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Recreation: An Answer To
The Golden Age Problem

A Term Paper
Presented in Physical Education 528
Eastern Illinois University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science in Education
Plan B


by
William R. Prince

July, 1962

MILLERS FALLS
ERASE
COTTON CONTENT

This paper has been approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree Master of Science in Education.

APPROVED:


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26 July 1967
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The word 'recreation' is heard quite often today; yet widely different meanings are attributed to it, and it is applied to a great variety of experiences. Recreation is commonly referred to as a type of experience, as a specific form of activity, as an attitude, as an integral part of life, or as a field of work.

Because of the diversity in the use of the word it is desirable at the very beginning of this paper to suggest an answer to the question 'What is recreation?'.

Recreation, according to Butler,¹ may be considered as any form of leisure-time experience or activity in which an individual engages from choice because of the enjoyment and satisfaction which it brings directly to him.

This paper is concerned with recreation for a group of people who may be classified as 'aging'. Meyer² defines aging as an inevitable and natural period of human life characterized by declining energy, loss of earlier adult

¹George D. Butler, Introduction to Community Recreation (2d ed.; New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1949), p. 3.

²Harold D. Meyer and Charles K. Brightbill, Community Recreation (2d ed.; Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1956), p. 384.

roles, marked cosmetic changes, and the onset of disability.

The problem of the older adult is here now but promises to be greater for future generations because of an increasing number of older people, longer life span, and lower retirement ages. In the light of this problem, it was found by the writer that there has been very little research accomplished on this subject. The following source was the most recent found by the writer in searching for substantiation of the above statement:

A limited amount of dependable information exists about elderly people. This lack is evident especially in the area of leisure-time activities and interests. Students of psychiatry, psychology, sociology, and recreation, have deplored this lack of scientific data about the leisure-time pursuits and wishes of older persons.³

The 1948 research planning report of the Social Science Research Council, Social Adjustment in Old Age, states;

The changes affecting the participation of older people in the fields of recreation, education, politics, and religion have received so little attention that the fund of relevant knowledge is hardly sufficient to serve as a basis for making specific research proposals. For the time being, therefore, investigatory efforts in these four institutional fields will have to be largely exploratory.⁴

In the preparation of this paper, the writer has employed research methods of the analytical survey and collaboration of secondary material. Personal inter-

³Leo Chalfen, "Leisure-Time Adjustment of the Aged: II Activities and Interests and Some Factors Influencing Choice," Journal of Genetic Psychology, LXXXVIII (June, 1956), p. 261.

⁴Ibid., citing Social Adjustment in Old Age, p. 153.

views were taken from Mrs. Robert Carey, wife of the Eastern Illinois University basketball coach, and past coordinator of the recreation program for the aged in Charleston, Illinois; Mrs. Gerald Goff, present coordinator of the recreation program for the aged in Charleston, Illinois; and Dr. Rudolph D. Anfinson, Chairman of the Municipal Recreation Board in Charleston, Illinois, concerning that city's program. The writer also reviewed secondary data in the Booth Library under the heading 'Recreation for the Aged' that was noted in the Education Index between the dates of May 1950, and April 1960.

CHAPTER II

THE PROBLEM

"The problem of the older person is becoming more important each day. Even the question of who is old, is a new one. In 1800, a man was old at thirty-five, in 1900, at forty-five, in 1950, at seventy, and it is predicted that in 2000, a man one hundred will not be considered old."⁵

There are four basic facts related to the problem with which the paper is concerned. These facts are as follows:

1. The increasing number of older people in the United States.
2. The increase in the life span of people.
3. The lowering of the retirement age.
4. The creation of new play attitudes in the older people.⁶

These facts are discussed in pointing out the seriousness of the problem.

The first basic fact is that the number of older people in the United States is constantly increasing.

⁵Dr. Jay B. Nash, Philosophy of Recreation and Leisure (St. Louis: The C. V. Mosby Company, 1953), p. 194.

