

Gas crisis could threaten travel trade

By C.J. RISAK

Summertime in the city. A hot Friday afternoon. Traffic on the highways, I-75, I-94 and I-96, starts to pick up around 2 p.m. By 5 p.m., the freeways are jammed with vehicles, not just those of businessmen fleeing from their jobs in the city to their homes in the suburbs. But other vehicles like campers and stationwagons, filled with families escaping the bustle of metro-Detroit life for one of the hundreds of campgrounds throughout Michigan.

The scene is familiar enough. Flight from business in the city to homes in suburbia isn't enough for many people, as they seek the freedom of outdoor living in one of the state's campgrounds. But that freedom, which has been such a big part of Detroiters' lifestyle for the better part of three decades, may be coming to an end. Campers and hunters may find a restriction put on that kind of recreation that would make it close to impossible for them to enjoy parks on the other side of the state.

It's a problem we're all facing at the present, and it's one that won't get better — gasoline.

Indeed, the problem may already be upon us. Last weekend at Warren Dunes State Park, in the southwest corner of the state in the town Bridgman, the campground had only about half the campers it had in 1978. A large part of the problem was the trucks' blockade of gas stations throughout that part of the state.

"GAS HAD SOMETHING to do with it (the decrease in campers)," said

Gary Lindquist, the assistant park manager at Warren Dunes.

"Overall, we're about 50,000 short of what we were last year. That's a decrease of about 10 percent."

Lindquist was quick to point out that the weather was probably more to blame for the decrease than the gas situation.

"It could be the weather, it could be the gas, it could be a combination of things," he said. Kerr Stewart, a spokesman for the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), echoed Lindquist's feelings.

"It (camp reservations) is down, yes," Stewart said. "Our latest figures, as of June 10, show that attendance was down about 13.1 percent."

"My feeling is that the main contributor is the bad weather. Region One (the upper peninsula) has had terrible weather, and so has the upper part of the lower peninsula."

But Stewart did add that gas was a major factor in declining attendance. "Since the middle of June, gas has entered the picture," he said, adding that camp reservations were "down just a little bit, about 1 percent. But refunds are up a great deal — about 60 percent."

Campsite reservations must be made 15 days prior to the date the site is to be used, according to Stewart. But cancellations will be accepted up to 24 hours prior to the site's scheduled use and money will be refunded in full.

TRAVEL TO THE upper peninsula

has also fallen off from last year's pace. According to officials from the

Mackinac Bridge Authority, crossings over the Mackinac Bridge are down 10.4 percent in the month of June from last year.

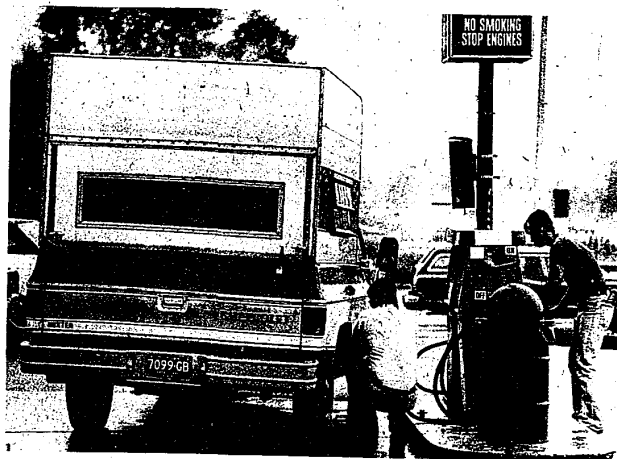
Each Friday in the month of June, bridge crossings were down from what they were a year ago. The largest drop was on June 15, which showed a decrease of 905 vehicles. A spokesman for the bridge authority estimated that the weekend of June 29-July 1 would show a decrease of about 29 percent from last year's totals.

While park authorities continue to feel that the weather is the main reason in decreasing park attendance, they won't rule out that gasoline may soon be the biggest problem. And in a state that relies heavily on its parks for tourist business, a gasoline crisis could cause an economic setback.

"Last year, we were down 8 percent from what we were the previous year (1977)," Stewart said from his DNR office in Lansing. "We not only made up that deficit, but we broke all records. 'I really don't think we will do this year.'"

There may not be a gas shortage. According to the Travel Information Center in Claire, traffic is light, even though gasoline is available throughout the state. But, if there is a crisis, it may not be too long before Michigan is saddled with even-odd days for gas rationing (even numbered license plates one day, odd numbered ones the next) and gas station closings on Sundays.

If that does come to the state, tourist spots all over Michigan will be crippled. The crisis of the gasoline shortage will have really hit home.



Campers like this one, which gets less than 15 miles per gallon, may soon go no further than the back yard (Photo by Randy Bors)

Local clubs suffer setbacks

It was bad enough that Farmington Glen Aquatic Club went into last Thursday's Northwest Suburban Swim League (NSSL) dual meet with six key swimmers missing.

What made matters worse was that the team they faced, Heart of the Hills,

located in Rochester, is one of the league's toughest.

