



DILL BRESLER/staff photographer

Last year Carey Peters took nine weeks off from her job at Tandem Computers Inc. in Northville to move into her new home in Canton and take a trip with her daughter Erica, 13, to California and Canada. Her employer is among a growing number of businesses that are offering employees leaves of absence as part of the employee benefit package.

By Marie Chesney  
staff writer

Last summer, Carey Peters took nine weeks off from her job in Northville to move into her new home in Canton.

Peters spent the first few weeks unpacking, decorating and landscaping. Then she and her daughter, Erica, 13, took off for a trip to California and Canada.

One fact has been omitted from this not-so-unusual story. Peters, who's only worked at Tandem Computer Inc. for four years, got paid her full salary as regional business manager for the full nine weeks she took off.

Tandem is one of a growing number of companies which offer paid sabbaticals as part of their benefit package.

At Tandem, every employee, from stock clerk to president, gets six weeks of fully paid leave for every four years of service. Workers can stretch that to nine weeks, if they add in their own vacation time, or if they spend nine weeks in a public service job.

"It's the most attractive benefit Tandem has," Peters said. "The sabbatical is the one benefit that grabs people when they are being interviewed."

Back in 1979, George Waldman's biggest dream was to go back to college and study urban affairs. The newspaper photographer had come to Detroit to capture on film the essence of life in an aging industrial city. What he now needed were concrete economic and political facts to buttress a photographic series forming in the back of his mind.

Waldman approached his newspaper for a one-year leave of absence to study urban affairs at the University of Michigan under a fellowship sponsored by the National Endowment of the Humanities for Journalism.

THE PAPER said no. So Waldman quit his job and went anyhow.

"I felt this was more important than my job," said Waldman. "I could always get another job. But I wouldn't get another chance like this."

"I didn't pick up a camera for one year." During his nine months at the University of Michigan, the unemployed photographer

## Time out

### Leave of absence: Break gives workers a breather

lived off the stipend given by the fellowship. When the course ended, his old paper rehired him. The series he created, "City Faces," won an award from the Michigan Press Photographers' Association.

Waldman, a Franklin resident, now works as a photographer for another Detroit paper.

Bonnie Miller Rubin of Chicago is touring the U.S. to promote her new book, "Time Out: How to Take a Year for More or Less Off Without Jeopardizing Your Job, Your Family or Your Bank Account." The book is a "how-to" guide to the sabbatical bound.

Rubin writes from experience. In 1985, she and her husband took eight months off from their jobs. They spent six months living on a kibbutz in Israel and two months traveling through Europe.

The Rubins were lucky enough to get a leave with the guarantee they would still have jobs at the end of the break.

But, with no paychecks coming in for eight months, they had a lot of saving to do before the sabbatical could begin.

Sabbaticals used to be the sole bastion of teachers, professors and others working in the field of education. No more. Today, more companies such as Tandem are offering paid sabbaticals as part of their benefit package.

AND MORE companies are willing to say "yes" to a worker who wants to take some unpaid time off, for whatever the reason.

"People need time off," said Joe Jensen, vice president of human resources for Tandem, which is headquartered in California.

"That's every employee, not just those in upper management. A sabbatical offsets the stress, the staleness, that builds up in a job. On leave, people are able to breathe and do interesting things."

"When people burn out, they might decide to get another job," added Peters. "But what they really need is just a little rest and recreation."

Waldman got more out of his sabbatical at the University of Michigan than just knowledge and the chance to get background information for an award-winning series.

"Beyond that basic help, it gave me more of a feeling of self-worth and confidence," he said. "Sabbaticals release you from the frustration of work. You can explore new areas of yourself."

"It's always good to change and not get stuck where you are."

At Tandem, someone is always on a sabbatical.

They look forward to it and count the days," Peters said.

Workers either get paid in one lump sum for the entire period they are gone, or paychecks are mailed on regular pay days.

Workloads either are divided among the remaining workers or a replacement is brought in.

Peters began her sabbatical in July, when Tandem was in the middle of a move from Livonia to Northville. The extra confusion put an extra burden on the other workers in her department, she said.

"THIS WAS dumped on them, but they all

took a chunk of the pie and did a great job," she said.

In her book, Rubin admits that one of the biggest hazards to sabbaticals arise when the worker returns to the regular workday world. She calls it "re-entry shock."

Jensen sees "re-entry shock" all the time at Tandem.

"One minute, they're out there climbing rocks, flying in balloons, diving in water," he said. "The next, they're back in an office, working."

Rubin said workers who take sabbaticals often get disenchanted with the workday world when they return.

"It's never over because it changes you," she wrote. "The biggest frustration, though, is that nobody else changes. Nobody really wants to know how rewarding your life has become, how your horizons have expanded, while they were back at the office, bashing their brains out."

"All of a sudden, all the reasons that caused you to take leave in the first place come rushing back."

Waldman recalls what it was like returning to the workday world after spending nine months at the University of Michigan.