⁶U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, The Nation and its Older People (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961), p. 284.

Today, the men and women who have passed the age of sixty-five number sixteen million persons, or nine percent of the population. These people find themselves arbitrarily classified as 'aged'.⁷ In addition to this, there are another seven million people between sixty and sixty-five years old. Population projections indicate that in ten years there will be almost twenty-eight million persons over sixty. This is not a trend that is going to halt or reverse itself. America, in fact, is faced with a new population explosion at the other end of life's cycle.⁸

The second basic fact of the problem is the increased life span of people today. Advances in the general standard of living, in the field of medicine, and in social services have brought about a longer span of life for a greater number of people. At the turn of the century, an average life span of forty-eight years could be expected for men, and fifty-one years for women. By 1954, those figures rose to sixty-seven and seventy-three respectively. For those who have already reached the age of sixty-five further lengthening of the average life span may be anticipated.⁹

A third fact is that people are spending more time in

⁷Subcommittee on Problems of the Aged and the Aging to the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, U.S. Senate, The Aged and Aging in the United States; A National Problem, Report No. 1121 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1960), p. 5.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Thelma Porter, "Summary of Problems for the Aging," Journal of Home Economics, LII (December, 1960), p. 820.

retirement and a higher percentage of them are retiring at the age of sixty-five. "In 1900, the average man spent two years in retirement. About thirty-five percent of the men over sixty-five were retired in 1900; today, it is about sixty percent. By 1975, it will be seventy-five percent."¹⁰

In many instances, a person is forced to retire due to compulsory retirement rules although he may still be competent in his work and express a desire to continue working. Employment, full or part time is important for today's older people because it relieves them of some of their excess leisure time.¹¹

The White House Conference on Aging in 1961 questioned the principle of compulsory retirement at an arbitrary age and urges consideration of measures incorporating some form of flexibility.¹²

The fourth of the basic facts relating to the problem has to do with developing new play attitudes in the older people. "There is the familiar, oft-quoted saying that 'we do not cease to play because we grow old, but that we grow old because we cease to play.'¹³ The older people of today,

¹⁰Geraldine Novotny and Donald P. Kent, "Physical Activity and the Older Adult," Journal of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation, XXXI (October, 1960), p. 23.

¹¹Committee on Free Time Activities, Background Paper on Free Time Activities (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1960), p. 34.

¹²The Nation and Its Older People, op. cit., p. 140.

¹³Ollie A. Randall, "Need of Recreation for the Aged," Journal of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation, XXII (February, 1951), p. 25.

through their adulthood and maybe even their childhood, have not had the time or the urge to indulge in the usual forms of recreation which are known as 'play'. They must create new attitudes if such indulgence is to be looked upon with favor even though there is at their disposal almost unlimited free time and a much greater amount of energy than is thought to be the case. Most of them have to learn that they are ageless in a very special way. When that lesson has been learned they must then be taught how to play.¹⁴

These four facts are basic to the problem. However, a listing of additional pertinent facts will aid the reader in his understanding of the problems of the older adults. These facts were prepared by the Federal Security Agency at the National Conference on Aging in August of 1950. They were brought out at the Annual Conference on Aging of the University of Michigan and similar meetings throughout the country. The facts are as follows:

1. The age group containing people over sixty-five is increasing at the rate of four hundred thousand per year.
2. Women outnumber men ten to nine.
3. Two out of three of the men are married; more than half of the women are widows.
4. A person at the age of sixty-five has a life expectancy of about thirteen and a half years.
5. About forty percent live in New York, Pennsylvania, California, Ohio, and Illinois.
6. About nineteen out of twenty old folks live in households, and half of these with related persons.
7. The aged move less frequently than younger groups from house to house, county to county, or state to state.
8. In 1947, twenty percent of the men over sixty-five are employed, and nine percent of the women.

¹⁴Ibid.

