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NORTH DAKOTA REC MAGAZINE SURVEY,  
SPRING 1985 - NONFARM EDITION

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## North Dakota REC Magazine Survey, Spring 1985 NONFARM EDITION

This report presents findings from a larger telephone survey of North Dakota residents concerning their attitudes toward the North Dakota REC Magazine. The survey was conducted in April 1985 by researchers in the Department of Agricultural Economics at North Dakota State University and in cooperation with the North Dakota State Census Data Center. The survey was limited to residents in the state of North Dakota even though the circulation of the North Dakota REC Magazine encompasses a broader geographic area. This report focuses on results for nonfarm residents of the state. Analysis for the farm sector of the state and results for the overall study are available in separate reports.

### Study Objectives

The character of North Dakota's population has changed markedly during the past decade. The state has reversed its historical trend of population loss and expanded at an impressive level. In fact, North Dakota's residential growth (5.7 percent) was third highest among the dozen states in the region (behind Minnesota and Wisconsin) between 1970 and 1980. Recent population estimates indicate that between 1980 and 1984, North Dakota ranked first in population expansion within the region.

Much of this new population growth has occurred in the state's larger cities. As a result, North Dakota has become more urban in nature. Nearly half of its residents now live in places with at least 2,500 population. A decade earlier only 44.3 percent of the state was urban.

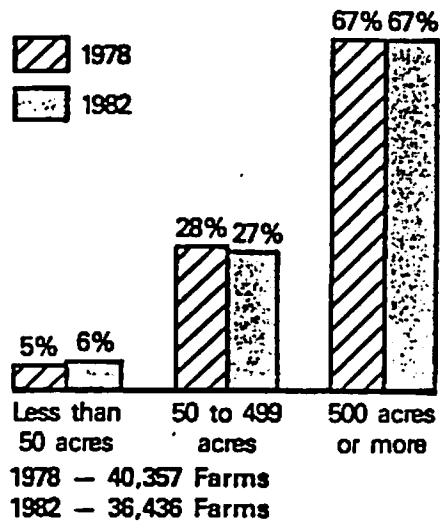
The shift in urban population mirrors many of the changes in the state's agricultural industry. Average farm size in North Dakota increased 18 percent between 1974 and 1984 (from 992 acres to 1,104 acres) while average per farm sales volume, after accounting for inflation, increased by 73 percent. There has been a significant decline in the number of farms in the state; between 1978 and 1982 the number declined from 40,357 to 36,436, a loss of nearly 10 percent (see Figure 1).

A third important shift in the character of North Dakota's population has been a marked change in its workforce. Between 1970 and 1980, nearly 69,000 residents were added to the state's work pool. This 16.5 percent rise was well above the gains experienced in the region. Additionally, more North Dakotans opted to participate in the labor pool during the 1970s than in previous decades. Approximately 61.4 percent of those above the age of 15 had worked or were looking for employment in 1980. This includes an unprecedented rise in women's contribution to paid labor, which rose from 35.4 percent in 1970 to 47.3 percent in 1980. As a result, the number of families in which both spouses worked for pay (54 percent) more than doubled during the past decade.

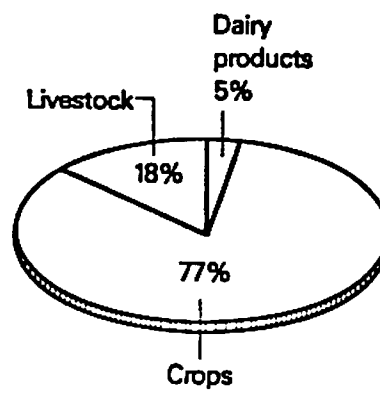
These shifts mark only a few of the changes which have occurred in the character of North Dakota's population. Others include an increased number of homeowners, a larger elderly population, expansion of the highly educated

# NORTH DAKOTA

## Farms by Size



## 1982 Market Value of Agricultural Products



Total Value \$2.3 Billion

Source: Bureau of the Census

Figure 1. North Dakota Farms By Size and Market Value

sector of the state, a shift in the state's occupational and industrial mix, and changes in household composition (e.g., more single parents).

