

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

RJB-10  
The View From Lot #49

846 Broadway-Lot #49  
Saugus, Mass. 01906  
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Institute of Current World Affairs  
535 Fifth Avenue  
New York, New York 10017

Dear Mr. Nolte:

Today the Saugus Mobile Home park is full of noise and children, for the first time since our arrival. Today is an especially warm Easter Sunday, and all morning cars loaded with children and grandchildren have been pulling in. As I get the morning newspaper one neighbor waves good morning and says, "We're off to see the children." Our next door neighbor stops by for a minute as he goes off to see his brother's family.



The park has been preparing for Easter over the last several weeks. Some people have begun planting their flower and vegetable gardens. Others have been out washing their cars; some have even been washing and waxing their mobile homes. One neighbor has planted two red flamingos on her small front lawn. We have been going into our storage bin, getting out the screens, and beginning to take the storm windows down. Slowly we have been getting our porch, which has lain dormant all winter, in shape for a summer of use.

How different these past couple of weeks have been from the winter, which seemed to stretch out endlessly when we first moved in on January 4th. Days would go by without us seeing any of the other people in the park except as they drove off to work early in the morning or as they returned late in the afternoon. I got used to seeing only one couple during much of the winter. Each day the Martins would go for a walk. Mr. Martin, a small man bent by age, would move ever so slowly as held onto Mrs. Martin. They would walk down past our coach to the corner and then turn down the next row of coaches out of view. Day in and day out they took their walk. Except for them the streets were usually empty.

We had quickly learned that the park was different than we had imagined before we moved in. For example, when we moved in we thought there would be a number of other people of our own age living in the park. We thought this because the people who sold us this coach told us our two next door neighbors were bachelors. Our two neighbors are bachelors, but one is 67 and the other is 71. As it turns out the great majority of people in this park

are over fifty.

We also learned after moving in that the park has a rule that restricts the park to adults only. I should say that this is not unusual for mobile home parks. Many parks have such a restriction. First, it is attractive to many retired people, and second, it is often helpful in obtaining a zoning variance. If a park developer assures the local community that his development will not add to the school population his chances of getting a positive response to his zoning application are greatly enhanced.

Anyway there are very few young people in the park. We have frequently returned home after an early evening out to find the park almost pitch black at 10:00PM.

When we bought this mobile home we knew that we were moving into a park without a community center, but none of the parks we visited in the Boston area had community centers so we thought the absence of such a center would not make much of a difference. I now realize that, given the substantial age difference between us and our neighbors, and the general inaccessibility of people in the winter, the lack of any community facilities made it virtually impossible for us to meet people informally. Nevertheless we have begun to get to know some of our neighbors, a few of whom you'll meet in the following accounts:

Ruth and Ed Snyder<sup>1</sup> are sitting in their coach watching TV when I knock on the door. The TV is often on in the afternoon and the Snyders often take to their favorite chair: he on the right of the TV and she further back on the couch.

The Snyders moved here nearly four years ago from a home they used to own in Danvers. "With the children grown up," says Ed, "we really didn't have much need of the house. We wanted a smaller place and a mobile home seemed like it made sense.

"I don't have the energy I used to have," Ed continued, "you probably noticed it takes me a long time to get anything done. I've got emphysema. It slows me down something terrible. Things I used to be able to do around the garden take me for ever now.

"But that's ok, I just go about doing them slowly. I take my time now. You'll see, Dick, when you're my age you'll have a lot of time and you'll learn there isn't that much to be in a hurry about."

Our conversation is interrupted by a phone call from one of the Snyder's children. All three of the Snyder's children, and their ten grandchildren live in the immediate area. As Ruth says, "They're always calling up or coming by. There isn't anything they wouldn't do for us. You probably noticed that we go away a fair amount. One of the children will come by and take us for a trip for a day, take us out for a fancy lunch or dinner, and then insist that we stay over."

1. the names of the interviewed have been changed.

"Actually," says Ed, "we had another boy, but he died about nine years ago."

"I'm sorry," I said, "if you don't mind my asking, how did he die?"

There was a momentary pause while Ruth and Ed looked at each other, and then Ruth said, "He committed suicide."

Before I even got to say I'm sorry that I brought it up, Ruth began telling me about her son and his suicide. "Ronny, that was our boy's name, found out that his wife was fooling around with another man. He couldn't believe it. It hurt him terribly, and then his wife asked him for a divorce.