"I had a terrible re-entry problem," he said. "I was in a program with 12 fellows from all over the country. We had biweekly seminars on major issues. I had to go from talking to professors to back to work, where I sat in the corner and waited until they called me (to go take a picture)."

At Tandem, Jensen said workers often make major career decisions on sabbaticals.

"THEY BECOME introspective," he said. "They have the time to ask themselves questions like, 'Do I like what I'm doing? What things are important to me?' We don't get people who leave, but we do get people who want to change their job. Someone in development decides he'd rather be in marketing."

Peters said she plans to coincide her next sabbatical in four years with her daughter's 16th birthday.

"She's talking of a cruise to Australia. Me, I'd like to get in the car and drive across the U.S."

## Beachside hotels crowd out fishing along the Algarve

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with red tiled roofs sitting in the sun where the promontory joins the mainland. There are a few boats in the bay, but most are out of sight in the fishing harbor.

The village is called Sagres. You've probably never heard of it — neither had I — but what happened here 500 years ago certainly shaped your life and mine.

In the 15th century, when many thought the world was flat, a ship that sailed beyond those last two promontories, past the "end of the world," was thought to fall off the edge of the world into the Sea of Darkness.

A PORTUGUESE prince, Henry the Navigator, didn't believe a word of it. Too many fishing boats had been blown out to sea and come back with tales of unknown islands.

Henry had something none of those fisherfolk had — a sextant, a newly invented nautical instrument that helped a sailor find his way out

and back by reading the stars. For the first time, sailors could go out and explore the world and find their way home again.

Prince Henry the Navigator started a navigator's school on that finger of rock out there and sent his sea captains out to explore the unknown world. (Henry didn't go himself; he got seasick)

I can see the road that leads half a mile out on the peninsula from the red-roofed town to the Fortaleza, where a high stone wall surrounds the restored buildings of the navigators, including the white chapel where his navigators prayed before they sailed away and the huge compass drawn with stones in the courtyard.

JUST INSIDE the gate is a small stone memorial dated May 23, 1483, that reads: "The United States Power Squadron honors the memory of Prince Henry the Navigator, 1394-1460, whose school of navigation,

founded on this site, opened the way for worldwide explorations in the Great Age of Discovery."

The navigators who learned their skills here explored two-thirds of the planet within 100 years and nothing has ever been the same since.

Vasco da Gama sailed out of here and discovered the sea route to India. Pedro Alvares Cabral tried to follow him, lost his course and discovered Brazil.

Christopher Columbus was trained here, but Prince Henry wasn't too interested in a western shortcut to India, so it was Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain who eventually outfitted Columbus's ships for voyages to the new world.

The sea and the cliffs are the same now as they were then, but other things have changed. If I look over my second-floor balcony here at the Pousada do Infante, one of several

ming pool waiting for the tourist season to be in full swing.

This southern coast of Portugal, the Algarve, is very popular among Europeans looking for winter sun; you can't see the tourist villages from this lonely spot, but they are there 10 miles beyond the windswept stretch of land on which I sit.

THE ALGARVE is 100 miles of Mediterranean seacoast from Sagres to the Spanish border. There were fishing villages here during 500 years of Arab rule and in the 12th century when Alfonso the Third drove the Arabs back across the Mediterranean to north Africa and ascended the throne as the first king of Portugal.

There have been fishing villages as long as anyone can remember, but nowadays the sons of the Algarve go to work in hundreds of small boats along the beach instead of going out to sea with their fathers. Travelers who knew the Algarve

long ago are outraged by the invasion of tourists and the rising skyline of hotels, but it is still possible to enjoy the miles of glorious sand beaches, to eat the traditional foods and photograph fishermen mending their nets along the shore.

Most of the people who come to the Algarve, especially from England, fly into Faro on a group plan and stay a week or two in hotel or apartment. We prefer to drive the pine-covered hills beside the sea, amid the smell of flowers, pine needles, fishing boats and grilled sardines.

This western half of the Algarve takes you through the commercial fishing cities of Lagos and Portimao and along the most popular tourist beaches around Praia da Rocha, literally the "beach of rocks." Miles of glorious gold sand follows the sea past huge red cliffs and through great arches of stone.

The town of Aljezur, once a Moorish fortress, is now a traffic jam of cars even in spring. East of Faro you drive from village to vil-

lage, stopping a hundred times to photograph the old world of southern Portugal. A farmer rides a tractor down the road; another leads a bullock cart, pulling a stone boat across a field.

MULE-DRAWN carts with bright yellow wheels share the road with cars and trucks. Women walk the highway in their straw hats, or chat at garden gates. This is the garden of Portugal, so markets are lush with sweet melons, huge vine-ripened strawberries and fish of every kind.

Imagine all this scattered with flowers and you will have a picture of this sun-drenched place, still one of the least expensive tourist destinations in Europe.

Next week I will take you into the pousadas, the wonderful government-owned inns that are so popular among tourists to Portugal. Meanwhile, if you want to discover the land of discoverers, contact your travel agent or the Portuguese National Tourist Office, 548 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10036-5089.