The plight of the homeless veterans

by Ande Wanderer

SLOAN'S LAKE – For those who live indoors, rain or snow is a minor inconvenience on a day-to-day basis, but for the homeless, weather largely determines whether you'll have a good day or a bad one.

September 17th looked like it would be a good day for Dave Garcia. When he woke up early in the morning at Sloan's Lake Park, it was warm and sunny, like a late summer day. A friend had given him a paperback thriller to read, and since it was only mid-month his pension check of $290 had not yet run out.

But by 9:00 p.m. fog, wind and drizzle had rolled in over Sloan's Lake and temperatures had dropped nearly 50 degrees during the course of the day. Garcia put on his warmest clothes and took cover under the awning in the back of Sloan's Lake gym to try and sleep, but it was a rough night.

Dave Garcia, 55 spends much of his time reading in the park.

In fact, it has been a rough year. Garcia lost his job last February. Although he learned to be a generator mechanic in the army, and was once employed at Lakeside Amusement Park, he couldn't find another. A widower with no children, Garcia is among the 40 percent of the homeless men in Denver who are veterans, the majority of whom are in their 50's and 60's and served in the Vietnam era. Garcia had never before been homeless. For a while, he was able to stay at his sister's house, but the

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