

OLD AND POOR: Old Men On Skid Row

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Abstract

This thesis is to a large degree an ethnology. The focus of the endeavour is a collection of poor old men in Lake City. I wanted to first of all discover who some of the old poor people were. Once this was accomplished, my concern was with a series of questions about themselves and their everyday life.

On searching both the gerontological and poverty literature, I have found there to be little existing material relating to the situation of the very poor aged. Throughout the thesis I have used the literature to support my case, and as well, by pointing out it's narrow scope have placed my work in contrast to it.

Insofar as I had to first find my desired respondents, and then observe as well as talk with them, I have used a participant observation methodology to collect data. The study has been divided into four sections which can be characterized as: setting the scene, discovering the origins of the men, describing their contemporary situation, and the conclusions.

In the process of setting the scene, I found their everyday activity to be limited to sitting in their room, a public park, or a public room. Where they do their sitting depends, to a large degree, on the weather at any given moment.

The background of these old men has its roots in the depression years when many of them were hobos. While some of the men worked steadily subsequent to the "Dirty Thirties", many did not, and have

been on and off pensions of various sorts for a number of years.

A little less than 50% of the men have ever been married, and not one of them presently enjoys a significant relationship with a women. They do not see their estranged wives, and rarely visit with children. Unlike many aged people who develop new friendships in old age after the loss of work and or marriage roles, these men have had the same friends for many years. They are now though, losing friends and therefore increasingly depend on neighbours to also be their friends. I should emphasize that they never have had a lot of friends to lose, and so are alone in their rooms for much of the time.

These rooms are single rented ones in old rundown roominghouses. The poverty of their residence is coupled with poor dress and diet. They wear old, worn, second-hand clothes, and eat a lot of canned starchy foods and day old pastry. Medical attention is only sought when they can no longer function well enough to look after everyday needs.

The men are also hesitant about using the other service facilities, administered by charitable organizations on skid row, because of the exchange relationship which exists between owner and client. A large number of the men feel the cost of a service like a mission meal for instance, is too high when they are compelled to attend a religious service prior to eating. Many of them respond by avoiding that facility whenever possible. In investigating these services I have also studied an institutional residence for poor old men. I found that while the physical facilities are for the most part good, the social life possibilities have been largely neglected.

The connection between the present circumstances of the men, and their past work and social careers is a direct one. Studies need to be undertaken to more fully reveal how this population fits into Canadian social structure.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my thanks to my supervisory committee: Dr. V.W. Marshall, Dr. W.B. Shaffir, and Dr. J.E. Smith. Dr. Marshall, as chairperson and Gerontologist, has provided me with a great deal of assistance in the areas of aging and the overall progression of my studies. He has also been a terrific morale booster whenever I have been lacking in self-confidence. To Dr. Shaffir I owe my thanks for his knowledge of the skid row and poverty literature in general, and as well for his excellent critical editing in the early drafts of this thesis. Dr. Smith is responsible for guiding me to the field research literature, and more significantly, she has assisted me considerably in organizing the thesis.

I am indebted to the old poor men of Lake City. As well as providing me with the raw data for the study, they have enabled me to gain an understanding of a way of life previously unknown to me. The staff of the Inner City Hostel have my thanks, as does the Friendly Visiting Group, for permitting me to observe and participate.

I would also like to express my thanks to Helen and my parents. They have accepted the times I have neglected them when my academic responsibilities have had to take precedence, and have given me encouragement throughout the time I have been engaged in this work.

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Part I

Setting the Scene

CHAPTER I

Introduction

This thesis is to a large degree an ethnology. The focus of the endeavour is a collection of poor old men in Lake City. I wanted to find out, by way of my own observation and information given to me by the men, who some of the old and poor people in the city were. Once this was established my concern was with a series of questions I hoped would give me a broad insight into what life is like for such a person. Where do they live? How well are they able to provide the other comforts for themselves, like food and clothing for instance? How do they spend their time? Of what nature are their relationships with family and friends? The quality of their lives and the everyday realities of it, I believe are revealed in the following chapters.

The specifics of their age, poverty and other characteristics were, to some extent, originally defined before the research began. As it developed, the realities of the people and their environment to be discussed necessitated some changes in my original ground rules. In actual fact then, who are the poor old people and where did they live in Lake City?

I initially intended to study the aged poor. They were to be male and female, age 65 and over, and dependent solely on the Old Age Security pension. For a number of reasons outlined in the methodology chapter, the women were dropped. I began by taking a walk with my committee chairperson through a neighbourhood we both knew to be old and rundown. In that short walk we saw numerous old people who by

outward appearance gave the impression of being poor. The mission I established contact with was on the next block over.

When I began to talk to the men I found some who seemed old, but who turned out to be in their fifties once I had come to know them a little. Originally, while including them in the research, they were separated in my writing and thinking from those over 65 years of age. I later decided this was an artificial and arbitrary division unsubstantiated by the facts of the situation. These "younger" men share the same social and economic characteristics common to the older men. Their only fundamental difference is age and some dissimilarity by degree, with respect to friendship patterns for instance. This age gap is in most cases less than ten years, and nothing came to light during the year of data collection to suggest these men will be markedly different in eight to ten years, except older. They were therefore incorporated and my age parameter came to be any man fitting the social and economic criteria over the age of fifty. Nevertheless, those between 50-64 only accounted for approximately 20% of the sample and played somewhat secondary roles to the older and larger group.

Economically speaking, the criterion was modified from the original premise to include men not on Old Age Security, most obviously those under 65. In terms of creating a socio-economic type I determined that whatever the source of their income it should not exceed \$200.00 per month. The largest Old Age Security pension at that time had a net worth of \$179.14 per month. The younger men on welfare, disability and army pensions consistently had monthly incomes of less than this. A characteristic of all the men was the fact that they were receiving some form of assistance.

Although not a restriction placed on the research by me, none of the men are living with women under any sort of relationship. The men of this thesis are poor, old, and socially marginal. I mean this in the sense that they are consumers solely, and are not producers of any commodity other than providing a clientele for social service agencies. In the latter context they could be said to represent a positive function of poverty.

The older men are once further removed from society's mainstream in that they have given up, voluntarily or otherwise, their skid row roles too, even though they continue to live there. This is one of the reasons there is so little research material applicable to them. The skid row literature, although used in this thesis at times as supportive evidence and at other junctures as a source of comparison, pertains primarily to men between 20-60 years of age. These are the men who still work irregularly as casual labour, and are prone to typically skid row phenomena as for instance forming "bottle gangs" to collect enough money for a cheap bottle of wine. The older men no longer drink as much, and when they do indulge, it is usually with their own money and done individually.

The aged indigents in this study do not work at all, and did not in many cases work steadily when they were younger. As a result they did not acquire the material benefits that even steadily employed blue collar workers normally do, i.e. a house and a car. Consequently these men did not "retire" at the age of 65 either. It is for these reasons that much of the current gerontological literature is not particularly applicable. For the most part the latter concerns itself with

problems which are at least in part created by retirement. Issues like: work role loss, decreased income, bereavement over loss of spouse, relations with children etc., capture most of the gerontological interest. These are not features which I observed in my Lake City sample. Therefore, while gerontological literature was utilized in areas like friendship, and comparatively in other areas, it too has not been of great utility to me.

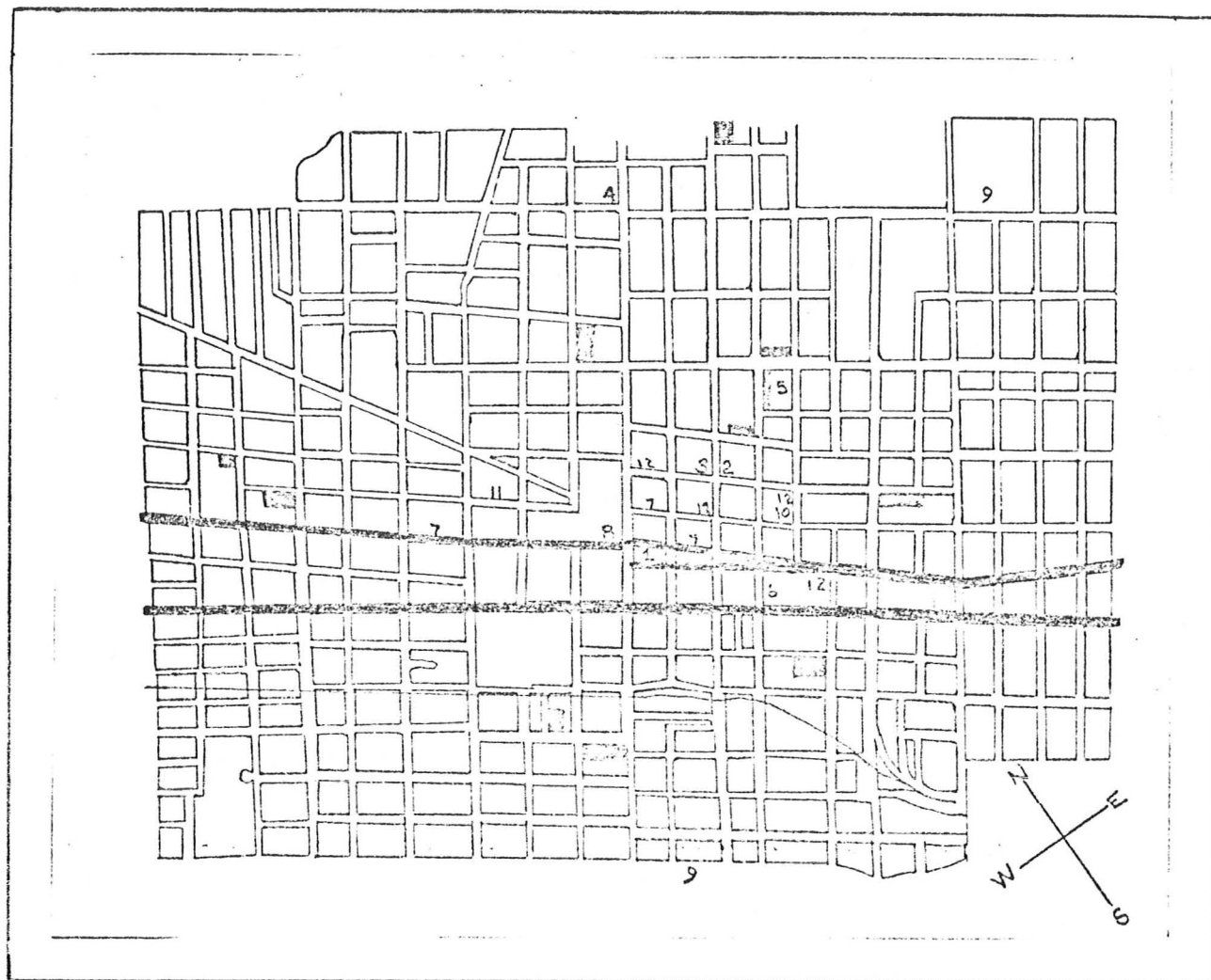
My initial contact with the men came via my presence at a local mission. This combination "soup kitchen"/permanent residence for aged poor men is in the heart of the downtown area. It is located a comfortable three blocks north of the commercial/retail district, and is characteristic of the residential relation of most of the men to the city. One of the first men I met lives one block south of the retail "strip". Others live two blocks north, five blocks north, three blocks south, and a few have rooms as far as ten blocks west of the downtown centre. Generally, the aged poor (and in fact the poor of any age to some extent) live in close proximity north or south but outside of the retail east/west centre. (See Map 1.)

Lake City is not a small town as it may seem at this point. It is a medium size city of approximately 300,000 population. As one might expect there is certainly more than one retail street, and yet there is one predominant street and an auxiliary artery one block south. These two streets run parallel to each other in an east/west direction right through the core of the city and are to some degree a rough halfway point throughout the city. It is likely that much of the city developed outward from these two major arteries. Consequently, the buildings

on these two streets, in their downtown portions, also constitute some of the oldest structures still standing. Similarly the downtown area to either side of these twin centres for a distance of approximately three-quarters of a mile to the south, and a mile and a half to the north, dates back in many instances to the turn of this century and earlier in some cases. As in all cities, buildings are continually being razed so the space they occupied can be built upon anew. These new buildings, I feel it essential to note, are not the residences or recreation areas of the city's aged poor.

The old men of Lake City inhabit the old areas because they are also the cheapest. Their homes are rented rooms in what were once private homes. These houses they live in are, in practically every case, soot blackened brick structures built in the first decade or so of this century. As these homes are gradually being sold by absentee landlords, torn down, and replaced by new hi-rise complexes, the men move to other old houses where the rents are low until they too fall victim to the wrecker's hammer.

Why do these people live in these very old homes which can be and are sold out from under them regularly? As previously mentioned, the rented rooms are relatively cheap. In 1973 when the research for this thesis was carried out, a ten by ten foot room with a bathroom down the hall could be rented for between \$50. - 60.00 a month. They are inexpensive in direct relation to their quality. Repairs are not made unless it is something absolutely essential to the house's functioning. And even these are not done immediately, but rather, eventually. One old man told me his landlord often waited until he

Area of Lake City Inhabited and Used By the Aged Poor

Key

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. The Park | 8. Shopping Mall |
| 2. Bus Terminal | 9. Hospitals used by the men |
| 3. Drop In Centre | 10. Police Station |
| 4. Mission | 11. A Mission occasionally used by the men. |
| 5. Mission (with aged residence) | 12. Some taverns favoured by the men. |
| 6. Underground Mall with Food and Licquor Stores | Parts of blocks where one or more of my subjects lived. |
| 7. Wine Stores | The two main retail streets. |

(A few men who lived in missions, & north/east of this area are not included)

could find a down-on-his-luck tradesman who would accept his offer of a week's free lodging at the house in return for making some repairs. Occurences like this explain why a large hole in this man's ceiling was not fixed for a year. Apart from the obvious cost of making repairs, the landlords are also reluctant to put any more than is required into these houses because they own them as an investment waiting to make a good return when the houses are eventually bought as part of a continuing series of urban renewal projects.

The aged indigents of Lake City who are respondents of mine, rent rooms in almost invariably rundown houses found in the downtown core. For neighbours these men have a number of possibilities. They are typically surrounded by anyone or several of: factories, garages, other rundown houses, a vacant lot recently created, missions, or an expensive restaurant in the form of a restructured old house.

While neighbours such as these are perhaps not optimal, they are the price the men willingly pay to remain within walking distance of the retail facilities. The aged poor are not in any instance the owners of motor vehicles, and in the great majority of cases rarely make use of public transit. Everything they need (and can afford) is within walking range. In between the two major commercial arteries, and only a block long, there is a small park with benches around the edge. From all directions in the warm weather the men make their way practically every morning to the park. It is here they spend most of their day watching the working population rush past them.

The park is where, as well as watching others, they can meet their friends, make arrangements for cashing post dated cheques,

acquire clothing, or buy a newspaper. It is the summertime centre for getting things set up and done.

Sometimes they go to one of the local taverns for a beer, and a few times a week most of the men make the trip to the local food store. These aged poor never produce along this commercial strip; they consume. For the men who go to the missions to eat, it is necessary to leave the commercial core and walk three blocks over. Once again they are back in the world of rundown neighbourhoods and this is where the charity organizations have established their operations.

When the weather turns cold the men are still within walking distance of the places and services essential to them. (See Maps 1. & 2.) Winter makes indoor activity desirable, and no facilities catering to the indigent can afford to establish themselves on the commercial main street. During the cold periods the men essentially only enter the area between the two main arteries on their way to some facility on the other side. As well as the two official missions there are two "para" missions where the men may go for a change of scenery from their rooms and stay warm at the same time. One of these is the city bus terminal and the other is a multi-social service sponsored drop-in centre for skid rowers.

Given these preliminaries, I hope to have made clear the nature of the men and the environment to be discussed in this thesis. To avoid the danger of presenting a seemingly jumbled and disjointed evaluation of the subjects and their everyday lives, I have created a series of short biographical sketches of a little less than half of my

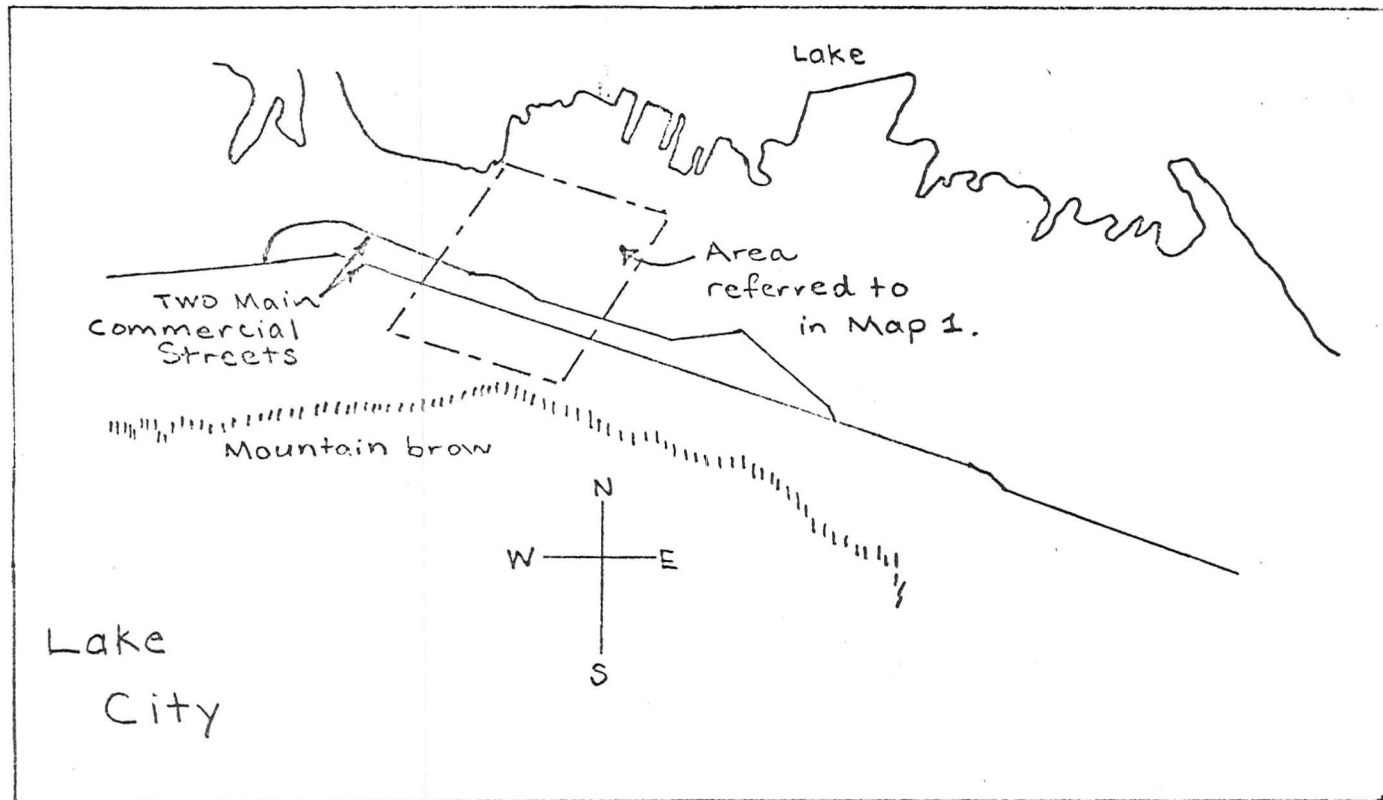
sample in which are included my principal informants. These are some of the poor old men in Lake City.

Jim Sanderson

Jim is a 78 year old man who though once married, lives alone in a rented room. Originally from Sarnia, his early adult life took place in Detroit where he went to work for Ford after serving part of World War I in the American armed forces. From this time through to about 1930 Jim worked the winters at Ford as a drill press operator, and in the summer boarded the Great Lake freighters as a sailor and at his peak, as a mate.

Life changed for Jim during the depression. His first love, the lake boats, provided only infrequent work at about one-third the wages he had been earning in the late 1920's. Without work on the lakes, he spent most of the ten summers between 1930-1940, working as a fruit picker just east of Lake City. These were also the first days to my knowledge, that he joined the hobo-wino-skid row-crowd. While he may have had some work at Ford during these years, it is improbable that it amounted to much because as young and seasonal labour he would be one of the first to be laid off.

Lake City had been Jim's home ever since (approximately), 1930. He continued to work the boats after the "dirty thirties" for about another ten years, but for the most part since 1950 he has been a skid rower who worked irregularly as a dock labourer. Jim never mentions his wife, and the only other relative he has ever been close to, a brother, died four years ago. Nevertheless, he has a handful of good friends, and



Map 2

This is a map showing the overall Lake City area, including the downtown section which consitiutes Map I. With the exception of the lake in the north, the city extends to each of the other three map perimeters.

many acquaintances. All of these are relationships developed as a skid rower in "bottle gangs", the orchards, on the docks, and in the parks.

Jim leaves his room everyday and in the warm weather goes to the park for a couple of hours where he alternately sits and talks to passing by friends and acquaintances. He is no longer a drunk although when he gets "melancholy" (about half a dozen times a year), he will go on a week long drunk alone, or with a friend called Jay who rents another room in the same house. When winter denies Jim the park, he spends the great majority of his time in the house alone, or talking to Jay, and the occasional visitor.

John Farrow

John is in his early seventies. Consistent with the rest of my aged sample he had been separated from his wife and in his case, since the mid-depression years when he was working picking fruit and drinking wine with friends like Jim Sanderson. In the summer of 1973 he filed for divorce and used Jim as a character witness. He has a small apartment in a building for the aged and spends his time walking in the park, and working with Alcoholics Anonymous.

Tony Walker

He is living in one of the missions and was placed there by a hospital social worker. He has been admitted to the latter suffering from malnutrition. Tony is a chronic alcoholic, in his 60's, and

has had professional treatment for emotional problems. Tony's estranged wife refuses to have any contact with him whatsoever. He stays inside a great deal of the time and has little to do with his cousin Reg Farley, or an old drinking friend, Jim Sanderson.

Reg Farley

Reg was a bricklayer, and one who by his account, managed to get work through most of the depression as a contractor. When at times he couldn't get work on his own Reg was able to get jobs as an employee on large construction sites. Approximately twenty years ago his wife died and according to Reg, it was the beginning of the end. He is 74 and has not worked regularly since his wife's death, and for the most part he has been drinking ever since.

Reg has a brother whom he virtually never sees, and as mentioned above, a cousin Tony Walker who lives in the same mission residence although they hardly speak to each other. In the days when he could walk unaided by a cane and was drinking more, he was a friend of Jim Sanderson. If Reg saw any of his old friends during the time I knew him it only occurred when he journeyed to the tavern. His days are spent in large part reading paperback westerns and watching T.V. He only goes out when he wants a beer, and he goes out alone.

George Vale

George said he avoided going to the labour camps during the depression because he was fortunate enough to get a job in an iron

foundry in Galt. This was when he was in his mid-teens and at 58 he has really worked at nothing else except iron. Three years ago he was employed in a Lake City foundry and doing heavy work until stricken by a stroke.

He has not worked since. George had been a heavy drinker before the stroke and has continued to be one after. He receives welfare and can not get a disability pension because the authorities say he could be rehabilitated someday. George does not think the arm from the stricken side of his body will ever be strong enough to do foundry work again.

Several years ago his wife left him. He has an adult son working in a city steel mill whom he hasn't seen in more than a year. His sister in Galt he has not seen for three years, and George does not feel she would be too eager to see him again. He eats in the missions, does some drinking, and sits in the park or winter drop-in centres most of any day until it is time to return to his rented room each night. George has a few friends with whom he drinks and converses, one of whom is Sam Thorn.

Sam Thorn

Sam has been in Lake City just about all his life. He spent fifteen years each on two jobs in his most productive years. He was a shipper/receiver for a department store and a warehouse man employed by a soft drink manufacturer. As he grew older he held a couple of jobs for a little more than five years each, as a Brewer's

Retail employee and a handyman around a seminary. His most recent job was two or three years ago when at the age of about 75 he was a locker room attendant for a suburban country club.

Sam was drinking quite a bit by way of intermittent binges, which got him ejected from the last two or three residences he inhabited. Living on the Old Age Security pension, Sam moves from rented room to rented room. His wife has long since left him or died, and of his three children he is not too clear where they all are. One of them lives in Lake City but Sam hasn't seen him for what sounds like years. Similar to Leonard Barsik in this respect, Sam is in the park during the summer, the bus terminal when it is cold, and sometimes he patronizes the missions.

Leonard Barstik

Leonard, 79, came to Canada in 1923 when he was in his late 20's. A combination of sickness incurred in the plant he worked at, plus the national economic decline of the 1930's, left him without a job. By 1933 he had lost the two houses he could no longer pay the mortgages on and returned to Macedonia.

In 1940 he returned and obtained a job in a Lake City foundry where he worked 25 years before retiring. Leonard has never again owned his own home. After the years of service to the foundry he was left with about a \$500.00 pension which had been deducted from his wages to be held until retirement.

Leonard lives in one rented room and is dependent on Old Age Security. He has a bowl of soup for breakfast and for supper it is

either mission macaroni or a hamburger somewhere. Any family he may have once had is virtually nonexistent in terms of contact with Leonard.

In the summer he sits in the park all day, and in the winter Leonard moves north a few blocks to the bus terminal.

Ronnie Burns

Ron is in his mid fifties and is a former wine steward at a country club. He fell prey to spinal meningitis as a child and has had one deformed leg ever since. The other leg, in response, acquired severe arthritis in the last year or so. The doctors told him to forget about working and enjoy his disability pension, and so he too wanders around the park and the other downtown haunts of the poor.

Roy Lancet

Roy is from Nova Scotia originally, and at 65 has been in Ontario at least since the depression in the 1930's. It has been so long since he has had contact with any family, he does not remember his parents' names, and has no idea where two step siblings are. He was a freight train hobo during the depression and spent a few years in a "Royal Twenty Centre". Twelve years ago he lost a leg in an auto accident and was on a disability pension until late 1973 when he was able to transfer to the more lucrative Old Age Security. Like the others, Roy is single and rents a small room. He and another man named Wallace share food, each spending approximately \$4.00 per week to eat.

Don Sawchuk

Don came to Canada from Poland around 1920, and worked a farm until 1927 in Saskatchewan when the crops failed. For part of the depression he worked laying track for C.P.R. though he soon came east to Sudbury where a daughter lived. He is 77 and has been in Lake City in the neighbourhood of 35 years. Don has only the Old Age Security, rents a single room, and has numerous physical complaints. He sees his daughter every year or two and, confined by his arthritis, rarely sees any of his old friends. One old friend of his, Stanley Berry, died in the spring of 1973. A drinker who quit, Don rarely goes more than a block away from his room.

Stanley Berry

Stanley was in his late 70's and a very lonely frightened old man when he died. His friends were few in number and rarely saw him because neither he nor they, i.e. Don Sawchuk, went much past their own doorstep. Stanley was estranged from his wife and lived his last years very much isolated, in a rented room.

Victor Bandow

Victor, about 70, was once an employed blue collar worker labouring for the city streets department. His marriage and job collapsed, and he rents a small room by himself and sees little if any of his wife or several children. Victor too, suffers from arthritis and goes out usually only to get food or a newspaper.

The following is a list of characters not included in the biographies. While the men are very much alive and quite real, the names are entirely fictional. Any connection between parts of this thesis and existing persons bearing these names is absolutely coincidental.

<u>Aged Indigents</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Non-Aged Who Have Contact With The Aged Poor</u>
Henry Bison	70's	Brother Andrew
Frank Brown	64	Father Barnett
Vincent Carson	65-70	Sean Baylor
Peter Connors	70's	Ron Cardy
Ralph Harmer	70's	Barry Dooner
Gavin Harper	59	Bill Folkes
Greg Johnson	70's	Brother Francis
Jordan	50's	Gordon
Scott Mandel	78	Ray Gunther
Roger Masife	64	Brother Harold
Wallace Ord	70's	Gordon Jacobs
Emerson Palmer	50	Jean Merritt
Danny Porter	50's	Paul
Tom Rainer	70's	Father Robinson
Robert Seagull	67	Brother Stephen
Brian South	65	
Kim Tanner	70's	

In a very brief and rough fashion, the biographies explain who I am dealing with and begin to set the scene. The methods chapter discusses how I went about collecting data, why I did it the way I did, and how the field material was interpreted. It also describes the kinds of problems I encountered in obtaining information which were fostered by the nature of the field setting. This is given a concrete description in the everyday activity chapter which is intended to serve a dual purpose.

Activity is shown to be the substance of my data. The old men's day to day lives were the general framework from which my data were retrieved. This chapter will also round off Part I of the thesis which is to set the scene. By knowing briefly who they are, how I worked with them, and what they do with their time, it is then possible to discuss the steps which brought them to their present circumstances.

Unlike many regularly employed people whose lives change dramatically when they retire, the lives of these men to-day are very similar to what they were 5, 10, or 20 years ago. I attempt to show by way of a discussion of their careers and family development, what preluded their old age and how it shared and initiated many of the characteristics found in the men's lives now.

These origins (Part II) have, logically enough, created their contemporary selves and environment. I do not mean by this that their personal whim has been the sole determinant of their life history. In many ways structural aspects of society (as the origins section points out), have been the mould to which their selves have fitted.

For example, many of the men had a great deal of their later development framed to a large degree by their experiences in the 1930's depression. Part III, their contemporary circumstances, is discussed in three chapters dealing with the relationships between the men and their family and friends to-day, their health and other factors related to this, and the connections the old indigents have with agencies and institutions set up to work with them.

