Chair City Journal

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At the request of certain individuals, I have changed the names of many of the people in this essay. It has also been necessary in some cases to blur the identity and location of certain places of employment. For the reader, the rule has been this: if a person has been identified with a full name, that is the person's true name. Otherwise, the name has been changed.

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Introduction

It stays cold into late March because of the wind. The days are fine and beautiful, but cold. Each day the sun is getting higher in the sky, leaving something of a usable evening for the after work hours. It's been said that March is actually October, only backwards. They are months in between.

Phil was working at the gas station on a Sunday afternoon in March, 1978. It was under-the-table work, a Saturday evening and a Sunday day shift. Phil's boss had an aversion for paying taxes of any sort. Cash business was the only way to go. Phil, too, liked the under-the-table part. He worked for CETA weekdays, drawing maps because he was the first guy to come along who knew what the word cartographer meant. The CETA job might be in jeopardy if it was known that he could find work. He pumped gas, checked oil, and would occasionally change a flat. No repairs, the boss had told him. The boss was very proud of his reputation as a mechanic and didn't want his weekend guys messing that up. So Phil pumped gas and read when he had the chance.

A clear and cold and bright Sunday afternoon often makes me restless. I lived in Amherst, in a one-room apartment with one window. The view, looking out over the railroad tracks, was of the east wall of the Connecticut River Valley. It was a better day for taking a ride than for studying. There were several junks cars in the yard of the station where Phil worked. I knew that in one of the cars I could find

a windshield wiper motor that worked. The one in my car didn't and hadn't for several weeks. Seizing on a decent excuse, I made the drive from Amherst to Gardner.

The drive is a pleasant one. Route 202 runs along the edge of Quabbin Resevoir, winding its way over the modest hills. Route 2 is a bit more barren, but is still pleasant. In all, it's a fifty minute drive.

Approaching Gardner from the west, one sees at first many old and in some cases ugly houses on the hill on the left. Two-family, three-family houses mostly, they give way to the factories and car lots nearer the center. It's not always a pretty city.

Phil was sitting in the office of the station when I drove in. Leaned back in a chair with his feet on the window ledge, he was reading a murder mystery. The Sunday Times and Globe were scattered around the office. I'd been careful to avoid the bell rope, so he didn't hear me until I walked into the office.

Greetings were simple. I asked him if there might be a wiper motor in one of the cars. He thought so. I told him I would probably need some wrenches. He grimaced and then said, "Okay. The boss doesn't like us using his tools, either. But what he doesn't know won't hurt him."

"Besides," I said, "he's the one who sold me the car."

"Right," said Phil. We rummaged the garage and found a couple of wrenches. The bell rang, meaning that Phil had to go to work. I said that I could probably handle the motor myself.

Fifteen minutes later I had wipers that worked. Several more cars had come in, keeping Phil busy. A good gas jockey is a marvel to watch in the way he can keep four cars tended to at once. I went out to the pumps to talk with Phil while he worked.

"It's usually not this busy," he said, topping off one tank and moving around to collect the money. "It don't give a man the time to keep up with his reading."

He finished off the last car for the moment, but we stayed outside to talk, braving the wind that was coming in from the northwest. I asked him about his CETA work.

"It's a good job," he said. "The work is interesting enough, but what a cast of characters we have down there. One guy takes off in the early afternoon to watch the high school baseball teams practice. Our boss down there is a drunk. Half the time he's late in the morning and when he gets there he's too sick to do much work. I make maps. It's fun. I've never done it before."

"How long before the job runs out?"

"July."

"Then what?"

"I don't know. I've been doing some tune-ups for the people at work in my spare time. Sally (his wife) isn't working right now. You know that problem with her foot. Well, it's gotten worse. She's going to be operated on in May. Who knows how long she's going to be out. I think, though, with the odd jobs I've got lined up, we may make it. Her father cuts wood on the side. I can help him out. Her uncle wants a

garage framed up this summer. I figure that with all these little things I might be able to make enough as if I had one big job. I'd like to see if I can get away with it."

I talked a little about my plans, short and long range, about graduate schools and the like. But something didn't feel right. At first I suspected that it was something in Phil's tone, that he was onto some kind of hustle that would leave him broke and scared as it had in the past, only this time he had a wife to be concern about as well. (Sally, unbeknownst to anyone, was pregnant at the time. In November she gave birth to a baby girl.) Work had been tough to find for Phil for the past few years. His trade as a carpenter was not in big demand. CETA said that it was training him. Cartographers, by most estimates, are not in great demand in Gardner. It was good that someone would think that he was bright enough to train, and sad that there would be no job at the end of the training.

Phil and I had come out of similar circumstances and had known similar lives. As a carpenter, he made good money when he worked. As a short-order cook, I made less money, but generally could find work. He was a college drop-out; I'd been one. A turn of luck had, however, put me on a very different track. With some encouragement from family and friends, and a bit of financial assistance, I'd taken one last shot at college, this time at Mount Wachusett Community College in Gardner. I wanted to be a disc jockey and I knew that the Mount's program in radio and television was probably the best of any two-year college in New England.

A run-in with one of the faculty members in the program caused me to change my major to General Studies after one semester. A chance conversation with Bob St. Cyr, transfer counselor, in January, 1977 led to my applying to Amherst. Being at Amherst led me to thinking about Gardner all over again.

I thought about Gardner not only as my hometown, but also as a place where themes in sociology, history, and literature got jumbled into that uneasy conversation with Phil. We were very much alike in intelligence, looks, and familial financial background. Our lives were becoming very different. And yet, it's not to be said that Phil's life had become all sadness. By marrying Sally, he'd married into a home and a family. She comes from a large family, meaning that Phil can see people that he knows throughout town, whether or not he wants to be seen. Gardner makes sense to Phil.

It makes sense in spite of his being broke most of the time or not having a job that's steady, satisfying, and with some sort of a future to it. The life he has in Gardner is, then, something that he has chosen as much as it has been chosen for him by accidents of economics, birth, or fate. Gardner can be an ugly little town, but it's home. It has other things to offer besides money and prestige. A quiet life, families that remain close and concerned, low cost of living -- these are some of offerings Gardner can make for those who wish to stay.

I knew that. I knew it when I chose to go off to Amherst, to Amherst College and all that that meant. I suppose I knew it when, at

seventeen, I took off for college the first time. And I certainly knew it when I came back in 1975.

I'd been working in a restaurant in Amherst, working the graveyard shift for a couple years. A few minutes before quitting time I got a phone call from my father.

"Your grandfather died last night," he said. His voice was steady as he told how his father, the old gent, as we used to call him, had gone to the hospital for what were to be routine tests.

The old gent seemed to know that there was more involved. Before leaving for the hospital, he was careful to point out to my father where the insurance policies were. Pointing to a grandfather's clock that he'd been working on over the winter, the old gent said, "I guess you'll have to finish this." A few days later, complications set in with lung problems that he'd been having tested. He passed away a week after entering the hospital.

Having no car, I had to borrow one to make it home. My boss loaned me his Cadillac. People were impressed when I drove into the yard in a suit and a tie and a Caddy. I did not always feel it necessary to let on that the car was borrowed. I stayed for a few days and then went back to Amherst.

Three weeks later I hitch-hiked back to Gardner. The reasons for leaving Amherst would take much too long to tell. The reason for returning was that home was a good place to laylow for a while. My grandfather's house was empty, waiting to clear probate. Much of the furniture had been sold off to settle the estate. A bed, the television, and

the kitchen appliances were about all that was left in the house. I lived there for a month and a half.

The house showed the signs of my grandfather's attempts at bachelor living after sixty-two years of marriage. My grandmother had died a year before. The house showed that he missed her. Sheets were pinned together instead of being sewn; pots were burned; corners weren't dusted quite as thoroughly. The small mistakes he made on that grandfather's clock said that he was concentrating on something else and not on the wood. Those nicks and misfitted corners were the first bits of evidence I'd seen in many years that he needed someone.

I watched Red Sox games on television and worked part-time as a short-order cook in a restaurant in Gardner. With the time I had I wrote letters describing the city, the old roads, the people who'd gone, who'd stayed, who'd come back. Those letters were jokingly grouped into a corpus called, "Chair City Journal."

Chairs are made in Gardner. The manufacture of chairs has been Gardner's principal industry for nearly two centuries. The shops grew during that time. The shops attracted people, immigrants and migrants, to Gardner. It's a blue-collar city. You work hard. Maybe you dream of better times for you and your kids. But still you work hard and don't get very rich.

As I looked at Phil's life, seeing what he got for his hard work, and reflected on the names and faces that I hadn't seen since graduation night, I noticed that many, if not most, of the kids who had done well had gone away. The folks in Gardner had perhaps tried life on the

outside. Going off to the service, going to college, just hitting the road--they'd tried and come back. Being in Gardner, either by birth or by choice of whatever sort, was again, as with Phil, both a conscious choice and an outcome of fate.

That mix of freedom and fate meant that Gardner was both proud and shy, arrogant and fearful, stubbornly conservative and boldly imaginative. It's a place that many kids leave in anger. Some return; some don't. Both the staying and the leaving required sacrifice. For those who leave, it means leaving behind a home that can be, when times are tough, supportive and caring. For those who stay, it means giving up on dreams of economic success, sacrificing perhaps some personal autonomy for the sake of family, and living in a city where change comes slowly.

The American Dream. What is it? Some say it's freedom of choice, a personal freedom that means that one can be anything that is within one's power and abilities to become. For others, the Dream is economic. Loosely, it's often defined as becoming middle-class. Sociologists argue about this, whether all people aspire to middle-classness or not. The movement from working-class to middle-class involves not only an increase in income; it also requires or offers changes in attitudes and expectations. It's a freedom that is sometimes bought with money, other times with power and prestige.

But to a man or woman from a community which values family and the obligations to generations younger and older, class mobility may be a thing unwanted or unreachable. The people of Gardner are, for the

most part, happy with the way Gardner is, or at least that's how it seems.

Kids, however, like change. Growing up in Gardner doesn't offer much in the way of change, certainly not economic. What it does offer is security, or at least stability. But even that has to be tempered by the economic facts. Gardner's unemployment is high and the work that is available doesn't usually pay well. There's pressure as well. Parents have dreams for their kid, hoping that the kids will do better than the parents. At the same time, parents will often fear that the kids will think that they are better than the parents, that advancement often signals rejection.

My father is a welder, retired now. My grandfather was a cabinet maker. I like to read and write. There had been some tough battles when talk came around to what I was going to be and do. I didn't know what I wanted to do, but knew that it was important that I cared about what I did before I committed myself to it. For several years, from my high school graduation in 1968 until fairly recently, I drifted. Three times a drop-out from UMass-Amherst, I held more than a dozen jobs and had countless addresses. And until I got to talking with people in Gardner, I thought that I was alone in this.

By writing and talking about growing up in Gardner, about the leaving and the returning, a few themes began to emerge. They had to do with social class, home and community, the sociology, psychology, history, and literature of a working-class community in a middle-class society. The themes, explored in those early letters to friends, found

their way into newspaper columns I wrote while at Mt. Wachusett and Amherst. They intrigued and maddened professors at Amherst, most notably Bob Gross, Dale Peterson, and Jan Dizard. With their patience, encouragement, and criticism, this essay has been -- dare I say it? -- fun.

Deep gratitude must go to the many readers, talkers, and listeners who have helped me along the way. The gang at the lunch table, the people around the various coffee shops of Gardner, folks in the libraries at Amherst and in Gardner, faculty and staff at both Mt. Wachusett and Amherst -- many have given much to make this essay possible. I have a special debt to the family and friends who missed me when I hid in my apartment for weeks as I wrote. I also owe birthday cards, Christmas cards, and phone calls for the last year. Special thanks to Pete and Gail.

Many of us have wondered, "Why is Gardner?" This essay is an offering, but not an answer. As people in and away from Gardner have speculated, I have listened and tried to capture the tones. It was difficult to hear all the things that were being said in the way that they were said. Gardner is, after all, my hometown and one's reactions to one's home are not always predictable and reasonable. Neither are one's intuitions always suspect. There are many voices in Gardner. Mine is just one.

And thanks to Isabel for shovelling the yard for my car when she had none. As Dave, my landlord, said, "She likes to do things for people. She's rented from me for nineteen years."

And thanks to Dave for keeping the rent low.

Special thanks to Sandra for all her help, particularly as she kept reminding me of why I was writing (We're still okay, aren't we?). To Mike and Adam and my parents, thanks for asking so many questions.

To Rachael, when she gets around to reading.

Chapter One

It was cold that Saturday night, the eighth of a run of below zero nights. Winter, after lolling about someplace else though a warm January, had come calling, lest New Englanders forget that there is such a thing as winter.

By morning temperatures had settled to nearly twenty below, a cold made all the harsher by a steady breeze. Pipes that hadn't already been frozen now refused to yield water for the wash-ups of the Sunday morning church-goers. And, in that early morning, the Fire Department in Gardner was summoned to get Joey out of a snowbank.

The first impulse, of course, is to chuckle -- a guy coming home from a Saturday night out, having had a few too many drinks, passes out in the school yard. But he was there for four or five hours. He was unconscious, face down in a snowbank, oblivious to the freezing cold. The warm air from his breathing was trapped by the snow, insulating his face just a bit and probably saving his life.

"He was so sweet," said Annette, who worked with Joey at a local restaurant, after she had visited him at Massachusetts General Hospital. "He cried."

Joey had very severe frostbite of the hands, such that it was doubtful that they would be able to save his hands. He'd worn no gloves. As it was, the pain was ruinous, each nerve shouting against the indignity of having been left in the cold so long.

"It's something he's going to have to live with," Annette continued. "His mother says that he would often black out like that after drinking. He's such a good kid, so quiet, just so good. It's just that he's got an enormous capacity to drink when he goes out."

Joey is nineteen. He's been working at that restaurant since his high school graduation, except for a couple of months that amounted to a vacation in Florida, from which he returned quietly and without comment. He likes to drink, or liked to drink. Whether he drinks more than other nineteen-year olds isn't the point. There were countless others out that night, in Gardner and in cities and towns around the country, of all ages and having consumed great quantities of liquor. Most made it home, having to contend with nothing more than a bad hangover. Others, no doubt, killed or were killed in automobile crashes. A few, perhaps, weren't found in time on a dangerously cold night.

It can't be said with certainty that a raised drinking age would have made much difference to Joey. During the week of that hideous cold, the Massachusetts Legislature was debating a proposal from Governor Edward King which would have raised the state's drinking age to twenty-one. Students were marching on the steps of the State House with a vehemence that hadn't been seen since the days of the Vietnam War. The mood of the eighteen to twenty-one year old age group is one that likes to drink. Had the drinking age been twenty-one that night, Joey might not have been drinking alone, but it can't be said that he wouldn't have been drinking.

The psychologist Erik Erikson has written extensively about the

maturation process. In regard to the development of identity in adolescents and young adults, he writes, "We deal with a process 'located' in the core of the individual and yet also in the core of his communal culture..." and that the development of a psychological sense of identity is a simultaneous process of reflection and observation.[1]

Joey's story is not his alone. The truth of a story about an individual lies in the interaction of the personality of that individual with a larger culture. Joey's culture comes in two packages: Gardner, his hometown, and a broader band of influences, less localized than just his home, that of youth in America. The two cultures are not always comfortable in each other's presence, and that tension surfaces most acutely in kids like Joey, himself at an age between.

Youth culture in America is part of something even more pervasive. It's variously called a myth, a dream, a majority; it is the middle-class style in American society. It comes in many forms and looks like many different things to different people. It can arrive as a house and a lawn with sculptured yew trees. It could be a white-collar job with an electronics firm. It can mean that you can go to college, or that your kids can go. It can mean money or power or style.

It's an old debate -- whether America is a middle-class nation in either its dreams or its reality -- and one yet unresolved. Recalling Erikson and his formulation that the development of a personal idenitity is a process involving both personality and culture, we can begin to set the problem. Familiar, yet troubling question such as "Who am I?" and "What am I to become?" although personal question indeed, require

in the answering information from and about the larger culture. That larger culture, however, has its own confusions.

If it may be assumed for a moment that people of the working-class aspire to become middle-class, what is it to which they aspire and why? The state of being in the middle-class can be defined according to such factors as occupation, income levels, attitudes, and life style. The jobs are, for the most part, white collar; incomes lie somewhere near the statistical middle in the nation; attitudes and life style center around themes of privacy, individualism, and personal autonomy. Capitalism and individualism, if we may paint in broad strokes, characterize middle-class attitudes. The private ownership of business corresponds with a belief of the worth and eventual rewarding of individual effort. One of the most sought after rewards has historically been a home of one's own. The private home, a place where visitors, be they family or neighbors, have to knock, is both a strong symbol and the present reality of much of what we would call middle-class life.

Why privacy? Pride, mainly, the opportunity to take pride in one's own acheivements. There is also the opportunity to make more of one's career. In order to avail oneself of mobility, one must be able to move. A large family is not often willing to move for the sake of one person in that family group. The early factories of Lowell, for example, recognized the importance of the family and had to accomodate its facilities if they were to find workers. Corporations of the modern day seem to be less willing to do so, although most large companies do have extensive provisions for the transfer of their employees. A family that

is willing to move will be rewarded more handsomely than the family that insists on staying in one place.

Privacy of the person requires a certain privacy of the spirit. The mobile person or family cannot quite so easily allow itself to develop great attachments to any one place. Self-reliance and increased demands being placed on the smaller family are aspects of the privacy while is one of the results of becoming middle-class.

If appearances are any guide, it would seem that Gardner doesn't have much in common with either middle-classness or youth. The approach from the west on Route 2 reveals many two, three, and four families houses. These are older houses. That is because, in many ways, Gardner is an older city.

Those houses were not built with GI loans. Over 3/4 (76.4% in 1970) of the city's residential units were built before 1939, with only modest increases in new housing construction during the late 1960's and early 1970's. Compared with figures for Worcester County, Gardner shows proportionately more two and three-family units, along with more apartment (five or more units per building) buildings. On average, fewer people live in each unit. Although that is in part due to the lower number of families with children living at home, 22.2% of Gardner's housing units were occupied by only one person, nearly five percent more than the county's figures. Not surprisingly, these older houses which dominate Gardner are valued for and rent for less.[2]

Pressure for new houses would, we would suspect, come from two angles: population growth or the demand of upwardly mobile people,

principally younger couples in their twenties, for a home of their own. Gardner seems to have neither.

Gardner's population has stayed awesomely steady since 1930. Over a span that has included The Great Depression, a World War, periods of economic boom and bust, the city's population has not varied more than five percent. In 1930, it was 19,399; in 1950, 19,581; in 1970, 19,748; in 1975, 19,349. This steadiness came during a time which saw the county population increase by nearly thirty percent.[3]

A state planning commission report in 1974, trying to account for this population stability, concluded after studying the patterns of the population for various age groups, "It would appear that a significant number of Gardner's youth are leaving the city." The pattern of youth flight, it was noted, was repeated throughout the Montachusett (northern Worcester County) Region.[4]

As a result, the median age in Gardner is one of the highest in the state. Its median, 35.9, is the highest in Worcester County and well above the county average of 29.6.[5]

The baby boom did hit Gardner, but it's impact was not as great as in other areas. Owing in part to the relative absence of young adults in Gardner, those who would be having children, the percentage of persons under age eighteen is lower than either state, county, or regional figures (30.1, 33.0, 33.2, 34.2 respectively). But something else must be going on, for the planning commission report noted that youth flight was common to the region. The fertility ratio (the number of children under the age of five per one thousand women age fifteen to forty-four)

and percentage of persons married are lower than regional averages.[6]

Why would people of Gardner be marrying less often and having fewer children? Marriage and children are a form of investment, an emotional investment that is made to an aspect of the dream called a home. It would seem that old investments, older marriages and homes, have continued well and strong, but new investments are being made only at a replacement level.

