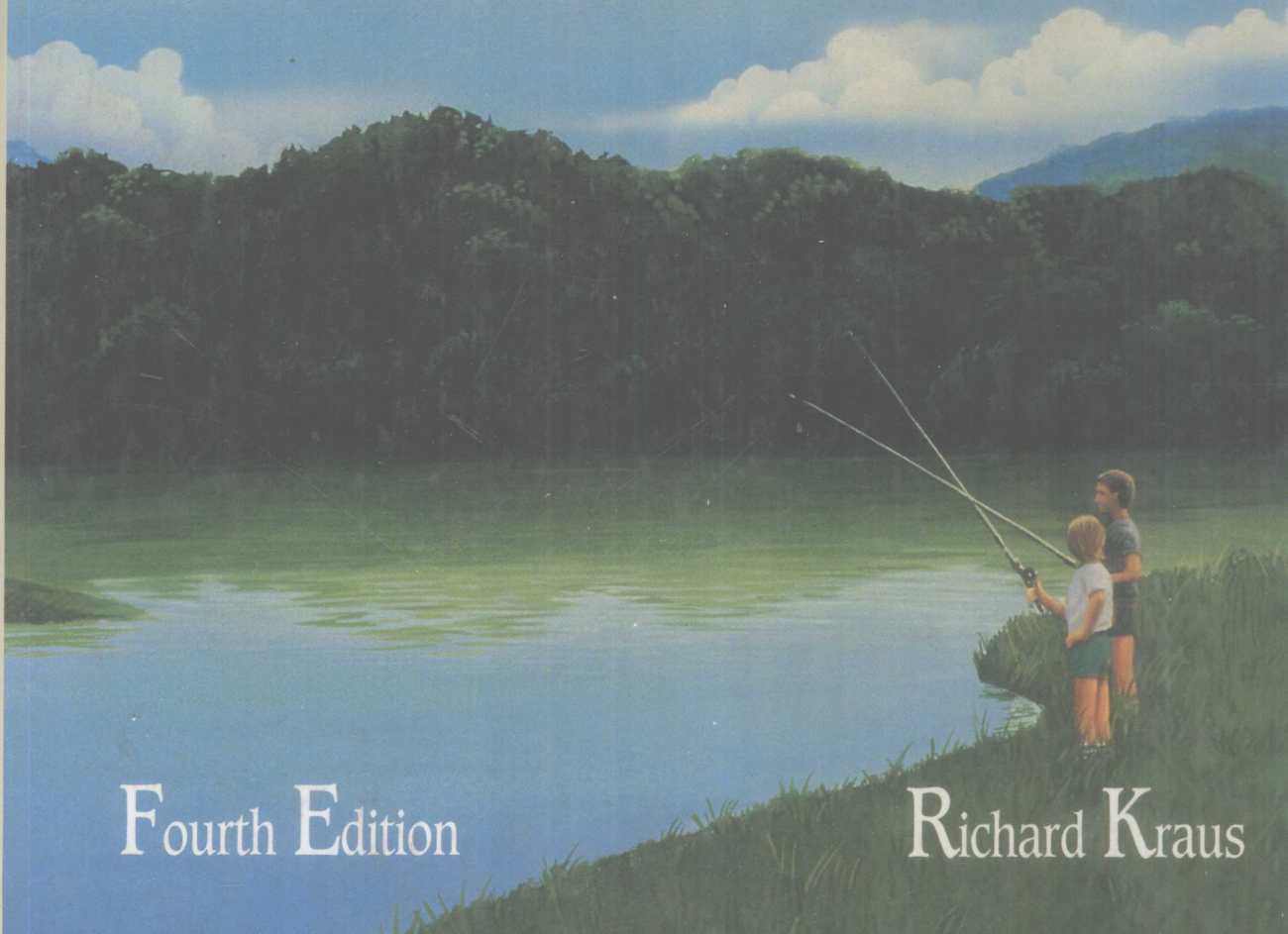


# RECREATION AND LEISURE IN MODERN SOCIETY



Fourth Edition

Richard Kraus

Fourth Edition

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# Recreation and Leisure in Modern Society

**Richard Kraus**

Temple University

HarperCollins *Publishers*  
**HIGHER EDUCATION**

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Fourth Edition

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# Recreation and Leisure in Modern Society

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# Preface

This is the fourth edition of a book that has been widely used as a foundations text in college and university recreation, park, and leisure studies curricula for the past twenty years. Since the publication of the first edition (1971), there have been immense changes in the recreational patterns of Americans and Canadians young and old, and in the leisure-service field as well. This new edition reflects these changes.

