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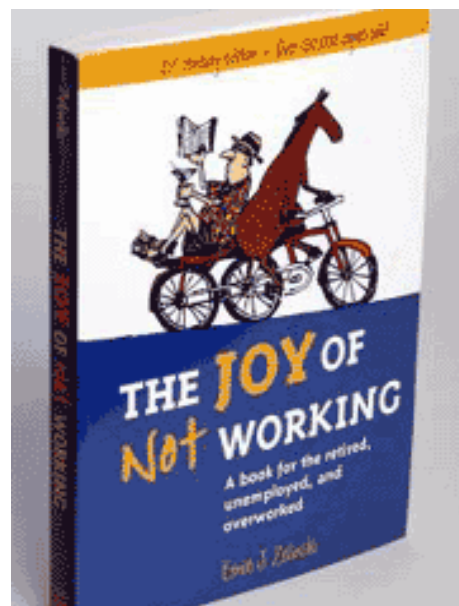
THE **JOY** OF **Not** WORKING

A book for the retired,
unemployed, and
overworked

Ernie J. Zelinski

An E-Book Liberated from the International Bestseller

The Joy of **NOT** Working

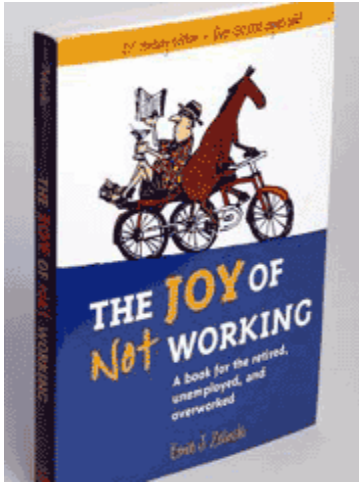


A Book for the Retired,
Unemployed, and Overworked

by

Ernie J. Zelinski

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Preface

This book can make you a winner. *The Joy of Not Working* has now been published in fourteen languages and has sold over 200,000 copies worldwide. Although the last edition was still selling well, I have updated it to make it more appropriate for the twenty-first century. I want to thank Phil Wood, Kirsty Melville, and Meghan Keeffe at Ten Speed Press for making the new edition possible.

Not only has the content been updated, a new section has been added at the back: a collection of some of the more interesting letters that I have received from readers since the last edition was published in 1997. I believe that you will find these letters just as inspiring as the material that I have written, if not more so. Moreover, I have inserted a few letters throughout the book. I want to thank the individuals who wrote these letters; they have contributed immensely to this book.

Unlike most how-to books on winning, this book is not about winning at a job or making money. Nor is it a book about winning at competitive games. It is about winning when you aren't working, in a way that is not competitive, but still very rewarding.

You're a winner when you have a zest for life. You're a winner when you wake up every morning excited about the day. You're a winner when you enjoy what you're doing. And you're a winner when you pretty well know what you want to do with the rest of your life.

My father taught me to work,
but not to love it. I never did
like to work, and I don't deny
it. I'd rather read, tell stories,
crack jokes, talk, laugh—
anything but work.

—Abraham Lincoln

Whether you are retired, unemployed, or working, you can use *The Joy of Not Working* as a practical and reliable guide to create a paradise away from the workplace. Because all of us need reminders from time to time about the obvious and the not-so-obvious, we can all use a handy guide on how to enjoy life more.

This book is the result of my education—an education that has nothing to do with the curricula in place at schools and universities. I acquired this education through my personal experiences, far removed from my formal education.

At the age of twenty-nine, I embarked on a new career. Having lost my job, I decided that I wanted to be a creative loafer for a year or so. Although my new career was supposed to be temporary, I have yet to return to a regular job.

In my last traditional job, I allowed myself to be imprisoned by a system that wasn't designed for free spirits. For almost six years, I worked for a government-owned utility, where I was hired to work from nine to

five. The nine-to-five job was more often an eight-to-six job with weekend work, mostly without extra compensation.

Having skipped vacations for over three years, I decided to spend ten weeks away from work one summer. Aside from the fact that I did not have approval from my superiors, this was a great idea. In short, I truly enjoyed those ten weeks. Despite my ingenuity in coming up with the idea, I was fired from my job as a professional engineer. The verdict was that I had violated company policy by taking the extended vacation.

What's the use of being a genius if you can't use it as an excuse for being unemployed?

—Gerald Barzan

Obviously, my superiors didn't like what I had done. Regardless of my high performance evaluations and my lengthy period without a vacation, the company terminated my employment shortly after I returned to work. I am not sure whether my termination was solely due to my violating company policy. Perhaps my superiors were envious of how much I enjoyed myself during my extended vacation. After all, many supervisors—particularly those employed in government—don't like dealing with subordinates who are not only creative workers, but also creative loafers.

Not surprisingly, for the first few weeks I was bitter about being fired. Having been a dedicated and productive worker, I had made many important contributions to this company. No doubt a great injustice was committed when they fired me, a valuable employee.

A big turning point for me occurred the day I realized my firing was a blessing in disguise. Not only did I admit I wasn't an indispensable employee, but I also lost interest in a regular nine-to-five job. I decided to spend as much time as possible away from the workplace, particularly in summers. A normal job was now out of the question. What's more, my career as a professional engineer was over.

For the next two years, I didn't work at all, nor did I attend any educational institution. My overriding purpose was to be happy without a job. All things considered, I succeeded.

What did I do during this period? Although at times I had very little



Mr. Zelinski, Harvard University, always thankful for all major contributions to society, today would like to grant you the honorary degree of Doctor of Leisure.

money, I lived what I consider to be a truly prosperous life. I engaged in constructive and satisfying activities too numerous to mention. Above all, I made a celebration out of being unemployed. I grew as a person and went through a transformation of my values. In my view, during those two years I truly earned my Doctorate in Leisure. Alas, no university has as yet granted me this degree.

After two years of total leisure, I decided from then on, if at all possible, not to ever work in any month without an “r” in its name. After all, in North America, May, June, July, and August are most suited for leisure activities. Because I enjoy my freedom, I have successfully avoided a regular nine-to-five job for over two decades. For all intents and purposes, I have been in temporary retirement or semiretirement since I was in my late twenties.

Leisure is the most challenging responsibility a man can be offered.

—William Russell

Over the years, many people have asked me how I am able to utilize so much leisure time without getting bored. This made me realize that many individuals have problems attaining satisfaction in their spare time. It also occurred to me that very little had been written on how to manage and enjoy leisure time. That is when the idea for this book was conceived. My premise is that anyone can learn how to fill spare time with constructive and exciting activities. It follows that a book on how to enjoy leisure time can help many people.

Throughout this book, I share my thoughts about how to lead a leisurely life, often using my experiences away from the workplace as examples. To give a broad perspective on how to be happily unemployed or retired, however, I don’t draw only from my own experiences.



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The greater part of this book is the result of studying and listening to the stories, experiences, and aspirations of other people.

You will find that this book isn’t highly academic in nature. I avoid great detail and academic jargon, because these simply don’t appeal to

most readers. The format includes text, exercises, cartoons, diagrams, and quotations to appeal to the many learning styles of different individuals. The many positive comments that I have received in hundreds of letters from readers have confirmed that this format works best in getting my message across in an interesting and entertaining way.

*He enjoys true leisure
who has time to improve
his soul's estate.*

—Henry David Thoreau

If you want to add to the variety, tone, and quality of your life, you should find this book a valuable asset, as have tens of thousands of people throughout the world.

Based on the responses of readers, I trust *The Joy of Not Working* will entertain, challenge, influence, or motivate you in more ways than one.

“The Life of Riley,” a popular expression for decades, denotes a good life. A person living the Life of Riley is satisfied and happy. This book is about how you can live the Life of Riley, whether you are retired, unemployed, or working. What it takes to live the Life of Riley may surprise you, however.

You Too Can Live the Life of Riley

A Grand Time to Loaf

On the second day of his visit to a large city, a wealthy and somewhat eccentric traveler encountered six panhandlers whom he had seen soliciting money the previous day. The panhandlers were now all lying in the sun, obviously taking a break from the responsibilities of their chosen profession. The panhandlers looked up curiously as the traveler approached.

The traveler decided to have some fun. He offered \$1,000 to the panhandler who could prove that he was the laziest. Hoping to claim the prize, five of the panhandlers jumped up to take part in the contest. Each one proceeded to demonstrate in varying ways—such as by sitting down while soliciting money from tourists—how much lazier he could be than his colleagues.

After an hour, having watched the five competitors with amusement, the traveler made his decision and awarded the \$1,000. He concluded that the sixth panhandler, who had refrained

*I am a friend of the working-
man, and I would rather be
his friend, than be one.*

—Clarence Darrow

from the competition, was definitely the laziest. The sixth panhandler had remained lying on the grass, reading a paper and enjoying the sun.

There is a moral to this story: not working, when you can enjoy yourself loafing, has its rewards.

This book is about the many pleasures that you can experience away from the workplace. If you are retired, you will learn how to manage and enjoy your unlimited leisure time. If you are temporarily unemployed, you will learn how to enjoy your leisure time and be happy without a job until you find one. And if you are employed, you will learn how to enjoy your limited spare time and create some more if you want more. You may even quit your job, never to work again.

