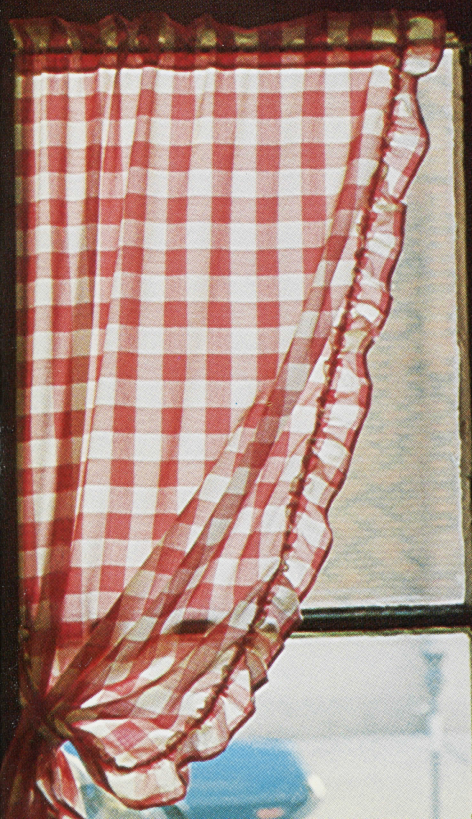


*The "Community" on Fourth Street*

AND THIS  
KNOW WHAT

IS HOW WE  
LOVE IS..

1 | 3 | 16





# *The "Community"* *on Fourth Street*

*by*

BERT KRUGER SMITH and SUANNE COPELAND

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The University of Texas

Austin, Texas 78712



"Community"\* — an interacting population of various kinds of individuals in a common location.

"Community" may be many-faceted. For the little world on Fourth Street encompassing the free lunch program, the store-front counseling, and the Spaghetti House, "community" is people bound together by the ribbon of concern which keeps them safe from the loneliness outside the door.



\* Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary, G. & C. Merriam Company, Springfield, Mass., 1967.



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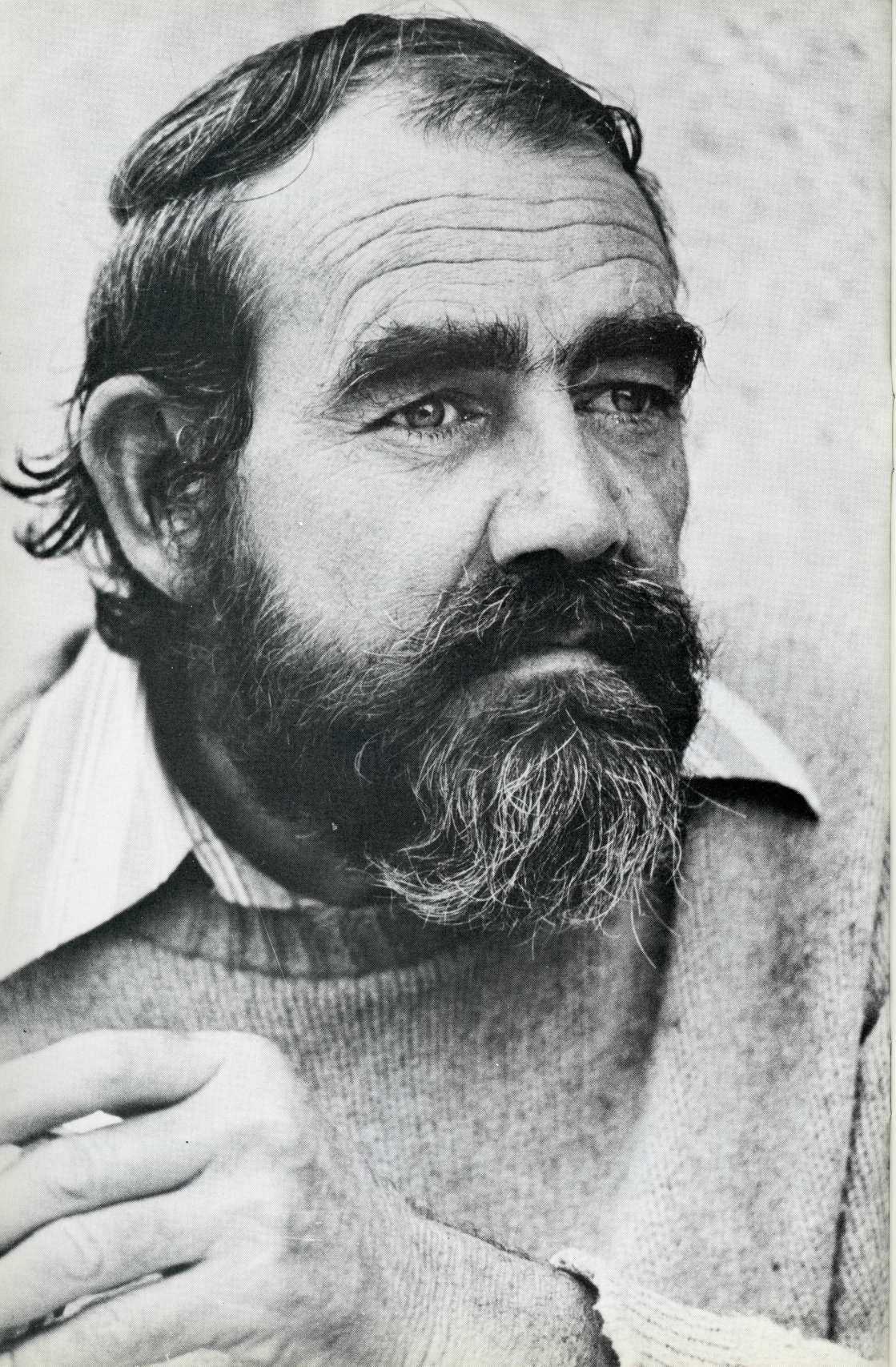
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## *Introduction*

The Hogg Foundation's cooperative support of programs designed to pool the talent and resources from several sectors of the community in order to reach new target populations—or old populations in new ways—has been utilized in several Texas communities. San Antonio is a case in point.

