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Leisure: A New dimension to living

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By Farrell and Wilbur Cross

Leisure:

"Work, we know, may make a man stoop-shouldered or rich. It may even ennoble him. Leisure perfects him. In this lies its future."

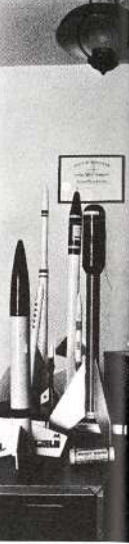
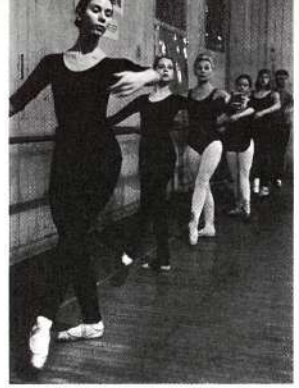
SEBASTIAN DE GRAZIA*

A young executive from a brokerage house designs stage sets for one of the summer theatres near his home. A life insurance agent wades for hours with his sons in icy streams, panning for gold and bringing home the real thing. A bank officer sculptures bushes for his neighbors and performs expert surgery on trees when required. An engineer reconstructs the history of his town and neighborhood. And a lady author conducts travelers on guided tours of the landmarks in her county.

What do these people have in common?

The answer is that they are all part of the steadily increasing number of imaginative citizens with more and more leisure time on their hands who are seeking out and finding ingenious and constructive ways of using their hours, days and weeks of freedom. The trend toward new activities for off-duty and non-school time is now touching the lives and outlooks of people of all ages, in all income brackets and in all regions of the United States, and to a considerable extent abroad.

As you consider the time you put into reading about new developments in accounting, into your own professional development and into intensive seasonal periods of work, you might well ask where is all this leisure that is supposedly being passed around. But the trend is steady and continuing, as was pointed out in a recent article in *U.S. News & World Report*, headlined "Leisure Boom: Biggest Ever and Still Growing." Discussing more time available to people in all kinds of careers, the article cited a number of contributory factors such as our new three-day weekends, longer vacations, the trend towards the four-day work week and the increasing



*Author, educator and political scientist

A New Dimension to Living

availability of products, materials and services for leisure-time activities.

Yet even ignoring the increase in hours available for discretionary "spending," take a little time to sit down and inventory the way you use, or fail to use, your leisure. You may well be in for some surprises, as our family was a few summers ago when we spent two weeks in a rented cottage at the shore with our four daughters. "Tomorrow," we kept saying, "we'll get organized and do something that's fun for everybody." But the days slipped by unrewardingly, and with nothing worth remembering to look back upon.

To make matters worse, after it was all over and we had returned home, we heard a glowing account of a really creative vacation enjoyed by a business colleague, his wife and two young children. They had tried "home swapping," turning over their Westchester County home, near New York City, to a couple from Maine who wanted a vacation near New York. Beforehand, each family had thoughtfully prepared a descriptive list of things to see and do in the area.

"Believe me," said our friend, "this was an eye-opener. As we made up the list, we thought about all of the places we had not visited and the events we had not experienced—right at home. So we ended up with a double bargain: things to enjoy while we were away on vacation, and now a great list of activities right on our doorstep that we had never given too much thought to before."

During the last four or five years, we have surveyed the leisure scene very carefully, while compiling information for articles and a book on leisure homes, as well as articles on weekends, vacations and home-swapping. And we have discovered an astonishing fact: Americans, despite the ever-increasing availability of recreational equipment, the opening up of new sports facilities of many kinds, and the incomes to spend on fun, are among the world's least imaginative users of leisure time.

Sure, we probably have more golfers per capita than any other country; our attendance records at spectator sports are overwhelming; and we probably spend more on hunting, fishing and boating equipment than the next three nations combined. Yet many of us have limited imagination when it comes to using the time creatively and constructively, in a way that is not only refreshing but provides a sense of accomplishment.

