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his students. But the game turned serious; a team of trained researchers has since analyzed, weighed, and catalogued household refuse in Tucson, Milwaukee, Marin County (California), and Mexico City.

One advantage of garbage research is that it uncovers what people would rather not reveal about themselves or might not even know. There is, for example, a considerable disparity between how much alcohol people say they drink and the number of wine and liquor bottles that actually turn up in their trash. Few Americans would admit to throwing away large quantities of food, but Rathje's *Projet du Garbage* has found that roughly 10 percent of all edible food ends up in the garbage—15 percent if one includes the "Garbage Disposal Correction Factor" for kitchen sink garbage disposals. In 1977, the U.S. General Accounting Office calculated that the 10 percent throwaway rate carried an annual price tag of \$11.7 billion.

The chief theoretical product of Rathje's indefatigable garbage sleuthing is his "first principle of edible food loss." He contends that the more standardized the diet—the fewer out-of-the-ordinary items it includes—the less waste. He finds, for example, that most families wind up throwing away only five to 10 percent of the ordinary white bread they buy but 40 to 50 percent of whole wheat and other "specialty" breads. An interesting corollary is that households that use many prepackaged foods waste little canned corn and frozen pizza but tend to throw away much more fresh produce than normal.

Modern packaging accounts for a hefty portion of Americans' trash. Rathje reports that an average family in Tucson discards 1,800 plastic jars and wrappers, 850 steel and 500 aluminum cans, 500 glass bottles, and more than 13,000 pieces of paper and cardboard. That adds up to a lot of iron ore and other nonrenewable resources. But elaborate packaging (and refrigeration) has cut food losses over the years: In 1918, according to a study by the U.S. War Food Administration, 25 to 30 percent of all food wound up in the garbage can.

Indeed, Rathje finds an ironic sort of solace in today's "wastefulness." Archaeologists have found that dead civilizations leave behind very few artifacts from their last, most decadent days. It is the "classic" era of Imperial Rome's history, for example, that provides the richest lode of treasures and trash. If garbage is any clue, Rathje suggests, American civilization may not be far from its zenith.

Nowhere to Go

"Deinstitutionalization and the Homeless Mentally Ill" by H. Richard Lamb, M.D., in *Hospital and Community Psychiatry* (Sept. 1984), 1400 K St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.

Homeless people wander the streets of every big city in America. Many of them, probably tens of thousands, are mentally ill men and women who find themselves on the streets because federal and state policies leave them no place else to go.

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Lamb, a psychiatrist who headed an American Psychiatric Association study of the problem, traces its origins to the early 1960s, when "deinstitutionalization" began. Scandalous conditions at state mental hospitals helped to start the process. So did new theories of treatment and 1963 federal legislation that made the mentally ill eligible for disability benefits and established small community mental health centers. The number of patients in state mental institutions dropped from 559,000 in 1955 to some 132,000 today.

What went wrong? Lamb says that the authorities did a bad job of planning. They were vague about how "community treatment" would work. They failed to anticipate that states would be parsimonious in paying for community care and that mental health professionals themselves would often avoid taking on the most difficult cases. Today, the majority of discharged mental patients return to their families. About one-third move to residential hotels or to government-subsidized "board and care" homes, which provide minimal care and supervision. Others wind up homeless.

The reasons vary. Some services are available, but only to those who are able to find them in a bureaucracy that even the mentally healthy find dismaying. Often, says Lamb, patients avoid treatment because "they do not want to see themselves as ill." Some simply prefer to live in isolation from others; some want to escape prohibitions against taking drugs and drinking, or simply long for freedom.

In Lamb's view, the only solution for the worst cases is recommitment to a state mental hospital. That would require easing state restrictions on involuntary commitment. But most of today's homeless mentally ill could live in facilities outside of hospitals if they were provided with more "structure" than is available in "board and care" homes. That means strict supervision by professionals. In fact, says Lamb, such services are already available to the mentally retarded. Simple justice requires that the state and federal governments make the same benefits available to the mentally ill.

PRESS & TELEVISION

*Journalists
As Historians*

"Journalism, History, and Journalistic History" by Theodore Draper, in *The New York Times Book Review* (Dec. 9, 1984), P.O. Box 58, Hackensack, N.J. 07602-9983.

Journalism, history, fiction. In a small but growing number of best-selling books, quite aside from TV "docudramas," these three ingredients are being mixed together into one big stew. Draper, a former Institute for Advanced Study historian, does not like the taste.