

Part I: Oncoming "Leisure Era": How We are Getting There

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For decades I have been lecturing and publishing about the onset of an impending leisure era brought about by enormous decreases in work, longer retirements, labor-saving reductions in household chores, advances in health care, onslaught of genetic fixes, extension of life expectancy overall, and other advances that assure continuing increases in "leisure time." Now retired from the active workforce and living in a retirement community, I have gained new perspectives based on living the role. Conclusions remain the same. An exposition of how this nation got there and what it means is related in this article, the first in a series of two that highlight trends thrusting advanced countries ever closer to a period of time when leisure dominates lifetime activities.

Longer life expectancies, less time at work, fewer children per household, time-saving appliances, convenience of prepared foods and eating away from home, profusion of third party service providers for every task imaginable, and speedier transport to get people around sums it all up. Those highlights round out the basic and cumulative account of time savings that are accruing. Compared to earlier times, when just getting along was a full-time preoccupation, these developments will profoundly change advanced nations.

These remarks commence by reviewing how steadily advancing life expectancies and avid consumption of innumerable time-saving goods and services – ones that Americans take for granted – have made possible enormous increases in leisure time. The second part describes how time spent on the job providing for one's keep continue to decline. The offshoot is the time gained that makes way for still more "free time." Times have dramatically changed. It's time to acknowledge this extraordinary but largely unheralded transformation.

Longer Lifespans Increase Leisure Time

Humans verge on a longevity revolution. Lifespans in America and elsewhere, so far, already have quadrupled. Longevity increased from 18 years in BC 1 to 77.6 years in the U.S. as of 2003. That increase amounts to a "fourth lease on life." Currently, the longest authenticated human lifespan is 121 years. All things considered, it isn't too much of a stretch to imagine that lifespans could reach 80 years by 2030; 95 years by 2100; and 130-160 years by 3000. Bio-tech/life science advances and lifestyle changes will account for most of these impending increases. These trends toward this end are indelibly imprinted on "things yet to come."

People are living longer. Hard as it may be to believe, an estimated two-thirds of human beings 65 years of age and older that ever lived on this planet are alive today! Trends portray and convincingly corroborate the graying of America's population.

Aging is likely to get some major jolts ahead in the near future. Bio-tech "tune ups" loom large – resetting molecular clocks governing aging (telomeres that regulate an enzyme, telomerase); cloning or replacing body parts; refortifying senescent brains; rejuvenating genetically-engineered hormones; regenerating new cells and molecules; and flushing out tube-clogging plaque. These are just a few of the looming possibilities life sciences bring to bear.

Development of vaccines and immunizations have saved countless lives over centuries. Beyond replacement with natural human organs, replacement with artificial parts is underway. These trends will grow, especially as bio-tech provides all kinds of near-magic solutions to replacing and repairing most every part of the human body. Resulting extensions of life expectancy increase the amount of leisure time available over a lifetime.

Public safety advances contribute significantly to the increase in leisure time. Public health and fire protection forces not only save lives, they also contribute significantly to increased life expectancies overall. By eliminating premature deaths for a host of various accidental possibilities, life expectancies become the beneficiary.

Almost anywhere one looks, life-extending changes that entail time-savings of one sort or another that add to potentially available leisure time can be discerned.

How Americans spend a lifetime depends upon how activities are tallied. In broad strokes, persons living an average of 75-80 years center the first 18-25 years learning and getting an education, the next 35-40 years are concentrated of jobs and earning a livelihood, and the remaining 15-20 years or more focus on retirement.

Household and Family Time Savings

In years bygone, one job supported up to 10-12 persons. Now two workers per household augment the ability to support much smaller families. The contemporary generation is likely to marry later in life than their forbearers. Many couples will postpone having only one or two children (or none). If they do elect to have children, some in desperate efforts to save personal time for themselves, will procure surrogate wombs, wet nurses, nannies and child minders to relieve time-consuming obligations of parenthood.