A number of studies have made this regrettable point. One by the Southern California Research Council, for example, added this note to its negative findings: "We cannot happily contemplate a future society in which leisure is vacuous or merely filled with hectic amusement. We need to develop new forms of leisure which stretch our minds."

The point was brought home more sharply by a British friend of ours when we told her that we had just bought a new outboard for use at our leisure home in New Hampshire. "Oh, a boat," she remarked. "Now you get in it and go, but do you meet a lot of interesting people that way?"

No, we admitted, we did not really meet anybody. But everybody had a boat and it seemed like a good way to get from one place to another on the lake. She looked quite downcast, especially when we revealed how much it had cost. It seemed very expensive and without much point. In Europe, small boats were used mostly for exploring rivers and canals and other waterways and meeting people with similar interests at historic sites or private gardens temporarily opened to interested groups or collecting nature specimens.

Our friend put her finger on what is the missing ingredient in much of our use of leisure time: other people. And that seemed to be a key to enjoyment whenever we met people who described the personal rewards of leisure.

Have you ever heard, for example, of a "weekend college?" We learned to

our astonishment that there are several hundred special centers, not to mention hundreds of colleges, where adults can take courses during their free time—ranging from single weekends to series of weekends or several vacation weeks at a time. We are not talking about professional courses like accounting or banking or taxation (of which there are certainly plenty), but just about everything imaginable, from Chinese and Hindi to astronomy, glider piloting, handicrafts, modern literature, landscape gardening, exploration, music appreciation and the natural environment.

Best of all, many of these leisure-time courses are offered in the most attractive settings, whether on a 100-year-old college campus, at a mountain lodge, along the California shore or on an island in the Great Lakes. Individuals, couples and whole families have in this way found that broadening their minds, as well as their experiences and friendships, can be enormous good fun, and at surprisingly low cost. Such exposure can sometimes be good business as well. We met one man, a public relations consultant, who said that he has developed so many new clients through his educational contacts that he has become "almost a professional student."

But you do not have to sign up for a course in order to broaden your interests and meet people. We each have our own objectives when it comes to the uses of leisure time. Exercise and health seem to top the list. Yet too many people seem to think in limited terms: golf, tennis, bowling and skiing, for example. Few people would add "collecting" as a use of leisure time that could be classified as exercise. However, we know of literally dozens of friends and acquaintances who can prove otherwise. There are several, for example, who took up mineral collecting a few years ago and whose rugged physiques and hearty good health can be attributed to the hundreds of miles they have covered over the roughest kind of terrain,



and in all kinds of weather.

"Isn't it a lonely kind of hobby?" we asked one time.

"Not at all," came the answer. "There is a great fraternal spirit among collectors. Whenever we come back from a trip with interesting specimens, we invariably find ourselves setting up visits with other collectors, so we can show off our new finds, swap duplicates or meet new friends-to-be in the field."

Many people move from one form of recreation to another, from this hobby to that, from one type of vacation last year to a completely different type this year. Why? Very simply, because they get bored, and boredom can be an extremely frightening state of existence. It was reported, in fact, that Admiral Byrd was so afraid of what boredom could do to his crew's morale when he departed on his long Antarctic mission that he took along a dozen straitjackets as the only solution he knew of for severe attacks.

All of us have that feeling sometimes, that if we just don't find something to do to jar us out of our lethargy we will go out of our minds. Interestingly enough, we can become bored while engaged in something that would be, to another person, quite stimulating. In reviewing the uses of your leisure time, take into account what one psychologist told us: that many people must use their leisure (or at least a great part of it) doing something that they feel will be constructive and benefit society. That is why you will

find many a business leader devoting his free time to projects or activities related to the improvement of his community. In all probability you know a few clients of the Firm who channel their own leisure time into such fields of endeavor.

