

1969

# Getting away from it all!

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Robert Dressler

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## Recommended Citation

Tempo, Vol. 15, no. 2 (1969, June), p. 21-33

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# Getting away from it all!

“You work too hard.”

You’ve heard that before.

If you are an executive in this business world, you probably do. But if you are in good health, say the doctors, good hard work will not hurt you. The tensions and anxieties that go along with it probably will.

“You need to get away.”

You’ve heard that one, too. And you did take a month off last year. This is little good if you get away only physically—you need to get away from the office *mentally*.

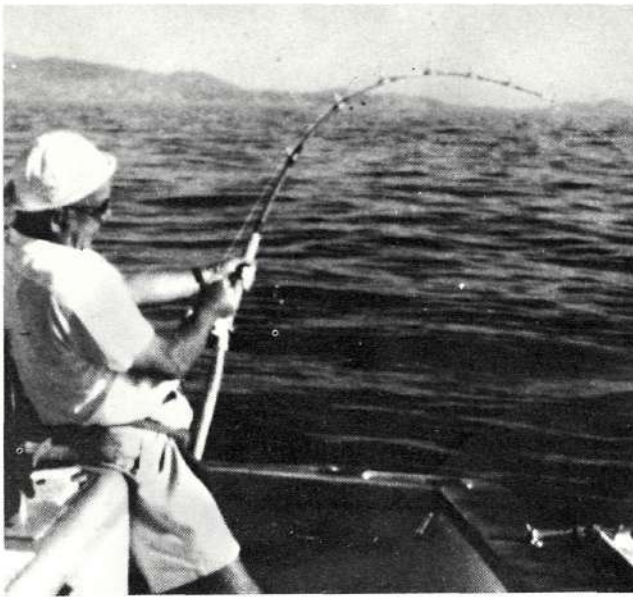
Most psychologists agree that this is not difficult, but most important, for the busy executive.

It is most difficult, psychologists say, because the executive often feels guilty about walking away from unfinished work, is afraid he may not have covered everything before he left, or because he got to the top by over-compensating for his fear of failure and is afraid to take time off.

But it is most important, not only for the executive’s health, but for his business. To keep at anything too long impairs the executive’s mental vision and his view of reality becomes distorted. Some psychologists say we have latent sources in our subconscious for dealing with problems. When we get away from a problem, these factors go to work. When we come back, the solution is there.

Psychologists add quickly that they do not discourage hard work or a man’s desire to compete and achieve. They say that the man who is committed to his work and is truly immersed in it often gets far more out of life than the one who never gets really involved in anything.

The secret, they say, is to relax. And they admit this is difficult. It takes a substantial amount of self-insight and understanding, but each man must find the way that works for him.



Robert Beyer  
strains to reel  
one in

To help you along, we have described the ways five business and academic leaders have found to re-charge themselves.

The methods they found range from big game hunting to repairing pocket watches. Some of them are physical; some are not.

But all are activities that provide some kind of reward, involve the mind full of business problems with other thoughts, or are so physically exhausting that vital sleep comes naturally.

The first is Robert Beyer, Managing Partner of Touche Ross.

*Mr. Beyer, you often comment on the need for leisure and the advisability of exposing oneself to a complete change of scene from time to time. Why do you think this is so important?*

Well, first there's the obvious necessity to relieve bottled-up tensions and settle your nerves. But apart from this I think we all face the very real danger of going stale and stodgy if we don't take care. I've seen it happen to people who become too deeply and totally immersed in their business activities. A kind of subtle creeping transition takes place. They miss out on so much of the real fun and excitement of life that a crust gradually forms about them. They lose their sense of humor. They become inflated with self-importance. Their youthful zest and enthusiasm fades. What's so insidious about it is the gradualness. You can't see it happening. You're not aware of the transition. But it takes place nonetheless. I think one of the most effective ways to combat this danger is to totally divorce yourself from the business environment every so often. It provides



an opportunity to stand back and assess where you are, where you've been, and where you're going—both in business and in life.

