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GATEWAY

NATIONAL RECREATION AREA / NEW YORK - NEW JERSEY

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United States Department of the Interior / National Park Service

SPECIAL STUDY: THE 1974 SUMMER SEASON

GATEWAY NATIONAL RECREATION AREA
NEW YORK – NEW JERSEY

NOVEMBER 1975

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This report is an "informal" evaluation of Gateway's first season of operation because anyone familiar with this new national recreation area will know how much of what occurred during the 1974 season is omitted from our analysis. Especially glaring is the lack of material from Sandy Hook. Due to limitations of personnel and resources, it was not possible for us to schedule observations at this major Gateway unit, but it will receive its full share of attention in future evaluation efforts. Fortunately, the National Capital Parks planning team, under Ted McCann, did spend much of its time during the 1974 season at Sandy Hook. The draft development concept plan they produced for this area incorporates information about the summer season. From the planners' vantage, at least, Sandy Hook has not been slighted.

In general, we have attempted to document the broad dimensions of human behavior at Gateway's public areas. We also have attempted to capture the ethos of the park's human ecology; that is, we wish to convey to the reader something of what the average visitor to the park might experience on any sunny Sunday in July. Qualitative data based on lengthy periods of participant-observation at selected areas within the park and extended conversations with visitors and park personnel form the basis for most of the material in the report. The New York City Planning Commission's Gateway transportation study team carried out a series of origin-destination studies during the summer, and in most cases Gateway unit managers attempted to collect visitation data of various types. These data are incorporated in the report wherever possible.

As New Yorkers, either by birth or long residence, and in consequence of our training as social scientists, the team members who wrote various components of this report must admit to certain predispositions and intellectual biases. First, we wholeheartedly support the National Park Service's emphasis on environmental ethics in park planning. In our opinion, the ecological world view must be the central value in park planning and programming. On the other hand, we strongly believe that the human values and

the human ecology of Gateway's lands are a vital feature of the park's resources. As we see it, the people of the New York/New Jersey metropolitan region are Gateway's priceless resource; they could eventually make this park rival, in its own fashion, the natural splendor of the great western parks. Some implications of this pro-urban value orientation are spelled out in more detail in the first part of this report.

A second intellectual bias is due to the fact that we are cultural pluralists. The composition of the study team itself reflects the ethnic, racial, and sexual diversity of New York's highly cosmopolitan population. While we are all Americans and New Yorkers who share certain core values, we also respect and enjoy the differences in our ways of life. This is an important trait because it is the profound social and cultural heterogeneity of the city that makes its residents both fear and love it and also makes park planning so difficult. In this report we deal with some of the problematic situations created by cultural diversity at Gateway.

A final viewpoint, which pervades much of the observation and analysis here, derives from our concern over the problem of alienation in contemporary city life. The National Park Service has inherited lands within the Gateway boundaries that for decades have been used and abused by special recreation groups, squatters, small entrepreneurs, vandals, land speculators, fishermen, ornithologists, residents of local communities, biology teachers and students, beach visitors, lovers, artists, teen gangs, soldiers, trash dumpers, and many, many others. For some, the park lands have provided opportunities to behave in ways that were not permitted or even possible in the densely settled and more regimented communities of the city. Through the generations, many of these uses have damaged the lands, the marshes, and the waters of the new park in ways that will take years of effort and millions of dollars to restore. Much of this damage was caused by people whose life chances and relationships to the major social institutions of this society make concern for the natural environment seem almost maladaptive.

Other human groups, especially those residing within Gateway's boundaries, have formed deep community roots and lasting attachments to the values of the park's natural environment. Their communities are like islands against the alienation from self and nature that marks so many of Gateway's more transient visitors. Some of the problems of accommodating and changing the behavior of the transient visitors, while not further alienating the area's residents, are discussed here.

Throughout the course of this evaluation study, we have enjoyed the most cooperative and cordial working relations with Gateway personnel, even in instances where the viewpoints of line staff and evaluators diverged. Inspector Groves and Lieutenant Tomlinson of the park police, Assistant Superintendent Olsen, and all the Gateway unit managers and their staffs gave us unstinting support during the summer. The experience and insight of these and other Park Service officials account for much of the value in this report. Its shortcomings must be attributed to our oversights alone.

— The Study Team

AN ORGANIZATIONAL CRUSADE

Gateway's premier season might best be described as an organizational crusade. The months between January and July 1974 marked a period of such intense effort that the energies and commitment of Gateway's personnel were often pushed to the limits of human endurance. This episode of National Park Service history should someday be related in full detail because the achievements of these 6 months demonstrate how effectively a complex professional administration can function under intense pressure. Throughout these supremely hectic weeks and months, Superintendent Antosca often cautioned the public not to expect an "instant national park." But in many respects, this is what the Gateway staff actually achieved.

From March 1, 1974, when the Park Service took title to New York City lands, to the July 4 weekend, the Gateway staff expanded from 4 persons to almost 100 permanent and over 400 seasonal employees. Many of these new employees left their homes and families behind while they worked 18-hour days to establish the new park system. Headquarters were renovated and made operational at Floyd Bennett Field, Great

Kills, and Sandy Hook. Thousands of dollars were spent to hurriedly purchase or rent the equipment necessary to run the park areas. A park police unit was recruited on time for the opening season. A highly successful program of environmental education for primary school teachers was established. Meetings were held with representatives of cooperating agencies and with the leaders of adjacent communities. Hundreds of automobile hulks were dragged from beach and marshlands, and tons of wood and other debris were removed from beaches and access routes. The admission charge at Sandy Hook was terminated, and a long list of maintenance and rehabilitation work was undertaken in order to make recreation areas safe for the public. The National Capital Parks planning team worked throughout the spring and summer to organize much of the basic material necessary for a draft master plan. And this list does not begin to exhaust the achievements of Gateway's first months of operation!

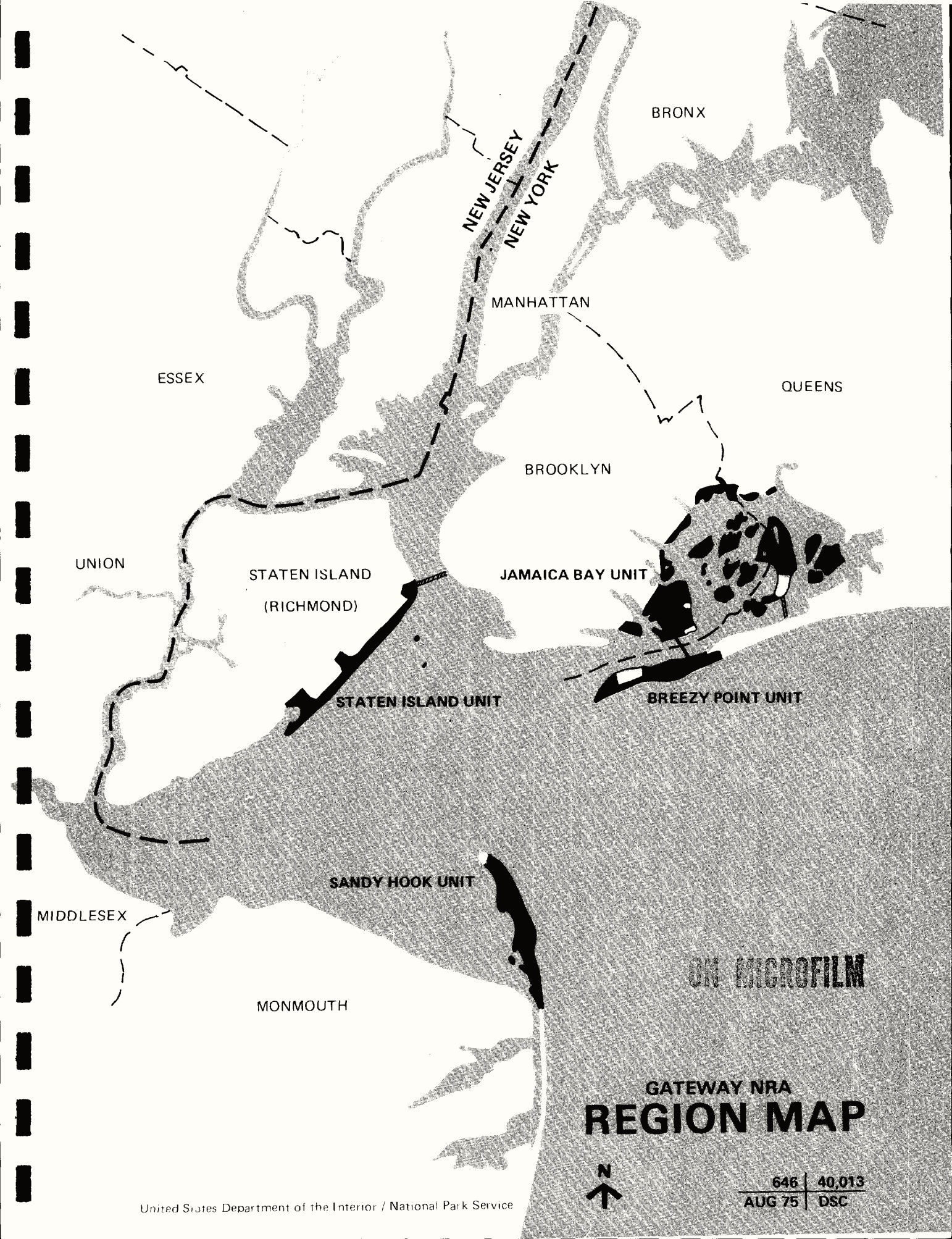
These deeds, and others not yet mentioned, hardly went unnoticed. The consensus of Gateway's informed and vocal public, even before the summer season reached its peak, was that the National Park Service had firmly established itself as a creative force on its new properties. By the end of the July 4 weekend, it was clear to the study team that any dire predictions concerning the Park Service's ability to serve the visiting public in New York City were unfounded. The remainder of the summer passed without any major incident to mar the successful inauguration of the park, and Gateway ended its first summer season with a much larger fund of public good will than it had enjoyed during the previous spring.

There were approximately 5.5 million visits to Gateway areas in 1974, an increase of at least 20 percent over the visitation to the same areas under the previous jurisdictions. This volume of public use establishes Gateway as one of the most popular recreation areas in the National Park System. In addition, the social characteristics of Gateway's visiting public seem to correct past inequities in overall national park visitation. However, the large majority of visitors to this new park system have yet to experience any important qualitative changes in the nature of their recreational experience. The role of the National Park Service at Gateway is real in potential but not yet in practice.

GATEWAY'S PUBLIC

Patterns of Use

Gateway's lands may be divided for analytical purposes into areas of developed and traditional park use (particularly the beaches and public places of Jamaica Bay, Riis Park, Great Kills, and Sandy Hook) and areas that may be termed "urban wilderness" because of the range of unplanned public uses that occur there. The "free beach" and the high-rise skeletons, the tip of Breezy Point, the marshlands of Jamaica Bay, and Crookes Point at Great Kills are places where anything can happen and usually does.



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GATEWAY NRA

REGION MAP

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SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF VISITORS TO GATEWAY UNITS, SUMMER 1974
(PERCENT OF TOTAL PER UNIT)

	Breezy Point (Jacob Riis)	Jamaica Bay	Great Kills	Sandy Hook
Family Income (mean)	$12,000	$10,500	$13,000	$12,000
Number in Visitor Party (mean)	2-3	2	3	3
Percent with 4 or More in Party	21.3	21.0	33.4	39.4
Previous Park Visits since June 1 (mean)	8.2	13.6	11.6	7.4
Mode of Access:				
Auto	84.1	87.8	93.2	98.2
Subway	12.1	1.7	—	—
Bus	14.9	3.2	—	—
Bike	—	3.5	—	—
Foot	—	5.5	—	—
Percent Carrying Radios	47.5	36.1	44.3	41.8

Socioeconomic Status — The only indicator of the visitors' general socioeconomic status is the information on mean family income. These numbers suggest that the park tends to draw most heavily from the blue-collar and middle-class segments of the metropolitan population. While the mean household income of visitors to Great Kills, Sandy Hook, and Riis Park averaged about $12,500 per year, 44 percent of those who mailed back questionnaires from Great Kills and Riis Park reported incomes in excess of $16,000. The mean of reported household incomes for visitors to Jamaica Bay areas, approximately $10,500, is significantly lower than for visitors to the other park units. Indeed, 7.3 percent of the respondents from Jamaica Bay areas reported a total income of $3,999 or less, a figure that represents almost abject poverty for adult New Yorkers. The equivalent figures for the other three units are at least 4 percentage points lower in this income category.

These data give clear support to the claim that Gateway programs and facilities will bring the high-quality recreational opportunities of the National Park Service to a public that can ill afford to visit the more distant parks of the west and the south or even other national park facilities of the region. For example, in 1968 the mean household income of visitors to Fire Island National Seashore was $16,000, a figure which in 1974 dollars would be over $20,000, or about $8,000 more per year than the average Gateway visitor enjoys.

The data on income also show that the poor are seriously under-represented among visitors to the park. Again, the highest proportion of visits by low income people occurred at Jamaica Bay, where 7.4 percent of the respondents claimed incomes of $4,000 or less. The federal census shows that in 1970 almost one third of the population of New York City (2.5 million people) lived in households with incomes under $5,000. This fact serves as a reminder of how much more planning and organization must be done at Gateway before the project will begin to deliver on its promise of service to all the people.

Group Composition — Both sets of figures about group composition tend to confirm the qualitative observations of the study team: Riis Park and the areas of Jamaica Bay are more likely to be used by nonfamily groups and individuals, especially the young and the elderly, than Great Kills and Sandy Hook, where family visitation is the more general mode. Of course, the numbers are only suggestive of these trends. Even if the inference is correct, this does not imply that one can legitimately categorize the park along this very limited social dimension. A detailed analysis of the social characteristics and group composition of Gateway's visitors has extremely important bearing on park management and programming. Therefore, considerable attention is devoted to this aspect of present park use in later chapters of this report.

Mode of Access — It is depressing to note, as the table clearly demonstrates, that the overwhelming majority of Gateway's users arrive at the park by personal automobile. Within a 2-hour radius of Gateway's ocean beaches there are no less than 1,449,000 carless households, 34 percent of all households in the area. This fact emphasizes the urgent need for interim and long-range plans to improve mass transit service. If the federal government imposes a substantial new tax on gasoline consumption, the existing mass transit lines that serve Gateway will be inadequate to meet new demands. Similarly, the existing parking areas at Gateway units could prove inadequate to meet increased use, as area residents would opt for the less expensive drive to Gateway beaches rather than pay twice as much to drive to Jones Beach State Park or to the Palisades interstate park system. These must be considered areas that "compete" with Gateway since access to them is also primarily by auto. The annual attendance at these two major regional park systems exceeds 21,000,000 (over 13,000,000 at Jones and over 8,000,000 at Palisades). Any significant decline in visitation to these more distant regional park areas could increase Gateway's summer

visitation by 15 percent or more, an increase that would severely tax already inadequate support facilities.

Regular Visitors and Communication Systems – Each Gateway unit presently hosts a clientele of regular park users who visit the area one or more times a week in good weather and who cared enough about the future of the park to fill out and mail in a questionnaire. This is shown by the numbers in the table that refer to mean previous park visits since June 1. These are people who come repeatedly to the same places, alone or in groups – like the old folks who meet daily at Canarsie Pier, the fishermen who stop alongside the marina at Great Kills, the "Mayor of Bay 5" at Riis, or any of the other self-appointed public figures who create norms and an informal social order here and there throughout the park. Without the civilizing influence of these "regulars" who hang out in strategic places at each unit, even more of Gateway's lands would become urban wilderness. This kind of visitor is needed in greater number, in more diversity, and on a year-round basis if the popular beaches and public places of Gateway are ever to become more than havens for anonymous bathers and eaters of hot dogs.

The transportation survey could not assess the degree to which the 1974 visiting public was aware of the change in administration at park areas. New signs at Sandy Hook and Great Kills and the removal of the admission charge at the former New Jersey state beach ensured that the public was at least somewhat aware of the important change in management of these units. In the absence of signs at Riis and Jamaica Bay, only the sudden appearance of rangers and park police, and the equally sudden appearance of interpretive recreational programs, caused the uninformed visitor to know the area had become part of a new national recreation area. Much of the delay in posting signs, particularly around Jamaica Bay and Breezy Point, must be attributed to an explicit "low profile" policy for Gateway in these areas. The lands at Floyd Bennett and Fort Tilden, for example, have become part of the Gateway holdings, but they are not yet open to the public. Excessive zeal in erecting signs could cause undue public confusion with regard to which places are public lands and which are not. Nevertheless, the Gateway staff did make sincere efforts to inform the general public about the park. Over 100,000 pamphlets were distributed to the visiting public, and articles about the park appeared regularly throughout the summer, especially in the local community press in Queens and Staten Island. It is unfortunate that the electronic media chose to highlight only the most sensational aspects of Gateway's visiting public.

Effective communications with large numbers of visitors from hundreds of communities in the vast metropolitan region will always present problems for management at Gateway. In this regard, it is worthwhile to note that over 42 percent of the current park visitors carry radios. This suggests the potential for experimentation with limited-range radio stations at heavily used areas like Riis. Among other benefits to interpretation and programming, such stations could aid in

creating a social network among park personnel, regular users of the units, and the more casual visitors. Radio has been used in the major western parks mainly as a communicative and interpretive medium, but there is reason to believe it could eventually serve an even more important social and cultural role at Gateway.

RECREATIONAL QUALITY

By any objective standards of recreational quality in this country, Gateway's most heavily used areas would have to be rated fair to poor. The beach facilities at Sandy Hook and the wildlife refuge at Jamaica Bay are notable exceptions to this observation. Riis Park and Great Kills, by far the most popular Gateway areas on the New York City side, require immediate improvements if they are to be brought up to National Park Service standards. These mass recreation facilities were greatly improved during the 1974 season, but they still rank well below high-quality park areas like Jones Beach State Park.

Of course, Jones Beach is not the only model by which success at Gateway's beaches should be measured. Riis Park and Great Kills must rank somewhat higher than other New York City beaches. Coney Island, the Rockaways, and Orchard Beach, which also serve the population of New York's inner boroughs, are not as well maintained as the Gateway beaches are now, nor do these areas benefit from the high-quality law enforcement program of the U.S. Park Police. Also, with the exception of Orchard Beach, the city beaches do not have facilities to accommodate the visitor public adequately and must depend on the supplemental role of establishments in the local neighborhoods.

Riis and Great Kills were specifically designed during the heyday of Robert Moses' park construction to provide alternatives to the overly commercialized beach strands at Coney Island and the Rockaways. Planning decisions were made in the 1930s and 1940s that caused Riis and Great Kills to depend on a visitation by New Yorkers who had access to private automobiles. Unfortunately, these parks did not receive adequate budgetary support from the city. Today they are a testament to the fate of large institutional park complexes that are allowed to fall into physical decay. The main problems at Riis and Great Kills are that the facilities are extremely limited and, where they exist at all, are of extremely poor quality.

Great Kills has only minimal facilities for beachfront recreation. There are no picnic areas, no playgrounds, no ball fields near the beach, no developed concession areas (other than the two hot dog stands), and no staging areas for events of any kind. The only redeeming feature of beach recreation at Great Kills is that the beaches and comfort facilities are relatively uncrowded and generally safe for families with small children because the surf is quite mild in comparison with beaches fronting the ocean.

Attendance at Great Kills increased by over 40 percent in 1974, primarily because the water was certified for swimming, a fact that was advertised, and the swimming beach was cleaned. The massive clean-up that the park staff accomplished before the season opened makes Great Kills the only beach on Staten Island that does not resemble the aftermath of the Normandy invasion.

Riis Park is considerably more developed than Great Kills and offers a greater diversity of recreational experiences. Unfortunately, the quality of the facilities at Riis is generally poor. The playgrounds are dangerous examples of the worst in institutional architecture for children; the basketball courts are worthy of the most impoverished ghetto facilities; the food concessions are depressing, at best. Although the staff at Riis was organized later than staffs at other units, it initiated improvements in facilities and programs that raised the quality of recreational experiences at Riis quite markedly.

Rehabilitation of the old boardwalk clock, painting the boardwalk railings, installation of nets on the basketball rims, and replacement of old lifeguard chairs were all relatively simple improvements that had a great deal of immediate impact on the visual aesthetics of the beach. Even more important were improvements in beach-cleaning operations, but shortages of machinery and trash baskets often made it difficult for the park staff to keep up with the volume of garbage that is daily deposited on the beach. In this regard, Bill Shields (general manager of Riis Park) observed on July 4, when almost 120,000 people visited the park:

> You see those piles of trash along the beach? Well, the trash baskets are under them. The beach is so crowded that we're having trouble getting to the baskets to empty them. The people will go to the trash baskets, but we don't have enough of them. I've got 800 baskets on the beach now, but I could use 3,000.

Jacob Riis Park is discussed at some length later in this report. The extraordinary aspect of recreation at this Gateway facility is that, despite the general paucity of opportunities available here, the people themselves fill in the gaps. They create one of the most unique urban leisure settings in the nation.

For the park personnel at Jamaica Bay areas, the 1974 summer season was a period of intense efforts at maintenance, clean-up, and experimental programs to improve the quality of visitor experiences at Plumb Beach, Canarsie Pier, the wildlife refuge, the North Channel Bridge, and Frank Charles Memorial Park. With the exception of the refuge, all these areas were greatly improved by routine maintenance and clean-up operations organized by the park staff. This Gateway unit has greater logistical and organizational problems than the other park areas because its facilities are dispersed along the narrow Jamaica Bay shoreline. Also, the city of New York continues its landfill operations at Spring Creek and retains control of the bicycle paths that link the

public places along the bay. Cooperation with city agencies is even more critical to the future of this unit than to the others.

Visitors to the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, particularly birders with long experience at the refuge and a proprietory interest in its management, came to feel over the course of the summer that the refuge was not receiving adequate maintenance attention. This sentiment gathered force during the summer and came to a head in September and October of 1974, when articles criticizing the refuge management appeared in the *New York Times*. In some part, these problems were caused by necessary shifts in personnel, which were effected in order to find the best combination of ranger and maintenance roles. Accustomed to the long tenure of the previous custodial staff, some birders feared that the Park Service would not develop adequate staffing and maintenance procedures. The Park Service is now at work on an extensive resource management plan for the refuge and is seeking to stabilize the personnel situation there.

While they received considerably less attention than the events at the refuge, Gateway efforts to upgrade services and facilities at other Jamaica Bay areas met with considerably more frustration. Extensive repair work on fencing and comfort facilities at Frank Charles Memorial Park were heavily damaged throughout the summer by vandals. At Canarsie Pier, a tent erected by the park staff to accommodate the elderly who frequent the pier was stolen 2 days after it was set up. Not all the experiences were as bleak, however, and programs of environmental interpretation, puppet shows, and the Gateway festival at Canarsie Pier (May 18) did establish Gateway's presence in these areas.

PROBLEMS OF SPECIAL USER GROUPS

Many of the efforts of Gateway personnel during the 1974 summer season centered on situations created by groups of park visitors who did not confine their use of the park to designated recreation areas, or by people who enjoyed special-use permits for access to areas of the park that are not yet open to the general public. The visitors who used, and at times abused, the more remote areas of the park created particularly serious problems for maintenance personnel and the U.S. Park Police; the holders of special-use permits posed important policy questions for Gateway managers and planners. In both cases the problems were created by expectations that the visitors had formed before the National Park Service began to administer the lands in question.

This report cannot detail and evaluate all the situations created by these special user groups. Therefore, some general observations, with strategic examples taken from the experience of the 1974 summer, will be highlighted here.

Youth Gangs, Vandalism, and Violence

The 1974 experience indicates that teenagers begin to use Gateway areas in rather large numbers in May, as the school year draws to a close and other special events break the normal school-week routine. Nonschool-age groups begin using the park lands in greater numbers after Memorial Day. This suggests the need to create special programs for high school and college youths who seek outlets to release the tensions of the school year. The Washington, D.C., "Summer in the Parks" program provided some excellent examples of what could be done along these lines. The New York City "Olympic Games," which were conducted during the Lindsay administration, also demonstrated how an imaginative and low-cost program of special events could channel the energies of the city's youth into creative outlets.

Such programs may never reach the city's most alienated and hostile youths, but they do provide competing opportunities for incompatible uses, including vandalism and violence. There are indications that coming summers will find larger numbers of city youth without summer jobs and without the means to seek recreation outside the city. Special programs at Gateway and in other strategic areas of the city can alleviate this situation.

The channeling of youthful energies into constructive paths is perhaps Gateway's most pressing and difficult challenge. It is also one for which the park has begun to evolve some strategies, particularly in its environmental education program and in experimentation with the discotheque and other programs that were implemented only on a limited basis during the summer. But before evaluating these attempts to deal with the problems, we will consider the bleaker aspects of the actual behavior.

Perhaps the worst case of confrontation between Gateway's new personnel and the youthful public in the park's more remote areas, the following case represented a "baptism by fire" for the park police. On Friday, May 16, during a balmy night toward the end of the public school year and shortly afterthe park police began their regular police details at Gateway, two policemen responded to a complaint from the Breezy Point Cooperative that there were some rather large bonfires at the tip of the Point. The officers drove their squad car out onto the beach and found three groups of teenagers engaged in beach parties. Each group was gathered around a fire. The officers approached the nearest groups and asked them to extinguish their fires in accordance with the Gateway policy that prohibits open fires in such undesignated areas. These groups complied with the officers' request without hesitation. But when the officers approached the third group, they were met with verbal abuse, which soon led to violence. The youths attacked the officers and began beating them to the ground. Radio communication had not yet been well established for the police unit. It was impossible for the officers to call for help. Fortunately, they had called in their destination earlier, and a second squad car had been dispatched to the location. When the second car arrived, the youths, all of whom were white and had been drinking

heavily, fled across the beach and were not apprehended. The two park police officers sustained severe superficial injuries but did not require hospitalization.

