

## ON A LIGHTER SIDE with Andy Rooney



I don't know how most people feel about it, but if I had to choose between being on vacation for the rest of my life or working without ever taking another vacation, I'd choose vacation-less work. Aside from the great satisfaction a day's work provides, too many things go wrong on vacation. Vacationing is hard, expensive and as often as not, no fun.

Years ago, a writer named Elbert Hubbard, who said a great many true things, said, "No man needs a vacation so much as the person who has just had one."

Americans suffer least of all. Something called "Expedia.com," which calls itself, "the world's leading online travel agency," takes a survey every year and has determined that Americans take the fewest number of vacation days among citizens of any major nation. The average working American takes 14 days off every year. The average worker in Great Britain gets 24 days. In Germany, workers average 26 days of vacation, and in France, workers take 36 days of vacation every year. That's 22 days more than we take. I just hope they don't try to borrow money from us.

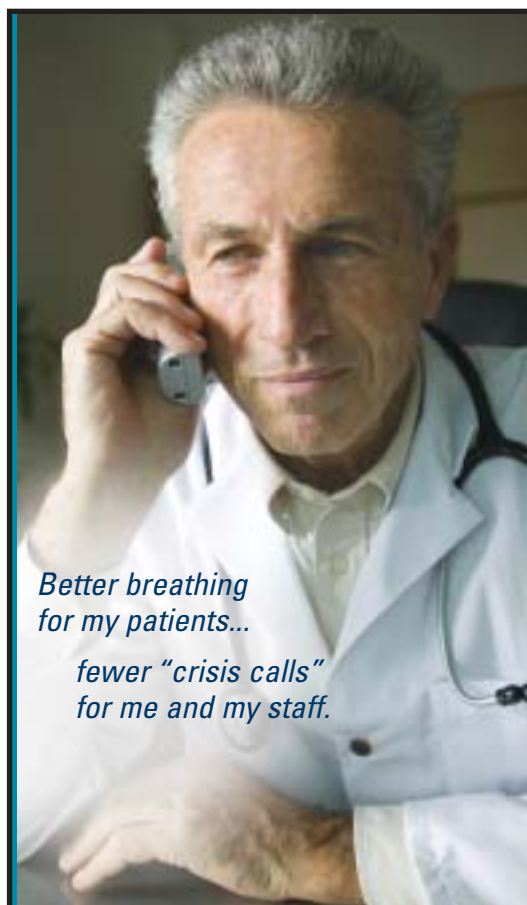
My reaction to those statistics is mixed. On one hand, I admire the French for taking that much time off, but on the other hand, I resent them for it. You have to concede that the French are better at living than we are. They enjoy the simple pleasures more than we do. If the French were Americans, I don't think they'd save their money to travel to Paris for an expensive vaca-

tion. They'd be more apt to sit back, relax and sip wine.

The number of Americans who actually do any manual labor today is relatively low. There are machines that do almost everything now. Very few people are out there in the hot sun all day long picking cotton. One surprising statistic relating to vacation is the number of people who don't take all the time they have coming to them. Surveys have determined that American workers don't use an average of three vacation days available to them.

It would be ideal if an employer laid out the work to be done, then ignored how long it took the people he employed to do it. That won't happen, of course, because employers would just change the work hours. That's the way of the world.

Most of us don't stop to think much about it, but the satisfaction we all get from money is not so much in having it as it is in the process involved in making it. The process, of course, is work. It's really a wonderful arrangement when you think about it. The businessman who makes a million dollars a year doesn't get any more satisfaction from his million than the hourly worker gets from his \$30,000. When I was in college, I worked summers in a paper mill for \$18 a week. I still think of the pleasure I took from getting the money in cash, every Friday at 4 p.m. I make more than that now but they don't pay me in cash and the money is no more satisfying than the \$18 that I received then.



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