**Hobbies**

**A "hobby" is a special interest or activity that you do in your time off. Some people keep pets as hobby. They keep rabbits, or fishes. They train dogs to do tricks, or keep pigeons to race and carry messages. Some are crazy about plants. They try to grow cacti or rare tropical flowers in their kitchens and sitting rooms.**

**Others are mad about their car or their motorbike. They spend their Saturdays and Sundays washing them, painting them, or buying new bits and pieces to make them go even faster.**

**Children and teenagers are great collectors. They collect stamps, or postcards or matchboxes, or pictures of a favourite footballer or pop star.**

**Many people make things as a hobby. Some teach themselves at home, but a lot of people go to evening classes at their local college. Just look under letter B in a list of London or New York evening classes and you'll find: Ballet, Batik, Bengali, Body building, Breadmaking and Byzantium.**

**But not everyone goes to evening classes to learn about his special interest. No one helped these people to do what they did.**

**A "hobby" is usually something that a person does alone. But American (and British) families sometimes like to do things together, too.**

**American families often have quite a lot of money to spend on their recreation. They can all enjoy their holiday home or their boot somewhere in the country away from home.**

**Americans love to get out of town into the wild. and many go for holidays or long weekends into the thirty-live fabulous national parks. These magnificent areas of countryside include tropical forests, high mountains, dry deserts, long sandy coasts. grassy prairies and wooded mountains full of wild animals. The idea of these parks, which cover 1% of the whole area of the USA. is to make "a great breathing place for the national lungs", and to keep different parts of the land as they were before men arrived. There are camping places in the national parks as well as museums, boat trips and evening campfire meetings.**

**Americans really enjoy new "gadgets", especially new ways of travelling. In the winter, the woods are full of "snowmobiles" (cars with skis in the front). In the summer they ride their "dune buggins" across the sands or take to the sky in hang gliders.**

**But Americans do not only spend their free time having fun. They are very interested in culture too. Millions take part-time courses in writing. painting and music, and at weekends the museums, art galleries and concert halls are full.**