*I understand that one of your favorite ways of doing this is to go on fishing expeditions.*

That's right. I've been a fishing enthusiast all my life. My dad started me off as a youngster in the fresh water lakes of northern Michigan and Wisconsin. There we fished for bass, muskellunge, pike, lake trout and many other varieties. Many people don't realize it, but some of the best fishing in the world is right here in the U.S. The fish in those northern lakes can really fight. But about ten years ago I was converted to deep sea fishing. Once you go after the big ones, anything else seems tame.

*Does your wife share your enthusiasm for the sport?*

Oh yes. Monica has joined me on several trips, but she's not quite as addicted as I am. One particularly interesting trip was to Cabo San Lucas in Baja California where the Gulf of California meets the Pacific Ocean. This is one of the best fishing grounds in the world. Monica and I were there with Bob Dodson of Los Angeles and his wife. A client of ours, Burt Raynes, who is president of Rohr Aircraft, invited us out with himself and his wife, and we were a party of six aboard this beautiful tremendous boat.

We went for striped marlin on that trip; they run up to 500 pounds or so, not really the giants, but ferocious bat-

*—then  
enjoys the  
rewards!*



tlers. The second day out the trades were blowing, and our eagle-eyed spotter sighted a marlin cruising with the wind. He pointed leeward and we saw that scythe-like tail ripping through the swells. The captain baited a line with live mackerel. The fish went for it an once, and I went for the fish. What a battle! It lasted two hours and covered six miles of ocean, but I finally landed him. He weighed in at over 200 pounds.

Later we spotted a big patch of seaweed—kelp, they call it. The captain said, “There’s bound to be fish around here.” We anchored 100 feet away and started casting live mackerel. Then they started biting, one after the other, mostly dolphin. Nothing beats marlin, but dolphin are excellent fighters for their size. They’re good expensive fish, and delicious on the dinner plate when served up as mahi-mahi. Afterwards, during lunch, the spotter caught sight of a big broadbill, which is slang for swordfish. Swordfish feed on the bottom of the ocean, and they won’t take your bait if you cast on top. The way to nail a swordfish once he’s surfaced is to spear him. Now this boat which was beautifully rigged had a long platform up front. Burt Raynes went out there with a spear which is attached to 100 yards of rope wound round a pulley. If you spear the fish, the shaft comes away, but the spear stays in, and he keeps running within the 100 yards until he gets tuckered out and you can pull him in.

The captain estimated that swordfish at about 200 pounds, and at \$2.00 a pound, that was \$400 worth of fish. Spearing is an extremely difficult and precise art. You’ve got a moving boat, a fast-travelling fish, and the tricky refraction of the water. The captain maneuvered the boat, and Burt Raynes made his first strike and missed. The captain circled, the fish hung around for a second go, and Burt missed again. I could understand his frustration; I’ve felt it myself. The swordfish got away, but soon afterwards we spotted a big hammerhead shark, and Burt tried his luck again with the spear. This time he made a perfect strike. But a shark’s hide is like leather. The spear didn’t penetrate deeply enough, and the shark got away. But at least Burt had proved his marksmanship. It was a good trip.

*What’s the most interesting trip you ever made?*

Piñas Bay. It’s a trip I made alone. Piñas Bay is between Panama and Colombia, and I went down there after blacks. Black marlin are the biggest marlin in the world.



You can't help but admire and respect these fish. They knife through the water like torpedoes, and they jump ever higher than tarpon. Their mouths are like steel vises, and they run anywhere from 100 pounds to over half a ton. In 1953 a black was caught at Cabo Blanco, Peru that weighed 1560 pounds. In any case, when you go after these monsters, it's no place for women. It takes every ounce of guts and stamina you can muster to haul one of them in. Women simply don't have the strength and staying power to cope with these battling behemoths of the sea.

*Are black marlin the biggest game fish known?*

One of the biggest. In 1955 in Australia a man-eater shark was caught that weighed 2,536 pounds. That's the biggest one I ever heard of. But let me tell you about Piñas Bay. It's completely secluded so that it's not visible from the sea. During the war, the Germans set up a submarine nest there and used it to prey on American ships coming out of the Panama Canal, until intelligence caught on and built an airstrip in the jungle to maintain surveillance over the submarines. After the war, the German submarine commander liked the place so well, he came back and converted it into a fishing camp. Later, somebody else took over and built a luxurious fishing lodge which accommodates 18 fishermen in all.

