

You know, it's like overnight. It's like we have to move. There's a certain energy level that we have got to move with. There's a certain -- intuitive sense of timing that we have. There are the needs of people that become apparent at any one time. There are needs: some rise to the surface, when they are at the top where you can no longer ignore them, those are the ones you gotta' deal with right away. Those are the priorities. Those are the crises.

And in terms of physical movement, it's exactly the same thing: whatever is touching you, whatever is closest to you, that is what you deal with first. Now in terms of why we have our people block a kick or block a punch.

'Miaows'

The two most common street fighting techniques that the average, what we call a 'miaow' (which is a trouble-maker) on the streets knows, is how to throw some sort of a punch -- how to throw some type of a kick, and so those would be the two most common things we'd be blocking against.

And a knife attack and a stick attack: a lot of people have knives -- a lot of people carry knives now, and sticks, because if somebody wants to walk through the park and pick up a weapon, they can get a stick or a bottle -- just about anything, so they're very common types of attack and that's why they were selected by us. They are also upper and lower body defenses.

SECTION III

In December, when we spoke to Evers, she was a 'full-time' Guardian Angel, but it is wrong to think that she is 'employed by' the organization, because none of the Angels receives any salary. Evers does Guardian Angel work "...about seven days a week, about twenty-four hours a day". She lives on some small savings that she had and she had a very cheap apartment in the East Village. She told us that she was "living completely hand to mouth" -- on what friends gave her, fed her, and the like. She does make some money from speaking to groups like SASHM.

Her 'uniform' (not really a 'uniform' at all, in one sense) is ordinary, except for the T-shirt and beret. She usually wears sneakers, so that she doesn't have any fancy dress requirements or clothing needs. All of this is important because everyone in the Angels' organization is either going to school full-time or they have full-time jobs, except for Sliwa and Evers (now 'the Sliwas'). All of them function in a completely 'normal' fashion in terms of American standards. Their additional commitment doesn't make life necessarily 'easy', because often, they have to take time off to be in court cases for those whom they have apprehended.

"It's part of our philosophy", Evers said, "Your involvement doesn't end with 'O.K., here's the guy I boomed and that's it and let him go". One of the problems she says they face is that people do not press charges and don't follow through with the cases -- with prosecution. She can't say she 'blames' them, really, "because what good does it do to take ten days off from work and the guy is out on the streets again in two weeks. It's like you just got screwed twice: once for the crime and the second time because nothing's been done and you've lost the money you would have made from working, but the Guardian Angels have to take that time off and it's understood and it's explained before they join that if they make an arrest, or participate in one, then they must follow the case all the way through court.

An Additional Problem

Probably one of the chief contributing factors to the development of an organization like the Angels was the disappearance of the American institution of the 'beat-cop'; the familiar, and often well-loved police officer who patrolled city neighborhoods regularly. There are still some police officers on the streets now, but as Evers points out, they seem to be more in evidence "where the Guardian Angels put out their patrols". Many police departments have community affairs divisions, "depending", Evers says, "on the size of the department, the budget, and it may or may not include a community affairs officer who usually handles senior citizens' complaints, or they may have somebody who works with young people and makes sure that a couple of cops play basket-ball with the kids a couple of times a month, or something like that, but in terms of it being any type of a viable contribution to young people or of having any type of effect, I think that in all the police departments I know of, I'm sure they would have assigned them to us, and I don't know of any".

Despite the fact that the Angels have had opposition from segments of city government, they have won enthusiastic, interested and almost dedicated support from the subway riding, park-loving population of metropolitan New York. On the whole, they have enjoyed what is known as 'good press' and WNEW and WPIX especially are to be congratulated on their coverage of the group. In November, 1980, there was much discussion, for example, under the heading

Guardian Angels: Blessing or Curse?

At that time in their turbulent history, it was hard to understand why the Angels could not be made into a Volunteer Service Group attached to the Police Commissioner's Office or to some appropriate branch of city government. They had, to most of the riding public, anyway, proved beyond reasonable doubt that they richly deserved recognition of that kind. At the time, Mayor Koch's position consisted of four points:

1. If the Angels became an official organization, they would have to carry I.D. cards,
2. The Angels (who then took personal responsibility for liability suits in connection with citizen's arrests) would then fall under City protection in these ways, if they were a recognized group.
3. The problem was basically economic, and
4. The issue of recognition for a single Angel could not be made because the story could not be verified owing to the fact that the person the Angel helped did not come forward, but the Mayor indicated that he would have been happy to give such awards under different circumstances.