CHAPTER III

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEM

One answer to the suggested problem is 'preparation for retirement and old age'. If more American people would make adequate plans and preparations for later life, there would be much less of a problem. People should learn to do for themselves and to use foresight in establishing present and future patterns of living. However, America has too many people with the popular notion that after a lifetime of work, one may blissfully enjoy earned leisure time. This notion usually fades rapidly upon retirement, unless that leisure is used for planned constructive endeavors.

"Too many people retire from something rather than to something. Retirement should be an active period of one's life. It should be a time to do things which one was unable to do under the pressure of long working hours. It should never be a lazy man's dream of doing nothing."¹⁶

"The experience of thousands of retired men and women indicates that successful retirement requires study, under-

¹⁶Nash, op. cit., p. 190.

standing, and preparation."¹⁷

In preparing for retirement, one should not overlook the importance of exercise. Exercise is important at any age because aging processes do not wait until the age of sixty or sixty-five to begin. Some form of exercise will help maintain physical health no matter what the age. In support of this statement, Dr. Paul Dudley White, the eminent heart specialist, cited five benefits from exercise. They are:

1. It maintains muscle tone throughout the body, including the heart itself.
2. It provides relaxation by relieving nervous tension and strains, anxiety, and mental concentration.
3. It aids digestion by reducing nervous tension and has a favorable effect on the bowel function.
4. It helps to control obesity, especially a few grams of fat in the wrong places, such as in the walls of the coronary and other important arteries.
5. Deepening of the respiratory improves the function of the lungs.¹⁸

The planning used by the individual for the use of leisure in retirement should be literally a matter of re-creation. Activities should be satisfying and enjoyable but more than mere fun; they should keep the retired person occupied but more than just busy. Through recreation, the retired oldster should realize added zest

¹⁷Ralph M. Grawunder, "Preparation for Retirement," Journal of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation, XXVII (December, 1956), p. 43.

¹⁸Paul Dudley White, "The Role of Exercise in the Aging," Journal of the American Medical Association, CLXV (September 7, 1957), p. 11.

and meaning in life, but these qualities should spring from planned and purposeful activities of real worth.¹⁹

Recreation is very important to the older adult. Through recreation he can be happier and maintain a better mental and physical fitness. Edward J. Stieglitz²⁰ in The Second Forty Years states; "Success or failure in the second forty years, measured in terms of happiness, is determined more by how we use or abuse our leisure time than by any other factor." Dr. William C. Menninger,²¹ famous psychiatrist, says "Recreation is an extremely important aid to growing older gracefully. People who stay young despite their years do so because of an active interest that provides satisfaction through participation."

If one has made adequate individual preparation, he can adjust to his 'life of leisure' with little difficulty. He will usually know what his interests are and know how and where to pursue them. However, most of the older adults have not planned ahead and as a result have nothing but idle time in their later years. It is for these people that we must furnish some type of recreation. The following quotation gives some indication as to what is being done to meet the recreational needs of the older adult;

¹⁹Grawunder, op. cit., p. 43.

²⁰Meyer and Brightbill, op. cit., p. 383.

²¹Ibid.

The community recreation structure must give increased attention to the recreation needs of older people for only a small group, less than one hundred thousand, is in old peoples' homes. Recreation is no less important than food and shelter for older people. A number of recreation agencies are experimenting with programs for those past sixty and some have sound programs well established. Professional recreation training schools are giving attention to the needs of this group in the preparation of prospective recreation leaders. An excellent example of recreation services that can be provided for older people is afforded by a score of clubs and programs developed in Cleveland by the Benjamin Rose Institute.²²

In providing activities for the aged through the recreation program, one should always keep in mind the fact that the dignity of the person must be maintained. Unless dignity is maintained, the older individual loses status and hence, opportunity for mature service and satisfaction.