There were incidents similar to this one, although not marked by the same degree of violence, throughout the summer – especially at Breezy Point, Frank Charles Memorial Park, Canarsie Pier, and the promontory at Great Kills. None of the subsequent incidents of late-night partying and vandalism resulted in injury to park personnel, which may be attributed in some measure to the lessons of May 16. The point is that these Gateway areas are now used at certain times by individuals or groups who act as if these lands were outside the scope of legal institutions and social control. The people who use such park areas at night during the late spring and summer are likely to be youths traveling with their peers in search of fun and adventure. In the case recounted above, they were apparently members of street-corner gangs from the Coney Island section of Brooklyn. For groups like this, it is something of an adventure just to be in the outdoors, outside the confines of their city neighborhoods. They adopt a defensive posture toward anyone not of their party and often bolster their courage with liberal doses of alcohol. The most alienated, frustrated, and defensive of these youths will often act out their fears and aggressions against each other or by violence against their immediate physical environment. Senseless tragedies, such as the murder by drowning that occurred later in the summer at Canarsie Pier, are too often the climax of these forays into the city's open spaces. Acts of vandalism that destroyed thousands of dollars worth of new improvements at all the Gateway units during the 1974 summer are another very demoralizing outcome.

Violence and vandalism are severe problems in all city parks and are increasing in many of our national parks as well. The situation at Gateway is unique only in that the lands in question are now being transformed into a national recreation area. There may be managerial and planning options that could exacerbate or diminish existing problems of illegitimate use.

Law Enforcement

Areas of the park that exhibit particularly high rates of vandalism and disorder were never policed adequately by local enforcement agencies prior to Gateway's creation. There is evidence that the U.S. Park Police have begun to establish control over many of the most problematic park areas, like the tip of Breezy Point, and that norms of legitimate public use can emerge in those places within the next 5 years if forceful law enforcement policies are continued. Park rangers may eventually replace the U.S. Park Police at Gateway, but this should not be contemplated before the Park Service has firmly established its control over all Gateway properties. It is doubtful that park rangers with law enforcement training could have coped with the situations of civil disorder that arose during the 1974 summer at Breezy Point, Jamaica Bay, or Great Kills.

The presence of U.S. Park Police at Gateway permits the Park Service to establish its own standards of law enforcement in the park. It also permits lines of communication and patterns of cooperation to develop between the Park Service and local law enforcement agencies. Rangers could play an effective law enforcement role once these relationships were developed, but not before. Sandy Hook, with its more controlled access and greater distance from densely urban communities, is an important exception to these comments.

A traditional managerial response to unintended or illegitimate use of park space is to channel these uses into locations where they can occur without hindering other park uses and where they can be controlled. For example, beach parties around wood fires are not necessarily an illegitimate use of park space if they do not conflict with other management objectives for a park area. This is a use that can be controlled by the creation of facilities and the proper surveillance by park staff.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

The program of environmental workshops for primary school teachers, which Sam Holmes organized during the spring and summer of 1974, is a model for how Gateway can cooperate with local agencies in providing services and programs to the region's vast population. The following is a brief description of the "Explore Gateway" program from the spring 1974 brochure:

> Explore Gateway is a series of six workshops to help fifth and sixth grade teachers use the new Gateway National Recreation Area for exciting and educationally productive experiences with their classes. The workshops are free and will be conducted on weekday afternoons between 3:30 and 5:45. They are intended this spring primarily for teachers whose districts are immediately adjacent to Gateway, and for interested students of teacher education.
>
> Participating teachers will take part in give-and-take sessions led by experienced resource people. In addition to background information about Gateway, the workshops will include specific activities and materials which teachers can use both in the classroom and on class visits to Gateway.
>
> The workshops will also encourage participants to discuss environmental education methods which they have already used successfully with their classes, and to volunteer ideas for the educational development of Gateway.

In cooperation with Gateway area managers, Mr. Holmes recruited some of the best local teaching talent available; he arranged for in-service credit for participating

teachers; he stimulated the creation of special materials on the use of Gateway sites; and he formed relationships with the New York City Board of Education that will prove invaluable to future development of educational programs.

From March 1 to the end of May 1974, when other Gateway personnel were feverishly engaged in organizing the park's facilities and seasonal staff for the peak summer season, "Explore Gateway" was already a functioning program for those interested in the park to observe and participate in. By recruiting local biologists and others who possessed years of experience on Gateway properties, new Park Service personnel had many areas of their park interpreted to them for the first time. This was a central, if unintended, consequence of the "Explore Gateway" program.

For Mr. Holmes and the evaluation team, perhaps the most important test of the success of the workshop program occurred during its last 4 weeks when participating teachers brought their classes to the park. These sessions provided opportunities to guide the transfer of training from teacher to pupil and to determine if various sites within the park could function as areas for environmental education. The Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge has for many years been a favorite site for school field trips, and the New York Parks Council continues to sponsor a successful program of environmental interpretation there for school groups. Because of this, Mr. Holmes chose sites other than the refuge to test the program.

The evaluation team observed "Explore Gateway" workshops at the Jamaica Bay, Breezy Point, and Staten Island units. When grade school children accompanied their teachers to park areas, the workshops were held at the beach at Great Kills and the bay beach at the Roxbury Yacht Club in the Breezy Point unit. At the latter it was possible to hold meetings with four separate classes, which circulated between four teaching and interpretive stations established by Mr. Holmes and his assistants along the bayshore.

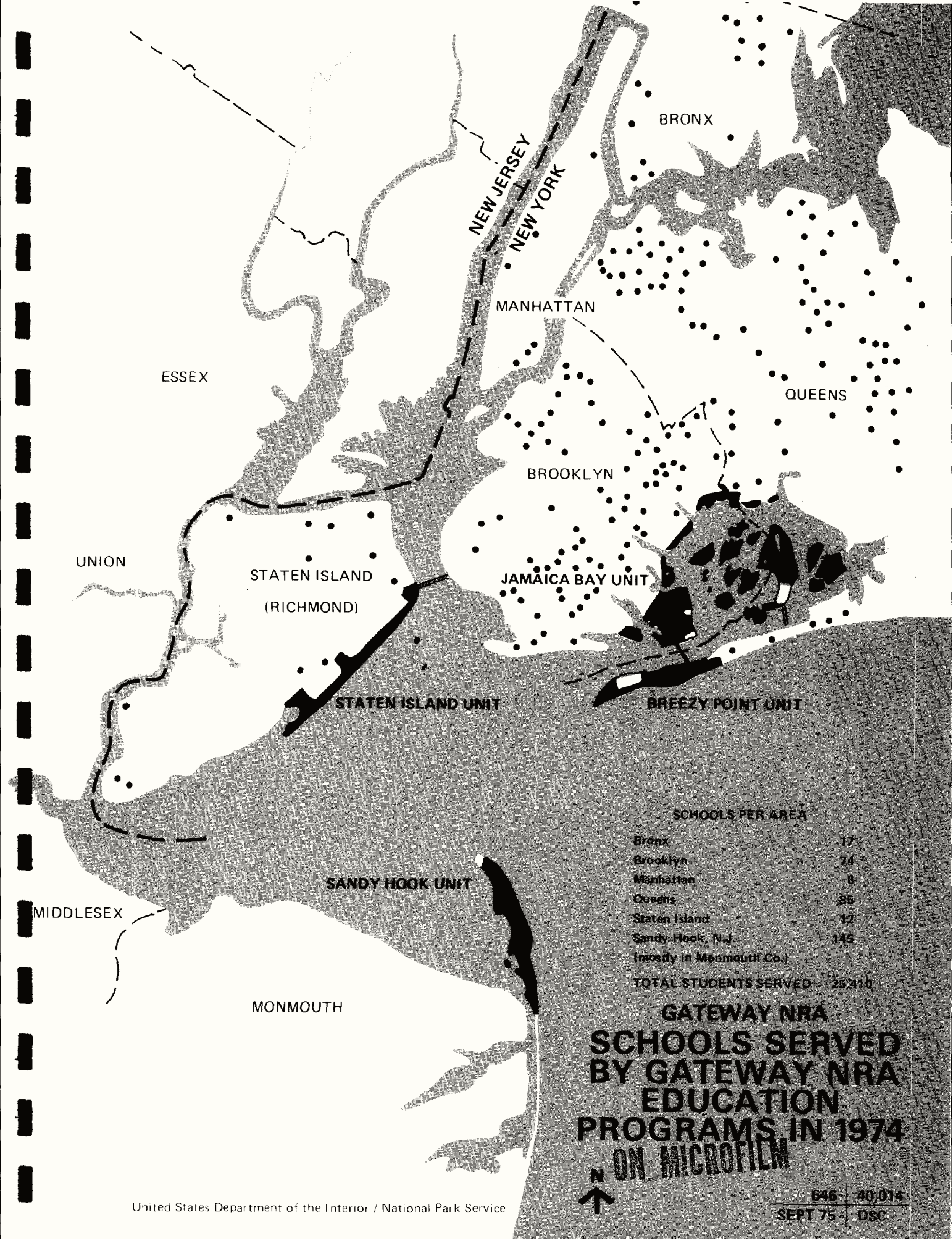
The following are recommendations for future environmental education programs:

Locate new environmental education and natural interpretive sites away from the wildlife refuge.

Disperse school groups over available sites and keep group size relatively small in order to maintain group intimacy as well as a favorable student/teacher ratio.

Make special efforts to integrate Gateway environmental education programs with similar programs elsewhere in the region.

Attempt to induce teachers to take more active roles in field trip instruction when their students are present.


BRONX
NEW JERSEY
NEW YORK
MANHATTAN
ESSEX
QUEENS
BROOKLYN
UNION
STATEN ISLAND
(RICHMOND)
JAMAICA BAY UNIT
STATEN ISLAND UNIT
BREEZY POINT UNIT
SANDY HOOK UNIT
MIDDLESEX
MONMOUTH
SCHOOLS PER AREA
Bronx 17
Brooklyn 74
Manhattan 6
Queens 85
Staten Island 12
Sandy Hook, N.J. 145
(mostly in Monmouth Co.)
TOTAL STUDENTS SERVED 25,410
GATEWAY NRA
SCHOOLS SERVED BY GATEWAY NRA EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN 1974
ON MICROFILM
N
United States Department of the Interior / National Park Service
646 | 40,014
SEPT 75 | DSC

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES DURING CALENDAR YEAR 1974

Date	Location or Special Program	Number of Students Served
Spring	Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge	6,420 (by the Parks Council, plus some NPS aid)
	Rockaway Point	1,300
	Earth Day	700
	Beautification	180
	Miscellaneous other	200
	Sandy Hook (Brookdale)	2,700
	Self-guided	2,025
	Ranger-led	900
Summer	Formal Programs	880
Fall	All Programs	10,110
	TOTAL	**25,410**

In addition, and most important, Gateway provided workshops for 234 teachers representing 7,020 students, giving each teacher from four to seven workshops, for a total of 1,548 workshop attendances by teachers.

Gateway had 206 classes booked in advance for the refuge for the spring of 1975, and 357 more classes also asked to come to Gateway in the spring. Plans were made to serve as many as possible by providing support for marine science explorations at the beaches.

CONCLUSION

The material presented in this chapter and the more detailed analysis of park uses in later chapters do not readily lead to a single list of suggestions for improvement of park operations. Since most of the study team members will be involved in one or another aspect of Gateway planning, there will be ample opportunities for specific suggestions and recommendations. More appropriate here are some comments about possible solutions to the major problem of National Park Service involvement at Gateway.

During the summer of 1974 and throughout the months that have passed since the end of the first Gateway season, many Park Service officials and representatives of the Department of the Interior have questioned the agency's role in urban areas, and in the New York/New Jersey metropolitan region in particular. Some have expressed the fear that the magnitude of park development and operation at Gateway could severely tax the resources of the Park Service. This is a realistic fear, one which cannot be dismissed by facile reference to legislative intent or federal largess in other areas. It is true that

Gateway could become a severe drain on the Park Service's limited financial and human resources unless creative solutions are found. Fortunately, some of the possible alternatives to massive federal spending are already emerging in the experience of Gateway's first operational year.

Two keys to solution of the problem of limited federal resources are recycled facilities and community organization. The first, the use of older buildings that once served as defense facilities, entails rehabilitation to make year-round recreational opportunities available. The hangars at Floyd Bennett Field and perhaps at Miller Field, as well as many other military structures at Forts Tilden, Wadsworth, and Hancock, could be improved to provide an almost endless range of indoor recreation facilities and programs. There is some resistance to this idea from people who expect Gateway development to proceed immediately to the construction of new facilities. But even under the most favorable financial conditions, it would be of questionable value to plan the construction of new buildings where converted older ones might do as well. In this way, Gateway would avoid the "edifice complex" that has marked the construction and development of public recreation in this and other metropolitan areas.

The second principle, the organization of community involvement in the design and operation of recreational programs, would represent a new and almost revolutionary step in public recreation. The Park Service, like most other public recreation agencies, is now overly bound to rigid definitions of visitor service. In general, the visitor is treated as simply another digit in the annual visitation statistics, a person who must have the environment "interpreted" to him or who must have access to certain comfort facilities or programs of entertainment and edification. Where rangers cannot provide the desired services, the Park Service brings in "talent" to entertain the visitor. Other services are provided by concessioners or by groups that enjoy certain special-use permits.

It appears to this study team that Gateway can make its most important contributions through a "Volunteers-in-Parks" program, the negotiation of cooperative programs (like the ones pioneered by the Gateway environmental education specialist), and the judicious awarding of special-use permits. Gateway can reach out into the communities it serves to recruit a "community of activists" with special interests, skills, and motivation who will provide a wide range of recreational and cultural opportunities to the public. For example, if Gateway is to provide the space and the facilities for crafts and other arts, management – with the cooperation of area arts groups – can organize a cadre of regular patrons who will help to make the arts program available to a wider public in return for use of the facilities. Generalization of this principle to other activities can provide a richness of park programs at much less cost to the Park Service than would be necessary if the Park Service itself had to pay for full-scale staffing in each activity.

SEGREGATION OF PARK VISITORS

The segregation of park visitors often presents difficult planning and management problems for park administrators. The existence of well defined territorial groups within a public space may make decisions regarding location of new amenities highly problematic. Segregation by race, by ethnic groups, or by other cultural traits may pose serious problems in the programming of special events or in the maintenance of easy social relations among the visitors. One need only remember the patterns of segregation by age and life-styles that emerged at Yosemite National Park in the late 1960s and the ensuing rioting that occurred there to understand, at least superficially, how segregation in a park may reinforce hostilities between human groups.

Racial segregation can lead to especially dangerous situations in public spaces. Indeed, the worst incidents of rioting between black and white Americans have occurred in parks. With the exception of the New York draft riots of 1861, the worst episodes of interracial violence in this country, particularly the 1919 riots in Chicago and the Belle Isle riots in Detroit in 1949, have occurred at beaches. These and other infamous incidents of racial conflict in American history were precipitated over competition for space in regional or local parks. In *Black Metropolis,* their classic study of the black community in Chicago, Drake and Cayton (1945) describe the events of 1919 as follows:

> This Chicago riot began on a hot July day in 1919 as the result of an altercation at a bathing beach. A colored boy swam across the imaginary line which was supposed to separate Negroes from Whites at the Twenty-ninth Street beach. He was stoned by a group of white boys. During the ensuing argument between groups of Negro and White bathers, the boy was drowned. Colored bathers were enraged. Rumor swept the beach, "White people killed a Negro." The resulting fight, which involved the beach police and the white and colored crowd, set off six days of rioting.
>
> Pitched battles were fought in the Black Belt streets. Negroes were snatched from streetcars and beaten; gangs of hoodlums roamed the Negro neighborhood, shooting at random. Instead of the occasional bombings of two years before, this was a pogrom. But the Negroes fought back.

Drake and Cayton are careful not to attribute the severe rioting to the situation at the beach alone. This tragic event – which lasted more than 5 days, took 75 lives, and left thousands homeless – had to be the result of larger social forces than the mere assortment of black and white people on a beach. Patterns of segregation on the beach were a reflection of residential segregation in the city itself. The severe hostility that exploded between the groups on the beach was only a symptom of the bitter competition between blacks and whites for scarce jobs and housing on the city's south side. The beach became the "neutral ground" upon which the antagonistic groups would meet and clash.

While the segregation of people in public places may exacerbate tensions that exist elsewhere, not all segregation, even by race, is indicative of hostility. The segregation of park visitors according to their preference for leisure activities is a phenomenon often legitimated in the design of park facilities. In the national parks, we often find that campers in recreational vehicles are segregated from those who use tents, and backpackers seek to avoid the more sedentary campgrounds of both types. Nature-study areas are kept separate from zones of heavy use, such as picnic areas or visitor centers.

Even segregation of people by race or by life-style is not necessarily a threat to social order or to the peaceful pursuit of leisure activities. In his recent study of ecological processes in urban neighborhoods, Gerald Suttles (1969) demonstrates how patterns of territorial segregation by age, race, and ethnicity actually may contribute to the stability of heterogeneous communities within the city. By arriving at tacitly agreed upon zones of use in parks and other public spaces, which vary according to the time of day or week, the residents of a racially and ethnically diverse inner-city area create a human ecology within which they can circulate comfortably and feel secure.

The view of segregation as functional to the preservation of social order in public places may allay fears of racial or other types of conflict, but it creates dilemmas for those who would plan or manage the use of public facilities. If planners continue to design facilities according to the assumption that all will have equal access to them, what is to be done when the people who use the facilities voluntarily segregate themselves over the available space and therefore do not have equal access to the planned amenities or programs? This is a practical version of a larger question concerning to what degree leaders of public agencies ought to recognize the limitations of cultural homogeneity in contemporary American society.

There is no simple answer to the dilemma posed by human segregation in public facilities. Solutions will necessarily vary from one situation to another. And even before solutions can be suggested, it will be necessary to feel confident that the ecological processes being shaped by policy and plans are well understood. Therefore, the patterns of segregation that currently exist at Jacob Riis Park, a large and

immensely popular ocean beach, are described in the following pages. There are also suggestions as to how the patterns of segregation that now characterize use at Riis Park came about and how they can be modified as the National Park Service seeks to improve the quality of facilities and recreational experiences at what is now the most heavily used park area in the national system. Since those responsible for the major decisions that will affect the future of Riis Park are generally quite different in life-style and culture from the people who are the park's heaviest users, an attempt will also be made to convey the ethos or "feel" of life in the park.

Setting: Riis Park

There is no little coincidence in the fact that Gateway National Recreation Area's most popular site for beach recreation is named after one of the great urban reformers of the Progressive era. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Jacob Riis publicized the horrible plight of immigrants who crowded the slums and tenements of New York. Himself an immigrant, Riis became a leader in the reform movements that stimulated so much social welfare legislation and later gave rise to New York reform leaders like Fiorello La Guardia and Robert Moses. Pioneer urban reformers like Riis, Jane Addams, and Lincoln Steffens were to the cities of the United States what Mather and Muir were to the nation's great natural areas. Thus at Gateway National Recreation Area one has the marriage, however uneasy, of the two most successful conservationist traditions in American society.

It is ironic that contemporary visitation at Riis Park (over 3 million people visited the 1.5 miles of beach strand here in 1974) so little conforms to Jacob Riis' dream of an Americanized population. Riis was a strong advocate of assimilation; the cultural diversity and multilingualism of the beach park would no doubt shock him. The situation of cultural pluralism that marks American society today was never anticipated by the first generation of city reformers who pinned their hopes for a homogeneous society of Americans on the uplifting influence of schools, settlement houses, and parks.

The patterns of segregation by race, sexual preference, and ethnicity, which are typical of Riis Park today, are also antithetical to the planning philosophy of Robert Moses, the master builder who initiated almost all the public facilities built in New York State from 1920 to 1960. During the depths of the Depression, while he was establishing his power and his reputation as a parkway and park builder, Robert Moses also turned his attention to the deplorable conditions of public parks in New York City. Access to the beaches that surround the city soon became a priority in Moses' plans to expand opportunities for outdoor recreation in New York City. Robert Caro (1974) describes the state of beach recreation in the city before Moses began to exercise his immense talents:

> New York [in 1932] was a city of islands, a city surrounded and permeated by water. But with Orchard Beach and Wolfe's Pond Park handed over to

> Tammany insiders, the only acquaintance that most of the city's lower-income families, who did not own cars and thus were virtually barred from Jones Beach, made with the ocean surf was at Coney Island, where a million people, treading gingerly among broken glass and filth that seemed never to be cleaned up, jammed the beach so full on a Sunday that one could hardly see the sand. The beach at Jacob Riis Park in Rockaways was used only sparsely, but there was reason: there was no way for a family without a car to reach it, and families with cars could reach it only after a tortuous trip.
>
> . . . Parents who took their children to city beaches on Sundays learned not to allow them near the shacks on the beach labelled "First Aid Station." The shacks were invariably filled with prostitutes sleeping off the effects of their Saturday night parties with the lifeguards.

It is rather depressing to note that the same general observations could be made today. Very few visitors without cars find their way to Riis Park, but five subway lines converge on nearby Coney Island, still one of the most congested public beach areas in the world. Although the efforts of Robert Moses vastly improved the physical conditions of Riis Park before the fiscal limitations of New York City restricted its growth, it has been allowed to become run-down again.

Riis visitors hardly conform to the typical middle-class, white, American families the National Park Service is accustomed to serving. Perhaps the most noteworthy aspect of life at Riis Park is the "culture of civility," a set of norms that allows all the groups who frequent the park to get along despite their great diversity. Just as there are norms that have emerged over time to define the use of space by the various groups, so there are norms of behavior in those areas or situations in which the groups are brought together in the park. In order to understand how this "culture of civility" has been established and how it may be preserved and enhanced, it is necessary to take a closer look at some of Riis' typical use patterns.

The Boardwalk — The boardwalk is the common meeting ground for all user groups. It is difficult to be sure who is the spectator and who is the show on the boardwalk. On hot summer days, this wide strip of concrete is ablaze with multicolored trousers, shoes, fluorescent toenails, and string bikinis covering the walk in cosmic diversity. Conversations flow through a breeze of suntan oil and cannabis as drag queens whisper and wink in hope of the capture. But this is also a hetero-space, where men follow the smiles of young women as they walk to the talk of the street linguist with the hippest credentials. This is the boardwalk, the vital link in the social connection of Riis Park people. It brings people from their 12- by 12-foot squares of sand to the dialectic of the concrete, where interaction is more open, amorphous, and like a gigantic party. Radios, tapes, and drums echo musical rhythms of every syncopation, all meshing into a mellow mass punctuated by talk, laughter, giggles, raps,

footsteps, stomps, dances of the bump, styles of fashion, bops and grooves, mixtures of cultures – alive and dynamic as the city from which they spring.

The boardwalk on July 4 was lined with people: young and old, children by the thousands, swimming in the ocean, playing on the sand space; the concessions packed as the line wound past the administration building; hot dogs and hot feet marshmellowing in the sun as way down at the head of the line the call went out, "Tickets, please, tickets, get tickets here." Good times were there; laughing, gaiety, dancing were there; everybody was there. Music blasting, tape decks playing; purple, red, green, lavender, turquoise bikinis and jumpsuits; cats and chicks decked out; James Brown was there. Water splashing, reefer smoking, tap dancing; exhibits and exhibitionists. Somebody was/everybody was rapping/sounding/running it down/picking it up/shucking/jiving/signifying. There were all kinds of games: the "dozens" and every other "get-down" ethnic game, socialist basketball games, the women-play-the-men games, the dudes being outdone, colors and sounds and people and people and people. This was parks to the people and people to the parks -- if you can dig it!

Blacks and Latins – Thousands of blacks and Latins descend on the Riis Park beach every weekend. Their use of the park ranges from minimal use on weekdays (mostly for recreational purposes such as basketball and baseball) to maximum use on weekends during the peak season. At these times, they occupy the section of the beach called Bay 5 and expand into Bays 4 and 6 when their numbers proportionately expand.

Blacks and Latins of various ethnicities (West Indians, Cubans, Puerto Ricans, etc.) locate in Bay 5 with a kind of mutual co-existence and very little conflict. Because of their historical roots and the intercultural blends of music and ethnic life-styles, blacks and Latins frequently share space and activities in the park. One illustrative example of this is offered by a regular user at Riis:

> Riis should have a Black and Puerto Rican Day Festival so the brothers and sisters can really get off. Last year they had drummers here every Saturday and Sunday night and the Latin brothers drank, smoked, and brought other instruments like flutes, shakers. The sisters were dancing and singing. They ought to have this again.

Compatible diversity and ethnic consolidation is also manifested in a variety of musical styles and themes. The conga drum is one vivid illustration; it screams with both an African and Latin influence.

Black and Latin families and other groups often congregate in the low-lined tree and bush shrubbery area at the park, where they make a base of operations in the cool

shade. Here the level of use is very much dependent on temperature, the number of people present at the park, and the time of day. Blacks expand their space on the beach by sheer weight of numbers rather than by conflict. July 4 was one illustration of this process. On that day, blacks and Latins numbered perhaps 30,000, and their spatial dominance was immense. The shrubbery, trees, and underbush were all covered with visitors.

The black communal network at Riis, for which the boardwalk is only the spatial center, is important because families, young adults, and children find a place where interactions come easily and are not subject to outside pressures. There is general solidarity among all visitors to Bay 5. As a Riis patron who has visited the park regularly for years says:

> We always have six or seven people with us when we come. On Sunday evenings, we get there and play cards, eat, party until sometimes 3:00 in the morning.

The partying element is very much a part of what Riis is all about. Another user says:

> I dig Riis and being with a lot of groovy black folk. We can do what we want to here without being hassled.

The solidarity among blacks extends bonds between one person and another until a sort of network is established that permeates the entire Bay 5 area.

The various forms of recreation in which Riis visitors find enjoyment and pleasure (be it reefer-smoking, nudity, gay activity, etc.) should be carefully considered before any stringent enforcement policies are implemented. Riis is the place where people can forget, for a time, the restrictions and repressive conditions of urban life and find fun, laughter, and other multi-mellow options available to them.

Gay Men and Lesbian Women – The presence of a large gay community is a consistent feature of Bays 1 and 2 throughout the summer months. Their use of the beach dates back 20 years. They inhabit Riis on a daily basis from early morning to late night. Bay 1 is about 70 percent gay on an average day, while Bay 2 is about 90 percent gay.