Where governmental funds for human service delivery programs are being reduced, other institutions at different levels in society have a greater and more challenging role to play. Meeting this change in San Antonio is the First Baptist Church, which has taken brotherhood beyond the chapel and has established an extended ministry to offer professional counseling for clients who may avoid or be missed by other social service agencies. Central and innovative aspects of this project are a free lunch program and a commercial restaurant which provide catalytic settings for self referral.

The success of the Fourth Street Inn can be measured in many ways including the broadened professional and paraprofessional base of the program, the increased number of clients referred by other agencies, the Inn's acceptance by the street community, its association with other institutions, and the increased support of volunteers representing all ages and socioeconomic levels. Operation consists of a unique blend of input from church, universities, local agencies, and persons having no institutional affiliation other than the Inn itself.

The Fourth Street Inn has demonstrated an innovative counseling program. It can be used as a model by organizations in other communities.

*Charles M. Bonjean*





## *One Morning*

8:30 Monday morning: the work force settles in for another week. In the offices that fill the many floors of the downtown buildings, employees drink coffee and talk about the weekend happenings. The business week comes to life in the heart of the inner city of San Antonio, Texas, population 864,000.

Down Fourth Street, just a few blocks from these office buildings, the atmosphere changes. Outside the First Baptist Church a line begins to form. There are only a few men at first, most in jeans, some in frayed slacks and sportcoats. Some roll cigarettes and talk sporadically among themselves. Others stand, shifting from one foot to another, and stare off into space. All are waiting—waiting in the free food line that is one of the services provided by the Fourth Street Inn, a ministry for the “less fortunate citizens” of San Antonio.

Inside the building, the signs on the walls of the meeting room are confusing—“Young People, Grades 10 Through College” and “The Gym Will Be Open Tues. and Fri., 11 a.m., Shave and Shower.” It seems that this clean, well-lighted place has a dual role, serving as a Sunday School room for members of the congregation on Sunday and as a dining area and message center for those who partake in the free food program the rest of the week. This morning, a table stands in the middle of the floor. It, too, is waiting.

Across the street, in the church-run restaurant and counseling center, sandwiches are being made for those in line. Soon the ministers who run the Fourth Street activities will walk back across the street with the food. In the interim, the group waiting there grows. The street people share the word: “There’s this free food line down at the church on Fourth, see. No sermonizing, just sandwiches and people who care.” Those in line don’t openly express their anticipation, just patiently inch forward. Two young men with shoulder-length hair and glassine eyes . . . a blind man with a cane and platform heels . . . a young Chicano boy, perhaps a runaway, with a couple of hungry dogs . . . a nattily dressed young man in his twenties with a blond beard and a traveling bag he never lets out of his sight . . . an old man wearing a white straw hat, his trousers tucked into his boot-tops.

Then the women begin to arrive: a blank-faced elderly woman with a high-pitched voice and a cap covering her sparse gray hair . . . a younger lady who must weigh in at 225 pounds . . . a flirtatious female in her 70’s, yet still a “wanted woman—wanted by most of the men in the Southwest,” she says . . . and finally the oldest of all, a bent shuffling gnome of a woman with a crooked smile. They sip cups of steaming coffee, tell their stories to anyone who will listen, and check frequently to make sure their tattered purses are still at their feet.

In the Family of Man, these are the stepchildren—not quite outcasts, yet not fully accepted, eternally existing on the fringes of middle-class serenity, shadows seen out of the corners of our eyes as they slip into alleyways or huddle in doorways. One wonders where the components of this human collage *did* spend the night—in a roominghouse, under a bridge, beneath a picnic table in the park?

They shuffle through the line, their feet creating a monotonous pattern of sound as if they are shackled together. There is a strangeness about the setting where food is shared but thoughts are not. The atmosphere is not unfriendly, yet the joking and chatting are subdued. Each person occupies his own private space and is primarily isolated, alone. To some, it's embarrassing to be in a free food line at all. To others, a basic human need, hunger, is being attended to, and that's the sum total of it. One very old gentleman, hat perched at an angle, sits away from the rest, leaning on a communion table in the corner; "This Do In Remembrance of Me" reads the inscription, but he is unaware of anything except the sandwich and coffee someone has brought him.

Some of the men take their second cups of coffee outside where they can smoke. A couple of wine bottles appear. Squatted on their haunches or leaning against the brick wall of the church, these men are outwardly at ease; yet an inner tension seems to exist in some of them, and their eyes scan the streets. Many of them will take advantage of the free food only once or twice before they move on, on to other towns, other closed faces and averted eyes, other "deals" to make. Their names and faces remain anonymous—they don't want to be "found." None of the coffee-break conviviality of the uptown offices exists here; the only things shared are crusts of sandwiches that some of the men toss to the dogs who wait patiently.

As the food begins to have an energizing effect, the street people become more alert. They are looking for something new on a boring, gray Monday, and several of them joke and trade tall tales. The late-comers start to straggle in. It seems that Monday morning is the time many of these people give blood. The \$14 they receive for a pint of blood will go a long way in street economy. Before the morning is over, 150 people will have been fed, some 300 sandwiches served. Many of the ingredients are donated, while others are paid for mostly through the efforts of those who run the Fourth Street Inn.

The crowd thins out gradually. Where do they go from here? What fills their days? The food has provided the fuel for the body, but what about the tired spirit? The meeting room is empty of people now, but the ghosts of bitterness, apathy, loneliness and despair remain. For the rest of the world Tuesday *will* come, but for many of the street people, only gray Mondays seem to lie ahead.

Those on Fourth Street are luckier than most. The hopelessness is not total. The abandonment is not complete. The people who run the free food line care—care enough to operate a restaurant and a counseling ministry that reach out to make society's stepchildren a part of the family once again.

