection. This has meant that Marc could relinquish his "caretaker/parent role".

Marc, however, did not seem to be cognizant of the extent to which his role had undergone change. He perceived that he, himself, hadn't really changed at all since Lorraine's recovery, although he did admit that he had gained more insight into alcoholism and mental illness and has been happier with himself and his marriage and more relaxed. He viewed this increase in happiness, however, as the result of changes in Lorraine rather than himself. This was reflected in his sense that he was a boring guy who was a creature of habit who lacked spontaneity. It should also be noted that

several descriptors that were used regarding Marc before recovery were also used afterwards. These included the fact that he was outgoing, friendly, not self-centered, kind, dominant, and controlling. He did note, though, that he has been feeling more angry since Lorraine's recovery than he did before, but he was unable to explain why this has been the case. Sometimes when he has become angry at Lorraine, he has threatened to get rid of the dog and cat, who have seemed to become a convenient scapegoat for this anger that he did not understand. Lorraine reported that, in addition to being more angry, Marc has also been less encouraging and more critical of her than he was before her recovery. Lorraine believed that this behavior on his part has been due to the fact that he has been losing his "caretaker" and "enabler" roles, with which, on some level, he had apparently become very comfortable. In view of the discomfort that Marc experienced from losing these roles, it could be said that he still maintained some vestiges of the "martyr role".

In light of the fact that Marc has continued to try to be very controlling of his wife, it was apparent that he has been having difficulty relinquishing his "controller role". Although Marc's more outgoing, domineering personality has lent itself to his continuation in the "leadership role", as Lorraine has become more sure of herself and has been able to function better and participate in decision-making, their "leader-follower" relationship has become less well-defined.

Lorraine also confided that she has been concerned that Marc might even be developing a drinking problem himself, which could further alter the delineation of these roles. She didn't think that it had become a full-blown addiction yet, but she has been worrying that it would be likely to get worse, especially in light of the fact that there has been alcoholism in his family.

With regard to Lorraine's family of origin, she pointed out that she was the oldest child who had always been very close to her father. In addition, she claimed that she has often reverted to her previous childhood role whenever she has gotten together with her family. She has continued to vie with her siblings for her parents' attention, especially with two of her sisters, who have gotten a great deal of attention because they have had babies. She has continued to receive frequent attention, however, because of her family's ongoing concern about her "problems". Although she has been able to completely relinquish her "sick role" in her relationship with her husband, some remnants of this role have continued to exist for her in her family of origin. While she has appeared to wish that she could totally extricate herself from the "sick role" in her family of origin, she has feared that the result would be a the loss of attention. Perhaps one of the reasons that she has strongly desired to have a baby was to enable her to completely abandon this role in her family of

origin while still being able to compete with her sisters for her parents' attention, but on a more positive level.

Since recovery, Marc has come to be viewed by Lorraine's family as a "savior" because he has been credited with getting Lorraine to go to the right specialists and for pushing her to take her medications. While Marc claimed that he hasn't really gotten much attention from Lorraine's family, he did notice that there has been a shift from the negative role of "scapegoat" to a decidedly positive one of "savior".

Marc did not say very much about his role in his family of origin except that he was the middle child and has been very close to his mother. Perhaps the reason that Lorraine's role in her family of origin has been more evident than Marc's was because they have tended to be much more intensely involved with Lorraine's family than Marc's family even though both families live nearby, although this has begun to change somewhat since recovery.

The Ehrlich Family

Formal Roles Before Recovery

Barbara and George Ehrlich had a division of labor in their family that tended toward the traditional. Once their first child, Christine, was born, Barbara quit her full-time job as a dietitian and stayed home, but after awhile she resumed her employment on a part-time basis, only working a few hours a week teaching nutrition to home health aides.

When her son Jeffrey was born, she once again stopped working briefly, but eventually she returned to work part-time. Since her husband continued to be employed full-time, he was the main breadwinner in the family. The children were either infants or toddlers during most of the period before Barbara's recovery, so the only formal roles that they assumed in the family was that of being dependent children. Since Barbara was home with the children most of the time and George often worked late in the evenings and on Saturdays, their care fell entirely on her shoulders, and because they were so little, she had to do almost everything for them. She also was primarily responsible for the performance of household chores. George claimed that he "never thought that Barbara had to do the housework just because she was the woman", and therefore seemed to have no qualms about helping her out by doing the dishes and other chores, but because of their employment arrangement, it just worked out that the running of the household became Barbara's primary responsibility, which placed her in the homemaker role.

In addition to child care, household chores (which included cooking, cleaning, and laundry), and working part-time, Barbara also took care of family members when they got sick, was in charge of organizing their social life, and even found time to do some volunteer work. In light of this, Barbara has described herself as being "a totally functioning alcoholic".

During this time in her life, Barbara was not satisfied with the division of labor in her family. On the one hand, it made sense to her that her husband was the main breadwinner since he was able to make a great deal more money than she could, but on the other hand, she felt torn between staying at home and going to work. She had been brought up to think that if she stayed home, she would be wasting all the time and money she spent getting a master's level education, yet she also felt that it was important for her to be there for her children. She stated that she felt like she "...had to be the perfect person. I had to have the perfect job and run the perfect house, and to me physically and emotionally this wasn't possible." As a result, she had put tremendous pressure on herself and was not happy doing either role. Due to the conflicting expectations that she experienced, she felt guilty when she worked, yet when she was at home she felt overworked because she thought that she had to keep her house immaculate. She was so busy cleaning that she never had time to sit down and talk to or play with the children. She complained that "...there was never time for anything. I wasn't happy with the way things were going".

George reported that during this time he was basically satisfied with the division of labor in their family. He did point out that eventually Barbara stopped getting up on weekday mornings to have breakfast with him or to make his lunch, and that sometimes she would go to bed before he got

home from work, leaving a sink full of dishes, but he attributed this to exhaustion on her part due to having to take care of two small children. In reality, the reason that she went to bed early before cleaning up and had trouble getting up in the mornings was because of her drinking.

Apparently, Barbara was able to continue functioning well in her formal role of homemaker in spite of her drinking, although she was not happy about it. Between her drinking and the impossible demands that she placed on herself, however, it was not surprising that one very important area of family life suffered, and that was with regard to the amount of quality time that she was able to spend with her family. As a result, although Barbara was able to perform her spousal and parental roles in spite of her alcoholism, there was room for improvement with regard to her fulfillment of these roles. George also performed his spousal and parental roles adequately, but because he was away at work so often, his presence was sometimes missed by his wife and children.

Informal Roles Before Recovery

One of the most apparent observations regarding Barbara's informal roles before recovery was that, unlike many alcoholics, she did not, at any time, assume the "sick role" as a result of her alcoholism. On the contrary, as was mentioned previously, she had been a functioning alcoholic who almost singlehandedly kept a spotless household, took care of

the children, worked part-time and even did volunteer work. It therefore appeared that she had been trying to perform a "superwoman role" in her family. This role enabled her to maintain the illusion that she was fine, when in reality she was experiencing the progression of the disease of alcoholism. The more her drinking became a problem, the more urgent was her need to maintain the facade of normalcy by playing this role. This was an effective strategy, since it never even occurred to her husband that she might be an alcoholic because she seemed to be functioning so well. This role was an essential one because it enabled Barbara to continue drinking and avoid facing what it was doing to her.

Descriptors that were used in the interviews to characterize what Barbara was like prior to her recovery indicated that she also played the dominant or "leadership role" in her family in that she could be difficult to deal with, which meant that it was easier for her husband and children to accommodate her moods than to stand up to her. This allowed her to be in the "controller" role as well. She was described as being aggressive, controlling, loud, boastful, opinionated, stubborn, argumentative, defensive, perfectionistic, self-righteous, angry, and subject to emotional highs and lows. She also stated that she had grandiose dreams regarding her expectations of her children. Interestingly, her perception of herself during this time was that of "victim" or "martyr", because she felt overworked,

unfulfilled, and unhappy. She felt completely out of touch with her emotions. She never felt that she had any choices and she blamed everyone and everything else for her plight because she believed that nothing was ever her fault.

Her husband, George, on the other hand, was described as being a quiet, passive, nonargumentative, dyslexic, noncontrolling, easygoing, acquiescent, nonconfrontational, and supportive person who would hold in his feelings and put up with Barbara's negative, demanding behavior which, at times, got out of hand. In light of this, it was apparent that George occupied a subordinate or "follower role" in his relationship with Barbara. As a result, while he and Barbara did argue at times, they were very close to each other and got along pretty well, for the most part, due to George's tendency to back down in order to avoid conflict. Interestingly, both spouses pointed out that he never argued with her at all about her drinking. This was probably due to the fact that he had been in complete denial regarding her alcoholism, as well as the fact that he had supplied her with alcohol and had been drinking right along with her. This would be indicative of another informal role that George had assumed, which was that of "enabler". In this role, he also refrained from confronting her about her drinking behavior, and he always made sure that he informed her about what she had done while in a blackout, and in Barbara's words, "he even made light of the fact that I couldn't remember a damn thing!" Mention was

also made of the fact that George worked very long hours as an air conditioning and refrigeration repairman in order to support his family and pay their high mortgage. Since he was often working evenings and Saturdays, it could be said that he also assumed the informal role of "workaholic".

The children's informal roles were not very well-established before recovery because they were both so young, but there was some mention of behavior on their part that might be indicative of the beginning of some informal roles for them. It was pointed out that Jeffrey was prone to tremendous temper tantrums which could have provided the basis of a "scapegoat role" or an "acting out child", and in spite of Christine's tender years, it was noticed that she had begun to act in a very maternal, protective way toward Barbara. This could have reflected the beginnings of the "family hero role", "the responsible one", or "surrogate adult". This illustrates the point that the development of informal roles in the family could certainly begin in children's preschool years.

George and Barbara had come to their marriage from their families of origin, where they had performed certain informal roles in the past which continued even after they left home. In George's family of origin, he appeared to fill the role of a concerned, reliable, attentive son who lived within a few blocks of his parents and saw them frequently. His role of the "responsible one" was quite different from that of his

alcoholic brother, who moved away to another state and did not often interact with the rest of the family.

In stark contrast, Barbara's role in her family of origin could be categorized as being a "troublemaker", "scapegoat" or "acting out child". She argued all the time with family members and had a very intense rivalry with one sister in particular. She was constantly instigating conflict. She said that she "used to like to poke and pick and foster a nice big family row and then hate everybody." Barbara claimed that she frequently felt uncomfortable and angry when her extended family got together because she could not express her true feelings around her family members. She pointed out that she felt that her family of origin was not supportive of her, they had certain negative expectations concerning her, and they didn't give her any respect because she "was always doing crazy things."

The one thing Barbara did like about her extended family gatherings was that they were always an excuse for heavy drinking. In addition, her family even seemed to accept the disruptive, often bizarre behavior that she exhibited when she drank. One time, when Barbara was so drunk that she thought that her mother had two heads, her entire family thought that this was hysterically funny. In view of this, it could be surmised that Barbara's heavy drinking family members also served to be "enablers" for her, as she was for them. It was a powerfully reinforcing alcoholic situation.

Formal Roles After Recovery

The roles involved in George and Barbara's division of labor, if anything, became even more sex segregated after Barbara's recovery. This was due to the fact that Barbara ceased performing part of the breadwinner role when she quit her part-time job in order to devote herself fully to her home and family. Moreover, once George started his own business, he was home even less often, and therefore was unable to perform domestic chores as often as he had been able to previously. Although Barbara bore the responsibility for the smooth running of the household, there was still some overlap in chores performed in the domestic sphere, since George would sometimes wash dishes with the help of the children when Barbara would go to her Women for Sobriety meetings, he would do his own laundry once in awhile, and he would usually do the vacuuming, because Barbara had back problems and wasn't supposed to vacuum. For the most part, however, their domestic chores were divided along sex segregated lines: Barbara did the cooking, cleaning, shopping, laundry, gardening, childrearing, and caring for sick family members; and George would take out the garbage, mow the lawn, maintain their cars, and do household repairs.

A chore that Barbara and George shared equally, however, was painting, which they always did together. Both of them also took care of checkbook balancing and bill paying, although Barbara dealt with the household account and George

focused on the business account. In addition, they both played an active role in disciplining the children, although Barbara has been disciplining them more frequently because she has been with them more. She has also been the one who has set the tone in the family regarding proper discipline. She has informed George that, at times, he has been entirely too strict and should work on controlling his temper and on being less demanding with the children, and George stated that he has been attempting to affect such a change.

The children have been expected to carry their own weight in the performance of household chores. They were supposed to take care of their own rooms, and while George would wake them up in the mornings, they have been responsible for getting themselves off to school. Christine has been making her own lunch and Jeffrey has been expected to help Barbara make his. The children have also been known to help out by sometimes setting the table and putting away the dishes. It was interesting to note that, while George was becoming less able to assist Barbara in the performance of domestic chores due to the demands of his business, the children were getting older and therefore were becoming able to start taking up the slack by doing more for themselves and by helping around the house.

George and Barbara have perceived that family members generally have been fulfilling their obligations regarding their chores and responsibilities and that their household has been running smoothly. The only disruptive aspects of family

life that have been observed by George have been day-to-day problems with the children, such as getting them to do homework, their chores, etc.

Barbara has noted that, since her recovery, she has been very comfortable with staying home and focusing primarily on the homemaker/wife/mother role, and she hasn't felt the least bit guilty about not being employed or doing volunteer work. This has been because she has learned to stop being a perfectionist and putting so much pressure on herself. She has ceased feeling that her house had to be perfect. As a result, her home has not always been spotless, but it has been running well and it certainly has become a more comfortable place to be. Consequently, she has had more time to spend talking with her children, playing with them, and taking them places, such as parks and museums. In addition, since she has quit drinking, she has been able to stay up and be with her husband after he has gotten home from work, and she has also been able to get up with him in the morning to make his breakfast and lunch. Apparently, then, once she recovered from alcoholism, Barbara's spousal and parental roles have involved becoming more nurturing, in that it has involved less frenzied housecleaning and more time spent with her loved ones. Similarly, although George has been working very long hours, he has made it a point to spend quality time with the children whenever he has been home by playing with them,

helping them with their homework, and going with them on frequent family outings.

Informal Roles After Recovery

In the years since Barbara began her recovery, she has taken a good look at herself with the help of a therapist, and as a result, has changed her attitudes and expectations about herself. She has ceased feeling the need to constantly prove her worth to herself and others, and she has abandoned the belief that she had to do everything and do it perfectly. This has been demonstrated by the fact that she not only eventually quit her part-time job and her volunteer work as PTA president and den mother, but she stopped feeling that her house had to be immaculately clean. Barbara also pointed out that she has become very accepting of the children for who they are, has let go of her impossibly high expectations of them and has become more realistic, and has been supportive and encouraging of them in whatever endeavors they choose to pursue. She has been happy in her sobriety and has become comfortable with herself. In light of these changes, it has become evident that she has gradually relinquished her "superwoman" role. This was possible because, since her recovery, it has not been necessary for her to play a role that would help to mask her problem with alcohol.

Barbara pointed out that she was the one who has been setting the tone for the house with regard to attitudes,

values, and discipline, but that she has been becoming less aggressive about it. She has apparently continued to play the dominant or "leadership role", albeit less forcefully and with more flexibility. Descriptors that were used by family members to characterize Barbara after her recovery which illustrated this modification included the following: assertive, controlling, intelligent, interesting, funny, lively, outgoing, comfortable, accepting, open-minded, spiritual, has choices, is able to cope, healthier, more relaxed, more energetic, more open, and no longer a perfectionist. She has become much more approachable and family members therefore have not been as intimidated by her and, as a result, have been more likely to assert themselves with her rather than always backing down. Apparently, Barbara no longer has had the need to rule her family with an iron fist.

Another informal role that Barbara has assumed in sobriety has been that of "recovering alcoholic". She has continued to attend Women for Sobriety meetings and has maintained a constant awareness of herself as being an alcoholic and therefore only one drink away from a relapse. Interestingly, she was only able to comfortably admit to the label of "alcoholic" after two years of sobriety. The acceptance of this label, however, has been a key factor in her efforts to stay away from alcohol.

After Barbara's recovery, George generally still performed a subordinate or "follower role" in the family, but this was only vis a vis Barbara, since his children looked up to him with awe and admiration and sometimes with a little fear, since he was the more strict disciplinarian of the two parents. Even in his relationship with Barbara he has become less passive and more likely to speak his mind. This has led to an increase in arguments, but both of them have felt that these have been healthy exchanges. Descriptors for George that appeared in family interviews regarding life after recovery included the following: very supportive, less passive, dyslexic, helpful, strict, introverted, not very talkative, cautious, trustworthy, reliable, quiet, accepting, respected, able to express feelings, and more likely to assert himself. He was also described as continuing in the "workaholic" role because of all the time he has had to spend working since he started his own business. Barbara commented that George "is not so much of a 'take it' kind of a guy anymore. He's not going to put up with it. I don't know why he's changed, but he doesn't take any crap anymore." She also characterized him as "a good man" and disclosed that she felt very lucky to have him.

Apparently Barbara and George had very different personality characteristics that have lent themselves to a relationship where George would tend to be more of a "follower", but since recovery there has been some

modification in the delineation of their dominant-subordinate role arrangement in that it has become less pronounced.

An informal role that George has relinquished has been that of "enabler". Although he was initially surprised and uncomfortable when Barbara told him that she was an alcoholic and was therefore going to quit drinking, he was very supportive of her efforts. Initially he refrained from drinking in front of her, which led him to drastically reduce his own alcohol consumption. In addition, he played an important part in making it possible for her to attend Women for Sobriety meetings by always making sure that he was home to watch the children on meeting night. In spite of his invaluable support and understanding, however, George has had difficulty accepting the label of "alcoholic" for his wife. He has not been comfortable discussing it and even has found it difficult to say the word in reference to Barbara.

The informal roles that have been played by the children since recovery have become more evident as they have grown older. Christine is the oldest child, and at age ten has been "crazy about her father" and has continued to be very protective of her mother. She has been described by family members as being trustworthy, reliable, more independent, strong-willed, smart, quiet, beautiful, respectful, and cooperative. Jeffrey, on the other hand, has been described as angry, crazy, frustrated, dyslexic, manipulative, more independent, stubborn, has a learning disability, strong-

willed, not too reliable, verbal about his feelings, crazy about his father, has a memory deficit, and explodes when he is upset. It was also pointed out that he has been getting the most attention in the family as well as the most criticism. Based on these descriptions of the children, it would appear that Christine has been the "good child", or the "responsible one" who could potentially be a "family hero", while Jeffrey has been heading in the direction of becoming the "family scapegoat" or "acting out child". Indeed, there has been genuine concern on the part of Jeffrey's parents regarding his learning disabilities that have led to problems in school and behavior problems at home which have resulted from his frustration. Barbara and George have worked very hard, however, to help Jeffrey with his problems by providing him with structure in his life, spending time with him and helping him with his homework, and providing him with praise and encouragement as well as constructive criticism. Both parents have noted some improvement in Jeffrey's schoolwork, and although they noted that he has continued to be prone to temper tantrums, they have become more controlled recently.

In light of the fact that Jeffrey has required so much attention from his parents due to his learning and behavior problems, it was not surprising that Christine felt as if she did not get enough attention and that this fostered a sense of rivalry between her and her brother. Barbara acknowledged that Christine got less attention because she didn't demand

it. In view of this, it might also be possible for Christine to become a "lost child", except for the fact that her parents have made an effort to give her a great deal of praise for her good behavior. In addition, since Barbara stopped drinking, working part-time, doing volunteer work, and obsessively cleaning her house, she has had a great deal more time to bestow attention on both of her children. This loving, family-oriented environment could preclude these children from becoming rigidly locked into the informal roles that they have been performing in their families.

Recovery has meant that some modifications have been necessary with regard to roles that were performed in their families of origin as well. George's role in his extended family has not changed perceptibly in that he continued to be the conscientious, good, caring son, in other words, "the responsible one". It was noted, however, that his family initially had great difficulty accepting the notion that Barbara was an alcoholic. They have become more supportive over time but every once in awhile they have said to her, "can't you have just one drink?" They have thus resisted perceiving Barbara in the role of "recovering alcoholic".

It should be noted that the problems which Barbara had with her family of origin due to her drinking, as well as the example of her brother and her father giving up alcohol, actually provided the impetus for Barbara to embark on her own recovery. At the same time, however, members of her family

kept expecting her to continue being the same person she was - the one who made trouble and did crazy things; in other words, the "troublemaker", the "scapegoat", or "the one who acted out". In discussing her family of origin, Barbara pointed out that:

They can suck you back into that role if you are not aware of it. But now I have choices. I can leave. I used to think I had to stay until the end of the party. But if somebody is getting to me, I can get up and leave. That has come with time. That was not true in early sobriety. It used to be extremely painful to be around them. Now they are learning to accept me and I am accepting them.

Barbara also mentioned that her tempestuous relationship with one of her sisters has been improving. It could be said, then, that although there was some resistance on the part of Barbara's family of origin to any change in her informal roles in the family, she was eventually able to divest herself of the role of the family "troublemaker" or "scapegoat" and assume the role of "recovering alcoholic" and, to some extent, the "peacemaker".

The Neilsen Family

Formal Roles Before Recovery

The Neilsen family had a division of labor that was, for the most part, traditional. Joan had been a full-time homemaker who had quit her teaching job as soon as she got married, and Frank was the sole breadwinner (until the children were old enough to get part-time jobs to earn money for their own expenses) and the family's main representative

to the community. The running of the household and the day-to-day raising of the children were Joan's responsibilities, while Frank worked long hours as an attorney, and was away from home a good deal of the time. His wife and children were completely financially dependent on him. When he wasn't working, he was extremely busy in community affairs. He served as president of various organizations, such as the Lion's Club, the church council, and the country club. At one time, Joan did become somewhat involved in community activities. She had even served for awhile as PTA president. As her drinking got worse, however, she had to give up those outside activities.

Joan's drinking also eventually began to affect her ability to consistently carry out her household duties, which included cooking, cleaning, laundry, shopping, child care, etc. Sometimes she would go through "great gales of activity, cleaning and getting everything done - real spit and polish." Other times she would do very little. In the later stages of her alcoholism, those times of cleaning activity became almost nonexistent, and she contributed very little to the running of the household. It was almost as if she didn't exist. Things either did not get done at all, or Frank and the children would attempt to compensate for her lack of functioning. Frank eventually took over the chore of shopping, which he would do on his way home from work, and he would always cook breakfast on Sundays. He also began doing some of the other

household chores, such as cleaning and the laundry, because he wanted them done a certain way, and Joan either was not getting them done fast enough or to his specifications.

Joan would try to cook dinner each evening, but was successful only two or three evenings a week. The rest of the time she either burned it, or was too drunk to finish cooking. In that case, either Karen or Teresa would finish making dinner, or Frank would take them out to a fast food restaurant.

Since Frank was rarely home, he participated very little in the upbringing of the children. While he was seen as the ultimate authority in the family, he was rarely around to discipline them. This initially was Joan's job. As her alcoholism progressed, however, this discipline became very inconsistent. Sometimes she would overreact to things that the children did, and other times she would be completely oblivious to what was going on with them. Not only was she increasingly unable to discipline the children, she was also unavailable to the children for guidance and emotional support. In addition, due to Frank's myriad activities which kept him away from home most of the time, he was generally unable to provide this for the children either. In response to their parents' inadequate performance of parental roles, the children began to look elsewhere to have these needs met.

Paul, Frankie, and to a lesser degree, Karen became involved with a neighborhood gang that was heavily into drug use. The two youngest children, Teresa and Donna, turned to "surrogate

mothers", which included neighbors, older baby-sitters and an aunt who lived nearby.

Joan and Frank both agreed that neither of them were playing their spousal roles adequately. When both of them drank and partied together, there was the illusion of a good relationship. Once Frank stopped drinking, however, a huge gap opened up between them that had previously been bridged by alcohol. It became evident that they had little in common and that they were unable to communicate effectively with each other. Joan felt neglected by Frank because of the time he spent away from home involved in all of his extra-curricular activities, and Frank was bitterly disappointed because he felt that his political ambitions were thwarted because Joan was unable to play the role of supportive helpmate who would stand behind him and promote his career. The growing anger and resentment that they each felt toward each other as a result of these unmet needs contributed to the further deterioration of the marriage.

The children also performed formal roles in the family. Since he was the oldest child in the family, Paul had been expected by his father to shape up and take over the aspects of parental roles that were not being played by Joan, due to her alcoholism, and by Frank, because of all of his outside commitments. Paul was overwhelmed by these expectations because he was not capable of performing these roles. He responded to this pressure by doing as little in the household

as he could get away with. He was in charge of putting out the garbage, which he did, but he constantly had to be told to do anything else around the house. Most of the time he stayed away from home, only returning if he needed a ride somewhere. Ironically, Joan continued in the role of family chauffeur even though she was drunk most of the time.

In direct contrast to Paul, Frankie pitched in and did many chores around the house. His main job was to take care of the lawn, but he would also do whatever else needed to be done. In addition, he was continually working on many repair projects around the house. He always had a very strong work ethic. From the time he was thirteen he worked in a restaurant, first as a dishwasher and then as a food preparer. He usually worked long hours, sometimes twelve hours a day.

As the oldest daughter, Karen was also expected to take up a great deal of the slack that resulted from her mother relinquishing many of her homemaker and maternal functions as her alcoholism progressed. She helped with the laundry and did many of the other household chores that needed doing. Although she did what she could, Karen claimed that she felt very resentful about having to make dinner so often, and she resisted taking the whole load of running the household on her shoulders. Teresa and Donna, as the two youngest children, were not expected to assume as much responsibility as the others in the family, but it was assumed that they would help out in whatever way they could with the household chores.

It should be noted that no one in the Neilsen family was satisfied with the division of labor that existed prior to Joan's sobriety. Joan pointed out that, while she initially had been content to stay at home and raise children because she hated teaching, eventually she felt "stuck" because she was home with the children all day while Frank could come and go as he pleased. She felt ill-prepared to be a housewife and a mother who singlehandedly had to take care of five children who were extremely close in age. As her alcoholism progressed and Joan became less capable of performing the housewife-mother role adequately and it became necessary for other family members to take over, there was a great deal of anger and resentment on the part of Frank and the children. Frank felt overburdened with the demands that arose when Joan could no longer perform her domestic roles. He pointed out that he was "running between trying to practice law, keeping the house going, shopping, doing the laundry, and keeping the kids in school." It was quite difficult and stressful for him to come home to a household of young demanding kids and a drunk wife. He came to expect that the children would assume a great deal of responsibility in the household. The children came to resent their mother for abdicating her formal roles in the family, as well as their father for putting so much pressure on them to take over some of her duties.

Informal Roles After Recovery

As Joan Neilsen's alcoholism progressed, she gradually assumed the "sick role". Initially she assumed this role only once in awhile, but toward the end of her active period, she occupied this role on a full-time basis. Joan talked about how she would hibernate in her room on weekends and would spend her time sleeping and drinking. She also spoke of certain incidents as occurring during "one of those times I was sick upstairs," as well as the fact that she "had alot of interests and hobbies but as I got sicker they became less and less." She also voiced the belief that she could have coped better with feeling 'stuck' with the responsibility of the children "if I had not been so sick". The children spoke of the fact that "my mother was always in bed", or "she would gulp down her drinks and that would always knock her out. Then she would go and lie in her bed, and when she was able to get up she would gulp more." Family members frequently checked on her to "make sure she wasn't choking or vomiting". Descriptors that were used in reference to Joan by family members as well as herself which reflected the "sick role" included: debilitated, down and out, felt terrible, sick, in pain, out of it, "crapped out", useless, hit bottom, crazy, nuts, fog-bound, frazzled, isolated, overwhelmed, befuddled, confused, passed out, and not functioning.

Joan also referred to herself many times as being the "bad guy" in the family. As a result, many of the problems

that existed in the Neilsen family could be blamed on her. Descriptors that reflect this "bad guy role" included: insulting, hostile, enraged, pariah, outcast, complainer, alienated, resentful, angry, disgusted, erratic, self-righteous, "bitch on wheels", very formidable, ashamed, embarrassing, neglectful, cranky, not nice, inconsistent, defensive, unmotivated, vicious, complainer, violent, mean, nasty, arrogant, and "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde".

Another informal role that Joan was likely to play was that of "protector" of Paul from the disappointment, demands, and put-downs from his father. She was constantly defending him and coddling him, and did not expect as much from him as she did from her other children. She pointed out that she "was constantly getting him out of trouble. I thought I was protecting him from his father."

Joan also assumed the informal role of "follower" in the family as her alcoholism progressed. She was completely financially dependent on Frank and had completely lost her input into decision-making in the family as her drinking got worse.

In contrast, Frank was the indisputable "leader" in the family. He set the tone for the family, provided for the family, and made the necessary decisions. Although he was not there for the children as much as they needed him to be, they did turn to him for guidance regarding how to deal with their mother's erratic behavior, violent outbursts, and drunken

fogs. Descriptors of Frank that could be considered compatible with that role would be: capable, supportive, decent, very intelligent, community leader, success-oriented, depreciating, patronizing, dominating, and responsible.

Frank did not assume the "caretaker role" vis a vis Joan except in the most perfunctory way. While he took care of the basics in the running the household, Joan was, for the most part, left to her own devices. There were a few occasions when the children became her "caretakers", such as the time that she and the children drove across the country in a van. Joan was drunk and frequently was passed out during the trip. Paul, who was just sixteen and had only a learner's permit, had to do all of the driving, and the rest of the children, who were between eleven and fifteen, had to take care of themselves and their mother. When they were at home, however, and she took to her bed, everybody in the family more or less ignored her except to check on her occasionally. After awhile they even ceased doing that. They were actually relieved not to have her underfoot.

Frank was also described by himself and others as being a "martyr". He felt very put upon by having such a great deal of responsibility in the family. He felt sorry for himself regarding the personal sacrifices he had to make, such as his inability to pursue a much desired political career because of Joan's alcoholism. He was viewed by some of his children as being generous and selfless, yet unappreciated by Joan. Karen

said that she worried constantly about how her father would feel when he came home from a hard day at work not knowing what to expect. Close relatives from both sides of the family were very sympathetic to Frank's burdens. As a result, Frank derived some attention, support, understanding, and satisfaction from assuming the "martyr role".

Until the last few years of Joan's active alcoholism, Frank also had assumed the informal role of "enabler". In the early days, he was her drinking partner, which certainly served the purpose of encouraging her to drink. As long as he was drinking quite a bit himself, she never had to question her own drinking behavior. It was only when he quit drinking that she began to experience his scrutiny of her alcohol consumption. She began to resent his interference and started to use him as a "blaming post" for all her own negative feelings. She rationalized that his domineering and self-righteous behavior that was part of his "controller role", was the cause of her misery; certainly it was not the alcohol. A vicious cycle occurred in that, as Joan's alcoholism progressed, Frank's behavior reflected his own anger, frustration, and sense of being powerless over the situation, which in turn gave Joan a good excuse to drink. Frank was described by himself and family members as being hostile, angry, edgy, embarrassed, frustrated, obsessive-compulsive, enraged, bitter, scared, nosy, suspicious, irritable, impatient, insensitive, and worried. Another aspect of

Frank's enabling behavior was his tendency to take over for Joan when she couldn't function, and his frequent attempts to cover up for Joan's drinking and resulting problems, such as the time he bailed her out of jail and used his legal connections to plea bargain her DWI charge down to a speeding ticket. The result of all of this enabling was to shield her from the consequences of her drinking so that she did not have to face what it was doing to her and her family.

Interestingly, it was only after Frank began attending Al-Anon, where he learned about what enabling was and how important it was to stop doing it in an alcoholic family, that he was able to extricate himself from the "enabler role". He stopped covering up for her, and also ceased reacting to her and laying down the law regarding her drinking, and he no longer told her what to do. This did not occur overnight, but eventually it created such a strain that Joan was forced to see how bad things had really become in the family, and that there was nothing and no one to blame for it except for her alcoholism.

As the formal demands that were placed on Frank by the family increased as Joan's alcoholism progressed, he attempted to cope with this by withdrawing emotionally from the family. He became, in Joan's words, "a workaholic", "a duck-out artist", and a man with "a bachelor lifestyle who did his recreational thing" and was a "free agent who could come and go as he pleased". He was an avid golfer and poker player who

played just as hard as he worked. This took away a great deal of time and attention from his family. Frank himself recognized that he played this informal role of "emotional outsider" when he described himself as "a loner, a person you can't get close to who likes his own space." He also pointed out that he "was not in touch with his emotions and was unable to express his feelings" until he went to Al-Anon. He liked to immerse himself in his work to get away from a tense family situation, or he would go out to their island home all by himself in order to escape. All of his community activities also kept him away from home a great deal. The children pointed out that Frank was not easy to get close to, not good at communicating with the family, was not emotionally receptive or perceptive, avoided being at home as much as possible, and when he was home, he totally tuned out the rest of the family or would only half listen to them.

Before Joan's recovery, the older son, Paul, was described by the family as being: a drifter, conniver, bonehead, rebellious, poor student, angry, scapegoat, screw-up, wild, a big tease, jackass, unreliable, troublesome, frustrated, gullible, procrastinator, acting out, easily influenced, overwhelmed, mean, thief, drug and alcohol abuser, inconsiderate, unmotivated, very hurt, crazy, a curtain crawler, the bad one, hot-headed, hyperactive, punk, outcast, illogical, lacked initiative, lacked drive and ambition, had a bad temper, misbehaved, and did dumb things. In appearance

he was described as resembling a "Hell's Angel" with a scraggly beard, a leather jacket, a motorcycle, and a tatoo. He hung around with a neighborhood gang called the "River Rats", a group that consisted, according to one of his sisters of "some really sleazy people". This gang encouraged him to steal his sisters' jewelry to get money for drugs. Paul's informal role could be summarized with the term "scapegoat" or "acting out child". He attracted a great deal of negative attention which averted the focus periodically away from Joan's problems and provided some relief for the family from always having to worry about Joan.

Paul also seemed to follow his father's example of becoming an "emotional outsider" to his family. He, too, was known as a "duck out artist" who left the scene when things got tense or unpleasant. He escaped by using drugs and alcohol and becoming involved with the local gang. Members of the family came to view Paul as a person who was not able to cope.

Another role that Paul assumed in the family was being in the middle of a triangle with his mother and father. His father expected a great deal of him as a child which he was unable to live up to. Joan felt guilty about this because she believed that Paul's problems could have stemmed from fetal alcohol effects that might have resulted from Joan's heavy consumption of alcohol while she was pregnant with him. At the same time, Paul's acting out was providing Joan and Frank

with an issue which they could argue about and vent a great deal of frustration and anger that they really felt toward each other but were unable to express directly. In addition, by protecting Paul in the face of Frank's harassment of him, Joan was able to assuage her guilt to some extent for drinking during her pregnancy.

While Paul became known as "the bad one" in the family, Frankie, in contrast, was seen as "the good one". Ironically, this was in spite of the fact that he also did poorly in school and was even more heavily involved in drinking and drugs than Paul was. This was because he had the ability to be a "cover up goody two shoes". According to family members, he was quiet, very bright, had a high I.Q., and was the "apple of his father's eye". He also was a very big help around the house doing all sorts of repairs and projects without being told. When he set his mind to completing a task, he became obsessive and perfectionistic about it and always did a good job. Since he had a much more easy-going and level-headed personality in comparison to Paul, he was perceived in a much more positive light, his school problems tended to be overlooked, and his parents were, for the most part, unaware of his extensive, daily drug and alcohol use. He was very good at covering it up, and they didn't want to believe that he could have a problem with substance abuse. He sometimes hung around on the fringes of the "River Rats", mainly for access to drugs, but he never got involved in the stealing

that his brother did. He worked hard, was never lazy, and since he had held a job from the time he was thirteen, worked long hours and was therefore able to pay most of his own expenses, he was viewed as being the "responsible one" in the family, and could even have been considered a "workaholic".

It was not surprising that there was a good deal of sibling rivalry between Paul and Frankie. They had nothing in common besides their interest in drugs and alcohol, plus they had been pitted against each other by their family's opposite perceptions of them. Frankie was seen as being reasonable, hard working, and got a good deal of positive attention for it, while Paul was viewed as hot-headed, illogical, and lazy, which evoked a great deal of negative attention. Frankie observed that "I got the label of 'goody-goody' and I wasn't a 'goody-goody' because I was really stoned out of my face." Frankie also confided that he felt a great deal of guilt because he didn't want Paul to feel like an outcast. Paul was always treated that way by the family, however, especially since he was constantly being compared to how good Frankie was even though he knew that Frankie wasn't as good as his parents thought he was.

Karen also experimented with drugs and alcohol, but not to the extent that her brothers did. She sometimes hung around with the "River Rats", but it never became a major part of her social life. She was closer to her brothers than to her sisters, and also felt closer to her father than to her

mother. She felt embarrassed by her mother, and very hurt that Joan was not there for her emotionally during a particularly painful adolescence. She often tried to manipulate her mother to stop drinking by being loving and affectionate when she was sober, and cold, distant, and hostile when she was drinking, but to no avail. She also frequently tried to play a "mediator role" between her parents. She was afraid when they fought and would always attempt to defend one parent to the other or would try to get them to make up. She felt particular sympathy for her father, and was described by her brother Frankie as being her father's pet.

Descriptors that were used by the family to describe Karen indicated that in addition to being a "mediator" and "manipulator" in the family, she also appeared to occupy a "victim role". She was described as being upset, embarrassed, afraid, discouraged, chubby, "ugly duckling", fearful, hopeless, unattractive, angry, ashamed, unhappy, anxiety-ridden, introverted, baffled, poor student, overwhelmed, hurt, scared, unpopular, and lacked confidence. She did not get nearly the amount of attention that she craved from either parent. Karen also claimed that she felt as if she had a lost childhood because all of her energies and concerns were wrapped up in her mother's drinking. She had no motivation or goals, and had no idea what her future was going to be. She took a lot of abuse from kids at school because of her

appearance because she was overweight, had frizzy hair, and wore "coke bottle" glasses.

The Neilsen's second daughter, Teresa could be classified as fulfilling the "lost child role". She hid in her room, and like her father and Paul, was a complete "emotional outsider" to the family. She, too, was referred to by family members as a "duck-out artist". Unlike Paul and Frank, however, she did not have a group of friends or activities that she could turn to outside of the family. She was not interested in school, had trouble making friends, and appeared aloof, stand-offish, distant, and alone, both within the family and outside of it. She did not have much of a social life, and spent a great deal of time alone in her room where she manicured and painted her nails and listened to music. She was also described as being moody, timid, baffled, discouraged, self-doubting, as having no opinion or direction, and as a child who experienced quiet rebellion. She was "lost in the crowd" and "went with the flow, but did her own thing." She sometimes hung around with her younger sister Donna, but was just as likely to spend time by herself. There was some sibling rivalry between Teresa and Karen, because Karen was very jealous of her sister's physical attractiveness. Teresa also kept Karen at arms length emotionally, which she did with everyone else in the family. Teresa particularly avoided her mother because she was afraid of her. She was so upset by her mother's drinking that she

did not drink or do drugs herself and vowed that she never would.

The youngest child, Donna, was also angry, baffled, and discouraged by her mother's drinking, but she reacted to it in a completely different way from her siblings. She was described by her family as being a "joker", "kidder", and "mascot". She was perceived as being "cute little Donna" by everyone and was affectionately referred to as "Peanut". She worked very hard at trying to cheer everyone up and to make everything nice. When things got tense she turned to "surrogate mothers" outside of the family, such as her aunt or a neighbor, for emotional support more often than Teresa did. She also got lost in her school work as a means of escape. She always studied hard and was the only one of the children to do well in school. This put her into the role of being a "good child". Like Teresa she, too, was abstinent from drugs and alcohol and had vowed to stay that way for the rest of her life. Of all the children, she was the closest to her mother, who referred to her as her "buddy". She kept trying to please Joan in the hope that she could make her happy and therefore not need to drink anymore.

Formal Roles After Recovery

The division of labor in the Neilsen family has altered noticeably since Joan's recovery from alcoholism. Joan immediately joined Frank in assuming the breadwinner role when

she began managing the family's ice cream parlor. Later, she became a full-time alcoholism counselor at a treatment facility after going to school to take courses in that field. Now that all of the children are older they, too, have joined in the performance of the breadwinner role to some extent. Those who were attending school have been working part-time and during the summers, while those who weren't in school have been employed full-time. Frank, however, has served as the main provider, because he has been earning the largest income of all family members due to his successful law practice.

