

Work's Rewards More Than You Think

INFLATION notwithstanding, a remarkable fact of life is how little we have to work in order to eat, sleep and be entertained for a lifetime.

Punching a few buttons on a calculator will show that few of us work as long or as much as we may have supposed.

Experts have figured out that the average life span in the United States has increased to 73 years and that it may continue upward for the next 35 years or so, peaking at about 85 years.

Longer life seems to be what everybody has been hoping for, but greater longevity is creating a few problems, also, mainly by placing a strain on pension funds and Social Security.

Better medical care and improvement in personal habits have reduced mortality rates from certain ailments and laws have been enacted to create what has been referred to as an "age irrelevant society."

Among many stories of achievements in the arts, literature, science, government and other fields is

one about Otto von Bismarck. He was 74 years old and chancellor of the German Empire in 1889 when he decided that everyone except himself should retire at age 65.

The United States adopted that benchmark in 1935 when the Social Security Act was passed. A few years ago the age for mandatory retirement was raised to 70, but the majority of employees have continued to take their pensions and quit work at 65 or even earlier.

A number of churches, companies and other institutions have set up programs to prepare people for retirement and to provide activities for them afterward so they won't be bored to death. No doubt these things help, but people might not be as unprepared for a life of not working as has been suspected.

By calculating actual time consumed, we find that sleeping an average of six hours per night for 65 years will amount to about 16 years. If sleep averages eight hours, make that 21 years plus.

Spending an hour a day eating

three square meals would consume 2.7 years over 65 years, plus conversation time afterward.

A few of us oldtimers began working early in life but now a youngster can't hold a regular job for his first 16 years. Many work part-time during high school and college. Add a year of work for this 8-year span.

For the next 40 years, engaging in a full time career, a person may work 40 hours a week, or 2,080 hours a year. This comes to about 9.5 years, less holidays and vacations.

Follow that with eight years of retirement to normal life span of 73 years, with no work done, and you come up with twice as much eating and sleeping time as work time. What you did with the rest of your time only you may be able to say.

It is amazing that we can accomplish enough and earn enough within those comparatively short working periods to provide for our necessities the remainder of our lives. Unless pension funds are exhausted, we will live longer and come out better in the future.