

August 1972

Induction of Seniors into the
University of Georgia Alumni Society

Inducting graduates of the University of Georgia into the Alumni Society is a pleasant duty for the President of the Society. I congratulate you and welcome you as members.

I congratulate you also on being the heirs of generations of Americans who spent their lives building for you a legacy never equaled in history. Although it is not represented by money or real property, this legacy has a value impossible to compute.

The freedoms you enjoy, guaranteed by the Nation's Constitution; the superior education you have been given; the opportunities to earn your living in a manner that interests and challenges you; the good health reflected in your good looks and lively intellect -- these things and many more did not develop fortuitously in the natural course of events. Earlier generations prayed, worked, fought, and died for them.

The influence of the Puritan ethic on American society figures greatly in the benefits you will enjoy. This philosophy, based on a stern religious dogma, emphasized self-reliance, a confidence to innovate, and above all a willingness to work.

Early Americans took the church's admonition against sloth very seriously, and feelings of guilt arising from idleness encouraged in them and their children a restless ambition, a characteristic that became typically American.

This strong identification with work by which generations of Americans achieved a religious sense of well-being and self-respect appears to be adding yet another clause to your legacy. Ironically, it embodies exactly what the Puritans feared; that is, a greater amount of leisure time for the population as a whole.

As our society becomes a richer and technologically stronger, it is moving in the direction of a shorter work week, a shorter work year, and a shorter work life, with correspondingly more leisure time. Since the turn of the century, the working day has been reduced by a third as the per capita output increased.

Psychologists, sociologists, and historians warn us that if society is going to demand less and less work of its members, then new values must be established and man must learn how to use his leisure time constructively and creatively. A skilled and highly competent population living in affluence without a sense of usefulness and worth could be highly explosive.

Leisure, as we understand it, is the time available to the individual when he has finished earning his livelihood. It is a time when he can choose from activities open to him at home or in his society.

Historically, time has always been a very scarce resource. In fact, until recent times, when the automated machines gradually took over the monotonous and time-consuming jobs, leisure has been reserved for a

select few. We cannot look to the past for precedents in ways to cope with leisure. The Puritans were unable to envision a time when large groups of the population could be idle with no drop in the output of goods and services. They left us no guidelines for this situation; however, they did leave us superb examples of self-motivation and self-discipline.

Bertrand Russell said: "Nothing of importance is ever achieved without discipline, not discipline imposed by society or authority, but discipline determined by individual needs and desires, in other words self-discipline."

You will find your greatest satisfactions through motivating yourself toward achievements that will benefit the greatest number of people and disciplining yourself to continue working to that end. Rest and relaxation will be more thoroughly enjoyed when alternated with periods of work and achievement.

Finding a worthwhile project should be easy. You can become active in civic affairs, interest yourself in local government, work for environmental control, work toward the continuing advancement of our schools and universities, just to mention a few.

It follows, then, we urge your interest in the efforts of the Alumni Society as it works with the administration and faculty toward even more outstanding achievements by the University of Georgia.