Since her recovery, Joan has actively participated in the running of the household, but she has resisted assuming the homemaker role. She commented that "I love the current domestic arrangement. I don't feel any need to take care of them or houseclean for them, but I do want to pull my equal share." Since several of the children have been living at the island home without their parents being present except on the weekends, they have been expected to collectively play the homemaking role by keeping the place clean, cooking, doing their own laundry, and taking care of the yard. Frank and Joan also had hired someone to do the heavy cleaning of the house, which the kids did not have time to do because of their work schedules. Frank has been doing the family's weekly shopping on his way out to the island home on Fridays, and Joan has been pitching in with regard to chores around the house when she has stayed out there. Frank has been paying

all the expenses for the upkeep of the house, but he generally has not done many household chores, except for emptying the dishwasher.

When Joan and Frank have stayed at their suburban home during the week, they both have worked to keep the house in order, they each have done their own laundry, and they each have taken care of fixing their own breakfast and lunch. Neither one of them has been responsible for preparing dinner because they have generally gone out to eat together when they have gotten home from work.

One of the first things that Joan did when she returned from treatment was to pick up the reigns of the mother role and to resume being in charge of the children. She took over the role of disciplinarian, and laid down the law with them, particularly with Paul, who was told that she had taken his stereo for collateral if he ever stole jewelry or anything else from family members again. She also told him to shape up and get a job, which he did. She became more aware of what was going on with her children and became more firm and consistent with her discipline and expectations of them. She has also worked on reestablishing the lines of communication with her children who now come to her to talk about their problems and concerns. She stated that she now "has a good, strong, mother-child relationship with the kids, but it is more adult and loving."

The children have all expressed joy at having their mother more emotionally available to them. Karen even said that "I just can't seem to get enough of her. It's like I am making up for lost time. Until about a year ago I would sleep with her when my father was away just so I could be close to her." Joan pointed out that sometimes she has gotten impatient with Karen's need for attention and has felt taxed by her emotional demands, especially when she has just gotten home from work. For the most part, however, she has been happy that her children have wanted to be around her and confide in her, and that she has been able to provide them with some of the emotional sustenance that they all have needed.

Frank, however, has remained emotionally aloof from his children. While they have appreciated him as a very generous provider, they have felt that he has not been emotionally supportive of them. His attention has remained focused on his law practice, his golf, his poker games, and his community activities. Although he has been at home a little bit more frequently and has seemed to enjoy it more than was the case before sobriety, he has not given the children the undivided attention that they would like from him. He has been very helpful to them in solving major problems, but it has been their day-to-day lives that he has been unable to get involved with. In addition, his children have complained that he has had a tendency to be patronizing and deprecating toward them.

The spousal roles have undergone some modification since recovery because Joan and Frank had learned in treatment how to communicate with each other more effectively. Since they have been spending more time alone together because the children have not been around as much, they have been able to enjoy each other and focus on each other's strengths rather than weaknesses. In addition, they have both been working on forgiveness of one another.

It should be pointed out that neither Joan nor Frank were completely satisfied with the spousal role that the other has been playing since recovery, although both have expressed awareness that part of the problem might have been that they had unrealistic expectations of each other to begin with. Frank initially expected that once she was sober, Joan would assume the role of "keeper of the hearth, dutiful wife, and helpmate to a political career" in addition to becoming a self-fulfilled person. When she balked at this, saying "now that I'm sober you want me to fulfill all the roles I never wanted in the beginning", Frank was very disappointed and angry at the fact that he saw her as interfering with his vertical progress, even in her sobriety. Eventually, Frank became resigned to his lost political opportunities. He even pointed out philosophically that "perhaps it wasn't meant to be".

Joan's expectations of Frank after sobriety were that he would suddenly become a solicitous, romantic, attentive soul

mate. When this did not transpire, she was angry. In retrospect she realized that "I wanted him to be somebody else: Rock Hudson, Paul Newman, and Robert Redford all rolled into one, plus a companion that I could talk to where we'd have these great intellectual discussions. But it wasn't going to happen." She then realized that she had to work on accepting him for who he was. In spite of this, she has continued to feel lonely and emotionally neglected, and has expressed the feeling that she and Frank have not had as good a relationship as she would like. In order to deal with this, they have been going to a counselor, who has been working with Frank on his intimacy issues so that he might become better able to express intimacy and warmth with his family, and who has encouraged Joan to try to "woo Frank back" by making a conscious effort to reach out to him, maybe by asking him out on a date.

As was mentioned earlier, the Neilsen children have assumed both breadwinner and homemaker roles in the family to some extent. When Paul was living at home, he did not do his share of the work, according to many family members. His chores were to take care of the lawn and pile up the woodpile, but he frequently had to be reminded to do them. He did his own laundry, but only when he completely ran out of clothes. In addition, although he has been employed full-time, he balked at having to pay rent, and only paid it when he was asked for it by his father. Since Paul moved out of the

family home, he has avoided helping out the family, and only has come around to work on things that needed to be done around the house when he was specifically asked. He has returned, however, to do his laundry in the family's washer and dryer. He still has been expected to pay rent to his parents, because he has been renting an apartment in a building that they owned nearby.

It has only been recently that Frank has realized that he expected too much of Paul as the oldest child. The combination of that realization, along with the fact that all of the children have become young adults and therefore have been on more equal footing with each other recently, has led to the removal of Frank's imposition of the big brother role that had frustrated Paul because he was unable to fulfill it.

Frankie has been viewed by his family as the family repairman or "Mr. Fixit". He has always done maintenance and repair projects around the house. In addition to being a full-time engineering student, he has been working part-time in construction, and has always done his share of chores around the house, especially the cooking and bringing in the wood to make the fires. He has been expected to take care of his own expenses, but has not had to pay rent because he is in school.

After Karen graduated from college, she went to live at the family's island home. She has been working full-time as a waitress so that she could pay for her own expenses and save

money for graduate school. She has not been expected to pay rent because she has been saving her money for an education that she has been planning to resume within a few months. She has done some of the cooking and cleaning around the house, as well as some of the daily shopping. She stated that she believed that she carried her own weight with regard to the running of the household, although she has felt at times "like the maid" when some of her siblings have not pitched in enough.

Teresa was singled out by several family members as being guilty of this. Although she has been working full-time as a beautician and has been paying rent as well as for her own personal expenses, she has been remiss in doing her share around the house. Her mother described her as being "not as house-oriented" as some of her siblings. It generally has been necessary to ask her to help with household chores since she would rarely do them of her own volition, except for preparing her own food when she has gotten hungry, and doing her own laundry.

Although Donna has lived away at college during most of the year, she has willingly helped with the household chores, especially cooking and doing her own laundry, when she has been home. In addition, she has had the responsibility of managing the family's ice cream parlor in the summer. While she has been paying for her own expenses, she has not been expected to pay rent because she is still a student.

The Neilsen family has been satisfied with most aspects of their division of labor, although there has been some dissatisfaction expressed by family members regarding the belief that Paul and Teresa haven't always done their share. In spite of this, however, the Neilsen household has been running smoothly.

Informal Roles After Recovery

Once Joan had assumed the informal role of "recovering alcoholic", which occurred during treatment when she finally accepted that the label of "alcoholic" pertained to her, she began relinquishing many of the informal roles that she had assumed prior to her recovery. One role that she ceased playing was the "sick role". Descriptors that reflected this included: sober, feels good, not so tired, able to enjoy life, has been feeling better, has been coping well, and has learned to survive. As a result of having relinquished the "sick role", she has become much more competent and has been able to resume the formal roles in the family that she had come to neglect during the progression of her alcoholism. She described herself as having "an enormous capacity for getting things done", and family members have agreed with that assessment.

Some of the words and phrases that were used by the family to describe Joan since her recovery have illustrated the fact that Joan has no longer been playing the "bad guy"

role, and has become a "good guy" and an admired role model in the family. These included: hopeful, forgiving, accepting, relaxed, concerned, tolerant, adjusted, genuine, honest, no longer violent, more communicative, breaking down her walls, intellectually curious, emotional, passionate, lovable, understanding, trustworthy, selfless, strong, and responsible. A few negative traits were also mentioned, such as: picky, obsessive, sometimes bitchy, and critical, but the positive traits outweighed the negative ones by far, which certainly was not the case prior to her recovery.

Another role that Joan has relinquished since sobriety has been the "follower role". She has recently been sharing the "leadership role" with Frank. Descriptors which have illustrated that role shift included: independent, has options, does her own thing, striver, strong-willed, speaks up, takes initiative, assertive, is not a "nice little girl", has a lot of freedom, doesn't feel trapped, and has been supporting herself more.

One informal role that Joan has continued to play to some extent has been Paul's "protector", but with some modification. While she has stepped back and let him "do his own thing" and has expected more from him than she did previously, she has also continued to protect and coddle him, and has served as a "peacemaker" between Frank and Paul when they have been in conflict.

As a recovering alcoholic, Joan has been very instrumental in encouraging healthy changes in her family. In early recovery she was so zealous about what she learned in treatment that she became in her own words, "a goody two shoes recovering alcoholic". She described the situation this way:

As I was recovering, I was growing at a faster pace than Frank and the kids. There were times when I would get angry about it. I would always be trying to pull the family along too fast. Now that I was getting sober, I wanted them all to learn this wonderful insight. That was where it was getting out of balance. Some were more willing to try to get it than others.

Frankie concurred with this assessment when he mentioned that in early sobriety his mother "..got on everyone's case and bitched about their quirks and imperfections, especially with my father. She even got the family to go to a family counselor. It was one of my mother's attempts at curing the family."

More recently Joan has stopped trying to force other family members to change and has focused on her own attitudes and behaviors, which has indirectly led to some changes in some family members' attitudes and behaviors as well. An example of this was discussed by Joan when she pointed out that she had felt like she was always "in jail" for Frank, that he always wanted to make her the "bad guy" because he blamed her for having to give up on some of his goals. She finally got tired of fighting with him about this and she soon realized that just because he viewed her that way didn't mean that she had to accept the role any longer. She finally

rejected that negative role, and worked at focusing on her positive attributes in order to cultivate her own positive identity. The eventual result was that Frank also stopped perceiving her as "the bad guy" and ceased blaming her for his unrealized potential.

Frank's informal roles in the family have not changed as drastically as Joan's have. As was mentioned earlier, he had ceased playing the "enabler role" prior to Joan's recovery, which provided a strong impetus for getting her to realize that she had a serious alcohol problem and needed help. This continued in her early recovery period as he worked his program and left her to work hers. He was very supportive of her efforts to recover, never complained, paid for her treatment, and continued to go to Al-Anon. This shift away from being an "enabler" and "controller" had been of great help to Joan in her struggle to recover. Since then, however, modifications in his informal roles have been minor.

He has continued to assume the "leadership role" in the family, with the difference being that he has been sharing it with Joan since her recovery. He has been described by the family as being: a great problem-solver, well-organized, responsible, having a good deciphering mind, objective, admired, professional, intelligent, and fiscally cautious. All of these could be seen as traits that would be beneficial to a leader.

Since Joan's recovery, Frank has assumed the "martyr role" once in awhile, not but nearly as often as he did when Joan was drinking. It was noted by family members that when he has bemoaned his dashed political aspirations, it sometimes has taken on overtones of martyrdom. In recent years, however, when he has taken on this role, Joan has called him on it.

One informal role that has not changed very much since recovery has been his role of "emotional outsider". This was reflected in the following descriptions of Frank after Joan's recovery: workaholic, "duck- out artist", narcissistic, has a big shield around him, hard to get close to, critical, insensitive, and noncommunicative. Even Frank pointed out that "I have been characterized as a person you can't get close to."

An informal role that Frank has assumed since recovery that he did not play before has been that of the one in the family who was "the object of everyone else's worry". Joan relinquished this role when she recovered, and the role appeared to have been assigned to Frank by the rest of the family. They are concerned about his health, his weight and his welfare. He has begun drinking again, albeit in moderation, and "he eats horrible food, doesn't exercise, and is always under pressure". Family members have been critical of his drinking, overeating, and gambling. As a result of this, a great deal of the family's attention and concern that

had previously been given to Joan and her alcoholism, has been focused on Frank and his physical and emotional well-being. It should be noted that the criticism that he has received for this as well as for his emotional aloofness has sometimes placed him in something of a "scapegoat role", whereby family members could vent their frustrations by criticizing Frank.

Paul's informal role in the family has been altered a great deal since Joan's recovery. He has been perceived by the others as having straightened out considerably, although there has been some evidence that remnants of the "scapegoat role" have continued to exist to some extent. After Joan returned from treatment and "laid down the law" to him, he stopped stealing his sisters' jewelry, quit doing drugs, stopped hanging around with the neighborhood gang, and got a job. When he got back from his stint in the National Guard, it was apparent to his family that he had grown up a great deal. Since recovery, he has been viewed by his family as someone who has faced reality, has been self-sufficient, in control of his life, living on his own, more mature and responsible, pulling himself together, and not causing problems anymore. They also described him as being mechanically gifted, a good guy, a nice person, sweet, kind, sensitive, bright, and insightful.

Although Paul has apparently shown great improvement in his attitude and behavior, there were still some areas of concern. Several family members were worried about his

drinking. Joan even referred to him as an "early stage alcoholic" who so far has been able to maintain control of his drinking, and some of his siblings noticed that he has tended to get nasty when he has been drinking. He also has developed an ulcer which has only been aggravated by his drinking. Paul, however, has not perceived his drinking as a problem. His view was: "God, it's just beer. No problem. A beer after work, big deal."

In addition, Paul also has been characterized by the family as being unreliable, prone to exaggerate, a maverick, and a hot-head who has gotten wild sometimes. He has also continued to experience low self-worth and has had his share of financial problems because of his tendency to spend too much money.

An informal role of Paul's that has only been altered to a limited degree since Joan's sobriety has been that of "emotional outsider". While members of his family have perceived him to be more approachable and easier to talk to, he has been the least likely one to come home to confide in someone when something has been bothering him. He was also characterized as being less family-oriented than his siblings, and it was noticed that he has been even less involved in family matters since he moved away.

While Paul has extricated himself to a great extent from the role of "the bad one" in the family since recovery, Frankie has seemed to intensify his role as "the good one".

After Joan began her recovery, Frankie had quit drugs and alcohol cold turkey once he was convinced during family week that the label of "chemically dependent" or "alcoholic" applied to him. He then channeled all of his energies toward getting a college education. Interestingly, Frankie has recently rejected the label of "alcoholic" for himself and has begun drinking in moderation, although he has remained aware that it could become a problem for him in the future.

Characteristics that have been attributed to him that reflected his role as the "good one" included the observations that he has been successful, intelligent, hard-driven, goal-oriented, achievement-oriented, productive, hard-working, reliable, motivated, stable, consistent, cautious, sensitive, perceptive, enthusiastic, generous, and a good, serious student. Frankie expressed the fact that he has had so many interests, desires and goals that he likened himself to Walter Mitty. He even confided that someday he would like to be famous. Family members noted that his driving ambition has seemed to take on a compulsive quality since Joan's recovery. This has been reflected in the descriptions of him by the family as being a meticulous, impatient, stubborn, perfectionistic, and a "workaholic" with a compulsive personality. Interestingly, Frankie himself attributed his desire to be the "perfect child" or "family hero" as being the result of his attempt to overcome his remaining low self-esteem.

Frankie and Paul have continued to experience sibling rivalry, but it has not been as intense as it had been prior to Joan's recovery. While they often have done battle because of their tendency to view things so differently, they have also been likely to forgive and forget and hang around with each other later on.

When Joan was first in recovery, Karen avoided facing her painful feelings and continued to wallow in the self-pity that was part of the "victim role". Although she was happy that her mother had stopped drinking, she was initially worried that her sobriety wasn't permanent and was confused about the changes that were going on in her family. She said that "it was a rough road at first because everything was changing. It was scary adapting to new roles." Eventually, with the help of a counselor she was able to struggle through her painful feelings and extricate herself, to a great extent, from the "victim role". She ceased feeling like the alcoholism was a big, black cloud hanging over her head and was able to become more optimistic. She stopped experimenting with drugs, and has calmed down and come into her own. She went to college, did well, graduated, and has been planning to go on to graduate school. She has been described recently as being: self-actualized, hopeful, more confident, motivated, growing, sensitive, intelligent, friendly, personable, expressive, empathetic, honest, and self-aware.

There have been some remnants of the "victim role" for Karen, however. She has continued to have trouble facing painful feelings. In addition, she sometimes has felt belittled by her father, hurt by the fact that her mother was not there for her during her painful adolescence, and jealous of her sister Teresa's good looks because she has continued to feel like an ugly duckling by comparison. Her father expressed concern that Karen sometimes has gotten "lost in the shuffle" because she hasn't had boyfriends like her two sisters have and "has not gotten enough reassurance and supportiveness by way of praise," although her sense of self has become much more positive in recent years.

Karen admitted that she has sometimes played the "manipulator role" with her mother, although after recovery the manipulation has not been about trying to get her to stop drinking as it had been before, but to get Joan to pay attention to her. She has also continued to perform the "mediator role" between her parents. Many times she has placed herself between them when they have been in conflict. She has been able to see each one's vulnerabilities and has tried to protect them because she has wanted them both to feel good.

After Joan's recovery, Teresa seemed to come out of her self-imposed isolation and to really blossom. She began to make many friends, and became extremely social and popular, especially with boys. Her mother saw this as being an

eruption from all those years of being so quiet and alone. She was seen by the family as finally having goals, starting to connect with others, being able to express herself and believe in herself, and being successful in her work as a hair stylist. She stopped being the "lost child" that nobody paid attention to and became recognized as "the family beauty". Family members referred to her as being very pretty, a beautiful girl, and as having "Greek Goddess looks". She enjoyed partying and was described as being "wild in bars where she would drink and dance the night away."

Although she was able to slough off the "lost child" role after her mother's recovery, she has been somewhat less successful at detaching from the role of "emotional outsider" in the family. While it was recognized that she has not been as much of a "duck out artist" as she had been previously, that she has begun talking more than she ever did before, and that she was able to confide more in Joan than had been the case before her recovery, she seemed to continue to be something of a loner in the family in that she remained emotionally apart from everyone else. This was especially the case with regard to her father, with whom she finally gave up on trying to have a close relationship. It was pointed out by several family members that she has often been difficult to talk to because "you don't know what her response will be or what she'll do with the information." Her outsider status was

reinforced by the fact that she was considered by her family to be a maverick and a nonconformist.

In some ways, Teresa has been sharing the remnants of the "scapegoat role" with Paul, and at times, her father. As was the case with her father and brother, she was subjected to much criticism regarding her tendency to detach emotionally from the family. In addition, there were also other personality traits that she exhibited that were subject to her family's disapproval, such as being moody, selfish, irresponsible, insensitive, defensive, impatient, phony, cold, and volatile.

Donna also has experienced some modification in her informal roles since her mother's recovery. While she has continued to exhibit a good sense of humor, she has been less of a "joker" or "mascot". She has become a more serious person who has been less likely to hide her true feelings behind a smile. She has become aware of a lot of emotional quandaries that she has just begun to sort out. She has remained her mother's "buddy" in that she has felt free to talk to her mother about her problems and because Joan has felt a special bond with her youngest daughter because she has reminded her of herself.

Like Frankie, Donna has attempted to enhance the role of the "good child" which she had played previously by becoming a "perfect child" or "family hero". She has been getting straight A's in college, has been active and successful in

sports, and has been very involved in extracurricular activities at school where she has assumed many leadership positions. She received a very positive reaction from her father when she announced that she would like to go to law school after graduation. He even began to make plans of someday turning his law practice over to her. Some of her siblings noted that Frank has appeared to be putting all of his hopes on her. It has been recognized by her family that she has been quick, capable, reliable, very intelligent, loyal, energetic, a very good student, and even a "goody-goody".

The Dolan Family

Formal Roles Before Recovery

Prior to Rita Dolan's recovery, she and her husband, Jack, had a traditional division of labor, whereby Rita was a full-time homemaker who almost singlehandedly raised the children, and Jack functioned as the sole breadwinner. Even as her alcoholism progressed, Rita never actually abdicated responsibility for the domestic role, it was just that sometimes she performed it less adequately than others, depending on whether she was drunk or sober. She cooked, cleaned, did laundry, picked up after her children, made the beds, knitted, crocheted, and had the responsibility of encouraging the children's academic pursuits, with little or no help from Jack. When she was drinking, she often did not

get up and make breakfast for the children, would sometimes burn the food when she tried to cook, and could not keep the house clean. In her sober periods, she felt compelled to try to clean up the mess that had accumulated while she was drinking, because she felt that she had to do something to prove her worth. Even when she was sober, she felt overworked and overwhelmed. At one point she had children at home with three different sets of needs: some were teenagers, some were small children and one was an infant. No matter how much she tried to keep the house clean, with six children "the house was trashed every night."

Interestingly, when the children in the family have looked back, they have acknowledged that the homemaker role did, indeed, belong to Rita but that most of the time she performed it inconsistently and inadequately. Jack, on the other hand, seemed to perceive that she had done an acceptable job, especially under the circumstances. He said:

It's amazing that she did it as well as she did. The kids were always clean, were always fed, and were always in school. I never worried that the house was going to burn down. As sick as she was, she was able to function and raise those six kids.

Perhaps the difference in the perceptions of Jack and the kids could be explained by the fact that Jack was rarely home, and that several of the children attempted to take over some of Rita's chores when she was in the midst of one of her periodic drinking bouts.

Jack's formal role involved trying to support a large family. Jack described this role by saying, "I was just the guy who hauled in the bacon." He always wondered if he would be able to support his family adequately and felt intense pressure to do so since he was the sole source of income. When he stopped working as an actor and became an agent, he felt like he was ten years behind his contemporaries, so he thought that he had to work twice as hard. This meant that he was hardly ever home. As his success grew, he had many more professional responsibilities, which required even more of his time and attention. As Rita's drinking progressed, Jack's work also served as an escape for him. Consequently, he was not much help at raising the children, and he did little if any housework, although on the weekends he did sometimes do the grocery shopping and yard work, and he always cooked dinner on Saturday night.

Both Rita and Jack were often remiss in performing their parental roles. Because of the alcoholism, Jack's career demands, and the large number of children in the family, there were many times when the children's personal and emotional needs were not being met. Jack did not check the children's homework on a day-to-day basis, but he did deal with the big problems concerning school, and Rita was able to monitor day-to-day academic progress only sporadically depending on whether she was drinking or not. Jack was also a very inconsistent disciplinarian. He remained oblivious to what

was going on with regard to the children's behavior, because he assumed that Rita was dealing with it, but every once in awhile he would come down extremely hard on the children when he completely lost his temper and vented his pent up anger at them.

In light of Rita's inability to consistently perform the maternal role, several of her children turned elsewhere for "surrogate mothers". Beth turned to her older sisters, and Margaret and Valerie turned to two unmarried women who were sisters to each other who lived next door. Steven dealt with Jack's abdication of the paternal role by forming a close friendship with an older man where he worked who taught him his trade and became something of a "surrogate father" to him. Both Rita and Jack pointed out that, at times, they had felt jealous and resentful toward the people that some of their children had turned to for substitute parenting.

Jack and Rita's spousal roles were not being performed adequately either. In the early years of their marriage, they had loved each other a great deal and had been very close, but their relationship deteriorated over the years into a volatile, angry, spiteful one, due to the hurt and pain that was caused by the drinking and extramarital affairs. Trust and communication between them completely broke down, and they were no longer fulfilling each other's emotional needs. Jack, however, had the perception that things were "wonderful" between them when Rita was sober, and only deteriorated when

she was drinking, while Rita remembered that she only was putting up a good front when sober in order to hide her negative feelings toward Jack.

The formal roles that the children played sometimes fluctuated, depending on whether Rita was drinking or sober. Linda performed the role of "big sister". She was put in charge of the younger children and was expected to watch them, care for them, and even discipline them when her mother was drinking. When she was sixteen and her youngest sister Beth was born, she took on a maternal role, because she felt compelled to take responsibility for seeing that the baby was cared for, both physically and emotionally, because she was afraid that her mother was in no shape to consistently fulfill the parental role with regard to caring for an infant. She also performed some household chores. For example, it was her responsibility to keep the kitchen clean. When Linda got married and moved out at the age of twenty-one, Beth was devastated at the loss. This was when Margaret, at age thirteen, took over Linda's formal role of "big sister" and looked after Beth, with some help from Valerie. Whenever her mother went into treatment, Margaret took over the running of the household. She cooked, cleaned, did laundry, and took care of Beth. Rita noted that:

She really took my place when I was gone. This little kid had been made into a mother. It really shocked me. Oddly enough, I felt some resentment and yet I felt that I better say how much I appreciated it. I think I did eventually. Also,

when something went wrong, Beth went to Margaret.
That upset me too.

Margaret also stepped into Rita's homemaker and mother roles when Rita was in the middle of a drinking bout. She would make sure that all the children had breakfast, that their lunches were made, that they got off to school, and that they were fed dinner. She kept the kids in line, and served as a great source of comfort to her father, because he knew that things were getting done. While this meant that Margaret had to take on a great deal of responsibility in the family, it also contributed positively to her self-worth. It was not surprising then, that when her mother returned from treatment or sobered up from a binge, Margaret felt as if she had been fired from her job.

The resentment that Rita felt when Margaret assumed the homemaker and mother roles while she was drinking or in treatment might have been based on the fact that she had never officially abdicated those roles, even though she was not actually in a position to perform them properly. Also, seeing Margaret take on her roles temporarily may have exacerbated her guilt and feelings of low self-worth for not living up to the expectations of others and to her own expectations of herself.

Both Steven and Matthew were expected to assist their father in the role of caretaker of the yard. They were expected to keep the lawn mowed and the yard free from debris. As the boys got older, and Jack was home even less frequently,

they assumed almost the entire responsibility for these chores. In addition, both of them assumed a "big brother" role toward Beth, especially when she was the only one of the children who were living at home. Both brothers would make it a point to ascertain whether Beth was alright and being cared for properly.

For six years, Valarie had assumed the role of youngest child in the family whom everyone else took care of. When Beth came along however, she was deposed from this role, and Beth became the youngest child or baby of the family, which meant that Valerie was reassigned to the formal role of middle sister, which caused her to feel resentful toward Beth. When she was older, Valerie was expected to assist her sister, Margaret, with the household chores and the care of Beth, but she would only do so when asked. Although she helped out upon occasion, she never actually assumed the responsibility for getting the chores done.

When Beth was the last child living at home, she was sometimes treated as an only child by her parents, although in the eyes of her brothers and sisters, she remained the baby. Beth said that she liked being taken care of by others in the family, but as she got older, she came to resent it when she wasn't taken seriously. As a teenager, she also found herself substituting for her mother as her father's companion at social functions with business associates whenever her mother was in no condition to attend.

Another formal role that all of the children assumed as soon as they were old enough involved getting a job and earning an income to pay for their own expenses. This was especially important for the three oldest children, because Jack's income was considerably less at that time, and the children's earnings were essential. When the younger children worked, however, it was more for the purpose of building character, and teaching discipline and the value of money.

Informal Roles Before Recovery

The periodic nature of Rita's alcoholism contributed to the inconsistency with which she assumed informal roles in the family before her recovery. She was described by several family members as being like "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde." She was a totally different person when she was drinking. When sober she was described as being passive, pleasant, compliant, nice, and could be very good in a crisis by using logical and sound reasoning to get through it, but when she was drinking she would "just blow apart and go crazy", and behave like "a bitch on wheels". This had a "roller coaster effect on the family", and made Rita the center of attention in the family.

The "Dr. Jekyll" role that she played in the family involved being a "follower" due to her passive, compliant behavior. Jack even pointed out that Rita was used to having him do things for her and telling her what to do. She did not like this arrangement, but when she was sober she kept quiet

about it. Other characteristics that contributed to her performance of the "follower role" included descriptions of her being overwhelmed, indecisive, easily manipulated, not feeling worthwhile, never knowing how to stand up for herself, letting everybody walk all over her, feeling like a "mental pygmy", and feeling dominated.

The "Mr. Hyde" role which appeared when she was drinking was the "bad guy" role. Descriptors that reflected this included: dishonest, phony, inappropriate, misguided, very angry, negative, sneaky, secretive, undependable, erratic, bitch, cunning, manipulative, nasty, evil, ugly, slovenly, self-centered, vicious, a mess, unpredictable, frustrated, pathetic, biting tongue, spiteful, envious, jealous, and agitated.

Rita also assumed the "sick role" in the family, but initially this happened only when she was actively drinking. Descriptors that were used by people in the family with regard to Rita when she was drinking illustrated this recognition that she was in the sick role. These included words and phrases such as: in pain, sick, had a disease, slept alot, was depressed, ill, crazy, and helpless. Rita explained that she drank to "medicate my pain," and pointed out that, "when I got drunk, I would behave the same way as if I was sick. I would go to bed and not say anything." When this happened, family members just left her alone and did not expect her to perform her formal roles in the family. Toward the end of her active

alcoholism, however, after family members had become educated about alcoholism as a disease and realized that even when she was sober she was in the throes of addictive thinking, Rita was cast full-time in the "sick role".

Jack did not respond to Rita's "sick role" by performing the informal role of "caretaker", however. When she was drunk, he became angry toward her or ignored her. As a matter of fact, there were times when Rita really was sick, and she was mistaken for being drunk by Jack. For this reason, when Rita was sober but feeling ill, she tried to keep it from Jack, lest he think she was drinking.

When Rita did drink, Jack felt the need to keep an eye on her or he would appoint one of the children to watch their mother. Rita said that, "he was like the warden, and I don't know anybody who loves their warden." Jack was more than just in the "leadership role" in the family, he also performed the role of "controller." Descriptors which demonstrated his assumption of this informal role included: domineering, protective, a tenacious controller, pedantic, overbearing, rescuer, critical, and manipulative. Jack himself pointed out that he believed that it was his responsibility to "fix" Rita's alcoholism. He also felt compelled to make sure that all of his children continued to practice the Catholic faith.

Another informal role that Jack had assumed in the family was that of "workaholic." Jack stated that, "I ran away from my life with Rita for a long time. I delved into my work as

a way of avoiding what was waiting for me at home." If Rita was drinking, Jack would find all sorts of reasons to work late that night. His dedication to his job allowed him to build a very successful career at the same time that it provided him with a sense of self-worth and an escape from the alcoholism.

In comparison to their mother when she was drinking, Jack appeared to some of his children to be "the good guy" or even "the perfect one", in that he was larger than life, had good intentions, was charming, talkative, outgoing, loving, wonderful, very affectionate, and extremely religious. As the children got older, however, they became more aware of his imperfections, and began to view him in a more negative light. By the end of Rita's active alcoholism, Jack had gradually begun to share the role of "bad guy" with her, to some extent, in the eyes of most of his children. He was described as being self-centered, presumptuous, shallow, phony, angry, harried, narcissistic, devious, mean, selfish, had erratic mood swings, and a bad temper. Several of the children pointed out that, in hindsight, they came to realize that Jack was not really the strong, perfect parent that they could turn to when things got tough. In reality he had, for the most part, actually abandoned them, making it necessary for them to take care of themselves and deal with their mother's binges on their own. Apparently, "the perfect parent" was a fantasy that the children needed to believe in when they were small,

but eventually they realized that it was an illusion. In addition, when the children learned of his infidelities, any last vestiges of "the perfect parent" role was destroyed. He was viewed for a time as a hypocrite who wore his religion on his sleeve but was committing adultery at the same time.

Jack also assumed the role of "enabler" in his relationship with Rita. Because of his own denial, he was not aware of how serious her problem was for a few years, and during that period continued to drink with her. When she was arrested for drunk driving he bailed her out of jail, and got her a lawyer who plea bargained for a lesser charge. He made excuses for Rita's behavior and covered up for her at times. He tried to run her life, stop her drinking, and orchestrate her recovery. This created a power struggle between the two of them, whereby Rita would drink to demonstrate that Jack could not control her. Interestingly, a counselor once told Rita, "you're the strong one. He thinks he is, but you are. You are the tough one." In addition, without knowing it, Jack also enabled Rita's drinking by continuing with his infidelities. Rita was aware of this, and it gave Rita a good excuse to drink. At the same time, by having a drunk wife at home who was very difficult to be around, it gave Jack the rationalization that he needed to assuage his guilt for being unfaithful.

After having attended "family week" at one of Rita's treatment centers and becoming active in Al-Anon, Jack became

aware of his "enabler role" and gradually learned to stop the enabling of his wife's alcoholism. He stopped making excuses and covering up for Rita, and he worked hard at stepping back and not trying to run Rita's life. In addition, after experiencing what he referred to as a spiritual awakening, he stopped being unfaithful to Rita. It wasn't until this secret was brought out in the open, however, and Rita was forced to face her feelings about it, instead of burying them and numbing them with alcohol, that the most insidious aspect of the enabling ceased.

While she was still living at home, Linda was expected, as the oldest child, to be the strict older sister who bossed everybody around to make sure the children stayed in line. By taking care of her siblings in this way, she was also in an "enabler role", in that she was taking over a function that Rita should have been performing. In addition, Jack often placed Linda in the role of "policewoman" who was expected to monitor her mother's drinking for him. Although she was fun-loving, very social, boy-crazy, and jovial when she was with her friends, within the family she ended up playing the role of "the tough one". She was described by family members as being just like her father, hard, outspoken, angry, domineering, controlling, manipulative, bitter, perfectionist, "hard ass", gruff, no-nonsense, protective, and screaming and yelling all the time. While this role allowed her to help keep the family functioning, it also served as a way for her

to protect her more vulnerable feelings which included the fact that she felt hurt, paralyzed, overwhelmed, unlovable, naive, befuddled, frustrated, like she was screaming on the inside, and that she wanted desperately to please others. Linda noted that she would sometimes attempt to escape from both her "tough guy role" and her inner pain by spending time alone in her room, playing her records, and spinning fantasies for herself.

Eventually she got married as a means of escape. Since her husband was in the Navy, this meant that they had to move quite frequently, usually to places that were quite far away from her parents' home. After she was married, she continued to be perceived by other family members as "the tough one" and she even had a difficult time letting down her guard and allowing others to see her soft, vulnerable side. Even when she was raped, she initially tried to tough it out, pull herself together, and put it all behind her. After the rape, the need that she already had to be in control became almost an obsession. She was a meticulous housekeeper, because her home had to be perfect. Her children had to be perfect and her husband had to be perfect, and when they weren't, she ranted and raved and tried to force them to be what she thought they should be. She also had impossible expectations of herself.

Steven's informal role in the family was that of the "lost child." Although inwardly he was angry, rebellious,

hurt, sensitive, loving, sweet, considerate, fearful, depressed, confused, bitter and had difficulty coping, he appeared to his family members to be aloof, quiet, laid back, cool, cautious, private, modest, hiding, sneaky, and a phantom. When he was home he would just "go with the flow" and did not have any major expectations of his family. He said that before he learned about the disease of alcoholism, he thought that his mother just didn't like him. He also felt that his parents were never there for him. To cope with this, he isolated himself from the rest of the family and did not have much of a relationship with anybody. He had been very close with Linda when they were small children, but by the time they were adolescents, they completely avoided each other. He became an "emotional outsider" in the family. He hid from other family members and was difficult to get to know. When Steve was a teenager, and things got to be too difficult to handle at home, he:

...would run up the street, buy a pack of cigarettes, sit in the train station for three hours, and smoke the whole pack of cigarettes because I was angry. I would just sit there and sit there and sit there. Or I'd get on the train and ride to the next town and back again.

When he was older, he would get beer and drink it in his friend's basement, or would go down to a neighbor's house for chicken soup or a can of beer. He also became very involved with a rock band that frequently kept him away from home. In addition, he spent a lot of time with a man named Al Parra, who was a projectionist at the movie theater that Steve worked

at. Al taught him his trade, and became his mentor and "surrogate father". When Al died, it was a devastating loss for Steve, who was thirty-three years old at the time.

Once Steven moved out of the house, he rarely called his parents and seldom went over to visit, even though he lived only twenty minutes away. He did not make much of an effort to keep in touch with his brother and sisters over the years either, except he did check up on Beth once in awhile. When he knew that his mother was drinking, he would avoid answering the phone and would tell his wife to tell her that he wasn't home. His perception of his leaving home when he did was that he "stepped off the Titanic before it hit the iceberg" and he had no desire to get back on. He also confided that he didn't remember a lot about his life when he lived at home, because he had blocked it out of his mind.

In taking on the "lost child" role, Steve faded into the woodwork, which meant that he was not adding to the difficulties that the family was already facing. It also permitted him to have an escape hatch so that he could avoid that which was the source of so much pain for him. Interestingly, Steven's tendency toward isolation and withdrawal would reappear from time to time after he left home in the guise of periodic minor depressions which lasted about a week. During these times, he didn't want to be with anybody. This culminated in a major depression that occurred when he was thirty-four years old, which happened a year after

Al Parra died, and coincided with the beginning of his mother's recovery.

The informal role of "scapegoat" in the family was performed by Matthew. Descriptors for Matthew that reflected this role included: holy terror, destructive, intense, hyperactive, very angry, accident-prone, self-destructive, disruptive, noisy, in trouble, had learning disabilities, was a poor student, annoying, obstreperous, loud, obnoxious, defensive, unreliable, nuts, violent, always in trouble, scary, abusive, quite a handful, volatile, difficult, explosive, aggressive, intolerant, raucous, agitator, someone who raised hell, and was constantly criticized.

In describing Matthew, Rita said that he was "a cause of constant worry because he did terribly destructive things." He had many injuries and accidents: he was hit by a car, broke his hand, broke his neck playing football, split open his skull, drank insecticide, had a screw in his hand, a nail in his nose, and had a diseased kidney that had to be removed surgically. He got into all kinds of trouble in school. He was tardy, caused disturbances in classes and was thrown out, did poorly academically, was held back twice, and finally was sent to military school where he did not succeed either, so he returned to public school. He was embarrassed and resentful that he was in the same grade as Margaret, who was two years younger and a much better student than he was. He took it out on her by physically and verbally abusing her. His parents

took him for tutoring, for neurological testing, and to a psychiatrist. He also drank quite a bit, smoked and grew his own pot, and was picked up by the police a few times for not answering traffic tickets.

When he finally graduated from high school, he went away to college for half of a semester where he partied and never went to class. He moved back home, and then to an apartment nearby, which he shared with several other guys, and worked at a series of odd jobs. Eventually his father put him in touch with one of his business associates, who gave him a job in a state that was located fifteen hundred miles away. While he was there he had financial problems, and was fired or had resigned from several jobs.

In spite of his angry, destructive behavior, Matthew was actually a young man who was a very sensitive, intense, emotional person who idolized his mother and was desperate for her love and approval. He was deeply hurt by the alcoholism, but buried his hurt feelings under mounds of anger. By expressing that anger so explosively, he was able to release all the tension that was building up inside of him. Interestingly, another way that he coped with his overwhelming feelings was by writing poetry.

Matthew's "scapegoat role" also served a positive function in the family, in spite of its disruptive nature. As Rita put it, "when Matty acted out, nobody thought of my drinking, nobody thought about their problems. All the

attention converged on Matt." His behavior was so infuriating at times that family members could vent their own pent-up and often unacknowledged anger at him. He thus provided the family with a safety valve which allowed them to let off steam.

The role that Margaret played when all six children still lived at home was that of a "lost child." She was described as being uncompetitive, lost, ignored, pliable, shy, and someone who hid her feelings. She never wanted to tell anyone what was wrong. There was a secret part to her that she never shared. She sometimes escaped from what was going on in the house by going next door and spending time with two unmarried sisters named Nora and Cassie Reilly, who took an interest in her and her two younger sisters. She looked like "the good little girl" on the outside but on the inside felt hurt, sad, angry, resentful, and bitter. She did, however, try to get some of her needs met by being a "manipulator".

When Linda got married and left home, and Margaret assumed her formal role of "big sister" and, at times, the role of "little mother" when Rita was unable to adequately perform the maternal role, she also was assuming an "enabler" role, because Rita could drink and things would still get done around the house. She also took on the informal role of being "the responsible one". She was described by family members at this point in time as being nurturing, capable, bossy, dependable, a caretaker, a bulwark, a people-pleaser, the glue

that held the family together, and Jack's strong right arm. In addition, she was a well-behaved student who got decent grades in school, and she became active in Alateen, which greatly pleased her father. Not only did her family benefit from Margaret being so responsible, but she derived a great deal of affirmation from performing this informal role.

Whenever Margaret felt that she was being divested of her maternal role, however, she sometimes assumed the informal role of "victim". At these times, she was perceived by family members as being a whining, pessimistic complainer who was frequently physically and verbally abused by Matt, serving as his "personal punching bag". She always seemed to tolerate his abuse and never fought back.

When she left home at eighteen, she went to college about 350 miles away. When she graduated, she lived with her boyfriend, John, for awhile which greatly displeased her father. A year later she married John, which bothered Jack because he wasn't a Catholic, and upset Rita because she didn't like him. Margaret was bothered by their disappointment, but she had given up trying to please her parents, because it was becoming too painful for her to keep trying and failing all the time, so she turned her attention instead to pleasing and taking care of John. As a result, she became an "emotional outsider" with regard to her family of origin.