The setting, origins, and contemporary scene is then tied more closely to-gether in the conclusions where some general statements are made which project the mood and thematic base of this thesis concerning Lake City's aged poor men.

CHAPTER II

How I Collected My Data

Introduction

In this chapter it is my intention to explain the various aspects of how I collected my data. The substantive section of the chapter has been divided into four parts. I will first explain why and how I have used participant observation. Following this there will be a description of how, using this method, I made contact and developed relationships with the old men, and the staff of the agencies working with these men. A discussion of how I conceive my role as a researcher will be the transitional step from the field work to an outline of how my field notes have been organized and interpreted. The field work research commenced in January 1973, started to taper off in October 1973, and was concluded in February 1974.

These men¹ have in many cases been on pensions prior to age 65.

¹When the research began I assumed women would be included. As the work proceeded it became readily obvious that elderly women are not in abundance amongst the aged indigent of Lake City. In all the trips to the rooming houses where the men live, I saw a total of three elderly women. In the parks where I found I could talk to almost any men at least a little, conversational overtures made towards the few elderly women who came to sit were met with indifference or a refusal to speak at all. Old women who have to fend for themselves could easily be suspicious of a young man striking up a conversation with them for no apparent reason. Generally, I had "no good reason" to be their friend and this led to distrust. While the same reaction can be encountered with men, the fact that we were both of the same sex, and the manner in which we met, described later, made for easier entry into conversation. Gradually women were phased out of the objectives of the study.

Their working lives have been spotted with periods of unemployment, time spent in jail for drunkenness and vagrancy, and generally for extensive stretches of their adult life, partial or complete dependence on the various welfare authorities. The understandable result is wariness. They do not talk to just anyone; they talk to those who can provide some measure of companionship. More importantly, the downtown indigent talk voluntarily only to those who do not represent a threat either to their personal dignity or their source of income. They must be able to view me as being relatively harmless. As Brother Stephen said,

Some of these men lose their cheques to other men in their rooming houses who beat them up and steal from them.. They don't go to the police for fear of another beating. They fear everyone and trust on one. These men can count on nobody to give them a fair shake. For this reason gaining their confidence is not an overnight task.

Brian South has become a little concerned about who he talks to and where he goes shortly after cheque day because of the two times he has been robbed shortly after cashing his cheque.

Brian said that he cashed his cheque in the grocery store. "I buy some groceries and then the store takes the cheque and pays me the difference. Well I stopped at the hotel on the way home and paid for my beer with a ten dollar bill. These two fellas were sitting in the bar too I guess, saw me do it, and saw the white cane." (He was partially blind then, and still has poor eyesight after two operations for cataracts.) "After I left, and was only about a block away from the police station on King William, two guys jumped me. One held my arms from behind while the other guy emptied my pockets...I'm not sure if it was the same two guys but I was robbed another time on the way home from cashing my cheque, twice now."

Participant Observation: Why and How

Participant observation was the optimal and indeed the only feasible methodology available to me. I have used it in studying the old men for primarily four reasons. The wariness of the men, mentioned above, which stems from an outsider/insider separation, declined in direct relation to the amount of time I spent with them. These interpersonal barriers which initially were present demanded then, that I spend a great deal of time with the men. This factor of time is present in all of my reasons for using participant observation.

The question of what constitutes data is answered in the following chapter concerning everyday activity. I simply wish to note here that because the data was this activity, it too required lengthy periods of time. Spending part of their day with them was essential if I was to know how they spent their time. Inherent in this is the requirement that I had to participate. The information derived from this technique allowed me to observe their responses to questions and situations in the context which was meaningful for the men. As Blumer (1962:139) states;

The peculiarity consists in the fact that human beings interpret or "define" each other's actions instead of merely reacting to each other's actions. Their "response" is not made directly to the actions of one another but instead is based on the meaning which they attach to such actions.

The fourth reason why I feel it was essential for me to adopt the participant observation method is that when I began I did not know any poor old men. I had to go out into the field and develop my sample one at a time. As I met each man I worked for many hours being simply a conversation companion to him, thereby allowing his wariness of me as an outsider to dissipate.

The other two significant methodologies for obtaining field data are the questionnaire and the structured interview. The conditions which determined I had to use participant observation were so strong as to deny the admissability of these other two techniques. To present either of these to one of the men would have required the use of some sort of recording mechanism other than my memory. As pointed out in the later chapter dealing with the men and their connections with agencies and institutions, they withdraw when they are asked as little as to put their name and address on paper.

I was the acquaintance of many men, and the friend of several of them while at the same time always remaining an outsider. The outsider who conducts such data gathering procedures as the aforementioned, is not trusted and is not considered as one who understands what it is to be an old man on skid row. As Wallace (1965:159) has stated,

When the sociologist arrives on skid row with pre-coded, pre-tested, survey questionnaire in hand, every one of his questions implicitly assumes the person is a failure and asks why. Even though this question remains unstated, both questioner and questioned perceive its fundamental reality. Under such circumstances the skid rower will answer if at all, only with responses designed for the consumption, if not appeasement, of the hostile outside world.

Apart from the fact that questionnaires will yield inaccurate data if any, such methods deny the researcher the possibility of understanding the context of the response revealed in participant observation. As Blumer (1962:145) argues further to his previous statement,

To catch the process the student must take the role of the acting unit whose behavior he is studying.

As well, questionnaires can be argued to be serious attempts at obtaining objective and quantifiable data, when in fact they run the risk of a more greatly distorted subjectivism than the participant

observed possesses when he observes a great deal of data he has not asked for, thereby diminishing the possibility of such things as self fulfilling prophecy (Blumer, 1962:146).

The other factor working against questionnaires and interviews is the threat to the subject's self. Gergen (1971:22-23), in giving a process definition of self, states that it consists of "that process by which the person conceptualizes (or categorizes) his behavior,... both his external conduct and his internal status", or as Blumer (1962:140), more generally puts it in discussing Mead's conception of self,

In declaring that the human being has a self, Mead had in mind chiefly that the human being can be the object of his own actions.

The aged indigent who wears old clothes, lives in a dilapidated rooming house, eats little and poor food, and has nothing better to do all day than sit in Gulliver's Park, has accepted these as being "him". Reminiscing about his earlier life does not provide much relief from the emptiness of his daily life, and so such activity depends on being done with shared others of similar backgrounds. The experience of being questioned in either a questionnaire or formal interview manner can threaten this equilibrium of self.

Although the conversational interview used once on a person tends to be superficial (Gold, 1958:261), there were instances in the researching of the aged indigents when I utilized such a form. The conversational interview has taken place in the course of the field work as a pure form four times, and in a less refined fashion another couple of times. The former four interviews took place once each with staff members from four agencies or institutions. The latter type

was with my informant who represents a quasi "Doc", Jim, and Gavin Harper who is a resident in the Inner City Mission.

The conversational interview is somewhat different from conventional participant observation, and at the same time, neither is it equatable with what I would call a structured interview. The genius of the conversational interview is that while I had a list of questions to ask the interviewees, I allowed them to elaborate beyond the demands of the question and even stray off topic a little. I was able to further legitimate this interview data by interpreting it against the background of the more broadly based data I for the most part gathered. As for the interviewees, the questions had to do with objective facts and subjective impressions of the organizations they are employed by, and in gathering information on the organization or institution they did not feel personally vulnerable when supplying information. Both Jim and Gavin are men I know particularly well. They obliged my series of questions on the implicit condition that I did not get too personal or initiate these sessions very often.

My reasons for using participant observation have also had the effect of determining for me the type of field application which would be most beneficial. The writings have to do with a typology of participant observation generally consider it as a continuum proceeding from observer/passive to participant/active.¹ It has already been mentioned in the preceding section that Gold feels the "observer-as-participant"

¹See: Gold (1958:255-263), Schwartz and Schwartz (1955:89-104), and Gans (1962:388-389).

is too superficial for practical field work of the participant observation variety. With the "participant-as-observer", there is the danger of "going native", and Gold (1958:260), paraphrases Simmel when he states, "the distinction between intimate content and intimate form contains an implicit warning that the latter is inimical to field observation". Gold also rejects the "complete observer" as being so detached as to not understand the people and events which he is there to study.

In trying to locate myself on this activity scale of observation, I was confronted with the inevitable problem resulting from the use of typologies. They are abstract concepts and ideal types to which no real life situation actually corresponds in entirety. Given this, suffice it to say that what I attempted to achieve with the aged men is the optimal balance between "active participation in the lives of subjects and observation of their behaviour", (Schwartz & Schwartz, 1955:98). I became a straight observer when circumstances via common sense demanded it, and a complete participant when the situation warranted it.

Establishing Contacts and Relations

F.C. Mann (1951:124) suggests the best way to begin making good contacts is to meet the "authority figures in the relevant social systems". In the world of the aged indigent there are no authority figures within their own inner social system. Authority figures are thought of as the outside forces against which they must forever be on their guard. The same principle as Mann's translated to my situation states, "make contact with respected members of the aged group, preferably those who

have friends". If you are in the company of one of these men, any other men in the park will greet you with a smile and without distrust, at least partially. Full trust takes a little longer than that. For example, one day Jim saw a man on the other side of the park and said to me that he had to see the fellow. The two men talked openly in front of me about arrangements for procuring a coat for Jim, but without giving specifics or naming names. The man sitting beside Jim's friend said "hi" to Jim and then greeted me too. In the company then of respected people you can meet new men, Jim has introduced me to several.

To back-track a little here though, how does the researcher meet "respected" men in the first place? I heard through my committee chairperson of a hostel downtown serving free meals to transients, which had a section for aged indigent men to live as permanent residents. I was given the name of the Brother who was the Director of this establishment and got in contact with him. This man agreed to let me use their facilities to make contact with the men. We decided then in January 1973, that I would help serve the transients once or twice a week, and on Tuesday nights would join a visitation group working out of the hostel that went around visiting some of the poor single men in Lake City.

This I did and it was through the fifteen minute visits to approximately seven (See chapter dealing with agency-institutions), men each Tuesday night that I met Jim, who later became my number one informant. I have met several others in this way too, whom I have since developed relationships with outside of the visitation group.

As a result of helping serve meals to the "transients" (who are really quite sedentary single, down and out men), I became a familiar face to many of the men young and old, whom I later saw again in the park. From January to April 1973, I worked in the hostel once a week before going to the park. This meant that a man who ate regularly at the hostel could have seen me about fifteen times by the time I showed up in the park. So I began in the park with a headstart; I already possessed some opening contacts. I continued to serve at the hostel one day a week until the end of 1973.

When I met these men there existed an obligation to tell them who I was and what I was doing. In a sincere and plausible manner I told anyone I gained significant information from that I was a student doing a study. I said it concerned men generally over the age of 65 and living off their Old Age Security Pension. The important thing I noted was that I wanted their views rather than to impose my own. The men wanted to know why I was there. They were not "interested in the complete rationale for the study" (Dean et al., 1967:69).

Some men let me finish my two minute statement and immediately began to tell me about their pension and the price of food, cost of rent etc. Others were not at all interested, and would interrupt me before I could finish by asking a question that had nothing to do with what I had been saying. I never had an adverse reaction from any men.

For the first while in the park I did not do too much by way of trying to extract information from new contacts. I was willing to talk about anything they wanted to talk about, and we did. Once the men knew me I then began to explore each of them at their own pace, discovering

the various informational potentials. Dean et al. (1967:70), stress the importance of letting the men get to know you before going after detailed information.

Acceptance depends upon time spent in the field, a legitimate role in the eyes of the informants, and the expression of a genuine interest in the people being studied. Therefore, the researcher should sacrifice initial data in order to speed acceptance.

How did I come to go to the park as a place to make contacts initially? I went there on a tip from Jim that he spent several hours a day there. Talking to him there would hopefully serve a triple purpose, I thought. It meant first of all there were probably other old men who frequented the park. As well, it would enable me to more easily meet these men if they saw me in the company of Jim. And thirdly, it seemed an ideal place to begin developing my already existing contacts with Jim and a few other men.

In explaining the development of existing relationships I shall rely primarily on the example of one of my informants Jim Sanderson, and one other man, Frank Brown. An article by Dean, Eichhorn, and Dean (1967:143), dealing with "fruitful" informants outlines four types of very beneficial respondents. Two of their types are exemplified by my informants. Frank Brown is a man whom the above authors would call one of the more-willing-to-reveal-informants. He heard about my study through a member of my committee and offered, via this person, to help. I took him up on his offer and he did indeed turn out to be very valuable. His information, of relevance to me, was confined to the depression years. In this area he was of considerable aid in the development of my working hypothesis on the depression.

Jim Sanderson developed in a more conventional manner. I first made contact with him through the Tuesday night visitation group emanating from the downtown hostel. Vidich (1955:250), states that it is always of great benefit to any participant observation study if the researcher can find an informant to fill the role played by "Doc" for W.F. Whyte in "Street Corner Society". He describes such people as being akin to the "small town intellectual", people knowledgeable and perhaps a little more worldly than their counterparts and yet retaining membership within the group being studied. Jim was certainly knowledgeable, but unlike "Doc", and Vidich's description of this type, did not set himself apart from his peers. He was merely better versed in articulating his situation, was a reflective person (Dean et al. 1967:143), and more willing to discuss himself than his fellows. As the second type fitting into Dean, Eichhorn, and Dean's outline, he was what they refer to as "informants who are especially sensitive to the areas of concern".

Jim placed himself in the role of "Doc" the first day I joined him in the park after having seen him approximately three Tuesday nights previously. As Jim was about to leave me for the day, he said,...

"You take sociology, you have to look at all sides to comprehend it all. Anyways, all the gossip and stories get told here in the park, so if you keep coming, we'll tell you all that stuff. I'm going to get my paper now, so I'll see you later."

Another point worth noting here with regard to developing relationships with an informant is to, not in a deceiving manner, actually ask him to help you. This can strengthen the bond of respect and trust between researcher and informant (Mann, 1951:126). I did this at one point with Jim when I needed some answers quickly to

fill in some gaps in his history with respect to friends. The request and affirmative reply was used as a go-ahead signal for some half dozen consecutive questions.

It was essential that I keep in mind while strengthening these relationships with the aged men that I must retain some objectivity and detachment so as to be able to recognize changes in the men, their situation, and our relationships over time, (Whyte, 1943:357). I ensured this detachment by taking a week's "cooling off" period from the field, and by re-reading field notes to remember how things were at earlier stages. It was readily obvious how researcher/informant relationships changed, as we developed increasingly more shared meanings (Schultz, 1967:127), which in turn enabled us to have more intimate and lengthy conversations. Unlike young people studied by Whyte though, these aged men did not experience significant changes in their situation over time other than the odd member of their group dying, as did Don Sawchuk's friend Stanley Berry.

The relations I've had with the hostel staff are not the central focus of the study, but do represent a significant subsection. My coming into contact with the staff there has already been outlined. Only two more points need be illustrated with hostel examples.

Mann (1951:126), in his paper "Human Relations Skills in Social Research" states that during the course of developing relationships the researcher should make clear to the different segments of the "society" being studied exactly who he intends to see, so as to avoid suspicion by any of the other parties. This has not been necessary too often in my work, but on occasion I have restated my objectives.

One evening the visitation group was going to visit some friends of theirs in a nursing home. Institutionalized aged beyond the hostel, did not, except in a limited way, concern me. I made it clear to these gentlemen then that I would enjoy going to the nursing home, but because of my research objectives I felt my time would be better spent if I limited my visits to men downtown. This was accepted and we continued with a better understanding as to how I wanted to direct my energies.

The other point to be illuminated evolved from changing relationships with hostel staff over time. Paul, who is one of the lay staff at the hostel and a reformed drunk hired as very cheap labour by the Brothers, had a continually evolving relationship with me. Our relationship developed over the months until he was transformed, through no request of mine, into an "observer's observer", (Zelditch Jr., 1962:237). Such persons are useful in light of the fact that it was physically impossible for me to be everywhere at all times.

The Researcher's Role

The central point of a participant observer's role is learning to live with and operate effectively as a dualistic person. At the same time I participated and worked to be accepted by the subjects of my study, I was trying to maintain the greatest degree of objectivity possible, thus demanding of myself a somewhat marginal position. In this way I would not seem to be really out of place when I didn't always participate. Part of this marginality, states Vidich (1955:248) is to not commit loyalties to any particular segment of the "society" you are studying. I have attempted this too, although there is a bias

in the direction of loyalty to the aged men of the park.

I remained marginal in the sense of not doing anything to influence the daily course of events. At one time in the study though, one of my informants Leonard Barstik, told me that he was getting what he considered to be slow service on his complaint to the federal government regarding a monthly pension cheque for less than he felt he was entitled to. This man wanted me to help him in his communications with Ottawa if there was not quick government remedial action. I was very tempted to help in the capacity of letter writer etc., where I felt my knowledge of bureaucratic channels and the English language (he is an immigrant ex-steel worker) might be of help.

Despite the temptation I decided to stay out of it until Leonard either got very insistent or his personal situation became quite grim. About a month or so after this first meeting where he requested my help, an increased pension cheque arrived and he was satisfied. I had successfully managed to avoid an active intervention in his daily life, while staying close enough to observe in detail how he dealt with bureaucratic problems.

Apart from wanting to maintain a degree of objectivity with respect to the Brothers at the hostel, I very much wished to avoid direct associations between myself and the Brothers in the perceptions of the men. A few of the men have called me Brother, and others have asked me if I lived there. Even though I continually tried to make clear I was a student doing a variety of things, there were some men I'm sure, who never did understand what a student was doing hanging around the hostel.

Acceptability as suggested earlier, can be viewed as a balanced mix of passivity/marginality as opposed to "going native"/participation. Acceptability considerably worried me as I began this research. This anxiety emanated from a concern over the obvious differences in appearance between myself and the aged men. For one thing, there is at least 25 years and often 40 years in age, and secondly; they knew I was a student, who didn't share their history of a hard life. My clothes were not shabby 1950's suits. I realized that it was impossible to become just like them in appearance. So I tried simply to minimize the differences.

After making a few contacts and gaining a little confidence, I learned as every participant observer learns, the key to being acceptable is not in you appearance (Whyte, 1943:304,317). Acceptability to the men in your role as a researcher depends on a sincere interest in what they have to say, what they consider is worth talking about, and the opinions they express at these times; but they never expected me to actually be one of them. The men knew I was writing a report and expected me to ask questions. The tricky point was how many questions, when they could be asked, and knowing what couldn't be asked. The key then, was in how I behaved and conducted myself in conversation. This did take time to learn and my acceptability grew with it. Most importantly though, after awhile I did not have to ask as many questions. As "Doc" said to Whyte (1943:303) after an incident when they were out to-gether,...

If people accept you, you can just hang around, and you'll learn the answers in the long run without ever having to ask the questions.

This acceptability was used during the few occasions when I went to intimates and put to them a list of queries. They seemed to

be quite willing to answer a string of questions until they realized the dialogue had changed from conversation to questions and answers, and would then stop answering and I would move back to conversation. In a dialogue I once had with Paul, we had started talking about a friend of his and Gordon's, Danny. He initiated it by telling me what a good worker Danny was and so I began asking questions. I had already asked one question, received a response, and Paul was still volunteering information...

Paul went on, "He gets \$190.00 per month pension from the army so he can't work. If he works they'll cut his pension, so he's be crazy to work even though there's nothing wrong with him. \$190.00 isn't too bad if you don't drink too much." (The last I heard from Danny he had fallen off the wagon, had a 2-3 week drunk and had moved into a mission to get "squared away"). I then asked Paul if Danny was an Indian, and Paul confirmed he was. I followed with a question as to whether he hailed from the Six Nations Reserve in Brantford or not. Paul said, "I don't know, I've never asked him. He's Gord's friend."...end of question period about Danny.

Even when you are close in your rapport with the informants and each knows the other's role, there still remains a strain on the researcher when active in his role. This necessitates, on occasion, taking a break from the field work.

This point about the research role creating strain, was felt by W.F. Whyte (1943:297) when he stated that having a relaxing atmosphere to come home to each night was essential to being good in your role during the day. The point is valid, and when the strain of talking to these men in the park several times a week, and then putting other work aside to do field notes, began to wear on me, I changed my policy and went for only a couple of hours at a time. This was quite reasonable to the men and perhaps more plausible, because they themselves probably only spent three or four hours in the park each day.

At times though, a more extended break was required. Especially when I felt in danger of coming too close to the "going native" syndrome. When I considered my conduct was in danger of contaminating (Gold, 1958:259) the data, whether it was for the above reason, or simply neglect stemming from weariness, I left the field entirely for awhile as a cooling off period. This provided a break, and, a chance to reflect on recent field activities.

Field Notes: Developmental Organization, Interpretation, and Validity

One of the primary means I used to reflect on field activities was to read over my field notes. This procedure familiarized me with past events, helped me to organize what I already had, and allowed me to plan and improve future field trips. One thing I often attempted the next time out in the field was to improve my verbatim testimony. In order to maintain trust and dissolve apprehension, I have never taken notes in the presence of any informants. Most often, as soon as I returned home, quick topic pointer notes were made, and then as soon as I had time within the next twenty-four hours, full field notes were written and typed. When for awhile I was spending a full day in the park with the men, I would slip away to a nearby library and make quick notes for the morning at noon, thereby allowing me to freely concentrate on the afternoon.

As verbatim¹ and general observational skills improved, the notes

¹Under the best circumstances these men are not, however, highly verbal.

grew more extensive until I eventually accumulated several file folders containing a few hundred pages of field notes. This created a situation where I could not remember which information was where. A more highly developed organization was required. I adopted a system used by W.F. Whyte (1943:307-309), when he was researching "Street Corner Society". First, notes were kept in chronological order with attached criticisms on the first copy. Secondly, a simple index system devised by Whyte was put into use.

The notes were then organized in an additional manner. A three page form was devised (see Appendix 1), listing the various headings under which information was required to complete a brief biography of each man. I soon realized that the biography was missing the categories: "drinking", "health", and "use or non use of helping agencies"; and these were added.

A further organizational technique which I employed when actual writing began was to create a list of various subject headings, i.e. housing, food costs, rent, friends and family, daily activity, etc., followed by filling in the relevant information. All relevant information pertaining to a particular subject was then in one place revealing similarities, and dissimilarities, and allowing quick retrieval of notes for quotation purposes.

As a consequence, less use of verbatim quotations is made here than is normally desirable in a report based on participant observation.

This organization of data was a form of preliminary interpretation. In creating the field note index, the biographies, and the breakdown of informants' statements into different subject areas, I simultaneously obtained more concrete and objective indicators (Lazarsfeld & Barton, 1951:156). At this stage the interpretation's prime result was bringing to light "surprising phenomena", (Lazarsfeld & Barton, 1951:156), and indicators which led to "working hypotheses", like the depression hypothesis mentioned previously.

Having thus organized and commenced interpretation of the data, the next step prior to reaching conclusions, was to check the validity of my informants' statements via the use of procedures to detect contamination, and lack of truthfulness. I did make an ongoing conscious check of the honesty of the statements made by the old men as I did the field work. The principal thing I had to remember was not to induce threatening situations for the subjects, and one way to achieve this was to refrain from excessive questioning. As "Doc" told Whyte earlier, personal questions do not work too well anyways. And as stated above, the number of voluntary statements increased as the research progressed, thus eliminating the need to be pushy with questions. The more time I spent with various individuals the deeper the background information we shared, and so they talked more freely about things I never had to ask. For instance, as the verbatim with Sam Thorn in the chapter dealing with agencies and institutions shows, he went beyond my question about the Coffee Stop, and talked about rooming conditions in general.

One of the most crucial safeguards I had against invalid data was the growing experience developed in the field with these old skid rowers. Experience is difficult to empirically verify, but nevertheless I maintain it greatly helped me to realize when a man was exaggerating an incident or lying outright. One time when I was asking Leonard Barstik about his pension troubles with the foundry where he had worked, he said he had not been deprived of money owing him after all. Fine, all this I believed, and then he told me he was broke two days after his pension cheque came out because he had to pay his wife \$300.00 in rent, plus his own rent. He had never mentioned a wife before, and for several other reasons outlined in the chapter on family development, I decided to treat as untrue that he had a wife and two daughters, and especially that he was supporting them. He was more likely panhandling.

With regard to adequate evidential data coming out of the use of my participant observation, the areas where it is most beneficial and legitimate are its non-specificity¹ in the early stages of the research and conclusions, the revelation over time of latent phenomena,

¹As Becker elaborates (1970:52). In short, the very large number of observations and kinds of data an observer can collect, and the resulting possibility of experimenting with a variety of procedures for collecting them, means that his final conclusions can be tested more often and in more ways than is common in other forms of research. We therefore act correctly when we place great reliance on field work evidence.

and the ability therefrom to use working hypotheses. As well, the method's utility in bringing out qualitative indicators where they would not emerge in a formal interview is also important.

Zelditch Jr. (1962:233), considers the two criterion of "goodness" for any method to be it's informational adequacy and efficiency. When the efficiency is the object, participant observation is realistic only when information is required which cannot be discovered by either questionnaire or formal interview. Participant observation then, is good when you are dealing with substantive problems and are not so concerned with theoretical variables, but rather the behaviours and conditions of the subjects (Becker and Geer, 1958:152). These are developmental features which take time to fully understand or even recognize (Zelditch Jr., 1962:242). Phenomena which are revealed over time through comfortable conversations necessitate that the researcher not commit himself at the outset to specifics. Rather, one develops in the course of the study "working hypotheses" which evolve from field notes and are ever able to be restructured as the subsequent field work demands (Geer, 1964:383-394).

This was the case when I was looking for some predominant event in the lives of the indigent aged. The suggestion that an especially important event existed in the first place came from re-reading notes. I had noticed the mention of the depression in Canada during the 1930's as frequently being present in my conversations with the men. They seemed to use it as an object of comparison with the present, most often in the subject areas of food, labour and overall quality of life.

My working hypothesis was that the depression perhaps had been the greatest single extended event in their lives.¹

On attempting to find further proof for this hypothesis, I found that although the depression was important in the lives of these men in their subjective perception, and as well in historical objective fact, it did not represent the single greatest event in their lives. I have since re-worked this hypothesis to reflect the impact the depression had, and now explain it as being an exaggerated form of what has happened to these men before and since the depression.

Conclusions

My form of participant observation methodology has made it possible for me to obtain, over the last year, a vast wealth of data on the aged male indigents of Lake City. It has done so in the sense that I have not alienated the men from me by being threatening. This acceptability permitted me to observe them in every aspect of their daily lives except sleeping. I know how they spend their time in summer and winter, on sunny days and when it is raining.

¹This is an excerpt from my field notes which represents the first real beginnings of the depression hypothesis. Jim seems often whenever we speak of food costs, welfare etc., to go back and compare now to the depression. So did Robert Seagull in my talk with him. It may well be that the relative deprivation between themselves and the rest of the society is not prevalent in their minds as I've sort of assumed it would be. Possibly the relative deprivation they personally endured during the depression gives to-day's situation a much more favourable light.

They have told me how they lived from the days of their youth during the depression through to the present. The latter I have observed and the next chapter on daily activity concludes this first section whose purpose is to set the scene. By examining the daily activity of these men the stage will be set to go on and discuss the backgrounds which have helped to create the circumstances and relationships these old men are presently involved in.

CHAPTER III

Everyday Activity

Introduction

As suggested in the methodology chapter, the daily activities of the aged indigents constitute the great majority of my data.¹ It was via participating and observing what occupys their time during the day or evening that I learned everything I have come to know about them. I went along with them and participated in their activities and thereby observed the data for this chapter. Often I would go and visit these men in their rooms and there I observed things like where they live, what they live in, what they eat, how often, etc. By being with them I know what clothing they own and by talking to them discovered where they obtain them. These conversations during any part of the day or evening were not interviews. I was to the casual observer, merely doing whatever the old men were doing. This activity provided me with my data. Similarly, only very infrequently did I interview any

¹Whyte (1943:320) realized after having been involved in his study of Cornerville society for some time, that to understand the relationships and situations of living there, his data would come primarily from the inhabitants' day to day activities. As he stated, "I learned then that the day-to-day routine activities of these men constituted the basic data of my study."

officials of agencies. Almost entirely, the activities the agencies staff are involved in concerning these poor aged men, I observed or participated in, so that the agencies' activities are also data.

Without trying to make their day to day life seem overly simple, I feel that what the men do with a day hinges on only a few but crucial factors. First of all, they are continually short of money. This is significant because if outside, they are limited to going to places within the budget. To save money and as well because they enjoy it, if the weather is pleasant the aged indigents spend much of their time outdoors. In the summer they are either enjoying the sun or escaping the heat of their rooms. When it rains they find shelter in their room or elsewhere. The winter in this city is wet enough and cold enough to make extended periods of time outdoors distinctly unpleasant. Therefore, in the winter months they go outside only to get to some place else.

Within these financial constraints they often choose how to spend their day according to what the weather encourages or allows. The importance of weather in the daily lives of the aged indigents prompts me to divide activity first of all into a discussion of what the men do in each of the two major seasons, summer and winter.

Summer: On a Bench or in a Room

During the warm months there are three or four places available for a man to do the same thing in anyone of them, very little. One night shortly after I met Jim Sanderson I asked him if I could come and spend part of his day with him. He agreed to do this and outlined his possible whereabouts for me.

I asked him if he was in his room much during the day and he replied yes. So I asked him if he would mind if I came to see him during the day. Jim said, "Yes, that would be o.k. I go out between 8:30 and 9 o'clock in the morning, and sit in the park..." "Gulliver Park, Jim?" I asked. "Yes, and I sit there until the paper comes out. I'm generally back in my room by about two." I then said, "O.K. I'll be down within a week, and if you're not in, I'll look for you in the park."

