

LOCAL RECREATIONAL RESOURCES FOR THE
AGED: A COMPARATIVE SURVEY OF TWO
VANCOUVER DISTRICTS (1957-8)

by

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ABSTRACT

The increasing number of persons surviving into old age, the prolongation of the period spent in retirement, and the social changes resulting from urbanization and industrialization, have all combined to make the use of leisure time by the senior citizens an urgent social problem. For this study, two districts from the City of Vancouver, both of which had a high proportion of senior citizens, were selected and compared. The purpose was to assess the effectiveness of existing resources in meeting the recreational needs of the senior citizens in the two areas. Foremost was the question of the nature of existing resources, their availability to the general population, and their availability to senior citizens. It also attempted to throw some light on the meaning of recreation to the older person, and the extent to which he is willing or able to involve himself in meeting his own recreational needs.

For the purpose of gaining information the co-operation was sought from ministers of local churches, and pensioners' organizations, through the use of questionnaires. These were followed up by personal interviews with staff of social and recreational agencies, representative men and women, and interested citizens.

The socio-economic characteristics of the two areas are described, and the recreational resources available and the use made of them by old people are analyzed. Many groups that replied indicated that the provision of recreation was part of their purpose, but that social action was their primary concern. The questionnaire was useful, but to determine the needs that are considered important by the recreation authorities and the pensioners, it was necessary to make further inquiries through personal interviews with people concerned with the issue. These findings are that the programmes studied are able to meet with varying degrees of success the needs of the senior citizens for companionship with their own group. The extension of existing facilities and programmes, and more frequent meetings are needed, however, to satisfy the emotional and leisure-time needs of senior citizens.

In the last chapter, the recreational resources and needs are reviewed and the limitations of the survey are discussed. It appears that the survey dealt primarily with older people of limited financial means who enjoy sufficiently good health to go out to meetings. Larger questions regarding the recreational needs and resources available to all senior citizens, would require further surveys to answer them properly.

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CHAPTER I

THE USE OF LEISURE-TIME BY THE AGED: PROBLEM AND OPPORTUNITY

Problems created by the increase in the number of the aged in our population are only beginning to be realized at the present time. Improved public health measures, advances in surgery and medicine, improved knowledge of hygiene and nutrition, and general improvements in the North American standard of living have all contributed to the increase in life expectancy during the present century.¹ This, coupled with the declining birth rate of the pre-war years, has resulted in an increasing proportion of the population being composed of persons over the age of sixty-five years. In Canada, the proportion of persons aged sixty-five years and over increased from five per cent of the total population at the beginning of this century to nearly eight per cent in 1951. The proportion in British Columbia is nearly eleven per cent and the numbers involved--approximately 150,000 persons--give added urgency to the social and economic problems of the older person in this province.

The use of leisure-time presents some of the most difficult problems for the ageing person in our society. The Twentieth Century in North America has been aptly described as

¹See, for example, Kessler, Henry H., The Principles and Practices of Rehabilitation, Philadelphia, Lea and Ferbiger, 1950.

the Century of Children.² An increased emphasis on youth and the problems of children in our changing society has brought about a heavy concentration of services to this segment of the population and to a large extent has meant that the problems of the aged have been given less attention. These problems are exacerbated when, as is often the case, the older person is compelled to retire from his normal employment on reaching a certain chronological age, regardless of his physical ability to continue working or his own wishes in the matter. The situation of the forty-or fifty-year-old man who finds the employment field barred to him because of his age is even more devastating in its effects. For many of our senior citizens, then leisure-time becomes an enforced condition of their lives and a condition which may carry with it many negative associations. For others more fortunate retirement is part of a carefully planned life, and for such people the added leisure-time may well prove a fruitful and satisfying experience.

It is safe to assume that certain problems associated with the use of leisure-time are common to most senior citizens; these will be discussed in general terms before examining the particular needs of the groups who form the subject of the present study.

The Social Problems of the Aged

In North American culture a premium is placed upon independence and productivity, and the visible sign of both is

²Kurtz, Russell H. ed. Social Work Year Book, 1947, "White House Conference 1940, "Russell Sage Foundation, N. Y., 1947.

material wealth. Status in the community, for both the breadwinner and his family, is directly related to productivity and material wealth. With retirement, however, the man faces a change both in his social role as a productive member of society and in his role as family provider and often family ties are already being loosened through marriage of the children or perhaps death of the spouse.

Technological and scientific advances in day to day living may also frequently work hardships on the older person. It is not easy for him to assimilate new ideas or to develop new skills and the process of adjustment is frequently made more difficult by the restrictions imposed on his activities and interests by his meagre financial resources. Few senior citizens, for example, can afford to own television sets or other electrical appliances, yet they must live in a society where such things are taken for granted by younger people. Similarly, recreation is dependent to a large degree on transportation and the cost of this may be more than the older person can afford.

Physical health is another important factor in ageing and one which is of constant concern to many older people. Changes in general bodily tonus, disabilities associated with age, the costs of medical care, and the problems co-incident with a reduced physical capacity are all very threatening and serve to undermine the older person's sense of security. It is generally agreed that age brings with it certain physical changes such as deterioration of sight, hearing or muscular ability, and,

of course, the aged are more subject to the so-called chronic diseases.³ Conditions such as heart ailments, arthritis, cancer and mental illness all show increased incidence beyond the age of sixty-five.⁴ Added to the problems of physical change and the lessening of physical capacity are the emotions of fear and anxiety prompted by these changes. This additional psychological burden must often be borne without the help of friendly counsel to share the burden. For many of the aged loved ones are no longer available, and even if they are, they are often unable to be of any great comfort in helping the older person to cope with the anxiety associated with normal ageing processes.

Other psychological problems confront the aged in our culture, largely as a result of the attitude toward, and the role assigned the aged in our society. There is a tendency to consider the aged as a special category of people who have special needs that isolate them from the general stream of population. Hence the practice of thinking in group terms about the aged and the tendency to segregate them in special institutions or in special groups for political, social and recreational purposes. This segregation of the aged presents certain problems in that the peculiarities of some of the members of the group are more likely to gain public recognition, with the result that the entire group becomes "peculiar" in the

³Shieglitz, Edward J., editor, Geriatric Medicine, 3rd.ed., J. B. Lippincott Co., Philadelphia, 1954.

⁴Reports of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Co., the American Heart Foundation, and Government reports such as the Annual Report of the Provincial Mental Health Services, Province of British Columbia, tend to bear out this observation.

eyes of the public. In actual fact, one finds a fairly representative cross section of personalities amongst the aged population, but because the aged are becoming more numerous, and because the processes of ageing bring about some slowing down of bodily processes and create some additional social problems, there is a strong tendency to type all senior citizens in terms of eccentricities rather than in terms of healthy adjustments of ageing.⁵ The aged of course, do have some needs that are peculiar to their situation of ageing in a somewhat materialistic society, and it seems desirable to examine some of these needs and the resources available to meet them before examining the specific needs and resources involved in the use of leisure time.

The Needs of the Aged

The needs of the aged do not vary basically from the needs of the general population. Essentially, these are needs for economic security including food, clothing, shelter and medical care, on the one hand, and, on the other, the need for emotional and psychological security which comes from a sense of worth and a degree of social participation.

For the senior citizen, economic security can be attained by private means or by public provision of financial aid. In Canada the latter provision is made through legislative enactment at two levels of Government. The Old Age Assistance

⁵Quavan, Burgess et Al, Personal Adjustment in Old Age, Science Research Associates Inc., Chicago, 1949.

Act⁶ is a Federal enabling act that permits Provinces to grant certain maximum allowances to persons over the Age of sixty-five, on a cost-sharing basis with the Federal Government. The Old Age Security Act⁷ makes provision for all persons over age seventy with ten years residence in the country to receive a minimum payment each month without references to the recipients' income from other sources. Supplementary assistance of up to twenty dollars a month is paid by the Province of British Columbia to anyone in receipt of Old Age Assistance or Old Age Security who meets certain residence requirements and whose total income does not exceed \$1,020 per annum in the case of a single person and \$1,800 in the case of a married couple. Even with this supplementary assistance the meeting of basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter, is often a most difficult problem for the senior citizen. Medical care is provided to the recipients of Old Age Assistance or of the Old Age Security pension who qualify on the basis of a means test for the supplementary allowance, but some ancillary medical services are difficult for the senior citizen to obtain. Such things as dental care, prosthetic appliances, and special medications are not always provided for the recipient of old age allowance with the result that his enjoyment of such things as reading or listening to the radio may be limited for want of glasses or hearing aids.