"He didn't want to give her one, I mean he loved her. He suggested they talk to their lawyer about it. Ronny said the lawyer asked her a few questions. 'Has Ron ever beaten you?' he asked. 'No,' she said. 'Does he provide for you?' 'Yes," she said. 'Has he ever run around on you?' 'No,' she said. The lawyer told her she didn't have any grounds for a divorce. He told Ron he would represent him if he wanted a divorce. Ron told him he didn't want a divorce, that he wanted her as his wife and that he wanted her to raise his children. So the lawyer told them to go home and make it up.

"They went home and after a while Ron found out that she was visiting with this man again. It was a real shame. The man had a wife and five children, and was expecting a sixth. My son seemed ok. He was depressed but he seemed to accept it.

"Once or twice he said something but we didn't think anything about it. Like once I was wearing a new black spring dress and he said, 'Why don't you save that for my funeral?' I thought he was kidding, but I said, 'Don't say that.' He told me, 'Don't worry Mom, I'm just kidding with you.' The other thing was just a couple of days before he died. The last time I saw him he kissed me on the lips and said, 'I love you Mom. Usually he kissed me on the cheek.

"Anyway, we'd been holding on to his rifle. He took it one day saying he was going to go rabbit hunting with a buddy of his. We didn't think anything of it, but that was the last we heard of him. He killed himself with that rifle a couple of days later.

"We didn't want to see her after that but we saw the children occasionally for a couple of years. But beginning about four years ago she hasn't allowed them to visit with us. I think she doesn't want them to find out what really happened to their father. We still send money to the children on their birthdays, and for Christmas, but I don't think they get it anymore. I think she cashes the checks for herself."

There is a quiet in the room, but the conversation picks up quickly again. "Are you originally from these parts?" I ask.

"Nope," says Ed, "we're both from Halifax but we didn't know each other there. I was part of a family of eleven children. I started working when I was thirteen down on the boats. When I was

seventeen I moved down to Boston and started working hauling dynamite for the Boston Transit Department. Ruth was already down here, had moved down with her folks on August 4, 1922-- isn't that right Mom? Well I moved down in December."

"December 6th," says Ruth.

"Anyway I moved in with an older brother who was already down here. My aunt who was down here knew Ruth's family and we went over to get some dishes and silverware from him. Ruth wasn't there, but the next time I visited the family I met her, and we started going around together. We got married on December 25, 1925."

Ed worked for a lot of different companies, and for many years he worked for a big laundry outfit. Then he set up his own laundry business.

"My husband stopped working about three years ago," said Ruth. "He had an accident. He was backing out from a driveway when a motorcycle with two boys hit him. They couldn't have been looking where they were going. They were probably watching some girls with short skirts."

"Well they were thrown from their bike, and my husband blacked out. He hasn't been the same ever since. He couldn't remember a thing about it for weeks after. He came home, and my son was here with me. Ed was white as a ghost and when we asked what happened he didn't make any sense. My boy wanted to take him to the doctor but he wouldn't go. A couple of weeks later one of his customers, who is a doctor, came in. My husband told him about his problem and he gave him some medicine. He finally remembered what happened. It was really terrible, he had this memory of those boys lying in the road. One broke his leg and the other hurt his knee. Our insurance finally settled out of court for \$14,400, which just covered the boy's medical bills."

"My husband was never the same after it. The business started going down hill. He kept thinking of the boys, lying there, so three years ago he closed up the business."

"That's when we started looking for a mobile home," says Ed. "You know this wasn't the first place we took. We had a place up in Peabody for a short time. We couldn't find anything else so we took this 12' by 52' Monarch. But it was located on a little cliff and Ruth didn't like it, it made her nervous."

"My boy heard that the woman who owned this home had just passed away in a nursing home. He knew her relatives and they gave us a good deal on this place."

"I'm glad we took the place because we like the park. I must like it, I put on some weight since we moved here. I used to be a 30 and now I wear a 34."

"Ed," said Ruth, "that's not true, you wear a 36."

"Hush up mom," says Ed, "you don't have to give all my secrets away."