Jim: "Yeah, I won't be very far away from either of those places."

As it turned out Jim mentions the two most frequented areas for passing the day: the park, and the room. He is very typical of many of the men I observed throughout the summer of 1973. When I first realized how many of them are in the park regularly I asked a few of the men if they came to the park often. Both Sam Thorn, and Robert Seagull on one particular day told me, "Oh yeah, quite a bit", and that he comes every day, respectively. As well as direct statements like this, I observed just in going to the park that many of the men were there practically every time I went. In addition to the three old "bench warmers" just mentioned, I often saw George, Roger, Leonard, Vincent, John, and Jordan. With the exception of the last named man, I met all of these listed indigents in the park. Many other retired and inactive men are consistently there too.

How much of their time is spent in the park and what is its attraction? I will answer this by describing "a day in the life" which any of these men could easily and often do, step into.

Morning comes between 8 and 9 o'clock for these single indigents. Breakfast is usually a meagre fare of little nutritional substance. Two day old pastry is a favourite as filler for meals, often provided by the Inner City Hostel meal line the night before. To this they add a cup of tea or coffee. A few indulged in good meals, but they

are the exception rather than the rule. Robert Seagull is one of these.

He is orthodox in neglecting lunch. Robert said to me,

You're not active enough to get very hungry. I get up around nine. I'm a bachelor, so I cook myself some bacon and eggs, cereal and toast. And that's all I eat until supper. My weight has stayed steady at 210-212 for the last five years, and I quit drinking ten years ago because I figured I was drinking too much.

Leonard Barstik represents something closer to the norm.

Prior to heading to the park Leonard eats very little.

In the morning I have a bowl of soup and at night a hamburger. (When he isn't at the Brothers' mission).

They do not eat during the day. The men who eat at the Brothers' will not go home for the day until about five o'clock, after they've eaten. Men like Jim Sanderson who cook for themselves will not spend the whole day in the park, generally leaving to go back to their rooms sometime in the mid-afternoon.

Thinking of Leonard, George, or Sam for example, the day begins in the park, and in keeping with the fact that their old "bottle gangs" have been dispersed by time, the old men come alone. And in fact the younger fellows in their forties and fifties are likely to show up unattached too. If they are to get to-gether on a bottle they'll team up with someone in the park and then leave to-gether. The older men enter the park, and since it is still early in the morning will probably sit in a sunny area.

Having placed themselves comfortably in the sun, they then proceed to engage in the "national pastime",...nothing. By this I mean no visible signs of activity. They are watching the people walking by, probably meditating to themselves, but principally they

are there. And in a different sense this is activity. The park is situated in the core of the downtown office and retail district (see Map 1. p 6), and is typically alive with people rushing to and fro. From the sidelines of the park they watch the world pass them by. Although not directly involved in the advances and business of urban life, they are, as men who always sit in the park, members of the community. Any comprehensive study of the downtown area would have to include them simply because they are there.

I think these men may be considered as spectators to the flow of urban life around them. Whether or not they are involved in vicarious participation is something on which I hesitate to speculate. The men never speak about wishing they could be striding along the sidewalk carrying an attache case instead of sitting on a bench beside it. And their recollections (See the 1930's depression conversations in the careers chapter), of their own early working days are not at all bitter. The men certainly recognize past hardships but seem to accept them (Butler, 1963:486-496). The only people the old men comment on are other park people, and do not seem particularly interested in the general flow of traffic unless something extra ordinary happens. The only other thing in the environs they deem worthy of comment are the new office and retail complexes being built nearby.

This suggests something about their use of time. To anyone more conventionally active by way of work and/or leisure, it might be argued the men do very little with their time considering a phenomena outlined by Wallach and Green (1961:485).

For older individuals, in comparison with younger, level of activity is much reduced but the general value of time is probably higher. The findings hence indicate that the subjective speed of time is more directly influenced by the degree of value of time than by a person's level of activity as such.

Given the limited opportunities which are available to the men for activity selection, this seeming waste of time could very easily be a very highly valued part of their day.

What they are involved in is the park crowd and they know what goes on in the park. One of the park activities which the men are cognizant of, is attempts to get a seat on a particular bench. Why is this territory more valuable than others? By about noon of practically any day in July of 1973 it was very hot, in the mid 90's. This particular bench provided some respite from the heat and at least some of the men were acutely aware of it. As my field notes indicate,

There is one bench on the south side of the park that has three distinct advantages making it the best seat in the park although I'm sure that not all the park patrons care. George commented to me once, "I guess those guys get here early in the morning and hang onto them seats all day." I was interested because often the men on the bench were older. In watching it I noticed that if anyone got up, their seat was taken almost immediately. I've seen men standing alongside it waiting for someone to vacate a spot. Other times I'll be talking to someone and watching the bench when I can, and on only having ignored the bench for a minute, I'll look up and see new faces on it. I didn't see anyone get up or sit down, and it's always full. The advantages of the bench are: 1) it has a back rest, 2) it is in the shade virtually all day, and 3) it is in the plaza end of the park where there is the most activity to watch.

Some men were intent on getting a seat on the bench, and when they did they would sit and stare at the goings on, just as the men who were content to sit on the other benches did.

It is not surprising that such things as the bench absorb a part of the men's attention. They spend the better part of every day in the park, weather permitting. As well, being there for so much of the time they get angry about features of the park which middle class people who simply pass through the park probably never notice. George was upset one day because he had to leave the park and walk a block to get a drink of water, the fountain in this park was sporting a rather dismal flow of water. As he got up to walk to the better fountain, he said, "I wish there was a decent fountain in this park."

Speaking more generally, Jim Sanderson has criticized Lake City's parks and compares them to a couple of other cities he has been to. He feels the city should provide more adequate facilities for the single man and the "urban nomads" (Spradley, 1970), who come through town. Notice in the excerpts which follow, that he is concerned about things which affect his everyday activity and would have no relevance whatsoever to any middle class working person. It is indicative of the narrow scope of their lives, and the significance of public areas in their everyday activities that such things are of consequential concern to these men. Jim and I were discussing good public places in the area where you could drink without getting caught. I asked Jim if they drank in the public washroom of the park very much.

No, you can't loiter there. There's a caretaker down there who would report you. And they close the washrooms down there on Sundays. (They're underground washrooms.) Can you believe that? Some fanatic wanted to close them down entirely, and take all the benches out of the park. Lake City is bad enough

as it is. Other cities have comfort stations. The last time I was in Detroit they had one; a place where you could shave and shower, with towels too. Back in the days of the milk wagon, drivers would pull over there at Queen and Norman and walk around to the far side of the horse. They'd do their business and get back on and drive away. No one would think anything of it. Its only wrong because people think it is.

The fact is that some people in the city would like to make it difficult for the skid rowers and old men to sit in the park at all. Given all its deficiencies, sitting in the park is still the only form of activity these men have, and so while Jim complains, he still faithfully goes there everyday, weather permitting.

While Jim continues to go to the park regularly despite his complaints about the comfort stations, and so does George Vale even though there isn't a decent fountain, there are men who for several reasons avoid the park. The regulars only miss going to the park when there are extenuating circumstances preventing them from going. Roy Lancet is one of the men who after having been a regular in the park, has not been there for over five years. The last day he was there was when they were nearing completion of a re-development of the park, were finishing the installation of the decorative fountain, and putting in the new benches. Roy said there were fewer benches than previously. The wide expanse of concrete and brick patio area has also attracted a lot of pigeons. The new construction and the increase in pigeons prompted Roy to harrumph and exclaim, "Pigeon Park? No, I haven't been there in years". Roy with his one amputated leg, now sits in his room and goes for short walks to the steps of a neighbourhood church instead of the park.

While some "bottle gangs" form or are consummated in the park, men like Jim also carry on what little business dealings they are involved in there too. One day I witnessed Jim's ongoing negotiations for a new to him coat.¹

Jim called out to a man who was walking up the other side of the park. The man didn't hear, so Jim got up and went to cut him off at the other end of the fountain (a large display fountain), saying to me, "He maybe has a coat for me." The man disappeared from view as he went behind the fountain, and then didn't reappear on the other side. I walked up to where Jim was standing. "I can't find him now", he said. I looked and at first couldn't see him either, but then I noticed him; he had sat down on a crowded bench while obscured from us by the fountain. I pointed out this man Jim had called John, and we both walked over to him. He was a white haired man but probably no older than 50 or so. He knew what Jim was going to say, and said, "They haven't got a coat in blue like you wanted yet Jim. I'll probably have one within the next few days though." Jim said that would be fine, and that was the end of it until the next time Jim saw him in the park.

Just as a heavy rain will empty the park, so will severe heat and a bright sun. This was the condition off and on for two months last summer. When it gets very hot the men evacuate to cooler areas, primarily another park down near the lake. In the first week or so of July last year, both Jim Sanderson and Leonard Barstik told me they had spent a day at this lakeside park in the last week. They had both gone to cool off. Not all of the men bother to go when it is hot. They are more likely to lie down in their room and just sweat it out.

¹Although Sanderson is the only man I specifically know of to negotiate for clothes in the park, I do know that other men are able to find people who will cash post dated cheques in the park and take approximately 20% as a service charge.

Gulliver Park serves a function for many of the downtown single men. It is for these aged indigents and alcoholics, their major activity area for the day. While they rarely do their drinking in the park, it is the best place to spend non-drinking hours apart from one's room. Some of the older men like Don Sawchuk and Henry Bison are, due to a loss of mobility rooted in physical decline, losing their access to friends. This is partially a result of their inability to walk to the park anymore. Accordingly then, these men spend the major share of their time in their room, or if the weather is good, maybe sitting outside or going for a walk around the block. To sit in your room or rooming house all day and night is for men such as these, their prime form of "daily activity".

Of the men in my sample, six fall into this category. Stanley Berry for instance, was greatly concerned about being robbed when outside and having things stolen from his room. The net result of these fears was that he stayed where he felt most secure, in his room. Victor Bandow on the other hand, while suffering from arthritis, is able to walk as far as the park but chooses not to. Both of these men stay in their room most of the day. Victor watches a considerable amount of T.V., and reads magazines and paperbacks. Stanley did not (he is dead now), have a T.V., nor did he read a great deal. His day would be spent sleeping, sitting around, and drinking. Both men would venture out of their room only to buy food, or go to the bank, and other essential trips.

The two of the six who are living in the mission have had their activity curtailed by problems with drinking, and it is possible too

that this is partly the reason behind Victor's seclusion. Both Reg Farley and Scott Mandel used to go out and have a few beers in the afternoon. Soon though, they began to get drunk on their outings and this led to problems with the mission staff and their fellow residents, Reg got too boisterous and Scott would get lost.

When drinking was no longer feasible as an activity, these men turned to T.V., which in their case is a very passive activity. I say this because they will watch it for hours on end, rather than watching one or two particular shows. Reg Farley is decidedly unhappy about his circumstances and does not seem to enjoy himself much at all. He behaves like the unloved child who constantly wants attention, or he sulks in front of the T.V. set. Scott Mandel who doesn't even read as Reg does, seems happy, and most of all secure amongst the mission staff and the few other residents. Although his activity is nil, he seems to be patiently putting in time until someone wants to talk to him and Scott then happily converses with that person. He is content doing very little, perhaps because in terms of living conditions he is better off than before. He came to the mission after discharge from a downtown hospital.

The other two men, Henry Bison and Don Sawchuk, are both persons who used to be more active but because of physical incapacity have stayed much closer to home in recent times. Henry is the man who was disabled twenty years ago in an industrial accident when he had a large amount of acid spilled on his legs. Don is suffering from arthritis and stomach problems. Both men, like Stanley, and Victor really only go out for essentials. They do though occasionally go for short walks

around the block but not far enough to get to the centre of downtown where the park and major activity is. Each live about three-quarters of a mile from the park. The rest of the time these men either sit in their room or outside. When they are outside they have a little opportunity to talk to neighbours and their children. These six men are, in terms of participation in society, less active than the park men. The old men who stick to their rooms do not even watch much of the world around them as the other fellows do.

For the men in the rooms, the days are passed sitting, reading, sleeping, drinking, or watching T.V. and of course, these activities almost always take place in one room or house. Such pursuits do not provide much stimulation and so it is disconcerting to realize that the men who normally spend their day in the park and a few other places, are pushed out of the park in winter by the inclement weather.

Winter: In Their Room, or a Public Room

The park is a place where the men can stay all day if they want, except in winter. When it begins to get snowy and cold, the men abandon the park. In doing so they cut themselves off from their major outside the room activity and opportunity for seeing and talking to people. In the cold weather then, the men either spend a great deal more time in their room thereby becoming like the six fellows described above, or they must find an indoor area to congregate.

It will become clear in the following passages that the areas the men have found to congregate while staying warm in the winter, are with one exception, places where they cannot really stay all day.

They are places where if the skid rowers become conspicuous they will have to move on. Thus, unless a man is willing to keep on the move every hour or so, he will have to spend an increased amount of time in his room during the winter months. The majority of the downtown men, particularly those in their forties and fifties are willing to keep on the move. The older men are less likely to be inclined to rove all day.

Jim Sanderson is one who decidedly spends more time in his room during the winter. He rejects anything he considers to be charity, and so in the same manner he refuses to attend city sponsored "senior citizen" days. Jim will also not go to one of these warm congregation areas because it is sponsored and staffed by a Protestant church. As noted previously, Jim drinks when he gets lonely, and he gets lonely more often when he stays in his rooming house for long periods of time. He is fortunate in having his neighbour/friend Jay downstairs, whom he can visit and drink with. The winter is relatively a lonely time for Jim, and for older men like himself this is the norm and not the exception.

There are a few, like John Farrow, who I only encountered in the park. Farrow's day consists primarily of a long walk, and part of the week he is active in the A.A. John's friend Jim, told me John's routine one day when I mentioned I hadn't seen him in the park that particular day. Jim said.

No, I haven't either. He was probably here earlier, and then over for a walk through the market and home again... He's pretty active in the A.A. you know.

I haven't run into John in any of the indoor winter haunts, and so

feel he probably just finishes his daily walk a little earlier in the winter because he does not stop off in the park.

Vincent, and Robert Seagull are both non-drunks (although Robert is a reformed drinker), and so since my basis of knowing them is the park, I'm not surprised they drop from sight in the winter. They will not go to a place patronized by drunks only, the park was more diversified in patronage, where they could be comfortable. Robert especially has no place to go, indicating he is probably spending more time in his room during the winter.

The only other notable person who virtually drops from sight when it gets cold is Sam Thorn. He lived in six different places plus the hospital once to recover from falling down drunk, in the year I have known him. I do not see him much in the public areas the other drinkers go to in winter, and so I lost track of him temporarily during the cold weather.

There are three places where the men can gather and stay warm in winter. The bus terminal, and an indoor shopping mall (see map 1 in introduction) are both used but to a lesser degree and in a different manner than the Coffee Stop. (The first two also see some use in summer on days when it rains.) The latter is trying to fill the summer role of the park, the other two would just as soon the men never showed their faces on the premises. Both the bus terminal and the shopping mall are money making areas where the skid rowers contribute nothing to the coffers of the operators, and perhaps by their shabby appearance even discourage some potential money spenders. They are therefore really only welcome at the Coffee Stop.

The shopping mall is the least significant of the three. There are only a half dozen benches on which they can sit, and there are always some shoppers, and some young teenagers who are also killing time at the plaza, with whom they have to vie for seats. This means of course in all likelihood only ten skid rowers and old poor men can be sitting at any one time. They spend more of their time just walking slowly, they are not in a hurry, up, down, and around the corridors of the mall. The attached department store also gets toured in the same manner. Merchants do not like them and unless they are quite drunk and therefore noisy or unconscious, they will remain quite unobstrusive while at the shopping mall. The men know its not their territory.

The indigents are getting closer to their element in the bus terminal. If the terminal is not crowded then there are more seats available than in the entire mall. This is still a place where they must remain "out of sight, out of mind", so to speak. The men are not welcome here either, simply a little more likely to be tolerated if they do not get in the way of paying customers. I talked to Leonard there one day about management attitudes towards drunkenness in the bus terminal.

At this point two middle aged drunks met in front of us. They were obviously drunk, dirty, and were talking about going to get some "whiskey". (Middle class people call "rye what they call "whiskey".) They agreed to do this and in a few minutes they left, one of them bumping into a person in the ticket line as he went. I asked Leonard if drunks get harrassed in the bus terminal. He said, "Oh, you bet! The man who is the boss is away on holidays, but when he comes back they will be thrown out. If they give him a hard time the police will come and take him out. No he doesn't allow any drunks to hang around here. He gets \$90.00 per week and that's a lot of responsibility to manage this place. For \$90.00 a week they expect you to work pretty hard you know."

Partially because the men are not great friends with a lot of people anyways, they are not in groups at all. When I was talking to Leonard another fellow came over and started talking to me. They both eat at the Inner City Hostel every day and yet they made no acknowledgment that they knew the other was there. Before I left the terminal that day I bumped into three more men I knew and all five I'm sure had seen each other around, and yet none of them spoke to any of the others, and all except one who was sleeping, spoke to me separately. I have been back to the terminal a couple of times and each time there were at least a couple of skid rowers I knew, like Emerson Palmer, Jordan, and "Mr. Smiley", and they were always alone, out of the way.

If they have to keep such a low profile, and not be "drunk and disorderly" while at the bus terminal, why do they go there? It is a "mini-park". It is a place other than their room, which is warm and free. They can head in there early in the afternoon for instance on the way to the Brothers' for supper. By going to the mission they leave the terminal for an hour or so, and they can then return after eating, as if they hadn't been there for awhile. While I don't think they are playing a game, it is at least tactical behaviour. The men will likely stay there for an hour or two and then head home for the night, unless they are getting to-gether with friends to share a bottle.

The terminal is not satisfactory though, except for stopovers on the way to somewhere else. It is useful for the men who slept overnight at a mission, had to get up at seven o'clock and leave, and in such cases the terminal becomes a good place to stay warm until the Coffee Stop opens at 10 a.m.

The Coffee Stop is the name given to a place and program located in an old church managed by a Protestant church organization. It is situated downtown and right across the street from the bus terminal. The actual nature of the program as perceived by the staff, and how it has been utilized by the men in the past, will be discussed in the chapter dealing with selected social agencies the men come into contact with. At this point I wish only to point out its relevance to winter activity for the men as a "public room".

For the most part it is a place where the men can talk to-gether, stay warm, and have a cup of coffee. It also serves as a change of scenery from the four bleak walls of the small room common to these men.

My descriptive first impression noted,... It is a large room in the basement of a very old church downtown across the street from the bus terminal. In it they provide coffee, donuts, cookies, tables and chairs, playing cards, and magazines.

The only one of the men in this study who is over 65 whom I saw hanging around the bus terminal was Leonard Barstik. There is one other man, "Mr. Smiley" who is also over 65, and earned the name as a sarcastic tag conferred by mission staff because he is almost totally unapproachable, and very surly. I have seen him around for a year and had a few words with him but that's all. Like the bus terminal, the Coffee Stop is populated mostly by men in their 40's and 50's.

My field notes reveal.

I saw about 20 men I recognized from the Brothers' and the park. George and Stitch were there that I knew by name. There were perhaps 50 men present when I arrived at approximately 10:30 a.m. Barry (the director), said they had, over the day, 95 men in yesterday. I did not see any of the real old men. And George who is 58, was the only one who is actively involved in my study...

In other words, while the men frequent the place, it is populated more by the younger men who are still chronic alcoholics and drug users. The older men do not attend regularly, and some like Jim Sanderson almost never go at all. What this leads me to ask then is, if the older man generally speaking, are not in abundance at the shopping mall, the bus terminal, or the Coffee Stop, where are they? They are in their rooms. The older man go out in the winter, for a purpose, to go somewhere. This differs markedly from the summer when they go to the park to sit. This represents the prime form of activity for the old indigents.

Short Duration Necessary Activities in all Seasons

All of the men go at some time to the grocery store, some more often than others. The food outlets are never more than several blocks from their rooming house, and what determines frequency is the amount of food they eat. Some like Jim Sanderson eat three meals a day, and breakfast is a substantial meal for him. Others like Leonard eat only twice, and most days he eats the second meal at the Brothers' thereby drastically reducing the rate at which he needs to go to a grocery store. The men who are big drinkers and also eat at the Inner City Hostel like George, need to buy very little food. The frequency of food purchases also decreases as the date of the month increases. They often are running low on money by the middle of the month at which time they change over in terms of degree, from going to the grocery store to go to the Brothers' Inner City Hostel .

For a few old men, going food shopping becomes more of an extended event because they sit down in the store and just watch the shoppers

for awhile. This is limited by the fact that usually only the chain stores provide benches in the front of their stores. Jim who does this, probably uses this period as an opportunity to catch his breath and rest his legs before he walks home. Primarily though, it is a way to put in time outside of his room in the company of people. Note, apart from the little shopping he does, he is once again a spectator.

Those men as already stated, who drink heavily and therefore do not have much money for food, i.e. George, Gavin Harper before he moved into the mission, and Roger, come to the Brothers' to eat. This can be a good mile or so from their rooms in some cases, and becomes a major activity in itself taking up the last half of the afternoon. There are also a few like Sam Thorn who thought he could solve the food problem by moving into the Brothers' mission. He is a heavy drinker though and was ejected for his repeated drunkenness.

The liquor store in the basement of a hotel complex, and a wine store in the heart of the neighbourhood these men live in are both regular destinations for many of the men. Depending on how much they drink they may go out for wine or liquor every day, every other day, or as little as once or twice a month. The men who do not drink excessively will go to the hotels, like Jim Sanderson or Kim, and have a few draught beers for lunch, and then leave. When they are not able to get up and leave after a few, like Reg Farley or Scott Mandel (already cited), they will quite rapidly be cut off by the tragedy which inevitably prevails. They either fall down and hurt themselves, get lost, or robbed. This can frighten an old man into either abstaining, or confining his drinking to his room with himself or friends.

The one other thing many of the men go outside regularly to do is cash their cheque at the end of the month, usually at a bank. It is an activity insofar as it is an essential task they at regular intervals have to complete. These places like the grocery store, the Inner City Mission, the liquor store and bank, are consumer activities. As such they are carried out all year round.

Conclusions

The activities engaged in by these old man can be capsulized as consisting of sitting in the park, finding shelter in inclement weather, or going out for a little shopping. As such, they differ from both old people in working class families, and the younger skid rowers. This fact has implications for the possible use of literature which at first seems quite applicable.

These are not really the same sort of men J.P. Spradley (1970), S.E. Wallace (1965), or S.R. Curtin (1972), deal with. Their subjects are for the most part the younger skid rower who is different in that he travels more, works part of the time, and forms "bottle gangs" to get to-gether enough money for a bottle of wine. The old poor men I studied are not involved in these endeavours anymore and to have introduced the above authors in a comparative sense throughout, would have necessitated discussing aspects of skid row activity which do not apply to the poor old men. They are relevant in the sense that these are activities the men no longer enjoy. Comparisons to the skid row literature in this area are utilized more in the chapter dealing with friendship. As well, the activities some aged share with their families as explained in the working class family's case by

George Rosenberg (1970), were stated to be almost non-existent. The breakdown of this situation with reference to Rosenberg is fully discussed in the family development and relations chapter.

This chapter, in conjunction with the previous two, is designed to establish the daily setting which exists for the aged male indigent of Lake City. Insofar as this has been successful, it provides the basis from which I will go on to describe both the origins of the men that brought them to this setting and type of experience, and secondly, the contemporary circumstances which together support and explain why their engagement is so limited.

Part II

Origins

CHAPTER IV

Careers

Introduction

The career origins of these men go back, for my purposes, to the beginnings of their adult life which in most cases preceded the "Great Depression" by a few years. In beginning my research on their lives at this point I was able to learn how they made their first active steps as independent adults. Granted, the first twenty years of their lives when they were still under the tutelage of parental family were very influential, but all of these men started their working lives in approximately similar circumstances. They were semi or unskilled labour without wealthy family support. I have taken this early labour as being the origin behind where they are now. Whatever the influence of family background, it was encapsulated in the positions they found themselves in when starting out to work.

Careers for these men connotes more than a narrow interpretation of labour. It involves labour as it is influenced by the circumstances surrounding the man. The family he was born into, the family he creates if any, his interests, education, and the structural economy of the times are all influential factors in any man's career. Hughes (1971:406), states career to be, in fact

a sort of running adjustment between a man and the various facts of life and of his professional world. It involves the running of risks, for his

career is his ultimate enterprise, his laying of his bets on his one and only life.

Career development in a particular profession was often with these men, never firmly established. For those who did work in one particular area, things like the depression have disrupted smooth development. In the social arena, many of the men have never firmly embarked on the project of starting a family. The auxiliary features of health, and material surroundings have consistently been less than secure.

The labour, health and material surroundings are the subject of discussion in this chapter, with the latter two being dealt with in an historical sense. Health and habitat will be more fully elaborated on as they exist in the men's present circumstances in Part III. The chapter following this will specifically consider the family development aspects of the aged poor's social career.

Especially in the lower echelons of labour, the jobs available and a person's ability to obtain them are significantly linked to their educational achievements (Porter, 1965:165-198). The aged male poor of Lake City have never provided me with any indication that their formal schooling proceeded much beyond elementary school. This, in conjunction with their poverty, provided the basis for the jobs they were able to fill. With this disclaimer then, I will leave off any further discussion of their education by stating that it was of a rudimentary nature and did not enter directly into their everyday lives once it had helped establish the starting position of their career.

Discovering the Origin of Their Careers

(This is after joining two older men who were talking to-gether in the park.) At this point

Farrow started to talk again where he had left off. He and Jim had apparently been reminiscing about things almost forty years ago... They were talking at first about fruit picking in the Orchard area just east of Lake City and the 'bulls' (police), who harrassed them in the area... Jim Sanderson and John Farrow.

This was not an isolated reference to the depression.

Later that same day Jim and I were talking about the pension increases of about a year ago and Jim maintained that "welfare makes cheaters and robbers out of you. They don't want to let you get ahead, just survive." (continuing on the same topic, but switching to the depression area for an example, not solicited by me).... "There were a lot of people on relief, and you used to get food vouchers. Well when the store men took them to City Hall to redeem them the city took 4% of each dollar's worth so that the store people couldn't make ends meet when losing 4% of their receipts. So they were forced to keep their thumb on the scales and sell you short."

These references occurred often enough that when I was perusing field notes, it came to my attention that frequently reference was made to the depression unsolicited by myself, who was at that time, almost totally ignorant of those ten years. As well, when considering things past, virtually no mention was made of either World War. When they talked about the past it was either depression days or something dramatic, like a serious injury at work. In subsequent conversations, I would sometimes ask about what life was like during the depression, or about whether they were employed and if so, where etc. The stories they told were not of easy times. Readings in economic and political history¹, coupled with the realization that a 75 year old man to-day,

¹See: Granatstein and Stevens (1972), Horn (1972), Grayson and Bliss (1971), and Piven and Cloward (1971).

was 35 in 1933, and a man 65 years old to-day was 25, led me to feel that the Canadian depression of the 1930's was perhaps the single most determinative extended event in these men's lives.

This last statement, I now feel, should be qualified. While the depression was an influential extended event, it was not "perhaps the single most" important event. In closer examination of the field notes it became clear that it would be difficult to argue that the depression alone, "destroyed" their lives. The men were just not too excited about it. They spoke of hard times when jobs were scarce, and the lucky ones like Jim Sanderson were able to live with a farmer and pick fruit all summer for a pittance. Those who were not so fortunate, as in the case of Frank Brown, spent a couple of years in the "Royal Twenty Centres", (the labour relief camps). Some like Don Sawchuk kept working through the depression, albeit at 35¢ per hour, laying track for the C.P.R. in Saskatchewan and British Columbia. Similarly, Robert Seagull worked in a construction camp and other places as a crane operator for 35¢ per hour.

Roy Lancet gave me a very revealing account of how he spent the depression years. At one point in this excerpt he wonders if perhaps maybe he was better off in those days, than now in some respects. And then later in the same conversation, Roy comments on how things got better very quickly when World War II broke out; but notice what this aged indigent used as an indicator of the times. This series of passages suggests that while times were bad in the 1930's and they then improved dramatically with the war, in the long run his life doesn't really differ too much now from then.

We were discussing food costs in his room one night when Roy made this comparison statement.

And the way food costs are now, I've been wondering if maybe we were better off in the "hungry days" in the 30's. No one had any money but still we managed to eat.

I then asked Roy if he had been able to find an adequate amount of work during the depression.

No there wasn't any work! I used to ride the trains back and forth from Toronto to Ottawa. Six months each way, and there'd be a year gone. And boy, it was cold sleeping in those boxcars in winter. Some priests were pretty good. There was one in Lindsay and he'd give you an hour's work and a meal. But you could still eat. You'd bum a meal and then go up to the "jungle" to eat. ("hobo jungle") I was able to work a little. I picked tobacco sometimes, for a dollar a day plus room and board. You could get \$1.50 a day but no room and board then. For awhile I was working for the railroad at 25¢ per hour.

At this point I decided to find out if he had had any contact with the labour camps of the 1930's and asked him if he remembered the "Royal Twenty Centres" so named because the pay was twenty cents a day.

Well I guess I should. That old R.B. Bennet got himself the best airport in Canada that way. And do you know what it cost him? How much do you think the men got paid who worked on that airport?

I knew and so I told him it was twenty cents a day, mostly to show that I had some knowledge of the conditions they endured in the depression.

That's right; he got an airport built on those wages.

I then asked him if he had actually been in the camp and if so how had the conditions been.