⁶An Act to provide for Old Age Assistance, Assented to 30th June, 1951. 15 George VI

⁷Ibid.

Moreover, because of the method used for re-imbursing medical practitioners who attend senior citizens under public auspices, some doctors are reluctant to make house calls or even to provide office service unless it is a matter of dire emergency since this type of practice is relatively unrewarding for the medical profession. Hospitalization also presents a problem for the aged person on a marginal income since it is difficult in the first place to gain admission to hospital, and, secondly, it is often difficult to maintain living accommodation if the hospitalization is to be extended over a period of time. Thus the senior citizen is often confronted with the alternative of either foregoing necessary medical treatment in hospital in order to preserve his living arrangements, or of going into hospital and taking the risk of having no accommodation to return to when the time comes for discharge.

Housing, of course, is one of the most vexing and difficult problems facing the person on a marginal income and the senior citizen receiving some form of public assistance has to make many compromises in order to find any form of accommodation. In British Columbia the problem is aggravated by the rapid growth of population in the large urban centres. While the moderate climate tends to attract many people at retirement, the expanding economy of the province since World War II has attracted a much larger group of young people with greater earning capacity than the senior citizen and this has undoubtedly created a situation of high land values and high rentals in housing. Caught in the squeeze between rising rent

levels on the one hand and a limited income on the other are eventually to accept a drastic reduction in the standard of housing they can afford to occupy. It has been demonstrated that sub-standard housing is closely associated with poor health, both physical and mental, and with an exacerbation of social problems.⁸ These additional stresses on the senior citizens of marginal income must create psychological problems that complicate the simple problems of providing food, clothing and shelter.

It is generally recognized that while there can be no effective substitute for an adequate income, decent housing and proper medical care, many of the physical and psychological stresses associated with ageing can be ameliorated by constructive use of leisure time. The provision of recreational facilities in depressed areas in many cities throughout North America has seemingly brought about positive change in the adjustments of the residents of these areas.⁹ In view of this, it seems logical to assume that recreation might help the senior citizen to cope with the multitude of frustrations that attend his daily life.

The Meaning of Recreation for the Aged

Modern thinking on the subject of personality growth and development has given rise to the concept that food, clothing and shelter are not sufficient to meet the needs of people if life is to bring a sense of fulfilment.

⁸Common Human Needs, Charlotte Towle, American Association of Social Workers, New York, 16, N.Y. 1955.

⁹San Francisco

All people seem to require acceptance and recognition of their inherent worth and dignity as human beings. This acceptance is sought as much in recreative pursuits as in other activities, and for the senior citizen who has much leisure time, his sense of worth is probably more often strengthened in his leisure time activities than in his other life routines.

Kaplan has suggested that recreation refers to "any activity that is either creative or recreative and which gives emotional satisfaction to the person involved."¹⁰ It is the aspect of emotional satisfaction that is of importance in considering the meaning of recreation to the aged. The older person, removed from productive employment, must find his satisfactions in non-productive activity. Creativeness can play a part in this, but many senior citizens are inexperienced at expressing latent creativity, and these must derive emotional satisfaction from other aspects of their recreative lives. It is probable that many senior citizens derive satisfaction from social contacts and from group acceptance expressed in "doing together", and that recreation of this type is the most meaningful way of utilizing leisure time for senior citizens. In some ways, it is likely that group activities and interests replace the close ties of family which have been lost or weakened. Following on this principle, however, it would be logical to assume that recreation for the aged should be a part of overall community recreation, in order to provide a sense

¹⁰Kaplan, Jerome, A Social Program for Older People, The University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1953, p. 7

of continuity with former family ties by the participation of all age groups. In practice, this does not seem to be too successful, although some special agencies have such comprehensive programmes which are well attended by the aged. Actually, in recreation it seems that the aged prefer the less intense programmes of their own age grouping, except in mass programmes such as concerts where the recreation is of a passive nature and requires very little investment of "self" to effect a successful programme.

Recreation for the aged can have various meanings, according to the unique situation of each older person. For the person who lives in relative discomfort, recreation may be the means of dispelling loneliness, of providing physical comfort or of offering activities that help to relieve anxiety, even if only temporarily. For others, recreation may provide an opportunity to remove themselves for a time from the rush and pressure of family living, while others may find status and recognition from belonging to a group composed of former work associates.

In addition to these more personal forms of motivation to participate in leisure time activity, there is the factor of service to others. In the North American culture, men have made much use of the group approach in dealing with social issues and meeting community needs. As a result, organizations such as service clubs, housing associations, etc., have grown up. Senior citizens who have identified with such community groups in younger years may still derive personal satisfaction from such activities, and at the same

time make an important contribution to their fellow men. such people can also bring to community groups a background of experience which, if used intelligently, can be extremely valuable.

Method of Study

The problems of increasing numbers of senior citizens in the population, together with the special problems they present in regard to the use of leisure-time, raise certain important questions. Foremost among these is, of course, the question of the nature of existing recreational resources, their availability to the general population, and their availability to senior citizens. In 1954 a survey was made of recreation services for the aged in the city of Vancouver.¹¹ This was a factual survey of the number and types of existing services, and did not concern itself with an evaluation of the adequacy of the programmes provided. The study did, however, point up the need for an evaluation of programmes and of the amount of participation in them by the senior citizens, and it focussed attention on certain critical areas in Vancouver.

The purpose of the present study is to assess the effectiveness of existing resources in meeting the recreational needs of older people in two distinct areas in the city. It also attempts to throw some light on the meaning of recreation to the older person, and the extent to which he is willing or able to involve himself in meeting his own recreational needs. The survey was restricted to two well-

¹¹Grant, Joan, Recreational Interests and Activities for Senior Citizens in Vancouver, School of Social Work, University of British Columbia, 1954.

defined areas of the city of Vancouver, the boundaries of which are shown on the map in Appendix B. These areas were selected for study because of the heavy concentration of old people in them and because of certain distinct socio-economic characteristics which have an important bearing on the well-being of the old people resident in the areas. Information about these areas and about the recreational needs and resources in them was obtained from observation in the field, from interviews with staff of social and recreational agencies, from interviews with senior citizens and persons interested in the problems of senior citizens, and through the use of questionnaires directed to special groups in the areas.¹²

The special groups selected were churches and senior citizens' organizations, and the information sought related to the kinds of recreational activities provided by these groups, the level of participation by senior citizens, and the needs for developing further recreational resources in the two areas. The replies to the questionnaires provided some indication of the number of resources available and levels of participation, but by themselves did not give sufficient information on which to base a proper evaluation of the program or of their value in meeting needs of the senior citizens. Accordingly, follow-up interviews were arranged with the respondents to the questionnaires.

¹²The questionnaires and the groups to whom they were sent are shown in Appendix A.

Chapter II describes the socio-economic characteristics of the two areas and analyzes the findings of the survey separately for the two areas in terms of the recreational resources available and the use made of them by older people.

Chapter III includes a qualitative evaluation of the services, based on interviews with key personnel involved in the programs, and attempts to identify the kinds of recreational needs for which there is no provision either in the existing structure of services or in the programs themselves.

CHAPTER II

RECREATIONAL RESOURCES FOR THE AGED: THE ROLE OF THE CHURCHES AND OF OLD PEOPLE'S ORGANIZATIONS IN TWO AREAS OF VANCOUVER

THE AREAS STUDIED

Two areas were included in the survey, the first comprising the West End and Downtown districts and the second consisting of the area lying south of False Creek and bounded by Main Street on the east and Trafalgar on the west. The precise boundaries of the two areas are shown on the map included in appendix B and although unimportant in themselves, they have the advantage for purposes of comparison of corresponding to the boundaries of particular census tracts.¹ For convenience of reference, West End and Downtown districts will be referred to as area A throughout the study and the district south of False Creek as area B.

Living Conditions of the People in Area A

The two districts included in area A are quite distinct. The West End section reflects in the architecture of its buildings the transition from a first-class residential district of fifty years ago to a mediocre rooming-house area which in turn is now gradually being replaced by apartment buildings catering principally to the upper-income groups of the population. Thus it is not uncommon to find rooming houses in various stages of deterioration side by side with spacious, well-planned apartment dwellings.

¹Area A comprises census tracts 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. Area B census tracts 14, 15, 16, 22, 21. D. B. S. Census of Canada 1956, Bulletin CT-11.