There were several important issues at stake, and many of them have been solved. Although not an official branch of City government, the Angels do now carry I.D. cards. Curtis Sliwa still maintains sole control over training and recruitment into the Angels. To my knowledge, the liability question has not so far been determined, however, many taxpayers would agree that they would far rather pay for the odd liability case that might come up over the Angels than they would like to pay ever and ever higher subway fares to the MTA and costs demanded by transport unions to cover defacement of public property, hooliganism, crime and all the rest.

To make an issue out of individual heroism vs. recognition of the group is to beg the issue. The Guardian Angels are not just a random aggregate of individuals who are acting through personal whims. The Guardian Angels are not hoodlums, nor are they a 'street gang'; they are humanists in a very fundamental sense of that word. They are not predators; they are protectors. 'Paladins' is really the appropriate word. The fact that they wear something that resembles a uniform does not make them a 'paramilitary' group; they cannot be held responsible for the fact that superficial associative functions connect a beret with commandos and/or terrorists. Their problem centers around a tremendous naiveté regarding the ideology and ethics involved with the military arts, especially Shao Lin, T'ai Chi Ch'uan, T'ai Kwando and the like. General education in these matters does not extend much beyond the odd sensationalist film that can be seen on television. Moreover, people who carelessly attach the term 'vigilante' to the Angels are equally naive -- or are simply deficient in their knowledge of American history and the structure and function of real vigilante groups, totally different from the Angels.

Communitas

We might well ask why it is that social concern, charity and some of the less lethal principles of western civilization cannot wear T-shirts and berets? Public benefactors need not, after all, be

confined to costumes consisting of Brooks Bros. suits. We might ask why it is that the supremely positive human qualities of care, responsibility, duty and concern cannot look at us from differently colored young faces on the subway? The Angels organization has many attributes of ideological *communitas* (Turner, 1969:134-140). Constant emphasis is made by both leaders of the group on the similarities of problems faced by an ethnically pluralistic industrialized society and its members. Insofar as they are represented within an organization (in this case definitely a human 'community by choice') they are willing to let the values of the group transcend individual differences.

On the other hand, the Angels are strikingly unlike many expressions of 'spontaneous *communitas*' that are frequently associated with mystical powers, with divine charisma and the like, even though their name 'guardian angels' is derived from a theological source. The Angels are quite unlike 'hippies' or other types of millenarian movements. Whilst in their T-shirt symbol, we can see an eclectic and syncretic use of symbol, their body language is not drawn from a liturgical repertoire, nor do they seek to establish 'communion' with one another via the use of drugs, rock music or flashing lights. Theirs is a comradeship of an entirely different kind: it does not see itself as an end in itself, for a start.

Rather, it would seem that there is great wisdom in the ideology that this group represents, for they are an organization who sees themselves as responsible to one another and to all of us -- "to anyone who is in trouble on the streets" -- for supplying a humble need; someone who cares enough to actively intervene in a violent situation. A point that Turner made is truly apposite here: "There is a mystery of mutual distance, what the poet Rilke called 'the circumspection of human gesture' which is just as humanly important as the mystery of intimacy" (1969:139 -- underline supplied).

Their lives are fraught, as we have seen, with objective, daily obstacles. Personal inclinations are subjected to the aims of the group, difficult decisions have to be made, not only by the Sliwas, but by every patrol leader and their assistants, and at every turn, they have to overcome individual and social obstacles at great personal cost -- even to the extent of the ultimate sacrifice made by Frank Melvin.

They are, I believe, sustained by a certain 'magic'. Evers put it succinctly, "There's a certain energy level that we have got to move with...there are needs..." (see p. 42 above) but their history to date shows more evidence of sustained effort and dedicated wills than it displays a penchant towards emphasizing those aspects of what they do. The basic requirements, after all, are those three patrols every week; at least twenty-four hours a week that are often boring, often too cold or too hot, and always repetitious, none of it surrounded by 'glamour' or 'adulation'.

