

Do what you want to do—

(Continued)

strange place and bring back animals without hurting them. Of course, every zoo man secretly dreams of doing this. When I talked about it one day with Vierheller, he shuddered at the cost. But he said if I could raise the money, he would contribute my time—that is, keep me on the payroll. That was half of the battle, but for the other half I wasn't so sure. However, I went to the Zoological Society, and told them about the wonderful reptiles that could be collected in Central America. They appropriated \$1,200 for my trip.

Down there, I learned something else about the pursuit of hobbies. In Guatemala, we found ourselves in Quirigua, the oldest of the Mayan cities, among magnificent monoliths and temples and jaguar stones. Through all the debris and trees and matted jungle vegetation, you could get an idea of the massive civilization the Mayans once had. There I stood with my cameras, overwhelmed, but realizing that I had no idea how to understand this spectacle before me.

When I got back to St. Louis, some of my friends who knew about Indians told me about the Mayans. But they told me, too, that St. Louis is called the Mound City because it is surrounded by Indian mounds. The largest earth mound in the world, 10 acres, is just across the Mississippi.

This made me think all over again. How stupid it is to dream of going to some wonderful ancient city. I had been to one and I was helpless there. But here in my "back yard," I could have a whale of a time exploring.

I began to collect Indian arrowheads. This may sound silly, but I found it great sport—and it later broadened my whole attitude.

You have to look for arrowheads where Indians camped, usually near water. In the Spring or the Fall, when the earth is bare of crops, you walk across a freshly plowed field, preferably after a rain. Fresh plowing always turns up new things, and you look slowly for chips. They might be arrowheads or flint stones. I began to work with serious archaeologists around St. Louis. We were able to reconstruct a great deal about Indian ways from finding these little objects.

This became my new hobby, my golf game. I got as much exercise out of it, and souvenirs other than scorecards.

But then it became more important than a hobby. It awakened an interest in me that had long been buried, an interest in primitive man and how he was able to manage his survival. I began to see more clearly how this interest related to my lifelong interest in animals. Our whole civilization is

built on animal culture. We couldn't live our lives today without animals for food and many other necessities.

MY LATEST ambition is to tell the story of primitive man on film for television. The project is already in motion, a series called "World Safari," that will take us to many out-of-the-way places and to others right here in America, always in contact with primitive man.

Even this wonderful opportunity arose because of a spare-time venture. Back in the days when television was scrimping along on experimental budgets, Beulah Zachary of WBKB in Chicago asked me if I could help put some animals on television. There were only 300 TV sets in Chicago then, and the station didn't even have scheduled programs. I'd load up my car with animals from the zoo—rattlesnakes, toads, frogs, turtles, crows, anything I could put in small transfer boxes. Then I'd show them on TV.

This led, of course, to "Zoo Parade," the program that later became quite popular on the NBC network. After eight years of television experience, we had learned a great deal about how to interest audiences in animals and nature. So "World Safari" became a natural outgrowth, and I look forward to it as a new frontier in both education and entertainment.

My friends tell me I'm a mild fellow, but as I look back over these notes, I'm afraid I can't claim to be shy. I'm thankful that I'm not, and I would urge others, especially young people, to be daring—in their self-examination, in their ambitions, in their willingness to give of themselves, and in adding to their experience.

It is not important to be young. It is only important to be determined. A friend of mine at the Chicago Natural History Museum, Melvin Traylor, is an outstanding authority on birds. He had owned several businesses, even a barge line for a while. But he was never really happy in any of these ventures. He finally figured out that life is too short to spend on things he didn't care about, and now in his work at the museum he is a happy man.

I had a cousin named Cy Perkins, somewhat older than I, from a branch of the family in Colorado. He was quite successful selling insurance but didn't really care about it. What he really wanted to do was to study reptiles. (It's only a coincidence that his interest was the same as mine, because I never knew him well, and neither of us influenced the other.) So one day he went to work for the San Diego Zoo where, before he died, he became the curator of reptiles. He spent his last years happily.

I am truly sorry for those people who have always dreamed about doing something else, but surrendered before they ever tried. My decision to spend my life enjoying wild animals was unconventional, maybe even outlandish and impractical. But I have made it come true, and I wouldn't trade places with anybody.

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