Appearances again guide us. The East Gardner Industrial Park, completed in 1976, is a sandbank. The executive director of the Gardner Commission to Promote Business and Industry, Charles E. Asher, recently resigned his post after a tenure of nineteen years, citing interference from Mayor Gerald St. Hilaire and the Gardner Chamber of Commerce. The commission was formed in 1959 in response to the relocation of one of Gardner's largest employers, Florence Stove Co., to Kankakee, Illinois. An industrial park in western Gardner was planned and filled to absorb the loss of Florence Stove. Other efforts to attract significant amounts of new business to the city have been frustrated from within and without.[7]

According to persons alive at the time, Ford Motor Co. wanted to locate an assembly plant in Gardner during the 1920's. Florence Stove, along with Heywood-Wakefield, acted to keep Ford out of the city, the local firms fearing that the presence of Ford would drive up the local wage rate. According to Mayor St. Hilaire, a similar pattern was found in the 1960's when Digital Equipment Corporation, a semi-conductor manufacturer, wanted to locate a plant in Gardner. The result was Digital

locating in Westminster, the town directly to the east of Gardner. Westminster got the tax revenues and prestige and now people travel from Gardner to Westminster to work at Digital.

A local real estate agent says that most of the people living in the newer apartment complexes in Gardner work at Digital, many in Westminster, other commuting to Maynard. With housing readily for sale in the city, it seems surprising that people would pay rents double of what they would pay elsewhere in the city. The newer apartments are, well, newer, nicer, more suitable for an upwardly mobile and geographically mobile population. The nicer apartments would seem to be best suited for those people who would be working in the area, but who do not plan to stay very long.

Gardner is at its base still a chair city. In 1974 46.1% of those persons working in manufacturing were involved in the manufacture of furniture and fixtures. Manufacturing itself was the largest source of employment, accounting for 61.7% of persons employed and 68.7% of the city's payroll. Wholesale and retail trade employed 16.6% of the city's work force, paying a similar amount of its payroll. It's interesting to note that furniture manufacturing paid 39.6% of the manufacturing payroll, less than its share of employment. Simplex Time Recorder is, however, the largest single employer in Gardner, employing nearly fifteen hundred persons, about one-third of the total manufacturing employment.[8]

Fully half of Gardner's work force is in occupations which would be classed as blue-collar (craftsmen, foremen, operatives, and laborers).

This figure is nearly ten percent higher than the county and twelve percent higher than national figures. Clerical and sales workers make up an additional 21.2% of the work force, half again as much as the nation's percentages. In spite of having more than forty percent of the city's adult women working, median family income in Gardner is below county, state, and national levels.[9] Unemployment, according to a spokesman at the state Divison of Employment Security, is slightly better than the state averages, which are generally worse than the national averages.

What develops from this brief portrait of Gardner is an older, generally blue-collar, generally poorer city with a stable population and economic base at its core. At its fringes, there is flux. The young, including the upwardly mobile, come and go. Immigrant ethnic groups still have an impact. Gardner, 99.5% white in 1970, has a population that includes nearly fifteen percent foreign-born and forty-five percent foreign stock. Sixty percent of the foreign stock is from Canada.[10] Historical experience has shown, however, that immigrant groups tend toward the blue-collar, entry level positions. The presence of a sizable foreign stock and born population would, therefore, tend to reinforce Gardner's blue-collar style.

Mayor St. Hilaire said, in reference to an encounter with a recalcitrant city council, "They seem to think that Gardner is the center of the world, that nothing important exists beyong the hills." As it seems to be culturally, Gardner is set apart from the rest of the world geographically. Tucked into a hilly region in the north central part

of the state, Gardner lies between, but separated from, the historically active regions of eastern Massachusetts and the Connecticut River Valley. The area was settled late and not incorporated as a town until after the Revolution. Without water power of any significance, Gardner had to wait for the engineering and politcal innovations of Levi Heywood in the early 19th century before noticeable growth could be begun. Heywood adapted the flow of water from Crystal Lake, on the north side of town, for use in his chair factories. He was also the major factor in the relocation of the Fitchburg Railroad through Gardner in 1854, rather than a planned course that would have taken the railroad north of Gardner into New Hampshire.[11]

What had begun as a collection of smaller, backyard operations was over the years subsumed by Heywood's, both economically and technically. Increasingly the automation of the manufacture of chairs and other furniture products meant that craftsmen were less numerous, replaced by machines, machine operators, and assemblers. A craftsman might be required to make a sample chair and to supervise the pattern-making. But after that, anyone could, with minimal training, make a chair.

This change in the technology, in full force by the early 20th century, meant that chair manufacturing was less of a craft and more of a job. Gardner continued to grow, attracting new people, immigrants mostly. In 1921 Gardner changed its charter, becoming a city with dreams of greatness.

It's been said by many around the city that Gardner never recovered from the Great Depression of the 1930's. One thing is certain:

the city stopped growing then. The Depression, World War II, the Korean War, and Florence Stove came and went. The decline of the railroads returned Gardner to a form of geographic isolation. Passenger railroad service ended in the late 1950's, leaving Gardner to adapt as best it could to a society of automobiles.

The people seemed ready, but the city was not. As with other New England cities and towns, the streets of Gardner are poorly designed for large amounts of traffic. Streets intersect other streets at impossible angles, twisting and bumping over Gardner's seven hills. Route 2, the major highway leading to and from Gardner, was made a four-lane limited access highway by 1970. A north-south highway is still in the planning stages, talk of which has been going on for twenty years.

The majority of Gardner's factories are downtown where traffic congestion is worst. A new industrial park in east Gardner looks out on Route 2. The park has been empty since its completion in 1976. A major reason for its emptiness is the lack of a decent access road to a highway. At present the access road is a spindly country road barely wide enough to accomodate two Volkswagens meeting in the night.

The city was built for another era. Most of the housing, constructed before the true age of the automobile, is within walking distance of the old downtown and the factories. The streets, however, are jammed in the morning, at lunchtime, and in the afternoon. Most of the cars have just one person in them.

It seems ironic that isolation would deepen as the era of mass media would broaden the world available to all Americans. Privacy of

person and spirit, it will be remembered, was one of the elements that was characteristic of a middle-class culture. Gardner, as a city, seems to have that quality. People do not, as a rule, come to Gardner uninvited. But privacy is also tied to mobility, economic and geographic, at least in the personal sense. Few people commute great distances to work; most of the cars are used for around town driving. Economically, Gardner moves slowly, as would a large family, up the ladder of success.

Styles are mixed within Gardner. A small tract-type house can be found next to a huge three-decker, Winnebagos parked in front of both. These houses can be on a tree-lined street where old colonials sit broodingly and well-groomed to remind the city of older times. At one end of Elm Street, two new apartment buildings, built within the decade, have Mustangs angled across the lawn. Across the street is another landmark of Gardner, a towering Shell sign that can be seen for miles on Route 2 and is often mistaken for the moon.

At the other end of Elm Street is Uptown, the old center of Gardner. Old houses, the oldest in the city, are huddled around the Congregational Church and the old town common. A grant, pending legislative approval, would establish a nature walk through the old center. One section of the walk will pass near the traffic circle in Uptown. The traffic island is covered with Astro-turf.[12]

The styles look as though middle-class culture, with its gas stations, Winnebagos, and the like, has seeped in. But it appears as if the new style is adapting itself to old ways rather than replacing them. It comes, then, to be privacy and stasis, as opposed to privacy

and fluidity.

The city, as the next chapter will show, has long thought of itself as the center of the world. Once, the trains ran, shuttling chairs and ideas to the outside. The Depression hit, the trains stopped, and Gardner withdrew within itself.

To the young, the world outside became a place of magic. Joey's good friend took off for the Navy shortly after graduation. The world that came to them by way of the television and radio demanded experiencing. Gardner became the old world. It became as though the kids discovered something that their parents had been hiding from them.

For some of those who had chosen to see what was on the outside, another discovery was made -- it's wasn't always so grand out there. Joey's friend, shorn and trimmed by the Navy, comes home on leave and enjoys the attention and chocolate-chip cookies lavished upon him. Joey knows as well, from his friends, including his boss, who travel the sixty miles to Boston to visit him in the hospital, that something special is involved in being a hometown kid who has hit on some bad luck. The city that's at the center of the world closes ranks in times of trouble.

Privacy and stability get replayed as themes in much of Gardner's life and history. Most days are ordinary and for many kids the intimacy of being at home is unnoticed or even unwanted. Private and separated from the larger world as Gardner may be, the truer sense of privacy, of making one's way in the world, is not so readily available, not within the confines of the hills of Gardner.

As mentioned earlier, the tendency toward a private or autonomous life puts greater pressure on the individual and his family. "Asked for more than he feels he can fulfill," writes Max Lerner, "he (the working-class youth) comes in turn to ask more of his family and milieu than they can fulfill...."[13] It requires a sense of irony and some play with words to see how Gardner seems to work. It is a private community that cannot give the kind of privacy to individuals that is suggested by a larger, middle-class culture. There seem to be two ways of being an autonomous self when one is of Gardner: to go along Gardner's way or to go away. The tension of the middle ground is what hurts.

Gardner is an old city, steady, stable, stubborn. Its young know that and are sometimes angered by it, sometimes saddened. Gardner in another era was not always perceived that way. Gardner was young once, too.

Chapter Two

Reverend William Herrick had been ill for three months in 1877 and unable to perform his ministerial duties. Pastor of the First Congregational Church in Gardner, Herrick was also a member of a committee selected by the town for the purpose of locating a town historian. The Reverend was something of a historian himself, having during the previous year's Centennial celebration deliver a lengthy address on the history of Gardner. His ill health made him reluctant to assume any new duties, such as those of historical writing.

In September of 1877 friends of Herrick urged, however, that he take the job. The committee, which had been in existence since April of that year, had queried a number of authors, but without satisfaction. Again, his health condition, along with a certain, if unconvincing, modesty, made him decline the town's request. After "fair persuasion, mixed with sugared words," Herrick relented and work was begun on the town's history in mid-November, 1877.[1]

Less than eight months later, on the Fourth of July, 1878, the book was completed. A new purpose had been found for historical writing. Herrick writes:

> In conclusion, we are able, with great candor to state that our ambition, for this kind of authorship, is entirely satisfied. We lay down our pen, upon this, our nation's natal day, with the most intelligent and unalterable conviction that nothing but grim necessity, can ever again induce us to resume it, for the purpose of writing a town history.

> We would say, however, to all clergymen, who are laid aside from pastoral labor, through "nervous prostration" that our experience has taught us, that the surest way to regain health and forget troubles, is to engage in a work like this, preaching at the same time twice, on the Sabbath....Debilitated brethren, by all means, write a town history....[2]

Herrick wrote no more histories, either in Gardner, where he remained until his retirement in 1882, or in Amherst, where he spent the years until his death in 1903. The county history, published later in the century, did contain a number of clerical authorships, but it is not clear that those writers shared in Herrick's understanding of the regenerative properties of historical writing. It's suspected that few did. The next full history, completed by Esther Moore Gilman in 1967, was not written by a member of the clergy. His exhortation has, in large part, gone unheeded.

Herrick is at once a formidable presence and something of a mystery. Biographical details are skeletal for this man who had served as the last minister of the old First Church of Gardner and the third of the reunited First and Evangelical congregations during separate terms in the 1860's and 1870's.[3]

Born in Methuen, Massachusetts on 26 March 1831, William Dodge Herrick was educated at Atkinson Academy in New Hampshire before entering college in 1853. (That he should be twenty-two when entering college is, for the 19th century, not unusual. It would, however, be nice to know more about those early years.) He first attended Yale College, leaving after a year for Amherst College. After his graduation from Amherst in 1857, he attended Andover Theological Seminary until

his ordination in Redding, Connecticut in January, 1860. He had married, during the summer preceding his ordination, Josephine Barton, daughter of Dr. Edward Barton of Orange, Mass. Herrick remained as pastor in the Redding Church until 1864.

Accepting the call of the First Congregational Church and Parish of Gardner, Herrick was installed as minister in the town on 19 October 1864. President J.H. Seelye of Amherst College preached the installation sermon. In 1867, healing a split of thirty-seven years, the First Church united with the Evangelical Congregational Church.[5] One of the conditions of the merger was that the current ministers of the two churches be dismissed.[6] Herrick was out of a job.

But not for long. Herrick accepted a position as minister of the North Congregational Church in Amherst. The newly united First Church of Gardner was, however, having a difficult time finding a minister. Three ministers held the post during the six years after the reunion. It was decided by the parish that Herrick ought to be recalled, which he was during September, 1873. The call was declined by Herrick on advice of the council of the North Amherst church, apparently due to agreements made between the minister and the church. The Gardner parish, however, wanted Herrick and the call was renewed in May, 1874. This call was accepted, with the result that Herrick was installed for the second as minister in Gardner, the sermon of the day being preached by Professor R. H. Mather of Amherst College on 11 June 1874.[7]

Herrick's second tenure as minister of the First Church in Gardner was an active period for both him and his congregation. In addition to

writing the town's history twice, he presided over a period of reconciliation that accompanied the reunion of the churches. In a diplomatic commentary on the reunion period, Herrick writes:

> It is true, indeed, that the church, since the union, has not been exempt from some degree of internal commotion and sharp contention, among its members, resulting, it may be feared, in the permanent disaffection of some, arising from cases of discipline, concerning which, there seems to have been a conscientious difference of opinion. [8]

Time, however, was the healer. In 1878, while Herrick was at work on his history, the church voted and broke ground for a new church in Gothic style.[9] The new building, on the common of what is now Uptown, was dedicated in 1879.[10]

Herrick remained in Gardner until 1882, when he retired from the active ministry, returned to Amherst, and assisted his wife and the town in various projects until his death in 1903. During the retirement years, Herrick helped his wife with her teaching, founded a school for the retarded, and was a member of the Amherst school committee. He died from asthma and heart failure 10 December 1903.[11]

Two obituaries give some clues as to the character and qualities of Rev. Herrick. The Hampshire East Association of Congregational Ministers expressed:

> ...deep appreciation of the strength and earnestness of Brother Herrick's Christian character; of his steadfastness to duty; of his uncompromising maintenance without fear or favor of whatever he thought true and right; of his high attainments as a Biblical scholar; of his usefulness as a Christian minister in his successive pastorates. [12]

The Amherst Record, in a lengthy obituary, noted:

> A man of positive character, of intense convictions, of speech plain and vigorous at times almost to rudeness,

> intolerant of what he conceived to be sham or hypocrisy of any kind, he made strong friends and enemies not a few. There was in his character something of the Puritan, something of the spirit that animated the stern-faced men who followed Cromwell, something of the zeal that led the great crusades. Yet he was not an ascetic, and in many of his attributes was very human.

The Record also observed his continued interest in schools and that he was "a consistent advocate of good highways...."[13]

From his History, we can also see the deep significance that Herrick found in highways. His chapter on the roads of Gardner begins with notes on "the serpentine trails of wild man,"[14] which leads to a rather extended discourse on Gibbon's commentary on the system of roads in the Roman Empire. This leads to a lament regarding the sad condition of roads in England in the seventeenth century. The concerns and actions of the early American colonists respecting roads are duly recorded. Seven pages into the chapter, the first mention is made of Gardner, citing the petition made by the citizens of Gardner for a decent road through the town. This petition, made to the Legislature, was made in 1785, a few weeks after the town's first town meeting. Most of the remaining chapter is devoted to the hardships associated with the maintenance of good roads in the region. The terrain is rocky and hilly, interspersed with swamps. Roads also cut through private property, meaning that farm owners' ruffled feelings must be smoothed, as must the bouldered way.[15]

But Herrick is not content to give us a history of roads in the town, the nation, or even the western world. "There is," he writes, "a more intelligent conviction in the public mind, that good roads have

much to do with the economy of living, since it must always cost more to draw a load over a bad road, than over a good one.[16] He notes, citing Macaulay, that the deplorable condition of the English roadways has been a limiting factor on the growth of British industry. He lauds the maternal affection that the Swiss bestow upon their roads, saying, "It is hoped that our roads will be yet made after models of this high character."[17]

Herrick is an extravagant writer. The far-reaching legacy of Gardner's roads already mentioned, he is no less expansive when discussing industry, public charity, religion, education, or cemeteries. Ancient furniture of the Egyptians, Assyrians, Greeks, and Romans are cited as precursors of Gardner's chair industry. Four pages of proverbs on industry lead us to this observation:

> Missionaries, among the Zulus, inform us that the first evidence of the humanizing and elevating influence of religion and civilization, upon the natives, is seen in their demand for a cotton shirt. In like manner, it may be said that the demand, which a progressive, civil and religious culture, makes for the use of chairs, is indicative of the fact that men have risen from a lower to a higher condition of intelligence as well as mental and moral growth. [18]

Likewise, we are treated to a history of charity from antiquity, through the reign of Henry VIII, to vagrancy legislation in the colonies -- this to acknowledge the recent construction of a poor farm in East Gardner.

The Reverend is also capable of a bit of wistfulness that is, given the subject, surprising for this man who has been characterized as a Puritan.

What jovial times those must have been at the taverns,

> when it was not thought immoral for everybody to assemble and talk over national affairs and drink the ver present draft of toddy and crack the jokes that called forth the uproarious laughter. [19]

The Reverend, it seems, was not averse to fun, either personally or literarily. As he writes about the capricious severity of Gardner winter and winds, he remarks,

> Occasionally, a spire is blown from a church, or portions of roofs are removed from the houses, by stormy winds, still, the inhabitants are not themselves carried away, nor greatly alarmed. [20]

Of trees, he grieves. "At present time, however, under the strokes of the greedy axe of the chair and pail maker, our ancient forests have all disappeared."[21]

And so on. To a young man intent on being a farmer in Gardner, he can only be discouraging. Gardner is a town of rocky hills, "cold, marshy swamps lands, saturated with sour waters and producing a sort of wiry, unpalatable grass," and with a short growing season. "Go West young man," Herrick says, quoting Horace Greeley.[22]

As a religious, Herrick is a curiosity. Educated at three of the most conservative institutions in the 1850's -- Yale, Amherst, and Andover --, and personally characterized as a Puritan by his obituary biographer, Herrick nevertheless reveals some of the liberalism we would associate with a Unitarian liberal of the likes of a William Ellery Channing. To be sure, the chapter on religion attaches the American heritage with that of Calvin, but that is to be expected. Scholarship regarding religion in America almost always begins with a discussion of Calvin and the Reformation in an effort to explain the

Puritan adventure in Massachusetts Bay. But the early Calvinists, according to Herrick, were "permeated by this love of religious liberty and freedom of conscience...."[23] He cites Bancroft in stating that

> the Calvinian theory, which these founders of our republic brought to these shores, instead of being narrow, illiberal, or irrational, "combines and perfects the symbolic wisdom of the Orient, and the reflective genius of Greece; conforming to reason, yet enkindling enthusiasm, guaranteeing absolute freedom, yet invoking the inexorable restraints of duty; awakening the inner man, to a consciousness of his destiny, and yet adapted with exact harmony, to the outer world."[24]

A few pages later, Herrick is obliged to face the problem of establishment.[25] The doublt burden of citizens who did not support the established (Congregational) church -- the public taxation which went to the Congregational Church, plus the expenses of the professed church -- was not lifted in New England with definitiveness until the early 19th century. This is hardly "absolute freedom." The numerous outraged commentaries delivered by 17th and 18th century Congregationalists against papists (Catholics), antinomians, Quakers, and Anglicans were not prompted by "this love of religious liberty," but by another spirit entirely.