In contrast to the West End which is primarily residential, the Downtown area with certain exceptions is chiefly commercial. The exceptions are a few older houses, some hotel accommodation and rooms located in and around the district known as "skid road". This latter district, although small in area, accommodates a large group of socially and economically marginal families and single people.² Rents for the most part are cheap and much of the accommodation consists of single housekeeping rooms so that it is not surprising to find the area inhabited by a large number of elderly people of limited means, most of whom are living on their own.

A wide range of incomes is found among the residents of the West End, ranging from very small pensions to unusually large private means. In the main, however, the construction of large modern apartment buildings has attracted a large number of more affluent residents. The elderly population is distributed among all income groups, but because of the relatively cheap accommodation in many of the older homes in the area, there tends to be a heavier concentration of old people living on small pensions of one form or another.

Recreational Resources in Area A

Recreational resources in Area A may be thought of as being of two kinds; on the one hand there are those designed

²Information obtained from the Old-Age Pensions Board indicates that approximately 30 per cent of the senior citizens on current case loads reside in the "skid-road" area.

specially for the area, and on the other there are those intended to serve the population of greater Vancouver.

Judging by the replies to the questionnaire used in the survey, there is a paucity of recreational resources designed primarily for the residents of Area A; however, within the area there is a preponderance of recreational facilities available to the whole city, and it is apparent that many senior citizens in the area avail themselves of these facilities and especially of those that require no financial outlay.

Some of these resources are Stanley Park, Georgia Auditorium, the Main Branch of the Vancouver Public Library, theatres, bowling alleys, billiard halls, etc. Some special mention should be made of Stanley Park since the senior citizens interviewed in conjunction with this survey have reported that they availed themselves of many of its resources. The park provides such facilities as outdoor checker-boards, lawn bowling, outdoor symphony concerts, "pitch and putt" golf, outdoor dances (particularly square dances and national dances) and just friendly conversation with visitors to the park.³

Besides these more obvious recreational activities it is evident that a number of other institutions in the area have become an important source of satisfaction to the older people in spending their leisure time. These include participation in casual assemblies at second-hand stores, auction

³One senior citizen reported that for twenty years he has found all his living accommodation through people he met in Stanley Park.

houses, railway and shipping stations, and in smaller parks, such as Victory Square. For senior citizens, the chief recreational value of these resources is the opportunity to gather with people of their own age and to derive some sense of sharing in the daily life of the city.

One of the few recreational services designed specially for a sub-group of the residents is Gordon Neighbourhood House, which is situated in the West End district. Gordon House is an unique type of recreational source in this area in that it functions as a social agency designed to meet recreational needs of the residents of the area. Special programs under professional social work leadership are available to the senior citizens, and in addition counselling services are provided by trained social workers. Other less structured resources are available in the area, such as the First United Church, Happy Hours Club and the St. James Branch of the Old Age Pensioners Organization.⁴

The Churches' Recreational Program for the Aged.

Twelve churches of various denominations are located in Area A. In order to ascertain the approximate number of senior citizens in the congregations and the kinds of leisure time activities provided over and above the regular services, the co-operation of the ministers of these churches was sought in answering a mailed questionnaire (See Appendix A).

⁴The Church and Senior Citizens Clubs are discussed more extensively in a separate section of this chapter.

Six ministers replied to the questionnaire, the replies varying both in range and information given and pertinence of answers. It was noted that all of the churches reported a substantial number of older people in their congregations, the actual number in four of the churches being over one hundred. It was not possible, unfortunately, to determine from the information given whether there had been any significant increase or decrease in the number of senior citizens attending over the past five-year period. However, of the four churches replying to this part of the questionnaire, two thought that there had been a noticeable increase, while one reported that there had been no significant change; the information provided in the fourth instance was inconclusive.

While it is recognized that the spiritual help and comfort provided by organized church programs is of inestimable value to many older people, no attempt was made to cover this aspect in the evaluation of the churches' programs for older people. Accordingly, the focus of the questionnaire was on those leisure time activities that the churches offered in addition to the regular religious services.

Four of the six churches replying to the questionnaire reported recreational and social programs of one kind or another, besides the regular religious services. One of the churches offered special leisure time activities for young people only, while three churches in the area reported programs especially related to the needs of senior citizens, as well as programs open to all age groups.

The programs offered by the churches vary from church to church. Two churches indicated that they had women's auxiliaries and a men's club, but none of these groups were described in sufficient detail to give a complete picture of their interests or the purposes of the programs. A third church, however, reported that it had a men's club which the minister described as devotional, recreational and social. Other activities reported were bible classes, retired folks fellowship clubs, guilds and women's associations, but none of these were described in sufficient detail to give a clear idea of what was involved in the program, or to what extent the church members were participating.

No indication was given by any of the churches reporting as to whether or not additional activities were needed or desirable, or if plans were under consideration for the implementation of further programs within the church.

The ministers reporting from churches in Area A felt that special efforts were needed to bring the senior citizens to church. Special efforts suggested by the ministers included personal invitations and social activities, as well as church services. Furthermore, two ministers saw the need for special efforts directed toward assisting the older person to participate in social programs; they attached particular importance to the place of personal contact by leaders who understood senior citizens and to the need for club rooms where the senior citizens might enjoy games and music. Three ministers were of the opinion that special efforts were unnecessary.

The questionnaire directed to the ministers in Area A asked for their opinions as to the need for additional recreational facilities in the areas served by their churches. The majority of them replied that they were aware of such needs and listed as the most important the need for a reading room, a recreation room, a day centre and club rooms operated especially for senior citizens. One minister in Area A reported that he did not see any need for any leisure time activity.

Living Conditions and the People in Area B

Area B, like Area A, is characterized by marked differences in housing standards and income levels of the residents. The section from Main Street to Cambie Street is primarily one of older homes that have been converted to rooming houses. The section west of Cambie Street is gradually being filled with large and expensive apartment buildings that are replacing private dwellings and rooming houses. These differences are particularly noticeable north of Seventh Avenue to the water front, where from Main Street to Burrard Street the housing shows severe signs of blight, while west of Burrard many large and comfortable apartment dwellings have arisen in the past fifteen years. As in Area A, it is not uncommon to find in these transitional districts large apartment buildings side by side with deteriorated rooming houses.

Occupations and incomes in the area range from those of semi-skilled and unskilled labourers to those of

semi-professional and professional people, the majority of the latter being found in the western section of the area in either private homes or apartments. The incidence of people who enjoy very high incomes is much smaller in this area than in Area A. Among the other members of the population a sizeable number have lived in the area most of their working lives. There are in addition a growing number of pensioners who have moved into the area from the West End and Downtown districts. This movement of older people into the area has been particularly pronounced during the last five or six years and is obviously connected with the numerous demolitions that have taken place in the West End and Downtown districts. Many of the buildings demolished were formerly rooming houses which provided relatively cheap accommodation for pensioners who have been forced to seek alternative accommodation in other cheap rental areas in the city, one of which consists of the easterly part of Area B.

Recreational Resources in Area B.

Area B differs from the other area surveyed in that it has fewer recreational resources than are available to the city as a whole. An important one, however, is the Kitsilano Beach which besides its bathing facilities has a community program that includes the "Show Boat." The "Show Boat" is an outdoor stage on which are presented programs provided by various amateur theatrical and concert groups in the city. The productions are free to spectators and are, accordingly,

well patronized by old age pensioners.

On the other hand, Area B has considerably more organized leisure time programs for its residents, but the findings of the survey indicate that only in a few instances have special provisions been made for the needs of the senior citizens. Resources such as Kitsilano Community Centre, the Jewish Community Centre and Alexandra Neighbourhood House make some efforts to provide programs for senior citizens, with the Neighbourhood House making the most concrete efforts. This program will be discussed more fully in a later chapter. The Community Centre has not met with much response in its attempts to organize programs for the senior citizens, but has found that a small group of them make use of the Field House in Connaught Park, a part of the Centre's physical plant. The men in this group arrange their own recreational program which consists chiefly of chess games or cards. The Jewish Community Centre offers a definite program for its senior citizens, but it has not been possible to obtain much information about this program.

Other resources in the area that meet some of the needs of senior citizens are commercial theatres, of which there are four offering moderately priced admission, and a library. The theatres are well patronized by senior citizens, but the library is over-crowded and has small quarters which must be shared with children and, therefore, the senior citizens find this to be of only limited value.

As in Area A, it was found that the senior citizens

of Area B made use of resources that are not primarily designed to meet recreational needs. Chief among these in Area B are the auction houses. Three of these are found in the area and senior citizens find them to be warm, pleasant establishments in which they can observe the progress of sales without having to make purchases.

The Churches' Recreational Programs for the Aged in Area B.