It's the most fantastic place I've ever seen. Completely isolated, carved right out of the middle of an incredibly thick jungle so that the only access is by air. A chartered plane picks you up in Panama City. Somehow it lands on this tiny airstrip overgrown with a foot of grass. And there you are. No roads, no telephones, no communication or transportation of any kind. If you fell seriously ill, you'd probably just curl up and die. At the end of a week, the plane returns to the airstrip, picks you up and takes you back out. Quite an experience.

The men who come there to fish are sportsmen to the hilt. At five in the morning, little native boys scoot around and pound on your door, and you feel the excitement even before it begins. It's still dark. You dress quickly and wolf down breakfast. Then you go out in these splendid marlin cruisers, twin screwed diesels and really equipped. Man, those boats are built. You cut through the water at a terrific speed. You go out 45 miles into the open water of the Pacific until you reach a large bank, like a mountain in the ocean. There you see a sight you can never forget,

layer on layer of fish feeding against this mountain. The ocean teems with them. And overhead, flocks of birds feeding on the fish.

You plow into this great mass of sea life with all kinds of hooks trailing, and you stock up on live bait. Then you go out after the black beasts. And this experience is beyond description.

Sometimes you win; sometimes the marlin wins. But you always know you've been engaged. And it's war, make no mistake about it. I remember hooking into this powerful 400 pounder almost seven feet long. You attack the fish, and he counter-attacks. And the marlin's smart. He knows that when you get a slack in your line he can break it, and that's what he's out to do.

*Do you mean to say that the fish knows what's happening to him?*

He knows, all right. Don't ask me to explain his mental processes. It's all instinct and a kind of survival savvy, of course. But he knows when he's in trouble, and he knows what he must do to get out of trouble. When he comes in on you, you've to give it everything you've got. And the captain has to maneuver that boat like a pro to keep your line from looping and snapping while you keep reeling in with tons of water crashing down on you. The trick, you see, is to work the marlin into a slow circling movement, and if you're lucky you can gain a yard or two of line with each circuit. Even after hours of battle that marlin will leap high into the air and reenter the ocean like some monstrous airborne missile.

At the end of the bout you're covered with blood, and sweat and sea foam. You're a real mess. But when you finally land your fish it's the most stimulating and satisfying experience in the world.

*Then the main charge you get from deep sea fishing is the excitement?*

That, of course. But there's more. It's hard to put into words. The competing is part of it. Somehow you feel that if you can conquer a giant marlin, you can conquer anything. Also, deep sea fishing is one of the best ways I know to test your staying power. It can be so demanding, so physically exhausting and downright dangerous, that after hours of fighting a marlin your body aches to give up. But if you're a true sportsman, your mind and your heart won't let you do it. Then there's the infinite amount of patience required, and the constant need to keep bounc-



ing back after repeated frustrations, the way Burt Raynes bounced back when he missed those strikes.

Tuna is a good case in point. Fishing for tuna is one of the most stimulating, and yet one of the most frustrating experiences I know.

*Why is that?*

Because of the sharks. The shark goes wild over tuna. It's his lobster supreme, his prime cut of steak. A shark won't dare attack a tuna when he's alive and in good health. But hook him on the end of a line and it's another story. That's when he's vulnerable. That's when the predators gather round for the feast. When you hook a tuna, and they can run 200 to 400 pounds, you have two battles on your hands. One is to bring in the fish. The other is to kill off the sharks before they can devour him. There are various ways to do this. In the Virgin Islands, where the fishing is first rate, we used long bamboo poles with shotgun shells bedded in the end. You harpoon the shark with these poles, and the shells explode, killing him. Some fishermen use revolvers to shoot the sharks. Some even blast away with submachine guns. But the damned sharks pop up from all sides and corners. Almost invariably they manage to get the tuna before you do. Once we fought a massive 350 pounder for almost three hours. When we finally hauled him in, all that remained was the backbone, the head and the tail. The sharks had devoured the rest. It was terribly frustrating.