Let's take a slow walk down Fourth Street. . . .





## *Yesterday*

### *The Path to the Community*

Alienation. Isolation. Loneliness. Hunger. These words frequently appear in discussions of present society. Diminution of the "extended family," increase in mobility, uncertainties in jobs, and anxieties caused by global problems often combine to heighten and increase numbers of people who find themselves jobless or hungry or alone.

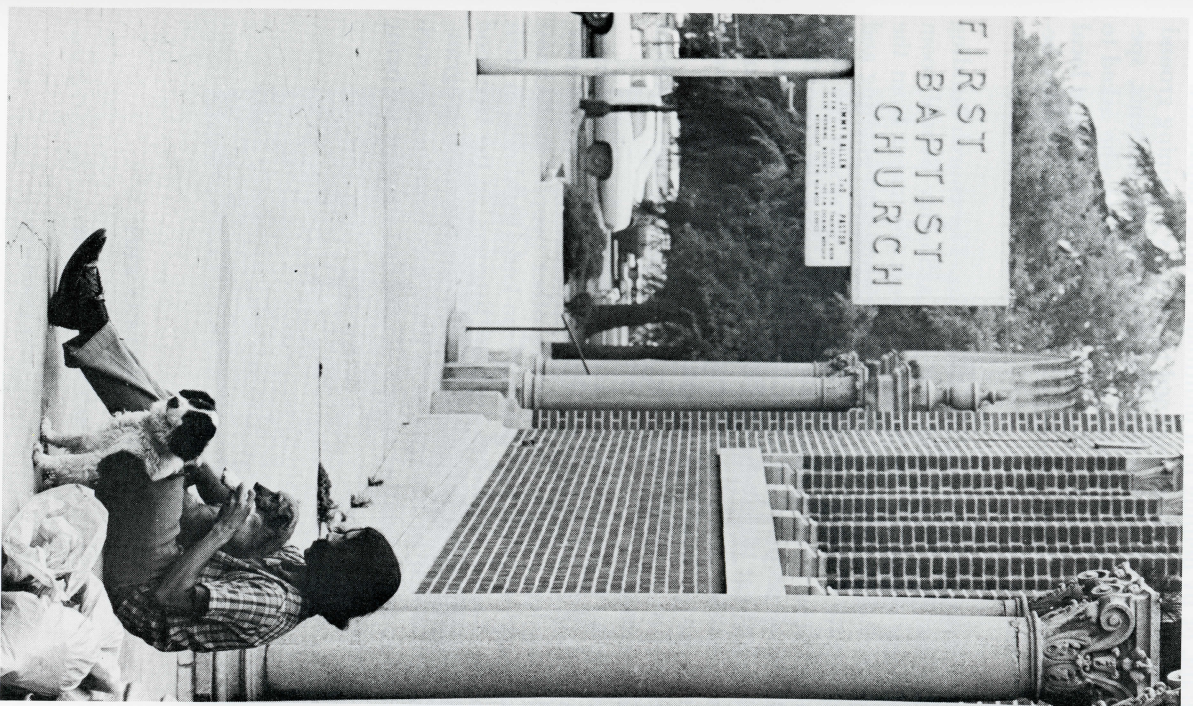
"Within the inner city . . . there are hurting people who have need of a refuge from their hurting and a place where they feel comfortable in putting words to their anguish. It is from a position of concern for our brothers who need a listening ear and a place of refuge that this ministry exists." These words come from a statement written by the ministers and counselors who have sparked and furthered the Fourth Street project. They continue, "The ministry here is to help men to become—not half, not sub, not super, not inhuman—but more human."

The Fourth Street Inn counseling program came into existence because the people who "lived" around the area of San Antonio's First Baptist Church were not being served by anyone. Recognition led to planning, and the ministering staff decided to see how a large downtown church located in a disadvantaged area of San Antonio might bring a therapeutic social ministry to people who walk the streets. No one is cast out from this ministry, which addresses itself to drug addicts, runaways, potential criminals, and others who are generally overlooked in a city church program.

Recognizing that starting a program to reach such people would require large amounts of money from the budget of the church and from outside sources, the ministerial staff planned carefully. How could they minister to those persons who were hungry, often homeless, and at the same time reach others who might be in less dire financial straits but still in need of counseling?

The design of a tri-partite program emerged: (1) a free lunch plan—instituted and carried out early; (2) a commercial restaurant—where trained and understanding waiters and waitresses would provide not only good and inexpensive food but also a listening ear and guidance to professional help for those who desired it; and (3) a counseling program—vigorous and available at all times. These would complete a circle offering aid to a variety of persons who might not find it otherwise.

On an experimental basis the church board committed a sizable portion of its funds to the project. Outside sources were contacted. The Hogg Foundation aided financially with the staffing and training component of the program.





The counseling itself was set up primarily by the Coordinator of Counseling and the Minister of Street Ministries. Members of the staff were young, vigorous, committed. Their spouses served, too, by decorating the facilities, by taking turns as cashier in the restaurant, or by helping in a multitude of other capacities.

The Fourth Street Inn ministry has been planned to serve as a training ground for a variety of people. Some of them are from nearby colleges, students, specializing in social work or psychology. Others are college students who asked to train for such efforts. Some persons volunteer for initial contact counseling at local bars, restaurants, and the Bexar County Juvenile Detention Center. Others become workers in the restaurant ministry.

Physically the program is set up in three disparate areas. The church building serves as the setting for the free lunch program, and a Sunday School room doubles daily as the serving room. An old building across the street from the church is utilized. Its ground floor, with the aid of remodeling and painting and the addition of red and white checked curtains and cloths, serves as the commercial Spaghetti House. Upstairs (with a separate entrance) are the counseling offices, waiting rooms, and food preparation areas. The offices of the Coordinator of Counseling, the Minister of Street Ministries, and the Director of the Restaurant were situated close to one another, and a large living room and waiting room were set aside for group meetings or for those waiting for appointments.

