

1933

## EC5505 Hobbies

Newton W. Gaines

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Nebraska  
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK  
IN AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS  
1933 U. of N. Agr. College & U. S. Dept. of Agr. Cooperating  
W. H. Brokaw, Director, Lincoln Extension  
Circular  
5505

HOBBIES  
by Newton W. Gaines

We should take life in a sporting spirit. The world would be much better off if folks lived more for the fun of it - not hilariously, but joyously.

God didn't make play a necessity in a child's life with the idea of having that child forget how to play when he grew older.

The purpose of life is happiness for the individual and for the many.

Plenty of work well done, plenty of play entered into with pleasure - all sprinkled with sympathy and service, and spiced with one or more hobbies, ought to bring happiness and contentment.

There are too many people who have the idea that one should think of nothing but work. They seem to believe that he who does not go at top speed most of the time is an unimportant person in the community. We might say, "Top speed for whom?" They mean for self. To interpret what they are thinking it would be, "I work for me and my family and make money for us -- that's success." But really, is it the right kind of success? When the preacher speaks the last words over us on the final day, it'll be a tough break for him if he hasn't anything to say but that Mr. B - was a hard worker and made money. That he was so busy he had very little time to enjoy himself and no time to help his neighbors enjoy themselves. How is such a man going to build himself into the heart of the community? And when such a person grows old his life is often a tragedy. He hasn't learned to play. He has scorned hobbies. He's snorted at and ridiculed the fellow who made a hobby of his church or his lodge, or his service club, or an occasional round of golf or baseball, or helping the kids make things to play with or a flower garden, or playing in the local band. His measure of life is money and material things. Every man should try to make money. He who has no money is poor but he who has nothing but money is worse off.

It's a tragedy to grow old not having adopted some hobby; something that will clear the cobwebs of worry and unpleasantness and grind of our work out of our minds and cause us, for a little while just to forget the idea of grasping for anything and even to forget time itself. Do you remember when mother used to let you go over to a chum's home to play just one hour, and you so lost yourself in play that you'd been there two or three hours when mother's voice called you back to a world of responsibility and reality. That three hours of play wasn't three hours to you. It wasn't even one hour. Time ceased to exist. You were just completely lost to the whole world outside - nothing else made any difference. That's what a hobby will do for a person. True, we have a lot of folks out of a job now and who don't know where the next day's meals are to come from, who can't indulge in their hobbies, yet from this terrible world-wide calamity of forced idleness, many have discovered hobbies. The popularity of the jig-saw puzzle and the various other types of puzzles was only the outgrowth of a condition in which folks just had to do something to keep from going crazy. I know a worthy fellow who was out of work one whole year. He and his wife would read a while and then play cards until both were tired out. Then she'd play the piano while he played solitaire. Next they'd work on the construction of a jig-saw puzzle or some type of mechanical puzzle. It was just something to do to keep from thinking of their industrial plight. Some people who are working, worry entirely too much during recreation hours about how they will live when they grow old or when they will die, or whether they have something seriously wrong with them or whether or not they need an operation. They are the type of people who just "set and think" during recreation hour. There is still another type who just "set". The latter are too lifeless to need a hobby to keep them from worry. They don't even think about worrying.

There is so much in habit. The man who never busies himself with any type of recreation or with hobbies during his spare time may form the habit of thinking on things about which to find fault. Thus he collects criticism cobwebs in his habits and grows pessimistic and becomes miserable company for himself and everybody else as he grows old.

Surely everybody should have a hobby. Can't you go to a baseball game and forget the hot sun and cramped position on the ground and the work you've just left and must go back to tomorrow? Maybe you can't with baseball but if you can't there should be something else that would do just that thing to you. Everybody needs some

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such absorbing interest in something away from his daily routine of life and work. If we have no hobbies during our busy years we should at least keep our attitude toward all types of recreation such that we can quite easily fall in line with a few favorite hobbies when the time comes to quit working.

As one grows older and friends and loved ones and companions leave, and one by one we drift apart, bitter loneliness lies ahead unless we have some interesting activity to turn to for leisure and pleasure.

Some folks are fortunate in that certain things connected with their work are hobbies. One woman has a reputation for making the best Angel Food cake in the whole country-side. To another it may be some other enjoyable activity about the home. I remember one woman of my boyhood days who always had a jar of homemade cookies such as boys like, and out came that cookie jar every time a boy hove in sight. She got more fun out of it than even the boys themselves. She watched for their coming and she smilingly marked their going as a group of them, cookies in hand, tramped out of the gate, down toward the old swimming hole. Cookies were that woman's hobby and I used to think that, at the end of life she'd meet the boys at the Pearly Gates with that smile on her face and that cookie jar under her arm. And I still think, Peter couldn't have a better person to head his reception committee.