In the 1960s, the primary focus of study in recreation and leisure studies departments was on programs conducted by public recreation and park agencies. Today, the leisure-service field comprises several other types of sponsors, including commercial and therapeutic agencies in particular. Moreover, past recreation textbooks tended to be concerned primarily with programming and leadership, while today's curricula have a strong marketing orientation and emphasize recreation's role in meeting human-service needs. When the last edition was published (1984), recreation and park professionals had undergone a traumatic setback in financial support, leading to widespread budget freezes and cutbacks. Today, the field has recovered from such problems and is, by and large, moving ahead optimistically to provide enriched programs and services in many communities—although in some larger cities austerity budgets still prevail.

The field of leisure studies is much more complex today than in past decades. In the past, relatively few researchers skilled in the behavioral and social sciences studied recreation and leisure. Today, a far greater number of scholars with backgrounds in psychology, sociology, history, economics, business management, and environmental studies are at work in this field. Several journals publish their research findings, and scholarship in the overall field of leisure studies has gained greater academic recognition.

This edition therefore provides both a broad, conceptual introduction to the study of recreation and leisure as societal phenomena and an overview of professional agencies and services in the field. While it makes extensive use of citations from the popular press, newspapers and news magazines, it also makes heavy use of articles and research reports in such publications as the *Journal of Leisure Research*, the *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration*, the *Therapeutic Recreation Journal*, *Parks and Recreation*, and the *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance*. As before, although the bulk of references and examples deal with the United States, much of the content is drawn from Canadian sources.

Although it is not reflected in the table of contents, this book is essentially structured in five parts that reflect the familiar "who, what, when, where, and why" journalistic format, in slightly revised order:

1. *What*. Chapters 1, 2, and 3 introduce the overall topic, describe social factors that have influenced the growth of recreation and leisure, and provide a conceptual analysis of recreation, play, and leisure. Chapter 4 then describes the personal values of recreation, including its role in family life and through different life stages.



- II. *When.* Chapters 5 through 7 present an historical survey of recreation and leisure in successive periods of mankind's history, from the pre-Christian era through the 1980s.
- III. *How.* In Chapters 8 through 12, the organized recreation system in the United States and Canada is discussed, with separate chapters dealing with government; voluntary nonprofit recreation services; campus, military and employee recreation; commercial and private recreation; and therapeutic recreation service.
- IV. *Who.* Chapter 13 deals in detail with the emergence of recreation, parks, and leisure service as a major career field, and with the professionalization of it as evidenced by the growth of higher education programs, professional societies, and credentialing procedures to screen leisure-service practitioners.
- V. *Why.* The final two Chapters, 14 and 15, identify the fundamental values and goals of recreation as a form of community service and present a philosophical analysis of recreation and leisure.

This book has been extensively updated, with many new references, and with a detailed coverage of changes that have occurred with respect to recreation and leisure during the 1980s. One such change has been the reported decline in leisure time that occurred over the past two decades, based on Harris Poll reports. It should be pointed out that only after this book had gone to press did critical analyses of these findings begin to appear in the popular media.

For the record, the Harris data were drawn from two questions which took about a minute to administer, as part of a much larger telephone interview. Responses were clearly rough estimates; for example, the most dramatic decline in leisure was reported by the elderly. Although few of them actually held jobs, they reported that they had only about an hour more of free time each day than working-age Americans—a curious finding! In contrast, University of Maryland sociologist John Robinson has found that free time was actually on the rise, based on systematic time-diary studies. Similarly, U.S. Labor Department statistics, based on company payroll reports, show a slight decline in hours worked per week over the past decades. It seems plausible that many people feel they are under greater pressure today than in the past, and that this accounts for the perception of a time “famine.”

In addition to providing heavy documentation of contemporary trends in recreation and leisure, the author has attempted to make the book as interesting and attractive as possible for student readers by including illustrations, provocative quotations that introduce the chapters, suggested questions for discussion at the end of chapters, and an overall format that breaks the text up with boxed excerpts emphasizing key points.

The author expresses his appreciation to a considerable number of recreation and leisure-service administrators, in public, voluntary, commercial, and other types of agencies, who generously sent him reports and brochures describing their programs and goals. Also, he wishes to acknowledge the assistance of Dr. Stephen Smith, of the University of Waterloo, in helping obtain current information regarding recreation and park trends in Canada.