Before leaving the subject of marriage and children, the potential time savings involved in putting off marriage to later in life deserves consideration. One gauge basic to such calculations entails the later and later median age at first marriage. The later in life persons marry, the fewer children they are likely to conceive. Decisions to have fewer or no children increases a couple's available leisure time. Rearing large families is a time-consuming effort. During Colonial times the larger number of persons per household provided many hands to share the workload of domestic duties and maintenance. Over the years, the number of persons per household has steadily shrunk, decreasing from 5-7 persons during Colonial times, to 4.76 in 1900, 2.64 at the end of 1997, and may decline to 2.35 by 2020, and further still to 2.1 by 2050. These changes alter how much time per household is available for leisure.

Until recently, women passively accepted the number of children "willed by God." The situation changed when contraceptives, outlawed for centuries, became widely available. Amniocentesis, available since 1952, and enhanced fetal visualization, abortion, lab-assisted fertility and genetic screening, "test-tube" babies (since Louise Joy Brown was born in 1978), in utero surgery (first reported in 1981), genetic therapies, and surgical sterilization are among explicit developments and trends that portend fewer children. These developments bolster capabilities for controlling family size and limiting time devoted to raising families.

Financial limitations and considerations provide powerful incentives for couples to limit the number of children. Given the hedonistic desires to indulge oneself, pressures to lavish spending on "keeping up with the Joneses," and a penchant to want more time for personal pursuits – aided and abetted by family planning – relegates decisions to have and to rear children an option.

All things considered, the cost of raising, educating, and marrying off offspring can cost far more than parents ever pause to think about. Methods for calculating these costs vary. USDA's 2004 survey pegged rearing costs to age 17 at \$269,520 for families earning \$70,200 or more, and \$284,460 for urban areas. Affluent families heap a growing array of "mega-outlays" on their offspring. In no small measure, the succession of these outlays throughout "growing up" contributes to controlling and limiting the number of offspring. For growing numbers, the decision is not to have any children simply because that leaves more time and money to pursue ones own interests.

Labor Saving/Time Saving Technologies

Time savings in household operation and maintenance figure prominently in the availability of "spare time." Numerous tasks used to require the better part of a day to accomplish. Now innumerable chores can be executed swiftly and effortlessly by an unending array of new and improved labor-saving household appliances. Robotics take on an increasing number of time consuming household chores. Hordes of personal services – ranging from housekeepers to lawn keepers all but eliminate countless time-consuming commitments.

Prodigious sorcery of countless inventions has lifted the burden of everyday chores off the shoulders of most Americans. Americans have become accustomed to and spoiled by all the prepared foods, cleaners and an endless list of household supplies in everyday use. So accustomed have Americans become that all these "sorcerers' apprentices" tend to be taken for granted.

Centuries ago, the world was a far different place. Around 1500 AD it has been estimated that 75% of a peasant's time was devoted to working just to get needed food on the table. Back in the "frontier days" people were almost totally self-sufficient. They had to be. Huge amounts of time were devoted to simply getting enough food to eat. By contrast, the amount of time the average American parent spends in meal preparation averages 15 minutes! Some savings!

Bread, cakes and baked products commenced with growing or otherwise obtaining "scratch" ingredients, milling the grain, assembling and mixing the ingredients,

kneading the dough and letting it rise (overnight), baking, perhaps frosting and decorating a cake, serving it, as well as cleaning up at each stage. Thinking about one's daily bread in this manner, puts an entirely different light on just how much drudge we avoid. Hardly anybody thinks about how much time savings comes from prepared foods. Modern meals, starting with pre-plated, full-course, ready to heat and serve "TV dinners" in throw-away trays, no longer even require clean up.

Cook stoves in olden days required a lot of time and attention. Wood had to be gathered, chopped, stored. Fires had to be set, lit, and users had to await until optimal cooking temperatures were reached. Eventually, ashes had to be removed and disposed of, and periodic cleaning of chimneys and vents was required for maintenance. All told, quite a bit of time and effort expended back then. Natural gas fired and electric stoves eased all these tasks. Microwave ovens transformed the pace of kitchen chores. Homemakers reap substantial time savings using this near instantaneous kitchen marvel.

