

FRENZY

September 2002

It seems that everyone in our society is in a frenzy. I have recently examined the activities of my children and my grandchildren, and then compared their lives to the life I lived in my youth. It seems to me that they do indeed live in a frenzy. There is so much to distract them from living. For the boys there is T-ball, little league, kids basketball, soccer, music (such as piano, guitar, violin) etc. Add to all that Boy Scouts, CAP, FCA, FFA and Awana, plus various other church youth activities and they are constantly on the run. Girls are not exempted. They have music, dancing, Awana, Girl Scouts, FFA, soccer, softball, volleyball, horseback riding, and numerous church activities and you have them in a frenzy too. This is not to say that parents have it easy. They are in a frenzy too trying to keep up with all their activities. They have to drive car pools and make sure they keep to their schedule. Parents have their own activities to attend to along with their children so that they too are in a frenzy. Sometimes when I read the calendar of my church and other churches in the community I realize that they too are in a frenzy of activities that can easily lead to burnout.

As a child I had little to do outside of school and church. I grew up during the great depression and we could not afford two or three cars, so there was no transportation. I had to walk to school and if my mother went shopping, she went to the store on public transportation. Many times I was sent to the local store on my roller skates with a list and the money to pay for the groceries that we needed. Then too we got our fresh produce and live chickens from a farmer who drove his truck by our house. He came once a week. Our milk was delivered to the door and our ice box was replenished as needed by the ice man who brought ice in a heavy wagon drawn by a huge Percheron horse. When he cut the ice there were chips that we kids could get. They were considered a treat. Life was much simpler in those days. We got our exercise playing roller skate hockey in the streets, exploring the woods near our home, climbing the cliffs in the abandoned rock quarry near our house, sliding down a cable suspended between two large trees and playing sandlot football and baseball. In the evenings we would play cops and robbers, and cowboys and Indians. Times were so hard that we could not afford a bicycle. Most of my friends did not have one either.

When we had vacations we went to visit my aunts and uncles and grandparents. While there we had to work in the fields, and help around the farms for almost all of them were farmers. In the winter we slept in houses heated by fireplaces and went to the bathroom in one and two hole privies. There was nothing more refreshing than having to take care of our needs in one of those when the temperature was 15 to 20 degrees (F) with a wind howling out of the North through the cracks.

When we reached high school we still only had one car that my father used during the long hours he worked, so dating often was done on foot or with public transportation. We did not have parties except for a rare birthday party. Our social activities revolved around the church and school. All athletic activities were sponsored by the schools.

When I was in undergraduate school I worked when I was not in class or studying, so there was barely time to date or take part in any recreational activity other than intramural sports. I had no time for fraternities or partying. I went to medical school during the war and since we went 11 months out of the year we did not have much time for anything except to go to school. I did go a few times to the beach, and twice to Montana with Jack Burgess, my friend from Missoula, but it took four days on the train to get there, and four days back all in a coach. There were no sleeping cars available for the likes of us. If we went short distances we often hitch-hiked.

In many ways I am glad that I did not grow up in post WWII America. It is not that I look back to "the good old days." But having grown up when things were so much simpler provided opportunity to do things that were creative. To give you some examples I will describe some of my activities. First I read a lot. I was a voracious reader. I did not have to be given free hamburgers to motivate me to read. I went to the library on my roller skates once a week and brought five books home. I first read all the books in the children's department, and when I had finished them I moved upstairs to the main library. When at age ten, I started checking out Charles Dickens, Robert Louis Stevens, Shakespeare, Zane Gray, Mark Twain and other such authors, the librarian began to question me. "Who's reading these books?" she asked. When I told her that I was she did not believe me. She did let me have the books even though she did not believe that I was reading them.

Then there were other exciting things to do. I raised rabbits and chickens and reveled in watching the mother rabbits pull the hair from their bellies to line their nests before the babies were born. It was always awesome to watch chicks peck their way out of the shell to come into the world ready to feed within a few hours. I hatched frogs' eggs and watched the tadpoles grow to maturity, first growing legs and feet all the while absorbing their tails to convert into their appendages. I often sat by springs in the woods watching salamanders swim about. But most of all I loved to fly kites. I made all kinds of kites that I would fly so high that you could hardly see them. They were mostly hexagonal made out of last year's dog fennel stems, and covered with brown paper that came as covers on our dry cleaning. I used flour and water for paste. I do not know how many spring afternoons I spent lying back in the broom sedge in the field across the street watching my kite soar into the sky and day dreaming of the day when I too would fly that high or even higher. If we went swimming we went to a swimming hole near our house. We went skinny dipping there because we did not want our

parents to know we were doing such a thing. There was no TV so we had to make our own entertainment.

One other thing I did was to do scientific experiments. We had a book in our house that described all kinds of simple experiments illustrating various aspects of science that I could do. I could do these with minimal resources. I did everyone of the experiments. I cannot tell you how much I learned doing them. My parents bought me a chemistry set that I also used to do experiments.

I tried to provide the same kinds of experiences for my children by spending our free week-ends by the shore, up at a nearby lake or camping in various places. I also bought books and educational toys. But somehow they did not seem to have the same appreciation for such activities as I did. If they did they have never told me so.

I have fifteen grandchildren and some of them spend much of their time watching the boob tube. They are missing out on the wonders of God's world. They are stunted to some degree educationally because the TV is really an educational wasteland. Even if good programs are available they prefer to watch the Cartoon Channel, and Nickelodeon both of which are devoid of any educational content. The older ones will try to watch MTV or other such trash.

I do not want to sound like a Jeremiah decrying everything, but I have to say that the frenzied world we live in has so many distractions that we do not have time to be still and know that God is God. The main distractions are the automobile, radio and television.