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GOING
FORTH

by Dan Taylor

Ed. Note: With three years in the Marines and a degree in landscape architecture behind him, Dan Taylor enrolled last fall as a graduate student in landscape architecture.
In December, he was accepted for the Peace Corps and is now in Arizona for overseas training.

It's so easy to survive today—at least for an American male of middle European stock, raised a Midwestern Protestant—that merely surviving can no longer be sufficient. And making money just for the sake of accumulating it, possessing it, or spending it for what one thinks are his real desires isn't enough either.

If I were given a guaranteed income of $12,000 a year for the rest of my life, I wouldn't know what to do with it.
The first one thousand would be fine; it would solve many problems.
The next two thousand would be fun to spend—a Volkswagon and a bicycle would be the first items on my list.
And the next two thousand would be great; it would give me Europe this summer with enough left for my next year's study.
But the rest of the money would only be a drag. It wouldn't help me to feel creative or to feel that I was making a contribution to this thing called life. Yet everyone must feel these. They are the essence of life.
Creativity isn't just the epic novel written, the great mural painted, the genius born. Creativity is an individual's constructive effort at anything. It is an idea conceived and, then, communicated; a carrot grown and, then, consumed. There must always be the two sides, the conception and the sharing. It's the article written for market, not the essay burned.
And this is what I am after. But it isn't just this simple. Creativity must be adjusted to individual levels; or, rather, individuals must find their proper levels. If one tries to go beyond his depth, it leads to frustration and embitterment: the water becomes brackish; the well dries up. But if there is not striving, there is no creation; the well not used becomes lost in the underbrush. This, then, is the problem—to find my level.
Avoiding nine to five hours is important to me, too. Nine to five means Monday through Friday, fifty weeks a year. Nine to five is tying one's self to one place and one pattern of life with sporadic breaks, annual vacations, weekends, evenings, lunch hours, and the fore-and afternoo n coffee breaks, to make the existence seem bearable. It frightens me.

So here I am, clinging to the academic world, seeking my level and keeping nine to five at arm's length. But I am going to have to leave soon; clinging has become a luxury I can no longer afford. Therefore, it is important that I arm myself in preparation for going forth. Self-discipline will have to be my sword and confidence my shield. Nine to five is soft and insidious; and, though it scares me, without stout weapons it could easily entwine itself around me and ensnare me. But, properly armed, I think I can find my well, check its depth, clear the debris and allow the water to flow sweetly. This I must do.