

Relax: Pack away your troubles in an old kit bag

A few weeks of vacation have a way of renewing the mental lease on life.

Most of us have been fortunate enough to enjoy those days away from the office or the plant.

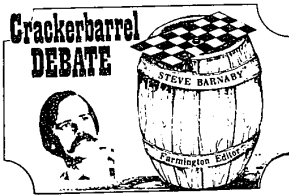
Admittedly, others of us have been away from the office and plant for far too long — victims of the bad economic situation.

But just this once, give the Crackerbarrel orator a break. For the better part of the year, he concentrates on annoying the populace with provoking thoughts. This day he would like to relax and talk about vacation.

As you read this column, I'm far away from the clatter of the electric typewriter. I'm tucked away in the far reaches of the northern Michigan forest, contemplating the cloud formations during the day and the stars at night.

Don't ask me where I am. That's the fun of going on a northern Michigan vacation. You can get in the car, point it in just about any direction and end up in a beautiful spot.

Northern Michigan and vacation have been syno-



nomous in my mind for as many years as can be remembered. Of course, remember, I'm a city boy and any place north of Pontiac is the wild north.

But still, the farther north, the better. As the miles turn the odometer higher, the body relaxes, the smile returns. It's a fine feeling.

LIKE MANY OTHER persons, I have been fortunate enough to travel to many far away and exotic places — Hong Kong, Hawaii, the Caribbean — but none have ever pleased me so much as northern Michigan.

The memories of those many Michigan vacations have been mental lifelines.

I remember distinctly laying in some rice paddy in Vietnam, looking at the moon, wondering what the folks were doing for vacation that year.

I'm sure they were in one of those favorite spots in Michigan we had carried over the years.

The Michigan map is as familiar to me as is the floor plan for the office. During cold winter days, nothing gives me more pleasure than to haul out that familiar map of the big mitten with the overshadowing Upper Peninsula and go exploring for a few minutes.

For some fleeting moments, at least, I once again am there. I can see the Lake of the Clouds in the Porcupine Mountains, resting majestically and oh so peacefully.

I can smell the pines of Hartwick. I hear the waves lap up on the shores of our Great Lakes. I cross the bridge connecting our two peninsulas over and over again.

I walk along the streets of Mackinac Island and Harbor Springs and admire the beautiful homes. I feel the mist of one of our many falls sweep over my face.

BUT WAIT A SECOND, this isn't any time for memories. Winter is still a ways off. I'm here and loving every minute of it.

I think I'll walk over to the campfire and pour myself a hot cup of coffee, watch the flames lick the air and listen to the crickets play their symphony.

Michigan really is a nice place to live — especially when you go north.

I think I'll wait until next week for provoking thoughts and controversy.



Tim Richard

Poorly paved roads aren't a pretty issue

It's easy to write about such personalities as Reagan and Carter, Billy and The Bird.

It's tougher to write about an issue — tougher but more important.

Many American roads are in bad shape. Maybe you thought it was confined to Oakland County or Wayne County. It's nationwide.

Kennedy, Mondale and Carter gave some whinging political speeches for the TV audience recently.

Two chaps who didn't get televised are Gov. William G. Milliken, a Republican, and U.S. Transportation Secretary Neil Goldschmidt, a Democrat. They had more to say.

MILLIKEN TOLD a convention of road builders on Mackinac Island:

"The problem is two-fold. On the one hand, drivers nationally are driving less and are purchasing more fuel-efficient vehicles as this nation recognizes the need to curtail our energy usage . . . a very desirable occurrence from an energy viewpoint."

But since road taxes are based on per-gallon consumption and not a percentage of gasoline prices, our road revenues are declining, the governor said.

The second side of the problem is that "transportation construction costs continue to sharply escalate as this nation experiences unbridled levels of double-digit inflation. One recent estimate said that the combination of forces is reducing our purchasing power for roads and highways some 33 percent per year."

Milliken had no miracle solution. It's not done that way in Michigan. A coalition of forces in Lansing will have to come up with compromise answers.

GOLDSCHMIDT RECALLED the original interstate highway plan was that the federal government would provide 90 percent of construction funding, then turn the highways over to the states for maintenance.

Often, however, the states used their road funds not to maintain what had been built but to build new roads.

"We must have a conservation ethic for our roads," Goldschmidt said in an interview. "In the same way you decide every 20 years you need a new roof for the house, you'll have to depreciate the value of the roads and replace them."

Part of the Carter Administration's energy plan, he said, was a 10 cent per gallon gasoline tax, part of which would have gone for road maintenance and not just construction.

Congress shot down that plan. But Goldschmidt said the administration may ask Congress to vote a two-cent increase in the fuel tax for maintenance. That rate would yield \$2 billion a year.

CASTING A shadow over Michigan's problems, the governor said, is the specter of the Tishch tax cut plan on the Nov. 4 ballot.

Milliken said the Tishch plan "would slash property taxes in half and force the state to make up all lost revenues out of existing funds." "The result would be a crippling of our ability to provide such basic state services as state police enforcement, mental health care, education and an adequate prison system."

But road builders shouldn't think their funds are safe just because they are earmarked by the State Constitution.

"If we were forced to turn people away from mental health treatment because there was no money to pay for it," Milliken warned, "you can be sure there would be extremely heavy pressure to remove the restrictions on transportation revenues to allow their use for other purposes."

Not glamorous stuff, but Milliken and Goldschmidt got to the point.



What's under all the gloss?

My thoughts for the day focused on the cover of Time magazine, the picture in my bedroom and the presidential candidates.

The Time magazine cover for Aug. 25 has a determined looking President Carter underneath the headline, "Running Tough." I'm not really a Carter fan but never has he appeared more presidential — resolute, determined, even capable.

