

'Knights of road' doomed by diesels

United Press International

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — As with all the empires in history, "King" Filer's is doomed. Done in by diesels, Gordon "Bud" Filer of Altoona, Pa., as "king of the hoboes," has seen his constituency shrink from tens of thousands to hundreds as the railroads in America went out of business and the fast-moving diesels replaced the steam locomotives.

The 69-year-old Emperor of the Knights of the Road, Air and Seven Seas figures one of the easiest ways for a man to get himself killed these days is to try to grab a free ride on a diesel-powered freight.

"The great days of hoboeing went out with steam trains," explained Filer at the annual Hobo Convention in Anchorage. "In those days it took the hogger (engineer) a mile or so to get up speed, and you could station yourself outside the yard, lope along the train and swing aboard without a problem. Today those diesels are doing 50 miles an hour before they're on to the high iron (main track).

"And as for riding the blinds (behind the tender of the locomotive), forget it. There aren't any tenders anymore, nor is there any way of hoisting yourself aboard."

Filer bristled when asked if there was any difference between a hobo and a tramp.

"You're darn right there is," he exclaimed. "A hobo is a wanderer in search of employment. A tramp is a wanderer attempting to escape work."

The Knights of the Road, which he and 1,044,336 other wanderers have joined in the past 70 years, was started by the late Jeff Davis in 1908. The Knights got "royal" recognition when the British Parliament al-

legedly proclaimed Davis an emperor and King of the Hobos. Filer became Emperor after Davis' death.

Filer said there were only eight hoboes who attended the first "convention" at Miami during the winter of 1908, but there were a hundred the next year, and several hundred each year after that.

Hoboeing reached its peak during the Depression years, said John "Frisco Jack" Sopko, of Trafford, Pa., when there were hundreds of thousands out of work and thousands riding the rails seeking jobs.

"Bos in those days were a lot like the Masons and Knights of Columbus," he said. "They'd try to help each other, and it was pretty much a share and share alike fraternity."

"There was always a mulligan (stew) simmering in every jungle (rendezvous spot outside a town) and every Bo that wandered in would toss what he had into the pot. We always carried something to eat along and although few of the ingredients would pass any sanitary inspection law, those mulligans were tasty and nourishing."

Filer, who started his hoboeing in 1925 and then quit when he found he could get free train rides by working for the railroads, said the two biggest jungles he ever saw were just outside Fresno, Calif., and Des Plaines, Ill.

"Bos would come from all over the country to Fresno when the fruit picking started," Filer said. "But most of the time things were orderly and quiet. Sure, there were always some troublemakers, but hoboes would go out of their way to avoid trouble. Life was tough enough in those days."

"The jungle outside Chicago was sort of the change-trains-here place, as Chicago always bragged that all the railroads came into Chicago."

Coffee was the mainstay of hoboes, and the brewing of the beans was done very simply.

"You just took off one of your socks, put the coffee in the sock and swished the sock around in the boiling water until you got the strength you wanted," said John Babiak of Jeannette, Pa.

Although Jeff Davis was acknowledged as king of the hoboes, the legendary Knight of the Road was Leon Ray Livingston who left his "A-No.1" mark on hundreds of water towers, trestles, signal towers and freight houses all over America.

Livingston, who died 40 years ago, claimed he hopped his first freight train when he was 11 years old and spent more than 30 years wandering around the country. During the last years of his life he was a loudly-applauded speaker at church and civic groups where he lectured the teenagers on the evils of running away from home.

All this year's conventioners gave up hoboeing long ago and came to Alaska by plane. All have comfortable, even prosperous, means, but all are proud of their hoboeing days.

"But hoboeing is finished," said Filer. "Now if you're broke you go on welfare. You don't have to grab a freight and move on to somewhere else where there might be work. And if you do have the wanderlust, who would want to travel in a box car when he can hitch a ride on the highway and travel in an air-conditioned car?"

Time to consider retirement is now

United Press International

NEW YORK — Some 1,180 Americans each day join the ranks of the 23 million already retired and by the end of the century one out of eight Americans may be a retiree.

And, warns the Bowery Savings Bank, those who quit work 20 years or so from now are not likely to be able to get by on Social Security or pensions unless they are upper echelon executives, civil servants or military officers.