Toasting bread started out as a time-intensive task involving placing the bread (or other item) on a heated stove top, carefully watching it, turning it over as required, regulating the surface temperature, scraping away charred parts, and so on. Then, along came the electric toaster. Initial open-face designs required watching the toast and turning it – then scraping off charred parts. In time, variable timers were introduced which reduced some of the tedium of watching and waiting.

My favorite example of just how far things have come involves preparation of breakfast oatmeal. Back in 1922, at least 15 minutes preparation was required, not including the sticky mess that had to be cleaned up. By 1939, prepared oatmeal products reduced the preparation time to 5 minutes. During the 1980s, a mere 10 seconds time was needed to prepare a ready to eat bowl of oatmeal cereal! This "heat n' serve" product is simply zapped in a microwave oven. The product comes in individually packed cook-in and serve-in packaging simply discarded after the contents were eaten – no mess to clean up!

Appliance makers have developed refrigerators, freezers, wine cellars/coolers. State of the art household helpers include pantries that will automatically track and record the status of supplies on hand. Scanner equipped appliances record items, help locate them, and even suggest replacement or replenishment.

Many years ago ice was collected and stored in insulated pits. After commercial ice-making was developed the familiar ice-man used to deliver blocks of manufactured ice to households. Large blocks were placed in convenient wooden ice chests which required periodic emptying of melted ice water, lest it flow over onto floors. All that effort was left by the wayside with the advent of electric refrigerators in 1913.

Hand washing, rinsing and drying dishes and utensils was done by heating the water, scrubbing and rinsing and then drying. This chore began to be minimized by 1886 when hand-cranked time saving washing machines were introduced. Automatic washer-drier units using hot water heaters and detergents that didn't leave undesirable residues came along years later.

Coffee, centuries ago, required a considerable amount of toil and trouble to concoct. The manual task of grinding the beans, initially accomplished with mortar and pestle, gave way to a mechanical fix – the coffee grinder mill – hand cranked at first,

then electrified. The more convenient and effective coffee percolator emerged back in 1816. Later a profusion of electrified versions became more and more "self-sufficient." Timers start the coffee pot to assure a steaming cup when the householder arrives in the kitchen. For persons in a big hurry, instant coffee merely has to be spooned into a cup of hot water – presto! Sidestepping spending time and avoiding the fuss and muss, coffee houses began cropping up to take over those chores.

Mixing and stirring ingredients for baked goods in days bygone often required long and laborious work. Mechanical beaters and the like speeded things up. Hand cranking was soon superseded by electric beaters and sophisticated blenders which came along in 1915.

Scratch cooking these days is largely limited to special occasions – holidays, hobbyist pursuits (gourmet cooks), impulse (response to interesting new recipes, guilt, status), and basically limited to a few specialties ("signature show offs" that have been mastered and perfected). Baking a special occasion birthday cake and throwing a birthday party can be a time consuming task. Today pre-planned and third party staged birthday parties require little or no time on the part of parents. Parents need only make the reservation. All the rest is handled by the caterer.

Food Services and Third Party Providers

"Take-out" taxi services have been established to order and pick up full-course meals from a restaurant of the consumer's choice – and possibly a video from the rental store en route. "Courier" home delivered meals eliminate time-consuming efforts such as the fetching and waiting in lines. On-the-job office trolleys come around to individual office or stations to sell their wares. Coffee breaks no longer require taking a trip down to the local coffee shop, they come to you. It's the same at big job sites – so called "roach coaches" make the rounds with a complete kitchen on wheels catering to workers' needs. On golf courses, motorized food wagons provide the grub.

Many consumers choose to grab meal or snack on-the-go at a drive-through fast-food window. More and more, Americans resort to food away from home letting somebody else handle all the fuss and feathers of preparing and providing snacks and meals. For several years now, over 50% of consumer food spending is taken in by food service providers. Eating away from home has become a way of life in America. Delegating somebody else to provide the service – a fully prepared meal or snack – relieves consumers of time they otherwise would spend preparing something to eat. By bits and pieces current lifestyles free up time, here and there, in the normal do-it-yourself routine of daily living.