But frustrating or not, you keep coming back for more, because it's your nature to compete, and win or lose, you always expect to do better the next time. I think there's a great deal to be learned from fishing. You develop courage. You develop staying power. You develop humility. And it helps you to learn not to take yourself too seriously.

When you get back to the job, you feel refreshed and renewed, stronger somehow, and more of a man. As a form of leisure, I recommend it highly.

Robert Dressler, President, Riker-Maxson Corporation.

*Mr. Dressler, I understand one of your favorite leisure activities is fixing pocket watches.*

Yes, that's my current—I guess you could say hobby. I say current because I never keep a hobby for more than a couple of years. When I find something that interests me, I take some time and explore it until I've learned all I want to about it. Then I find something else that interests me. I

*Robert Dressler  
and watch - in his  
Manhattan office*





suppose this attitude is left over from my younger days. You see, when anyone is trained as a scientist, as I am, he runs into so many things he'd like to know more about. When he's young, he can put his exploration off until the summer, but when he's older, he's just too bloody busy.

But to get back to the subject, I've done many things. Before I took up the watches I grew large single crystals.

*How did you become interested in crystals?*

I started growing single crystals because I heard they are remarkably hard to grow. It took me two years to learn to do it well. I made hundreds of them and gave them all away. They're beautiful things... I even imported a lithium compound once.

*How does one grow single crystals?*

You find crystals with the most interesting shape and put their components together. I grew them in sealed jars—if you let in air you get multiple crystals—and kept them in a temperature controlled fish tank... But no one can really tell you how to grow single crystals. You have to experiment.

*Did you begin working on watches the same way you became interested in the crystals?*

Well, I became interested in watches on a long train ride. I've forgotten why I was on the train, but I was sitting next to a man, who for lack of something better to do, told me about his hobby—repairing watches. He recommended those two books over there. When I got off the train, I bought the books and read them. But they don't really tell how to do it. I bought all the tools the books recommended—they were very inexpensive—and started taking wrist watches apart and putting them back together. It was easy to fix the wrist watches... Incidentally, all that about having to have steady hands is nonsense... All you have to do is buy a new part to replace a broken one. You know which part to buy because they're all numbered. These older watches are more intriguing because you can't always replace a broken or missing part. When a part is broken or missing, you have to either repair it or make a new one. That's when it gets interesting.

*But isn't working on such tiny objects frustrating?*

Not at all. You see people, especially in the scientific and business world, can't get away by lying down—the problems are still going on inside. The only vacation is to do something else. Try to do something that's hard to do; that's what rests your mind. And when you're tinkering

with a little thing—like a watch—your mind better be on it or you'll break something. The only thing you have to do is to get used to dealing with small pieces and learn to get them apart. That's all.

*Are you beginning to get tired of fixing watches yet?*

Yes, I'm beginning to look around for something else now. I've found I'm starting to have trouble finding people to give the watches to. I don't collect them—or study the markings. That doesn't interest me.

(When we asked Mr. Dressler for a pocket watch to photograph, he did not have one. But one of his employees had one he had repaired.)

*Then what is next?*

Well, I'm kind of intrigued by the idea of blowing a bubble that will last a year. I'll have to find some kind of film through which the air won't diffuse. I haven't decided yet what it will have to be.

*Professor  
Herb Miller  
at this year's  
Indy 500!*



Herbert Miller, Professor of Accounting, Michigan State University Graduate School of Business Administration.

*We know, Dr. Miller, that you've been an auto racing buff for a number of years, but I understand you've had a racing buff's dream come true recently.*

Yes, I did. I was invited to be a member of a pit crew



at this year's Indianapolis 500. I'm not a mechanic—although I did have to get a \$5 mechanics' license—but I felt very much like a participant. I tried to help wherever I could. I washed parts; took some parts apart—didn't feel I could do any rebuilding since that is so crucial—but I kept a record of the laps run at practice and at the qualification runs; and I help up the pit board to give signals to the driver. I'd say my duties ranged from insignificant to not very important.

*How did your car do in the race?*

Our car—it was number 14—was never in the race. But we received a great deal of publicity, nevertheless.