"The only thing that really bothers us is the rent which keeps going up. When we moved in we were paying \$60/month. Then it seemed just when our social security went up our rent went up to \$64/month. Then, as you know, last December they raised it again. They raised it to \$72.50. Well people got upset, and got a petition together. We went to the owners and told them we couldn't afford that kind of increase.

"We had a meeting with the park's lawyer. He explained the owners had to make the increase because of new costs. We talked for a while and then they gave us a break. They lowered it 30%, so now we're paying \$72.20.

"Well, that's a little hard, but I got to admit in a lot of ways it's a lot cheaper than living in a house. When we owned our house we were paying \$680 a year in property tax. Now we don't pay hardly anything. Also when we moved we were paying a fuel bill of about \$21 a month. Now we pay maybe \$100 a year for our heat.

"We have to be careful because we're on a tight budget. We're lucky though we have children who are just a telephone call away, and there isn't anything they wouldn't do for us.

"We don't like to take from them, they have their own families to take care of, but they help out all the time. My son, the one who works for Polaroid, he helped me get my car (a 1968 Mercury). When I bought it a couple of years ago it cost me \$1,000. Well, to be honest with you, I couldn't afford that. But my son said, 'Dad, I'll pay half and you pay half.' Now he takes care of changing the oil.

"Like I said our children take good care of us. They want to take us out and show us a good time. We don't even like fancy meals, but you can only say no for so long."

"You know what my daughter told me?" asked Ruth. "She plays the lottery just like I do. I only get one ticket each week, that's all we can afford. She get two, sometimes three.

"You know what she told me? She said, 'Mom, if I win the big prize I'm going to buy some land in the country and build a big house on it. And right next to that house I'm going to build a small house for you and Dad to live in.'"

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"The first 100 years are the toughest," says Mr. Lester.

"Probably," I say. "How old are you?"

"How old, 80" says Mr. Lester, "not bad, huh?"

"Are you really 80?"

"Yup, and then some."

Both Mr. and Mrs. Lester are from Newfoundland. Mrs. Lester comes from a family of eleven girls. "Growing up with so many girls," she says, "I wanted to have a son, but as God would have it I had three lovely girls. I think if you want a son maybe

you'll get a daughter, at least that's how it worked out for me.

"I was so happy and then a tragedy almost ruined my life. My first husband was a carpenter and he was doing very well. One day he was killed in an accident at work, leaving me with three small girls. In those days they didn't take care of the widow or the children like they do now. There was nothing I could do but remarry.

"Luckily I found Mr. Lester. He already had two grown and married children. He was a lovely man. He took over responsibility for all three of my children. Up until I moved into this mobile home park I never paid rent in all the years I was married with Mr. Lester. He was a builder, a very excellent builder. He built some lovely homes. He built three homes in Revere. One for us and one for two of my daughters. After that we moved down to Hamilton, on the south shore. I didn't like that very much though.

"My husband retired, and the children wanted us up near them in Revere so we decided to move into a mobile home. We picked this park. I think we were the first people, maybe the second in the park.

"It was quite different then. I loved my home, but in those days everyone was so friendly. I used to have some women in for lunch and they would have me in. Now we keep to ourselves, people don't have much to do with each other. I don't know why, but people aren't very friendly. When a few of the old people moved out some new ones moved in and we don't have much to do with them. We keep to ourselves most of the time."

Mrs. Lester looks over toward her husband and says, "He used to be quite a man, my husband, but his health is lost now. I'll tell you it's been real hard on me. Sometimes I even wish the Lord would come and take me away. God knows it isn't easy. You know, he's very much older than me. He was kind to me when I needed someone but these last six or seven years it's been almost unbearable. I've had to be terrifically strong.

"We're moving into one of those elderly apartment complexes in a few months. I really don't want to, but my son-in-law said he thought it would be a good idea for us. He said we wouldn't have the snow to shovel and all the work around the house. You know you need contacts to get into those places. He said, 'Mom, I'm going to take care of it for you.'

"He did, and like I said we're moving in a couple of months. I really don't want to go, but I can't say no, not now. He thinks he's doing me a real big favor, but I'm doing him the favor. I never lived in a place with a lot of people all around me, and I've never lived on the sixth floor. We always lived on the first floor. No, I'm not thrilled about moving, but I can't say anything."

I can't think of anything to say to Mrs. Lester at this point, so I look over to Mr. Lester and ask, "So you were in building?"