The author dedicates this edition of *Recreation and Leisure in Modern Society* to the students he has had the pleasure of teaching at Teachers College, Columbia University, at Lehman College of the City University of New York, at Temple University in Philadelphia, and, briefly, at both the University of Utah and Cortland College of the State University of

New York. He also wishes to acknowledge his satisfaction at having been for several decades one of a fine company of men and women—college and university professors of recreation, park, and leisure studies.

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*Temple University*

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# Chapter 1

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## Recreation and Leisure: The Current Scene

To have leisure is one of the oldest dreams of human beings—to be free from an endless round of labor—to pursue what one wants, to spend time in voluntary activity, free of the tyranny of nature and of other human beings, free to exist in a state of grace. Living life on one's own terms is a central ideal of western society.

A rapid emergence of a new kind of society . . . has broadened the roles of leisure, making its use more central to our self-concept, health, economy, and spiritual well-being. As leisure has emerged into an identifiable, and often separate, institution of post-industrial society, the organizations which emerged . . . to deal with recreation, play, sport, parks, leisure, and culture are being challenged to leap, not into the future, but into the present.<sup>1</sup>

One way or another, despite sometimes nearly insurmountable obstacles, Americans have always found a way to play. Even the founding fathers recognized that the "pursuit of happi-

<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey Godbey and H. Douglas Sessoms, "Recreation and Leisure: Post-Industrial Society Values," *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance—Leisure Today* (October 1986): 5.

ness" required a balanced approach to life that fully integrated work and play. In the 1950s and 1960s, America's parks and recreation departments evolved into a powerful network for delivering a wide range of sports and leisure activities. But radical social changes in the late 60s and early 70s created a new social order. As we approach the 21st century, we face major challenges in serving new constituencies of single parents, latch-key children, and an aging population as the 'boomers' come of age.<sup>2</sup>

Why should recreation and leisure be regarded as significant aspects of modern life? What justification is there for a text that analyzes them as key elements in contemporary society—or for the hundreds of college and university curricula that deal with both theoretical and practical issues in recreation and leisure?

As this book will show, recreation, parks, and leisure services have become an important part of government responsibility and a significant social service in modern life. However, many people think of recreation simply as casual fun and a source of personal pleasure, and do not recognize leisure as a subject of serious scholarly concern. While we are often ready to spend substantial sums on vacations, entertainment events, or other leisure goods or services, often we do not realize that recreation constitutes a major force in our national and local economies. And, while we may accept the importance of play in our lives as a form of sociability, people tend to have limited awareness of its overall value in meeting the varied social, emotional, and health-related needs of participants.

For these reasons, it is the primary purpose of this text to present a comprehensive picture of the role of recreation and leisure in modern society, including: (a) the varied forms they take; (b) their social, psychological and economic implications; (c) the network of community agencies that meet leisure needs; and (d) the development of recreation as a field of career opportunity and professional practice.

## **DIFFERING VIEWS OF RECREATION AND LEISURE**

The very terms *recreation* and *leisure* may convey different meanings to the public at large. Like the blind men and the elephant (with one blind person leaning against the elephant's leg and thinking of it as a tree, while another touches the trunk and perceives it as a giant snake), we all tend to know only what we experience directly. So our perceptions of recreation and leisure vary greatly.

For some, recreation means the network of public agencies that provide such facilities as parks, playgrounds, swimming pools, sports fields, and community centers in thousands of cities, towns, counties, and park districts today. For others, recreation may be

<sup>2</sup> "Celebrate Play for America!," *Parks and Recreation* (July 1988): 22.

found in a Senior Center or Golden Age Club, a sheltered workshop for the mentally retarded, or a hospital for physical rehabilitation.

Still others may view recreation primarily in economic terms, seeing it through the eyes of the manufacturer of sports equipment, the travel agent, or the professional sports promoter.

Some may regard recreation solely as an amenity, and characterize our present way of life as a "fun" society. In their eyes, pleasure and amusement are the sole purposes of recreation, and leisure has become trivialized by a hedonistic search for personal release and excitement.