So, you think that you've heard about or seen everything? There's no end to what consumers can do from the comfort and convenience of a drivers' seat. At the Outer Banks in North Carolina there is a drive through liquor store. You don't even have to waste the time getting in and out of your car. In Daytona Beach there's a drive-in church -- swimsuits and pets allowed. Believe it or not, some mortuaries even provide a drive-thru bay for paying last respects! No need to stand around and pay last respects.

The penultimate time-saver – at least for those that can afford it – involves hiring somebody to do the work for you. In times gone by, butlers, maids and housekeepers were among the retinue of hired hands that helped get things done in big homes that could afford it. Currently, various specialized assistance may involve live-in helpers. Maids, nannies and nurses, for example. Dual wage earner families facing a premium on time, often hire specialized workers for jobs they are too busy to undertake. Lawn and garden care services tops that list. Childcare centers or cooperative arrangements involve another familiar example for working parents.

Modern-Day Cleaning Chores

A vast arsenal of household products provide "light as a feather exertion" to work cleaning miracles. In olden times "washday blues" also may have included obtaining water to get cleaning projects underway. Water supply that is piped into most every household today, wasn't always that easily available. The chore of packing water from a well, spring or other potable source used to be a time-consuming chore for almost everyone. No more.

American colonists made soap from waste fats and lye derived by leaching ashes. Later on, discovery of oleic and stearic acids and an array of other chemicals evolved and created a myriad of washday miracles. These time-saving compounds were formulated in solid, liquid, flake, granular or almost any form one can imagine. They are formulated and designed for almost any task. Laborious time-consuming undertakings involved in collecting one's own homemade fixings and using such concoctions to achieve desired results have all been left behind.

Beating clothing and fabric goods on rocks, scrubbing them on washboards, hand-cranking mechanical machines or with cranky contrivances are things of the past. They have been replaced by miraculous bays of automatic washer-driers. Getting the cleaning chores done has progressed a long way from the washboard, hand wringing, and pinning on a clothes line. Current household washers and driers are programmable. All you have to do is dump and retrieve. What once took a day or so to accomplish can be done in a flash. There's no more wringing out wet clothes, rinsing things out multiple times, no need to hang and pin washed garments on outdoor clotheslines – only to gather them up quickly when a rainstorm threatens. After that it's back to redo it all over when whimsical weather enables the task to be finished.

As if all of these wash day chores weren't time consuming enough, next comes the chore of pressing. One of the first appliances to be electrified was the lowly flat iron. This switch reduced the time-consuming task of heating and heaving heavy metal irons weighing ten pounds or more. Today many consumers just bundle all the wash up and take it to the nearest cleaning establishment. Some of these establishments also will pick up and deliver freeing users from additional time consuming toil and trouble.

All told, a whale of a lot of time is saved by labor-saving household equipment about which we don't even give hardly a second thought. In fact, most everybody, at one time or another, is likely grumble and complain about having to clean things up.

Only recently have vacuum cleaners replaced the time-consuming, arduous and not so effective or efficient floor sweeping. Rugs used to be taken up, carried out-

doors, hung on lines and beaten with a dust whip. Hand-cranked mechanical versions of not-so-effective floor cleaning machines were introduced in the 1860s. The first electric model was huge and cumbersome. It was so large that it had to be drawn around by horses, parked outside a customer's premises, and hoses were run into interiors by snaking the line through windows. It may have been more effective in getting things done and done better – but it was far too cumbersome. Earliest vacuums designed for portable household use were introduced by Hoover in 1908. Household clean-ups have never been the same since then.

Window cleaning is another time consuming chore householders tend to put off or avoid. No need to fret or worry. Windows with surface coatings of durable transparent chemicals on surfaces actually are self-cleaning!