It was decided that the counseling would be a holistic approach, without decided denominational overtones.

The planners recognized that if the program was to be a success, careful training of volunteers would be vital. These volunteers, recruited from the community, were often persons who needed companionship with other people, too. Almost half turned out to be semi-retired or retired persons who knew loneliness in their own lives. Such persons were to be trained to work as "listeners" in the free food service, or waiters in the Spaghetti House, or workers in the outreach program. It was decided that experts would be brought in to train the volunteers in sociology and psychology, and in understanding oneself . . . the first step toward being able to help and relate to others.



*Today*

*The Three Layers of Community*



FREE LUNCHEON PROGRAM

SPAGHETTI HOUSE

COUNSELING



## FREE LUNCHEON PROGRAM

It is 8:30 a.m. The church is veiled in fog.

A line of people reaches out from the door—an ungainly gray snake humped to the corner. Some stay in small groups, talking and glancing across the street at the door through which the boxes of sandwiches will come. One loner sits by the curb and pulls from a bottle of wine—an aging infant taking sustenance from the comfort of a drink.

The room inside is yellow—walls, cement floor, ceiling. Folding chairs in lines around the walls. An upright piano as silent as some of the men. In the early morning everything and everyone seem to be watching the clock on the wall.

In the food preparation room upstairs across the street Ed works with a rhythm developed out of practice. Fast, faster, still faster his hands move.

He empties the wrappers of bread; spreads slices across the oil cloth covered table. The bologna next, cut from the large roll in the refrigerator; then the cheese—quickly slapped upon the slices. A dab of mayonnaise, a spoon-tip of mustard, and then the bread again—slap, slap, slap across the table top. Forty-five minutes, 200 sandwiches made and stacked into large plastic-lined boxes. All done by 9:30 a.m.

Meanwhile, the men across the street lean against the church building. The women sit primly inside the gray room. They speak little; look at little; just wait. No one talks of hunger or of need. No one talks very much of anything. They drink coffee from paper cups and wait silently.

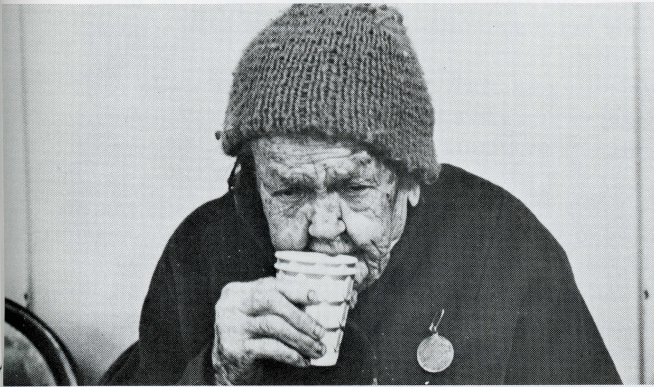
When Ed comes through the door staggering under the weight of the sandwich-filled box, the line begins to form in earnest. There is no jostling and no joking—just the muted formation of quiet people waiting to be fed. From the box on the table in the middle of the room, Ed hands out two sandwiches on a paper napkin. Some men shuffle through in silence, looking down, taking their portion and moving on. Others mumble thanks. Still others look up, “good morning,” and “thanks.” The women smile a bit and say a word or two, and Tillie, an 80-year-old regular in the line, chatters, “Thankee, darlin’. Nice day. Thankee lots.”

No one waits on the sandwich eating. Before the first batch of sandwiches is handed out, almost everyone, even those without teeth, has finished eating. Some eye the box hungrily; a few try to make their way through a second time. Ed watches them all. He knows them, spots the ones trying to get an extra sandwich, refuses to be fooled.

Ed is deadly serious—about religion, bologna sandwiches, and work. His hair is slicked with pomade, his eyes keep watch on everyone, and his hands are on the move.

How did Ed arrive at the free lunch program? One can only guess. He is young;







he is strong; he has found religion. "I gave my testimony," he tells everyone. "I am saved!"

Ed's pride in his speed at making sandwiches is matched only by that of his religious awakening. Both Bible and bologna are with him throughout the day.

Bill runs the show. Everyone knows it. Bill keeps things in line. He is genial but firm. His face and the tremor in his hands still show the ravages of the drinking years. But now he is in command—of himself and the people who come to the free lunch program. He picks up the cups which people carelessly drop. He moves among the people, quieting those who are angry, cheering those who seem depressed. Bill is an active man with a mission.

Who are some of the others?

Wolfman never stops smiling—his teeth like the keys of a mahogany piano. He smiles, he sidesteps, he exchanges comments—but he holds back on revealing who he really is, how he reached the free food line, where he would like to be.

Another, an aging Anglo, leans his head against the wall as he patiently waits for his sandwiches. A tall man, he might once have been impressive. Now his face is no longer a unit but two disparate parts—the upper half still strong, the bottom half sunken and indented, toothless.

Polite, friendly, he smiles a bit. He knows his way around the country—from New Jersey where he once made his home, down to the warmer South in the winter; from free sandwiches to the free lunch program at another church; from small jobs in one town to smaller ones in another.

He is in no hurry. He holds his paper bag; rests his head against the wall; checks his minute Bible to be sure the slip of paper giving his free lunch number is safely tucked inside.

Here is Minnie Pearl, "settled in" to the free lunch line, taking charge of newcomers, running the show. And beside her the middle-aged woman wearing a large cross.

The Mexican-American men are all ages—surly youth who neither smile nor speak; older men, carrying the weight of years like heavy sacks on their shoulders. The Blacks are mostly older, except for the young man in green clacking across the floor in his platform shoes.

And as the line moves on, one notes the reluctant men in velour shirts and permanent-press slacks, men who seem foreign to the free lunch line. They are salesmen without sales, reduced to the bologna and cheese handout in line with all the others. The salesmen are followed by young Anglos with back packs, beards, vague eyes. They do not want to give their names; they keep their shirt sleeves down, tightly, their arms not visible to anyone.