About a year after Margaret and John were married, John had gone to stay at the Dolan's home when he was being interviewed for a job in a nearby city. Margaret did not come because she could not get off from work at her job at a discount department store. When John got home from his day in the city, everyone in the Dolan household was asleep. He went into fifteen year-old Beth's room, and sexually molested her while she was sound asleep. When she woke up in terror, he said to her, "this is our little secret", and then left the room. When Margaret was told about this incident, she remained loyal to her husband, defended him, and stayed with him, even though this meant a certain amount of estrangement from her family. She was told that she was welcome to come and stay at her parents' home anytime she wanted, but that John could not. Shortly after this, John got a job in a city about a thousand miles away. This meant that Margaret saw far less of her family, and when she did visit or speak to anyone on the phone, it was very strained for awhile. As a result, she returned to the "lost child" role in her family, with some aspects of the "victim" role remaining as well.

Valerie performed a variety of informal roles in her family throughout the years. Since she was in the formal role of baby of the family for six years, and thus got attention for being in that role, she tended to be in the informal role of "the good child". She was described at this time as being loving, caring, generous, and very attached to her mother.

She felt that if she were "a really good girl", her mother would not need to drink.

When Beth was born, Valerie had been relegated to the formal role of a middle child, which she greatly resented. At the same time, her mother's alcoholism was progressing instead of getting better, and this was having a devastating effect on her. At this point, she was described as being resentful, intensely angry, confrontational, aggressive, mercurial, unpredictable, highly competitive, combative, pugnacious, jealous, active, crisis-oriented, sometimes violent, and volatile. She verbalized exactly how she felt regardless of people's feelings, and was a trigger for a lot of the fighting that went on among Matthew, Margaret, and herself. She stood up to Matthew's physical attacks by beating up on him, even though she was four years younger, so most of the time he left her alone. This meant that for awhile she attempted to compete with Matthew for the "scapegoat role", but his behavior was far more outrageous and destructive than hers was, thus providing him with a great deal of attention and Valerie with very little.

Valerie was credited with having other very positive traits at this time, such as being fearless, independent, honest, very courageous, very smart, brave, and very bright. In addition, she had always been a good student. These traits could have been parlayed back into the "good child" or even the "family hero" role, but her more volatile characteristics

that had evolved from her anger prevented that from happening. By the time she was an adolescent, therefore, she had assumed the role of a "lost child", which meant that the family was relieved from spending its energy addressing her needs for awhile. As a teenager, she was described by family members as being depressed, reclusive, sad, withdrawn, quiet, deeply troubled, self-centered, kept to herself, lived under a dark cloud, and hid from her family. She felt like she was reaching out for love, affection, and acceptance from her family but to no avail. This greatly injured her, so she withdrew from them. She stayed up in her room and read a lot and slept a great deal. She tried Alateen but she wasn't comfortable there. She had very few friends at this point in her life. Like her sisters, she frequently sought refuge with the Reilly sisters next door. She eventually began to view Nora Reilly as a "surrogate mother" because Nora took a special interest in Valerie, and showered her with the love and attention she so desperately needed. As a result, Nora had a great deal of influence over Valerie. She introduced her to the philosophy of Edgar Cayce, who was a clairvoyant and an advocate of the belief in reincarnation, by giving her all of his books to read. This provided her with a sense of order, serenity, and peace that was missing from her life. She also became a vegetarian and ate nothing but health food. By the time Valerie was in her last year of high school, her role had switched from being "the lost child" to being "the

weird one" in the family, which took some of the intense focus away from the worsening alcoholism, and provided her parents with the common bond of having to worry about her.

Her father thought that when she turned to the beliefs of Edgar Cayce, it was a "slap in the face" at her strict Catholic upbringing and therefore at him. Her siblings made fun of her vegetarianism and her meditative chanting. She had become "hippie-like" in her appearance, with long, frizzy, unruly hair, long, hand-me-down clothes, and no make-up. Although her behavior was met with disapproval from her family, it got her attention and provided her with some sort of identity in the family. At the same time, however, it represented her rejection of the family's way of life, and it demonstrated an alliance with people and ideas that she perceived were meeting her needs at the time.

As soon as she finished high school, she left home to go live and work at a hotel that was staffed by followers of Edgar Cayce which was located about four hundred miles away from her parents' home. While she lived there, she continued in her rebellion by drinking a great deal, using drugs, and being very promiscuous. She was a source of tremendous worry to her parents, but they were somewhat appeased when she enrolled in college and received very good grades. When she became pregnant, she gave up drugs and alcohol and once again became fanatically health conscious. Although she had the baby, she never married the baby's father. As a result, her

parents helped to support her so that she could graduate from college with a bachelor's degree in nursing. Shortly after that, she met and married Dick, a much older man who pressured her to get married after a whirlwind courtship. Jack and Rita were very distraught about this wedding because of their age difference, their religious differences, his past history of failed marriages, and the fact that they hadn't known each other very long. Dick, who was studying to become a psychologist, told Valerie to lessen her contact with her family even further than she already had, because he had diagnosed them as all being seriously disturbed. As a result, while Valerie retained the informal role of "weird one" in the family, she also became a "lost child" once again.

Since Beth was the baby of the family, this put her in a good position of being the "family mascot". Her birth had been unexpected, but it gave everyone in the family something positive to focus on in the midst of their pain and confusion. She was described as being sweet, loving, emotional, needing approval, kind, considerate, expressive, fragile, well-behaved, dependent, and a "cute little kid". The mascot role involved her attempt to continue to try to cheer everybody up and distract them from their troubles. Beth claimed that she was always trying to please everyone and to make sure everybody was happy. She was "crazy about her mother and followed her around all the time like a puppy dog." Rita called her "C.C.", which stood for "constant companion". Beth

believed that if she could provide the emotional support that her mother needed, she would no longer have to drink. She said, "I felt like if I could save her from herself that eventually she'd be O.K."

Beth believed that, when she was born, she had brought her parents together at a time when they had grown very far apart, and she felt that it was her role to try to continue to do so by spreading love and joy. After awhile, however, she began to feel like a "ping pong ball" between her parents as she assumed the "mediator role" with them, particularly when she was the only child who was living at home.

Apparently, the roles that Beth took on as a child involved being a "fixer" in that she was always trying to fix whatever was wrong in the family. Since it was not possible for Beth to cheer up her entire family, get her mother to stop drinking, or make her parents' marriage a happy one, her attempt to do so created a great strain on her. She remembered that she tried acting very happy on the outside, but was feeling very unhappy, depressed, strung out, angry, confused, disappointed, upset, lonely, and "a basket case" on the inside. Her mother pointed out that Beth could be intensely happy if something delighted her, but would also express her anger very explosively. She would try to hold her anger in for a long time, but then she "blew like a top" when she couldn't take it anymore. As a result, she could be very volatile and mercurial.

As a teenager, she was attracted to friends who had problems of their own so that she could attempt to fulfill her need to make every thing better for them, since she had not been successful in doing this in her family. Rita pointed out that:

Beth liked to fix everybody. And when they didn't do what she told them to do, she got mad as hell at them. So although she had a lot of friends, she also lost a lot of friends. She was busy with everybody else's troubles because it kept her from looking at her own.

Since Beth had experienced a sense of failure in fulfilling her role of fixing everybody and making their lives happier, this had a negative effect on her self-esteem. What added to that was the fact that she had learning disabilities, particularly with regard to her ability to read. This resulted in poor grades in school and a lack of motivation to succeed academically. As a result, she desperately sought attention, affirmation, and approval. Since she was a very pretty girl when she was a teenager, she got a great deal of attention from boys in both high school and in college. As a result, she became somewhat "boy-crazy" and sometimes pandered to people's expectations that she behave like a "dumb blonde." Later she tried very hard to dispel this image of her because she felt it was disparaging, but it was very difficult.

Beth also frequently reached out to other people for love, guidance, and approval. She was constantly looking for role models. As Beth put it, "anybody who kind of floated my way, I just clung to." This included the Reilly sisters when

she was small, her sister-in-law, Eileen, a few close friends when she was a teenager, and her sister Linda, whom she idolized and sought to emulate.

Interestingly, one of the benefits of being the youngest in the family was that Beth was exposed at a relatively young age to both counseling and knowledge about alcoholism. She was thirteen when the family attended "family week" during one of Rita's treatment experiences. She became very active in Alateen, and she saw a therapist after the trauma of being molested by her brother-in-law. This enabled Beth to begin to work on her problems and alter some of her unhealthy behaviors even before her mother started her own recovery.

Formal Roles After Recovery

It should be noted that, after Rita began to recover from her alcoholism, she continued to assume the formal roles of homemaker, wife, and mother. The difference was that she was able to perform these roles much more adequately and consistently. In early recovery, she cooked, cleaned, did the laundry, and ran the household very smoothly. She no longer felt overwhelmed with her domestic duties for several reasons: she was sober and feeling well, they had hired a cleaning service to come in once a week, and at this point only Rita and Jack were living at home. Even though all of her children were living elsewhere, she was able to return to the nurturing mother role that she had become remiss in performing as her

alcoholism progressed. According to Jack, "the kids can't seem to get enough of their mother. They just love to be with her." Since her recovery, they have all actively sought out her company, advice, and affection. She has been there for all of them in times of crisis, illness, and childbirth, providing love and support when they needed her.

After Rita recovered, Jack continued in his role of sole breadwinner for six more years, although he started to come home from work at night at a normal time. Jack stated that, "oddly enough, since Rita's sobriety, I had less interest in my job than I did in being home. I enjoyed being home an awful lot." After his bout with cancer and almost losing Rita to her lung ailment, he had begun to feel that what he did for a living - helping celebrities make millions of dollars - was no longer important or meaningful. As a result, he retired at the age of sixty-five, even though he could have worked and earned a great deal of money for several more years. Once he was retired, he began cooking all of the meals and doing the food shopping, while Rita did all of the cleaning in the house, since they no longer employed the cleaning service. Rita also did most of the gardening and took care of the house plants, while Jack cleaned and maintained the pool in the backyard. They had hired someone to cut and care for the lawn, so neither of them had to do that. Apparently, once Jack abdicated the breadwinner role when he retired, he assumed a good portion of the domestic role which he and Rita

have become quite adept at performing together. Jack has also been making an effort to know his children better, and has been very generous with financial help and advice when the children have needed it, which has therefore enabled him to more adequately perform the paternal role than had been the case before recovery.

Both Jack and Rita have focused a great deal of energy and attention on restoring the adequate performance of their spousal roles. Even their children have become aware of the good, loving relationship that has evolved between them. They have managed to work out their anger regarding the past, have learned to communicate well with each other, and have become great companions. Apparently, they have been able to find a great deal of happiness with each other since sobriety.

In light of the fact that the children have not been living at home for many years, their formal family roles have diminished appreciably. Since Steven has been the only one of the children who has continued to reside near Jack and Rita, he has willingly taken on the formal role of dutiful son by helping his parents out whenever they have asked, and house-sitting and caring for their pets and plants when they have gone away. He has also cooked gourmet meals for them on many occasions. In addition, because of his frequent contact with his parents, he also has benefitted greatly from the restoration of the improved performance of Jack and Rita's parental roles.

Beth has been struggling lately with a redefinition of the formal role of little sister or baby of the family. Her contention has been that, once they all became adults, they should no longer relate to each other on the basis of being big sister or big brother and little sister. Instead, she believed that they should all have been put on an equal footing in the formal role of adult children in the Dolan family. Her brother Steve seemed to adjust well to Beth's transition from child to adult, probably because he lived nearby and had watched her grow up. Her other siblings, however, had a more difficult time altering their perceptions of her. When Beth informed her brother Matthew that she was no longer a baby to be patronized and protected but a grown woman, he started teasing her by referring to her as "the baby woman". She and Linda also had a particularly difficult time redefining their big sister-little sister relationship that often had evolved into a mother-daughter relationship. Once Beth was able to turn to Rita for maternal love and advice, she no longer needed Linda to be her surrogate mother, which was a difficult change for Linda to adjust to. As Beth became more mature and was dealing with some of her residual problems with the help of a therapist, she did not even need Linda to perform the formal role of big sister to her little sister role. Beth had come to resent Linda's desire to perpetuate this arrangement, because she simply wanted to be Linda's sister, where they would relate to each other on a totally

equal basis. This was very difficult for Linda to accept, because she was sixteen years older than Beth, and had always loved and cared for her in a very maternal, protective way. As a result, Beth's attempt to redefine their relationship initially had been disruptive to it, thus creating a rift between the two sisters. This had a ripple effect throughout the rest of the family when other members became upset when they found out that the two sisters who had been so close over the years were experiencing problems with each other. At the time of the interview, Beth and Linda were in the painful process of reestablishing a different formal role relationship with each other.

Apparently, the Dolan family experienced several modifications regarding their formal roles since Rita's recovery from alcoholism, and these roles have continued to undergo change as the family's circumstances and relationships have been transformed over the years. It should be noted, however, that these roles were affected by circumstances such as the children moving out and Jack's retirement, as well as by Rita's sobriety.

Informal Roles After Recovery

In her early sobriety, Rita relinquished the "sick role" and her primary informal role in the family was that of "recovering alcoholic." She said:

I spent all my time doing everything I could to maintain my sobriety. That included all kinds of

A.A. meetings and an after-care group called "Early Recovery". I also saw a shrink. I was gone almost every day of the week because of these commitments. I was thrilled to get that monkey off my back and I was glad to be able to think clearly and not focus all of my energy on drinking.

Family members have noted that Rita became like a completely different person after her recovery. She was no longer perceived as having the "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" personality changes. The descriptors that were used regarding what Rita was like after recovery were overwhelmingly positive, which indicated that she had relinquished her "bad guy" role in the family. She was described as being grateful, comfortable, honest, reliable, discerning, spiritual, positive, bright, fascinating, courageous, wonderful, trustworthy, more aware, normal, loving, insightful, serene, content, interesting, clear-thinking, a wonderful companion, an amazing woman, a friend, happy with herself, and a person who has been growing and maturing. Traits of hers such as her tendency to be quiet, reserved, and a slow decision-maker have pointed to her inclination to remain in the "follower role", but this was to a lesser extent than had been the case before recovery.

Interestingly, in view of the fact that the family's positive view of Rita in early recovery was in such stark contrast to the negative view that they had of her while she was still drinking, they all had a tendency to put her on a pedestal. They thought that now that she was in recovery she would be perfect, and all of their problems would go away.

Consequently, in the first few years of her sobriety, Rita assumed the role of the "perfect one" in the family. They all treated her as if she could do no wrong.

As time went on, however, several of the children began to view their mother as being a human being who had faults as well as good points, and have been trying to come to terms with this altered view and learn to accept it. This process seemed to begin after she was sober for about five and a half years when she became seriously ill with her lung disease. This returned her to her "sick role" for awhile, and family members began to worry about her a great deal, both because of the physical danger of her illness, and the depressed mental state that she was experiencing at the same time. She wasn't her old self for quite a long time, and although she had told everyone that she had quit smoking, the whole family was well aware that she was sneaking cigarettes in the bathroom. Not only were they concerned about the effects of this on her physical health, it reminded them of the lying and the sneaky behavior that she engaged in when she was still drinking. She stopped going to her A.A. meetings around this time, and was perceived by some family members as having reached a plateau in her growth and recovery, which worried them. For several of the children, this unearthed a great deal of unresolved anger that they had buried when their mother began her recovery.

Steven pointed out that eventually he was able to realize that, while his mother wasn't perfect, this did not take away from her positive traits. Even though he was bothered by some of her imperfect behavior once in awhile, he was able to come to accept her, for the most part, just as she was. He has come to think of her as a good friend. This was made easier by the fact that he saw his mother very frequently and spoke to her several times a week on the phone. At the time of the interview, Linda, and especially Beth, were still in the process of dealing with the angry feelings that had surfaced when they were no longer casting their mother in the role of "the perfect one". The other three children did not seem to be as conscious of this role shift for their mother, perhaps because they haven't seen her as frequently as the other children have, although Margaret and Valerie did not seem to view their mother as being as perfect as Matthew saw her. In Matthew's eyes, Rita has continued to be a saintly person who could do no wrong.

Another informal role that Rita has been performing since her sobriety was that of "homebody" which might have been an outgrowth of the isolation that she had experienced when she was drinking. She was described by family members as being a reclusive, quintessential loner, who tended to turn inward. She has seemed to be very comfortable spending most of her leisure time at home reading, watching television, swimming, and sunning herself by the pool. While some family members

have become concerned by what has appeared to them to be her growing isolation, Rita has expressed the fact that she has been very happy and content with her lifestyle.

Once Rita was in recovery, Jack's informal roles had undergone some change as well. Apparently, he had already relinquished his "controller and enabler roles" shortly before her recovery, and it was also noted that, in the children's eyes, he had switched from being "the perfect one" to being "the bad guy" before recovery. After recovery, however, he ceased being a "workaholic" and became less of a "controller" than he had been before. He has made a conscious effort to avoid trying to run the lives of his wife and kids, although some family members pointed out that, while he has ceased being a blatant controller, he has become more of a "passive or subtle controller." He had remained in the "leadership role" for the most part, as demonstrated by Beth's comment that "you always know when my Dad's around. He's a very large presence and is very verbal about what he thinks and what he wants to do." It should be noted, however, that while a great deal of what Jack and Rita have done as a couple has continued to be initiated by Jack, Rita's wishes also have been considered and have been frequently carried out.

While for some of the children, Rita seemed to switch from "bad guy" to "perfect one" and eventually to "appreciated family member" and "friend" who was valued for her uniqueness rather than her perfection, Jack went from "perfect one" to

"bad guy", and then he, too, became an "appreciated family member" and "friend" after awhile. He was viewed as being more realistic, more caring, more considerate, more direct and honest, more self-disclosing, more approachable, very verbal, no longer adversarial, grateful, serene, spiritual, religious, impulsive, optimistic, reliable, generous, laid back, jovial, relaxed, has an improved attention span, is more of a friend, and is less paternalistic toward his children.

Apparently, this ability that the children have had to come to view their parents in less extreme and more human terms has demonstrated that they no longer needed to have a "villain" and a "hero" in order to make sense of what was going on in their family.

While Linda remained in the informal role of "tough one" in the family for several years after recovery, and has continued to demonstrate traits that have reflected some remnants of this role, such as being loud, forceful, bossy, strident, strong, reliable, still angry, active, dynamic, and a perfectionist, she has made some noticeable alterations in her behavior in recent years. Other descriptors that were used by family members for Linda included: vulnerable, open, smart, stressed, hurting, fun-loving, spunky, generous, loving, talkative, outgoing, metamorphic, sensitive, more accepting, searching, honest, spiritual, religious, reborn, freer, unpretentious, real, more relaxed, pretty content, has softened, and is less fearful. Linda herself pointed out

that, "I felt like I was walking around with cataracts for a long time, and now they're gone, and I found out that everything is not black and white." Apparently she no longer felt compelled to play such a one dimensional role in her family.

Since Rita's recovery, Steven has, to a great extent, relinquished his "lost child role". He has established a close, loving relationship with his parents, and has interacted with his parents more in the past seven years than he did during his whole life before that. He has developed a strong sense of family, and while he seldom has written or called his brother and sisters, he has always been very anxious to see them when they have been in town visiting his parents. He has been described by family members as being sweet, caring, loving, honest, forthright, dependable, considerate, special, trustworthy, loyal, generous, accepting, reliable, supportive, and having a big heart.

There has been another side to Steven, however, that his family has recognized which appeared to reflect traits that were consequences of his being in the "lost child role" for such a long time. These descriptors included the perception that at times he could be fearful, anxious, lacking in ambition, depressed, stuck, and not too talkative. He has been somewhat more likely to say what was on his mind since his mother's recovery, but this has often taken the form of complaining. He has rarely been introspective about what has

been bothering him, tending instead to blame external situations and other people for his problems. Family members have become concerned with his occasional bouts of depression as well as his heavy drinking. There has been a family consensus that he has always tended to drink to medicate his feelings, and there has been concern that he has been in the early stages of alcoholism in recent years. Rita explained that:

He's like my father who drank the same amount of beer every day of his life. No more, no less. But what it did was take my father emotionally away from his family. So even though I had a perfectly good father, I never knew him. That's the way I am beginning to feel about Steve now. While he hasn't been falling down drunk or had terrible accidents, his drinking is taking my son away from me emotionally. I hope Steve can find sobriety, and I hope he finds it a lot sooner than I did. What is difficult for me now is that, while he had to deal with my alcoholism, now I have to deal with his, and it's so hard.

Apparently Rita has perceived that, as Steve's alcoholism has progressed over the last few years, he has been becoming more emotionally isolated, which has served to revive his "emotional outsider role". In the meantime, the worry and concern that his depression and early stage alcoholism has caused his family has placed him in the informal role of "the one that everybody worries about". Rita had been in this role when she was an active alcoholic, and when she recovered, Matthew occupied it for awhile because of the mess he seemed to be making of his life.

In recent years, however, Matthew has seemed to pull himself together and has no longer been a great object of worry for the family, nor has he been performing the "scapegoat role". He straightened out his problems with the I.R.S., became a successful salesman, and got married to a woman who some family members thought was a great deal like their mother: intelligent, sensible, gentle, quiet, and loving. He had a setback when he was hit by a drunk driver and was injured badly enough to be out of work for many months, but he has since started his own business and gone back to work, has received a substantial settlement in the lawsuit against the drunk driver, and has just bought a new home. The fact that he relinquished the "scapegoat role" in the family was reflected in the descriptors that were used in reference to Matt since recovery. These included the following: happier, loving, caring, has made progress, trustworthy, more reliable, concerned, fun, has good intentions, family-oriented, more mature, settled down, no longer so angry, gregarious, outgoing, very funny, a neat person, not as intense, no longer self-destructive, has led a charmed life, and has an enormous heart.

There have been some concerns that have remained among family members regarding Matthew, such as his inability to be articulate about his feelings, his tendency to drink too much upon occasion, and his propensity to be something of a "bull shit artist". The existence of some remnant of Matthew's

"scapegoat role" also has been demonstrated by the fact that Matthew has continued to be the recipient of the most criticism in the family.

Margaret has become less of a "lost child" since her mother's recovery. She has not been as afraid to come home and visit her parents, and has done this more frequently in recent years. She also has kept in constant telephone contact with her parents. Her relationship with both of them has been warm and loving. Jack and Rita have become more tolerant of her husband, John's presence in their home, and everyone in the family has been civil to him for Margaret's sake, although the entire family has remained very wary of him. As Jack said, "I'm not sure he's glued together quite right."

Descriptors that were used by family members in reference to Margaret conveyed enough variation and complexity in how they had come to view her since recovery that it did not point to the "lost child role" in particular. These included the perceptions that she was a nice person, an overeater, good-natured, more direct, more honest, devoted to her family, resilient, supportive, very loyal, amazing, reliable, sometimes fiscally irresponsible, has a good sense of humor, earthy, sometimes resentful, and has learned to stand up for herself. She has maintained some vestiges of the "manipulator role", in that she sometimes has had difficulty expressing her needs directly, so has resorted to manipulation upon occasion in order to get her way. It was also mentioned that she has

continued to whine occasionally, and that her feelings could be hurt quite easily. She had never gotten over her extreme sensitivity to criticism and disapproval. Her mother pointed out that "Margaret reacts intensely when her feeling are hurt. I am sometimes reluctant to talk to her about certain things for fear of how she might react." This trait of Margaret's appeared to be a remnant of the "victim role" that she had played in the family before recovery.

Family members have also observed that, while she has become somewhat more open about her feelings, she has also continued to keep a lot to herself. She has been known to harbor hidden resentment and she has avoided bringing up the past. She has been able to talk to other family members about every day surface things, but she has avoided discussing deeper topics. Apparently, Margaret has not completely relinquished her role of being an "emotional outsider" in the family.

Valerie's role of "weird one" in the family has all but disappeared. While she has remained a health conscious vegetarian, and has retained spiritual beliefs that were quite different from those of her parents, the family has been more accepting of her uniqueness in recent years. They came to admire her strength and determination for having struggled as a single mother, for extricating herself from a bad marriage with a domineering, abusive husband, and for moving to Germany and making a life for herself and her family in a foreign

country where she did not even speak the language. When she became pregnant and decided to marry Kurt, the entire family was very supportive of her and accepting of her decision.

Not only had the Dolan family abandoned their need to have a "weird one" to provide a distraction from what else was going on in the family, but Valerie herself no longer had the need to play up her idiosyncracies and different outlook on life in order to get attention. She has been described by family members as being happier, better adjusted, not as fanatical, content, very bright, reliable, coping, spiritual, charming, strong, admired, no longer desperate, fine, interesting, growing, comfortable with herself, and as having an "off the wall" sense of humor.

In light of the fact that Valerie has been living so far away, she has not been in touch with family members all that frequently. As a result, she seemed to resume aspects of the "lost child role" to some extent. Descriptors about her that reflected this role described her as being detached, an enigma, lonely, and self-centered, although she was also described as sometimes feeling homesick because she missed her family a great deal. Consequently, the few times that she has returned to the United States, she has made it a point of seeing all of her family members.

Beth's informal roles in the family changed a great deal since Rita became sober. Shortly after her mother's recovery, Beth got married and moved two hundred and fifty miles away.

A few years later she began to go to a therapist as well as to meetings of Adult Children of Alcoholics. She also started attending church regularly, and she even went back to school. She was able to dispel the "dumb blonde" role once and for all when she made the dean's list after her first semester with a 4.0 grade point average. She was described by family members as being accepting, comfortable, mature, religious, spiritual, grown up, sensitive, bright, caring, courageous, reliable, giving, growing, lovely, nice, smart, considerate, positive, loving, trustworthy, achievement-oriented, content, strong-willed, honest, candid, assertive, and self-reliant. She was also perceived as having higher self-esteem, great ideals and expectations, and a mind of her own. She has realized that she doesn't want to be like her sister, Linda, anymore because she has learned to like herself.

Obviously, ever since Beth began to focus on herself and improving her own life, she has no longer had the desperate need to please everybody else in the family or to fix their problems. In addition, as family conditions improved with Rita's recovery, it was no longer necessary that she perform the informal roles of "mascot", "fixer", or even "mediator".

Interestingly, as Beth has been undergoing positive changes in her life, it has also affected other family members. As she has altered her own behavior and perceptions of herself, this has led to changes in both the formal and informal roles that she performed in the family, which

required some adjustment on the part of other family members. At times, this has been uncomfortable or confusing for some of them. Beth reported that she has been attempting to be honest with herself and others about her feelings, and has been trying to set boundaries and limits with family members. She has been working on learning to see her mother as a person rather than a saint. She pointed out that "I had put her so high up on a pedestal that I had to take her down. I was really worshiping her." She also has been trying to come to terms with many of her repressed feelings about her childhood, and has been working on some of the problems that she has been having with intimacy.

While it has been true that all members of the family have experienced personal growth and change since their mother's recovery, Beth has been the only family member who has actively and consistently sought help from various sources over the years in order to facilitate her continued growth and development. In this light, Beth's present role in the family could be described as "the growing one". Other family members who indicated that they, too, have experienced personal growth and change more recently have been Jack and Linda.

Although the children in the Dolan family have undergone noticeable changes in their informal roles since Rita's recovery, it was noted that they have tended to revert to their old role behaviors whenever the entire family has gotten together. This may be due to the fact that it has been a rare

occasion that everyone has been all together, so they naturally have gravitated to behaviors that they had been used to when they were all living together. This has been made easier by the fact that many of them have continued to cling to remnants of their former roles. In general, however, it was apparent that each family member has come to be viewed by others in the family as being a complex person who is no longer held to such rigid informal role expectations in the family.

Discussion of Findings

When comparing family life before and after recovery, changes were very evident with regard to the formal and informal roles that were performed in all four families. Initially, Joan Neilsen and Rita Dolan were full-time homemakers and their husbands were the sole breadwinners, Barbara Ehrlich worked part-time and performed most of the domestic chores while her husband was the main breadwinner and sometimes helped her around the house, and Lorraine and Marc had joint conjugal roles whereby they both worked and took care of the house. Except for Barbara, as the women's alcoholism progressed, their ability to perform the domestic role declined. Rita was only able to perform this role intermittently and inadequately, while Joan and Lorraine got to the point where they had abdicated the domestic role altogether. This necessitated that their husbands, and in the

case of the Dolan and Neilsen families, the children, attempt to pick up the slack with regard to the running of the household. Although this allowed for the households of the Higgins, Neilsen, and Dolan families to function to some extent, things did not generally run very smoothly. All of the women, including Barbara stated that they were not satisfied with the division of labor prior to recovery, and the only husband who expressed satisfaction was George Ehrlich, probably because his wife continued to perform the domestic role well in spite of her alcoholism.

In all cases, the spousal role suffered, but to a minor extent for the Ehrlich family, to a major extent for the Neilsen and Dolan families, and for the Higgins family, Lorraine's ability to perform the spousal role was almost nonexistent, while her husband, Marc, was performing this role quite adequately. In the families that had children, the ability to perform the parental roles were also negatively affected, especially in the Neilsen and Dolan families, where the children had spent most or all of their formative years living in an active alcoholic situation. Several of the children attempted to compensate for the inadequate performance of parental roles by latching on to surrogate parents.

After recovery, all families were more satisfied with the division of labor regarding the domestic and the breadwinner roles. Some changes had occurred in each family: Lorraine

Higgins got a job and resumed sharing both the breadwinner and homemaker roles with Marc; Barbara Ehrlich quit her part-time job and became a full-time homemaker, thus no longer feeling torn between the two, while George became the sole breadwinner; Joan Neilsen got a job and shared the breadwinner role with Frank while the whole family worked together to perform the domestic role; and Jack Dolan retired and has been sharing the domestic role with Rita. In all four families, they have had the flexibility to readily adapt their formal roles to their changing circumstances. The performance of spousal and parental roles improved perceptibly after recovery, although in the Neilsen family, there was a sense that there was still room for improvement in the spousal roles and in Frank's parental role.

With regard to informal roles, all of the women except for Barbara Ehrlich had assumed the "sick role" and the "follower role" prior to recovery. Instead of these roles, Barbara had taken on a "superwoman role" as well as the "controller" and "leadership roles". All of the husbands but George Ehrlich had taken on the "leadership" and "controller roles". It was interesting to note that Barbara, who was the only woman whose alcoholism had not progressed to a debilitating level, and who was successful in her first attempt at recovery, did not have a domineering, controlling husband like the other three women did. Instead, she was the dominant spouse in the relationship.

All the husbands had been described as "workaholics", except for Marc Higgins, whose first priority was to be home as often as possible to take care of Lorraine. The other three husbands did not take on the "caretaker role" in their families, however. Apparently, the "workaholic role" and the "caretaker role" were mutually exclusive in these families. All of the husbands and several of the children performed the "enabler role" in that they often took over roles and responsibilities for the alcoholic so that the family could still function, but at the same time this ended up making it easier for the alcoholic to continue to drink.

Before recovery, the children in the families gravitated toward performing informal roles that involved becoming somewhat one dimensional, meaning that the roles which they were permitted to play were often quite narrowly defined. It should be noted that the specific roles that they assumed may have been influenced by factors such as birth order, personality, or circumstances, however. In addition, the Dolan family demonstrated that, when situations changed (i.e. the mother's alcoholism became worse, more children were born into the family, older children moved out), there was sometimes a shift in the informal roles that some of the children performed in the family. It also was noted that, as these roles were played by each member over an extended period of time, they became incorporated into their personal identities. In addition, even when the children left home,

they generally continued to perform the same role when relating to their family of origin and often in their new situations and relationships as well.

After recovery, the three women who had performed the "sick role" had completely relinquished it. Marc Higgins seemed to have the most difficult time adjusting to this because it required that he make some corresponding changes by giving up the "caretaker role". In addition, the dominant-subordinate role delineations of the spouses in all of the families became less prominent and more flexible. The "enabler role" was also relinquished in all cases, which made it easier for the women to perform their "recovering alcoholic roles". Interestingly, in the Dolan and Neilsen families, where the women had been active alcoholics for a longer period of time than the other two women, the husbands had begun to extricate themselves from the "enabler role" even before their wives' recovery. It should also be noted that, for Lorraine Higgins and Barbara Ehrlich, it was essential to redefine their informal roles in their families of origin as well after their recovery, since they continued to interact with them frequently, which was not the case for the two older women.

The children's informal roles generally became less limited and less rigidly defined after their mother's recovery. For many of them, however, there were some remnants of the roles that they had played prior to recovery, but these roles no longer represented the very essence of who they were.

Apparently, just as the informal family roles which were performed in each of the families prior to the alcoholic's recovery evolved as they were attempting to deal with her progressing alcoholism, they also had to adjust these roles in various ways in order to adapt to her new role of "recovering alcoholic".

It was interesting to note that the descriptors which were used by members of each family regarding the alcoholic changed so drastically after recovery that it was difficult to imagine that they were referring to the same person. (See Tables 1 through 4 in Appendix D, pp. 395-404.) Certainly the dynamics of these families had to change in some way as members interacted with a wife and mother whose attitudes and behaviors had become so different. Indeed, there were some differences in the descriptors that were used for the spouses, but they were not the polar opposites that had been the case for their wives. Some husbands, such as Jack Dolan, and to a lesser extent, George Ehrlich, appeared to undergo more changes than Frank Neilsen and Marc Higgins did with regard to how they appeared to family members. In light of this, it was interesting to note that the Dolans and the Ehrlichs expressed somewhat more marital satisfaction and family happiness than the Neilsens and the Higgins did.

The differences in the descriptors that were used for the children were, in most cases, quite remarkable. The children who had mostly negative descriptors prior to recovery had many

more positive ones after recovery. In addition, the descriptors that were used for all of the children were generally more multifaceted, thus making it less likely that they would be relegated to the narrowly defined roles which they had performed prior to sobriety.

Although some of the changes that occurred in the formal and informal roles in the four families were substantial, it should be noted that these changes did not happen overnight. While some of the changes were dramatic, such as the shift from being an active to a recovering alcoholic, and others were more subtle, they all had a ripple effect in that they stimulated changes which contributed to some role modifications for other family members. This culminated over time into new arrangements in family role relationships.

Chapter VI

FAMILY RULES BEFORE AND AFTER RECOVERY

In addition to roles, rules have also been essential elements of family life that have enabled members to work together to maintain some sort of equilibrium which would permit them to function in day-to-day activities. Family rules have existed only when there has been some sort of agreement about them among those involved. Not everyone has to have liked or appreciated these rules, but they must have agreed about their existence. This has generally been the case regarding both overt and covert rules, which have been determined by whether there has been conscious or unconscious recognition of that agreement. Overt rules included those that governed the families' division of labor, the upkeep of their homes, discipline and rules for children, decision-making, finances, their obligations to each other, and their drinking. Covert rules involved those which: supported the development of the family's informal roles, originated from expectations from outside the family, dictated what subjects could be discussed and which should be avoided, specified appropriate interaction among family members, governed their relationships with their families of origin, and stipulated how they should deal with the alcoholic.

If a family has been experiencing the alcoholism of one of its members, some of the rules that have evolved must focus

on how to deal with this problem. The four families in this study developed both overt and covert rules during the wife/mother's active alcoholism, and they found it necessary to modify some of these rules after her recovery. In this chapter, a discussion of these rules and their modifications has been provided.

The Higgins Family

Overt Rules Before Recovery

In the Higgins family, the overt rules concerning the running of the household appeared to be very lax. Both Lorraine and Marc claimed that they had no set division of labor and that chores were done when they felt like it. They reported that they just did the bare minimum to survive. But as Lorraine became less and less able to function, Marc took on more of the domestic chores. The overt rule that "whoever saw something that needed to be done would do it" remained intact, it was just that Marc became increasingly more likely to be the one who did this.

They apparently did not have any operational overt rules about keeping the apartment nice and fixing it up. As a matter of fact, the apartment was described by Lorraine as looking like a tenement. She admitted that they hadn't even bothered to put up curtains or decorate the apartment in any way. Their home also became very cluttered because of a rule

that had evolved which stipulated that they should never throw any of their belongings away.

With regard to decision-making in the family, they had a rule which appointed Marc as the one who should singlehandedly make all the decisions. They also operated on a rule that had put Marc completely in charge of the family finances. Lorraine readily conceded these responsibilities to Marc since she had no desire to contribute any input into either of these areas.

The rules concerning their obligations to each other seemed to be one-sided for the most part. Marc was expected to constantly take care of Lorraine, but there was no rule which mandated any sort of reciprocity. Lorraine rarely, if ever, cared for Marc, even if he was not feeling well. As a result, while Marc was obligated to constantly care for Lorraine and be responsible for everything she did, he himself was not permitted to get sick. He even mentioned that one of the reasons he quit skiing (besides the fact that they had an overt rule that he couldn't go anywhere without Lorraine) was because of the risk of injury. Marc was also expected to be very supportive of Lorraine's interests and endeavors, but Lorraine was exempted from reciprocating with Marc because all her attention and energy was focused on her own situation. Marc was also expected to remain constantly by Lorraine's side whenever possible. He was not permitted to engage in any pursuits that did not include Lorraine because of their rule

that Lorraine could not be left alone for extended periods of time. As a result of this rule which forced them to be together constantly, there was not much privacy in the Higgins family.

The overt rule in the family regarding drinking supported the fact that Marc was permitted to drink, both at home and elsewhere, but Lorraine was not. In spite of the fact that drinking was off limits to Lorraine, beer was permitted to be kept in the house for Marc. Even though Lorraine agreed with the notion that she should stay away from alcohol because it caused so many problems for her, she frequently broke this rule, but only in the privacy of her own home. She never drank at social functions such as weddings or parties. There had only been one incident where she got extremely drunk in a bar, but that elicited such a severe reaction from Marc (he threatened her with divorce) that she never did it again. When she drank at home, it never provoked such a dramatic reaction from Marc, although he did get angry about it and tried to convince her to abide by the rule and stay away from alcohol.

Regarding Lorraine's bipolar affective disorder, there seemed to be an attempt on the part of Marc to impose rules on Lorraine regarding "doing something about her problem." Marc would say to her, "I can't stand coming home and finding you like this. You've got to do something about yourself. You have to get a job." He also tried to convince her to stay on

her medication prior to her recovery, but it was to no avail. Lorraine's stubborn resistance to change was an indication that she rejected these rules that Marc was attempting to impose. As a result, such rules did not become operational in their marriage.

Covert Rules Before Recovery

It was interesting to note that a few of the Higgins family's covert rules actually contradicted and even undermined some of their overt rules. For example, while their overt rules about the performance of household chores were very lax and flexible in that chores were done by whichever spouse saw the need to do them, covertly they operated on a very rigid rule that actually allowed Lorraine to be exempt from performing all domestic chores because of her illness. This rule was directly related to the main informal role that she played - the "sick role". It also reinforced Marc's ability to perform his "caretaker role". While Marc certainly was not satisfied with this division of labor, the fact that he took on all the responsibility for running the household demonstrated that he unwittingly enabled Lorraine to remain helpless, thus supporting his informal role of "enabler". In light of the fact that Lorraine's "sick role" and Marc's "enabler" and "caretaker role" were familiar, and in many ways comfortable for them, it was not surprising

that covert rules developed that helped to perpetuate these roles.

Another example of a covert rule contradicting an overt rule had to do with Lorraine's drinking. The overt rule stipulated that Lorraine was not allowed to drink, yet covertly her drinking was actually an essential element that allowed her to remain in the "sick role", the performance of which was necessary to maintaining the family's status quo. Marc unconsciously collaborated in supporting this rule by gradually taking over all of Lorraine's formal roles as her mental illness and alcoholism progressed, thus leaving the "sick role" as the only role open to her in their family. As a result, anything that she did to ensure that she remained in this role was covertly permitted. This included not taking her medications as well as continuing to drink. In view of this, the permissibility of Lorraine's avoidance of taking any medication for her bipolar affective disorder could be identified as another covert rule in their family.

The Higgins had also developed covert rules that dictated that no matter how bad things were at home, they always had to put up a good front to the outside world, including their families. Even though Lorraine's family was aware of her problems, Marc and Lorraine always made an effort to minimize them. In addition, since the chaotic condition of their home reflected the difficulties and turmoil that they were trying

to hide, Marc and Lorraine never permitted anyone to come into their home to see it.

Covert rules also existed which directed Lorraine and Marc with regard to what they were permitted to talk about and with whom. Unlike many families that have had an alcoholic in their midst, the Higgins were able to talk about the alcoholism with each other, with their extended family, and with a few people outside of the family. There were some self-imposed restrictions that existed, however. Marc pointed out that, when he and Lorraine discussed her drinking, it was almost always at the wrong time, such as when she was under the influence of alcohol or during the heat of an argument. When she was sober and not in an angry frame of mind, the subject was avoided at all costs for fear of stirring up her wrath and setting off a drinking bout. Consequently, when the subject was brought up, it was not dealt with in a constructive manner, which meant that no changes in Lorraine's drinking behavior could ever realistically be expected to be motivated by such discussion.