Alterations in the characteristics of a population may signal a corresponding change in the informational demands of residents. For example, the pressure among farmers to improve efficiency, adopt more effective management techniques, and develop better financial skills has increased their need for information concerning these matters. Similarly, an expanding number of homeowners, including single parents and women, has increased the demand for information concerning such issues as home repair, product safety, consumer tips and informative advertising. In response to such demands, the intent of this study was to analyze how the North Dakota REC Magazine has met the information needs of residents in the state and assess what changes might be appropriate.

### Data and Methods

A telephone survey was conducted of a random sample of North Dakota residents in April of 1985. Telephone interviewing was used to maximize response rate. Calls were made between the hours of 6 p.m. and 9 p.m. with return calls made when necessary. The sampling frame was obtained from a 1 in 75 random sample of the subscription list of the North Dakota REC Magazine. From this list, telephone numbers were matched with corresponding names. A total of 501 residents were contacted with a refusal rate of slightly under 15 percent. Many of those who chose not to participate in the study were farmers who had started planting early due to unseasonably warm spring weather. It should be noted that the respondents were never informed of the sponsor's identity (North Dakota REC Magazine) to insure unbiased reporting.

Separate surveys were conducted for the farm and nonfarm population. The nonfarm survey lasted, on the average, less than 10 minutes. Telephone interviews were conducted with either spouse or in the case of nonfamily households, the primary owner or renter. The analysis in this report was based upon 238 completed nonfarm surveys.

### Results

The survey results are described in three parts. First, a general evaluation of the North Dakota REC Magazine by nonfarm respondents is offered. This review includes: 1) an assessment of the number of periodicals residents receive; 2) their general reaction to the North Dakota REC magazine; and 3) what residents typically do with the magazine after they have read it. Second, a more in-depth analysis of those sections of the magazine tailored to the nonfarm sector is reported. Finally, demographic characteristics of nonfarm respondents are provided.

### Nonfarm Respondents

#### Printed Information Received

The state's urban residents and those not living on farms appear to receive a variety of magazines and newspapers. Nonfarmers responding to the

survey reported that they subscribe to or receive six magazines and newspapers monthly, on the average. Less than 2 percent of those responding to the survey indicated that they were dissatisfied with the North Dakota REC Magazine; nearly 61 percent stated that they were very satisfied with the publication (see Table 1).

TABLE 1. ATTITUDE OF NONFARM RESPONDENTS TOWARD THE NORTH DAKOTA REC MAGAZINE

Attitude	Percent of Nonfarmers
Very Satisfied	60.9%
Somewhat Satisfied	27.8%
Uncertain	9.5%
Somewhat Dissatisfied	1.2%
Very Dissatisfied	0.6%

Proportion of North Dakota REC Magazine Read by Nonfarmers

Nonfarm readers found the North Dakota REC Magazine informative as evidenced by the number of household members who read the magazine. Nearly two of every three nonfarm family members surveyed typically read the North Dakota REC Magazine. (Arithmetically, results from the survey indicated that there were 3.4 members in an average nonfarm family of which 2.1 members typically read the magazine).

The magazine was typically recycled instead of being tossed away after use. The nonfarm readers clipped and saved, kept, or passed on nearly 84 percent of the magazines after they had read them (see Table 2).

TABLE 2. WHAT NONFARMERS TYPICALLY DO WITH THE NORTH DAKOTA REC MAGAZINE AFTER THEY ARE FINISHED WITH IT

Action	Percent of Nonfarmers
Keep entire issue	18.5%
Clip and save items of interest	42.8%
Pass it along to another reader	12.5%
Throw it out	26.2%
TOTAL	100.0%

It is important to note that the nonfarm readers reported reading a substantial portion of the North Dakota REC Magazine. For example, urbanites indicated that they read 57 percent of all articles excluding advertisements. A slightly smaller proportion (42.5 percent) of nonfarmers read the classified and nonclassified ads.

Evaluation of Major Sections in Magazine

The attitudes of nonfarmers regarding the informational value of the North Dakota REC Magazine is provided in more detail in Table 3. In this table each major section of the magazine is evaluated with respect to how much is read with a ranking of how informative the corresponding section was to the reader. The rating was based on a scale from 1 to 10 with 1 being the least informative and 10 being the most informative.