"Thankee, darlin'." That's 80-year-old Tillie again in her lilac knitted cap and red coat, darkened to black in places by accumulated filth. Tillie smiles as she speaks, and the sharp, yellow stubs of teeth are visible, as are the gaps where the stubs have gone. Fingernails and toenails match the teeth in thickness, yellowness, and sharpness. Arthritis has pulled the toes over one another, and the worn blue tennis shoes reveal the crippled feet. The darkness of both legs could be dirt or veins or hair.

All Spaghetti Dinners Include:

Green Salad and Choice of Dressing  
 Italian - Blue Cheese - Thousand Island  
 - Bread Sticks - Homemade Rolls -  
 Coffee, Tea, Cola, or Milk

**SPAGHETTI**Our Famous Spaghetti Dinners  
With Your Choice of:

1. 4th Street Inn Sauce  
 (A Tomato Sauce with Fresh  
 Vegetables) Delicious,  
 Light, and Tasty.....2.50
2. 4th Street Inn Meat Sauce..... 2.75
3. 4th Street Inn Sauce  
 With Meatballs..... 2.75
4. 4th Street Inn Sauce  
 With Italian Sausage..... 2.80

Child's Plate (Under 12) -  $\frac{1}{2}$  Price

Just plain Spaghetti and  
 Meat Sauce with Homemade  
 Bread..... 1.75

Beverages

Coffee Service..... .20  
 Ice or Hot Tea..... .20  
 Coca Cola..... .20  
 Mr. Pibb..... .20  
 Milk..... .30

**ITALIAN**  
**wiches**1. 4th Street Inn Special:

Cotto Salami, Mortadella Ham,  
 Provolone Cheese, Bell Pepper,  
 Onion, Tomato, Pickles, and  
 Spices in a Golden Crust Roll..... 1.85

2. Hot Meat Ball:

Meatballs, Sauce, and Golden  
 Crust Roll..... 1.50  
 With Cheese..... 1.65

3. Hot Sausage:

Italian Sausage and Sauce  
 Served on a Golden Crust Roll..... 1.50  
 With Cheese..... 1.65

4. Holland Ham:

Sliced Ham, Lettuce, and Tomato  
 on a Golden Crust Roll..... 1.25  
 With Cheese..... 1.35

5. Genoa Salami:

Genoa Salami, Bell Pepper, Onion,  
 Pickles, Lettuce, and Spices on a  
 Golden Crust Roll..... 1.35  
 With Cheese..... 1.45

Salads

Dinner Salad w/Breadsticks..... .50

Antipasto:

Small w/Breadsticks..... .80  
 Large w/Breadsticks..... 2.00

Soup of the Day

Large Bowl..... .65  
 Small Bowl..... .45

Homemade Pies and Cakes..... .50

No one comes close enough to look. On the coat, hanging by a single safety pin, is a religious medal—"a gift, you know, from the Sisters. They give me money, too, every once in a while."

If one could peel away the filth and the fat and the years, he might see that Tillie was once an attractive woman. Her clouded eyes still bear some slight image of self-liking.

Tillie leans forward. "Tell me, darlin', do you think I'm crazy? No? Well, my neighbor wants to kill me. He has hired people to do me in. But God punished him. Now that neighbor's got cancer—got it from some woman he was sleepin' with. . . ."

The costs of feeding a hundred or more people per day run unbelievably low. Donations help. Bread and sweet rolls are given to the Center and occasionally gifts of cheese are received. Other food costs come from funds from the restaurant or grants.

Even though two bologna and cheese sandwiches a day stop far short of satisfying the daily nutritional requirements of a human being, they can sustain life or serve as major supplement to other dietary needs.

In one month, 2,600 meals were served at a total cost of \$1,118.33. The figure, before labor is added, breaks down to 34c a person. Including the labor cost of \$125 per month, the expense per person figures out to be about 39c.



## SPAGHETTI HOUSE

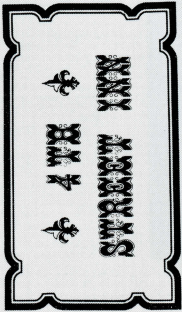
Noon. Sun filters through the stained glass of the transom and splinters light onto the floor of the Spaghetti House.

The Spaghetti House is husband, child, friend, home for many people.

It is warm—in colors and in spirit. Red and white diamonds on the tablecloths; fresh pictures and posters; colorful half curtains—all of these invite the casual diner or the lonely person.

The smell of spicy meat pervades the room. Tony, who manages the kitchen, is both paid worker and volunteer, for while he draws a salary, it is nothing compared to what he could make in a commercial establishment. He is “hooked” on the program, and his smile and attention to detail demonstrate that fact. Tony in his tall white hat looks like a traditional chef. However, his overall concern for the operation of the Spaghetti House and his extra time spent in finding new foods and good ways to prepare them are evidence of his proprietary interest in the running of the restaurant.





**SPECIALIZING**  
in pasta (spaghetti)  
and "ITALwiches"

	HOURS OPEN	NOON	EVENING
SUNDAY	CLOSED	11:00 - 2:00	
MONDAY	CLOSED	11:00 - 2:00	
TUESDAY	11:00 - 2:00	11:00 - 2:00	
WEDNESDAY	11:00 - 2:00	11:00 - 2:00	
THURSDAY	11:00 - 2:00	11:00 - 2:00	
FRIDAY	11:00 - 2:00	11:00 - 2:00	
SATURDAY	CLOSED		6:30 - 11:00

207 Fourth Street  
San Antonio, Texas 78205  
PHONE: 227-6208

Fourth Street Inn  
Statement of Purpose on Back

The volunteers are ready. They have met with the coordinator and have checked duties. They are ready in other ways, too. All of them have gone through a training program where they worked on self-discovery and on understanding others. They have learned how to be warm and available to persons who might have problems, how to make people feel comfortable about asking for counseling help, how to refer without being conspicuous.