There are twenty-nine churches of various denominations in Area B. All the ministers were sent a questionnaire, ten of which were returned. All the ministers replying to the questionnaire reported a substantial number of senior citizens in their congregations. Three ministers gave the number to be over one hundred, four said it was between fifty and one hundred, one that it was under twenty-five. Other ministers failed to indicate the approximate number of senior citizens attending. Fifty per cent of the ministers reporting felt that the number of old people in the congregation had changed over the past five years. With one exception, an increase over the five year period was reported, some of the ministers observing that a similar trend was apparent among young members of the congregation. One minister reported that the number of older people had decreased and have as the cause, the mobility of the senior citizens and the loss of members through death.

In Area B, as in Area A, the program offered by the churches vary from church to church. Six ministers reported that they have some leisure time program. Five of

these programs were described by the ministers as social activities which were open to all adult members of the congregation. There was only one minister who reported a special leisure-time activity for senior citizens in his congregation. The activities indicated were women's associations, women's missionary societies and meetings. There was, however, no description given of the nature of the meetings or associations. Other activities listed were clubs and theatrical performances in a church attended by members of a particular ethnic group. Other activities mentioned were men's clubs, women's auxiliaries, mothers' fellowship meetings, bible classes, missionary meetings and a choir. The choir was attached to a Lutheran church, but the nature of the membership was not given.

Five ministers reporting from churches in Area B stated that the members of their congregations have made special efforts to encourage the older people to attend church services and to participate in the life of the church. In one case transportation to church was provided for older mothers who were alone on Mother's Day. Other special attempts mentioned were personal invitations, giving the pensioners a special welcome and helping them to feel that they have a place in the congregation. The importance of transportation was stressed by one church where the provision of this had resulted in the attendance of more old people at the services. One minister was of the opinion that special efforts were unnecessary, but he failed to give the reasons upon which his opinions were based.

Opinions of the ministers reporting from Area B varied as to whether special efforts were needed to encourage older persons to participate more fully in the recreation provided by the churches. The need for recreational facilities was stressed and also the desirability of providing special rooms for senior citizens to meet in. Usually the churches do and can afford this special accommodation. The provision of transportation was seen as an effective means of getting people to church, and also as a way of conveying to the old people the feeling that they were wanted. One of the ministers had found the pensioners the most willing and careful workers around the church. Recreation was seen as a medium for happier social adjustment of the senior citizens by two ministers. These men saw a need for recreational rooms which could be especially assigned to the pensioners. This need, however, was not seen by all ministers in Area B.

The Role of the Old Peoples Organizations

A special questionnaire was mailed to the executives of eleven Old Peoples Organizations. (see appendix) The purpose of this questionnaire was to discover what sort of provision these organizations made for recreation, and to determine what ~~senior citizens~~ ^{senior citizens} considered to be important recreational needs. Only five questionnaires were returned, three from Area A, and two from Area B. Since these questionnaires were sent to various types of old age pensioners groups and since the responses were very unevenly distributed

between Area A and Area B, it is difficult to make any comparisons between the two areas. It was therefore decided to combine the findings of the five questionnaires for purposes of examination and interpretation, without making specific reference to the areas in which the organizations are located. Since three of the five groups replying were affiliates of the B. C. Pensioners Organization, and since membership in these affiliate branches is not dependent on area of residence of the member, the responses in these three questionnaires cannot be considered truly representative of senior citizens living in a specific geographical area.

Replies were received from three branches of the Old Age Pensioners Organization, one Friendly Aid Society, and one retired employee pensioner group. The two groups replying from Area B were branches of the Old Age Pensioners Organization, while only one branch of this organization replied from Area A, but the two other groups that replied were from Area A.

Old Age Pensioners Organization.

The three district branches replying to the questionnaire reported that they were established between the years 1953 to 1955. Membership in the branches was as follows:

	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>
Club A	50	185
Club B	38	50
Club C	231	56

The purpose of the branches is stated as a wish to improve the living conditions and financial standards of

pensioners. While this stated purpose tends, according to the replies received, to lead the groups into strong social action that frequently includes political activity, all three groups indicated that they served a secondary purpose of providing recreational outlets for members. One group reported a fairly extensive program centered in clubrooms provided by a church. This group's program is examined more fully in another chapter. A second group reported twice-monthly meetings devoted to business and recreation, chiefly of the passive entertainment type, while the third group reported that such activities as special film showings and friendship meetings as well as the regular general meetings.

Although the questionnaire included questions about the senior citizens' opinions about unmet recreational needs, the responses to these questions suggest that the senior citizens were more concerned about needs other than recreational, with the result that no definite opinions about recreational needs were elicited. In the main, the responses indicated that material needs were of predominant importance and tended to overshadow the needs for leisure time activity.

b. The Friendly Aid Society

This society, which has been in existence for some years, has a mixed membership of three hundred and sixty. Its purposes are similar to those of the Old Age Pensioners Organizations, but in addition, the group

reports that it serves certain recreational purposes. These are described as friendship groups interested in music, old-time dancing, theology, politics and current events. The group also has an active program of visiting sick members and their families. The groups members provide encouragement and advice to those who are sick or in distress, and one feels that this form of activity has recreational values for the members.

Membership in this group consists to a large extent of people who claim pioneer status. While this is not a prerequisite for membership, a large sub-group does enjoy this particular status.

6. A Retired Employee Group

This group, which was established in 1938, is of particular interest in that it has a membership of eight hundred men and one hundred and fifty women. All members are former employees of a large company, and all have retired on company pensions. The company maintains an active interest in this group, providing club room facilities and occasional special events. The identification with the company by former employees who still have a pride in the progress of the company, together with the fact that many of the members have worked together for years, makes this a particularly cohesive group. Retirement for these members also carries status and economic security, with the result that the club serves a more recreative function than the others discussed here.

Recreation resources in this group include monthly meetings with special entertainment, organized activities such as cards, bowling and billiards, all of which are available in the club rooms. In addition, there is a reading room available for members as well as opportunity for informal meetings with other members.

d. A Men's Hostel

A questionnaire was sent to a large men's hostel in Area A, since some recreational program for male senior citizens was being offered here. It was reported by the representative of this hostel that a large group of senior citizens have been housed here in recent years and the need for recreational program for this group has become increasingly apparent. For this reason, provision has been made for activities such as table games, musical programs and films. During the past winter, two evenings a week were given over to films for senior citizens alone, and attendance at these was reported as being excellent.

The reply sent in by this institution was one of the few received that mentioned unmet needs in recreation for the aged, and discussed one group's attempt to deal with the overall problem of recreation for these older people. Because of this, mention is made here of this program, even though the institution is not specifically designed to serve recreational needs of the aged population.

Summary

In both Area A and Area B, it was noted that recreational resources for senior citizens were of two main types according to their function in the community. One type of resource was designed to meet recreational needs of the specific area, while a second type was designed to serve a much larger population, but the residents of both areas made use of these as well as of the first type.

Among the first type are agencies such as the Gordon Neighbourhood House in Area A and the Alexander Neighbourhood House in Area B. Area B tended to have slightly more such resources than Area A, notably the Kitsilano Community Centre and the Jewish Community Centre. With respect to resources available to the city as a whole, however, Area A had a preponderance of these, while Area B had only a few such resources. In Area A were found such resources as Stanley Park with all its recreational facilities, the Georgia Auditorium, the Main Branch of the Vancouver Public Library, and a great number of commercial recreation facilities such as movie theatres, bowling alleys, etc. Area B had the Kitsilano Pool resources and a much smaller number of commercial recreational resources than Area A. The theatres in Area B were more extensively utilized by Senior citizens than were those in Area A, chiefly because the cost of such recreation in Area A is rather prohibitive for people on limited income.

In both Area A and Area B it was found that senior citizens made full use of informal recreational resources. Such facilities as auction houses, railway and shipping terminals and small parks were used by the senior citizens as meeting places and as places where they can participate in the day-by-day happenings of the city without too much cost.

A questionnaire was circulated to key people in a number of churches and senior citizens' organizations in both areas in an effort to determine the special roles of these types of agency in the areas being surveyed. Approximately forty per cent of the churches approached replied and responses indicated that the churches in both areas vary considerably from one communion to another in the amount of provision they make for recreation for the senior citizens. There was no significant difference as between Area A and Area B in the churches' interest in recreation for senior citizens; what differences there were, were associated with individual churches rather than this type of area and ranged from complete lack of interest to active and constructive concern. The churches that replied to the questionnaire gave little clear recommendation as to the needs of the aged for recreational services, but most referred to the obvious need for an expansion of programs. The responses to questionnaires seemed to reflect the churches' concern about the physical

needs of senior citizens and because of the overwhelming nature of this problem, the less tangible emotional and leisure-time needs of these people were not objectively considered.