While ethnicity, race, and age have particular significance for patrons of Riis Park, spatial location by sexual orientation has even greater importance. Thus black and Latin gays will most likely settle into the gay area instead of the black and Latin area at Bay 5. Whatever their race or ethnicity, gay men and lesbian women prefer those areas defined as gay territory. Arthur Evans (1974) explains:

> A part of the "why" has to do with the oppressive conditions of gay life. The gay section at Riis Park has traditionally been our turf. We Gays generally find ourselves pushed out of almost every area in this society. Our jobs, our churches, our families, our government. Riis Park has been one of these places we've fled to as a haven – one place, finally, where we could be openly and outrageously gay without having to worry about tight-assed straights snooping around. It was ours no matter what anybody thought.

The sexual freedom Bays 1 and 2 provide is not available in the other bay sections.

The gay population is predominantly white and male, with a smaller proportion of black, Latin, and white lesbian women. Racial and ethnic compatibility exists, mostly on a sexually preferred basis. Black and Latin heterosexuals in Bay 5 might view gay men and lesbian women as threatening were they to approach or inhabit Bay 5 with any consistency. While playing basketball during field observations, a researcher broached the subject of the gays in Bays 1 and 2 with two young black men. One of them stated:

> As long as them faggots don't bother me they all right. But if they come over here fucking around, there might be trouble.
>
> Like Lenny Bruce said, I don't have nothing against homosexuals, but I wouldn't want one to marry my brother.

Gay black males often congregate on the Bay 5 boardwalk, an area which is exceptionally popular and conducive to a great deal of free interaction. Preferring mobility on the boardwalk, black gays usually resist the stationary milieu Bay 5 provides for straight blacks.

Spatial and Temporal Segregation – Ethnic and racial groups tend to situate themselves spatially and temporally within specific sections of the park. These sections are roughly 100 yards in diameter. There is a need to comprehend this relationship in an effort to identify the problems this phenomenon poses for park planners. There is a further need to examine demographically those characteristics that directly relate to park behavior – i.e., sex, race, and age.

The use of segregated space by ethnic and racial groups is largely dependent on temporality. Because of the different times chosen for usage by specific groups, several types of users emerge.

The *resident user* of the park is characterized by familiarity with the facilities and the activities generated by the park. He/she is fully cognizant of the "goings-on" and can give insightful accounts of park happenings. One such resident, the self-proclaimed

mayor of Bay 5, offered advice on crowd control and behavioral patterns of his area. Asked what the police should do about marijuana smoking at Riis, he replied:

> The police should maintain a low profile and not attempt to arrest people smoking pot. Bay 5 is like a little Harlem, and any incident using force might incite the wrath of blacks.

Residents are the most consistent users of the park, and they usually live near the park, either in Queens or Brooklyn. They are usually respected by other park users and by local management.

Patrons are regular users of the park, but their encounters with park personnel are much less frequent. Nevertheless, because of their interaction in this setting, they are generally in the know about park activities and recognize other patrons and residents by sight, if not by name. The patron, depending on ethnicity or sexual orientation, will usually remain in that area most comfortable for interactions and not circulate as the resident does.

The *freak-seekers* are those users who come to the beach only after a certain publicity has been generated. They are not regular users or patrons and do not come to involve themselves in the facilities the park offers. They usually come to see the persons, objects, or events whose publicity has aroused their interest. Their length of stay at the park is short or long, depending on the duration of the event for which they come. Freak-seekers can be black, white, Latin, single, couples, families, the elderly, the young, the hip, and the square. They have no loyalty to spatial dimensions, choosing any and every area with equal curiosity. Since they are not regular users of the park, freak-seekers do not remain in any area very long. Transient by the nature of their park use, they will only return if the possibility of seeing or becoming a part of something exciting recurs.

There are three distinct racial groups who populate Riis Park: blacks, Latins, and whites. Blacks constitute the largest group in number on any given weekend. These groups and their various ethnicities voluntarily choose strategically located spaces on the beachfront. These spaces allow cultural and ethnic life-styles to co-exist with a minimum of conflict. Seldom is the specifically designated space of one group occupied by another, except during particular days and hours when the usual group is not present. For instance, on weekdays when very few blacks are on the beach, some whites will locate in the Bay 5 area. However, on weekends whites desert this area and move to other bays. Throughout the summer months, Bay 5 remains exclusively black and Latin on weekends. White users at the park populate the greatest area in both spatial and temporal dimensions. They dominate Bays 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 14 every day of the week.

The relinquishing of territory without physical conflict is an indication of mutual respect and acceptance of territorial possession by racial groups. This kind of mutual acceptance allows for a peaceful co-existence among groups who are generally antagonistic toward each other in most other circumstances.

For the most part, people come to parks to mingle and participate in people-related activities. Through voluntary segregation by race they limit their range of options for contact. Age is also important in regard to this complex process. At Riis the major age categories are adolescents, young adults, families with young children, and the elderly. Parents are often concerned about the kinds of activities their children will be exposed to, especially nudity, sodomy, and marijuana use. It has prompted some users to not bring their children to Riis. One such parent remarked:

> I have always considered Riis an adult park and because of this, I never bring my kids here. I wouldn't want my kids to see some of the things happening around here. When me and my friends come, it's to party, drink, play cards, and shit like that.

Family groups are generally less mobile than most other users because of their need for a permanent beach space, which is especially important when the area becomes crowded. The elderly also tend to remain in one place throughout their time at the park. For singles or small groups, permanence is less important; strategic locations gain precedence. Small groups often move several times to gain better positions on the beachfront.

Certain areas attract certain age groups. Adolescents and young adults may wander off to the basketball courts or congregate on the boardwalk, for the boardwalk is the place where exciting, dynamic things happen. Families as units play few games, and swimming is their most prevalent group activity. There are two playground areas, located near Bays 2 and 3 and near Bays 5 and 6, for the youngest members of families. Children do exert some influence on the activities of their elders; for example, nude bathing is virtually nonexistent in the black areas when children are present.

The Discotheque — A "Get Down" Summer with a Thousand Julys — Most formal events at Riis are highly age specific. For example, the discotheque was mostly attended by young adults, predominantly black and Latin. Black music was taped for each session and the unauthorized sale of wine and pot was common place.

The ride from Harlem, Bed-Stuy is long and hot as crowds arrive at the Flatbush Avenue station, descend from the iron-horse, and wait on the outside to go inside the packed Rockaway bus. But the people are used to the thousands of annoyances; and besides, today is the SUN Day after Noon.

A day mellow-like mellow, and the line to the bus is stretched long and young and hip and ready. Radios, straw hats, marshmellow shoes, transcendental heels, Pointer Sister sisters and platform brothers enter the 45-cent bus to an immediate clapping to a taped boogie-down-baby tune. Today is Disco night. A summer with a thousand Julys.

The Disco is the double hippest mellow-drama, a happening that happens on odd and even days as long as it ends on a Sunday. The ride is quick as the sounds carry one off the bus onto the walk to the vibrating rhythm of basketballs and other assortments of oohs and aahs of a darker multitude who are already present in form, style, and visual hip, play-that-funky-music hip. The get-down ethic permeates the scene as multicolored zoot suits and opulent flashes of the past in dress and music transcend the immediate and reach out for happy times of a yesteryear as present as today.

Today is Disco night. And the various elements that make the evening special are beginning to assemble as conga drums and head bands, beads on feet, and feet on concrete compete for the complete syncopation. A small group clusters to form a mass – a 125th-Street-on-Saturday-like mass, a Fulton-Street mass, and another group a mass of like proportions – and they multiply to equal 5,000. The music has started and the bells start ringing and whistles whistle while claps are clapping. The scene is blowing while the tremendous mass of darker/multicolored humanness shakes the Rockaway foundation, or so it seems.

The bump is the coordinated rhythm of hip and behind, behind and elbow, behind and behind. Today is Disco night. The vendors of illegal wares approach the crowd on all sides to offer merchandise of a marijuana produce – nonlabeled cigarettes, Jamaica red and Acapulco gold.

The smoke circles the crowd and forms labyrinths of idyllic images of the Isley Brothers, whose composition makes up a rhythmic clap as the beat continues; and time is of no consequence as MFSB plays on to spiritual togetherness; and reefer is puffed and passed to young women in colors of turquoise, silhouettes of darker complexions. And what the wine man sells the people will buy, because everyone knows cannabis is dry to the aftertaste.

Tonight is Disco night, boogie-down-like night, check-that-ass-out night, funky-fever-like night. Riis, a summer with a thousand Julys.

The discotheque was one of the few innovative and successful activities provided at Riis in 1974. While there were other activities with good response, the "disco" was exceptionally popular, and those who attended it thought it was great. One person commented:

> My brother and I went to the disco every Sunday it was on. We really dug it. I did not go to the beach much, but I never missed a disco.

Several key elements contributed to the disco's popularity. The volunteer organizers provided a reasonably good sound system under difficult situations: i.e., a large crowd of 5,000, the concrete, and the large amount of equipment. The disc jockey was also much appreciated by the disco crowd. A group of youths volunteered to supervise the crowd and to assist in keeping the fights, if there were any, to a minimum. They attempted to isolate arguments and frictions from the larger group. Those who attended the discotheque derived a positive kind of experience from it.

There was an instance of trouble, however, when rival gangs succeeded in creating havoc by using the disco night as the time for fighting. The incident caused minor property damage and panic for those persons present. The police and other park officials felt the incident was too threatening, and the disco was closed for the remainder of the summer, leaving a void in the kind of musical diversity, cultural richness, and gaiety so often vital to users at Riis.

Some people expressed resentment at the closing of the disco. One person responded:

> All of a sudden the disco stopped. We didn't know who was responsible for it starting in the first place. We had wanted all along to thank or compliment somebody for putting it on 'cause it was so good. And all of a sudden it stopped. We just want it back again.

There was no official mention of the reason the disco was closed. Informally, one park official stated:

> The closing of the disco was very much caused by the "gang incident." That incident was the culmination of many previous things, mainly the unauthorized vendors selling wine and drugs. And also the crowds. You see, we had sometimes 8 or 9 thousand people out there, and the police couldn't handle them all. And, of course, they were frightened. But if the vendors had not been there, things would have been a lot better. But as far as drugs are concerned, they were being used like water out there, anyway. I think even the "gang incident" was an overreaction by everybody, but it could have been a real nasty affair had it got out of hand.

Obviously, the need for recommendations and policy concerning unauthorized vendors is crucial. But the need for a more open approach to people and their needs and desires is at least equally crucial and often ignored. It is regrettable that continuation of the discotheque during the 1974 summer could not have been worked out since the disco received such enthusiastic support from its users.

Territorial Defense and Police Harassment — In any attempt to understand behavioral patterns at Riis Park, one must focus on specific types of incidents that test

the limits of civility. Fires, vandalism, fighting, and other kinds of physical confrontation may often be defensive actions against territorial encroachment. Fighting, in particular, is a behavior that may stress honor, rights, and "ownership" of space. After all, people or groups who consistently inhabit a particular space develop an identification regarding that space and a sense that their turf is established. But violence at Riis is rare. A 4-year visitor to Riis spoke about the incidence of fights in Bay 5:

> I've been coming to Riis Park for years and I have yet to see a fight between blacks in Bay 5. That doesn't mean there were none, but it's just I haven't seen any. We all seem to get along real well.

Many blacks feel the police will not encroach upon Bay 5 because they respect both the space and its inhabitants:

> The cops won't come into this area [Bay 5] and fuck with us like they do them faggots over there [pointing toward Bays 1 and 2] because we ain't gonna stand for it.

In this matter, territorial defense against spatial encroachment centers around the idea of respect. That is, the space or territory is respected only as much as those who occupy it are respected. Blacks are seen as those who will defend their territory; and few if any groups will encroach upon it.

Harassment is a form of territorial encroachment that involves official action against park users. The officials are seen as park violators who arrest, harass, or otherwise intimidate in both justified and unjustified situations, depending on whose version one hears. Summons or arrests are issued to those users who engage in acts labeled indecent, immoral, and/or illegal. Official actions manifest themselves in the following ways:

> Verbal pleas to nude bathers or swimmers to cover up or go to another section of the park beach where families with children will not be offended
>
> Summons, if nude bathers do not cover up
>
> Summons and/or arrest for unauthorized vendors selling wine or marijuana, smoking marijuana, oral and/or anal sodomy, and other kinds of sexual intercourse both heterosexual and homosexual

Wine sellers and other unauthorized vendors are the villains in the park, especially on weekends. (Many sold their products during the disco hours, arousing the wrath of park officials.) Park users have mixed opinions about police tactics in dealing with these people. One disco-night visitor observed:

> If the cops hadn't bothered with the cat and left him alone, there would not have been trouble. I, personally, wanted the wine the dude was selling. This Sangria is just like soda, anyway.

Blacks in Bay 5 have reported several incidents where park police have avoided confrontations on the beach. One black woman said flatly:

> The cops could bust a lot of these niggers out here if they wanted to for smoking reefer and for other things, but they don't. Most of the time they just leave people alone.

Police harassment without provocation was rare in the Bay 5 area during the 1974 season. Several keen observers, specifically lifeguards, felt the low profile concept worked. It is generally felt that the park police displayed a great deal of tact and control under trying and difficult circumstances after the publicity on nudity and gay activities put great pressures on them to crack down.

Benefits and Problems of Segregation

It is clear from the descriptive material presented that the general patterns of spatial segregation characterizing daily life at Riis Park serve a number of purposes for the park visitors. First, these patterns make it possible for park users to voluntarily select those with whom they wish to associate. Second, these zones of segregated use provide a more or less stable ecology of behaviors; people familiar with the beach know what to expect in different areas of the park and therefore know how to avoid behavior they do not wish to engage in or witness.

There are some areas of the park where all groups come together for activities and interaction. The boardwalk, with its concession stands and its nearby playgrounds and athletic facilities, is the primary common ground for the meeting of cultures. It is here that the overall "culture of civility" that guides the behavior of all user groups is most evident. The striking feature of life at Riis Park is that, despite marked patterns of segregation, there is generally a high level of respect among the visitors for the life-styles and behaviors unique to the various groups. There are instances of hostility, especially between homosexuals and white teenagers, but in general there is extremely little tension caused by racial or ethnic divisions. The "culture of civility" at Riis Park is one in which there is extreme tolerance for deviance of all kinds. The various groups treat space as a value to be acquired through peaceful means, largely by simple force of occupation. People or groups who deviate from the norms of segregation are not ill-treated. Thus, if a white family were to remain in the Bay 5 area of the beach, they would not be harassed by the black people who dominate that stretch of sand; and this is generally true for all other permutations, with the exception of sexual behavior.

The processes whereby segregation occurs, especially the roles of the various types of visitors who populate the park, need to be observed in more quantitative detail in

future evaluation studies. In this regard, it will be especially important to observe how the patterns described here may change as additional portions of the beach are opened, extending into what is currently Fort Tilden. Not all aspects of segregation at Riis Park are positive for the overall social order of activities there. Indeed, some instances of segregated uses may be inimical to the goals of the National Park Service or to the safety and general well-being of the visitors. This is especially true with respect to activities that are segregated along racial or cultural lines. For example, segregation of gay people in Bays 1 and 2 permits some of the visitors there to behave in a fashion that draws undue attention to a fairly small number of exhibitionists. This attention tends to result in a popular label for the park as an "adult beach," a term similar in connotation to "adult movie." Some fear that this labeling process may limit the diversity of citizens whom Gateway can serve at Riis Park, but there is little empirical evidence that this will happen. There is more evidence to the contrary, in the variety of users who do populate the beach, that those people who fill Riis to capacity on most sunny weekends have discovered the most obvious means to avoid behaviors they do not wish to experience.

Segregation of people in activities that were designed to have equal access for all can be a serious problem in any public facility. The use of a public restroom as a place for sexual behavior is an instance where the general public has its needs denied due to the behavior patterns of a minority. Some Park Service officials have viewed the discotheque as another example of the negative aspect of segregation in park use. These events had 99 percent black and Latin attendance. No attempt was made to attract other park users. The presence of 3,000 to 5,000 young blacks and Latins, and the absence of other groups, made the disco appear as if it were intended to be only for these groups. This seeming violation of the principle that park events should attract as broad a base of visitors as possible must account in some part for the sudden termination of the disco as soon as an incident occurred that posed some danger to park officials and participants.

The disco experience merits attention because it is an example of the kind of situation the Park Service must confront as it becomes involved in urban recreation. Incidents of conflict such as that which occurred between members of two rival gangs at the last disco are bound to occur again at Gateway. Termination of the event will not be a satisfactory answer in the long term. (Although the argument was made that the facility where the disco was held was of poor quality and presented problems for "crowd control," to some extent, this was a rationalization for an action taken from a desire to avoid further incidents.) More visitors are injured or killed using the backcountry areas of the national parks or in climbing mountains like Rainier, and more Park Service personnel risk their safety in rescue operations than will ever be endangered at events like the disco. The same skill and fortitude with which the Park Service handles visitors who are privileged enough to reach the backcountry should be applied to visitors at events in the urban parks as well.

These comments do not imply that Park Service managers should be content to run or sponsor events that appeal to an audience that is segregated along racial and ethnic criteria. But such segregation does tend to be a preferred mode of activity and will occur. What is required, then, is the simultaneous phasing of other events that will appeal to other audiences, and perhaps among them will be events that will draw as many groups together as possible.

The general orientation that has guided these observations, which might be adopted in planning and managing the uses of Riis and other Gateway areas, is that

> . . . planners and other professionals do not monopolize wisdom about goals and values; diversity is valuable and people are entitled to live in any way they choose unless that way can be proved to be destructive to them or to their fellow men. Goals and values arise out of the opportunities and restraints which are encountered in everyday life, and different age and class groups inevitably have different goals and values. The planner ought to respect these and give people the opportunity, resources, and freedom to choose what they want to do. I am for the democracy in all spheres of life, cultural, economic, and social as well as political, for I do not believe anyone has the definitive conception of the purpose of life. [Gans 1968]

THE GAY COMMUNITY

Background

This section of the report is the result of a field study conducted at Jacob Riis Park during the summer of 1974, the first season that Riis was under the federal jurisdiction of the National Park Service. The original intention was to examine the gay community at Riis, the fabric and texture of that community, its history and geography, and the instruments and levels of communication within the gay community. During the course of the study, increased tension and conflicts over the issue of nude bathing redirected the focus of this study to the activities of the park police, their interaction with the gay community, and their efforts toward and methods of social control. The role of the media in the instigation and inflammation of this conflict will be examined, with special attention given to the confusing and sometimes contradictory misinformation dispensed by the television networks.

The study employed ethnographic methods: formal and informal interviews, participant-observation, field notes and transcriptions, content analysis, etc. Relevant police records were also reviewed. Because of the significance of chronological events (news coverage, arrests), a longitudinal perspective was employed in the analysis of the data.

Gay Culture

From the day Mayor James ("Gentleman Jim") Walker dedicated the bathing pavilion in 1932, Jacob Riis Park has borne the élan and cosmopolitan orientation of the world's largest city and the range and richness of its ethnic and cultural diversity. One of the most beautiful and popular beaches in New York City, Riis Park is situated in the borough of Queens, near the western tip of the Rockaway peninsula, just south of Brooklyn. Its 2 miles of ocean beach are divided into 14 sections called bays. Each bay reflects the unique character of the different urban groups that frequent it. Over a number of years, ecological patterns have evolved, with various groups voluntarily segregating themselves into different areas. Each group has developed its own niche, and the stability of the patterns and general lack of confrontation between groups indicates the utility of the boundaries that have developed.

Bays 1 and 2, at the eastern end of the beach, have been a center of gay life in New York City for many years. Gay men and lesbians have been coming to Riis Park for several decades, and they share a history at Riis Park, a history that is both personal (as it is experienced and shared by individual gay people) and political (as it relates to the position of gay people in society). The shared personal experiences of gay people, their choice of certain public places for congregation and entertainment, and their reactions and relationships to the larger society are the binding and unifying features of the gay community. Definitions of such a group are inevitably vague and inadequate, but for those who find definitions helpful, Dr. Martin Hoffman (1968) identifies some of the salient characteristics of the gay community:

> . . . the homosexual community is a kind of community which is not defined by geographical factors (although homosexuals tend very often to live in certain sections of the city rather than in others) as by certain common values and behaviors, and by shared public places.

The deep personal significance gay people attach to a particular geographical location is illustrated in the following wistful reminiscences of Riis Park:

> Dick is in his middle to late 30s and has not been to Riis Park in many years. Dick and I were having a drink one night at a Chelsea bar, when an old friend of his passed. Dick called him over and introduced us.
>
> "Who does he remind you of?" Dick asked his friend, pointing to me. "Do you remember that lifeguard we used to know at Riis Park, we used to see him there all the time? Doesn't he remind you of him? That was some time ago!" His friend smiled, nodded agreement. When he left, Dick explained that they had been lovers at the time, and they visited Riis Park every week. "He's married, and we used to bring his two little kids all the way from Jersey. They were babies then; the little boy was in a bassinet. How old

> could he have been? Six months. We had to drag all the bottles and diapers; it was a real production. Sometimes his wife would come along, but she usually preferred to stay at home, get rid of the kids, and take a rest." "Are they still married?" I asked Dick. "Oh yeah, he loves his family. His daughter is starting college this fall." [from the researcher's journal]

This special significance can be better understood when one considers the unique orientation of gay people to time and space. Carol Warren (1974) offers some insight:

> Space and time are the concrete boundaries of a community, in a not quite metaphorical sense. A community that is secret and stigmatized must quite literally have walls: places and times set apart from other places and times in which the community can celebrate itself. Although gay places are always specific and can be found, gay time may be spent internally, invisible from the world around, as well as externally, within gay places.

Warren points to the limited environment in which gay people can interact socially and express themselves as gay people. Society has provided a range of social institutions and settings in which straight people can meet, develop personal and sexual relationships, express affection for each other, etc. Meanwhile, it has denied the expression of the same feelings and emotions by gay people in the same environment, forcing gay people to remain invisible in all spheres of their lives except that which is exclusively gay:

> The gay community exists within leisure time, since the concepts of stigma and secrecy prevent its extension into worktime. The gay world, then, is a world of leisure time, structured by the concept of leisure and play, and giving a value to leisure beyond simple relaxation. By confinement to leisure time, and through the centrality of the gay experience, sociability and play become the most significant of life's tasks. [Warren 1974]

The public places where gay people meet have greater significance in their lives than merely leisure or recreational facilities. As gay people are excluded from full participation in many social institutions available to straight people, they compensate by investing a corresponding amount of time and energy in activities and locations that are gay. So gay people, who have been denied their fully integrated personal identities in the straight world, seek environments in which they can complete their social identities, share their mutual experiences, and realize their full identity as human beings.

The Gay Bar — The gay bar, as an institution, offers homosexuals many of the opportunities for meeting and socializing that are offered straight people in a variety of social settings, from their churches to their places of business. The gay bar plays an

important role in the lives of many homosexuals and is central in the gay community, transmitting values, fashions, and culture. The most obvious but by no means the exclusive function of the gay bar is to provide gay people with a setting in which it is safe and suitable to approach other gay people for the purpose of sexual relations. "Cruising," the act of seeking out and assessing potential sexual partners, is the primary activity of the gay bar. The social pressures, which exclude expressions of homosexual interest in more heterogeneous environments, create a situation in which the gay bar, with its limited function and exclusive clientele, flourishes. Likewise, the pressures against members of the same sex forming lasting sexual relationships and establishing joint residences make the relative anonymity afforded in cruising an attractive and desirable alternative. Psychiatrist Martin Hoffman (1968) notes:

> Thus the instability of relationships which is frequently used as grounds for condemnation of homosexuals is, in fact, the very product of this condemnation. There is thus, to say the least, a strange irony in homosexuals being accused of not forming stable relationships, when it is the social prohibitions they suffer which largely prevent them from becoming involved in such relationships.

It should be noted that large categories of homosexuals make little use of gay bars, and many never set foot inside. This may be the result of circumstances — the gay bar is an urban phenomenon, and gay people who live in rural areas may have no access to gay bars — or it may be the result of a personal preference, or it may reflect the life-pattern of the homosexual.

Lesbians, for example, do not patronize gay bars with nearly the same frequency as gay men. Although many lesbians enjoy gay bars and in most large urban centers there are bars that cater exclusively to lesbians, the gay bar does not serve the same function for lesbians that it does for gay men. A woman who is a regular patron offered these purposes of a lesbian bar:

> A place where women can be comfortable
>
> A place where couples can go to act affectionate (normal) in public
>
> A place where monogamous couples can engage in vicarious sexual encounters (flirting, etc.)
>
> A place to meet new people, possibly a new partner (dating a little before bed)
>
> A social club

The motivation for quick, impersonal sex is almost completely absent, replaced by the desire for sociability. The number of lesbians, in absolute terms or relative to the number of male homosexuals, is the subject of much debate, but Esther Newton (1972) observes:

> Whatever the ratio may be between those of each sex who have engaged in homosexual *acts* or even who *define themselves* as homosexuals, there can be no doubt that men far outnumber the women *in gay life.* My impression over a two-year period was that men outnumber women by a ratio of at least four to one. The males, considered as a group, have a much more elaborate subculture and contribute disproportionately to distinctively homosexual concepts, styles, and terminology.

Furthermore, the gay bar, and even the "gay scene," is inimical to many lesbians and lesbian-feminists because it is male-oriented and male-dominated, and because the "cruising" and sexual "meatrack" atmosphere is considered sexist, degrading, and loathsome.

There are other categories of homosexuals who do not frequent gay bars. Lovers, or gay people who have an exclusive long-term sexual relationship with one person of the same sex, rarely go to gay bars because they do not find the "cruisy" atmosphere conducive to their personal relationship. They are not in the market for sexual partners, and they may find that cruising stimulates unnecessary jealousies and thus prefer "at home" socializing with a group of personal friends.

The gay bar is, nevertheless, the central institution of the gay world and "the cornerstone of the gay community" (Weinberg 1974). Aside from its significance as a purveyor of popular culture, which extends beyond the bars into all areas of gay life, the gay bar has a special significance in the life of the homosexual in relationship to the gay community (Hoffman 1968):

> Walking into a gay bar is a momentous act in the life history of a homosexual, because in many cases it is the first time he publicly identifies himself as a homosexual. Of equal importance is the fact that it brings home to him the realization that there are many other young men like himself and, thus, that he is a member of a community and not the isolate he had previously felt himself to be.

