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ROBERT, A WILDCAT CONTROL

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Robert walks with the easy roll of an athlete. He wears a windbreaker-- light blue nylon one day, tan leather the next-- an open-necked shirt, and heavy newish Adidas. He is a twenty-six year old Black from Harlem and if he has a passion, it is basketball. He has spent much time in the past in the little playground at 151st and Amsterdam. After the long winter he is not really in condition he says, and his 5'9" frame does not need the 210 pounds he now carries. He looks as a matter of fact more like a hockey player than a basketball devotee. He is presently on a diet, "I'll be in shape by summer: It's just willpower you need," and seemed content with salad and diet Pepsi. He is clean shaven, trim, polite and cooperative-- if not chatty. He is willing to consider any aspect of his past, though he is vague on dates and sinks into legalistic doubletalk on his criminal history. Because he has spent little time in institutions, he does not have his case history verbatim and in easily-dispensed style as do some who have met too many social workers in the past. And while his answers to questions show consistency from year to year, he is willing to consider subjects from a new perspective when confronted with an opportunity. He carries a copy of the Daily News each day and reads it at unfilled moments, but does not go much farther toward a global perspective than that the cost of living is going up all the time and wages are staying the same.

There are two details of the initial impression Robert makes that persist and gain significance. First, it is with surprise that one notes

that he wears blue jeans with a knife-sharp crease ironed in. Every day. He does the washing and ironing himself and, "I just prefer it that way." The second initial impression is that Robert does not often speak the argot of the street; he speaks of being "arrested" not "busted" and not "police"; not any other street-lingo possibilities. Deepened acquaintance indicates that these surface characteristics have basic personality determinants that relate to both his past and future.

The 5 block area around 151st Street in West Harlem with Amsterdam and Broadway boundaries where Robert has lived all his life gives evidence of faded glory. The apartments now rundown and in need of extensive repair, with heavy women leaning from upper windows and unoccupied young men sitting on the stoops, have dignified names from other times: Fontenoy, Arundel and Osceola. There are other inhabitants of the neighborhood that are newcomers to this staid area: the abandoned Juan Diaz Barber Shop with its broken plate-glass window held in with plywood; the Do-It-Yourself Laundry with three vigorous young men doing baskets of laundry at 11 a.m.; The Casa Kalef TV Repair Shop bringing new ethnic groups and new industries to the area; and Sam's Groceries and Hart's Funeral Home caring for the fundamental needs of the generations who have passed through here. This mini-melting-pot boasts a Chinese church beckoning its adherents with colorful red and black characters. The Church of St. Catherine of Genoa has updated its appeal with an advertisement for "BINGO- 1000 Prizes" in addition to Catherine's centuries-old message. The AIE Zion Church and the William Du Bois Community Center make their appeal to young and old alike.

And the Episcopal Church of the Ascension with its acres of spacious cemetery land is under lilac siege these spring days. "The Ascension", as Robert calls it, has made its peace with the neighborhood and has the best basketball training camp in this section of the city. His statement that the neighborhood was a good place to grow up in. ("There were always a lot of churches around,") was not to be taken at face value. He clarified that statement later by saying that they served not primarily the spiritual needs of the youth, but as sponsors of the competing ball teams. Looking reflectively about, at a former precinct house that now houses the Top of the Hill Wham Social Club, with a steady stream of citizens ready to socialize in mid-morning mid-week, Robert commented: "I really had the best kind of a childhood you could have in this kind of neighborhood. I still see some of my old friends since childhood every day."

There is not the deterioration of buildings here that the South Bronx shows. There are no vast blocks of carcasses; few evidences of fires exist that stand as monuments to the lives that were disrupted by them. There is occasional fresh paint -- ultramarine blue is a big seller this season-- and the excavation that Con Ed is making even has a makeshift bridge over the chasm. The only gapped area in Robert's own block is a cleared narrow lot between two buildings that serves as a parking lot for police cars belonging to the police in the precinct house. Robert's apartment is the end building of four brick apartments standing between the local elementary school and the precinct house. Just past the precinct house is the little park that serves young and

old: the young have a jungle gym and slides and swings on their macadam; the youth have two full basketball courts on their section; and the benches that line the circumference of the busy park are filled in the spring sunlight with those who don't chose swings or basketball, reading the Daily News, sleeping or chatting about grandchildren, the fifth at Aqueduct c drinking out of a brown bag (which is specifically discouraged on the entrance sign) Robert deals with the park as an extension of his home. He plans now that the good weather is here (" The winter went by so fast, I didn't do any sports; now my weight shows it,") to get out and play for several hours before he goes to work. He prefers not to play with others until actual game time, not with a crowd, occasionally one on one. "It's better exercise." He speaks with real affection and pride of the little park. He has a healthy young man's delight in the outdoors and in physical activity. And the little park with its heavy-gauge steel fence in place of trees and its black macadam lawn serves as a masculine retreat. He reports that he often takes his nephews out to shoot some baskets.

The fifth floor apartment in the early century East 151st St. building is a long way up firm marble steps with handsome iron railings that show few signs of the years of use other than accumulated grime. The walls have multiple layers of peeling high-gloss institutional yellow enamel . They are covered as with/wall-paper^a dadó of jubilant graffiti with such unlikely references as "Paris 31" and "Amsterdam 73"! Robert noted that the walls are occasionally repainted and "right away" the kids put the writing back, almost as though the new paint made them uncomfortable

or feeling naked. Or anonymous.