TABLE 3. EVALUATION OF THE MATERIAL READ IN THE NORTH DAKOTA REC MAGAZINE BY NONFARM RESPONDENTS AND RANKING OF HOW INFORMATIVE IT WAS

Section	Read Entire Section	Skimmed Through Section	Skipped Entire Section	Ranking*
Editorial by Chub Ulmer	42.2%	36.1%	21.7%	5.2
Newsfronts	49.4%	33.1%	17.5%	5.4
Your Home	65.7%	18.1%	16.3%	6.1
On Wellness	44.8%	24.2%	30.9%	4.8
Our Readers Reply	61.2%	24.8%	13.9%	6.2
Nutrition News	51.5%	26.1%	22.4%	5.6
Prairie Patchwork Hints	61.4%	15.1%	23.5%	5.9
Recipe Roundup	77.1%	7.8%	15.1%	7.0
Your Local Co-op Center Pages	64.2%	19.4%	16.4%	6.3

\*Ranking based on a 10 point scale with 1 being the least informative and 10 being the most informative.

The sections read by more than 60 percent of nonfarmers included: Your Home, Our Readers Reply, Prairie Patchwork Hints, Recipe Roundup, and The Co-op Center Pages. Nonfarmers evaluated all sections highly informative with no section of the magazine receiving a score under 4.8. The sections receiving the highest ratings were: Recipe Roundup (7.0), The Local Co-op Center Pages (6.3), and Our Readers Reply (6.2). The lowest ratings by respondents were given to sections entitled On Wellness (4.8) and the editorial by Chub Ulmer (5.2).

### Current Purchasing Pattern

Nonfarm residents are dependent on accurate and timely information from the print media. Decisions concerning equipment and household item purchases are often made with the aid of informative advertising. These investments often are quite substantial. For example, Table 4 indicates the average amount of money nonfarm respondents mentioned they spent purchasing various items during the past year. Car and truck purchases were the largest expenditures with an average of \$1,614 and \$1,336, respectively, spent on these items last year (see Table 4). Concern for increased energy efficiency by North Dakotans is reflected in their outlays for home weatherization material. Nonfarm respondents reported spending an average of \$124 for weatherization material this past year (see Table 4).

TABLE 4. AVERAGE AMOUNT OF MONEY SPENT BY  
NONFARMERS PURCHASING SELECTED ITEMS IN 1984

Item	Average Amount Spent in Dollars
Car	1614.00
Truck/Pickup	1336.00
Lawn Mower	95.00
Garden Equipment	31.00
Home Weatherization Material	124.00

### Buying Intentions

Many nonfarm respondents indicated that they were contemplating purchasing large ticket items in the near future. For example, 27 percent indicated that they would most likely be buying a car or truck during the next year (see Table 5). More than 10 percent considered purchasing a computer. More than one in four reported intentions of buying new appliances.

Slightly more than 6 percent of the nonfarm respondents indicated an interest in purchasing a new home or cabin. Those interested in remodeling their existing homes were three times that level (19.7 percent). Of those interested in remodeling their homes, 19.7 percent reported that they would likely do it themselves.

TABLE 5. SELECTED ITEMS WHICH NONFARMERS ARE CONSIDERING PURCHASING DURING THE NEXT YEAR

Item	Percent of Nonfarmers
Car	27.0%
Truck	9.8%
Lawn Mower	14.0%
Home or Cabin	6.1%
Home Appliances	25.6%
Home Computer	10.4%
Garden Equipment	14.0%
Home Weatherization Material	16.5%

### Demographics

A brief description of the characteristics of nonfarmers in the survey is reported in Tables 6 and 8. A comparison with the characteristics for the overall nonfarm population for North Dakota can be made by using Table 7.

#### Age

The age distribution of nonfarm respondents parallels that of the state (see Tables 6 and 7). More than one in five respondents were in their early career stage (i.e., 25-34). A slightly higher proportion of respondents was of retirement age (i.e., 65+). The bulk of those interviewed, therefore, were in the middle-age group from 35-64 years of age.