Communication — Communication within the gay community is relatively unstructured and haphazard, relying on the informal social networks of individual gay people, the level and quality of whose information is highly subject to question (Newton 1972):

> The principal mode of communication between homosexual communities is through individual mobility, although lately guidebooks of homosexual bars and institutions, the printed matter of homosexual organizations, as well as homosexual fiction, have augmented social networks.

In addition, several commercial periodicals, including one national biweekly newspaper, *The Advocate,* cover the events and activities of interest to gay people. In New York City, there are two weekly magazines, *Where It's At* and *Michael's Thing,* which feature lists of gay bars and advertise any special happenings.

Because of the vast differences within the gay community in all areas of life, their communication tends to center exclusively on gay-related topics and issues. Esther Newton (1972) observes these differences and the one-dimensional consensus of the homosexual community:

> All people who define themselves as "gay" are placing themselves with other homosexuals as opposed to heterosexuals. However, this by no means implies that homosexuals are united, or that they are prepared to act in unison on any issue whatsoever, be it moral, political, religious, or economic. Indeed, the *only* thing they *all* share is the name itself, together with the agreement that they are deviant. Although one can discern the beginnings of a homosexual movement, the fragmenting differences between homosexuals still outweigh any potential solidarity.

Newton herself qualified this statement in a subsequent footnote, emphasizing

> . . . the emotional and symbolic power of the category. As a perception of commonality, it overrides *in the first instance,* distinctions of race, sex, class, and even nationality. Homosexuals are much closer to a political force today than they were in 1968. The younger generation of homosexuals have been politicized and are pushing for political unity within the framework of radical politics.

The range and variety within the gay community is so vast, the unifying variables so limited, that their communication media appeal to their shared interest by using the least common denominator. The result is frequently low-level, even crass, emphasizing gay bars, gay scenes, gay sex.

After writing a weekly column for *Gay* (a defunct weekly newspaper) providing lists and descriptions of New York City's most popular gay bars, John Francis Hunter (1971) expanded his work into a full-length book filled with names, addresses, and descriptions of bars, baths, restaurants, theaters, and other places of particular gay interest:

RIIS PARK (as in Jacob Riis, author of *The Making of an American).* To reach this noisy, screaming, but very gay, in parts, city beach you take the Seventh Avenue IRT to Flatbush Avenue, Brooklyn, whence you change to a Riis Park bus. The more nearly exclusively gay section is to your left, toward the private beach. Bathhouses are to your right. The ball field, where lesbians and their gay brothers play straight challengers during the season, is right in front of you as you cross the parking lot. Friends who remember Riis Park from ten years or so ago say it has changed drastically, deteriorated, and reminisce about the dunes where the action was and the home for the aged under construction where gays wandered as if in an abandoned hotel in Never-Never Land. (Reminds me of the ruins of the Flamboyan in St. Thomas.) The straights concentrated about ten per square yard, the debris, the noise and the questionable purity of the water may put Riis Park out of bounds to you, but not to visit it is not to see one of the famous Happy Hunting Grounds in America. Not unlike Crystal Beach, Santa Monica.

Gay History at Riis Park — The history of gay people at Riis Park has undergone many changes in response to different social climates. At those times when homosexuals have been subject to harassment and arrest (for example, the late 1950s and early 1960s during the Wagner administration), gay people have adapted with caution and secrecy. A senior New York Police Department officer and Riis Park veteran recalled in a July 1974 conversation:

> I worked here 12 years ago and the gays were coming here then, too, to Bays 1 and 2. Of course, they weren't gay like they are today! [He is challenged that gay people at Riis Park have always been flamboyant in their behavior.] Oh, on the beach, yeah, there was horsing around, but the gays who came here then did not want to be recognized, not even on the beach.

During periods of repression, when the existence of gays has been perceived as a challenge to the standards of the larger society, they have been dealt with severely and, hindsight indicates, arbitrarily:

> Meeting a neighbor I have known to be gay for some time, I told him that I was working at Riis Park. "Riis Park! I haven't been out there in ages; it must be 14 years, when I first came to New York. The last time I was out to Riis Park, I was arrested." My mouth dropped, as I asked "What for?" "Wearing a bikini!" "You were arrested for wearing a bikini! How?" "I was standing in front of the bathhouse waiting for a friend, and a cop came along. He stood there awhile, looking me over, and I pretended not to notice. He kept staring, and it made me very uncomfortable. Then he came over and told me I was under arrest. I said, 'What for?' And he told me my bathing suit was lewd and immodest, that you could see my pubic hair. Of

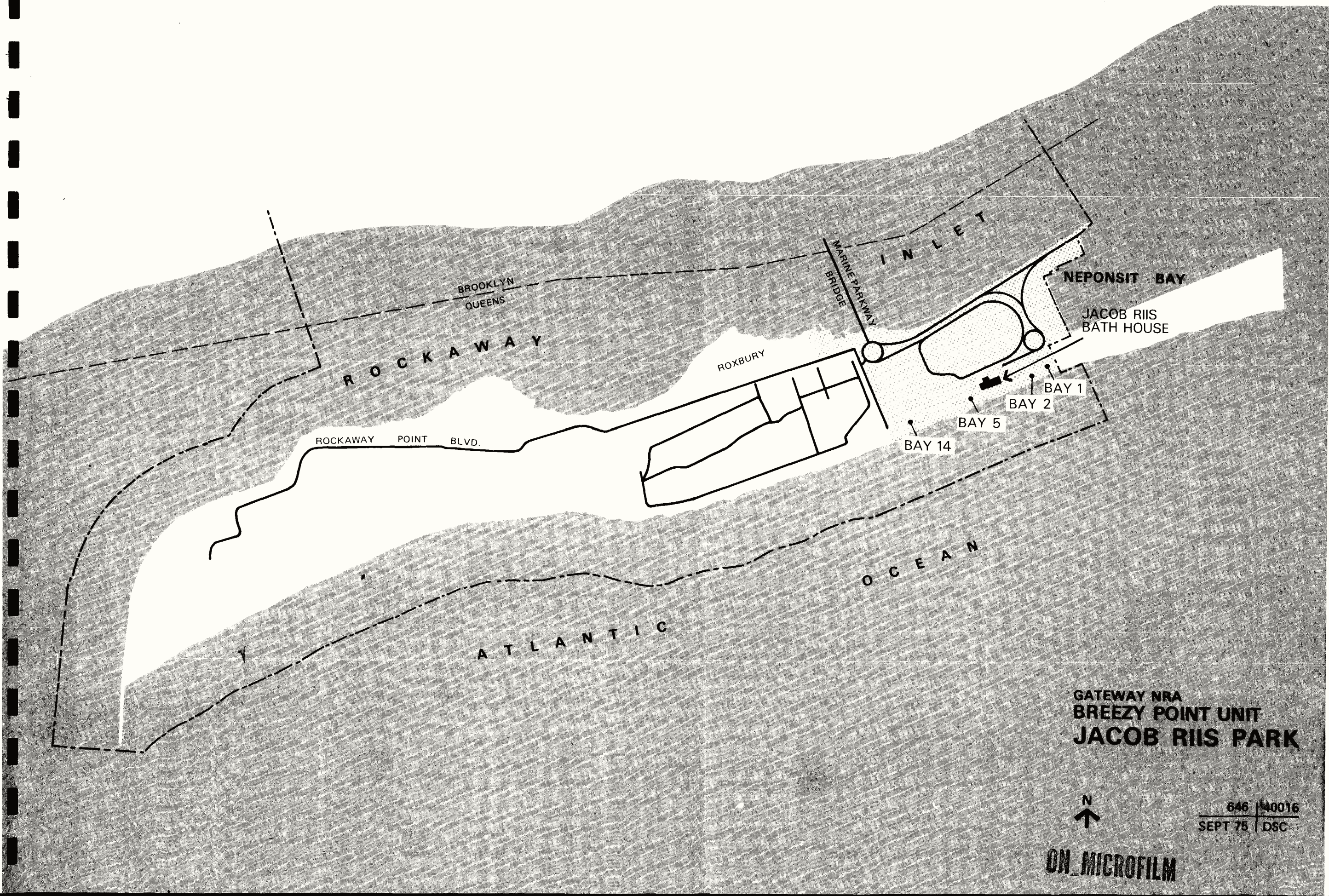
course, lewdness is in the eye of the beholder, and you couldn't see a thing, the bathing suit was about this wide [indicating approximately 6 inches at his hip – 2 inches wider than the bathing suits now worn by the lifeguards], but he said it was immodest, and that it was a public beach, and I was arrested." [from the researcher's journal]

Gay Liberation and Riis Park – Some changes in public attitudes toward homosexuals have occurred over the past decade, and Riis Park reflects these changes. The women's liberation movement has raised serious questions about the "natural"-ness and appropriateness of sex-role stereotypes, and the rigid "role-playing" behavior they imply. Blacks and other minority groups have asserted themselves and the beauty of their individual cultures, and they have demanded the rights and respect due every human being by his/her natural heritage. Inspired by the victories of women, blacks, and other minorities and instructed by their failures, gay liberation evolved out of these raisings of consciousness and these assertions of pride as a political movement. Gay liberation is the assertion of gay people, of their pride, of the integrity of their culture, and of their rights – their inalienable human rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, rights that have been withheld on the basis of sexual preference.

Physical Description of Bays 1 and 2 – Bays 1 and 2 are both the most isolated and the most immediately visible sections of Riis Park. All vehicular transportation (with the exception of public buses) approaches Riis Park from the east, circling the parking lot before entering. Pedestrians approaching the Bays 1 and 2 area from the parking lot via the eastern traffic circle can be seen by anyone driving by, as can a small section of boardwalk near the softball field. This is the visitor's first glimpse of Riis Park and, for gay people, it means instant recognition.

Because of the secrecy and stigmatization of the gay community, its members become adept at "picking up on" the most casual of nonverbal clues: momentary eye contact, certain articles of clothing, etc. This is not to say that the sophisticated non-gay observer could not or does not pick up these cues, but only that the gay observer (especially the gay observer coming to Riis Park, perhaps for the first time) is more disposed to do so. The gay people who come to Riis Park know exactly where it is they want to go, as soon as they have passed the Bays 1 and 2 area.

There are many kinds of nonverbal indicators of homosexuality. An observer might, for example, make notice of the number of males in a group as they approach the beach, noting that they are all approximately the same age, in their mid-20s, and that certain items of apparel they seem to favor (platform wedgies, shoulder bags, brightly flowered shirts) are more frequently worn than might be expected of the larger population. The observer might notice that the men in the group do not observe the same degree of body separation or territoriality that is practiced by most heterosexual males; one can observe, in many instances, a bodily freedom between gay males that is



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unseen in heterosexual males outside of physical contact sports. As the observer becomes more sophisticated, it may be possible to identify gay people on the basis of much more subtle and varied cues. (Note Esther Newton's comment about the complexity and the elaborate nature of the homosexual subculture.) Mixed groups of women and men may be identified by their spatial characteristics – gay women staying together, and gay men doing the same; or perhaps the central position of one female, elaborately fashioned, in a group of males.

The limited section of boardwalk visible from the road is a center of activity. The small brick building at the end of the softball field houses restroom facilities and a small, very busy concession. It is situated at the head of the only staircase to the Bay 2 section of the beach, and it is a center of traffic: people heading to/from the beach; people heading to/from or loitering outside the men's room. There are two wooden-frame booths in front of the concession where tickets are sold that can be used to purchase food or beverages. Lines form at the two windows, and the eagle-eyed can determine the size of the crowd by the length of the lines. The line is frequently all male, many wearing brightly colored, abbreviated bathing suits. The under-representation of females in the line is noteworthy. Although a simplistic explanation might suggest that they buy less food or bring it from home – and this would be supported by the economically inferior position of women in society – the more complete explanation lies in the character of the lesbian experience. Whereas gay men have created and dominated an elaborate external structure of social institutions (bars, baths, etc.), the lesbian, without access to the resources of the gay male, has created an identity that is internal, depending less on social institutions and much more on the personal relationships she shares with other women. While the public behavior of gay males is geared to attract attention (particularly the attention of a beautiful stranger), the lesbian's search for identity is much more private, and this privacy is reflected in her public behavior. To make a generalization, the gay man is likely to spend his time waiting in the line cruising, keeping an eye open for an attractive stranger or an unrenewed acquaintance, while the woman remains with her friends on their blanket. One of the political implications of this is that lesbians are particularly invisible in a society demanding that all homosexuals remain invisible. Lesbians are invisible even to themselves.

One might also surmise the character of the beach from other outstanding features. Following the signs to the beach via the underpass that opens onto Bay 3, the literate encounter the most outrageous examples of gay graffiti. Interspersed with the most graphic gay language are a few examples of straight graffiti (an incongruous "Chuck and Lorraine forever"), but these are outnumbered and outsized. Curiously, with all the repairs and furnishing, no attempt was made during the entire 1974 season to clean up this underpass.

The beach itself has a definite "gay" character, which almost any observer could easily recognize. Social scientists and polemicists, writing about the gay experience 10 years

ago – discovering the oppression, discrimination, and suffering inflicted on gay people – were frequently heard to admonish their straight (hopefully sympathetic) audience that the last word to describe the experience of these poor unfortunate human beings was gay! Jacob Riis Park, taken as an index (albeit incomplete and not notably representative) of the status of the homosexual community, may finally prove these funereal, if well-intentioned, apologists *wrong!* One dictionary defines "gay" as

> 1. Excited with merriment; merry. 2. Bright in appearance, brilliant in color. 3. Given to social pleasures or indulgence; hence, loose; licentious; as a gay life.

Given that definition, perhaps no single word better captures the spirit of Bays 1 and 2 than "gay" – not as it is used to describe an oppressed minority group, nor as a polar description of sexual behavior which excludes "straights," but in the fullest, most comprehensive meaning of the word.

The people who come to Bays 1 and 2 at Jacob Riis Park come to celebrate *summer . . . sun . . . New York . . . life . . . freedom . . . sex . . . gay . . . !* Together they form a community varying in backgrounds, styles, life-histories, even sexual preference, but united by the quality of their celebration. If this quality is uniquely "gay" (in both the subcultural and literal definition of the term), the expressions of this character are as varied and diverse as the community itself.

The First Season at Gateway

The situation at Jacob Riis Park, as it began its first season under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service, reflected the changes in attitudes that affected the larger society. Aside from the maintenance and appearance, which regular visitors agreed they had never seen better, the most striking and immediately visible change was the introduction of federal police officers from the National Park Service. During this first season only, a small contingent of New York City policemen were retained at Riis Park to ease the takeover by federal officers. The new officers were distinguished by their attractive light-blue uniforms and their neat, trim appearance.

> These cops [observed an anonymous bather], they look so clean. I've never seen cops so neat in my life. They don't look like cops, y'know what I mean. All the cops I ever see have the big bellies hanging over their pants, sloppy, you know.

The unique ecological boundaries that characterize Riis Park were evident from the beginning of the season. The following quotes are from the researcher's journal:

21 April 1974

Scattered around the parking lot on this deceptively sunny afternoon are a hundred or more cars, many of them occupied. There are several families, black and white, picnicking in their cars, and there are romantic couples, gay and straight, sitting in the front seats of their cars, talking.

The wind near the water is very strong, and there are a number of people sitting for protection in different shrubbed entrances to the main pavilion. In one small enclosing, a gay man lies in a bikini, sunning himself. An obvious sun-worshipper, he already has a terrific tan. In another, an older woman in gray sits in a beach chair reading the Sunday newspaper. There is an elderly man with her. The pattern of straight, perhaps rigid, people coexisting with obvious, if not flamboyant, homosexuals recurs.

When I pass the playground, I notice that near the swings some children are playing. They are all warmly dressed, gray sweatshirts, navy and dark red sweaters; they are with their father. Near the parallel bars, there is a blond bodybuilder, with his shirt removed, wearing tight faded Levis, with a red bandana handkerchief sticking out of his back pocket. The tan muscleman is posing and playing with his long-haired wolfhound show dog.

From the earliest visit of the researcher, the people at Jacob Riis Park displayed extremely contrasting life-styles and extraordinary tolerance in dealing with each other. The predominantly gay character of the Bays 1 and 2 area, moreover, was established even at this early date.

The people down at this end of the boardwalk are mostly gay. There are a few bicyclists, a few single men, and several male couples. A group of four mature lesbians are walking along, and they stop to take group photos; two of the women are carrying Instamatics on their wrists. The group is paired, but they are all friendly. A few men have brought their dogs for a walk, too.

As the season progressed and the weather grew warmer, more and more people headed for the beach. It would be impossible to describe the crowds who gathered regularly at Bays 1 and 2 in quantitative terms – 70 percent male, 90 percent gay, 20 percent nude, 80 percent white, 30 percent Latin – because the quality of the beach was so dynamic, the experience so fluid and unpredictable.

Weather, for example, played a decisive role in beach attendance. The higher the temperature and humidity, the more unbearable the heat of the city, the more people escaped to Jacob Riis Park. When an unusual heat wave hit New York on Friday, July 12, the crowds at Riis Park swelled. When the heat blistered through the weekend, the crowds grew by Sunday to a record-breaking 115,000 people.

Costumes – The attire chosen by male bathers at Bays 1 and 2 reflected the widest range of preferences and experiences within the gay community – from the most modest and conventional bathing suit to the most flamboyant, from the most aggressively "masculine" to the most "feminine," from the most elaborate form of costume to no costume at all.

Because of the general "cruising" behavior and attitudes of male homosexuals, with its dependence on nonverbal forms of communication to exchange sexual signals, particular attention is paid to the details of the gay male's dress. Generally, this takes the form of a studied appearance – items of apparel fastidiously chosen to convey a certain disposition ("funky," "chic," "casual," "butch"). In its extreme form, items of apparel are chosen to convey specific sexual messages. In the case of gay males who are into the "leather" or "S+M" scene, for example, the keys worn either on the right or left side indicate whether the actor chooses a submissive or dominant role.

The careful observer can discern other patterns from the costumes and accessories of the bathers and, after some practice, can identify pairs of male lovers. Frequently wearing similar, even identical, bathing suits and observing similar habits of grooming (beards, moustaches, hair length and styling), their choice of clothes corresponds well, as might be expected of two people who get dressed together. (This ability to identify gay male lovers caused the researcher considerable consternation, later in the season, when two men he knew to be policemen appeared in plainclothes one day. As they walked down the boardwalk in the direction of Bay 2, he noticed, running down the checklist of similarities in costume and grooming, that these two officers matched all the criteria for gay lovers!)

The caravans of these lovers are often rich in bourgeois treasure: matching beach chairs, towels (HIS and HIS), umbrellas, coolers, and refreshments of all sorts. Because of the stability of their relationship, they are more likely to be able to accumulate such articles. The stability of their relationship also makes them the frequent center of a circle of friends. These circles include unattached gay men who use their friends as a home base from which to circulate and meet people. Some women (gay and straight) take advantage of socializing with and around male lovers.

Pairs of lesbian and gay male lovers and the friendship circles that surround them are one of the pillars of the gay community. Entertaining in private homes and apartments is a major source of entertainment for many gay people. Many never visit the bars or the baths or the theater. Curiously, all these people – lovers, singles, lesbians, gay men, straight people, and bisexuals – who never get together in any other place come together at Jacob Riis Park and identify it as common to the gay community.

Other Groups of Visitors – Other particular groups and friendship networks within the gay community were regular visitors to Bays 1 and 2. Large groups of Spanish and

bilingual gays frequented Bays 1 and 2 at Riis Park. Spanish gays in New York, especially in Queens, are so well integrated into the larger, organized gay community that they do not represent an alienated subgroup, but rather a distinctive culture within the gay community.

One group of gays whose physical impairment prevents extensive communication with the larger gay community, but whose frequent presence at Riis Park indicated a general gay identification and affinity, were the gay deaf people. Usually traveling in large groups of men and women, they brought a corresponding amount of beach stores and accessories – food, beach chairs, etc. These groups were particularly self-contained and did little mixing with the larger crowd. They generally employed sign language for communication, and their sign language had an intriguing, unique, and difficult to describe gay inflection, involving gay humor and campy gestures.

Straights – The gay community at Jacob Riis Park is significantly different from the gay community at large in one particular aspect: It includes a large number of "straight" or predominantly heterosexual individuals, in addition to many individuals whose ambivalent sexual feelings and behavior might be described as bisexual. These people came to the Bays 1 and 2 area of Riis Park fully cognizant of the gay scene, ready to share in the joy and celebration of the gay community, delighting in its humor, taking advantage of the free atmosphere and the opportunity to do one's own thing. Because of the open nature of Riis Park, as well as the voluntary character of its participants, straights who enjoy gay people and the gay scene were free to join them without hassle and share in their life-style. The freedom to bathe in the nude was a major attraction, especially for women who wanted to remove their tops without being leered at or spat upon. They enjoyed the gay people at the beach and interacted with them to whatever level was mutually desirable.

> The most crowded day of the year. People were literally sitting on top of one another. Friendships bloom in tight spaces. Nick asked me the time once or twice, and when he and Carmen wanted to go down to the water, they asked if I would mind their blanket. They looked young; they had been married less than a year. When Carmen said she had three children, the oldest 16, I was amazed.
>
> Nick and Carmen like to have a good time. They like Riis Park; this is their third visit, the first a little over 2 weeks ago. They like Bays 1 and 2 because the people are freer, and they enjoy the nude bathing. After awhile, when we had all gotten a little friendly, Carmen took off her top and left it off until we left.
>
> Carmen and Nick like the gay people. Carmen told me, "When Nick and I were first married, I didn't know what scenes he was into, but when we got

down together, I said, 'Fine, that's cool,' and when Nick brings me here, I like it. Now we got things down." [from the researcher's journal, July 14, 1974]

Definitely not included in the gay community are those straight people who, especially after the publicity, came to gawk and stare and satisfy their prurient curiosity. Their relation to the gay community can only be compared to the relationship of skyjackers to aviation.

Beach Activities – General pastimes at the beach included all forms of sunning and bathing, socializing, enjoying the natural beauty of the ocean. The gay people at Bays 1 and 2 let none of these conventional pastimes escape them. In many cases – as with nude sunbathing, jumping and playing in the surf with bathing suits around their necks, or "cruising" as a form of socializing – the gay people added their distinctive touch to the conventional forms of entertainment. In other cases, their enjoyment of the beach was indistinguishable from the larger categories of beach-goers.

There were some forms of beach activities that were not characteristic of other beaches, in general. Because of the large number of beautiful and interesting subjects, Bays 1 and 2 were a very popular location for professional photographers, sketch artists, and artistic people of all kinds. An occasional troupe of professional dancers would make an appearance, providing spontaneous, free entertainment. Some professional models and actors of renown within the gay community (through gay-oriented books, clubs, plays, or films) would make visits to Riis Park, and the amateur who had a good approach and a ready camera might get some excellent photographs of an otherwise unavailable, or very expensive, model or celebrity. Jim Tait, the star of a number of gay plays and films, appeared one day, and physique photographers had a field day.

Influence of the Gay Bars – The gay bars exerted considerable influence on the ambience of Jacob Riis Park. The bartenders at the popular gay bars in Queens and Manhattan have a rather esteemed place in the gay community. They know many people and have followers by the legion. Their appearance at Riis Park was heralded by full attention and honors; many young men rushed to greet them, fill them in on local happenings, etc. Bathers were commonly identified by the bars they frequented.

> One bather who had removed his trunks and was dancing with a topless female partner attracted some attention. When I remarked on the performance to a friend of mine, a bather on a nearby blanket commented, "Oh, him again, he does the same act every weekend at Le Jardin." [from the researcher's journal]

Riis Park served as a general meeting place on sunny afternoons for regular patrons of certain bars. One enterprising bar in Queens, called The Square Lemon, attempted to

The good humor and easy acceptance of this exotic performance indicated a surprising sophistication on the part of the park police, a sophistication that would receive many more challenges.

> As we were standing there, some new scene was formulating, and I decided to go down to the beach to get a better look. Jackie, a much younger guy in his early 20s, was doing a little drag number in a turquoise chiffon gown, one shoulder holding it up, rhinestone chains holding it together on the other side. With this he carried a matching chiffon stole, about 10 feet long trimmed with white ostrich feathers. He wore no makeup, he had his hair cut in a medium shag, and his only drag props were his gown and boa, yet his complete demeanor was convincingly feminine. He proceeded to dance and strip for the crowds and the numerous photographers who had accumulated. He turned to Leslie, and remarked about the outfit, "Simply lovely, darling!"

The addition of nudity (albeit partial and teasing) in this second performance made the reaction of the police even more significant. Once again, no action to curtail the activities was taken, and the police displayed restraint and good humor.

> At a few points in Jackie's show, he concerned himself with the possibility of the police coming down and getting mad. He played to the policemen, doing dips and turns, wearing just the boa. At one point in the show, one of the now three park police headed in the direction of the stairs, and Jackie remarked that he hoped he wasn't coming down. I didn't think he would, and as expected, he walked right past the stairs and over to some people on the other side of the stairs.
>
> As the crowd of spectators grew, so did the number of police. The police who had been walking along the boardwalk stopped when they came to Bay 2 to enjoy the show, and try to figure out what was going on. Two police cars, one city, one NPS, had driven down the boardwalk, and they too stopped at Bay 2, until there were two cars and perhaps twelve policemen. They didn't stay long, there was no attempt made at preventing the show, and having spoken to some of the policemen before, I knew they weren't planning to arrest anyone.

The good humor of the police seemed slightly strained when their numbers swelled, and senior officers and management seemed to be in agreement that 12 police were an over-reaction and that the best policy was simply to "leave them alone." Some felt that the presence of so many police might be misunderstood and provoke some sort of "incident."

The festivity and theatricality at Jacob Riis Park frequently escalated into full-scale performances and shows of all kinds. Crowds, large and small, gathered at an instant for the slightest performance, often applauding the star and making requests. Singers, dancers, models, all types and varieties, all levels of talent, some beautiful, some grotesque, were all given the momentary spotlight that is the key to performance.