Lorraine's alcoholism was also discussed in her extended family. This was not surprising, since her mother was a recovering alcoholic whose alcoholism was already an acceptable subject for discussion in the family, which meant that a precedent had already been set. In addition, it was initially Lorraine's parents who had recognized her problem with valium addiction when she was in college and who insisted

that she go into treatment, where she had been diagnosed as a cross-addicted alcoholic. This demonstrated that her family of origin had been cognizant of her problem for many years. Perhaps by permitting discussion of her problem, it ensured that Lorraine would continue to get the attention from her family of origin that she so desperately wanted. This made it all the more possible for her to remain in the "sick role" in her family of origin as well as in her relationship with Marc.

It should be mentioned that Lorraine's alcoholism was never discussed at all with Marc's family of origin, which meant that a covert rule existed which put Marc's family off limits when it came to whom they were permitted to talk to about the alcoholism. It was possible that this was the case because, rather than serve as a source of attention and concern, the "sick role" would most likely have evoked a negative response from Marc's family, since they were not as well-versed as Lorraine's family was regarding the view of alcoholism as an illness. As a result, Lorraine refrained from obviously performing the "sick role" when she was around Marc's family. This was not difficult to do since their contact with his family tended to be more limited than their contact with Lorraine's family was.

As far as talking about Lorraine's alcoholism to people outside the family, both spouses claimed that they were able to do this. Since Lorraine had isolated herself from all social contacts, however, her discussion of the problem was

confined to mental health professionals with whom she came into contact from time to time, or to people that she met at A.A. meetings, which she had attended occasionally between drinking bouts. Marc, on the other hand, reported that he talked about Lorraine's alcoholism with a few people at his place of business, particularly an older man whom he became very close to, who was himself a recovering alcoholic. Marc indicated that there were some limitations to discussing this problem outside of the family, however, when he stated that he didn't "go around telling everybody in the world or talking to everybody". Again, discussion of the subject of alcoholism was limited to those who had an understanding of it as a disease and who therefore would not pass judgement on Lorraine. This allowed Lorraine to discuss it without subjecting herself to being stigmatized, and Marc could talk about it without feeling that he was betraying Lorraine.

The rules which specified whom they were permitted to talk to about Lorraine's mental illness were identical to the rules regarding the discussion of her alcoholism, presumably for similar reasons. To people who did not understand, mental illness would also have had a stigma attached to it.

When it came to Marc's personal problems, however, he followed a very rigid rule that did not permit him to talk about them to anyone, not even Lorraine. The reason he gave for not confiding about his personal problems to people in his extended family or to those outside of it was that he didn't

think it was anybody's business. The fact that he didn't even turn to Lorraine when it came to discussing his personal problems was explained when he said that Lorraine "was so wrapped up in her own problems that she was incapable of dealing with mine as well." By keeping his problems to himself, Marc could appear stoic and strong, which were qualities that would be useful in the performance of the "caretaker role".

Marc and Lorraine had some covert rules that dealt with their interaction with each other. They tended to be moderately critical toward one another, and they seldom lavished much praise on each other. Lorraine was permitted to be very dependent on Marc, but the reverse was never true. In addition, while Lorraine was permitted to tell Marc "every bizarre thought I ever had", she completely avoided confronting him about the fact she disliked it when he spoke to her in a nasty tone of voice. As a matter of fact, a covert rule existed which determined that Marc and Lorraine should avoid arguments whenever possible. When they did argue, it usually involved Marc chastising her for drinking. Indeed, the only time that Lorraine was able to express her anger about anything was when she had too much to drink. All of these covert rules seemed to reflect and reinforce a type of parent/child relationship between the two of them, whereby Marc had been the dominant caretaker and Lorraine had been in the subordinate, childlike, "sick role".

Some covert rules regarding their interaction with each other involved the expression of affection. In the Higgins family, affection was expressed frequently, generally by giving hugs and kisses. This rule seems to have originated with Marc since he was characterized as being the more affectionate of the two of them. His frequent initiation of affection toward Lorraine had been compatible with his "caretaker role".

One of the Higgins family's covert rules could be traced to the expectations of Lorraine's family of origin. This involved the fact that Lorraine and Marc had to constantly engage in celebrations and other forms of social interaction with Lorraine's family. Even though all other areas of their social life had virtually disappeared, this was one area where Lorraine always had to pull herself together, show up and participate. Of course, Marc was expected to attend with her. These expectations did not exist with regard to Marc's family, however, so they socialized with them a great deal less than was the case with Lorraine's family. This demonstrated how some of the rules in a family existed because they have been passed down from one generation to the next.

As in most alcoholic families, some of the covert rules in the Higgins family had involved strategies for covering up for the alcoholic. Both Marc and Lorraine acknowledged that Marc did cover up for Lorraine whenever she was in bad shape because of her drinking and/or her depression. Most of the

time this took the form of making all kinds of excuses and lying about why she couldn't go somewhere or come to the phone. By covering for her in this way, Marc was maintaining the illusion of normalcy in their family, but he was also shielding Lorraine from facing up to how serious her alcoholism and mental illness had become. By avoiding this realization, Lorraine did not have to recognize the need to do something about her problems, which enabled her to remain in her "sick role" a while longer. Apparently, then, these efforts on Marc's part actually served to undermine his attempts to convince Lorraine to stop drinking and to take her medication.

Overt Rules After Recovery

During the period of Lorraine's early recovery, Marc claimed that he would not put up with Lorraine's vegetating. He would insist that she at least go through the motions of performing some of the household chores, such as walking the dog. As a matter of fact, since she was the one who wanted the cat and dog, taking care of their needs became her chore. The rest of the household chores, with the possible exception of the cooking, which was Marc's job, were shared between the two of them. They continued to operate on the rule that "if something needs to be done [around the house] and one of us is free, it's done. Or not. It's fly by the seat of your pants more than anything else." Even after recovery, the chores

still have been done when one of them has felt like it. The main difference has been that Lorraine "feels like it" more frequently than she did before she recovered. As a result, the household has been running more smoothly now than it was before. They recently have been living in a nicely decorated new apartment that was in much better shape than the one they had lived in previously. Obviously they have acquired a rule since Lorraine's recovery that their home should be maintained in a comfortable, livable way. In spite of this, both spouses have indicated that they feel that they still have not been fulfilling their responsibilities regarding their obligations and chores. This demonstrated that, although Marc and Lorraine have not felt as if they have always been living up to it, they have developed a rule which mandated that they should be performing all the chores that have been necessary to allow their household to function smoothly.

One rule that has continued to exist since the time before recovery, which might have served to actually interfere with their desire to maintain an orderly home, has been the rule that has stipulated that they should never throw anything out. This has resulted in the accumulation of clutter, which has been at cross purposes with trying to keep a small apartment neat. This might have been one of the reasons that Marc and Lorraine have had a sense that they have not been living up to the rules that have evolved which have supported their desire to live in a nice environment.

Not only has there been more actual sharing with regard to household chores since Lorraine's recovery, this sharing has extended to decision-making, income earning, and finances. Recently, Lorraine has been employed full-time and has been expected to contribute to the household income. She has also been more involved and interested in the family finances, although she and Marc have been arguing more about spending money than they had been before. With regard to decision-making, both spouses agreed that Lorraine has had a great deal of input in the decisions that have been made since her recovery, but they disagreed as to the extent of that input. Marc believed that after thorough discussion and careful consideration of Lorraine's opinion, it has been he who ultimately has made the final decisions, while Lorraine insisted that all recent decisions have been made jointly. Apparently this rule has not been completely agreed upon, thus leaving the couple vulnerable to arguments regarding this issue.

With regard to their obligations to each other, the rules have changed in that they no longer have been as one-sided as they were previously. It no longer has been necessary for Marc to care for Lorraine all the time since she has been in recovery. As a matter of fact, they have developed a rule which has stipulated that each of them should take care of the other one in the event of illness, but if the illness was not too serious, each has still been expected to fulfill their obligations. In addition, Marc no longer has been expected to

remain by Lorraine's side at all times and to refrain from having a life of his own. He has been permitted to engage in pursuits, such as playing golf, that have not involved Lorraine and that have necessitated leaving her home alone. Since Lorraine has been feeling better, she too has begun to go out without Marc, either on her own or with others, to places like the beach, the shopping mall, and of course, to work. One result of this has been a marked increase in personal privacy for the couple.

Since recovery, a covert rule developed which mandated that Lorraine be supportive of Marc's interests and endeavors (e.g. playing golf). Her ability to focus on his interests and to encourage his endeavors has resulted from no longer having to spend all of her energy worrying about herself and trying to get through her life. Interestingly, Lorraine has noted that as both she and Marc have become more interested and involved in activities outside of the home, Marc actually has become less supportive and encouraging of her interests and endeavors than he had been prior to her recovery.

The overt rule regarding the consumption of alcohol has remained unchanged: Lorraine must not drink and Marc may drink in moderation both at home and outside the home. They also have created a rule that has allowed beer to be kept in the house, but only Marc has been permitted to touch it. These rules have been obeyed in that Lorraine has not touched Marc's beer, and she has stopped drinking entirely, both in public

and in private, while Marc has continued to drink beer every day. In spite of accepting and following these overt rules, Lorraine confided that she has not been happy with them, although she has never informed Marc of this fact. She said that sometimes having beer around the house has bothered her and she claimed that "sometimes I feel like just cracking one open." In general, however, Lorraine has supported the rules about drinking that have been operational in her family since her recovery.

The overt rule which probably had the greatest impact on the lives of Marc and Lorraine was the one that stipulated that Lorraine should take medications in order to control her bipolar affective disorder. Earlier it was mentioned that Marc attempted to impose this rule on Lorraine, but it never became operational because she refused to accept it. Eventually, however, Lorraine came to perceive that any of the rewards that existed for continuing in her illness were outweighed by the costs, which finally gave her the incentive to take her medications as a daily part of her life. This may have meant accepting the "mental illness" label, but it became a worthwhile trade-off for eliminating her unhappiness.

Covert Rules After Recovery

While Marc and Lorraine have revised their overt rules to allow their household to function more smoothly, a covert rule has continued to exist that sometimes has undermined these

efforts. Both spouses discussed their propensity to procrastinate. In fact, Marc even said that "our rule is: never do today what you can put off until tomorrow." Perhaps being permitted to procrastinate has enabled them to experience the evolution of their new overt rules regarding their household responsibilities as being less stressful, even though, on the surface, it could be seen as going against these overt rules. Recently, however, they have become disturbed by their tendency to procrastinate, and have indicated that they have been working on remedying this problem. Now that they have had several years to adjust to the overt rules which have become operational since recovery, they no longer have needed the covert rule that allowed them to procrastinate. Indeed, they now have begun to recognize it as an obstacle to performing their household duties even more efficiently.

It should also be mentioned that the covert rule that allowed Lorraine to be exempt from performing all domestic chores due to her illness was no longer operational after her recovery. Since she had divested herself of the "sick role", they no longer needed covert rules to perpetuate this role. Marc, however, did point out that although Lorraine contributed more to the running of the household than she did before her recovery, he still felt that he did more of the chores because, once Lorraine went back to work, she would get tired more easily, and since Marc had so much more energy than

Lorraine, he would get them done more quickly. Lorraine did not agree with this perception. She believed that since her recovery, there has been an equal division of labor between the two of them. Since Marc even admitted that the reason he has been doing more of the household chores was because he took it upon himself to do so and not because Lorraine expected it of him, perhaps this represented a reluctance on his part to give up the last vestiges of the "caretaker role", which required that he view her as "tired", and therefore still in need of his assistance.

Once Lorraine stopped drinking and began taking her medications, she ceased occupying the "sick role". Therefore, there was no longer any need for covert rules to exist which allowed her to periodically experience the bouts of drinking which had contributed to the perpetuation of the "sick role".

There has also been a covert rule that evolved after Lorraine's recovery which stipulated that Marc would have final say regarding whether or not they kept their pets. This has given him a great deal of leverage over Lorraine, who has become devoted to her animals. Apparently, even though Marc had lost a great deal of power when Lorraine went into recovery, he has been able to hold on to some of it via this covert rule. This has allowed him to retain some vestiges of the "controller role".

Once Marc and Lorraine ceased feeling that they had to keep the deep, dark secret of how seriously Lorraine was

affected by her alcoholism and bipolar affective disorder, they no longer felt that they needed to expend so much energy putting up a good front for the outside world. As a result of the fact that the rule which mandated that they do this became less important, they both felt that they had the freedom to relax and be themselves around others. The result of this was the lessening of the strain that had been created prior to sobriety by constantly having to keep up pretenses.

After Lorraine's recovery, covert rules which dealt with what Marc and Lorraine could talk about and with whom were still in existence, but they had become modified. For example, just as they did before, Marc and Lorraine continued to discuss her alcoholism, but not as often since it was no longer perceived as a big problem. Marc even stated that "we know it's there and something she's got to avoid, but we don't get into any long discussions about it." They also have felt free to talk to each other about Lorraine's bipolar affective disorder, particularly in reference to the importance of her staying on her medications. Recently, however, the topic of conversation has concerned the need for her to cease the medications while she has been attempting to get pregnant, as well as their fears about what the consequences of this might be.

Lorraine's alcoholism and mental illness have continued to be acceptable topics of conversation with members of their extended family as well as with a few people outside of the

family who have been close to them and who have been aware of the existence of these problems, although they have not come up very often, probably because they have ceased to be of immediate concern since Lorraine's recovery. It is of particular interest to note that both she and Marc have discussed these subjects with Marc's mother in recent years. This may be because, although a stigma may have continued to be attached to the labels of "alcoholism" and "mental illness", it has been diminished by the fact that Lorraine has been in recovery and therefore asymptomatic. In view of the fact that Marc's family was not well-educated about the disease concept of alcoholism, they might very well believe that Lorraine has been "cured" and that these problems therefore have disappeared.

There have been certain subjects that have been completely off limits for discussion between Lorraine and Marc. Although they have discussed the past once in awhile and generally have been in agreement regarding what they have remembered about it, they have avoided talking about painful memories from the past at all costs. Marc pointed out that "we don't drag up skeletons. If it's in the past, it stays there." Lorraine mentioned that she and Marc never have discussed what she did in her college days while drinking. She has not wanted to talk about it and he hasn't asked. They saw no point in bringing up anything that might stir up unnecessary negative feelings which could affect whatever

equilibrium they have achieved as Lorraine has been recovering.

There have been two subjects from the present that never have been brought up between Marc and Lorraine. One of them has been Marc's smoking and the other has concerned Marc's drinking. Although both of them have considered his smoking to be an addiction and therefore something he must quit, they have not discussed it because they have been aware of the fact that he'll only give it up when he has become ready to, and no amount of nagging from Lorraine will change that. Marc has described himself as a "stubborn Irishman" who has hated to be told what to do. With regard to Marc's drinking, it has only been Lorraine that has perceived it to be a problem. She has been afraid to bring it up to him however, since she has been concerned that "he'll get angry and get rid of the dog and cat." Lorraine's reluctance to bring up subjects that might upset Marc has given him a great deal of control over what they may and may not talk about.

While it was interesting to note that Lorraine has been a little bit more likely to discuss her personal problems with people outside her family since her recovery, especially people at work who were counselors, Marc has continued to refrain from confiding in anyone. Once Lorraine's alcoholism was no longer active, he didn't even have any reason to talk about that to his fellow worker who was a recovering alcoholic. This has allowed him to continue to view himself

as someone who is strong, capable, and self-sufficient; in other words, a person who has been giving rather than receiving assistance.

Marc reported being able to talk to Lorraine a little more about his own feelings now because she has become able to handle paying attention to more than just her own problems (although they still have remained of central importance to her). Perhaps this new covert rule which has allowed Marc to express many of his feelings to Lorraine may have opened the door to permitting the rule that also has allowed him to criticize her more expansively.

The covert rules that governed Marc and Lorraine's interaction with each other also have been altered. Lorraine noted that Marc has become more critical and less forthcoming with praise and attention. He sometimes even has tried to make her feel guilty about how she has been, in his estimation, not caring for and training the animals properly. Lorraine perceived that what attention she has been getting from Marc recently has been more negative than positive. At first glance this may seem odd, because she certainly has been in a better frame of mind and functioning at a much higher level than she was before recovery, but when it became evident that this change has meant that she could be more independent, this caused an uncomfortable loss of power for Marc. Since some of Lorraine's altered behavior was perceived by Marc to be the source of that discomfort, it was not surprising that

he has reacted negatively to her more than he did previously. He actually has been resisting the complete surrender of the parent/child relationship that he and Lorraine had before her recovery. Marc also indicated that he and Lorraine have been arguing more than they did before, but these arguments have centered on money rather than on Lorraine's drinking as it did previously. This could be a reflection of the fact that Lorraine has been speaking up more, and that she has expected to have more say in financial matters instead of leaving it all up to Marc, as she had prior to her recovery.

The criticism that has been handed out in this family has not been a one way street, however. Lorraine has been just as likely to criticize Marc as Marc has been to criticize her. It appeared to be a "tit for tat" situation. Lorraine pointed out that now that she has not been so wrapped up in her own problems, she has been able to see Marc more clearly now and has been more aware of his faults, in particular his tendency to control her, his lack of spontaneity, and his propensity to speak to her in a nasty tone of voice sometimes. He has stopped being her "caretaker" and her "savior", and she has come to view him as a human being with his own imperfections, which Lorraine has been more likely to point out to him since her recovery. This, of course, has put Marc on the defensive. He explained their mutual criticism by stating that "everybody's got their faults and everybody likes to point out each other's faults to make themselves feel better. If she

points out mine, I'm going to point out hers." This covert rule which has permitted Marc and Lorraine to criticize each other frequently served the purpose of enabling them, in Marc's words, to "make themselves feel better" at a time when they have been experiencing rapid role changes that may have, at times, been confusing for them in terms of their identity. It also might be seen as a safety valve which has allowed them to let off some steam that sometimes has built up as they have gone through the changes that have been occurring recently.

No changes were noted regarding the expression of affection between Marc and Lorraine since recovery. Hugging and kissing have been frequent occurrences have appeared to originate more often with Marc than with Lorraine, who admitted that she has been more likely to initiate affection with her pets than with her husband. Perhaps Marc's tendency to use the animals as scapegoats might have stemmed, in part, from some unconscious jealousy over the fact that they have been providing Lorraine with some of the things that previously had only been forthcoming from him.

Lorraine and Marc have ceased feeling obligated to spend so much time, including every holiday, with Lorraine's family. As a result, they have been able to spend more time with Marc's family than had been the case prior to sobriety. Perhaps this change occurred because Lorraine no longer felt compelled to always show up at family gatherings in order to "prove" that she was alright. Lorraine also pointed out that

she has felt comfortable being herself and expressing her feelings in her family of origin in the last few years, but only to a certain point. She mentioned that her reluctance to exhibit to her family all the changes that she had gone through since recovery stemmed from the fact that "they were used to me a certain way for so long." This illustrated the point that, once she was in recovery, not only was it necessary for changes to take place in the rules that affected the marital dyad, but also in those that affected Lorraine's relationships with members of her extended family as well.

Since Lorraine has no longer been drinking or experiencing the mood swings that resulted from her bipolar affective disorder, there ceased to be any reason for covert rules to exist regarding the necessity of covering up for these problems. In actuality, this rule may have begun to disintegrate right before Lorraine resumed taking her medications permanently. Both she and Marc finally had to face up to the enormity of her two illnesses once the resulting difficulties were so problematic that covering up for them became extremely difficult. Once they relinquished this covert rule, they were able to begin their journey toward recovery, because they were no longer shielding themselves from the severity of Lorraine's problems.

The Ehrlich Family

Overt Rules Before Recovery

Overt rules existed for the Ehrlichs which supported the traditional division of labor that existed in the family. Even though Barbara had part-time employment, they operated on a rule which held that George was the one who was responsible for supporting the family, mainly because he had the greater earning potential. It was therefore permissible for him to work long hours on every day but Sunday. At the same time, a family rule existed which expected Barbara to bear the responsibility for running the household and caring for the children. While George did perform some domestic functions, there were no rules which specified that he was obligated to do so. Consequently, whenever he engaged in a domestic activity such as doing dishes, he was perceived as doing Barbara a favor.

Regarding the upkeep of their home, very rigid rules existed which mandated that the house be spotless. As a result, Barbara spent a great deal of her time cleaning. This rule allowed her to give cleaning the house priority over spending time with her children. Even though these high standards of housekeeping were self-imposed by Barbara, who felt a strong need to prove her worth, both to herself and to others, George accepted this as normal and never tried to persuade her to stop being such a perfectionist about their house. He even used her tendency to work hard to explain why

she retired so early in the evening and stayed in bed so late in the morning, even though the real reason she slept so much was as the result of her excessive drinking. Apparently, these rules that mandated that she constantly demonstrate her competence by obsessively keeping an immaculate house actually served to mask her progressive alcoholism.

There were very few rules regarding expectations that were placed on the children due to the fact that they were so young during Barbara's active alcoholism. They were not expected to perform any household chores at all. They were, however, expected to show obedience and respect to their parents once they were no longer infants.

Rules having to do with decision-making and family finances reflected the fact that Barbara and George both had input in these areas. In retrospect, however, they realized that many of their major decisions, such as whether to buy a house and when to have children, were made without a great deal of discussion or consideration. They reported that they just seemed to fall into these things. Apparently, they had a general plan to buy a house and then start a family, but they had no actual timetable. Rules existed which permitted these decisions to be made on the spur of the moment and as the result of Barbara's impulses and powers of persuasion. As a matter of fact, it was at Barbara's urging that they bought the house at a time when they couldn't quite afford it. George claimed that Barbara motivated him by saying "let's go

out and take a look at houses. All we have to do is shop around, we don't have to buy." They found a house that they liked which was a very good deal, however, so they bought it. Once they had the house, it just seemed to follow that the children would come next.

The Ehrlichs also had overt rules that governed their obligations toward each other. These included the expectations that they be supportive of each other, and that they respect each other's privacy. Since the children were very small before Barbara recovered, these rules applied more to the parents than they did to the children at that time.

The Ehrlichs had a basic rule about drinking which stipulated that it was totally acceptable behavior for both of them, and it was simply a way of having fun. As a matter of fact, they didn't think that they could have very much fun without drinking. It was viewed as an essential element of socializing. They only surrounded themselves with other people who also viewed heavy drinking as being normal. Drinking was always associated with social occasions, so Barbara and George sought out these social occasions and even created their own whenever possible. If Barbara wanted to drink in the afternoon, she would invite someone over to drink with her. She also permitted herself to drink only beer in the afternoons since, in her mind, she did not perceive beer drinking as serious alcohol consumption. She would, however, drink anything alcoholic in the evenings or at social

gatherings. Barbara and George also drank together in the evenings, but this, too, was couched in social terms, since they referred to this as their "cocktail hour". Barbara only began drinking alone and earlier in the day after her doctor told her that drinking beer would be beneficial to her milk production when she was nursing her son. She saw this as an excuse to drink beer for "medicinal purposes" whenever she wanted. Apparently, this provided a new rule about drinking that permitted her increased consumption to be viewed as acceptable.

Covert Rules Before Recovery

Covert rules existed in the Ehrlich family which encouraged Barbara to assume the "superwoman" role in the family. Barbara alluded to this when she commented, "it was like, 'oh, the book of marriage said you're supposed to do this' and you did it." Barbara lived her life by following the covert rule that everything in her life had to be perfect. She did not think that she had choices because, in her view, the rule which said that she had to work, be a mother, have the perfect home and the perfect children was set in stone. If her husband or children couldn't do something right in her estimation, she did it for them, which added to her already enormous workload. Her drinking was allowed, as long as it did not interfere with these expectations. When her drinking eventually caused her to begin her day later and end it

earlier, a new rule came about which made that permissible because her "rest" was deemed necessary in order for her to care for two young children. In supporting this new rule, George was fulfilling his "enabler" role. In addition, the rule that mandated that Barbara "set the tone for the family" allowed for her to assume the "leadership role" and George the "follower role".

Barbara and George did things like buy a house and have children because they thought that it was expected of them, not because they chose to. This may be the reason why they believed that, in retrospect, major decisions such as these were made without much thought. These rules that they operated on, which they perceived to be externally imposed on them by their families of origin and by society, also dictated that Barbara should keep working even after her children were born so that she wouldn't "waste her education". The fact that they assumed that they had no choice about many things in their lives demonstrated just how powerful covert rules can be.

The Ehrlich family had a covert rule which mandated that alcoholism should never be discussed in the family. Barbara's drinking was never talked about as being an indication of alcoholism. The only time the subject was ever brought up was when Barbara and George jokingly answered a list of questions that they had obtained somewhere which was supposed to

determine whether drinking was a problem. Obviously, it was not taken seriously at all.

Alcoholism was never discussed in George's family of origin before Barbara's recovery, and Barbara's family didn't talk about it either until her brother announced that he was an alcoholic. Even then, family members refused to take it seriously because, as Barbara pointed out, "then it was discussed like, 'ha ha, he thinks he's an alcoholic. Isn't that funny!'" Even though her father had stopped drinking before her brother did, he never had labeled himself an alcoholic, so the family did not have to discuss it in that context. As far as Barbara's drinking was concerned, her extended family never saw her as being an alcoholic at all. They simply accepted the fact that she would sometimes do crazy things because they believed that it was just part of her personality.

While it was not permitted for the Ehrlichs to discuss alcoholism with friends and acquaintances, both Barbara and George did sometimes discuss other personal problems with people outside of the family. George did this only once in awhile in a one-on-one situation with a very close friend, while Barbara would talk about her problems with anyone who would listen, but it was always done in a complaining, negative way, and nothing was ever perceived to be her fault.

Covert rules regarding family interaction stipulated that affection should be expressed frequently through kisses, hugs

and back rubs, and this was always done when people arrived home and before bed. The expression of feelings was allowed, but only to a point. George said that he would hold his feelings in sometimes, just to avoid a confrontation with an often formidable Barbara, and Barbara felt that she was not allowed to express her anger in the family, so she would hold it in for awhile and then erupt, which would lead her to feel guilty afterward. When Barbara and George did argue, they were permitted to throw and break things, but they were never allowed to hit each other. They also were expected to refrain from criticizing each other, although they tended not to praise each other very much either. Apparently, covert rules regarding interaction in their immediate family encouraged family cohesion and emphasized the importance of getting along for the most part, in spite of Barbara's progressing alcoholism.

Regarding their association with Barbara's family of origin, there was a rule which directed that all extended family members had to attend family functions. Barbara felt that she could never say no to a family invitation, and that she had no choice but to stay until the end of the party no matter how uncomfortable it might be. Barbara also noted that her mother had total control over the family and that she "had the most to gain by us all drinking. It's interesting that the girls in the family did not stop drinking until my mother died." Apparently the Ehrlichs were inextricably caught up in

the rules and dynamics of Barbara's family of origin before Barbara's recovery. This did not seem to be the case with George's family of origin, however.

There did not appear to be any covert rules that orchestrated major strategies to cover up for Barbara's alcoholism or to get her to stop drinking, probably because there was a rule which required complete denial that she was an alcoholic, both in her immediate family and in her family of origin. Indeed, George, Barbara's parents, and her siblings helped to enable the continuation of Barbara's alcoholism by drinking right along with her, so her drinking behavior was actually camouflaged in this way. Barbara and George never argued about her drinking and he did not try to regulate or restrict it in any way. As a matter of fact, George would often minimize the ramifications of her heavy drinking by making light of her blackouts and filling her in on what she did not remember. Once in awhile he would let her know if she did something to embarrass him while she was drinking and would gently suggest that perhaps she had too much to drink and should drink less next time, but he perceived these occurrences as isolated incidents, and never believed that she had a serious drinking problem. George remembered trying to conceal Barbara's drinking only once, and that was when she passed out at a party. Other than that, there were no instances where he felt the need to cover for her. This might be due to a covert rule which encouraged

their penchant for associating with heavy drinking friends and relatives, which created a situation where Barbara's drinking behavior was not all that conspicuous.

Overt Rules After Recovery

Since recovery, the rules that existed in the Ehrlich family which specified what the division of labor should be changed very little with regard to George and Barbara, but there were changes in the rules regarding what the children's obligations in the home were. Overt family rules dictated that Barbara was still responsible for the domestic role and George was in charge of the breadwinner role. As a matter of fact, once Barbara quit her part-time job and George started his own business, he became the sole source of income, and the rule which allowed him to work long hours remained in effect. When he was home, however, rules existed that expected that he would lend a hand around the house when Barbara needed help or if she was sick. There was also a rule which specified that he should always be home on Tuesday nights to watch the children so Barbara could attend her Women for Sobriety meetings. The only domestic chore that became George's responsibility was vacuuming, and this was the case because Barbara had back problems and as a result, they had a rule that she was not supposed to vacuum.

Rules regarding the upkeep of the house have become much less perfectionistic since Barbara's recovery. There was no

longer the expectation that the house had to be immaculate. Instead, a neat but lived-in look became acceptable. A new rule has evolved which places a higher priority on spending quality time with the kids than on keeping the house spotless. Barbara hasn't even insisted that the children's rooms be neat, except when they have friends over. She stated that "it could go for two or three weeks that they haven't cleaned and their rooms are just absolutely disgusting. But if they want a friend over, it must be cleaned."

The rules which they had regarding the expectations that were placed on the children have changed since recovery, but this had more to do with the fact that the children have gotten older. There have been rules which specified what their responsibilities and chores were, which included the expectation that they must take care of their own rooms and get themselves off to school. Christine has been expected to walk to school, but she has been allowed to be driven to school two days a week, and she has been permitted to decide which days this would occur. However, the children have been given the responsibility for getting themselves to school on time.

There also have been rules which have governed the children's behavior in the home, for example, eating has had to be done in the kitchen (or in the dining room when they have had company); their television viewing has been monitored (except that when the parents have had guests, the children

have been permitted to watch what they have wanted just so they wouldn't bother the adults); and the children have been expected to be in their rooms by nine o'clock in the evening so that Barbara and George could have some time alone together (but they haven't had to go to sleep - they could read, straighten up their rooms, or play quietly). There have also been rules that have directed the children to be polite and have good table manners. Interestingly, there has not been a rule in the Ehrlich family about only getting dessert if they finished their meal. Barbara explained by saying that, "as a dietitian, I know that you can have lots of problems when you start making dessert the end all. It should be part of the meal." The children have had to tell their parents when they were going out and where they were going, and they have had to ask before eating food between meals and before using the telephone. It was pointed out, however, that there have been no other rules regarding the children's telephone use, such those which set time limits. Rules also have existed regarding the children attending to their own personal hygiene and finishing their homework. In addition, Christine has had to follow a rule which has instructed that she call home if she was not going to be coming right home from school.

A new rule was instituted recently which stipulated that Jeffrey had to do his homework as soon as he got home from school, and that his mother would spend an hour helping him. If there was more to be done after an hour, his father would

help him later that evening. Since this rule was put into effect, Jeffrey's schoolwork has been improving and he has been able to do a great deal more work on his own than had been the case previously.

In disciplining the children, Barbara and George have been firm and consistent with them, but they have tried very hard not to scream and yell at them all of the time. They have made a point to sit down and explain to the children why certain things have been expected of them. Barbara and George have always made sure that they back each other up with regard to dealing with the children, because they haven't wanted them to get two different messages.

When it has come to decision-making and finances, both Barbara and George have continued to have shared input. The only differences that have emerged since Barbara's recovery have been that they have given more careful consideration to these areas than they had prior to her recovery, and that George has been more likely to speak up and voice his opinion, even when Barbara has been quite adamant regarding an opposing view. They have also made an effort to include the children in the decision-making process whenever feasible. In addition, even though both George and Barbara have been dealing with the finances, they have been operating on a rule that has dictated that Barbara should take care of personal finances and that George should focus on the business finances.

The overt rules that have specified family members' obligations to each other have continued to specify that they be supportive and encouraging of each other's interests and endeavors. George and Barbara also have made it a point to make sure that at least one of them attend events and activities that the children have been involved in, such as their soccer games. Family members have also continued to respect each other's privacy. The children have not generally barged in when their parents' bedroom door has been closed, and George and Barbara have made it a practice to always knock before entering the children's rooms.

The rules that have surrounded drinking alcohol in the Ehrlich family since Barbara's recovery have stipulated that Barbara should refrain from drinking, but that it was alright for George to drink, even at home. It was no longer acceptable for George to get drunk, however. While neither George nor Barbara have been uncomfortable when other people drink, they have disapproved of anyone drinking to intoxication. For this reason, they have preferred to refrain from associating with heavy drinkers.

During the period of Barbara's early recovery, George avoided drinking in front of her, but after awhile he no longer made a point of it, although by then he had drastically cut down on his own drinking. When they have attended a function where drinks have been served, George has preferred to make his own drinks so that they wouldn't be too strong,

and he has limited himself to one or two drinks. Barbara and George also have formulated a rule which has stipulated that Barbara should always drive home when George has had even one drink.

Beer has been permitted in the house from the very beginning of Barbara's recovery period. She felt very strongly that it was important for her to be a part of society, which meant that she would not be able to completely avoid all association with alcohol. Consequently, when she first stopped drinking, she did not get rid of the beer in the refrigerator nor did she stay away from all weddings and parties. She realized that she had to get used to being an abstainer in a drinking society.

The message that Barbara and George have conveyed about drinking to their children has not been rigidly forbidding. It has involved the idea that drinking would be acceptable for them when they become adults, but that it should not be done while they are young. They also have been told that one or two drinks would be permissible, but intoxication should be avoided at all costs.

Covert Rules After Recovery

Changes in the covert rules in the Ehrlich family since Barbara's recovery have originated, in some cases, with a change in Barbara's expectations of herself. She no longer has had the need to perform the role of "superwoman" since she

recovered, because she has ceased operating on a set of rules that dictated the need for her house to be spotless, for her to take on a plethora of responsibilities both within and outside the home, and for her to do everything she attempted perfectly. This has led to a more flexible and relaxed atmosphere around their home and has made it possible for Barbara to be less aggressive and controlling of everyone and everything around her, although she has remained assertive. This has supported her continuation in the "leadership role" in relation to George's "follower role", but since she has been less domineering, she has been performing this role much less rigidly. In addition, even though Barbara has remained busy, life for the Ehrlich family has been more low key in recent years.

George adhered to a covert rule that mandated that he should always go to work, even when he has not been feeling well. The only time he would permit himself to stay home would be if he were very sick. This rule has served to support George's informal role of "workaholic".

Covert rules which existed that were based on external expectations have been relinquished to a great extent in the Ehrlich family. Barbara pointed out that "now we're doing things for us instead of everybody else. Basically we're doing the same things but for different reasons." In a similar vein, Barbara also mentioned that she has stayed married to George because "I love him, not because I have to."

They have apparently begun to develop covert rules regarding family expectations that have been based on their own choices rather than rooted exclusively in societal expectations or those of their families of origin. All family members have felt as if they have had the freedom to be themselves with regard to extended family members, and with people outside of the family, as well as with their immediate family. They apparently have not felt the need to alter their behavior in any perceptible way depending on whether they were in their home or outside of it. Evidently there has not been a covert rule since recovery which has mandated the need to put up a front for the outside world. Instead, the Ehrlich family members have been encouraged to express their identities freely no matter where they might be.

Covert rules regarding what family members have been permitted to talk about and to whom have changed somewhat since recovery. Since there has been recognition of Barbara's alcoholism, the subject has been openly discussed among immediate family members. Barbara pointed out that she has felt free to discuss her alcoholism with her children in a manner that they could understand, and as often as she has felt would be comfortable for them. Barbara and George have also discussed her alcoholism, but not very frequently because George has not been very comfortable with labeling her an alcoholic. This subject has been discussed very openly and quite often in Barbara's family of origin, most likely because

so many family members have been in recovery themselves. They have been less likely to bring this topic up with George's extended family, who have remained perplexed about Barbara being an alcoholic in the first place, since she did not, in their minds, exhibit stereotypical alcoholic behavior.

Barbara and George have not been adverse to discussing Barbara's alcoholism with people outside of the family. As a matter of fact, Barbara appeared on a nationally televised talk show to discuss it. She said that she decided to do this because she wanted everyone to know about her alcoholism so that she wouldn't have to hide it anymore. George pointed out that when the subject of alcoholism has been brought up among their friends, it often has been discussed in a joking fashion. This was done to minimize any discomfort that might have been felt regarding this topic.

The Ehrlich family has been quite open with each other, for the most part, with regard to what they have been able to discuss among themselves. Barbara and George have felt that they could discuss anything with each other. They have been able to be much more honest with each other since Barbara's recovery. Sometimes Jeffrey has begged his mother not to tell his father when he has done something wrong, but Barbara generally has told George about it, because if she didn't, it would be violating their covert rule that they never keep anything from each other. With regard to the children, the only subject that has been off limits has been Barbara and

George's negative feelings about some of their extended family members.

The family frequently has discussed the past with each other, and when they have there generally has been agreement about it. They have enjoyed looking at family pictures and talking about what life used to be like for them, especially the more pleasant memories, although they have not been adverse to occasionally bringing up unpleasant events as well.

Personal problems that family members have experienced have been comfortably discussed within the immediate family. The children have been encouraged to come to their parents and talk about anything that has been bothering them. Personal problems have also been discussed with some of their extended family members as well as with people who are outside of the family. Barbara said that she has confided in some very close friends as well as her therapist. George sometimes has discussed personal problems with two very good friends that he has known since high school. George said that he has talked to them "just to see how things have been going, comparing to see if they have a better idea on how to handle their lives and so forth." Apparently, covert rules have existed for the Ehrlichs that have permitted them to go outside of the family for help and advice as well as to feel free to turn to immediate family members for this.

Covert rules that had to do with family interaction continued to expect that affection among family members should

be expressed openly with kisses, hugs, and other physical contact, such as giving back rubs. The open expression of feelings has also been permitted in the family, but Barbara has been having difficulty getting used to this new covert rule because she had spent so many years being discouraged from freely expressing her feelings, especially negative ones. As a result of this, she became very out of touch with her own feelings and it has been only recently that she even has been able to identify some of them.

Rules regarding the expression of anger in the family have focused on the importance of talking it out. Barbara and George have come to expect their children to use "I messages" when vocalizing their anger. This has involved saying things like "I get upset when you yell at me" rather than "you're a mean person." This emphasis has indicated that the Ehrlich family has viewed effective communication as an important priority in their lives.

Rules that have governed arguing have changed somewhat since recovery and have expected that Barbara and George refrain from arguing over "ridiculous little things" as they had in the past. When they have argued, they have tried to "talk calmly and on good terms, just to get it out in the open." Neither of them has ever left the house during an argument or slept downstairs apart from their spouse, although George mentioned that, at times, he has left the room during an argument "just to get another thought, to think about

what's going on. This is to keep from just constantly yelling back and forth and not getting anywhere." In general it could be said that, although Barbara and George have continued to argue with each other since recovery, the subject and nature of the arguments have changed. It should also be noted that arguments between parents and children have increased since recovery because the children have gotten older and have been more likely to question parental discipline. This has been especially true between Jeffrey and George, who have argued frequently about this subject. Christine and Jeffrey have also argued with each other once in a while, but Barbara has made a concerted effort to avoid getting involved in their fights. The children have been expected to resolve their differences on their own.

One covert rule that has operated in the Ehrlich family has placed great importance on minimizing criticism and giving praise as often as possible, although they frequently have found themselves being critical of Jeffrey's behavior. They have attempted to temper this criticism with praise for him whenever he has been behaving well, however. In addition, while the children have been known to be critical of one another, Barbara and George have rarely criticized each other. This has helped to promote the mutual understanding and respect that has existed between them since recovery.

Covert rules that have addressed the Ehrlich family's interaction with their extended family have also undergone

change since Barbara has been in recovery. For instance, they ceased feeling obligated to accept every invitation to family gatherings or to stay until the end of the party. In addition, while they have felt obligated to invite all extended family members to large family parties that they have had, even siblings that they were not that close to, they haven't expected that all who were invited would always accept, nor have they interpreted the declining of invitations as a snub, as had been the case prior to recovery. Apparently, this new covert rule, which has specified that since recovery there have been choices regarding whether to attend family functions, has been operational for the entire extended family as well as for the Ehrlich family themselves.

Just as there had never been any covert rules in the Ehrlich family which dictated that Barbara's drinking had to be controlled or covered up, no rule has evolved since her recovery which has expected family members to monitor whether she drank or not. Instead, it was seen as being her choice, and she was solely responsible for her attempt to achieve sobriety. Although the denial by George and some extended family members that she was an alcoholic continued in her early recovery, after awhile they more or less accepted the label and then operated on a covert rule that mandated that they cease being "enablers" who would encourage an atmosphere conducive to drinking, and instead become very supportive of her efforts to recover.