He sits there without saying a word, so I try again, "Mrs. Lester says you were a house builder." I feel he can hear me, but he still doesn't say anything. I smile at Mrs. Lester and get up to leave. Now Mr. Lester says to me, "You ask a lot of questions, what did you say your business was?"

"I'm doing some research," I say, "doing some writing about mobile homes."

"Able to make a living doing writing?" he asks.

"Not bad," I say "I'm doing ok."

"I was a builder myself" he says.

"I know," I say, "your wife told me."

"Yup, used to build houses, don't any more but I used to."

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Irene Serreti leans out the back door, her short red hair and face just visible, and says, "Hi, Dick, come on in, I'm on the phone." I walk back to the rear entrance past Irene into the living room where Jack, her husband, is lying on the couch reading the Sunday paper and watching the St. Patrick's day parade.

Jack is quick to get up. He puts the paper away and turns off the TV before I have a chance to introduce myself. Soon Irene is off the phone. She comes in and says to Jack, "Watch your ashes."

Then she turns to me and says, "Well, what do you think of it?"

"It's very nice," I say, looking around the white carpeted living room.

"Thanks," she says. "I did the entire thing myself. About six years ago I was living in an apartment, but it was getting more and more expensive. Finally I decided to get a place of my own."

"At the time I was working as a barmaid at the Green Apple and the owner knew Jimmy De Costa and told me he was setting up a park in Saugus."

"I got here and I was given the choice of almost any spot in the place. All my friends gave me different advice. Most of them told me whatever I did I should take a corner spot. I did, and it was awful advice. Even though I got more space my place doesn't get any shade in the summer and it's like a hot box. It's almost unbearable."

"Anyway I chose this spot, and then I bought this coach. I told them I didn't want any of their furniture or their rugs. I took all my furniture and rugs from my apartment and laid it all out the way I wanted it."

"The place has changed a lot since we first moved in, but except maybe for a regular house, and really who can afford one, I wouldn't choose to live in anything but a mobile home. I really

like it. They're easy to take care of and if you fix them up the way you like they're very attractive. The one thing that took me a little long to get used to was the heater. It was a little loud, but I got used to it.

"The only other thing is the rent. It keeps on going up, but what can you do about it? When I first moved in the rent was \$56. It kept on going up and last year, as you know, they raised it to \$72.50. They sent us a letter saying they needed to raise the rents. Well, everyone was very upset, and we got a petition together telling them we didn't like it one bit. Well the management finally let some of us meet with their lawyers. They went over all these reasons why they needed to raise the rent. We said we weren't getting any more out of it, so they made a compromise-- they lowered the rent to \$72.20, some compromise. But I mean, what can you do?

"We like it here though. When I moved into the park I wasn't married. Jack and I got married about five years ago. We both had been married before, but neither marriage had worked out. But we're happy, aren't we Jack?"

Jack nods his head.

"That's about all you'll get Jack to say, he isn't talkative like me. That's why he doesn't care as much as I do that people in this park aren't very friendly. That's changed some since we came here. When we were first here I had a card game going. Once a week we played, but then this one moved out and then that one, and soon the game was over.

"I don't really know what it is. We know most of our neighbors, but just on a hello basis. People just don't seem interested in doing much together. For instance, remember that guy Steve, who I introduced you to the other day? Well, occasionally we'll ask him and his wife if they want to go for a movie or a ride. But they never seem to want to do very much. Steve will usually say something like he's too tired or not really in the mood. After a while you stop asking.

"For a while I thought maybe if we had a community center, you know a place where people could go it might be different. Some evenings I can't get to sleep, and I know it's that way for some of the other women and it would be nice to have a place to to play a little cards or sit and talk. But management says there's no place to put one.

"To tell you the truth, Dick, I don't really think things would be all that different with a community center. It's just that people aren't real friendly here. Now my niece, who lives up in a mobile home park in Peabody, she says everyone up there is real friendly and they don't have a community center. She says people there get together all the time, especially during the summer, they have cook outs with each other. That's sort of the way I was hoping it would be up here but it isn't. I don't think Jack minds as much as I do."

"That's right," Jack says, "to tell you the truth I can do as



well without people much of the time. A couple of years ago this guy next door used to come over all the time. We got a little friendly and it was like he was living on our doorstep, that wasn't for me."