Another source of recreation for the older people can be found in the organizations of older people. These organizations usually require individuals to be a certain age before accepting them as members. In the case of the Golden Age Club, which is one of the more popular of these organizations, that age is sixty or over. "The Golden Age Clubs which are springing up all over the country emphasize what can be done. Something to do, a group to belong to, keeping busy, and having fun are the guiding principles. The results are astonishing. There are few, if any, admissions from these clubs to mental

²²Gerald B. Fitzgerald, Community Organization for Recreation (New York: A. S. Barnes and Company, 1948), p. 114.

hospitals. It is stated by authorities that sixty to seventy percent of older people in hospitals should never have been sent there and should not stay there. These people need stimulating recreational activities in a friendly atmosphere."²³

These organizations for older people can be found throughout the country. Some of the various names are; The Happy Hour Club, Oldsters, Mature Americans, Senior Citizens, XYZ Club (Extra Years of Zest), Half-century Club, Three-Quarter Century Club, Three Score and Ten Club, and the Fossils (where membership is composed only of scientists and retired technicians).

The following letter received by the Department of Municipal Recreation of the Milwaukee Public Schools is typical of the numerous letters written by older adults who have taken advantage of the opportunities provided them for free activity:

There has never been a dull moment in my life since I joined the Golden Agers. I have met the most wonderful people. They are full of laughter and fun. A friendly welcome greets you as soon as you enter your group. A handshake here, a squeeze there; your heart bubbles over with joy when you see how much you are wanted.²⁴

Community recreation should establish centers for the older adult whenever possible and set aside an area for older people on the playground. A small, secluded area should be set aside for this age group, away from the noisy

²³Nash, op. cit., p. 194.

²⁴Williams, op. cit., p. 6.

wading pool, apparatus, and low organized game areas and near the courts for such games as shuffleboard, horseshoes, bocce, and roque. It should be shaded and generously provided with comfortable benches and tables for quiet games.²⁵

In establishing a recreation program for the older adult, the following procedures have been found most useful:

1. Appoint a recreation committee to plan and direct the recreation program of the organization.
2. Give the members responsibility for planning and carrying on the program, which should be of their own choosing and not something handed down to them.
3. Plan the recreation program around the interests of the members.
4. In the talent file, list members who can serve as entertainers, singers, ventriloquists, song leaders, or dramatic coaches - to name only a few.
5. Encourage these individuals and all members to develop skills which can be used in the program.
6. As interest in specific activities develops, encourage the organization of clubs.²⁶

Recreation leaders, educators, researchers, and legislatures need to establish a team approach toward making retirement a life-fulfilling experience for individuals and an asset for society.

²⁵Butler, op. cit., p. 181.

²⁶National Recreation Association, Recreation Activities for Adults (New York: Association Press, 1950), p. 2.

CHAPTER IV

THE CHARLESTON PROGRAM

The Charleston Recreation for the Aged Program is one of the few programs of its kind now operating in Central Illinois. The writer feels that by inserting this section into the paper, some idea may be obtained as to the organization and administration of this type of program.

The data used in describing this program was obtained during interviews with Mrs. Robert Carey, past chairman of the program; Mrs. Gerald Goff, present director of the program; and Dr. Ruldolph D. Anfinson, Chairman of the Municipal Recreation Board in Charleston.

The first meeting, for the purpose of organization of the program for the aged, was held in December of 1960. The people instrumental in the origination of the program were Mrs. Carey and Mr. Webb's Norman, City Recreation Director of Charleston. Mr. Norman had experienced this type of program in Moline, Illinois, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin; where he worked with the senior citizens groups.

There are three administrators of the program; one coordinator and two assistant coordinators. These three are the only salaried persons. The coordinator does all of the contacting and organizing, while one assistant does the buying and delivering of supplies, and the other

assistant keeps the records.

The Kiwanis Club donated five hundred dollars in order to get the program started. However, this money was soon used and a committee approached the Municipal Recreation Council for finances in support of the program. The Council had limited funds but the community pressure was so strong that they were forced to furnish the funds. The program operates on a budget of approximately two hundred dollars a month with about sixty-four percent of this total going to leadership and the remainder for supplies.