The Neilsen Family

Overt Rules Before Recovery

The overt rules in the Neilsen family that determined their division of labor had stipulated since the beginning of their marriage that Joan would not work outside the home and would devote herself to taking care of children and running the household, and that Frank was totally responsible for providing the income. To allow for this, he was exempt from performing most household chores and was permitted to spend long hours at the office. As Joan's alcoholism progressed, however, she frequently broke the rule which mandated that she must adequately perform all domestic functions. This necessitated a modification in the family's rules regarding the running of the household so that it would still be able to function in spite of Joan's alcoholism. The new rules stipulated that Frank should take over many of the domestic functions, such as cooking, cleaning, laundry, and shopping, with some help from the children. Frank actually expected the children to take over more responsibility than they were capable of. Rather than assign them to specific jobs, he expected that they would just see what needed to be done and then would do it. As a result, things were not very well-organized, and while the household did function to some extent, it did not run very smoothly and was sometimes in total disarray. Frank, therefore, saw this as the children's

fault, and became angry with them for sometimes violating these rules that he had imposed on them.

As Joan's alcoholism progressed, she also was no longer able to consistently provide child-care, and since Frank's job was demanding and time-consuming, he was unable to be at home enough of the time to take up the slack. As a result, the child-care fell to the children themselves, although there was no rule that specified that the older children had to look after the younger ones. Instead, the family rule was "every man for himself". All of the children were expected to make their own breakfast and lunch, and take care of their own needs.

Overt rules involving expectations of the children as well as discipline were relatively relaxed. There were no strict rules regarding what time to be home by, whom they were able to see, or where they could go. They were more or less left to their own devices, although they did not have completely free reign. While they did not have rigidly set curfews, they were expected to be home at a reasonable hour, particularly on school nights. It was understood that they had to go to school, but there was no set time for doing homework, and no pressure put on the children to do well in school, although they were provided with tutors if they needed them. The children were given allowances, but they had to earn money if they wanted things that were above and beyond

the basics. They were also expected to be decent, honest people who honored their commitments.

As Joan became even more debilitated by her alcoholism, the rules that governed the children's behavior became even more lax and inconsistent. Both parents were often unaware of what was going on with the children because Frank was at work and Joan was frequently up in her room sleeping. When they misbehaved, Joan either was oblivious to it, or she overreacted by becoming quite enraged and even violent, and Frank was likely to just "let it slide". He was not one to lock them in their rooms or withhold favors as the result of some transgression.

The lack of supervision and discipline that was prevalent in the Neilsen family meant that the children could get away with a great deal. The older children smoked, drank, did drugs, and were truant. The fact that most of them rarely did homework translated into poor grades in both elementary and high school for everyone except the youngest child, Donna. Frankie pointed out that "we were totally undisciplined and we got into a lot of trouble in the name of 'coolness' and didn't do very much in high school. None of us should have been allowed to be so undisciplined."

The rules that focused on decision-making and finances mandated that Frank have the ultimate authority in these areas, but that the rest of the family be given the opportunity to have input. As Joan's alcoholism got worse,

her input was no longer valued, and she was consulted less and less often. Although the money that Joan and the children had access to was doled out by Frank, he was always extremely generous with it. This was true even in the later stages of Joan's alcoholism when she had several episodes of fiscal irresponsibility which threatened their financial stability.

Rules regarding family members' obligations to each other stipulated that they should all encourage each other and support each other. At least one of the parents was expected to attend any activities and performances that their children participated in, such as sporting events, in order to cheer them on. After awhile Joan stopped attending these events when her drinking got worse, and Frank either attended them alone or did not attend at all because he was too busy with his added family responsibilities. Another obligation that family members had toward each other was to respect each other's privacy, although Frank felt exempt from this rule as the head of the household and would sometimes open the children's mail, and Joan felt that she never had enough privacy to drink.

Several rules existed in the Neilsen family regarding the drinking of alcohol. During the first years of the Neilsen's marriage, their lifestyle was always surrounded by drinking. It was seen as being perfectly acceptable for both Joan and Frank to drink as much as they wished, both in the home and outside of it. Coming home drunk from a social affair was

allowed and even expected. A case of liquor was delivered to the house every other week as a matter of course. Once Frank stopped drinking, however, the rules changed. Frank had imposed a new rule on himself that he should completely stop drinking because it was interfering with his law practice. The liquor deliveries stopped, and when it became apparent to him in his sobriety just how much Joan was drinking, he tried to impose a rule on her whereby she would be expected to limit the amount that she drank. As Joan's behavior in public became more and more embarrassing as a result of her drinking, Frank tried to impose a rule on her which required her to stop drinking altogether. Even though Joan refused to accept this rule, she did bow to pressure that she cut back on the drinking she did out in the open. This resulted in forcing her to become a "closet alcoholic" because she often drank in secret as she attempted to comply, on the surface, with the family's restrictive rules about drinking.

The family also had rules about drinking for the children. Alcohol was considered off limits to the children until they reached legal drinking age. This rule was adhered to by the two youngest children, but blatantly violated by the three oldest ones.

Covert Rules Before Recovery

Certain covert rules existed in the Neilsen family that served to uphold some of their informal roles. The fact that

family members came to tolerate the rule that allowed Joan to retire to her room and spend as much time there as she wanted made it that much easier for her to assume the "sick role". Similarly, the covert rule that allowed Joan to take responsibility for being the cause of Paul's behavior problems due to her drinking during her pregnancy with him actually put her in the position of having to defend him and protect him from his father's wrath. The fact that Joan was perceived as the "bad guy" in the family was the direct result of the rule that family members should view her excessive drinking as an indicator that she was willfully misbehaving instead of being the result of having the disease of alcoholism.

The fact that Joan occupied the "follower role" in the family and Frank was in the "leadership role" was supported by the covert rule which perpetuated the notion that Frank was the competent one in the family, and Joan was the incompetent one. Frank's tendency to play the "martyr role" was supported by the rule that he himself had imposed which mandated that things must be done a certain way in the household and that he was the only one who could do it correctly. This led him to shoulder enormous responsibility and then feel resentful and put-upon about it. Frank did not usually occupy a "caretaker role" in response to Joan's sick role because there was no covert rule in the family that mandated that he do so. Frank's "emotional outsider role" was reinforced by the rule which permitted him to come and go as he pleased and live what

Joan referred to as a "bachelor lifestyle". The "enabler role" was supported by the notion that Joan's alcoholic behavior had to be compensated for. Similarly, the "controller role" was upheld by the rule which stipulated that Joan's alcoholism had to be managed in some way by Frank because it somehow reflected negatively on him as a husband that his wife was so out of control. When he attended Al-Anon, however, he became aware that it would be better if he no longer adhered to this rule, and when he followed this advice it allowed him to cease playing the "controller" and "enabler role". Paul's "scapegoat role" evolved because there was an unspoken rule that he should be criticized by members of the family for not living up to familial expectations in an attempt to shame him into shaping up. This also encouraged him to be an "emotional outsider" because it was too painful for him to open himself up to his family when he was only going to be the object of their derision. In addition, because Paul felt that he was such a disappointment to his parents, he thought that he might be the cause of his mother's need to drink. The guilt that resulted from this led to even lower self-esteem, which was manifested in even more acting-out behavior. He was also averting attention away from Joan by being the "scapegoat" in the family, which would temporarily minimize how serious her problem was.

Due to the fact that Frankie behaved in ways that conformed to familial expectations by being levelheaded,

logical, and a hard worker, a rule existed in the family that emphasized the importance of praising Frankie and viewing him in a positive light as "the good one" in contrast to Paul's role as "the bad one". The idea was to provide Paul with a good example of what he was supposed to live up to, but this actually served to create a fierce rivalry between the two brothers. Frankie's "good kid" role also reflected well on the family, so it was important to them to encourage and perpetuate this image of Frankie. This was in spite of the objective reality that Frankie was high on drugs almost all of the time, and had a much more serious drug problem than his brother did. Frankie's efforts to keep up a good front so that he could continue in this role might have resulted from his attempt to adhere to the covert rule that held that family members may have contributed to causing Joan's alcoholism, and so he had to compensate for it by being good. Frankie might also have been operating on the notion that if he was good enough to please her, and then she wouldn't want to drink.

Karen's tendency to occupy the "victim role" was encouraged by the fact that, since the Neilsen family was incapable of compensating for the painful experiences that she had during adolescence, they had a covert rule which allowed her to complain and feel sorry for herself, thus finding a certain kind of solace in being the "victim" that everyone felt sorry for but couldn't help. Being a "victim" also involved an attempt to make her mother feel so guilty that she

would stop drinking. This, as well as her assumption of the mediator and manipulator roles in the family, also resulted from the existence of an unspoken rule which mandated that she was responsible for putting a stop to her mother's alcoholism somehow, and for making her parents happy.

Teresa's roles of "lost child" and "emotional outsider" resulted from a covert rule that might be summarized by saying "if it works, don't fix it". Since she made so few emotional demands on her family and her presence was not often felt, the family assumed that they were exempt from worrying about her, which then enabled them to focus their energy and concern on family members who had major problems and demanded more attention. In another sense, her assumption of this role could have been an attempt on her part to hide all of her anger and resentment which she might have feared would drive her mother to drink more. This perception was rooted in the covert family rule which stipulated that family members were responsible for causing Joan's drinking.

Donna's role of "mascot" stemmed from the covert rule that, as the funny one in the family, she was responsible for cheering everybody up so that the pain and misery in the family might be counteracted and even eradicated. Her efforts to get good grades in school was another way that she attempted to make her family happy. If her family was happy, perhaps her mother wouldn't need to drink so much. Again, the covert family rule which made family members feel responsible

for getting Joan to stop drinking was behind all of her efforts.

In the Neilsen family, they often operated on a covert rule which stressed the importance of living up to the expectations of the outside world. It was especially important to Frank to project a good professional and social image. When it was no longer possible to do that because of Joan's embarrassing public behavior while drinking, they either refrained from going out to social events, or Frank went alone. In addition, the fact that Joan was not able to live up to the proper image of a politician's wife caused Frank to completely abandon his political aspirations rather than take a chance on exposing Joan's condition to outsiders.

There was a related covert rule which mandated that all family members refrain from discussing Joan's alcoholism with anyone outside the family. This included extended family members. Karen pointed out that "our relatives knew about the problem, but we never talked about it with them. We had no idea how to approach the subject." The alcoholism was not openly discussed with Joan because it was a taboo word with her, and family members feared that she would get violent or walk out of the room if they brought it up. The children rarely even discussed it with each other, except in a joking way, although toward the end when things became very difficult, they would confide in each other about how worried they were about their mother, and would consult each other

about how they should handle difficult situations that arose when their mother was drinking. It should be pointed out that the "don't talk" rule was relaxed somewhat when Frank went to Al-Anon and the children to Alateen. This permitted them to discuss the alcoholism outside of the family but only within the confines of the meetings. They still completely avoided discussing it with extended family and friends. Personal problems outside of the alcoholism were rarely discussed within the family. The children did not feel as if they could talk to either of their parents about their problems because they seemed to have enough to contend with and didn't appear to be interested, and they did not confide in each other very often either. Joan said that there were several people outside of her family that she could talk to about personal problems, but Frank never discussed his problems with anyone outside the family, possibly because he felt that it would interfere with the image that he was trying to project to the outside world. There were a few women in the neighborhood as well as an aunt who sometimes served as "surrogate mothers" for the girls, who were able to talk to these women about some of their personal problems, and the boys confided in a close friend or two on rare occasions, but as Karen pointed out, "No one would ever tell the truth. Everyone would minimize everything."

The family interaction that occurred among the Neilsens was governed by several covert rules. Family members were

expected to kiss each other hello, regardless of whatever turmoil was surrounding them. When problems mounted in the family, everyone would go their own way and avoid each other. This placed definite limitations on their ability to communicate effectively. Everyone was concerned about what was going on in the family, but they would not show it. Fear and anger prevailed, but it was expected that these feelings would be kept under wraps most of the time. Frank and the children were very fearful of Joan's rages and would try to avoid upsetting her by hiding their true feelings so as not to provoke her. Once the tension became too much to bear, however, family members would argue with each other in order to blow off steam. As a matter of fact, there were times when they would purposely annoy each other just to provoke an argument. Criticism was constant, and praise was rare. It should also be mentioned that there was a tremendous amount of distrust in the family. This "don't trust" rule was useful in helping family members to avoid feeling the pain of disappointment in other family members which occurred whenever they didn't live up to each other's expectations.

Covert rules also existed which dealt with Joan and Frank's families of origin. Since most of Joan's family members lived three thousand miles away, there were very few rules regarding them. When her mother was living with her, or when she got together with her brothers and sisters, drinking was always a big part of their gatherings and excessive

drinking was permissible. Another covert rule that was apparent was that, while it was important for Joan and her relatives to keep in touch, it was acceptable for them to go many months without any contact whatsoever. Frank's family of origin had the expectation that they should keep in very frequent contact, however, and they would be considered remiss if they did not. This was made easier by the fact that they lived in relatively close proximity to each other. Frank's family was also very formal and proper which meant that Frank and Joan had to curb their drinking when they were with them. After Frank quit drinking, Joan rarely drank in front of them, but did sometimes sneak drinks. She always felt that she had to be on her best behavior when in their company, but in spite of her efforts, she sensed their disapproval of her. Another rule was reflected in the fact that there was always an unspoken invitation to the children from Frank's mother and sister who lived in the same town, that they could come over to their house whenever things got tough at home.

There were several covert rules that existed in the Neilsen family which dictated how family members should deal with Joan's drinking. Frank operated on the covert rule that it was his responsibility to get Joan to stop drinking and to cover up for her when she was intoxicated. He attempted to do this by controlling how much alcohol came into the house, scolding and cajoling her about her drinking, extracting promises from her that she would not drink, making excuses for

her absence at social gatherings to others such as, "she's not well", or "she's indisposed", and cleaning up her messes and getting her out of trouble like he did with her DWI. These actions were all a part of his "enabler role". After Frank went to Al-Anon, he gradually learned to discontinue these behaviors.

The children also operated on this same covert rule that expected them to cover up for their mother and to get her to stop drinking. They tried hiding the liquor from her, finding the bottles she had hidden and breaking them, and pouring out her liquor, and filling the bottles with water. Interestingly, these were all individual efforts on their part, and they didn't even talk about it to each other until after Joan's recovery. They also tried to hide their mother's problem from their friends by not inviting them over unless Joan was not there, and by never talking about the alcoholism with them.

Overt Rules After Recovery

After Joan's recovery, the overt rules regarding the division of labor in the household could be summarized in Joan's words: "We all play together and work together. We wouldn't allow the kids not to help out." The division of labor has been relatively flexible in the Neilsen family. It has not been expected that Joan do all of the domestic chores, but once she was sober, she carried her own weight and did her

share. Since the children have grown up quite a bit since their mother's recovery, it has been expected that they each take care of their own rooms, laundry, meals and shopping, and that they all have jobs in order to earn income to take care of their own expenses. There has also been an overt rule which mandated that those who have been living at the island house during the week must take care of it and keep it clean. There have not been any specifically assigned chores, however. The family has continued to operate on the basic rules of "every man for himself" and "if you see that something needs to be done, do it". The differences since recovery have been that Joan was no longer exempt from this rule, and the children have been more capable of discerning what needed to be done and then doing it properly, due to the fact that they were older. Frank, however, has not been expected to pitch in around the house as much as everybody else because of the notion that he has worked so hard as the breadwinner and because, since Joan became sober, it no longer has been necessary. It should be noted, however, that he has continued to do the major weekly shopping for the family. He also has done some chores around the house when he has become irritated by the fact that they haven't been done correctly according to his specifications, or in a timely fashion. This has been based on a rule that he had been trying to impose on the family which would mandate that everything should be in its proper place. In general, the running of the household has

been spontaneous rather than regimented, but it hasn't been haphazard and disorganized like it was prior to Joan's recovery.

Each of the kids have been permitted to keep their rooms however they wished, but it has been expected that the rest of the house should be clean enough so that they could feel comfortable having their friends over. The family has deemed it important that there be no signs of disregard or neglect at their home. Joan did point out, however, that "the house doesn't have to be 'white glove' clean, but certainly a decent clean, and the lawn should be mowed, but it doesn't have to be manicured."

There have been basic house rules that the children have been expected to abide by since recovery, but there have not been a great many of them. When Joan was first in recovery, she tightened up the disciplinary rules about what behavior was acceptable for her children and she "stuck to her guns." The law was laid down to them regarding drug use, and they were expected to be responsible, helpful, and considerate. In addition, Paul was told that his stealing would no longer be tolerated, that he had to get a job, and if he did not wish to abide by the rules he would have to move out. As the kids got older and their behavior became more mature, these overt disciplinary rules became unnecessary for the most part. The rules that have continued to be operational for the children were characterized by family members as being relaxed,

easygoing, flexible, and consistent. Frank described the situation this way:

We're very lax or lenient in our rules. We have parameters, true, but they are not strict or stringent because there aren't too many things that really need scrutiny. Certainly we would not countenance certain behavior patterns as far as being outside the socially acceptable things. I would not permit any of the kids to come home with somebody and sleep with them. I would not countenance illegal behavior. So, short of some outrageous behavior, I think we're pretty liberal in our thinking.

Frank and Joan's message to the kids after recovery regarding education was, according to Joan: "Just because we're not sitting on you every fifteen minutes to do your homework, don't assume that we don't think education is important. You guys have good chances, so don't blow it." Each child was given the opportunity to pursue higher education and was encouraged to do so, but there wasn't a great deal of pressure applied in this area. None of the children was made to feel that he or she had to be a doctor, lawyer, or corporate president. Frank pointed out that the result of this lack of pressure has been that "some of them are late bloomers because they didn't have the regimentation. But that's okay according to our philosophy. Better they seek their own level than to force it on them and have them rebel."

One other major overt rule that the children had to contend with stipulated that those who were not in school would have to pay rent to their parents if they continued to live in either of the family homes, while those who were still

attending school were exempted from rent payment. The amount was not very high, but Joan and Frank thought that by paying it, the kids would be taught some fiscal responsibility.

The rules that had to do with decision-making had changed once Joan was in recovery. Instead of Frank making all the decisions with some input from the kids and little or none from Joan, the family operated on a rule that dictated that whole family make decisions together, with Frank and Joan carrying the most weight. Since the children were older, it was assumed that any decisions that affected their personal lives, such as whether to go to school, where to go to school, where to live, what kind of work to do etc., would be their own responsibility. Their parents' contribution to the making of a personal decision was expected to be in the form of feedback and advice. The children generally have asked their parents for consults, but ultimately they have made their own choices because parental permission has not been necessary. With regard to finances, family rules have determined that each of the children should be financially responsible for their own expenses, but that Frank should be the one who paid for general household expenses and for the basic upkeep of the house. After Joan's recovery, overt rules regarding family members' obligations toward each other continued to stipulate that family members love and support each other. The difference was that they had an easier time adhering to this rule once the level of anger, resentment, and tension in the

family diminished when Joan stopped drinking. The Neilsens have noticed a real sense of family unity whereby they all have been pulling for each other. They have been very interested in and supportive of each others' endeavors, and they have made it a point to attend activities and events that family members have participated in whenever possible. Once Joan was sober, she was able to resume her participation in these areas. Family members also had an obligation to respect each others' privacy. This rule existed prior to recovery, but Frank sometimes broke this rule. Since recovery, however, even Frank has adhered to this rule in that he no longer has been reading his children's mail unless they have given him permission to do so, and Joan has not had the sense that her privacy has been limited, because she no longer has felt driven to be alone so that she could drink in secrecy.

The overt rules that surrounded drinking alcohol once Joan was sober were greatly altered. The most obvious change was the existence of a rule which mandated that, since Joan was an alcoholic, she could never touch alcohol again. At the same time, however, there was also a rule that Joan's sobriety was her responsibility, and no one else's. All other family members have been permitted to drink alcohol, albeit in moderation, including Frank and Frankie, who both resumed drinking after periods of abstinence. Drugs, however, have been regarded as being completely off limits to everyone.

Drinking and bar-hopping has been accepted as a part of the partying that the kids have been participating in during recent years. When individuals have overindulged in alcohol, other family members have reacted with disapproval and concern. In the back of everyone's mind has been the knowledge that all of the children could be at risk for becoming alcoholic because of its hereditary nature, so they all have appeared to be monitoring themselves and each other for early signs and symptoms.

Another overt rule in the family regarding the consumption of alcohol has been the result of Joan's preference "that booze not be kept in the house so that there is less of an incentive for the kids to drink it." Alcohol is permitted in the home, however, if they are having people over for a barbecue or other occasion.

Covert Rules After Recovery

Covert rules existed in the Neilsen family after Joan's recovery which were influential in triggering some alterations in the informal roles that existed. Joan had been able to assume the role of "recovering alcoholic" because of the covert rule which expected that she should accept the label of "alcoholic" and then be responsible for her own recovery. This covert rule actually came into existence before Joan went into treatment, when Frank went to Al-Anon and learned to view Joan's alcoholism as a disease rather than misconduct. This

understanding assisted him in putting an end to his enabling behavior.

The ability of all family members to undergo alterations in some of their informal roles was influenced by the elimination of the rule which dictated that they may have been responsible for causing her alcoholism and that it was therefore up to them to put a stop to it. It was during the "family week" of Joan's alcoholism treatment program that the family even became conscious that they were, indeed, operating on this covert rule, and that it would be necessary for them to eliminate it. The result was that Paul was able to extricate himself, to a great extent, from the "scapegoat role" because he no longer needed to call attention away from Joan's behavior, Karen no longer had to cast herself as the "victim" in her attempt to make her mother feel guilty enough to stop drinking, Teresa did not have to be a "lost child" so as not to add more things for the family to worry about, and Donna no longer had to be the "mascot", whereby she felt the obligation to cheer everybody up so as to create a happy family where no one would have to drink.

The fact that there were some changes for the better in all of the kids' roles, especially in the case of Frankie and Donna, who became even more entrenched in the "good kid" roles, may have been the result of the new covert rule that came about as a result of Joan's recovery which mandated that family members make some positive changes in their lives in

order to adjust the imbalance that occurred when Joan became sober. Frankie and Donna might have become even more obsessive about their "goody two-shoes roles" as a means of lessening the tension that was caused by the imbalance that resulted when some family members were changing faster than others.

One covert rule that Joan and Frank have all but eliminated, has been the one which specified that living up to the expectations imposed on them by outsiders was essential. Once this rule was discarded, they no longer felt that their worth was dictated by the acceptance or rejection of the country club set. Joan and Frank had begun to avoid the country club toward the end of the active alcoholism out of fear of being subjected to disapproval and rejection. Yet when Joan recovered, she (and to a lesser extent, Frank) did not feel the need to get back into the social whirlwind. She reported that they had come to view the people who frequented the country club as being "phony, superficial, artificial, and heavy hitters themselves," and as a result, they no longer felt the need to live up to the country club set's expectations or to subject themselves to judgement by their standards.

Covert rules that governed what family members can talk about have been altered as well. The biggest change has been that alcoholism has become an open topic of conversation, both within and outside the family. Once Joan went into treatment,

thus accepting the label of "alcoholic", it wasn't a family secret anymore. In early recovery, they actually had even gone overboard in discussing Joan's alcoholism and recovery. More recently it has been discussed freely, but less frequently. Interestingly, even though there has been some concern about the alcohol consumption of certain family members, particularly Paul, this rarely has been brought up to the person who has been the object of their concern. As far as discussing it outside the family goes, Frank pointed out that the sharing of his family's experiences, especially in Al-Anon or with certain clients, has been viewed as permissible because it could be of help to others.

Family members have seemed to have no qualms about discussing other personal problems that they might have with people that they trust outside of the family, as well as with members of their immediate family. All of the children indicated that they have felt free to talk to Joan and each other about personal matters, but that they felt quite reluctant to confide in Frank. Frank even admitted that he has been uncomfortable talking to his children about such personal subjects such as "their loves and their lives." He has also been very uneasy talking about painful subjects. This resulted in the formation of a covert rule which dictated that the kids should go to their mother with personal matters and not their father. They also have felt that it hasn't been permissible for them to tell their father that they resent his

lack of attention and his being patronizing and depreciating toward them because he has been such a good provider. As one of the kids succinctly put it: "Why kill the goose that laid the golden egg?"

The family has been known to talk about the past, except for Frank, who had made an effort to distance himself from it because of the painful memories. When the rest of the family has discussed the past, they have usually been in agreement about it, and they sometimes have even joked about it, using humor to minimize the pain that was felt.

The covert rules that have dictated the expectations regarding family interaction have generally emphasized the importance of maintaining a close and intense way of interacting and communicating, although Frank, and to a lesser extent, Paul and Teresa, have been criticized for sometimes pulling away from this intensity.

In contrast to the perfunctory way that affection was expressed prior to Joan's recovery: a kiss hello or goodbye that was often done out of habit or with gritted teeth; the affection that has been expressed since recovery has been much more frequent, spontaneous, and genuine. The new affection rule has encouraged a great deal of holding, hugging, and touching. The kids often have expressed affection with each other indirectly by playfully punching or wrestling. The only two people in the family who have not felt free to kiss each other have been Paul and Frankie, although they have hugged

once or twice. Frank has always kissed everyone, including his sons, but in general he has not been known to be very affectionate. Joan pointed out that "Frank and I are not 'love-dovey cooey'. If we are, it's pretty much up in the bedroom in privacy."

There has been a covert rule in the Neilsen family which has expected that the kids should be good friends as well as siblings. They have hung around with each other, shared each other's friends, and made each other's fun. Although they sometimes have gotten on each other's nerves, they have tended, for the most part, to get along very well with each other. It has been considered acceptable for them to kid each other frequently, as long as it has been with love rather than viciousness. Frankie pointed out that when they all get together, "it's a giggle session. It's just a melting pot of personalities." This has been in stark contrast to the way that they often scattered in different directions and "did their own thing" prior to Joan's recovery.

While arguments have continued to occur in the family, it was noted that they have been fewer in number and have involved "more legitimate, controlled, constructive arguing". The arguing that has gone on in the family since recovery has no longer been in reaction to the alcoholism, but has focused on other issues, such as Frank's inability to communicate effectively with family members, or Joan's reluctance to be as social as Frank would like her to be. Whereas Paul and

Frankie used to have huge fights with each other, they have learned to resolve many of their differences by talking it out.

A covert rule that was completely discarded was the "don't trust" rule. In the early recovery period, Joan and Frank had to work very hard at rebuilding their trust in each other, and it also took awhile for the children to feel sure that their mother was not going to drink again. More recently, however, there has been a great deal of trust in the Neilsen family.

It has become very important in the family that they all make a point of praising each other. Criticism has also been permitted, but only if it has been constructive criticism offered without malice. It has also been likely to be expressed in subtle ways, such as by innuendo or "beating around the bush." Frankie theorized that this was the case because "the person might freak out due to low self-esteem." There also has been a sense that the criticism would be more likely to be listened to if it was proffered in a gentle way.

Covert rules regarding Joan and Frank's family of origin have continued to exist, but there have been some differences here as well. Joan has not been keeping in frequent touch with her surviving relatives recently, but she has always felt that she could go see them on a moment's notice. There has been no change in the rule which expected that Frank should call and see his mother and sisters frequently. Although

members of his family of origin have continued to be somewhat formal and proper, Joan has not found this to be intimidating once she had stopped drinking. As a result, she has been much more comfortable with them and has developed a respect for them.

Even though Joan was no longer drinking, many of the covert rules that dictated how family members should deal with her alcoholism were adapted to the early recovery period. Frank and the children went out of their way to prevent Joan from getting upset, which might have led her to go back to her old way of life. The covert rule that Joan should never be upset had also been operational while she was drinking, because family members would do anything to avoid Joan's disruptive wrath. Frank also confided that, even after she became sober, he would frequently give her the "diagnostic kiss" when he got home, whereby he would inhale as he kissed her to see if he could smell any alcohol on her breath. As Joan's recovery progressed, however, these rules were no longer necessary and were gradually abandoned.

The Dolan Family

Overt Rules Before Recovery

The Dolan's division of labor was based on an overt rule which stipulated that there should be a traditional division of labor whereby Jack served as the provider and Rita performed the role of homemaker. Jack was considered to be

exempt from the responsibility of household chores because of the demands of his job, but he was permitted to perform the chores that he enjoyed whenever he wished to, such as cooking on Saturday night or occasionally doing the food shopping. Rita felt compelled to take full responsibility for the domestic chores, even though she often felt overwhelmed and unable to fulfill the expectations placed upon her by her family and herself. She always made a long list of things to do each day. When she was sober, she felt that she had to finish all of the chores on the list, but when she was drunk she didn't care whether they got done or not. There was also an overt rule which specified that guests could not be invited to the house unless it was immaculate. Since Rita felt that she could never get the house clean enough for people to see, they rarely had company.

For many years, it was Rita's job to pay all of the bills, but when her drinking bouts began to interfere with her ability to take care of this task properly, Jack relieved her of it and did it himself. It was also expected that Jack should be the decision-maker in the Dolan family. He either made a decision and announced it to Rita and the children, or he asked them for some input and then made the final decision himself.

The children were expected to help out around the house by making their beds, cleaning up after themselves and doing a few household chores, like putting away the dishes and their

laundry and emptying the garbage. All of the children were aware of these rules, but they were not enforced most of the time because of a lack of supervision due to Rita's drinking bouts and the fact that Jack was rarely at home.

Rules that existed for the children in the Dolan family included the expectation that they be polite, respectful of their elders, and have good table manners. They were also expected to get jobs when they were old enough so that they could take care of their own expenses. When some of the kids began to smoke cigarettes when they were teenagers, they were forbidden to smoke in the house. Rita told them, "you can't impress me. Go impress your friends that you smoke for." In spite of this rule, they would sneak cigarettes, especially when their mother was passed out from drinking.

The discipline that the children were subjected to was quite inconsistent. When their father wasn't around and their mother was drunk, they were left to their own devices, with the older children such as Linda, and later, Margaret, trying to maintain some semblance of order in the household. Eventually Jack would become aware of the breakdown of rules in the family, which necessitated that he do something about it. This led to a brand of discipline that was either all or nothing. For example, when he would finally notice that the children were being remiss in making their beds or picking up after themselves, he would resort to extreme measures, such as throwing their clothes out of the window, taking apart their

unmade beds and putting them downstairs in the vestibule, and unscrewing light bulbs from lights that had been left on. Similarly, the children would go for months without any supervision with regard to doing their homework, and then when their report cards came, Jack would come down very hard on them by grounding them or taking away privileges. They were expected to go to school every day, even when they didn't feel well, as long as they didn't have a fever. To get around this, a few of the children became very adept at cutting school. Jack also expected the children to go to Mass every Sunday. Steve said that "you had to go to church on the toe of my father's shoe, or else." If they did not go to the same Mass as their parents, they were quizzed by Jack about what that day's gospel was about. The kids all had curfews, and if they were late, there was a big fight with Jack. He sometimes even meted out physical discipline, especially with the boys.

When Beth was a teenager and the only child living at home, Jack was rarely aware of what was going on with her due to his absence from the home, and Rita tended to let her do anything she wanted as long as it wasn't life-threatening. Rita explained that "I was telling myself 'well, she's grown up, so she can make her own decisions.' But some of her decisions were poor. She didn't get the guidance she needed." Rita also mentioned that, although she did not approve of some of Beth's friends, she never said anything to her about it, and whenever Beth asked her what she thought about these

friends, Rita would say "oh, they're wonderful." Rita felt that she was not honest with Beth because she was fearful of upsetting her.

When the children grew up and left home, they always knew that they could rely on their parents for financial assistance if they needed it. The Dolans were extremely generous in lending money to their children, and expected nothing in return except to be paid back eventually.

With regard to their obligations toward each other, an overt rule existed in the Dolan family that mandated that they respect each other's privacy. This was especially important since they were a large family living in relatively close quarters. Rita's privacy to drink, however, was not covered under this rule. Family members were very distraught about Rita's secretive drinking and did not accept her need for privacy which would enable her to drink without being subjected to disapproving eyes. When the children began to move away and start families of their own, their right to privacy was respected, but only to a point. If something confidential was told to a family member, especially Jack, it sometimes would get around to other members of the family through the grapevine.

Rita and Jack felt an obligation to attend events and activities that their children participated in, such as chorus, plays, football games, and track meets, but because of the fact that they were too caught up in their own problems,

they were unable to be consistently supportive and encouraging of the children's interests and endeavors. Because of Jack's over-involvement with his job and Rita's bouts of drinking, there were times when they were not even aware of what their children's interests and endeavors were.

The overt rules that dealt with drinking in the Dolan family initially permitted both Jack and Rita to drink socially and to use it as a way of unwinding at the end of the day. Their nightly cocktail hour, which they also called "the rejection hour" because the children were supposed to leave them alone during that time, was an almost sacred time of the day for them.

When Rita began to notice that she was having a problem with her drinking, she spent a lot of time trying to control it, but refused to give it up because it made her feel better. Once her alcoholism started to affect her ability to function properly in her family, a rule developed which mandated that she refrain from consuming alcohol. There were times when she abided by this rule, and times when she broke it by drinking, albeit on the sly. Rita thought that if nobody saw her take a drink, then it was as if she wasn't breaking the rule. Although she spent a great deal of time lying, sneaking, hiding and protecting her supply of liquor, and covering up for her drinking in an attempt to give the appearance of acquiescing to this rule, she didn't fool anyone in the

family. They then became angry at her for this rule violation.

Jack, however, was still permitted to drink, but since a rule existed whereby alcohol was not permitted in the house, he was only able to drink when he was away from home. When Rita went away for treatment, however, Jack would buy liquor and drink the entire time that she was gone. Before she came home, he would be sure to consume all the liquor and throw the bottles away.

As far as the children were concerned, drinking alcohol was seen as taboo, and a rule existed that forbade children who were under the legal drinking age to even touch it. They had been brought up with the idea that drinking was bad and that alcohol was evil. Ironically, one of the ways that each of the children rebelled at one time or another was to break this rule by drinking with their friends.

Covert Rules Before Recovery

Covert rules existed in the Dolan family that contributed to the creation of the informal roles that had developed prior to Rita's recovery. One such covert rule directed family members to avoid expressing or even feeling unpleasant feelings. One result of this was that Rita drank to anesthetize her painful feelings, especially her anger at Jack's unfaithfulness, which she was not permitted to express. Frequently she was able to demonstrate the anger that she had

kept buried while sober in indirect and exaggerated ways when she drank. This created the "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" informal role variations that she experienced. This same rule that expected the avoidance of unpleasant feelings led to the evolution of many of the informal roles that the other family members had taken on to protect themselves, such as "workaholic", "tough one", "lost child", "scapegoat", "victim", "emotional outsider", and "the weird one".

Another covert rule specified that there were things that could be done to get Rita to stop drinking and that family members had to keep trying until they figured out what it was. This rule contributed to the formation of the informal roles of "controller", "enabler", "policewoman", "responsible one", "good child", "mascot", "mediator", and "fixer".

Once family members had some experience with Al-Anon, Alateen, and family counseling, they adopted a new rule that encouraged them to view Rita's alcoholism as an illness which she did not choose to contract, which further reinforced their acceptance of her occupying the "sick role". In addition, Jack learned to eventually relinquish the "enabler role" after his exposure to Al-Anon and counseling taught him that he had been "doing all the wrong things for all the right reasons."

There were a few covert rules in the family that evolved from external expectations that the Dolans felt had been placed upon them. One of these rules held that no matter what was going on in the family, it was important to put up a good

front to the outside world. Linda verbalized this when she said, "I could never let my friends know what a nightmare it was at home." As a matter of fact, several members of the Dolan family admitted that they sometimes behaved very differently with people outside of their family than they did at home. In addition, the children were reluctant to bring their friends home, and would only do so after ascertaining that Rita was sober, and even then, there was tension because of the fear that she might drink. The effect that this rule had on Jack and Rita was that they eventually became socially isolated because they couldn't plan any social activities due to not knowing whether she would be drunk or sober.

Another covert rule which reflected external expectations originated in the Christian philosophy, which the family had interpreted to mean that "to be a good Christian, you give of yourself until it hurts". Beth pointed out that, in practice, this meant that "in our family you couldn't set up any boundaries and say 'I can't do this anymore, your behavior is unacceptable to me.' Instead you were supposed to keep quiet and put up with all sorts of abuse and then come back for more." This covert rule set the stage for a great deal of enabling in the family.

There were also covert rules which specified what subjects could and could not be brought up in the Dolan family. First and foremost, the subject of Jack's infidelities was a completely taboo subject. Jack did not

tell Rita about them until the end of her active alcoholism when he broke this sacred rule, and Rita never told Jack that she knew that he had been unfaithful until his revelation. As a matter of fact, Rita mentioned that, before recovery, "the whole atmosphere between Jack and me was a lie. I didn't tell him the truth about anything, because it was bad news telling the truth."

Rita's alcoholism was rarely discussed in the family before Rita began going to treatment, except cryptically. Jack would call home and ask the children, "how is your mother?" He would never come right out and ask them if she was drinking, but they knew that was what he meant. Linda said that, after awhile, she and some of the other kids would lie and say that their mother was fine when she wasn't, because if Jack thought she was drunk, he wouldn't come home.

Once Rita went to treatment, which involved the recognition that the label "alcoholic" applied to her, the family sometimes did discuss the alcoholism among themselves, because they had learned that it was acceptable to do so. This was especially true after they learned during "family week" about how harmful the "don't talk" rule could be in alcoholic families.

There were also covert rules regarding the avoidance of discussing other topics in the Dolan family before recovery. The children refrained from talking about the Reilly sisters to their mother, because she became so angry and envious if

they did. In addition, after the initial uproar that was created when Margaret's husband, John, sexually molested Beth, the subject was never brought up again to Margaret or John. This, too, was seen as an emotionally charged subject that was disruptive to the family and therefore better off left unspoken. In general, the members of the Dolan family did not usually discuss their personal problems with other family members. This facilitated the creation of the emotional distance that existed in the family in order to minimize the pain that they felt.

At one time, there was a covert family rule which forbade the discussion of Rita's alcoholism with anyone outside the family. This was reflective of the previously mentioned rule that designated that they all make an effort to put up a good front for the outside world. Even Rita said that she never talked about her alcoholism with her parents, other relatives, or friends who weren't A.A. friends. Once family members experienced Al-Anon, Alateen and family counseling, however, each member of the family began to feel that it was acceptable to confide in a few close friends about Rita's alcoholism, although some family members were more disclosing than others. They were also able to discuss other personal problems besides the alcoholism with these close friends. For the most part, however, most of the people they knew outside of the family were not made aware of extent of the pain and suffering that

members of the Dolan family experienced during Rita's active alcoholism.

Covert rules existed in the family regarding members' interaction with each other. Because of the constant tension and potential for conflict between Jack and Rita, they had an unspoken agreement: "you leave me alone, and I'll leave you alone." They avoided each other as much as possible, and their communication completely broke down. When they did communicate, it often involved lying or loud arguments. This was true with regard to the children as well. There was constant criticism going on in the family, and very little praise. The family had a covert rule that permitted them to scream and yell and verbally attack each other when they fought, but the rest of the time they would clam up about their feelings.

The covert rule regarding the expression of affection directed that affection be expressed freely and frequently among family members by hugging, kissing, and touching. This reflected the fact that there was a lot of love in the family, although there were many times when, as Beth noted, "we didn't like each other very much." Rita tended to be much more affectionate when she was drinking to the point where, as one of the children explained, "she slobbered all over us", which made family members less likely to trust the fact that her affection was genuine.

This pointed to another covert rule that existed in the Dolan family, which was the "don't trust" rule. This enabled them to negotiate and survive the confusion and uncertainty that was prevalent in their family. As Jack put it, "where there's active alcoholism, it's like living in a house of mirrors. You can't trust anything that you see or feel."

Jack and Rita had a few covert rules regarding their families of origin, who lived quite far away from them. While the Dolans maintained contact with them through occasional visits, letters, and phone calls, and were very dutiful children, covert rules existed which permitted them to detach emotionally from their parents and siblings in order to allow them to put their painful childhoods behind them.

Covert rules also evolved which focused on dealing with Rita's alcoholism so that the family could still function in spite of it. Initially, Jack had been in denial about Rita's alcoholism because they had so many good times drinking together. When he could deny it no longer, his attitude was "well, let's fix it". This covert rule involved expecting the children to observe Rita's behavior and reporting it to their father, monitoring or eliminating her supply, taking away the checkbook and credit cards, and limiting her cash flow in an attempt to prevent her from obtaining her supply, and sending her to treatment when her drinking became especially problematic. Interestingly, although all family members at one time or another searched for Rita's bottles, marked them

to see how much she was drinking, emptied them out, or filled them with water or vinegar, each of them did these things on their own without telling the others. All of these efforts were to no avail because Rita always found a way to drink when she wanted to.