There is an admonition "from the super about ^{the}gerbage" that notes that Mondays only can "gerbage" be placed outside the apartment doors. Robert's door has three fearsome locks in makeshift arrangements. (They have never been robbed). His is the only apartment on the fifth floor now occupied; "my good friend used to live next door, but everyone's moved away now." The apartment is tiny and cluttered but tidy even though last night's fish dinner is still remembered. The dishes are all washed and sitting in the sink strainer. The tops of sink, frig, stove and table in the miniscule kitchen are several layers deep with supplies but placed as though those who use the room have put them there in order and can find what they are looking for. A very narrow hall leads to the 8' x 8' living room. This room has one narrow curtained window on a court and two bedroom doors. (Robert's room must be reached either through his sister's room or his mother's, but all have separate rooms.) The one open bedroom door shows the bed neatly made and only room for clothing neatly on hooks on the walls. The living room has a large flowered comfortable overstuffed sofa and chair, a TV, coffee table with yesterday's Daily News and last Sunday's magazine section from the Times. A window shelf has six leggy courageous plants seeking occasional sun. A metal standing shelf has a tape deck and lots of neat piles of tapes and twenty or so framed pictures of laughing children in assorted groups: Robert's brothers' children are seen to grow older instantly in succeeding annual school photos and on various holidays looking mischievous. There is a small colored photo of Robert's mother, a serious heavy woman in a formal flowered dress standing proudly before a full length striped curtain, Robert has in his wallet a tiny cropped picture of his girl Annie ("I had to have a picture of myself

for some application, so I cut myself out.") Annie is here an unsmiling young woman with large intense eyes, severely trimmed hair and a tight sleeveless sweater. "She's not tall-- just about this tall."

The apartment is carpeted with small scraps of unmatching carpet that overlap and are somewhat hazardous for those unfamiliar with the overlaps. A cut glass vase with tired laurel leaves stands on the coffeetable. Robert took these out of the vase when his visitor brought flowers. He carefully cleaned the vase, put fresh water, arranged the flowers and then found another container for the tired laurel leaves. The wall behind the sofa, which is covered with a large patterned brown fabric, is a mirrored wall, as the ads say, "doubling the size of your room." You must stand in the bedroom to get the doubling effect however. In the small hall at a height of about 7 feet is a large dramatic hand-painted portrait, well-done, of a young black girl. Robert bought it from a friend who painted it. It may even be "by the numbers" but it is a good portrait and looks out and down disdainfully on the cluttered patterned rooms. Robert's blind sister stayed in her closed room on a recent morning, with a loud radio that broadcast only talking, no music. Robert reported that she stays at home "quite a lot"; she had just gotten her copy of Sports Illustrated in Eraille.

Robert likes to be up by 9 a.m. He spends the first part of his morning cleaning up; he had done the dishes and vacuumed the floor even though he had not expected visitors. He gets his clothes ready for the coming day at work; "I wash my shirt and pants and jacket every day." He shops, goes out to see friends and buys the paper. He has lunch before

going downtown for work at 3:30. He takes the subway to work in the early afternoon and the bus back at night; he doesn't take the bus in the middle of the day because the school children are just getting off then and it is too much commotion. The bus takes about an hour; the subway trip about 45 minutes with transfers. He sometimes meets friends after work or sometimes comes home to watch TV. He does not seem to spend much time in bars.

On weekends, "I mostly stay around here. I do my laundry and watch a lot of TV. All the sports are on on the weekends. We've got the basketball championships and the Mets and the Yanks now. There's something all the time." Family members visit and he goes to their homes as well, and sees a lot of his nieces and nephews. One nephew lived with them for awhile, and he and the nephew went to a lot of movies then, but he has not been to a movie for months now. He likes adventures and enjoyed the Towering Inferno. He has not been to church " in a long while now." He has also not been to a ball game, "not yet this year; my buddy wanted me to go last Sunday but I didn't have that much money then. They've raised the price of general admission and you know how much a beer costs at the Stadium! " Indeed!

Robert's family picture is surely not an example to illustrate the instability of the family in the fragmented urban center, The entire matrilineal family lives within 10 blocks of one another: his mother, sister, brothers and their wives and children and various aunts and uncles. He and his mother, Marion, and sister, Alice, have lived in the same house all of Robert's life. His mother has been there "more than thirty; it was my grandmother's then."

The two older brothers as they married and had families moved, but within grandmother-care distance. And even grandmother and grandfather Laura and John Taylor themselves now live in the next building. An aunt, the mother's sister, lives in the same building and provides telephone linkage. Even Robert's girlfriend Annie's homebase is within the area. She herself is working on Riverside Drive now, but Robert sees her mother "every day." He reports that his "grandmother raised all four of us and now she is raising the grandchildren. We all live in a 10 block range; I see them and the young ones come and spend the night with my grandmother."

