

1.

some facts about Our Aging Population

did you know that....

Older people constitute the most rapidly growing portion of our population? Although the over-all United States population increased 7.2 percent from 1930 to 1940, there was five times that increase in the age group 65 and over, or a grand total of 35 percent. In 1900 the percent of our total population 65 years or over totaled 4.1; in 1940 it was 6.8; in 1949 it was estimated at 7.6. By 1980 the percentage will rise to 15.

The total number of older people in the United States is increasing? In 1900 the total number of people age 65 and over was some 3 million; in 1940 the total rose to approximately 9 million as compared to some 12 million in 1949. It is generally estimated that by 1980 there will be 26 million people over 65 years. At present it is estimated that in Hennepin County there are approximately 55,000 people at least 65 years old.

The average life span has increased? More people survive to older age than formerly although they do not live much longer than they did a half-century ago. The average life span at the time of the Roman Empire was 23 years. In the United States in 1900 it was still only 47 years, but by 1940 it was 63 years; in 1944 the life expectancy for white males was 63.55 years - for white females it was 68.95 years; by 1960 the estimated average life expectancy should reach 75 years.

In 1948, the New England and the Upper Midwest States tended to have the highest ratios of people age 65 and over, the South the lowest? The number of persons aged 65 and over varied from 5 per 100 in New Mexico to 10 to 100 in New Hampshire. Minnesota had a percent of 8.4 as compared to the then (1948) nationwide average of 7.5.

Men 65 years and over have ceased to outnumber women of that age? There are 90 men for every 100 women in this age group. This is the result primarily of a more rapid decline in female mortality than in male mortality. Since married women tend to outlive their husbands and because most men are married to women several years younger than themselves, it is found that two out of three men 65 years and over are married; but the majority of women in this age group are widowed.

Looking ahead, we can summarize by stating that by 1980 in the United States perhaps fifteen people out of every hundred will be 65 years of age and over.

Using 1945 as its base, Fortune Magazine shows what the 'old' lived on -

1. Public and private assistance
(Government aid being the biggest share)39%
2. Employment earnings
(Includes unemployment compensation and
sickness insurance.....34%

3. Income from pensions
(OASI and other government pensions amount
to 2/3 of this amount).....18%
4. Income from investments..... 9%
- Total 100%

About $3\frac{1}{2}$ million of those 65 years and over have no money income. Of those with money income, more than half have incomes of less than \$1,000; almost one-third have incomes of less than \$500.

In Minnesota, 9 out of every 10 old age assistance recipients live in private establishments with one-third living with relatives and almost a like amount living alone or with spouse only. Throughout the entire state approximately one-fifth of the old age population are old age assistance recipients. In Hennepin County this number rises to 26.2% of the population aged 65 years or more. Among those receiving assistance in this county 30% lived alone; 47.7% were widows; many have outlived all their relatives.

What are the needs of the aged? As we well know, there are two types of aging: chronologic and physiologic aging. Some individuals at 65 are physiologically younger than others at 50 years.

Certain needs stand out as essential to the welfare of people past 65 years.

1. Good modern medical and psychiatric service to prolong health as well as life
2. Adequate and decent shelter
3. Opportunities to be useful
4. Adequate social security and old age assistance
5. Facilities for the care of the chronic sick
6. Opportunities to earn
7. Opportunities for leisure time activities.

Who are the aged? The age of 65 had been arbitrarily set by Congress in 1935 for eligibility under its Social Security provision. The aspects of aging, however, take on different values from decade to decade. This has been evident physically, and is even more evident socially and psychologically. One classification of aging because of the rising average age of the population may have 40-59 years as the middle-age, 60-79 the pre-aged, 80 and upwards being the aged.