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JUN. 2 1977

## Leisure's Big Business in America

UNEMPLOYMENT continues to be a problem, but business is thriving on spending by those who have jobs and are working less.

With an additional crisis or two reported in the news, with every edition, Americans are looking for relief and escape.

An estimate by the U.S. News & World Report shows that we will spend \$160 billion this year in our search for happiness, and that spending in pursuit of pleasure is doubling every 10 years.

Fun money usually comes out of what economists call personal disposable income, sharing priority with food, housing, clothing and transportation. Other expenditures get what's left.

A century ago, the workweek consisted of six 10- or 12-hour days. By 1900, this was reduced about one-third. Today, most hired workers have two-thirds of each 24 hours for themselves.

Millions now work only 35 hours a week, and hundreds of companies have shifted to a four-day workweek for employees.

Counting Sundays, days off, paid

vacations and official holidays, workers may have 150 or more days a year away from their jobs and still be classified as fully employed.

When it is considered that millions of young people do not find regular employment until after they finish college, that 65 is normal retirement age, and that we're living longer, it is easy to see why leisure-based businesses are booming.

Leisure has been defined as a state of being in which activity is performed for its own sake. The field is broad and people apparently will try anything that looks like fun.

Individual participation sports are growing rapidly. Some 25,000 people enjoy skydiving, parachuting from planes just for the thrill of it. However, swimming is rated as the sport with the most participants.

Next come bicycling, fishing, camping, bowling, pool and billiards, boating, table tennis, tennis and softball.

Attendance at spectator sports

has gone up 100 million in the past decade, as sports seasons become longer and longer.

Heading the list in this category is horse racing, followed by auto racing, major league baseball, college football, harness racing, college basketball, greyhound racing, professional football, major league hockey and minor league baseball.

Cultural activities have grown and hobbies cover just about every conceivable field of interest. Millions of people use their leisure in church work, hospital assistance and public service. Others watch television and go to movies or fun parks.

Before man's genius and technology freed Americans from manual labor, work often was regarded as the only respectable way of spending time. This inhibited some from enjoying their leisure time, but obviously this is no longer a big problem.

Today's families have more time and more money to spend than ever before, in spite of inflation and high taxes. And from the ways they are spending them, they are really enjoying life.