The Puritans, a name originally gained derisively from the Anglicans, sought to purify Christ's church, and by that purification hasten the Second Coming. Theirs was serious business, to construct a beacon of righteousness for all the world to see. This narrow cadre of singularly devoted men and women grieved at the nascent liberalism in England. The liberalism and toleration that grew in the wake of their experiment in America was more as a result of default, an inability to

sustain the original passion which had brought them to these shores. The Puritans, unable to hurry the Lord of History, found themselves in America for a lot longer than they had planned, and had to adjust their society accordingly.

Herrick's reading of the early years of Puritanism is more in the mold of Channing, although even Channing is much less charitable when he discusses the Puritan influence upon religion. If temperamentally Puritan, Herrick could ill afford to be rigidly so, at least in his scholarship and public activities. A true Puritanism was patently not salable in the latter half of the 19th century.

There is another factor which would tend to temper whatver Puritanism Herrick might have felt. Immigration was bringing new groups to Gardner as well as to all of America. The Irish and French-Canadians began arriving in noticeable numbers after mid-century, leading to the establishment of an Irish Catholic church in 1863. While the pre-eminence of the First Church would continue for a few more decades, Gardner was undergoing a change, religiously and ethnically.[26]

The First Church itself had been split by liberalism in the 1830's, leading to the foundation of the Evangelical Society. In the fall of 1830, Jonathan Farr, a professed liberal, was called to the ministry of the First Church, leading to the split within the parish. The liberal majority which had chosen Farr evidently remained intact after the separation and eventually succeeded in effecting the reunion, aided by Reverend William Herrick.[27]

An advocate of industry in both the economic and moral senses of

the word, an enthusiastic scholar, a man of literary warmth and wit, and yet by some accounts also a stern and opinionated presence, Herrick gave Gardner a historical record that is, in his words, "more than a barren statement of town records."[28] His history is, more accurately, a vision for Gardner. It is fancifully extreme at times, leading to the supposition that the culmination of Western civilization, economically, politically, and spiritualy, lies in chair manufacturing. And yet, by its very arrogances, Herrick's writing evinces an understanding of the realities of Gardner's circumstances and unifies those ordinary facts into a bold and cohesive sense of purpose.

Roads, while not a guarantor of communal prosperity, connect each town with every other town, and the heritage of roads connects this town with all of history. Towns, he notes, are antecedant to the foundation of the state or the republic, that in effect, without the towns, there would be no republic. This in turn suggests that each town, no matter how isolated or disadvantaged, has its voice with which it may join in the chorus of historical development.

As a mother would look upon her child, Herrick can find physical and moral beauty in any town. Indeed, that is precisely his point. Within itself, Gardner is beautiful. Herrick takes us to the top of Glazier Hill and narrates the scenic wonderment of the region from this vantage. Edwardsian is he in his rapture at the sunsets, at the smoke of the workshops at it blends with the settling mist, even at the sound and sight of the Fitchburg Railroad so detested by Thoreau some three decades earlier.

The town is private, separated from much of the commerce and bustle of the nation by miles and hills. And yet, the roads and railroads bring news, take away news and ideas, bring products and take away chairs. Gardner is an important component in an active, liberal, and expanding industrial society. This society can deliver not only material prosperity to those who are working hard; it is also the fulfillment of a liberal Christianity that sees advancement on all fronts. It is a new society that is charitable to its poor, while at the same capable of exhorting the most amount of work from its citizens. This work will be rewarded, materially and spiritually. Gardner, as it tends to its own work, adapting as best it can to its difficult climate and terrain, and in so doing makes its valuable contribution to the American society and nation.

It is, then, a vision similar to, if not identical with, that of what was earlier described as the vision of America as a middle-class society. Upwardly mobile, active, and yet retaining the privacy of a home and a private self, Gardner was seen by Herrick as being, no more, but certainly no less, an equally vital part of the cities and town that, only in the aggregate, made up the American nation. The manufacture of chairs, seen by Herrick, is the town's contribution to the Christianizing and civilizing efforts of modern society.

The beauties of Gardner, its integral purpose and essential industry notwithstanding, Herrick left Gardner. He chose the Connecticut Valley for his retirement. His reasons for leaving are not clear. The town he chose, Amherst, was and is an academic community, better

suited perhaps to the style of this Puritan liberal scholar. Herrick, showing his fondness for roads, travelled a good deal in his life. Born in Methuen, educated in New Hampshire, New Haven, and Amherst, with pastorates in Connecticut, Gardner, and Amherst, the Reverend apparently felt that his home was not dependent on place, but on spirit. His home was in history, in the study of the importance of each contribution made by each person and town to the advancement of civilization. He could, we might suppose, write an equally enthusiastic history of any of the towns in which he lived. Illness, being as much of the spirit as of the body, could be healed by deep reflection on one's true purpose. Included in that purpose is an understanding of one's place in history. To understand that means to study one's place at the time. He fell ill in Gardner. His reflection upon his illness led him to deep study of his surroundings. Reoriented and rejuvenated, Herrick never found it necessary to write another history, preferring action of another sort. In Amherst, he worked with schools and supervised the construction and maintenance of a decent roadway system for the town.

Gardner seemed to be able to sustain the motion suggested by Herrick for the next half century. If the town was the basic unit of the earlier America, the city was to perform a similar function in the 20th century. Shortly after Gardner changed its charter and became a city, it appeared to stumble. The population continued to grow until the 1930's. The city, however, did not do as well as the town.

Chapter Three

The style of Gardner, in spite of the charter change and certain physical aspects, is more of that of a town.

The Central Variety and Luncheonette is quiet at eleven o'clock in the morning. Late coffee break customers come in for their carry-out orders, but most of the activity is in the back kitchen where the cooks and waitresses get caught up on the work and talk that had to be pushed aside during the busy earlier morning.

It's hardly entitled to call itself a variety store, this sparsely filled store midway between the Heywood-Wakefield buildings and West Gardner Square. Twenty or so years ago, the Central was a wondrous place for a child to happen upon. Toys, candy, and a respectable quality rubber baseball could be purchased for a modest bit of change, along with uninteresting but probably necessary things such as coffee, toilet paper, and canned peas. But,that was twenty years ago. Replaced by convenience stores such as Li'l Peach and Cumberland Farms and by the large super-markets on the edge of the city, there are only a couple of the old style variety-luncheonettes in Gardner. Central Variety and Luncheonette is not one of them.

It is basically a lunch counter with fifteen stools. There are a few tables in the main room and several more in a back room to accommodate the larger, and slower, lunch crowd. Early in the morning, the turnover is swift, governed by the starting times of the nearby shops. People

generally have a half hour to forty-five minutes for their lunch breaks and, if they don't have errands to run, will take the full time at their lunch tables. The lights in the back dining room go on at eleven-thirty.

A few minutes after eleven-thirty, Stephanie hurries in. She is dressed in heavy clothing for the day-after-snow cold and doesn't take her coat off as she orders a ham on wheat and a glass of milk. The waitress calls out the order to an older woman working the grill two and a half feet away.

"A half hour isn't a very long lunch hour," I note.

"No, it isn't," says Stephanie, unbuttoning her coat but leaving it on. "A lot of the time I get a sandwich to go, take it back to the workshop, and eat it there. Or, if there's time in the morning, I will bring something from home." She glances at the clock and takes a bite of the sandwich that's just been served. "No, there isn't much time at all."

"You can't get much done besides eating, can you?"

"No. At least that's where it's good that I get out at four, so I can get to the bank and stuff."

"Are there problems if you get back late?"

"Yes. The other supervisors have to wait around until we get back. The clients have to be supervised during their lunch break."

Stephanie works at a workshop for the retarded nearby. She is a skills supervisor. Local businesses contract with the workshop to have the clients perform small tasks -- sorting rods, assembling lamps. For For this, the clients are paid. Because the severity of the retardation varies greatly, some of the clients will be able to leave in six months to a year, seeking employment and living on their own, while others will

be, in one manner or another, institutionalized for the rest of their lives. Stephanie's job is not unlike that of a foreman in a shop. She must know all the jobs and be able to assist and motivate her workers. For this, she is paid a wage that is not much above the minimum.

"Have things settled down after the holidays at the workshop?"

"Oh, yes, a lot. They're slow now. I guess everyone is a little low with the excitement before. Before Christmas, everyone was so worked up that it was impossible to get any work done. They'd stop working and sing Christmas carols and that's all they wanted to do. It was nice that they were so happy, but it was hard to show them that there was work that they had to do."

"Scrooge," I say, smiling.

"Believe me, I'd have rather sung carols myself. But they have responsibilities to work while they're there." She, too, is smiling as she says it.

More people arrive as it gets closer to noon. Stephanie and I talk for a few minutes until she has to leave. She pays her bill, buttons her coat, and hurries back to the workshop, leaving at three minutes to twelve. Shortly after noon, the luncheonette is full to overflowing, the first wave from Conant Ball, which is directly behind Central Variety.

The variety store that Central Variety is not, Casa LaGrassa, a.k.a. Uptown Lunch and Variety, is. The restaurant is in the back of the store. To get there, one must walk past shelves of Pampers, past large glass-doored refrigerators that hold, among other things, milk, soda, and packaged meats, past a wall rack of stationery supplies, and then left into

the restaurant. A sign, saying "Food," points the way.

The restaurant seems huge becuase of the huge ceilings. There is a three-sided counter on the right with two dozen high stools. A window open from the kitchen. A divider with plants on top separates the counter area from a dining room on the left. There are twenty tables, small and large, arranged a bit more than snugly around the room. In the left wall, a short passageway leads to a service bar with a window facing the dining room and to a single rest room. The counter area, lit by flour-escents, is much brighter than the dining room, where orange globes hung high cast a decorative light.

LaGrassa's does alright. Its biggest problem is parking. A dozen new parking spaces carved out of a plot of city land nearby has helped but little. LaGrassa's is uptown, overlooking the uptown traffic circle. The area is full, filled with the oldest buildings in the city, filled with traffic trying to go in fourteen different directions. Settled by a Gardner of another century, Uptown makes sense on foot and no sense by car. Parking places are hard to find uptown, must of the spaces taken by customers at Casa LaGrassa.

"For the longest time," said Stephanie, as we walked through the store to the restaurant, "I thought this was just a store. I didn't know there was a restaurant here."

"They keep it pretty well hid," I said. Phil LaGrassa is working the register, which is next to the entrance to the restaurant. Behind him are the racks of cigarettes. On a shelf below lie the dirty magazines. "He does a good business here."

"I know," she said. "My sister and I come here once in a while for lunch. It was packed. In fact, when you suggested that we come here, I was wondering how they'd like someone just sitting and talking."

"You have to be assertive about these things. You just sit."

It was a weekday evening and quiet. We took a small table to the side. A few minutes after we had ordered, six men in their twenties came in, chosing the large table next to us. They order spaghetti and beer, seeming to be more enthusiastic about the beer.

"Do you like being single?"

"Not really," she said. "I don't think about it all that much, but when I do, I'm not that happy with it."

"Why not?"

"I don't like coming home to an empty house." She paused, then laughed. "I'm sure other girls have said the same thing and meant something different. No, it's not like that. Weekends when I have Jeffrey (her eight-year old son) the house feels different. It has some life to it. You wouldn't think an eight-year old could be a lot of company, but he is."

"Do you think you'll get married again?"

"Yes." She paused again. "I don't think I'm cut out for living alone. I admire what you've done."

"What's that?" At the table next to us, praise becomes effusive for the waitress who has brought new pitchers of beer.

"The way you live," Stephanie said, "what you do. I love reading, but I don't think I'd have it to make it my life. It's not easy being a writer."

"I'm not a writer yet."

"But you're trying."

"Living alone, as you probably know, isn't much glamor. Mostly it's just habit now."

"You see, there is a difference. You've lived alone for a long time."

"So have you. I mean, how long have you been divorced, five years?"

"But I've never left Gardner. My mother was always just up the street and if I didn't call her every day there was hell to pay. The other difference is that you like being alone. I don't."

"It's given me my best times and my worst times. And, as I said, it's mostly habit now. I don't know if I could adjust to living with someone now. But," I say, stabbing a tomato in my salad, "that's enough about me. How, if you don't mind my asking, did the divorce happen? Whose divorce was it?"

"His, really. We'd been separated for about six months. One day on the phone he tells me that he's getting a divorce. It was a surprise. I thought that we were just temporarily separated. He was seeing someone. They got married right after the divorce."

"The separation, how did that happen?"

"We were too young. I'd married the only guy I'd seriously dated in high school. Jeffrey was a very hyper child and I found that I just couldn't handle him."

"When did you start working as a waitress?"

The radio on the shelf of the service window to the bar had been turned on. Stephanie waited a few seconds before answering. "Ron had been

a sportswriter for a few years. He'd just gotten fired in a real dirty deal. We needed the money, so when he saw the ad in the paper for a part-time waitress, he encouraged me to apply. Who'd have thought that that part-time job would have stayed with me all this time, pulled me through so much."

"How did you meet Ron?" I asked.

"At a club we both belonged to in high school. I think I was in my sophomore year in high school."

"You dated him almost exclusively, didn't you?"

"Yes," she said. "He treated me so good. I felt completely myself when I was with him, the self that I was then, anyway."

"Thinking about it now, after all this, how do you feel about having not dated more."

She laughed lightly. "I don't know. I know that my mother had said that maybe I ought to go out with other boys, to look around some more. But,I didn't. For one thing, I would never find any reason to break up with him once we started dating. Like I say, he treated me so good. When I was a senior, and he was out of school, other guys would ask me out, not knowing that I was still with him. But by then I felt a sort of obligation to him."

"The marriage. Did that grow out of that obligation, as the next logical thing to do?"

"Marriage, well, it just sort of happened. Yeah, it was a natural occurance. We got married while he was at the Mount. He tried going to Fitchburg State, I forget what program he was in. He dropped out. When we

were married we moved to Fitchburg and worked in the same factory down there. He did a little upholstering on the side. It was down there that he got started with Digital. And the writing, too. He was working like three jobs, writing for the Gardner News."

"And he's been with Digital since?"

"Yes."

"Getting back to the dating. Did you then wonder, or do you now, about pledging yourself to one guy?"

"No, not really. He was good to me. And it was a way to get out of the house. I used to spend all of my time with him, over at his house or just out."

"I take it your folks liked him or at least didn't put any obstacles to the relationship."

"No. They liked him, thought he was a good kid. As I'd said, my mother thought that it might be better if I dated more, but she didn't object. My father, of course, didn't say anything."

"Do you think that your getting a job caused anything?" The waitress came over and turned down the radio without comment.

"No. Well, it did make it possible for me to work, to have something to do when we broke up." The radio got louder again. "Why?" she asked.

"Well, it's just that sometimes when a wife goes to work, or starts school, or does something different, it causes trouble in the home."

"No, I don't think so. The marriage was tired before. We'd been just too young." She smiles. "If he and I were married now, it would be a pretty good marriage, just for being older. That's all we needed."

"You're friends with him now, aren't you?"

"Better friends than we've ever been. When we talk on the phone, it's usually about Jeffrey, but we're very good friends."

"How about with his wife?"

"Oh, she hates me with a passion. A couple of times Jeffrey has had to hear that, and that's no good. She's blown up a couple of times, accusing me of trying to take her husband away (which I'm not). A child shouldn't have to hear that stuff. She and I don't talk at all."

"If you were to marry a divorced man and his wife, ex-wife, was still around, I bet you'd be upset, or at least confused."

"I understand that. I'm not mad at her. But,what does get me angry is wondering what she is saying to Jeffrey about me. He knows that I'm his mother. I supposed that now that he has a new family of his own, it doesn't matter much to him. But,he knows that I'm his mother. That matters to me and it will matter to him later."

"Did you feel guilty for letting him go with your ex- and his new wife?"

"Sure. I said to myself at times, 'What kind of mother would give up her son?' But I didn't give him up. I still see him. And the important thing is that he has a home and is cared for. If I wasn't sure about that, I'd feel very bad."

"Most women keep their children after a divorce, particularly around here. Sometimes they do it for spite," I said.

"I couldn't have done that. If they were moving away, I'd have to worry about it a lot. I had to realize, too, that I'm not the kind of

mother like mine was. She sacrificed her whole life for her two daughters and now she's got nothing but us. She doesn't work, doesn't even drive. She has to depend on my father to go very far from the house. I try to get her to do something, but there aren't many things she can do. She's in her late fifties. There are programs that I've looked into for her. But as long as my father is alive and working or until she gets to sixty-five, she can't use them."

"Church?"

"She goes to church and does some things there. But it isn't much."

"You were brought up..."

"Catholic. The nuns and the whole bit."

"How do you feel about that?"

"I hated it. I can remember screaming at my mother about her sending me off with those horrible nuns. She said that if she had known she never would have done it. I believe her. She didn't know. She thought she was doing right."

"When did you stop going to church?"

"Sometime after I got married. I would go once in a while then. When the divorce came, of course, I stopped completely. They say that things have changed there now, that they are a lot more forgiving toward divorced people. And I guess I'd like to go, just to have a place to go and sit and be quiet. Maybe someday. I still have my basic beliefs and maybe someday I'll go back. At least the guilt is gone."

"That's surprising. Most Catholics usually hang onto their guilt for a lifetime."

"No," she said. It's gone."

"Even about sex?"

"Especially about that," she laughs lightly.

Phil LaGrassa comes over to turn down the radio. "You guys ought to keep it down. We've got other customers in here," he said.

"You the manager?" one fellow asked.

"I'm the manager," said Phil, walking away. The radio stayed soft and soon the young men left.

"We were supposed to be talking about the Mount," said Stephanie. "But we keep getting sidetracked."

"No matter. Okay, how about the Mount? Will you go back?"

I don't know. I thought about it for this semester. Rural Housing has told me, though, that I'm making too much money at the workshop, so they're raising my rent. I may have to stay working those three nights at the restaurant. I need the money. I suppose I don't need quite so large a place. But I do, for the times when Jeffrey is with me."

"Working all the time and trying to go to school is just too much. If I went to school, I'd lose my free evenings and probably most of my weekends. That's the way it was when I went last year. I was on the run constantly."

"What do you think you missed by working all the time before?"

"The social life. My friend Ellie was telling me how to meet nice guys. I don't like bars. I can't drink much and most of the guys there are creeps. I asked her how to meet nice guys. She said, "Go to college." I guess that was in the back of my mind when I went. But I didn't have the

time even to sit for lunch. I barely knew anyone in my classes. I was either studying or had to leave to go to work."

"Another year would have made a big difference. It takes most people a year just to find their way around. I was lucky, having the newspaper to get me out and around, meeting people."

"See, I didn't have time for any of that. It was just work and school. If I had it to do over again, that's what I'd look for, meeting more people."

"Do you have any close friends now?"