Yet there is growing recognition that recreation and leisure represent more than simply fun or the satisfaction of the pleasure drive. Instead, psychologists tell us that a number of other important human drives are met by recreational participation. Sociologists have studied leisure in the context of religion, socioeconomic class, ethnic affiliation, and other social variables and find it a significant aspect of community life today. Anthropologists see play as a highly purposeful form of education for the young, and a multifunctional aspect of many cultures.

Without question, recreation and leisure *are* all of these things. They represent a potentially rewarding and important form of human experience, and constitute a major aspect of economic development and government responsibility today.

It is important to recognize that this is not a new development. Recreation and leisure are concepts that have fascinated humankind since the Golden Age of ancient Athens. Varied forms of play have been condemned and suppressed in some societies, and highly valued and encouraged in others. Today, for the first time, there is almost universal acceptance of the value of recreation and leisure. As a consequence, government at every level in the United States and Canada has accepted responsibility for providing or assisting leisure opportunities through extensive recreation and park systems.

Other types of organizations have increasingly moved into the recreation and leisure fields as well. These include numerous voluntary, nonprofit agencies that provide varied forms of education and social service to special populations of all sorts. Private membership clubs, commercial businesses, industrial recreation sponsors, educational authorities, and numerous other types of sponsors add to the variety of leisure opportunity today.

### **Diversity in Recreational Participation**

Often, we tend to think of recreation primarily as sports and games, and to ignore other forms of play. However, recreation actually includes an extremely broad range of leisure pursuits, including travel and tourism, cultural entertainment or participation in the arts, hobbies, membership in social clubs or interest groups, nature-related activities such as camping or hunting and fishing, attendance at parties or other special events, or fitness activities.

Recreation may be enjoyed along with thousands of other participants or spectators, or may be an intensely solitary experience. It may be highly strenuous and physically demanding, or may be primarily a cerebral activity. It may represent a lifetime of interest and involvement, or may consist of a single, isolated experience. In the past, we tended to define recreation as including only those activities that were socially constructive and

highly moral in nature, and that helped to restore one for renewed work, by providing physical and mental rest and refreshment. Today, we recognize that much recreation may be highly demanding or dangerous, and indeed that some forms of it—such as gambling or drinking—may be morally questionable and destructive from a physical or economic point of view.

### **Motivations for Recreation**

In addition to the varied forms that recreation may take, it often meets individual needs that go far beyond the need for relaxed fun. While later chapters in this text describe play motivations and outcomes in fuller detail, they may be summarized as follows.

Many participants take part in recreational activities simply as a form of relaxation, or for release from work pressures or other tensions. Other popular motivations may include the need to express oneself creatively, to give vent to one's hidden talents, or to pursue excellence in varied forms of personal expression.

For some participants, play may offer a useful channel for releasing hostility and aggression, or for competing vigorously against others. Others enjoy recreation that is highly social and provides the opportunity for making new friends or cooperating with others in group activities.

Some take part in leisure activities that involve community service, or that permit them to provide leadership in fraternal or service organizations. Still others take part in activities that promote health and physical fitness as a primary goal.

Given these complex purposes for play—as well as the significant social values that may be achieved through organized recreation programs—it is understandable that many varied leisure pursuits have become available in the modern community. While some activities are self-generated and do not require special planning or leadership, many others can only be carried out in organized programs or with the use of special facilities and direction.

## **LEISURE AS A CAREER FIELD**

As a consequence, employment in recreation agencies and programs has grown markedly over the past several decades and today constitutes a flourishing career field. Hundreds of thousands of men and women are professionally employed as recreation leaders, supervisors, therapists, planners, managers and program or resource specialists.

Indeed, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics predicted in 1985 that jobs in the leisure and recreation services field would expand by 1.5 million over the next 10 years, a 27 percent increase. This employment growth is markedly higher than that predicted for other key industries like retailing (16 percent increase), banking and financial services (19 percent), communications (17 percent), and public utilities (13 percent).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> "Where the Jobs Will Be: Outlook in Key Industries," *U.S. News and World Report*, 23 October 1985, 45.

## **SOCIAL FACTORS PROMOTING THE RECREATION MOVEMENT**

The social factors that helped bring about the growth of recreation and leisure programs and services stemmed from a variety of causes. Some of them involved changes in the economic structure of our society. Others were rooted in the kinds of social expectations that emerged as we moved from an essentially rural, agrarian society where government played a limited role, to a complex industrial and urban society with government assuming increasingly broader responsibilities.

### **Availability of Leisure**

The key development underlying the growth of the recreation movement and our national preoccupation with leisure and its uses has been the growth of free or discretionary time in the twentieth century.