The senior citizens' organizations replying to the questionnaire were even less specific in regard to recreational needs, with the result that their replies to this part of the questionnaire were most inconclusive. All senior citizens' groups that replied, however, indicated that the provision of recreation was part of their purpose. In the three district branches of the Old Age Pensioners Organization, recreation was considered to be a secondary function of the group, with political and social action being of primary concern. The other senior citizens' groups were more concerned with recreation as an end in itself, and one very large group seemed to be formed around the common interest of former employment and use of leisure time.

Since the replies to the questionnaires were not sufficient by themselves to provide a rounded picture of recreational needs and resources in the two areas, it was necessary to supplement this information with personal observation of programs and with interviews with persons experienced in working with older people. From these interviews, a clearer picture of existing program in a selected group of agencies was further obtained. The findings of this part of the survey are reported in the next chapter.

CHAPTER III

SOME SPECIFIC RECREATIONAL PROGRAMS FOR SENIOR CITIZENS

In order to give a more rounded picture of the programs offered by some of the community agencies mentioned in Chapter II, visits were made to two Neighbourhood Houses and to certain clubs organized by the Old Age Pensioners' group and by the Churches. The choice of programs for description was made on the basis of their representativeness of the kinds of recreational resources available for the aged in the two areas studied. The descriptions which follow are derived from personal observation of the clubs' activities and from interviews with key people in the various programs.

Leisure Time Activities Provided by a Branch of the Old Age Pensioners' Organization: Area A

The branch selected for more comprehensive study is one located in the downtown section of Area A. It serves a large population of senior citizens who reside in the eastern end of the area; membership, however, is not restricted to those living within the area and people living in other parts of the city are free to join. This branch enjoys the facilities of a club room provided free of charge by a large Anglican Church and because of this is able to offer services to its members for the greater part of each day. The branch also has the use of the large church hall for general meetings

which are so well attended that they would seriously overcrowd the club room.

The clubroom is part of the main building of the Church but has a separate entrance. It is a medium-sized room, having a fireplace, a preponderance of well-worn cumbersome furniture, and ample storage space. The furnishings are appropriate for their use inasmuch as the elderly club members do not feel any great need to exercise special care in using the club facilities. Interested citizens have donated most of the furniture to the club including two radios and a television set. Offers of furniture to the club continue to be made by friends of the branch. The executive hopes soon to be able to obtain additional space in the Church to meet increasing demands for space. It is hoped to obtain a smaller room adjoining the present room and to make it available to women members only.

The branch operates under the direction of an executive council, consisting of four representatives elected to the positions of president, vice president, secretary, and one member-at-large. In addition, the president has responsibility for appointing four members to serve on the various committees which have been organized within the branch. Responsibility for attending regular monthly meetings is assumed by all members of the executive.

This branch offers two main recreational outlets for its members, namely, sedentary activities such as games, television and radio, and the opportunity for social

intercourse and activities centered around food. Activities related to food are structured around afternoon tea which is served daily. Members pay a small fee to cover the costs of tea and light foods and, in addition, supervise the daily arrangements for preparing and serving the refreshments.

In the early days of the club, members depended on donations to provide refreshments, but since this was an uncertain arrangement and since food was extremely important for many of the members as it was their only hot meal in the day, the fee arrangement was finally agreed upon.

The monthly general meetings although specifically designed to carry out the business of the branch, serve a recreational function which is recognized by the branch executive. The program of the general meeting usually consists of luncheon, followed by a "sing-song". The business of the meeting is then dealt with, including reports of committees, after which there is a general question and answer session in which members are encouraged to voice opinions on a variety of subjects of their own choosing.

On occasions, the executive has been able to arrange for outside entertainment at the monthly meetings. The branch has called upon choirs, dancing and ballet schools and film societies on different occasions. Films depicting the "old country" are very much favored by the senior citizens. The experience of the various executive members has been that members of this branch prefer passive recreation in most instances, except for group singing in which there is excellent participation.

This branch offers an additional service which, while not recreational in nature, does nevertheless serve the members in some of their recreational needs. This is a counselling service staffed on a volunteer basis by the members of the executive. Members may bring personal problems to the counsellor and obtain advice on any matters that concern them. Questions chiefly concern accommodation and high rentals, the problems of making-do on a limited income, misunderstandings with "cold" social workers, and on occasions "love affairs".

In the same vein as the counselling service, but more related to the material well-being of the members is a clothing centre operated by the branch. This service is dependent on gifts from friends of the branch, and is well patronized by members.

Although this branch utilizes church facilities, it is in no way affiliated with the church. Nevertheless, the church has noticed an increase in attendance of senior citizens at services since the club commenced operations. Many of these new members of the church are members of the club and have probably been attracted to the church because of its acceptance of senior citizens as a group.

The Happy Hours Club.

A second resource selected for study was the Happy Hours Club. This is also located in the downtown section of Area A, but serves a much smaller segment of the population than does the Old Age Pensioners' branch. The

Club operates under the auspices of a Church situated in Area A and offers recreational facilities to some fifty to seventy elderly men and women resident within the immediate neighbourhood of the Church. A meeting place is available in the attractively-decorated Church hall and reportedly lends itself to a feeling of belonging on the part of club members.

Although membership is open to all, the members have remained fairly constant over the years and almost equally divided between men and women, most of whom are lonely people having few individual interests. New-comers are rare and after once attending, tend to remain, with the result that they form a close homogeneous group with common interests.

Meetings which are held during the afternoon on a weekly basis are not formally structured. Responsibility for program arrangement is assumed by the organizer of the club, a member of the congregation of the church who gives his services on a voluntary basis. Meetings usually follow the same pattern. They open with a short devotional, which was arranged originally at the request of the membership, and includes a short sermon and two or three familiar hymns. This period of worship is followed by the showing of two films, one of which is educational and the other a travelogue, and both of which seem to be enjoyed by the club members and frequently provide topics for conversation.

Tea, which is prepared by the Ladies' Auxiliary of the congregation, is served by the members of the club and for those who can afford to pay, the cost is ten cents. Members making this financial contribution are listed and regarded as unofficially constituting the club membership. It has been noted by the organizers that the majority of the senior citizens prefer to donate regularly to this fund and appear to derive a feeling of independence from doing so. The informality of the tea-hour itself provides a comfortable medium for the friendly conversation which is so important to many of the aged people whose lives tend to be isolated and devoid of family companionship.

In affording an opportunity for social intercourse for a selected group of senior citizens, the club would seem to be meeting a very definite need judging from the regularity of attendance on the part of its members.

Although the Happy Hour Club is sponsored by the congregation of the Church, no attempts have been made to encourage the club members to attend Sunday Services, although they are always made welcome if they do attend. It has been observed by Church officials that club members in general do not belong to the congregation, nor do they attend morning service. However, the evening service, which has been described as somewhat evangelical in character, attracts a large number of senior citizens including club members.

Gordon House

Gordon House, located in the West End Section of Area A, is a Neighbourhood House which is sponsored and financed by the Community Chest and Council. It is organized for the specific purpose of providing recreational activities for selected groups of citizens resident within this area. The House is open to the members between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 to 9:30 p.m. six days a week. Professional social work staff is employed to supervise and facilitate program activities.

Included in the group served by this recreational Centre are approximately four hundred senior citizens, most of whom live in its immediate vicinity. Membership is officially restricted to residents of the West End, but regulations are sufficiently flexible to permit continuance of attendance for former residents who have moved from the area but have continued to maintain their interest in the activities and associations which the Centre offers.

Because of the preponderance of aged people within the membership of Gordon House, care has been taken to accommodate all their activities in quarters entirely separate from Junior House which caters to the recreational needs of children in this area. This arrangement was planned deliberately in order to avoid disharmony and any need for unnecessary restrictions for two large groups of members whose ages, interests and activities differ widely.

The program for Senior Citizens includes recreational games, social activities and special interest and hobby groups. The supervisor of the program for Senior Citizens is a member of the professional staff of the Centre and is responsible for encouraging participation by the membership in as many of the existing programs as they wish, as well as for providing opportunities for the development of new programs.

Each group and program is organized by an executive which is elected from the membership and is responsible to it. Each group maintains representation on the House Council, a governing body which is empowered to make certain decisions regarding the House and the programs available to the membership.