They are not 'good samaritans', nor are they looking for recognition. Their biggest problem seems to be that many in our society today cannot understand doing something simply because it is good.

Postscript for Aspiring
Anthropologists of Human Movement

It is possible, given our present local circumstances, that seem to include a popular passion for 'authenticity', television and newspapers' near-obsession with 'docu-dramas' and 'investigative reporting', to blur, if not erase, the boundaries between a social or cultural anthropological conception of an 'ethnography' and the kind of document that is offered here. Confusion is possible because this document is a native explanation of a living group of people that sets forth in lucid, articulate and colorful terms the 'folk model' of the Guardian Angels organization.

As Moerman (1969) has pointed out, however, social anthropology is a discipline that prides itself on having realised that "...it would not be a fish who discovered water..." and that "...cultural immersion (the longer, the better; one just soaks it up)..." does not produce scientific knowledge. In other words, native explanations, interesting though they may be, are neither analyses nor interpretations. They are data.

One of the more distressing features of prevailing vague notions about cultural relativism and aesthetic pluralism, plus the vogue that the 'fun ethic' enjoys today (where it can be seen to impinge directly on serious pursuits of the arts and sciences) could be stated briefly as a set of informal 'rules', i.e. (i) scholarship should not be painful in any way, nor should it create intellectual or metaphysical discomforts, (ii) the descriptive work of an untutored sensation seeker, a reporter or a tourist which is shoddy is just as good as the work of a committed professional anthropologist, which is usually cautious, somewhat difficult and often excellent, (iii) uniformity of privilege, publication and remuneration is greatly to be desired and because 'my' desire to have fun and do interesting things is equal to 'yours', or because 'I' am in pursuit of a 'story', then knowledge and/or intellectual merit as standards for privilege are simply old-fashioned and a bore anyway. Because of this, it is important that the foregoing account be recognized for what it is: an ethnographical report of the folk model of events seen by the two leaders of the Guardian Angels.

Although the collection of materials like this constitutes only one small part of what anthropologists 'do', it is an important part and in the form presented here, is an accurate and faithful report of the native explanation, unadulterated by extraneous embroidery of any kind.

Explanatory Notes

1. The term 'non-vocal' is used instead of 'non-verbal', because we do not believe that silent body languages used by human beings can be separated from the general human capacity for language-use. 'Non-verbal', although widely used by social and human scientists, is appropriate for animals, but we want to insist upon the conceptual distinction between language-users and non-language-users because the distinction is crucial to discussions of symbols and meanings.
2. For those who may not be familiar with the geography of New York City and the names of its boroughs, a subway map is appended. The 'Bronx' is one of the five boroughs of New York City.
3. The name may recall, to some, the American film that starred Yul Brynner entitled 'The Magnificent Seven' that was an attempt to translate into American cultural terms some of the ethical and moral ideals portrayed in the Japanese film, 'The Seven Samurai'.
4. The term, 'golden ghetto' is thought to be a succinct way of describing a group of young people that probably exist nowhere in the world except in the affluent United States. They are characterized by their possession of extraordinary amounts of money and material possessions and their equally extraordinary alienation from other aspects (and groups) in their society. They are the product, not of class, 'caste', or other typical sociological classifications, but of economic status.
5. Some examples of newspaper and television controversy are the following:

WPIX's program 'Urban Journal', 26 October, 1980

WNEW's program 'Midday', 4 February, 1981

'The Guardian Angels: Help -- or Hype?' IN New York, 24 November, 1980, Reporter: Nicholas Pileggi

'Crime Forum at NYU' IN The New Torch, 17 February, 1981, Staff Reporter: Don Spetner

'Angels: Largest Citizen's Crime Patrol' IN The New Torch, 17 February, 1981, Torch Wire Copy Editor, Gregory J. Perrin

Curtis Sliwa has been interviewed by David Snyder and many others. The Angels are the constant focus of media coverage, especially when, for example, on their way to Atlanta, Ga., to attempt to aid in the apprehension of the mass child-murderer there, they were followed everywhere by television crews.

6. Thanks are due to Holly Fairbank, graduate student in the Dept. of Dance and Dance Education, SEHNAP, for the initial transcription of the tapes.