In modern, post-industrial society, leisure has grown markedly for most individuals. Thanks to advanced mechanical equipment and automated processes in factories, agriculture, and the service fields, the productive capacity of workers has increased dramatically. In effect the workweek has been cut in half since the early days of the Industrial Revolution. In addition, greater numbers of holidays and longer vacations are now taken for granted by most American and Canadian employees. With improved Social Security benefits or pension plans, as well as longer life-expectancy and medical advances, many employees are today assured fifteen or more years of full-time leisure following retirement from work.

Thus we have been given a dramatic gift of free time to spend throughout our lives, in ways of our own choosing, and numerous authorities have predicted that leisure will continue to grow steadily in the years ahead. Surprisingly, in the mid- and late 1980s, a number of surveys have shown that this trend has been reversed, and that there actually has been an increase in workweek hours for many individuals. For example, the Harris polling organization reported in 1988 that a survey of 1500 men and women in March and April, 1987, indicated that their median number of leisure hours per week had declined from 26.2 in 1973 to 16.5 in 1987.<sup>4</sup>

However, this decline in leisure hours appears to be selective, with certain groups in the population (such as affluent professionals or business managers) working longer hours, but with other individuals continuing to have relatively short workweeks. When other factors are taken into account, such as the increase in holidays, vacations, and retirement, along with the needs of other special population groups like the disabled or under-employed, it is apparent that leisure continues to present a vast opportunity to great numbers of Americans and Canadians today.

### **Increased Affluence**

A second important factor, particularly during the first several decades of the twentieth century, has been the growth in personal income in both the United States and Canada.

<sup>4</sup> "Less Time for Play," *U.S. News and World Report*, 26 August–5 September 1988, 133.



Particularly during the "soaring sixties," as some financial analysts called them, the Western world witnessed a striking rise in national income, buying power, and total productivity. Personal income in the United States climbed from \$383 billion to \$686 billion per year, and the Gross National Product almost doubled. As a consequence, more and more people had substantial sums to spend on hobbies, entertainment, television and stereo sets, vacation travel, sports equipment, and other leisure pursuits and products.

By the mid-1980s, total spending (on leisure) in the United States was estimated by *U.S. News and World Report* to be \$310 billion a year—comparable to national expenditure on the military or on public education.<sup>5</sup> In the succeeding years, Americans were reported in 1987 to be spending \$47 billion a year just on sports.<sup>6</sup> As a single example of the immense sums spent on leisure activities and events, the 1988 Winter Olympics held in Calgary, Alberta, involved the following remarkable statistics:

most countries involved (57), most athletes (nearly 1,800), most events (46), most tickets sold (1.4 million), highest worldwide television rights fees (\$400 million), and most dollars spent on new and existing facilities (more than \$500 million).<sup>7</sup>

It should be pointed out that these impressive statistics have serious implications with respect to the role of sport in society. As Bray points out, the need for profit in a consumer economy results in an emphasis on paid spectatorship rather than on free recreational participation which does not produce a profit. She writes:

the interests of the owners of sports franchises, television networks, television advertisers, and the print media coincide, and they are served by the provision of professional sport to extremely large segments of the public. Time spent watching professional sports is time lost from participating in sports. In addition, the consumer interest generated in sports such as football, baseball, basketball, and hockey increased the demand for the public provision of these sports and not others in schools and recreational leagues.<sup>8</sup>

Nonetheless, the immense sums spent on varied forms of recreational participation contribute significantly to the national economy and to the fiscal well-being of many regions of the country—and are responsible for literally millions of jobs in public, private, and profit-oriented leisure-service agencies.

## Demographic Trends

Another important factor promoting the growth of popular recreation has been the dramatic increase in population during the twentieth century.

The median age of Americans climbed to 31.7 years, it was reported in 1987, and predictions were that it would be over 41 years by 2033. With greater numbers of elderly and

<sup>5</sup> Alvin Sanoff, "Business Gets Healthy from Athletics Too," *U.S. News and World Report*, 13 August 1984, 27.

<sup>6</sup> "Business: Sport Your Economy," *U.S. News and World Report*, 7 December 1987, 59.

<sup>7</sup> "Calgary Has It Down Cold," *The New York Times*, 7 February 1988, 1-5.

<sup>8</sup> Catherine Bray, "Sport and Social Change: Socialist Feminist Theory," *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance* (August 1988): 50.