Looming on the not-to-distant horizon is relief from cleaning bathrooms, one of the least pleasant household chores. Good bye to tedious antibacterial sprays and wipes, cleaners of all kinds, toilet brushes and bathroom sponges.

Household Electronic Aids and Automata

The tedium and boredom of certain household tasks are being slowly but steadily taken over by a variety of robotic appliances. This invasion means less time spent on the domestic front attending to myriad household tasks. And that, of course, would add to available leisure time. If you pause and think about it, numerous "robotic devices" already have become a commonplace fixture in most homes.

As far back as the 1970s, devices utilizing existing household electricity wiring to carry signals provided remote control of appliances. Since then, things have become much more sophisticated. A variety of existing technologies use wireless networks to make every appliance remotely controllable.

On a minimal scale of time-saving, consider the ubiquitous remote controls used around a household. Virtually any electronic device in a household can be triggered from the comfort of an easy chair. It's a far cry from the early days of TV when you actually had to get up, drag yourself over to the TV, tune in a station – and then follow up intermittently with channel surfing, readjusting the set-top (or roof top) antenna, adjusting the tint, volume or whatever. While the convenience and utility of a remote control – to turn on the gas fireplace or the front walk lights, or whatever else – may not increase leisure time, it eliminates the physical effort that may be required.

Although not often thought of as a robotic device, garage door openers provide a familiar example. Looking down the road, a range of effortless services for automobiles are being worked on. On-board infrared beams and computer guidance devices that automatically take over and park your car in the garage, for example.

Even more ubiquitous, are smoke and/or flame detectors. Installation has become mandatory. Building codes and safety regulations require them.

Many "household servants" operating automatically tend to be overlooked. Sump pump overflow systems protect from flooding as a result of rain or flowing water.

For many years programmable computer controllers have been available to turn entire landscape watering sprinklers and drip line irrigation systems on and off. Householders are relieved from setting hoses and sprinklers. No longer do household

groundskeepers have to meticulously move sprinklers around from place to place to get complete coverage.

Outside the home, lawn mowing robots have been striving to take over the drudge of maintaining yards. Now ever-bigger landscapes require attention. Tackling lawn cutting now takes so much time and effort, that home owners are turning in droves to riding lawn mowing machines. A fully loaded "lawn chariot" comes complete with automatic transmission, power steering, cruise control, CD player, cup holder.

Tending to pets can be time consuming. Not to worry. "iRobot" (developers of robotic vacuums and floor washers) is working to develop robotic household servants that will walk the dog (as well as other versions that will tend and watch elderly humans).

These days you don't even have to get up to let the pet in or out. Staywell's infrared locking dog door opens and closes a small door when a signaling device on the pet's collar transmits an infrared signal. Nor do you need to take a pooch out for a walk. JogADog, a canine treadmill comes in three sizes and can be cranked up to ten miles per hour. These days you don't even have to bother with setting out a pet's meal. Timers have been around for years to release a pet's meal on cue. One version plays a recording when it's time to call a pet to mealtime. Keeping pets amused can be fun but it also requires time. Innumerable toys to keep pets amused are available. Bubble Buddy puts an interesting twist on things that features bacon-scented bubbles for the dog to chase. Topping it all, consider for a moment why pet lovers favor cats over dogs. Why? For one thing, simply because they require less care – a hallmark of people in a hurry living busy and fast-paced lifestyles.

Speeding Up (and Simplifying?) Getting Around

Unsatisfied with just one motor vehicle many Americans, possess multiple cars per household. During the 1950s, a one-car garage was standard in 41 percent of homes that had any garage whatsoever. Currently, nearly two-thirds of all new homes have two-car garages. For some trend-setters, conspicuous consumption involves 4-6 car garages! This also means that there are more vehicles per household to care for. Upon closer examination and comparison, time devoted to using and caring for means of transportation may not have declined very much. Servicing motor vehicles consumes time akin to what previously was spent in caring, feeding, grooming, and sheltering animals along with maintaining carriages, carts, saddles, bridles, and so forth.