TABLE 6. AGE AND EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF NONFARM RESPONDENTS AND THEIR SPOUSE

	Age			Education	
	Respondent	Spouse		Respondent	Spouse
Under 25	3.0%	3.5%	Less than H.S.	22.4%	14.6%
25-34	21.3%	21.5%	High School Diploma	35.8%	35.4%
35-44	20.7%	25.0%	Vocational/Trade School	7.9%	5.6%
45-54	16.5%	16.7%	Some College	17.0%	19.4%
55-64	14.0%	15.3%	College Degree	13.3%	21.5%
65 +	24.4%	18.1%	Graduate Work	3.6%	2.8%
TOTAL	100.0%	100.0%		100.0%	100.0%

TABLE 7. AGE AND EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF HOUSEHOLDERS IN NORTH DAKOTA, 1980

Age	Percent	Education	Percent of Persons Aged 25 Years and Over
Under 25	11.4%	Less than H.S.	33.6%
25-34	23.6%	High School Diploma	31.3%
35-44	14.7%	Vocational/Trade School	*
45-54	13.7%	Some College	20.3%
55-64	14.2%	College Degree	14.8%
65 +	22.4%		
TOTAL	100.0%		100.0%

\*Data not available.

### Education

The overall educational level of nonfarm respondents was slightly higher than that for the state (see Tables 6 and 7). Slightly more than 22 percent of those surveyed had less than a high school education. This seemingly high proportion is mainly due to the elderly segment of the survey population. In contrast, nearly 17 percent of those interviewed held a college degree.

TABLE 8. APPROXIMATE GROSS INCOME (BEFORE TAXES) FOR NONFARM RESPONDENTS IN 1984

Gross Family Income	Percent of Nonfarmers
Less than \$10,000	11.3%
\$ 10,000-\$ 19,999	24.5%
\$ 20,000-\$ 29,999	26.5%
\$ 30,000-\$ 39,999	14.6%
\$ 40,000-\$ 50,000	6.6%
Above \$50,000	16.9%
TOTAL	100.0%

### Income

More than 11 percent of the nonfarm respondents surveyed reported incomes below \$10,000 (see Table 8). The majority indicated that they earned between \$10,000 and \$30,000 in 1984 with nearly 17 percent who reported a gross income above \$50,000.

Finally, the nonfarm respondents appear quite active in outdoor activity. Nearly 76 percent of those surveyed reported that they had a garden. Over 60 percent of the respondents indicated that their garden was less than 10 square feet while 12.7 percent reported a garden greater than 100 square feet. In addition, the majority of respondents cited fishing and hunting as recreational forms they typically engaged in. A list of other recreational activities mentioned by nonfarmers who were surveyed is listed in Table 9.

TABLE 9. RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES ENGAGED IN BY SURVEYED NONFARMERS

Activity	Percent of Nonfarmers	Activity	Percent of Nonfarmers
Hunting	51.5%	Cycling	21.9%
Fishing	63.9%	Sports	27.2%
Swimming	39.1%	Running/ Jogging	49.7%
Boating	42.6%	Other	27.8%
Camping	46.7%		

#### Summary

A telephone survey of North Dakota residents was conducted in April 1985 to assess their attitudes toward the North Dakota REC Magazine. Respondents were selected at random from the 1985 subscription list of the North Dakota REC Magazine. Cross-checks with census data denote that the subscription list offered a representative sample of North Dakota residents. The analysis in this report was based on 238 completed nonfarm surveys.

Results indicate the North Dakota REC Magazine is widely read and strongly liked by nonfarm residents in the state. Nearly two of every three persons in the nonfarm households surveyed read the magazine. Respondents noted that the information contained in the magazine was quite useful and helpful. Seventy-three percent of those surveyed reported keeping the entire issue, saving items of interest, or passing the magazine along to another reader as opposed to throwing it out.

Surveyed residents also gave a very favorable evaluation to each of the major sections of the magazine. No section was read by fewer than 42 percent of the respondents, and all sections received a ranking of at least 4.8 on a scale from 1 to 10 (1 being least informative and 10 being most informative).

An analysis of buying intentions revealed that many consumers in the state will be purchasing large ticket items in the near future. More than 27 percent of those surveyed indicated that they would most likely be buying a car next year. A similarly high proportion (i.e., 25.6 percent) stated they were contemplating purchasing new home appliances.

Finally, the survey revealed urban and rural nonfarm North Dakotans are very active outdoors. Seventy-six percent reported having a garden. Additionally, the majority of respondents cited hunting and fishing as recreational forms they typically engaged in.

In sum, nonfarm residents of the state found the North Dakota REC Magazine informative and enjoyable to read. Information gathered from its advertising aided respondents in their purchasing decisions as indicated by the level of advertisement readership. The magazine's long retention period and favorable evaluation of each section indicate a positive appraisal by respondents.