"All my mother's people came from the south, from Georgia. My father's people came from the Poughkeepsie area. Neither of my parents finished high school. My mother was 15 when the first baby was born. I lived with my grandmother til I was six; my mother always worked. My father and mother separated when I was 10; I used to see him every week until he got sick. He was an auto mechanic in a gas station and even when he left, he lived nearby. He didn't have another family. He died when I was 16 in junior high school. of a liver ailment. My brothers and I all had our own gangs that we hung out with; we've always lived in the ghetto and played a lot of basketball. I used to like it when my grandmother would take us to church (Baptist) on the holidays. We always got all dressed up. My mother goes to the Catholic Church, St. Catherine's.

The army classified Robert 4F in 1968 as an asthmatic. Robert recalls that when he was a small child he had a lot of colds and had to stay home from school. But it was not until he went for the army physical that he was diagnosed as asthmatic. "I must have outgrown it because it

never bothers me now." Medicaid has paid for each of the required physical exams that the drug programs require and the only other medical expense recently has been a broken ankle in the summer of 1975 which he got while unloading a truck.

It is not surprising that living in a 5th floor walkup, Robert's family has not had a series of pets. In 1974 however, he did get a German Shepard dog. The interview six months later laconically noted, "The dog ran off."

Robert is the third son, the "baby boy" as he called himself, after two older brothers: Walter is now 35 and George 32. He was followed by a sister Alice now 18 who was blind at birth. Both brothers are married and have four children apiece. The eldest works at a messenger service in the same building that Robert works in, and the second brother is employed in a variety store in the local area. Both brothers were previously addicted to drugs and are now detoxed from methadone programs. Walter got Robert his present job and one of the odd jobs Robert had painting a local store was in the variety store in which George is employed. Walter has his high school equivalency certificate.

Alice the sister who is 18 has completed her high school education and in the past two years has been attending activities at the Manhattan Lighthouse. She is now able to take a bus and get around by herself and has been taught to type and to play the piano. "She's looking for a job; the Lighthouse says there are no jobs now-- not for anyone. There are lots of girls who are frustrated in that program."

"Education. That's the answer. If I'd had my head together I would have stayed in school... My long time goals? To go back to school. You can't do anything unless you have an education... 'What do I believe has been the chief obstable in preventing you from getting a job?' Lack of education."

Whether this is the customary rationalization of those struggling unsuccessfully in today's depressed economy, or an especially sad litany of a young man whose dreams exceed his accomplishments, the discrepancies are well documented in Robert's school history. He is completely the product of the New York City school system: P.S.186; Jr.High School 164; and a year and a half at George Washington High School. (Jr. High in this system includes 9th grade, so that "a year and a half of highschool" put Robert part way through 11th grade when he quit.) Robert mentions that "he was left back in 7th grade," so that he was a little older than he might otherwise have been when he "quit high school, messing with drugs. / I started experimenting when I was going into 9th grade, Jr. High School. A lot of my friends were older and they had left to go to High School. Lots of the fellows got left back earlier... We had something called 'career guidance.' It was a special all boys' class. Something came over us in that class. We had got good marks before that. We all played a lot of basketball... When I used to get my report card people were just shocked to see how well I did. But then we got put in the special class. I wanted to work but with all my friends on the outside, my idols were on the street hanging out. If I had my right mind I would have stayed

in school. I went to night school a little while after I quit, but I didn't stick. I think about a High School Equivalency all the time. My brother got his HSE. He even got a job in a training program teaching other people. He can even do income tax for people. But he is working in a messenger job like me. His mind is not ready yet. My mind wasn't ready when I was going to night school either."

"In about 1969 I went to a training school for photography. The city funded this technical school. I got transferred out and went to this photography school in the Bronx for a month. But I left to be closer to my friends again. I had gotten heavily into drugs. I only stayed at school a month because, "I preferred to be someplace else than in the training school. They didn't supply our equipment for us to take home. I thought of photography as a job then. Now I think I might want to get back into it some time for a hobby. But I never got the equipment. Maybe if I get enough money together I could get my own developing equipment. But in 1969 I had something else on my mind."

In 1975 Robert was sent by the drug program to a manpower program in auto mechanics. Originally the program ran for 9 months, but because of the city's financial crisis the program was cut to 5 months. This curtailment of the program is the central theme of Robert's account of that idyllic period in his life. "We got paid in the program, \$75 every week... Some people already knew a lot but it was all new to me. I'm not so qualified now as these others who started with more. I can do brake jobs and tune-ups but the real money is in body work. That's the thing to go into. There's no training for that in the course though. That's where the

money is-- body work. People bring their cars in and get a discount on the work done, and the man in the program gets experience. I had a lot of friends there; I really enjoyed it. I hated it when they cut the program short. I did learn to drive. Now the program has been taken over by the federal government. I don't even know if the school is still open. It was nice there; we worked and drove in the morning and went to school in the afternoon. We got paid; we got our tools. I graduated. I did a little work after that. But garage work doesn't pay; you don't get a decent salary at any garage. I had a friend who had a wife and little son. He took the course and he already knew something before he took it. His wife works but he has a lot of debts and car notes. My friend got a job but it only paid \$60 a week at some gas station. He couldn't stay there for that money. If only Manpower hadn't cut the program. The government cut the funds in half just when I was in it. At the end certain people didn't get their tools either. I went 7 months; it wasn't long enough. But I got a certificate. I got it on my wall hung up. It's stamped by the state. There are lots of places, garages-- they just don't have to pay you. They have a steady mechanics already and they just want you to pump gas. The course ended in 1975. I still see some of the guys from the course. They didn't get jobs either. The program had a referral job service, but they couldn't get jobs for us. We ought to get \$120-130 a week. They just set the new deadline in the middle of the course and said, "Whatever you can learn by that deadline, that's it."