In short, regardless of your situation, you can get more satisfaction and pleasure away from the workplace by reading this book. Welcome to the joy of not working.

Leisure: The Opposite of Work, but Not Quite

“How do you define leisure?” This is an interesting question, but one that is difficult to answer. It was posed to me by a participant in a leisure-planning seminar that I presented at a Canadian Association of Pre-Retirement Planners’ conference.

Unable to give a definite answer, I decided to utilize one of my many principles of creativity—give the problem away. I asked the other seminar participants how they define leisure.

After a great deal of discussion, we arrived at a consensus. The definition that we created was: “Spare time over and above the time required to provide the necessities in life.” Luckily for me, the definition was adequate for us to continue the seminar.

Nonetheless, this definition can lead to another interesting question: “How do you define necessities in life?” Eating may be a necessity, but casual dining for an hour or two at a bistro is a pleasure. Indeed, casual dining is one of my favorite leisure activities. Yet to some, eating is always a necessity, one that interferes with their other pursuits in life.

Later, I looked up the definition of leisure in several dictionaries. Dictionaries commonly define leisure in such terms as “time free from required work, in which one may rest, amuse oneself, and do the things one likes to do.”

DICTIONARY

lei-sure (le'zher or lezh'er), n.

1. the opposite of work but not quite.
2. somewhat of a paradox.
3. what a person does living the Life of Riley.—adj. and adv.

lei'sure-ly.

lem-on (lem'un) n. 1. a small tropical fruit with pale yellow skin and very acid juice; 2. the tree, related to the orange, which bears this fruit; 3. a pale yellow color.—adj.

lem-on-ade (lem'un-ād) n.

a drink of sweetened water flavored with lemon juice.

So where does eating fit into the dictionary definition? Is eating work? Is eating leisure? Or is eating something altogether different?

I wasn't about to take the time to locate the people responsible for the dictionary definition of leisure to see if they could clarify this confusion. I suspected they couldn't.

I hate definitions.

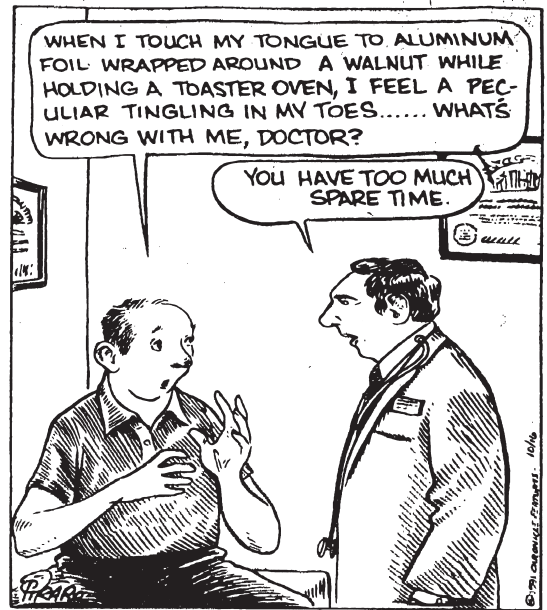
—Benjamin Disraeli

After pondering this question for some time, I was still a little puzzled. How can I define leisure to prevent the potential for endless questioning in my seminars? I just want to present my ideas on how to enjoy leisure. I don't want to be a philosopher, determining whether eating is leisure or leisure is eating.

Eventually I decided that the purpose of my seminars (and this book) is not to establish a universal and perfect definition for leisure. Leisure will always mean different things to different people. Loosely defined, however, leisure is the time an individual spends away from work to do the things he or she wants to do.

Ultimately, it is up to you and me to define work and leisure for our personal needs. Moreover, it is up to you and me to find out what we, as unique human beings, want to do in our spare time. Of course, we also have to actually do what we would like to do.

Doing what we want to pursue in our leisure time is easier said than done. An interesting paradox arises: Leisure is about not working; in order to attain satisfaction from our leisure, however, we have to "work" at it. Weirdly enough, leisure is the opposite of work, but for it to be enjoyable, it requires a great deal of effort.



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The Illusions of Leisure, Retirement, and Lotteries

By choice or by chance, all of us, sooner or later, will have to learn how to utilize and enjoy leisure time. No doubt what we do with our spare time will determine the quality of our lives.

Because it was once a rather rare commodity, leisure was considered a luxury for many centuries. Only recently has leisure become abundant

enough that some people are able to enjoy it for decades, particularly when they retire.

Leisure in great measure is the ultimate goal of many people throughout the world. Everyone desires at least a certain amount. Some people, in fact, claim their goal is to have nothing but leisure on their hands. They want to live the Life of Riley. Even so, most aren't prepared for handling unlimited leisure time. Sustained leisure has become a

burden to many, even those who are healthy and in a financial position to never work again.

Whether we find our jobs exciting and stimulating or boring and depressing, many of us are in for a big surprise when confronted with an increase in spare time. Most of us

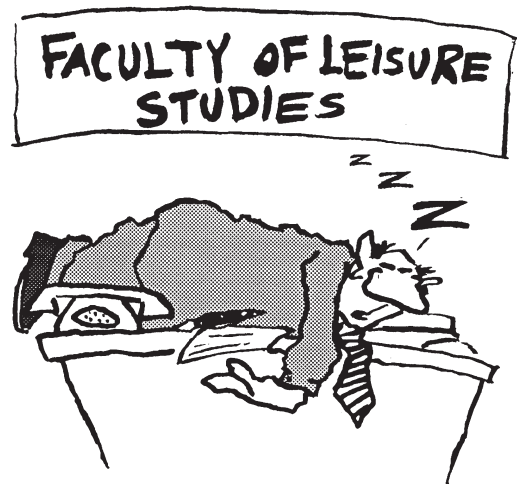
It is paradoxical but nonetheless true that the nearer man comes to his goal to make his life easy and abundant, the more he undermines the foundations of a meaningful existence.

—Franz Alexander

reserve the enjoyment of leisure for the future; often the future arrives too soon. When we retire or are laid off, we end up with much more spare time than we are accustomed to handling.

Various studies confirm that many people have difficulty in effectively utilizing their spare time. For example, one study by the U.S. Department of Commerce reported that only 58 percent of people were experiencing "a great deal" of satisfaction from how they spend their leisure time. This means that 42 percent of individuals could use substantial help in enhancing the quality of their leisure. Even some of the people who are getting a great deal of satisfaction may not be experiencing as much satisfaction as they would like. Many of these people probably could use some help as well.

Most of us will spend the greater part of our adult lives working. Taking into account getting ready for work, commuting to work, talking about our jobs, and worrying about getting laid off, we will have spent more time during our working lives thinking about work than thinking about all our other concerns in life.



Many of us also spend a great amount of time thinking about how great life will be when we don't have to work anymore. Indeed, many dream about how much better life will be with much more leisure time. When I worked as an engineer, I was amazed (and dejected) at how much time engineers and technicians in their twenties spent talking about the potential size of their pensions and all the activities they could pursue in retirement. Although I too was in my twenties, I had more interesting subjects to discuss with others. (If you are interested in what they were, buy me dinner, and we'll have a most interesting conversation.)

He lacks much who has no
aptitude for idleness.

—Louise Beebe Wilder

As a matter of course, society leads us to believe that retirement and happiness are one and the same. Retirement is supposed to be the great escape from the stresses inherent in most jobs, a time to experience a fulfilling life derived from many enjoyable and rewarding activities. Unfortunately, this is not the case for everyone who retires.

Embarrassingly, I admit that until my thirties, I, not unlike most baby boomers, was influenced by society's programming as to what constitutes the good life. I believed that increased leisure was something everyone looked forward to and enjoyed when they took a long sabbatical or retired. Soon after, I realized that it is often dangerous to go along with beliefs that most people adopt—about the good life or otherwise. Indeed, the masses are frequently wrong. The problem is that the finer things in life often turn out far different from what society's influential factions lead us to believe they will be.

Winning a major lottery, for example, is supposed to immeasurably enhance our lives. Most of us have no doubt that becoming a millionaire will enable us to experience the Life of Riley that we have always dreamed about. The Life of Riley with no work and all play is supposed to be not only trouble-free, but also satisfying and happy. Not all evidence supports this notion, however.

For their book, *Suddenly Rich*, Jerry LeBlanc and Rena Dictor LeBlanc studied several wealthy people who had acquired sudden fortunes. The LeBlancs found most people with unlimited leisure time on their hands weren't very happy. After having been subject to a mandatory work routine for so long, these people had trouble dealing with days totally lacking in structure and purpose. "I really miss that truck driving job," admitted a New York resident who had won a major lottery and then retired. "The biggest loss of my life is not having someone to tell me what to do."

The act of retiring can actually be as much of a problem as not being able to retire. A study by Challenger, Gray & Christmas, Inc. found that

In this world there are only two tragedies. One is not getting what you want, and the other is getting it.