> One afternoon, around 4:30, the peak time for departure, a show began not far from the stairs at Bay 2. This time it was a guy in white shorts and a black knit halter top, lip-synching to Bette Midler singing "In the Mood." All the gestures were there and much of the enthusiasm, and he attracted a good crowd; most of the people who were headed home stopped on their way to watch for a few minutes. The guy who was singing, unlike the other two previously described, was rather masculine in appearance. He wore a moustache and had dark hairy legs, but he liked to camp, and he was a good lip-syncher (two skills prized in the gay community). After he had taken his bows as Bette Midler, someone from the crowd of about 350 called out, "Do Barbra! Do Barbra!" His friends improvised a turban for him, and he began Streisand's "The Way We Were." The song was a down number, and in between lines he would make some joke in his own rather deep voice and everyone would crack up. [from the researcher's journal, June 22, 1974]

It is obvious from the variety displayed by these three individuals that "drag" as a noun or an adjective takes many forms, that the performers differ in their ability, their intention to pass as females, and their dependence on props. The one feature common to all three was the wit and humor in the performances and the enthusiasm with which they were received by the gay community.

NUDE BATHING

Early Practice

From the beginning of the 1974 season, individuals participated in nude sunbathing. Curiously, this practice was highly inconspicuous. Because people at the beach characteristically wear so few clothes to begin with – and at Riis Park's Bays 1 and 2 area, this becomes an understatement – the presence of a few isolated nudes went relatively unnoticed. An added factor in the lack of visibility of the nude bathers was the posture usually assumed by sunbathers. Lying on their blankets, these individuals were obscured by other bathers. Even when sitting up, the fact that they were not wearing bathing suits was hardly recognizable with male bathers. Only when standing, slipping into or out of their bathing suits, could nude sunbathers be seen by large numbers of other bathers. It should be noted that sunbathing is a private activity involving only the individual and the sun. The desire for exhibitionism, in the abrasive sexual connotation, is virtually absent.

Bill Shields, the general manager of Riis Park, commented on the lack of visibility of the nude bathers:

> Sometimes I don't even notice. Like if you're standing right over someone, you can just pass right by and not notice a thing, but someone, maybe 200 feet away, will catch your attention. [Interview, June 24, 1974]

Another factor contributing to the general lack of visibility of the nude bathers was their choice of location. Most of the nude bathers stayed away from the boardwalk, preferring to gather nearer the ocean. The largest number of topless females was in the immediate vicinity of the lifeguards' stand. These women were not gay; many were single and friends of the lifeguards; others were with husbands or boyfriends, but liked the atmosphere (slightly more heterosexual) and security in that area. A curious boundary evolved near the lifeguard stand, with straights not interested in the gay scene gathering to the right of the stand, nearer Bay 3, and the gays gathering to the left.

One of the largest groups of nude bathers, and the most persistent through the end of the season, was not on the beach at all, but in the surf. Large numbers of gay males, and occasional females, would slip out of their bathing suits once they got into the water and put them around their necks to prevent losing them. Although these individuals usually stayed in water up to their waists and were not usually visible from the shore, many gay men lined the shore waiting for the undertow to provide an occasional glimpse. None of this could be seen from the boardwalk.

Among the other bathers, the nudes evoked limited curiosity. The first encounter with nude bathing generally elicited a little surprise, especially in the early part of the season. As the season progressed, the crowds grew larger, and the weather became hotter, more and more people were taking off their bathing suits. Statistics are very difficult to determine, but a reasonable estimate would be an increase from 1 percent or less (very occasional) at the beginning of the season to about 10 percent at the peak (before the crackdown). *Time Magazine* (July 29, 1974) correctly reported that

> Among the skinny-dippers across the country, men seem to outnumber women by about three to one. In some areas – Cape Cod's Provincetown and New York's Fire Island, for instance – male homosexuals pioneered beach nudity. Now joining them are the straights, mostly young adults and teen-agers, many of whom picked up the idea on the shores of Europe.

Many of the visitors to other sections of Riis Park had no occasion to visit the Bays 1 and 2 area and had no idea of the existence of nude bathing. Some people stayed away because they were familiar with the long-recognized Bohemian reputation of Bays 1 and 2, but most visitors simply preferred the facilities and the people at other sections

of the park. They went there directly, either from their cars or the bus, and returned directly. Again, it should be noted that Bays 1 and 2 are isolated as well as being immediately visible. At the eastern end of the beach, Bays 1 and 2 are completely self-sufficient; they have their own restroom facilities, snack bar, and even a special access to the separate eastern parking field.

Reactions to Nude Bathing

The only possibility for a stranger to happen upon the nudity at Bays 1 and 2 occurs during walks along the shore or boardwalk. Many regular visitors to Riis Park, the elderly in particular, never go down to the beach. The benches, the sun, and the boardwalk provide a perfect setting for reading, quiet entertainment, and meeting and socializing with old friends.

> I decided to get some reading done and chose a quiet bench near Bay 7. The sun was strong, and there was little distraction – except my increasing awareness of birds and bird noises, about 250 gulls and pigeons all near my bench. Suddenly, the explanation became clear. On the next bench, with her male companion, sat a woman in her late 50s, fully dressed with a sunhat and scarf, reaching into her B. Altman's shopping bag, pulling out handsful of breadcrumbs.
>
> After about an hour, another elderly couple approached. Loud greetings were exchanged, "I haven't seen you since last year! How have you been? Is this your first time at the beach?" Inquiries about health were made, the responses bemoaned.
>
> Much of the conversation was inaudible, then the woman remarked with exclamation to the pigeon lady, "Oh yeah, we were just down at the other end, at the *nudist colony!*" The pigeon lady nodded her head with sympathy, and asked, "What's next?" There was disapproval in their attitude and tone, mixed with resignation at the changes which will shape the future. [from the researcher's journal, June 18, 1974]

Reactions to the nude bathing were generally mild. The police and park administration received regular complaints that "this sort of thing is disgraceful," "should not be allowed on a public beach," etc. One park policeman reported that as the police approached the Bay 2 area in their squad car, they noticed an elderly couple on bikes. The couple approached the police to express their vehement dissatisfaction, using words like "sinful," "outrageous," and "disgusting." The police said they were sorry, but they were not able to do anything about it, and made a polite, but speedy, exit. After several hours of routine calls and investigations, they returned to Bays 1 and 2; there were the two geriatric cyclists, still staring at the beach!

The official response to the complaints about nudity was generally sympathetic, although it was explained that there was nothing that could be done about it.

Confusion Over Legality

Several misleading and highly publicized decisions contributed to the general confusion over the nude bathing question. A young secretary was arrested during the summer of 1973 on a secluded beach in Amagansett in Suffolk County for bathing without a top. The arresting officer charged the woman with "public lewdness." When her case came to trial in Nassau County, in early May of 1974, the judge ruled in her behalf, indicating that there is nothing intrinsically lewd about the nude body, and she was acquitted.

In a classic fifth-page (typically reserved for spicy stories) article, complete with exaggerated cartoon of a judge and a topless female near a sand castle, the *Daily News* covered the decision under the headline, "Nudeness Is Not Lewdness." Whether hurried subway strap-hangers continued reading the article or not, the subtleties of the legal decision and its jurisdiction were not thoroughly explained, and the impression was left that it was legal to sunbathe in the nude, regardless of counties, statutes, etc.

During the middle of June 1974, ABC Eyewitness News sent a reporter to Coney Island to test public reaction to the recent decision. The reporter found no nudes, but asked several attractive female bathers, "Now that it has become legal, will you bathe in the nude?" The answers were mixed and generally undecided, but no one challenged the reporter on her information.

Police Activity – Throughout this period, occasional attempts were made by individual park policemen to prevent nude sunbathing, especially when it was visible from the boardwalk or when it occurred in areas outside Bays 1 and 2. That the police, at this time, were subject to the same confusion regarding the legality of nude bathing as the general public was obvious in the manner in which they dealt with individual instances. In some cases, bathers were asked to put on their bathing suits. When they complied, the police left.

At some point, a decision was made that visibility was the major objection, and nude bathers were then informed that they must position themselves on the beach so as not to be seen from the boardwalk. Later, a female bather walking topless on the boardwalk was told to replace her halter, that nude sunbathing was permitted beyond the lifeguard stand. The following day, the same officer in the same location observed a male sunbathing in the nude:

> The subject was asked to put on his bathing suit. The subject put on his bathing suit. The subject was advised that if he was seen sunbathing in the nude again he would be arrested for disorderly conduct.

The same day, another officer explained to a visitor that Riis Park was now under federal jurisdiction and that there was no nudity allowed on federal property.

The contradictory and arbitrary handling of the nude bathing "problem" by various policemen at different times indicates that there was, by no means, unanimous agreement on the villainy and perniciousness, or even the seriousness, of this "criminal activity." Likewise, the change in attitudes and behavior on the part of the park police, as reported in their incident complaint file, testifies to the influence of temporal factors, such as change in public sentiment and popular pressure, as well as change in the density and location of the nude bathing itself.

Legal Challenge — On July 7, the first challenge to the constitutionality of nude bathing was issued by Thomas J. Raleigh, a 27-year-old gay activist. At 2:30 on a crowded Sunday afternoon, Lt. James F. Tomlinson of the Gateway park police observed a black male sunbathing in the nude about 20 feet from the boardwalk at Bay 2. Lt. Tomlinson went down to the beach and asked the man to put on his bathing suit. While the black male was in the process of complying, other nude bathers in the vicinity were voluntarily putting on their bathing suits. Then Thomas Raleigh approached in the nude and began to deliver a critical lecture on civil liberties; he cited recent decisions defending the rights of individuals to sunbathe in the nude. Lt. Tomlinson asked Raleigh to put on his bathing suit, and Raleigh refused. Lt. Tomlinson warned that unless Raleigh complied he would be issued a summons for disorderly conduct. Raleigh explained that he believed that a person who wished to bathe in the nude should be allowed to do so and had the right to do so and expressed his desire to be arrested in order to challenge the constitutionality of the law before the Supreme Court. Raleigh was subsequently arrested by Officer Ronald Eisenberg, who was called in to assist Lt. Tomlinson. When he appeared before the U.S. magistrate on July 23, 1974, Raleigh opted to have his case heard in the U.S. District Court.

> When the case came up in court Nov. 1, the prosecution moved for dismissal with the explanation that park rangers who patrol the beach during the summer have been reassigned to another part of the country for the winter, and the government did not consider it worth the expense to bring the arresting officer back to New York for a trial. [*The Advocate,* December 4, 1974]

Although Raleigh failed to have his case heard before the Supreme Court, where a final decision on the legality of nude bathing might be made, his case did attract considerable publicity, especially in the gay media, thereby bringing public attention to the complex issue of nude bathing.

Confrontation and the Role of the Media

The confrontation over the issue of nude bathing was to crystallize and become part of the public domain as a result of a particular CBS News broadcast on July 9, 1974. As the events of subsequent days testified, CBS News, rather than reporting the situation as it existed (peaceful and tolerant, without confrontation), presented an image of Riis Park so heatedly divided over the issue of nude bathing that it actually created the conflict it described.

Because of the highly distorted picture of Riis Park presented by CBS News, the nude bathing ceased to be a quasi-legal pastime restricted to a small isolated section of a public beach and actually became the critical moral issue that the news reporter had described. Public interest and attention focused on Jacob Riis Park, the moral position having been defined: Is public morality going to be defended, or are these "queers" going to be allowed to run around in the nude?

The Crackdown — The impact of the July 9 broadcast can be measured by the severity and immediacy of the repercussions. To say that *everyone* was talking about it might be an exaggeration, but the extent of influence of the major networks was certainly evident at Jacob Riis Park. Among the regulars at Riis Park (visitors, policemen, administrators, lifeguards, etc.), even those who had not personally viewed the broadcast were quickly informed of the content by those who had, and the details of the broadcast became the major topic of discussion and debate all along the boardwalk. Opinions varied regarding the style and content, but there was unanimous agreement on the sensationalism of the presentation. Among those who were most familiar with the situation at Bays 1 and 2 in a variety of capacities (lifeguards, visitors, police), it was generally agreed that the presentation was grossly distorted. There was amazement at the violence of the images; few people had ever seen the ripped-down fence at the end of Bay 1 or the "Queers Beware" sign that appeared on television. But more significantly, it was recognized that the peaceful existence of nude bathing had come to an end, and there was enormous apprehension about the consequences.

The period of uncertainty was mercifully brief. On Thursday, 2 days after the broadcast, a policy directive came down through the park police that there was to be an immediate end to the practice of nude bathing at Jacob Riis Park. By Friday, the police had been mobilized, and the crackdown had begun. There was an immediately recognizable difference at the park. The atmosphere of celebration had disappeared, and attention focused on the newly created "issue" of nude bathing and the reaction of the park police. Rumors of arrests circulated freely. Groups of bathers gathered on the boardwalk to discuss the situation, share opinions, and exchange misinformation about arrests and police activity. The general mood of the bathers was agitated; there was concern over the disruption of their normal activities.

The number of park policemen was visibly increased all along the boardwalk, with the heaviest concentration in the Bays 1 and 2 area. As many as 13 officers congregated around Bay 2 at one time, standing together in groups of four and five, with occasional pairs. Their numbers, as well as their unusual pattern of large grouping, indicated their concern for personal security and their expectation that trouble was imminent.

Contrary to the widely circulated rumors, up until this time there had been no arrests, no one had been pulled off the beach (as one New York City policeman reported), nor had any citations been issued for disorderly conduct. Inspector Hugh Groves, the chief of the Gateway park police, described the new policy as an "affirmative action." The police were merely informing the nude bathers of the law and asking them to put their bathing suits on. The police were not looking for any trouble.

Although the policy at this time was formally that of "affirmative action" and the police were not looking for trouble or arrests, Inspector Groves' statement did not consider the emotional implications of the affirmative action. Most significantly, this was the first time the police had made a regular practice of going down on the beach to tell the bathers to put on their bathing suits. The mere presence of policemen, where previously there had been none, was considered an invasion of territory and privacy. The sight of police on the beach was so threatening that, regardless of the tact or the politeness of the individual officers, their actions were seen as bullying, unnecessary, and a violation of personal freedom.

For many of the police, who had enjoyed the sun and the atmosphere of Riis Park as much as the bathers, this was the first time they were called upon to confront large numbers of bathers, even if it was only a polite confrontation for the purpose of information. There was considerable range in the ability and maturity with which they responded to the situation. For some of the younger officers, the hostility of the bathers was a relatively new experience. The hostility of the bathers was as threatening to these officers as their presence was to the bathers, and they reacted to the goading and the insults with nervous insecurity. Several younger officers had to be reminded to "keep their cool," and one officer was sent away when he began to engage in an unnecessary argument with an irate bather. The decisive feature, which Inspector Groves did not mention, was that for many officers and bathers the initiation of the affirmative action was also the initiation of an adversary relationship. This relationship between the nude bathers and the park police was dramatically illustrated the very first day of the crackdown in a critical and potentially dangerous incident.

> As a result of the police activity, there were many groups of disturbed bathers discussing the problem on the boardwalk. "What the hell are they hassling us for?" "I thought it was legal." "No, it's not legal on federal property." "I thought it was legal in New York State." "No, that was Nassau County." "Why don't they leave us alone?" "There's been too much publicity," etc.

I was engaged in one such conversation, when a park police wagon rode down the boardwalk to Bay 1. Several policemen followed directly behind the truck, and it became obvious that the police were going to make an arrest. As soon as the first police made their way to Bay 1, large numbers of people from Bay 2, who had seen the police truck, hurried over to see what was happening. The group I had been standing with ran down to Bay 1 almost immediately. More police headed down to back up the arresting officers, and with them, the crowd of curious onlookers grew.

The police had gone down to Bay 1, asking people to put on their bathing suits. When they had gotten to a section of the beach that was relatively inaccessible, a couple of hundred yards from the nearest stairs, they asked one woman to put on the top of her bathing suit, and she refused. When one of the policemen wrote out a citation for disorderly conduct, she ripped it up and threw it in his face. At this point, reinforcements had to be called in to facilitate her arrest, and the crowds, which grew larger by the moment, had surrounded them, blocking their path for a speedy exit. To complicate matters, the woman had three small children, who had to be carried off the beach.

I held back, not wanting to add to the commotion, but when final positions had been assumed and I felt I could not aggravate the situation, I walked down to Bay 1 slowly, just in time to see the police leading the woman and her children through the crowd. The crowd was angry, yelling "Pig! You pigs!" The sight of the children evoked more anger. "What kind of pigs are you? Arresting babies!" "Oh, Christ, you gonna arrest them too?" The crowd yelled other obscenities at the police, apparently including a 12-letter word considered a technical foul; I did not hear that one in particular, but the police, to whom it was addressed, assured me it was said, and judging the temper of the crowd, I have no reason to doubt it.

The woman was transported with her children to police headquarters at Floyd Bennett Field, where she was issued another citation. The police then returned her and her children to the beach. [from the researcher's journal, July 12, 1974]

The crowd, which must have reached well over a thousand people, dispersed as soon as the truck pulled away, but the general commotion took much longer to subside. As the crowd broke up, smaller groups gathered on the beach and along the boardwalk. The bathers complained about the arrests and the action of the police. The sight of a woman with three small children being led from the beach by a group of policemen was very provocative. The children, especially, elicited enormous feelings of sympathy from the crowd. Had the police decided to pick a subject to evoke the greatest

reaction, they could not have chosen a more perfect martyr. The rumors that circulated following the incident demonstrated the impact the scene had on those who witnessed it:

> "A woman with six kids," "a woman with four kids." "They left the kids right there on the beach." "She was nursing when they came to get her." "Did you hear she was nursing?"

For their part, the police were equally disturbed by the incident. From a tactical point of view, they had been in a very dangerous position. If the crowd had become physically violent (a possibility the police took very seriously, which, considering the extent of the verbal abuse and the precariousness of the situation, may have been a greater threat than anyone realized), there would have been no way for the police to defend themselves. The anger of the crowd and the potential danger left the police thoroughly shaken. One of the policemen expressed his fear afterward, in a muted voice:

> Can you imagine what would have happened if one of the kids started to cry and struggle?

This first incident polarized the adversary positions of the police and the bathers, sealing their relationship and making future confrontations an inevitability.

The remainder of the first weekend was marked by two significant arrests. They bore little resemblance to the previous day's arrest, and neither elicited the same nearly catastrophic results. Both involved intoxicated males in very visible, accessible locations, who refused to put on their bathing suits and defied the police openly.

> Saturday afternoon, the most obvious thing about Bays 1 and 2 was the apparent success of the crackdown. Almost no one on the beach was nude, none were visible from the boardwalk. Everyone seemed to be displaying considerable caution, with one obvious exception.
>
> About 100 feet from the staircase at Bay 2, there was a guy dancing around in the nude. I wondered how long he would be allowed to continue, before the police would stop him. He was dancing for about 5 or 10 minutes, and he was joined by a female with her bathing suit on, when the park police spotted him. As they approached, he sat down quickly and put his bathing suit on. When the police arrived he was sitting on his blanket with his pants on. The policemen wagged their fingers and left.
>
> It seemed that the scene was finished, and I lay back on the blanket. Some 20 minutes later, I was awakened by some "Boooo's," and observed the

> subject being led from the beach. Apparently dissatisfied with the police action the first time, the bather went up to the boardwalk and demanded an explanation. He did not agree with the law, he told the police, and was going to go back down on the beach and continue dancing in the nude. It was then that the police went down and arrested him. [from the researcher's journal, July 13, 1974]

There were major differences between this arrest and the one that preceded it. Because he was so near the boardwalk, there was no opportunity for a crowd to gather or to build up any resistance to the police. Those in the immediate vicinity booed, but because of his location, the arrest was made very quickly and, unlike the first arrest, the police had a very easy time picking him up. The behavior of this second arrestee, furthermore, was so erratic and irrational that he attracted little sympathy from the crowd. Aside from his behavior, it was clearly apparent and was freely admitted by the arrestee later that he was very drunk.

Heavy use of alcohol was a strong contributing factor in the third arrest of the weekend. Late Sunday afternoon, another male was observed walking along the boardwalk in the nude. After refusing to put on his bathing suit, the subject attempted to break free from custody, striking the arresting officer in the chest and becoming extremely violent. After a struggle he was subdued with the assistance of two New York City policemen, handcuffed, and arrested. What distinguished the case of this Brooklyn hairdresser, aside from the combination of charges for intoxication and assault on a federal officer, was the extent of the publicity he received. His lawyer tried to have the charges against him dropped, on the grounds that the Bays 1 and 2 section of Riis Park were known to be gay and that nudity was commonly accepted there. It was a valiant effort, but the attorney did not know what he was up against. An outraged federal magistrate, Vincent A. Catoggio, responded in the single most repeated quote of the summer:

> I don't know where these people get the idea they have the constitutional right to strip naked and parade in front of other people. If this is what is going on at Jacob Riis Park, the Department of Interior might well consider closing the place.

When the subject received no satisfaction from the magistrate's office, he decided to take his case to the public and appeared on network news broadcasts defending his position. His style was abrasive and the content little more than indignation, but he did raise one important question on ABC Eyewitness News:

> All I want to know is this – how come there's nude bathing on the beach, and it's all right one day, and the next day, they come down on the beach and start making arrests?

During this period, the media (television and press) had an enormous influence on the shaping of events.

The events of the first weekend had caught the park police off guard. They were admittedly ill prepared for the confrontation they had faced, and they spent the following week assessing their position and making sure there would be no repetition of the dangerous incident of the previous Friday. One thing was clear immediately: If they were expected to enforce the law against nude bathing, they would need additional support. Arrangements were made for reinforcements, and by Thursday it appeared that a big escalation of police activity was scheduled for the weekend, with additional officers.

As a result of their experience the previous weekend, the park police made a serious re-evaluation of their enforcement policy. Recognizing their extreme shortage of manpower, a decision was made that the park police would not make a special effort to go down on the sand to seek out nude bathers. An article on the first page of the Brooklyn-Queens section of the *Sunday News* reported this change of policy. The general manager of Riis Park, Bill Shields, observed that nudity was specifically in violation of federal law:

> However, if it is not visible from the boardwalk, and especially if the person is lying or sitting on the beach, and cannot be seen several hundred feet away with the unaided eye, then the police will not go down and bother him.
>
> If the police do see someone in the nude close to the boardwalk or on the boardwalk, we will tell him to put his clothes on. If he then does not cover pertinent sections of his anatomy, we will issue a summons for disorderly conduct. An arrest is the last thing we will do.

This statement marked a considerable change in the official attitude toward nude bathing that had received wide publicity during the week through Vincent A. Catoggio. In addition to dismissing the possibility that the park would be shut down because of nude bathing, the article included specific suggestions from another "park official" regarding the safest place in Bays 1 and 2 for those who wished to sunbathe in the nude: right near the shoreline where there is a drop of 5 or 6 feet at low tide. This new ambivalence on the issue of nude bathing was not without devastating side effects.

The Friday of the second weekend began with a little rain, and though it cleared up early, it kept most of the people away from the beach. The result was a rather small crowd, little nudity, and no harassment. The most immediately striking feature on Saturday was the incredible number of additional police. In an unused room on the left side of the main pavilion, there were 15 additional New York City policemen.

> Sergeant Donnelly was busy when I arrived, trying to get his men sent home early. When I spoke to him later on, he told me he had let them go at 2:45. "There was obviously not going to be any trouble, and there was no need for all these extra men, just sitting around." [from the researcher's journal, July 20, 1974]

Twenty-four park police officers were sent up from Washington, including two of the first women on the force. Ten additional officers were drawn from other areas of Gateway. Displacement of energy appeared to be the only effect of so many additional police being called in to enforce a law against nude bathing, the official position regarding the feasibility of enforcement being changed, and that change in attitude being publicized in the nation's largest newspaper.

The First Sodomy Arrest — At approximately 3:40 on Saturday afternoon, two white males, ages 19 and 28, were arrested in the men's room at Bay 2 and charged with sex offenses. Although this was not the first arrest for such activities that had been made during the summer, the characteristics of this arrest made it a harbinger of future police activities. (Of the previous arrests, one was discovered accidentally by a visiting uniformed officer, and the others, who were engaged in a lengthy scene in the men's bathhouse, were released on citations. Both incidents occurred on July 7.)

The significant features of this arrest, which likened it to subsequent arrests, were (1) the time of the arrest was late afternoon, significant because most of the visitors to the park, including the players from the adjacent softball field, were on their way home and the smaller crowd made the arrests tactically simpler; (2) the arrest was made by a "plainclothes" park policeman; (3) "sex offenses" is a charge that can be categorized as a misdemeanor (disorderly conduct) or a felony; (4) the arrestees were transported to the Federal Detention Center to await arraignment after being booked at the police substation, unlike the previous cases where the arrestees were released on citation.

The existence of a complainant in this case was much debated. According to Inspector Groves, a complainant existed, but there was no need for one if a federal officer caught the subjects in the act. Private citizens are extremely unreliable when it comes to appearing in court, and arrests by federal officers directly are much more efficient. In this case, it turned out, there had been no specific complainant, but merely general complaints.

> When I arrived at the police substation, there was a National Park Service paddy wagon parked in front. Inside were the two arrestees who had been caught in the "tango." A friend of one of them (perhaps a lover) was very distraught, as he tried to talk to his friend inside the wagon. The window on that side of the truck was closed, and his friend motioned for him to go around to the other side. Two of the arresting officers were engaged in a

conversation when they noticed the arrival of the emotional young man trying to communicate with one of their prisoners. *"Hey! Get the hell out of there!"* The young man tried to explain that he was just talking to his friend. "I don't care what you're doing. Get the hell out of there!" One of the officers, dressed in garish plainclothes, was particularly antagonistic toward the young man. He bellowed, "Go back down there [pointing to Bay 2] where you belong!" The shaken young man began to retort, "You go where *you* belong," but withdrew before he was arrested with his friend. [from the researcher's journal]

Tearoom sex (impersonal sexual relations in public places) is the choice of many men with heterosexual and homosexual identities because it provides satisfaction for homoerotic impulses with a minimum of personal involvement and a maximum protection of personal identities. Public restrooms are chosen because of their exclusively male atmosphere and because they combine the important characteristics of spatial privacy and public accessibility. Not every public restroom is a "tearoom;" the designation is given only to those restrooms where homosexual contacts are made, and where such contacts are known by interested parties to be available (Humphreys 1970). Curiously, few of the participants in general tearoom activity are involved in the homosexual subculture; many individuals who engage in such activities are married and presumably heterosexually identified.