Robert has had the same girl Annie since 1969. "I love her but I'm not ready to get married yet.... She's a registered nurse. We went to elementary school together. She graduated from high school and then went on to Manhattan Community College to study nursing. Now she has a B.S. from Lehmann and got her masters there too. She now works at Arthur C. Logan (?) Hospital in Harlem. The hospital is bankrupt but they still pay the staff. She has another job at the same time, a private nursing job. She likes the overtime and she takes care of an old woman at the woman's house on Riverside Drive... She lived with me at my house for awhile in '75. But I wasn't ready yet for the financial responsibility of another person. My income wasn't enough when she was living here. In 1976 we took a bus trip to Canada. She has a car but we took the bus; it's cheaper. I'll marry her I suppose someday if I ever find out what I want... to go back to school or whatever. I see her about once a month now. I see her mother every day; she lives just three blocks away, just she and her mother. Other people ask me, "Where is your girlfriend these days?" I tell them that she works all the time... She will be 25 in September.. She has always been after me to go back to school. I know that you have to have an education to get anywhere. 'I don't care what you do just so long as you work hard, not hang out on the street,' she says to me. Lots of the time I was going with her I was hanging out and messing with drugs."

Robert enjoys being philosophical about the change in the drug scene though his observations and conclusions are often contradictory: how it is different now from when he was in school and first experimenting

with drugs; how the quality of drugs has changed, the relative dangers, and even what he would do if he had children now being exposed to the temptations of the street. He himself began experimenting with drugs at 15. He tried most of the drugs --marijuana, cocaine, heroin."I hung out on the streets. I hung out even in school. Mostly with other kids. School kids were the main source of drugs when I was young. It works. Kids you wouldn't suspect of taking drugs or selling them. Maybe a kid needs extra money-- for clothes or something.He gives it to you first to try, and then sells it. You cut classes. And everyone else was cutting classes too. We hung out together. We didn't realize that would happen in the end... My mother's reaction? That kind of thing shocks anybody's mother. My grandmother just kept quiet; my mother was the boss. My mother now is a woman who has seen everything; she's seen it all now, not much shocks her anymore. And I was the third kid. I wanted to be on the streets. My mind didn't want to be pulled back to school."

Robert was first addicted at 16, and except for two short jailstays for arrests he was addicted for five years. "It was hectic. I used to sell to make a fast buck. But I would rather have been working. Dope is people's minds playing tricks on them. I haven't done anything illegal for a couple of years now, but I did then. I lived at home the whole time, hanging out on the streets. I sold the whole time I took drugs. I ran numbers for three or four years too.

Robert entered the Beth Israel Methadone Maintenance program in September 1971 at the urging of his probation officer. "I spent five years in the program. Time went by so fast." While in the program Robert was *My brothers didn't influence me much; I knew what they were doing. But everybody went and did it then, You can't fault anybody 'specially."

quite positive about the effect of the methadone program. "Methadone has helped me to take life a little slower than I did before... I can see the error of what I did and methadone makes it possible for me to make corrections. I don't have to worry about dope and have time to put my energy other places... I've been lucky in the program; I never really had any problems in the program I never had to ask for anything special or extra. I didn't have any trouble with the supervisors. "

Now that he has detoxed (October 1976) Robert gives the impression of one from whose eyes the veil has been lifted." It was a hectic 5 or 6 years on methadone. You don't realize the effect methadone is having on you while you're taking it. They gave you too much then; you didn't come down right away. I was high on methadone when I first went to Wildcat (the Wildcat interviewer reports that he was drunk in that first interview). To me methadone is not a good thing. They keep you on it too long; the dosages are too high. Many people I know lie about having a habit or shoot up once or twice so the urine specimen will come out positive. Just to get on methadone. They like the high and the programs don't check for that kind of abuse. Many people I know also dip a little here and there.. I know girls who've bought methadone, They weren't in the program and they took it and drank it. It's not a toy. They just like the high. If you stayed there, you're hooked, drinking that stuff everyday. ...Methadone is really bad to be on; it breaks down your body and your mind. As a drug, it's just one drug in place of another; it's doing more harm than good..... The doctors at the programs either don't have the money issued to follow up on people and know what's going on, what the methadone is

doing to them. Or maybe they're not interested. The program was really not helpful in my personal life. The people, especially my counselor, had an attitude of 'I don't care.' If you want anything you have to do it yourself. At a certain time you just have to put your foot down. Lots of people go to them at the program with their problems. They tell their counselor things about family, work or drug problems. They get no help, no concern. You're supposed to see your counselor once a month but they don't give me no help. My friend was a counselor. They say one thing and do another. I told my counselor that I needed a job or to back to school. The counselor just looked in a thick book he keeps there. He didn't help at all. In New York they have the wrong people for drug counselors. We used to have meetings with the counselors, patients and counselors. Someone broke into the office after one of the group meetings. They stole some petty cash and a typewriter. So we all got hasselled and they cancelled the group. I didn't feel we needed it anyway; the counseling was no help. They have basketball recreation programs at the drug center, but I never played there. About jobs and school and problems you can just help yourself.. just as well. The drug programs are government-funded programs. They are giving out legal drugs. You just get off one drug and go on another."