Overt Rules After Recovery

After Rita's recovery, the overt rule which mandated that the Dolan family have a traditional division of labor continued to be in effect. The main difference was that Rita was better able to fulfill the role expectations that were placed upon her, and the household has, therefore, been running much more smoothly. Rita has also refrained from putting so much pressure on herself regarding the upkeep of the house, which has led to a more relaxed attitude on her part. Rita pointed out that she no longer felt that she had to "kill herself cleaning the house" before having people over. She stated that "I'm not trying to impress people anymore. Now you get what you see."

The major change in the Dolan's division of labor came when Jack retired. Once he ceased performing the breadwinner role, he became much more involved in the domestic role. He has completely taken on the tasks of cooking and shopping, while Rita has been doing the laundry, the dishes, the bed-making, and the cleaning. It should be pointed out, however, that the chores and responsibilities are sometimes exchanged

or shared, which demonstrated that the assignment of these tasks has not been set in stone.

Since Rita's recovery, there have been changes in the overt rules that concerned decision-making and finances. Rita has resumed the responsibility of paying the bills, while Jack has been balancing the checkbook and managing their investments. Jack pointed out that, as a result, "we both know where our money is." Similarly, both Jack and Rita have been participating equally in making decisions. Jack said that he has made a concerted effort to avoid making decisions for Rita, and he hardly ever has done anything himself without talking to Rita about it first. This was a major rule change that was facilitated by the improved communication between them.

Since the children have not been living at home with their parents for many years, there have been very few overt rules that have affected them since Rita recovered, except for the rule that governed the provision of financial assistance from their parents. Although Jack and Rita have continued to be generous with providing loans for their children when necessary, the kids have become aware that they could not expect them to be as generous as they were before Jack's retirement because of his reduced income.

One overt rule that summarized the Dolan's obligations to each other was to "live and let live", which came from the A.A. and Al-Anon programs. They have been learning to accept

and live with each other's differences and to stop trying to control or change each other. Everyone has felt more free to live their own lives and to make their own decisions as a result of this rule.

Another overt rule involved the obligation to respect each other's privacy. Jack and Rita both felt that they had enough privacy in their home. Each of the children's privacy has been respected in that they have not been expected to share every intimate detail of their lives with the rest of their family. In addition, it has been expected that confidences would be kept, although once in awhile this rule has been violated. This happened recently to Beth, who stated that "the last time I had an argument with my sister, it spread around the family like a virus."

There has also been a covert rule which specified that the family had an obligation to be supportive of each other's interests and endeavors. Beth pointed out that when her family supported her decision to go back to school, "I never felt such encouragement and admiration." They have attended events that other members have been involved in whenever possible, such as when most of the family went to hear Jack sing a solo in the church choir one Easter.

The Dolan family has continued to have overt rules about drinking. One such rule has determined that neither Rita nor Jack would drink anymore. In addition, alcohol generally has not been kept in the house. During Rita's early sobriety

period, no alcohol was allowed in the house at all, but later it was permitted when Beth had a party, as long as Rita was asked about it first.

While there have not been any family rules imposed on the children regarding their drinking once they became adults, some of them have stopped drinking on their own, and others have been drinking rarely or in moderation. According to Steve, "we don't hassle each other about drinking." Although there has been some concern about the amount of beer that Matt, and especially Steve have been drinking, they have been permitted to bring it into their parents' house when they have visited and they have been allowed to consume it there, as long as they have removed any full cans when they have left.

In the early period of Rita's recovery, she had a tendency to think that anyone who drank either already had a problem with it or was cultivating a problem with it, although this has not been her attitude in recent years. While she and Jack have perceived that there was nothing beneficial about drinking alcohol, they have both developed a "live and let live" attitude about other people's drinking.

Covert Rules After Recovery

The changes that occurred in the Dolan family's informal roles since Rita's recovery were influenced by changes in a few of their covert rules. Some of the new rules that evolved were influenced by the philosophy of "twelve step programs"

such as A.A., Al-Anon, and Alateen. Family members who participated in these programs eventually passed some of these ideas on to the rest of the family. One rule that resulted from this reflected the notion that "you didn't cause the alcoholism, you can't control it, and you can't cure it." Other related concepts included the directives to "detach with love" and "let go and let God". These new rules helped members of the Dolan family to eventually accept that they were powerless over Rita's alcoholism. The result was that they no longer felt so compelled to perform informal roles in the family such as "controller", "mediator", "responsible one", "fixer", "enabler", "good child", "policewoman" or "mascot."

Similarly, the new rule which expected that family members be more truthful and open about the expression of their feelings (along with the fact that family life was not nearly as painful as it was before recovery) created less of a need for the assumption of self-protective roles such as "workaholic", "tough one", "lost child", "victim", "emotional outsider", "weird one", and "scapegoat". It should be pointed out, however, that some remnants of these roles have remained for some family members because they have continued to repress some painful feelings from the past because of the rule that what happened before was "water under the bridge", and that it would be pointless to dwell on it now that things have improved so tremendously in the family. Beth, however, who

recently has been in the informal role of the "growing one" in the family has been breaking this rule recently, (as has Linda to a lesser extent), by delving into her suppressed pain from the past with her therapist and then attempting to discuss some of these issues with others in the family. Not surprisingly, this has created discomfort and even resistance on the part of some family members.

Covert rules that reflected external expectations have also been greatly altered. The Dolans have ceased feeling that they must project a false image to the outside world. As a result, family members reported that they have no longer been behaving differently with people outside the family than they have when they were with family members. In addition, Jack and Rita have not felt the need to make excuses anymore when turning down social invitations. If they haven't felt like attending, or if Jack wanted to go and Rita did not, they just did what they pleased without worrying about what other people thought.

Covert rules that have dealt with what family members can and can not talk about have also undergone change since recovery. In recent years, family members have been encouraged to be open and honest with each other. However, there also continued to be some limits imposed on the Dolan family with regard to what subjects should be avoided in conversation. When Rita was in early sobriety, she was "very sensitive about who was here when the family was talking about

my alcoholism, but as time went on, I participated in the discussion." The fact of Rita's alcoholism has been discussed openly within the family since recovery, although it hasn't come up very often in recent years because it hasn't been an issue lately. In addition, the children have avoided talking to Rita about the painful experiences that they had when she was drinking, or how her alcoholism affected them, although a few of the kids have discussed these issues with each other. It was also interesting to note that, although the Dolan children have been able to talk seriously about the past with each other on a one-on-one basis, when they have gotten together in a group and have spoken about the past, they have preferred to "keep it light" by discussing it with humor.

The subject of Jack's infidelity has also been avoided in recent years, because it has come to be considered a dead issue that no longer needed to be discussed, and while the sexual molesting of Beth by her brother-in-law, John, has been brought up occasionally in private conversations between family members, it still has not been discussed with John or Margaret since it happened. And although the topics of Rita's smoking, Jack's overeating, and Steven's drinking have been discussed among some family members, they have rarely been brought up in any serious way with the person involved, even though these behaviors have evoked a great deal of concern in the Dolan family. This could be seen as another example of the family rule that they should "live and let live."

Family members have discussed Rita's alcoholism with people outside the family when it has come up, but they haven't been likely to bring it up unless it has been appropriate. Family members also have continued to discuss their personal problems with a few close friends, or in some cases, a therapist. In addition, they even have been more likely than before to confide in family members once they had learned that they could, for the most part, trust each other.

The elimination of the "don't trust" rule has enabled the family to become very close since Rita's recovery. Jack and Rita have become devoted to each other, have learned to communicate well, they have come to enjoy each other's company, and have felt like they have fallen in love with each other again. The children reestablished contact with each other and grew closer together, and they also began to make a concerted effort to stay in frequent touch with their parents. Interestingly, for some of the Dolans, family members have been counted among their closest friends in recent years. This closeness didn't happen overnight, however. It was actually the result of a gradual process.

There has also been a great deal less arguing going on in the family, and these altercations have been more in the form of minor disagreements or discussions than loud, angry fights. The covert rule about appropriate arguing has been that they should not be permitted to scream and yell, and that they should stick to the issues at hand and avoid attacking each

other. Consequently, they have been able to discuss their differences of opinion with more civility and respect than before.

The Dolans have continued to be a very affectionate family, but the affection has been more spontaneous and genuine since recovery, rather than as a result of a sense of obligation (or in Rita's case, the result of the effects of alcohol). Family members also have been more likely to praise and compliment each other when it has been warranted. Criticism has also continued to occur in the family, but it has been less frequent and less biting than before recovery, and it has tended to take the form of "kidding on the square". Rita pointed out that she has tried to discourage the kids from talking to her about each other in a negative way. She felt that it was important to avoid being catty. In addition she would tell them, "If you're upset with someone, don't tell me, tell him or her, and say it constructively, not antagonistically. In other words, say what you mean, but don't say it mean."

Since all members of Jack and Rita's families of origin were deceased at the time of the interview, there were no covert rules in reference to them. With regard to their extended families that included two-sisters in-law and several nieces, nephews, and cousins, however, a covert rule existed that permitted Jack and Rita to maintain a distant relationship with them, while the Dolan children were not

expected to maintain personal contact with these relatives at all. Anything they knew about what was going on in these relatives' lives came from their parents.

After Rita's recovery, it took the Dolan family awhile to relinquish the perception that they had some control over Rita's behavior. This was demonstrated by the fact that Jack and a few other family members "walked on eggshells" during Rita's early sobriety period, hoping that they would not do or say something that would make her drink again. They were afraid that if they got her upset or angry, it would have an adverse effect on her positive state of mind, which would make her very vulnerable to having a relapse. Rita said that "it seemed to me that I could do nothing wrong. Everything I did was fine." This made Rita nervous. As she told it, "it was giving me power that I knew I couldn't handle, so I asked Jack to stop. He wasn't even aware that he was doing it." As a result, Jack has made a concerted effort in recent years to avoid this behavior.

Jack also applied what he had learned about alcoholism to Rita's difficulty with quitting smoking. He recognized it as an addiction, like alcoholism, over which he had no control. As a result, he did not say anything about the fact that he knew that she has been smoking in secret, and he did not try to prevent her from doing so, as he probably would have done in the past. So, although she has reverted to some of her old games and behaviors in order to be able to smoke (in spite of

the "no smoking" rule that was imposed on her by her doctor), Jack has not responded in kind by returning to his old controlling games of the past.

Discussion of the Findings

The overt and covert rules that had been operational in the four families during the active alcoholism evolved in order to cope with the alcoholic situation. Although many of these rules were far from ideal, they did serve the purpose of allowing the families to get through their days, even though they were often faced with a very difficult and painful home life. It was also evident that the families' rules had undergone noticeable changes when the alcoholic women were in recovery.

Many of the overt rules that operated before recovery were sometimes haphazardly enforced in all families except for the Ehrlichs. This was because Barbara Ehrlich's alcoholism had not interfered with the functioning of her family to the extent that had been the case for the other three families. In addition, several of the overt rules that existed in the Higgins, Neilsen, and Dolan families were frequently violated before recovery. These included the rules that governed privacy, and those that forbade the alcoholic and underage children to drink. Rules that expected family members to be supportive and encouraging toward each other were also violated at times, because of the tension, resentment, and

preoccupation with other things, which often prevailed in the family. The children also frequently got away with disobeying the rules that applied to them due to the lax and often inconsistent supervision that they received. In addition, when the alcoholic broke the rule that mandated that she adequately perform her functions with regard to the family's division of labor, this necessitated the development of a new rule which provided that other family members should take over for her.

Once the alcoholic experienced recovery, however, the overt rules that became operational in all four families have, for the most part, been flexible and consistent, and they have appeared to be generally well-suited to the running of the household. These rules which operated in the family after recovery no longer had to focus on allowing the family to function in spite of the alcoholism. Instead, they have enabled the family to negotiate the realities of everyday life in sobriety. They have appeared to provide firm guidance for all family members regarding how to behave without being too rigid. They have clearly stipulated what has been expected of each family member, but they have remained flexible enough to adapt to changes, such as those which have been brought on by children getting older, children leaving home, a change in employment status for a family member, or out of a need to deal with any problems that may have arisen in the family. These rules have also served to reinforce the formal roles

that have existed in the family while still allowing for some modification when necessary. It was also apparent that there were significantly fewer flagrant violations of these overt rules by family members after recovery.

The covert rules that existed in the families prior to recovery served the purpose of making the alcoholism somewhat easier for family members to live with, but at the same time, they also served to support the perpetuation of the alcoholism. Some of these rules that supported the existence of the families' informal roles were apparently based on some erroneous assumptions: that the excessive drinking and resulting behavior were the consequences of the willful misconduct on the part of the alcoholic rather than symptoms of the disease of alcoholism; that family members' behavior and perceived deficiencies may have been the reason that the alcoholic needed to drink so much; and that family members were responsible for getting her to stop drinking. After recovery, many of the covert rules that helped to support and perpetuate the existence of some of the family's informal roles either disappeared or were modified in some way. This was because, as the informal roles were no longer essential to maintaining equilibrium in the family once the alcoholic was in recovery, the rules that upheld them were no longer necessary in their original form.

In the early recovery period, some new covert rules came about in order to deal with the initial changes that resulted.

This was necessary because the alterations that occurred in the alcoholic's roles, thinking, and behavior at this time were actually perceived as being disruptive to the status quo of the family, because family members were not sure, at first, how to react to these changes. The results were that some of the old covert rules were abandoned, and new rules eventually developed which allowed the family to cope with the changes that were brought on by recovery. This eventually enabled the families to become closer and to communicate better. In some cases, the new rules came directly from the tenets and philosophy of "twelve step programs", such as A.A., Al-Anon, and Alateen. In the cases of the Neilsen and Dolan families where the husbands went to Al-Anon before their wives began their recovery, some of these rules began to change shortly before their successful attempt at sobriety.

In all four families, recovery brought about changes in the covert rules that mandated that: family members should not talk about the alcoholism or other family problems, they should not trust each other, and they should not allow themselves to feel their painful feelings. While these rules protected them during the active alcoholism and helped to preserve the precarious balance that the family was desperately trying to hold on to, they were no longer as necessary after recovery. Some remnants of these rules were evident however. While the recovering alcoholic's alcoholism was no longer off limits as a topic of discussion in the

family and family members have been encouraged to be open and honest with each other, the subject of their concern about the smoking, excessive drinking, and overeating of some family members has been avoided. It was also evident that, while family members have generally become better at acknowledging and expressing many of their feelings, there has still been a tendency to avoid facing and dealing with long-buried feelings from the past. It was interesting to note that, when the past was discussed in several of the families, people either responded uncomfortably, or more often, it was discussed with humor in order to cover up any painful feelings that might be evoked.

Another covert rule that changed for all four families was the notion that they had to keep up a good front to the outside world because of the necessity of living up to some externally imposed, impossibly high expectations. After recovery, these families no longer felt the need to cover up, make excuses, or keep up pretenses because they have ceased feeling that what other people thought of them was of paramount importance.

Obviously, many of the overt and covert rules that existed in the families during the active alcoholism were affected in some way when the alcoholic recovered. The rules that were no longer necessary disappeared. Some remained unchanged because they continued to serve similar functions after recovery as they did before, although they were more

likely to be adhered to than was true in the past. In addition, new rules came about which evolved in order to support a healthier, functioning home environment, and to allow room for the growth and change that a family in recovery would be likely to experience over the years.

Chapter VII

FAMILY RITUALS BEFORE AND AFTER RECOVERY

Family rituals, which have been defined by Bossard and Boll (1950) as those patterns of prescribed formal behavior that generally involve the ceremonial use of leisure time, could also be examined to obtain clues about the nature of a family's interaction, particularly as they have reflected a family's values, attitudes, ambitions and goals. When a family has contained an active alcoholic, it would be expected that rituals would develop that either incorporate or compensate for that reality. Similarly, as the alcoholic has progressed through recovery, the rituals would have to be modified in some way to accommodate this change. The Higgins, Ehrlich, Neilsen and Dolan families have all experienced changes regarding the kinds of rituals that have been associated with holidays, socializing and entertaining, weekends, weekdays, family dinners, religious practices, weddings, and vacations both before and after the wife/mother in the family began her recovery. These changes have been discussed in this chapter.

The Higgins Family

Family Rituals Before Recovery

For the Higgins family, the celebration of rituals that surrounded the holidays, particularly Christmas and

Thanksgiving were extremely important. On Christmas Eve, Marc and Lorraine would go with Lorraine's parents and siblings to midnight Mass and then back to her parents' home for turkey sandwiches. On Christmas morning, Marc and Lorraine would exchange gifts at their own home, and then go back over to Lorraine's parents' house to exchange gifts with the entire family. Afterward, they would visit Marc's parents during the evening, and they would exchange gifts with his whole family and have dinner with them. On Thanksgiving they would have dinner at one of their parents' homes but would always make sure that they also visited the other spouse's parents afterward. Marc explained that "we tried to make sure that everyone was covered." In spite of the great effort that Marc and Lorraine made to celebrate the holidays with their families, they claimed that they really didn't look forward to them at all. As a matter of fact, Lorraine saw the holidays as something she would just want to get through and be done with. It appeared that they felt a tremendous amount of pressure from their families to go through the motions and act like everything was fine regardless of how Lorraine felt at the time.

Lorraine pointed out that this effort to act like all was well at holiday time was something that was initiated by her father during her mother's active alcoholism, especially at Christmas time. She explained that:

Christmas before my mother recovered was rough because she was depressed a lot. But my father

would insist on all the typical rituals. One of his famous lines was "I want everyone to be happy. We're supposed to be happy, so we're going to be happy."

This directive appeared to have been in effect during Lorraine's active alcoholism as well. No matter how depressed she felt, she had to at least "put on a happy face" for holiday celebrations. This obviously created an enormous strain on her, but at the same time probably served to foster equilibrium in her extended family because, although they were fully aware that Lorraine had problems and even accepted her being in the "sick role", they seemed to need a ritualized demonstration at certain prescribed times of the year that their family was, for the most part, "happy" and therefore "normal".

Interestingly, while Marc and Lorraine diligently participated in holiday rituals with their extended families, they sometimes allowed these rituals to fall apart in the privacy of their own home. At Christmas time, for example, if Lorraine was feeling very depressed, Christmas preparations would seem like an impossibility, so she would leave all the gift purchasing to Marc. Sometimes they would not even bother putting up a tree of their own. Since no one was ever invited to their home, they wouldn't have to explain this to anybody. In addition, Lorraine said that she was never in any shape to prepare a meal and have people over.

It should be noted that it wasn't just Lorraine who was devoid of holiday spirit. Marc claimed that he, too, did not

look forward to the holidays. He was bothered by the fact that they weren't as fun for him as they had once been. Before he met Lorraine, he associated holidays with

"being out and about, seeing friends and doing all those holiday things. But with Lorraine's problem, we cut down to seeing just family members. It kind of took the fun out of it."

He said that initially he attended friends' Christmas parties without Lorraine but he just didn't feel right about it, so he began declining these invitations until eventually their friends stopped inviting them altogether.

Easter was a holiday that was never celebrated in a big way in the Higgins family. It had never been as important a holiday as Christmas and Thanksgiving were for both their families of origin. They would sometimes get together with Lorraine's family and go to Mass, or they would have dinner with one of their families, either at home or at the country club, but it was not the "command performance" that the other two holidays were. Similarly, Mother's Day, Father's Day, and birthdays were not really celebrated in a big way except for sending cards or giving gifts.

The Higgins family's rituals that surrounded their socializing and entertaining were greatly affected by Lorraine's alcoholism and depression. After their marriage, they gradually lost touch with their old friends because Lorraine was never "up to it" when they were invited out. Initially, Marc had gone to parties and weddings alone, but after a brief period of doing this during their courtship and

newlywed years, he stopped because according to him "that was not right". The only people that Marc and Lorraine socialized with were family members. On the rare occasions when they did go out to socialize, it was with Lorraine's sisters and their husbands. For the most part, however, they characterized themselves as homebodies. In addition, they never invited anyone to their home, not even family members.

The weekend ritual for Marc and Lorraine consisted of "just hanging around the house". They didn't really do much of anything. Marc stated that "weekends in general were kind of boring and slow paced." On Sundays, Marc would sometimes watch football on television, and once in a great while, if Lorraine was feeling up to it, they would go out to dinner with each other. In general, however, weekends were "lazy do-nothing days". Marc claimed that he did not like hanging around on the weekends, but he felt responsible for Lorraine and obligated to keep her company. Consequently, a weekend ritual evolved that allowed for them both to stay home, for the most part, and not feel pressured to do anything. This accommodated Lorraine's alcoholism and mental illness because it ritualized her inability to pull herself together and perform even the most basic functions and thus made it a normal part of their weekend existence. Since they never allowed anyone to enter their home where their behavior might be observed, they prevented others from raising any questions about the normality of their "do-nothing" weekend rituals.

The rituals that surrounded their weekdays involved Marc going to work and Lorraine hanging around the house when she was unemployed. Her activities consisted of sleeping, watching television, and at times, drinking. When Marc came home in the evening he would become annoyed at Lorraine for just lying around, and he would be very angry if she had been drinking. Still, he would cook the dinner and do the wash when he got home, which made it even less necessary for her to make an effort to do something about her problem. Therefore, it could be said that weekday and evening rituals also compensated for Lorraine's mental illness and alcoholism.

A typical family dinner for the Higgins family involved eating in front of the television with very little conversation going on between them. Lorraine claimed that she did not like this ritual but that Marc insisted upon it, and she didn't feel that it was worth arguing over. Since mealtimes often involved the only times during the day that Marc and Lorraine could be face-to-face with each other, the potential for concentrated and even intimate interaction and communication were present. By having the television on, however, they did not even have to face each other, let alone talk to each other in any sort of meaningful way. In light of the fact that Lorraine would often be either depressed or under the influence of alcohol, it was not surprising that Marc preferred to dine in this manner.

Marc and Lorraine were not very religious and did not participate regularly in religious ceremonies, although they did go to religious services on Christmas and Easter. This usually involved attending Mass at Lorraine's parents' Catholic Church with her family. The only reason that they went was because it was expected of them as part of the holiday ritual, not because of any personal religious conviction. Their participation in this ritual was another example of putting up a good front for their extended family. Even though family members were aware of Lorraine's problems, they were not privy to the extent of those problems. As a result, they would be less likely to put pressure on Lorraine to take some positive action toward recovery if she functioned well in the rituals, which would then enable her to continue in her sick role.

Weddings generally involve very elaborate rituals that provide a context whereby people can experience an important milestone that involves a major change in interpersonal relationships. Marc and Lorraine's wedding was the first one of the siblings on both sides of the family. They had wanted "a small, simple wedding, but it just mushroomed." It involved a Nuptial Mass at the parish church of Lorraine's family, and a catered reception afterward for about one hundred fifty people. They acquiesced to this to please their parents. They realized that this ritual was extremely meaningful to their parents as well as to themselves. It

wasn't just the celebration of the beginning of their married life together. It marked a new stage that the families would now be entering - the beginning of a major alteration of the families of origin.

As far as other weddings were concerned, Lorraine avoided them when she could because she was uncomfortable in social settings. Marc initially went to the weddings of friends without her, but he felt awkward about her conspicuous absence which made the fact that there was something wrong more obvious, so he eventually began declining invitations. It was easier to keep Lorraine's problems a secret by slowly disassociating themselves from their friends. Family weddings had to be attended, however, even though Lorraine felt uncomfortable there as well. This was another example of a ritual that enabled the Higgins to put on a good front for the extended family so that they would not interfere with Marc and Lorraine's status quo by putting tremendous pressure upon them to take some positive action regarding Lorraine's problems.

The vacations that Marc and Lorraine went on before recovery also involved going to secluded spots and spending their time together alone. As a matter of fact, Marc and Lorraine's first vacation together after they were married was when they went to the Caribbean on their honeymoon. Lorraine pointed out that "here we were in this paradise and I was feeling awful for no reason." This incongruity is what forced Lorraine to realize that something was really wrong

with her. Honeymoons are supposed to be very joyful rituals and yet this was not the case for them. This experience provided Lorraine with the motivation to seek out some help for her problems. Even though this did not lead to permanent recovery for her right away, it did bring her to the point where she consulted a professional who provided the diagnosis of both alcoholism and bipolar affective disorder and prescribed treatment for them.

Family Rituals After Recovery

Since Lorraine has been in recovery, she has expressed the fact that she has really enjoyed the holidays, especially Christmas, which has become a much more pleasurable experience. She and Marc have done more of the Christmas preparations together since recovery. Marc also claimed that he has been looking forward to the holidays recently, although "not with the anticipation of a young kid." He pointed out that they have continued to celebrate Christmas the same way that they did before Lorraine's recovery by going to the homes of both families, but they've been feeling happier about it since Lorraine's recovery.

With regard to Thanksgiving, for the first several years after Lorraine's recovery, they celebrated it as they had before by going to dinner with one of their families and stopping in afterward at the other. The difference that was noted, however, was that the overall mood was a little

lighter, and as a result, things were nicer. This past Thanksgiving, however, Marc and Lorraine broke with tradition and began a new ritual. For the first time they invited family members over to their home for Thanksgiving dinner. Interestingly, it was Marc's family who was invited rather than Lorraine's, and it was Lorraine who prepared the meal rather than Marc, who usually did the cooking in the family. Through this change in ritual the Higgins conveyed two things: that Lorraine was capable of functioning in the traditional role of the wife playing hostess and preparing the holiday feast, which demonstrated that she was no longer in the "sick role"; and that Marc and Lorraine could assert their independence from some of the social demands of Lorraine's family of origin.

Since recovery, Easter, Mother's Day, Father's Day, and birthdays have still not been celebrated in a big way in the Higgins family. On Easter they still might have dinner with one of their families, and on Mother's Day and Father's Day they have given presents and cards, but other than that, no big deal has been made. Marc and Lorraine agreed that birthdays have been becoming more and more uneventful each year. Marc said that "it's not something we go nuts over. It's not terribly important one way or the other." They have given each other gifts and have sometimes gone out to dinner or over to one of their parents' homes for their favorite meal, "but there is no big 'to do' about it."

In general, it could be said that the Higgins family's holiday rituals have become much more relaxed, and Marc and Lorraine have actually enjoyed and looked forward to them as a time to be with the extended family without the tension that existed prior to Lorraine's recovery. The lack of tension might be explained by the fact that their desire to participate in the holiday rituals has been genuine. Since Lorraine's recovery, the holidays have ceased to be a command performance that served to demonstrate how Lorraine was still able to function on some level in spite of her problems.

Both Marc and Lorraine have indicated that their social life has improved somewhat, although not to any great extent because Lorraine has continued to feel that it would be something of a strain to be around other people. They have occasionally gone out with couples their own age instead of only socializing with Lorraine's sisters and their husbands. They have also actually invited people over and entertained in their home, but this has been limited to family members. They also have not, as a rule, visited friends at their homes either. They have, for the most part, continued in their tendency to be homebodies. This might be due to the fact that it has been difficult to reestablish contact with a circle of friends after cutting themselves off from those friends for so many years. Also, Lorraine has felt somewhat self-conscious about her lack of professional and financial progress. By avoiding people with whom she might have to discuss what she

has been doing lately and where she has been living, she would not have to be constantly confronted with the painful reality of what her inability to arrest her alcoholism and mental illness over the years has cost her.

It should be pointed out that, while Marc and Lorraine have not greatly increased the number of joint friends that they have, Marc has developed a circle of friends that he has regularly associated with every weekend on the golf course. Once he no longer had to spend all of his waking, nonworking hours as Lorraine's "caretaker", he was free to reestablish some sort of social life for himself. He was always more outgoing and gregarious than Lorraine, and once he had the opportunity to get back into some sort of social interaction with people outside of his family, he took advantage of it. The only friend that Lorraine seemed to have outside of work was a woman whom she had known since high school who has made a concerted effort to stay in touch with Lorraine over the years. Lorraine pointed out that she has spoken to this friend about once every three months on the phone and she has seen her once a year on Christmas when this friend has come over to Lorraine's parents house for a visit. If it weren't for this friend's persistence in maintaining contact with Lorraine over the years, however, the friendship would have fallen by the wayside as all the others had.

The weekends have continued to involve some measure of rest and recuperation for Marc and Lorraine, but they also

claimed that they have been more likely to go out on weekends since Lorraine's recovery, and when they have stayed home they seem to have gotten more things done around the house. Marc has been playing golf on most Saturdays, and on Sundays they have usually cleaned the apartment, done grocery shopping, and washed the clothes. For the most part, they characterized the weekends as being slow-paced but with less tension in the air than before. Perhaps this has been due to the fact that Lorraine has no longer been feeling depressed and has been able to function. It might also be explained by the fact that neither of them has felt tied to the apartment like they were before. In addition, when they have spent time there, the surroundings have been more pleasant since they have become more conscientious about keeping some semblance of order in the household.

Weekdays have been different since Lorraine's recovery in that she has been employed full-time outside the home. Marc has usually been the one who has gotten home from work first and has promptly prepared their dinner. Once Lorraine would get home, she would feed the pets, walk the dog, and relax until dinner was ready. Again, they noted that the atmosphere was less tense because Marc no longer had to be angry at Lorraine for staying in bed all day, and Lorraine has ceased expressing her hostility through occasional drunken tirades.

Their dinners together have continued to be eaten in front of the television set just as they were before

Lorraine's recovery, with the biggest difference being that they have been talking to each other more. This has meant that, although they have remained in the habit of having the television on while they ate, it was no longer used as an excuse to avoid conversation with each other.

Marc and Lorraine have still not been regular churchgoers, but they have continued to attend services with Lorraine's family on some of the religious holidays. Lorraine pointed out that she has had a positive attitude about religious ceremonies, while Marc conveyed a sense of indifference about them. In general, it has seemed that religious rituals have never been of central importance in the lives of Lorraine and Marc. Instead they have been a peripheral part of certain holiday rituals.

The Higgins' experiences with attending weddings since Lorraine's recovery have been quite positive. Lorraine said that "going to weddings after recovery was great - very joyful. And it didn't bother me not to drink." Both she and Marc reported that they had fun at the weddings they've attended recently. This could be due to the fact that, as has been the case for the holidays since recovery, they no longer have felt the tension that comes from pretending to be having a good time and putting up a good front in order to avoid scrutiny.

In contrast to the disaster that their honeymoon was, Marc and Lorraine's recent vacations have been very pleasant

and relaxing. They have preferred to go to a summer resort community during the off-season in September after all the tourists have gone and things have calmed down to a much slower pace. They indicated that they have always looked forward to getting away from the hustle and bustle of the metropolitan area. They have rented a private home on several occasions and have generally kept to themselves. Their activities have included golf for Marc, shopping for Lorraine, and weather permitting, spending some time together on the beach. Their vacation ritual has obviously been in keeping with the quiet, somewhat isolated lifestyle that had evolved before Lorraine's recovery and which has continued to exist, to some extent, since her recovery.

The Ehrlich Family

Family Rituals Before Recovery

Rituals that surrounded holidays in the Ehrlich family always involved alcohol. Barbara stated that:

I saw the holidays as a drinking time. "Oh, good! You can get drunk as much as you want. There'll be lots of booze. You don't have to worry about that." Ordinarily you'd worry if you went to somebody's house if they would have enough alcohol, but at Christmas you didn't have to worry about it. There was plenty of it flowing!

George concurred with this perception, saying that the holidays were always "a big party, having a lot of people together. The biggest thing was having enough booze on hand."

Barbara pointed out that she always got drunk at these holiday parties.

On Christmas they would always go to somebody else's house because Barbara felt that she wasn't responsible enough to have it at her house. They usually went to George's parents on Christmas Eve and opened presents with them and his brother's family. These visits always involved a great deal of drinking as part of the celebration. On Christmas Day, Barbara's entire family would get together at her mother's insistence, either at her parents' house or perhaps at one of her sibling's homes. George described these Christmas celebrations with Barbara's family as being "loud with alot of noise and people, wild, lots of booze. One person trying to be louder than the other one, and opinions flying around." He also remembered that there were many children there who would be running around and breaking each other's toys. He said that he did not find these occasions to be very enjoyable. Barbara remembered Christmas in this way: "It was just drink, drink, drink. That's all it was - drinking. It was chaos. Ridiculous. It was just not nice." Christmas was viewed as "a big production number", and all the preparations were viewed as being a big chore which had to be done because it was expected.

It wasn't only Christmas where alcohol was of central importance. The same was true of other holidays and celebrations, such as Thanksgiving, Easter, birthdays,

christenings, graduations, etc. It was very important for whomever was having the party to make sure that they had all the alcoholic beverages on hand that their guests preferred. Barbara described these occasions as being "big, big deals - great excuses for lots of drinking. We used to get a keg of beer and talk about people and laugh at them. Very obnoxious." In view of this, it was not surprising that, in spite of the fact that Barbara could drink as much as she wanted at these occasions, she used to dread family get-togethers, yet she felt that she had no choice but to attend. This was particularly true on Thanksgiving, because all of the members of Barbara's entire extended family were expected to get together. It was very rigid in that even if family members had dinner or visited somewhere else, they were still expected by Barbara's family to at least put in an appearance. The few times that the Ehrlichs did get together with George's parents and brother's family for Thanksgiving it was quieter and more manageable by comparison.

Rituals that surrounded all socializing and entertaining with friends also centered on a great deal of drinking. Just as was the case with family get-togethers, every social gathering, whether at the Ehrlich's home, at the home of friends, or in a bar or restaurant, was always an excuse to drink to excess.

Although the Ehrlichs had frequent visitors to their home, guests were only permitted when the house was spotless.

In spite of these very high standards, Barbara and George had many parties, barbecues, and get-togethers where great quantities of alcohol were served. Their social life away from home was also very active. They attended as many parties as they possibly could, and they frequently went to bars together where they would often meet some of their friends.

Some of the rituals that surrounded the weekend before Barbara's recovery also involved drinking. On Saturdays, George would often work during the day, but they would always go out partying at night. If he didn't work that day, they would just hang around the house recovering from having gone out drinking on Friday night. Sundays were always spent recuperating from Saturday night. They would wake up late with hangovers and start the day with Bloody Marys. Since neither of them felt too well, they just sat around doing nothing except watching television most of the day. Sometimes they would invite people over later in the afternoon or early evening for drinks. George saw Sunday as being "a totally wasted day. The whole weekend would be basically shot." Weekday rituals before recovery involved George getting up alone, making his own breakfast and lunch and then going to work, while Barbara slept late. She would spend the late mornings cleaning her house, and then, if it wasn't one of the few days a month that she worked, she would have friends over and they would drink together, or she would drink beer by herself all afternoon. If Barbara was still awake when George

came home, they would always have a cocktail hour and then they would drink beer with their dinner. Otherwise she ate with the children and would go to bed when they did, at seven or eight in the evening.

On days when George was off or did not have to work late, they would all try to eat together as a family with the children sitting in their high chairs. Not surprisingly, Barbara confessed that she remembered very little about their family dinners before her recovery.

The Ehrlich family engaged in very few religious rituals before Barbara's recovery. They rarely went to church, and if they did, it was out of guilt. They had no spiritual life at all. Barbara had come from a very religious, Catholic background, but she turned away from it as an adult. She was very angry with the Church, using it as a scapegoat by blaming it for all that was wrong with her family of origin, who were Catholic. While she could not reject her family, she was able to reject the Church.

The weddings that the Ehrlichs attended prior to recovery were always "big blow-outs where everybody drank alot." This was especially true of Barbara and George's wedding. Barbara described it as "a drunken carrying on." They had a traditional formal church wedding with a reception afterward that involved a four hour "cocktail hour", but no dinner. Barbara wanted it this way because she "was so into drinking,

and I always hated it at other weddings when the cocktail hour ended and they brought out the food."

Vacations also centered on drinking. Barbara and George took advantage of their respite from responsibility and drank a tremendous amount. They could not conceive of having a good time on vacation without drinking and partying.

In general, it could be said that Barbara and George, as well as their extended family members, looked for any possible excuse to drink. As a result, the consumption of alcohol was an integral part of the Ehrlich family's major rituals.

Family Rituals After Recovery

Barbara and George both expressed that fact that they have enjoyed the holidays better since recovery, because they have been much calmer and quieter with a great deal less drinking. They have also tended to involve fewer people than before. Holidays ceased being the command performance that they had been in the days prior to recovery. The fact that most extended family members have either quit drinking or slowed down considerably could account for some of these changes. As a matter of fact, Barbara noted that, recently, the recovering siblings have been likely to get together with each other, while the siblings that have continued to drink have tended to gravitate toward each other on some of the holidays. Barbara pointed out that, at first, this made her angry but then she was happy about it because "now we don't

have to watch them drink, and they don't have to feel uncomfortable because we are not drinking. Now I finally feel comfortable at these gatherings."

Christmas has been much more peaceful in recent years. The Ehrlichs have stopped attending huge family parties and have been celebrating at home with the immediate family and a few visitors. George said that "it's easier and more comfortable to have fewer people and to just enjoy the people who are there." Generally they would invite George's parents over for dinner and to exchange gifts on Christmas Eve. On Christmas Day they would eat dinner at home and then would go over to have dessert wherever the extended family has gathered. Barbara pointed out that the biggest difference with regard to celebrating Christmas since sobriety has been that "it's love-centered and caring. It's just different. We are thinking about all the other aspects besides drinking." She also stated that the focus has been more on the children and getting them the things they wanted for Christmas. The purchasing of gifts and the writing of Christmas cards have ceased to be seen as a chore or an obligation, and have come to be viewed as an opportunity to think about people they love and to do something nice for them. Similarly, Thanksgiving has no longer involved a huge extended family gathering that everyone must attend. There has been a great deal more flexibility surrounding this holiday with regard to who has it and how many family members are invited. Sometimes the

Ehrlichs have opted to spend it at home with just the immediate family or with a few guests, or they have gone over to George's parents' home. Barbara said that "it's like, 'if you're not doing anything, come on over'. It's not that rigid."

It should be noted that family holiday celebrations such as Christmas, Thanksgiving, Easter, Mother's Day, Father's Day and birthdays have continued to involve the presence of alcohol which has been provided for those in the family who have not stopped drinking, but there has been much less emphasis placed on it. In addition, the Ehrlich family has been able to spend more holidays with George's family once they no longer felt bound to the mandate that they must always be a part of Barbara's family's celebrations.

Mother's Day and Father's Day have generally been spent quietly. They have sometimes had a barbecue to which Barbara and George have invited their parents. Jeffrey and Christine would make little gifts to give their Mom and Dad on their respective days.

Birthdays have been smaller events than they had been previously, and have involved celebrating with presents and cake. Christine and Jeffrey have been given more control over what they want to do for their birthdays. The children have been allowed to have two celebrations: one with their friends during the day, and one with their family in the evening. They have been permitted to choose how they would like to

celebrate with their friends, such as having a party or a sleep-over, going to the zoo, roller skating, the movies, etc. They have also been allowed to select what they would like to have for dinner at the family party. They would generally only invite some of the relatives (e.g. grandparents and godparents), because, as Barbara said, "my family is entirely too big to invite."

Occasions such as graduations, christenings, first communions, etc. have continued to be major celebrations involving the entire extended family. The main difference has been that there has not been nearly as much drinking at these gatherings. Instead of getting a keg of beer like they used to, they generally have purchased only a case and have had some left over afterwards. These celebrations have come to be seen as opportunities for family members to get together to talk with each other rather than as big excuses for drinking.

Barbara pointed out that "there's a big difference in what's going on because people aren't picking up drinks. The talk is different because you are not talking about people or laughing at them. It's not so harsh." These parties might not be as raucous as they used to be, but Barbara and George find them to be more enjoyable.

Barbara and George have continued to have friends over to their home and have visited at their friends' homes since sobriety, but it has not been as frequent. They have attended very few parties since sobriety, have ceased going to bars,

and they have seemed to have less contact with friends of theirs who have remained heavy drinkers. Actually, a great deal of the Ehrlich's social activities have involved doing things together as a family. When George has been off from work, they frequently have made an effort to go on some sort of family outing. Apparently, when drinking no longer played a central role in their lives, Barbara and George were able to shift the focus of their social lives away from the party scene and toward their immediate family.

Weekends at the Ehrlich home have been much more family-oriented since Barbara's recovery. On Saturdays, Barbara and George have been likely to sleep a little bit later than on weekdays, while Christine and Jeffrey would usually get up and watch television while eating some cereal. The children often would have a big breakfast with their parents later on. During the afternoon, they would spend some time doing chores around the house and yard, and after that they would go shopping together. In the summertime they have usually gone to the beach in the afternoon, and if George has been off from work, he has joined them as well. On Sundays, the entire family has been going to Mass together at the Catholic church, including George, even though he was a Lutheran. After Mass they have usually spent a relaxing day together, yet they still have been able to get things done. They have often made it a point to go on some sort of family outing during the

afternoon, like to Chinatown or an amusement park, for example.