Yes, around 1931-32... Not too bad, it was the \$5.00 per month pay! At the end of the month I'd

sneak into town and come back the same night, broke. It was strange too, because when the war broke out in '39, say '40, all of a sudden you'd go into a hotel and it'd be full, with \$10.00 bill sitting on the table. It was amazing how fast it came up.

Given those hard years, none of these men extract the depression as an isolated feature of their lives when careers and family hopes were dashed. Only persons like Leonard Barstik, who lost a sizable real estate investment and his job, see the depression now as a catastrophic period, which eliminated most of their life chances. This fact, that the depression was not singled out for bitter epistles, led to a puzzlement which then gave way to a new understanding. The indigent aged, except in a few isolated cases, were not the people who lost fortunes during those hard years. They were poor before the depression, poorer still during it, and only a little less poor after it. This is not to say that the depression did not have an effect on these men's lives. It did, and they remember the hard times. The point though, is that the 30's are not easily separable from the 70's. The men are still vulnerable, and they are still made to feel like "bums" on relief, when relief is all they've got. This will be explained and developed further.

Lake City's aged poor did not then, start an ascendant career during the depression. They endured these hard times, and then were not able to fully recover afterwards. In light of the national conditions in the 1930's though, they were not isolated individuals.

When Canada, an export nation, experienced deep slashes in export prices, and investment incomes collapsed, the necessary outcome for our economy in that year 1929 was that prices could not drop low enough

to sell industrial produce and maintain full employment. Rather than reduce prices further, thus cutting the profit margin significantly, the alternative chosen was to cut production volume, thereby necessitating a reduction of the work force. Enter mass unemployment. The impact on the Canadian populace is hinted at in the following table illustrating both a rural and an industrial province.

Table 1¹

Per Capita Income In Two Provinces
Affected By The Depression

<u>Provinces</u>	1928-29 Average \$/ Capita	1933 Average \$/ Capita	% Decrease
Ontario	549	310	44
Saskatchewan	478	135	72

Housing during the depression became a serious problem for a great number of Canadians. For single unattached young men there existed a number of alternatives. The roving transients slept in box cars, parks, or the shelter provided by the farmer he might be working for. Frank Brown crossed Canada four times in one year riding freights, and as Roy stated above, sleeping in box cars is not very comfortable. Both Roy and Frank spent about two years in Ontario labour relief camps. When I asked Frank about the sleeping accomadations, he said

¹Taken from Royal Commission on Dominion Provincial Relations 1940, found in Horn (1972:175).

We had a twenty by ten room, with eight double bunks in it. You were issued two blankets, and if you didn't wash them yourself, they never got washed.

Obviously these men lived in substandard housing as a result of not having the money to afford better. Leonard Barstik, another subject in this study, is a case in point. He arrived in Canada from Macedonia in 1923, and obtained work with a plant in Port Colborne. He worked as a "plugger", using "copper shale" in his work. The gas emitting from treatment of the copper caused him to become sick sometime in 1930 and to be laid off. At some point before 1933 the company tried him as a mechanic's helper in their Sudbury works. His health though, was still impaired and he collapsed one day on the job. According to Leonard he was laid off for good this time. Prior to 1930 though, he had acquired three houses from which he was receiving rent. Laid off, he was unable to keep up the mortgage payments and he lost all three properties. Leonard then went back to Macedonia ruined, not to return to Canada until 1940 when once again there was work during the depression due to the widespread attitude of nativism.¹

¹The foreigners were blamed for taking the jobs of British subjects and as well, for being the source-point of emerging communist action (Brown & Brown, 1973:60-62, 64). The city of Winnipeg was especially active in urging Prime Minister Bennet's government to deport foreigners whose acquisition of citizenship represented a "disgrace to British citizenship and British traditions", (Webb, 1931:263). It was not confined to the west though, or to government officials, as the following excerpt from a letter written by a Grimsby, Ontario citizen (Bennet Papers, 1933:534), illustrates...

...Why not put some of these foreigners and Indians in their own country

When he returned he got a low paying job at a foundry and worked there 25 years until he was retired. Barstik was retired without a pension, and at no time during those 25 years was he able to once again buy a house. He now lives in a room, in a lower class district of Lake City. The housing situation for many single men was certainly not one that provided security or comfort.

With respect to health care during the depression, people were less able to pay doctor's fees with an "unhealthy" double result. Persons were spending what little money they had on non-prescription drugs rather than pay a higher doctor's consultation fee, but missing the opportunity for early diagnosis. This also created a situation where doctors and nurses were being laid off! They had very few patients while at the same time the need for care was higher than it had been for decades. (Lipset, 1968:278-280).

Consider then that if this was the case for persons on relief, what of the young single man who for a considerable part of this time was a transient. To receive relief one had to pass residency requirements, and if one was on the move,...no residency,...no relief. The transients' health would be correspondingly worse than those on relief.

It can be seen how these various features of the depression build on each other in a logically multiplying fashion. As low income affected

and give a white man some show, as they are taking work away from Canadian men,...our country is overrun by foreigners.

housing, and nutrition, thereby reducing the health level of the populace; so did the reduced health of people take its toll. Apart from the obvious fact that people died of diseases unnecessarily, evidence from a transient reveals that the men on the road were not able to work even when there was a rare opportunity. (Paul, 1939:171).

As might be expected the physical condition of the men is almost as low as their mental states. Exposure, cold, and hunger have taken their toll. Any scheme for rehabilitation must consider this. A stiff percentage would be unable to do a day's work in their present condition.

Husbands and wives without work and therefore without money, in rundown housing, with poor health because they and their children were not eating properly, all produced nervous tension that created the frictions which frequently destroy the harmony of family life.¹

¹Remembering that John Farrow spent many summers during the depression with Jim Sanderson picking fruit, and that he was separated from his wife in 1933, this account of life in Cabbagetown Toronto is likely indicative of the home life he and many other young men may have experienced with their young families.

Behind the frontwindows of Cabbagetown lies drama, pathetic or shocking: There are innumerable quarrels and bickerings, drunken fights, sordid tragedies. There are quarrels of worn-out parents with the idle and blase sons and daughters, who, unable to find work, must needs lie about the house all day sunk in cynical boredom, (Garner, 1936:146-147).

As well: It would appear that the longer a married man is without employment the greater are the chances of domestic strife occurring in the home, (R.C.M.P. Report, 1932: 269).

Half of the old men I know, who were in their twenties and thirties during the depression, never married at all. (See Chapter 5 on Family Development.)

There is too intense a complexity of the different depression factors working to-gether, and growing on one another, to keep all factors distinct. A man like Frank Brown was without work. As a single man in Toronto he could not get relief, so he was hungry, in poor health, and had on only a thin shirt in October of 1932 when he went north to the camps and suffered the insult the labour camps were to working men.

In concluding this section on the effects of the depression on, primarily young single men, one should note two statements made by Frank Brown.

I asked Frank if being in the camps and riding the rails etc. had had any lasting effect on him. "Well it made a drunk out of me. For a number of years I was a drunk. If you're out of work for that long, 1929-39, you become almost an 'unemployable'. The ten years of deterioration make a man take at least another ten years to re-establish himself." "And some of them never get re-established," I said. "That's right", Frank replied.

Something of a paradox existed for the men in the camps. While Roy Lancet earlier, and Frank Brown here, have both stated that the time they spent in the camps were periods of grim living conditions and long lasting debilitating influences, the following statement by Brown points out that the camps, bad as they were, were all that kept some men from starving.

In the 1934 provincial elections, Hepburn (P.M. of Ontario), was saying that he would abolish the camps, and the alternative to the camp was essentially

starvation. So we had lots of dynamite and for two months prior to the election all that could be heard up and down the road was explosions. We blew up all the work we'd been doing. It worked, they kept the camps open another two years.

Careers Subsequent to the Depression

The careers of these men were placed in a quasi mold during the depression. The character of their labours through those ten years to a large degree, set the pattern and maintained itself throughout the rest of their lives. As will be shown, the depression veterans were too old to go back to school, and too spiritually torn down to rush aggressively into the expanding labour market of World War II. Their jobs, subsequent to the depression, were of low to moderate skill, and of short to moderate duration. Any problems that had arisen in the course of the depression with respect to drinking, family, or health, continued for several years, and in most cases will go to their grave with them. Specifically then, what has occupied their time since "the long hard" years?

Let us first consider work histories. Vincent, Ralph Harmer, and Robert Seagull were a naval chef, a railway worker, and a crane operator respectively. Each of these men did the same sort of work throughout his working life. Brian South, and Reg Farley, while skilled, did not have steady employment in their fields. Brian worked for a company making railway cars during W.W. II and repaired bogey wheels sent back from tanks in Europe. While he is just now reaching what is considered to be retirement age, 65, I know that he has had two operations for cataracts which have enabled him to see, but not well enough to work.

Prior to the operations he was almost blind as a result of the cataracts. He is also presently still attending Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.). This would suggest that for a number of years now it has been impossible for him to do what he was trained to do.

In a somewhat similar case, Reg Farley "fell apart" when his wife died while he was in his fifties. He became an alcoholic and until he went to A.A., remained one. From the time his wife died it is doubtful whether he ever again lived up to his once held reputation as a gifted brick layer and successful small contractor.

The remaining fourteen men were not so steadfast in one occupational field. Even Jim Sanderson whom I consider to be semi-skilled to skilled, did not keep at a job for very long. Sam Thorn who did stay on the job, did so in a low skill position.

Jim has been a drill press operator for Ford, a mate on a lake oil tanker, a wino, and a fruit picker. These occupations, in the context of skill, run the gamut from no skill at all, to one that requires some skill and a large measure of experience. He worked the boats in season irregularly from 1915 to the late 1940's. This was interrupted by a stretch in the American army during World War I, by ten seasons of fruit picking in the fruit belt, and an irregular and unknown number of years as a wino. The winters were occupied by employment with Ford in Detroit and drinking. He has not seen the inside of a jail for ten years, but he is 78 years old, and confines his now limited drinking to hotels and his room.

The only job that ever held his interest was working on the lake boats. What might have been a career was cancelled by the seasonal

nature of the work, low pay, the depression which sometimes kept him off the boats entirely, and his drinking. There is no real way of knowing what prompted the heavy drinking. His drunkenness may have cost him some jobs, and on the other hand, the sad state of his working life may have been what drove him to drink.

Whereas Jim switched jobs frequently, Sam Thorn kept two jobs for fourteen years each, and two other jobs for several years each. He was a shipper/receiver for a department store a full 14 years, and for an equal time he was employed as a warehouse boss for a soft drink manufacturer. The latter job he quit, and from the former he was fired when the company changed hands for the third time. The two occupations of lesser lengths of time were with the Brewer's Retail, and as a handyman at an Anglican seminary. None of these jobs required great skill, and neither did they present avenues for advancement. Sam has, as well, a history of drinking. Whether or not any of his jobs were terminated because of drinking is not known; they were not by his own account.

A few other examples of semi-skilled and unskilled workers are: John Farrow, fruit picker, Tom Rainer, sometime surveyor, and Victor Bandow, an unskilled street worker for the city. There are also two cases of men who never held much of a job to speak of and were often on welfare.

As can be seen, the types of work engaged in by the men are blue collar jobs at best and casual to non-labour at worst. The length of time they stayed with a particular job varied from seasonal help to jobs lasting fifteen years.

Geographical mobility with respect to labour has a value determined by

the reason influencing a person to move. Whether a man moves to accept a promotion, or because he was laid off or fired from his previous employment, can have serious consequences for his well being. Only twenty percent of my respondents have made moves determined by their work situation. In not one of the cases did it advance their career, and one man in particular was hindered by the moves. If the relocations did not result in a net gain for these workers, why did they move? Circumstances demanded it. The jobs they had been on were in most cases over.

Frank Brown was a road worker at a relief camp in mid-Ontario, and then a fund raiser in Southern Ontario for the International Brigade. When the Spanish Civil War petered out, he moved to Northern Ontario because of steady work and good pay where he was a mining camp chef. He later spend two years avoiding conscription, and for his trouble was put to work in a factory in southern Ontario. Frank moved all over the province as political and economic circumstances demanded without finding any long lasting job or trade with which to maintain himself securely.

Similar rapid movement with no gain and some hinderance because of the short terms of labour which ruled out fringe benefits, pay hikes, promotions, etc., is the chronicle of Jim Sanderson. He left the boats when the ice came. He left the factory when the ice thawed. He left the boats when there was no longer any work, and left fruit picking when there was once again boat work. Jim's moves earned him nothing, and cost him the means to comfortable living and independence in old age.

Robert Seagull was a construction crane operator and he went where they were paying any wages or the best wages. This entailed travels

that took in camps near Kapuskasing in the 30's, and several jobs totalling ten years in South America.

For the rest of the men geographical movement was of little significance. And for those to whom it was important, they realized no gain in the exchange.

These three aspects of their working lives: skills, movement, and length of time on a job, all influence the wages and benefits that the men were eligible for. With respect to wages three things stand out. They were not well skilled men, and they got their start in the working world in non-union days. This naturally implied low wages. These were not the wages that enabled a man to purchase property. If Jim had stayed with Ford for thirty years he could have purchased a home. Instead, he worked seasonally and did some drinking too. His wages looked after day to day concerns only.

In the realm of benefits, the men fared less well. Very few of them receive anything from the Canada Pension Plan, and if you have any income other than the Old Age Security plus the supplement, an amount is deducted from your pension to nullify any savings you might have.¹ To have personal savings puts less burden on the government but does the individual no good at all. I'm referring to small savings accounts, and not to property holdings.

¹Don Sawchuk has a small savings account and because of it he has had \$2.00 deducted from receiving the full pension plus supplement each month. Sam Thorn had his supplement cut off for a year to allow for the dissipation of a \$1,000.00 savings account the government discovered he had developed as a result of a job he held the year previous.

Only two of the men ever received money from a company pension, and these were Sam Thorn who once received a department store pension that has long since run out, and Leonard Barstik who had a \$500.00 pension spread over about four years following retirement. Very few companies offered pensions when these men were working, and virtually none had schemes whereby pension credits were transferable from job to job.

After the depression my respondents became permanent residents of Lake City. There was some work to be had in the city, and in having a residence they became eligible for some pension benefits legislated into effect during the late 1930's and 1940's, i.e. Old Age Security, and Unemployment Insurance.

Even with their residential stability established in the late 1940's, the work careers of these men did not change significantly. The only noticeable alteration was that they were no longer so mobile.

In fact, when I review their careers through the 1950's and 1960's, the only feature of note is their changing travelling behaviour. After a year's observation and talking to the men I know of only three who take any trips. Jim Sanderson used to go every August approximately, to visit his sister in Detroit, but did not go this year. This was by no means a big expensive trip, to Detroit on a bus is not very glamorous. And it does not appear as though he will go again except for her funeral. She is senile and Jim feels it might be very upsetting for both of them, so he does not want to go.

Jim did make two trips in 1973. He first went to Toronto for a day.

He told me they had pop for a nickel, hot dogs for a nickel; subsidized \$8,000. by the city for elderly people, and that it was "more than cheap Lake City would do". He walked around the City Hall grounds, through Chinatown, and went to the

Yonge Street mall Toronto holds in the summer.
He said, "I was going to go on the subway, but
didn't because it was getting late."

This trip was the longest one he made all year and was a bus ride to a city 40 miles away for one day.

His other excursion was to a small town a few miles outside of Lake City for a couple of hours by bus again. He went to visit the people he had picked fruit for during the depression.

"Yes, it was really nice to go and see those people; they're real good people. There are three families who live next to each other up there.
"How long did you work there fruit picking Jim?"
I asked. "Every summer for ten years I guess.
They're real down to earth people, not 'high hat' at all, happy to see a sort of hobo like me."

That was it, in a year he spend a day and a half travelling outside Lake City. I do not think there is any doubt he enjoyed himself during both outings. Relative to the other men I've been working with, Jim has done a considerable amount of travelling, but by middle class standards I don't think his journeys even qualify for the word "travelling", in the context in which we use it. He himself gave no indication that he considered it anything more than a short trip.

Don Sawchuk has told me he sometimes takes a bus ride to see his daughter in Sudbury. He told me as an aside when we were talking a little about farming. Don's primary point was that he had been impressed by the high quality agriculture in Holland Marsh north of Toronto which he had gone by on the way to Sudbury. Nothing he has ever said makes me think he has taken this trip in the last year, although I'm not absolutely sure he has not. Nevertheless, even if he has it is all the travelling he has done.

The only trip George has ever made any reference to was a trip to his sister's in Galt several years ago. He says he "ate her out of house and home" for three weeks and did not think she wants him to return for another visit.

None of the other men have ever mentioned making any trips anywhere. They are all quite sedentary in their old age, and while Robert Seagull worked part of his life in Northern Ontario, and about ten years in South America, he says now with respect to travelling in his past 65 years,...

I don't do much travelling, but can go anywhere in the city on my transit pass that costs \$10.00 per year.

These men have stopped travelling in any way which can be considered significant with respect to their daily activities.

Conclusions

The men do not consider their work histories to be failures. They do not though, discuss them very much on their own. When they relate working histories to me, some like Reg Farley are quite proud when telling of their ability to both find work and produce good quality products. On the other hand, men like Don Sawchuk seem to place no importance on their working days. Don will freely talk to me and has invited me to stay for a meal, but when it comes to work I have to pry each detail from him. Men like Jim Sanderson and Frank Brown, who were both out of work for part of the depression, tell me of adventures they had in those days while just mentioning the work that took them to an area in the first place. The perception of working careers by the men thus ranges from disinterest to a proud recounting if solicited.

The working past Lake City's aged indigents carry with them is on in which the depression played a significant role. Being in the sector of the work force most vulnerable to setbacks in the economy, they suffered personal setbacks. Some of them have not worked regularly since those years, while others have. None of them have ever been more than blue collar workers or low paid clerks. Economic poverty has accompanied them into old age, it is not something novel for them.

The opportunity presented in the post depression years was the ability to have some form of permanent residence, accompanied by a combination of work and pension bnenfits. These years did not lift them out of poverty, but there was a security permitting them to abandon the hobo role. They stopped travelling to find work, and confined trips to seeing family and friends. As will become clear in the following chapters, these latter reasons for travelling, and the onset of old age, has curtailed the travelling of the Lake City aged poor to what I have described in this chapter.

The familial side of their lives is tied to the economic realities they have endured, and it works in both directions. As I pointed out earlier in this chapter, the depression came at a time in their lives when most young people begin to create families if they have any intentions of ever doing so. The depression itself, and the work, social habits and trends which grew out of it, have all had an effect on the development of families for these men. And as will become clear in the following chapters, family, social, and economic backgrounds all bear directly on the lives of the aged indigent to-day.

Part III

The Contemporary Situation

CHAPTER V

Family and Friends

Introduction

The treatment of the family in this thesis is substantially different from the framework commonly used in the gerontological literature. Rosow (1967), and Shanas et al. (1968), tend to consider the fact of an already mature family. Starting from this point, they are then concerned with frequency of seeing children, aid received from children, etc. Rosenberg (1970:14), also deal with households where there are married couples, and usually both partners still alive. The breadwinners of these households have maintained a stable economic position for the great majority of their working lives. In a further example of his sample's stability, Rosenberg (1970:20) reveals,

The residential stability of the members of the sample can be explained in large part by the fact that most of them are homeowners.

For these authors then¹, a mature family is the three generation one where people have been married, and have had children who are now grown and married themselves. When this same form of research considers

¹The journal end of the literature is equally lacking in this area. "The Gerontologist", a leading journal, in the last five years has published virtually nothing on the situation of the single indigent, let alone his family relations.

the aged widow or widower they discuss, almost to the exclusion of everyone else, such persons who have adult children to visit and support them in various degrees of frequency and amount.

My subjects are alone and have been for some time. One author who does concern himself with the plight of the single aged is Jeremy Tunstall (1966) in his book Old and Alone. Unfortunately, while of some use, his data deals more with those who are widowed and have some contact with children or other kin. The attitudes held by and the services received by his respondents were particular to Britain and do not apply in the same way here.

As well, authors who write on skid row (S.E. Wallace, 1965; J.P. Spradley, 1970 for instance), confine themselves to a discussion of skid rowers as a group of middle aged men who are getting older. Their point in mentioning "older" though, is that the skid row population is declining. They are not concerned with age related problems and therefore the population is analyzed as a homogeneous group.

The problem with respect to my respondents lies in the fact that they fall somewhere inbetween skid row and blue collar working class, with a skew towards the former. This being the case I can take the observations and conclusions made by researchers like Rosenberg, Rosow, or Zena Blau with respect to friendship and family relations, and apply them to my men making note by way of support with the skid row literature where applicable.

As I stated, occasionally literature is found that directly applies to my research, but unfortunately such examples are too brief, infrequent, and cannot provide hard data. Sharon Curtin (1972) in her work entitled

Nobody Ever Died of Old Age presents a collection of her observations on a varied population of aged persons. One chapter in particular could be written about practically anyone of my respondents. Curtin's study remains valuable because she points by the distinctiveness of her content and method, to the meagre amount of work done on this segment of the population to date.

The most notable feature of the family structure of these aged indigents is the lack of one. As pointed out in Chapter 1, not a single individual of my respondents is presently living with a woman. If not always, they are now all single. As Wallace (1965:147) points out, the skid rower is divorced or separated twelve times as often as the members of the larger community. The reasons for these separations still exist and therefore necessarily colour their potentialities for relationships with family members after the unit has broken down. Similarly these men are found to have a limited number of siblings and children. The number is atrophied to me as a researcher, partially because they are somewhat recalcitrant about discussing the lack of family relations they have. While the respondents know of the existence of some kin, there is little more to tell because they very rarely ever see them. (Wallace, 1965:146).

What this chapter proposes to do is to provide an outline of the particular family evolutions. This should illustrate many parallel familial situations amongst the men and connect these to their labour careers. I will then present evidence on the status of their relations, or lack of same, with kin. Without ties to family, the men are left with friends and neighbours to provide them with companionship and aid where it exists.

Zena Blau (1973:66) has argued recently, that in old age relationships with family decline at the same time as do work roles, although certainly to a lesser extent. With these two major roles exists opening a large hole in the meaningfulness of an older person's life, this vacuum must be filled with alternative roles for the sake of the subject's mental well being.

...each role exit signifies a reduction of his social resources, thereby constricting his freedom to control his own destiny and to influence others...

...though friendships are of minor significance in adulthood, compared to work and marriage, they are an effective restitution for the loss of the work and marital roles in old age...

She argues (1973:67), that this "filler", is friendship and that it therefore takes on a much greater significance in the later years than it did when the person had several other resources in their work and marriage roles.

....Indeed, because friendship rests on mutual choice and mutual need and involves a voluntary exchange of sociability between equals, it sustains a person's sense of usefulness and self-esteem more effectively than filial relationships.

To whatever degree friendship fails to provide a significant alternative to lost roles it is lacking as a means of making old age a happy period. Irving Rosow states (1967:145),

...there may be no effective substitute for the loss of any major social role except an equally significant status which is as highly valued and rewarded.

Remembering that my sample is anomalous with respect to the great body of the literature, including Blau, her points on friendship must be modified to a degree. While I will argue in this chapter that

because of the absence of work and marriage roles, the alternative is friends and neighbours; they are of a sort which were developed prior to old age and had significance at these early points too. The respondents being dealt with here have been at least partially without the two major roles enjoyed by the larger population for a great number of years. I will also argue that because of their older age now, regardless of non-diminishing need, these relationships are declining or at least changing emphasis from friends to neighbours. This is occurring due largely to three phenomena: 1) their decreased mobility due to sheer physical slowdown, 2) their decreased drinking habits, and 3) the loss of some of their cronies via death.

Married and Alone

Less than 50% of the men have ever been married.¹ And of all the women who are no longer with their husbands, less than 30% were separated by death. This means that almost three quarters of the men who were ever married are either separated or divorced. Charles Goldfarb (1969:279) in reporting on a Bowery Project in New York City had similar findings:

Five percent of the men were currently married;
42% were single and the remainder were divorced,
separated or widowed.

¹While the following are American figures, I am taking them as being indicative of the Canadian situation. Riley and Foner point out (1968:159), that in the years showing the highest percentage, 45-64, approximately 88% of all men are married. They go on to point out that even after 65 years of age, over 70% of all men are still married. Compare this with the above statement that only half of my respondents were ever married, and none of them are now.

Of the wives of my respondents who died, indications suggest they were with their husbands until death. For example, in the case of Reg Farley his wife's death was the catalyst which probably catapulted him into far greater problems. In a conversation with him, he was telling me how he used to be a wino who stood in the soup line. I asked him how long ago this was.

It happened when my wife died. Things sort of fell apart after that. People don't understand how that can cause all the collapse, but if it happened to them they'd know.

In another case I was talking to Vincent and Jim Sanderson in the park one day, and we were discussing the cost of dying, in the economic sense...

Jim said, "...You can't afford to die! Do you know what it costs to-day for a plot in Holy Sepulchre Cemetery?" "No", I said, "\$325.00", he said. I then commented, "Yeah, and when you add in \$500.00 which is a modest sum for funeral parlour services, your costs go up to \$800.00." Vincent then said, "Well for round figures, say \$1000.00. I know it cost me just about that much to bury my wife."

Ralph Harmer's spouse is dead. Brian South's wife died in 1948, and he is only 65 now, making him 40 when she died. Reg Farley was in his fifties when his wife died and Vincent is only in his late 60's now, and so could not have been too old when his wife passed away. These dead women are not the norm. The average age for women to die in Ontario according to 1969 statistics (Canada Year Book, 1972:261), is at 68.7 years, as compared to 63.6 for men. Therefore judging by the pattern of the other married men who are older and have wives who left them, and realizing that Brian South is an alcoholic still working to stay off licquor, and that Reg Farley became an alcoholic within a few years of

his wife's death, it would not be rash to speculate that the percentage of broken marriages might have been slightly higher had these women lived longer.

I have little reason to suspect that any additional women have passed away rather than separated. The reason for this is that death is respectable, and can be mentioned quite easily, provided it was not a recent event, as the above examples illustrate. To say that your wife left you because you were an unemployed wino is somewhat more difficult to verbalize. Situations such as the latter do get talked about, but they require more time.

Children

Almost all of the men who have ever been married, have had children before the marriage dissolved. In the same sense that men don't readily talk about wives who have left them, neither do very many of them talk at any length about their children. Brother Stephen has talked with one son of each of Tony Walker, and Scott Mandel. Other than this, neither I nor anyone I know, has talked to any of the children of these men, or seen them with their parents.

In the cases of two of the men, I would probably have never heard about their children except by happenstance I was with Sam in the park when another skid rower came up and asked him what his sons were doing. With Victor Bandow, I heard of his children at the same time I discovered the past existence of a wife by the same two separate and confirming sources. In the former's case, Sam Thorn, knowledge of his sons came as a great surprise to me...

This man then asked Sam about his sons. His sons! It was the first I'd heard of any family. One son is living in the Lake City Y.M.C.A., one is "out west somewhere", and another is in Montreal. He didn't sound like he ever saw them, and after he answered the question he said no more about them.

Parental Family

Wives, lack of wives, and children have been observed and noted. The result of this examination is that the men have no family of their own to speak of with the exception of some children. The other aspect of family is the parental side. These men are too old to still have parents, but they are certainly eligible for some siblings even though some of these have died.

While only 40% of the men have siblings alive to-day, the percentage is continually dropping when one considers persons as old as these men are. For instance, a couple of the men used to have siblings living locally who they apparently had some contact with. John Farrow's brother died in June 1972, and he still wears his brother's ring. He also went and bought back his brother's watch from the pawn shop as the former had been sold to buy licquor, and he now keeps it at home. Farrow's friend Jim Sanderson used to have a brother in Lake City too, but he died four years ago. Reg Farley said he used to know both of them quite well, which makes me think that perhaps the brothers spent a fair bit of time to-gether.

Siblings still alive are not necessarily accessible. Roy Lancet has a half-brother whom he has not seen since he was a child. Roy does not even know the man's name, and neither is he sure the fellow is still alive. Jim Sanderson has a sister in Detroit and she has been accessible

by bus about once a year although this year Jim did not go because he had the flu. As well, his sister is senile and he thinks it might upset both of them if he visited her. Closer to home, Brian South, Reg Farley, and George Vale have siblings within fifty miles of Lake City whom they see every two years or so.

The development of families is directly tied to the early careers these old indigents have had. The combination of poverty, and continually being on the move, severely hampered their ability to take on the responsibility of starting a family. As well, during those depression years they were separated from family for extended periods of time, thereby helping to break down parental family links with siblings.

Family Relations

The point raised by Wallace earlier regarding the lack of relations with kin is given further support in the findings of both Rosow and Rosenberg, and in the survey made by Curtin (part of which includes two skid row winos). Poor people who have had a history of subsistence living have been found by Rosenberg (1970:152), to have "lower than expected rates of contact with kin." This is a reference to poor families. The degree of contact decreases further when you take the case of the man living alone. Rosenberg (1970: 153) concludes,

The separated, divorced and never married have lower rates of kin contact than do the married or widowed...Males domiciled alone...contact their kin less than do more conventionally domiciled families and solitary females.

Rosow makes a similar point with regard to help and care of the ill received by parents from children. His respondents are all apartment dwellers. He finds the primary factor in whether or not parents receive

help from their children is the distance which separates the two. The closer to-gether they live, the greater the likelihood of aid. Coinciding with this he states (1967:151), of "those parents with no local children, less than half receive any kind of help from them at all." Rosow's investigation of those living alone reveals there is dramatically less help forthcoming from relatives (1967:161).

...even in longer illnesses, only one third of the solitary can mobilize family members...less than half as frequently as people who live with others.

He goes on to point out that in such cases one of the alternatives available in varying degrees are neighbours and friends. This will be considered further below.