Who are these volunteers? Many of them are church members, but some come because they themselves have been helped and want to perform their own service for others. Others are lonely human beings who long for the fellowship which comes through performing a mutual task. There are those who simply have a need to serve. People volunteer for many reasons.

They are all ages—from late teens to eighth decade, and their financial picture goes from bare subsistence to the millionaire category. Age, looks, and finances are overshadowed by service.

The staff chuckles over one customer who bragged to the restaurant manager that he had never had such good, professional, and careful service in any eating place in the country. "I don't doubt that," responded the manager. "You've probably never been waited on by a millionaire."

Volunteers may work any shift they wish. Some of them take only one three-hour stint a week. Others serve several days of every seven. Still others come back to help with the "music nights" on the weekends, when bands and singers gather at the Spaghetti House to provide entertainment.

A young couple, right out of college, works together several times weekly preparing salads, keeping stock, and pouring cold drinks. A retired banker helps in the kitchen with the dishwashing. Several housewives wait tables, smile their thanks at the tips they receive, and put the money in the bowl designated as the





“general fund,” which goes to further the program. The Spaghetti House once received a \$20 bill as a tip.

Irene is an enigma. How did she come to a single life highlighted once a week by her service in the Spaghetti House? Childless, husbandless, timid, she nevertheless arrives promptly and moves swiftly as she performs her mission with the customers. It would be easy to overlook Irene—hair, dress, skin are monotones. But her smile breaks through, a white arc in the light brown color scheme of her appearance . . . and her days.

Or Lila—pretty, with blonde shining hair, eyes that crinkle, a dimple. She could be a beauty queen. Why does she volunteer? She likes it, and she never misses one of her assignments .

Mrs. Harrison is not always able to come when she is expected. When the arthritis pain is just too bad to let her stand, she calls in. But she always asks if she could sit on a kitchen stool and fix the salads or pour the iced tea or line up the silver. She doesn't like to miss her turn.

The customers often keep “regular” schedules also. Many of them drop in from the telephone company up the street or from the insurance firm or other offices close by. They come in greeting people by name, calling to Tony in the kitchen, acting like people visiting the home of friends.

Occasionally someone wanders in uneasily, rubbing his hands against old trousers, greasy gray hair slicked back in a ponytail. He may look around the room and finally slide into a chair at one of the tables. When a waiter comes to him, he quickly reveals that he thinks this is the free lunch room. The procedure is explained to him, quietly, warmly, and he leaves without being either ashamed or embarrassed.

Sometimes a customer may start a conversation with one of the waiters, who then gives full attention to the person talking. Others on shift may take over the serving duties while the person listens to the customer. At times the customer, in such an atmosphere, will talk of a pending divorce, a devastating loss, an unshared fear. And the person waiting tables knows how to listen or to reassure or to refer that person to the counseling services so close and so accessible.



Date Opened		Local		Telephone	
Name (last, first, middle)		Sex	Business		Telephone
Birthdate and Place		Age	Permanent Address		
Marital Status ___ S ___ M ___ W ___ Sep. ___ Div.			Soc. Security No. _____ Military Service ___ yes ___ no		
Spouse's Name: Telephone:			Spouse's Address: Religion:		
Person or Agency Referring:					
Known to Other Agencies: ___ no ___ yes If yes, list agencies:					
Other Members of Household		Relationship	Birthdate Birthplace	Religion	Occupation or School
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
Drugs or medication (tranquilizers) regularly used:					
Statement of Problem as you see it:					
Referred to:					
Counselor's Name:					



## COUNSELING

Evening. Fourth Street is filled with echoes, whispered remnants of the day. A quiet time like a deep breath between two noisy screams. The drinking men have not emerged from beneath the bridges or the insides of shacks. The movie-goers are still at home.

Lights are on in the rooms above the Spaghetti House. Here there is movement—people working together to solve their problems. A young woman moves uneasily in the big velvet chair as she and one of the counselors explore her marriage relationship. In another office a group talks together about failure and self-concepts. . . .

Who comes to the counseling program?

It may be Raoul, nearing sixty, divorced, alienated from his children, facing his older years alone. Raoul, depressed, comes for counseling.

Or Debbie, 30 years old and pretty, except for the terror in her hazel eyes and the trembling of her hands. She writes "I AM GUILTY" on a piece of lined yellow paper as she talks.

Maybe it is Bob, 14 years old and into drugs. Heavily into drugs. Shadows beneath his eyes. Only fear has brought him to a counselor.

Or perhaps it's Karen, a 16-year-old pregnant hitch-hiker who is "just passing through."

Mike comes to the counseling center, too. He has been arrested for exposing himself in front of a group of teenaged girls. He feels inadequate as a man. He asks for help.

And Martha. Martha is single, approaching middle-age, has trouble making friends and keeping jobs. Her loneliness has brought her to the center.

Ethel and Tim come in together. Sealed in marriage, they are alienated in relationship. Miserable together and unhappy apart. They find the center.

Others seek it, too—adolescents who meet once a week to exchange ideas and philosophy; a singles group which uses the center as an alternative to the singles bar scene, as a place to meet, talk and shore up their self-images and their strengths. Other groups are planned.

The problems people bring to the center are varied, but they focus mostly in the areas of drugs, marital difficulties, loneliness, parent-child relationships, attempted suicide, and runaways.

Group work with alcoholics like those released from the San Antonio State Hospital has been part of the program. Here the needs to be met may include job placement or incorporation into the free food program.

Many of those who go into counseling "pay" in responsibility instead of fees. A young person, a drop-out from school, may be told, "If you want to come to see me, you'll have to stay in school." The "coin" of payment is often self-discipline toward a task of rehabilitation.