**APPENDIX 1**

**Questionnaire Survey**

**NONFARM SURVEY**

REC MAGAZINE SURVEY

NONFARM EDITION

We would first like to ask you some questions about your reading habits.

- 1) How many different magazines and newspapers do you and your spouse receive in a typical month?

# \_\_\_\_\_

- 2) Which of the following statements best describes your attitude toward the ND REC magazine?

- A. Very satisfied \_\_\_\_  
B. Somewhat satisfied \_\_\_\_  
C. Uncertain \_\_\_\_  
D. Somewhat dissatisfied \_\_\_\_  
E. Very dissatisfied \_\_\_\_

Now we would like to ask you some questions specifically about the ND REC magazine.

3. How many members of your family typically read the ND REC magazine?

# \_\_\_\_\_ Household Members

4. What do you do with your copy of the magazine when you're finished with it?

- \_\_\_\_ Keep entire issue  
\_\_\_\_ Clip and save items of interest  
\_\_\_\_ Pass it along to another reader  
\_\_\_\_ Throw it out

5. Please evaluate each of the following sections of the ND REC magazine by indicating: a) if you or your spouse read the section; b) if you or your spouse thought it was informative; and c) how the section might be improved.

	Read Entire Section	Skimmed Through Section	Skipped Entire Section	Please rank how informative this section was on a scale from 1 to 10 with 1 being <u>least</u> informative and 10 <u>most</u> informative	Would you please indicate how this section might be improved.
A. Editorial by Chub Ulmer	___	___	___	___	
B. Newsfronts	___	___	___	___	
C. Your Home	___	___	___	___	
D. On Wellness	___	___	___	___	
E. Our Reader's Reply	___	___	___	___	
F. Nutrition News	___	___	___	___	

	Read Entire Section	Skimmed Through Section	Skipped Entire Section	Please rank how informative this section was on a scale from 1 to 10 with 1 being <u>least</u> informative and 10 <u>most</u> informative	Would you please indicate how this section might be improved.
G. Prairie Patchwork, Hints	—	—	—	—	
H. Recipe Roundup	—	—	—	—	
I. Your Local Co-op Center Pages	—	—	—	—	

Now we would like to ask you a few questions about the advertisements and editorials you see in the ND REC magazine.

6. A. On the average, what percent of the classified ads do you and your spouse (combined) read?

\_\_\_\_\_ %

B. Would you please indicate how this section might be improved?

7. A. On the average, what percent of all ads other than classified do you and your spouse (combined) read?

\_\_\_\_\_ %

- B. Do you have any suggestions on how these ads may be improved?

8. What percent of all articles (excluding advertisements) do you and your spouse typically read?

\_\_\_\_\_ %

9. What type of articles or editorials would you like to see more of?

Now we would like to find out how the ND REC magazine may aid you in future purchases you are considering.

10. During the past year, approximately how much money did you spend purchasing the following items?

\$

A. Car

\_\_\_\_\_

B. Truck/Pickup

\_\_\_\_\_

C. Lawn Mower

\_\_\_\_\_

D. Garden Equipment

\_\_\_\_\_

E. Home Weatherization Material

\_\_\_\_\_

11. Which of the following are you considering purchasing during the next year?

- A. Car \_\_\_\_\_
- B. Truck/Pickup \_\_\_\_\_
- C. Lawn Mower \_\_\_\_\_
- D. Home or Cabin \_\_\_\_\_
- E. Home Appliances \_\_\_\_\_
- F. Home Computer \_\_\_\_\_
- G. Garden Equipment \_\_\_\_\_
- H. Home Weatherization Material \_\_\_\_\_

12. Are you considering remodeling your home?

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

If yes, will you be doing most of the remodeling or will you hire a contractor.

You \_\_\_ Contractor \_\_\_

Finally, we would like to get some basic background information on the different types of ND REC magazine readers.