Weekday routines have involved George and the children getting up to go to work and to school, with Barbara preparing breakfast and lunch for them (with the help of the children) and seeing them all off. Barbara would then spend the day taking care of the house and doing shopping and errands. Upon their arrival home, the children would do homework and play. Unless George came home late from work, the entire family would eat dinner together in the kitchen. If George was late, Barbara usually has eaten with the children. At the dinner table, they have been likely to discuss current events, and what has been going on in school and with the children's friends. They have not established any set seating arrangements at the table except that Barbara has preferred to sit on the side of the table that gave her the easiest access to getting up and down from the table to serve the food. After dinner, the family has generally read or watched television, and George would sometimes play with the children.

Since Barbara's recovery, her family has become much more religious. As was mentioned earlier, they have been going to church on Sundays, plus they have made it a point to say grace before meals. They also have participated in other religious rituals, such as lighting an Advent wreath during the period of Advent, right before Christmas. Barbara said that she thought that these rituals have been important for her family.

She had turned back to her faith after her recovery "because there was something lacking in my life. My spiritual life is just starting to blossom now. You do the rituals and then you start to have some feeling for it." George has also partaken of the various Catholic rituals even though he was a Lutheran because, to him, there really was not a big difference between the two religions.

Weddings that Barbara and George have attended since her recovery have continued to be "big blow-outs". In her early recovery, Barbara was somewhat uncomfortable at weddings, but she knew she had to get used to drinking occasions even though she was sober. In recent years, she has become more comfortable at weddings because, as George pointed out, "she is a funny, lively person who can have a good time without drinking." What has changed since her recovery has not been the events themselves, but how she has come to view them. She has been perceiving them recently as opportunities to see people whom she hasn't seen in awhile in order to catch up on what they have been doing, rather than as an excuse to get drunk.

The Ehrlich family has made a point to go on vacation together every year. They have gone on many camping trips, and one year they all went to Disneyworld. In addition, Barbara and George have always made sure that they have spent one weekend a year away by themselves. These yearly vacation rituals have appeared to stress the significance of their

family life as well as Barbara and George's relationship as a couple, rather than on the importance of drinking and partying.

The Neilsen Family

Family Rituals Before Recovery

In the Neilsen family, the rituals that surrounded the holidays were fraught with a great deal of tension. While for Joan the holidays always represented an excuse to drink, she also felt a good deal of pressure on her during them because it was expected that she should make the holidays for everyone else in the family. She felt that she had to try very hard to do what was expected of her in order to cover up her drinking. In spite of this attempt, however, there were many times when she was unable to finish preparing dinner because she was so drunk, and other family members would have to take over.

Frank said that he was always "scared as hell" about what was going to happen during the holidays. There were many times where he and Paul had to "pick her up and dump her in bed because she had passed out". Frankie described holidays as being "a roller coaster of emotion: elation - depression - elation - depression; changing hourly and you didn't know why. It's just the way it was."

The other children agreed with this assessment. They had very idealistic images of what the holidays should be like. They

always seemed to approach each holiday with the expectation that this time everything would go well, and they always felt hurt and disappointed when that turned out not to be the case. Karen's sentiments at the time were: "Why can't our Christmases, Thanksgivings and Easters be like normal people's?"

Christmas was usually spent at the Neilsen's island home before Joan's recovery. The boys would buy the Christmas tree, and the family would decorate it. The family went to a candlelight service at church on Christmas Eve, although sometimes Joan would say she was tired and would send the rest of the family to church so that she could stay home by herself and drink. When they returned from the service they would turn on the Christmas lights and put on Christmas music and then put all of the presents under the tree. They generally went to bed late on Christmas Eve, and the presents would all be opened when everybody was together on Christmas morning. In the afternoon they would all eat a big turkey dinner that Joan prepared if she hadn't passed out from drinking before the meal was served. If she did, other family members would help out to finish cooking and serving the food.

Joan said that she saw Christmas as "a real drag". Her description of what Christmas was like for her was as follows:

It was always overwhelming and I'd get wound into a frazzle, but I could always come through with a little 'boost'. At Christmas I would do things to appear like 'supermom' who'd never forget anything because I didn't want to call attention to my

drinking as being a reason for not getting it.
That put incredible stress on me.

One of the chores that Joan was expected to do was to write all of the Christmas cards, including a large number that went to Frank's clients and business acquaintances. She hated this task but felt obligated to do it, so she acquiesced. She felt very resentful about it, however, which provided her with a good excuse to drink. Joan was also expected to do all of the Christmas shopping with money that was provided by Frank. She also had to wrap all of the presents herself. Very often she would sit alone up in her room, wrapping presents and drinking. Sometimes she became so drunk or hung over that she couldn't finish wrapping the presents, so she'd pay one of the kids to finish the job.

Frank remembered Christmas as being "one of the major drinking times." The children were very aware of the tension that existed in the family around Christmas time. They also recalled that a great deal of bickering and fighting went on among all family members.

Before recovery, Thanksgiving was usually spent at Frank's mother's house, or one of his sisters' homes. His relatives tended to be more proper than the Neilsens generally were, so tension often prevailed. Frankie pointed out that "we didn't know what glass to pick up or what silverware to use. We didn't know all the manners like they did." In addition, they also worried about how Joan would act. Most of the time she made an effort to behave well and didn't make a

scene, but when she did, it was very embarrassing to the family. Generally, Frank's family would deal with Joan's drinking by acting like they didn't notice it.

On Easter, the family went to church together, and when the children were little, they would get Easter baskets and have Easter egg hunts. They generally went over to Frank's mother's home for dinner.

Birthdays were celebrated by having parties for the children. Joan saw these birthday parties as "make-up time with the kids". She felt that she had to compensate them for her drinking by making a big deal out of their birthdays. Joan pointed out that at these parties "I was always very conscious of creating a facade, but I really became kind of useless at the end of my drinking. I was always crapped out upstairs."

During the first several years of their marriage, rituals which surrounded socializing and entertaining always involved drinking for Joan and Frank. They "played a lot of golf and did the country club scene", where there were many dinner dances and social affairs, until Joan's behavior became too embarrassing for them. When that happened, Frank generally engaged in these activities alone or he declined invitations altogether. Before Joan's drinking got too bad, they also had big dinners and parties at their home, and they frequently invited couples over for drinks. They also visited other people's homes who drank as much as they did. The children's

social life was centered away from home. They rarely invited friends over to their house unless their parents were out of town. The three oldest kids' social life, like their parents, centered on mood altering substances. In addition to alcohol, drugs like pot and cocaine were also used, mostly by Paul and Frankie.

Weekend rituals usually involved spending time at their island home. To Frank and Joan, Saturday night represented party time. They always went out somewhere or had people in. The children remembered having many baby-sitters on Saturdays. During the day, the boys would often have hockey practice, and afterwards would "hang out with their punk friends". Karen also sometimes hung around with her brothers' friends, and Teresa either spent time with Donna or by herself in her room. Frank spent the day playing golf, and would also stop into the office for awhile, and Joan just "hung around the house and drank".

Sundays were usually spend getting rid of the hang-over. The family went to church on most Sundays, and the children also went to Sunday school. During the later stages of Joan's drinking, she couldn't get herself together to go to church, so the rest of the family went without her. On the way home from church they stopped to buy bagels and would then go home to have breakfast together. Frank always cooked breakfast for the family on Sundays. They did not, however, have big Sunday dinners together as a family. When Frank was still drinking,

he and Joan often would attend an afternoon party, or they would have one themselves, which was always a great excuse for afternoon drinks.

Weekday rituals began with Joan sleeping until eleven in the morning, while the children had to get themselves up, prepare their own breakfasts and lunches and get themselves off to school. Frank didn't help much because he was too busy trying to get himself out to work. Since Joan was not employed at the time, she stayed home all day, but did a minimum of housework. Mondays were especially difficult for both Joan and Frank because they were usually hung over. Joan generally didn't do anything around the house until Tuesday or Wednesday. She pointed out that "toward the end of my drinking I was completely useless." When the children came home from school it was just to drop off their books and go out again. They would come home for dinner and then go out again afterwards, saying "Oh, I don't have any homework. I did it all at school." When Frank was still drinking, he and Joan would have cocktails together before dinner and they would talk to each other, but Joan said that "after a couple of scotches it was 'babble, babble'". The basis of the conversation was all this liquor."

In the early days of Joan's alcoholism, attempts were made to have family dinners around the dining room table, but later on family dinners were served buffet style, especially at their island home where they did not have a dining room

table, because the dining area had been eliminated to make room for a fireplace. Usually family members ate on the run. People helped themselves to the food that was cooking on the stove when they were hungry and settled down to eat wherever they wanted. Frank always ate dinner in front of the television and rarely interacted or conversed with the family. The atmosphere at dinnertime was described as being tense, picky, nasty, complaining, and sad. Frankie talked about the mood at dinnertime this way: "It would escalate up and down and finally we'd have a big blow-up and then silence for awhile. And it would be over the stupidest thing." They did not have a regular dinnertime either. Karen pointed out that "it was pretty much the same ritual every night. We were supposed to eat at six, but it wasn't that regular." Joan would prepared dinner if she was in reasonable shape, but if she was drunk, Frank would buy the kids pizza or hamburgers.

The Neilsen family participated in religious rituals quite frequently before Joan's recovery. In addition to attending church services on Sundays and religious holidays, the children learned their catechisms at Sunday school and were all confirmed in the Lutheran faith. In spite of this, the children felt that their religious experience was superficial, because they participated in it at the insistence of their parents, even though they didn't care much for it. The main reason that the family regularly attended services was because Frank was actively involved in the church as a

member of the church council and it would not have looked right if the family did not also actively participate. Frank speculated that perhaps his involvement and commitment to the church, just like his involvement in all of his other extracurricular activities, actually served as an escape from the alcoholic situation at home.

The rituals that were involved in wedding celebrations was also noted. Frank and Joan had a typical formal wedding when they got married. Family and friends from both sides of the family came. They had organized it very quickly, in about three or four weeks. Invitations were by phone rather than in writing. They had a religious ceremony in a Lutheran church and "a nice reception in an exclusive place." They had very good memories of their wedding.

When Frank and Joan went to other weddings during the course of their marriage, they saw them as opportunities to drink. Later, as Joan's alcoholism progressed, however, there was a lot of tension in the air when the family went to weddings because they were "worried about whether Joan would flip out". Joan herself did not generally like going to weddings, because she felt like she was being scrutinized and put down by the other people there. In retrospect, she believed that this perception was due to the fact that she was not proud of herself and felt a great deal of self-hatred. In general, she viewed the attendance at weddings as a duty. The children felt uncomfortable at weddings as well because, in

addition to being nervous about how Joan might behave, they themselves were not sure how to act. Frankie said "we were introverted, afraid to dance." Like many other situations in public social settings, the Neilsen family often felt self-conscious, uncomfortable and inadequate at weddings, particularly in the later stages of Joan's alcoholism.

Family vacations were usually spent at the family's island home. They also took several cross-country trips in the family van to go visit Joan's brother's family. Usually Joan and the kids would drive in the van and Frank would fly out to meet them. While the rest of the family was gone for two months on these trips, Frank usually only allowed himself one week off, because he felt that he couldn't be away from the office for very long. This was not a problem when they vacationed at their island home, because he had a second office out there. The cross-country trip that Joan and the children took during the summer before her recovery was particularly harrowing, because Joan was drunk the whole time and often was passed out, so Paul did all of the driving, even though he only had a learner's permit. In addition, the three older kids were stoned on pot the whole time. Looking back, the family was amazed that Frank had allowed the trip to take place, given the fact that he was very aware of Joan's condition. They believed that he was in denial about just how serious the situation was, because he really needed the respite that he would get when his family was away.

Family Rituals After Recovery

Since Joan's recovery, the holiday rituals have been much more meaningful. They have been seen by family members as being fun and spontaneous. For the Neilsens, it has been very important to be with the family on the holidays, and they have all made an effort to be together. There has been much less tension surrounding them, and family members have good times together. Joan pointed out that she has been much less conscientious about the holidays since she became sober, because she hasn't felt that she's had to prove anything anymore. Joan's recent view of holidays in general was expressed this way:

I don't like big occasions. I don't care what it is. I don't like one day to be singled out as the focal point of the year, with people presuming that I have to make it into something that is so big and wonderful.

As a result of this sentiment, Joan has basically sidelined herself with regard to holiday preparations. She said that she has enjoyed the holidays, but that she prefers to "just sit and watch it from afar." She noticed that, at first, her family seemed annoyed when she did this, thinking that she was a "bad sport" because she was not fitting the ideal image of a mother's central role in making the holiday, but as time went on, they became more accepting.

Joan admitted that she has continued to see Christmas as a pain and that she has become cranky as it has drawn near. To deal with this, Joan has put a lot less pressure on

herself. She has not been responsible for the preparation of Christmas dinner, and while she has continued to write personal Christmas cards, she has refused to write them to Frank's business acquaintances. She said that "now I don't give two hoots and a holler about certain things surrounding the Christmas holiday, but I don't want to be a wet blanket either." The one area that she has been very conscientious about has been in trying to give equally to all five children because she hasn't wanted to slight anybody. This meant that gift giving remained a real chore for her. Her solution was to go shopping with each child and let them pick out what they wanted, and then she would buy it, wrap it, and put it under the tree for them. While this practice was acceptable to most of the kids, Donna, apparently, was not happy about it. She would complain to her sisters that the Christmas spirit was:

not in Mom's heart. It's always like it's such an effort or such a hard thing for her to go out and go shopping. It's like she doesn't want to do it. And I don't want her to do it if she doesn't want to do it. I want her to get my gifts and be psyched about it and feel good like Santa Claus. I don't know if that's asking too much or anything, but it bothers me.

Apparently Donna has continued to have idealistic expectations about what Christmas should be like, and therefore has experienced disappointment when it hasn't come to pass.

The actual rituals that have surrounded Christmas Day have not changed drastically since recovery. Family members have continued to celebrate it at their island home, and they would also attend the candlelight service on Christmas Eve as

they had before, although fewer of them have been going recently than had been the case prior to sobriety. Usually Joan and Karen have been the ones who have continued to go.

Frankie would usually buy the tree. A few days before Christmas, the family would put up the tree with all the trimmings and would decorate the house. On Christmas morning, Frank would make coffee and serve bagels, rolls, and danishes to everyone. They would have a fire in the fireplace, Christmas carols would be on the stereo, they would take pictures of the family together, and would open their presents. Usually one person would be the "orchestrator" who would hand out the gifts to everybody, although anyone in the family could play this role. Frankie would prepare the Christmas dinner by making a turkey or a ham, and serving it buffet-style around four or five o'clock in the afternoon. Usually just the immediate family would be there. After dinner the kids would all go out to different friends' houses. After Christmas, on or about January 20th, the family would have an elaborate tree burning ceremony in the back yard, where they would put the tree upright in a stand and set it on fire. It would burn fast and furiously with flames shooting up about fifteen feet. The whole family looked forward to this every year and would assemble together for this event.

The family has stopped spending Thanksgiving with Frank's sisters because the families have gotten too big, but they have been celebrating it over at Frank's mothers' house. The

entire Neilsen family has always spent Thanksgiving together. Usually Grandma and Frankie would make a turkey dinner together, and the girls would bake the pies. The few times that they have celebrated Thanksgiving at their island home, they have set up card tables in the living room so that they could all eat together in one room. Joan has sometimes pitched in with dinner preparations but it has not been her responsibility to do it.

The rituals surrounding Easter since recovery have changed in that it has ceased being a big family celebration day, and in recent years has been treated as just another Sunday. Nobody in the family even has been going to church on Easter in recent years. Joan expressed a good deal of relief that the pressure of that holiday has been removed from her.

Birthdays, too, have not been commemorated with the same intensity that was the case previously. Joan and Frank would try to do something special for each kid on their birthday, such as take them out to dinner or have a barbecue, and whatever other family members were available would come, but it would not be treated as a big deal. The birthday celebrant would be given gifts and cards, and they would usually have a cake, but there would be no elaborate party. Quite often several members of the family would chip in to buy one big birthday gift.

On Mother's Day and Father's Day, the children would touch base by calling if they were not able to be home, and

they would also give cards, gifts, or flowers, but there would not be a big family dinner or other type of official family gathering. On Joan and Frank's anniversary, they would give each other cards or flowers, and the kids would remember them with a card or gift. On their twenty-fifth anniversary, the kids chipped in and gave their parents a thousand dollar gift certificate toward a cruise.

The rituals surrounding Frank and Joan's social life have been simplified in recent years. They haven't had any big, formal dinner parties, "with good china and silverware", although they sometimes have invited close friends over for barbecues because they have preferred casual outdoor entertaining. Joan has been avoiding the country club scene since her recovery because she has come to view it as phony, and while Frank has remained involved, it has been less so than was the case before recovery. Frank has continued to play a great deal of golf and has also continued with his weekly poker games.

Family members have felt free to invite their friends to come to their home, and they have done this quite often. As a matter of fact, their island home has become a focal point for the kids and their friends, and Joan and Frank have invited a few of their own friends, upon occasion, to come stay for the weekend.

A great deal of the Neilsen's social life has been spent associating with each other. They have gone out to lunch and

to the beach together, have congregated at family barbecues at the house, and all of the kids in the family have gone out drinking and dancing in bars together on Friday and Saturday nights. Where once family members felt compelled to avoid each other, they have gotten to the point in recent years where they have sought each other out in the expectation of having a good time.

The Saturday ritual has generally found the entire family staying at the island house. It has been a day for sleeping late, doing chores and then taking it easy. Frank would usually play golf in the morning, and go into the office for a few hours in the afternoon. Many of the kids have had to go work on some Saturdays. Sometimes Joan and Frank would go out together in the evening to dinner or to the movies. If not, Joan would attend an A.A. meeting.

Sunday has been viewed in the Neilsen family as a day of rest. Family members would generally sleep late, relax, go to the beach, or get some work done that has needed doing. Joan and Karen would sometimes go to church, but the rest of the family generally would not. Frank has preferred to get up early and play golf instead of going to services. He commented that "they know that if I'm in church it must be bad weather."

On weekdays, Frank and Joan have been living in their suburban home without any of their children, and have gone to work from there. When they have come home from work, they

have usually gone out to dinner together so they could spend some time together and talk. The children would generally go to work or to school. During the week, the Neilsens have tended to live parallel lives. Everybody in the family "does their own thing". As Frankie said about his siblings' lives on weekdays, "they're in their own little spheres." Sometimes after work they have gone out together for a little while, but since they all have had such different work schedules during the week, it has made sense for them to continue to follow the family rule that has advocated "every man for himself."

Since the lifestyles and responsibilities of family members have been so diverse in recent years, along with the fact that the family has been living in two separate domiciles during the rest of the week (with Donna away at college for most of the year), it was not surprising that family dinners, where the entire family would assemble together, have been occurring less frequently than had been the case in the past. When they have been able to get together for a meal, it usually has been on weekends, during the summer, or on holidays. Joan said that "we make a big chicken dinner on weekends, and people just come and fill up their plates." Obviously, they have continued to eat buffet style where family members have helped themselves from pots on the stove.

Another aspect of family mealtime that hasn't changed has been the fact that it has remained impossible to pry Frank away from the television set during dinner. It should also be

mentioned that, while Joan has participated in the preparation of dinner, it has not been solely her responsibility. Other family members have pitched in, especially Frankie, who has enjoyed cooking.

Since the family still has not gotten a large dining table at their island home, they have usually divided themselves into two groups when they ate: those who wanted to talk would eat in the kitchen, and those who wanted to watch television would bring their plates into the living room. When they have all assembled together for dinner, it has usually been at six o'clock. Frankie described family dinners since sobriety as being "a pisser. We're pretty comical - pretty witty." Although the family dinner ritual itself has not altered very much since recovery, the atmosphere at these gatherings has changed considerably from being tense and unpleasant to being casual, comfortable, and fun.

The amount of participation in religious ritual has waned since Joan recovered. Although family members have continued to believe in God and to pray a lot, they have avoided attending church services, except for Joan and Karen upon occasion, and once in a great while, Frank. There has not been any pressure in recent years for family members to go to church, as had been the case in the past. One reason could be that Frank no longer felt the need to convey a religious family image once he resigned from the church council (perhaps because he no longer needed so many escape hatches to get away

from the alcoholism), and another reason might have been the fact that, since the children have become adults, it has been recognized that their religious practices should be their own business. They all have continued to identify themselves as Protestants, but there has been a sense of themselves being spiritual as opposed to religious people.

With regard to weddings, Joan has continued to view them as a duty. She has perceived them as being "too fast, too much is demanded, too fly-by-night." If she could avoid them, she would, although she did concede that at her own children's weddings, she'll be "proud as punch". When she did attend weddings that were celebrated since her recovery, however, Joan has felt relaxed, dignified, and proud of herself. She also reported feeling more like an equal with everyone else there, probably due to her vastly improved self-image. For this reason, going to weddings has not been nearly as stressful as had been the case before her recovery. The other members of her family also have been able to be more relaxed, and have enjoyed themselves more since they no longer have had to be so vigilant regarding Joan's behavior or worried about what she might do to embarrass them. In addition, since the children have become adults, they have felt more socially adept and therefore have been more comfortable at weddings.

While many family vacations have continued to be spent together at the Neilsen's island house, they have made a concerted effort to get away, because the island house has

become a permanent residence for some family members, and not just a summer home or weekend retreat. Joan has gone to see her brother, but the family has not driven across the country in the van since that fateful trip during the summer before Joan's sobriety. Joan did go on a car trip with her daughters to Florida, however. She and Frank also went on the cruise that the children had given them for their twenty-fifth anniversary, and they have taken other trips together to New England and the Midwest. It should be mentioned that, since her recovery, Joan and Frank have made a concerted effort to go away alone somewhere at least once a year.

The Dolan Family

Family Rituals Before Recovery

The rituals that surrounded the holidays before Rita's recovery were described by members of the Dolan family as being rigid and fraught with tension and anxiety. Rita said that she always made an effort to make the holidays special, but it was too much for her. As a result, she developed an intense dislike for the holidays over the years. The children would often have great expectations that the family might have some fun, but these expectations were always dashed. They would act like they were happy, but "through gritted teeth", and would think to themselves "God, I can't wait until this is over!"

The biggest holiday in the Dolan family before recovery was Christmas. They went all out with a tree, decorations, and lots of presents. Jack noted that "it was such a big deal that it would take me until June to pay for it." The family would put up their tree on Christmas Eve and all the children would help decorate it. Then they would go to midnight Mass. When they returned home, they would open gifts from the relatives, and on Christmas morning they would receive their gifts from Santa Claus. It was Jack's job to hand out all the presents to everyone, one by one. During the afternoon, they always had a big Christmas dinner that generally involved only the immediate family.

Rita was almost always drunk either before, during or after Christmas. She did all of the Christmas shopping, which she hated. She would get very worn out from it and would then feel like she needed a drink. Sometimes she would refrain from drinking before or during the Christmas holiday, but she would then drink afterward as a way of coping with all of the stress. She also had the task of writing out all the Christmas cards, both to friends and business associates, which sometimes numbered as high as three hundred cards that had to be sent. It was also her responsibility to plan, cook, and serve Christmas dinner.

Even if Rita was sober at Christmas time, it was still very tense because everyone was afraid that, if they upset Rita, she would drink and spoil everything. With this sort of

atmosphere prevailing in the household, it was not surprising that, once Christmas dinner ended, which signaled the end of the day's family rituals, the older children would gratefully leave the house and go visit their friends. As the children got married and moved away, they would come back home for Christmas (and other holidays) only infrequently, although they would acknowledge it with cards, gifts and phone calls. Even Steven, who lived nearby, would make an brief obligatory appearance around the holidays to exchange gifts, but he rarely was totally involved in the family's Christmas rituals once he moved out. It was of interest to note that, as a movie theater projectionist and later as a professional chef, he almost always had to work on the holidays, including Christmas.

It should be pointed out that Jack's memory of what Christmas was like before Rita's recovery was much more positive than were the recollections of the rest of the family. While there was a general consensus among them that Christmas was a tense, difficult time, Jack described it as involving "lots of excitement, lots of joy, and lots of expectations." Family members did acknowledge Jack's attempt to counteract the tension and anxiety by bending over backward to make the holiday joyful and pleasant, however. He would see that the house was always decorated, both inside and out, and he would make sure that Christmas music was playing - which was usually religious in nature. Although the

appearance of the house was always very festive, there frequently wasn't much of a holiday mood among family members.

Thanksgiving involved having a big turkey dinner with all the trimmings that Rita would prepare singlehandedly. There was a family joke that "Mom always burns the rolls", because she would put them in the oven and forget about them. As was the case for Christmas, she was drunk either before, during, or after the holiday, which created a great deal of tension. The entire family was expected to be present for dinner, except for those who had moved out. There were a few times toward the end of Rita's alcoholism when she was on a binge around Thanksgiving, and therefore was unable to adequately plan or prepare a big dinner. In that case, the family would get all dressed up and go out to a very nice restaurant for dinner. If Rita was very drunk, she would stay home. Other times, as Beth described it, "my father would try to sober her up, scoop her together, and get her to the restaurant." If she was still obviously under the influence of alcohol when they went out, it proved to be an embarrassment for the family.

Other holidays were celebrated by the Dolan family before Rita's recovery. Easter was not as big a celebration as Christmas and Thanksgiving were for them. It involved going to church, going out to breakfast afterwards, and having a big family dinner that Rita cooked. When there were small children at home, they had Easter baskets and egg hunts, but

for the most part, Easter tended to have more religious overtones. As time went on, however, Easter began to seem just like any other Sunday.

Mother's Day and Father's Day were not celebrated in any particular way, but the children were expected to remember their parents with a card or gift as a means of acknowledging that they were grateful for their efforts. The Fourth of July always involved a major family outing. They would often go to the beach during the day, and then they would go watch the fireworks and have a picnic supper. They continued to do this until Beth was about thirteen.

The children's birthdays were always made special by Rita because she felt that it was important in such a large family for each child to be made to feel special at least one day of the year. The children would not have to do their chores that day, and they could have anything they wanted for dinner. There was always a big celebration that involved the entire family, with presents and a cake that Rita would either bake herself or buy at the bakery. Another birthday ritual in the Dolan family was that Jack always sent flowers to Rita on the kids' birthdays for having given birth to them.

The rituals that surrounded socializing and entertaining changed as Rita's alcoholism progressed. Before her alcoholism became a problem, Jack and Rita sometimes attended parties or had guests over to their home. This usually involved people that Jack knew from the entertainment

business, whom Rita did not like. As time went on, she would cope with her discomfort with these people by getting drunk. Eventually they stopped socializing with them altogether. Once Rita started going to A.A., they began to socialize with other couples who were involved with A.A. Jack explained that "we had a whole A.A. social life. We had a small group of people that we were close to. We would have bridge games at our house or at their houses. It was the only social life we've ever really had in this town in the thirty years we've lived here." As Rita's alcoholism progressed, they eventually stopped entertaining and socializing with that group as well. Jack continued to attend dinners and social functions that were related to his business, but Rita rarely accompanied him, although Beth sometimes did when she was a teenager. The result was that their social life completely deteriorated, leaving them quite socially isolated as a couple.

The Dolan family's Saturday rituals generally involved spending the day doing chores. If Rita was sober, she would do a lot of cleaning. Because she usually tried not to drink when Jack was around, she avoided starting one of her binges on the weekend. Once chores were done, the kids either scattered by going to their friends' houses, or they felt trapped at home and would stay up in their rooms. Saturday night dinner was always prepared by Jack, who would barbecue a steak, and make french fries, a vegetable, and a salad to go with it.

On Sundays, the family would always go to Mass together and then they frequently went out to breakfast at a nearby diner. As the children got older, however, they all went to different Masses. Jack conducted a choir at a Protestant church in the mornings, and after he was finished, he would pick up Rita and the smaller children and go to one o'clock Mass at the Catholic Church. The older children were expected to have gotten themselves to an earlier Mass if they didn't want to wait and go with their parents. The rest of Sunday was a "fend for yourself" kind of day. Members of the family went their separate ways. Jack detached himself from the family by sleeping a lot, or watching sports on television. Rita avoided being with Jack, and the children avoided their parents. They did not have a family dinner on Sunday. Rita would fix something simple for herself and the small children, but everyone else ate whatever they could find whenever they were hungry.

Weekday rituals involved getting the children off to school and Jack would go to work. If Rita was sober, she would clean the house and do the wash, but if she was drunk, nothing would get done. When the children came home from school, they could always tell from the condition of the house whether their mother was drunk or sober without even seeing her. If the breakfast dishes were still in the sink, they would often walk right back out the door and go over to a friend's house. When all of the children were home together,

it was very noisy and chaotic, with Steven playing the piano, Matthew banging on the drums, several stereos going at the same time, the phone ringing constantly, and kids always fighting. If Rita was too drunk to make dinner, somebody else made it. Then the children would go to their rooms or watch television while waiting for Jack to come home. Sometimes he came right home after work, and sometimes he didn't. The times that he didn't come home usually were days that Rita was drunk.

Family dinners involved very specific rituals in the Dolan household. They always made a concerted effort to eat together as a family whether Rita was drunk or sober, even though it could be very unpleasant. There was a great deal of whining and arguing at the table, and everybody picked on and teased each other. When Jack wasn't home, Rita and the children generally ate together in the kitchen in front of the television. The kids would sometimes talk about disgusting things at the table just to annoy their mother. When Jack was home for dinner, it was much more formal. They ate together in the dining room, and Jack would sit at the head of the table with all the platters of food and a pile of plates, and dish up and serve everybody's meals. He would try to create some kind of decorum by putting on classical music while they ate and by instructing the children about proper table manners, although this was often done in an angry and threatening manner which added to the tension. If Rita was

drunk, they all tried to ignore her. In light of what dinnertime was like for the Dolan family, it was not surprising that the kids couldn't get up from the dinner table fast enough. They wanted to be excused as soon as they had wolfed down their food.

Since they were practicing Catholics, religious ceremonies and rituals played a very important part in the Dolan family's life. They went to church every Sunday and holy day. The children were brought up very formally and strictly in the faith and were expected to follow the letter of the law of their religion. Beth observed that "religion in our house was not something that was felt in your heart, it was something that you wore on your sleeve." As soon as the children left home (and in some cases, before they left home), they stopped practicing their faith. Rita explained that "they were so tired of having religion jammed down their throats that when they got free of it, they just let go."

Jack was extremely active in the church. He sang in the church choir, taught in the religious education program, and served as a lector and an extraordinary minister of communion during Mass. Rita became less religious as her alcoholism progressed. In the final stages of her alcoholism, she felt that God had forsaken her, and then she began to think that there was no God. During this time, she stopped going to Mass regularly.

Rituals that surrounded wedding ceremonies were affected by whether Rita was drunk or sober. Jack and Rita's wedding occurred before Rita became an alcoholic. It was a small, quiet wedding that was held in the chapel of a convent, followed by a wedding breakfast in a nearby hotel, with a few close friends and family members in attendance. The wedding had been planned very quickly, and Rita's parents refused to attend because they were upset that she was marrying a Catholic and that she had converted to Catholicism herself before the wedding.

There had been four weddings in the family during Rita's active alcoholism. Rita was drunk for two of them, sober for one of them, and completely absent from the fourth one because she was in treatment at the time. Linda was the first one of the children to get married. She wanted a traditional wedding with a Nuptial Mass and a big reception. At that time, Jack had to borrow money to pay for it, and Linda had to pay for part of it herself. There was a great deal of tension, anxiety, and confusion due to Rita's drinking. Both she and Jack had obtained the services of two different limousine companies without telling each other, and when they both showed up, chaos ensued because both of them expected to be paid. Finally, Jack had to call the police to get one of the limousines to leave. During the ceremony, a drunk Rita cried audibly throughout, and at the reception, her wig was on

crooked and Jack kept trying to fix it, which made her very angry at him.

Rita was sober at Steven's wedding because she had been in treatment for several months before it, and came home just to go to the wedding. She then went back to the treatment facility the following day. Steven's wedding involved a Nuptial Mass with a reception that followed, with about one hundred twenty people in attendance. Family members remember it as being a happy, fun day with very little tension or anxiety.

At Margaret's wedding as well as at her rehearsal dinner, Rita was very drunk. She had been drinking prior to the wedding because she was unhappy about it and wanted to block it out. She still managed to make Margaret's wedding dress, however. The rehearsal dinner was held at the Dolan's home, and Rita became so drunk that she passed out and had to be put to bed. Although John was not a Catholic, he and Margaret had a Nuptial Mass in order to please Jack. Afterward, there was a reception for about eighty people at a nearby catering hall, and Rita was very drunk throughout. Family members described this wedding as being upsetting and tension-filled, and they also pointed out that they felt very embarrassed by Rita's drunkenness.

Valerie's wedding was organized on the spur of the moment, and the only family members who could attend on such short notice were Jack, Steve, and his wife Eileen. They had

to fly there because it was held in the town that Valerie was living in at the time, which was about four hundred miles away from where they lived. They also flew home the same day right after the reception because Steve had to work the next day. That was the first time that anyone in the family had met Dick, who was described by Steve as being "the biggest sleazebag I ever ran into". They were married by a young long-haired, bearded, sneaker-clad minister from an undetermined Protestant denomination at the house that Dick and Valerie had been living in. There were about thirty people in attendance at the wedding, who were mostly Valerie's friends from the Edgar Cayce movement. After a very brief ceremony, there was a small reception at the house where a buffet, which Jack had paid for, was served. Jack remembered the wedding as being "the worst day of my life. I can not tell you how depressed I was over all that. It was a black day." Rita was very hurt that Valerie did not wait until she was out of treatment to get married. Right after the ceremony, Valerie called her mother, and they both cried on the phone.

The rituals that surrounded vacations before Rita's recovery generally involved the entire family getting into the station wagon and driving long distances to visit relatives once or twice a year. It was crowded, hot, and noisy, with the children bickering and fooling around. Jack did not like to make many rest stops, so the children were always begging

him to stop to eat or go to the bathroom. One time, they accidentally left Matthew behind at a gas station, because he had gotten out of the car when everybody thought he was asleep, and they didn't realize that he was missing for a half hour. They became frantic when they did become aware of it, and they turned around and went back to get him. When the children were in their late teens and old enough to stay home, they would avoid these family vacations whenever possible.

Family Rituals After Recovery

Since Rita's recovery, the rituals that have surrounded the holidays have been less rigid and stressful, and more enjoyable than they had been previously. Family members often have gotten together with each other whenever possible, but there has been no obligation to do so.

Christmas rituals have changed somewhat for Rita and Jack since recovery in that they don't make as big a deal over it as they once did. Christmas shopping has not been as extensive as it once was, nor has it involved "crazy, hectic, last minute stuff." They have done all of their shopping early, much of it by mail order, because they had to be sent out to most of their children and their families who live far away. They have trimmed their Christmas card list by no longer sending them to Jack's business associates, and Jack has been writing most of them recently. Rita and Jack have continued the tradition of going to midnight Mass on Christmas

Eve and Jack has sung in the choir. Steven and Eileen have come over to the house to exchange gifts, usually on Christmas Eve. Jack and Rita have continued to put up a tree, although it has been a small, artificial, beautifully decorated one, rather than a large, live tree that had been haphazardly decorated by the kids as had been the case in the past. Christmas, in recent years, has been described as being quiet, peaceful, pleasant, not flamboyant or extravagant, but still festive. For some Christmases Jack and Rita have traveled, either to visit one of their children, or to go on vacation. When they have stayed home, they have always had a Christmas dinner during the afternoon that Jack has prepared, or that they have prepared together. Sometimes it has been just the two of them, and other times, one or more of their children and their families have come to visit. Family members who have not been able to visit have sent gifts by mail and have called their parents on the phone to wish them a "Merry Christmas."

Interestingly, Rita said that she has continued to have a dislike for Christmas which has been left over from her drinking days. Although she has found it to be a lot more pleasant than it was then, she has disapproved of the frantic, hyped-up, materialistic way that it generally has been celebrated in this country. Several of the children also reported feeling stressed or depressed around Christmas, because of the unpleasant memories that have been evoked as

the Christmas season has approached, with all of its accompanying demands and expectations.

In recent years, Thanksgiving has been a quiet affair. Sometimes some of the children and their families have come for a big turkey dinner that their father or both parents had prepared. A few times Jack and Rita have opted to turn down invitations to go elsewhere and have had Thanksgiving dinner alone together. Several years ago, their fortieth wedding anniversary happened to fall on Thanksgiving, so all the children and their families came home to celebrate. It was a surprise party for Jack, but they told their mother about it beforehand, because they knew that she did not like surprises. Steven and Eileen took Jack and Rita out to dinner at a restaurant, and when they arrived, the rest of the family was already there. It was the first holiday time that the entire family had been all together since Rita's recovery, and it turned out to be a very joyful, loving celebration, and they all had a very good time together.

Easter since recovery has involved Jack and Rita going to the Mass where Jack has sung in the choir. Afterward, they have either gone out to dinner, or they have eaten a meal that Jack has prepared. Sometimes some of the children and their families have come for dinner, or they have invited a few friends over. Once in awhile Jack and Rita have chosen to spend the day alone with each other.

On Mother's Day and Father's Day, the children have sent cards or gifts, and they have also called their parents on the phone. Jack and Rita pointed out that they have not been getting anything for each other because "we aren't each other's parents".

The Fourth of July has no longer been commemorated by Jack and Rita in any special way, but several of the children have continued to celebrate it in a big way with their own families. This apparently has been one holiday that has evoked pleasant memories for all of the children.

Birthdays have been toned down a great deal in the Dolan family. Rita pointed out that recently she only has been sending birthday gifts to her children and their spouses who do not have children of their own. Otherwise only the grandchildren have gotten birthday gifts. Jack and Rita have continued to send birthday cards and to call their children on the telephone to wish them a "happy birthday". The siblings have not exchanged gifts in recent years, but most of them remember each other's birthdays with a card or a phone call. Jack has also continued his ritual of giving Rita flowers on each of their children's birthdays.

Obviously, holiday rituals have provided a way for the Dolan family to keep in touch and stay close as a family, even though they have been living far away from each other.

Since recovery, Jack and Rita have been somewhat reclusive socially. Jack observed that "we don't have may

people except family in our social circle now." They had gotten in the habit of not socializing or entertaining for so many years that this has continued in the present. They seldom have invited friends over to their home, and they have not visited at friends' homes very often either. They have preferred going out to dinner to entertaining at home. Most of their social activities, such as dinner, plays, or movies, have involved just the two of them. They have been very happy with this arrangement, because they have come to enjoy each other's company a great deal.

For Jack and Rita, weekend and weekday rituals have become very similar since Jack retired. Jack has been going to daily Mass, but Rita has only been going on Sundays. They both have been spending their days doing a few chores such as cleaning, laundry, shopping, gardening, or tending to financial matters, but there has not been any pressure to get things done by a certain time. They also have had time to spend relaxing by watching television, reading, and when the weather has been nice, swimming or sitting outside in the sun by the pool. Jack usually has been the one who has cooked dinner for the two of them, and Rita has generally cleaned up the kitchen afterward. In the evening they have watched television programs or videotapes together.

Family dinners since recovery have usually involved only Jack and Rita, so they have been very quiet, comfortable affairs. Whenever several or all of the children have been

there for dinner, they have tended to sit in their old seats at the table, and, although they have, at times, reverted to their old informal roles, there has not been the tension, arguing, and teasing that had been the case when Rita was still drinking. Although Jack has continued to serve the food to others at the table at smaller gatherings, when many people have been there it has been served buffet style, and sometimes even family style, whereby the platters and bowls of food have been passed around the table. Rita noticed that, after the meal has been finished, the kids "want to sit all day and talk, talk, talk. That's a big difference from before, when they would bolt from the table as they were swallowing their last mouthful."

Religious rituals have continued to be very important for some members of the Dolan family. Jack has continued to be very actively involved in the church and has been attending daily Mass. In addition to singing in the choir, teaching in the religious education program, and actively participating in the Mass by doing the readings and giving out communion, Jack has taken communion to people who have been homebound or in hospitals, and since his retirement, has been taking courses to better prepare him for lay ministry. Although his involvement in his faith has increased since recovery, he has stopped trying to impose it upon others in the family.

Since her recovery from alcoholism, Rita's faith gradually became restored. She started going to Mass on a

regular basis and began listening to the gospel and realized that "it sounded just like the [A.A.] Program." Although she hasn't been going to daily Mass with Jack, she has been observing Sundays and all of the Catholic holy days by going to church.