7. Thanks are also due to Dale Walkonen (Department of Dance and Dance Education) for her reproduction of the insignia from one of the Angel's T-shirts so that it would fit our page size.
8. Bellevue is one of New York City's oldest and largest hospitals that includes psychiatric wards.
9. There are several terms used by Mr. Sliwa that are 'street language' and/or current colloquial usage. These terms rise (and disappear) with great rapidity. For the benefit of those not familiar with current idioms, a brief explanation will be given: 'bust' means to arrest and then to 'book' an individual at a police station.
10. Starsky and Hutch are two mythical young detectives (plain-clothes) who are the protagonists of a series of television programs by the same name.
11. Owing to the ubiquity of American advertising and promotional schemes, it is perhaps true that an international audience will be familiar with 'McDonald's', but some may not have heard of this chain of fast-food shops that specializes in hamburgers, and such.
12. IRT stands for Inter-city Rapid Transport. See appended map for the route of the Seventh Ave. line.
13. 'Riker's Island' is a prison on an island in New York Harbor. The thief 'did' six months time for his previous offense.
14. 'Headquarters' for the Guardian Angels is now in the basement of the Judson Memorial Church, 55 Washington Square South, New York City, N.Y., 10014. Donations may be sent to The Alliance of the Guardian Angels, Inc., 982 East 89th Street, Brooklyn, New York 11236.
15. The etymology of the term 'honcho' is unclear, but it is synonymous with 'boss', 'big man' and 'authority'.
16. The question of whether or not the Angels could be auxiliary police of some kind was a pressing issue for some time. It was connected, too, with whether or not they would be granted official recognition as a group by City government. The point arose in a public discussion on 31 October, 1980 in connection with 'personal liability' for wrong arrests. For some time, it appeared that 'training' and intervention by city officials might mean that control of the Angels would be removed from its original founder and leader. The situation has been resolved by creation of official I.D. cards that the Angels wear, but they are still an autonomous group.
17. 'Complainants' in this context means that they have themselves been attacked or assaulted.
18. Rockaway is a district in the Brooklyn borough. See second page of appended map for location.

19. This strike took place on 1 April, 1980. On 8 April, union members were ordered back to work, but they refused. The strike ended approximately 10 April, 1980.
20. Deaf patrols will be the subject of future discussion, as two of SASHM'S members at present have the general subject of deaf signing as their specific subject of research.
21. Comment of this kind rarely emanates from the Mayor's office anymore, or, indeed, from the offices of most City officials, but the association still exists to some extent at a popular level.
22. 'SWAT' means Special Weapons and Techniques.
23. 'Mercenary' here bears a different meaning from the traditional one that involved paid troops of another national origin. It simply means, in this context, persons who do not reside in the area in question.
24. The number here simply means 'very many'; it bears no real statistical weight.
25. Mr. Sliwa's 'nick-name' is 'Rock', hence the 'Rock' Brigade and the confusion explained here.
26. "Albert (Ace) Feliciano is an eighteen-year-old deliverer for a Manhattan fried chicken store...Carlos (Valentino) Valentin is an...eighteen year old, lives on the Lower East Side, and is a senior at Clara Barton High School. He works in an electrical supply factory..." (from Pileggi article; see note 5). 'The twins' are Jeff and Jerry Monroe, who teach martial arts classes for some of the Angels. Williams refers to published statements of these young men, such as "I don't want guys in my patrol who can't take criticism. Angels can only stick together with discipline. Either you learn to take orders or get out". (These are extracts taken from newspaper articles, 1979).
27. In American baseball, the batter gets three 'strikes' or tries at the pitched ball before he is ruled 'out', and the next batter comes up. The allusion here is to this: where baseball players have three strikes at a ball, the Angel only has 'one strike' and he or she is 'out' of the game.
28. A 'hang-out dude' is a person who does not participate, one whose life is useless to himself and everyone else.
29. 'Down' in this context has the meaning of having one's feet 'on the ground', so to speak, roughly an opposition to 'flipped out' or not solidly rooted in reality. Also, 'convinced' or 'committed'.
30. Bruce Lee is famous for several Kung Fu films he has made that, unfortunately, represent the martial arts in a biased, and fairly trivial manner because they emphasize 'board-breaking' and violent scenes that are, if anything, relatively unusual in the history of the martial arts. The point here is that the Angels do not seek sensationalism, although it is thrust upon them frequently by the media. See the section on 'The Best Patrols' for further explanation.

