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APR 21 1983

## Should Self-Gratification Come First?

**S**ELF-PRESERVATION is said to be "the first law of nature" among animals. For people self-gratification seems to come first.

A relatively small number of people may be fighting for their lives literally but thousands of times as many are struggling only to have more fun, even if serious hazards may be involved.

The doctrine that pleasure is the chief good in life is as old as mankind. At times it surges to overwhelm other aspects of society. It is the theme of the over-amplified generation, who argue, "If it feels good, do it."

Our nation's troubles may be connected to this philosophy. It is more pleasant to borrow money and provide citizens with benefits from the government than it is to impose economic discipline, so Congress doesn't face up to balancing the budget.

Self-gratification takes precedence over civic responsibility. Many citizens prefer golf and games to good government. They leave the way open for pressure groups, the

incompetent and the dishonest to take over.

The theme of self-gratification permeates every aspect of our lives. Business and advertising are geared to appeal to our desires for personal enjoyment, to help us live more comfortably, eat tastier foods, look better, feel better, ride easier, be more popular.

In perspective, those are desirable objectives. The hazard lies in making them our sole objectives.

A case in point is the report of the National Commission for Excellence in Education. After comparing schools of several nations, it concluded that our American system is too easy. Too much attention is given to frills and fun; not enough to solid subjects that may lead pupils to higher accomplishments.

Self-gratification is the appeal made by beer and liquor dealers, tobacco companies, and drug pushers to entice potential addicts. Documented cases showing deleterious effects on individuals, their families and society are hidden by promises of temporary pleasure.

Ambition to succeed is a desirable trait. Those who lack this quality seldom accomplish much. But ambition must be tempered with self-discipline. Otherwise, greed for power, money and other forms of self-gratification can overpower morals, ethics and manners.

Churches, hospitals and other worthy causes often find it hard to obtain enough volunteer help because many people prefer to indulge in their own pleasures. Conversely, many crimes are committed for motives of self-gratification, usually to obtain money without working.

Self-gratification appears in many forms. For some it demands daring deeds such as sky-diving or spectacular stunts like driving a speeding car through a blazing wall. Millions participate in sports but just watching is enough for millions of others.

Not a few people are satisfied just to sit quietly after a day's work, to be entertained by TV, hobbies, games or conversation. Our preferences differ but all of us seek self-gratification.