I know a lawyer who comes from his hard fought cases in the court room to his flower garden, which he cherishes almost more than he does his lucrative law practice. I can see that man just living in that garden when time makes it necessary for him to lay down his law books. And then his real fun will begin. Contrast him with another lawyer I know who doesn't accomplish any more at law, but who never has the time to even mow the lawn or notice his own children and who quiets the house as soon as the evening meal is over, because he has to study and think about his law cases -- no hobby, no outside interest, no special companionships -- Oh, it's a tragic thing to find a man who takes himself so selfishly serious in the world. Such a one never can let down even when the time comes and if he does finally have to throw aside his law books, he'll fret and fume, and bitterness and remorse will just burn his heart out and few will mourn when he's gone. Folks, it's just a tragedy to be without some hobby that we can ease off into when life's struggle for position and money is over. We should be ready to really live and have our fun when this time comes.

Some people take their religion too seriously to get any fun out of it. In olden times they held religious festivals and celebrations of joy. They rejoiced in the Lord. They sang songs of praise and danced for joy. They got fun out of their religion. Going to church on Sunday should not only be a duty, it should be a hobby. I once knew an old gentleman, ninety-four, whose one aim was to live his religion every week day, and Sunday was his one hobby day when he ceased his religious activities while he enjoyed his Sunday School Class and his Church. Just to be around him was a benediction and an inspiration and in money, as well as other things, he was the richest man in his county when he retired, and he retired twenty-five years before his death because it was not a hobby of his to be the richest man in the cemetery as well as in the county.

If we like our work well enough that our job is really play, we may not need a hobby until in later life. And he who knows how to make play, not slavery, out of his work will know how to discover an old man's hobby when that time has come.

To some women, getting a big dinner or having all the relatives in for Thanksgiving is a hobby mighty worth while. Do you remember some neighbors you and your wife stopped in to see on business and when five o'clock came the neighbor's wife slipped out of the room for a few minutes. She returned to the parlor a little later and when she found you getting ready to leave, she said, "sit right down. I've got supper on the stove right now. It'll just take a few minutes and we want you to stay." And they did want you, and it was a feast of good will and good cheer along with the splendid food. Of course, this isn't the day of big home cooked meals being a hobby but there are other things equally as important in people's make-up.

I've been telling of the type of hobbies folks have that go along with their work. Let's look about us and see if there isn't some hobby we have that's a real joy. Maybe it's making a freezer of home made ice cream and having some folks in after supper; or getting together a few people for a little, hurriedly prepared picnic supper down by the creek or in the near-by town park, each one bringing some contribution to the meal. Maybe it's your hobby to watch and listen for news of a sick neighbor and then to hustle out all the farmers round about and rush them over to plow his field or husk his corn; or it might be to get the women folks together and hie yourselves over to Martha's for a quilting bee; or to some it might be suppers for the Ladies Aid or a barrel of clothing or food for the needy. Any of these are worth while hobbies if they give you an inexpressible pleasure and also serve somebody else and make them happy. Let's have some type of community hobby that will be known and appreciated thruout the community.

I know a number of women in the state who make it a hobby to go to a Mothers' Vacation Camp once a year or to see that some other woman is given an opportunity to attend. Maybe you could arrange with someone to help take care of some tired mother's two or three small children while she went to one of these three-day camps - to hear many good things and to make things that are a different task than her everyday work and to eat food cooked by somebody else. Why, out there at camp they play quiet games if they wish and hilarious ones if they prefer. Someone calls them to dinner and in the morning even though they feel like getting up early they don't have to. Three days of this and that mother would be longing to get back to her children. And the one whose hobby helped her to get away will go to sleep for quite a few nights thereafter with an inexpressible inward feeling of satisfaction with herself and she'll waken up in the morning hardly knowing why she feels so contented with life, until it flashes across her mind how happy she made this one little woman by her own self denial. Wouldn't we have great camps next year if every community sent even one such mother.