**M**ore millions of citizens young and old means more millions of people who are ready to engage in play. In the United States, for example, the population soared from 200 million in 1967 to 215 million in 1976 and 245 million in 1988. It is predicted to rise to 305 million in 2033.<sup>9</sup> In Canada, population totals climbed from 19 million in 1964 to almost 23 million in 1976, and 25.8 million in 1987. Contrasting with earlier trends, the government's National Center for Health Statistics reported in 1988 that Americans had more babies in 1987 than in any year in nearly a quarter century, and that both marriage and divorce rates were the lowest in more than a decade.<sup>10</sup>

middle-aged citizens, a growing need for recreation programs designed to serve these age groups appeared. Along with such demographic changes, there was a marked increase in the number of those attending college in the United States. Just after World War II, there were about 1.6 million students in colleges and universities. By the late 1970s, close to 10 million young men and women were in college.

One of the effects of higher education is to expose students to new ideas and experiences, and to broaden their interest in such leisure activities as art, music, literature, and travel. The higher one's level of education, the more likely one is to engage in a wide variety of recreational pursuits.

Another significant demographic factor affecting the provision of leisure services has been the increasing diversification of the American and Canadian populations. Instead of relatively homogeneous communities or neighborhoods composed chiefly of typical family units, today there are much greater numbers of single people, those choosing alternative lifestyles, those of more varied ethnic or national backgrounds, and other special populations. With the growth of single-parent families, headed overwhelmingly by women, the need for new kinds of recreation programs to serve such groups is clear.

### Urbanization and Suburbanization

One of the key factors in the early development of the recreation movement was the growth of America's industrial cities. As people huddled together in crowded slums without the natural opportunities for outdoor recreation that the countryside provided, it became obvious that leisure posed an increasingly serious problem for an increasingly urbanized society.

Thanks to this dramatic growth of the cities, the recreation movement got under way in the United States and Canada. It took the form of playgrounds for children, sports fields for youths and adults, networks of parks throughout our cities, and the establishment of settlement houses, community centers, and other social-service and religious organizations that provided recreation.

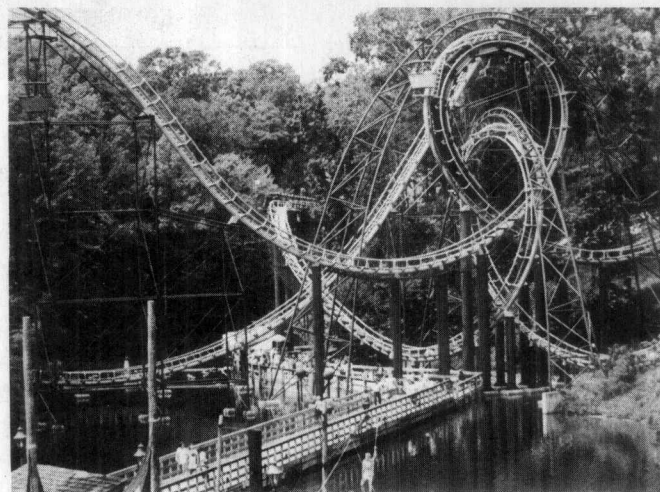
Following World War II, there was a widespread move by millions of middle-class families away from central cities to the suburban areas that surrounded them. The satellite communities they formed quickly established recreation and park systems—often with ex-

<sup>9</sup> "Population in U.S. Tops 245 Million," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 5 October 1988, A-9.

<sup>10</sup> "U.S. Births Up Sharply in 1987; Deaths Highest on Record," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 16 August 1988, 24.







**Themes of Today's Leisure:  
Fitness, Relaxation, and Thrills**

Thousands of marathon runners pour across New York City's Verazano Bridge (*facing page*) in an annual event typical of many distance races held throughout the United States and Canada. Other fitness enthusiasts, including growing numbers of senior citizens (*below*), regularly work out in health spas or exercise clubs. Not all recreation is this strenuous, however. More and more swimming pool designs include beachlike surroundings for relaxed lounging and bathing (*left*), unlike traditional pools intended chiefly for swimming laps or racing. Thrill-seeking recreation has also become a vogue in recent years as millions take part in exciting, high-risk outdoor play. One popular attraction is the rollercoaster, such as the terrifying "Loch Ness Monster" (*above*) at Williamsburg, Virginia's Busch Gardens.