The point made by both Rosenberg and Rosow is that men who are alone for whatever reason, and are of a background that is consistently one of poverty, see less of kin than do the larger population of married, aged persons. The subjects I deal with have a further factor to consider when asking why they see very little of their kin. They are old skid rowers. Their ties with family are, as has already been made clear, extremely limited. In fact they are shunned by the community as a whole with the result that they are very much alone with the exception of their friends and like sort neighbours.

Of the men in my sample, 50% of them have mentioned some kin to me in the year I have been meeting and spending time with them. I have never seen any of these relatives. Their relationships with their family are never frequent, and sometimes agonizing.

Often the men have children they haven't seen in years even when some of these children live in Lake City. George Vale suggested the

relationship he has with his son one day when we were talking in the park.

George: "They train your dogs in obedience there. They make them walk around in circles. We took our dog there. Well actually my son Howie took him, a police dog, and he got 100%." I remembered something about his son from a prior conversation, so I said, "What's Howie up to now?" "He works in the steel plant and I have not seen him for over a year. The last time was..." George has garbled speech, and does not enunciate well at all, and so even when I asked him to repeat this last part I did not know what he said.

George's wife left him some years back. He had a stroke three years ago and has been on welfare ever since. Life for George now is one without family, one without work. He depends on friends and neighbours.

Sam Thorn is another man who in his late 70's is still a drunk. He has a wife from whom he is separated, and three sons of whom he never makes any mention. He would much rather talk about the jobs he once had and how he would like to work again. I only discovered, as mentioned earlier, that he has these sons when another drunk asked where they were. One of them is in Lake City, and the rest are scattered around the country, with him not too sure even what province one of them is in, "out west somewhere".

Tony Walker is a man who is a chronic alcoholic whose wife and at least one son live in Lake City. He is separated from his wife and she refuses to ever see him. The son, although willing to have his father come and visit him, explained to Brother Stephen at the Inner City Hostel why he never goes to visit the father...

Brother Stephen: When I called his son he seemed like a very nice guy, and said that his Father was welcome to come and visit anytime he wanted, but

that he wouldn't take his sons to visit their Grandfather. He said, "The places my Father has been living in, and the way he lives, I wouldn't take my kids to see such conditions."

Walker is now living at the Hostel and to my knowledge the son has not come down to visit his father in his new relatively pleasant conditions.

Some of the men who have children living a large distance away from them see them occasionally. Don Sawchuk has a daughter in Sudbury with whom he lived for a short period after he left the prairies, in the late 30's. Shortly after, he moved to Lake City and now, once a year perhaps, takes a bus ride up to see her. He has never mentioned his daughter coming to see him. Don's wife has never been brought to light in any conversation and it seems the only relative he ever sees is his infrequently visited daughter.

None of the men who still have spouses alive ever see them and Tony Walker is the only one I have heard of who ever tried to. She refused to see him or talk to him. As the above cases illustrate, children might as well not exist either. The rare times fathers see any of them are so infrequent as to provide at best only negligible uplift to their spirits. Scott Mandel's son made himself available long enough to move his father from one of the city hospitals over to the Brothers' hostel. It was supposed to be a temporary accomodation until he could be placed in one of the city lodges. These arrangements fell through and so Scott stayed on (happily too), at the hostel. The son though is a rare figure at the hostel now that he has fulfilled his obligation.

The only other family these men have are siblings. These have proved to be somewhat closer than wives, and in some cases, children too. Nevertheless, they are either dead now or seen so little as to provide neither companionship or aid to any of the respondents.

In developing family histories I said both John Farrow and Jim Sanderson used to have brothers to whom they may have been quite close. At the same time it was made clear that there are also men like Roy Lancet who has a half-brother he has not seen since he was a child. To a lesser degree there is Jim Sanderson's sister in Detroit whom he never sees more frequently than once a year. These men then closely approximate what Wallace and other skid row writers declare to be non-existent ties to kin. They are not the same people surveyed by Rosow and Rosenberg, whose studies deal for the most part with family units matured and partially scattered by children leaving home. The elderly indigents of Lake City are alcoholics past or present and because of this they have lost most semblances of conventional life in the community. This is not to say that there were not extenuating circumstances prevailing on them to leave homes behind, and allow old values to disintegrate. There were, and these take the dominant form of the men having been lower class urbanites and farm people to begin with. As such, they were the people who suffered most severely in the great depression, creating patterns in those years which destined them to remain casual labour and serious drinkers.

Friends and Their Limits

The people these men choose for friends are long time comrades. Some of them have known each other since the days their marriages were

still together, as I know Jim Sanderson knows both John Farrow and his wife. Some forty years later, in the summer of 1973, John called on his old friend Jim to testify at his divorce about a woman Jim has not seen in all those years. Friends and neighbours are role alternatives, and sources of support for my respondents in the absence of the customary marriage and work roles. The difference is that these alternative roles were embarked upon thirty and forty years ago, much before they became old men. These persons are still their friends, even though they are now it seems, for several reasons, having to rely more on neighbours to become friends.

These men who depend on other like men as alternatives to families do not seem to have a great number of friends. My observations of the men in the meal line at the "Brothers", in the park, and in the hotel beverage rooms reveals that the men spend a great deal of their time essentially alone. There is some company I suppose, in just being in the park with the other men even if you do not speak to any of them. And while they are eating at the mission they often converse. Significantly though, they arrive at the mission singly and leave in the same manner. As often as not when they are in the hotels they sit alone.

Rosow (1967:58) has found, while doing his investigations, that the middle class respondents have almost twice as many friends as the working class people in the study, (25% of the working class with more than 10 friends versus 44% of the middle class). And similarly, twice as many of the working class as the middle class have less than 4 friends, (40% of working class with less than 4 friends versus 19% of the middle class).¹

of middle class).¹

The primary source of the differences here lies in the middle class's much greater access to resources, notably in the areas of having the means to transport themselves large distances, and participation in community organizations which do not terminate when they retire from work.

My observations of the downtown indigents definitely places them in the camp of the working class when one is considering the number of friends they can count. One day I asked Jim Sanderson how many friends he felt he had.

"Well I have about 4 what I would call good friends, ...and a hundred acquaintances." "Would Mr. Farrow be one of the four?" I asked. "Yes, I would call him a friend. I've known him for a long time. I knew his Father originally, although he's only about ten years younger than me."

More days than not though, Jim really only has extended conversations with his neighbour Jay downstairs, who has become a friend. It is the older men who spend most of their time alone. Victor Bandow, who suffers from arthritis, spends practically all his time in his room. He goes out to shop, once in awhile he goes to the Brothers' for a meal, and he regularly goes out to get a newspaper. Victor used to sell newspapers himself and the man who presently sells them on Queen St. is one of his very few good friends.

¹See also Rosenberg (1970:27).

Another old man, Don Sawchuk (77), used to have a fairly good friend in Stanley Berry. Don had stopped drinking though, and found about a year ago that at his old house where Stanley lived there was just too much noise and drunkenness. So he moved out to room in another house about a mile and a half away. From that time on he saw Stanley only every couple of months, and that seemed to be only because of chance meetings downtown. Stanley died in late April of 1973, and one time in mid June when I and another man were talking to Don, we asked him if he had heard about Stanley. He said no, and that he hadn't seen him since the previous Christmas. We told him that Stanley had died and Don responded by saying,...

Well Stanley didn't eat right, he drank too much, and he was 73. So its o.k. He's gone, (and made an accompanying pushing aside motion with his hands). Don also suggested that maybe he would be the next to die.

Stanley himself epitomized the extreme of having few friends. He qualified as isolated in that his fear of people stealing things from him kept him inside for the great majority of the time. His reluctance towards going out resulted in his not getting medical attention for a cut finger until it was badly infected. He was perhaps not really so much paranoid as he was unable to roll with the inevitable punches of being a skid row drunk. Stanley had changed his name so his wife could not trace him and maybe she was indeed pursuing him for some reason. He told me that he had his glasses, some magazines, and his refrigerator stolen. This accounts for the three locks on his door which also showed signs of forcible entry. Consequently, Stanley had very few friends, especially after Don Sawchuk moved out. One night he asked me why the

Brothers hadn't come to visit him recently. He was a lonely frightened old man and was found dead on the street he feared so much.

Transition From Friends to Neighbour/Friends

As he gets older Don is showing all three of the indicators I mentioned earlier in this chapter suggesting the older men find friends in their neighbours or go without. Blau (1973:83), in discussing the impact of various role changes on friendship argues that,

the effect of major role exits on older people's friendships depends on the prevalence of these exits among their peers.

I agree with her finding, and in the case of my respondents the fact is that there is a prevalence of old friends dying off; such as Don's friend Stanley, one of Brian South's good friends who died in the early fall of 1973, and John Farrow's brother who was a friend of John's and Jim Sanderson too. This does not, however, mean that the remaining men are able to come to-gether and rely on each other for friendship.

It is interesting to note in this respect how as well as death separating fellows, other variables drive some old skid rowers apart, when they are trying to take action to lengthen their lives a little. At the time Brian South told myself and another man with me of his friend dying he also spoke of his relationship with another old friend fast becoming extinguished. (Note: Brian presently attends A.A.)

With respect to friends, Brain asked us if we ever saw Lorne Gooter on Gold St. I said, "Was he in 21 Gold?" "No." "Oh, because that place has been condemned now." "No, he's in 41 Gold, the last stone house on the block. He's sick, sick with wine. I used to see him regular, 3-4 times a week, buy wine for him when he was too sick to get out and stuff. One day he was putting on this paste for some black sores on his

skin and couldn't reach his back. So he asked me to do it for him. I did, and then a few days later I broke out with these black marks. They came out on my arms and leg and then the other leg. I went to my doctor, and he gave me a liquid that worked." "How long did it take to clear up Brian?" I asked him. "It was gone in 48 hours. I took some up to Lorne but he didn't use it. His won't go away because he doesn't put it on right, or often enough. I got mad about this, and haven't seen him for a couple of months now."

Further difficulties in seeing remaining friends are demonstrable in several features of their declining years. As already noted, the men who live to see 70 cut down on their drinking. This trend occurs also for the general population, as supported by statistics compiled by the Addiction Research Foundation in Toronto, (1973) They note that in Ontario for the age category 39-49, 88.5% of their respondents were users of alcohol, while in the age category of 50 and older, only 67.2% used alcohol. Jim Sanderson was mentioned one day when I was down at the Brothers. It turned out from the conversation that three of the six men in the room who are old drunks used to drink with Jim! None of them had seen him recently and none of them knew exactly where he was even living now. While Tony Walker expressed an interest in going to see him, and Reg Farley and Danny have said that they really like Jim, I doubt very much whether any of them will ever go to see him, and Jim will probably only see them if he bumps into them downtown.

Secondly, as Don Sawchuk pointed out to me, his legs are not as good as they used to be and he rarely ventures too far from home.

(Remember Victor Bandow who essentially only leaves his room to shop and buy a paper.) When the weather is good Don goes for a walk around the block,

but almost never goes to the park anymore, and never walks to the Brothers' now that it is a good 6-7 blocks from his place. I have never seen him anywhere but around his own house and street.

In addition to the loss of friends through death, deteriorating health, and decreased drinking, there is as well the structure of lower class neighbourhoods which isolates the skid rower from those around him. Rosenberg (1970:80) states,

But poverty, in isolating the poor from neighbours of higher economic standing, also estranges them from the younger, child rearing residents of the local area. Income differences and family and life-cycle differences combine to erect a barrier to neighbourhood affiliation which is difficult to surmount.

Not living in dense apartment areas full of pensioners, the men are lucky if they can make friends with one other man in their rooming house, who is probably a skid rower too. In Jim Sanderson's case his drinking is often confined to what he has with Jay downstairs.

When Don Sawchuk left the house where he had been a neighbour of Stanley's, he took on a new set of friends, his new neighbours. I have seen him sitting talking to another old man who lives in his house and a younger man, a neighbour from across the street. Since he virtually never goes further than two blocks away from his house, these are the only people he has contact with. (His grocery store is a small corner outlet a block away.)

Similarly, Roy Lancet's best friend (now that the old man who used to have the frontroom died of cancer two years ago), is the man he splits the cost of food with, the other man who lives downstairs. Roy too has stopped drinking (Roy was a resident of the hobo jungles during the

30's and was quite a drunk), and so has not any drinking buddies.

Rosow (1967:100) maintains, that the working class people are much more locally involved than middle class persons are.

The active social life in the working class is centered on the place of residence while middle class members move through a much broader social arena beyond their immediate environment.

He also states (1967:101), that if the density of aged persons living in a neighbourhood is greater than 50%, the effect may well be to decrease isolation because of the strong opportunities available for extensive neighbouring.

This situation does not exist with the older men I know who live in an area with a density of aged persons of 10.9% (1971 Census of Canada: Lake City).¹ Therefore, unless they move into an area such as a mission hostel or nursing home, where the density of aged persons is likely to exceed 75%, the men can expect to witness a continuing drop in the number of friends with whom they have any contact.

Conclusions

The family situation of the aged indigents has been outlined to illustrate unions begun, lost, and still functioning. I have made the point that fewer than 50% of the men have ever been married. Of those who were, none are presently with their wives, less than 30% lost their wives via death with the rest coming by way of separation or divorce, and

¹My sample of men takes in 11 census tracts. The aged density ranged from 7-15% of the total population of the tracts. I consider aged in this case to be 55 years or older.

almost all of these once married men have grown children. And finally, while the numbers are dropping as time moves forward, 40% of the men now have siblings still alive.

To try and give an overall impression of the relationships my respondents have with friends and neighbours I have to say they are essentially alone. While it is true many of them at one time had a large number of drinking comrades I have already pointed out that they have suffered considerable attrition in the ranks of these friends. On the basis of the examples above and generally what I've seen of the men in the last year I feel that most of them, because they live in cheap rooming houses with other skid rowers, have neighbours upon whom they can rely in times of need.

Jim, who was sick with the flu in December of 1973, said that his neighbour/friend Jay downstairs had bought groceries for him during his illness. Unless he got very sick this would probably be all the aid or care he would receive. When I asked him if he ever went to see a doctor when he got the flu he said, "No, I've had it for years." For the most part though these men are used to being alone and fending for themselves. Even so, there are times when they get lonely or depressed and this can sometimes precipitate going on a drunk for a week or so. Once when I arrived at Jim's room to find him drunk, he said,...

Yes I'm half 't-eeed up'. I did it yesterday. I guess it was because of (and he hesitated seemingly searching for the right word), melancholy.

The combination of their poverty, lifestyle, and associated needs brought these men to-gether. The biological limitations of old age have worked to socially limit these men to a few friends who live in

their immediate locale. This history of the above factors now tied to biological breakdown, has all but cut off family ties too.

In this chapter I have outlined the status of these aged indigents' families, and their relations with them, friends, and neighbours. It is the physical infirmities and conditions of living to which my concern now turns, in continuing the description of their contemporary lives which commenced with this chapter.

CHAPTER VI

Health

Introduction

In defining what the word health implies for my aged indigents, there are several factors which must be considered. The first of these is time. The physical condition of the men in their environment has been developing throughout their lives. Some features of their present physical situation are ultimately tied to the conditions prevailing wherever they were born. Elements like clothing, housing, and nutritional intake have not changed dramatically in the course of adult life for most of the men. On the other hand, whatever the effects that these relatively unchanging conditions encouraged have escalated.

The purely physical environmental areas, and one's mental health begin to overlap more concretely as the men grow older. As the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto (1973: E3) states,

The aging phase of life brings into sharp focus the interlocking of physical health, mental health and social, economic and environmental factors.

This being the case, the social and physical aspects of health play a part in the everyday life of the men. As pointed out in various parts of previous chapters, the men have had family relations affected by drinking, and their ability to visit friends or travel around the city has been generally hampered by a deterioration of their health. The nutritional aspect of some skid rowers lives also has been seen to

create several hours of afternoon activity when they eat at the missions.

It is for this reason that I view their health in terms of how it affects their everyday lives more so than the actual diseases they may incur. Diseases are important and will be discussed to some degree. Such acute or chronically ill men cannot function independently and so must leave the area for some form of subsidized institution. When this occurs, I can no longer interact with them as they have left the locale which characterizes their existence. My interest then, considers only briefly the services available, and instead concentrates on the nature of their ability to function within their social milieu. This is what seems to me to be critical to developing a realistic understanding of what life is like for the aged indigents in the context of health. As Shanas (1968:25) explains it,

...health in the elderly is best measured in terms of function
...degree of fitness rather than extent of pathology...

To fulfill this perspective on health I will discuss in the following order the areas of physical environment, including food, clothing and shelter; conditions related to their work careers; the effects of drinking; and biological diseases with symptoms connoting physical decline.

Nutrition and Health

Some of the men have been eating poor institutional food or mission meals regularly since the depression. Roy Lancet has related to me that he never starved during the depression because he could pan-handle a meal. "But you could still eat. You'd bum a meal and then go up to the 'jungle' to eat." The jungle is a reference to the shanty camps

hobos used to put up near railway tracks. Even so, Roy did spend two years in a government relief camp. Frank Brown phrased it a little more poignantly when I asked him why he entered a relief camp in the early 1930's:

Well I was single you see, and if you were single they wouldn't give you any relief. So from hunger I was forced to go to the camps. They had just as good a weapon as Hitler had with his concentration camps. He used a gun to force you into the camps, the Canadian government used hunger. Both work quite well.

This, in conjunction with my observations of younger skid rowers at the missions, leads me to qualify a statement made by the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto (1973: B10). In discussing the poor meals many of the aged eat, they state,

Low income and high shelter costs force many seniors to continue to prepare their meals long after they can properly do so from the standpoint of nutritional adequacy and safety.

I would agree that in both these respects my men are lacking, but in their case it is not a specific phenomena of old age. As a result of their working careers as migrant labour and skid rowers, they have not enjoyed a balanced diet in most cases for many years. Therefore, while I describe their nutritional intake to-day, it should be understood that the men have been consuming this sort of diet for a good many years.

Some of the men claim to eat pretty well, but evidence in their rooms suggests otherwise. Canned spaghetti or its equivalent is usually the meal. Some have told me of a diet which leaves a lot to be desired, although others, like Jim Sanderson, do eat three meals a day including eggs for breakfast. Forty percent of the men I have worked with did or do eat at the Inner City Hostel quite a bit in the last two weeks of the month, and a couple of times a week in the first half of the month.

In the beginning of each month with their pension cheque solvency, the men usually spend the money in some combination of restaurants, groceries, rent, and wine. When the money runs out, they return to the hostel.

The men who eat very regularly at the hostel, as Gavin Harper used to, have a pretty poor diet. It was, until recently, their only meal in the day, not counting bread they might eat in the morning that they picked up from the hostel the night before. Now the Refuge Mission has moved it's meal time back to noon, so that men who are willing to walk to both places can get soup and a sandwich at lunch, and macaroni at the hostel for dinner. The hostel serves a stew, which has a macaroni base and whatever else is available, every night except Sunday. A steady diet of macaroni will fill you up and not much more.

Men such as these typically eat only one meal a day, their supper. I know from serving at the hostel that many of the men take home day old pastry which is presumably eaten during the next day to carry them over until supper. On the days when they are not at the hostel, canned food often serves as supper. Many of the men eat canned spaghetti, or stew. Others will buy a hamburger or perhaps cook a little sausage they have purchased.

When Leonard Barstik does not make it to the hostel his daily fare is soup in the morning and either a meat pie or a hamburger at night. Even more startling is the case of Roy Lancet. He and another man rooming in the same house go to-gether on food, and it works out to about \$4.00 per week each.

Whichever option they choose, it is meagre fare. The aged indigents of Lake City eat little quantity and a great deal of it is starchy foods. With the exception of the few institutional men, and one or two more, these men are grossly undernourished in the realm of vegetables, protein (meat), and fruits. Jim Sanderson has had the flu twice in the last five months. Emerson Palmer, as mentioned earlier, caught a cold with complications severe enough to hospitalize him. He already has emphysema and can't afford other respiratory problems. Stanley Berry virtually never left his room and I think for awhile after his first visit to the hospital he had "meals on wheels", but it did not last. Apart from this brief period he ate very little.

Stanley never came to the hostel, and his room showed no sign of anything substantial to eat, a little bread, some jam, and maybe a jar of pickles.

Since all but a few of my sample are roomers in boarding houses, none have their meals prepared for them. This demands that they do all their cooking in their bedroom. With respect to food preparation accessories, almost everyone of the men has a hotplate. Generally all of them have access to a refrigerator although only about half of the men own their own. They do not have sinks in their rooms and must use a community bathroom if they need to wash any food. The cupboards I have inspected are usually partially filled, and consist of canned foods such as outlined above. Refrigerators typically have a little milk, a few eggs, and some margarine. This constitutes, not including the missions or restaurants, the provisions the men have for feeding themselves.

Second-hand Clothing

The important thing about clothing is protection against nature's elements. In this respect, as in food, the aged indigents have a less than adequate supply. Their clothing is second-hand, theadbare, and shabby. They obtain what they have from used clothing stores, or as handouts from the missions. This method of procurement seems to be the norm amongst the very poor. Lovald (1961), found a parallel situation in his study of New York city skid rowers.

...few of the inhabitants possess clothing other than that which can be purchased at rummage sales, second-hand clothing stores, or given away by the Salvation Army and other charitable organizations.

One day at the hostel Brother Stephen called one of the indigents over as he was about to leave after eating. The man waited until the others had left and then the Brother produced two pairs of used shoes. The middle aged skid rower tried them both on and took the pair which most closely approximated his shoe size.

The men typically wear worn out "good clothes." By this I mean old second-hand suits. They are long ago out of style, the elbows and knees are worn thin, and the cloth is quite shiny. The suits, like the shoes above, need not fit exactly. I often saw pants which were bunched up by a belt because they were several sizes too large, or with the top button undone due to tightness. The shoulders and sleeves of jackets seem to fit only in random cases. On one occasion Don Sawchuk greeted me in an old white shirt which fit in the sleeves, but only because the cuffs had worn right off.

Shoes are the part of their wardrobe which most obviously sets these old men apart from the people who are the first owners of their clothes. Many times I have seen the men with slit uppers on their shoes at the ball of the foot. I at first thought it was where the old dry leather had split. Later I discovered in conversation that the men split them themselves to make shoes which are too tight more comfortable.

I was startled one day in a conversation I was having with Jordan, a skid rower in his fifties I know from the mission meal line. He had on a new pair of shoes which looked at first glance to be quite expensive. I complimented him on them.

Yeah, I put my own rubber heels on the bottom to make them last longer. I bought them in the budget section of the department store. They were \$4.79 plus 7% sales tax which made them \$5.23.

Jordan not only bought cheap imitations of expensive shoes, but he had nailed a black rubber heel on the bottom of the crepe heel to prolong their utility.

I have now discussed what the men eat and how they prepare it, as well as what they wear and how it is obtained. The other environmental feature which is related to their health and everyday life is where they live. I have already stated that the men are almost all roomers. I will now elaborate on this.

One Room Rented Homes

As I explained in the introductory chapter, the men accept these poor accommodations for a couple of reasons. The most obvious of which is the fact that they cannot afford to live anywhere else. At one point last year the federal government raised the pension for the aged.

Following close on the heels of this announcement came a directive from the provincial government stating that the rent in government subsidized institutions was to go up. The effect in the case of the hostel I am familiar with was to effectively nullify the pension increase such that it was soon absorbed by inflation.¹

The other factor which keeps the men in their rooms is the fact that these rooms are located within walking distance of all the essential facilities they can afford to avail themselves of (provided, for instance that their legs are still unafflicted by arthritis). One man who lives in one of these rooms is Henry Bison.

It is debatable whether or not Henry's present quarters are any better than the ones the Health Department forced him to vacate. When I and a member of a mission visiting group visited Henry one night, we found his house to be strewn with garbage, inhabited by drunks, small children, and cockroaches by the hundreds. This other man lodged a formal complaint with the Health Department, thus authorizing them to make an inspection.

¹The Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto (1973:B10), points out a similar situation in Toronto after a series of small pension increases in 1966.
...as a result of the increase room rentals increased on the average \$2.00 to \$3.00 per week. With no resources other than small pensions, the cost of shelter and food take up the greatest share of the income with little left for clothing and transportation and virtually nothing for the small comforts in life.

They found both cockroaches and bed bugs, and gave the owner ten days to clean it up. The solution to Henry's room full of bugs was to close the upper floor of the house where they had all lived, and re-open the lower level. They cleaned out the garbage on the first floor and moved down there. Now Henry sleeps in what should be the livingroom, and because it is the first floor there are larger rooms and fewer of them. The two children share the room with Henry, the children sharing one single bed between them.

Henry, minus the cockroaches, is quite typical of all the elderly men I've worked with (excepting the few men in the institutions). Every one of these men rents a room in a rundown house. They typically pay \$60.00 per month, have an 8'by 12' room with hot plate, and share a bathroom down the hall. A bedroom then, is their home. Usually there is a dresser, bed, sitting chair and a small table. Emerson Palmer's house was without heat several days at a time on a few occasions last winter, and without water at all upstairs for awhile this summer. The bathroom on the lower floor did not have a functioning bath tub. Jim Sanderson waited seven months, after I met him, to get a 3' by 3' plaster hole in his ceiling fixed, where it leaked "only if the wind blows from a certain direction". Jim accepts these conditions. His landlord is planning to sell his old house to developers someday and so wants to avoid costly repairs. He keeps tenants by offering slightly lower than the going rate to men who have stayed with him for a number of years like Jim who has been in three different houses owned by the same man over the last five years. Jim pays about \$50.00 per month rent.

These then are the rooms Lake City's aged indigents call home.

Some of my respondents, such as Victor Bandow, have their names in with the Ontario Housing Corporation for low rent apartments; and two of them, Brian South and John Farrow now live in such apartments. For the great majority of my respondents though, the fact is they will probably die in these rooms unless they are forced to move by an urban renewal project to another almost identical room somewhere else. Many of the aged people who do request rent subsidized housing are similar to some of the men in my sample according to the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto (1973:B10), which also notes the situation of those who are worse off because they are alcoholics.

The great majority of the elderly requesting assistance from the Room Rental Service are senior citizens who have never owned a home or property. Many have lived on very low incomes including welfare. For the elderly alcoholics and mentally ill reasonable adequate living arrangements are almost non-existent.

Food, clothing, and shelter, are all social conditions of everyday life which contribute to the general well being of the men. At this point in the chapter I will turn to aspects of social health which are more directly related and visibly obvious to the observer. This is the realm of labour situations where some of the men have lost their jobs and some mobility via accidents.

Industrial Health

Lake City is a large industrial centre and, as a result, there are a significant number of men sitting in the parks who are disabled. Three of my respondents have had their functional mobility hindered as a consequence of work related incidents.

Henry Bison who occasionally limps down to the hostel for a meal, had acid spilled on his legs in an industrial accident twenty years ago. Henry said that he spent ten years convalescing, and he still has trouble walking. He takes a tour around the block everyday because his doctor tells him to.

Another example is Brian South who was injured while working on a lathe during the war.

I had to design a special tool to get at a certain part of the wheel, and I was using it one night. I was on night shift at about five o'clock in the morning when the tool broke and flying pieces broke my goggles but didn't hurt me. Do you think I could find another pair of goggles? They were either locked up somewhere or someone had hidden them. Well I figured I only had another couple of hours to go, so I made a new tool and went back to work. At twenty to seven, or thereabouts, the new tool broke and five pieces went in my eye. The company doctor got out four pieces and bandaged up my eye. After three weeks my eye wasn't a lot better, so I went back again. He figured there must still be a piece in there that he couldn't see. He lifted the skin off my eye and took out the last piece with a magnet. Now my eyes got better, but I figure that accident was to blame for my bad eyes now. I've had two operations on them.

He later developed cataracts, perhaps unrelated; but the accident certainly didn't help either, and he was then on welfare until he turned 65. They would not give him a disability pension, which is more money, because an operation might have enabled him to go back to work. After two operations, while he could see, it was not well enough to return to work. As he was nearing 65, they left him on welfare until his 65th birthday. The near blindness caused by the cataracts had other indirect influences on his health apart from his eyes. He is an A.A. member and the enforced idleness he endured provided ample opportunities to drink. As mentioned he lost his job and therefore had his income reduced by being on welfare.

Leonard Barstik lost a job, a real estate investment, and his health when he became chronically sick from gases emitting from the ore he was working with in his job. Some twenty-five years later he developed an isolated case of skin cancer, which fortunately was excised in time. The cancer originated in a rash on his nose, caused by a skin irritation developing where the bridge of his safety goggles made contact with his skin.

While industrial accidents and conditions which have diminished the health of my respondents are significant, drinking has taken a larger toll with the health of the men.

Drinking

Amongst the aged indigents I have studied in Lake City, a little more than half are still drinking heavily to-day. Several of the remaining men like John Farrow, Brian South, Don Sawchuk, Robert Seagull, and Roy Lancet have quit in recent years. As I will illustrate, drinking has played a role in determining the career and health fate of both the men who have now quit, and more critically those who are still drinking.

They drink cheap rye, but this for the most part constitutes an exception to the usual fare. By far the favourite is Canadian sherry at \$1.20 a bottle. On Sundays especially, and any day that a drunk cannot get served in the liquor store, shaving lotion is a ready substitute. Often it is mixed about 60/40 in favour of the lotion, with wine to make what is commonly referred to as "canned heat". There is a variety store in central Lake City which at one time (I don't know if it is still sold), sold six cases of Mennen's under the counter every Sunday afternoon. When my source asked the man why he was willing to sell this vile potion

to the winos, the proprietor replied, "If I don't, someone else will." Having gathered some picture of how much, and what quality of alcoholic drinks these men consume, let me move now to mark the consequences of drinking for these aged indigents.