Emphasis is given to sponsoring a feeling of participating in community life on the part of the senior citizens attending the Centre. A wide variety of activities is offered for their enjoyment, all of which are designed specifically to meet the frequently limited physical capacity of older people. These include carpet bowling, square dancing, old time dancing, card games, such as bridge and cribbage, as well as craft groups, discussion groups, and a glee club.

A major endeavour each year which involves the membership at all age levels is the Spring Carnival. This Carnival is held at the Centre. Considerable responsibility is assumed by the Senior Citizens in providing craft work

for sales, participating in advance sale of tickets, and in painting and designing posters to be used for display and advertising purposes.

In addition to having their recreational needs met, Senior Citizens also receive help at Gordon House with problems requiring expert counselling services. This help is provided by trained social workers who have a thorough knowledge of community resources and how they may be best used. It is frequently concerned with such matters as obtaining suitable accommodation or completing Old Age Assistance Applications and problems related thereto..

In evaluating the response of the Senior Citizens to various programs offered by Gordon House, it should be noted that former members who have moved from the district are reluctant to give up their membership. These activities seem to meet the recreation needs of the senior citizens. It is also notable that rarely does a member withdraw, but that, in general, termination of contact is the result of either an enforced move away from the district, incapacitating illness or death.

Old Age Pensioners' Branch: Area B

The Branch selected for more comprehensive study in Area B is located in the Kitsilano district. It is designed to serve the recreational and social needs of the elderly men and women residing within the neighbourhood of the Kitsilano Community Centre. The Centre's facilities are available to the Old Age

Pensioners' Organization, free of charge. Such facilities include a room for the regular monthly meetings of the membership as well as the unrestricted use of the Centre's Lounge on a daily basis. In addition, the field house in Connaught Park adjacent to the Community Centre has developed into an unofficial meeting place for many of the elderly male members of the branch.

Like the Old Age Pensioners' Branch selected for study in Area A, the one in Area B is organized under the direction of an executive Council, consisting of four elected representatives to the positions of president, vice-president, secretary and member at large. In addition, the president is responsible for appointing a selected number of members to serve on the committees which have been set up by the membership. All members of the executive have responsibility for regular attendance at branch meetings which are held on one afternoon a month.

Meetings are structured to include a business period followed by some form of sedentary entertainment, and concluding with informal discussion over tea and coffee. Emphasis is placed on the benefits derived from regular attendance and the opportunity to form new friendships within one's own age group. Members are encouraged to meet together for social purposes during the period between scheduled meetings.

The only committee presently active in the club is one devoted to visiting sick and infirm members who, because of their incapacities, are no longer able to

attend in person. Apart from this, the membership has indicated no particular interest in the development of craft, study or activity groups.

In addition to providing accommodation, the Kitsilano Community Centre has assumed some responsibility for attempting to meet in other ways the recreational needs of this particular group of senior citizens. The club lounge is available every day for reading, card playing or visiting with friends. Films are shown regularly free of charge through the facilities of the national Film Board.

Efforts such as these, however, are not in the opinion of the branch president sufficiently adequate to attract the majority of the members. He noted that, despite numerous complaints of loneliness, the lounge was seldom used and the films were poorly attended.

On the other hand, as previously mentioned, the field house in nearby Connaught Park is regularly patronized by many of the male members. According to the president, they seem to feel more at ease in the surroundings which it affords and which are much less formal and elaborate than are those of the Community Centre.

The matter of program planning has for some years constituted a problem for the executive. According to the president the membership, and more especially the women, have been undecided as to what they want in the way of activities. Many members wish only to be entertained and will take little responsibility for program arrangement. Difficulty is experienced in obtaining

the services of entertainers, particularly for the afternoon meetings; as a result, the members must depend largely on their own resources for interesting and varied activities. It would appear that the stimulation and leadership necessary to inaugurate and maintain programs has to come from the executive or the president.

An interesting side effect of this particular organization has been the number of marriages between members which it has sponsored. During the comparatively few years of its existence some twenty couples have married. In most instances the partners were originally lonely men and women devoid of close ties who, through the medium of the branch, found their own particular solutions to their problems.

However, in evaluating with the president the services of this particular branch of the Old Pensioners' Organization, it would appear that apart from lesser benefits such as the passing of time, it is failing to meet adequately the recreational needs of a large proportion of its members.

An Experimental Program Offered by a Church

A somewhat unique service in that it caters primarily to the recreational needs of very aged and often infirm senior citizens is offered by a church located in Area B. Because of the advanced age and physical incapacities of the majority of its members, the club is as

unstructured and informal as possible in its organization. Responsibility for programs and entertainment is assumed by volunteer members of the congregation. There are no membership qualifications and membership in the Church is not required.

This experimental program developed some years ago when a ladies' group of the congregation extended personal invitations to Christmas dinner to all known pensioners residing within the district. Eight senior citizens responded to the invitation and, as a result of the success of this dinner, it was agreed that meetings for social activities should continue on a monthly basis.

The club now has a membership of twenty-eight, drawn chiefly from residents of boarding homes in the district. The majority of members are eighty years or more and many have to be brought to meetings by their more able-bodied friends, some arriving in wheel chairs.

In order to ensure attendance, each member is reminded by letter of impending meetings three days in advance. Notifications include the date, place and time of meeting. The program commences with a roll call in which members are required to reply by giving the names of vegetables or fruit rather than their own names. This simple word game is thoroughly enjoyed by the old people and does much to set the tone for the meeting. Following roll call there is a sing-song, and later a film or other form of entertainment provided by guest artists. When no such entertainment is available the meeting is devoted to simple games suitable to the limited capacities of the

participants, followed by the serving of refreshments. All food is donated by the ladies' auxiliary of the church and served by them. Care is taken to ensure that the cakes and cookies are home-baked and attractive in appearance.

As in the case of several of the clubs previously described, many of the members complain of loneliness and lack of activities. Consequently, the church hall has been made available once a week for a meeting of senior citizens on the understanding, however, that no structured programs would be provided. A member of the congregation would be present to open and close the hall, but apart from that would take no part in the meetings. At the time of writing, the hall has been open in the afternoons for three weeks, but the response so far has been poor.

In assessing this program the sponsors are of the opinion that the weekly program meets the needs of a small, select group of senior citizens who are sometimes forgotten by more elaborate programs.

Alexandra Neighbourhood House.

Alexandra Neighbourhood House, located in the southwest section of Area B, is a Neighbourhood House which is sponsored and financed by the Community Chest and Council. It is organized for the specific purpose of providing recreational activities for selected groups of citizens resident within this area. In this agency, as in Gordon House, professional social work staff is employed to supervise and facilitate program activities.

Included in the group served by this recreational Centre are approximately fifty senior citizens all of whom are women. The Neighbourhood House offers these women a club known by the name of Sunny Seniors. It is designed to serve the recreational and social needs of the elderly women residing within the district of Alexandra Neighbourhood House. The House makes available to the club for their weekly meeting an attractively painted and comfortably furnished room free of charge.

The club has an organized program that varies from week to week. The program includes film presentations, bingo, conducted tours to factories, book talks and celebration of various festive occasions during the year. The program is varied enough not to become too routine, and yet there is a continuity and regularity in the activities which enables the members to plan their attendance in advance.

After the program the members prepare and serve their own tea, the refreshments being provided by the Centre.

The club operates under the direction of a group leader who is a member of the professional staff of Alexandra Neighbourhood House. He is responsible for arrangement of the programs in accordance with the wishes of the members as well as for providing opportunities for the development of new programs.

In addition to meeting the recreational needs of the members of the club, the Neighbourhood House has arranged for the services of an experienced caseworker to be available

on certain days of the week to any elderly person requiring help with personal problems. Assistance is given in finding living accommodation and boarding-home placements for those who need them. Frequently the concern is with such matters as completing Old Age Assistance applications and in obtaining medical services. If no concrete help or solution is available sympathetic listening and support is given the person to enable her to cope with the situation.

In evaluating the club for the senior citizens at Alexandra Neighbourhood House, it seems that the membership and numbers have remained fairly constant and that it is rare for a member to drop out. From this it appears that the club meets the recreational needs of the small, select group of women who attend it.

SUMMARY

In summary, personal interviews were held with key people responsible for six of the recreational programs available to senior citizens in Areas A and B. Two of the programs are organized by Old Age Pensioners' groups which, however, are dependent upon such outside resources as churches and community centres for meeting quarters; two are organized by Neighbourhood Houses providing club rooms for meetings, and two by Churches, which also make space available for meetings.