Among our own acquaintances, for instance, are: the vice president of a bank who teaches photography to physically handicapped children ("My own picture-taking has improved 100 percent since I started this"); an industrial salesman who collects nature samples and has vastly improved the exhibits at a natural history museum in his county; and a commodities broker who learned bookbinding so he could help the town library keep its costs down and its circulation up. As a result of his growing capabilities, he has also started hand-tooling some of the finer books in his personal library at home.

"Book bindings are great talking points," he said one day. "I was never very good at making polite conversation. But with books, you can't miss. I go into someone's office, his home, his club, and I always spot interesting examples to talk about. Besides, it has turned out to be a really positive financial investment."

We do not all have to be productive, fortunately, in what we do with our leisure time. Most people want to have the feeling that they are somehow broadening their interests or capabilities, but they do not necessarily need to be "do-gooders." This outlook is important in considerations of leisure

time. "Most Americans," said an editorial in *The Magazine of Wall Street* a few months ago, "still derive great satisfaction from work. But toil is no longer looked upon as morally necessary. This relaxation of the so-called work ethic is particularly evident among youth—the work force of tomorrow."

It is interesting and significant that, "while one American heritage—the puritanical approach toward work—is being renounced, another is being reclaimed. That is our outdoor heritage. We are exhibiting a growing need to get away from our offices and factories, our apartments and tightly knit residential communities."

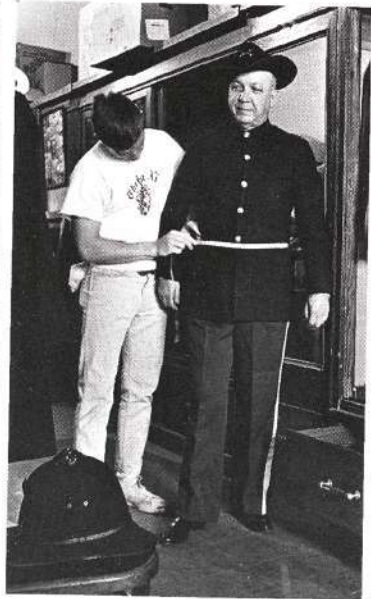
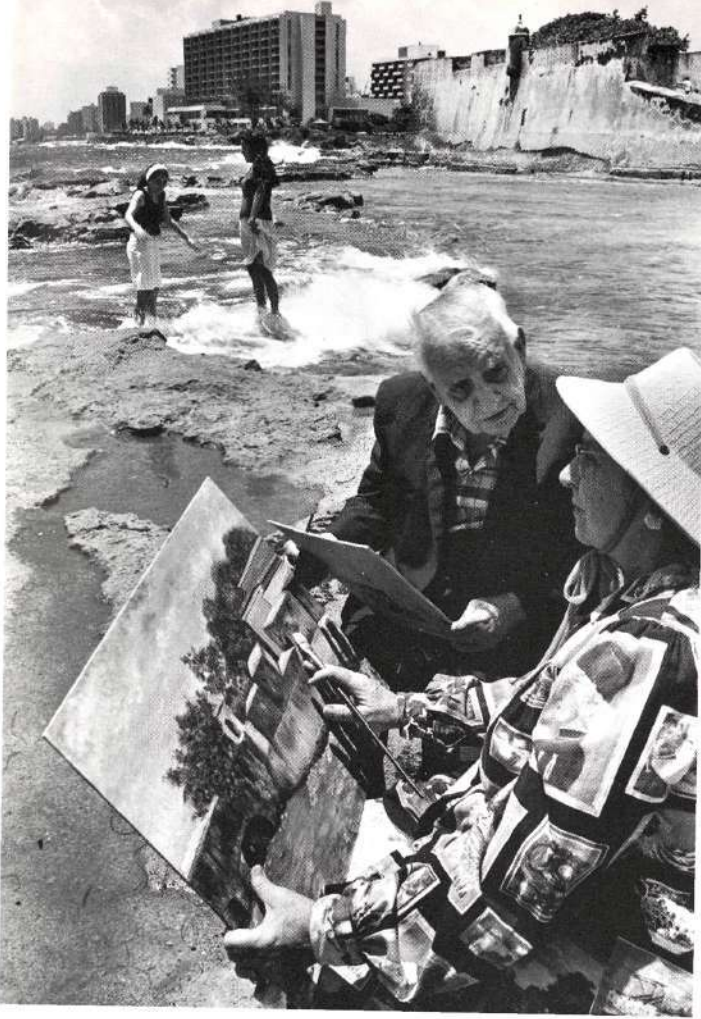
The environment—here is an area that opens up unlimited possibilities for people who want to use their leisure time in a manner that is fascinating, broadening, invigorating, healthful, educational and beneficial to the whole community. It used to be that the dedicated nature lover was a kind of hermit who tramped off alone into the woods to observe animal life, count species of birds, gather wild plants or simply breathe in the fresh air and commune with God. You can still do this in many regions of the country, despite the prophets of doom who say that all America is polluted, as well as almost any other part of the civilized world you care to mention.

