

Suicides

Ray Stewart

SUICIDES have been prevalent in the human race since the first Pithecanthropan individual split open his own skull with a heavy wooden club. The reason for his taking his own life has never been determined, but was probably of simple origin, as life itself was very simple then. Through the ages, as society has become more complex and involved, the reasons for suicides also have become more complicated and much more interesting. Through investigation of the various reasons found on typewriters, notepaper, dictaphones, wire recorders, and old wrapping paper left by persons who can no longer speak or write, one can recognize and understand the many different types of suicides.

The first is the "financial trouble" type of suicide. The company's auditor is arriving tomorrow at 2:30 and the teller is not able to borrow or steal the money. He hates to leave his wife to face the scandal, but it is better than admitting he could not keep up with the Joneses. A note usually reveals that his wife is better than he deserves and that he hopes the boss will understand his predicament. He jumps off a bridge, but it is not too unbearable for the nagging wife who was the cause of his embezzling the money in the first place.

This type of woman immediately brings to mind her counterpart, who is a true, faithful, and loyal wife and therefore a good example of the only type of suicide restricted to females—the "sleeping" type. Any scandal which could in any way harm her husband or mother-in-law causes her to take an overdose of the sleeping powder prescription which this type of woman always has on hand. She usually does not leave a note, but the empty bottle and the all-revealing future soon divulge her reasons.

Next there is the "no-success" suicide. He has held down no job for more than two months. He is usually living in a small, filthy, third-rate hotel on a back alley. His education extends through high school, and his future to him is non-existent. A note including all these statements is written on the back of the envelope in which he received his last job release. Since he can not afford a gun, he slashes his wrists and hangs himself.

The most publicized is the "has-been" suicide. This kind has tasted success and glory, but only briefly. He has tried in vain to regain the Utopia of his past. He too lives in a shabby hotel and hasn't eaten since last Saturday. He is an actor and thereby adds his bit to the glamour, mystery, intrigue, and adventure which go with such a profession. His death is as spectacular as he can make it, such as jumping off the Empire State Building or throwing himself in front of the governor's car. This makes his last scene a dramatic triumph.

The "neglected-rejected-lover," on the other hand, has a simple death. He has been turned down six times and feels that there is nothing left for him but to leave his love to another. These reasons are heard as the dictaphone plays back. The body is never found, as the lover leaped from a ship in mid-ocean.

The last suicide of importance is the "little-things" type. He is a bachelor and has no matches when the blond at the next table pulls out a cigarette. His toothpaste runs out after one of his rare alcoholic binges. He has no change for the telephone, or a shirt button is missing on his last clean shirt. He writes a long novel before his departure (his suicide has been pre-determined) explaining all the trials and tribulations of his troubled life. This novel-length note is found clutched in the body's hand on the floor of a modest three-room apartment.

Perhaps when the Cro-Magnon is as ancient as the Pithecanthropus is today, and society's complexity has increased proportionately, there will appear many other interesting types of self-administered deaths for the existing race to investigate. Until then we must remain satisfied with the types that we have.

The Children's Shoe Department

Edna Bellenbach

ON Saturday afternoon the children's shoe department of a large store is a scene of noise and confusion for parents and clerks, but for the young customers it has the atmosphere of a party. The necessary delay caused by too many customers gives the boys and girls a chance to spend from ten minutes to a half-hour amusing themselves within the confines of the department, and the waiting period gives the casual observer a chance to see many kinds of children.

Most impressive are the bubble gum chewers. These boys and girls fall into two categories: the ones who methodically blow bubbles while staring into space, and the ones who move about the room trying to blow the largest pink bubble. The latter group are the most interesting because occasionally one of the bubbles bursts just as it reaches super large size and the sticky mass is left as a thin coating on the chewer's face. A child encountering this mishap may react to the situation by either "showing off" and laughing or by becoming angry. In either case he must remove the film of gum.

The inquisitive children cannot be overlooked. These boys and girls start to explore the department the minute they enter the area and do not stop until their parents practically drag them to their seats. They look into every show case and reach in if they can open the doors, they examine shoes which have been left on the floor, they open boxes stacked in the corners, and finally they discover the entrance to the stock room. This is the most wonderful discovery of