As indicated in the introduction to this chapter, the health of these men in many cases, got off to a poor start beginning with the depression of the 1930's. With respect to drinking, for example, Farrow and Sanderson have both made it known in conversation with me that they were winos during the depression, and Brown states that the depression made a drunk of him. As with the other conditions of their existence, drinking has been a part of their lives for many years.

Drinking occasionally exacts its cost at an early stage, as it did when one of the men who ate at the Inner City Hostel was found dead in his bed at the age of 42. The man was one of those invariably drunk and it was "sobering" to his best friend to see him die so suddenly. His friend, not surprisingly, was only sober for a few weeks, and was quite shortly after after serving an approximately three month jail sentence for public drinking. It is the wide ranging effects of alcohol in several areas which often creates other problems.

One of the most obvious and in the end, pervasive effects of drinking, is that it costs a lot of money to drink heavily. It costs money that could have been spent on other things. For the aged person on a fixed income, Jim Sanderson had this to say about the financial cost of drinking: "If you drink you don't eat. If you eat you don't drink." Roger once asked Jim Sanderson, in my presence, if he could give him two five dollar bills for a ten. He was going to put one five dollar bill in

his shoe so he would not spend it drinking. Roger wanted to save some money because he only had \$12.00 left and it was still two weeks until the next pension cheque. One can easily calculate how much money Roger had for two weeks' expenses after his drinking, assuming he did not do anymore drinking before he received his cheque.

As well as heart disease and the inability to buy things like food, all drinkers run the risk of losing their job. George, who worked in a foundry, suffered a stroke three years ago and has not been back to work since. Considering that he is 58 years old now, it is doubtful if he will ever work again. He was and is a heavy drinker, and the day he suffered the stroke he told me, he had been drinking ever since he left the foundry, and continued to drink after the stroke (it did not completely immobilize him), until he went to a doctor 48 hours later and was subsequently hospitalized and operated on to remove a blood clot. His drinking had directly cost him his job. No job, less money, less food, decreased nutrition, and reduced health above and beyond his heart condition is the result.

Another man, Victor Bandow, lost his job as a city streets worker because of continued absenteeism from the job. An official at City Hall told me that he feels drinking was behind the absenteeism. Knowing both men as I do, I have every reason to believe this appraisal of the situation.

When you consider specifically these men at their present age and no longer working, the biggest indirect consequence of drinking on health is that they frequently live in poor accommodations whether or not they can afford better. Sam Thorn has been ousted from both a nearby residence for the aged and the Inner City Hostel for drinking. He has since lived

for short periods of time in a room on a traditionally welfare street, and the Salvation Army Hostel. He as well sometimes lives temporarily at the hospital, from which he recently returned after suffering a liquor blackout on the street. Johnson was also ousted from the Inner City Hostel for drinking and his resulting incontinence. For the same reason he was evicted from a cheap rooming house, and the last I heard he was at the Refuge Mission. Sam Thorn and Johnson are both about 75 years old.

Drinking can prevent proper medical care as well. This same Mr. Johnson was turned away from one of the city hospitals on grounds of inebriation when he arrived complaining of chest pains. When he returned shortly with the same complaint, he was admitted and found to have indeed suffered a mild heart attack.

Mental health can directly affect drinking behaviour too, thus reducing physical health and not curing the mental health problem. Jim Sanderson said after having been on a week long drunk, that he did it because of a feeling of "melancholy". Different, but in the same field, Reg Farley became an alcoholic after his wife's death, and lost his business and home. He now lives at the hostel where the other residents get on his nerves, through no fault of theirs. He reacts by going out and getting drunk. One time Reg was gone all night and returned in the morning with his face all bloody, apparently the result of falling down somewhere.

Disease

To this point in the chapter the health features I have been discussing are all essentially social in nature. Rather than pathology per se, they are functional hinderances to their everyday lives.

Drinking also causes disease in the physiological sense. In turning to a discussion of diseases I will briefly describe the ailments which strike the old skid rower more frequently than the general population. The discussion then shifts to diseases which impair everyday functions.

Since I am not a physician I can not intelligently discuss diseases and their symptoms, but nevertheless I maintain that all of the previously discussed social health problems are contributing factors to physiological disease. My position in this regard is supported by a statement made by Wiseman (1970:9), in her discussion of skid row health.

Skid row drunks, with their lack of permanent housing, their bottle sharing, their fights, their passing out in doorways and sleeping out in all weather, the lack of cleanliness standards in restaurants and hotels, the impermanency of sex arrangements, and the dangerous jobs they often have to accept in order to make a little money, are easy prey to all types of disease and disability. Because of these conditions, Skid Row men have high rates of tuberculosis, venereal disease, pneumonia, influenza, injuries to limbs, and eye and teeth defects, as indicated by surveys sponsored by Pacific City Urban Redevelopment Association.

More specifically, the actual figures show the skid row aged are prey to higher rates of disease and injury than the national population. Goldfarb (1969) with some American figures lists some of these comparative rates.

The tuberculosis death rate in skid row is 36.9 times higher than for comparable males in the United States population. The heart disease death rate is 233 times as high. Pneumonia death rates are 14 times as high. Organic brain syndromes are 16 times higher than the national rate. Accidents from falls are 15 times, suicide is 5 times, and cancer is 3 times higher than the national rates.

Whether or not the rate of arthritis affliction is higher amongst the skid row aged or not, approximately one third of my sample suffer from this disease.

Arthritis is important primarily in the extent to which it limits mobility. When the condition is acute and therefore very painful, mobility is zero and the person is in bed either at home or at the hospital. Victor Bandow was hospitalized twice in the summer of '73 for this reason. It follows from this that sufferers from arthritis are dependent largely on services that are nearby. Evidence of this was revealed when Don Sawchuk stated that he no longer ate at "the Brothers", because since it has moved it is too far to walk. Arthritis slows down anyone it afflicts. This creates problems as well with regard to grocery shopping, going to the pharmacy, or even buying a newspaper, as all of these men get their paper from a stand rather than have it delivered.

Two of the men who are less than 65 are a part of the Gulliver Park crowd because of diseases which put them out of work. They would not necessarily be without employment if it were not for the fact that in both cases their skills are manual. Olly, who worked as a bartender, had spinal meningitis in one leg, and was forced to retire at 52 when he incurred arthritis in the other leg. He is on a disability pension until he qualifies for the Old Age Security. Emerson Palmer works loading trucks amongst other things, but because of emphysema he no longer worked more than the odd day, not to exceed the amount stipulated by his disability pension. If it were not for low skill and advanced age, from the standpoint of an employer, both of these men could be gainfully employed. Their involuntary early retirement has placed both men in single rooms and has made them at least part time patrons of the soup kitchen.

The old poor men who suffer from these various ailments and conditions do not receive adequate medical care. Without family to care for them, they are dependent on themselves, and whatever friends and neighbours are available. This creates a situation where they do not seek professional medical aid until they are in serious condition.

Health and Contact With Medical Services

Included in a list of reasons why the aged poor do not seek medical aid often enough, (Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, 1973:E6), are two which appear particularly relevant to my population.

factors of education, culture, economics and language inhibit the patient in obtaining or using proper medical care.

While I personally feel this is true, it is also one of the areas about which these lower class men do not verbalize. The other listed reason is suggestive of why they do not verbalize, and is related to their class position.

...attitudes and definitions of health vary by social class, finances, country, culture, age, sex, occupation and...many of these outlooks lead elderly people to accept certain symptoms and disabilities as natural or inevitable.

Jim Sanderson seems to reflect this. When he had the flu several times last winter, he just stayed in bed and allowed his neighbour friend Jay, who lives downstairs, to do his grocery shopping for him. He does not have a doctor and when I asked him if he did have one he could go and see about this recurring influenza, he said, "No, I've had it for years."

Both Victor Bandow and Sam Thorn did not enter hospital until they fell over in the street. Sam was in the middle of a bad drunk and

entered the hospital to get back into shape. Victor collapsed on the way to the grocery store one day with a bad attack of arthritis. He told me that a passerby called the police who drove him to the hospital. In another instance, Stanley Berry cut his finger opening a tin can. Ignorance of proper hygiene and reluctance to get help soon enough, coupled with less than scrupulous attention by medical personnel, led to gangrene and amputation of the finger.

Conclusions

The social definition of health I have used in this chapter has been the frame around which I have tried to show the physical situation of the aged male poor in Lake City to-day. This is the second chapter of the third and contemporary section of the thesis. It serves the purpose, in conjunction with the everyday activity chapter, of revealing to-day's situation, and illustrating some of the deficiencies which prompt these men to avail themselves of the charitable agencies and institutions in the city.

The next chapter deals with this interaction between the two groups. It is the outsiders trying to work with the insiders, the aged skid rowers. Since the agency and institution staff are outsiders, the chapter stands apart from the rest of the thesis to some extent. Up until this point I have only dealt with the old men themselves. It will be necessary to discuss the outsider/insider relationship because it is significant in their everyday lives. The men use these facilities to the extent they find them helpful at a reasonable cost to themselves, without committing any loyalties to the agencies or institutions.

CHAPTER VII

Outsiders and Insiders: Services for the Skid Row Men

Introduction

For the old men who live in the city's downtown core, institutions in a variety of forms and number are a part of their lives. The importance of these social outlets to an individual is at least in part determined by whether or not he is a heavy drinker. The man who drinks a lot is more often going to be in need of temporary sleeping accommodations, mission meals, and relief from the winter's cold. The institutions which provide "permanent" residence, are used by men who are still physically able to live in a room somewhere in the city. Skid row does not provide extensive nursing care for old poor men. If they are in need of such care they must leave the district.

My observations have revealed about 80% of my respondents make some use of the services provided by the various social agencies and institutions. There are three social outlets which command my primary attention. These are: the winter drop in centre called the Coffee Stop supervised by a Protestant church, the Inner City Hostel's meal service and permanent residence for old men administered by Roman Catholic Brothers, and a Roman Catholic lay group who visit the aged poor of Lake City. My secondary interest is occupied by: the mission activities of the Refuge mission administered by a group of Protestant concerns, and the Coffee Stop's Sunday meal service.

These men are using facilities which are related to the life of the old poor man, and therefore this is not an exhaustive examination of all social agencies. For instance the welfare office, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Lake City De-toxyfication Centre have not been given close scrutiny although some of the men I've had discussions with have relationships with these social services. They were left out because the old men do not make extensive use of such agencies.

The social service institutions available to the old poor men of downtown Lake City are not determined by age differentiation. There is only one facility specifically designed for use by old men, the Inner City Hostel's permanent residence quarters, and even it has the flexibility of usage expressed in the policy of its director and the provincial government, to include younger men. There is a man presently living there who is 59. He is not particularly young, but neither is he an old man. Rather, the prime feature of these facilities is that they are designed to try and serve the needs of a skid row population. In so doing they cater to men ranging from 20-80 roughly speaking. As a result of this focus the more independent of the aged poor do not take advantage of the services offered as much as the younger men who are alcoholics, drug users, unemployed or some combination of the three.

Needs met by these institutions are almost entirely material in nature. Food, clothing, and shelter are the most frequently dispensed items. In some cases these are offered as lure to bring into a compromising situation skid row men, where in exchange for some form of physical sustenance the agency will ask them to accept a little spiritual sustenance.

This is a perilous area though, for the men very often will refuse the spiritual guidance even when it means foregoing the physical help. And even when they do enter into statuses where they are subject to spiritual exhortation, the men seldom are engaged permanently in this position.

It is a feature of these "spiritual gifts" that they are almost invariably a cloak for a theme which asks the men to give up liquor, their irresponsible ways and take part in some constructive work. As already mentioned though, these rarely result in any significant success and it appears some of the Lake City institutions are more aware of this than others, and particularly some of the classical "mission" cases described in skid row literature.

Since it is things like: an empty stomach, a painful hangover/ need for a drink, cold feet and hands, and warm non-perforated clothes, which send the men out of their rooms and down to the "people institutions", it follows that at least some of the latter have their business determined by calendar dates and seasons of the year. The eating establishments double their number of patrons in the third and first part of the fourth week in the month over the number they serve in the first week. The Old Age Security cheques usually arrive the last Tuesday in a month. When the wind blows and the air chills to the bone, places like the Coffee Stop flourish and then fold in the summer. The Friendly Visiting Group can count on the men they want to visit being in their rooms early during the winter when in summer they often stay in the park until nine or ten.

The variable rate of activity outlined above being the case, I shall deal with these institutional services in a quasi ascending order of importance moving from seasonal congregation areas and visiting

groups to all year round eating establishments and finally, to the permanent residence for aged men.

Coffee Stop ... If You Don't Drink

Perhaps the easiest approach to follow is to give an official outline as the officials there proclaim, and then review it in the harsh light of reality supplied by my observations and statements from the men the agency is trying to help.

Recalling the room which is the Coffee Stop and its broken-down furniture, single T.V., tables, cards, and poor coffee, the statement made by the officials when they were applying for grant funding (The Spectator, 21 January 1974) stated,

Footrest is a place where the men who normally hang out in Gore Park can go to "challenge the staff to create a congenial and non-threatening atmosphere, using limited resources and having little time for extended personal contact."

This statement refers to their aim, in case it isn't immediately clear, to provide warmth, coffee and a chair for the men in the winter.

The other equally important aspect of the Coffee Stop as far as its director is concerned, is to exist as a referral service for alcoholics, drug addicts, and criminals, who come in looking for some help to straighten out. He is acquainted with the extremely high rates of recidivism amongst many skid row men who may have been "dry" for awhile and so, as my field notes indicate

he is angry with the institutions existing to help the drug users because they won't take addicts who have been admitted unsuccessfully a few times before. Barry says, "They are human beings, and if one comes to me and says: 'I'm ready to jump.' What's he going to do if we turn him away?... If they don't want to take the failures then I'm going to buck the system. I've got a man from the Spectator coming down

this afternoon, and I hope he can put it as a little bulletin on the front page. If this doesn't get some action, then I'll go to the Chief of Police, the Mayor and anyone else I can get to."

This recreation room and referral service is the outgrowth of of a Coffee Stop which operated last year in the facilities of the Refuge Mission. The chairman of the Coffee Stop's management committee reports last year's project to have been a great success where staff observed the men to take better care of themselves, were better behaved, and avoided drinking while the centre was open (The Spectator, 21 January, 1974). In the light of this success the committee consisting of: a Research Foundation, a Protestant minister, the director of the Refuge Mission, the regional welfare department, ministers and directors of several halfway houses in the area, and the Lake City Psychiatric Hospital, sought funding on a larger scale. They received the required monies from the Local Initiatives Program, the provincial ministry of health, and the United Church.

In this way Coffee Stop got off to a booming start this winter and the day I first visited, the second day of their operation, all of the staff were in extremely good spirits. However, I returned to this patch of warmth in Lake City's damp, dreary winter two weeks after they commenced operation and found their ebullient mood to have mellowed somewhat.

When I was approaching I noticed a police paddywagon parked outside. I entered and found two policemen were escorting three or four men out. As they went out, one of the social worker staff members was saying to each of them, "You're banned for a week!" After the men left another staffer came in and discovered another half dozen men had been banned. "We won't have any left to come in if we ban many more." The one who had been telling them they were banned said, "I don't care. If they don't want this place, fine, we'll close up. I can go elsewhere. We can't allow them to drink in here. They make me so mad."

The men had been found to be passing a bottle while sitting in Coffee Stop. As the commotion of this scene began to recede, and I was talking to a few of the staffers, another one walked in and showed a full bottle of wine he had just retrieved from the washroom downstairs. He then proceeded outside and poured it out on the sidewalk. The same woman quoted above who was expelling men stated, "This is our new discovery of how to cure alcoholics. We have a drunk sidewalk." She was of course being facetious, but nevertheless these two incidents point to a growing frustration amongst Coffee Stop staff. Their genuine concern for the men, the coffee and donuts, and the warm resting place have not deterred the men from drinking. Given this it follows as well that neither has their behaviour improved nor are they taking better care of themselves.

All of this lent considerable credence to a story told to me previous to this year's opening, by a staff member of another mission. He explained last year's Coffee Stop to be very frustrating to it's director and staff to the extent that they were not willing to operate it a second year. According to this man you need considerable supervisory staff to keep the men from drinking in both the recreation area and the washrooms. And because this is what the staff have to spend a good deal of their time doing it becomes a much less enjoyable job. You are at least partially reduced from a social worker to a monitor. The result last year was that they had considerable trouble keeping volunteer staff on the job. Perhaps this year's operation hoped to overcome this by having four full time paid staff.

In the official view then, Coffee Stop has been a success in the past as a congenial warm meeting place for the men of skid row where they refrain from drinking. As well they operate a referral service. The latter seems to be operating with some success while the recreation room is less of a victory in that the men do not seem to be appreciably changing towards the ideal of the staff.

Some men probably have and will go off drinking for a time during Coffee Stop. They have periodically been doing this for years, and I have seen no evidence whatsoever to suggest that Coffee Stop can be responsible for a man going off drinking. To be sure, the staff do not feel directly responsible for men going off the bottle either, but they do hope their example of concern, and understanding, will give the men a place where they will be supported during their own efforts to quit. Is it understanding to call the police on a drunk man who has been caught drinking and refuses to leave? Is it understanding guiding the hand which pours discovered bottles out on the sidewalk and bans the guilty party from returning for a week?

To reiterate what was said in the section on winter activity in Chapter 3, the majority of the Coffee Stop patrons are men between the ages of 40-60. Putting this statement in perspective though, reveals there are more of this age group than others, anywhere on skid row. The older men go there infrequently which complements the fact that none of the aged poor I've spoken to, overflow with praise for it. When I met George in Coffee Stop the first time I was there, he greeted me, asked me how I was and then complained about the coffee.

He asked me, "Is your coffee hot?" I replied, "Yeah, its pretty good." "Mine's cold." "Get another one then George.

I think there's hot coffee in it now." He didn't get another one and left shortly after.

The statement in itself is not significant, but this occurred on the second day of its operation and his only comment was a negative one. Perhaps too, when coffee is one of about three things being offered, and its bad, then it is significant.

Another time (the day the paddywagon was there), when I was talking to Sam Thorn in the bus terminal, I asked him if he had been over to Coffee Stop?

Sam replied, "I was just in there." "How do you like it?" I returned. "It's a bad place, all full of drunks and pretty crummy." "Yeah, the cops were pulling some boys out when I arrived." Sam said, "Yeah, she was asking them to leave when I was there. It's like that in all the rooms around here. I like the Y, but it's too expensive, and all the rooming houses are full of drunks. I can't stand living in them, all the fighting, quarrelling, drinking."

Sam obviously wasn't overjoyed by Coffee Stop, but it suggests more.

He was there because those drunks are his kind. Sam is an off and on drunk too. And when you realize, as he says, the rooming houses and hotels are just like the drinking at Coffee Stop only more open and accompanied by fights, what are the possibilities that a few hours a day in Coffee Stop are likely to induce a man to leave the bottle? In Coffee Stop when he looks around him, a man sees only a very old and poorly furnished room full of wasted drunks, and drug users. He is there because there is companionship with his fellows, it is warm, and there's free coffee and two day old donuts.

Jim Sanderson who is now for the most part sober, can afford to criticize the drunks at Coffee Stop, or the missions. He very infrequently goes there, and gains very little from such a social service. When

Jim was a younger man and still a hobo, he was a chronic drinker and would I think, have been unable to criticize drunks attending missions, and places like Coffee Stop. When I told him I'd seen the paddywagon pick some men up there he said only,

They shouldn't drink there. It's not a bad place.
I've been there.

In terms of the staff, I think they will have to be content with being a referral service for drunks, and drug users who periodically get to the point where they have to temporarily dry out, or straighten out respectively, or they'll kill themselves (quickly). At times such as these, Coffee Stop provides a sort of "store-front" social agency which will make sure they receive treatment quickly. They are not going to contribute anything to significantly altering the situation of skid row and its inhabitants. The drunks and drug users who quit for awhile, or forever during the time Coffee Stop is in operation would in all likelihood have done so anyways.

From the point of view of the men who drink the coffee, rub their hands to get warm, and drink wine, it is as the article in the city paper was titled, "a place to go on skid row." It makes life a little easier during the winter for the old and the young. The men don't see it as a great healing centre, and the staff will not either if they are honest.

The Friendly Visiting Group ... Sometimes

This Roman Catholic Society is a secular arm of the Roman Catholic whose members main concern is to help the poor, primarily through cash and material donations. For instance they operate clothes bins outside supermarkets. These clothes are then collected in their

own trucks, taken to a warehouse, sorted, and then distributed to their own stores to be sold as inexpensive second hand clothing. This group was also, in the early stages, responsible for sponsoring the Inner City Hostel. With the building of the new hostel, while there are still group members on the board of directors, the primary economic support comes from private business donations.

The visiting group is a subdivision of this larger society. They are a small group of men (no women), who go out once weekly to visit, officially, skid row type men. It is on only very rare occasions that they visit women, as for instance when one might go to see a woman in the hospital who was a personal friend, rather than someone the group felt should be visited.

The goals of the group are rather ambiguous and were never clearly defined in the year I spent with them. Several of the men had been doing this visiting for eight years and had long ago I suppose, fallen into a pattern which for their purposes, no longer required clarification. And yet given this, apart from wanting to visit primarily poor old men they have no self guiding system. This absence of clear goals resulted periodically in feeble efforts to reinforce their organization. Without really knowing what more they wanted to do, and not being committed to actively pursuing it, they floundered in these attempts.

The numbers involved in doing the visiting are really very small. For the first nine months I accompanied them there were only four men who regularly went out, and in the last three months of the year they were joined by a fifth man. All of these men are of middle class background. There is some range though professionally. Their occupational areas in ascending status order are: supervisory staff at factory, travelling

salesman, personnel man for a municipal government, accountant, and lawyer. Two of these five are retired, one being 78, and the other approximately 65. The ages for the others range from about 30-45. And while there are five men who regularly participate, the core of the group is three men.

Associate members are the director of the Inner City Hostel, Brother Stephen, and a priest Father Barnett. The latter was replaced by another priest who also left and they are presently without the services of a priest, which is significant and will be discussed further.

The headquarters for this group presently are, and will most likely continue to be, the one year old facilities of the Inner City Hostel. This is where Brother Stephen fits in. He more or less hosts the group and gets ready the parts of their program which take place within the building. As well, at meetings he provides relevant information he has learned from the men eating at the transient supper. The part of the evening Brother Stephen is responsible for setting up is of critical importance to the visitors, without which the group would be in serious danger of failing.

This is to say that the visiting group is in large part sustained by their non-visiting activity, with the disconcerting result that one is sometimes tempted to label it a social club. A typical evening is divided into three distinct sections, one of which actually brings them into contact with the indigent men, and since each portion takes up about an hour, then it follows visiting the men consumes approximately one third of their time.

Members generally arrive a few minutes before seven in the evening and at seven attend mass held in the hostel chapel. Mass has a congregation consisting of the visiting members, the two Brothers who operate the hostel, one of the lay workers, and occasionally one of the aged residents of the hostel. The average number attending mass then would be 8. By eight o'clock mass is over, the men are organized and off to visit the skid rowers in the city. They all arrive back in the vicinity of nine o'clock to begin a meeting which by the time it concludes, will probably have taken up another hour, so the men leave for home around ten o'clock.

What is it, though that suggests social club rather than social service? The breakdown of the evening taken at face value although certainly not disproportionately weighted towards indigent men pursuits, is not enough to declare irresponsibility, or lack of dedication. Just as the activities of the old men increase in the warm weather, so do the "extra curricular" adventures of the visitors.

Generally speaking, the active four members attended regularly through the winter and spring. In the late spring though, activity started to trail off. The last really regular meeting took place on July 3 at which time I noted,

Attendance at the hostel for the weekly visits seems to take a disastrous plunge in the summer. Ron has been away for the last six weeks. Bill is away now for several weeks on a trip with his wife. Ray was not there last night. Father Barnett is involved in a summer program up where he is and won't be back until September. Last night there was only Bill and myself.

The group never really got back together again until September 11, and even then one of the four regulars was absent. The fifth member

did not begin until October 9th. The missing fourth member began to attend again as of October 23rd.

Lonely men, alcoholics, the poor and aged, do not disappear in the summer. As noted in the activity chapter they are able to sit in the park during the warm weather. And they still have to sleep in those sweltering rooms. In other words, if there can be demonstrated a need for visiting in the winter then I fail to see how this need dissipates in the summer. Yet activity aimed at fulfilling this need did fade out in the good weather.

The seasonal peaks and lows in attendance by members of the visiting group has a related feature which is not tied to the season. This is absence at anytime in the year because of personal preferences for other "extracurricular" activities. My field notes show one man Ron, was already absent six weeks prior to July 3, and that he did not return until October 23. As well, he missed three weeks because he had a "men's club" meeting to attend. This means that of the 24 possible weeks between January and the end of June, he missed nine, making 15 times he was there, or 63%. Who's to say whether this is a good or poor percentage? I estimate the other three at hitting at least 90% attendance between January and the end of June. Relative to this, Ron was somewhat lax.

A point worthy of note which suggests perhaps the skid rowers' needs are not always paramount in the minds of the visitors, was the correlation between the attendance of a priest to say mass, and the members presence. At least a week previous to July 3 the priest made his last visit to the hostel for Tuesday night mass purposes. By July 3 the

group had folded for the summer. When the group got back to-gether September 11th, there was a priest available. I then made the following notation on November 27, 1973.

I went to the hostel at 8 p.m. because all I wanted to do was announce to the group I was going to discontinue Tuesday night sessions. When I got there I discovered that only Sean and Bill had shown up and so Brother Stephen had sent them home. I haven't asked each individual, but in the last three weeks or so, there has been little turn out for visiting. This corresponds I think, to the fact that there hasn't been a priest available to say mass in these weeks. In other words there seems to be a direct relationship between mass being said and the attendance of the visitors. This brings into mind the question of whether or not visiting the men is primary in their minds.

The issue of social club or service group becomes more clear when we see who visits who on these visits. Bill and Jean went to a place called St. Mark's Villa more than 60% of the time when they went visiting. In contrast, Ron went there on 10% of his outings, and Ray 5%. The Villa is a large modern institution for the aged with numerous people around to visit, and activities to get involved in. The men at the Villa were vastly in less need of visits than were the skid rowers. Ron and Ray concentrated on visiting men in the downtown areas.

Coupled with this is the fact that the men at the Villa are always clean shaven, not drunk, in clean clothes, and tend to be of about lower middle class backgrounds, or at least worked steadily and then retired. This makes them socially much more akin to Bill and Jean and greatly reduces the need for these fellows to cross the tracks and visit the seamy side where the skid rowers are much more likely to be in need of a visit. I should qualify this by stating that Bill, the one who did not drive, was the one who always suggested to the other that

they go out to the Villa, and when alone Jean would tend to keep his visits in the poor downtown area.

Still, they were at the Villa more than 60% of the time so that the evening was easily social for them as much as the visit. They were satisfying the least needy, and strengthening my concern about the group being more social than service oriented. Ron and Ray though, were much more likely to visit the really rundown rooming houses where the men would be drunk, dirty, and unshaven at times.

Considering the group as a whole again, how many men did they visit? How long did a visit last? And how frequently did they occur with a particular individual? Apart from the half dozen or so men at the Villa who Bill and Jean often went to see, there are really only seven other men living alone in the city which the group as a whole saw often enough to qualify. To count I considered that a man must be seen at least three or four times in a six month period. Actually then, Ron and Ray travelling separately with the occasional help from Bill and Jean, only have seven men to cover. Some like Jim Sanderson or Roy Lancet, are probably visited on the average of once a month. When you remember they were not visited at all through July and August, this means they are probably seen at least every three weeks. Knowing how many and how often these men are visited, how long does an average visit last? They range from five minutes if the room has an odour, and the man is dirty or drunk, to half an hour with a man who is not drunk and has a tidy odourless room. The average then would be about 15 minutes per man.

On these visits the discussion always begins with a "how are ya", and is usually pretty light conversation. Topics vary some depending on the person being visited. For instance Don Sawchuk thoroughly enjoys telling anyone who will listen, about his ailments. Jim Sanderson likes to tell stories about when he used to work the boats, or at the Ford plant in Detroit for some winters. For a great deal of the summer of 1973 there was a strike by city workers which included grave diggers and garbage men. Conversations often involved various consequences and implications of the strike. Very rarely does the conversation get around to religion and as mentioned in an earlier chapter this is one reason why the men don't mind having religious people come to visit them.

The visitors do occasionally, and this is usually done by Bill and Jean, particularly the former, help the men with little problems. Bill once helped a man in his fifties get off welfare and onto a disability pension by repeatedly asking the provincial government to assess the man. When they did and turned down the application, he appealed and eventually won. When the man got it he was grateful because it provided an additional \$35.00 per month, and as well the removal of the welfare stigma. The man concerned implied this and Bill said it. "It's better psychologically this way too isn't it." In another case Jean drove him to the place and Bill helped an old man 77 years old fill out his first income tax return in many years so he could get his rebate. The man upstairs from him needed his birth certificate from his birth place in Nova Scotia to prove he was 65 and thereby eligible for Old Age Security benefits. The man didn't know where to get it, could only remember his Father's last name, and not

his Mother's name at all. They with the help of Brother Stephen, eventually got it for him and the man began to receive his cheques. Bill once last year also helped Jim Sanderson get a second hand washing machine from the society's second-hand store and made sure it was delivered for \$10.00 total. The machine enabled the lady superintendant to wash the house's dirty linen.