The first effort of the program was to establish a center or club for the older people in which they could participate in various recreational activities. This, unfortunately, was a failure as only a small number of people attended. Reasons given for this failure were the weather, which was wintery, and the fact that the program was not accepted as well as had been anticipated. The program still carries this center as one of its goals.

After this initial failure, the program was redirected toward providing recreational opportunities for the various boarding and nursing homes for older people. Charleston has ten nursing homes and three boarding homes. The boarding homes will not admit the ill and handicapped but the nursing homes will admit this type of person as well as the healthy older adult. Mrs. Carey estimated there were three hundred people in the homes and out of those three hundred there were one hundred fifty participants.

At the beginning of the program, it was hoped that

older people in the community that were not in the nursing or boarding homes could be served, but they would not go into the homes. Apparently, most of them didn't want to associate with the homes in any way.

The reaction of the community toward the program was favorable from the very onset but the people in the homes were very cool at first. However, the program was gradually accepted by them and now they are very enthusiastic about participating.

The people in the homes enjoy having the activity leaders guess their ages. Most of them will range from seventy to eighty years of age. However, there are a few exceptions such as one woman, in one of the homes, who is only thirty years of age.

In establishing the recreation program in the homes, the operator of the home was contacted first. In every instance, except one, the operators welcomed the starting of this program in their homes. When the operators were cooperative the nurses also gave their support of the program.

The program started at the Hilltop Rest Home and another home was added each month. In each new home the workers found new needs had to be determined and met.

The program is arranged so that one activity leader and two to four assistants visit the homes every Thursday between the hours of two and four P.M. The activity leader and her assistants are volunteer help. The program

has approximately three hundred volunteers and the number is still growing. Not all of the volunteers go to the homes. Some bake cookies or set up crafts. The local Kiwanis Club sponsors a banquet for the volunteers to show their appreciation for the work that they have done.

If the volunteers cannot attend a home during a certain week, special interest groups visit the homes in their place. Thus far, the special interest groups aiding the program have been accordian players, singers and singing groups, persons showing slides, and on one occasion a group of high school girls visited one of the homes and demonstrated some cheers.

The volunteer workers that go to the homes lead and demonstrate to the participants various activities. Among the activities which seem to be most favored are:

- (1) Games (bingo, checkers, cards, dominoes, and crossword puzzles).
- (2) Singing (This is one of their favorite activities).
- (3) Crafts (the crafts are kept simple; this activity may be therapeutic for some). Many times the finished crafts may be given to a children's home. The oldsters like the idea of doing something for somebody else. The local shoe company donates all of the leather for the leather crafts.
- (4) Automobile rides (there were only seventeen who could partake in this activity; some of these, however, had not been out of the home for two or three years). A release and indemnity agreement must be signed before participation in this activity can occur. This release is shown in Appendix A.
- (5) On special occasions, such as Easter or Christmas, all homes are visited and favors, prepared by the volunteers, are given to the oldsters.

Local groups and organizations have been contacted

in the hope that they will volunteer their services to the program. Through participating, these groups will perhaps be made more aware of the problem and will give more encouragement and strength to the program. A letter to these organizations listing ways in which they can help is shown in Appendix B.

Mrs. Carey, Mrs. Goff, and Dr. Anfinson all displayed enthusiasm for the program. Dr. Anfinson felt that the program has been very successful despite the fact that they have operated with limited funds and facilities.

The primary goal in mind at the present time is to have a community recreation center with crafts and games for older people but at the present time there is a lack of funds.

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ERASE
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CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

In doing the examination of the material for this paper, the writer has developed a much deeper insight into the problems concerning the aged and what is being done to solve these problems.

America is not yet fully aware of the problem that is confronting them. This awareness is going to have to be developed before it is too late. We seem to ignore the fact that life is a continuing stream from the cradle to the grave and what we do in one life period is largely determined by what has gone on before and in turn determines to a great extent what we do in the following years.

With the increase in number of aged, increase of life span, and increase in number of retirements, time is a very important element.

