

HOW TO TURN DEFEAT INTO VICTORY

SOCIAL WORKERS AND OTHERS who work on skid row find many differences in age, religious faith, education, and background among the tragic souls who have dropped into America's gutters. Some of these citizens are surprisingly young. Others are old. A sprinkling are college graduates; a few have essentially no formal education. Some are married; others are not. But the people on skid row do have something in common: each one is defeated, whipped, beaten. Each one has encountered situations that conquered him. Each is eager, even anxious, to tell you about the situation that wrecked him, about his own private Waterloo.

These situations cover the waterfront of human experience from "My wife ran out on me" to "I lost everything I had and had no place else to go" to "I did a couple of things that made me a social outcast, so I came down here."

When we move up from skid row into the dominion of Mr. and Mrs. Average American, we see obvious differences in living habits. But again we discover that Mr. Mediocre gives essentially the same reasons to explain his mediocrity as Mr. Skid Row gave to explain his complete collapse. Inside, Mr. Mediocre feels