Among the children, Linda and Beth have returned to their faith and have been attending Sunday Mass regularly in recent years. They have found that the religious rituals have been comforting for them. The four middle children have remained alienated from the formal religious rituals of the Catholic Church, although none of them have become atheists.

There have been three weddings in the family since Rita's recovery: Beth's, Matthew's, and Valerie's second marriage. All three weddings were attended by the entire family and were described as being happy, festive, enjoyable, and fun. Jack's only reservation was that Matthew and Valerie were not married in Catholic ceremonies, but he did not make a big deal about it.

Beth had a large wedding which involved a Nuptial Mass at the family's parish church and a big reception at a catering hall with about one hundred seventy-five guests. When Matthew was married, the entire family flew to Debbie's hometown, and all stayed at the same hotel. The wedding was held in a small chapel in the woods in a simple ceremony presided over by a Protestant minister. Afterwards, there was a dinner at a nearby restaurant that approximately thirty-five people

attended. Valerie was married by a friend of the family who was a Protestant minister in the living room of her parents' home surrounded by the entire Dolan family and a few very close friends. After the ceremony, Steven prepared and served a sumptuous buffet supper. Family members reported that the best part of attending these weddings was to have the entire family assembled together at one time.

While vacation rituals since recovery have generally not involved the entire family, they have sometimes included part of the family. One time, several of the children accompanied their parents on a two week trip to Greece, which was where Valerie had met Kurt. Jack and Rita have also spent a few vacations visiting Valerie's family in Germany. They have also gone on vacations to visit their children who have been living far away. In addition, Jack and Rita have gone on vacation together alone to places like California, Hawaii, and Italy. Obviously, vacations have not only been used by Jack and Rita to get away and for a change of scenery, but to spend some time with their children whom they do not get to see on a daily basis.

Discussion of Findings

Rituals that existed in the four families prior to recovery generally had to incorporate the reality of the excessive drinking by either permitting it to occur, as was the case for the Ehrlich family and for the Neilsen and Dolan

families during the earlier years of their marriage, or by compensating for the alcoholic's disruptive drinking and declining participation, which occurred in the Higgins family, and in later years, for the Neilsens and Dolans. In addition, it appeared that there was a major effort to sustain many of the family rituals in spite of the pain and difficulty of doing so under alcoholic circumstances. This included the celebration of holidays, birthdays, family dinners, and to some extent, the attendance at weddings. In the Neilsen and Dolan families, holidays and birthdays were seen as being a good time to try to make up to the kids for past problems that were caused by the drinking, but this put even more pressure on Joan and Rita, which led them to drink and thus cause tension and disruption on these occasions as well. Perhaps the rigid adherence to such rituals provided some level of comfort in that it created a patterned framework whereby family members could feel safe due to the fact that the existence of such rituals served the purpose of warding off total chaos.

Since recovery, family members have been able to cease having to compensate for the alcoholism as they performed their family rituals. As a result, some of the rituals have changed noticeably, and some have remained relatively constant, although in many cases, they have had a more simplified and casual air about them in recent years.

Of the rituals that had undergone changes, it should be noted that some of these alterations were the direct result of the children getting older or moving out, such as the way holidays and birthdays were celebrated, and in some cases, church-going practices, while others changed in response to the recovery itself. For Joan Neilsen and Rita Dolan, who began their recovery very late in the progression of their alcoholism, these included rituals where they decided that they no longer had to play the roles which they had formerly felt called upon to perform against their wishes. These included their central roles in making the holidays, as well as those which dictated what roles they should play in their social life. Apparently, once they achieved sobriety and were able to eventually rebuild their self-esteem in recovery, they became more assertive about refusing to participate in the rituals in ways that they had previously been uncomfortable with, but had been afraid to resist. Once they had redefined their roles in these rituals, it became necessary for the rest of their families to adapt to these changes.

Some examples of other ritual transformations included the fact that, for the Ehrlich, Neilsen, and Dolan families, their social life at one time or another involved drinking and partying, but after recovery it was alcohol-free and centered on their families. This was also true for the Higgins family, except that this had also been the case before the recovery as well. For all four families, weekend rituals have allowed

them to be more productive since recovery, their experiences with weddings have become more enjoyable, and vacations have been more pleasant. It was interesting to note that all four couples made a point of saying that they thought it was important for them to go away alone together at least once a year.

Regarding the rituals that changed very little, such as the specific dinnertime rituals for some families, and the ways that some holidays were celebrated, it was evident that, while many of the overt behaviors remained quite similar, the underlying atmosphere that permeated these events was vastly improved once the alcoholic was in recovery. The level of tension diminished, and there was a sense that family members actually enjoyed being with each other. Apparently their ritual interaction had become more spontaneous rather than the result of some sort of coercion which was based on preconceived expectations of what they would be doing if they were a "normal" family.

Some family rituals were modified in both content and function. With regard to the birthday and holiday rituals in the Neilsen and Dolan families, for example, they became a good way to formalize the maintenance of close family ties, instead of serving as a means of trying to compensate for the unhappiness that family members had experienced because of the alcoholism.

As members of the families discussed their rituals, it became apparent how important these rituals have been with regard to their identity as a family. It was also interesting to note that, for the most part, family members were in total agreement about their past and present family rituals. The existence of such clear, common memories might be attributed to the fact that rituals tend to be larger than life and very specific. In addition, the expectations surrounding rituals were rarely ambiguous. Family members appeared to know exactly what was expected of them, even if they were not happy about it. The rituals that surrounded holidays, weddings, and socializing before recovery served the purpose of allowing families to pretend that all was well by going through the motions, when in reality it was not. For the two younger women, Lorraine Higgins and Barbara Ehrlich, many of these rituals contributed to a certain amount of emotional enmeshment with the women's families of origin, although not with their husbands' families. Since recovery, however, a few alterations in these rituals have occurred which have reflected a change in this realm, which has allowed them to be less enmeshed with the women's extended families.

It should be pointed out that many of the changes in family rituals that occurred happened gradually, and some of those changes had more to do with how the rituals were experienced or interpreted than with the behaviors themselves. Nevertheless, the rituals that have become operational since

recovery have served to support the incorporation of the alcoholics' recovery into their families' lives. In addition, as was the case with the families' rules that evolved since recovery, the families' rituals have been based more on what has been right and comfortable for them rather than on expectations from extraneous sources.

Chapter VIII

CONCLUSION

Theoretical Implications

The family has been described by Hess and Handel (1959) as a bounded universe whereby all members inhabit a world of their own making. They explained that "the family's life together is an endless process of movement in and around consensual understanding from attachment to conflict to withdrawal - and over again." (1) Beckvar and Beckvar (1982) pointed out that the family is actually a system where all members are interconnected with each other, and what happens to one member of the family affects the others in the family as well. In view of this, it certainly makes sense to study the entire family as a unit, rather than focus on the experiences and perceptions of just one member, if the complexities of family life are to be identified and understood.

An in-depth analysis of a family, therefore, should take into consideration the perceptions of all family members regarding their experiences, interactions, behavior, and images of themselves and each other, both past and present. As a result, definite patterns of family life can emerge, along with identifiable changes in those patterns over time. In this study, there has been an attempt to conceptualize what happens in middle to upper-middle class, white, suburban,

American families when the alcoholic wife/mother experiences recovery. Of special interest was the identification of the ways in which a family can collaborate on revising their roles, rules, and rituals as they attempt to adjust to the changes that have been brought about by recovery.

Several insights have emerged regarding the patterns and changes that emerged in these families. One such finding was that, in all of the families, it was the alcoholic woman who finally initiated her own successful recovery. She was only able to do this when she recognized that the main source of the intolerable situation that her life had become was her excessive drinking. This also involved the acceptance of the label of "alcoholic" for herself. This provides support for Grove (1984), who refuted Dean and Poremba's (1983) notion that the label of "alcoholic" was highly stigmatizing and, therefore, harmful by saying that there were positive effects from assuming this label. This was particularly true in the group setting of organizations such as A.A. and Women for Sobriety, which do not share the larger society's stigmatization of this label.

In light of this, it was not surprising that another finding pointed to the fact that, for all of these women, expert intervention and/or peer support from outside the family was necessary in order to sustain recovery. This was particularly important during their early sobriety, because these outside sources of help and support provided these women

with the strength to maintain their recovery at a time when family members were still struggling to adjust to the changes that the alcoholic's sobriety had introduced to the family.

The specific changes that actually occurred after recovery with regard to family roles involved the fact that both the culturally defined formal roles and the psychosocially defined informal roles involved a transformation from negative to positive interaction. More specifically, these roles changed from perpetuating enabling strategies of the drinking before recovery to incorporating more constructive reactions which supported more healthy interaction in the family afterward. In addition, it was observed that after recovery, formal roles were more adequately performed in the family and informal roles no longer had to be as rigidly defined or as one-dimensional as they had been prior to recovery.

Findings regarding the common changes in family rules included the observation that after recovery, they involved more flexibility, less rigidity, more trust, and more open communication, especially with regard to feelings. Specifically, there was a decrease in the covert rules which stipulated that family members should not talk about the alcoholism or other family problems, that they should not trust anyone, including each other, and that they should not allow themselves to feel any negative feelings, although a few remnants of these rules were still apparent. For example, one

subject that has continued to remain off limits even after the alcoholic's recovery has been the addictive behaviors of other family members. Interestingly, many of the covert rules that existed prior to recovery were based on certain false assumptions. These included the notions that family members might have caused or contributed to the existence of the alcoholism, that somehow they must control or manage the behavior of the alcoholic, and that ultimately they should be responsible for putting a stop to it. The realization that these perceptions were erroneous was a large part of the recovery process for the families. Outside help in the form of A.A., Al-Anon, and Alateen, as well as therapy and family counseling, were often instrumental in initiating these necessary shifts in perception. It should also be pointed out that, both before and after recovery, some of the covert rules reinforced many of the family's informal roles, while many of the overt rules functioned to uphold the formal roles that existed in the family.

The findings regarding family rituals suggested that, except for less emotional enmeshment and less frequent getting together with the immediate family and/or families of origin, formal ritual behaviors did not change very much when the alcoholic woman recovered. What did change quite noticeably, however, was that the tension and anxiety which previously had surrounded these rituals diminished, and openness, enjoyment, and spontaneity increased. Prior to recovery, the rituals

that surrounded holidays and other formal occasions were rigidly adhered to regardless of how painful it might have been to do so. By creating the sort of organization and patterned behavior that were essential parts of such rituals, the potential chaos that the alcoholism often threatened to produce could be warded off. While this did create tension and anxiety, it also produced some sense of safety, in that the one thing that family members could always rely on was that certain set patterns of behavior would always be followed on these formal occasions. The rituals that existed prior to sobriety dealt with the potentially disruptive drinking in two main ways: by incorporating alcohol consumption right into the rituals themselves, or by compensating for the drinking in some way. Rituals since recovery have been relieved of the responsibility of having to cope with the alcoholism in some fashion. In addition, many of these rituals served the purpose of strengthening family ties by facilitating interaction and communication in a casual and comfortable way, instead of attempting to tie the family together in a rigid, suffocating fashion in a desperate attempt to ward off the possible breakdown of the family.

Apparently, the changes that occurred with regard to the roles, rules, and rituals in these recovering families have entailed collaborative strategies that involved all family members as they reacted to changes that other members were experiencing. This whole process was initiated when the

alcoholic women began their recoveries, which was initially disruptive to the previously established status quo of their families and, therefore, required some modifications in order to create a new equilibrium. The resulting changes that were brought on by sobriety with regard to the roles the alcoholic played in the family affected every other member by necessitating some positive changes in many of their roles, as well as in several of the family's rules and rituals.

Suggestions for Future Research

The present study focused on white, middle to upper-middle class, suburban families that contained a recovering alcoholic in the wife/mother role. This narrow focus reflected a deliberate attempt to control for intervening factors, such as social class, race, and residential locale so that patterns in these families would be revealed more clearly. It was assumed that if the families had not been carefully matched to each other with regard to certain social characteristics, these patterns might be less evident. Now that certain clear-cut findings have emerged with regard to the families in this study, future research should focus on whether these patterns emerge in families of different social backgrounds and locations. Questions could then be answered regarding whether the patterns of living that are experienced by recovering alcoholic families might be influenced by different cultural backgrounds and socioeconomic levels, as

well as by a lifestyle that is typical of an urban as opposed to a suburban environment. In addition, it would also be useful to explore whether similar patterns exist in families where the recovering alcoholic is the father/husband or one of the children. All such research, however, should utilize the case study method, whereby all members of the family are interviewed extensively about their perceptions of family life, both past and present, in order to yield the kinds of insights that the present research has provided.

Another dimension that should be explored in depth in future research on recovering alcoholic families is sexuality and how it is affected by the alcoholic's recovery, since this is an important aspect of a marital relationship. Perhaps an honorarium could be paid to respondents in order to provide them with incentive for answering questions of such a sensitive and personal nature. Such an honorarium would also be useful in encouraging more families to participate, which would provide a larger sample for the study.

It would also be useful to explore whether some form of treatment or outside intervention is necessary for the alcoholic to experience recovery as well as for family members to successfully adapt to her recovery. This could be accomplished by conducting a wait-list study, whereby families who contacted a treatment facility could be divided into two groups: those who experienced treatment and those who were placed in a holding pattern due to being wait-listed. Both of

these groups would then be followed up and compared with regard to successful outcomes to determine whether it is the treatment or the passage of time which contributes to the families' successful recovery. This would be helpful in ascertaining factors that contribute to short-term recovery. Successful long-term recovery could be evaluated with regard to the usefulness of treatment by locating families several years after they had contacted a treatment facility. These families could be divided into two groups: those who completed the prescribed course of treatment, and those who never followed through with treatment. They could then be interviewed in order to determine whether the alcoholic is still sober, whether the marriage is still intact, and whether family members express satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the way family life is now. By looking at the outcomes of other factors besides whether the alcoholic is drinking or not, it would provide a basis of comparison between the lives of families of recovering and non-recovering alcoholics. It would also provide information regarding the quality of recovery for those who are sober.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

1. How long was the wife/mother an alcoholic before recovery was attempted?
2. Can you remember what family life was like before alcoholism became a problem? When was that? Describe.
3. When did the alcoholic first attempt to recover from alcoholism? What were the circumstances?
4. What kind of help or treatment has the alcoholic received?
5. Have there been any relapses since the initial attempt to recover?
6. How long has the alcoholic's present period of sobriety been? Has there been anything different about this period of sobriety when compared to previous periods, if any?
7. Prior to this period of sobriety, what was the longest length of time that the alcoholic was able to maintain sobriety?
8. Who sought help first, the alcoholic or one of the other family members?
9. Have family members received any counseling or attended A.A., Al-Anon or Alateen?
10. What is your opinion of A.A., Al-Anon and Alateen?
11. How did each family member react to the alcoholic's drinking? Did they attempt to regulate or restrict the drinking in any way? Did members work together or separately in this endeavor?
12. Describe what family life was like before the alcoholic sought to recover.
13. What was family life in the early days of recovery?
14. What has family life been like lately?
15. Has the occupations, activities, interests or hobbies changed for any family members since sobriety?

16. How do you feel about the alcoholic's sobriety? Do you think it will last?
17. To what extent do you think the alcoholic's drinking affected you while it was occurring? How much has having had an alcoholic in your family affected who you are today? To what extent has the alcoholic's sobriety affected you?
18. Are you comfortable with how things are now in the family? Are there any changes that you would like to see in the family?
19. Have your expectations about yourself, your family, work, social life, etc. changed at all since recovery? If so, in what way have they changed?
20. Describe what each family member was like, including yourself, both during active alcoholism and recently.
21. Have any family members experienced any personal problems or difficulties (physical, mental, emotional or spiritual) either during active alcoholism or since? If so, what were they?
22. Describe each family member's relationship with each other member (including yourself) both during active alcoholism and recently. If there have been any changes over time, were they for better or for worse?
23. What was the division of labor in the family (regarding roles, responsibilities, chores, etc.) prior to active alcoholism? Did this change during the active alcoholism?
24. Have family members responsibilities and chores changed at all since sobriety? What are they now?
25. Were you satisfied with the division of labor during active alcoholism? Are you satisfied with it now?
26. Is the household running smoothly now?
27. In you opinion, are all family members, for the most part, fulfilling their obligations regarding responsibilities and chores? Was this true prior to sobriety?
28. How do you feel when your entire family is assembled together? Under what circumstances does this occur?

29. When you are together with your family, what kinds of things do you talk about? Who does most of the talking? The least?
30. What subjects are generally avoided by family members in discussions?
31. During active alcoholism was the subject of alcoholism openly discussed in the family or rarely brought up? What would you say is the situation now?
32. In what ways did family members try to conceal the alcoholism or cover up for the alcoholic?
33. Does your family ever discuss the past? How often? What is usually brought up in these discussions? Is there generally agreement or disagreement among family members about past events when they are discussed?
34. Who do you feel the closest to in your family? Was this true during active alcoholism? What kinds of things can you talk to him/her about? What don't you talk about?
35. Is there anyone in your family that you feel uncomfortable with? Why? Whom do you talk to the least in your family?
36. Which family member do you see the most? The least?
37. Which family member do you argue with most? How frequently do you argue? What are these arguments generally about?
38. Is there less or more arguing going on the family since sobriety? Has the subject or nature of these arguments changed?
39. Is there anyone in the family whom you would not trust with a secret? Whom would you trust most with a secret?
40. Is there anyone in your family that you consider unreliable? Who is the most reliable?
41. How do each of the members of your family deal with tension and anxiety? Has this changed since sobriety?
42. To what extent were you able to express your feelings (anger, sadness, hurt, joy, love, etc.) freely among family members during active alcoholism? What about now?

43. How is affection generally expressed in your family? Whom do you kiss and hug? When? Whom do you generally not kiss or hug? Why is this the case?
44. How supportive or encouraging was your family regarding your interests or endeavors during active alcoholism? How about now? Do family members attend events that other members participate in? How often?
45. Do family members ever praise each other? How often? Who in the family gets the most praise? The least? Who generally praises whom?
46. Do family members ever criticize each other? How often? Who in the family gets the most criticism? The least? Who generally criticizes whom?
47. Does anyone in the family try to make you feel guilty? Who? What does he or she do or say?
48. How much attention do you get in the family? Is this attention positive or negative? Has this changed since sobriety?
49. Who do you think gets the most attention in the family? Is this positive or negative attention? Who gets the least attention in the family?
50. Do you feel like you have the freedom to be yourself in your family or do you feel restricted or stifled? Explain.
51. Do you behave differently at home with your family than you do with people outside your family? If so, in what way?
52. How much privacy do you have at home? Would you say that each family member's right to privacy is respected in your family? If not, how is this right to privacy violated, and by whom? Was this situation different during active alcoholism?
53. How were major decisions made in the family during the active alcoholism? How much say or input did each member have? How are decisions made now?
54. Are there any family rules or ways of doing things that you disagree with or think need modification? What are they? What changes would you make? Why?

55. Was alcoholism ever discussed with anyone outside the family during the active alcoholism? Is it discussed with anyone outside the family now?
56. Do you ever talk to anyone outside the family about other family or personal problems? If so, to whom? What do you discuss? Was this true during active alcoholism?
57. Who are your closest friends? How often do you see them, and where? What do you do together? How often do you speak on the phone? What do you talk about? Do family members like or approve of these friends? Why or why not?
58. How frequently do your friends come to your home? Has this changed since sobriety? How frequently do you go to their homes?
59. What happens when someone in the family gets sick? What do they do? Who takes care of them? Was this true prior to sobriety?
60. What has each family member's attitude been toward drinking both before sobriety and at present?
61. How would you describe your attitude toward the holidays prior to sobriety? How do you feel about them now?
62. Describe a typical Christmas both before the onset of alcoholism and during active alcoholism? Do the same for Easter, Thanksgiving, Mother's Day, Father's Day, birthdays, and other important holidays and celebrations in your family.
63. Describe the above as they've been since sobriety.
64. Since sobriety, has the way that the family socializes and entertains changed at all (e.g. what you do, with whom, where, how often)? If so, how has it changed?
65. Describe a typical Saturday, Sunday and week day prior to sobriety, and then describe them as they've been recently.
66. Describe a typical family dinner prior to sobriety, and then describe it as it has been recently.
67. Are there any religious holidays or practices that are observed by your family? Describe. How do you feel about them? How religious would you say members of your family are? Was this different prior to sobriety?

68. Have there been any weddings in the family that members have attended, both before and after recovery? If so, describe.
69. What would you like to be doing ten years from now? What do you think your family will be doing ten years from now?

APPENDIX B

JOINT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (MARRIED COUPLE)

1. What are the names and ages of all immediate family members?
2. Do any immediate family members live elsewhere at present? If so, who and where? How long ago did they leave home?
3. What is the husband's occupation? What is the wife's occupation?
4. Did either of you have any previous occupations? If so, what were they?
5. What is the education level of each spouse?
6. How many years have you been married? How old were each of you when you were married?
7. Did your families approve of the marriage? What was your wedding like?
8. Have either of you had any previous marriages?
9. What is your present religious affiliation?
10. What was your religious affiliation as children?
11. What was your position in the birth order in the families that you grew up in?
12. Has there been any alcoholism among relatives on either side of the family? If so, did any of them successfully recover?
13. What activities are each of the children involved in? (Include school, jobs, extra curricular activities, hobbies, etc.)
14. What interests or hobbies do each of the spouses have?
15. Are there any activities that the family has participated in together?
16. Does each family member have responsibilities and chores to do in the household? What are they? Are chores and responsibilities ever shared or exchanged?

17. What are some of the rules that this family has? How were these rules established?
18. Are there any rules that apply to everyone in the family? Are there any rules that apply only to certain individuals in the family?
19. What did you do this past Christmas? This past Thanksgiving? Easter? Mother's Day? Father's Day? How was each person's most recent birthday celebrated?
20. Does this family ever go on vacation together? If so, what was your most recent vacation like?
21. What did you do this past Sunday? Would you consider it a typical Sunday for your family?
22. When was the last time the entire family ate a meal together? Do you eat meals together often? Is there a set seating arrangement at meals? If so, what is it?
23. How often do you see relatives? Which relatives do you see most often? Least often?
24. Have there ever been any special names used for anyone in the family besides their given names? If so, what are they and how did they originate? Are they still used? If so, how often? Does the person with the name mind being called by that name?

APPENDIX C

ROSTER OF FAMILY MEMBERSHiggins Family:

Lorraine, secretary, age 35 - alcoholic wife

Marc, carpenter, age 37 - husband

Ehrlich Family:

Barbara, homemaker, age 37 - alcoholic wife

George, owned air conditioning and refrigeration business, age 38 - husband

Christine, age 10 - daughter

Jeffrey, age 8 - son

Neilsen Family

Joan, alcoholism counselor, age 55 - alcoholic wife

Frank, attorney, age 59 - husband

Paul, grounds-keeper and maintenance mechanic, age 24 - son

Frankie, college student, age 23 - son

Karen, recent college graduate, waitress, age 22 - daughter

Teresa, beautician, age 20 - daughter

Donna, college student, age 19 - daughter

Dolan Family

Rita, homemaker, age 64 - alcoholic wife

Jack, recently retired theatrical agent, age 65 - husband

Linda, homemaker, age 42 - daughter

Neil, naval officer, age 44 - Linda's husband

Regina, dance instructor, age 20 - Linda's daughter

Joe, in Navy, age 19 - Regina's husband

Nicholas, high school student, age 15 - Linda's son

Steven, projectionist and caterer, age 41 - son

Eileen, college professor, age 38 - Steven's wife

Matthew, salesman, age 37 - son

Debbie, bank employee, age 28 - Matthew's wife

Margaret, homemaker, age 35 - daughter

John, art gallery director, age 35 - Margaret's husband

Jeannie, age 9 - Margaret's daughter

Victoria, age 6 - Margaret's daughter

Benjamin, age 20 months - Margaret's son

Valerie, homemaker, age 33 - daughter

Kurt, maker of dental appliances, age 40 - Valerie's husband

Amanda, age 10 - Valerie's daughter

Max, age 2 - Valerie's son

Beth, college student and bank employee, age 27 - daughter

Jim, lobbyist, age 27 - Beth's husband

APPENDIX D

TABLE 1

**Descriptors Used By The HIGGINS Family Regarding
Each Family Member Before And After Recovery**

<u>FAMILY MEMBER</u>	<u>BEFORE</u>	<u>AFTER</u>
LORRAINE (recover- ing alco- holic)	sick, depressed, suicidal, non-functioning, afraid to be alone, desperate, withdrawn, unable to concentrate, miserable, dependent, afraid of people, very inadequate, afflicted with bizarre thoughts, suffering from depression, a cross- addicted alcoholic, had a bipolar affective disorder, had nose-dive depressions, had an illness, hypoglycemic, experienced a negative personality change when she drank, felt lousy, had a chemical imbalance, shy, dependent, passive, hostile, resentful, vicious, violent, unhappy.	confident, getting her act together, more animated, no longer depressed, more comfortable around people, more compassionate, happier, easier to live with, more accepting, talkative, more outgoing, reliable, trustworthy.
MARC (husband)	dominant, controlling, outgoing, responsible, covered up for Lorraine, source of comfort and hope, couldn't discuss his problems or feelings, supportive, encouraging, unself-centered, uncritical, non-judgmental, kind, took care of Lorraine, loyal, like a parent, unhappy, frustrated, full of dread, despairing, loving, patient, scapegoat to Lorraine's family.	domineering, condescending, sometimes speaks in a nasty tone of voice, happier, insightful, boring guy, lacked spontaneity, creature of habit, outgoing friendly, not self- centered, kind, dominant, controlling, more angry, less encouraging, more critical, has drinking problem, savior to Lorraine's family.

TABLE 2

**Descriptors Used By The EHRLICH Family Regarding
Each Family Member Before And After Recovery**

<u>FAMILY MEMBER</u>	<u>BEFORE</u>	<u>AFTER</u>
BARBARA (recover- ing alco- holic)	aggressive, controlling, loud, boastful, opinionated, angry, stubborn, negative, demanding, argumentative, perfectionistic, self- righteous, defensive, subject to emotional highs and lows, had grandiose dreams, victim, overworked, unfulfilled, unhappy, out of touch with her emotions, blaming, felt she had no choices.	no longer a perfectionist, more accepting, supportive, encouraging, happy, more realistic, comfortable, less aggressive, less forceful, more flexible, assertive, controlling, intelligent, interesting, funny, lively, outgoing, accepting, open-minded, spiritual, has choices, is able to cope, healthier, more energetic, relaxed, and approachable.
GEORGE (husband)	quiet, passive, non- argumentative, dyslexic, non-controlling, easygoing, acquiescent, supportive, non-confrontational, held in his feelings.	admired, reliable, quiet, strict disciplinarian, less passive, more likely to speak his mind, good man, very supportive, dyslexic, helpful, introverted, not very talkative, cautious, trustworthy, accepting, respected, able to express feelings, more assertive.
CHRISTINE (before age four) (daugh- ter)	maternal, protective.	(from age four to age ten) protective, trustworthy, reliable, more independent, strong-willed, smart, quiet, beautiful, respectful, cooperative.
JEFFREY (son)	(before age two) prone to tremendous temper tantrums.	(from age two to age eight) angry, crazy, frustrated, dyslexic, manipulative, more independent, stubborn, has a learning disability, strong-willed, not too reliable, verbal about his feelings, crazy about his father, has memory deficit, explodes when upset, gets alot of attention.

TABLE 3

**Descriptors Used By The NEILSEN Family Regarding
Each Family Member Before And After Recovery**

<u>FAMILY MEMBER</u>	<u>BEFORE</u>	<u>AFTER</u>
JOAN (recover- ing alco- holic)	felt stuck, debilitated, down and out, felt terrible, sick, in pain, out of it, crapped out [sic], useless, hit bottom, crazy, nuts, fog-bound, bad guy, frazzled, isolated, passed out, overwhelmed, not functioning, violent, insulting, hostile, accepting, enraged, pariah, outcast, complainer, alienated, tolerant, resentful, angry, genuine, disgusted, erratic, self- down righteous, a bitch on her walls, wheels, very formidable, emotionally ashamed, embarrassing, strong, neglectful, cranky, not up, nice, vicious, understanding, inconsistent, defensive, selfless, unmotivated, violent, trustworthy, nasty, arrogant, 'Dr. responsible, Jekyll & Mr Hyde', picky, defender, coddler, obsessive, protector, dependent, mean. sometimes	sober, feels good, not so tired, able to enjoy life, has been feeling better, has been coping well, learned to survive, competent, has enormous capacity to get things done, hopeful, no longer violent, forgiving, accepting, relaxed, more communicative, concerned, adjusted, breaking down her walls, intellectually curious, strong, passionate, lovable, speaks up, understanding, selfless, trustworthy, responsible, picky, obsessive, sometimes bitchy, critical, has options, independent, does her own thing, striver, strong-willed, takes initiative, assertive, is not a 'nice little girl', has a lot of freedom, doesn't feel trapped, has been supporting herself, protector, coddler, 'goody two shoes', peacemaker, recovering alcoholic.
FRANK (husband)	capable, supportive, decent, very intelligent, community leader, success- oriented, depreciating, patronizing, dominating, responsible, martyr, felt sorry for himself, made sacrifices, Joan's blaming post, self-righteous, workaholic,	supportive, doesn't complain, great problem solver, well organized, responsible, has a good deciphering mind, objective, admired, professional, intelligent, fiscally cautious, 'duck-out

domineering, angry, artist', narcissistic, has frustrated, hostile, edgy, a big shield around him, embarrassed, obsessive-hard to get close to, compulsive, enraged, insensitive, emotionally bitter, scared, nosy, aloof, non-communicative, suspicious, irritable, drinks, overeats, gambles. impatient, insensitive, withdrawn emotionally, 'duck-out artist', workaholic, not easy to get close to, free agent, had bachelor lifestyle, loner, not in touch with emotions, unable to express feelings.

PAUL
(son)

(before age seventeen) drifter, conniver, bonehead, rebellious, poor student, angry, scapegoat, screw-up, wild, a big tease, jack ass, unreliable, troublesome, frustrated, gullible, acting out, procrastinator, easily influenced, overwhelmed, mean, thief, drug and alcohol abuser, very hurt, crazy, inconsiderate, unmotivated, the bad one, a 'curtain crawler', hot-headed, lacked drive and ambition, punk, hyperactive, outcast, had a bad temper, illogical, lacked initiative, misbehaved, did dumb things, lazy, 'duck-out artist', couldn't cope.	(from age seventeen to age twenty-four) straightened out, faced reality, has been self-sufficient, in control of his life, living on his own, more mature and responsible, pulling himself together, not causing problems, mechanically gifted, a good guy, nice person, sweet, kind, sensitive, bright, insightful, early stage alcoholic, unreliable, prone to exaggerate, a maverick, hot-head, has low self-worth, has financial problems, spends too much money, more approachable, easier to talk to, less family-oriented than siblings.

FRANKIE
(son)

(before age sixteen) coverup 'goody two shoes', quiet, very bright, had high I.Q., apple of his father's eye, big help around the house, obsessive, level-headed, perfectionist, worked hard, wasn't lazy, goody-goody, reasonable, easygoing.	(from age sixteen to age twenty-three) successful, intelligent, hard-driven, goal-oriented, achievement-oriented, productive, hard working, reliable, motivated, stable, consistent, cautious, sensitive, perceptive, enthusiastic, generous, a good, serious student, like 'Walter Mitty', would like to be

famous, driving ambition, compulsive, meticulous, impatient, stubborn, perfectionist, workaholic, some low self-esteem.

KAREN (daughter)	(before age fifteen) hurt, embarrassed, afraid, manipulator, mediator, upset, discouraged, chubby, the ugly duckling, fearful, hopeless, unattractive, angry, ashamed, unhappy, anxiety-ridden, introverted, baffled, poor student, overwhelmed, scared, unpopular, lacked confidence, lost childhood, no motivation or goals, took alot of abuse, overweight, had frizzy hair and coke bottle glasses.	(from age fifteen to age twenty-two) more optimistic, calmed down, came into her own, self actualized, hopeful, more confident, motivated, growing, sensitive, honest, intelligent, friendly, reasonable, empathetic, self-aware, manipulator, craves attention.

TERESA (daughter)	(before age thirteen) 'duck-out artist', not interested in school, had trouble making friends, aloof, stand-offish, distant, alone, moody, baffled, timid, discouraged, self-doubting, had no opinion or direction, experienced quiet rebellion, lost in the crowd, went with the flow but did her own thing.	(from age thirteen to age twenty) blossomed, made friends, became extremely social and popular, especially with boys, finally has goals, started to connect with others, can express herself, believes in herself, very pretty, a beautiful girl, has Greek goddess looks, loves to party, is wild in bars where she dances the night away, emotionally apart, loner, not as much of a 'duck-out artist', difficult to talk to, maverick, non-conformist, moody, selfish, defensive, irresponsible, insensitive, impatient, phony, cold, volatile.

DONNA (daughter)	(before age twelve) angry, baffled, discouraged, joker, kidder, mascot, cute, escaped in her school work, studied	(from age twelve to age nineteen) good sense of humor, less of a joker and mascot, more serious, less likely to

hard, did well in school, hide her true feelings
buddy to her mother. behind a smile, her
mother's buddy, quick,
capable, reliable, very
intelligent, loyal,
energetic, goody-goody,
very good student.

TABLE 4

**Descriptors Used By The DOLAN Family Regarding
Each Family Member Before And After Recovery**

<u>FAMILY MEMBER</u>	<u>BEFORE</u>	<u>AFTER</u>
RITA (recover- ing alco- holic)	'Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde", no longer during sober periods she was passive, pleasant, compliant, nice, good in a crisis, used logical and sound reasoning; when drinking she was a bitch on wheels, blew apart, went crazy, overwhelmed, easily manipulated, indecisive, didn't feel worthwhile, didn't stand up for herself, let everyone walk all over her, felt like a mental pygmy, felt dominated, dishonest, phony, sneaky, inappropriate, misguided, very angry, negative, evil, secretive, undependable, erratic, cunning, nasty, manipulative, ugly, slovenly, self-centered, vicious, a mess, unpredictable, had a biting tongue, frustrated, pathetic, spiteful, envious, jealous, agitated, in pain, sick, had a disease, slept alot, was depressed, ill, helpless.	'Jekyll and Hyde', grateful, honest, reliable, bright, discerning, spiritual, positive, fascinating, courageous, wonderful, trustworthy, more aware, normal, insightful, serene, content, interesting, clear thinking, a wonderful companion, an amazing woman, a friend, happy with herself, has been growing and maturing, quiet, reserved, slow decision-maker, homebody.
JACK (husband)	warden, domineering, protective, tenacious, controller, pedantic, overbearing, rescuer, critical, manipulative, workaholic, successful, charming, talkative, outgoing, loving, wonderful, very affectionate, extremely religious, self-centered, presumptuous, shallow,	still a controller, but more passive and subtle, large presence, very verbal, more realistic, more caring, more considerate, more direct and honest, more approachable, more self-disclosing, no longer adversarial, serene, grateful, relaxed, laid back, less paternalistic,

phony, angry, harried, spiritual, religious,
 narcissistic, devious, impulsive, more of a
 mean, selfish, had erratic friend, optimistic,
 mood swings, bad temper, reliable, generous, jovial,
 hypocrite. improved attention span.

LINDA
 (daughter)

(before age thirty-five)	(from age thirty-five to age forty-two)
'policewoman', bossy, fun-loving, very social, boy crazy, jovial, just like her father, hard, outspoken, angry, domineering, bitter, controller, manipulator, perfectionist, 'hard ass', gruff, no-nonsense, hurt, protective, screaming and yelling all the time, overwhelmed, paralyzed, unlovable, naive, frustrated, screaming on the inside, wanted desperately to please others, obsessive, meticulous housekeeper, had impossible expectations of herself.	loud, forceful, bossy, strident, strong, reliable, still angry, active, dynamic, perfectionist, vulnerable, open, smart, stressed, hurting, fun-loving, spunky, generous, loving, outgoing, talkative, metamorphic, sensitive, more accepting, searching, freer, honest, spiritual, reborn, religious, unpretentious, real, more relaxed, pretty content, has softened, is less fearful.

STEVEN
 (son)

(before age thirty-four)	(from age thirty-four to age forty-one)
angry, rebellious, hurt, sensitive, loving, sweet, considerate, fearful, depressed, confused, bitter, had difficulty coping, aloof, quiet, laid back, cautious, private, modest, hiding, sneaky, a phantom, would go with the flow, cool, did not have any major expectations of his family, isolated, withdrawn.	strong sense of family, sweet, caring, loving, honest, forthright, special, dependable, considerate, supportive, trustworthy, loyal, generous, accepting, reliable, has a big heart, fearful, anxious, lacking in ambition, depressed, not too talkative, says what's on his mind, not too introspective, complainer, blames external situations and other people for his problems, bouts of depression, stuck, early stage alcoholic.

MATTHEW
 (son)

(before age thirty)	(from age thirty to age thirty-seven)
holy terror, destructive, intense, hyperactive, very	

angry, accident-prone, pulled himself together, self-destructive, not a great object of worry disruptive, noisy, in anymore, happier, loving, trouble, had learning caring, has made progress, disabilities, was a poor trustworthy, more reliable, student, annoying, concerned, fun, has good obstreperous, loud, intentions, family-raucous, obnoxious, oriented, more mature, defensive, always in settled down, no longer so trouble, unreliable, nuts, angry, very funny, violent, scary, abusive, gregarious, outgoing, a quite a handful, volatile, neat person, not as difficult, explosive, intense, no longer self-aggressive, intolerant, destructive, has led a agitator, raised hell, was charmed life, has an constantly criticized, enormous heart, is unable deeply hurt, resentful, to be articulate about his sensitive, emotional, family, sometimes drinks idolized his mother too much, bull-shit artist, desperate for love and receives the most criticism approval, buried hurt in the family. feelings.

MARGARET (daughter)	(before age twenty-eight) uncompetitive, lost, ignored, pliable, shy, sad, hid her feelings, hurt, angry, resentful, bitter, whiner, manipulator, nurturing, capable, bossy, dependable, caretaker, bulwark, people-pleaser, glue that held the family together, her father's strong right arm, Matt's personal punching bag, tolerated Matt's abuse, never fought back, pessimistic, complainer.	(from age twenty-eight to age thirty-five) nice person, good natured, an overeater, more direct, more honest, devoted to her family, resilient, amazing, supportive, very loyal, reliable, sometimes financially responsible, manipulative, good sense of humor, earthy, sometimes resentful, has learned to stand up for herself, whiner, feelings are hurt quite easily, harbors hidden resentment, avoids bringing up the past, has not gotten over her extreme sensitivity to criticism & disapproval, somewhat more open about her feelings, but keeps alot to herself.
VALERIE (daughter)	(before age twenty-six) loving, caring, generous, attached to her mother, resentful, intensely angry, confrontational,	(from age twenty-six to age thirty-three) health conscious, content, vegetarian, spiritual, strong, determined,

aggressive, mercurial, happier, better adjusted, unpredictable, highly not as fanatical, very competitive, volatile, bright, reliable, coping, combative, pugnacious, charming, admired, fine, no jealous, active, crisis- longer desperate, oriented, sometimes interesting, growing, violent, stood up to Matt, comfortable with herself, started fights, fearless, has an off the wall sense honest, independent, very of humor, detached, enigma, courageous, very smart, lonely, self-centered, brave, very bright, homesick, misses her depressed, reclusive, sad, family. withdrawn, quiet, deeply troubled, self-centered, kept to herself, lived under a dark cloud, hid from her family, desperately needed love and attention, weird, vegetarian, hippie-like, had long frizzy unruly hair, wore hippie clothes, wore no make-up, drank a lot, used drugs, was promiscuous, got good grades, became health conscious.

BETH
(daughter)

(before age twenty) sweet, loving, emotional, needed approval, kind, considerate, expressive, fragile, well-behaved, dependent, cute little kid, tried to please everyone, crazy about her mother, followed her around, felt like a ping pong ball between her parents, always tried to fix what was wrong with her family, very unhappy, depressed, strung out, angry, confused, disappointed, upset, lonely, a basket case inside, volatile, mercurial, blew like a top when angry, boy crazy, desperately sought attention, affirmation, and approval, sometimes acted like a dumb blonde.	(from age twenty to age twenty-seven) accepting, comfortable, mature, religious, bright, spiritual, grown-up, caring, sensitive, loving, courageous, reliable, giving, growing, lovely, nice, smart, considerate, positive, trustworthy, achievement-oriented, content, strong-willed, honest, candid, assertive, self-reliant, higher self-esteem, has great ideals and expectations, has a mind of her own, no longer please everybody or fix problems, has tried to be honest with herself about her feelings, has tried to set boundaries and limits with other family members.

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