

{ Who are the people you see every day? }

No. 97
in a series.

People We See

Shelterless in Los Angeles.



Meet Darrell Ford



Club CEO John Hawkins
and Melvin Davis.

People We See on YouTube The Club has begun posting videos of our "People We See" interviews online. See them on the Club's YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/user/cityemployeesclub

Name: Darrell Ford
Born: Jan. 14, 1952 (66)

Catching up with Darrell: We last profiled him in December 2016, and we ran into him again.

Darrell was born and raised in Chicago. He graduated from Fenger Public High School (the same high school attended by Eliot Ness, the original FBI leader of the Untouchables, and Robert Zemeckis, director of *Back to the Future* and *Forrest Gump*). He's never been married and does not have any kids. He has a younger brother and a sister; all are a year apart. His brother is on a disability retirement in Chicago, and his sister lives in Macon, Ga.

Darrell started working when he was 16. His first job was at a Stop 'n Shop grocery store bagging groceries, and eventually he was promoted to the dock, where he loaded half cows for the butcher department. After that he worked at the First National Bank in downtown Chicago, where he rolled coins – 150,000 a day. From there he worked at a law firm, Pope Ballard Sheppard and Fowle, as a messenger and later he was promoted to the mailroom supervisor. From there he worked at the National Association for Realtors in the mailroom and then was promoted to the

accounting department, where he worked accounts receivable and accounts payable. He then was let go from this job and began drawing unemployment and moved in with his mom. A couple of years later, his mom simply locked him out of the house, and thus began his life on the streets. He said he just laid down somewhere, with cardboard on the sidewalk and a blanket.

When he was 53, he and a friend decided to try their luck in California. They boarded a Greyhound bus and took the three-day journey to Los Angeles. When he got to LA he went straight to the Union Rescue Mission. The mission gave him a jumpstart. However he doesn't stay in them now: "You have to get up at 5 a.m. and be out on the street. On the street you can sleep as long as you want."

He said people give him things when he's sleeping. He woke up one day and had \$5 stuck in his hand. He'll wake up to food left for him. He said he's very fortunate. He keeps to himself and stays away from the homeless who are into drugs. "You can't starve when you're in downtown Los Angeles," he says, where there is plenty of food.

He said he was never really into hard drugs but he was a little bit of a follower – when his friends drank or smoked marijuana he would,

too, but he came to find out he really didn't need those things. He likes beer but doesn't drink to excess; and when he can he'll treat himself to some Crown Royal.

- Favorite candy: Turtles (pecans, caramel and chocolate). "The delicacy of candy."
- Favorite actors: Clint Eastwood and Al Pacino
- Favorite movie: *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*
- Medication: an inhaler for asthma

Make a wish: "Curtis Mayfield made a record, 'If I Were Only a Child Again', which is what I wish for: to start all over as a child. He said that, that way, his life wouldn't be the same, it would be different. He would make a few alterations. He would also wish to make the world a better place by allowing everyone to be somewhat comfortable. There would be no homelessness and everyone would have their medical needs met."

What would you have done differently? "I would have gone to college and would have been a counselor, adviser or a chemist." He said he had a chemistry set when he was 13 and he really enjoyed doing that, but he never followed up with it. He also played the acoustic guitar. He had some friends who played, too.

Worst thing about living on the street: The routine of it and being constantly in the outdoors enduring whatever the weather brings. He won't buy a tent because he feels it will make him complacent and then will subconsciously accept living on the streets.

Favorite childhood memory: Christmas time. "We weren't a poor family, so we had everything we pretty much needed."

Advice for parents with teenage children. "Watch your child closely, pay attention." Daryl said he wouldn't wait until they were 10, he would start counseling them at 8 years old, and if you "haven't got grips on them by 13 then you can forget it. See what their interests are and encourage them to continue. Listen to how they talk, their movements. That's as basic as you can get.

"If your parents don't teach you, the streets will".

The Club gave Darrell water and \$40 for food.

The interview, conducted by John Hawkins, took place March 27 on the corner of Fourth and Los Angeles 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. }