

FEAR & LOAFING

How dry I am...



Karl Nilsson
buff my ears, but was interrupted in the nick of time!

To stay on the cutting edge of suburban culture, I personally sample as many entertainment trends as possible. This weekend, I tried out the hot new concept in dinner theater—a restaurant on Telegraph where the food on your plate puts on the show.

My wife ordered oriental stir-fry and heard a few numbers from "Madame Butterfly" before eating the soprano bean sprout. My spaghetti performed two acts of "Carmen," led by a surprisingly versatile pair of meatballs. For a grand finale, a tray of French pastries staged the barricade scene from "Les Misérables."

As tenuous as the entrees were, a trip to the men's room struck a sour note—apparently local gourmets have been relaxing themselves left and right in the washroom!

How do I know this? Because I saw the proof with my own eyes. While waiting for the check to arrive, I excused myself and went to the lavatory. After washing my hands, I turned and reached for the towel dispenser. It was then I saw what would turn my carefree night of musical food into a somber reflection on the brevity and uncertainty of life.

Badly shaken, I slumped against the sink, knowing I had narrowly escaped a brush with death.

On the wall, in front of me was the familiar white metal box with a loop of white cloth hanging below it. Each tug on the towel was designed to pull down about 10 inches of unused fabric to dry your hands. At least, that's the use it was intended for. How naive I was...

There, on the outside of the harmless looking box was a label I'd never seen before, a label I am not making up: "WARNING: Do not attempt to hang from towel, or insert your head into the towel loop. Failure to follow these simple instructions can be harmful or injurious."

Thank goodness I read the warning in time! Imagine the tragedy if I'd been in a playful mood: As minutes turned into hours, my distraught wife would send a waiter to investigate my absence. "Ma'am, can you identify these shoes sticking out of the towel machine? Apparently, your husband couldn't follow directions and got himself rolled up in the dispenser's sawtooth."

As I wiped my hands on my pants, memories of reckless, crazy days before the warning was posted filled my head. How often I had felt the urge to hang from the towel but for some unknown reason decided not to. How many times had I longed to insert my head in the towel loop and

bluff my ears, but was interrupted in the nick of time!

Sure, I had been lucky. But what about the countless injuries that must have prompted this new warning label? Were they accidents or were they just the latest way suburban cheats died to get their kicks?

Perhaps this scene has even happened to you. You're waiting to enjoy a delicious meal at your favorite cafe and decided to wash up. Carefully, following instructions, you "pull down gently with both hands," when suddenly out comes a careless diner! Before you can dry your hands on his tie, his paper-thin body spoils out, knocking you to the floor beneath coils of corpus delicti.

THROUGH NO fault of your own, a perfect evening is ruined by someone who tried to dry their hands after having too much to drink! And that's the real danger, folks. Even though you may obey the restroom rules, you can still be victimized by some joker who plays it fast and loose with the towel machine.

Can I get very serious for a moment? Everything you do affects every other passenger on this small spaceship we call the earth. Although it might seem like harmless fun for a consenting adult to insert his head into the towel loop, it can scare the garchapio out of innocent customers.

Like members of a giant ant farm, we have a solemn responsibility to each other. Always remember, "no man is an island" (although Jackie Gleason once registered at a hotel as a peninsula).

People, it's time we looked at the long-range consequences of our actions. When scientists invent a deadly new disease, they must stop and consider the inconvenience it may cause for doctors who tee off twice a week. When a couple engages in premarital deaf lossing, they must stop and think of the embarrassment it may cause their family and friends.

Hopefully, the day will eventually come when every object in a public restroom will have its own warning label.

STREET SENSE

Stop fighting with hubby

Dear Barbara,
I separated from my husband six months ago, and now I am involved in a messy, hostile divorce.

We have two children ages 6 and 8 who are living with him in our family home. I left the house because he wouldn't. The children are with me in my parents' home (this is temporary) every other week.

My husband wants joint custody. I am vehemently opposed to such arrangements for two reasons. Number one, I think it is confusing to live in two places, and number two, my husband and I are fighting viciously all the time. Joint custody would mean constant interaction between us and a need for cooperation that we cannot fulfill even minimally.

What do you think?
"Mom"

Dear "Mom,"
I think that under the present

circumstances, there is no good reason for this dilemma.

For your children, the only satisfactory solution would be for you and your husband to stop fighting and be mature enough to think about their psychological welfare. Since you have not offered that as a possible scenario, I assume it cannot be considered.

The question of custody is a hotly debated one. There are many women who believe as you do and would like the least amount of interference from their ex-husbands for both them and their children. There is even research to support this position.

THE CENTER for the Family in Transition in Corte Madera, Calif., has reported that joint custody is indeed harmful when parents fight because the children must constantly witness anger and hostility.

However, I have seen families in my practice in which the children end up feeling neglected when the amount of time they spend with their father (or mother, if that is the non-custodial parent) is shortened.

Fathers' rights groups have stated clearly that they believe the single custody position is an infringement on their rights. There is a highly supportable position.

SO EVEN though you make good points—one, it is confusing to live in two places and two, it is harmful for your children to see you fighting—your conclusion is best for you but not necessarily the best for your children, and certainly not for their father.

