

{ Who are the people you see every day? }

**No. 97**  
in a series.



# People We See

*Shelterless in Los Angeles.*

## Meet Leroy Williamson.



Club CEO John Hawkins and Leroy Williamson.

**AGE:** 77.

**BIRTHPLACE:** "Kansas City, Mo."

**MOVED TO L.A.:** In 1963.

**HOME THE PREVIOUS NIGHT:**

"On the sidewalk at Sixth and Los Angeles."

Leroy moved to LA in 1963 from Kansas City. He made the move because he was "running from the draft." When he turned 22, he and his friend got in their car and headed to Los Angeles. When they got to LA he found a job as a fry cook and then worked for the Salvation Army. He said back then it was easy to find a job in Los Angeles, but as time went on it got tougher.

He went to Manual High School in Kansas City but dropped out in the middle of 10th grade. Did peer pressure cause him to drop out? He said no – he dropped out because he didn't want to go to school. He said he did a lot of partying but not with alcohol or drugs. As far as drugs he didn't know what weed was until he got to California. He said when people said they were smoking grass he thought they were literally smoking real grass.

He said he had been living on the streets for a long time and that it was nothing new to him. When he was young he used to run away from home and sleep wherever he could. He would hop the trains like a hobo going from one place to another; it was an "adventure to me." Oh, and he didn't call it "sleeping on the street;" he called it "camping out." Had he ever lived in an apartment? He said yes, about five years ago, but there were too many bedbugs, so he left; to him it was cleaner on the streets than in the apartment. He also said that, in his opinion, most people catch the flu because they are inside without any fresh air.

He told me he lives off of Social Security, buying fast food for meals. He gets around on his bicycle, which he affectionately calls his "second pair of legs." I asked him if living on the street was dangerous, and if it still was an "adventure." He replied, "Yes," it's always dangerous, and yes, it's still an "adventure"! He said he carries pepper spray with him.

**FAMILY:** "I have one biological sister, but I have been separated from her for 30 years."

**MARITAL STATUS:** "Single, never married."

**EDUCATION:** "I went to Birmingham High School."

**RELIGION:** "No, but I have enough common sense to know there is someone greater than me, but I don't have a name for it."

**MILITARY:** "No."

**MEDICATIONS:** "For my prostate and high blood pressure."

**POLITICS:** "Not a Republican, not a Democrat."

**FAVORITE MOVIE:**

"*The Guns of Navarone, For Whom the Bell Tolls.*"

**FAVORITE TV SHOW:** "None, but I do like Rush Limbaugh on the radio."

**FAVORITE ACTOR:** "Gary Cooper."

**FAVORITE FOOD:** "Meatloaf, cabbage, cornbread, greens and a glass of water."

**IF YOU WERE MAYOR:** "Build more shelters, but you can't make people go in them." Should the mayor pay people to go into the shelters? "Yes."

**MAKE A WISH:** "I wish to never run out of wishes."

**ADVICE FOR EVERYDAY PEOPLE:** "Be yourself; pay no attention to what others think about you. Stay positive."

*The Club gave Leroy water and \$20 for food. The interview, conducted by John Hawkins, took place Jan. 18 on the corner of Third and Main Streets downtown.*

{ In this monthly feature, Club CEO John Hawkins introduces you to people you see every day, but you might not know who they are. The Club reminds you that we all have names and stories to tell. }