13. First, what is your age category and that of your spouse?

	You	Your spouse
Under 25 years	___	___
25-34	___	___
35-44	___	___
45-54	___	___
55-64	___	___
65 years or over	___	___

14. What was the highest level of education you and your spouse obtained?

	You	Your spouse
Less than high school diploma	___	___
High school diploma	___	___
Vocational or trade school	___	___
Some college	___	___
College degree	___	___
Graduate work	___	___

15. How many members are in your household

\_\_\_\_\_

16. Do you have a garden?

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

If so, about how large? \_\_\_\_\_

17. Do you own a personal computer?

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

18. Do you or your spouse engage in any of the following recreational activities?

\_\_\_ Hunting      \_\_\_ Boating      \_\_\_ Sports (tennis, baseball, hockey)  
\_\_\_ Fishing      \_\_\_ Camping      \_\_\_ Running, jogging, walking  
\_\_\_ Swimming      \_\_\_ Cycling/3-wheeling      \_\_\_ Other, List \_\_\_\_\_

19. Finally, what was your family's approximate gross income (before taxes) last year?

\_\_\_ Less than \$10,000  
\_\_\_ \$10,000 to \$20,000  
\_\_\_ \$20,000 to \$30,000  
\_\_\_ \$30,000 to \$40,000  
\_\_\_ \$40,000 to \$50,000  
\_\_\_ Above \$50,000

**APPENDIX 2**

**Open-Ended Responses to  
Questions Concerning Each Section  
of the North Dakota REC Magazine**

## Nonfarm Edition Comments

- 5a. Editorial by Chub Ulmer  
Indicate how this section might be improved.
- biased opinion
  - should run as a business and not ask for money
  - Chub could be more conservative
  - good at the time of election
- 5b. Newsfront  
Indicate how this section might be improved.
- not satisfied - biased
  - more local
  - seems to be more of an editorial than news; too biased and should be labeled differently
  - depressing and very negative
- 5c. Your Home  
Indicate how this section might be improved.
- more on home safety
  - interesting
- 5d. On Wellness  
Indicate how this section might be improved.
- good as is
- 5e. Our Reader's Reply  
Indicate how this section might be improved.
- interesting
  - both sides aren't always presented
  - good for feedback
  - needs more variety
- 5f. Nutrition News  
Indicate how this section might be improved.
- good
  - it varies (good - bad)
- 5g. Prairie Patchwork, Hints  
Indicate how this section might be improved.
- very good
  - outdated material

Nonfarm Edition Comments (continued)

5h. Recipe Roundup

Indicate how this section might be improved.

- never miss this section
- good recipes
- recipes with fewer calories
- passes recipes on to others
- recipes are very uncommon

5i. Your Local Co-op Center Pages

Indicate how this section might be improved.

- hard to understand
- nice to have; would like to have little more information from local co-op
- more newsworthy

6b. REC Classified Ads

Indicate how this section might be improved.

- more ads
- more color/graphics
- not relevant to urban people
- bolder print
- more pictures
- stagger it throughout the magazine
- more local ads
- ads for both farm and nonfarm

7b. REC Nonclassified Ads

Indicate how this section might be improved.

- more ads on electric heat units
- not relevant to urban people
- categorize the ads

9. What type of articles or editorials would you like to see more of?

- hints
- recipes
- health/nutrition news
- human interest
- family
- appeal to a broader range of people
- history of North Dakota - pioneers
- managers report
- weatherization
- safety
- personalized articles
- storms and electricity
- good variety
- reader's reply

Nonfarm Edition Comments (continued)

9. What type of articles or editorials would you like to see more of?

- holidays
- horses
- more classified ads
- energy
- sewing
- wildlife
- area/local news
- political articles
- state events
- where REC money is going
- more information; less editorializing
- economics
- poetry
- woman's section
- fix-it articles
- computers
- farm management
- patterns
- new products
- biographics of North Dakota people
- ways to conserve energy/electricity
- feature stories
- more young FHA couples' articles
- solar power
- farm economy
- garden
- sports hunting/fishing
- music
- guest spots
- federal farm program
- local industry
- more sales report
- fewer ads
- carpentry
- [I] have been reading [REC] for 15 years and they already have good articles

## Nonfarm Edition Comments (continued)

### 11. Other Recreational Activities

- pool
- ping-pong
- weight lifting
- picnics
- cross-country skiing
- snowmobiling
- reading
- gardening
- yard work
- camera
- needlework
- horseback riding
- roller skating
- rodeo
- traveling
- aerobics
- biking
- archery
- music
- photography
- drawing
- T.V.
- horse shoe
- trap shoots