"Since Mary moved away, no one really. Ellie lives in Fitchburg. When we were going to school, we'd see each other often, have lunch at least once a week. Now, though, there just isn't the time. We never seem to get together. I'm basically very shy. The kids at work sometimes think I'm a snob because I don't make friends easily. But I just don't."

"What did the Mount do for you?"

"It got me out of a rut. I've worked at the restaurant for five years and there are times when I just hated it. Sundays were the worst because I know that Sunday night I'd have to go back there. Going to the Mount was something different."

"But, it didn't get you a job."

"No, it didn't. And I've talked with people there. I'll get a raise in another three months, and that that's about as often as I can get them. To get more, or to move up in my classification, I'd need at least a Bachelor's and probably a Master's. That's too much to think about."

"An Associate's isn't worth much, is it?"

"Not really. And I know, too, that the longer you're out, the less likely it is that you'll go back. Each semester I say that I ought to take a few courses, but it always seems like so much. I felt bad that I had to drop those courses I'd signed up for this fall."

"But you'd gotten the job you were going to school to get."

"Right. And I was discouraged at my mistake. I took a couple of courses last semester that I really didn't need and if I'd taken the right ones, I would have graduated last spring, with the credits I'd gotten earlier from Monty Tech. Instead, I had to repeat sociology, because nothing else that I needed was offered in the fall. And then, I had to turn around and drop it again."

"That mix-up wasn't your fault, was it? I mean, you were mis-advised."

"But I should have known."

"To change the subject a bit," I said, "where do you think you'll eventually settle down to live?"

"Probably around here. When I was nineteen, I should have just taken off somewhere, started out on my own. But I was too scared then, and all I thought ablut was getting married. I guess that's about all most of the girls I know talked about."

"You got married right after high school, right?"

"Six months, no, it was about a year afterwards. But it wasn't a long time. There were a lot of things I could have, should have done then."

"Do you think you might ever just take off and start off fresh in a new place?"

"Yeah, but I won't, Steve (her boyfriend) and I have looked at some

houses around here, in Westminster. If we get married, we'll probably live around here."

"Does that bother you, that you don't think you'll ever live anywhere else?" I asked, noticing that the dining room was empty except for us and a waitress setting tables. People were coming and going at the counter.

"A little. It's something I should have done ten years ago. Oh, if I find a job around Worcester, I might take it. But I doub t if I could live in the city. I'd be too scared."

"How do you see yourself ten years from now, when you're nearing forty?"

"Married, living in Gardner," she says, smiling.

"Do you think you might go back to school after you're married, when the pressure to work isn't so great?"

"It's a possibility. It doesn't matter that much that I finish, I don't think. What's important is that I done some things already. When I married, I was just too young, we both were. And I'm not like my mother. I can't live my life for my kids."

"You just read My Mother, My Self. How was that?"

"It explained a few things. She and I are alike in many ways."

"Do you worry about her? I mean, my folks are getting on in years. It scares me to think that I'll have to care for them. Not that it's a burden to me. Rather, that it'll be a problem, because they're so used to fending for themselves, my father in particular."

"My mother tries to keep busy. She gets up early every morning,

refuses to take naps. I'd love to be able to sleep late, but she never does. I can see it. If you start sleeping during the day, you get pretty bored. So she takes walks, visits when she can, even in the cold weather."

"What does you father do?" I asked.

"He drives truck for one of the factories."

"Not long distance, is it?"

"I don't know how far he travels, but it's never out of the state."

"He's been at that for quite a while, I would imagine."

"Yeah. I can't remember exactly how long, but it has been a while. Before that he was always working in one of the factories. And he's got his night job as a janitor." She chuckled. "He's worked two jobs for a while, too."

"Is that why you stay close by? For her?"

"Maybe. She doesn't have much besides her two daughters."

"Does she like being a grandmother?"

Stephanie laughs. "At first, she did. She likes being a mother. But, Jeffrey is a very active child, very active. He wore her out. That's a problem. She hasn't got the strength to be a mother anymore, but that's the only thing she knows how to do."

"I guess that's part of the reason for my being in Gardner," I said. My folks are divorced. My father is retired and lives alone. He's sixty-five and in his own way lets me know that he likes having me around. It's tough trying to keep an eye on them while not letting them know that you're doing it. I guess pride makes us play little games like that, their pride."

"It does. But we keep getting away from the Mount."

"With good reason," I said, laughing. "The Mount hasn't made a big change in your life, has it?"

"Yes and no. I certainly didn't use it for all that it could give me."

"Which is one of the problems of a community college. Most of the kids going there are working, have to work, and can't devote the kind of time to school that they could at a live-in place. Most kids go to their classes and then split, usually to go to work.

"The other thing is that, as we talk, I realize that we've been lucky with the place. You to get your job, me to transfer out to a good school. But there are a lot of kids who don't get a chance to use their degrees at all."

"Like Steve," Stephanie said.

"Exactly. You can say that education is never wasted, and I believe that. But one of the promises that gets made implicitly is that more education will get you a better job. It's a promise that can't get made in Gardner with any confidence."

"Steve certainly isn't using his degree at the restaurant. And now, he's looking into getting his real estate license."

"Does that bother him?"

"He gets awfully down on himself. And he really has come to hate his job now. He and the boss have been having some awful fights."

"That happens when you've been at a job too long, particularly a job like that."

"I just hope he can find something else soon."

I began to look around for our waitress to get our check. Stephanie and I put on our coats and stood up. The waitress came out from the counter area. "We thought you'd given up on us," Stephanie said.

"I didn't want to disturb you," said the waitress, pleasantly.

A few evenings later, I ran into Stephanie at her restaurant job. There had been some changes on her job at the workshop. She'd been shifted around to cover for someone who was out sick, and it was looking as though those changes were becoming permanent.

"I'm working with another supervisor now. Each of us has a different system of doing things. I have to learn her system. I'm used to working by myself."

"Doesn't sound good."

"I don't like it. I told you about the raises there. It just gets to me, having to work here two or three nights just to pay my extra rent. And if I go anywhere else, to another restaurant, they'll make me work weekends because that's where the new people always go. And that's where the most money is, too. I dunno. The car's not running right. I have to sit in it for ten minutes warming it up so it won't stall when I'm driving.

"Sounds like the automatic choke."

"That's what the mechanic said. I had it in for work not too long ago. I forget how much he said it would cost to have it fixed. That's where you're lucky, that you can do a lot of the work yourself."

"My father's the mechanic, not me."

"Well, you and your father. At least mine starts now." She felt the

eye of the manager on her and walked away to begin cleaning around the coffee maker. A few more customers came in. I didn't get to talk with her again that evening. I finished my coffee and left.

Chapter Four

Stephanie mentioned that her reasons for returning to school were mixed. The hope of getting a better job was there. But when the job came along, without her having the degree, she still had a few regrets about what she had missed while at the Mount. What she felt that she had missed most was the chance to meet people. Working thirty hours a week left her little time for loitering around the cafeteria where much of the socializing takes place.

The Mount also got her out of what she called a rut. Restaurant work isn't bad for a time, but, and her I'm drawing on my own experience as well as Stephanie's, the work has its limits. A rough guess, based on ten years of flipping burgers, is that no more than ten percent of the people working in restaurants at any given time are making that work their careers. The pressures, the routine, the low pay, the strain of being, day in and out, "just a waitress" or "just a cook" -- the work begins to take its toll. It was this rut that Stephanie hoped to leave.

Most of the people working in restaurants are young, teens and young adults. One reason for this is the generally flexible work schedule that one is asked to work. For this reason, women with school age children can find mid-day work that will still allow them to be home when the children are. High school and college kids are able to work evenings and weekends as their schedules permit.

With most people working part-time and few making it a career,

atmosphere of impermanence sets in. People are constantly leaving the restaurant where Stephanie works. Going away to school, getting married and/or having children, finding better jobs -- the people on the move say that it was a good job for its time and now it's time for something else.

But what of those who don't move on, who watch a hundred people over the years leave to seek new and exciting lives? It begins to wear. A change of job might help, but in Stephanie's case, while she was working full-time, that sort of change wasn't likely. All that could be readily found was more of the same. The rut was more than occupational; it became personal. She was becoming a career waitress by default, and she didn't like it.

In writing about the effect of social class on personal feelings of autonomy, Melvin Kohn states,

> The essence of higher class position is the expectation that one's decisions and action can be consequential; the essence of lower class position is the belief that one is at the mercy of forces and people beyond one's control, often, beyond one's understanding....Self-direction, in short, requires opportunities and experiences that are much more available to people who are more favorably situated in the hierarchical order of society; conformity is the natural consequence of inadequate opportunity to be self-directed.[1]

In a working-class city, such as Gardner, the opportunities are not readily available for people to develop the kind of self-directedness which, Kohn suggests, is commonly associated with middle-class life. Kohn's analysis speaks to a concern felt by Stephanie in a dangerously acute way. She had played by the rules: she married, became a mother, worked to help out the family in times of trouble. She had played by

the rules and was now in a position of hating herself. For a long time she had worked, hoping that something would come along, that her time as a waitress was indeed temporary. A husband might take her away from all this. But the man she knew and might marry was in no better position than she. She knew as well the risks involved in trying to climb out of anything by the means of marriage. Her ex-husband, Ron, was on the climb. A Gardner kid, he had the ambition to work three jobs at one time, hoping that something from one of the three would make the difference for his life and Stephanie's. Stephanie stayed with him during those building years, but found that she could not stay with a man, in effect, just for the money that might come along. Nor could she stay and gain satisfaction by his doings. The promise of a self-directed life, even if it was possible for Ron, had to be a reality for her as well or it just didn't feel right.

Playing by the rules is, to Kohn, conformity, and is the product of limited education and constricting job conditions. Education, Kohn writes, is important

> because self-direction requires more intellectual flexibility than does conformity; tolerance of nonconformity, in particular, requires a degree of analytic ability that is difficult to achieve with formal education.[2]

He goes on to state that jobs in higher class positions, the better white-collar jobs, allow one to practice self-direction, and that this experience expands out to one's off-the-job life as well. Blue-collar work, as with most service work, doesn't allow that sort of flexibility, and there are, according to Kohn's reasoning, similar effects on one's

non-working life.

There's an apparent contradiction when it's said that much of the attractiveness of service work, like that of waitressing, is in the flexibility of scheduling that is possible, while the inflexibility of the job itself in the workplace can stifle the worker's personal sense of freedom and worth. This is a paradox which will get replayed again, and it's one of the ironies of service work. It is on the cusp of blue and white collar work, and for that reason has both the attractive and deleterious qualities.

Aspirations for a better sort of life, then, may be fulfilled, or at least helped along, by additional amounts of education. Enter Mount Wachusett Community College. Its low cost, convenient location, and continuing education facilities helpt to make a college education available to those for whom college had been traditionally denied for reasons of economy, practicality, and academic standards. If, as it's been suggested by Kohn, college education can help working-class people out of the economic and psychological ruts that have come to rule their lives, then a community college would seem to be a great thing for a place such as Gardner.

To the three uses of community college education that have been mentioned, primarily rising out of Stephanie's experience -- economic advancement, social agency, and personal growth --, a fourth might be added. Erik Erikson has advanced the idea of adolescence as being a moratorium, a time between the obedience and dependence of childhood and the responsibility of adulthood.[3] This moratorium is, as a rule,

a socially sanctioned time of indecision, as it's generally been available to middle and upper-class youth, often in the form of extended periods of education.[4]

The word moratorium is not wholly adequate, however, to our purposes, at least as it relates to Stephanie. She, at age twenty-nine, is past the age of moratorium, as the usage by Erikson would indicate. But, for other Mount students, college can be "time between," a bit of luxury in the form of a period which demands relatively little in the way of definite commitment. College is an activity which has some social legitimacy, while at the same time offers the student the chance to nibble at life without the pressure of having to make irreversible decisions.

"Elevation into the middle-class," writes Frank Parkin, "represents a personal solution to the problem of low status...."[5] A private solution, however, following Kohn, might mean risking a private failure. Howard London, in The Culture of a Community College, notes, and more will be said of this in a later chapter, that students entering community colleges are often not prepared for the culture that awaits them, a middle-class culture, essentially, which values abstract thinking to a much greater extent than the students had previously experienced. London writes:

> Students created a perspective that diminished the possibility of success as defined by their middle-class, gate-keeping teachers. Indeed, the self-doubts of students, so intimately linked with social class, created a double bind: Suspecting their abilities to work with ideas led them to suspect the worth of working with ideas, yet mind and intelligence were held to be important indicators of worth and character.[6]

The openness of the American economic system fosters dreams, dreams which, Kohn suggests and London, within the educational system, endorses, may be subverted by the very conditions that make the need so great.

Much debate centers around the economic worth of education, saying, in effect, that many people still take seriously the prospect of real social mobility that would arises from greater amounts of education. The ticket out of the working-class life, assuming one wants to go, is money. Money, it should be noted, doesn't change everything, or make us happy, as our grandparents often told us. But, money does make a lot of other things possible. The way to money, it's assumed, is through education which in turn leads to a better job. This is the assumption which guides Ben Wattenberg in his statistical analysis of the United States, The Real America.

Wattenberg doesn't equivocate. Most Americans, he writes, "know that education is a direct variable that produces, if nothing else, an economic payoff."[7] He then cites census data which shows the decided advantage held by college graduates over high school graduates in terms of lifetime earnings. Wattenberg's standards for social progress come from the question, "Is what we have now better than what it replaces?" To the "de-eliticization " of American colleges, he says that,indeed, things are now better.

If, as Wattenberg suggests, the direct economic benefit of a college education is part of the popular wisdom, we would then expect to be able to find a causal relationship between income and educational levels. His figures show that college graduates, as a group, do much

better over their lifetimes than do non-graduates. But those are income averages; no firm prediction can be made, based on education levels alone, as to what any one individual will earn. There are too many other variables. Further, not all colleges are alike. Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis qualify Wattenberg's, and our, enthusiasm, with the following:

> The promise of high-status seemingly offered by admission to community colleges is a particularly cruel hoax. The occupational opportunities and likely incomes of worker with less than four years of college fall far short of the opportunities open to four-year college graduates. Four-year college graduates are over twice as likely to end up in high status professional and technical jobs as those who have less than four years of college. Those without four-year degrees are twice as likely to end up in clerical jobs.

While the advantage of four-year graduates over high school graduates in terms of lifetime income is fifty percent, the difference for those with less than four years of college is fourteen percent.[8]

Because community colleges deal with students who are poorer, economically and academically, a ghettoization has taken place, Bowles and Gintis conclude. What seems to be an extension of the middle-class franchise turns out to be, according to these authors, a replication and legitimation of a rigid class structure with the middle-class itself. "We suggest that the booming community college movement has created a class stratification within higher education parallel to the hierarchical relationships of production in the modern corporation.[9]

Stanely Aronowitz echoes Bowles' and Gintis' argument that the types of colleges (elite private, state university, state and community

colleges) gear their students for specific levels of employment. The result is that patterns of conformity and nonconformity are replicated in the types of colleges studied. "The community college...is typically bereft of liberal culture," Aronowitz argues. While imagination and invention are stressed at the elite private schools, "imagination is held in low esteem in the state schools and community colleges, where training replaces education and programmed response overcomes thought."[10]

The generally lower quality of instruction, standardized curriculums, and overcrowded classes indicated to Aronowitz that community colleges have been designed with the purpose of either discouraging students or numbing them into a form of submission. He concludes,

> The endless waiting in the lower grades for a different education that was to be fulfilled by college is followed by the recognition that college is not meant to be a fount of wisdom, but is, at best, a credential for a job. When this illusion too is smashed by the high levels of unemployment among those who have completed four-year colleges, the student realizes that college beats working at McDonald's and its main value consists in postponing for a while the bleak job prospects that lie ahead. At best, community college graduates may become a manager at McDonald's rather than a short-order cook, who is typically only a high school graduate.[11]

London suggests that Aronowitz may overestimate the amount of cynicism and anger among students who attend community colleges without finding satisfaction. Students generally perceive that something is lacking in their education; often as not, they tend to personalize that failure, blaming themselves more often than blaming the school. [12]

To add to the uncertainty regarding the economic benefit of a college education, Diane Ravitch, in a review of the radical critiques

of education, writes,

> ...the present state of historical knowledge points to two conclusions about the past: first, that there has been significant upward mobility in American society; and second, that the relative importance of schooling in this process is thus far uncertain.

Acknowledging the popular support for the notion that advanced education will lead to economic advancement, she says that most people balance this idea with an awareness of the roles played by hard work, determination, and good luck.[13]

Christopher Jencks, in Inequality, suggests an alternative view from that of Wattenberg, and disputing Ravitch to some degree. Additional amounts of education, Jencks asserts, will not yield as high a return for working-class youth as for youth from high-status (middle and upper class) families. "For working-class whites, blacks, and women, dropping out seems in many cases to be the most economically rational decision."[14] The amount of money spent on education, plus the income lost while in school, do not, on average, balance out against the return of lifetime income. At best, increased amounts of schooling will give one access to the better paying jobs. But even here, the chances of rising to the top are limited. He notes, "...Men from high-status families have higher incomes than men from low-status families, even when they enter the same occupation, have the same amount of education, and have the same test scores.[15] Other reasons for attending college may be found for working-class youth, but economic gain should not be foremost. "Efforts to get everyone to finish high school and attend college must, therefore, be justified on noneconomic grounds. Otherwise, they probably

cannot be justified at all."[16]

Although it's hoped by parents and students alike that college will help the child, the conclusions are ambiguous, particularly when it comes to the lives of working-class youth. In a society which is continually upping the educational ante, it may require even more work on the part of poorer youth just to stay even, that college may be needed not to gain, but to avoid losing even more.

The suggestion by Jencks that noneconomic reasons ought to be found is picked up by Wattenberg. In his general optimism, he cites a Gallup Poll which notes that forty-three percent of all Americans, when asked if there was anything they wished to do differently with their lives, said that they would have obtained more education. He terms college "broadening humanistic experience," and returns us to an earlier consideration, that the psychological benefits of college are worth seeking on their own, enabling one, recalling Kohn, to handle middle-class life, should it ever come along.

College is college, in Wattenberg's view. The expansion of community colleges duing the last two decades has provided more kids with the same opportunities formerly restricted to the rich. This process, the blueing of academia," he calls it, has been both cause and effect of what he regards as a definite and good thing: America's becoming a middle-class nation.

Wattenberg, however, is wrong. The likes of Harvard, Vassar, Amherst, or Michigan State are not being offered at Mt. Wachusett. One reason is the student who goes there. Open admissions at the community

colleges means that anyone with a high school diploma or its equivalent can attend a community college in Massachusetts. At the more prestigious institutions, acceptance rates as compared to the number of applications can be, and often are, in the fifteen to twenty percent range; depending on the program, the acceptance rates at Mt. Wachusett range from thirty to one hundred percent.[18] A significant number of Mount students need and accept remediation in math, reading, and writing.[19] The range of academic preparation levels among Mount students is wide and so are the demands on the instructors. Wattenberg's contention that a community college degree is equally valuable when compared with two years at an Ivy League institution is a bit of grandiose dreaming.