The only other case of the visitors doing anything for the men they visited was after the time Ray and I went to visit Henry Bison and found his room infested with cockroaches, flies, etc. Ray called the Health Department and asked them if they could look into it. The Department said a formal complaint was required before they could enter the premises, so he made such a complaint. The owner of the house was given ten days to clean it up as a result of the Health Department visit. The owner merely moved everyone downstairs (since before they had all been upstairs), into very cramped living quarters, but away from the bugs. It is debatable whether a service or disservice was actually perpetrated in this case regardless of Ray's good intentions.

The visitors do some services, and see several people for 15 minute periods every couple of weeks. Do they feel this is adequate? And if not, what did they do in a year's time to change the situation?

After each week's visit everyone returns to the hostel for a meeting in the boardroom. They begin with a prayer asking their patron Saint to help them to help the poor and less fortunate. Alongside this, they also repeat the Lord's prayer. The group then pass a little purple velvet bag in which a secret donation is made. The average donation is between 24-50¢ so that weekly increments to the treasury are usually

around \$2.00. This money is used each Christmas to purchase gift packages for the men of razors, tobacco, shaving cream, and other like sorted things. They then discuss their visits.

Doing this is a formal process where the chairman asks each person to report, referring to them as "Brother Tindale" for instance. The first time they called me this and noted me as a new member I objected saying I was a participant observer and not a member. They hastened to assure me that they realized this but wanted to consider me whatever the real circumstances, as part of the group. While you are reporting your visits a secretary records them and the following week they will be read back as "minutes of the previous meeting". It is therefore, a formal structure complete with executive positions. Having a chairman, secretary, and treasurer, this usually only left Brother Stephen and Ron without an official capacity. The meetings always ended after reports with coffee, sandwiches and a half hour approximately, of conversation.

It was at these meetings and the conversation following, where policy for the group was decided, and biases revealed. In the context of discussing what was said at these meetings then I shall assess the situation of the visiting group.

On March 27, of last year the group came to the conclusion that their visiting service as it was then constituted was not serving many people very well.

Ray, Brother Stephen, Father Barnett, and Ron, were saying they hadn't been visiting as much lately or as systematically as they could. They want to create lists and circulate them on a rotation basis so they would know who was seen, how often. They also suggested periodic meetings to inform the others of what they had been doing, and how those visited were.

On April 3rd, a week later, they had their first formal meeting of the structure outlined above. There was still no action taken to improve their visiting technique. A month later on May 8, when the group still had not proceeded past instituting structured meetings, Ron suggested they go visiting before mass at 7 and return to the hostel at 9 for mass. This would enable them to see more men for longer periods of time. The group agreed to do this, but then the next week when Ron arrived at seven it was business as usual with mass first and still an hour of visiting. I can only interpret this as a coalition of Bill, Jean and the director of the hostel against Ron's plan as he wasn't informed of the change. That week when the previous week's minutes were read, they noted Ron's motion, but the failure to carry it out was ignored and no discussion took place.

The next week May 8, Ron made another motion. (Ron did try to be innovative and constructive, and the fact that his attempts were blocked may have something to do with his less than consistent attendance.) The members agreed their present list,

of men was of little use as the skid rowers move quite frequently. Ron suggested despite Brother Stephen's protest that it could not work, a table be put in the transient dining room, asking anyone interested to sign. Bill, to Ron's thinly veiled exasperation, looked to his ally Brother Stephen, when he said such a list "is impractical, its impractical." He was simply restating Stephen's own objections while the latter agreed to give it a try.

Ron also asked me if I would meet him at 6:30 the following week and the two of us would go out visiting early to-gether and show up in time for the meeting at nine o'clock with the rest of the group. Well the upshot of all this was not much. Ron did not show up the next week and instead went to a men's club meeting. Stephen tried the list

for a day, and when the number of men coming for a meal declined the next day, and the ones who did arrive asked the lay kitchen help, "Why does Brother want our names?", Stephen halted the list. (This is a reference to the transient meal service to be discussed in the following section.) The only result of all these moves was hard feelings between Ron and the rest of the group. Brother Stephen said to me about Ron's ideas, on May 11,

Ron is a good man, but he's really in truth lazy. He doesn't come regularly, but when the mood suits him. When he is here he is quite happy to linger over coffee before going out. And then he wants to make changes to our pattern that, rather than being sincere attempts to enhance the program, are self-centred manoeuvres to suit his own convenience, like having mass a nine o'clock. He won't listen to you when you tell him lists don't work. He's unreasonable.

Ron didn't come much after that for the rest of the summer, and in part Brother Stephen was right. Ron didn't seem to be terribly dedicated to regularly going out to see the men.

The two days the list was out though, about 15 men signed it and so could have been new men to see. Members like Ray tried to find some of these men and visit them. On May 15 I noted even with this new list Bill and Jean were still going to the Villa. So essentially things did not change at all, one or two new men came out of this list who were visited more than once. And this was the way the situation remained until the fall when the group re-convened.

At the first regular meeting of the fall, the group was once again concerned about the lack of organization to their visiting and proposed to improve it by buying a big red address book to enter everyone's name in it. This was on September 11th, by September 26th they were still unable to purchase the address book they wanted. By November 27th

when I stopped attending the group, as already pointed out, they were not even getting all the regulars out to the weekly meetings due to the lack of a priest to say mass. Basically then, the number of people they visited was limited, only a half-hearted effort was made to meet new people, and the organization which they knew was poor, they hoped to improve with a new address book.

Apart from the services completed for those three men who had trouble finding their way through bureaucratic entanglements, there were only two other things which were even proposed to be done with regards to the men they visited and neither have been carried out.

On several occasions some of the visitors have urged some of the old men to move into the hostel or any lodge. It is a product of a sincere concern that the men will be better fed, clothed, and housed in an institution. And they probably would be, but the spiritual part of their life would disintegrate. The men have a number of reasons for staying out of institutions for as long as they can. Don Sawchuk said to me one day,

"Are you living with the Brothers?" I told him, "No, I'm only there on Fridays and some Tuesday nights." He then continued..."Two fellows from there came to see me last week and asked me if I wanted to move there." They wouldn't be Brothers because they don't solicit. It was either Bill and Jean, Ray, or Ron. "The Brothers are o.k. I guess, but I don't want to live there. The room I have is o.k. in the summer and not bad in the winter. And if I went down there I'd look funny to the men back here. I'd be some sort of example or representative."

This was on August 8th, and then later on September 18, Don was talking to Ray and I when he mentioned he had a friend at a nursing lodge.

Ray immediately suggested he move in there, or to the hostel. Don said he would not go until he could no longer cook for himself...

During report Ray mentioned he had wanted to get Don into the hostel, and I told them that Don didn't want to come. Brother Stephen said he knew the missions have always had a stigma on skid row and amongst other indigents who weren't necessarily skid rowers. I introduced the word "mission stiff", meaning a man who lives in a mission. Stephen said he was familiar with it, and added "mission bum". Ray and Bill, and Jean were quite surprised to hear that the men viewed the hostel in this way.

While this is an example of the members' attempts to get a man into the hostel, it is also the revelation that they did not know, after 8 years of visiting, that the men harboured any inhibitions towards having a close contact with the missions. They also at an earlier time asked Stanley Berry if he would want to move in, and Stanley refused because after two years of living at the Salvation Army he never again wanted to share a room with other men.

The other attempt at action was by Bill to bring a few of the wayward men back to the church, and in one case to encourage a man who he knew was saving his pension cheque, to make the hostel the beneficiary of his will. Bill tried once to get Jim Sanderson back to the church but was turned down by same. Then after Roy Lancet was successfully getting his Old Age Security and was banking it Bill spoke up about it at one of the post-visit meetings and said,

the next thing to do is to get Roy back into the church. He's baptized you know.

later at the same meeting,

Realizing that Roy Lancet is saving money, Bill also thinks it would be a good idea if Roy was encouraged to make out a will so his money doesn't go to the government. Sean asked if he had any relatives. Bill says he has three sisters but Roy doesn't know where they are. Bill then suggested that Roy be encouraged to make the Inner City Hostel the benefactor of the will. Sean said any charity would be a good idea. Bill said he thought we should

push for the Inner City. I pointed out that Roy might have some friends who are a little short of money to whom he might want to give whatever estate he will have. Nothing more was said about it at the time and I don't know if they will push the issue with Roy or not.

The logical conclusion to be drawn from this reporting of the activities of the Friendly Visiting Group is that they are an amateurish poorly organized group, despite their eight years experience, who show a singular lack of understanding or concern for the needs of the elderly urban poor. While the men seem to on the whole enjoy their visits the latter are so infrequent as to not be critical to the happiness of these men. And they see so few men relative to the number of aged poor in the city that one can only assume they are not deeply interested in providing a visiting service which will make a difference in the lives of these men.

There is some doubt that these visits are beneficial to the elderly. J. Tunstall has written (1966:289-290), in discussing a visiting project in England researched by another man,

He found record-keeping and organization to be haphazard and unreliable. Visitors knew little about the social services and did little to refer those in need to the appropriate agency. Half of the visitors exhibited "a smugness and sense of superiority towards the old people." Only a fifth of the old people were receiving weekly visits lasting as long as an hour... There was no decision as to which categories of old people should be visited, and little idea of what should take place in the visits. The assumption seemed to be that the mere presence of the visitors...who tended to be middle class married woman aged about 50...would automatically be beneficial to old people.

Generally, all of this applies to the Lake City group except that the visitors are men, and none of those visited are seen as frequently as once a week for an hour long visit. If there are any benefits to such a visiting programs, they may be only ones of the type noted by Bennet (1972).

It is too soon to draw any definitive conclusions about the impact of the Teachers College Friendly Visiting Program in particular, and friendly visiting programs in general. However, the presence of visitors does seem to have some direct, salutary effects particularly on behavior which can be influenced by frequent visiting, namely grooming of one's surroundings and amount of complaining about illnesses.

A California study (1972) researching public agencies and their ability to satisfy the needs of urban elderly poor, argues agencies do not take the environment as given, whereas the residents do, and therefore do not consider means to fit needs that are acceptable to the elderly. The Lake City group seems to have not considered the needs of the aged poor except when an obvious isolated short term need arises, and therefore cannot possibly plan to meet needs they haven't defined. The smugness referred to by Tunstall is reflected in the Lake City group in their dislike for dirty clothing, untidy rooms, drunkenness, and lack of church attendance. They dislike visiting the drinkers and avoid them often. When they do see them, visits are likely to last ten minutes at the most. The same California study noted,

Services must begin to reflect desired lifestyles instead of imposing an isolated set of values. This is particularly true for the urban elderly poor.

The Lake City group consists of very sociable and in their own minds, Christian, well intentioned persons sacrificing their time and efforts. However true this may be, the fact is their visiting service has never been seriously evaluated to determine its utility, nor has a serious effort been made to improve organization, or really seek out the lonely urban elderly poor. It is unfortunately, a social club first, and a visiting group second.

Macaroni Anyone?

Lake City has two major missions serving free meals. They are administered by each of the Inner City Hostel, and the Refuge Mission. I will also look at the Coffee Stop's Sunday meal for skid rowers.

Practically any literature available on skid row includes some mention of the missions and their soup kitchens which have historically combined soup with salvation. Two of Lake City's operations are of this type, and the other does not offer a religious service with the meal even for the few who might want one.

The men accept the mission service as their part in an exchange arrangement. 'We'll go to the service if you feed us.' Even this amount of payment is often considered too high a price to pay and is illustrated by the large drop in attendance in the first week or so of each month when the men still have some money. As their drinking and other activities decimate their for the most part fixed incomes, they increasingly turn to the mission for a meal.¹

The overall complaint about missions which offer salvation before you qualify for a meal is that it is religion being forced on unwilling ears. As Jim Sanderson said, the one reason he does not object to the visitors is they do not force religion on him. Wiseman (1970:191)

¹.Wallace (1965:58-59) suggests the same phenomena of the old men disliking mission meals and states, "Most skid rowers use the mission only for emergency relief."

quotes a skid rower as complaining,¹

There are morning devotions. There are Thursday night meetings. There are Sunday services. They just shove the religion down your throats...All they do is harp on religion.

When interviewing the director of the Refuge Mission in Lake City, I asked him why they had stopped serving a meal at supper, and now were doing so at noon. His answer indicates how much the men appreciate the church service, and the nature of the exchange relationship.²

When we changed last October it was in keeping with our desire to provide spiritual uplift as well as giving out food...We had a church service after the meal and everyone would just flock to the exit. So now when serving at noon there is a service prior to the meal...I don't think its too much to ask and anyone who doesn't like it can go elsewhere. We feel we have a responsibility as Christians, and lots of people who walk around this world proclaiming they're Christians, aren't, to offer these men something, and they accept it in exchange for the meal...Its not to just feed the man, we offer 'uplift'. If we just give him food then we aren't doing anything for him.

The missions who require the skid rower to attend a religious service as a prerequisite to receiving a meal, are imposing their definition of the situation (McHugh, 1968), on the men. As the director of the Refuge Mission states, they define respectability, to be something

¹There is plentiful support for this expression of distaste the skid rower has for the soup/salvation combination. Lovald (1961) states, "Most of the Gateway's residents express distaste for the mission's policy of soup, soap, and salvation, and the man who makes a habit of getting saved is called a mission stiff."

²The Chaplain of the Pacific Center studied by Wiseman which is very similar with the exception of actual work to the Refuge Mission, states (Wiseman, 1970:170), This program helps alcoholics by providing an assortment of work, meditation, chapel devotions, and friendships.

the mission possesses rather than the skid row men. As such, they understand it to be their responsibility to impose this definition. At another point I asked him how many men he feeds, and while the fact he serves at noon may account for the discrepancy, the differences in attendance are revealing.

TABLE II

The Influence of 'Salvation' on 'Soup Patrons' Mission Attendance

	Refuge Mission	Inner City Hostel
	With Church Service	Without Church Service
Date		
Beginning of Month	5-20	30-40
Latter Portion of Month	70-80	120 +

Geography is not a factor in this case either. They are both in the downtown area and readily accessible to the men.

As well as the Refuge Mission, there is one other facility which provides a meal for the skid rowers including a religious service. It is the Coffee Stop. Monday through Saturday Coffee Stop offers neither religious ceremony or food. On Sunday they supply both. At 2:30 in the

We try to get at the whole man. Just taking care of his physical problems and giving him medication doesn't offer him anything for the future. And as well, there is no doubt in anyone's mind about the existence of the exchange relationship on skid row, as Wallace points out (1965:59), The relationship of mission worker to skid rower is based on an exchange... tacit and unwritten...but nevertheless, thoroughly understood and admitted on both sides.

afternoon they hold an interdenominational Protestant church service which is followed by a meal. This being only a once a week effort, the food is provided by a variety of church congregations.

The outlet doing the largest volume of business is the Inner City Hostel. As already noted they serve a supper meal at 4:30 Monday through Friday, and at 4:00 o'clock on Saturday. The Coffee Stop is the only available place for a free Sunday meal. Since there is no religious service at the Inner City Hostel, the exchange cost is relatively lower here. The men react with concern and a decline in patronage when they feel their share of the exchange is being unduly elevated. An example of this was described in the earlier section dealing with the visiting group. When Brother Stephen placed a small table, paper and pen in the dining room and asked anyone who wished a visit to sign their name and address, the men reacted by asking the lay staff why the Brothers wanted their names, and far fewer showed up for a meal the next day. This upset the Brothers as they did not want to threaten the men, and so the list was removed and the volume of customers was soon back to normal.

The missions operate as a non-profit organization and so accept help wherever they can find it, and one of their principle aids is the food donated with which they feed the skid rowers.

Food comes without expense from (1) christian-minded grocers, bakers and restaurant keepers who contribute spoiled fruit, old bread, and used coffee grounds, and (2) Ladies Aid Societies and the like, who bring home-cooked food to the mission as a special treat.

In the case being discussed here this is not altogether true. They do receive food from all of the above sources listed by Wallace (1965:55)

as (1), but they receive very little from (2). As well, although they do get old bread, (it is probably two days old by the time the men eat it) the rest of the food is not defective in any way. For one reason or another it is not marketable, but is as completely safe as the food we buy from the grocery store.

The hostel used to get free meat but when its quality became similar to the sort of food described by Wallace, the hostel stopped receiving it and began buying their own. Meat, coffee, milk, eggs, salt, etc., are the things they have to buy, the staples. All of the turkeys they use for the Christmas dinner, about 25 twenty-four pound birds, are privately donated by individuals. For canned goods they depend entirely on city schools. Each Christmas season there is a drive and the result is enough to feed the approximately 130 persons involved, until the next year's drive.

A typical meal, and it is very typical; as the meals differ only fractionally from day to day, first of all consists of macaroni, pastry, and coffee. When there are vegetables, extra meat etc., they are added to the macaroni. The times there are ample supplies of fruit or vegetables they are served as a side order and they are dependent on the seasons. All in all though, the hostel depends on starch to fill the men. It is not particularly nourishing but even hot macaroni helps a cold empty stomach.

To continue with Wallace (1965:55), he states,

Salaries are reduced, if not eliminated, by allowing reformed drunks to work in return for shelter.

If a loose interpretation of this is acceptable, then I can concur with Wallace on this point in the hostel's case. They employ two men and

previously three, and they are all reformed drunks, who now only occasionally drink "in excess". The difference I'm suggesting is that while they have held numerous and various sorts of jobs over the years (one is in his late fifties, the other in his latter forties), they have worked most of the time. Paul and Gordon have held jobs of some variety: bartender, waiter in a tavern, cook, garbageman, truck driver, and car wash attendant. Admittedly, while they worked, when the job permitted, they'd be drinking all day at work.

The hostel budget will not allow them to pay any more than room and board and pocket money. The one time one of the Brothers applied to the board of directors for permission to hire a cook, he was turned down. My experience with the staff they do have though, is that they are excellent workers and because of their histories are people the skid rowers can trust as they knew them back in the drinking days (as when the men asked these staff why the Brothers wanted their names).

Paul and Gordon are responsible for the clean up, maintenance and food pick ups, while the Brothers administer the building as a whole including the aged men's residence, and do all the cooking. While the Brothers readily note the excellence of their staff, they occasionally have moments of self-doubt as when one confided to me he felt it was due to emotional problems that the two lay workers agreed to work for so little, and wondered out loud if they were really doing these men a favour of any sort.

The procedure for eating at this mission is tightly organized and depends on continuous movement to function smoothly. The men line up outside. At 4:30 the doors are opened and they enter single file.

Once inside they pick up a tray and move past the steam tables where high school girl volunteers dish out the food. At the end of the buffet they pick up a spoon and head for a seat at a table holding either eight or sixteen men. There is always an usher present making sure every seat is filled starting at the back and moving forward. If this is not done there are inevitable scattered empty seats left, leading to confusion which culminates either in men wandering around looking for a seat or men unnecessarily standing outside when they could be eating (which is important when it is cold). As soon as the room is full or everyone is in, boxes of pastry are set out by the doors to be collected by the men on their way out on a first come first served basis. This latter strategy helps to encourage men to eat and leave, and not sit at the tables any longer than necessary.

This is all well and good because it gets the maximum number of men through in the minimum amount of time thereby easing the wait when there is an overflow crowd, and allowing the staff to clean up as soon as possible. It is also dehumanizing. Erving Goffman (1961:21-22) in discussing the process whereby an "inmate" in a "total institution" loses his identity, states

Given the expressive idiom of a particular civil society, certain movements, postures, and stances will convey lowly images of the individual and be avoided as demeaning. Any regulation, command, or task that forces the individual to adopt these movements or postures may mortify his self. In total institutions, such physical indignities abound. In mental hospitals, for example, patients may be forced to eat all food with a spoon.

In the hostel the men do not serve themselves, they all eat everything with a spoon, and they eat from army surplus metal trays. At

times it makes sense when a man is drunk for instance, and assuredly makes clean up operations simpler, but it is always demeaning too. While perhaps necessary depending on your vantage point, it is an assault on one's dignity to tell a 50 year old man where to sit. The implied suggestion in all this is that the men are not responsible enough to eat with knives and forks, or choose their own places. As well, they must eat at 4:30 to allow the staff time to clean up so they may eat at the conventional time of 5:30-6:30. The logical conclusion is the staff feel they are dealing with children as well as ensuring control and convenience.¹

This control must be especially maintained the staff feel, when noisy drunks come to eat. The quiet drunk is watched, and helped if he needs it. The noisy drunk who swears or hangs around the serving area after eating is asked to leave, and if this is not enough, he is physically escorted out. One night Stitch answered Stephen's call for seconds at supper, but as well as being drunk, he wanted to have a jar filled with food which the hostel discourages because the men often leave it on the property around the neighbourhood. As my notes reveal.

Stitch asked one of the girls to please fill up his

¹Wallace (1965:57) implies the mission staff's proclamation that the men are irresponsible and immature in a description of staff's attitude towards the men fostered by the former's inability to convert the skid rowers.

The major reason (why men are on skid row) is that they were all spoiled as children, they could have what they wanted as children. And they are still spoiled today. They don't want anyone to interfere with their lives.

24 oz. jar with casserole. The jar had the remains of some other old casserole in it from the looks of it. Just as the girls were about to fill it, Brother Stephen noticed and said, "No, don't fill that! Now stop that and go Stitch! You know the rules!" Stitch said, "Well Jesus Christ, you said seconds!" At this point he was forcibly escorted to the door by the Brother. Stitch was quite drunk.

The Brothers will not tolerate back talk which is rude or vulgar to themselves, and especially when the serving girls, as above, can hear it. In another case a drunk made the mistake of being rude to the Brother before he even got in, when in a debate over entry he said, "I knew I made a mistake coming here!" Stephen hustled them both out the door saying, "Yeah, and you'll make another mistake if you ever come back." Referring to comments like the immediately above, he said, "Those are emotional moments I'm not proud of, and try to make as infrequently as possible."

When a drunk is quiet, and obviously in need of a little help, they are quite understanding.

One youth about 18 came in after the steam table had been emptied, and was quite drunk. The food hadn't been put away yet, so while one of the other men who eats there helped the young man into a chair, one of the Brothers put a meal plate together for him. The man was not hurried out either. I was wiping a table next to him, and asked him a "How are ya?" question. He told me he had just got out of jail that morning and I guess he had been drinking the rest of the day.

And then 15 minutes or so later, the drunk fellow had gone and one of the staff members and I were just finishing sweeping the floor when Stitch arrived. We motioned to him through the window there was no food left, but Stitch just continued to stand there on the ramp. We told Brother Stephen when he asked, that Stitch was still there. Stephen then got two bowl sized tinfoil disposable containers, filled them with spaghetti and meatballs, and took it out to Stitch.

The Brothers say their policy on admitting drunks is "if a man is still physically in control of his mobility and not boisterous or foul mouthed, he can come in."

Very few of the men complain either about treatment or food received. The few who complain about food consistently or are perpetually miserable, are given nicknames by the staff. They know complaints will never change the menu and so being surly, or complaining is perhaps a technique to maintain identity in a threatening situation.

One fellow who has been nicknamed "Mr. Beefer" by the staff greeted me as he came by asking if there was any raisin bread instead of just white or brown. Then he wanted macaroni instead of the stew being offered. I said "Well, you'll just have to make do with what we've got." To which he replied, "Why don't you tell me to go up to the Sheraton Hotel?" as if that's been said to him before when he complained and so expected it this time.

There is another fellow who comes in who looks like a distinguished Britisher two years after the "Great Crash", a wealthy man gone broke. He always looks quite antisocial to me. This night the girls didn't put a large enough serving on his tray to suit him. He sort of grunted and shoved the tray back in their direction. They put more food on it and he went to eat. One of the Brothers pointed him out to me a little later when we were standing around about to start cleaning up. He said at one time the fellow had been at the Toronto house where he had been nicknamed "Mr. Happy."

Feeding these people ranging from 20-80 years of age and all male (One woman has eaten at the Lake City house once, and she and her husband did not return.), is day after day of macaroni, drunks, and a few complainers. In terms of eating, the hostel has a considerable number of "mission stiff" who are regulars no matter what time of the month it is. One of the Brothers wondered out loud to me once,

I wonder if we should even feed the men. If they couldn't get a free meal maybe they'd spend more money on food and less on wine. Brother Andrew (the head of the order), says "Give them a cup of coffee and a piece of bread." But when he was directing a hostel he put out the best meal he could.

The hostel provides the best food service in the city from the perspective of the skid rower. It is free, clean, and the exchange rate is low not having a religious service attached to the meal. There are aspects of it which are demeaning and there are some men who depend on it rather than use it simply as a desperate alternative. I would suggest that if the service were cut off the men would buy no more food really, and just eat less. Old men like Robert Seagull, Don Sawchuk, and Jim Sanderson who drink little or not at all now, are thereby able to save their few monies for food, and so make no use of the meal service. Leonard Barstik, Victor Bandow, Brian South, and Sam Thorn who occasionally fall off the wagon, make use of the macaroni meal anywhere from once or twice a month to half the time.

Inner City Hostel Institution for the Aged:
Material Sustenance and then What?

The Brothers who operate the Inner City Hostel are the same people who operate the transient meal service described in the previous section, and it is in the same building as the residence for aged skid row men. The Brothers have four locations of operation in Canada, two of which are facilities for the aged. In Montreal they have an institution which houses approximately thirty men. In Toronto the house operates only a transient meal service and overnight lodgings. Grapeville is an institution for emotionally disturbed boys and fourthly, there is the Lake City house.

International headquarters for the order are in Texas. By international they mean Canada and the United States.

As an order of Brothers in Canada, and as a group in the residences for the aged business, the Gentle People Brothers have got problems. They have been losing Brothers to the secular world and not replacing them with new novitiates. The lack of replacements is not due to the Brothers' reluctance to receive them. They would dearly appreciate some dedicated sincere applicants. At one point I asked Brother Harold of Lake City if when their building held the capacity of 24 residents, would they increase their staff from the present two Brothers and two workers. He replied positively and I then asked him if they would be Brothers.

"No, because we haven't enough." Me "How many Brothers are there?" "There were 14 at the beginning of the summer. Now there are 9 and 2 novitiates." "Is that for all of Canada?" "Yes." "Were they novitiates who quit?" "No, one had been a Brother for 12 years."

Taking a slightly longer view of the past and an analysis of the present, things do not seem very bright for the order. Brother Stephen has said their most recent new novitiate was two and a half years ago when four men entered, and the one who is left will be taking his vows very soon. The Brothers tend to get transferred every year or so, but generally there are at least two in each location. The senior members are slightly more sedentary, as for example Brother Stephen has been in Lake City for the past four years

Their future in the aging business at least for Canada, is being cut in half by the Quebec provincial government. They have announced the phasing out of the Montreal house. The Gentle People Brothers will be reduced to one aging institution. The government intends to make the

present facility into a community centre, and at this time it is not known whether the Brothers will staff it. They may be out of Montreal altogether.

The hostel in Lake City originated twelve years ago and has been in its new facilities since January 1973 when I began my participant observation. Before discussing the nature of the institution, policies, and relationships, I propose to provide a short annotated history of this first year of activity. In this way a basis will be available with which to understand the present situation.

1973

- Late December 1972 - staff move in. It consisted of two Brothers: Stephen and Francis, and three lay workers: Scotty, Paul, and Gordon.
- January 15 - first resident, Sam Thorn moves in.
- February 15 - Scotty leaves to go to Toronto to work with his brother.
- February 23 - Brother Stephen states that the 3rd floor for the aged, will not open until the elevators are installed. He expects the floor to fill gradually after the open house he will hold when the elevators are in. He is waiting for these so the men will not have to climb three flights of stairs all the time. Originally, the elevators were delayed by a strike. Sam Thorn is in because if not the hostel it would have been the street. He had nowhere to go.
- February 26- Sam leaves on a drunk.
- March 4 - Sam returns without any money but is taken in anyways.
- April 1 - Sam goes on another drunk and is out for good this time.
- April 3 - Paul has been driving a truck for salary for two weeks now, and so he decided to move out and get his own apartment.
- April 10 - Paul was on a week long drunk and so now without a job or money, returns to the hostel.
- May 8 - The hostel is steadily acquiring more furniture, but with the strike over for a week or so, there is no progress being made on installing the elevator yet.

- May 15 - There is still no action on the elevator, and Brother Stephen is now hoping to have the 3rd floor open by July 1. Brother Francis has been transferred to Montreal, and replaced by Brother Harold from Grapeville.
- June 5 - A Father Robinson has moved into the hostel, partially for his own rehabilitation, and partially to work with the skid rowers.
- August 3 - Mr. Johnson has moved into the hostel, while work on the elevators though progressing is not yet complete.
- August 17 - Mr. Johnson has been ejected from the hostel for repeated drunkenness. Reg Farley came to look over the hostel and then left. Once again there are no residents.
- August 29 - Reg Farley returned and moved into the hostel.
- September 11 - Work on the elevator is still not finished and broadloom and furniture is still being added to the hostel.
- October 16 - Gavin Harper has moved in as a resident, so there are now two residents, and by now the elevator is working.
- October 31 - Two more men, Scott Mandel, and Jock have moved into the hostel, while Scott is staying only until he can be placed in a Lodge. It turns out as time goes on that Scott is a permanent resident. There are now 4 men living there as residents.
- November 6 - Father Robinson leaves hostel and does not return.
- November 20 - Tony Walker moves into the hostel and wants it to be temporary, but by February 1974 he was still there.

1974

- January 10 - A fifth man has moved in as a resident.
- January 29 - The open house Brother Stephen wanted, is finally held.

This history of the first 13 months of the Inner City Hostel's operation outlines the comings and goings of the principal characters and shows the recruitment of residents pattern.

