

Monday's Commentary



How to cope with oil crisis

It seems as though we've been dealing with grave energy emergencies for years, but I'm not sure we ever had one.

To the best of my recollection, early on in President Richard Nixon's administration, we were dialing down, switching off lights and thinking of trading our big gas-guzzlers for kiddie cars.

Now the headlines are screaming about limiting motorists to two gallons of gas each working day. The first thing that pops into my pragmatic mind is that President Jimmy Carter's rationing plan will create an all-time high unemployment crisis.

If you're a commuter who travels 40 miles to work in Southfield, for example, you'd get the same gas allocation as a guy who leaves his car in the garage and jogs to his job. Long-distance drivers may be tempted to quit if they can latch on to a pal who has enough gas to get to an unemployment office.

Carpooling may be one solution. But if you have only one auto and it's your turn to drive, forget it. A working couple with two gas-sipping subcompacts and a sports car would get three times as many gas coupons as a large family with one station wagon. If your kids have their own wheels and coupons, don't expect them to share.

OF COURSE you can always get involved in the "white market" of the ration tickets. That means you deal in unneeded coupons and name your price. After all, what's illegal about large corporations and the very wealthy snapping up every white market coupon they can get their hands on as a hedge against further shortages?

It's the plain folks like you and me who will suffer from rationing. For the sake of saving gas, I've been thinking of buying a high-speed Schwinn. My kids say the way I drive, a bike is the only kind of transportation I deserve.

Another one of Carter's brainstorms is limiting weekday hours for service stations. I hate to waste time stopping for gas, and I never realize my gauge is on empty until I'm a block away from home after work. If gas stations are closed, I might have to join the unemployment line.

Stopping weekend gas sales is supposed to discourage pleasure driving. So what does one do on Saturdays and Sundays?

Well, you can plan how to limit temperatures for heating, cooling and hot water in your home which is another suggested energy-saving plan.

Or you can hang up a schedule deciding who takes a cold shower on Saturday. If one of your kids has a date or a similar emergency, compute how many drips of hot water he or she can use to get clean.

If nothing else, spend part of the morning deciding how to go on a date with an empty gas tank.

AFTER DIALING down, walk or run to your friendly neighborhood library and take out a book on how to survive in an igloo. For further reference, find out if it's true that Eskimos are healthier and live longer.

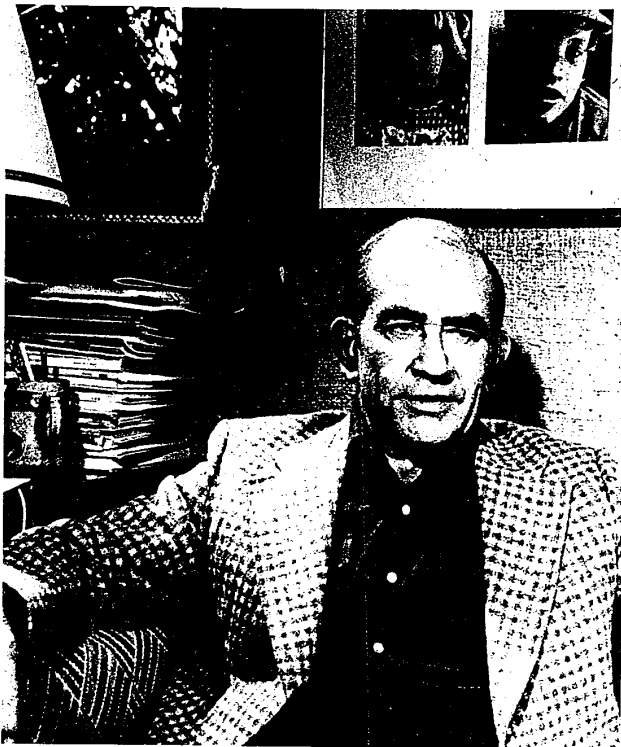
When you come back, snuggle up in a flannel robe over two or three turtle-neck sweaters and figure out what else you can do for the energy crunch. You can always plan to wash and dry your family's duds just once a week. Or better yet, buy them disposable ones.

Don't forget that three televisions going at one time puts a strain on your energy supply, so start making another schedule. Once a week, let your husband watch a football game or a rerun of "The Three Stooges at Play." Compromise and choose between your favorite soap opera, "As the Stomach Turns" or "Roots Revisited," part 87, "Saturday Night Live," or "Mork and Mindy" should satisfy at least one kid.

If you really get bored and suffer from the energy crunch blues, you and your family can always do something novel and exciting like talking to each other.

In your spare time, start worrying about summer when all good Americans will forsake air-conditioning for the cause. Don't plan on cooling off in your car with the windows open because you'll probably be out of gas.

I bet you thought you'd never cope with an energy crisis.



Ed Asner, in his portrayal as newsman Lou Grant, draws enthusiasm from both journalists and laymen. Last week, Asner drew a big crowd of enthusiastic journalists while making a speech at the Detroit Press Club.



Mélange

by
Mary Gniewek



Waiting for Lou to call

He's gruff, but lovable. He knows his job well. Every Monday night, he shows us how the Los Angeles Tribune is put together with just two reporters and one photographer. He's editor Lou Grant.

Before the Trib, Lou was producer of WJM-TV News in Minneapolis. He worked with assistant producer Mary Richards and zany newscaster Ted Baxter. All in all, Lou Grant is not an actor. He's a believable journalist.

At least that was the premise of his appearance in Detroit last week. Lou Grant, alias Ed Asner, came to the Detroit Press Club to receive an award from Sigma Delta Chi, the Society of Professional Journalists. He cited Asner for portraying a realistic "but not too realistic" newspaperman. ("What the hell, I make you look good every week," he said in his brief acceptance speech.)