Aronowitz's argument, that the community college experience is a deadening one justified just barely by a negligible advancement, is also wrong. The high drop-out figures to which he and Bowles and Gintis allude do, on first glance, indicate high levels of disaffection with the quality of education being delivered. But those figures, widely circulated as being, on the national level, fifty and seventy percent of freshmen and sophomores respectively dropping out before graduation, are gravely inaccurate. Stephanie would be classed as a drop-out by the standards used, the simple fact of failing to graduate in the day school within a specified period of time. The drop-out figures only show the number of students who do not continue at the same rate as their entering class, for whatever reason. No factorings are included for shifts to other schools, temporary dropping-out due to jobs, family concerns, pregnancy and the like, or even for a change from day school

to evening school.[20] In short, there is a fluidity to community college enrollments which bears closer scrutiny before any conclusions can be drawn.

Precisely because they are not easily quantifiable, the noneconomic reasons for a community college education invite a good deal of debate. It is surprising to note, however, that Aronowitz, Bowles and Gintis, dedicated radical critics of American education, should be more concerned with the economic payoff of college, substantial or not, than is their conservative counterpart, Ben Wattenberg. Likewise, drop-out figures seem more troublesome to Aronowitz, who, in earlier pages, had berated the community colleges for being an extension of the lock-step of high school. That a student could sample courses over a long period, and thus, unfortunately, be numbered among the drop-outs, seems to be a serious crisis for him. It may be, on the other hand, that that sampling is healthy evidence of person's willingness to continue an education over the course of a lifetime, rather than to confine it to the teens and early twenties.

The four uses of education mentioned earlier -- economic, social, psychological, and a form of moratorium -- appear in unique combinations in all students. In Stephanie's case, a reading of the situation might be as follows: The realization of her predicament came to her slowly, principally as a result of a marriage gone sour. She found that her dreams of a fulfilling life, derived from whatever source but presumably from the world outside Gardner, were not being met. A job outside the home, one of the ways often found to obtain escape from a trouble& marriage

which was itself an attempt to get out of the house, turned out to be as stifling as what she had left. Staying single, taking the extraordinary step of relinquishing her son, she found that she was being drawn more and more back to her mother's life. Her attempts at finding a style of life that is both acceptible within the community standards of which she is a product and yet satisfying in terms of giving her self-respect and self-direction leaves a vacumn of authority which is all too willingly filled by her parents. To meet a guy and get a job and learn more about herself, she took the step of trying college. The time in college, for what it was expected to do, was a qualified success.

Her sampling and testing was spread out over a decade. Her entrance into college came as a result of so-called mistakes. This situation is not new historically. Joseph Kett, in Rites of Passage, notes that late graduation ages were quite common in the 19th century, particularly among men from families without traditions of education. "Such late decisions (to enter college)," he writes, "would be more frequent where the young man's families lacked ties to professions or to merchant houses where advanced education was valuable. In other words, these young men were originally destined for some other line."[21] Along with economic difficulties, then, came a period of, if not accurately called indecision, then, trial-and-error. The life that was placed before him was sampled and found wanting. If the means were present, alternative such as college could be tried.

The extension of something new into a culture unaccustomed to a presence such as that of college would not be quickly accepted as a

a viable possibility. Stephanie played by the rules, and the rules of her life in her time included marriage and motherhood. That the community college was open and willing to accept her as a student did not necessarily mean that she would consider it as a real possibility for her. Indeed, it wasn't until she had done her duty, and in a way failed at it, that she could actively consider other possibilities.

"It may well be," Erikson remarked, "that what 'you can take for granted' a phrase which Freud used to characterize his attitude toward morality) also determines what chances you can fruitfully take with it."[22] College and all that it might promise was not taken for granted by Stephanie. Therefore, recalling Jencks, a kid coming out of a working-class environment might be slower to realize the opportunities available as a result of education, and might be less able to capitalize on the chances at hand.

Stephanie, as with others like her in Gardner, saw a hope of something in her choice to attend Mt. Wachusett. Some aspects of what is called the middle-class life as she's seen it do appeal to her. The autonomy and feeling of self-directedness could not come out of her job as a waitress, her parental or marital family, or much else in her environment. More will be said about Mt. Wachusett later, but her feelings about the place revolve around a sense of missed opportunity. By circumstances and shyness, she was unable to make more of her time there. That the school could or should have done more, as Aronowitz and others would argue, wasn't a conclusion that she found to be overwhelmingly compelling. The economic effect of her year in college was, as the

radicals concluded, negligible, although this was in part due to the fact of her leaving before graduation, and in part due to the fact that it would take a Bachelor's or Master's before any great gains in income would be seen in her occupation. Neither was it the liberating experience that Wattenberg promised. She felt, in certain ways, inadequate to the task of education. Exposure to the world of idea was exhilarating only when it did not point out what was missing. The demands on her time because of the needs to make ends meet through working limited her chances, if the promises of education are true, to make a new life for herself.

She had, in her marriage to Ron, a shot at a thoroughly middle-class life. Her husband was an ambitious, bright, and advancing young man with a real chance to make a change. But his life, she found, wasn't hers. Once the love faded, there was little else that attracted her. She made some gambles for the sake of her freedom, but hadn't the resources to make the gamble pay off in a dramatic way. It might be said that her close connections with her mother are acting as a drag on her own mobility. Stephanie, however, grew up in Gardner and evidently learned its lessons well. Change is best when it comes slowly. She wanted the security of a home and family, but wanted the excitement of a dream as well. She's found that she can have both, if she takes bits of each at a time.

Chapter Five

The sign is tall and can be seen by travellers on Route 2. The sign from that direction reads: ter Donut. With its too-small parking lot, the orange and white building is nestled to the side of a railroad overpass that bisects Pearson Boulevard. Up close, the name of the place is discovered to be Mister Donut. (Traffic from the north sees Miste Donut.) Trains occasionally on the overpass will stop, sending three or four guys down for coffees. Few pedestrians come by, as there are no sidewalks leading to the shop. ter Donut is designed, albeit not very well, for the motoring public, domestic and foreign. For many on the outside, ter Donut is the only contact any of them will have with Gardner.

As I drive past I notice Rick's red Subaru in the parking lot. It takes some things they don't teach you in driving school to get in and out of ter Donut's. Pearson Boulevard is at that point three lanes becoming two. Across the street is the entrance to Gardner Plaza. Traffic from Gardner going to the plaza or to Route 2, traffic coming off of Route 2 or from South Gardner, traffic coming in and out of ter Donut -- it's a mess. It's said that Bob Cousy has peripheral vision over two hundred and fifty degrees in range. That's great for basketball, but paralyzing for a driver. There's too much to worry about. My Valiant lurches across two lanes of traffic and into the parking space next to Rick.

"You've got the dimmest goddam lights in the world," he shouts from

his car. "How the hell can you see?" I shrug and get into his car. He'd been sitting in his car, drinking a to-go coffee for a while, watching people.

"Coffees?" I ask.

"Sure. You got money?"

"My round."

I bought the coffees for us. We decided to sit outside on the swatch of lawn beneath the sign. It was a warm night, very warm for the last Saturday in October. Daylight time was being given back, meaning an extra hour for the Halloween parties that were going on. Rick and I watched the people in their white suits and green faces.

Next to ter Donut is the Old Colony gas station, one of three (sometimes four) gas stations on this section of Pearson Boulevard. The smell of gas drifts down to meet us, as does the sound of bad valves and tape decks. Most of the time Old Colony has the cheapest gas in town. (Each time a gas station changes ownership, the new owner will try to start a price war. Either he cuts his margin so low that he goes broke, or he builds a steady business and can raise prices.) These are hard times for the independent chains, though. Old Colony has been running a penny or so higher than the Shell station up the street. To give it an additional edge, Old Colony has cheap cigarettes.

When I returned to Gardner in 1975, I found Rick sitting on a chair that was leaned against the front of the small brick building. The job of pumping gas, however, doesn't let one sit for very long. Old Colony was and is a busy place.

It's said that some guys are born to pump gas, others achieve it, and still others have it thrust upon them. Rick spent his early years in Cleghorn (pronounced Cleg-on), the French-Canadian section of Fitchburg, born on Lincoln's birthday, 1951. As with Gardner and the furniture shops, the promise to a kid growing up in Cleghorn was the paper mills, much like it had been for the fathers and grandfathers before.

Popular wisdom had it that doing well in school would give you a better chance with life. Although that's arguable, a lot of pressure remains on a kid to do well. Rick did well early, skipping the second grade. That made him and his parents very proud. It also caused problems. It was embarrassing to get to the third grade because of smarts instead of the natural progression of age. The third-graders already in place did not at first welcome the new kid.

The other problem was Rick's brother. Rick's not quite sure how it happened, but a competition developed between the two brothers. Bob, being two years older, set the pace of the competition and Bob could have cared less about school. If Rick did too well, he caught hell from Bob. Rick, however, was still sensitive to the criticism of parents and teachers, criticism that Bob seemed to be able to ignore.

According to Rick, three or four other kids were offered the chance to skip a grade at the same time as he was. Rick was the only one to go, the other parents saying that it was more important for a kid to be with others of his own age.

Some years later, Rick noted that his parents resent the fact that he is well-educated, compared to what they had. The bind starts early.

Pressure came on Rick to do well, and in doing well he discovered that he was the object of resentment, at first from other kids, including his brother, and later from his parents. After a while with that stuff floating around, a kid doesn't know what to believe.

Rick continued to do well, in spite of himself, in spite of a growing lack of confidence. His family moved from Cleghorn to Westminster, a small town between Fitchburg and Gardner. School, after all, was school, except that in the Westminster public schools, Rick wasn't taught by nuns. That there were girls in the classrooms did make much difference to Rick at age nine. Rick's father, particularly after the move, held onto the dream of having his boys return to Fitchburg to attend Notre Dame, a competitive entry high school not far from Cleghorn.

To be sure, the move to Westminster meant change for Rick and his family, but not as great a change as appearances would indicate. The neighborhood, for one thing, wasn't much different from the one he had left. Most of the families were or had been blue-collar. None of Rick's twenty blood aunts and uncles were in the neighborhood; most, however, were within regular telephone dialing distance.

The new house, on several parcels of land, was at the end of a wooded road, three miles from Westminster center, a quarter mile from the Gardner line. A swamp with enough water to look like a pond was in the back of the house. In the cellar was a pool table looking so huge that one thought that the house had been built around it.

A dozen houses within a half-mile of country road, a couple of fields for football, baseball, and war games -- this was Rick's new neighborhood.

The pool table was the ambassador of good will. Times when the kids could play were erratic because Rick's father was still working shifts at Fitchburg Paper and was sometimes asleep during the day. Other times, though, the old man would be downstairs with the kids, laughing, joking, teaching the kids how to shoot pool. (He was also protecting his investment. An untutored kid can tear up a pool table felt faster than a frog on ice skates.) Rick's father liked people, most of all, kids. He made them laugh and feel at home. Rick was short and had a theory that a guy laughing is less likely to beat you up. It worked, even with his brother. Sometimes.

In their turn the boys took the entrance exams for Notre Dame. Rick passed. Bob didn't. Rick felt that, as happy as his father had been over the acceptance, Bob's would have meant more. Rick went to Notre Dame High School. Bob went to Oakmont Regional. Bob, however, wasn't without distinction. As only a sophomore, he gained the right to the back corner seat on the school bus.

The Notre Dame that Rick went to was not the one that either he or his parents knew. Parochial schools were changing in the 1960's, as was the whole of the Catholic Church. Vatican II was a shock. Many people took the Church's claim to eternal truth quite literally. Lives and attitudes and daily routines were predicated on the unshakable truth of the Church's teaching. The Church was presenting, for all of time as far as most knew, the seamless robe of assurance and wisdom. And suddenly, it appeared as if the Church was saying, "We will trim a bit here, change the coloring there, add a patch or two." People cried from a baffled grief.

Into this stepped Rick, just a kid going off to high school. Faith

had been an awkward matter for him and his parents -- at times relaxed, at times obsessed. He recalls being forced by his mother to kneel at five o'clock with his family in prayer. He also remembers that his parents wouldn't say anything if he happened to miss Sunday Mass. Notre Dame was a damn good high school, its catholicity not hurting but probably not causing it reputation.

As much as he might have been aware of the changes in the Church, the Mass being said in English for example, Rick's reaction was one of confusion more than fear. "I wanted confidence," he said later, "and I hoped that Notre Dame would give it to me. It did and it didn't."

Those were good if tough years for Rick. Academically he did well -- A's and B's. He wore his ND blazer proudly, went to football games and lost his voice yelling, and had a good time with the other guys. The first two years he rode public buses back and forth from Fitchburg; later he drove his own car. One of the finest things about being at Notre Dame was that he no longer had to be Bob's little brother.

Religion classes were being taught differently. The brothers sought a reasoned faith in their students. This meant that faith by fear and rote had to be unlearned, if necessary. Many of the brothers couldn't ask questions of their students, however, without asking questions of themselves.

Brother Augustine was a close friend for Rick. He was a young priest, a strong, good-looking guy. Most importantly, he listened to Rick, taking his concerns seriously as no other teacher had done. ("They confused the hell out of me," Rick said. "They changed his name. For the first two years, he was Brother Augustine; then they changed it to Brother Durocher, his

real name.) The ski club would take trips and Rick would notice the girls eyeing Brother Durocher. Rick would wonder why a man would chose a celibate life. Brother Durocher tried to explain that it was absurd, but a reverent absurdity buried deep in the mystery of sacrifice. He cited St. Paul. Rick shook his head, wanting to laugh. Brother Durocher smiled, empathizing with the boy's confusion. Rick learned later, after his graduation from Notre Dame, that Brother Durocher had left the order.

The measure of confidence and security that Rick had gained from Notre Dame evaporated after graduation.

"Why didn't you go on to a real college?" Rick was asked later.

"You mean instead of the Mount? I guess because I didn't really want to go to college."

"Did your folks have anything to do with it?"

"Not much. No, by then, I was making decisions I had to make."

Rick lasted a semester, complaining that, after four years of all-male parochial education, the presence of young women in the classroom was too much of a distraction.

January, 1969, was not a good time to drop out of college. There was a war on. Letters came quickly from the draft board. Rick, before he received one of those letters, enlisted in the Air Force with a friend. They were promised Germany. Rick spent two and a half years in Germany, by way of a year in Vietnam. His brother Bob had a punctured eardrum and was IV-F.

"I wanted confidence; they gave me confidence," he says, seriously. He talks eagerly about his time in Germany and guardedly about the trip

to Vietnam. He mentions a time in a bus station in San Francisco when he stared for an hour at the buses boarding for Vancouver, Canada. "I couldn't do it," he says. He boarded a plane for Vietnam instead.

His mother would write to him, telling him that his father had cried over his letters. It embarrassed and angered Rick. He'd never known his father to cry. He was angry because his father couldn't show emotion and yet understood the kind of pride that works in most men. "When I left, here I was, going off to war, maybe to die. My father shook my hand."

About Vietnam, he'll say, "I was crazy then," and he changes the subject.

"Coming home from Vietnam, the transport was quiet. On the way over, we were rowdy as hell. Coming back, it was dead silence. No one was even looking at the stewardesses. We'd gotten shelled as the plane was leaving.

"We got off in Washington state. Most of the other guys were Army and had to hang around for debriefing for a day. I booked the first flight to O'Hare in Chicago and called my folks from there. Crying and screaming, they said they'd meet me at Logan. It was around four in the morning.

"Flying from Chicago to Boston, I remember saying to myself, 'I don't want to be here. I don't want to go home. Not yet.'"

"Do you know what that was?"

"No. I've been trying to figure it out, trying to recreate what that feeling was, and I can't. I just wanted to keep going.

"I landed at Logan at five in the morning. My mother was bawling her head off. My father shook my hand. I think he put the other hand on top. It's a big deal, coming home from a war not dead. Worth at least a two-handed shake."

Germany was better. Rick became animated as he talked. "Three of us got sent over at the same time. We reported to our Commanding Officer. It was cold and I knew that I didn't want to be out on the lines unloading planes. The CO asked if any of us could type. I said that I could. (What the hell do I know about typing?) They sent me down to run this old punchcard computer. A guy liked me, I made sergeant real quick, and I could knock out those reports in one-third the time the other guys could. I got the midnight shift. We smoked a little and had a good time the rest of the way out.

"But I was homesick the whole time."

Laying low was the plan after his discharge in 1972. He drifted around Massachusetts and Vermont. During the drifting he met Kate.

Kate had come from New York, Long Island. She was nearly five years younger than Rick, he being nearly twenty-three when they met. They met at an alternative school where Rick was teaching skiing. They left school together, owing five thousand dollars of the school's debts.

"How the hell did that happen?" Kate was asked.

"When the school was getting started, the phone and electric companies didn't believe that we were anything. The companies wanted an individual name on the accounts. I happened to be the one who went down to the offices."

They had to go to work. Living in a small house (shack) near the base of Mt. Wachusett in Westminster, Rick went to work at Old Colony, fifty hours a week on the second shift. Kate worked for a while at a restaurant in Hubbardston until it was closed for back taxes. She then worked at a

small plant stand.

When I pulled in for gas that spring in 1975 and we recognized each other, we exchanged shrugs. We were home and not too happy about it.

"There's something about hometowns," he had said in a moment of reflection between fill-ups. "They're like vacuum cleaners. You go off, do what you do, and something keeps drawing you back. You do loops, big ones, little ones, but there's always that something that sucks you back in. It's the same with all hometowns, I guess." He lit a cigarette. "Gardner just sucks more than most."

He was eager for me to meet Kate. "She did a lot for me," he said later. "She opened up whole worlds for me that I never knew existed, worlds of art, theater, music. What's that song line -- a New York way of life?"

"A New York state of mind."

"Yeah, that's it." He sings, "A New Yawk state of mind."

"I hate it when he says that," Kate said, separately. "I hate to think that I am responsible for so much change in a person, that if he hadn't met me he would have married some local bimbo and never be the wiser."

"What if that's true?" I ask.

"It probably is. That's what scares me the most. I don't like having that kind of responsibility for someone, and I don't like knowing that without some kind of exposure someone could not miss it."

"Different worlds, aren't they, Gardner and New York."

"I'll say. It was normal for me to go into the city every weekend,

plays, museums, concerts. I guess one of the biggest changes in Rick came when he lost the dollar value of the theater. Fifteen bucks is a small price to pay for something so priceless as a night at the theater. At first, he could only see the fifteen bucks and wonder if it was worth it. Now he can't get enough. When we go to visit my folks, he's dragging me into the city all the time, even when I don't want to go. It's new and exciting for him."

"And if it wasn't for you, he'd never care about the theater."

"Yeah, I know. But I don't like to think about it."

There wasn't much time for the theater while Rick was working at Old Colony. In one way, it was Rick's kind of work. His quick laugh and ability to put people at ease meant that he could enjoy the hours out in public. It was good for business, too. His friends would stop by, have a chat and a smoke, buying a couple bucks worth of gas. His boss, George, an ex-Marine, had a hard time understanding that Rick's friends were also customers. Bosses, it seems, go by different rules. If it looks like an employee is having fun, something must be wrong.

George liked Rick, in spite of Rick's beard and Rick's friends. They were, after all, both vets. Nevertheless, George had five stations to run and had his sights on the district manager's spot. The rules had to be enforced. No one but employees was allowed inside the office, and there was to be no loitering outside.

Later in the summer, the station went to self-service. Rick sat behind a console in the office, controlling the pumps and playing with the buttons. Money was passed through a small slot in the window. One had to

talk through the slot because the intercom never worked. The door was to be locked at all times. All that Rick had to do was punch the buttons and take the money. The day after his paid vacation, he quit.