What are the prospects for changing the modern appetite for more and more motor vehicles? Dim. The plain fact of the matter is that Americans prefer personal motor transportation. The 89.7 percent currently using that mode is unlikely to change very much. But the manner of use may be changing in ways that will minimize or perhaps even eliminate spending time merely driving the vehicles!

Operating motor vehicles requires full time and attention. However, a number of automatic devices and systems are coming along to change all of that. Push a button, set the speed and the car drives itself along the roadway. Automatic highways of the future – with the highway, not the car calling the shots – have been on the drawing boards for years.

Time consuming money handling is being slowly, but steadily pared back. Check writing and mailing eventually all but eliminated time consuming trips to pay in person. Next came automatic electronic fund transfers between the bank and designated payees. More consumers are turning to the internet to order goods and services, and arrange for electronic funds to pay the tab. Drive-through windows at banks obviate the need to get out of cars, walk inside the bank, wait in lines, and so on. Automatic teller machines are on duty 24-7. Consumers are king.

No matter where one looks – from hiring an electric cart to speed up time for playing a round of golf, or ferrying a relief baseball pitcher in from the bullpen to speed up playing time – examples of how Americans go about speeding things up abound. Memoranda and briefings for senior officials are limited to one-page or a few minutes. One-liners and sound-bytes swiftly convey messages before listeners/viewers impatiently jump to the next snippet. Speeding things up another step, a new language of acronyms has been coined – TV, VCR, PC, MTV, HDTV, FAX, BMW, Y2K, to mention a few. Intrepid internet users have come up with their short-cut acronyms to sum up often used phrases or thoughts: BTW (by the way); GOK (God only knows); LOL (laughing out loud); TTFN (Ta-ta for now); IMHO (in my humble opinion); F2F (face to face; a personal meeting); FWW (for what it's worth); and so on. Instant everything is ingrained in the American experience.

Multi-Tasking and Quick Fixes

Harried Americans cram more tasks into given time slots by performing multiple tasks simultaneously. Jacuzzi whirlpool baths feature built-in TVs and CD-stereos with a floating remote controllers enabling users to do several things at once. La-Z-Boy's overstuffed recliner comes complete with built in beverage cooler (12 can capacity), massager, heating system, phone and remote controller. "Couch potatoes" don't need to even stir from reclining repose to sate many needs.

In-flight movies wile away travel time while travelers simultaneously peruse a potboiler novel, prepare a business memo on a portable computer, intersperse calls ahead from seatback-mounted telephones, sip a martini, converse with seatmates, and flirt with stewardesses. Every waking moment is designed to deliver the most activities. And so on through endless experiences.

Almost anything you can think of is constantly being done quicker. Instead of wasting time buttoning shirts, zipping garments, threading a belt or lacing shoes, time-saving Americans simply slap Velcro fasteners together, slip into pullovers, and use elastic waistbands to hold up slacks.

Voting accomplished during the 1800s with so-called "bed sheet" (lengthy) ballots required laborious and time-consuming manual marking and check offs. Currently much voting is done by the push of buttons and a swift computer tabulation. Likewise, filing tax returns is increasingly being done by computer. A whopping 49% of tax returns were filed electronically for the 2003 tax years (as of April 30, 2004).

Catching and fining drivers for motor vehicle infractions also has been shifting over to auto-pilot since the 1960s. Running red lights or speeding is now electronically confirmed, digitally photographed and traffic tickets are automatically sent to owners of violating vehicles.

From 5-minute oil changes to 1-hour photo-processing, dry cleaning or eyeglass preparation, and from overnight courier service to instant faxes or e-mail, Americans insist upon instant everything. Travelers turn to off site hotel check in either on-site (in hotel lobbies) or off-site (at airports) as a time-saver so they can receive their magnetic key cards and proceed directly to their rooms without time-consuming delays.

Do Time Saving Efforts Actually Increase Leisure Time?