"I only drink socially, when I'm out. Maybe several times a week. I learned long ago that alcohol and methadone don't mix. The drug programs aren't right when they have all that drinking and hanging out there." Robert's drug program was the Beth Israel Methadone Maintenance center at

125th St. and 1st Ave. That Center surely presents a depressing sight. It is in a heavily populated, vigorously commercial neighborhood with an inordinate number of thriving bars. The blocks both east and west of the Center have groups of mothers and young children, older women with shopping carts, older men selling newspapers, etc. But the street directly adjacent to the methadone pick-up area looks like a bacchanalian sketch from Breughel. Or maybe even Hieronymus Bosch. There are drunks seated on the sidewalk leaning against the building or asleep, /skittering along the curb in a drunken tightrope act. / Others are holding the ubiquitous brown bagged bottle, vomiting into the street, Little groups of glassy eyed men relate in social caricatures / of autistic conversation. There are young children teasing or opportuning swaying adults who shrug them off angrily or turn away in proud uncertainty. There is loud laughter and sullen withdrawal. It is a delimited area with such dramatic groupings and modd portrayals as to seem a stage set. Within the next block you are under the Triborough Bridge watching cars impatiently nudging one another home to the suburbs.... "unfeeling and uncaring," Robert's statement that "when I got off methadone I tried to stop associating with some of the people I hung out with before. I wanted to have a whole other way of life," seems like the most optimistic of predictors.

Robert was cautious about detoxing. He went from 120 mg. per dosage in 1971 to 80 mg. in 1974, 60mg in the summer of 1976, and detoxed in September and November 1976. While he was still on 80 mg. he felt that you must do everything carefully about detoxing. "You have to go slow; otherwise, you may have to go back and on higher dosages.. I wouldn't want that..." Later he said, "Everything has to be right to detox. You have to be ready.

Everything has to be good: your personal life, a job or school is important. Some kind of tie with the family. Before trying to detox you have to be ready." Robert did indeed detox slowly. But on a trip south last summer in a state of geographic euphoria, he was told by a counselor in the drug program to which he had temporarily transferred: "You're a healthy young man. Why don't you detox?" "I came back here and started to detox right away," in a period of two months. They gave me a little pill to calm my nerves for a while. When I came back from the south they said I had to come in every day for a pickup; I had been going for a pickup twice a week. I said 'I'm not going through all that daily pickup.'"

"The drug scene is different now than when I started. Taking drugs is not like it used to be; in these days you never know what you are getting, or what you might get. It's dangerous now, more dangerous. Now they are not the same drugs. They are now made chemically, not the real thing and they're cut so much that it's not the same. Now the addiction is worse, there are more drugs on the street... Drugs are bolder now, people will sell to anyone. Now there are less cops around. They make a lot of arrests, but the kids are younger now that they arrest. A lot are not going to school. Young kids. If I had kids now I would rather have them go to the south. You have to get educated first before you're out in the world."

Robert finished last year five years of probation. During the term of probation he noted: "My term should have been completed months ago, but I still have to keep reporting to the officer and I don't know why. I never violated any of the probation terms. At another time he

reported that "I've been on probation so long because I've had five different probation officers." He was arrested first at 19. He was charged with two counts of selling in 1968-69. He elaborated on how arrests are made: "Before 1969 they could charge you with a sale, but after the law was passed, they couldn't just pick you up. They usually said you sold twice. They always made it up, they'd get an warrant; if you pleaded guilty, then they'd get you. But if you were smart you didn't plead guilty." He was sent to Rikers' Island the second time he was arrested and spent five days there waiting for his case to come to court. But he was not convicted, and spent no time in prison. He claims the two misdemeanors and no felonies and becomes a guard house lawyer when pushed to the wall on details: There were two different charges, cross possession really... The law was changed, so that if you were arrested the second time, if you already had a record, they just added it to your record."

Robert was arrested in 1969 for robbery while working for Dreyfus Investment Co., delivering stocks and bonds. There was an armed robbery involving securities. Robert was charged with the theft; he had been there only "a couple weeks." "I was already going to court for something minor, so they picked on me. They had my prints in the police book. But I never did the robbery, they wouldn't hire me back anyway though." They put a picture of me on the precinct bulletin board."

"I ran numbers for awhile, maybe three-four years. It's good money. Numbers takes all day though. You have to start at 6 a.m.; you go til 5 p.m. I worked the whole time for the same guy, a friend of mine. I was never bothered the whole time I was hustling. When I was doing it they locked guys up all the time. Then the police let them out and took money from them for protection, Now they don't bother you. It depends on the part of town or the borough you're working out of. I can't believe it now when I go down to the Wall Street area. You see twenty people a day buying or stoned, like bankers, people you'd never expect to see a high on."

Robert told a somewhat different version of the numbers story in a later interview. "I was locked up a couple of times, but the boss always bailed me out. They lock you up in the afternoon; then the boss sends down a bondsman and you're out by the evening. It's no big deal. The assistant district attorneys know the areas they want to close down and that is where they concentrate."