—Oscar Wilde

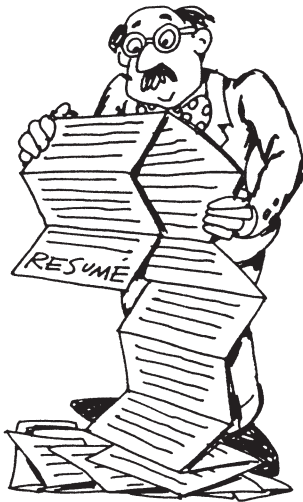
over 50 percent of people accepting early retirement packages were more than happy to return to work after three months of retirement. The Life of Riley wasn't all that enjoyable. Surprisingly, despite all its shortcomings, work wasn't so bad after all.

Taking It Easy Isn't All That Easy for Some People

Perhaps living the Life of Riley wasn't easy even for Riley. For people who have not learned how to handle leisure time effectively, the Life of Riley is a dilemma, filled with anxiety and uncertainty.

Chances are that you will experience the same difficulties if you don't develop the ability to enjoy many leisure activities. Indeed, if you haven't adopted a love for leisure by the time you retire, you will feel the Life of Riley is the biggest rip-off since the last time you were conned into buying the Brooklyn Bridge.

Following are some common problems that people have in their leisure time:



Guess I'll apply for work again. After having been retired for six months, I am really looking forward to returning to the misery of a job.

- Boredom
- No real satisfaction from leisure activities
- All dressed up and nowhere to go
- All dressed up, somewhere to go, but no one to go with
- Friction with spouse when time together increases
- Not enough things to do
- So much to do and no time to do it
- Hard time deciding what to do
- Bankroll of a peasant but tastes of a millionaire
- Bankroll of a millionaire but poverty consciousness of a peasant
- Feeling guilty about taking it easy and having fun
- Enjoying only those things that are illegal, immoral, or unhealthy

Luckily, leisure has two sides to it; the other side is much more positive. Unlimited spare time can, in fact, be an incredible blessing rather than a dull curse. To some, the leisurely life is even more satisfying than

they expected. They become more active than ever before. Each day is a new adventure. To these individuals, nothing can be as enjoyable as a leisurely lifestyle. Indeed, they would do Riley proud if he were to show up and see them in action.

When you are able to enjoy leisure time to the fullest, your life will be enhanced to immeasurable levels. Success at leisure will contribute to a life that many on this earth can only dream about. Whether you are retired, unemployed, or overworked, your ability to handle leisure time will result in:

- Personal growth
- Improved health
- Higher self-esteem
- Less stress and a more relaxed lifestyle
- Satisfaction from challenging activities
- Excitement and adventure
- A more balanced lifestyle
- Improved family life
- A sense of self-worth
- A higher quality of life overall

The difference between success and failure at anything in life is often slim. Handling unlimited spare time is no exception. Having covered the problems and benefits of increased leisure time, it's time for us to look at what factors are essential for solving the problems of leisure and reaping its benefits.

The following exercise is just one of several you will encounter in this book. You will get a lot more out of the content if you attempt all the exercises. When a choice of answers is given in an exercise, you can add your own if none is suitable to you.

Exercise 1-1. The Essentials

Read through the following list of personal attributes and other factors and check any that you feel are essential for attaining success at managing and enjoying leisure time.

- Excellent health
- Living in an exciting city

*The time you enjoy wasting
is not wasted time.*

—Laurence J. Peter



The difference between success and failure at anything is often slim.

- ❑ Having many friends from different walks of life
- ❑ A charming personality
- ❑ Owning a motor home
- ❑ A love for travel
- ❑ Athletic ability
- ❑ Good looks
- ❑ Excellent physical condition
- ❑ Abundant financial resources
- ❑ A beach cabin
- ❑ Living in a warm climate
- ❑ Having had good parents
- ❑ A great marriage or relationship
- ❑ Having many hobbies

Now that you've chosen those you think are essential, let's look at two people who had trouble handling the Life of Riley and one individual who was a master at it.

The Life of Riley Can Be Elusive

A few years ago, I discussed retirement with Delton, who was sixty-seven at the time, financially secure, and played tennis (often better than I did even though I was thirty years younger) at the club where I was a member. Although Delton had liked the company he worked at for many years, he didn't like its policy of mandatory retirement at sixty-five.

After he was forced to retire, Delton had no idea what he should do with his time. Indeed, he was lost. Two years after his retirement, Delton was happy that his company allowed him to return to work part-time. His time away from the job had not been well spent (except when he whipped me in a game of tennis). Delton even confided in me that he hadn't liked weekends when he was working full-time. Weird as it may seem, he always had difficulty deciding what to do on his days off.

Rich, another former member at the same tennis club, is another example of someone who had problems with his spare time. The difference between Delton and Rich was that Rich yearned to retire early. Like many people in my hometown, Rich fantasized about moving to the West Coast to live the Life of Riley. Rich had his wish come true when he was only forty-four. Having worked with a police force since

he was nineteen, Rich was able to retire with a decent pension after working only twenty-five years.

After Rich moved west to enjoy the Life of Riley, he realized that he didn't have too much in common with Riley. Rich found handling unlimited spare time extremely difficult. He responded by opening a business. When he lost his shirt on that venture (not serious—you don't need a shirt in West Coast weather), he tried several other things, including going back to work for a short time. The last time I talked to him, Rich was still undecided on how he could best deal with retirement. This is somewhat unfortunate, considering that Rich was in an enviable position to which many people aspire.

People waste more time waiting for someone to take charge of their lives than they do in any other pursuit.

—Gloria Steinem

Unemployed Stockbroker Lives Life of Riley

A number of years ago, North American newspapers reported on the plight of stockbrokers, who were having a tough time after a severe market crash. Young executives, who had known a bull market and the expensive lifestyles it brought, were bewildered and astounded. Many, who were about to lose their \$200,000-to-\$500,000-a-year jobs, claimed that they couldn't take other jobs at \$100,000 a year because their personal expenses were too high. (I'm sure these stories brought tears to many readers' eyes, as they did to mine.)

My friend Denny was a stockbroker before the crash. Denny hadn't been a top producer and had saved very little money. After the crash, Denny left the business altogether. He didn't immediately go looking for another job, however (not even a low-paying one at \$100,000 a year). Although Denny had little money, he decided to take it easy for over a year so he could enjoy a different lifestyle.

During the time Denny was unemployed, he was content as anyone could be in this world. He was relaxed, he had a smile he couldn't lose, and he was a treat to be around because of his positive nature. I knew many working people who were making above-average incomes in their high-status jobs, but not one was as happy as Denny.

Hard work pays off in the future. Laziness pays off now.

—Graffiti

Denny has since returned to the workforce in another field of endeavor. The last time I saw Denny, he mentioned that he was enjoying his new career. Even so, he was yearning for the time when he again could leave the workforce for a year or two just to enjoy life. No doubt Denny, unlike Rich and Delton, will get at least as much satisfaction and enjoyment out of retirement as he did from any one of his careers.

Riley's Secret

Let's return to exercise 1-1 to clarify which factors are essential for living the Life of Riley. Why was my friend Denny so content to have nothing but free time on his hands, while Delton and Rich both found the free time that comes with retirement to be a burden?

If you chose any item that was on the list, you are a victim of your own incorrect thinking about what it takes to master leisure. Not one item that I listed is essential for successfully living the Life of Riley. Every item on the list may help, but none is essential.

Some people will argue vehemently that abundant financial resources are essential. Yet Delton and Rich were much better off financially than Denny was. If abundant financial resources are essential, Delton and Rich should have been happy to be unemployed and Denny unhappy, instead of the other way around. (In chapter 11, we will look at the role money plays in the enjoyment of a leisurely lifestyle.)

Some may also feel that excellent health is essential. No doubt excellent health is an important asset. Nonetheless, many retirees with health problems are still able to enjoy their leisure time and life in general.

Then what is essential? The Life of Riley is nothing more than a state of mind. Denny has the one essential ingredient—a healthy attitude—that Riley surely had to have in order to live the good life.



Provided that you have a healthy attitude, you can adjust to a life of total leisure without missing a stride. Dick Phillips of Portsmouth, Hampshire, England, couldn't agree with this more. He wrote to me after reading a previous edition of this book.

Dear Ernie,

My wife Sandy and I were on an Air Canada flight to Vancouver this summer to commence a "Life of Riley" retirement holiday in your lovely country when a fellow female passenger introduced me to your book *The Joy of Not Working*.

I later obtained a copy at Duthie's Bookstore and read it when I returned home. (Riley did not allow time for reading on holidays.) I am fifty-four years of age and have worked since I was fifteen years old: first as a fitter and turner apprentice, then as a seagoing-ships engineer before joining the County Police for a thirty-year career. Your book gives much sound advice, some I have been following for years. I have enjoyed developing interests outside work while still working. When I retired last November, I enjoyed the freedom to parcel up my time and develop interests which include hiking, cycling, old car restoration, model engineering, painting, and D. I. Y. projects. You are right—a positive attitude to life in retirement is essential.

In your book, you write about a fellow officer named Rich who, like me, retired in an enviable position but found life difficult. I hope he has now read your book, and he is developing that inner self that makes all things possible. Meanwhile, I am looking forward to next year, when I will join a team building a large, wooden sailing ship for disabled people, and later find time to revisit Canada.