But there are many fine leisure-time pursuits that can be followed actively, whether for a day, a weekend or an entire vacation. One of our close friends is a treasurer in a real estate

LEISURE TIME ACTIVITIES IN H&S AS DESCRIBED IN H&S REPORTS

Rick Johnson, <i>Omaha</i>	Astronomy	AUTUMN 1972
Maurice Newman, <i>EO</i>	PhD Studies	SUMMER 1972
Merle Halls, <i>Phoenix</i>	Ornamental Metalwork	SUMMER 1972
Homer Sayad, <i>Saint Louis</i>	Arts Management	SPRING 1972
Stuart Macdonald, <i>Zurich</i>	Coaching Soccer	SPRING 1972
Cary Findlay, <i>Miami</i>	River Pollution Survey	AUTUMN 1971
Jim Kappeler, <i>Columbus</i>	Cave Exploring	SUMMER 1971
Ed Robinson, <i>Minneapolis</i>	Short-Line Railroading	SUMMER 1971
Andy Andrews, <i>Greensboro</i>	Soaring	SPRING 1971
Joe Croteau, <i>San Juan</i>	Growing Bananas	SUMMER 1970
Jerry Benning, <i>Minneapolis</i>	Flying	SUMMER 1970
Elmer Beamer, <i>Cleveland</i>	Rare Book Collecting	WINTER 1970





firm. "The only thing I knew about the outdoors," he confided, "was that I always got a nasty case of hay fever when I went to visit my grandmother in a small town in the Midwest."

Then one day he became interested in the environment through a client of his firm who was worried about prospects of a heavy drop in real estate values because of pollution. He took a course in ecology during his spare time, followed by several others in environmental fields. Now he spends at least a couple of weekends each month tramping through the countryside and making environmental surveys. Armed with this information, he speaks before community groups, telling them how lakes and streams become polluted and what they can do to counteract the problems. Also, though he shies away from discussing the subject, his new knowledge and productive activities have not hurt his standing in the firm, to say the least!

Leisure time is going to be increasingly with us. Since the days of our grandparents we have increased the amount of leisure in the average life span by some 50,000 hours—or, if you will, considerably more than 2,000 days. It is a pleasant thought. Yet it can also be quite scary, if we just do not know what to do with ourselves besides watching TV, thumbing listlessly through magazines or occasionally taking in a sports event.

The accomplishment does not come easily. "To be able to fill leisure intelligently," wrote philosopher Bertrand Russell, "is the last product of civilization." □

Farrell and Wilbur Cross form a husband-and-wife writing team whose articles on leisure-time activities have been published in several national magazines. Their book on leisure homes will be published by Hawthorn Books in the spring of 1973. Another book, a guide to adventure vacations, is scheduled for later in the year.