

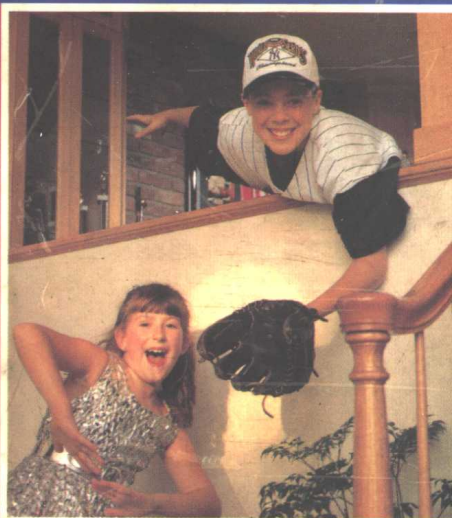
Varieties in the Society of the United States



# 美国 社会 百态

施心远 编译

英汉对照美国风情丛书



東方出版中心

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## 说 明

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## 内 容 提 要

本书是《美国风情系列丛书》中的一种,以英汉对照的形式,对美国的各种社会现象以及存在的种种问题进行了多方位的描述和报道。全书计有针砭时弊、揭露阴暗面、规劝不良行为、警示社会危机、提倡社会公德、歌颂奉献精神等短文 44 篇,从政治、经济、法律、教育、医疗卫生、体育、娱乐、社交、家庭、工作、生活等方面,反映了当代美国社会积极向上的一面和消极黑暗的另一面,可谓展现美国社会的万花筒。本书既可供学习英语之用,也是了解当代美国社会的理想读物之一。

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英 语 原 文



## 1. Suicides in the U. S. A.

Self-inflicted deaths in America last year—those officially recorded as suicide—claimed the lives of an estimated 24,400 persons, a record annual total.

Most suicides occur in the urban areas, the highest geographical incidence is in the West and men commit suicide more frequently and violently than women. Suicide is rising sharply among young people. Researchers claim that perhaps 70,000 to 80,000 young people between the ages of 15 and 24 will attempt suicide in the next twelve months—and 3,500 to 4,000 will succeed.

The over-all suicide rate of 11.7 per 100,000 in the United States is by no means high compared with other countries. It lags behind Hungary's 33.1 per 100,000—the world's highest—as well as a number of other European nations such as Czechoslovakia's 24.5 per 100,000, Austria's 22.3 per 100,000, and Sweden's 22 per 100,000.

The Los Angeles Institute for the Study of Self-Destructive Behavior, which opened in 1958 as the nation's first suicide-prevention center, now conducts

“psychological autopsies” to establish whether death was accidental or suicidal.

Dr. Calvin Frederick, psychologist with the investigation work, explained the generalized cause of suicide this way: “Usually, people commit suicide because they are hapless, helpless, and hopeless.”

Four to 10 times as many people attempt suicide as those who actually succeed. Those who fail will often try again to kill themselves.

## 2. The Bank

In America nearly every adult has some business with a bank. Most people have savings accounts where they deposit their money. Many also have checking accounts which then permits them to write a check against the funds in their account. In America most people pay their bills by check rather than in cash. It is more convenient and the cancelled check is a receipt of payment.

Banks do more than offer savings and checking accounts to their customers. A bank will generally cash a check for you and will change large bills for you. If you have an account in a bank you can get a check cashed without any charge. If you want a special check the bank will give you the check for a small fee. The bank will also sell you travelers checks which are good when you travel overseas. Travelers checks can be cashed in most overseas hotels and banks.

When the bank accepts money for deposit it pays interest on the money deposited. Thus your money in the bank is earning money. Normally the bank pays about 6% interest. With the bank there is also securi-

ty against loss. The bank is insured and protected against loss of any type. As a result in America little money is kept at home where it does not earn interest and there is a chance of it being stolen.

The bank also provides security for one's special papers and valuables. Most banks have a safe deposit section. Here you can rent a box (made of metal) in which you store your valuables and important papers. You are given a key to the box and only you can open the box. Most Americans have a safe deposit box. You pay the bank a yearly charge called rent for the use of the safe deposit box.

One of the most important functions of a bank is to make loans. This is the way the bank makes its money. If you want to buy an expensive object (car, house, etc.) you must borrow the money from the bank. You go to the bank and make an application for a loan. After the bank examines your application to insure that you are a good risk they then will give you the money. You then have to repay the bank the amount of the loan plus interest over a period of years. Each loan is different and the rate of interest on the loan will also vary. In America you hear many people say, "I owe the bank so much money". This means they have made a loan from the bank to purchase some expensive items and they still have to fully repay the loan to the bank.

In America nearly every adult has some business with a bank. It may be just to deposit or withdraw money from their savings account or merely to get change of a large bill. The bank is certainly a very important business in every American city.

### 3. Medical Insurance

Until the late 1920s about 90 percent of all medical bills were paid directly to the doctor by the patient. Today direct payments cover less than a third of medical bills; the rest are settled in the form of third-party payments by private insurers or by federal and state governments. Private medical insurance now pays for about 35 percent of the nation's medical fees.

Historically, the purpose of these third-party payments has been not so much to protect the sick person from the burden of medical expenses as to protect the income of the hospitals and doctors. During the Great Depression, many people were simply unable to pay their hospital bills. To guarantee against any such loss of income in the future, the hospitals decided to create a third party that would pay patients' bills for them—Blue Cross. The idea behind Blue Cross was a simple one: an individual would pay regular insurance premiums to a nonprofit agency, which would then pay at least part of the costs of any hospitalization that person might require. Later on, a



parallel insurance program, Blue Shield, was added to cover doctor's fees for medical and surgical expenses inside hospitals. The "Blues" have always maintained an intimate relationship with the hospitals, and their regional boards are still typically dominated by hospital doctors and other members of the medical establishment. The primary purpose of the "Blues" is not to save money by keeping bills down; rather, it is what it has always been — to ensure that hospital bills, however high they may be, get paid.

In the 1940s and 1950s, fringe benefits such as health insurance were recognized as a legitimate area for bargaining between unions and employers. The result was a massive new health-insurance market, which was quickly exploited by commercial insurance companies. More than a thousand firms are now active in the health-insurance business, with eight major companies dominating the field. These commercial insurers differ from the "Blues" in that their goal is profits for themselves — profits derived largely from the margin between their payments to doctors and hospitals and their income from the premiums paid by their clients. Profit margins can be preserved only if increases in health-care prices are passed on in full to the public in the form of higher premiums.

Thanks to Blue Cross, Blue Shield, and the commercial insurance companies, about four-fifths of the