Think over your own activities and discover a hobby you have or that you can develop and then really go at making a success of it. I used to know a community that had an old swimming hole surrounded by trees. They cleaned it out and on the bank they built two cheap dressing rooms. Every Friday evening through the summer the women folks took supper over and the men came, sometimes right from the field, to the picnic supper and a good swim. That was that community's hobby. Those folks were taking time to live as they went along. Try to estimate the value of such neighborliness as grows up through helping one who needs it and of playing with those whose everyday problems are just like yours. Certain hobbies may be detrimental or beneficial, depending on whether they are carried out in a spirit of good will or with selfish motives back of the so-called enjoyment.



I know many folks who make playing of cards a sociable, enjoyable pastime for all who are in the game. They joke each other and banter back and forth and once in a while stop to comment on some problem of the day or to relate some incident. If there is a stranger sitting in, he soon feels as if he were one of them. I also know women whose hobby is cards but who play only to win. They frown upon a poor player and are critical toward a partner. They have only one aim and that is to beat the other fellow. It's a type of bigotry that becomes almost a disease. And when they win they feel that the thrill of it is the crowning glory of a half day well spent. Such folks are slaves to a bad hobby -- and how the majority of the women in the game do dislike them. And such a hobby causes such a lady herself, more misery than it gives pleasure. In fact none of it is pleasure. It's just self-centered gratification at beating somebody else. It's the same type of greed that goes along with the fellow who gets rich by taking it from others and thinks it's pleasure.

Some people choose as their hobby the adopting of some social cause such as temperance, or welfare work, or clean-up campaigns and such, and fortunate is the one who can enter whole heartedly into such work and still not be a fanatic.

Music and dramatics for the home and community are mighty worth while hobbies. One doesn't need to be a teacher of either to make a hobby of it. Just get the feel of what it would mean to your community to have a community teacher to lead a chorus or a band or orchestra, or some good leader to coach separate groups for a play each month. When you are sold on the idea, hunt your teacher or leader and get your community stirred up. A way can always be found to bring things about if one keeps right at it and won't give up. Another thing the country needs as it never needed before is people who will take as their hobby the "Rural Church or Sunday School in our community." The rural community is suffering more than we think from lack of interest and pride in any church anywhere. Some of the folks attend church in town but generally the town folks carry all the responsibilities and manage everything in the way of plans for religious meetings and picnics and socials and such. Those are the side issues of religion which become people's hobbies in connection with their religious life. The country needs them. Just take time to run over in your mind the percentage of your community who are church workers. You may be surprised. The country's best communities support their church and try to build the community into its activities and also they try to lead their church into a real interest in the activities of the community.

A hobby should furnish enjoyment, pleasure and diversion. It should relieve the strain of life and thereby put us in a better mood to make other people happy. It should help us to help others. Too many folks think that leisure hours devoted to excitable pleasure or self indulgence in something that will help them to kill time and break the monotony is worth while. Generally it is not. Too often we are just getting ourselves into that condition in which everything is monotony that is not excitable.

A hobby that would make many people happy would be that of making friends. To make a friend one must be a friend, must become interested in people and learn to get a kick out of association with them according to their ability to appreciate and to be appreciated. Black or white, rich or poor, good or bad, clerks or proprietors, laborer or executive -- they're not so different in their reaction on friendship when touched by the right friendly approach. Some day when you are starting out to spend fifty cents on yourself for some selfish pleasure and a fellow asks you for a dime - invite him into a restaurant for a meal with you and enjoy his attitude toward you and what you've done. One must study folks - know when and how to talk to them - not

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spending much time telling them about yourself and your experiences but leading them to talk about their affairs and thus find unselfish things to talk about in common. Good conversation doesn't have so much to do with individuals and what happens to them as it has to do with hopes and aspirations and theories on different things in life. To get the spirit-of-friendliness idea, you should go to your public library and get Grayson's "The Friendly Road". Don't read it like you read fiction. But read a little each day. It has something no other book has. Then you'll want to read some of Grayson's other books. They'll fill you with the idea of making friendship a hobby and taking time to live as you go along.

My mother's hobby, up to the day of her death, was reading - generally fiction. She used to say that a good book helped her to be happy while she was performing an unpleasant task. This is the way she explained it. "I'll be all tired out with the work I'm doing when all at once a ray of sunshine flashes across my mind. I feel the thrill of it and yet can hardly figure out what caused it. But on second thought I find it had passed, almost unrecognized through my mind that when this task is over I can take time to read the outcome of that interesting episode in my book."

Let's make reading a hobby.

Below are given a list of hobbies. Study them and pick your hobby or something that you find you have a special liking for and you may decide to develop a hobby.

Entering into or watching baseball, basket ball, football, swimming, skating, croquet, golf, tennis, dancing, athletics, planning parlor games, table games, field games, wrestling, etc.