Regards to Riley,

Dick Phillips

Note that Dick Phillips, like Denny, also has a healthy attitude about being unemployed—an important attribute for enjoying all aspects of life. Regardless of your age, sex, occupation, and income, you too can experience the many joys of not working, provided you adopt the right attitude. I can say this simply because I have been able to be as happy when unemployed as when I was in the workforce—if not happier. If I can do it, so can you.

There exists above the "productive" man a yet higher species.

—Friedrich Nietzsche

My firsthand experience with unemployment is extensive. I have spent over half of my adult years without a job. This has given me important insight into what it takes to be a success

away from the workplace. I am not blessed with any special talents and abilities that you don't have. Other people who, like Denny, experience enjoyment in their spare time are also normal human beings with no exceptional intelligence, talent, or skills.

All things considered, living a leisurely lifestyle isn't dependent on having some huge advantage over others. We all have the ability to live the Life of Riley. The key is to acknowledge our own skills and talents and put them to good use.

Never adopt the excuse that you weren't born as talented or fortunate as others. The hand that you were dealt at birth isn't as important as what you do with it. You can always make up in creativity what you lack in talent or good fortune. Playing the game of leisure is like playing poker; playing three aces badly won't get you as far as playing a terrible hand well.

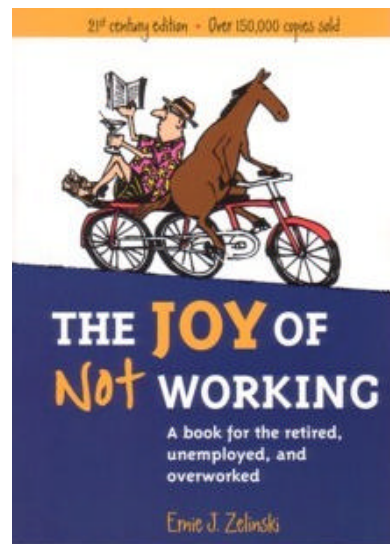
"Leisure consists in all those virtuous activities by which a man grows morally, intellectually, and spiritually," stated the Roman statesman and philosopher Marcus Tullius Cicero. "It is that which makes a life worth living." I suggest that you take Cicero's advice and run with it. It will be most valuable to you on your journey through life.

Top 10 Reasons to Buy *The Joy of Not Working*

1. You are independent and more creative than most people.
2. You were born a lover and not a workaholic.
3. You don't want the cheese; you just want to get out of the trap.
4. You like books that are reader friendly with lots of cartoons, quotations, and exercises.
5. You like books that make you smile and challenge traditional ways of thinking.
6. You agree with the words of Bertrand Russell: "One of the symptoms of an approaching nervous breakdown is the belief that one's work is terribly important."
7. You know that people who burn the candle at both ends are not anywhere as bright as they think they are.
8. Your parents and co-workers will not approve of your adopting this book as your lifestyle Bible.
9. You know a good deal when you see one — if a book has been published in 17 languages in 21 different countries and has sold over 250,000 copies, it must have great value.
10. You feel morally superior to the hard workers of this world because you know that the secret to a happy and fulfilling life is to work smart and not hard.

*The Joy of **NOT** Working*

A Book for the Retired, Unemployed, and Overworked



Purchase
The Joy of **NOT** Working
at
www.amazon.com
or
www.barnesandnoble.com
with these direct links.

Additional Letters from Readers

Introduction to Letters

This new section includes some of the most interesting letters that I have received since the third edition of *The Joy of Not Working* was published in 1997. Since the book was first published, I have been particularly amazed by how it has affected people differently. Some readers indicated that they developed a better work/life balance after reading the book; others revealed that they quit their jobs; still others said that they were inspired to leave a boring job that they worked at just for the money and find a job that they really like.

I must admit with some embarrassment that a few of these readers are living *The Joy of Not Working* better than I am. Although I don't work hard or long hours, lately I haven't taken a one-year break, or longer, from work as some readers have. Undoubtedly, I have something to learn from them.

I hope that these letters will inspire you to make your life a lot more interesting and enjoyable. Most people go to their graves regretting things they haven't done. The easiest way to become one of them is by

*Sometimes you wonder how
you got on this mountain.
But sometimes you wonder,
"How will I get off?"*

—Joan Manley

joining society's chorus instead of singing your own songs. As you can see, most of the following individuals are singing their own songs, and they're much happier because of it.

Angst from a Reader in France

Michaël Roche of Isère, France, wrote to me in January 2002 after reading the French edition of *The Joy of Not Working*.

Dear Ernie,

Your book *The Joy of Not Working* is a little gem. I found it by accident in a bookshop, and I must confess it was a happy accident.

I am a twenty-two-year-old student, and my impending entrance into the world of work is a real angst. For many years, I have known that I am not made for working. Spending forty hours a week in an office forty years of a life is a waste of time. It is an opinion which is difficult to accept; the look of others is merciless. Free time is not a problem for me. I have a lot of desires, and I know many interesting and fascinating activities, but a life devoted to work cannot allow me to have enough leisure time. I do not refuse to work, however. I just refuse a certain lifestyle some people (my family, my friends, my teachers, my neighbors, my potential bosses, etc.) try to impose on me. About this point, your book is comforting. I am not the only human being who thinks these things. What a relief!

In the next few months, I will have to make a decision about the rest of my life. If I decide to follow MY way, there will be cries and incomprehension. But thanks to you, I know that if I follow the way of easiness I risk to spend the rest of my life in satisfying the wish of someone else. This way is the synonym of renunciation, resignation, compromise, frustration, regrets, and remorse. Unfortunately, it is the easiest way to follow; society has drawn it for me.

I will need a lot of courage, and your book is a precious help for that. Thanks for being alive, Mr. Zelinski, and thanks for your great book.

All apologies for my English.

Michaël Roche

We work to become,
not to acquire.
—Elbert Hubbard

Putting the Get-a-Life Tree Activities to Good Use

Duval C. Sherman of Los Angeles, California, wrote to me in May 1999. As you can see from his letter, he found the Activities for Your Get-a-Life Tree (known as a Leisure Tree in previous editions; see pages 114 to 119) useful for planning what he will do in his retirement.

Dear Ernie,

I recently finished reading your fine book, *The Joy of Not Working*, and I am surprised that it has not sold over one million copies.

I retired from my very stressful job as a bus operator in Los Angeles, Calif. on October 29, 1997, at the ripe "old age" of forty-six. My former coworkers' favorite refrains were, "What will you do?" and so on and so forth. That is when it dawned on me that these people had no life away from the job. How sad!

Now that I am no longer stressed out, and have had enough time to clear my mind, I feel much happier and healthier. Your Activities for Your Leisure Tree have been very helpful. I saw things on there that I may have never thought of. For the time being, I have chosen about seventy of them that I think should keep me pretty busy for quite some time, with more to be added later. In fact, Ernie, as I write this I am in the middle of trying one of the activities now, writing my autobiography.

I have ordered two more copies of your book to send to two cousins of mine. One has been a teacher for thirty-one years and is debating whether or not she should retire. I am hoping that your book, and my continued urging, kind of pushes her along in that direction so she will have the time to pursue some of the other things that she has told me she is interested in. My other cousin is an obstetrician with her own clinic who shows absolutely no sign of slowing down. I am just hoping that she will take a little time to "smell the flowers" and find the time to read your fine book.

Whenever you are able to take a little time away from your "leisure," would you please be kind enough to send me a reply?

Thanks.

Sincerely,

Duval C. Sherman

*When pleasure interferes with
business, give up business.*

—Unknown wise person

From a Mother Who Decided to Opt for Part-Time Work

Jennifer Andrew of Cary, North Carolina, wrote to me in July 2000.

Dear Ernie Zelinski,

Just got through about half of your book *The Joy of Not Working*. I had to write to you, even before reaching the end.

I recently started working a part-time schedule so I could spend more time with my two-year-old. In addition, so I could spend more time “living”! It was hard to negotiate, but I managed, and with benefits. So far, I love it, but I have to admit I have been a little bored. When I picked up your book at the library, I started to realize why. It is true that it takes a lot more creativity to set a schedule

for yourself. However, it can be done!

More men are killed by overwork
than the importance of the
world justifies.

—Rudyard Kipling

Spending time is too broad a goal. I realize we need more purpose, and I need activities that are just for me, not just me as a Mommy. Our first goal is going to be physical fitness. I plan to take both of us on as many walks, swims, and trips to the play-

ground as we can handle. Also, to set more of a daily schedule for our activities.

There is so much pressure these days to work, and work hard. Especially now that the U.S. economy is booming. The unemployment is so low, that being fired does not worry most as much as it did, even when your book was first written. This is why I think it is even harder to take time out to “smell the roses.” Raise a family, have a great career, save for retirement, etc. I discovered I could not do it all, at least not at the same time. I have officially taken myself out of the rat race! Yippee!

I truly believe that being too caught up with “trading up” (new car, bigger house, etc.) is just a sign of deep personal dissatisfaction and boredom. Your book made me realize I have let myself grow boring. I have never discovered what I was good at, what I enjoyed just for its own sake, not what would be the most profitable career. I plan to enroll in some classes at the local community college, join a church that sounds interesting, and get involved in community service. I also am going back to grad school, but I am not rushing it. At twenty-six, I know I have a while, and I want to enjoy every drop of life that I can.