Jack, who is a mechanic for MDC, gets up at 5:20 and is out of the house by 6:00. He doesn't get home till 4:00. By then he just wants to have dinner and relax. Most weekends he spends at least an hour Saturday morning with one of his two sisters, who live in Revere.

"I'll tell you," Jack says, "that's enough for me. I like it here, but I guess Irene is right, people aren't very friendly."

"I believe in giving people a chance," says Irene. "I like most people unless they're mean. Now a lot of people in the park have been talking about the two women in the park who spend a lot of time together. I say it's none of their business. They're nice people, and what they do is their own business. I know how those rumors can start. When I moved in here I was single, people thought I was having all kinds of parties because people used to park across the way. But they weren't coming to see me. So I figure let them think what they want. My feeling is that when they start paying my bills I'll start answering to them. Until that time they shouldn't mind my business."

"Even you, I heard about you before we met. People were saying that this hippy and his oriental wife had moved in. I said, 'so what, maybe they're nice.' Now I tell people that you're beautiful people, and they shouldn't let your appearance bother them."

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Joan Dunn, with the help of her daughter-in-law, is packing up her house because she is moving in less than a month. "You know," she says, "I've really enjoyed living here, and if it weren't for my husband having died I wouldn't want to leave."

"But it just isn't the same without him. Our children have been suggesting I move, and they're right. I'm lonely here without my John. So I'm moving into the upstairs part of my daughter-in-law's house. They've fixed up a little apartment for me."

"My husband died of a heart attack four months ago and it was a shock. But what can you do? We were very happy together. We had all sorts of plans for the future. We figured we would live here for a couple of more years and then buy a new mobile home and a little piece of land up in New Hampshire and put the place up there. We always liked New Hampshire; we used to spend summers there. I still have a site that we have a camper on. I pay \$250 for the full year and that covers everything, including rent and utilities. It's a nice place right by the water, right by lake Winepesand. It isn't more than 2 to 2 1/2 hours away. We used to take the big boat up there. When John was alive we had a 34 footer. He loved that boat, had all sorts of boat magazines around the place, but the boat was just too much for him. We had to give it

up, and we got a smaller boat, a 21 footer.

"But I'm going to sell that. You really need to have a man who knows something about boats. I'd like to get \$6,000 if I can, it's well worth it. I'd give it to my son, but he already has his hands full with his motorcycle and I don't think my daughter-in-law figures they need anything else."

"That's right mom."

"I've got good memories living here. We used to own a house, but when the children grew up we didn't need it, so we sold it to our son. We bought this mobile home. We got a real good deal, it cost us \$5,600. Over the years we did a lot of work on it, we added a porch, and a shed, widened the driveway, added air-conditioning, and put in a disposal. When I got ready to sell it I tried to figure what I should ask for. Well, you probably know you've got to pay the park ten percent of whatever you sell your place for, so I figured maybe I should ask \$12,000. I told the people down at Town Line that that's what I was going to ask. Well, they told me I could get more for the place and suggested that I ask \$13,500.

"I figured they knew their business better than I did so that's what I asked. Well the first day I had it out for sale this woman came by. She's the cousin of someone who lives in the park. Right away she says she wanted the place. We talked for a while and she started telling me about her problems. She's a widow like me, and hasn't had it easy. Well I gave her a break and told her she could have the place for \$13,000.

"I know I could of held out for my price, because in the next few days several other people made me offers. But all I wanted was a fair price.

"My husband and I were lucky. We both worked and pooled our money. My husband worked for more than 30 years as a chemical worker for Monsanto. He got to be a chief chemical worker, that's like being a foreman. I worked for Sylvania, I did electronics work on the line. I did that for thirteen years. I stopped three years ago when the plant closed down. About a year ago I took a job at Salada. But I quit after two days. I couldn't take the pace. I just couldn't go back to working on the line.

"I'll be sorry to leave the park. We liked it. We were lucky we didn't ever have any real problems with our mobile home. It's been easy to take care of. Sometimes I'm sorry we didn't get to know more people in the park better, but when John was with me I guess I didn't need them.

"I don't mean to say the people in the park aren't nice, they are. It's just the relationships have been limited. Like the people next door. If she's outside hanging her wash and I'm in the window we'll talk, but that's about it. There are a couple of women who I play cards with, and I know I'll see them even after I leave.