The Federal Government attempted to emphasize recreation for the aged in the White House Conference on the Aging held January 9-12, 1961. This should have a great amount of influence in the organization of these types of programs.

The best way to care for the leisure time of this older group is through recreational activities. Organized

free-time activity programs for the aging are growing but still reach only a small percentage of older people and for too little time. A great deal more needs to be done.

It is the hope that through this paper, an awareness may be more fully developed in regard to the problem.

In any event, at least one of the objectives of the paper has been achieved. That objective being to strengthen the writers knowledge in the field of recreation for the older adult.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

RELEASE AND INDEMNITY AGREEMENT

For and in consideration of our desire to aid in a program of recreation for all ages in the City of Charleston, Illinois, and in consideration of the Recreation Board of the City of Charleston, a public corporation, making available a recreation program for Senior Citizens of said City, thereby permitting me and others similarly situated an opportunity to participate in said Recreation Program, which consideration we hereby acknowledge to be good, legal, and sufficient, I do fully, completely, and forever release and discharge the Recreation Board of the City of Charleston, The City of Charleston, a public corporation, and their officers, agents, servants, volunteers and employees, and each of them, from any and all claims, demands, and choses in action of whatever nature which I may have, assert, or acquire against them, or any of them, and from any and all liability of whatever nature, which they, or any of them, may be or become under to me, in consequence of any injury, loss, or damage sustained by me while I am a guest of any of them or an participating in any Recreation Program sponsored by them or any of them.

Further, for said consideration, I covenant with said Recreation Board and City of Charleston, their officers, agents, servants, volunteers and employees, and each of them

that I will forever fully indemnify them, and each of them, and hold them, and each of them, harmless from any liability whatsoever which they, or any of them, may be or become under to me and from any and all claims, demands, and choses in action of whatever nature which I may have, assert, or acquire against them, or any or them, on account of any injury, damage, or loss to my person and or property occurring while I am such guest or am so participating.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I do hereby set my hand and seal this

_____ day of _____, A.D. 196_

Signature (SEAL)

APPENDIX B

CHARLESTON PLAYGROUND

AND

RECREATION COMMITTEE

September, 1961

Dear Friends of the Nursing Home Program:

As was promised in the Public Forum in the Courier-News recently, the Playground and Recreation Committee wishes to bring to your organization these ideas for your consideration. Charleston has seven nursing homes which are visited each week, so there is a need for many programs. Perhaps your group will want to volunteer for one home once a month, or choose a special observance during the year. A program such as this must be co-ordinated; therefore, we ask that your Community Service Chairman or appointed Chairman please contact me.

There are many ways in which your group can help. The Committee presents these ideas for your consideration.

1. Be responsible for the complete monthly birthday party at one home. We have names and dates.

2. Choose one of the festive days and plan a party or program.

3. Make a special treat for one entire home once a month or furnish cookies for the weekly program.

4. Bring one of your especially nice programs to the homes.

5. Plan to take the senior citizens who are able to church. Present with a corsage or boutonniere.

6. Develop an individual craft - such as basket weaving - something not too messy.

7. One person be responsible for news from one home once a month to use in a Senior Citizens newspaper.

8. Collect all news items and publish a small newspaper.

9. Be responsible for the decoration of one home for the holiday season.

10. As a club, sponsor a special program for all senior citizens. Choose a central place. The committee has ideas and suggestions.

11. Have a bake sale or something similar to raise money for the program.

12. Purchase small appropriate items to be used for gifts for special occasions.

The committee welcomes any suggestions your organization may have. Will you help in making this program successful? We are counting on you.

The yearly program is now being planned. The committee would appreciate it if your organization would choose a program it wishes to carry out and then call the co-ordinator and have it recorded.

The volunteers who form the nucleus of the program will be very happy to cooperate with your organization to make the

program successful. You may be sure that any happiness which can be brought to the senior citizens will be appreciated.

Yours for your fellowman and may your day be happier for helping.

(Mrs.) Maxine Goff, Planning Co-ordinator
Playground and Recreation Committee

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