I have been feeling many of these things for awhile, but never verbalized them before. I always wondered why the

weekends got me down and lots of alone time made me anxious. Hope to hear from you, if you can take the time from your fun activities.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Andrew

From Someone Anonymous in South Africa

One of the most curious letters came from South Africa. It was in fact just a normal letter-size envelope with nothing inside. However, two quotes from the New Testament were written on the back of the envelope along with “From Anon” below the quotes.

*To work is simple enough; but
to rest, there is the difficulty.*

—Ernest Hello

“It is vain that you rise so early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil, for he gives to his beloved sleep.”

—Psalm 27 (126) : 2

“Blessed is one who fears the LORD who walks in his ways! You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands; you shall be happy, and it shall be well with you.”

—Psalm 28 (127) : 1 + 2

From Anon

Dropping Out of College Means Dropping In to Life

Matt Moss of Delray Beach, Florida, wrote to me in December 2000.

Ernie,

I just finished reading your book and couldn't agree with you more. It's so nice to see it all right there in black and white. We all need to slow down and take a hard look at what's really important.

I am only twenty years old but feel as if I can relate EXACTLY to what made you do exactly that. I stopped going to college after two years of mechanical engineering classes and internships. It was a difficult decision for me to make because to so many people in my life I was just deemed a college dropout. I don't feel as if I dropped OUT of anything; I was dropping IN.

You don't resign from these jobs;
you escape from them.

—Dawn Steel

I have never been a happier person. I have learned so much more in the past year than I would have ever learned at school. I have traveled all over and had all kinds of adventures. I worked at a summer camp for kids and discovered how wonderful the innocence of a child's mind can be. It's hard to accept that half these children are going to be miserable adults with a nine-to-five desk job. So really I guess I want to say thank you. I support your message and wish you all the luck in the world in getting it across to others. Life's too short not to enjoy it.

Well, take it easy. Best wishes.

Mat Moss

Pursuing a More Leisurely Lifestyle Is a Win/Win Situation No Matter What Happens

There is definitely risk involved in moving to a new career. There is, however, just as much risk involved in staying in a job you don't like. William T. David of Nashville, Tennessee, wrote to me in January 1999. Six months earlier, David had quit a high-paying job to pursue a more leisurely lifestyle. As he points out, the ability to take risks—even if it leads to failure—can have its rewards.

Dear Ernie,

I just finished reading *The Joy of Thinking Big* and *The Joy of Not Working*. What a wonderful way to start the new year!

In July of 1998, I walked out of a high-paid, high-stress factory job and never looked back. I spent four wonderful months relaxing and working on my condo. My current job pays much less, but I am happier now. My future plans include selling my condo and moving back to Wisconsin to be closer to my family.

Love of bustle is not industry.

—Seneca

It has taken some time, but I now know what I want to do in life. I am a very creative person and I have a ton of good ideas. I will pursue the things I've only dreamed about: writing songs, poetry, and a fictional novel; obtain patents on inventions; do more artwork; resume ballroom dance lessons; and learn to play the piano.

The wonderful news is that even if I fail, I never really fail as long as I am happy with what I want to do in life. It becomes a win/win situation no matter what happens.

Take care,

Bill David

On a Spiritual Path to More Leisure

James Paul Bauman of Oliver, B.C., wrote to me in August 2000. As Bauman indicates, living a more leisurely lifestyle can sometimes bring on guilt feelings. He gives us hints on how to overcome these feelings.

Dear Ernie,

I recently read your book *The Joy of Not Working*. I am very grateful for its message. Spirit sent it my way when I needed to learn its lesson. It gave me timely spiritual release. Thank you for writing it.

I'd long been laboring under some residual guilt feelings regarding my chosen lifestyle. I moved to a very simple life after I got separated several years ago. I wanted to have time to do all the things I'd rather do with my life, such as writing. As a result, I have been very fulfilled writing several books on economic freedom.

While I passionately love and believe in the simple, quiet life I lead, and have thrown off much of the guilt that came attendant with living radically differently from everyone else around me, and having so much free time to enjoy, I nevertheless retained an uneasy guilty feeling that I must work long hours, for no better reason than to *excuse* this lifestyle. I even avoided going into my local town during normal working hours, lest I appear as a "welfare bum." Silly, yes, but it's not always easy to go against years of social ingrainment.

On my spiritual path I am learning to accept myself wholly. The need for freedom in all aspects of my life has led to a natural way of being that has often met with disapproval from others and sometimes niggling residual fears and guilt of my own. But I've been overcoming these. The self-validation I've been receiving, including that which I've found in your book, has been overwhelming. Thank you!

Few people do business well
who do nothing else.

—Lord Chesterfield

Gratefully yours,

Jim

A Loyal Leisure Convert

Mike Hood of London, Ontario, emphasized in his letter how he had refocused his life:

Dear Ernie,

Just a note to express how much I truly enjoyed your book *The Joy of Not Working*. Prior to reading it, my primary focus in life was work. (I still have the odd lapse.) However, now I am pleased to say that I have rediscovered the JOY OF FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND MOST DEFINITELY LEISURE. I bike regularly, take frequent trips to parks/beaches, see movies, and read novels.

A good rest is half the work.
—Yugoslav proverb

In closing, thanks a million. Your book has and continues to serve me well.

Sincerely,

Mike Hood (a loyal leisure convert)

A Synchronistic Letter, Indeed

There was a bit of synchronicity involved in receiving the following letter. Allow me to lead into it. In December 2000, I received a phone call from Ronald Henares in California. Ronald told me that he and his friend Mark Craig, both in their late twenties, were employed in Silicon Valley and had become burned out from the hectic pace of working in the high-tech industry. Both Ronald and Mark had purchased a copy of *The Joy of Not Working*; the book had become, in Ronald's words, "their Bible for leisure."

Moreover, Ronald told me the book had influenced him and Mark to quit their jobs and move to Folsom, California, where they planned to open a smoothie shop. They wanted to sell *The Joy of Not Working* in the shop and were seeking my permission to do so. I suggested that Ronald contact Ten Speed Press to purchase the books directly from the publisher. During our conversation, I requested that Ronald and Mark both post a review of *The Joy of Not Working* on www.amazon.com, which they did within a week. (Only through these reviews was I able to get their full names.)

Approximately a year later, I was wondering how Ronald and Mark had made out with their smoothie shop and whether they were, in fact, selling *The Joy of Not Working* there. Because I did not have

Ronald's phone number or address, there was no easy way for me to find out. Much to my pleasant surprise, about a week later, in January 2002, I received a letter from Justin Matthew Onstot of Mather, California.

Dear Ernie,

Thank you for being true to your mission by publishing JONW. This book has, quite literally, changed my life.

It all began last summer when I walked into a smoothie store here in Folsom, CA. I was employed by a large high-tech company. This company is known as a meat grinder—and its reputation is well-deserved. I was having a bad day, and the proprietors of the smoothie shop picked up on it.

We got to talking, and it turned out that the two young men had both been corporate wage slaves. So they understood how I was feeling. One day they got hold of your book, and they became convinced to leave corporate America and follow their dream of owning their own business together.

Inspired by their story, I bought a copy of your book, which they were selling there in the store. I took it home that evening and savored the words of wisdom. There were some bitter pills to swallow, such as the idea that money could buy neither happiness nor security. But your ideas struck a chord in my soul.

It took me about six months to decide on my course of action. This last December I gave my notice. My employer was shocked, as apparently I was considered a "rising star." I worked my last day on December 31 and haven't looked back.

I love life again! I am able to start each day with coffee at my local caffeine dispenser. I sit and journal. And I am continuing to work on my first novel. The fact is, for the first time since graduate school, I can take full breaths of air again. The headaches, heartburn, and insomnia are gone. My goal now is to be faithful to the pursuit of my mission.

*A day's work is a day's work,
neither more nor less, and the
man who does it needs a day's
sustenance, a night's repose,
and due leisure, whether he be
painter or ploughman.*

—George Bernard Shaw

I have you and your book to thank. Your book did more for me than anything else could ever do. God bless, and good luck in your endeavors.

Regards,

Justin Onstot

Pretty Ambitious for a Leisurely Person

After reading *The Joy of Not Working*, some people decide to slow down and take it easy; others are motivated to new heights. Kimberly Menard of Tinley Park, Illinois, was one of the latter. Kimberly wrote to me in April 2001.

Dear Ernie;

I just finished reading your book *The Joy of Not Working* and thoroughly enjoyed the entire book. I am forty-two years old and have been working in the purchasing profession for over sixteen years. Over the years I have set many work-related goals such as certifications and pursuing my

degree to move ahead in my career. I have always loved learning in college and now will appreciate the classes more because they will provide me not only with career advancement (which was the only reason I was in college until reading your book). After reading your book I now see the opportunity for personal accomplishment

The best career advice given to the young is "find out what you like doing best and get someone to pay you for doing it."

—Katharine Whitehorn

and gaining knowledge not only for career advancement but also for self-improvement.