Some 50 persons are counseled per week, and referrals come about in many

ways. Some simply begin talking about their problems as they go through the free lunch line and speak with one of the lay volunteers. Others may express some of their anxiety to one of the volunteers waiting tables in the Spaghetti House, and thus be sent to the counseling program upstairs. Or they may be referred by any one of a number of agencies—Drug Abuse Central, Travelers Aid, the Salvation Army, the Child Guidance Center, and other churches or individuals. Interestingly enough, according to the staff, the most difficult people to reach are those in the mid-income bracket who hesitate to admit having problems.

Counseling sessions take place in several offices above the Spaghetti House. In addition to daytime hours, the center operates until 10 o'clock four nights a week for group discussions and drop-in visitation.



The Coordinator of Counseling and the Minister of Street Ministries, Church staff members, serve as primary counselors and trainers. They oversee and direct practicum efforts by students from the Worden School of Social Service and Our Lady of the Lake College. A graduate student in clinical psychology at St. Mary's University also does supervised work at the center.

In addition, college students and several dozen interested community persons have undergone in-service training in counseling procedures. Some of these work in counseling capacities in local bars, restaurants, and at the Bexar County Juvenile Detention Center.



At still another level, about half a hundred persons undergo from 35 to 40 hours of training in counseling in order to serve in the restaurant ministry. Training for all persons is an ongoing process.

Is the counseling program successful? The leaders feel that it is. Most work is done on a short-term basis, but follow-ups are carried out via telephone and personal visitation. Several psychiatrists are on "standby" for referrals of serious cases or for emergencies. A large percentage of the persons who have terminated their counseling sessions report that the help they received there has greatly improved their lives.

Persons living on the fringe of life are desperate for survival, and the climate of acceptance generated by this program seems to nourish wavering egos and strengthen resolves toward independence. To paraphrase the statement often made about "home," the center seems to be a place where people feel free to leave and safe to return.

How can the success of the Fourth Street Inn ministry be measured? Not only in numbers of "cases" resolved or terminated. Not just in tabulation of volunteers trained or food dispensed.

The subtlety of spirit which pervades this program may also serve as a measuring guide to evaluation. For example:

The center was broken into once but never again.

Prostitution in the neighborhood has diminished.

And the Blood Bank, which is housed in a mobile unit behind the center and was a frequent target for vandalism in preceding years, has never been invaded since the program started.

Only once has anything valuable been stolen from the center. After a large quantity of donated meat disappeared, several of the "regulars" in the free lunch program discovered who had committed the theft. They were angry but silent. One day soon after the theft a favorite patron of the free lunch line spoke to a program director. "You won't have to worry no more about stolen meat," he said. Peer action had provided the solution.

The decrease in crime and the self-policing of the area are explained by one of the counselors. "You have to remember," he says, "that what you own, you nourish. The street people protect their own. They have a good thing here and don't want anyone to louse it up. It's like the difference between living in a rented house and having a home of your own to take care of," he continued. The program also has an excellent working relationship with the local police.

\* \* \*

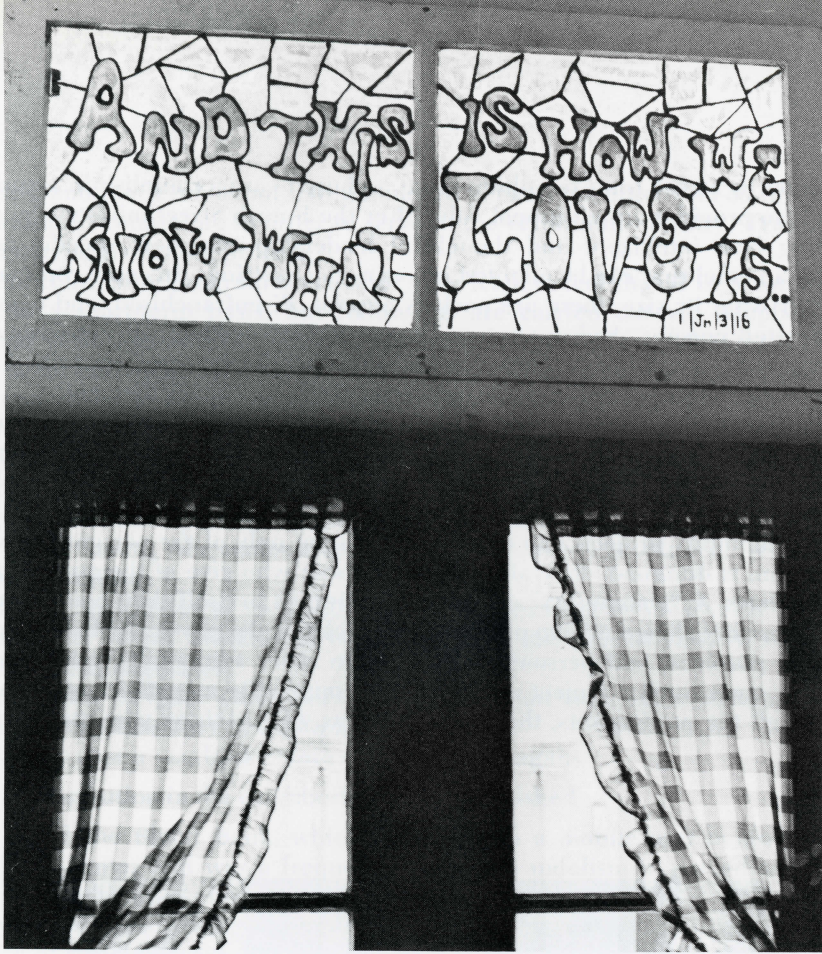
The Fourth Street Inn exemplifies what a church can accomplish in a community. It also provides an additional value. For the Fourth Street ministry, by demonstrating how intelligent and thoughtful leadership can meet specific needs, provides a model that can be adapted in a variety of settings. In every community, no matter what its size, there are pockets of poor, disenfranchised, and emotionally depleted persons. And every town boasts its own leaders with charisma, enthusiasm and commitment. Thus, the elements of the program described here can be replicated in other places, by other people, as the needs demand.