*Why was that?*

Our driver drew number one in the qualifications tests, which is not the best position for a rookie. You see, the 33 fastest cars in the qualification trials make the race. So when a rookie is first, he doesn't know what he has to beat and doesn't have the experience to rely on. So, our car was first on the first day of trials. But, as you may remember, it was a rainy day and our driver didn't get in the full half hour of practice that each driver is given. While he was out on the track for his half hour the yellow light—that is a signal for all cars to come in off the track—went on two times.

Now, each driver is allowed three chances to qualify. At the end of each trial the owner of the car decides whether to let that trial count. So, when our driver got on the track for his first qualification run, the owner waved the white flag to indicate that he did not want that trial to count. As it turned out, that time would have been good enough.

The second time the owner chose not to let our time count. And in the third trial—we were running in the last 15 minutes of the qualification period—the engine blew and we were out. So there was a good deal of speculation in the press and at the track about how we would have done.

*Well, how did you become so involved with the racers that you were invited to the 500?*

It began when my daughter was a teen-ager and we were looking for something we could enjoy together. We hit on auto racing. But after we attended several races, we were curious about what kind of people were in racing; we tagged along from track to track and got to know the people. That's how I met the pit boss who invited me to the 500.

I had the invitation for a few years, but I hadn't been able to get away for the month of May before. So this time I got away because I believe that you must find time to do these things. If you wait until all your work is in hand—you'd never get to do anything else. I'd hate to think that at retirement I'd wish I had done something I hadn't. If I thought there was something I'd regret not having done, I would try to arrange my affairs so I could do it.

And accountants should be human and have a wide range of interests . . . All figures make Jack a dull boy.

*Guillermo young  
on top of rhino  
killed in Zambia!*



Guillermo S. Young, Touche Ross partner in Panama.

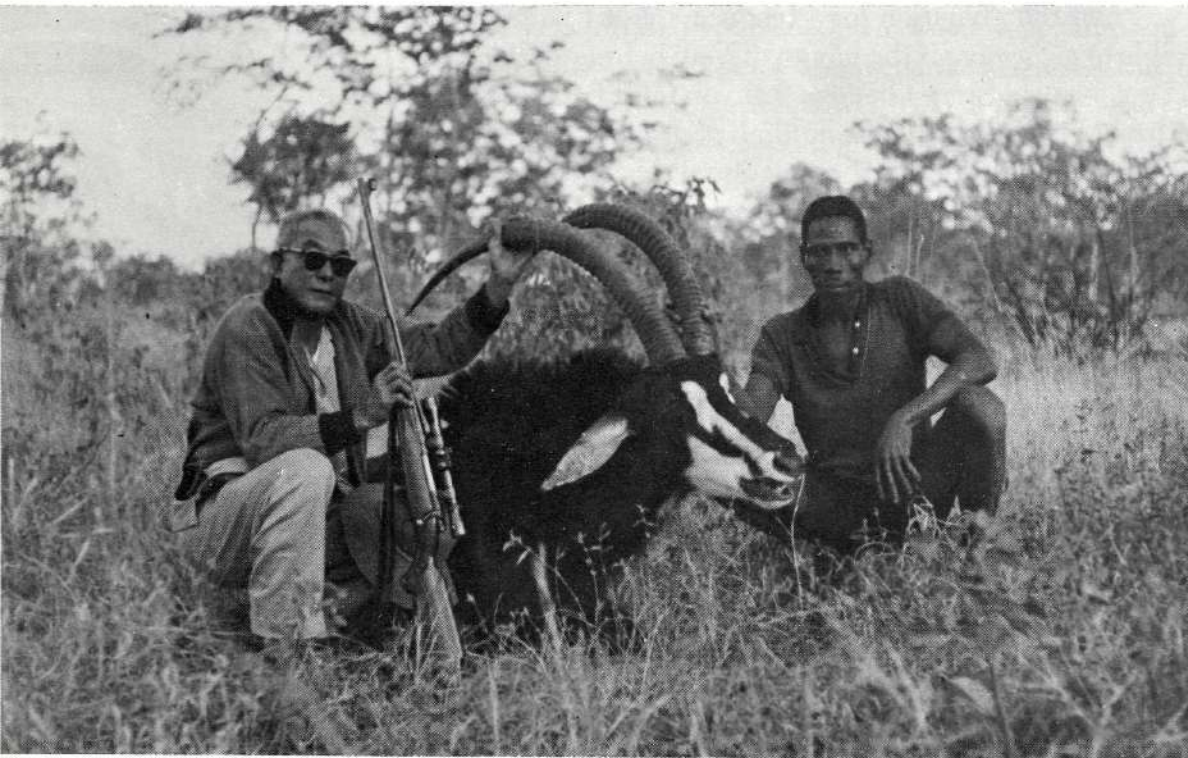
*Big game hunting is a sport one does not naturally associate with an accountant. How did you become a hunter?*