Rick and Kate had gotten married the week before the vacation by a Unitarian minister in their little house (shack) in the woods in August, 1975. The reason for getting married was primarily their desire to have children. They knew that unmarried couples with children had a lot of trouble.

An added benefit of the marriage, not apparent the week before Rick quit Old Colony, was that the GI bill would pay him more for going to school. A week before the semester began, after a few nights of feverish talk, Rick enrolled at Mt. Wachusett Community College as a Human Services major, collecting nearly two-thirds of what he'd been making punching buttons and talking through the slot at Old Colony.

While Rick was in his first semester, they opened a small household goods business with a friend. The three worked well together. The other friend, Ray, had had his own business before; Kate supplied the imagination; Rick's contribution was his capacity for hard work.

The business went well for a year. Tax problems came along -- they'd forgotten to set aside money for business and personal taxes. Rick took a job driving an ice cream truck the following summer (1976) to try to get the shop back on its feet. The store lasted another six months. There wasn't the money to expand and they'd pretty much saturated the market with what they had. They had a going-out-of-business Christmas sale and closed up shop.

Through it all Rick continued in school. He liked it and they needed the money from the GI bill. It took him three years to graduate with his Associate's in Human Services. Rick and Kate moved from Gardner for a time, living as house parents in a residential school for emotionally disturbed teenage girls.

"There isn't one kind of work I want to do. I like working with people and I like carpentry," Rick said. They have moved out of the school, but Kate has gone back to work there on the evening shift. Rick is picking up odd jobs and remodeling an apartment for his landlord, an apartment they hope to move into within a few months. Rick started at UMass in January, arranging his classes so that he only has to go in three days a week.

"You know," I tell him, "you could walk into Digital right now and by tomorrow have a job paying fifteen thousand a year."

"Don't tell me that," he says, laughing. "Really?"

"Sure. They're crying for people like you. And you're a vet."

"I know. I just can't do it, though. We need the money and I'd like the money, but I just can't do it. I need to be doing something different every day. The way it is now, I love to get up in the morning. One week it's working for a friend's brother tearing down a donut shop in Lowell, and the next week I'm fixing up my own apartment. Leo (his landlord) is even paying four bucks an hour for days I don't do shit for work."

The traffic in ter Donut's parking lot gets loud and we have to shout our points. "Hi, fellas," shouts a carful of teenage girls on its way up Pearson Boulevard.

"Hi, yourself," he shouts back.

He knows that I'd been writing about Gardner, so I tell him some of the problems I've been having in writing about social class.

"I wouldn't trust anyone coming up here from Amherst College to write about Gardner," he says. His face is turned away so I can't read his expression.

I don't ask if I'm okay, saying instead, "We're both working-class and yet we're not. We're college graduates, of sorts, on our way to something. But how much is that going to change things?"

I mention the case of a guy we know who won the million dollar lottery, who's wrecked two Corvettes, lost his driver's license for five years for DWI, who's back working at the Highway Department because he's broke until his next check comes in.

"Money doesn't change everything, but it changes something," I say.

"Kate's had a tough time with our being broke all the time, couldn't get used to the idea that it just wasn't there. She's better about it now, realizing that we're broke for a reason. We've got better things to do than work all the time. I didn't understand that part of her for a long time, either. I'm not sure if I do now or not."

"It takes a long time to outrun where you've grown up. Our folks are still refighting the Depression, and we'll be refighting them for the rest of our time."

"I like Kate's father, her family, but I didn't feel quite comfortable down there. They tried their damndest, but I couldn't relax."

"That's social class, isn't it? Not being comfortable in places where you don't think you belong?"

"Yeah, I guess it is. When I was growing up, when we were growing up, we didn't know that we were poor, so it didn't matter. I don't know if it matters now or not."

"It's crazy, isn't it? I mean, if you don't leave Gardner and see the rest of the world, you can probably not know how tough things are and will probably still be happy about it."

"And," he says, "we make fun of the poor bastards who are stuck here not knowing that there is anything else."

We go inside and I buy another round of coffee to take out. "What kind of father do you think you'll be?"

"I dunno. I guess that's why we haven't had kids yet. Kate's wanted kids for a long time, but I haven't felt right."

"Why?"

"You tell me. Could you be a father right now?"

"A lot better than I could have a couple of years ago. The major thing has been that my faith in kids has increased. Sure, some kids turn out bad or get dropped on their heads too much by their parents. But there seems to be something indestructible in a kid, an amazing ability to turn out alright."

"Yeah, I guess. The kids we've worked with, some of the mothers have been prostitutes. fathers burgulars. And some kids come from Wellesley. But the thing I'd do different from my father or Kate's father is that I'd give my kid me. Our fathers worked like slaves to give us what they didn't have. I wish that the old man had just taken it a little easier."

"It's tough when the old man isn't around, when he's working to give

us security and we wind up insecure."

"No, it's not that," he says. "My old man was around enough, not like Kate's father who had to work all the time. Something was missing. I guess my old man just worried too damn much. My kids will get plenty of me."

"Probably too much," I say. "They'll wish that you'd be like other fathers and get the hell out of the house."

"Probably. What can you do?"

We finish our coffees and go home. Over the next few months I see Rick and Kate irregularly. Sometimes their red Subaru is coming around each corner; other times a couple weeks will go by before I see either of them again.

A friendship that's gone on for nearly twenty years is apt to not notice things. Often when Rick and I are together, we'll spend an hour remembering our Little League days. His Uncle Eddie had taught him how to make devilish bunts down the first base line. "I think I hit one home run in three years of Little League," Rick said. Which was one more than I had. I pitched and almost had a knuckle ball. But remembering the ball games and the pool table means that other changes get left unnoticed. We didn't let on what scared us, then or now, and so didn't always pay attention to what took away those fears.

"Looking back on your life," I ask Rick, "seeing the troubles you had with Bob, the way Notre Dame tricked you, the service tricked you, the troubles in the early years of the marriage, where do you think your confidence comes from? It certainly isn't coming from anything outside."

"Confidence, huh? You're right, I don't know where it comes from,

except that I know, or think I know, now that no matter what happens, I can survive. I say that now. I may not like what happens, I may be a basket case while it's happening. But I'll manage. I've done things and I've got things I can do. I'm no great carpenter, but folks like what I can do and they'll pay me."

"What's the one thing that scares you the most about your marriage."

"Infidelity." A pause. "I don't go snooping around after Kate, don't care if she goes off for coffee with other guys. But, if she wanted to get to me, that's the way.

"The other night, I was watching TV with her, zoned out on the tube more than I was listening to her. She says, 'If you don't listen to me, I'm going to go out and have a roaring affair with someone who will pay attention to what I say.' My heart stopped. She saw my face turn white and apologized. It hurt."

"It's the instinct of lovers to know where the other's jugular is."

"I guess so, but she didn't have to say that."

A few days before, I'd been talking with Kate in another coffee shop in town. "What's the one thing that would most threaten your marriage?" I asked her.

"For Rick, infidelity; for me, boredom." She related the incident in front of the television. "I didn't mean to say it, and I knew how much it would hurt him."

"The instinct of lovers?"

"Yeah. Scary, isn't it?"

"What do you want to be when you grow up?"

"Older," she says. "Really? I'd like to have my own interior decorating place. I know I've got the talent and the eye for it. It's the kind of thing that Rick can get excited about, too. He's got the skill to put into reality whatever I think up. I dream and he does it. Seriously, I'd like an interior decorating business where I can make enough money and have flexible enough hours so I can raise a kid.

"We need more than just each other for our marriage to work. The way it is now, with me working evenings, our time together is precious. I'd like to get on days, so Rick and I could have more time together, if we wanted it. I don't say that we'd spend every evening together. Other things would probably come up. But it would be nice to have the options."

"Would you be terribly upset if you woke up twenty years from now and found yourself still in Gardner?"

"If the next twenty went like the last two, no. I didn't like the place when I got here because I wasn't too happy with myself. We've lived here for nearly five years now. I've got friends. And I've come to appreciate what Gardner has. It can be a pretty place. I think of the house near Mt. Wachusett. Folks in the city drive two hundred miles for the kind of view I saw on my way home from work every day. And do you know about Gardner and wicker? They made the machines here that allowed wicker to be mass-produced. I loved wicker and went through the ceiling when I learned what they made here. People in Gardner say, 'So what.' I compulsively turn over chairs to see where they're made. The best ones often come from Gardner.

"Gardner doesn't notice what it's got. All the drinking around here

really bothers me. Did you know that Gardner used to have opera houses, theaters..."

"And they're gone. They're gone because most folks, then as now, would rather get drunk."

"Yeah, well, it doesn't seem right." She sits up a bit. "Look, you're in a baseball game. You're on second base. The ball is hit. At the same time, you hear a bee somewhere. You don't stand around looking for the bee. You run. That's Gardner, so worried about the bee that they forget anything else."

"Once burned, twice shy. You've got to remember that most of the folks around here are scared about money. If they've got it now, that doesn't mean that it's going to be there tomorrow."

"So they blow three hundred bucks on a skiing vacation like Rick's folks. Or spend all on cars."

"I said that's how it is. I didn't say it made sense."

Each time I see Rick some mention is made of our cars. Mine are by now legendary. His fortunes have been somewhat better, although not lately. "You know that we just spent $510 for a valve job," he said. "I went in the other day to have the heads retorqued. I tell the guy that I've been going through oil like nothing. He tells me that we need a ring job." Pained expressions come to both of our faces. "We're gonna sell it. I've got the receipts showing that it just had $510 worth of work done on it. That Volkswagen I was telling you about, it's still for sale."

"Volkswagens, the ultimate beat-on car. Adjust the carburetor with a hammer."

"Do a tune-up by kicking the right rear tire."

Rick and Kate quickly became my closest friends when I moved back to Gardner. Frankly, our friendship grew our of a snobbishness -- Gardner was a ratty little mill town where nothing was happening and we were stuck there.

To keep us from feeling that our imaginations had gone completely dead, as we sat over coffee, we would watch people and make up stories about them. We would wonder, for example, why two middle-aged women would be at Friendly's at nine o'clock on a Saturday evening. Where had they been? Where were their husbands? We'd make cruel jokes about the sex lives of young couples who would be walking hand in hand after having hot fudge sundaes. A sidelight to this voyeurism was noticing that single women were more likely to frequent the coffee shops of Gardner than in most other cities. One attractive woman from Amherst had said, "I won't go out alone to a coffee shop around here. I can feel every eye in the place on me and I know that if I sit there very long, some guy will assume that I have nothing to do and will try to pick me up." Gardner seems to be a safe place, if a bit dull.

Kate and Rick and I watched people. The getaway plans were never realized. Instead, each effort to make life bearable involved us more in Gardner. We became friends with some of the people we had been watching. We decried the lack of decent bookstore in the area and looked into starting our own. The months turned into years and we were still in Gardner, admitting now and again, quietly, that we were coming to like the place.

It's an old rule, long known by psychologists and bartenders, that bright lights get people to move and dimly lit places are better for conversation. The lights of ter Donut are very bright, designed to attract customers but discouraging them from staying very long. About the only people who stay very long are the truck drivers and the drunks -- the former out of stubbornness, the latter because of the fiction that coffee counteracts alcohol. ter Donut is the only place open after midnight for fifteen miles along Route 2.

Kate says, "We really ought to open a restaurant."

It's been a running daydream with us to have a restaurant for people like us, people willing to devote long hours to talking and watching other people. "I don't think my knees can take it anymore," I remark, "but I also don't like these burger skills going to waste."

"You can manage."

"It's not the same though, you know. The people who work in restaurants don't have nearly the fun and relaxation as the customers."

Kids are taught by television that it's fun to go to McDonald's, but they have no idea of what it's like to work there. The work is hard and demanding; greetings have to be formalized because there's always another customer waiting. It's the rare business that can make it financially and not require a lot of work from the owners and employees.

When we talk about what we would like to do for our life's work, leisure time is probably the most important factor, to have the chance to be out in the public. The irony is that the work that would afford those possibilities, service work, is also the work where that sort of thing is

most discouraged. Whether by employers or economic realities, the three of us had been prevented from having our talk and eating, too.

This is strange talk, indeed, made all the stranger by its context in Gardner. As a rule, the people who have time for a cup of coffee during the day are ones who have a lot of free time -- the retired, unemployed, and disabled. Occasionally, they'll be joined by an off-duty cop or fireman, housewives, and people working the evening shift at the retail stores. Oh, and a few college students.

Unemployment remains high in Gardner while the newspaper is filled with ads looking for people to work in the shops. There aren't the young people around who are willing to do that work. Armand Landry, Registrar at MWCC and former guidance couselor for a couple of area school systems, says, "Parents are constantly saying, 'Don't go into the shops like we did. Be a secretary, an engineer, a teacher, an accountant, anything. Just get out of the shops.' They want their kids to be better than they were."

So, taking the first step anyway, a kid such as Rick will rule out the shops, either the wood shops of Gardner or the paper mills of Fitchburg. What's left? Well, you can go to school. He tried that right out of high school and wasn't ready. The next decision, because of the threat of the draft, was made for him, unless he wanted to stick an ice pick in his ear. But it was more than being forced into the service; he wanted to go. There was something to do in the service. Sure, some of it wasn't always nice, but the Air Force trained him and gave him recognition when he did well. After the service, however, Rick found out that work in the elec-

tronics industry wasn't that different from work in the shops. You wore a white collar and worked on a microscope instead of a lathe, but the work took place in a confined place with no windows and supervisors were every bit as demanding as a foreman with a quota to meet.

Rick liked working with people. Old Colony wouldn't let him. He went back to school. Because funding is to precarious, as much time is spent in the helping professions worrying about money as is devoted to serving those in need. And so, when in doubt, go back to school.

The academic calendar can't be beat. Rick knows that his degree in psychology from UMass will make only a slight difference in his job prospects. That doesn't matter much now. He enjoys school and enjoys the time left open to do other things, whether those other things include tearing down a donut shop in Lowell or working with emotionally disturbed teenagers.

Mixed messages come to a kid like Rick. One injunction is loud and unmistakable -- do better than we did. Usually that translates into -- make more money. There aren't many jobs, certainly not in Gardner, which allow that sort of thing.

Another message, even more murky, comes along with the injunction against the shops. It's talk of independence. Rick grew up in a time when the Depression was not his fear, but his father's. The church along with the schools and the shops, no longer had the kind of authority over Rick's life as had been true for the generations before him. His life was his to make.

Gardner is an industrial area, but not that far removed, in a place

or spirit, from its rural surroundings. It's also a poor area. When there isn't the money to have someone fix something, one has to know how to fix it or leave it broken. Most men in Gardner are adequate carpenters, mechanics, and electricians. Some are better than others, certainly, but within each family there is enough collectively known to get almost anything done. Being able to handle the routine repairs helps a family in Gardner to gain a measure of economic freedom. If the car won't start, it may be a nuisance, but it doesn't have to threaten the food budget.

Rick is a good carpenter and is able to work off some of his rent by doing some work for his landlord. He's built one house with a friend and will build his own when he gets around to it. Right now, he complains because he could have more work than he has time for. He smiles as he complains, though, feeling good because people like his work.

I wander down the street to the apartment that Rick is remodeling. He is upstairs in the cold building, in a room made colder by the windows left open to mix some fresh air with the plaster dust from the ceiling he is tearing down.

"The other day, while I was pulling down this stuff, I get the idea -- cathedral ceilings. After work, I go home and tell Kate. We both get real excited about it and that's all we talk about the rest of the night, cathedral ceilings." I pick up a newspaper from 1939 that had been behind a wall. "What you been up to lately?"

"Lazy times. Nothing much. Y'self?"

"Had a talk with Sam last night. You know his mother, Ellie, she used to drive the school buses? Sam's father got emphysema real bad now. He

can't walk a few steps without his not being able to breathe. So he's out of work. They're trying to get a kennel going to make some money and the whole house is going crazy. In the middle of all this, Sam wants to move out of the house with his girlfriend. They're gonna get married, but they want to try to see how it is living together. But he's all confused, the old man sick, his mother yelling at Sam and everyone."

"What's he going to do?"

"Well, he's already moved out, staying with some friends. He doesn't know. So I talk to him, lay everything out so he can make up his mind. First, I tell him that he should move in with his girl. For Sam, and what Sam needs to do, that's probably the best thing. But then I tell him what his family is going through. Here's the old man, worked all his life, and now he can't. His pride is killing him. He can't ask for help and he can't do it himself. Ellie is going crazy trying to keep the house together, trying to get the kennel going. I tell Sam, 'You're nineteen. You've got to take charge. Don't wait for them to ask you for help. They can't. Your old man's got too much pride for that. You just walk in and take over. Your family needs you. You're nineteen and can handle it. Let the younger kids take care of the house. You and your mother get to work on the kennel.'

"It was like that time in the bus station in San Francisco. The right thing for me to do was to go to Canada. I could have a good life there now. The worst thing, and probably the best, was for me to go to Vietnam. There were other people in my life, my folks in particular. I had to think about them and do what I had to do."

"So he's going back?" I ask, shivering in the west wind blowing

through the room.

"He hasn't yet, but he will. He wanted to wait a couple days, but he'll go back."

We walk downstairs to survey the other apartment. I notice a fireplace and go in for a closer look. "Irene likes fake fireplaces," he says. "They put in one of those electric logs." We laugh. "What can you say?"

Later, as I'm leaving, he says, "It was good to talk with Sammy last night. It's nice to know that someone thinks enough of you to come and ask for help. I like that." He has a big smile that shines through his beard. He turns and goes back upstairs.

Chapter Six

They look so young in those bright pictures of clean faces. It takes something to have your picture displayed in the glassed-in case in that lobby near the bookstore. The twenty-eight pictures of the Student Government Association councillors of Mt. Wachusett Community College, well, they shine. Some of the people, no doubt, are shy about having their pictures there. One can almost hear the embarrassed groans when it came time to select a print. "Oh, no, that doesn't look at all like me," or, and usually in a quieter tone, "That looks too much like me." But, to a visitor knowing none of these people anymore, the pictures are fine, good kids looking good.

No doubt, as well, a bit of egotism prompted the idea of the display. Few people get elected to office of any kind without a good supply of self-assurance. Unlike a past class president who managed to get a full-page, full-face photo of himself into the school's catalogue, this display was a grander gesture. "We need to have the students know their representatives are," it was said in a student government meeting. It's true. Most students don't know, or seem to care much, who their representatives are, a problem that is due in parts to the students and to the representatives themselves.

According to David Halverson, Assistant Dean of Students and advisor to the SGA, the overwhelming majority of representatives have had no experience with such activities in high school. While the character-

istics of the group may change, often dramatically, from year to year, owing in large part to the presence or absence of older students on the council, no more than two or three members would have been on their student councils in high school.

Political talents, then, do not come naturally to this group. To help these students in coping with the duties of leadership, Dean Halverson and Bob St. Cyr, Transfer Counselor and co-advisor to the SGA, have instituted the Leadership Training Conference, a year-long, one credit series of seminars designed to give the group skills in group decision-making. The session held in the fall was devoted primarily to the planning of objectives for the year. Out of the brainstorming came the idea of the display as an answer to the perennial problem of the SGA, that of low recognition of the councillors by the students. Along with the display came informal coffee hours sponsored by the SGA. Dean Halverson that the coffee hours' results were encouraging. He did not elaborate.