Reading your book motivated me to now begin setting personal leisure goals which I have never previously done.

Goal number one: in high school I wanted to be a writer and somehow got sidetracked and ended up in purchasing. I will now pursue writing a book during my leisure time if only fifteen minutes a day (per your book)! I have always wanted to write a book but like your books says always came up with many excuses to not do it.

Goal number two: throughout my life I've always come up with a thousand excuses to not exercise. We have a golden retriever, and I have set a goal to walk her for one mile every day. Not only will this benefit me but also my dog. I am an insulin-dependent diabetic, so I must be careful when managing my insulin and exercise.

Goal number three: (can be tied to goal number two): I am involved in an islet cell transplant research program and UIC. This research program is a possible cure for diabetes. Eight people in Canada have previously been cured long-term through an identical islet cell transplantation protocol. My goal is to help find a cure for diabetes. If the islet transplantation does not cure me, at least I helped find a cure for future generations. The book I will write will be focused on coping with diabetes and will be basically my life's story. I want this book to be published to help all individuals who must cope with diabetes.

Thank you again for writing *The Joy of Not Working*. I'm certain that I will reflect back on the book throughout my lifetime.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Menard

People Think That She and Her Husband Are Odd to Be Leisurely

In April 2000, Melanie Martin of Medicine Hat, Alberta, wrote to me about how others don't agree with how she and her husband manage their lives.

Dear Ernie,

Thank you for writing your wonderful book *The Joy of Not Working*. It was amazing for me to read a book that reflected exactly how I think and feel about things. I didn't know people like you existed (aside from my husband and I, and we both always felt that we were odd). We've received nothing but criticism and negativity from people our entire six years of marriage, and now I understand why—because we are so happy, and people can't handle it.

In 1994, we married at twenty-one, and the life that followed was: a lay-off, then a move from Victoria, B.C., to Campbell River, B.C., for a job that fell through two months into it, another major move to Calgary, Alberta, where we were unemployed for another six months and homeless. Then I became very ill (but undiagnosed), husband got a great job for \$45,000 a year, almost had a nervous breakdown as had no life outside of work and was treated horribly, he quit that job, came out to Medicine Hat, homeless for another month, jobless for almost a year, then I became severely ill and finally after long months of suffering was diagnosed with celiac disease (what a relief!).

I haven't worked in twenty years;
Guess I ain't so dumb.
I may be a hobo;
But, I ain't no bum.
—Unknown wise person

My husband found a great job at \$50,000 a year. And after all this, that's the icing on the cake as we're happy to be healthy and still in love. We receive tons of criticism from our friends and families back in B.C. But while they're complaining about the cost of living, etc., they are oblivious to the paradise in which they live—Victoria, B.C.

Come on, people! We are here in Alberta, watching the flat land, and the grass grow, and loving every minute. Inner

peace is what it's all about. I feel blessed we've learned so much, so fast, so young. Failure. Failure. Failure, Failure, Success! (How exciting!)

By the way, my favorite pastimes are being by myself, coffee shops with my husband, reading, writing letters, and attempting books. Did your book ever make me feel good about myself! Everyone else judges me harshly for not working and not following "the norm." I'm happy.

They're not.

Sincerely,

Melanie Martin

P.S. I left out 50% of the crap we went through—figured you'd get the general idea, and the past is the past. So don't run away. No negativity here.

I have made this letter a rather long one, only because I didn't have the leisure to make it shorter.

—Blaise Pascal

Not Everyone Likes *The Joy of Not Working*

Out of several hundred letters I have received, there have been only two negative ones. One was from a schoolteacher who complained about all the spelling errors in the first edition of the book, which was self-published and not properly edited. The other negative letter came from a gentleman in Ottawa, Ontario, whose name I have changed to Tom Blake.

Sir:

I have just finished reading your book *The Joy of Not Working*. I disliked the book intensely. You are irresponsible to encourage people not to work and to live off the efforts of others.

Who do you think pays the taxes that build the roads you drive on, maintain the public libraries, defend your person and property? Not only are you telling people not to contribute their share, but in not saving for hard times, misfortune, and retirement these people will require additional financial support from hard-working, responsible members of society.

A lazy person gives the workaholic something worthwhile to do and someone to feel happily superior to.

—Julia Swiggum

Your book is nothing more than a shallow, long-winded advertisement for your worthless speaking engagements. You are encouraging people to add to the national debt, and you are making a living at this. I'm not all that

surprised that you could not find a publisher. You are a traitor. You should be in prison.

Sincerely,

Tom Blake

Obviously, Tom Blake missed the whole drift of the book. Therefore, I immediately drafted a letter in which I shot holes through every criticism he made. I decided not to send the letter, however. Near as I can tell, you would have to be a certified psychiatrist, as well as a magician, to persuade negative people such as Blake to not work so hard and to enjoy life instead.

A Retired Teacher Who Wants to Teach People How to Retire Properly

Tim Westhead, a retiree from Whitby, Ontario, wrote to me in September 2002. Although he was looking forward to retirement, it turned out somewhat different from what he had expected.

Dear Ernie,

Let me begin by telling you how much I enjoyed and appreciated *The Joy of Not Working*, a book suggested to me this past August by my twenty-four-year-old son.

I retired at the end of June 2002 after teaching high school for thirty years in Toronto. I thoroughly enjoyed my job, the students, my department and school, and the conference circuit I've been on for more than two decades. But the key reason I decided to leave was to escape the brutal commute of one hour or more (one way) that I'd been doing for twenty-six years in Toronto traffic from my home outside Metro. I was fortunate enough to be able to take advantage of the 85 factor (age plus years of experience) for Ontario teachers that came into existence in the spring of 1998.

So from that time until last June, I had four years to consider my retirement, plan for it, and investigate possibilities of part-time employment. Like many who have worked for a number of decades—some who plan and some who don't—by mid-summer I began to feel pretty strange about being retired and about being jobless. You know, the “survivor guilt,” the elation, etc., of not having a job to go to—the emotions that most people probably experience during the transition period, I experienced too.

Leisure time is that five or six hours when you sleep at night.

—George Allen

I decided at that point that I'd better research retirement, leisure pursuits, and being jobless, and that's when my son suggested I read your book. The long and short of it is that I've created a workshop called "Keep Your Chins Up in Retirement—Practical Ways to Preplan Retirement." It deals neither with planning financial matters nor with filling out the proper forms; rather it focuses almost exclusively on the emotional aspects of retirement and how to deal with and enjoy one's new lifestyle. I believe this is a significant facet that retirement seminars and workshops gloss over or ignore altogether. I'm going to start pitching it to teacher's organizations, etc., in the near future.

Again, I thank you, Ernie, for the emotional boost you've given me (and countless others, I'd wager) about how to take delight in a new lifestyle after the full-time grind.

My very best,

Tim Westhead (Retiree!! and Semi-working Stiff)

A Retired Couple Who Plan to Compare Their Leisure (Get-a-Life) Trees

Elaine Hamos of Palo, Iowa, wrote to me in October 2002. After setting it aside for two years or so, Elaine had rediscovered *The Joy of Not Working*.

Dear Ernie,

A couple of years ago my husband and I received two retirement books for Christmas from his son. Brian was worried about his dad adjusting to this new life.

We read both books, and I don't know what happened to the other one, but *The Joy of Not Working* was just excellent.

After two years, I decided to read the book again. It is amazing to me how much more I have learned. This second time around, everything made even more sense, and I completed some of the exercises that I hadn't bothered to do before. The Leisure Tree is especially helpful.

Reading your book has revved me up to make my life even more fulfilling. If a person will let the mind wander, many wonderful and exciting ideas come to mind. My husband plans on rereading the book also. It will be fun to compare our Leisure Trees!

Thanks for writing the book, and please let others know that it is even a better “read” the second time around. I plan to read it a third time sometime in the future. Your book is a real motivator.

Sincerely,

Elaine Hamos

Letter from an Early Retiree in Florida

Steve Reichard of Dublin, Ohio, sent me this email in January 2003. He was spending the winter in Florida at the time, something that I would like to be able to do so that I could escape the cold winters in my hometown.

Hi, Ernie.

First of all, let me say that I loved your books, especially *The Joy of Not Working*. I have definitely learned a lot from reading your books. I am a thirty-four-year-old software engineer with a wife and little boy. About two years after graduating from college, I started my own software company and have been self-employed ever since.

A few years ago, I became financially independent, so I have been facing the prospect of what to do with the rest of my life, which can actually be pretty stressful. I lead a life that is pretty similar to yours: I write software on a notebook computer whenever I please, and I enjoy a lot of free time. Right now I’m in Florida for the winter, staying with my wife’s parents. My office consists of a notebook computer on a card table.

I run into a lot of the same problems that you probably deal with: everybody works, so it’s hard to find someone to “play” with.

I also wanted to recommend a book to you: *Toxic Success* by Paul Pearsall. The author’s views are similar to yours, in that everyone is working nowadays and letting their personal relationships and nonwork life suffer.

Anyway, I wish you the best, and wouldn’t mind if you dropped me a line or two if you have some free time.