Tearoom sex evokes a wide range of reactions within the gay community. The majority of homosexuals (like the majority of heterosexuals) use public restrooms for excretion and not for sexual contacts. Many homosexuals, for a variety of reasons, share the contempt and animosity for the participants of tearoom sex that is felt by the heterosexual majority. Some conservative homosexuals in stable relationships accuse, "That's the kind that gives queers a bad name." More liberated gays consider the impersonality of such encounters dehumanizing and degrading, responsible for the perpetuation of the stigma the larger society attaches to homosexuals.

The restroom in the building nearest the Bay 2 area of Jacob Riis Park is a notorious "tearoom." Because of its location, most of the participants are gay. People who haven't been to Riis Park in years still remember this particular restroom as the site of considerable sexual activity. The most serious problem for those interested in going to the bathroom is the incredible congestion caused by loiterers.

During the first week of the crackdown, I was talking with two of the younger park police officers, who were defending their new enforcement policy.

Officer A: Things were getting pretty out of hand here.
Officer B: Yeah, like the incident back there.
Interviewer: You mean the men's room?

Officer B: Yeah, back there in the men's room, some kid from the softball field was assaulted.
Interviewer: (in a hushed tone) Child molestation?
Officer B: No, assault.
Interviewer: Oh, he was beaten up in there.
Officer B: No, some guy walks in and starts patting him on the ass.
Officer A: You've got to draw a line somewhere, and that kind of stuff just can't be tolerated.
[from the researcher's journal, July 12, 1974]

The police received many complaints from visitors, gay and straight, regarding the crowding and loitering in the bathroom and occasional reports of minor harassment.

Dies Irae (July 21, 1974) – The climax of the crackdown came on Sunday afternoon of the second weekend, with 13 men arrested for sex offenses and one transvestite charged with nudity. The first two men were apprehended early in the afternoon, at approximately 12:30, in the men's bathhouse. They were charged with disorderly conduct and released on citations. The arresting officers were plainclothesmen. The next man was apprehended in the same location at approximately 2:05, when he approached a plainclothes police officer and asked if he "would like to play." Before the officer could respond, the subject reached out and grabbed his genitals. He was arrested, issued a citation, booked, and transported to the Federal Detention Center to await arraignment.

None of the above arrests were brought to the general attention of the public at the beach. Because all of the arrests were made inside the men's bathhouse, away from the Bay 2 area, they were largely unnoticed. The bathers first became aware of what was going on later in the afternoon, around 3:30.

> I was standing in front of the concession, talking to my friend Victor, when we noticed several uniformed police officers rushing down the boardwalk from the Bay 1 area, heading toward the men's lavatory. They had apparently been called in to back up the arresting officers, and on their way, they attempted to break up the small crowd that was milling around outside. By the time I went back to see what was happening, the police were leading out the last few of the men. The action was taken very quickly. Because of the invisibility of the men's room from the beach (the men's room is situated in the rear of the building that holds the concession), only very few had gathered to see what happened, and by the time I went to the other side of the building to see where the men who were arrested had been taken, they were all gone, hustled down to the substation.
>
> This time the crowd was more nervous than angry. Assumably, anyone could have been caught in the men's room, and the thought of arrest was

disturbing. "Did you see how many they got?" Numbers varied, but one thing was certain: It made little difference if it were 7 or 14. That was the least significant detail. Everyone present saw several men being taken away, and many believed it might just as easily have been themselves. There was some bitchy, nervous humor. The friend of a very popular guy called over, "Hey, Tony, I see they didn't catch you!" Tony's face fell for a moment, then he yelled back, "You son of a bitch! I hope it falls off!" [from the researcher's journal]

Two officers in plainclothes entering the public restroom at Bay 2 had observed eight males – four white, four black – engaging in a variety of sexual activities, from masturbation and manipulation to fellatio and anal intercourse. All eight men, ranging in age from 21 to 55, were arrested, charged with "sex offenses," processed at the substation at Riis Park, and transported to the Federal Detention Center pending arraignment. A little over an hour later, one of these same plainclothes officers, the one who had earlier been approached at the men's bathhouse, returned there and observed two more white males engaged in sexual relations. They were arrested for "sex offenses," booked, transported, etc. When they were being led away to the police wagon, it was observed that one of the arrested men was holding a towel around his waist as his only covering.

The final arrest of the day was that of a 28-year-old, black transvestite named Marsha Johnson. The arresting officer observed Marsha posing partially nude on the beach at Bay 2 for an unidentified photographer. At the time of her arrest, Marsha was wearing a huge black wig with artificial red flowers on one side, a full-length robe that resembled a discarded peignoir, full makeup, and accessories. Marsha had apparently removed the bathing suit she was wearing underneath her robes, exposing herself for the camera and for the amusement of the crowd of onlookers who had gathered for her performance. At this time the officer proceeded to the beach and escorted Marsha to the substation.

I was standing in front of the substation when Marsha was led down the boardwalk. The sight of this tall, black, extravagantly dressed queen being escorted by a young, blond officer in the uniform of the U.S. Park Police – she towered over him, and as a queen, never lost her dignity – was such a strikingly incongruous image it might have been humorous, had the implications not been so tragic.

Shortly after her arrest, a friend arrived, and he tried to get into the substation to help Marsha. Marsha was seated on a bench inside with her back to the door, and the friend saw her and proceeded to enter. The security was tight, and he was repelled by the numerous police guarding the door. These police were polite, even kind, to the young man. "I'm sorry, you

can't go in there." The friend tried to explain his intentions, that he wanted to get Marsha released immediately. When he couldn't even get in the door, he became hysterical, crying, pleading for his friend's release. "Don't hurt her! Oh God, she didn't hurt anybody. Why are you arresting her? Oh, please, don't hurt her! She's a sick girl, please don't arrest her. She's a very sick girl, oh please!" The guards at the door were younger men, and they appeared very sympathetic, but they remained firm.

The hysterical friend fell on one of the policemen, pleading (physical contact with a policeman being a dangerous activity); then he changed his tactic. "Don't worry, honey!" he called inside to Marsha, still visible, "I'll get you out of here!"

"You know she's got friends," he told the policeman. "I'll call G.A.A.! [the Gay Activists Alliance] I'll call Mattachine!" The policeman was suitably unimpressed. The friend pleaded once more, "Oh please, don't arrest her, she didn't hurt anybody. She's a very sick girl. She's been in Bellevue and Creedmoor; she just got out of the hospital, oh please!" The friend left to call Marsha's friends in some of the gay organizations for help and received no answer; 6:00 on a Sunday afternoon, switchboards unattended. [from the researcher's journal, July 21, 1974]

Marsha Johnson is a fixture in the gay community; she appears regularly at gay functions; she is well known and well liked. Marsha has a history of institutionalization and psychiatric hospitals. Unlike many drag queens who can control their situations and environment with clever manipulation and wit, who are on top of things, Marsha is extremely vulnerable and suffers from severe confusion over gender identity. Her friends in the gay community – and there are many – recognize her helplessness, appreciate her warmth and generosity, and respond by attempting to shelter and protect her from the harsh realities of the outside world. Her arrest sent shock waves through the gay community. Charges against Marsha were later dropped, and when the cases against the 11 men arrested with her that day and the two arrested the day before came to trial, there was some plea bargaining. The defendants were offered $50 fines in return for pleas of guilty to charges of disorderly conduct, with no specifications as to the actual cause of arrest.

Irony surrounds Marsha. The contradictory position of drag queens, as exalted and degraded, and their central position in the gay community are beautifully illustrated in the events that followed the arrests.

On the day of the hearings, I was talking to the lover of one of the men who had been arrested. He explained how Marsha acted as a foil for the group, keeping them together, actually protecting and sheltering *them* from the

extreme depression of *their* circumstances. For many (if not all) of these men, this was the first time they had ever been arrested, and their terror and humiliation was compounded by the circumstances of their arrest and the lack of sufficient clothing.

By contrast, Marsha, through her numerous entanglements with the police and various institutions, had become rather numbed to the routine indignities which accompany them. The men watched Marsha, in her extraordinary costume, walk through these scenes unfazed and with the slightest bit of humor and contempt for the situation, and her spirit and defiance gave them the needed courage to cope, raising their spirits with laughter. [from the researcher's journal]

Evolution of Police Attitudes and Behavior — Aside from its intrinsic significance, the arrest of Marsha Johnson on charges of disorderly conduct for nudity illustrates the radical change in police response to similar incidents. Only one month earlier, on June 19, police had encountered an almost identical situation in the performance of Jackie and responded with humor and amusement. Over the course of 1 month, the attitudes of the police had come full circle, from tolerance and good humor to resentment and bitterness. The events of the month heavily influenced the change in attitudes, but the change in sentiment more directly resulted from the change of policy.

The incident of July 12, involving the arrest of the woman with the young children, by no means improved relations between the police and the bathers. It did spark a major shift in tactical emphasis toward crowd control and effective weaponry for police protection. The change in attitudes preceded the incident and occurred during the 3 days between the presentation of the television broadcast on CBS News (July 9) and the first day of the crackdown (July 12). During those 3 days, the police had to redefine their ideas to conform with the policy of enforcement they were about to undertake, any reluctance had to be set aside, and they had to explain to themselves how things had changed to require this new policy. This rationalization process and the self-explanation are evident in the July 12 interview with the young park police officers, which preceded the incident with the female bather.

Officer B: Things were getting pretty blatant, coming up to the boardwalk.

[Nudes walking on the boardwalk had been a rumor for days; the interview preceded the actual case of the drunk male on July 14, and I asked if there had really been anyone nude on the boardwalk.]

Officer B: No, but they're coming right up *to* it now.
[Different inflection.]

Officer A: Things were okay for awhile, but then it got a little out of control. Parading around in the open, shaking their asses at the boardwalk, deliberately making fun of the cops.
[from the researcher's journal, July 12, 1974]

This redefinition of a previously amusing and unthreatening activity indicates some of the mental transformations the police experienced during the transitional period of readjustment.

The antagonism created as a result of the adversary relationship was further aggravated by a number of unpleasant confrontations between individual bathers and police. The "pig" epithet, first hurled during the episode with the nude female bather, was to reappear at critical moments, causing bad feeling and increased polarization. On July 16, one park police officer reported being threatened by a male homosexual on the boardwalk at Bay 2, who said if the police used extreme force to enforce the nude sunbathing regulation, "there would be several dead park pigs on the beach," and the gays would take care of the park police the way they handled the N.Y.P.D. when they invaded the gay bars in the city. After delivering the threat, the gay man disappeared in the crowd. The result of this and similar threats was a heightening of police concern for their own security and subsequent efforts to guarantee it with larger forces.

The change in police attitudes toward nude bathing was originally sparked not by a real change in the behavior of the bathers, but by a change in the police perception of the bathers' activities, a redefinition in moral terms in which the activities were considered threatening not only to their person and honor, but to the standards of the larger community. The larger community had not been affronted by the nude bathing at Riis Park because they did not know it existed. With the first sensational report, however, the outpouring of public opinion against the nude bathing was phenomenal.

Sensation, Saturation, and Distortion – The precipitating influence of the CBS broadcast of July 9 has already been examined, and the chronology of subsequent events defends the contention that it was the media that acted as the instigator and prime mover in the conflict over nude bathing at Jacob Riis Park. If the conflict was created by the coverage of CBS News, the saturation of the various magazines and newspapers amplified and aggravated it, raising public concern over the "problem," citing arrests, and confirming the misimpression that Jacob Riis Park was a heated "trouble spot."

The only benefit of this incredible "overkill" coverage was that by reporting the numerous arrests and police actions that were made at Jacob Riis Park, it somehow satisfied the public's outraged sense of morality, giving the impression that order had been restored, and eventually the media soothed the monster it had created.

Some Conclusions and Suggestions

The restroom at Bay 2 is a public nuisance to gays *and* straights because of the large number of men loitering about waiting to see if anything will happen. Loitering always precedes sexual activity, and the category of "waiter" (Humphreys 1970) comprises the majority of those individuals whose purpose in the men's room is other than excretion. All sexual activity in the men's room could be eliminated by having *uniformed* policemen occasionally patrol the restroom, reminding occupants to speed it up. Alternatively, a sign warning the users that the restroom is under police surveillance would be a less effective means of prevention. The distastefulness of such an assignment for police officers is overshadowed by the possible elimination of grave consequences for those unfortunate individuals caught engaging in sexual activity and the general, more serious problem of overcrowding and congestion.

It is important that officers assigned to such duty be in uniform. The use of plainclothes officers, particularly in patrolling men's lavatories, is considered extremely threatening by gay people, and arrests resulting from their use are regarded as violations of their civil rights. Entrapment is the legal term for arrests made by officers who lead the innocent into criminal acts they are not predisposed to commit. Illegal inducement is a very difficult thing to prove. However, it is a good bet that the use of plainclothes officers (young, attractive, sportily dressed) might induce a homosexual man to commit an act that he would not have under different circumstances. The mere possibility that entrapment might take place should immediately terminate the use of plainclothes police officers in sensitive areas.

The obvious potential of the news media for harmful sensationalism must be recognized. Attempts should be made to direct the attention of friendly reporters to Riis Park *before* any possible unfavorable, sensational news articles are published. In dealing with an urban recreation area in the largest city in the country, the National Park Service can no longer afford its lack of sophistication regarding the manipulation of the news media.

The watchdog assignment of the police, as the guardians of public morality, is an unenviable one. The relativity of the community standards they are empowered to protect is illustrated in two conversations the researcher had with park policemen on the first day of the crackdown, July 12, 1974.

> I began the first conversation with a mature senior officer with what a shame I thought it was that the publicity had provoked pressure to eliminate nude bathing. He explained that he didn't make the laws, he was just there to enforce them, and it was against federal law to be nude in public. I suggested that the policemen did not appear anxious to enforce the law, in this case, and that they had seemed extremely tolerant earlier in the season. He agreed that publicity was certainly one *major* cause of the crackdown. He talked

about the standards they are chosen to enforce, and he indicated that he must enforce the standards of the community.

"In the area of the Bowery," he offered as an example, "there are a lot of derelicts; they lie in the gutters; they don't harm anyone; and they don't get arrested. It's the Bowery; that's where the derelicts are. But if they were to go to another community, some place like Forest Hills, or some other exclusive neighborhood, they would be picked up in a flash. Because crime is relative to the community, and it is the standards of the community which we must enforce."

The conversation with this officer lasted about 10 minutes, and his ideas about community standards I found very provocative. I was about to offer some ideas of my own, when we were interrupted by some minor commotion on the beach. Everyone had gathered around a dancer or something. I had time to review his example critically, and I will relate my explanation in my interview with Inspector Groves.

Inspector Groves and I had a rather lengthy conversation about the nude bathing and the gay people at Bays 1 and 2. They didn't bother him personally, but their behavior infringes on the rights of the community, and it is the standards of the community which must be protected.

"When one small percent of the people," Inspector Groves explained, "want to engage in some behavior, that's all right, unless their behavior is in violation of the standards of the 99 percent of the population; but when the behavior of the small group violates the standards of the larger group, then the standards of the larger group must be upheld. It's that simple."

At this point, I told him about the conversation I had earlier that day with another officer and explained that I hadn't been able to complete my explanation.

"According to the example given, there are a lot of derelicts in the area of the Bowery; they lie on the street; they really don't cause any problem; and they are pretty much left alone. They're on the Bowery, and that's sort of where they belong. If one of the bums or derelicts were to move to a street in Forest Hills or some other exclusive community, he would be arrested immediately. The difference would be in the standards of the community: Forest Hills could not tolerate the presence of a derelict, whereas the Bowery was the place where derelicts had traditionally been located."

At this point, I paused and asked if Inspector Groves agreed with the evaluation of communities and community standards that I had just related. When he agreed, I continued:

"If derelicts are free to remain on the Bowery and continue to group themselves there, the Bowery might be considered the community of the derelicts, the Bowery being where derelicts are. In something of the same way, Riis Park, being where gay people are, where they have been since the year of the Flood, might be considered part of the gay community. Both subjects are involved in victimless crimes, although some argument could be made that derelicts are their own victims. In the case of the gay community, such arguments are groundless, and part of the reason that gays appear angry at the police is because the gay community feels that Bays 1 and 2 are theirs, and that the standards of their community with its acceptance and encouragement of nude bathing should be respected."

Inspector Groves listened politely and agreed that my statement had certain validity. [from the researcher's journal]

This section of the report analyzes visitor use at Plumb Beach and Great Kills, two areas in which park usage was defined by the community *before* the creation of Gateway National Recreation Area. These two areas must be understood in terms of the needs they fulfill for the community.

The life experience in the modern-day American city is, for the most part, dehumanizing. The work process has been fragmented, emphasizing efficient and increased production at the expense of the human development or personal growth of the workers. Many people fear the loss of control of their life situations. More and more of their time is structured by the decisions of others, and the power of the individual is continually eroded. Everyday lives are institutionalized and mortified. Jobs are often monotonous and meaningless, inflation eats away monetary rewards, crime endangers life and property, and pollution of the environment threatens the quality of life.

Leisure-time pursuits also must compete with institutionalization, but they provide an opportunity for the working man to locate himself as a significant actor in the private world while his identity in the public world faces extinction. In our public lives we have lost much of our autonomy; in leisure there is still a potential for expression of self and community (Aronowitz 1973). Community definitions of park usage have been generated by this quest for individual autonomy in a regimented, mass society. The spontaneous, informal, individual uses at Plumb Beach are a quiet rebellion against an over-institutionalized world. Formal community usage (e.g., the Great Kills Athletic Club) is an attempt to revitalize the community in a society that erodes communities.

PLUMB BEACH

As many as 2,000 people a day have used Plumb Beach. Even though it is dirty, the beach is continually used, as the following table shows:

Average Daily Use, Summer 1974

	July	August
Weekdays	595	169
Weekends	837	600

These numbers are conservative estimates. They include only the concession area and only the hours when park technicians were working. Plumb Beach is actually used 24

hours a day. The decline in usage from July to August can be accounted for by the lack of good beach weather in August.

Although many New Yorkers on their way to Queens stop at Plumb Beach to rest for an hour or two, the majority of users are from the surrounding Coney Island/Sheepshead Bay/Marine Park area. These visitors have been using Plumb Beach for years and are seeking the uncrowded privacy of the beach.

Family Beach

There is a friendly, family atmosphere about Plumb Beach, where families come to barbecue, sunbathe, swim, and get away from it all. Until as late as 10:00 p.m., families can be found enjoying the coolness of the summer nights and the calmness of the ocean.

Working-class, white ethnics (Jewish, Irish, and Italian), who are the majority of the users of Plumb Beach, tend to inhabit the beach area around the concession. Working-class blacks and Puerto Ricans tend to occupy the shady areas on both sides of the beach area.

Plumb Beach could be an excellent family facility. It is marred by the extreme pollution of the water, a complicated problem that involves Gateway in New York City politics. The beach area also is extremely dirty, a matter which Gateway has the capability of dealing with but as of yet has done little about.

Swimming and Fishing

When swimmers are asked about swimming in the polluted waters at Plumb Beach, they often reply that they have been swimming there for years and have felt no ill effects from the pollution. They also do not believe that the water is any more polluted than the ocean water at Manhattan or Brighton Beaches. Parents who allow their children to wade in the water often feel that the beach is great for children because they can walk out half a mile before it gets deep.

Although the park attitude about swimming at the beach is that swimmers swim at their own risk, in August 1974 three park rangers were observed attempting to stop about 30 people from swimming, a task at which they were completely unsuccessful. Probably the only way to prevent swimming at Plumb Beach would be to close down the facility.

People in New York tend to be so desperate for outdoor recreation facilities that many of them are even willing to play in polluted waters. The great challenge for Gateway is to create new, clean outdoor recreational facilities that will not destroy the user's ability to "hang loose." The Park Service in 1974 did offer an alternative to children who would normally have used the polluted waters at Plumb Beach: They set up a

sprinkler on top of the concession building. Although this did not altogether stop children from bathing in the bay, it did tend to decrease slightly the number of children using the polluted water. Since prohibition of swimming will not work, the sprinkler is a good beginning to create alternatives to using the polluted waters.

Two areas at Plumb Beach are used for fishing. At Knapp Street, people cluster near the storm sewage outfall to fish with rod and reel. At the concession area, recent Italian immigrants and Puerto Ricans use nets to catch small fish, a family pastime with two or three men skimming the water with the net while the women and children pick the edible seafood from it.

Plumb Beach for Lovers

Plumb Beach has for years been a popular place for couples to park. At night, there are always 10 or more couples "submarine-race watching" in parked cars at the Knapp Street entrance, the concession parking area, and along the beach area.

Plumb Beach is also a place for romance during the day because it is a beach where people know they will not be bothered. During the day, lovers can find relative privacy along the beach area or camouflage in the high grass. At Riis Park lovers are arrested; at Plumb Beach lovers go unnoticed.

Hazards

The extent of the debris in the beach area makes Plumb Beach hazardous for its users, Broken bottles, cans, and planks of wood with rusty spikes protruding are all potential hazards for the beach users.

In July and August 1974, 26 accidents were reported by park technicians; 18 of these accidents were cut feet. The 26 reported accidents were probably only a small portion of the accidents that actually occurred at the beach. New Yorkers are an independent lot and learn early in life to take care of themselves. Most people who injure themselves at Plumb Beach will not ask for aid but will take care of the injury themselves or will seek aid elsewhere.

Beach-goers have often been observed picking up broken glass and other debris to make a clearing for their beach blankets. Some people have even asked for hammers from the park technicians to hammer rusty spikes back into the planks from which they were protruding.

If accidents are going to be kept to a minimum, the beach area must be cleaned regularly. Equipment to clean Plumb Beach did not arrive until the end of August 1974, which was when the first systematic clean-ups of the beach occurred. Clean-up of Plumb Beach should begin each April and be maintained throughout the summer.

Park Technicians

Park technicians at Plumb Beach were faced with the problem of enforcing rules in a recreation area where rules had not been enforced for over 20 years. The first problem was trying to stop cars from parking in an already filled parking lot. One frustrated park technician described his reaction to the situation:

> Last week we had a problem because people insisted upon parking their cars after the parking lot was full-up. They just ignored us. We could have used a policeman. People don't listen. There's no uniform; they think we're scouts. They don't even know what Gateway is.

Though somewhat frustrated by the nonrecognition they received from users of the facility, the park technicians believed that they could make an impact upon the redevelopment of Plumb Beach as a recreation facility. These young people were inexperienced in the work they were assigned to do, but they compensated for this inexperience with enthusiasm and a willingness to experiment. In July, the capabilities of this enthusiastic staff were demonstrated when they produced an eventful and enjoyable program for the Fourth of July holiday.

At this celebration, the Kingsborough Historical Society had a photo exhibit depicting what the surrounding Marine Park/Floyd Bennett Field community looked like from 1900 through the 1950s. There were pictures of Plumb Beach as it was in the 1940s when there was a boardwalk and no noticeable litter. These pictures clearly showed the potential of Plumb Beach and were a glaring indictment of the neglect by the New York City Park Department since the end of World War II.

The park technicians put on a puppet show, using a stage and puppets from Kingsborough Community College. About 75 people, two-thirds of them children, watched the play, "The Shoemaker and the Elves." What they lacked in skill, the park technicians made up in enthusiasm, and the children seemed to enjoy it. A rock band and a singer performed for most of the day, and people on the beach danced and enjoyed the music. Various people were interviewed throughout the day. Most of them had been coming to Plumb Beach for years and hadn't known about the planned program beforehand. They expressed surprise that there was such a program. A typical response was: "I'm happy they're finally having something for the kids."

The enthusiasm of the park technicians increased after the successful Fourth of July program, but this enthusiasm was short-lived; their request for aid in developing a summer program could not be supported by other Gateway staff members. Park technicians felt that the most pressing need for improvement of Plumb Beach as a recreation facility was to clean up the beach. Although a large truck and more personnel were often requested, to the park technicians, unaware of shortages elsewhere, these requests seemed to fall on deaf ears. Money requested for an arts and

crafts program was also slow in coming. The park technicians embarked on a program of collecting aluminum cans from the beach to raise money for arts and crafts supplies. These supplies made possible the teaching of beadwork, painting, shell and sand montages, etc., to the children who were coming to the beach.

Murry, a park technician naturalist, conducted small groups of people on nature walks and instructed small classes on the problems of pollution. Murry would tell his classes that he hoped Gateway would make the whole marsh area and the dunes into a wildlife preserve:

> The marsh area is an excellent producer of oxygen, and the whole area is a natural refuge for horseshoe crabs, clams, and birds.

In his classes on "pollution awareness," he would tell his listeners that

> The treatment of waste by the city is not up to government standards. . . . It only treats 65 percent of the waste instead of the 90 to 95 percent that is required by the government.

In general, the park technicians were trying hard to do a good job with the limited facilities available to them. They felt that they were fighting a losing battle and that park managers gave Plumb Beach a low priority.

Park Police

Crime has not been a problem for the park police stationed at Plumb Beach. The New York Police Department has jurisdiction over the bicycle path and is theoretically available if needed. In the 2½-month period from July 1 to September 17, the park police filed 33 complaints, none of which was a serious danger to any beach user.

Complaint Record

Complaint	Incidence
Parking	1
Vandalism and Dumping	5
Hazard and Park Maintenance	6
Assistance to N.Y.P.D.	4
Assistance to Citizen	3
Suspicious Person	1
Disorderly Conduct	1
Animal and Wildlife	3
Fires	4
Larceny	1
Injury	1
Abandoned Vehicle	2
Other	1
Total	**33**

Vandalism and dumping tended to be the most serious crimes that occurred on the beach. The rubberized garbage cans were repeatedly stolen during the season. As one of the park technicians stated:

> You can't blame New Yorkers for stealing from the federal government; they've been paying taxes for years and getting nothing in return, and those garbage cans will look so good at their backyard barbecues.