31. 'Singled' here refers to the distribution of single Angels on the patrol being assigned one to a carriage.
32. 'Seig Heil' is a euphemism for 'fascistic', 'overly authoritarian' or regimentation that is mindless. To say "I'm not Seig Heil" means that one does not exert mindless authority.
33. 'The School' here refers to the training Center in Chinatown.
34. 'Haul' in this context means 'try', 'work very hard' + move very fast.
35. 'The top' refers to the Angels chain of command. Their organization is based on a principle of hierarchy (See Williams, 1975:107-8).
36. And their volunteer work is a financial liability: they pay their own fares. The fare was \$.60 when this interview took place. It is now \$.75. The Angels do not get 'free rides' on the system.
37. A session of Evers' 'street survival' program was held at NYU and it is hoped that a program of classes will be sponsored by SASHM for the NYU community in the near future.
38. Articles pertaining to Lisa Evers are (i) the Miami Sun Reporter Weekend, June 20-21, 1981, Larry Perl, (ii) 'View', a weekly forum of opinion based on the news (Daily News, Sunday, March 8, 1981, Murray Weiss; (iii) The Soho News, November 3, 1981; (iv) The Chicago Tribune, September 3, 1981; (v) The Miami News, September 15, 1981; and (vi) Herald (same date).
39. The white woman's 'double bind' could be described in many ways, but fundamental to the notion is that whilst she is white -- equalling a kind of 'superiority', she lacks the support and recognition that women from recognized minorities have.
40. To accomplish one's goals as a woman, professionally (to 'get over') one is usually smarter to try to look and behave in an unattractive fashion, and if one is ugly, it is a positive value, thus one can 'lose your looks' deliberately or, if one never had any looks, this is an advantage.
41. Our attention is drawn here to the vast differences in ethos noticeable in different sections of the United States, and to the fact that the Angels, in this case, were 'outsiders' and 'foreigners'. It was, therefore, no mean accomplishment -- and a kind of 'proof' of their philosophy -- that they were taken in by the people of Atlanta so that their plans for helping the community were implemented, in spite of official opposition. The comment about Evers being drugged was explained as follows: "There were bakery pies that had come in -- and we were on a twenty-four hour schedule, and I was eating these brownies that no one else had touched -- and I realized about a week and a half later that I hadn't slept in a long time. Normally, I would have just collapsed somewhere along the line, so there must have been something in them. Every attempt was made to try and get us to commit a violent act, or to hurt somebody or to totally 'blow' us".

42. Evers: "We walked into a housing project for the first time with three T.V. crews following us. That was not a cool thing to do because they had never been in that neighborhood before, even though those reporters were supposedly covering the story".
43. As Curtis Sliwa points out in Section I, Angels cannot be layabouts or non-functioning members of society at large. It is usually not understood that 'being a Guardian Angel' means taking on additional responsibility in one's life, for it is not a full-time undertaking (except for the Sliwas) and it is not a form of employment.
44. Bedford-Stuyvesant is the name of a low-income housing project in Brooklyn.
45. "Our headquarters are now in the basement of Judson Church"... see note number 14. NYU is a large, metropolitan campus and the Judson Church is part of the complex, geographically, of University Buildings that are mixed in with non-University shops, buildings, etc.
46. 'Preparation-H' is a widely advertised patent remedy for the disorder, both in newspapers and on television.

References Cited:

- Moerman, M. 1969. 'A Little Knowledge'. IN Cognitive Anthropology (Ed. S. Tyler); Holt, Rhinehart & Winston, pp. 449-469.
- Turner, V. 1969. The Ritual Process. Aldine, Chicago.
- Williams, D. 1975. 'The Brides of Christ'. IN Perceiving Women (Ed. S. Ardener); Halstead Press, N.Y. (Malaby, London), pp. 105-125.