Membership varies from a small group of twenty-eight men and women of very advanced age and fairly marked physical infirmity to a large group of some four-hundred senior citizens, the majority of whom participate actively

in one or more aspects of the agency's program. In five instances the membership includes both men and women; in one it is restricted to women.

Program content differs fairly widely depending upon the interest, participation, and physical capacity of the membership as well as upon the quality of leadership available. It is to be noted that in the one agency offering a wide variety of activities, together with professional assistance and direction, the membership is correspondingly high. In all instances, the programs offered are predominantly sedentary in type; all include refreshments and an opportunity for informal conversation. Two of the programs are organized by agencies which are sponsored and financed by the Community Chest and Council, and which employ professional social workers. Four are organized by unpaid volunteers who have no professional training in either social work or recreational

The findings of this part of the survey point to the fact that in all instances the programs studied meet with varying degrees of success the needs of the senior citizens for companionship within their own age group. In one case, this is seen primarily as a side effect in that members have met and married; at the other extreme is the response of approximately four hundred aged men and women to the stimulating and varied program offered by a progressive Neighbourhood House. The experience of this agency suggests

that the extension by other groups of existing facilities and programs to include a wider variety of activities and more frequent meetings would do much to satisfy the emotional and leisure-time needs of senior citizens within the area. Suggestions and recommendations for implementing such an extension, as well as consideration of some of the limitations of existing services, are contained in the following chapter.

CHAPTER IV

RECREATIONAL RESOURCES AND NEEDS: THE SITUATION REVIEWED

The findings discussed in this chapter are based on an examination of two areas of the City of Vancouver. These areas were chosen because of the distinctive socio-economic characteristics they exhibit and because each has a large population of old people living within its boundaries. The recreation resources available to the senior citizens in both areas were studied through observation, questionnaire and interviews with key people and the two areas were subsequently compared. Particular programs representative of the recreation resources in two areas were then examined in more detail with a view to determining their effectiveness in meeting the needs of older people.

Some Limitations of the Survey

Limitations in the scope of the survey as well as in the methods used for gathering information restrict the conclusions which can be drawn from the findings of the study. For example the people who were interviewed and the organizations which were examined do not represent a cross section of the elderly population. The survey tended to exclude two groups in particular, those of a relatively high socio-economic status and the elderly residents of boarding and nursing homes of which there are a large number in the two areas studied. Accordingly, the findings of the survey must be interpreted as relating primarily to older people of limited financial means who

enjoy sufficiently good health to enable them to participate in outside activities if they so wish. The study has very little to say about the recreational needs and satisfactions of the elderly persons who, for one reason or another choose not to engage in group activities. Clearly, such persons must make up a sizeable number in the elderly population as they do in any age group and will include those who suffer no distress from depending upon their own resources as well as those who would benefit from wider human associations but lack the means, or the confidence or the social skills necessary to seek them out. Further research into the characteristics of both of these groups would yield valuable information for the planning of community recreation services.

A significant omission from the present study is an evaluation of the attitudes, expectations and satisfactions of the persons comprising the membership of the various groups and organizations surveyed. The study reports the opinions and suggestions of persons intimately connected with recreation programs for the aged and many of these persons are themselves recruited from the ranks of the elderly, but it is not inconceivable that the people participating in these activities have different views about what is required from those held by the leaders and organizers. Although it was not feasible to include a poll of membership within the scope of the present study, a certain amount of light was thrown on this subject in the course of observing the actual operation of some of the programs.

Beside the limitations inherent in the scope of the survey, it was apparent as the study progressed that certain shortcomings in the methods used for collecting information would affect the reliability of the data obtained. For the most part, the response to the questionnaires was not favourable and there seemed to be two main reasons for this. First a lack of interest in the subject matter of the survey and second, a reluctance on the part of the respondents to provide information which might reflect adversely on the efforts which they were making to meet the recreational needs of older people. In the light of subsequent interviews with persons involved in the programs, it would seem more reasonable to attribute the poor response to lack of interest rather than embarrassment at the scarcity of services provided. Within the questionnaire itself there should have been some statement on the meaning attached to the term "recreation" for the purposes of the survey. It is probably that uncertainty in the minds of the respondents as to what could legitimately be considered as recreation caused some to withhold important and useful material. One question, question #2, was generally misinterpreted. The question's intention was to obtain the number of senior citizens attending the services, but it was interpreted as referring to the age groups of the members of the congregations.

The response to the follow-up interviews was generally more satisfactory, although even in these it was

apparent that for some of the persons interviewed the recreational needs of older people were of only incidental interest. In such cases, the problems of immediate and major concern tended to center on either the economic or spiritual needs of the aged, and preoccupation with these frequently prevented an objective discussion in the interviews of the recreational interests of the aged.

In summary, the present study has been more successful in raising questions than in providing definite answers concerning the leisure-time needs and satisfactions of older people. Some of these questions are enlarged upon in later sections of the chapter, but it is clear that any adequate treatment of them must wait upon more intensive study.

The Nature and Extent of Existing Recreational Resources

It was found that the recreational resources in both areas were of two main types; those directed specifically toward the people living in the area and those serving the whole city and even the metropolitan area. These resources are operated under public and private auspices, commercial and non-commercial; in some the recreational purpose is primary while in others it is incidental to other activities. There are resources designed specifically for senior citizens and others catering to people of all ages, but used to a greater or less extent by senior citizens.

Special account was taken of the recreational services provided by the churches and pensioners' organizations. It was found that these services are relatively few in number in the two areas studied and that participation in them by old people varies considerably, depending upon the characteristics of each local community and the degree of leadership provided in each instance. There were indications in both areas of increasing concern on the part of church groups for the recreational needs of older people, but it was evident for the most part that the pensioners' organizations were providing most of the leadership in planning and arranging programs. The statements of leaders in the senior citizens' organizations provide an interesting commentary on this situation. They point out that the purpose of their organization is not primarily recreation and that recreational activities in these groups are of secondary importance to the major objective of improving the living conditions of the pensioners. Some groups use recreational programs very deliberately as a way of attracting membership in order to increase the effectiveness of the organization in demanding improved services for senior citizens.

Among the churches offering programs of a recreational nature for the senior citizens there did not appear to be any deliberate attempt to combine the recreational and devotional aspects of their work. Presumably these churches are satisfied that the programs need not be heavily slanted toward the spiritual needs of members

since these can be more appropriately met through the regular services of the church and the personal counsel of the minister. It is noteworthy that some ministers did not consider recreation an important need among older people. The reasoning behind this view was not explored, but it was noticed that the ministers expressing it belonged generally to sects of strong fundamentalist persuasion for whom the joys and tribulations of this world are as nothing compared with the rewards to be obtained in the life hereafter.

A major drawback to the recreational programs sponsored by the pensioners' organizations and the churches is that the majority of the programs can be offered only on a once or twice-monthly basis. With one or two exceptions, such as the Old Age Pensioners Organization Branch in Area A, and the retired employees' club, facilities are not available on a regular enough basis to provide for daily meetings and activities; yet, most senior citizens have sufficient leisure time to take advantage of more frequent programs. This question of available time probably accounts in part for the older person's greater use of secondary recreational facilities, such as libraries, parks and auction rooms. The lack of continuity in program may also account for the rather limited use made of some resources by senior citizens. In this connection it is significant that the two Neighbourhood Houses studied in the survey offer regular and frequent programs for the

senior citizen group and report greater enthusiasm and "self-involvement" by members than do any of the other resources studied. The part played by the professional staff of the two Neighbourhood Houses is no less important as a factor in ensuring the success of these two programs. By contrast, in the two groups which enjoy the frequent and regular use of facilities but where professional staff is not available, it was obvious that the level of enthusiasm and participation on the part of the members was much lower, the chief attraction for the members being the material benefits available, such as refreshments, warmth and comfort.

Clearly, the continuity of program and the availability of professional staff have an important bearing on the character of the participation of the members and the satisfaction which they derive from the program. From the point of view of the number of old people involved, it was noteworthy that the two groups reporting the largest attendance at monthly meetings offered very little in the way of recreation. Some explanation of this may be found in the fact that both of these groups have in the past organized themselves around issues of social welfare important to senior citizens and have been supported wholeheartedly in these social action endeavours. Interestingly enough, the leaders of both these groups were of the opinion that membership could be increased and present membership better served by developing their recreational programs.