With this short history now available for reference I will briefly answer the question of why a man would move permanently into the hostel given the bad reputation the missions have, and the label you

can pick up of being called a "mission stiff". Wiseman suggests (1970:210), three possible needs a hostel residence can satisfy and all suggest a lack of permanence. She includes,

(1) to get a temporary roof over his head and a full stomach (this means that all other approaches to these needs have failed and other stations on the rehab route are temporarily unavailable or more undesirable); (2) to make a stake so as to have some chance at a new start on an independent life, or (3) at least to get "squared away."

I maintain it is hard to differentiate between (1) and (3), both usually mean a place to recover at after a drunk where you can eat some reasonable food and save enough money for the next drunk regardless of what you may tell the mission staff. Wiseman's (2) does not apply in this case because the hostel only leaves a man about \$40.00 a month after his room and board is paid, and this is very little to build a stake with. Secondly, an old man is not even trying to build a stake.

With reference to the other two reasons, Jim Sanderson once last June asked me if anyone had moved into the hostel yet,

I said, "Well Sam Thorn was in, but he's been kicked out by Brother Stephen for coming in drunk twice." Jim replied, "The hostel shouldn't have to put up with drunks." "Well true, but on the other hand you can't expect a man who has been drinking all his life to all of a sudden stop." Jim said, "Not many of them go there to live permanently. They stay three maybe four months, and when they've fattened themselves up, they leave to go on a big drunk, living off the fat they've put on in the hostel." "None of them are there with the idea of staying eh Jim?" "Well maybe a few have good intentions but not many."

This of course, is what both Sam Thorn and Mr. Johnson were doing. By referring to the history above, you can see how briefly they both stayed. All of the other five residents seem to be more permanent

although there is still time for them to leave and fulfill Jim's prophecy. They all drink though; one has been threatened with expulsion, and another was sent out to the "de-tox" centre for three days to dry out after a bout with the bottle. Perhaps these men are trying to stay in one place for awhile this time.

Both Erving Goffman (1961) and Evan Kahana (1970) have discussed the characteristics of institutions and both are of a nature applicable to the Inner City Hostel. Kahana uses a three dimension system devised by Kleemeier (1961), which is directed more at the aged than the similar four point system outlined by Goffman. The latter differs from Kleemeier primarily on point one, when he (1961:6) states,

First, all aspects of life are conducted in the same place and under the same single authority.

His next dimensions are almost identical to numbers two and three of Kleemeier, who outlines them, as interpreted by Kahana (1971), as the segregate, congregate, and institutional control dimensions.

The segregate dimensions refers to the condition under which older persons may live exclusively among their peers, having little contact with other age groups. The congregate dimension refers to the amount of privacy the setting provides for individuals and the extent to which residents are individually treated. The dimension of institutional control refers to the degree of control that the institution exerts over the daily life of the individual.

Insofar as the similarities are obvious between the two frameworks they both are tools for describing the institutional relationships more so than individual ones. As well, although Goffman (1961:4) includes homes for the aged in his first category of institutions qualifying for the label "total", I do not think all of his analysis applies, and fit better institutions like prisons and perhaps chronic nursing homes.

His first point concerns all activities taking place under the supervision of one authority and this does apply to the Inner City Hostel. The residents do their eating, sleeping, and indoor recreation (with the exception of drinking), within the walls of the hostel, and as such are subject to the staff's supervision.

Kleemeier's point about age segregation is a yes and no proposition. To the extent that the men go outside (as they are free to do and are all ambulatory), they can associate with anyone they wish. If though, they spend the great proportion of their time inside, then the age range available, among the residents, runs from 59 to 78. This is excepted marginally when on occasion one of the lay staff who is in his late 40's, plays cards with one of the men. For the most part the men do stay indoors, going out either for a walk or purposeful errands to buy something or get a haircut. They also occasionally go out drinking, but nevertheless I estimate they spend 85% of their day inside the hostel.

The congregate dimension, or degree of privacy, strikes a sore point with skid rowers generally, and these residents are no exception. The rooms in the hostel are six in number, and each is divided by three-quarter partitions, into four. While this is better than the "cages" skid rowers heartily dislike¹, it is still considerably different from private rooms. Stanley Berry once told me he would not move into the

¹As Bogue points out (1963:447), The results of a questionnaire administered to skid row men asking them to rank their preference in housing accomodatiion when given the choice of: cubicles or cages, open dormitories, or single rooms with two or three men sharing a kitchen, only 1% chose the cubicles or cages.

hostel because it would mean giving up the private room he had at that time and valued highly after living for two years in the distinctly non-private Salvation Army hostel. And Reg Farley who told me when he moved into the hostel, and was for a time the sole resident, he would not mind sharing his room with three other men when it became necessary, nevertheless became irritable and began to drink again shortly after he acquired his first roommate.

The other area where the men spend a considerable amount of their time is in the resident's lounge. It resembles a living room and in no way provides privacy. There are really very few places available in the hostel where the men can ensure their privacy.

Another aspect of Kleemeier's congregate dimension involves "the extent to which residents are individually treated", and under this area can be discussed whatever social distance exists between staff and residents.

Wiseman (1970:176) in outlining "companionship therapy" at the Pacific Center noted,

Missionaries rarely mingle with beneficiaries either at dinner or in the recreation room or even after church services. Professional staff see the men only in their official capacity. Strict social distance is observed otherwise.

Goffman's account (1961:7) corroborates this and points out that social distance is "often formally prescribed". To some extent this is all true although I doubt whether it is as severe at the Inner City Hostel as depicted by Wiseman, and Goffman. With only one exception, Gavin Harper, the Brothers address the residents as Mr. Farley, Mr. Waler, etc., and the men call them Brother Stephen, etc. It might be argued that this is

a sign of mutual respect, if so it is artificial. The lay workers and people like myself call everyone by their first name. The Brothers call each other by first name, and the residents do likewise amongst each other. There is then, a barrier erected in terms of formal titles which differentiate staff from residents.

Almost none of the residents attend mass as it is not compulsory and so camaraderie there cannot be examined. In the dining room there are a collection of tables which each seat four. Three residents occupy one table, two another, and these latter two are joined by one of the lay workers. The Brothers and volunteer helpers eat to-gether. Only very rarely do Brothers sit at residents' tables, or vice versa. Similarly the lounge used by the residents only sees a Brother in it when he is on official business or if he is passing by and stops to talk for a minute. The living quarters of the Brothers, the residents, and the lay workers, are each on separate floors effectively separating each group from the other. It provides privacy for the lay workers and the Brothers, but not the residents.

Another feature of differential privacy is illustrated in the Brothers having private bedrooms, and the two lay workers share one large room. Therefore while social distance is perhaps not as extreme as described in the literature, it nevertheless exists, and was incorporated into the original design of the building.

The most relevant area of institutional control for the residents of the hostel comes in the area of their daily activities. To clarify what is meant here it is useful to quote Goffman (1961:10) on this point.

But to say that inmates of total institutions have

their full day scheduled for them is to say that all their essential needs will have to be planned for.

It is in this sense that institutional control is applicable here.

While they are free to go out into town, all of their basic needs are looked after. Their sleeping, eating, and indoor recreation is all looked after for them by the Brothers. This is all done I am sure, with the best of intentions by the staff, but unfortunately has dehumanizing consequences.

An example of this occurs at meal times. There is a small buffet set up in the dining room. All staff, volunteers, and visitors, walk by and pick up whatever and however much food they want, not so with the residents. When they enter the dining room their food is already on the plates and set at particular places in the room. This obviously denies them the choice of what and how much food. They are not able to choose where or with whom they eat, and as well it creates an image of helplessness. There is not one resident there who cannot pick up his own plate and food. Two use canes and admittedly it would be a little awkward at first but it would also provide some small degree of control over their environment. As Kahana states (1971),

Practices which are designed to protect the resident from hazards of exertion and insure his adherence to diets, or which dote over his safety, often contain many dehumanizing elements which deprive the older person of any sense of mastery over his environment.

Another aspect of the hostel's institutional life is recreation possibilities and areas related to this. A critical factor in recreational potentials can be the degree of professionalism amongst the staff.

In one sense professionals are required to impart new knowledge, help

set up programs, and hopefully understand the residents' needs. This must be put in the perspective of the cultural and/or class differences between staff and residents which can work to enlarge and reinforce social distance. In this aspect of it the hostel is fortunate in having their "cheap labour", Paul and Gordon. Directly because these two men have similar backgrounds to the residents they understand the needs of the residents, and probably share some of their attitudes. They know when a man needs a drink and sometimes accompany him to a hotel. They take the time and have the interest, to play cards or checkers with the men occasionally. Kahana and Harel, in a 1972 study concur on this saying a "common cultural heritage leads to greater empathy and improved communication with residents." "Empathy and improved communication" are difficult to quantify, but their presence probably does help the residents to relax, and enjoy themselves a little more.

Nevertheless, some professional training on the part of the Brothers could provide an effective balance with the folk knowledge of their lay staff. Unfortunately, neither of the two Brothers is particularly anxious to acquire this professional base. One Brother told me he was not happy with the operation of the Montreal house specifically because it did have some professional staff. He said,

In the Montreal house they have plenty of staff, but they are all specialized labour so that really the place is in a mess because it is so impersonal. The important time that should be spent with the residents doesn't get done.

This does not seem to me to be the fault of specialized labour per se, rather it represents misplaced priorities. The Lake City staff themselves see very little of their residents and they are not specialized labour.

The other Brother resists taking an Ontario government course in nursing home administration, and the previously mentioned Brother waited until it was too late before he got around to finding out about it and so did not enroll this year. This course is eventually mandatory because the provincial government who require it, greatly subsidizes their aged residence and controls regulations on costs and rates to be charged, as well as ages of men to be admitted etc. They resist taking this course for fear it will turn them into petty bureaucrats who spend all their time filling out forms in triplicate. This is certainly a pitfall to be avoided but still insufficient cause to avoid any upgrading of their credentials.

No one in the Canadian division of the order has taken the course although the Vice-President began it and then quit he says, because he did not have enough time for it. None of the Brothers have university degrees and several of the ones who enrolled in community college courses left the order shortly thereafter.

It is certainly possible to think up activities for men without higher education, but it has not been done. The sole indoor activity prepared by the Brothers is watching T.V. They can also play cards or read. These are the full extent of indoor activities available to them. Situations such as these tend to create frustration and boredom, especially when one of their favourite recreational pursuits, drinking, is not allowed. (While they are relaxing a little about expelling a man for drinking he stays only so long as he reforms and is penitent for his misdoings.) These men are ex-skid rowers, or skid rowers in a new building and are totally untrained in creating leisurely activities which do not involve drinking.

As Goffman states it (1961:10),

Sometimes so little work is required that inmates, often untrained in leisurly pursuits, suffer extremes of boredom.

The residents are required to do virtually nothing in terms of work. They do not even put their own dinner on a plate, or carry the dirty dishes into the kitchen. A communal effort directed at the dishes might go some distance to breaking down social distance too.

As the history at the beginning of this section hinted, the hostel was well outfitted with broadloom, and more chairs than they can rationally justify. (Capacity crowds occur in the chapel about once a year on special occasions.) The kitchen is a splendid example of all the latest expensive institutional conveniences. I'm not suggesting they should not concern themselves with these, but perhaps they prevail over the needs of the residents. As Kahana puts it (1971),

Institutions are frequently more interested in outward appearances than inner realities. Social conscience is aroused by signs of poor maintenance or limited supplies, but remains insensitive to manifestation of apathy or an atmosphere of hopelessness.

The hostel has two strikes against it in this category on top of a lack of professionalism. First of all they have a tight fisted board of directors who will not finance such things as hiring cooks. Personnel like that are essential if for no other reason that it would give the Brothers more time to spend with the aged residents. As it is now so much of their day, practically all of it, is oriented to collecting, preparing, and serving food to the transient men, that they only see the old men as they fly past the lounge. The good grades the hostel earns on it's transient meal service cost heavily when it comes to the aged residence.

The men themselves are divided. Reg Farley is distinctly unhappy, always irritable, and often drunk. Tony Walker wants to move out but knows of no better place, so he sits in the lounge and stares at the T.V. Scott Mandel is quite old at 78, and he seems to be enjoying himself, perhaps in comparison to his previous experiences, and seems content to watch T.V. all day. He too did some drinking until the nearby hotel caught onto his forgetfulness senility and stopped serving him. Gavin Harper is the youngest at 59, and he really enjoys the hostel. It is the best material life he's known in about five years, and he is still young enough to confidently prowls the downtown area and spends many afternoons bar hopping.

I asked him what he thought of the hostel now that he had been there a few months. "Terrific, you couldn't ask for anything better. There's good food, the dining room furniture is just like you'd find in a club. The whole building is new. All the staff are good guys. No complaints, no way."

As Gavin's testimony reveals, he enjoys his food, (he is about 50 pounds overweight), and perhaps having the material things furnished, these men are not accustomed to asking, "and then what?" They have been partially dependent on missions for years and are not intimidated by the label "mission stiff". So while they may get bored, apart from liquor these residents as Goffman noted above, literally do not know what they are missing. And the hostel staff does not have the time, training, or money to find out what it is, and do something about it.

Conclusions

The agencies and institutions providing services on skid row, naturally enough cater to the needs of skid row as a whole and not the

old men. Even the Inner City Hostel while primarily for old men has an allowance for one-quarter of it's beds to be filled by the non-aged, and all of their men tend to be skid row types.

The Coffee Stop serves the needs of the skid row men best by providing an alternative to Gulliver Park in the winter. It is a warm place where the men can get together and have coffee. It also offers relief from the dreary rooms they spend much of the rest of the winter in. Coffee Stop as a referral service for alcoholics and drug users is of some use to the men. They will not though make the slightest dent in curbing alcohol and drug abuse amongst the skid row population. Almost daily the police wagons are there escorting drinking men out. One man trying to come off a drunk stopped going there during the day because every time he turned around someone was offering him a drink. The staff are adequately trained social workers who harbour some misconceptions about what they can accomplish on skid row.

The visiting group really does not harbour any misconceptions about what it can accomplish because it has never seriously made the effort to define what it is they would like to do. The group visits too few men, too rarely, for too brief a period of time. The organization is haphazard and part time. The only conclusion I can draw on this group is that they are well meaning people who are nevertheless not concerned enough to either really examine what it is they are doing, or make an all out effort to improve their program. As it stands now it has a negligible influence on the lonely, urban aged poor of Lake City.

Soup kitchens as stated in the chapter, are practically as old as skid row. For the men they provide emergency food towards the end of

each month when they are running out of money. Some skid rowers become "mission stiff" of a sort, and eat there practically everyday.

The food available at the missions, depending on donations, very rarely offers protein or vitamin rich food, and concentrates on the more economical starchy foods like macaroni. They are adequate for carrying a man over a rough period, but will have a degenerative effect on anyone eating there regularly, although it is hard to identify precisely, when the men simultaneously don't eat any other food, and drink to excess.

The Coffee Stop and the Refuge Mission combine soup with salvation, and to no avail. Attendance figures comparing a soup/salvation outlet with one which dispenses just food, attests to how much the men appreciate the higher exchange cost at the rescue missions. None of these missions accomplish anything in the direction of reducing the skid row rolls and at least the Inner City Hostel does not pretend it does.

The hostel deserves credit and censure. The former because they do not practice the futile effort of "saving" the men. They compassionately know who their clientele are and provide for their material needs as best they can on limited monies and supplies. The practice though, of using army surplus trays, spoons as the only utensil, ushering the men to their seats, and hurrying the men through, while perhaps explainable in terms of efficiency, are nevertheless dehumanizing features and procedures which do nothing to give the skid rower any dignity.

The Inner City Hostel's third floor, or residence for the aged, does provide as Gavin enthusiastically points out, better eating and sleeping opportunities than any of these men have probably known in

recent history. On the other hand, the social distance, lack of privacy, and total absence of any recreational programs or facilities for the men other than a T.V. set, is a failure to take an active interest in the lives of these men. They have not, to this point in time, sought to discover what the needs of these men are. Until they do this and are prepared to take the necessary steps to provide for some of these needs, the last years of these men's lives will be rather without purpose.

As Kahana states (1971),

...humane treatment must be seen not only as the absence of maltreatment but as an active attempt to restore the older person to his optimal level of functioning.

In the case of the old skid rower this does not mean try and keep him off alcohol. It means first of all to be willing to accept their drinking, as the staff seem to be beginning to. They must go considerably further on this drinking aspect, and should therefore, at least examine the pros and cons of allowing the men to drink in the hostel. This sort of mature attitude to drinking cannot take place until the Brothers are honest and open about their own private habits. And I hasten to add, these are not scandalous, but normal and yet hidden from the lay staff and the residents. Steps such as these should be part of a general program to break down social distance barriers.

The Hostel cannot be all it should be without more money. Who is going to live in a building where the only activity is sitting in front of a T.V. set all day unless he's desperate? It is also essential that at least some of their staff enroll in courses on nursing home administration including the sociology of aging and death. In so doing it does not necessarily follow that they will become bureaucrats.

You can always hire a bureaucrat to do the paperwork, that is not difficult. Brothers who are not willing to take steps to upgrade their knowledge about aging, in its many facets should not be in the age institution business. Those old skid rowers deserve no less than the best efforts the staff can put out, and that means full time. It is possible to make a man's last years meaningful and active. In Kahana's words (1971),

To the extent that the institution succeeds in recognizing the needs of the new resident and providing an environment which can accommodate to his needs, stress is reduced and the pace of decline may be checked.

This is the role of an institution for the aged. It is the "and then what?", after material sustenance.

The services these various agencies and institutions provide, are used by the men in an unwritten but understood, exchange relationship. In return for whatever satisfaction the outsiders receive for their ministering to the poor, the insiders accept food, clothing, and shelter supplies they pay for by obeying the rules and listening to the concerns of the agency staff. The exchange relationship is not conflict free. The two groups have differing interests and only work together because there is something to exchange. As I have shown, the skid rowers abandon the social services when the asking price exceeds what they consider to be reasonable.

Part IV

Conclusions

CHAPTER VIII

Conclusions

I am using a three step approach in my conclusion statement. Integrated chapter summaries will make clear the relationships between the men and those persons who have throughout the lives of my men, exercised authority over them. This will act as a background on which I will base my discussion of the major problem areas dealt with in the thesis. Following this, recommendations concerning the nature of possible future studies which have suggested themselves in this thesis will be outlined.

Chapter Summaries

The daily activity of Lake City's poor old men has been the focus of my study. In general terms, I made use of three forms of activity the men were a part of. I was involved in reporting both the activities they were engaged in while in my presence, as well as watching the nature of their pastimes when not actively accompanying the particular individuals. For instance, I would sit in the park or bus terminal without talking to anyone, and instead just observe who did what, when, and with whom. The third aspect of their day to day pursuits I kept up with was their relationship to others outside of their circle of associates. At times this involved watching them

react to police, or institution staff, and often it demanded that I listen to stories of their past to understand their position in various structural contexts throughout their adult lives.

Whenever I was talking to the men, it was always in a setting of their choosing. The informal atmosphere of the talks made allowances for conversation topics not at all related to my research topics, while at the same time guaranteeing the relevant information would be gathered freely in an atmosphere not threatening to the men. I used participant observation methodology as it is best able to provide flexibility in data gathering while maintaining a constructive framework for utilization of data.

The methodology is most obviously in evidence in Chapter 3, Daily Activity. In conjunction with information already presented in the Introduction, this chapter sets the scene by constructing a picture of what life is like for these men. It brings to light the structural constraints of meagre social and economic resources which then determine things like where they live, how far they can travel, and the limited possibilities for keeping active. It is these various features constituting the social fabric of their lives which I take separately and discuss in depth in the following chapters.

In terms of actual physical engagement, I show how with so few places to go, or things to do, the men are substantially affected by the weather because it often determines whether they go to the park, or stay in their rooms, in the winter, the weather again often plays a significant role in deciding if they will venture out to places like the drop-in center or bus terminal. These winter indoor spots also have administrators who are more difficult to avoid than the police

who pay little attention to the park. This means the men in the winter are more often brought into confrontations with middle class people who have specific ideas concerning what is best for them. In these settings the exchange relationship is in nearly continual evidence.

The present situation of these men naturally has a past, and it is consistent with how the men spend their time. Section Two of the thesis consists of the Careers chapter which outlines the origins of Lake City's aged indigent population. The central fact, but not the sole determining point of their origins, is the Canadian depression of the 1930's. It occurred at a time when these men were just commencing adult life.

The depression was also the first time the structural forces of government and the economic system made themselves readily obvious to the men. If they did not know their relationship to those who control the economy before this, they knew then. Work was irregular at best and often unobtainable for long periods of time. Work they did receive was of low skill, low pay, and short duration. These were the days when the men made contact with skid row and many began the heavy drinking which for the rest of their lives would have a cumulative adverse effect on them. The jobs they had in these years are characteristic of those they have had since then, consistently of low skill and little reward.

Career for Hughes (1971), as I have stated, consists of adjustment to social occurrences in one's life. Lake City's aged poor made most

of their adjustments when they were younger. They did not get the steady work from which you retire at 65. Half of them never married, and those who did have long been separated from wives and children. They came out of "the dirty thirties" and never fully recovered. A description of the relations my respondents have with existing family and friends commences the third section of the thesis, the contemporary scene.

Relations with family are very few and tenuous when they do exist. As well as being divorced from creative roles in the work sphere, these men have been denied stable family structure which has many ramifications in terms of aid and companionship in old age. They receive negligible amounts of either from family, and so therefore must rely on friends and neighbours.

For biological, social, and economic reasons, the number of friends the men still have contact with is declining. In a similar manner the men are not able to build new friendships or contacts in their old age, and so become increasingly dependent on neighbours as well as local agencies.

Their decimated economic and social resources revealed, I then move in Chapter 6 to a discussion of their health. This has been defined by Shanas (1968:25), as the ability to function. It satisfies my needs because most of the men, while suffering from one or more chronic complaints and notably arthritis, are nevertheless still able to get around at least in a limited fashion.

I also discuss material factors which contribute to the health

of the men (Wiseman, 1970:9). Their poor food, clothing, and shelter resources are a direct result of their previous careers, primarily economic, but social as well. The fact that the government sees fit to consider this a tolerable situation is consistent with my sample's position in the social structure. It is reflected to-day in the continued existence of a marginal labour force, and the blind eye turned towards those directly responsible for the aged poor's present conditions. For example, the government itself, in the case of a nearby city, has recently been shown to be a slum landlord.

Given the diminished resources revealed in the Activity chapter, and developed in the following chapters, I conclude the substantive section of the thesis with a chapter on the service facilities available to the men. The men know these outlets are administered by those persons who are the representatives of the same people who denied them work in the 1930's, who oversaw their welfare cheques off and on since then, and who jailed them when they were publicly embarrassing. I do not mean the men necessarily connect the various agencies to their structural roots. These men though, as the chapter illustrates, know only two groups, "we" and "they", and agency staff are "they".

This relationship is plainly evident to the men as they balance their needs against what they will give up in personal dignity, in return for what the agencies can offer. The data I present on the mission food outlets, and the residence for aged men bear this out. They give the agencies the minimum possible in

return for food or bed, and rarely commit loyalties to these agencies. There are some men who do, and they are recognized by their peers for what they are, broken men, the mission stiff as Wallace (1965:62) refers to them. They have suffered the final dehumanization, the loss of dignity.

Theoretical Commentary

The preceding review of material presented in the chapters reveals several things about the old poor men of Lake City. There is, firstly, the exchange relationship which pervades any personal contact they have with those who exercise authority over them. The men give, at cost to themselves, only what is required to achieve the best return they can on the relationship.

Secondly, the overwhelming realization though is that the men are so poor with respect to economic and social resources they are not in a very good bargaining position. The aged indigents of Lake City are dependent on outsiders for all their physical needs. They can therefore only offer limited amounts of themselves as payment for material sustenance. It is for this reason the indigents attend mission religious services, or pose for newspaper photos at skid row drop-in centres.

The third point concerns the source of their social and economic poverty. As the Careers chapter explained, the present situation for Lake City aged indigents began when they were young adults. Without

jobs, education, wealth, or permanent residence, they were unable to carve successful careers for themselves. Their work history since then reveals a consistency with those beginnings. It is characterized by low skilled and irregular work, bouts with alcohol, and little or no retirement benefits. The social sphere is likewise a logical continuation of the 1930's. Only half of the men were ever married, and not one has had a marriage sustained into their old age.

A fourth point I would like to make is that while I discuss social and economic forces and consequences separately, they do not occur in isolation from each other. The economic plight of the men is a direct result of their class position and its history in Canada. The lack of social resources reinforced their inability to move out of their economic setting.. The economic circumstances on the other hand, made it very difficult to be financially independent, or even maintain a residence. This disqualified many of the men from being able to accept the responsibilities of a family. Those who did attempt it, bear witness to the strain economic poverty places on social relationships (Garner, 1936).

The activity towards the aged and their economic circumstances by the relevant levels of government in this country are a denial of my analysis. They have been in the past, and continue to be so presently (See also Piven and Cloward, 1971). I am aware of studies presently underway by the Ontario government with the stated purpose being to reframe welfare policy. Nevertheless, it remains to be seen

if they are going to actually attack the central issue. This is the fact that welfare, under any name as distributed in this country, is given as tainted money to those too helpless through individual failings to care for themselves.

Attitudes such as these are fostered by theories like the "culture of poverty" argument. In this scheme the poor are said to be a subculture which pathologically maintains itself via socialization and personality defects (Valentine, 1968:141). The subscribers to this psychologically based theory include a substantial number of academic poverty experts, and government policy makers. They see poverty being eliminated by way of psychiatry, education, and social workers directed towards instilling middle class values in the deficient minds of the poor (Valentine, 1968:144).

This is incorrect. The authority structure in this country, and those influenced by them, have abrogated their responsibility. If they were to accept it, they would be compelled to recognize that it is the inherent deficiencies in the dominant system which are responsible for the perpetually poor. Beck (1966), in speaking of welfare dependency as a condition imposed on those who are continually poor, makes this point.

If large-scale dependency as a problem is found in the heart of urban and industrialized masses, then the structural arrangements which characterize the urban industrial society itself must contain the elements which give rise to the situation.

The poverty of old men live with is directly tied to their class position and the sorts of working relationships this position

permits. This lower class position was further reduced by the particular historical and economic circumstances of the 1930's. The social relationships of labour being what they were, in turn fostered more purely social conditions which inhibited many single men from developing families.

These old men are making the best of a bad situation when they interact in the exchange relationship. Their present day dependency which is responsible for their poor bargaining position, has its beginnings back when the men were very young adults. The circumstances surrounding those days of emergence placed a blight on their careers. These are the old poor men of Lake City. They are dependent on others while retaining small parts of their dignity. They are old and they are poor.

My findings in the course of this thesis have at various times brought to mind areas where I feel further research is warranted. One of these in particular is prompted by the above structural versus psychologistic culture of poverty discussion.

Areas Requiring Further Research

It is for the aforementioned reasons social workers motivated by a personality or cultural basis for poverty, will never be significant in eliminating poverty. Instead, we need studies which presently concentrate on blue collar workers, to broaden their scope and include the marginal labour of the seasonal worker. The latter's role as a portion of the working class needs to be explored and demonstrated

in its relation to Canadian social structure.

The poor are lacking primarily in money, but more importantly in the long term, they are without the power necessary for self-determination. The statement that the poor have the right to vote into power the men and women of their choosing is illusory (Valentine, 1968:151). The parties themselves, and the candidates they choose, are chosen directly or indirectly by the dominant authority group. Studies being done to integrate the aged poor into a structural framework need to explicitly point out that access to power is a prerequisite to the self-determination of the poor, and their own elimination of poverty.

Another aspect of poverty research as to do with women. As I explained in the Introduction, women were left out of this thesis. I think a study, perhaps similar in approach to mine, is urgently needed to make known the exact situation of Lake City's or any city's, aged poor women.

With respect to relevant literature, I have throughout this study made the point that gerontological research has concerned itself, by and large, with middle class problems. Even the poor aged they do discuss are middle class persons who are experiencing difficulties in their old age. Contributions to the literature are needed to correct the present imbalance and neglect of the aged who have been living with poverty for many years.

Valentine states emphatically (1968:147), that "what is most needed is fresh research leading to real ethnographies of the poor."

Beck said the same thing in 1966, and it is now 1974. It is my hope that this ethnography of old poor men has gone some distance towards filling the void existing in the literature dealing with both the poor and the aged.

Appendix ABIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Name:

Age:

Address:

Sex:

FAMILY

Spouse:

Parents:

Siblings:

Frequency of seeing spouse:

Frequency of seeing siblings:

FRIENDS

Number of close friends:

Number of casual acquaintances:

Names of close friends:

Most frequent location of meeting:

Average age of friends:

Range of friends' age:

Sex of majority of friends:

HOUSING

Type:

State of repair of bldg.:

Rent:

How long in present residence:

Length of tenancy with present landlord:

Satisfaction with accomodation:

INCOME

Sources:

Amount:

If less than 65 yrs. of age, does pension vary according to changing needs, i.e. rent decrease equals pension decrease.

Satisfaction with income:

Do you have any money after food, clothing and rent; to be used for instance on recreation or travel?

WORK HISTORY

A chronological outline:

Impact of W.W. I and II:

Impact of depression:

Anything else that significantly affects work history:

EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES

How majority of time is spent, in summer and in winter:

Variations in routine from day to day, i.e. Monday and Tuesday,
or Wednesday and Saturday:

OPINION OF:

Missions:

Social Workers:

Police:

City Hall govt.:

Govt. in Ottawa:

DRINKING:

HEALTH:

USE OR NON USE OF HELPING AGENCIES:

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