I wondered as I looked at the cover if the real Carter is tough, resourceful, resolute and determined enough that his sense of discretion, his sense of purpose and his sense of the U.S.' role in the world will come through in his job. I wondered if it would come through to the voters. I had my doubts.

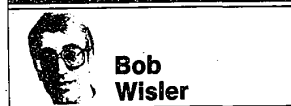
Political campaigns remind me of the picture in my bedroom, hanging behind a door. It is a photograph taken a few days after I was married a few years ago. My friend, a talented photographer, took it as Sue and I stopped for a moment in a candlelit room. He presented an 8x10-inch color photograph a few weeks later. The glossy finish, I thought, gave us a regal aura.

I showed the photo to friends and relatives. They were impressed. I took the photo to a person who frames such things. He picked out an antique wood frame and suggested dulling the photo to keep it in character with the wood frame. He told me it would look better. I bow to experts. I ordered it his way.

I have never liked the photograph since I had it framed. The glossy finish make us look romantic, alluring, interesting. With the gloss gone I could see that my eyelids drooped and my fingers were limp. I knew that I had been drinking too much. My wife's eyes were unfocused, as if she could not fathom what was going on. Her mouth was open but she was saying nothing.

The finish on that photograph was on my mind when I looked at the photograph of Carter and when I looked at Reagan on television that same day. After years of what seems to us like tired leadership, we tend to look for an image of a leader as we would like him to be, not as he is. After years of economic uncertainty and political blackmail we look for the picture-perfect president who will lead us through our troubles and make us feel good about the journey.

As Ronald Reagan is nominated and leads in the polls. Underneath the TV charisma, the Republican brand



Bob Wisler

of howdy, and the John Wayne answers there may be a man who has the resolve, resourcefulness, discretion and courage to lead us through our time of despair. But I have my doubts. The things that Reagan is starting to say and the things that people are saying about him bother me.

Garry Willis is an astute political columnist of national syndication. It surprised me that on Aug. 27 he used terms of such extreme derision in attacking recent Reagan statements on U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Willis concluded his column with this rhetorical question: "What must the world think when we openly consider putting this clown in charge of the most dangerous weapons in the world?"

It is early for this kind of statement. It is the kind of charge which dogged Barry Goldwater throughout his 1964 campaign for the presidency. The pressure of a presidential campaign, in which every statement has the potential of undermining the whole campaign, is enormous. The pressure-killed George Romney before he even started. The pressure ruined whatever chances Goldwater had. To some extent it knocked off Humphrey and it put the finish to McGovern's feeble hopes.

I suspect that the pressure will get to Reagan — because he really doesn't understand the U.S. role in the world the way most of the citizens do. I am beginning to hear people who expect to vote for Reagan in November say they feel uncomfortable with his pronouncements. I think that between now and November we will have had the opportunity to examine beneath the veneer and that we will discover that Ronald Reagan isn't the leader we are really looking for.

Jimmy Carter may not be either, but I think we will find that his comes closer. I think that, underneath it all, Carter's view of the United States and what we should stand for is closer to what we want in the dangerous years that are ahead.

Supreme court race: great day for Irish

"It would be inappropriate for me to comment on that because that question could come before the State Supreme Court for review at a future date."

It's that season again. Four or more persons are campaigning around the state for two seats on the Michigan Supreme Court.

It is a court of appellate jurisdiction — that is, it hears appeals of cases decided in lower courts.

Two of the candidates are incumbents — Mary S. Coleman and Charles L. Levin. It seems fair to ask the challengers what cases they would have decided differently had they been on the high court.

The answer will be the one quoted above — it is "inappropriate" to comment.

The second answer one commonly gets when quizzing supreme court candidates is this profoundly: "I will interpret the law as I find it, without fear or favor That is very little help to a serious voter.

TIME WAS when Michigan Supreme Court justices were appointed. That occurred under the Constitution of 1835 and the Constitution of 1850, until 1857.

Then the state legislature, in the Jacksonian spirit of the time, made the supreme court elective. The Constitution of 1908 required they be nominated at partisan conventions and elected at partisan elections.

The Constitution of 1963 made only a slight improvement. It called for nominating justices at partisan conventions but made the election nonpartisan.

On paper, then, our justices are elective. But of the seven current members of the court, three were originally appointed by Gov. William G. Milliken to fill vacancies.

And in some areas of the state, most of the circuit judges were placed there originally by gubernatorial appointment.

VOTERS LIKE Irish names in Michigan, out of all proportion to the number of persons of Irish descent.

Three of the seven current justices have identifiable Irish names — John Fitzgerald, Thomas Giles Kavanagh and James L. Ryan.

Two of the current crop of supreme court candidates have identifiable Irish names — Michael Harty and Joseph B. Sullivan. The politicians who nominated them think they know something about us voters.

This year's Michigan Supreme Court election is important in a political way. The 1980 census has been completed, and our legislature is due to be redistricted by the State Apportionment Commission.

The apportionment commission always deadlocks 2-2 over Republican vs. Democratic apportionment plans. The plans then go to the Michigan Supreme Court for a decision. At this point, it becomes important for a political party to have a majority of the court on its side.

And so, whether we like it or not, the supreme court is a partisan political instrument of government.

WE ARE REMINDED, at this juncture, of Archie Bunker's analysis of the judicial system. Archie's idea was have professional juries because:

"You got a judge who spends half his life in school — after which he spends years as a lawyer, then a lower judge, then an upper judge, until he finally works his way up to a Superior Court."

"But does he get to decide who's innocent or guilty? No — that decision's made by four salesmen, three bank tellers, two plumbers, a seamstress and a dingbat!"

—TIM RICHARD