"Once when I was in the drug program, I got picked up for loitering in front of the Center. I had just picked up and was talking to my friend outside the office. We saw the wagon coming and started to split in different directions. But they picked us up and took us away in the wagon. I wouldn't plead guilty. I was just talking there. We were fined \$25 and had to go back in three days to court. After three days I went back; the judge wasn't there and the arresting cop didn't show. So they threw the case out of court. For Loitering. I didn't ever hang out

at the Center; it was just an accident I was there talking."

"My last probation officer was a nice man. But he didn't have any equipment or resources to help much. He did give helpful hints. I haven't been in any illegal activity in several years."

Illustrative of Robert's erratic "work history" is the juxtaposition of his statement that "I've been working all my life since I was a little kid," with the fact that he has never been able to collect unemployment insurance during any of the dry periods because, as he says, "You have to have worked somewhere for eight months before you can get unemployment." He feels with probable justification that his probation period was extended again and again because he didn't have any single job for a long enough period of time. He had a patchwork of five or six legal jobs since entering the methadone program in 1970 interspersed with part-time odd jobs like painting the inside of the variety store on the block.

While still on drugs ~~on drugs~~ he worked for Dreyfus and Co., stockbrokers, delivering and picking up bonds. This was the job from which he was fired, arrested but not convicted. He was paid \$65/ per week at this job. His vita noted that he was also working occasionally for the A and E Typewriter Co. at the same time delivering typewriters part time. "And there were three jobs before this that lasted less than one month each. But this may have been another year; Robert is remarkably casual about dates. Particularly when a little obscurity salves the ego. In 1971 as he remembers he worked for a moving company, part time for 5 months. At Christmas time in 1973 he got a temporary job for the Harrison Messenger

Service for \$80/ wk. making Christmas deliveries. This holiday job was followed by a stint at the All Seasons Floor Waxing Co. working at drug program offices, waxing floors in different offices. His work there gradually tapered off; the company did not have enough work to do. He shifted to part time and the company ultimately fell apart. While he worked there he got \$65/ wk doing the floors full time.

In 1973 Robert was hired for what he reported at the time was "not the best job I've ever had," though he earned more there than elsewhere. He was a security guard at a construction site at the Bronx VA Hospital. "The people and the area are nice. I have a little shelter with lights and a radio. I read and think. I'm always thinking. I liked the people at the messenger job better. But I don't have any difficulty with my boss here or the people. And no plans for changing jobs." He made \$104./wk. at the site. He says in retrospect that he quit because he didn't make enough money there, but it is also then that he was accepted in a training class.

In 1975 through his drug program counsellor who contacted the Manpower office, Robert was enrolled in the auto mechanics class. Though the course was cut from 9 months to 5, he received a school grant while going to school of \$75./wk. This was the period in which his girl lived with his family, a period when he wasn't making much money, but by going to school seemed to be working toward a more stabilized future.

When the course ended and no related job appeared, Robert worked at being a cab driver. He was involved in this activity for about a month and is very ambivalent about the good money-bad conditions aspect

of this job, so that the details of his involvement in the situation change with each telling. "I have lots of friends who drive cabs. It's awfully dangerous work. My uncle's brother has two gypsy cabs. Where I am there are only gypsy cabs. Insurance for them costs about \$1800/ year each. Then you have to pay for your own repairs. One guy owns a fleet; they're not medallion cabs, you know. There is always a hassle; you get locked up if you get caught without insurance or without your sticker. I know a guy who got out of his cab when the fare wouldn't pay and he got robbed. There is good money to be made but cab driving is very dangerous. Maybe sometime I will drive a cab; my mother asks me about it. But she says whatever I want to do is fine. I was going to get a cab but it wasn't insured. I couldn't take the chance when the company didn't get the insurance. (R.'s file says that he did drive a cab for a month in the third quarter of 1975 at \$175./wk.)

The summer of '75 brought "the best job I ever had." Robert worked for two months for the Alamento Food Service Co. delivering lunches to kids in the city schools and camps. He met his car pool mates each morning at 6 a.m. under the George Washington Bridge. They drove to Dairyland in New Jersey to pick up the dairy products for the lunches. "We brought milk and juice back for the kids. I liked the guys a lot. They call me every summer to do the job again. It finished in September when the camps closed. I was just a helper and so I made \$109./wk. The driver had the best job; he made \$150. You have to have a

New York State driver's license for that. It's not a hard job. You have lots of fun. (R.'s file notes that he was the driver making \$150./wk.)

Robert's present job is at Frost Brothers Messenger Service on 45th between 2nd and 3rd Ave. He got the job in February, 1976 through his brother who works in the same building. Robert took this present job part-time because he was also working part-time doing painting for a friend who had just rented a store. Robert works from 4 to 8 p.m., or half time at \$65./wk. "I make five or six deliveries per day, mostly advertising. The farthest they usually send me is about a 10 block area. I went to West 13th St. once." There is a rumor going around the office that Frost Brothers is going to get into the television business. Robert is interested and hopes that it works out.

