

Time shapes natural world

By Timothy Nowicki
special writer

TIME was an unknown concept in the recent history of man. In contrast, today we are governed by time in almost everything we do.

Time in the natural world is a constant, yet dynamic, force that shapes everything around us. This concept became very evident as I walked through a beautiful beech-maple forest of Rotary Park in Livonia.

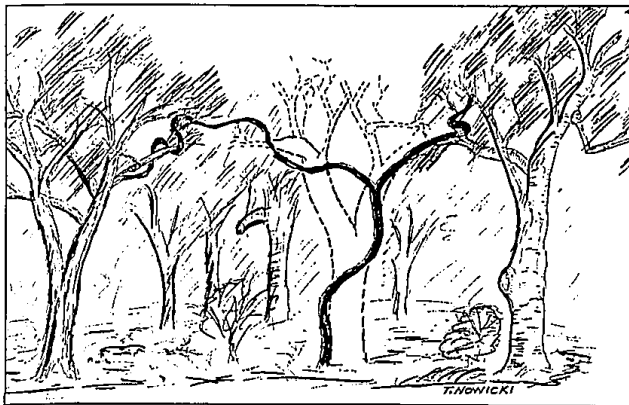
If this area had been completely cleared in colonial times and then abandoned, it would have taken about 350 years to become a beech-maple forest. Just the presence of these trees expressed the feeling of time. Their silver trunks towered skyward to form a canopy that dwarfed my presence.

THIS MAJESTIC forest — filled with the songs of wood thrush, red-eyed vireos and scarlet tanagers — would, by itself, have cemented the concept of time. But along the trail I saw another anomaly that could only be explained by time.

Rooted in the ground was a grape vine suspended by two arms clinging to trees 10 and 20 feet away. Several years ago this young grape vine began growing up the side of a tree.

At the end of each grape vine branch were tendrils that searched for a support to cling to. Once it found a support, the tendrils twisted tightly and tenaciously.

Through the years, new tendrils reached higher and higher following trunk, branches and twigs. As the grape vine extended to the branches



The grape vine looked like a sailor strapped to yard-arms because its original host tree had died and crumbled.

of surrounding trees, time continued to edge on. The original supporting tree, which may have been old to begin with, was aging even more.

EVENTUALLY THE supporting tree died and slowly crumbled to the forest floor.

But not before the grape vine had extended its grip to the neighboring trees.

Now that the original supporting

tree is gone, the grape vine looks like a sailor strapped to the yard-arms. Simply looking at this suspended vine is interesting in itself, but re-

viewing its history through time adds an even greater appreciation for this and other phenomena of nature.

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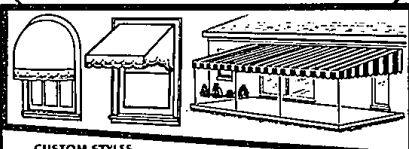
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& 1:00, 3:00 and 7:00 P.M.

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