Thanks,

Steve Reichard

A Reader Who Discovered the Author Is Not a “Welfare Bum”

Peter Borchers—who lives in my hometown of Edmonton, Alberta—wrote to me in the late 1990s. Although I used to see Peter in some of the coffee bars that I frequented at that time, I didn’t get to know him until some time later. Peter wrote to me to express his surprise at the content of *The Joy of Not Working* once he actually got around to reading the book.

Dear Ernie,

I’ve come to read your book *The Joy of Not Working* from the opposite angle. As an adult education student, your book was one of ten on a list to write a book report on.

Do not mistake a crowd of
big wage earners for the
leisure class.

—Clive Bell

To be truthful, the title stirred my senses in a very negative way. All I could think of was “welfare bum.”

I picked up the book at the library and right there started reading the first chapter. I didn’t take the book out, but went to the nearest bookstore, bought my own copy, and went home to read it. I read it not once, not twice, but three times. I couldn’t wait to present, alone in front of my peers and professor, your book, like a priest the gospel. My peers gave me a standing ovation and the professor top marks. I thank you for that; you deserve the praise; I was just a humble messenger of your message.

I can happily confess that I, although still working full-time, am living most of your text. I am a very happy person with high esteem and various hobbies that will take up most of my time when I do retire. I will be taking a sabbatical of one year as a preretirement exercise to prove that your book is a living entity to many seekers.

You will be hearing from me again.

Greetings,

Peter Borchers

Retirement Means Not Going Back to the Tunnel with No Cheese

Job-sharing allowed Shirley Campbell of North York, Ontario, to become semiretired. She was looking forward to full-time retirement, however, and wrote to inform me how she planned to spend her time.

Dear Ernie:

I enjoyed your book very much, and it came along at the right time. It belongs to a friend who is a workaholic. I am retiring in March—sorry, I mean I plan to spend more time in self-realization/actualization.

I will be sixty-five in March, and my boss doesn't want me to quit and, in fact, was being very successful in making me feel guilty about it to the point where I was having second thoughts—but not anymore.

There are so many things that I want/enjoy doing. At the present I am job-sharing so only work three days a week. But how much better (it will be) not to work at all. No way do I want to sit in front of a computer for the rest of my life typing pathology reports.

*If you have a difficult task,
give it to a lazy man—he will
find an easier way to do it.*

—Hlade's law

My friend—the workaholic—said, “What are you going to do all day—lay on the couch and watch movies?” And I said, “No, I'll get up every once in awhile for a snack.”

Seriously, I am going skiing in Banff in March with my grandson. I like to cook, bake, entertain, travel, and sew, so I do not believe I'll have a problem with too much leisure time. No—I am not going to keep going back to tunnel where there is no cheese—good analogy since I love cheese. Anyway, thanks so much.

Sincerely,

Shirley Campbell

An Invitation to Dinner

Over the years several readers have invited me to dinner, including Lorna (last name is withheld due to the nature of the letter) of Washington, D.C. I received her letter in February 2003.

Dear Ernie:

With all due respect I am writing to let you know that your book is too long to derive the right dose of leisure for me this Sunday morning.

You had me at first sight of your book's title. That was months ago, and I left your book at my bedside untouched!

Today it caught my eye again, and I opened it to the page with your picture. I needed great assurance that you are somebody alive, still on this planet. Therefore, please

respond upon receipt of this (letter) immediately. You have dinner waiting here in Washington, D.C.—yes, to find out what “interesting subjects” you have to talk about (see page 5)!

Of course, your book says it all! The table of contents to be exact! I, myself, am enjoying *The Joy of Not Working* for I am JOBLESS and thankfully have found a kindred spirit in YOU.

I believe each topic in the table of contents of your book may very well be a book title unto itself, and believe me 99.999999 percent of the world’s population (work force) needs these affirmations as expressed in your chapter headings.

The word *career* is a divisive word. It’s a word that divides the normal life from business or professional life.

—Grace Paley

Let us therefore UNITE our minds of leisure! I wish to give away your book to each yuppie and definitely to corporate fools succeeding to promote MODERN SLAVERY! So, now let me not get all WORKED up! I certainly don’t need the WORK!

Can we agree to meet soonest here in D.C.? Here is my card.

I am wrapping up your book to give to my daughter a most exciting birthday present for her thirtieth birthday. She is a disciple of leisure like you and me—although still struggles a bit with “society’s programming,” which I hope your book can successfully debug!

My thanks and praise for your wit and wisdom!

Call me,

Lorna

Paring of Old Beliefs and Attitudes Is Not Necessarily Easy

Louann Sanchez of Ridgeland, Mississippi, wrote to me in November 2001. Like many of the people who have written to me, Louann made a drastic change in her life to search for what she truly wants and be the person she always felt she could be.

Dear Ernie,

I just finished *The Joy of Not Working* and find that I am wishing it could continue. Not that there is more to be said (you do that superbly), but I really enjoyed the actual reading.

For an assortment of reasons, I quit my job of twenty-six years just before the tragic terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, D.C., in September and moved from the Midwest with a friend to Mississippi. Interesting time to make changes in one's life, hmm? The transfer job I had thought would be waiting for me did not work out and several other options proved unpalatable, so there I was unemployed and though unnerved by the prospect, I wasn't particularly worried. Lots of people are out of work due to the economic downturn and the terrorism. Unlike many desperately looking for work, I am glad that due to a stable financial base (for now) and my friend's help, I am able to take this time to do a complete reorientation of myself and decide what the future holds . . . I feel almost unpatriotic that I am not out there actively seeking reemployment or out shopping or traveling just to help the American economy. (Sounds a bit peculiar to me, this "shopping" to help the country, doesn't it? Finding a way to make an economically feasible and fiscally profitable economy based on saving and perpetuating the planet Earth and its dwindling resources seems like a much better way to help the country and the world.)

The many job positions I had held in my one company never completely satisfied me, although I liked doing many parts of the different jobs. It was a way to make money, to survive and continue. But in the past year, I found just bringing home a paycheck wasn't right for me anymore. Needs weren't being met, and I felt I had gotten lost somewhere along the way. With some misgivings and apprehension and lots of thoughtful reflection, I decided that radical change was the only way to effectively find a new way of living.

Anyway, in the face of family disapproval and puzzlement of friends, I have been dealing with the feelings derived from not having a job while trying to assess how to do what I want and be the person I've always felt I could be. It's harder than I thought, this paring of old beliefs and attitudes to find the real me and the passions that make life sweet and to find a better way to live. Your book has helped a great deal with the job loss issue and not working issue, besides pointing out marvelous ideas and jogging the ol' work-subdued creativity and wonder bubbling back to the surface. It hadn't disappeared entirely; just took a vacation from being front and forward. I've been delighted to work the exercises in the book, and equally delighted to find that in answering those questions, a whole slew of more questions (and answers and puzzles and contradictions and arguments) have arisen to add to the mix.

It is too difficult to think nobly when one thinks only of earning a living.

—*Jean-Jacques Rousseau*

I have asked for your book as my sole Christmas present (the one I finished is borrowed from the library and they frown mightily on highlighting pertinent information and writing in margins). Defacing your book is not my goal here; I just need to be able to refer to helpful sections, quotes, exercises, etc., to continue adding to the personal and career assessment that forms part of the structure of my day. I think adding your book to my collection of excellent thought-provoking books, articles, and personal journal entries is the best present I can give to myself this year and for years to come. Thank you once again, and here's to you. May health and happiness be your companions on the path.

Sincerely,

Louann Sanchez

Work Is That Thing That Interferes with Life— Don't Let It!

There is an old saying, “When the student is ready, the master will appear.” Obviously, Jennifer Reinson of Calgary, Alberta, was ready for some guidance when she took a hiking trip on the West Coast Trail on Vancouver Island in British Columbia. The trip taught her a few important things about life.

Dear Ernie,

This past May I ventured out on a trip, little knowing the influence it would have on the rest of my life. It turned out to be the best thing I have ever done for myself. After graduating from university at Christmas, I decided to treat myself to a vacation and go on the West Coast Trail. Nothing could have opened my eyes to the wonders of the world more. This trip took me back to the basics of life, living in the now and mastering the moment for what it is. I realized on the second day of this nine-day trip that I worked far too much. At that time I had three jobs and numerous other side/part-time positions. One individual in this group that I traveled with pointed out that it was pretty sad to hear a twenty-two-year-old say that she worked too much. That is a comment that has stuck with me. I decided right then and there that life was not all about work, but about living now and enjoying the simple things in life. By the end of the trip, I had come up with the saying: **WORK IS THAT THING THAT INTERFERES WITH LIFE—DON'T LET IT!**

I promised myself that I would remember the feelings I experienced on the West Coast Trail when I returned to my hectic life at home. I decided on the trail to keep a journal of all the things I wanted to do with my life and how I planned to get there. I promised myself that I would never again hear myself say, "I work too much!" So, as the trip wound down, I began to think of what I had to go home to, three jobs and a summer full of work. Something had to be done!