The outcome was almost predictable, as Heart of the Hills swamped the undermanned Glen team, 332-232, at the Hills pool.

Woodbrooke Hills, another Farmington club, had no more success against defending league champion Bloomfield Surf Swim Club, as they dropped a 314-210 decision last Thursday.

Only two Glen swimmers managed to win two individual events. Cindy Meili won both the 13-14 and 15-17 age group 50-meter breaststroke events (37.4 and 37.8, respectively).

Theresa Burton was Glen's other double winner, as she captured both the 100-meter individual medley (1:13.1) and the 50-meter backstroke (35.4) in the 15-17 age bracket.

Team records were set in two events. Kim Pogue set one in the 13-14-year-old 50-meter butterfly (33.1) and Alec Campbell set another in the 13-14 100-meter individual medley (1:09.0).

Heart of the Hills had five double winners in individual events. Jeff Zwarnier, swimming in the 7-8-year-old division, won the 25-meter backstroke (22.8) and the 50-meter freestyle (18.5).

Both the 9-10-year-old 50-meter freestyle (34.6) and the 50-meter backstroke (41.3). Sharie Fedak won twice in the 11-12 age group, capturing the 100-meter individual medley (1:14.5) and the 50-meter 50-meter breaststroke (37.0).

David Krull was a double winner for the boys in the 11 & 12 age category, taking the 100-meter individual medley

(1:17.35) and the 50-meter butterfly (34.89).

Doug Cleland won twice in the 13-14 division, taking the 100-meter individual medley (1:05.1) and the 50-meter butterfly (25.7).

The win for Heart of the Hills avenged a dual meet loss they suffered last year to the Glen team, when the Hills team was short several key swimmers.

Woodbrooke Hills had four double winners in its loss to Bloomfield Surf. Steven Tunney won the 7-8-year-old 25-meter freestyle and 25-meter backstroke (27.0), while older brother Mike took the 10-11-year-old 50-meter butterfly (37.3) and the 50-meter backstroke (40.5).

In the 11-12 boys age group, Chris Leslie won the 50-meter backstroke (37.4) and the 100-meter individual medley (1:19.9). Tom Renaud was the team's other double winner, taking both the 13-14-year-old 50-meter freestyle (27.5) and 100-meter individual medley (1:11.8).

Both Woodbrooke Hills and Farmington Glen are 1-1 in dual meets this season. Heart of the Hills and Bloomfield Surf are undefeated in two events this season.

Glen hosts Forest Hills Swim Club and Woodbrooke Hills opens its home season against Cranbrook Thursday.

Express optimistic

(Continued from page 7B)

dale had trailed Eastern Division, American Conference leader Tampa Bay by only 17 points with two games in hand.

The Strikers were also looking for their first regular-season victory over the Express. Last year Ft. Lauderdale dropped a 2-1 game in Florida, and lost to the Express up north 4-2.

In the '78 playoffs Detroit was eliminated by the Strikers after a best-of-three series boiled down to a final mini-game at the Silverdome.

THE STRIKERS then went on to lose to Tampa Bay in the NASL's playoff semifinals. That showing, plus their play this season, has earned Ft. Lauderdale status as one of the league's better teams.

That's why Wednesday's match

spelled a renewed optimism for the entire Express franchise.

"We all thought before the match that it would be a very hard game," said Francis. "We played them in some hard games last year, and they were a very good side."

"But, when you play as well as we did, I don't think any side could have beaten us," he said.

Francis had his best game since his arrival from England against the Strikers. In four games he has scored three goals, and assisted on three others.

MacDougall leads the Express in total points. A Scottish International player, the 32-year-old forward has eight goals and 10 assists for 26 points.

Purphy is second in points scored with 19 goals, four assists for 24 points.

Dakesian to attend OCC

Jack Dakesian, a 6-foot-5 former center for the Southfield-Lathrup basketball team, has decided to attend Oakland Community College in the fall.

Dakesian was one of several fine basketball centers from the Oakland County area. He averaged 13 points and 11 rebounds a game for Coach Jim Kourkakis' Chargers, helping the team to a 14-7 record and a tie for second place in the Metro Suburban Association with Rochester Adams.

Dakesian, who earned a berth on the Observer & Eccentric's All-Area second team, will major in accounting at OCC.

Another major event at the junior college, located in Farmington Hills, was the signing of Johnny Keel to attend Ferris State College. Keel, OCC team captain for the past two years, is

a 6-4 small forward who averaged 12.4 points and 7.1 rebounds a game for the past two seasons.

His best scoring contest came this year against Washtenaw, in which he scored 30 points. He finished in double figures in 19 of 29 games this season.

Meanwhile, the status of star guard Walker Russell remains uncertain. A national letter of intent to attend Michigan State University was extended to Russell, but he failed to sign it and return it within the required time period. According to OCC spokesman Barry Schwartz, he could still attend MSU, but his failure to sign the letter seems to indicate he is not interested in that university.

Russell has reportedly narrowed his choices down to two schools: University of Michigan and University of Houston.

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