In a booklet designed to teach persons how to prepare for retirement, the Bowery says the average minimum income needed for a retired American couple has climbed to \$6,776 a year from \$3,860 ten years ago and may reach \$24,416 by 1999.

The Bowery doesn't pretend to be able to read the future accurately but the book contends that those still some way from retirement — young people especially — must not leave the matter of retirement up to Social Security or company or union pension plan. They must do something important for themselves.

The book goes into the basics of Keogh plans, individual retirement accounts and other relevant programs a bank or a good investment counselor can set up for the years after the paychecks stop.

The booklet says there is a

psychological barrier to be overcome in workers' reluctance to think about retirement or even to ask exactly what their pension benefits under the company or union plan will be and to make a decision on the options in the plan.

The Bowery has collected a lot of general information about retirement and the booklet contains this information as well as details about the plans it is selling.

For example, of the eight states with the biggest retired population, Hawaii is the most expensive in which to live. A couple needs \$10,000 a year to live there. New Mexico, at \$5,800, is the cheapest and Arizona at \$6,900 is next.

Most people know by now that the maximum a couple — one working and one non-working spouse — can collect from Social Security is \$690 a month. The minimum may be as little as \$172.

But the Bowery says these considerations are dwarfed by the problem of where to retire. Many people want to go to a warm climate but the bank warns that terrible financial and social mistakes can be made by putting too much emphasis on this consideration. It may be better to stay right where you are in your retirement years although perhaps in a smaller house or apartment.

Housewives form Martha' movement

United Press International

INDIANAPOLIS — They work 18 hours a day and don't earn a penny, but they wouldn't give up their jobs for anything.

"It's a job that has constant interruptions and a high frustration level. It's challenging but sometimes boring and it can be isolated and depressing," says Mrs. Donna Abrams.

Mrs. Abrams and hundreds of women like her call themselves "homemakers." They have come together in a movement intended to challenge their status as unem-ployed. It's called the Martha movement.

"It was started two and a half years ago by a woman executive who had herself put down by people after she quit her job and became a full-time mother," Mrs. Abrams said.

The group takes its name after the New Testament story in which Jesus visited the home of two sisters named Martha and Mary. Mary chose to stay with Jesus and listen to his stories while Martha prepared the meal and cleaned the house.

The movement has 6,000 members nationwide, she said, and "we believe a woman has a right to choose whether she wants a career outside the home or whether she wants to be a homemaker."

Mrs. Abrams organized the Indianapolis chapter in May. Its 16 members and their children meet at her house twice a month to socialize and discuss problems they encounter.

"We don't need an organized group because our needs just seem to

surface," she said. "Recently we talked about how women cope when a husband is away from the home on a business trip, and we discussed our own feelings of safety or insecurity as a woman alone in the house."

Although Mrs. Abrams said the group does not oppose the aims and beliefs of the women's liberation movement, Martha members are trying to reverse what they believe is the gradual decay and deterioration of the family structure.

"The sad thing is that young women not only don't think about having a family today, but they're not encouraged either. The careers they think of are outside the home."

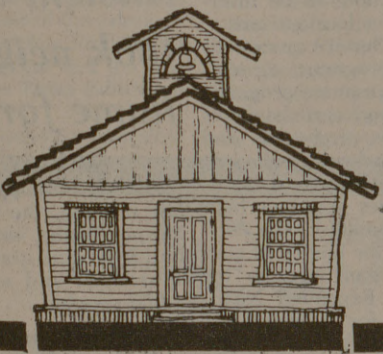
"The nice thing is you can have a career as a homemaker, and then when the children are grown up, you can go out and find a job."

"But it doesn't work in the reverse. If a woman gets a job and stays with it until she's 40, it will be too late for her to safely begin a family."

"We hope to be all things to all homemakers," Mrs. Abrams said, "not only women who stay at home, but women who work and men who take care of the family as well."

Most important, however, group members are attempting to demonstrate that being a homemaker is as fulfilling and challenging as any other job.

"When I fill in forms or tax records that ask for my profession I write homemaker now," she said. "It's kind of a retraining, but when homemakers are asked, 'Do you work?', they should be proud to answer 'Yes.'"



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