

# Mutual Respect

*by* Angela Kubinec

Melody's husband, Jim, has broken four chairs by sitting in them. Two chairs were in a restaurant, which holds a special irony. She envisions similar future embarrassments. Melody consoles herself with the fact that he is too small for the circus, the toilet has not yet broken, and she is an expert stain remover. Al-Anon principles rule her life, and she is able to see that his illness is one for which his desire to change is the only pathway to a cure. Her friends marvel at her ability to separate herself from his behavior, and her restraint from talking about his plight.

Jim's wife Melody was out of work on sick leave for six weeks, prior to being determined disabled, in an effort to stabilize her delusional behavior. Her psychiatric relapses have occurred frequently in the past. She was arrested once in a disturbance over a parking space, and he does most of the shopping now. He sees her unpredictability as a symptom rather than a weakness, and accepts that medication is not always effective. His friends respect the way he is gentle with her, while not making excuses for her. Jim is not secretive, but he discusses her problems with a quiet objectivity, only when absolutely necessary.

But recently, in an uncharacteristic argument, Jim told Melody he was sick of her attitude. Melody told Jim she was tired of being embarrassed by his appearance. Then, relieved to have cleared the air, they peacefully returned their way of living.