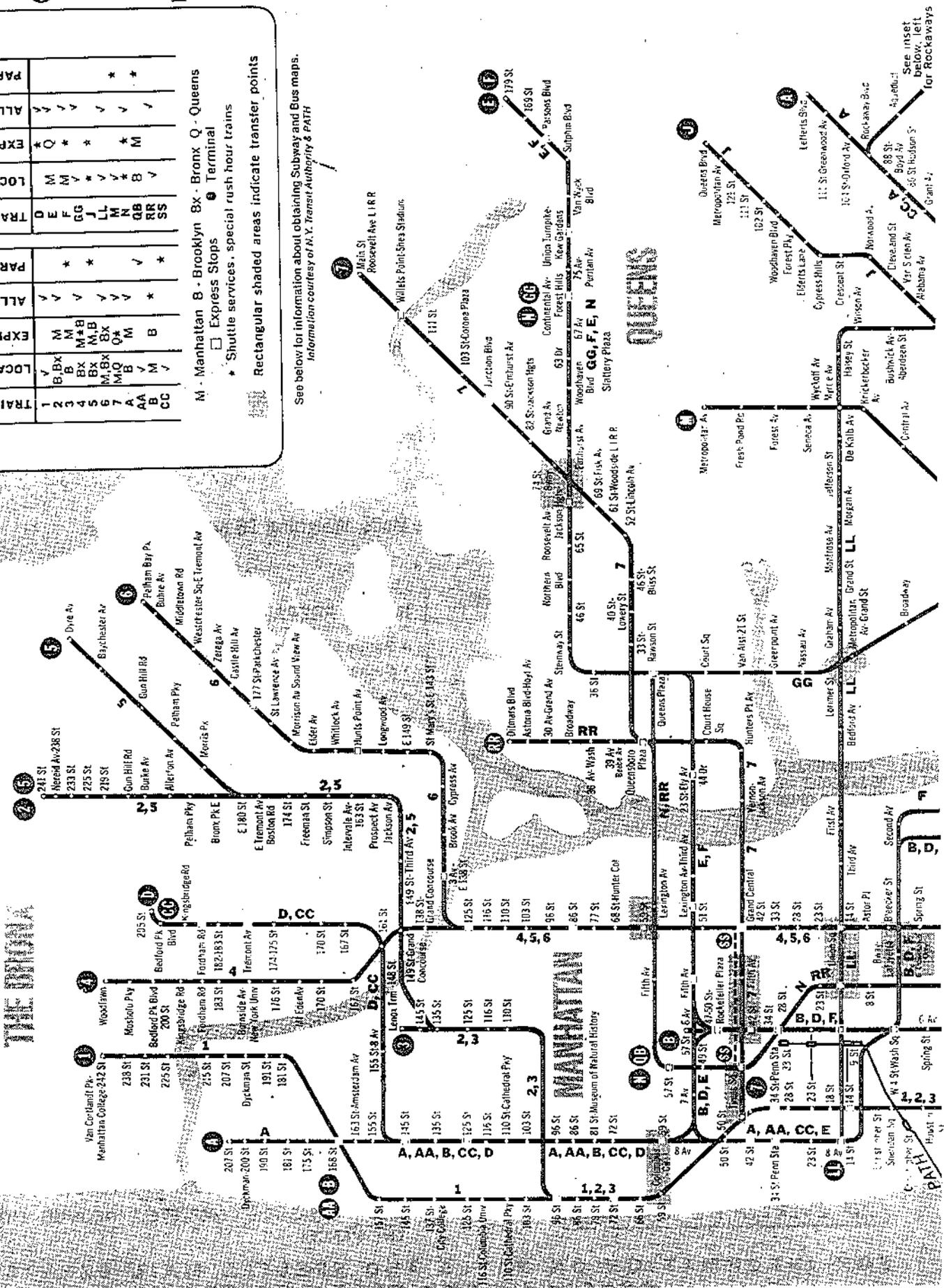
subway and path map

GUIDE TO SUBWAY SERVICE

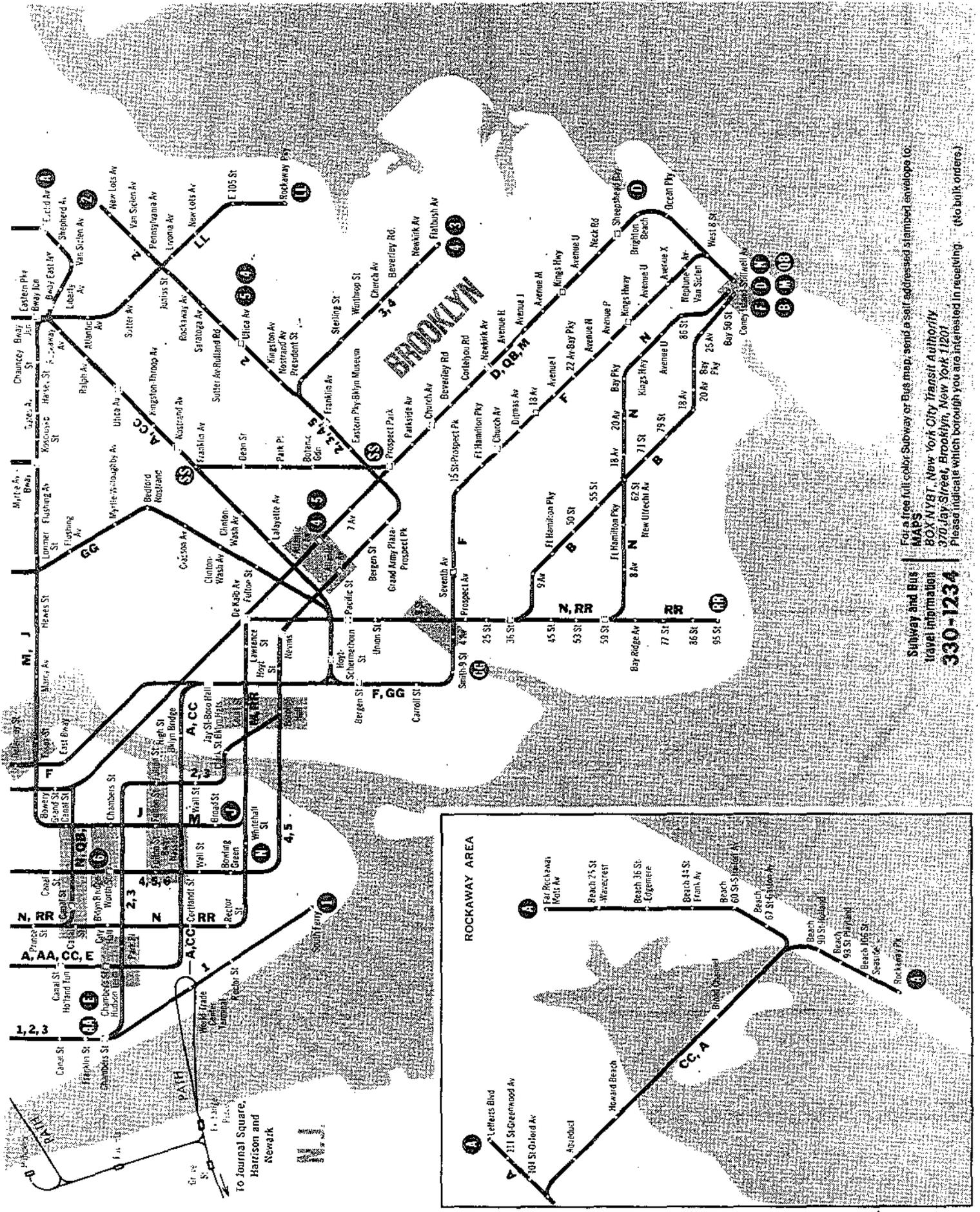
TRAIN	LOCAL	EXPRESS	ALL TIMES	PART TIME
1	B, Bx	M	✓	✓
2	B	M, M+B	✓	✓
3	Bx	M, M+B	✓	✓
4	Bx	M, M+B	✓	✓
5	M, Bx	M, M+B	✓	✓
6	M, Bx	M, M+B	✓	✓
7	M, Bx	M, M+B	✓	✓
AA	B	M	✓	✓
BB	B	M	✓	✓
CC	B	M	✓	✓

M - Manhattan B - Brooklyn Bx - Bronx Q - Queens
 Express Stops Terminal
 Shuttle services, special rush hour trains
 Rectangular shaded areas indicate transfer points

See below for information about obtaining Subway and Bus maps.
 Information courtesy of N.Y. Transit Authority & PATH



subway and path map



For a free full-color Subway or Bus map, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to:
MATS
BOX NYBT, New York City Transit Authority
370 Jay Street, Brooklyn, New York 11201
 Please indicate which borough you are interested in requesting. (No bulk orders.)

Subway and Bus
Travel Information
330-1234