Despite all of the ingenious and marvelous time-savings in the household, some time-study experts contend that many of these efforts may not actually contribute very much to net time-savings! I wonder about that. Surely from a longer term historical perspective, enormous gains have been made.

Although labor-saving devices and methods eliminate time-consuming drudge and greatly facilitate tasks, they tend to get used much more to achieve higher performance levels. For example, householders often expend precious time rinsing and preparing dishes for the dishwasher, and they tend to wash and put away culinary articles after every meal. They tend to pre-soak, segregate and prepare clothing for the wash, spend more time carefully folding and putting away washed articles, and wash articles of clothing much more frequently.

Householders devote extra time and care in preparing exotic ingredients, executing more elaborate recipes, carefully researching and selecting spices, and otherwise embellishing preparation of foods that might be zapped in microwave or halogen lamp lightning-fast cooking ovens. Because backyard chefs tend to prepare elaborate fare, all the bells and whistles usually wind up taking more time to prepare – no time savings here.

On balance, the result is that the task time remains much the same. However, the saving grace is that the quality of performance is vastly enhanced by more meticulous and time-consuming perfectionists. Or is it?

Ever-Bigger Houses and Luxuries

Consider living arrangements. Increasingly larger homes entail greater efforts to maintain. In addition, the number of persons per household has declined. These reductions mean that there are fewer persons to do the necessary chores to maintain the household and have it run smoothly and cleanly. It follows that the smaller number of inhabitants actually wind up expending a proportionately greater amount of time performing household tasks and chores.

Moderns have more "quick fixes" and speedier task fulfillment than ever. So it may seem. Consider the following. Housing size is an important consideration in these calculations. The size of average homes continue to grow larger. Within a generation, average square footage in private residences rose 50%, while family size declined by 20%. No matter how you look at and measure household time-consuming chores, simply because there is more space to maintain, the load of work to keep things running smoothly also rises.

Years ago, things made of cast iron were built to last and required little maintenance or polishing. Today the situation is different. Upscale home furnishings include

expensive status symbols of conspicuous consumption. Most of them require painstaking care and attention. Exotic hot tubs, whirlpool baths, "rainforest" showers, and fancy accessories take special time and attention to keep in tip top condition. Likewise for elaborate professional-scale and gourmet kitchens with all the bells and whistles. It goes on and on. Luxury-laden bedroom suites, not only bigger but much more elaborately appointed, require more time and attention. In the garage, where there used to be space for one vehicle, the current status statement may involve a 3-4 car bay garage which may feature tiled floors, and fully equipped workshops.

Maintaining homesteads increasingly extends beyond the primary residence. Seasonal, recreational or occasional use second homes have grown in number. The total rose from 3,604,216 units in 2000 to 6.8 million in 2006. Although largely limited to an affluent few, nonetheless the time devoted to maintaining those getaways must be considered. Somebody has to maintain these dwellings. For these fortunate few owners, it may involve merely hiring somebody else to take care of the premises. Time saved by passing upkeep onto somebody else does save time. However, so far as time-use is concerned, it takes time to travel to and from these getaways. The average second home is situated 220 miles distant from home base.

For those fortunate enough to own a boat, there also may be a dock to maintain. Beyond that is the laborious time and devotion spent keeping a fine boat spit-spot. The "good life," carried to the hilt, can be quite time consuming – not to mention expensive.

Conclusion

Overarching perspectives of on going and impending changes provide a keener sense of the onset of the approaching Leisure Era. Visionary strategies are posited on a clear understanding of past, present and prospective patterns. My object of these remarks is to provide notions of some select developments and trends that enhance understanding the approaching Leisure Era. Poised to begin dominating over 50% of every American's waking moments over an entire lifetime around 2015, that turning point is less than a mortgage away! That pattern subsequently will continue on through other advanced nations. Major changes in thinking, lifestyles and economics will incur wrenching change in the years just ahead. This review, so far, highlights only a smattering of developments and trends highlighting notions of the impending Leisure Era. There's more to come in the sequel article to this initial perspective-setting trend analysis

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