My brother Arturo and I invested some years ago in a cattle ranch in Veraguas. We planned to use it as a base for some modest hunting and target-shooting excursions. But we couldn't keep the cattle ranch in the black, so we sold out the Veraguas stock and went to Africa and India to do our shooting. We started making these trips in 1964. So far we've made three.

*What has been your most exciting kill?*

I think Arturo and I agree that our best adventure was in Africa—when we were on a 30-day hunt out of Beira, Mozambique. We were out with our professional guide, and all of a sudden a water buffalo charged our party.





*Arturo Young  
(left, guide)  
with a sable antelope  
captured in  
Botswana.*

Arturo and I fired our guns as fast as we could. And I think the guide was worried because he had extended what is called a “hunters’ courtesy” and left his gun in the car, allowing Arturo and I to back each other. Well, we were firing as fast as we could, and the guide kept shouting at us, “Shoot! Shoot!”...I don’t know what he thought we were doing. But the animal finally dropped—five yards from where we were standing.

*Are most of your adventures so successful?*

Not at all. There was a time, this was also in Africa, when we were out for kudus—that is an African antelope, quite large, and is grayish-brown and has white markings. We had been out from the main camp for about a week. Nothing. So we gave up and started to drive back to base. Needless to say lunch that day was rather dreary since we hadn’t bagged anything. But a half hour after we started on the road again the driver shouted “kudu!” And there strolling up the road toward us was a big buck with two companions.

The driver tramped on the brakes, and the car stopped in a cloud of dust. We jumped to the ground with our guide and started a barrage of fire as fast as we could work the breechbolts we had. We kept shooting, all three of us, until the antelopes—which of course had started running in the opposite direction as soon as they caught sight of us

—the antelopes had all disappeared safely over the hills about 200 yards away.

And there have been other times when we have spent days, just looking for some animals—like the time we got the elephant—we spent five days trailing the herd.

*What happened on that expedition?*

After we had spent the five days following that herd, we were finally in range and got out of the truck and began stalking the animals. When we do this, we are looking to see which animal we can get, but we also try to get in position to get one that will make the best trophy.

Well, while we were stalking—and I was taking some moving pictures of the herd—there was a shot from somewhere, we don't know where, and the elephants stampeded.

Luckily, they didn't run away from us—and even more fortunately, they didn't run toward us. Instead they ran across the field in front of us.

The guide yelled at me, “Drop your camera! Grab your gun!”

Well of course I swung my gun around and aimed at one of the running beasts.

The guide yelled again, “not that one, get this one over here.”

I kept swinging the gun and fired... and the elephant fell. But right away another elephant, we think it was a female, stopped and raised the fallen one with her trunk and carried it away.

We had to follow those animals all morning until we found them and killed the wounded elephant.

His skull, tusks and footstool are in the museum now.

*I understand you have quite a collection at the National Museum in Panama?*

That's right. We do have a lot of our trophies there. We have a kudu, a gnu—or as it's sometimes called, a wildebeest—hartebeest, Cape buffalo, the antelopes, impala, eland, blue buck. The blue buck is one of the few antelopes found in India.

Then on an expedition I made alone, I have trophies of an Indian elk, spotted deer, a leopard, and a three-foot bat. The bat is called a giant fox in India. It has a wingspread of over three feet. But it isn't a vampire, like other bats. Instead it feeds on fruit.

And we have done some hunting in the United States of America, mostly in Alaska. We got a moose, Alaskan stone sheep, a caribou and a black and Kodiak bear there.