

I had to clean floors and dreamed of drinking

"Frau Anders", said the doctor, "You are imprisoning yourself! Otherwise you'; be done for. You have to go through a very hard rehab in a closed psychiatric hospital. It's quite near Wasserburg am Inn."

I shut myself in there myself. Huge halls in which up to 40 patients lay — schizophrenics, people with paranoia, very neurotic people, everything crazy.

They took everything from me, even cigarettes. At the time, I smoked up to 60 a day. They searched me for knives, scissors, nail files.

The windows were sealed, the doors locked. Even the latches were mounted in such a way — downwards — that you could not hang yourself on them.

I lay in a hall with three dozen patients. They spoke loudly, fantasized. I myself waited for the terrible "film" that ran every three hours before my eyes: I saw gruesome grimaces. Animals crawled over my body.

You were tied to the bed

I can't describe that any further. It is probably worse than dying. I will never let it come to that again.

The "film" came back with devilish punctuality every three hours.

In mortal fear, I thought only: sit tight, sit tight, sit tight. With each passing day, it gets less ... Alcohol is worse than cyanide.

They kept coming back, these grimaces and animals.

I screamed, bathed in sweat, thrashed around in unspeakable fear. **They strapped me to the bed.**

It was a horrible time, they brutally attacked me. I will never drink a drop of alcohol again because I could not go through such a withdrawal again.

Barely drunk outside again

I had to get up at six o'clock in the morning and clean floors. Only then did I get breakfast. I had to scrub the sooty pots of the kitchen, remove food residues.

In the beginning it was particularly difficult because I could hardly eat anything.

I shook so much that I could not hold the fork.

In order to get through the physical withdrawal, I was given many medications — and became addicted to tablets.

I had gone cold turkey.

After two months, things were getting better. I was given a room with two beds. Fourteen days later, occupational therapy began — crocheting, knotting, very simple things.

When I was discharged, my mother picked me up and drove me to Tegernsee. There I saw a bottle of sparkling wine. I drank it immediately. And took tablets. Everything was as it was before. I took myself back to the hospital the same day.

Helga Anders: Love-tell me where you are

Written by ROBERT MENKE

Now, finally, I was ready to go all the way. I agreed to long-term therapy: for six months in Furth im Wald on the Bavarian-Czech border, in a sanatorium of the Max Planck Institute of Psychiatry.

Low, modern buildings, bright, friendly, a large canteen, an entire wing with therapy rooms for pottery and carpentry.

I gained six kilos with psychotropic drugs. I got a skin allergy, was suddenly covered in pimples and had a swollen face. It was as if all the evil was coming out of me.

Mother's death—a severe blow

Johannes Mario Simmel wrote me a letter. I did not know the famous writer personally. He told me how bad his alcohol dependence had been. That he had crawled on all fours, just to get a drop of alcohol. "Hang in there!" he wrote. *I'll keep my fingers crossed for you.*

I thought that was really lovely.

That was now my life: a lot of sports, swimming, gymnastics, running in the forest — since then I have been a passionate jogger.

My problem was that I had focused on other people all my life. I had to learn to lead my life on my own responsibility. I had to find out what was important to me.

We did self-confidence training — because alcoholics lose their self-confidence and their self-esteem.

We learned not to have love affairs with doctors or other patients. That, too, would have been only an escape from one's own problems.

My mother visited me often. She also brought Leslie.

They were both convinced: Helga doesn't drink anymore, she can do it.

But my mother also once said: "I will not be around for when Helga gets out in the spring."



Helga Anders today, photographed by her divorced husband Roger Fritz. She continues to have contact with him.

Gymnasiums, a swimming pool, a wing with many small apartments. Here was where I was to finally start my new life.

All this was overshadowed by the fear for my mother's health; she had suffered her second heart attack.

Here in Furth im Wald, I no longer had any horrible visions; the physical withdrawal was done. But I dreamed of lush pieces of cake — typical of alcoholics in withdrawal. The cravings for sweets are enormous. And I dreamed of drinking, that I travel and

On 08 December, 1978, she packed her bags to visit me. While loading the suitcases, she fell down next to her car and died ...

For me, this was a shock. For three days, I wrote down everything that I knew to be beautiful and good about my mother.

Tomorrow you will read:

Helga Anders doesn't drink anymore. But sometimes she has delusions, thinks she is Hitler's daughter, feels disgusted.