Other things that may become beneficial hobbies are:

Music (for one's own pleasure or for the community good -- vocal or various instruments.)

Dramatics	Hiking clubs
Reading	Boy Scouts
Book clubs	Girl Scouts
Magazine clubs	Reserves
Picture study	Boys and Girls Clubs
Relics clubs	Farm Organizations
Kodak clubs	

A lot of women have been a real uplift influence in their community because they took Rural Women's Club Project work as a hobby.

We need some people who will attempt to develop a hobby of gathering young and old around the piano in somebody's home to have a good old time type of sing. Seth Parker typifies this over the radio.

One may be interested in crocheting, knitting, making baskets, filling a scrap book with recipes, poems, happenings, cartoons, jokes, quotations, quilting, making rugs, etc.

A good asset to any community would be a few people who were always on the lookout for indications of special talent in the children of the community and planning to interest them in making it possible to develop that talent.



If you enjoy seeing young folks do worth while things and want to help them become interested in fixing up their home and farmstead, organize a Boys and Girls Fix-It Club. It's a real hobby and you'll get <sup>as</sup> much fun out of it as they get. One father reported that this year was the first time he ever saw when there wasn't a thing around the place that needed fixing. His boy and girl were in a Fix-It Club.

Some have one or more of the following hobbies, any of which more and more people should become interested in:

- Vegetable gardens
- Flower gardens
- Rock gardens
- Trees and shrubbery
- Bird study, feeding and shelter
- Landscaping

Some one should develop almost a mania of furnishing a place where boys can gather and read and wrestle and talk and develop themselves. There should also be another room for girls of the community.

Fishing and general vacations are real hobbies. A person needs to get away and get out where he can indulge and encourage laziness for a few days. Just get -

- Too tired to work
- Too tired to walk
- Too tired to play
- Too tired to talk
- Too tired to growl
- Too tired to cry
- Too tired to even try
- Too tired to wish
- Just-tired-enough-to-fish.

Let's not forget to play, and to see that there is plenty of planning for our children's play. To us older folks, play may be a luxury but to the child, play is a necessity and to him or her, it's really quite serious. The little girls playing house are not hilarious. To them it's real. The boys playing at riding horses or running a train are very serious in what they are doing. A man's hobby is often taken seriously but it's the thing he likes to do and that makes it interesting and restful.

Children begin early to play quite independently. The baby soon after birth, begins to play with mother. Then later if he gets in the dust or sand he begins to pick it up and watch it fall. A sand box or table should be an early play-thing. Then follows the time when he pounds on his chair with the spoon - more play. Then a little later the little girl wants to make things and mud pies are the result. Through it all they should have a variety of simple toys - spoons, balls, bean bags, colored sticks to stick up in the sand for fences, blocks, pencils, water colors, crayons, and blackboards. Study your child as he plays at his various games and see what line of play becomes almost a hobby with him. Encourage him in these things as it will mean more to his life.



Recreational Material

Extension Circulars 501, 524, 540, 542, 546, 551.

Ask your County Extension Agent for the above circulars. If you have no agent, write to the State Leader in Women's Work, Agricultural College, Lincoln.

Play Ground Material

Write Children's Bureau, U. S. Department of Labor, Washington, D. C. and ask for "Backyard Playgrounds Folder No. 2." (No charge).

"Home Made Play Apparatus for the Rural Play Grounds." Berea College Academy, Berea, Kentucky.

Get these from your local library:

- Becker - Books as Windows
- Bowles - Home Made Rugs
- Caffin - How to Study Pictures
- Collins - Amateur Photographer's Handbook
- Cotter - A Simple Guide to Rock Gardening
- Farwell - Village Improvement
- Faulkner - What we Hear in Music
- Rogers - The Fine Art of Reading
- Walker - Home Craft Rugs
- Wilder - Adventures in my Garden and Rock Garden
- Webster - Quilts: Their Story and How to Make Them

Write Mrs. McElroy for list of books for Boys and Girls Clubs and Their Leaders, Leaflet No. B-O-5. Or an outline for a bird club, Leaflet No. B-O-4. Two cent stamp for each leaflet requested and a stamped self-addressed envelope. Address Club Department Editor, Better Homes & Gardens, Des Moines, Iowa.

As a closing suggestion I would say "Let's study ourselves - our likes and dislikes - and maybe we will dig up a hobby we hadn't thought of before. Get in touch with your Agricultural Extension. Your plans may be such a nature that some of their material will help you to develop your hobby."