I doubt that what I "think" will make a difference, but in the hope that it will, I will give it again. Stop fighting with your children's father and allow them to have whatever of



Barbara Schiff
their childhood is left

Barbara
If you have a question or comment for Barbara Schiff, a trained therapist and experienced counselor, send it to Street Sense, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150

Post-Yule travel avoids the crunch

Continued from Page 1

A Pan American and TWA both fly from Detroit to JFK and on to Europe, so many people take their Detroit-New York flights even if they are catching another airline flight from New York. Fares are usually reasonable.

To find any toll-free number call information by dialing (800) 555-1212. They'll tell that Pan Am is (800) 221-1111 and TWA is (800) 221-2000.

My husband recently flew Detroit to JFK en route to India and chose not to fly TWA or Pan Am because their afternoon flights got in around 5 p.m., and he didn't want to take a chance on being late for his 6 p.m. check-in. Airlines that fly primarily overseas are also sometimes late or overbooked.

He chose USAir, even though he had to change planes in Philadelphia or Pittsburgh, because he wanted to arrive at JFK early in the afternoon.

USAir, which absorbed Piedmont Airlines this year, flies to hundreds of large and small towns, primarily in the eastern United States. Call toll-free (800) 428-4322.

I personally think JFK is a zoo, and I avoid it whenever possible. Northwest airlines has non-stop flights from Detroit to Paris on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday and from Detroit to Frankfurt on Monday, Thursday and Saturday. They fly Detroit to London daily with a change at Boston, which is Northwest's main hub to Europe. I guess they got tired of JFK, too.

Call Northwest toll-free at (800) 225-2525.

Here is another alternative: Fly British Airways Detroit to London, with a stop at Montreal. Those of you who don't want to go that far might like to know that BA will also fly Detroit to Toronto daily through March 31. They leave Detroit at 6:45 p.m., arrive in Toronto at 6:55 p.m. daily; leave Toronto at 2:20 p.m., arrive in Detroit at 3:45 p.m.

Roundtrip mid-week fares are \$98. Call toll free (800) AIRWAYS.

Q: Is it too late to bring my son and daughter home for Christmas on one of those cheap flights? We've also considered meeting them somewhere else, preferably where it's warm!

Insight always gives us 20-20 vision, so join the club of people who wish they had bought their vacation tickets during the great August sale, or their holiday tickets before the magic window closed Oct. 31.

Airlines are, of course, heavily booked for just before and after Christmas and New Year's, but never assume you can't get a good seat at a decent price. Start calling airlines and start considering a holiday gathering just before or after Christmas.

We're meeting some of our family in the Hilton Head-Charlotte-Savannah area early in December. Flights are not rock bottom but they are still good.

You can still get some flights south, but you may have trouble getting accommodations during Christmas week.

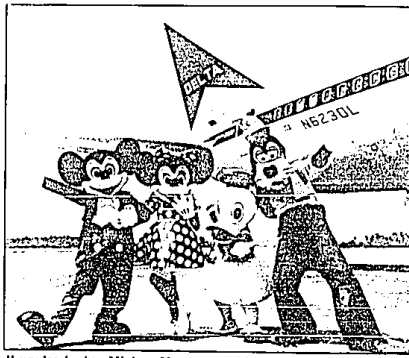
Call American (866-1000), Eastern (965-8200) or Delta (800-872-7786) for warm-weather destinations and consider meeting your family in early January, when the rest of the world hasn't started traveling yet!

For those of you who might like to do all this closer to home, Northwest Airlines and the Grand Traverse Resort offer this package before Dec. 15 and from Jan. 8 through May 24 1990. Fly from Detroit to Traverse City, and enjoy two nights deluxe accommodations at Grand Traverse Resort for from \$225 to \$275 per person, depending on the accommodations you choose.

Like most package rates, they are

based on two people in a room, four in two-bedroom condos, six in three-bedroom condos. You can enjoy the indoor health club and racquet facilities, or the skating rinks and cross-

country ski trails outdoors in season. Of course, you can drive and get all this for less. Call toll-free (800) 678-1754.

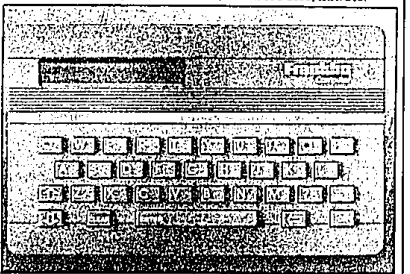


If you're lucky, Mickey Mouse and his friends Minnie, Donald, and Goofy will be there to meet you when your plane lands in Orlando, Fla.

STREET SEEN

Denis Susan Lucas

Our intrepid Street Scene reporter is always looking for the unusual and welcomes comments and suggestions from readers and entrepreneurs. Send those to this column in care of this newspaper, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150, or call 591-2300, Ext. 313.



Word wiz

If spelling was never your forte, or if you just enjoy playing word games, the Fran Word Wiz is for you. It contains 60,000 words including proper names and abbreviations. Or you can have educational fun by playing Hangman or anagrams either against the Word Wiz or among friends. This version is \$39, and available at Sears. Similar spellers available at Meijer, K mart and Radio Shack.

Small world

It looks like a furry rabbit with a charming porcelain face and wavy eyelashes, but it's really a music box that plays "It's a Small World." A collector's item, it is made in California. The face is hand-painted porcelain and the piece is signed and dated by the artist. Marmel Toys and Gifts, 28857 Orchard Lake Road, Farmington Hills.



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