In general Robert's attitude toward finances is one of calm. He and his mother and sister live in the five room apartment (including bath and kitchen) Marion has lived in for 30 years. Rent as reported in Robert's file fluctuates between \$65./mo and \$76/mo, but he now claims it is \$60. The most obvious explanation of this is that Robert doesn't pay the rent; his sister's SSI funds pay that so that each time he is asked, he gives a reasonable approximation. His sister receives the SSI funds regularly; his mother has received Home Relief funds in the past, but has also worked part time as a housekeeper on West End Ave. She works about four hours each morning and sometimes works for special occasions in the same home. Robert has contributed in the past to various home purchases, e.g., an airconditioner for the apartment. During the past six years (since entering the drug program in 1971) he has alternated periods of part-time

employment, the seven month period under the school grant, full time employment and welfare monies. He has gotten two of his jobs through the New York State Employment Service or Manpower (via the "drug program), the rest through friends. He notes that "welfare is such a hassle; it takes months to qualify; you need to sign so many papers, and there are the rudest people who work for welfare." At various times in his work history he has noted, "There's not much I can do right now; I try to put aside \$20-30 when I get paid." "My mother puts money aside for me that I give her." "I use the extra to help my mother," and "recently things are better." He has and has had no bank accounts. (His file states that he had accounts in 1975.)

In the interest of possible clarification the following is a schematized view of R.'s work history since entering the methadone program in 1970 including rates per week.

Full or Part-time Employment:

All Seasons Floor Waxing	2 mo. full time	10/72-12/72	\$65/wk
	6 mo. part time	1/73- 5/73	?
Harrison Messenger Service	Full time-2 weeks	12/73	\$80./wk
Bronx VA Hosp. Const. Site	Full time-8 weeks	9,10/74	\$104./wk
Taxi Cab Driver	Full time One mo.	5/75	\$175./wk
Alamento Food Service	Full time 8 weeks	7,8/75	\$ 109./wk
Painting-locally	Part time "Saturdays"	7,8/76	?
Auto Mechanic School	Full time	7 mo. 11/74-5/75	\$75./wk
Running Numbers	Three - four		\$100/every fe weeks

Welfare	PAD or	Ranges from (as per R.'s report)
	HR	\$25/every two weeks
		\$40/ " " "
		\$42/ " " "
		\$ 161/mo.

Medicaid: Physical Exams and broken ankle 1975

Food Stamps: on and off.

Robert's conversational style is in general cool; he is polite and responsive, but reserved. EXCEPT on the subject of last summer's trip to Atlanta, Georgia. The reaction to that trip can be summed up in the colloquial, "I never had it so good!" All Robert's maternal relatives came originally from Georgia and he still has many relatives living there now. And "there were no jobs in New York City so I went south. I haven't been there since I was a baby. It's really beautiful in the south. The subway they are building is not finished, not til 1980. People there are not so crazy. All the busses are air-conditioned. They are all new and you can get a bus ride for 15¢. It is 50¢ for cigarettes and gas is cheap. My cousin (I used to go out with her a lot) works for the welfare department. Her father is in the undertaking business. She tried to get me a job in the new sports arena; it has an ice rink, a shopping center and an amusement park. I applied for a job there, but I didn't ever hear... There's no pollution in Georgia, no corruption and no stray dogs. It's beautiful there; you can walk barefoot in the streets, it's so clean. I applied at GM for a job, but it was right before the strike... In the south you get a better education. Here there are just a lot of knothheads; the kids and the teachers and the bureaucracies. If I could get a job and save the money, I'd go south. A lady offered me a house the lady wasn't using. She was supposed to rent it out. If I could get a job, but I just didn't have the money. As far as I know it's still there though."

"I was sorry to come back. In New York City people are afraid to move, afraid to go to work. There are no jobs. I worked in the south every

Saturday painting for a friend who was working for GM.... In the south the drug program is just much better. Lots of people there mess with drugs. But they take it into the home, not in the street. There is not all that people hanging out, high and drinking. In New York they don't help you to detox either. In the south they urge you. They care more there. They give you free tickets to a baseball game. You play basketball with the counselors. Herer they have the wrong people for the jobs of counselors."

"Last year I weighed 200 pounds. But I got thinner in Georgia. I played lots of basketball. I came back looking great; I even had to have all my clothes changed. I played basketball at 7 a.m. for two hours; then in the afternoon I played for another couple hours....Eventually I had to come back from Atlanta. I was living with relatives. If I had a steady job I could of stayed there. I wrote a lot of letters. Lots of people are moving between here and there; lots of people go there and then they get homesick and come back. I have lots of cousins coming and going. You need to know an action person there for a job; it's more true there than here, that you have to know someone. You have to see it though to be able to believe it. I do so like so much to live there; they do more with the less they have."

When pressed to consider his future, Robert maintains his caution. "I suppose if I could I'd like to go back to Georgia and get a home. It would be according to the kind of job I could get... I think too about the High School Equivalency possibility. It depends on how it works out at Frost Brothers. I would rather have a full time job now, but it takes so

much in taxes. I have a friend at work who has another job in the evening; he sells papers. The cost of living is going up, but not the wages... I couldn't go back to auto mechanics; there just aren't the jobs that pay enough. Pumping gas just isn't good."

About getting married he replies: "If..... if I get my High School Equivalency..... if I get another job..... if I get my own business going.... It all comes down to money. He laughed at the possibility of his girl supporting him.