Variations of the Fourth Street effort can be tried. A broader base of internships, practicums, or field work for university students can be utilized. Areas for practical experience for high school students can be provided. Multiple combinations of services and servers can be attempted.

Such community projects can meet the needs not only of the persons for whom the program is designed; they also can serve those who give of themselves in the various efforts. A "community" of volunteers often is in itself therapeutic for persons who are not always able to participate in society—the physically handicapped, the aged, parolees, and persons removed from other community endeavors. In its largest sense, such a project can be a total community experience, meeting the needs of all the participants, those who serve as well as those who are served.







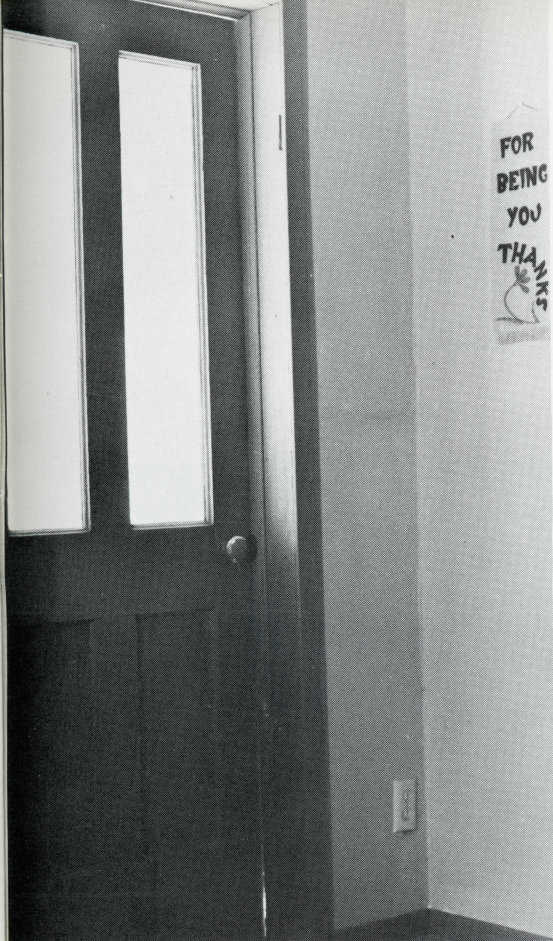
### *Doors to the Community*

Doors and windows, windows and doors . . . church doors that open for those in the free food line . . . restaurant doors that welcome the troubled and hungry middle-class workers . . . open doors to the counseling center where problems are explored.

Doors with peeling paint . . . doors and windows with stained glass inscriptions, "And This Is How We Know What Love Is" . . . doors and windows that let the sun shine through at the Fourth Street Inn. Shafts of multi-colored light probe the dark corners just as a caring heart, a listening ear, can rouse the soul from the shadows.

Windows casting light on posters which express the philosophies of the workers there:





“Life is like an onion—you peel off one layer at a time and sometimes you weep.”

“To avoid criticism, do nothing, say nothing, be nothing.”

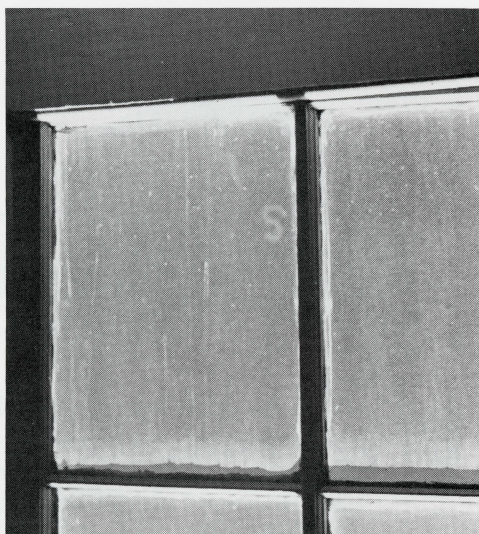
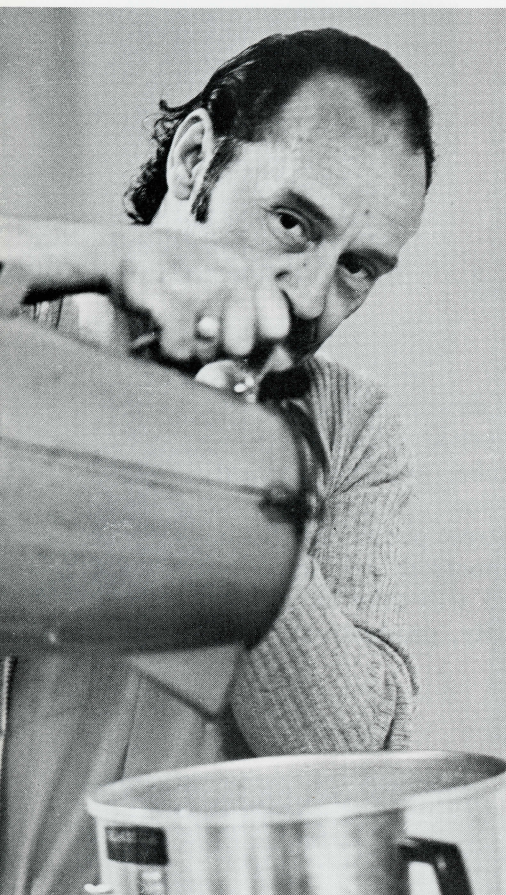
“What you are is God’s gift to you—  
What you make of yourself is your gift to God.”

“Consistency is the last refuge of the unimaginative.”

“Happy are those who dream dreams,  
And are ready to pay the price to make them  
come true.”

“For being you, thanks!”





## 4TH ST. INN

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 Robert Sandoli, *Coordinator of Restaurant Services*  
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