"I should tell you that when there are any real problems people have been terrific. When my John died the people in the park took up a collection. They do it whenever a tragedy hits the park."

Just then one of her two grandchildren trips over one of the half packed cartons. "Watch out, Judy," she says.

Mrs. Dunn goes over to the package and rewraps the now-exposed silver serving plate. "You know," she says, "I've never used it. The trouble with silver is you have to constantly wax it. I thought of selling it in the flea market, but it has some sentimental value, it was a present to John and me for our 25th. anniversary. I guess I'll keep it. "Saying that she rewraps it in newspaper and pushed the half-closed box to the side.

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I introduce myself to Mr. and Mrs. x and I tell them about my project. I ask if I can take their picture. "Nope," says Mr. x. "I never let anyone take my picture. When people come down to the plant(GE in Lynn) and take pictures I turn around. I don't want my picture in any paper or national magazine. It's not that I'm ashamed of the way I look, I just don't want my picture spread around. Some people would love to find out where I am, and they'd pester me to death. There are some people who just take advantage of you. They'd see my picture, and next thing I'd know they'd be on my doorstep, wanting all kinds of things. I don't want to be bothered with them, so I don't want my picture taken."

"Will you talk to me about living in this park and why you bought a mobile home?" I ask.

"Sure," Mr. x says, "as long as you don't take any pictures and don't use my name, why shouldn't I talk with you? Hell, if there's anything I don't want to tell you I won't, so go ahead-what do you want to know?"

"Why did we move to a mobile home. That's easy. They're not half the problem of a regular home, and they're much cheaper. I work hard enough, and I'm getting too old to spend what little leisure time I have working on keeping up a place. I don't have to paper the walls, or paint. I don't have to do cement work. I moved here to relax. If I can't then I'll sell this and move into a tent."

Mrs. x laughs.

"No, I mean it, says Mr. x,"I came here to relax and that's what I plan to do. If I can't do it here I'll find a place where I can."

"How do you like the park?" I ask.

"It's ok. When we moved in the place was just a mud hole. They were just finishing, and they did a decent job, nothing special mind you."

"Do you spend much time with neighbors?" I ask.

"Naw, not much. We spend time with our children and grandchildren and that's best for us."

"Do you think you'd spend more time if there were a community center?"

"Nope, don't think so. I don't think we'd use it. We don't need a lot of socializing. I know my neighbors well enough to say hello, and talk, and that's fine with me. My wife was pretty friendly with the woman you bought your place from. They used to spend some time together. But she's pretty busy with her church work and keeping the place clean."

"Is that right?" I ask Mrs. x.

"Yes, I do a lot of church work. On Tuesdays four women come over and we do some church sewing."

"Is there anything you don't like about the park?" I ask Mr. x.

"Sure, lots of things. The main thing is the way people let their grandchildren run free. I don't mind people having grandchildren come to visit them, but they shouldn't let them bother others. You'd never catch my grandchildren bothering nobody. I bet you couldn't even tell that my grandchildren were here for a week. They stayed inside most of the time, and they were quiet, not making a whole lot of racket. When they went outside they were with me or my wife. That's how their parents taught them, just like I taught my children."

"I taught my children to do their screeching in their imagination. It isn't like that with some people in the park. Some of them just let their kids roam around playing ball wherever they want. Well that's not right. I mean, there are rules in this park, and if I have to follow them everyone else should."

"Old people have a right to have things quiet. People like us have had children grow up and we want some peace and quiet. That's why we picked this park, and we should get that quiet."

"There really are all kinds of rowdys around. One time we had to get the fire department to put out a fire some kids started on the hill. Tramps like that shouldn't be allowed in here. I believe that if people in this park can't control the kids that visit them they should be required to move. I'd give them a warning the first time, and then I'd make them move."

"It's especially bad for me, because I have to sleep during the day. If there's a lot of noise it disturbs my sleep, and as it is I don't get enough. I work on a special 4th shift up at the plant."

"How much do you make?" I ask.

"I don't figure I should tell you that. A lot of people would like to know that information. But I figure if I can afford two loaves of bread that's my good fortune. You give me a fair price, not a price based on what I've got."

