



# From Harvard to Hell...and Back: A Doctor's Journey through Addiction to Recovery

By Sylvester Sviokla III, Kerry Zukus

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Dr. Sylvester "Skip" Sviokla lived life as a successful, driven, athletic, and brilliant graduate of Harvard Medical School, reveling in wealth and glamour as a "celebrity doctor" until addiction brought his life crashing down. This real-life "Dr. House" had it all (he thought) until addiction took everything. Miraculously, recovery gave him back his family, his self-respect, and much more.

The media is filled with celebrity addiction stories, so people will be drawn to the author's experience as a "doctor to the stars." Having attended the most famous university and medical school in the world, Dr. Sviokla's story will also be relevant to a larger audience, including medical professionals and those seeking answers about addiction.

**Sylvester "Skip" Sviokla III, MD**, is a 1967 graduate of Harvard College (where he was a two-year starter on the football team, culminating in his receiving one vote for the 1966 Heisman Trophy and an offer to try out for the Chicago Bears) and a 1972 graduate of Harvard Medical School. He was owner and medical director of Skip Sviokla Entertainment Medicine, Inc. and of Medical Weight Management, Inc., in Massachusetts.

**Kerry Zukus** is an alumnus of Berklee College of Music in Boston, where he studied composition and arranging while appearing as an actor in theaters all over New England.

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Sviokla, a recovered drug addict and alcoholic, today runs a successful clinic specializing in treating medical personnel with addiction issues. Here, Sviokla replays his early life, from Harvard College football player to his residency at UCSD's hospital, where he chose surgery as his focus and first began to show addictive symptoms. Shortly thereafter, he suffered an accident that ended his prospects as a surgeon, and a failed business venture led to heavy drinking and using pills. The loss of his medical license sparked a downward spiral into depression and poverty during which Sviokla took a series of low-paying jobs and turned to alcohol to numb the pain and embarrassment. He made half-hearted attempts at recovery, even checking into a psych ward, before finally arriving at a "moment of clarity" that led to true sobriety. Following a battle with bureaucracy in California, Sviokla found the Rhode Island Medical Board more receptive to reinstating his license and decided he "wanted to give something back to the world." The result is his current practice, Medical Assisted Recovery. Sviokla demonstrates bravery in this confessional account of his addiction and recovery.

### About the Author

Sylvester Sviokla, III: Dr. Sylvester "Skip" Sviokla III is a 1967 graduate of Harvard College (where he was a two-year starter on the football team, culminating in his receiving one vote for the 1966 Heisman Trophy and an offer to try out for the Chicago Bears) and a 1972 graduate of Harvard Medical School. He was owner and medical director of Skip Sviokla Entertainment Medicine, Inc. and of Medical Weight Management, Inc., in Massachusetts. Additionally, he has served as an emergency room director, a chief of occupational medicine, and a vice-president of outpatient services in a number of hospitals.

In more recent years, since his struggle with substance abuse and the loss and eventual reinstatement of his medical license, he has received certification from the American Society of Addiction Medicine, and is a Diplomate of the American Board of Addiction Medicine. He is a staff orientation speaker for Rhode Island Hospital, where he talks to incoming physicians about the perils of substance abuse and addiction in the medical community. He is the medical director of several methadone clinics in Rhode Island and co-owns a substance abuse clinic dedicated to helping others get well and reclaim their lives.

He is the proud husband of Maurine and the father of daughters Katherine, twin daughters Nicole and Amanda, and son Chip (aka Sylvester Sviokla IV). He is also the gratified grandpa to seven wonderful grandchildren who love him dearly and have never seen him impaired.

Kerry Zukus: Kerry Zukus' debut novel, *The Fourth House* (2007), was a Featured Selection of the Book of the Month Club, the Doubleday Book Club, and the Literary Guild, divisions of Random House/Doubleday Entertainment, where it sold out its first two printings. *The Fourth House* was named a finalist for the prestigious James Jones Award, given annually to the best first novel by an American author.

Kerry is an alumnus of Berklee College of Music in Boston, where he studied composition and arranging while appearing as an actor in theaters all over New England. He is also the co-author of Paul Rusesabagina: Hollywood's Make-Believe Hero, with Edouard Kayihura, a memoir and critical deconstruction of the heralded Hollywood movie *Hotel Rwanda*.

He lives in Little Silver, New Jersey.

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