Fact is, the Lou Grant Show is the most realistic portrayal of the newspaper business ever shown on television or in the movies. For that reason, journalists are big on Lou. Reporters have all known an abrasive type like Rossi, a hard driving, up and coming woman like Billie and an offbeat photographer like Animal.

I had the occasion last week to be initiated into Sigma Delta Chi. Lou had the honor of reading us the oath. There were 15 inductees. It was more fun than swallowing goldfish.

Like the character he portrays on television, Ed Asner is a very warm, humorous and likeable guy. Dressed in a suit on his short stocky frame, he

looked like a Teddy Bear. No wonder Lou Grant always seems to get his own way, who can resist him? Asner had the full house roaring with his impromptu quips.

Attending several journalistic functions in the past, I've never seen a crowd receive a speaker so well. The rapport was established on immediate contact. He no sooner walked in with chapter president Mitch Kehetian, editor of the Macomb Daily, than a crowd flocked to him, camera bulbs were popping, reporters asked for autographs and a local sportswriter shoved a Scotch in Asner's hand.

It was the closest thing to hero worship I've ever seen among journalists. Reporters rarely get excited about anyone, be it entertainers, politicians or other newsmakers. You develop a professional tolerance against such behavior.

Before coming to the Press Club, Kehetian took Asner on a tour of the city rooms of the Detroit Free Press, Detroit News and Macomb Daily. The poor man must be awfully tired of portraying his role outside of work, I thought. But what a tribute such a reception must be to his acting ability.

Having seen Asner perform on stage several years ago at the Star Theatre of Flint, I can attest to his ability in live performance. It's as moving as his television and movie roles have been.

After the induction ceremony, Asner proclaimed that he was going to start a newspaper with us as his crew. The idea was well received. I'm still waiting for Lou to call.

The Flip Side

by **craig piechura**



Learn to love partly cloudy

It happens every year about this time, and I see no indications that this year will be any different.

Ol Bill Shakespeare knew his stuff when he had one of his characters warn citizens to "beware the Ides of March." They'll get you every time. Except I'd like to add the Ides of April and May to the warning cry.

I'm warning people keep their heads about them despite the cruel tricks winter pulls on the people of Michigan. Like a guest who arrives at 6 p.m. and stays for the late movie, Michigan winters don't know when to leave.

You may have been one of the free spirits frolicking outdoors last week in flannel shirts with the sleeves rolled up. People were outside playing, washing cars, riding motorcycles, sans coat, hat and gashies.

Please do not, I repeat, do not put those muck-lucks in winter storage yet. Do not put on a happy face and start singing upbeat songs. It'll only be rougher on you when the annual onslaught hits off-and-on through March and April and maybe May.

My advice during these uncertain times? Stay inside and contemplate Old Man Winter's inhumanity to man. Practice a Gregorian Chant. Rotate your snow tires. Read "War and Peace" for enjoyment.

A GRIM outlook is important in times like these. There will be many trying to dissuade you from thinking like this. Ignore them. Robins have been known to freeze their little red breasts off in pursuit of the early worm.

Expect hostility from people enjoying the random warm days of March, April and May. They may even hurl baseballs and Frisbees in your direction. Pull the wool collar over your eyes and head home to turn up the thermostat. Keep telling yourself that things will get much worse after they get better.

An optimist will tell you to enjoy the warm weather while it's here, no matter how fleeting the moment might be. The trouble is people aren't emotionally equipped to lapse back into winter doldrums once they've started enjoying this thing called spring.

Don't get militant about it and tell the Frisbee flippers about the time it snowed on Fourth of July in Indianapolis. Just make sure that you keep that sweater on the hook 'til June.

This advice is not something I hand out in arrogance. I do not have a corner on the correct consciousness. There's been times I let down my guard, believing spring sprung before it sprang. I've bought opening day baseball tickets weeks ahead of time confident that it would be a beautiful day for baseball. Come opening day, that's me in the upper deck huddled around a hot dog for warmth.

THE MOST INSIDIOUS thing about March in Michigan is that it gives people too many teasers.

We'll get a week of balmy weather where everyone is writing sonnets about Easter bonnets. And then, before you can say wind chill factor, a cold front grips the state dumping snow and ill will on everyone's doorstep for nine straight days.

Neighbors fight over unreturned snow shovels and even the unbridled optimists have a crabby tone to their voice when they tell you to have a nice day.

Michigan must be the home of delayed gratification. How many times have you heard sidewalk philosophers say "You need the bad weather to appreciate the good"?

A more appreciative group of citizens would be hard to find.

What's Michigan's motto again? "If you seek a pleasant climate, you came to the wrong place." If it weren't for the London Bridge in Arizona, the cultists in California and Anita Bryant in Florida, I'd tell everyone in the state to move.

But somebody's gotta stay here to carry on the culture. Who will build the cars and drink in the bars of the Motor City? Who'll make the cherry pies and upper peninsula pasties? For that matter, who'll make the coney island hot dogs that taste better than the ones they sell in Coney Island?

We must take a Calvinist approach to winter/spring in Michigan. Nothing we can do will change our situation and we are destined to our fate. We do not deserve to have a nice day.

Learn to love fair and partly cloudy.

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Steve Barnaby
Editor

2332 Farmington Rd.
Farmington, MI 48024
(313) 477-5450

John Reddy, General Mgr.
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George J. Hagan, Advertising Director, Fred J. Wright, Circulation Director