"What else don't I like about the park? The rent. The rent keeps going up. They keep on squeezing the workers. I think the city or state should step in and set a limit, put a limit on the profit. It's not only on rents, they should put a limit on all kinds of returns. If they don't do that prices eat up any kind of savings you've got, and shrink your pension. "

"Are you planning on retiring?" I ask.

"Sure, when I can afford to. I can't retire now but I'd like to retire. I started working over 30 years ago and when I started you didn't have your choice of work. You either took what you were offered or you didn't work. I'll retire when I can afford to. See, in this country once you retire what they want to do is shoot you so you won't cost the government any money.

"Well, I'm not going to let myself get in that position, even if it means I've got to work a few extra years."

Mrs. x laughs again.

"I'll tell you," says Mr. x, "I'm telling you the plain truth, but it's as hard to tell the truth now as it was in the Bible days."

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The Escom park I visited in Florida and the Saugus Mobile Park are very different sorts of communities, although both fall under the umbrella of mobile home communities. Each serves different needs in different ways. I think it is interesting to look at these differences.

### Physical differences

The Escom park is a large plush park. When it is completed it will probably receive Woodall's five star rating. Its 1500 units, golf course, and community center are located on a 300 acre plot. The park, which is located about 30 minutes outside of Miami, is in the midst of a residential area. Across the road from Escom is a large conventional home development where the houses range in price from \$60,000-\$100,000. The park has a variety of coaches running from the 12 by 60 single to very elaborate double wides.

The Saugus Park, which has a three star Woodall rating, is located on a parcel of land of less than 15 acres on Route One. Route One is a six lane thoroughfare running from downtown Boston north toward Maine and New Hampshire. Located on Route One are a bevy of restaurants including a giant Chinese-Polynesian restaurant called the Kowloon, Valle's, with its Wednesday and Friday night lobster special, Frank Guiffrida's Hilltop steak house, and such franchises as Lums, Colonel Sanders Fried Chicken, Burger King, and a newly opened McDonalds. Within two miles of the park there are two large suburban shopping centers, and four major super-markets. Gas stations abound, their 'triple S&H stamps with fillup'

signs seem to be everywhere. The immediate area also contains a large hockey rink and several car dealerships.

There are some motels on the road, but to my knowledge this park is the only residential development on this part of the highway. The entrance to the park is directly on Route One. The park is laid out in a modified H.

The majority of the 75 homes in the park are 12 by 60. A few are smaller, all are singles. Nearly half of the homes have built-on porches, and the majority of them are enclosed.

### Community facilities

There are, as I mentioned earlier, no community center or laundry facilities in the Saugus park. This severely limits social interaction. For example, most of the people who live in our section know few people in the park outside of this section. People in other parts of the park tell me that the same is pretty much true, that their social contact with people in the park is pretty well limited to people in their section.

Escom, on the other hand, has a community center, as well as extensive recreation facilities. Several of the Escom residents related to me how they had met and made new friends at bingo or other functions at the community center.

These differences, however, don't adequately explain the differences in the two parks. Mobile home parks tend to be more community-minded than other residential facilities. The very idea of a park, an instant community, helps explain why knowing one's neighbor seems to be much more of the fabric of mobile home parks than suburban developments, or apartment complexes.

Given that, I think these two parks fairly well reflect two different needs that mobile home parks can serve. The Escom park offers a home and a community. The Saugus park primarily offers a mobile home as a residence.

Escom is operated and designed to be a community. This is obviously a conscious effort on the part of the developers. The existence of the community center, and the extensive schedule of social activities, is a way to facilitate the development of a sense of community.

Most of the residents of Escom are retired people. Most of them are not from Florida. They have come South from northern states like Michigan, Ohio, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and New York. They have left their families and friends up North.

Many of these people, then, are cast at sea, so to speak, without any real social ties. I think they are in need of social contact and for many of them this is offered by their new neighbors who are in a similar situation. The park offers them more than just a place to live, it offers a community with which to become involved, almost a surrogate family.

For the people living in the Saugus park things are quite different. Although a large number are retired or near retiring age, they are almost all from the immediate area. Most have spent the greater part of their lives in the Boston area. The people in the Saugus Mobile Home Park have extensive social relations in the area. They are not looking for a place to make a new life, but a place which is easier to care for than a house, and more private than an apartment.

Although the social contact would undoubtedly improve if there were some community facilities, for many their primary social ties remain with their families and friends from other nearby communities.

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