The Future of Plumb Beach

Plumb Beach should be cleaned up and the hazardous planks, rotting boats, and glass should be removed, but development of the facility should be held to a minimum. Plumb Beach should be maintained as an area where users can "hang loose," as they have for generations. There probably will be minimum development at Plumb Beach in the future because of its low priority within the Gateway system.

GREAT KILLS

Great Kills Beach, like most Staten Island beaches, is dirty. Beach users dodge planks of wood in the water, and the sand is often littered with debris despite the best efforts of the park staff. Staten Islanders, who have historically had to travel off the island for work, shopping, and entertainment, often think nothing of traveling to the Jersey shore or elsewhere to go to the beach. Most beaches on Staten Island traditionally were sparsely populated until Gateway took over Great Kills.

Informal Use

Over 300,000 people used the park at Great Kills in the summer of 1974. Unlike other years, the beach was often "blanket-to-blanket" crowded on sunny July weekends. Staten Islanders, who had been traveling off the island for summer recreation, were staying in greater numbers on the island and spending leisurely afternoons on the beach at Great Kills.

Great Kills has become an excellent family beach where people can enjoy the sun and the water. Most of the beach area is still used exclusively for fishing, but more of the beach will eventually be available for swimming. The increased use of the beach at Great Kills can be attributed mainly to the efforts of the park staff. They have cleaned up the beach and changed its image from an unusable, dirty beach to a clean, family beach. Beach-goers who had not been using Great Kills in the past heard by word of mouth that it had been cleaned up and became users of the facility.

New Yorkers, who take for granted that local, state, and federal authorities will not be responsive to their needs, have learned to fend for themselves and are often creative in their recreational pursuits. Dodging planks in the water has been a favorite pastime of

the children who swim at the beaches on Staten Island. The very dangerous, dilapidated hangars at Miller Field are used for bicycle racing, stickball, football, and other activities. Staten Islanders who have learned to expect neglect are pleasantly surprised when they see that the beach has been cleaned. Gateway has begun to demonstrate to Staten Islanders that the Park Service will not neglect the beach at Great Kills and that it will be developed to meet their needs.

The Great Kills Athletic Club

The Great Kills Athletic Club has been in existence for 20 years. It provides sports facilities for 500 boys in its summer baseball program and for 800 boys and 150 girls (cheerleaders) in its football program. In 4 years, five football fields have been built through the volunteer work of G.K.A.C. supporters and $40,000 raised to develop the facility.

Before Gateway took control over Great Kills, the G.K.A.C. had a city permit that allowed it to develop land within the park for its own needs. City neglect enabled the G.K.A.C. to develop its sports program without outside intervention of any sort. Now the club members increasingly have the feeling that all the community participation and the hard work were for nothing, because their community athletic club stands in the way of the development of Gateway National Recreation Area. The G.K.A.C. views Gateway as a hostile intruder. Its members fear that Gateway will develop the park for the needs of some abstract users but neglect the real needs of the G.K.A.C. community; Gateway threatens to destroy what they have been building for years. Parents of the players and the G.K.A.C. staff feel that Gateway is "shafting" them. As one parent expressed it:

> The priorities are all whacked out. They give concessionaires exclusive rights to the use of the land, and when it comes to these kids, they want to take the field away from them. Aren't these kids more important than some boat basin?

Club members have organized lobbies to Washington and talked to local Congressmen. To the members of the Great Kills Athletic Club, Gateway is just another federal bureaucracy to be mistrusted.

The food stand built by the G.K.A.C. was shoddy by Park Service standards, but this shoddy stand represented the hard work of the people who make up the G.K.A.C. community, and it also served as an important economic resource. According to one of the G.K.A.C. staff, they were told to close the stand or they would lose their permit. With the food stand closed, $6,000 to $7,000 a year in revenue is lost. The G.K.A.C. feels powerless before the Park Service onslaught, which they believe is aimed at taking away their athletic fields:

> Who are they building this park for, anyway? Some park ranger in Washington?

DIVERSITY IN PLANNING

In our society, "community" and "neighborhood" are fast becoming obsolete. People are isolated from other people, and attempts at community participation are continually disparaged and destroyed. Parks should be developed for the real needs of the people who use them. Community participation should be encouraged to play a role in the development of Gateway National Recreation Area. What has occurred in the G.K.A.C. controversy is one of the failures of Gateway's first year.

There is a danger in the development of modern recreational facilities that they will duplicate in leisure-time activities the institutionalization and depersonalization of the workday world. If Gateway is to offer alternatives to this process, there must be diversity in planning. The historical needs of the users must be considered, for it is when these needs are not considered that conflicts emerge: e.g., the Great Kills Athletic Club and the gays at Riis Park. The community of users should be incorporated into the planning process as much as possible. This should be no great barrier to the development of Gateway since so much of the land to be developed for the park (Floyd Bennett Field, Fort Tilden, Miller Field, etc.) is coming into public use for the first time. The park administration must continually strive to remain in tune with the needs of city users.

INTRODUCTION

A silver band of sparkling sand that's nestled by the sea
It looks so nice — this Paradise — belongs to you and me.

A gay bazaar, the Mardi Gras, kids playing happily . . .
Attractive rows of bungalows — all this for you and me . . .

The friends we've made, the years we've stayed, the happy memory
This place is gold for young and old; and that means you and me.

This is Breezy Point
Glad to be here today —
And we're hoping to stay
Here at Breezy Point.

— Lyrics of the winning song in a contest sponsored by the Breezy Point Catholic Church Glee Club

Breezy Point is a small, privately owned and operated community situated just east of the western tip of the Rockaway peninsula in Queens County, New York. It exists as a private community within the boundaries of Gateway National Recreation Area. It is first and foremost a beach community. Its northern and southern boundaries are the natural beach areas of Jamaica Bay/Rockaway Inlet and the Atlantic Ocean. Unlike some of its neighbors across the bay(Coney Island and Brighton Beach), Breezy Point has no high-rise apartment houses, no large geriatric community, no threatening and rising crime rate, no racial conflicts, and no pressing pollution problem. Well within the metropolitan area of a very troubled city, Breezy Point shares none of New York's urban traumas. To the contrary, this private beach community offers the city's frightened lower-middle class what they perceive as a safe, sane refuge from the threats of city life — all within 25 minutes of midtown Manhattan.

Characterized by cottage-like, single-family housing units that residents call "bungalows," a very definite paucity of automotive traffic, extraordinarily healthy-looking children, wide vistas of sand and sea, a racially homogeneous population, a lack of any commerce and industry except that necessary to fulfill the most local needs, and a political organization akin to early New England settlements,

Breezy Point is not merely a place to live. To its residents, it is a way to live, a community life-style that is rapidly disappearing in an ever more deeply urbanized America.

Breezy Point is formally known as the Breezy Point Cooperative, Incorporated, which owns and operates approximately 400 square acres of land on a condominium basis. Residents own their bungalows via a proprietor's lease or owner's lease. Depending on the size, assessed valuation, and location of their homes, these tenant stockholders hold anywhere from 150 to 200 shares in the Cooperative. With the formation of the Cooperative and its acquisition of the community's acreage, Breezy Point became a legally private enclave or settlement closed to all trespassers.

Officers and members of the Breezy Point Board of Directors are elected by the community. This board employs a full-time manager. The Cooperative provides such necessary services as a security force; sanitation, water, beach, and parking lot maintenance; and limited intra-Cooperative transportation via mini-bus. The Cooperative also oversees commercial development within the community by building and maintaining a small shopping center, selecting chain stores such as Trunz Food Markets to operate in the center, and owning several restaurants and bars that are privately managed on a profit-sharing basis. Finally, the Cooperative builds and renovates such recreational facilities as athletic fields and basketball courts, some of which recently have been equipped with night lighting. Now 13 years old, the Cooperative publishes its own *Breezy Point Bulletin,* a newsletter mailed to all the Point's homeowners.

The Breezy Point Cooperative weaves the woof and warp of the fabric of community life. Importantly, it is the force that has maintained the community's private status within metropolitan New York, coordinating the fund-raising necessary for the Point to hire legal aid in its many struggles with city, state, and federal governments and representing the community's interests in negotiations with such large agencies as the National Park Service.

There was a "Breezy Point" even before the Cooperative's formation. But today the Cooperative is Breezy Point, and, as natives often say, "We are the Cooperative." While the Cooperative plans ahead with what it hopes is progressive leadership, it also actively seeks to preserve those special qualities of security, community, privacy, and recreation that have characterized Breezy Point in the past.

A COMMUNITY OF HOMOGENEITY AND CONTRAST

". . . a unique residential community where the greatest assets are the thousands of people who live there . . ."

– John J. Carroll, Chairman
Breezy Point Board of Directors
1970 Annual Report

Breezy Point today is basically a racially, socially, and economically homogeneous community. Politically, too, its citizens have been united by a common cause: the preservation of their community. However, specific contrasts between sections of the community, between summer and full-time residents, and between age groups do exist within this general homogeneity.

Socioeconomic Structure

Breezy Point's overall population does not run the usual economic gamut from welfare recipients to super-affluents; there are no pockets of poverty. Breezy Point is a lower-middle-class to middle-class community. The mean income in 1970 was $12,815, with family incomes clustering between $10,000 and $24,999. The table details the annual incomes of Breezy Point families as reported in the federal census of population in 1950, 1960, and 1970. To broaden comparison, similar data for the total New York standard metropolitan statistical area (SMSA) was drawn from the 1970 census figures.

ANNUAL FAMILY INCOMES

	Breezy Point Cooperative			N.Y. SMSA
	1950	1960	1970	1970
Income	470 families	390 families	599 families	2,970,425 families
Less than $1,000	19.0%	–––	0.8%	2.8%
$1,000 to $1,999	11.7%	9.2%	2.3%	2.3%
$2,000 to $2,999	19.0%	1.9%	0.8%	3.6%
$3,000 to $3,999	41.4%	1.2%	1.6%	4.1%
$4,000 to $4,999	5.3%	6.9%	2.5%	4.3%
$5,000 to $5,999	3.1%	15.3%	2.6%	5.0%
$6,000 to $6,999	–––	15.1%	10.8%	5.3%
$7,000 to $7,999	–––	11.0%	3.1%	5.7%
$8,000 to $8,999	–––	4.1%	5.0%	5.9%
$9,000 to $9,999	–––	3.1%	7.8%	5.8%
$10,000 to $14,999	(0.5% above	21.2%	34.5%	26.1%
$15,000 to $24,999	$10,000)	10.0%	22.3%	21.0%
$25,000 plus		1.5%	5.3%	8.3%

As seen in the 1970 figures, Breezy Point has considerably fewer families that can be considered "poor" when compared to the New York SMSA. Only 10.6 percent of the community's families earned annual incomes of less than $6,000. More than double that amount, 22.1 percent of all New York City families, can be found in the same income category. Of the families who were in full-time residence at Breezy Point, 64.6 percent had middle-class incomes in the range of $9,000 to $24,999; only 52.9 percent of all New York City families can be similarly classified. When compared to all New York City, Breezy Point has a smaller percentage of families earning more than $25,000 a year. Only in the lower-middle income bracket do Breezy Point and the New York SMSA seem comparable: 26.7 percent of Breezy Point families and 22.7 percent of all New York City families earn between $6,000 and $9,999 annually. In terms of income of its year-round residents, Breezy Point is more uniformly middle class than New York City at large. Although there has been recent development of a "Gold Coast" section of large and expensive homes, a traditional monied aristocracy does not exist.

When considering the ethnic and racial constitution of Breezy Point, shifts become apparent that reflect previous patterns of European immigration to America. Early in Breezy Point's history, settlement of the community centered around Roxbury and was predominantly German-American. Gradually, the ethnic shading changed to what residents popularly assume to be "60 percent Irish and 35 percent Italian." Early ethnic patterns of settlement – more vague than defined – have left no ethnic ghettos in Breezy Point. Perhaps this is due to the fact that of the approximately 2,400 full-time residents of Breezy Point (as of 1970), nearly 1,700 were native-born Americans of native-born parentage.

In the following table, the ethnic and racial makeup of Breezy Point since 1960 is described along with similar 1970 data for all of New York City.

POPULATION BREAKDOWN BY ETHNICITY AND RACE*

	Breezy Point		N.Y. SMSA
	1960 pop. 1,395	1970 pop. 2,215	1970 pop. 11,571,819
White			
Total foreign stock	29.0%	29.0%	39.4%
Irish	35.0%	40.0%	6.9%
German and Austrian	18.0%	8.5%	11.8%
Other northern European	25.0%	20.0%	5.2%
Italian	7.0%	3.8%	22.0%
Slavic (Polish, Russian, Czechoslovakian, Hungarian)	3.0%	13.5%	23.2%
Canadian, Mexican, Cuban	10.0%	3.2%	30.6%
Negro	0.5%	0.1%	16.3%

* Drawn from 1960 and 1970 federal census

The above data indicate the relative ethnic homogeneity of the full-time Breezy Point population. In 1970, 68.5 percent could be classified as northern Europeans, with an outstanding 40 percent of them being Irish-Americans. Outside the community, Breezy Point is known as a bastion of Brooklyn's middle-class Irish looking for the summer sun. A much smaller percentage of the foreign-born population and those of foreign stock in all New York City can be classified as northern European.

The data for 1970 indicate that there are fewer foreign-born Italians or Italians of foreign stock in Breezy Point than most residents interviewed believed. This figure (3.8 percent) does not include those Italian-Americans with native-born parents and Italian-born grandparents. Since the peak of Italian immigration to this country was within the first two decades of this century, many Italian-Americans fall into this category. Another factor to be considered is that first-generation Italian-Americans are less mobile in seeking places of residence than their children, preferring the older "Italian" neighborhoods of the city rather than ethnically mixed areas.

Since the formation of the Breezy Point Cooperative in the early 1960s, only two ethnic groups have increased their density: the Irish (from 35 percent to 40 percent) and Slavic peoples (from a minimal 3 percent to a surprising 13.5 percent). This, coupled with the steady decrease in the Negro population from 32 in 1950 to 2 in 1970, seems to be an indication not only of a growing ethnic and racial homogeneity, but a religious homogeneity and a uniformity in physical appearance. Polish and Hungarians are predominantly Catholic, and often their physical appearance is less different from northern Europeans than the physical appearance of the Italians, Spanish, Cubans, Puerto Ricans, and Mexicans.

A factor that becomes visible in both tables is the decrease in the Breezy Point population from 1950 to 1960 just before the formation of the Cooperative, which insured private status for the community, and the increase in population since the legitimization of the Cooperative. This is due, in part, to more people making Breezy Point their year-round home.

Breezy Point is generally Christian in religion; Catholics predominate, followed by Protestants. Representatives of the Cooperative stated that there were several Jewish families in Breezy Point, but most residents interviewed did not know any personally. One Pointer explained that thinking there are no Jews in Breezy Point is a "mistaken belief; that there have been Jews at the Point for 40 years." A retired resident with a Jewish daughter-in-law stated that his son's wife would never live in Breezy Point because "she wouldn't like it; she'd have no friends; there would be nothing for her." Another resident said Jews don't like to live in Breezy Point because there "is no temple or synagogue for them." There are, however, synagogues no farther away than the Neponsit/Belle Harbor area of the Rockaways.

In terms of education, the residents of Breezy Point display another aspect of their homogeneity. Nearly all residents have experienced some high school training, with the median number of years spent in school being 12.0. Ten percent of the population over 25 has some college education.

Generally, Pointers are New Yorkers. Those in full-time residence probably moved from Brooklyn or Queens, first becoming familiar with the community through several years of summer residence. Seasonal Pointers – those who move in from Memorial Day to Labor Day – also come from the metropolitan boroughs, although the Point has seasonal residents from many other states. Some older residents "follow the sun," spending summers on the Point and winters in Florida or Arizona.

Almost everyone has family ties on the Point beyond the nuclear family, with second and third and fourth generation Pointers not unusual. Bungalows become family possessions often "passed around" within a family from father to son, uncle to nephew, sister to brother, cousin to cousin, etc. One family has 14 bungalows, homes changing hands within the family when owners want to retire or move or when a marriage or a death takes place.

With such a basically homogeneous population, it is not difficult to construct a profile of the average Breezy Point resident. He is white, in his middle- to late-40s, and married with two children. His grandparents were born in Ireland, and he thinks of himself as Irish. He spends his summers on the Point, having first learned about the community from a brother or sister who has a bungalow there. With a high school education, he is probably a policeman or fireman or skilled worker who lives in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, or Maspeth, Queens. Lately, his changing neighborhood and his concern for his family's physical safety have made him think about selling his house and winterizing his bungalow at Breezy Point. It might be a lot smaller than his Brooklyn home, but at least his wife is safe on the streets at night; at least he knows his neighbors, who are not much different from him; at least hard drugs are across the bay; at least there are no outsiders, no strangers.

Sociopolitical Structure

Some of the contrasts characteristic of Breezy Point emerge when examining the community's sociopolitical structure. Although the Cooperative is within a political district of Queens County and represented on the city council, its political identification has a more intracommunity quality. The Breezy Point Cooperative is three separate subcommunities, each with an individual character:

Roxbury – Settled first by German-Americans, it grew helter-skelter, with tiny bungalows close together.

Rockaway Point – Further west on the peninsula, it was settled by Irish-Americans and grew in rows of tiny, similar bungalows on both bay and ocean side.

Breezy Point – The most westerly section, it was settled last by both Irish and Italians with larger, more extravagant bungalows built by a developer. Later homes were constructed privately.

Much of Rockaway Point and Breezy Point was developed by the Rockaway Point Development Corporation under John Austin.

Each of the communities has a separate civic association: the Roxbury Peoples Association, the Rockaway Point Association, and the Point Breeze Association. All homeowners and their families are members of one of these associations by virtue of and depending on their area of residence. There are no nonmembers in the Cooperative. These organizations perform a variety of services, such as hiring and training lifeguards, and fulfill a social function by sponsoring such events as dances, card parties, and communion breakfasts. They also represent their respective communities in dealing with the Cooperative.

Ideally, a homeowner from each block volunteers to serve as a Block Captain, whose responsibilities include anything from the seasonal construction of boardwalks to spontaneous fund-raising efforts for a neighbor in trouble. Officers of these associations are nominated and elected by their fellow residents. They also form a pool of proven civic talent from which the Cooperative's nominating committee can choose candidates for the Board of Directors, the Cooperative's decision-making body. These civic associations existed long before the Cooperative, and one of their main functions in the past was to represent, through their elected officials, the residents of their communities in communications with the Rockaway Point Development Corporation, literally the landlord from which residents rented their bungalows and upon which they depended for many community services. For all residents of the Point, these associations are the first and most frequent contact with the community's political structure and the arena for most of their political participation.

More apparent contrasts in the makeup of Breezy Point are produced by selected physical aspects of the area and the seasonal rhythm of life. Both stimulate differences in life-styles and some conflicts.

Bayside/Oceanside – Breezy Point is a small slice of the Rockaway peninsula, which hangs off Long Island like an appendix. The northern shores enjoy the relative tranquility of the Rockaway Inlet and Jamaica Bay, while the southern shores are pounded by the Atlantic Ocean and blown by constant ocean breezes.

Because the bay's waters are predictable in their serenity, Pointers have chosen to build their homes close to the water. Many homes were on stilts until a hurricane in the early 1960s. Baysiders don't have to *go* to the beach; it is so close it is like another room added onto their small bungalows. Mothers can watch their children in the water by looking out their windows. Refreshments come right from the kitchen. As a result of all this, there is a great deal more "beach-life" on the bayside. The beaches, which are smaller than on the oceanside, are rarely empty.

Strong winds, rough waters, and high tides keep the oceanside bungalows farther from the water, and a naturally widening beach pushes the homes farther from the ocean each year. As a result, with the exception of the southernmost residents, oceansiders must *go* to the beach: chairs, blankets, umbrellas, towels, food, and mothers with their children are a more common sight on the ocean beaches. Women without children or with grown children make relatively little use of the beach, seeking daytime diversion in visiting or shopping outside the Cooperative. For the homemaking female, much of the daytime is spent doing laundry, including sandy towels, blankets, and wet bathing suits. Windy days, in particular, are laundry days at the Point. Food shopping is the next most important chore, and this is complicated by the fact that in certain areas of the community there are no streets, and therefore no cars. A frequent sight is a mother and her small children walking to food stores pulling a red wagon to carry the groceries.

Baysiders are small-boat owners mooring their craft right outside their front doors. Their language is full of seafaring jargon and bits of sea knowledge, much like natives of Cape Cod. Oceansiders are less conscious of the beach and the water. Those interviewed felt that beach activities were mostly for children and young people.

Baysiders and oceansiders recognize their respective differences, and the contrasts seem to cause few if any overt conflicts, beyond gentle teasing. Observation and interviews provided few instances of cross-socializing because residents are very block-oriented. People from the bay and ocean sides do not get together very often, except for club, church, or civic association meetings. The annual Surf Club dinner is the largest occasion for residents from all parts of the community to get together.

Streets/Walks — In Breezy Point, one reasonably reliable indicator of status is place of residence: whether one lives in the "streets" or "walks" section, and just where within those sections. (The relatively new "Gold Coast" section seems divorced from the rest of the community at this point; its residents keep mostly to themselves.)

Most of Roxbury and at least half of Rockaway Point are laid out in an informal type of development that Breezy Pointers call the "walks concept." This means that single-family bungalows face each other across a 6- to 8-foot concrete walk rather than across a street with sidewalks and curbs. There are no streets in these sections of the

Cooperative. Residents must leave their cars in access parking lots and walk to their homes. Bungalows are tiny, one-storied, and so close together that the eaves of one roof often are no more than 10 inches from the next. This is "close-quarters" living, both inside and outside, making privacy a rare commodity.

Bungalows on the more easterly walks seem less well cared for than those on the westerly walks and streets. A haphazard, informal atmosphere exists throughout the area, with toys, bikes, red wagons, scuba gear, surf boards, folding chairs, and wet bathing suits scattered about. There have been few attempts at landscaping or gardening the small property plots. Winterized bungalows are not common sights. Going on into the Breezy Point subcommunity to Lincoln and Marion Walks, one begins to see spit-and-polish residences, trim landscaping, and recent winterizations; the walks seem to be transformed from a casual beach colony to a more formal year-round community.

Some residents and Cooperative representatives speak fondly of the "walks concept" and its full life-style. Here is a microcosmic world of friendly neighbors and heightened communal life. Proximity and familiarity, instead of breeding contempt, nurture an atmosphere of security without anonymity and alienation, without strangers and strange ways to encounter and deal with. Some Pointers talk of life on the walks as a daily celebration of that same spirit that made pioneering Americans raise each other's barns, marry each other's children, defend each other's rights, and support each other through personal tragedies. Limited observation did show that walks residents are frequently in each other's homes or on each other's porches, drinking each other's beer and discussing life on the walks, Gateway, their children, Watergate, and the Cooperative.

Going further west, a different world unfolds beyond Utica Walk. Here is the model suburban strip development minus the uniformly sodded and rectangular front lawns. This is the world of the "streets" – rows of once-identical bungalows, built by a developer on streets finally mapped by New York City in 1947, and housing units on 40- by 100-foot plots dictated by city building and zoning regulations. This is a serene, orderly world with streets closed to non-Cooperative visitors by gates that can be opened only with the Cooperative I.D. card. Visually trim and tidy, this area has more space between bungalows, many winterized units, new paint, front and back yards of neatly raked sand and seashell borders. Take away the sand and sea, and the streets could be part of Whitestone or Baldwin, Long Island. Dotted among the developer-built homes are more recently built homes, which are larger and more lavish than the bungalows. A police captain was interviewed while he was painting the front door of his recently completed house. The house was large, cedar-shingled, and had no characteristics of either the typical Breezy Point bungalow or beach house (decks, small rooms, large overhanging eaves). This house was more representative of those found in the later built, non-Levittown suburbs. The "streets" have a settled

community atmosphere and their residents manifest very regular patterns of life: husbands and wives leaving daily for their jobs; regular meal hours; more formal socializing.

The Gold Coast — The latest area of development in Breezy Point is Beach 216 Street and Palmer Drive on the bayside. Sometimes referred to as the Gold Coast, this is a section of expensive year-round homes with none of the aspects of beach houses or summer bungalows. This area of obvious affluence, with such well-accepted symbols of status (because they are rare in Breezy Point) as larger plots of land, lawns, trees, stone construction, garages, and central air conditioning, is not a center of influence. As some residents say, people on Palmer Drive "keep to themselves." They are newcomers in a community where long residence is a social value and a minor indicator of social status.

Summer Residents/Full-Time Residents — The most apparent contrast among the homogeneous Breezy Point population is between summer and full-time residents. For most of its nearly 100-year life span, Breezy Point has been a summer colony. It was not until the opening of the Marine Parkway Bridge in 1937 and the housing shortage after World War II that a real thrust toward full-time residence began. Of the 2,768 homes in Breezy Point, approximately 1,100 are winterized or newly built year-round units. With Memorial Day comes the onslaught of summer residents who, with their different life-styles, different attitudes about the community, and different needs, occasionally encounter some silent and some not-so-silent resistance from year-round Pointers.

There are a few very pragmatic reasons for uneasy feelings between year-round residents and "gypsies" (what the full-time residents call summer Pointers). Whether a Breezy Point homeowner chooses to remain in the community all year or just during the summer season, he must pay an average of $70 in monthly carrying charges 12 months a year. It is with these carrying charges that the Cooperative pays for lighting, sanitation, road and beach maintenance, Cooperative mortgage payments, and taxes. As a result, summer residents feel that although they utilize these services only 4 months a year, their support keeps the community going all year. Though cognizant of this situation, year-round Pointers complain about summer crowding, noise, confusion, and traffic.

These factors in combination produce a certain amount of friction and resentment, and subtler elements are also at work to reinforce this resentment. Winter and summer residents have different community attitudes, which are reflected in their somewhat different life-styles. Breezy Point is the only home for year-round residents. They have no community ties elsewhere in terms of schools, churches, recreation, political interests, or associations. For 12 months a year they populate the membership roles of ladies auxiliaries, volunteer fire departments, and the like. Those who maintain only

summer residence in Breezy Point are generally "on vacation." They choose to become less involved in community activities. As one summer bayside resident explained, this is the summer Pointer's "time off," a release from his winter burden of responsibilities. Most of his civic responsibilities and awarenesses lie elsewhere.