The SGA reps are themselves selected from those students who were willing to run for office. In the results of the Comparative Guidance and Placement tests, six percent of incoming freshmen said that they would like to participate very actively in student government activities, while more than half said that they were not at all interested.[1] (For a fuller discussion of the CGP, its tests and results, and its purpose, see note. Data, unless otherwise specified, refers to the class entering in the fall of 1977, the report most recently available.) Dean Halverson said that approximately one-third of the students were in-

volved in clubs, organizations, and sports at the Mount. This figure, he noted, does not account for overlap, a student belonging to more than one organization, nor does it show how active individual members are.

Two-thirds of Mount students, it seems, just go to school. Well, not really. Figures were not available for the number of students working or with families to care for, but the CGP showed that eighty percent of the students planned to work during the school year, with half of all planning on more than fifteen hours of work a week, primarily for the purpose of financing their education. More than sixty percent were to receive no money from their parents specifically for education, although seventy percent intended to live at home with their parents.[2]

When asked about the percentage of students receiving financial aid, Bob Gilman, Financial Aid Counselor, said that slightly more than half of the Mount students are receiving aid, including GI bill assistance. "We're doing better," he said. "Each year we practically have to beg kids to come in to file a BEOG (Basic Educational Opportunity Grant) application. Probably eighty percent of the kids are eligible for some kind of grant money, but they just won't apply. It's like, and they get this from their parents, it's like welfare to them."

"I guess I would have to applaud that," remarked Sid Goldfader, Director of Admissions. "This notion that someone, by virtue of eligibility, is entitled to something strikes me, well, I think it's laudable that some kids would refuse to accept aid, preferring to work for their own education."

"But," I say, "there are cases, many cases of kids jeopardizing their education because of having to work thirty or more hours a week. There's a point at which pride becomes foolishness and undercuts the whole point of going to school."

"I agree," said Goldfader, "and I still think that if a kid can put himself through school without assuming that financial aid is his due, I think that's good."

The range of family incomes for Mount students has steadily broadened over the last seven year. Irrespective of inflation and a rise in the median income, a consistent ten to eleven percent of the students reported family incomes of less than $6,000 per year. The median income rose from $10,000 in 1971 to $13,500 in 1977. Families with incomes of more than $20,000 rose from three to fourteen percent of the total in the same period. Twenty-three percent of the families, however, in 1977 were receiving some form of public assistance, exclusive of financial aid.[3] (No response has been the largest category of responses on the CGP, due most probably to ignorance on the student's part concerning familial finances. When asked whether or not the respondent was claimed as a dependent by the parents for tax purposes, an average of fifteen percent did not know.)

The Mount attracts students from a larger geographical area as well as from a broader range of income groups. In 1971 twenty-six percent of the students lived in or near Gardner, less than five miles from the campus on the north end of the city. By 1977 that figure had dropped by seven percent. That decrease was made up by the students

living further away. Sixty-six percent of the students in 1977 lived more than eleven miles from campus, with nearly thirty percent travelling more than twenty-one miles.[4]

The long distances mean several things. The amount of time spent on the road is, in effect, time lost to other things. Nearly one-third of the students spend at least an hour a day in transit, that much less time for work, school, or extracurriculars. It's not surprising which of the three would take the brunt of the losses. Longer distances from home to campus also minimizes the number of return trips to school. Students can, and do, plan their schedules so that their time at school is full, with only the enforced hour off. (The Mount has a scheduling feature unique among community colleges: a free period. No classes are scheduled from 11:15 to 12:00, ostensibly for the purpose of allowing groups to meet. Occasionally, an exam will be planned for that period. As is most often the case, it's a good time to have lunch.) Late afternoon and evening activities are sporadically attended by students.

Far away and at home, the students have friends and families within their own communities. Unlike a residential college, therefore, the importance of friendships and activities on campus are less important to the Mount students. Which is not to say that friendships, even romances, do not develop; rather, those friendships on average seem to play a less central role for the students than would be expected at a live-in college.

Time, money, and distance -- these factors contribute to some of the differences between the community college experience and that of

a residential college. The reason for going to school, however the initial choice was made, is finally school itself; extracurricular activities are seen as either frills or as aspects of education that must be sacrificed because of the other demands upon one's time.

This would appear to be particularly true of the older students. Dean of Students John Hogan observed that there are generally more prersures on an adult student's time, many of the pressures centering on money.[5] With an average age of twenty-two for all Mount day students (no figures were available for night students, but estimates put the average age as near thirty), and an age range of sixteen to sixty-two, most Mount students would be classed as adult students.

One of the questions on the CGP was the following: "What did you do before coming to the Mount?" Forty percent of incoming students were not coming directly from high school. Twelve percent had worked three or more years, a figure that had more than doubled since 1971. Ten percent said, "Other." We can assume that a fair number of those were housewives.[6]

The reasons for coming to the Mount are not primarily economic, at least not in the short term. Bob St. Cyr noted that an average of thirty percent of the graduates do transfer, about eighty percent going to in-state state institution. Forty percent, however, of incoming students said that they planned to transfer, a figure that has decreased over the years. The percentage of students planning full-time work has correspondingly increased, up to twenty-seven percent in 1977. A consistent one-quarter was undecided. The report also noted that fifty-

eight percent of the students hoped for educational and vocational counseling.[7]

What is heard, particularly from adult students, is an ambivalent grumble regarding their time in school. Demands made by work, family and outside interests limit the amount of time left over for non-academic activities at school. But, few people expressed any willingness to drop things on the outside for the sake of extras out of school. Although strained by it, most seemed to enjoy the diversity that comes from adding school to an already full life.

As suggested earlier, it's unlikely that one single reason would be found for attending the Mount. For some, it's money; others, self-fulfillment. That sixty percent of the incoming students arrive directly from high school hints at something else, that college is becoming the norm, even for these blue-collar kids.

Nearly half of the students came from blue-collar families, almost the same as Gardner's figures. Most of the students are first-generation college educated. with only one-third of the fathers and less than one-quarter of the mothers having had any post-high school education at all. Median incomes were slightly lower that the state averages, but slightly higher than Gardner's alone.[8] (It should be remembered that twenty percent or more of the students gave no information about family income and nearly ten percent gave no information about parental occupation.)

The CGP queried the students about their attitudes toward education while in high school. While Mount students scored above national

averages in all areas of academic preparation, except for math requiring algebra, they scored lower in motivational areas. (See notes for a sample questionaire.) The questions tried to gauge effort to excel while in high school. Highest motivation scores were found in those students planning majors in the fields of nursing, business education, human services, and art. Lowest scores were found in prospective liberal arts, liberal studies, and general studies majors. Not surprisingly, drop-out rates, however suspect those figures might be, roughly correspond with the motivation scores, while Mt. Wachusett overall had a higher retention rate than the nation.[9]

Liberal arts, liberal studies, and general studies majors made up nearly one-quarter of the incoming students and had the highest attrition rates. In general, the career programs did half again as well as did the transfer programs. (Transfer programs are art, liberal arts and studies, general studies, human services, business administration and education. Seventeen percent of the incoming students planned to continue their business major at a four-year college.)[10]

It should also be noted that the motivational scores dealt with high school attitudes, not necessarily attitudes at the time of testing. Although we cannot be certain, we would expect that the forty percent who are returning to school after an absence would show higher levels of motivation than would be shown by these tests.

All of which suggests that those students with the more clearly defined plans tend to do better, at least in terms of effort and durability, than do students without such clarity. Unfortunately, the tests

do not provide much more specific information. For example, it's uncertain if those students who are working to finance their educations tend toward the transfer or career programs.

Similarly, important data is missing for students actually enrolled or graduated. Follow-up surveys are just now being developed for usage by the state's community college system. The result is that the long-range benefits of a Mt. Wachusett education, in personal or economic terms, is not known. Further, continuing education programs, although larger in enrollment than the day school, have even less information to guide planning.

What happens, then, according to Registrar Armand Landry, is a form of democracy. Or, perhaps more aptly, a marketplace for education. Curricular changes are dictated in largest part by demand. Given an era of tight budgets, Landry noted, the allocation of teaching resources would be dictated by enrollment figures for the various courses and programs. "This, after all, is a community college," he said, "and is therefore responsible to the community it serves."

"We are in the business of educating," he continued. "This sometimes means that we annoy local business people. Our distribution requirements have each student taking at least one-fourth of their courses outside the of the specific courses required for the department. Even in the highly technical fields, we require twelve or more hours of general electives. The exposure to the liberal arts, which by the way I fully believe in, is not accidental."

Landry struck upon one of the central paradoxes in the adminis-

tration and direction of a community college: what is to be emphasized, training with the hope of providing the student with a salable skill, education in the amorphous liberal arts tradition. When it was suggested that a reaffirmation of the liberal arts goals be made, Landry objected. "Look at the numbers. Look at what the students are choosing. It is, after all, their education. Who are we, you or I or anyone, to insist that a particular student, who may not have the slightest desire for poetry or Faulkner or world history, take exclusively those kinds of courses? Many of our students would be, and are, terrified of courses which require a great deal of abstract thinking. Is that necessarily wrong? You've found a school that suits you well. Many of the students here wouldn't want to go to Amherst, any more than you would want to go to Worcester Poly Tech. Amherst isn't what they want, or what they're good at. Who's to say that's so wrong?"

Relying on his experience not only at the Mount, but also as guidance counselor at area high schools, Landy recalled the reaction of many parents to the Mount. "Parents will come up here to look over the school with their child. Particularly if that child is a daughter, you know who they'll notice most? Not the professors or administrators. The secretaries. They'll see the women working here, in a clean place, well-lit, where the women can wear dresses to work and look nice. They'll see the secretaries. That's what they want their daughters to be. Isn't that something?"

Indeed. Armand's wife, Barbara Landry, works across the building as the career guidance counselor. She estimated that a secretary in the

Gardner area would earn about $7,500 as a starting salary, perhaps closer to $9,000 in Fitchbrug or Leominster. "It's not much," Barbara noted. "They could do much better if they were willing to relocate. Of course, most don't, preferring to stay in their own communities."

When asked about graduates in other programs, Barbara discussed the problems that the community college system had been having in compiling accurate long-term information. "Most of our reports are dealing with students one to three years out. The five and ten year information, which would be really helpful, is terribly time consuming and we just haven't been able to do it yet, althogh we're working on it.

"There's another problem with this," she added. "There's a high rate of non-returns on the forms we send out. We don't know what to make of those. Are these people not reporting because they've forgotten to return the forms, or because, for whatever reason, they don't want to tell us."

"It may be that they're waiting until things are better or settled. They may be waiting until they have something good to say about themselves," I suggest.

"That's probably true for many of them. And understandable as well. But, for our purposes, with non-returns of twenty percent or higher, we really can't make much use of even the information we do have."

Planning, then, comes back to instinct, experience, and vox populi. Armand noted that students weren't the only ones with a say on curricular planning. Local businessmen would, through the school's advisory board, indicate what needs they had, what kind of training they would

hope to have in their new employees. Sometimes, if it was feasible, the school would gear programs along those lines. "We are more than a training school, though," he insisted. "There have been programs that we've phased out, only to have to rebuild them again. But, our main purpose is to provide as good a general education as possible so that our graduates are adaptable to more than one line of work, more than one company." Companies often use the school facilities for training sessions of their own, for which the Mount will, on a case by case basis, grant academic credit. "But, just because a course is given here doen't always mean that we taught it or recognize it as being credit worthy."

The adaptability of the Mount isn't as graceful as it sounds. There have been some bitter struggles at the college over educational policy and direction. Faculty morale at state colleges in Massachusetts has been lwo for a number of years. The decade for expansion was in the 1960's. The 1970's have brought budget cuts, real and threatened. The Mount has a large number of adjunct faculty members, particularly in the evening division. The evening division, which by law must be self-supporting, has the kind of flexibility which often results in a course being added or dropped because of over- or underenrollments. A marketplace education means, for those faculty members, economic insecurity.

Howard London, remarking on the community college he had studied, said that there was an insecure relationship between faculty and students which often created an adversary positioning between the two. Faculty,

London had found, had been in their own careers sidetracked, often because of financial pressures, while in graduate school. Unfinished dissertations or poor performance in graduate school resulted in a temporary teaching job at the community college becoming more and more permanent. The resentments that grew from these career frustrations, in certain ways not unlike the frustrations the students found when entering an academic environment, led to some bitterness toward their duties in the classroom.[11]

A strike by the community college faculty, unionized within the last five years, was narrowly averted two years ago. The visible issue was pay; the larger issue was the feeling of powerlessness on the part of the faculty. There are many voices competing for control of the community college system. Traditionally, it had been the domain of the Legislature to dictate much by its generous funding during the 1960's. The former Governor, Michael Dukakis, and now Governor King, tried to reassert their authority over state government in general, and the educational system in particular. Added to this is the Massachusetts Board of Regional Community Colleges, the trustees of the community college system. All curricular changes, all hirings, amost all procedures must have MBRCC approval. Local adminstrations and faculty lobby within the Board, as well as at the State House. Apparently, the Board responds most readily to the marketplace. Allocations are based on the number of graduates within specific programs. The higher drop-out rates among the liberal arts majors have not been view with much sympathy in Boston.

Distribution requirements within each of the programs guarantee that all students will take English Composition. A tenured Humanities professor, teaching five sections of English Composition, observes, "Look at this crap. It's barely legible, barely literate." He shouts with his office door closed. "If these were English 100 kids, I'd understand, maybe have some patience. But these are regular kids. They don't even try."

The Mount does have an extensive remediation program. In 1976 nearly twenty percent of incoming students had their programs modified to include one or more 100 (remedial) level courses in English, reading, and math. These students, once admitted to regular programs, had higher grade point averages than the rest of the students in non-remedial programs.

The professor and I come out of the office. A student is waiting at a table near the door. "Did I miss anything?" the student asks.

The professor stopped. "We finished the poetry section today. I gave out a few terms."

"There's gonna be a paper on the poetry?"

"No. The next writing assignment won't be for another two weeks. It will be on the next novel. But, you'd better get those terms."

"I'll copy down the notes," the student said.

"How do you like that?" the professor grumbled as we walked away. "'Did I miss anything?' The guy hasn't been in class for a week."

The broadening humanistic experience that Ben Wattenberg talked so glowingly about seems to be at best a luxury that the kids don't

know how to use. Recalling Kohn, growing up working-class means that conformity is the guide. Conformity, he suggests, is invariably practical, less at ease with the abstractions of education. College may expose kids to new styles of thinking, but habits are habits. The students of Mt. Wachusett are, as a rule, the first ones in their families to attend college. Fathers work blue-collar jobs and the mothers either work in similar lines or are at home. Most of the kids are travelling long distances to school and many have to work to put themselves through school. Time is precious; the environment is new and the expectations strange; often, the students are older, with the result that their educational background, stretching back through the early 60's, 50's, and even earlier, is that of an even more traditional age. News from the outside world suggests that a college education is useless as a help for getting a job. Given all that, what's a kid to do?

It's not as Aronowitz and Bowles and Gintis suggest, that the community college are tricking the students and channelling them into bland middling middle-class jobs. Not quite so simply, anyway. The task, if we should call it that, of undoing a lifetime of culture cannot be done Henry Higgins-style, a crash course in liberal enlightenment. To expect such is madness, and is likely to blind one to real qualities that these students bring to a classroom. Teachers at the Mount, in one breath grumbling about the quality and dedication of their students, will, with the next, beam with pride at the sight of a student who does well. Not only, it should be added, at the student who makes the

leap from the Mount to Amherst ("He's one of our shining stars," a professor remarked when introducing me); but also, and perhaps most excitedly, when a kid comes out of the back of the class to show some real enthusiasm for a subject. "This is why I teach," a professor says, showing me a student paper that demonstrates some fine writing. "This is what makes all the crap worth it."

It's easy enough to romanticize the process as well, as Wattenberg certainly has done. No magic is performed at the Mount. As with the fellow who hit the lottery, prizes found are often prizes squandered. Change, it will be remembered, comes slowly to Gardner. New money and new chances are played with, rather than put to durable use, because of the expectation that these good times, like the ones of the past, will soon go away. The liberal, middle-class vision is based on a hope and even a conviction that things will, if good, stay good, and possibly get better. For kids growing up around Gardner, the reality is that of a half century of economic stagnation. Experience teaches that yesterday was very much like the day before and today will be much like tomorrow. A sudden influx of money or ideas just won't do, not unless a guarantee of some sort can be given that the new commitment won't go away.

On the first day of classes in the fall, the students look eager. The freshmen are always a little more neatly dressed, a bit more patient with the lines. Children scamper about as their mothers register and confirm schedules so that babysitters can be arranged. As the semester progresses, the docility fades. Time and energy are apportioned accord-

ing to complex formulas that must include family, friends, work, play, hanging out, cars, and, if there's time, school.

Each morning, at 7:45, a traffic jam beings. A line of cars tries to make the two mile trek from Route 2 to the Mount. Most of the cars are plain vanilla family sedans. A few Firebirds and Camaros are, however, outnumbered by Volkswagens. There are, too, the mystery chariots, mysteries because of indeterminate breed and because of their continued existence. They are all coming through Gardner to go to college. Throughout the afternoon, the flow is reversed. Less compacted than the morning rush, people will sometimes stop off for a coffee or gas or milk along Pearson Boulevard. But, they're in a hurry and soon they're gone.

The cafeteria at the Mount is nearly empty by three o'clock. A work-study student is vacumning. The custodians have already had their coffee break, as have the secretaries and administrators. It will be empty in the cafeteria until 5:30 when the early evening students arrive. WMTR, the closed-circuit radio station, plays funk, competing with the sound of the vacumn cleaner. The vacumn cleaner wins. It's impossible to study in the cafeteria in the afternoon. It's also the best time to clean the building. There are few students around.

Chapter Seven

"The janitors run this place," one MWCC faculty member remarked in an aside. "They would be happiest if this place was to shut down at five. Then, they could get on with their cleaning without interruption. What kind of a way is that to run a college?"

You can see yourself in the ashtrays. The place looks fine. A new campus, barely five years complete, on the north side of Gardner almost a mile from Uptown -- the college is impressive in pictures. The Mount is a broad, three-story building with an attached fine arts wing and a separate, and brand new, physical education complex. Surrounding the school is an expanse of neat and well-trimmed lawn. From Route 140, which leads to and beyond the campus, the Mount attracts not a few students by its physical presence.

The college is also set on one of the coldest, windiest spots in the universe. Wind which cools itself to lethal levels over Hudson Bay in Canada comes on a straight line to Gardner, skimming across Crystal Lake and the municipal golf course before delivering its frigid message to the hapless visitor entering the college by way of the front door.

Throughout New England, particularly in the hilly western region, the old Puritans chose sites for their houses on the highest spot available. Good visibility and protection for Indians was thought to be the reason. Temperamentally, however, these barren, wind-stripped patches of uncompromising severity helped the Puritan understand the true purpose

of their mission. From these austere vantages those early hopefuls could suffer in blissful penitence all the harshness the natural order could give. The Puritan could, as well, from these chastised heights see the first hints of the Second Coming as it dawned, on the Day of Days, from the hitherto heartless horizon.

The college is set on an old field of a farm. Within memory it was a working farm, bequeathed on the death of the farmer to the college. For the first ten years of its existence, Mt. Wachusett wandered around downtown Gardner, residing variously in an old high school school building and a former A&P structure. When the college was relocated to its present site, it stepped both forward and back into history.