Some Observations on the Use Made of the Resources

That many older people are searching for satisfying ways of spending their leisure time is evident from the number and variety of recreational resources that they make use of. Moreover, the findings of the survey confirm the importance to the older person of recreational activities which foster a sense of worth and usefulness, either through identification with his peer group, or through participation in planning and the carrying out of programs. Generally, he prefers to follow pursuits that are not demanding of great expenditure of physical energy. It was noted that the pensioners tend to prefer programs that are rather passive in nature, but that they seemed to enjoy some association with younger age groups in some aspects of their recreation. Thus their needs are partly to "have done for them", but without being deprived of their capacity to make responsible decisions on their own behalf in choosing their recreational activities. Phrased in another way, their needs seem to be for enabling leadership that will not usurp their freedom of choice, but at the same time, will not demand an expenditure of energy that is beyond their physical and emotional capacities to give. This survey has indicated that their level of enthusiasm and "self-involvement" is closely associated with the availability of leadership or of conditions which satisfy these criteria. Thus, we find the older person availing himself of two main types of resources; those that provide leadership which recognizes his needs, and those in which no demands for active participation are placed upon him as in, for example, concerts,

auctions and library facilities.

In general, the leisure time outlets studied in this survey tend only partly to meet the recreational needs of older persons. Such resources as church groups and old-age pensioners' organizations serve a useful function, but each, to a greater or lesser extent, fails to facilitate the latent leadership within the group of old people. Limited physical facilities and infrequency of meetings clearly act as a barrier in many cases to the development of strong membership participation; it is noteworthy, however, that where these two obstacles have been overcome the level of participation by the older persons seems to vary in direct relationship to the quality of leadership available. It was most noticeable that participant enthusiasm and self-involvement was highest in those structured resources where professional leadership was available, as for example at the Neighbourhood Houses, and that these qualities were also evinced when strong volunteer leadership was available.

In the case of the secondary leisure-time resources such as movies, libraries and auction houses, it was more difficult to evaluate levels of participation, because participation in them is greatly influenced by the individual's financial resources as well as by personal interest. It is possible that many senior citizens avail themselves of such resources even though they consider them inadequate to their personal needs, simply because they involve little or

no financial outlay. Others may use these resources because of interest in the subject matter that it provides. It is equally probable that their participation in these forms of recreation is influenced by their limited and declining reserves of physical and emotional energy. In any event, the information available from the present method of study did not permit a proper evaluation of these resources or their comparison with other evidence obtained.

Recommendations

This study has pointed out the relative poverty of Area B in recreational resources for the aged. In view of the already large number of elderly persons resident in the area and the likelihood of the numbers being further increased as a result of migration from the West End and from the areas scheduled for redevelopment by the city, it is essential that plans be made now for the improvement of existing services and the establishment, where indicated, of new services. The need for expansion and experimentation is obviously great, but it is equally important to ensure that the services which are offered are of the right kind.¹ Accordingly, before embarking on a large-scale new program it would seem wise to establish a number of pilot projects to determine the usefulness and effectiveness of particular services and of different approaches to the problem. Area B is a logical place in which to initiate such projects.

¹Kutner, Bernard, Five Hundred over Sixty, Russell Sage Foundation, New York, 1956.

From the point of view of making better use of resources which already exists, the Parks' Board program perhaps offers the greatest possibilities of immediate and wide-spread returns. This is especially true for the elderly residents of the West End, but it is clear that the Parks' Board program is potentially capable of making a significant contribution to the welfare of older persons living in all parts of the city.

Physical facilities in Vancouver parks are generally satisfactory and often above average, but in program planning there has been little thought given to the special needs of older people. The pattern of the Parks' Board programs for the past eight years seems to have been one of emphasizing good physical plant and adequately supervised facilities for children. In these two areas there is a fairly clear goal and purpose. Less clear are the goals and purposes of the Board in respect to supervision and leadership in adult activities. The provision of leadership is of particular importance in leisure time activities for the aged, but it has been largely neglected in the general parks' program. No doubt, there are good reasons for this emphasis on programs for young people, but older persons make extensive use of parks and are probably more dependent for a greater range of satisfactions on what the Parks' Board has to offer than is the case with younger people who are in a better position to "take it or leave it". To say that older persons depend for the satisfaction of some of their

recreational needs upon the Parks' Board and that the Parks' Board has the corresponding responsibility to supply certain services, does not, of course, imply a relationship of passive dependency on the part of the aged. The one unequivocal fact which has emerged from the present study is that the greatest benefits are conferred by those activities which enhance the older person's sense of individual significance and usefulness, and that all else is little better than a palliative. Accordingly, it is most important that in developing its services the Parks' Board should enlist the co-operation of senior citizens organizations and, equally important, that the programs provided should be designed to develop maximum participation on the part of the old people themselves.

The situation with regard to the Parks' Board program demonstrates most effectively the need for co-operative planning and the pooling of resources between the public agency, the senior citizens' organizations and the private agency. In this regard, it is noteworthy that the persons interviewed in the survey invariably commented upon the overriding need for coordination of the various programs and services directed toward older persons. The Community Chest and Council, through its standing committee on the welfare of the aged has tried to meet this need and over the years the committee has made some notable contributions. The problem, however, has become so vast and complex that it is unrealistic to expect a lay group with

one part-time professional staff to provide an effective service of coordination.

Another important need stressed by the persons interviewed was for additional counselling services similar to those now offered by trained social workers in the two Neighbourhood Houses. The value of such a service is that it provides not only information and referral, where indicated, to other appropriate welfare sources, but also constitutes a recognized resource to which the older person can turn for help in dealing with any one of the innumerable problems which beset old age.

Greater understanding of the psycho-social needs of individuals has shown that it is not enough to provide for man's material wants, such as food, housing and clothing, although these are essential, in order to have happy individuals. One must also provide human companionship and human interaction. This is true of all age groups.

Older people in the North American culture have hitherto remained largely in the background, but in the last few years, an increasing interest has developed in understanding the social aspects of ageing. From this understanding, it is apparent that the older people are in need of satisfying recreational outlets which will assure them a continued and useful role in society and which will develop their hidden skills and talents. These questions should be approached simultaneously from the point of view of the individual, the family and the community. To provide

happiness to the older people through activities which are within their capacities in their leisure time should be a challenge to every thinking member of the community.

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APPENDIX A ...1

The University of British Columbia

LEISURE-TIME ACTIVITIES FOR SENIOR CITIZENS

I am making a survey of services and needs for older persons in your district. Would you be willing to give me the benefit of your experience in this matter?

Stamped and addressed envelope enclosed for your convenience. Please return promptly.

1. How long has your organization or club existed in Vancouver?
2. What are the purposes of your organization?
3. What is your approximate membership (January 1958)? Men.....Women.....
4. How often does your organization meet? Weekly...monthly...other.....
5. What kind of social program do you organize for your members?

Kind	How often do they meet	
	Weekdays	Weekend
1.
2.
3.
4.

(Please use back of sheet if further description helpful).

6. Which are the most attended or most popular programs?
7. What are the main reasons that bring people to your organization?
8. Have you had requests for any particular kind of activities or services?
Please give details
9. What in your opinion, are the main problems facing older people in your area
10. What services could be provided to help meet these problems?

Would you be willing to discuss the needs and problems of Senior Citizens if I could make an appointment to meet you or other executive members of your Organization.

(Miss) Edda Andresson
Research Student,
School of Social Work.

APPENDIX A ...2
The University of British Columbia

LEISURE-TIME ACTIVITIES FOR SENIOR CITIZENS

I am making a survey of services and needs for older people in your district. Would you be willing to give me the benefit of your experience in this matter?

Stamped addressed envelope enclosed for your convenience. In writing up the survey, no mention will be made of any individual church by name (unless you so desire). Please return promptly.

1. Do you have a substantial number of older persons in your congregation?
Yes... No...
2. What is the (estimated) number of older people who attend Sunday Services at your church? Under 25.....25-50.....50-100.....over 100.....
3. Has the number changed in your observation, over the last 5 years?
If so, in what way
4. Does your Church organize special activities for its members, over and above the religious services? Yes... No...
5. Please list these activities, and how often they meet:

Mainly for older Persons		Open to All	
Description	Meetings	Description	Meetings
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.

(Please use back of sheet if further description helpful).

6. In your opinion, which of these programs are of most interest to older people?
.....
7. In your Church, are there any special efforts or plans made to encourage older people to attend church activities (describe)
.....
8. What special efforts do you think would help older people to participate more fully in social activities? (describe)
.....
9. Do you see a necessity for social activities or programs etc. which have not been met in your area? Please indicate
.....

(Miss) Edda Andresson
Research Student,
School of Social Work.

TABLE I

Map showing area "A" and area "B"
"B"