Year-round residents of Breezy Point often prefer the tranquility of the off-season months. Many full-time residents point out that winter brings what neighbors are left closer together in an attempt to ward off loneliness. As a result, the year-round Pointers become a series of very tightly knit groups born out of sharing winter hardships and inconveniences such as lack of ferry service, the necessary forming of car pools to get to work, the closing of some stores, and severe weather conditions or late-season hurricanes. This is a way of life the summer resident knows little about.

The division between winter and summer residents also shows up in the interaction patterns of the teenagers at Breezy Point. Tending to form tight cliques, summer and winter teenagers do not socialize with each other. Many teenagers verified this area of conflict, explaining that teenagers who go to the same schools, the same movies, and the same parties the whole year have different interests than the summer youngsters. The young people also differentiate and group themselves along another spectrum, their style of amusement. The chief security officer listed three such groupings: the "straights," the drug users, and the drinkers. The drug users are the smallest group and currently are growing smaller. Security force patrolmen have dealt with only three heroin users in 5 years. The drinkers are increasing in number, perhaps as a result of the shrinking number of drug users.

It is also among the young that the strongest dissatisfaction with the Cooperative is expressed. Two examples of what young people consider the Cooperative's inept expenditure policies were repeatedly cited in interviews: the replacement of the floor at the Bay Terrace Restaurant with wood instead of a more durable material and the paving of the parking lots. Several interviewees said that this sort of dissatisfaction is one reason some young residents are not considering settling permanently in the Cooperative.

A BELEAGUERED COMMUNITY

History

Breezy Point's history and way of life began nearly 100 years ago when German-Americans from Ridgewood, Glendale, Maspeth, and Middle Village, Queens, set up a tent colony where Roxbury is now. These were, in essence, "squatters." Later, when the Southern Pacific Railroad acquired the Point for a projected railroad spur, it leased tent sites for $5 a year. These tent sites became cottage and shanty sites, and Roxbury grew informally and haphazardly. There were simultaneous tent settlements

in Rockaway Point. Sturdy houses were built on the peninsula's high land, spreading the community in the helter-skelter pattern visible in maps of the area. Beach clubs and hotels sprang up with surrounding cottage colonies. The first hotel in the community was opened by Nels Friberg in 1904. (Mr. Friberg's descendants still live at the Point.) The varied clientele of the hotel were vacationers who came from far and wide on the ferries from Sheepshead Bay and Canarsie. Another large hotel was opened by Philip H. Reid on what is now the bayside half of Reid Avenue. In its early years, the Roxbury settlement was known as the "German Riviera."

Before access roads connected Breezy Point to the mainland, the business of living was a very different affair for the 8,000 summer residents (Bellot 1918). Necessities and luxuries alike were brought to the Point by boat. There was a vegetable boat, an ice boat, and even a furniture boat. Pointers often went down to the bayside piers to make their purchases directly. In later years, the Point was equipped with electricity during the summer, but this was shut down during the winter months, leaving the Point without any power or public lighting. One of the most colorful Breezy Point traditions, still vital today, can be traced back to the community's summer colony status. To cap off the summer season with a rousing farewell, residents would parade and party for the whole Labor Day weekend. Today, it is a community-wide celebration still highlighted by a parade of colorfully costumed residents, local bands, marching units from local clubs and associations, and locally designed and built floats. In Roxbury, during the "Labor Day Mardi Gras," the party goes nonstop for 3 days and people lie down to sleep wherever and whenever they feel tired.

In 1922, the Southern Pacific Railroad leased the entire Point to the Rockaway Point Development Corporation. This transaction began the first really large-scale development of the area in any organized fashion. By 1927, the development corporation could buy the Point outright, with the exception of Fort Tilden. (Private ownership of the land within the Cooperative has been traced back to 1685, when a colonial grant was issued to Captain John Palmer by the English governor, Thomas Dongan, in conjunction with the Long Island tribal chieftan Tockapoucha. However, during the 19th century the federal government, and possibly New York State, held title to some parcel of the land area under study.)

Development of the area continued to Suffolk and Tioga Walks until New York City called a halt to construction, its reason being that houses were being built too close together. In 1947, the city mapped Breezy Point for the first time and required all houses to be built on 40- by 100-foot plots facing mapped streets. So the Breezy Point "walks" ended, and the "streets" began.

A Threat and a Reaction

> "Only time will tell what a magnificent victory the 2,700 families of Breezy Point won with Mayor Wagner's compromise beach plan . . . . for years to come this will be one of the most exclusive colonies this side of Newport."
>
> —"Brooklyn Beat"
> *The Daily News,* September 17, 1963

In 1960, the harsher realities of the world across the bay broke in on the Point with the announcement in a Walter Winchell newspaper column that the Rockaway Point Development Corporation was selling its landholdings. Most residents had no idea that their "landlord" was considering the sale of its property. The prospective buyer was Urban Improvements, a temporary title later changed to Atlantic Improvement Corporation. The AIC intended to demolish the bungalow colonies and replace them with high-rise, low-income housing. Not only summer homes were threatened, but, more importantly, a way of life was in jeopardy. It was this threat to their homes and their carefully constructed social reality that knotted the already closely knit Pointers into a united and formidable force.

In March 1960, the boards of directors of the three civic associations met and chose appropriate members of the communities to form an 18-member Joint Action Committee. This committee, the first step toward the formation of the Cooperative, organized a campaign to purchase from AIC the land on which Breezy Point homes stood. The initial problem was to hire competent legal aid – a very costly endeavor. During a Labor Day weekend, volunteers organized a door-to-door collection operation, obtaining $500 in cash from nearly every family. By the holiday's end, $1,500,000 in cash had been collected. High-powered legal aid was hired. This was the first in a series of maneuvers uncharacteristic of Breezy Point's quiet and unobtrusive way of life, but very characteristic of a group whose life-style is threatened by outside forces. The residents of Breezy Point coalesced to begin their long struggle.

To ensure their right to live where and how they had always lived, Pointers began simply: writing the mayor, seeing him personally, instituting a massive letter-writing campaign to all involved agencies. Slowly, methods escalated. The AIC and the Rockaway Point Development Corporation agreed to sell the newly forming Cooperative 403 square acres, on which most of the Breezy Point homes stood. The selling price, however, was almost $12,000,000 – nearly $3,000,000 of which was demanded in cash.

In order to obtain the necessary mortgage from Massachusetts Mutual, a condition had to be met: 2,000 signed leases had to be delivered before January 1, 1961. This meant

that all those residents of Breezy Point who formerly rented their bungalows from the Rockaway Point Development Corporation had to enter into a proprietor's or owner's lease arrangement in order to secure the birth of the Cooperative and the down payment for its land. Logistically, the problem involved closings of over 2,000 leases between December 26, 1960, and New Year's Day. A separate floor of the Williamsburgh Savings Bank in downtown Brooklyn was obtained, and closings, at the rate of 400 a day, were held on a round-the-clock basis. Families were transported from the Point to the bank by volunteers who used cars, buses, and boats, often in very difficult weather. Volunteers from the Point and the bank did much of the clerical work necessary to keep the operation going.

Another problem beset the Pointers. Many of their homes fell outside the boundaries of the 403 acres they were buying. Rather than give up these little bungalows, they moved them by barge along the bay, or by truck along Rockaway Point Boulevard, to within the limits of their now private community.

The entire crisis period is recounted eagerly by most of the Point's residents who lived through it and contributed in some way to its settlement. Indeed, the story takes on the quality of community legend or myth – much as the legends recounted by Indian tribes concerning the great deeds of their forefathers. If nothing else, the cooperation and cohesion necessary to carry out the entire endeavor successfully has provided Breezy Point with a deeper sense of its own identity as a community. It is no wonder that Pointers often liken themselves to colonial Americans who had to struggle together to wrest their homes from the wilderness.

Two quiet years passed before a new threat occurred: The New York City administration of Mayor Robert Wagner decided to develop a large park at Breezy Point following strong recommendation by a citizens committee headed by Mrs. Marshall Field, the Regional Planning Association, the NAACP, and the Urban League. The city's plan also included the demolition of the Cooperative community. Resentment ran high along the walks and streets of the Point. Pointers felt that the tremendous struggle and financial investment to buy their land and form the Cooperative had more than earned them the right to maintain their way of life without interference from outsiders. They saw their community as a safe, sane alternative to the city around them and a credit to the city and state. They also saw no logical reason why the city would destroy their homes for a park, especially when they could prove that Jacob Riis, a city park close to their homes, was under-utilized.

Centrally organized now – the Cooperative being several years old – residents waged a vocal public campaign against city powers. A peninsula-to-city hall march was organized, pickets ringed city hall, a Circle Line boat was hired to carry protesting residents, bumper stickers blossomed all over the city, helicopters and buses were brought into the breach along with volunteer fire trucks and community ambulances.

That the campaign was successful is part of the picture, but not the entire portrait. The fact that the Breezy Point way of life was so vital to the residents that they engaged in public protests and demonstrations deserves consideration. To most Breezy Pointers such public tactics felt, as one resident put it, "undignified." "We are not demonstrators," he said, "but we did it." Pointers are generally proud of their participation in these public protests. "We were one of the original people who beat city hall. We were there until 5:00 in the morning. We brought people in in relays on buses; brought all our ambulances, used boats, and a helicopter." Another Pointer summed it up: "I don't think you've lived in the city until you've carried a picket sign."

The "little people" of Breezy Point, using ways that made some of them feel undignified, did beat city hall – for a while. New York guaranteed the continuance of the Breezy Point Cooperative. For Pointers, however, the siege was not over yet.

In May 1969 the Regional Planning Commission urged the federal government to take over Breezy Point as a national seashore. Events tumbled along rapidly with Secretary of the Interior Hickle in July 1969 calling for a move to take "parks to the people" in the eastern United States and a government study recommending the establishment of Gateway National Recreation Area at the entrance to New York Harbor. By December 1969, the length of the Cooperative's life span seemed a misty speculation, with rumors about its land area being absorbed into a national park within 20 years. *The New York Times* favored the development of Gateway National Recreation Area and, finally, in May 1971, President Nixon gave it his full public support. However, Pointers mobilized for action again, being veterans of such strife. Cooperative representatives testified before congressional subcommittees, explaining their plan for peaceful co-existence: i.e., the development of a national park with Breezy Point as an exempted community within the park's boundaries. The community was subsequently exempted from park development; yet many residents still worry about the future of the community.

Breezy Point residents, surrounded by Gateway, don't know what to expect. They are afraid that, like the middle section of a candy bar, Breezy Point will be nibbled from both ends. The community has lost its private access to the beachfront on the oceanside. The development of Gateway as a national park will mean the influx of thousands of park users, many (Pointers think) coming from crime-congested and poverty-stricken urban areas. Can Breezy Point maintain its cherished and hard-fought-for privacy? Pointers so far have kept the "outside" just that, and they are prepared to fight to keep it there, outside their gates.

A WAY OF LIFE

> *". . . the worst s.o.b. in the world, getting off the /Breezy Point/ ferry becomes a nice fella."*
>
> – John Dirken
> Breezy Point Real Estate Agent

John Dirken is a peppery real estate agent who, with his wife Caroline, has lived on a tidy Breezy Point street for more than 15 years. His description of the average Pointer provides an apt introduction to any attempt at finding out what the Breezy Point way of life means to a Breezy Pointer:

> There's no way you can describe the average person down here. They drop their – it's like taking off a piece of clothing when you come down here. People are friendly. And, of course, you have an area of safety and they relax more. And the proximity of the houses may have something to do with it . . . . If a neighbor has any trouble, if they need money, if there's a fire – people run benefits for them. This is something you can't put a price on. This is one of the intangibles. . . .

The "intangibles" – the friendliness, the freedom from fear, and the knowledge that your next door neighbor is not and will not be much different from you – are what the Breezy Pointers, marching with picket signs, were fighting for. Many residents call the Point their "Shangri-la," and as one interviewee explained, "those who don't live here all year round count the winter days until they can come back." In trying to find out what "Shangri-la" meant, dozens of similar responses turned up in almost all interviews:

A sense of community ("friendliness")
Safety/security ("freedom from fear")
Control of social environment
Ownership/participation

Not listed in order of priority, neither are these elements discrete. Rather, they meld and mingle, reinforcing and insuring each other, and in total becoming the Breezy Point way of life.

A Sense of Community

There are probably no two more unlike and antagonistic groups than the young citizens of the metaphorical Woodstock Nation and the citizens of Breezy Point. Yet they share a common social value in their desire and striving for a strong personal sense

of community, a dissipation of the current sense of alienation, a sharing of common experience, and a breakdown of the sort of personal anonymity that can damage the individual's sense of humanity.

When Pointers were interviewed about why they liked Breezy Point, they consistently explained that at the Point they felt like "somebody with feelings," "human beings," "real persons," and not "just numbers." They contrasted these feelings with how their working life across the bay in the city made them feel. One small-scale phenomenon of community relations was very striking: Some families and couples without children frequently take their meals together in a communal fashion. One couple interviewed had been sharing meals with four other couples for 20 years. There was a communal space set aside on a plot of land between bungalows where these meals were shared. The space – with tables, chairs, and garden – was tidily maintained through cooperative effort.

Breezy Point residents feel they can depend on each other and often do rely on each other, much like residents of isolated frontier towns had to cooperate in order to survive. Pregnant women never carry bundles home from the supermarket; someone always comes to their aid. Younger residents check on the elderly. Children of a family temporarily in distress are fed and cared for. A lost or wandering child is always brought home; there is no fear of child molestation. People "see to" the homes of neighbors who are away. For young mothers, not having to worry about their children's safety was very important, a reason for their moving to the Point. One said, "I don't have to watch my baby daughter every second she's out. No one will hurt her here."

Another phenomenon of cooperation is the "hitchhiking syndrome." Intracommunity hitchhiking is so prevalent that few residents use the Cooperative mini-bus, which was provided to discourage hitchhiking. A Pointer without a car has no problem getting from one area to another within Cooperative boundaries. All he need do is start out on foot, and within minutes another Pointer in a car will pick him up. In fact, people without cars depend on this phenomenon to get around. Residents have no fears about hitchhiking or picking up hitchhikers as do people on public roads. (In studying the community, researchers often used the "hitchhiking syndrome" to great advantage: Not only did it enable them to get from one place to another, but they met friendly drivers, many of whom enjoyed being interviewed.)

Many residents explained how the amount of social interaction acted as a buffer against loneliness and isolation. At Breezy Point, new acquaintances quickly become old friends, and people visit each other's homes frequently in the evenings and spend a great deal of time sharing experiences and recounting the day's events. Summers bring a constant round of block parties. The large number of social, civic, and church associations provide a varied constellation of social activities so that no Pointer lacks

the opportunity to gather with his fellows. Most homemaking women who were interviewed spoke of the informal daytime social life, when women drop in to friends' and neighbors' houses for coffee and talk. Talk, or talking together, seemed to be what Pointers really meant by socializing, what they did most, and what they enjoyed most. Mrs. Russo, standing in front of her bungalow with her husband and baby, sounded like a typical Pointer when she agreed to be interviewed for research purposes:

> I love it here. New people move in, and soon they're old friends . . . . There's no way anyone could describe in words or put down on paper what it's like to live in Breezy Point. There's no place like it.

Safety and Security

Not a single resident interviewed failed to mention as one of the prime benefits of being a Pointer safety for self and children and the quieting sense of security this produces. The fact that they live but a short walk from clean and uncrowded beaches does not seem to have as much meaning and value as the community's low crime rate and its private status. Many full-time residents made their final decision to move into the community after a frightening first-hand encounter with city crime: muggings, rapes, burglaries. Breezy Point, as every resident knows, is one of the safest areas in metropolitan New York. Pointers like to say that there has never been a major crime of personal violence committed in the community. This may or may not be an exaggeration; but the spirit of the statement seems to be true, and some Pointers do sleep with their doors unlocked. The crime most frequently committed within the community is vandalism by youthful offenders. This includes spraying paint, destroying Cooperative fences, and trespassing into homes closed for the winter. Most young trespassers who are apprehended are the children of the owners of the home and are using the house for sexual trysts and beer parties. The chief security officer of Breezy Point's private security force noted that purse-snatching was the most serious crime committed as long as he has held his present position.

The Breezy Point Security Force is a 17-man team that nearly doubles its size in the summer. In terms of legal police power, the members of this force may issue New York City summonses. Those security force members who are also special New York City patrolmen may arrest any suspected offenders. These offenders are then held until the New York 100th Police Precinct is notified and its people take action.

Much of the security force time is spent patrolling the beaches and such potential trouble areas as bars, restaurants, and gathering places for young people. Dealing with trespassers is another duty of great concern to the community at large. To Breezy Pointers, uninvited outsiders mean potential trouble.

The security force mans the information booth and gates that straddle Rockaway Point Boulevard at the entrance to the community. Since the boulevard is a public road,

anyone may drive through the community. However, only Pointers who carry Cooperative I.D. cards (which soon will include photos) and their guests (who are issued temporary parking passes) may use the parking lots, walk along the streets, or use the beaches. Should a trespasser use a parking lot, a special wheel lock can be put on his car to prevent him from moving it, or a nonremovable sticker may be glued across his windshield. The security force also has the option of removing the car from Cooperative land — a costly and infrequently used alternative.

Control of Social Environment

Also contributing to the Pointers' feeling of security is the control of the social environment within the community. Residents of Breezy Point feel safe within their gates. The privately owned status of the land insures their power to control who lives in the community through a series of regulations that directly or indirectly dictate who may or may not purchase or rent homes:

> Prospective bungalow buyers must first join the appropriate subcommunity organization.
>
> They must provide three letters of recommendation from residents in good standing.
>
> The Cooperative conducts a search, similar to a bank search, into the credit rating, financial sources, and social standing of a prospective resident.
>
> Prospective buyers cannot acquire external financing for their homes: i.e., the Cooperative will allow no bank or finance organization to acquire a mortgage on a residence within the Cooperative. The hopeful homeowner must obtain a personal loan or have sufficient cash on hand to buy his bungalow.
>
> A homeowner may rent his bungalow for only two consecutive seasons; the third year he must live in it himself. A prospective renter must provide letters of recommendation, just as the potential buyer.

The residents like these regulations. Their legal status as a private community enables them to maintain a social environment of racial homogeneity. Outsiders are kept out. Letters of recommendation are provided mostly for relatives and close friends: newly married sons and daughters and other relatives, or summer renters who have spent many seasons establishing community ties and proving their acceptability to their neighbors.

Ownership and Participation

There is little available literature concerning the power of residents of private communities to direct community life and to establish a sense of community identity.

A resident of Bensonhurst, Brooklyn, probably does not experience a strong identification with his community and probably feels quite powerless in the face of New York's vast political complex. If he does vote regularly, he feels that his vote counts for little and that he has a very small if any say in how the city treats him. Full-time Breezy Point residents, on the other hand, do not identify themselves as New Yorkers. In fact, most shun the city across the bay. They are Pointers by their own definition: a cluster of people legally separate in life-style from New York City. Pointers have successfully confronted the machinations of the New York City administration in order to maintain their separateness. Their sense of ownership of their community leads to feelings of competence in the face of municipal power.

All residents interviewed voiced extraordinary pride in the community itself and what it had accomplished. Nearly every resident interviewed felt that he was part of the Cooperative and that he had a powerful say in the actions taken and the decisions made by Cooperative representatives. When discontent arose over Cooperative operations, action by residents took the form of independent candidacy for Cooperative office. The feeling of "Kafkaesque" impotency experienced by New Yorkers at large is lacking in Breezy Point.

Social life in Breezy Point is a complex of civic and social organizations that offer residents a varied spectrum of social interaction and opportunities for participation. Besides the three main civic associations, the five churches in the Cooperative have organized clubs offering various forms of participation for all residents. The Antlers Club (Elks) plus its ladies auxiliary, the Roxbury Square Club, the volunteer fire departments, the Catholic Club, the Pointers Club, the Rockaway Point Square Club, even the Cooperative itself and a wide range of softball, baseball, basketball, and swimming teams provide a daily and nightly schedule of activities. Card parties, penny socials, bazaars, communion breakfasts, block parties, ethnic nights, box socials, games, child and adult beauty contests, theatrical productions, and glee clubs all abound. And for the more civic-minded volunteers, fire department and emergency action teams call frequent practice runs, training sessions, and competitions. Since Pointers are not afraid to go out at night and do not need cars of their own, these social opportunities are rarely missed. When there is no organized activity offered, which is very rare during the summer, Pointers participate in the simple, naturally occurring occasions of living: weddings, christenings, birthdays, wakes, and showers, which bring relatives and neighbors together.

The Cooperative operates a teen club, which offers such activities as free movies and beach parties. In 1973 the club sponsored a musical review with an all-Cooperative teen cast. The Cooperative also runs a baseball clinic, staffed by professional and college athletes, and a "place to go" program in Catholic church halls, providing highschoolers with a gathering place. The Catholic Youth Organization operates a youth center for youngsters ages 8 to 12. Many young people prefer to just "hang out" with their

friends at either the Sugar Bowl, a Cooperative-owned and privately managed beer and burger hut on the oceanside, or Henny's, a pizza palace on the bayside. No hard liquor is served in either establishment. A Pointer must prove that he is 21 to drink at the Bay Terrace Bar.

There is one movie house in the community, a less than extravagant, informal building that shows nothing but GP (general patronage) movies because the community will not allow anything else. This trend in family-style movies repeats itself with literature (magazines, paperback books, etc.) for sale in local stores. No *Playboy* or similar magazines are in evidence, nor any sexually explicit fiction. Arts and crafts books and baby-care books are prevalent.

With both the opportunities and the safety to participate, Pointers have alternatives to the loneliness experienced by many urbanites. "Everyone knows everyone" is the usual description of the community's social life. While spontaneous socializing is either block-oriented or church-oriented, there are several opportunities for all groups to get together. As one resident said, these opportunities – usually dinner dances – are always sold out weeks in advance.

The Breezy Pointers' Choice

The Breezy Point way of life is an appealing alternative to life as it is lived in the rest of metropolitan New York. Also, it may be a direct reaction to life as it is lived in "the city." Life within the community is full and relatively serene by Pointers' standards. Conflicts are minimal, and serious crime almost nonexistent. To insure such a haven within an arena of urban tension, the residents have closed out the city via the legal apparatus of private ownership and cooperative management. Through complex regulations, they deny admittance to that part of the city population they identify with the city's problems: minority groups. To some outsiders interviewed – doctoral students at the City University, employees of city agencies, elementary and secondary school teachers – Breezy Point is a white, lower-middle-class ghetto so overly sensitized to the insecurities of city life that paranoia has made it withdraw into itself and lock its gates with legal forms of bigotry. To the Pointer, his community is Shangri-la: a safe, sane, clean, healthy place where he cares for his neighbors and they for him, and he is close enough to his job not to be burdened either financially or physically by the typical suburban commute. It is also, for Pointers, a success story of which they are a part. The community has survived onslaughts by city, state, and federal governments and has flowered. It is a return to those American values of an earlier time: respect for law and social order, the sanctity of the family, cooperation, and civic pride. Breezy Point provides its citizens with what the city cannot: a sense of identity and a reaffirmation of their worth as individuals.

To maintain this haven, a Pointer makes a costly choice for a man or family restricted by the realities of a lower-middle-class income. More and more frequently, summer

residents are choosing to sell their winter homes or leave their winter apartments, often more comfortable and convenient than their summer bungalows, to make the large financial investment necessary to winterize their Breezy Point cottages for full-time residence. The Cooperative is strict about winterization; self-imposed building codes are tighter than those delineated by New York City. Winterization has become, for some summer residents, a dream for which to plan and save.

The coming of Gateway National Recreation Area has not stopped this drive toward total winterization. The community continues to solidify its full-time status in the face of the inevitable changes Gateway will produce. Winterization has become akin to a vote of confidence in Breezy Point: The community is determined to maintain its haven atmosphere.

CONCLUSION

Breezy Point is homogeneous – class-wise, race-wise, and value-wise – and harbors a deep mistrust of outsiders. It has a large seasonal population, a cooperative structure, private status, and a long history as a residential recreation area for lower-middle-class and middle-class families. Unlike many seasonal communities, it has never attracted a summer population of single people, and since the formation of the Cooperative, single people are discouraged. In some ways, Breezy Point is similar to the private sport and leisure communities being developed in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, but the population of Breezy Point is less affluent and its main direction now is not toward recreation.

Breezy Point can be observed from the vantage point of conflict relations and their ramifications. Georg Simmel (1955) saw, as a function of conflict, the intensification of group cohesion.

> [A conflicting external force] may not only heighten the concentration of an existing unit, radically eliminating all elements which might blur the distinctiveness of its boundaries against the enemy; it may also bring persons and groups together which have otherwise nothing to do with each other.

Simmel goes on to speak of the unification for the purpose of fighting when there is only the perception of an external threat.

> It is characteristic that [such] unity, while it originates in conflict, and for purposes of conflict, maintains itself beyond the period of struggle. It comes to have additional interests and associative forces which no longer have any relation to the initial purpose.

Before the initial threat presented by the sale of Breezy Point acreage by the Rockaway Point Development Corporation, the area was three loosely joined communities – all primarily summer escape havens. Out of threat and conflict was born the Breezy Point Cooperative and the community itself, as it exists now with its new direction toward major full-time residence. Each new conflict with city and federal agencies serves to strengthen the cohesion of the community, to reinforce its resolve to maintain itself as it is and wants to be. This is not to say that cohesion in the face of conflict is Breezy Point's sole motivation. Escape from the trauma of city life, a need to feel physically safe and secure, and a need for strong feelings of community are also underlying motivations for the Breezy Point Cooperative.

A great deal more study of the Breezy Point Cooperative community should be done in light of the inevitable changes that will be produced by the Gateway National Recreation Area and the continuing relations the community will have with the federal government.

APPENDIXES

A: BIBLIOGRAPHY

B: THE STUDY TEAM

A: BIBLIOGRAPHY

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