No buses run to the Mount. Arrangements for public transportation have been tried and stopped for lack of ridership. The walk from the nearest residences is a half-mile of trek across this New England desert. You get there by private car, yours or one borrowed or shared.

The public communications program, radio and television, is one of the best in New England. A multi-million dollar color television studio has a link with the local cable system. Courses in public communications are rigorous and demanding. The romance and glamor of the electronic media are quickly dismissed as the students try to master the intricacies of tape loops, VTR editing, and chromatic cameras. The skills learned in the program also give important insights into the way in which the media work, the technical wizardry that goes into producing a "Mork and Mindy," or a Red Sox game.

When I stop by Dean Halverson's office for one of my last visits,

a student is interviewing him as part of a project for a broadcast journalism course.

"There have been some rumors going around," the student is saying, "that the Mount will be building new dorms and becoming a residential college."

"There's no truth to that whatsoever. One of the reasons we can keep costs low at the Mount is that we don't have dormitories to worry about. Costs get added aside from the room and board charges, so that a student has to pay more at Fitchburg State, even if he lives off-campus. Let me ask you this: if the Mount had dorms, would it be a more attractive place for you, with a cost increase?"

"Probably not," the student replied. "I live in New Hampshire and the drive does get to be a hassle. But I hear a lot of folks talking about this in the cafeteria and as a part of my course I thought I would check it out."

"Well, I can tell you pretty confidently that nothing like that is in the works. But, let me just confirm this with Dr. Haley."

Dean Halverson reaches for the phone and calls Dr. Arthur Haley, president of Mt. Wachusett. The rumor is squashed. The student, with a good interview on tape, is on his way to the editing room.

The experience of education at Mt. Wachusett has a way of admitting change while at the same time perpetuating old styles and attitudes. This latter suggestion is not, as Bowles and Gintis argue, necessarily sinister. For Stephanie, although it might be said that she was culturally conditioned to be shy, the reality of her life remains that she

is fearful of sudden and drastic change. A sense of duty and responsibility to her family is a way of both justifying stasis and acknowledging the importance of her love for her family. A similar thing happened to Rick. When pressed to offer advice, he told what he knew, that becoming an adult means assuming unpleasant and often restricting duties towards one's family and community. One becomes self-conscious about the successes one might reach for, with the result that efforts at something new are often tentative and halting. Even if the dream is one of a good job and a home of one's own, fears of both success and failure cause the gambles of mobility to slow or stumble.

For those who are impatient, and there are many, there's the road. Mayor St. Hilaire used Erikson's term of moratorium to describe the period of college and after for his life. He wandered and wondered what a kid from Gardner could do, ought to do. His time away was similar to, but not identical with, the older idea of joining the Navy to see the world. The assumption in going off to the service was that one would come back; with St. Hilaire and others, a definite and angry break was being made with home. There was no conscious intention to return to Gardner; if anything, it was the opposite -- a deliberate attempt to get away.

Why don't all who leave stay away? Why don't all who are unhappy leave? Luck, one would suppose, plays its part. If, at the end of seven years of wanderings, all one has to show for it is a job flipping hamburgers in an all-night restaurant, home may not look so bad.

But St. Hilaire, after choosing law school at age twenty-five,

was a lawyer when he returned. He set up a law practice in Gardner and ran for mayor at age thirty-one.

We speculated why it was Gardner would appeal to anyone who had been away for so long. Gardner is a good place to build a home, it was concluded without definitiveness. The city is quiet, safe, and housing costs are low. The elusive attractiveness of a home taps a nerve that felt unsatisfied in the outside world.

Rick and Jerry St. Hilaire came back to Gardner under very different circumstances, gas station attendant and lawyer respectively. The necessity for a good home for Rick was found in the same place as the luxury of a good home for a young, bright lawyer like Jerry St. Hilaire.

Families work well for the rich and the poor as well. For the upper classes, family connections are a way of insuring power; for the poor, families buttress against further losses. Those in the middle of the scale are more often willing to do without familial responsibilities for the sake of mobility. For Gardner, as it has become, one of the duties of the young is the continuation of support, of preserving Gardner as a family that grows older.

Jay Tourigny, a CETA employee working for the Chamber of Commerce, talks enthusiastically about a grant that, pending legislative approval, will develop a Heritage Park in Gardner. "We have a unique opportunity," Tourigny says, "to become a prototype in the Northeast for programs that care for the elderly. Imaginitive things are being done in the Sun Belt, but very little has been tried in the Northeast. With this

grant, Gardner can make a name for itself."

The grant includes the naming of historical sites within the city, a nature trail (past the Astro-turf), and crafts workshops which will try to recapture the skills of older craftsmen by passing them on to the young. Bringing recognition to Gardner's tradition as a city of quality workmanship, it's hoped, will polish Gardner's image within its limits as well as outside.

"It's a nice idea," says St. Hilaire. "But, we also have to look to attracting young people to the city. The college as an attraction has not been used. People commute to the college, taking away what they learn, rather than returning it to the city. New industry that hopefully will be coming to the city would go a long way to keeping not only Gardner's young in the city, but also catching some of the young from other places."

It's a nice idea, the city simultaneously extending itself to the young and old. It may be that change is in the wings. St. Hilaire is a mayor that Rev. Herrick would understand. Capable of anger and yet a warm laughter as well, the Mayor has definite ideas about the amount of work Gardner has ahead of it in order to bring about a revitalization of the city. The work has to begin with a dedication to attracting industry to the city. The Industrial Park is a sore spot for St. Hilaire, an embarrassment for him and the city. Tax adjustments and the like will be necessary, but the overriding need is for (are you listening, Reverend?) a decent road.

Afterwords

Rick got into the car one morning in February. He and I had been riding together to Amherst two days a week. "Guess what," he said as soon as he had his coffee open. "We think that Kate's pregnant."

"Oh?"

"She's going to the doctor on Friday, but we're pretty sure. She's super regular, and, well, she's damn sure."

"It's always something." I have to concentrate on the driving and can't talk much until we get out of town and onto Route 2.

"Yeah, it's always something," he says with a plaintive smile. "That means that I'm gonna have to quit school and get a full-time job." He bangs his hand on his leg. "Damn."

"You'll be able to finish out the semester, won't you?"

"I think so. But, just when I get started. Oh, don't get me wrong, I'm happy about having the kid. I think it's great. But it means just whole lot of hassles."

"There's never a good time."

"No, there isn't."

Over the next couple of months Rick and I talk about options. The sense of panic leaves him, although he remains on edge. "You know," he says, often, "I've really got to get my tail in gear and start looking for a job." Then comes the fear. "If something good comes along, I'll probably have to quit school right then and take it. I just hope

that it can hold off until I can at least get this semester done."

"How long can Kate work?"

"Into the summer, probably. We really don't know. Some of the girls she works with, the teenagers, really freak out at pregnancy. She'll probably work until she starts showing and then get the hell out."

He cuts back on his course load, from four to two courses, so, he says, he can spend more time on the apartment. Rick and Kate take in a foster daughter, a seventeen year old that they'd known for a bit more than a year. I ask him why, in the midst of all this, they take on a foster child.

"She needed a place to go. She works and goes to school and is actually more fun to have around than she is work. Her troubles get my mind off of my troubles."

Rick and Kate sell the Subaru and buy the ugliest Volkswagen in the world. Two days after they get it, the right front wheel seizes, throwing Rick, the only one in the car at the time, into a ditch on the side of the road. "It's a goddam good thing Kate wasn't with me," he says. Rick and his brother get the wheel unseized. One day a week, Rick and I ride to Amherst in the bug, trying to diagnose the sundry coughs and skips and thunks as we drive.

"When do you think that you'll have the apartment done?" I ask him.

"June, it looks like. You know, I can go like a raped ape when I've got a whole day over there. I got a helluva lot done one day last

week. The trouble is trying to find one day when there isn't something else that comes up."

"Crazy times."

"You got it."

Phil's wife, Sally, had a baby girl in November, the day before Thanksgiving. Phil, when I would visit him at his apartment, never seemed as happy as when he would playing with the baby. A permanent smile had grown into his face.

The year had meant change for Phil, a mixed sort of change that came from going both up and down at the same time. The CETA job ended in the summer. He collected unemployment for a while, just a short while. A construction job with a large company came his way, the first construction job he'd had in several years.

He became excited. The benefits -- insurance, a credit union, a good prospect, because the company was so large and had so many projects going, of working all winter -- outweighed the time and expense of having to travel up to sixty miles to a site. "If I can just prove myself to them for, say, six months, I think I'm all set for as long as I want."

In March, after six months of working for them, Phil hurt his back. A tangle in communications had the company saying that he'd been laid off and shouldn't have been working on the day when his back started hurting.

A friend arranged an interview with Digital in Worcester. Phil was eager to try something new. "I may not have just the thing they are

looking for. I don't have a real electronics background. But a big place like that must have a need for carpenters, ordinary electricians, stuff like that, someone to build a bookcase for a hot-shot executive. But I know that if they would just give me the chance, I could learn most anything they would show me. I know I could learn it."

The first interview went well. He came home excited. They'd been trying to buy a house, but had been having difficulty with the financing. The bank said that a person had to have been working for one company for two years. "How the hell are you going to get that in construction," Phil said. "Even when times are good, guys jump around. But maybe, with a company like Digital, a bank might think differently."

The second interview went not as well. He was anxious. "Something didn't feel right in there. They talked to me like I didn't know anything, not like the first guy. They stayed general and never got around to asking what I could do. It was like I didn't know nothing." A few days later, two letters came in the mail. One was the first workman's compensation check; the other was a letter from Digital saying that they were terribly sorry,and so on.

"We're not starving," Phil said. "But I think I'm gonna have to go back to work. The back is okay, although I talked with another chiropracter who said that, with the treatments I've gotten, I'll be having trouble again. He said that a lighter line of work, with less driving, would be a good idea.

"I'll look around, maybe into the shops. You won't make the money, but at least we'll be close by. The money lost in pay will, I think,

be made up by less wear and tear on the car.

"I don't want to leave Gardner, and it'll take a damn good job to get me to leave. I like it here."

"How's it going?" I asked Stephanie over the phone.

"Pretty good. This new job that I'm doing is pretty exciting. I don't know if I told you, but the work I'm doing now at the workshop is more of being a teacher. I spend nearly all of my time with this one client. Working along with a physical therapist and a speech therapist, I'm just concentrating on him. He's having a tough time, being just fifteen and the youngest one there. But he's coming along well; he just got a new wheelchair. But he's had it tough. He just came from a foster home and, like I say, feels out of place for being so young."

"You know, and I imagine you think about it, too, we don't often realize the things we can take for granted. Not only good health, mental and physical, but just things like family, being able to know and find your mother, things like that. We're pretty lucky compared to some."

"I was talking with my mother about just that thing yesterday. My sister has mild cerebral palsy, very mild, not like this kid. And even that difference, my mother noticed, is really something. You're right. There's a lot we should be pretty thankful for."

"Things are going well, then?"

"Yeah, pretty good."

"How long do you plan to keep on working at the restaurant?"

"Each time you ask me that, I say that it'll be just until

the next holiday." She laughs. "I don't know. It's a habit, I guess."

Joey has been in Massachusetts General Hospital for nearly two months. The index finger of one hand had to be amputated. The fate of one or two other fingers remains in doubt. "He was so cute over the phone," Annette said. "They took the skin for the first series of grafts from his leg. 'You know where they took more skin for the next grafts?' he asked me. From his bum. He said that he can barely lie down, let alone sit in a wheelchair."

"He's doing well, though?"

"As well as can be expected."

"You know," one of his friends whispered to me. "He doesn't have any insurance."

There was silence as we tried to calculate mentally the cost of two months in intensive care at Mass. General. We gave up, knowing that whatever number we came up with, it would be silly when compared with the ability to pay. There was more silence. Why him? Why not us?

Post Script

We had some laughs about it, but when the time came for writing, the laughter went away. This business of leaving home is serious stuff.

In May I will be married. During the summer we will move. The reason for the move is graduate school for me. I'm on my way to becoming a professional. I'm on my way out of town.

I should feel good about that and I do. Graduate school and then a teaching career is one of the oldest of my dreams, one that seemed, until very recently, to have gone the way of cowboys riding the range or a young kid pitching for the Red Sox. I was told that there are no more cowboys and that I didn't have a major league fastball. But, when I was told that it was okay for me to go to graduate school, I got a bit scared. Dreams aren't supposed to happen.

Sandra, my fiancee, says not to worry, that it's just a few more letters for the tombstone. She says it with a smile. The move will be better for her career as for mine. That makes it easier to take.

With the move will come new friends, new familiarities of streets and sights and sounds, new coffee shops. We can adapt, settle in, make a new home. It will happen. It always does.

But, most folks don't spend a year working on an essay about a hometown, the joys and doubts and chances and lost opportunities that come from living in one's city of birth. And most folks, after trying to tell something of a story like that, don't move on before the ink

is dry. There is, to put it kindly, an irony there. The move can make much of what I've had to say about Gardner either a damnable lie or the fulfillment of a dream. Or, as we've come to suspect from all this noise, a bit of both.

The trees will be budding in a few weeks (he says, watching the snow flurries cancel a boys' game of catch on the front lawn). Gardner will be prettier when the trees are full. We say when we move that we'll keep in touch, knowing how much we won't. The letters and phone calls and visits are much too deliberate to have happen as often as they should. Gardner will become out of the way, except in the memory of the way Elm Street looks on a summer's evening.

Enough. There'll be time for sentimentalism when the packing is being done. There'll also be the chance, by lifting boxes and carrying chairs, to burn off the extra energy that rises crazily at times of moving, marriage, and the end of something.

Foolishness. Seasons that fall over one another. Crazy times. Sandra and I will be having a tag sale to rid ourselves of accumulated junk. (Don't want to be pushing any barns down toward Concord, now, do we?) I thought that maybe I would put a tag on my car, just for the hell of it. Someone might like it, say, as a terrarium. Phil suggested that I park it at school, take out the seats, and use it as an office. I dunno. We'll find something to do with it. Something appropriate, I'm sure.

Union Street
Gardner, Mass. 01440
6 April 1979

Notes

Chapter One

1.) Erikson, Identity, p. 22.

2.) Monograph of the City of Gardner.

3.) ibid.; 1975 Mass. Census (At the time of writing, the full 1975 state census had not yet been published. A photocopy of the Gardner section was made available to me by the Mayor's office.)

4.) Planning Commission Report, p. 3.

5.) U.S. Census, Vol. 23, pp. 192-3.

6.) ibid., pp. 43-4.

7.) Gardner News, 5 April 1979.

8.) Monograph.

9.) ibid.; Statistical Abstract, 1977.

10.) Monograph.

11.) Malloy, "Levi Heywood," reprinted from Gardner News, date unspecified.

12.) Inquiries with the city government led to this explanation regarding the Astro-turf: No one is quite certain who made the decision or why.

13.) Lerner, p. 14.

Chapter Two

1.) Herrick, p. vii.

2.) ibid., p. viii.

3.) Moore, p. 104.

4.) Biographical file on Rev. William Herrick, Amherst College Archives.

5.)Herrick, p. 504.

Chapter Two, cont.

6.) Moore, p. 104.

7.) Herrick, pp. 505, 517.

8.) ibid., p. 517.

9.) ibid., p. 518.

10.) Moore, p. 105.

11.) Amherst Archives.

12.) ibid.

13.) Amherst Record, 16 December 1903.

14.) Herrick, p. 108.

15.) ibid., p. 108-33.

16.) ibid., p. 133.

17.) ibid., p. 134.

18.) ibid., p. 165.

19.) ibid., p. 133.

20.) ibid., p. 47.

21.) ibid., p. 49.

22.) ibid., pp. 405, 407.

23.) ibid., p. 467.

24.) ibid., p. 470.

25.) ibid., p. 472.

26.) Moore, p. 86-9, 102.

27.) ibid., 109-10.

28.) Herrick, p. vii.

29.) ibid., p. 39-45

Chapter Four

1.) Kohn, p. 189.

2.) ibid. p. 190.

3.) Coles, p. 133.

4.) Leabeaux, note on p. 246.

5.) Parkin, p. 50.

6.) London, p. 27.

7.) Wattenberg, p. 75.

8.) Bowles and Gintis, p. 217.

9.) ibid., pp. 208-9.

10.) Aronowitz, p. 90.

11.) ibid., pp. 90-1.

12.) London, p. 64.

13.) Ravitch, p. 90.

14.) Jencks, p. 224.

15.) ibid., p. 216.

16.) Aronowitz, p. 90.

17.) Wattenberg, p. 71, 77.

18.) Conversation with and reports from Armand Landry, MWCC Registrar.

19.) Comparative Guidance and Placement report; see also, notes in Chapter Six.

20.) Bowles and Gintis, p. 211; Firgures on drop-out rates are based, as discussed in the text, on the percentage of students graduating with their entering class. My conversations with Dean Halverson and others raised the possibility of "good drop-outs" that would not be noted in these figures. Locating a good job, transferring to another institution before graduation, even simply moving would not be registered, except as ordinary drop-outs. More work has to be done to make these figures more meaningful for scholars and educators.

Chapter Four, cont.

21.) Kett, p. 32.

22.) Erikson, Identity, p. 25.

Chapter Six

1.) Comparative Guidance and Placement test report, p. 9; The CGP is a standardized battery of tests given to all entering freshmen for most two-year colleges nationwide. The main function of the test is to provide information about the student's relative abilities in the areas of math, reading, and composition. In addition, biographical data is gathered through a group of questions at the end of the test. In this latter section, questions regarding motivation levels while in high school are also given. The tests, administered at Mt. Wachusett since 1971 by Dean Halverson, provide the major source of information regarding the incoming classes.

The 1978 CGP results were not available until April, 1979, and thus were not included in the text. Trends that were suggested in the earlier reports were, by and large, sustained. The average Mount student still is likely to be a first-generation college student, live a considerable distance from campus, at home with parents, and would come from a family earning less than the national median. The trend toward great career orientation continues. A two percent increase in the number of students with a felt need for personal counseling was also recorded. Remediated students continued their improvement record.

The section entitled, "Academic Background and Attitudes," asked questions designed to measure the motivation levels of students while they had been in high school. The questions include: Grades in last high school English and Math courses; personal importance of good grades; the student's sense of whether or not teachers and other students thought one to be one of the hardest workers; effort to get on honor roll; extent delayed in doing uninteresting homework; whether student though that s/he studied more than other students. Motivation scores, as with all other scores, were then compared with national averages of all entering two-year college students. The results, continued in 1978, indicate that while Mount students were better than average in academic preparation, motivation scores lagged, except in certain disciplines as noted in the text.

2.) ibid., pp. 5, 8, 9, 13.

3.) ibid., p. 13.

4.) p. 8.

5.) Hakkarainen, "The Elder Mountie."

Chapter Six, cont.

6.) CGP, p. 6.

7.) ibid., pp. 5, 7.

8.) ibid., p. 13; Planning Commission Report, p. 10; Statistical Abstract, p. xix.

9.) CGP, pp. 16-8; Reports prepared by Armand Landry were shown to me with the understanding that the data, concerning drop-out rates, were for comparison only and that the specific numbers not be used. Landry and I share the same annoyance with the way these figures are tabulated.

10.) Reports from Landry; CGP, p. 8.

11.) London, pp. 56, 154.

12.) CGP, p. 19.

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In addition, as mentioned in the notes, reports for internal use had been made available to me by several administrators at Mt. Wachusett.