His present views of his future in general are less firm than those reported in earlier interviews. In 1972 in his initial Wildcat interview he listed "school and work" as his goals. "Client has had some training in photography and wants to get back to taking pictures. He would like to get his own developing equipment now he's working. He likes to take pictures of kids. He saw the Paul Strand show recently with his girl friend (He reports now that they just planned to go; they did not actually see it.) He thinks of photography as a hobby and a profession. Those are his two major plans."

In 1976 he was reported as saying, "Client says he would like to complete high school and get full time job as an auto mechanic. After he has earned enough money to get his own equipment he would like to marry his girl friend."

There is persistent criticism of the kinds of counselling Robert has been exposed to, both personal-problem counseling, drug program, probation and job counseling of various sorts. "The programs are alright but if you

want to do anything you have to do it yourself... They've got the wrong people hired as counsebrs My counselor was always too busy when I came, always on the move doing what, I don't know, going off to --- who knows what. He had a private business on the outside.... If you bring personal problems to them-- family, drug, job-- they don't help.. Too many of the counsellors just have a 'don't care' attitude. You can help yourself just as well. If I want to go to school I can just go... If I make up my mind I can do anything I want to do. Some people (clients) just don't care; they don't try. I think you don't hurt anyone but yourself."

In talking about Wildcat, Robert asked, somewhat rhetorically, "Why didn't they show more initiative? Why didn't they get their own businesses going? Like the office cleaning one they started? These guys were already working together. They should have moved out into their own businesses. Why didn't they move out of Wildcat and start something on their own with the group already together, that's the hard part. I'm pretty critical of Wildcat and how they did things. People just stayed in the jobs they started in, stay in the same jobs, stayed in Wildcat and didn't go on out."

One consistent trait Robert shares with a large proportion of humanity -- experimental, control and civilian-- is that of frequent use of handy rationalizations: the auto mechanics course was cut short;.. the referral services, at the drug program and at the training course.. are poor and unhelpful;.. garage jobs don't pay enough money to bother with; cabs are too dangerous and too expensive to try to operate; full time work has the disadvantage of adding more taxes to take home pay;

New York City is not really fit for man or beast. These rationalizations serve first of all to limit Robert's aspirations, certain things are just not possible. They also serve to nullify the kinds of help that are available through the city personnel--employment, drug, and welfare counselors; they do not serve their clientele, in part through lack of concern, in part through incompetence, and in part through self-seeking. This leaves Robert with his own will and determination which seems like good mental health and a courageous personal stand. But has so far not really gotten past GO.

A few random observations:

The central importance of Robert's affiliative need to his job performance is shown in the fact that the two times he has been most content were: first, at the auto mechanic school where he worked and went to school with a group of fellows he enjoyed and many of whom he still sees; and the delivery truck pool that hauled over to New Jersey for the camp lunches each day. The jobs in which he had to tote that ^{load} ~~bag~~ alone-- the messenger jobs and the watchman duty on the construction site-- were not his favorites, and he did not stick very long. He is confident that the Wildcat crews because they work together as a crew could and should have been able to make a success-- as a unit-- of an independent team venture. The affiliative need is one getting more and more attention these days in other contexts; some note that it is an important factor in the motivation of the housewife who wants to get out of the isolated home into a situation in which she works with others. I surely can't be ignored in counselling and job performance evaluation.

Each of us have some idyllic experience in our past where "we never had it so good."-- or as we say in the old country, Nie ist es mir so gut gegangen wie dort! Here is the taxi driver who remembers with delight the times he used to come to the city to hear Tommy Dorsey; the person who looks back on the summer of his/her youth when he/she ran naked on the beach; the student who longs forever to go back to Boston where he was happiest.

For Robert this experience was his trip to Atlanta last summer. All of his fantasies of how things could be better in his life were stirred up, despite his own statements that he didn't get any job or a place to live, GM went on strike, living with and on relatives did not bring lasting enjoyment, "Life is so beautiful there, you have to see it to believe it." Whether you ought to build reality around fantasies-- who knows?

The generalizations of the "Unripe Time" is one that is familiar to us all too as Robert demonstrates: there are no jobs for the blind sister now; s.. if GM hadn't been on strike; if the sports arena had had a job; if his head had been together when he had a chance to go to school; if they hadn't cut the auto mechanics course. Marriage? if he had got his HSE, the higher paying job, more money. There are so many reasons why we all do not need to do more now.

Robert's pattern of turning aside when the world is not accommodating him is another consistent characteristic. When he meets obstacles in his personal or work life he does not push against them, he turns aside when he meets difficulties. His is a non-aggressiveness, a gentleness that is softer than the world. The softness then is excused with easy rationalizations made as plausible as possible. Is it perhaps the result of having a blind sister?

Or does a man who irons his blue jeans daily, And arranged the flowers carefully in a clean vase have special assets. And special liabilities?

The striking observation that Robert does not talk about being busted, about pigs, etc. would seem to indicate a "reformability" not possible in those for whom the street argot makes a realistic assessment of what is happening to you in the outside world impossible.

I hope the picture of the vulnerability of the man shows through. You get the sense of someone who has grown up with a sense of order and stability in that home, faced at a crucial period in life by the negative and destructive youth culture. Somehow even the evasiveness encountered appears as evidence of his susceptibility.

JYS