Before returning to Calgary, our group stayed over in Victoria, and that's where I found your book. While strolling down a street, a few of us popped into Munro's bookstore. When I first saw the title *The Joy of Not Working*, I thought it would be a comedy about goofing off at work and ways of calling in sick, but all it took was for me to read up to the third paragraph of the Preface, when you talked about the zest for life and waking up every morning excited about the day, that I realized you and I were on the same wavelength. I couldn't believe that another person was thinking the way that I was! I had such a complete revelation about life on the West Coast Trail that I was sure when I returned home, reality would set in and I would be confronted by challenges and be forced to return to a lifestyle I had decided I no longer wanted.

Well, I returned home and quit two of my jobs, what a feeling! I was surprised to see that it really wasn't that hard! Simply put, I placed more pressure on myself because I didn't want to disappoint others that I almost stopped myself from doing it. Since then I have put some serious thought into what I want out of life. I thank the lucky gods every day for helping me to open my eyes and realize at a young age that I was headed in the wrong direction. I believe in your saying of "a little short-term pain for long-term gain" and have decided that I want to be my own boss and be able to take sabbaticals when I see fit and live the Life of Riley.

My summer plans have changed dramatically. I now will only be working one job until July 31, after which time I will be taking the entire month of August off. During this time I have plans to visit with family, travel and get a little R 'n' R. In September I have decided to return to school and take a two-year master's of kinesiology program. I already have my own company called ESSENTIAL FITNESS LTD. but instead of in the past doing that on the side and working for someone else at a job that brought me half the satisfaction, I have decided to be my own boss full-time.

*Idleness is an appendix
to nobility.*

—Robert Burton

I've been back now from the West Coast Trail for just over a month, and I'm proud to say that every day I am thankful for allowing myself to enjoy the gifts of love, laughter, and life. I feel so fortunate to have discovered now at twenty-two that life is what you make it.

Thank you for your inspiration.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Reinson

A Woman Who No Longer Has to Feel Guilty about Not Working

Being retired gives you the freedom to do what you want, when you want, and with whom you want. Part of the equation for handling all this freedom is the ability to be creative and to become a highly independent person, if you aren't one already. Moreover, you must be able to overcome any feelings of guilt about not working while others less fortunate than you are working.

In March 2003, Susan Yates of Indianapolis, Indiana, wrote to inform me why she no longer has to feel guilty about not working.

Dear Mr. Zelinski,

I just finished your book *The Joy of Not Working* and wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed and appreciated it.

A few years ago, my husband and I took a look at our lives and decided to make some changes. At that time, I was working a nine-to-five office job, and he was flying for a commuter airline and working almost every weekend. When he was home, I was at work and vice versa. We realized his income was more than enough for our conservative tastes so I quit my highly unsatisfactory job with no regrets! Since then, we have had wonderful times together enjoying his many days off and I have had abundant time on my own to pursue my interests.

My problem has always been feeling guilty about not working. My family especially seemed to have a hard time with it, and some people have been downright hostile. But now, thanks to your wonderful book, I will no longer feel I need to apologize for my beautifully work-free existence,

*We live in the age of the overworked,
and the under-educated; the age in
which people are so industrious
that they become absolutely stupid.*

—Oscar Wilde

and I will know just what to say in response to those who attack it.

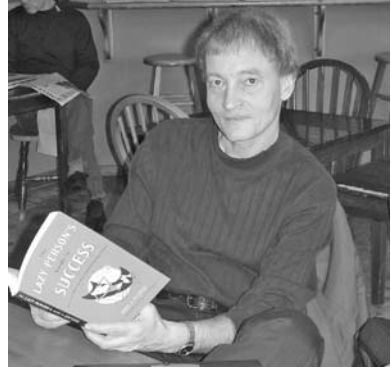
Thank you again for a wonderful book—I know I will read it again and again (it's already so highlighted now it looks like a coloring book!).

Sincerely,

Susan Yates

About the Author

Ernie J. Zelinski is a Best-Selling Author, Life Coach, Innovator, Creativity Consultant, Speaker, and Unconventional Career Expert. He has helped hundreds of thousands of individuals from all walks of life in their major career transitions and retirement planning through his life-changing books.



Photograph by Greg Gazin

Ernie's 15 creative works — published in 21 languages in 28 countries — have sold over 650,000

copies worldwide. His retirement bestsellers *The Joy of Not Working* and *How to Retire Happy, Wild, and Free* have been featured in major international media and have sold over 375,000 copies.

Ernie is an innovative ex-corporate worker who was blessed to have been fired from his job as a professional engineer over 20 years ago and to have leveraged his many years of struggles without a real job into a lifestyle of personal and financial freedom.

Ernie's core message — that we all can be more creative and really live life the way it was meant to be lived — is at the heart of all his work. To prove this, Ernie semi-retired when he was 31 years old and had a net worth of minus \$30,000. As a result of his creative efforts working only 4 or 5 hours a day, however, Ernie today earns a great income and is well-prepared for retirement.

Since the early 1990s Ernie has dedicated his life to helping individuals pursue their dream careers and at the same time create a better work/life balance in their lives. Thousands of individuals have contacted Ernie by letter and e-mail about how they have experienced inner renewal and personal growth as a result of reading one of his blockbuster books.

You can e-mail Ernie at vip-books@telus.net or write to him at VIP Books, P.O. Box 4072, Edmonton, AB, Canada, T6E 4S8.

Learn more about Ernie Zelinski and his creative pursuits by visiting one of his funky websites:

www.erniezelinski.com

www.retirement-cafe.com

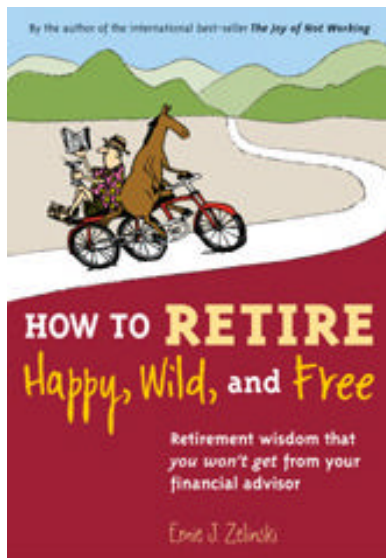
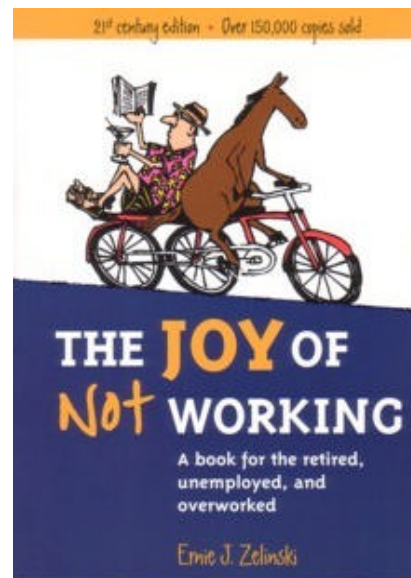
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VIP Books by Ernie J. Zelinski

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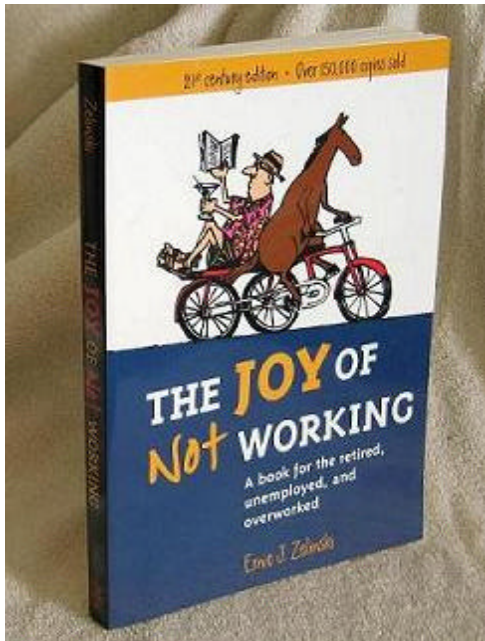


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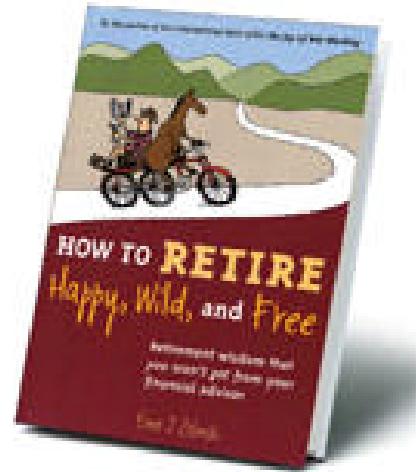
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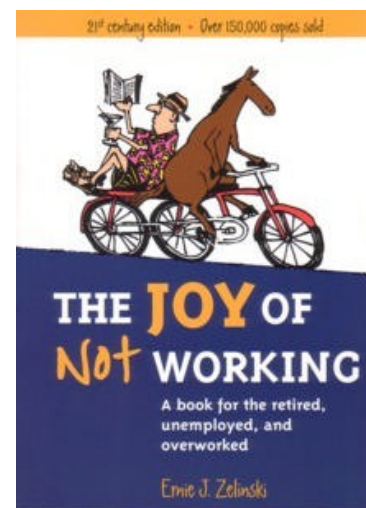
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