



## Detroit

## Overcoming old images

## Travel

## Plenty to-do

By IRIS SANDERSON JONES

"Tourists from outside Detroit have discovered us, but the people in the suburbs haven't discovered us yet."

That's Leon Atchison, director of the Detroit Recreation Department, who thinks that "a whole generation of suburbanites have culturally deprived children who have never seen the art museum, Hart Plaza or any of the things going on at Belle Isle."

A major renovation of the island has taken place since many suburbanites stopped going to Belle Isle five years ago, but Atchison thinks that most of us haven't heard about it yet.

"We had a two-pronged problem, made up of bad maintenance and a bad image," Atchison said. "Whenever anything had to be cut from the city budget, they cut parks. Five years ago, this island was a mess."

"The streets and sidewalks were cracked, cars were parked everywhere, the grass and gardens were a mess and the facilities were not maintained."

"We've spent \$10 million on new sidewalks and ramps, high intensity lights and new facilities, and we'll spend another \$5 million before we're finished."

Dark manager William Darnell echoes those thoughts.

When asked about the gangs that once plagued the park, he said, "We stopped allowing rock concerts on the grass, and the police ran off the motorcycle gangs, so that about solved the problem."

BELLE ISLE didn't have good beginnings a century ago. Like most of southern Michigan, it was a swamp. People called it Hog Island, because they ran hogs on the land to keep down the snakes.

Both ends of the island were developed in controversy. Scott Fountain, at the east end of the island, was given to the city 15 years before Detroit got around to accepting it. It now faces downtown with a first-class view of the city skyline.

Th opposite tip of the island, where the Livingstone Lighthouse has an unobstructed view upriver, has been the subject of a family squabble between park administrators, who want to open the area to foot traffic, and Friends of Belle Isle, who want to keep it wild.

Footpaths and permanent artists' easels will be constructed here. A nearby 260-acre wooded area will remain as a wild homeland for 88 resident deer.

The land between the two island tips has been alive with renovation and construction crews for several years, as the island staff gets ready for the 100th birthday.

The Nancy Brown Peace Tower has a new electronic synthesizer that can reproduce exactly the musical sound of a cast bronze bell. A \$750,000 spread of formal gardens is being planted next to the Dossin Museum area. The old maintenance center is being converted into a craft center.

Wooden walkways and play equipment are crawling with kids at the new Playscape. They are extending and building high walkways above the Belle Isle Zoo, which probably won't re-open now until fall.

The Nature Center is in full swing near Lake Muskoday, where they are planning to install fish ladders.

It's a brand new island, but one thing hasn't changed. The kids still race around the aquarium and the conservatory while teachers yell "Keep quiet" and "You get back here before I..." The punishment is always unspecified.

## Learn travel biz

A travel school designed for both consumers and travel industry professionals will begin classes in Oakland County July 9.

The school, which is licensed by the Michigan Department of Education, will offer a full curriculum of 150 credit hours of required courses and 30 credit hours of elective courses.

Courses begin July 9. People interested should contact TEI at 32985 Hamilton Ct., Suite One, Farmington Hills, for an interview before applying for classes.

DETROIT — I feel this great rush of pride as we curve past Cobo Hall in sight of the river.

"Look, everybody, there it is. That's the Renaissance Center."

I've been doing this all week as I accompany fellow travel writers and editors from the Society of American Travel Writers on a tour of metro Detroit.

At Greenfield Village, it was "wait until you see the Thomas Edison laboratory."

At Cranbrook, "The gardens here are terrific."

At the local tourist sites, I've been the biggest tourist of them all... at Meadowbrook Hall, on the people-mover at Fairlane Town Center, and here I am ready to pop my buttons as we start our tour of the city of Detroit.

The occasion is the summer meeting of the Central States and Canadian chapters of the society, a North American Association of travel writers, editors and related travel industry personnel.

We gather several times a year to do business and to explore our meeting place as a travel destination.

I have been with them in Chicago and Texas, in Cairo and Bombay, but what am I doing here spending a week touring a city where I walk around every day?

There are six active members from Michigan and five of us are here: Len Barnes and Marcia Danner from Michigan Living Magazine, Nancy Kennedy of Ford Times, freelancer Hal Butler and myself.

BEHIND ME, a member from Arkansas is saying, "I thought northerners were cold, but this is the friendliest place..." He had just been served a Michigan Sunrise (that's orange juice brandy, and champagne) by Dutch de Vogel, manager of the Dearborn Inn.

Nearly, a Texas woman says, "I didn't bring my bathing suit, because I thought it would be freezing up here, and I'm dying of the heat."

At the front of the bus is Alexander Luvall, executive assistant to the mayor. He is one of the men who has been showing us Detroit; I have come to call them the renaissance men.

The renaissance men all have something in common. They are articulate and sophisticated men who get an urgent note of pride in their voices when they talk about "my city." These are the men, and of course the women, who have worked hard to rebuild a dying city and they are proud of it.

Luvall grew up in Detroit, but he was in law school in Chicago when Mayor Coleman Young was elected to office.

"I just came on home. I knew that if I did something for Detroit it would be for me. For my city."

We take the long ride up the elevators at the Plaza Hotel, and now I look down at the ethnic festival going on in the Hart Plaza below. I watch the crowds scatter in the light rain, and hear another voice say, "I look at all the people downtown on a Sunday. I wish we could do that where I live."

And there I go, popping my buttons all over again.

## Some sights to see

Belle Isle Conservatory — 224-1098.

Opens at 9 a.m.

Greenfield Village and Henry Ford Museum — 271-1620, 20900 Oakwood, Dearborn. Hours 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays-Sundays.

Detroit Institute of Arts — 833-7900.

5200 Woodward. Hours 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Tuesdays-Saturdays.

Detroit Artists Market — 962-0337.

1432 Randolph, Harmonie Park. Hours 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays-Saturdays.

Detroit Science Center — 833-1892.

5020 John R at Warren. Hours 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays-Fridays, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturdays, noon to 5 p.m. Sundays.



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