Travel



(T-8C,8-10C,10C+,F-12C,R,W,G-5BXB,WH)17A

Reminders of a bygone era

Updated inn unmatched in sunrises

NEKEMA, MICH. — The sun comes up in a late September mist over Portage Lake, backlighting the fishing boats and the docks in front of the Portage Point Inn.

and the docks in front of the Portage Point Inn.

The slap of water against the docks and the matter of motors are the only sounds on the lake, except for an occasional exclamation from a fisherman as the coke salimon strike.

It has been too dark to see more than the outline of the turn-of-the-century buildings spread broadly across the shore and up the hill, but the sun is above the horizon now, spotlighting the wiltie clapboard ramble of wood, the great pillars of the original hotel, the croate it slall.

the bright of geranium window boxes that decorate in the bright of geranium window boxes that decorate in the guests are still asleep, athough a few have done their morning walk along the lake and up the road between Portage Point Inn cottages to Lake Michigan, five-minutes walk away.

All of these buildings were built for wealthy turn-of-the-century passengers who came by steamship and played croquet in long skirts and white flannel trousers on these lawns. The steamships have long gone and you must now detour off state Highways 22 or 31 as we did in our drive down the west coast of Michigans.



down the west coast of Michgan.
We left Traverse City with
and another dozen in cars, all of us part of the Stote
and another dozen in cars, all of us part of the Stote
of Writers here in Michigan. Ten such groups left
Traverse City the same day, to write stories and
resort porches on both the upper and tower pentaulies. These writers have come to Michigan from all
over the U.S. and Canada.

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NO SENSIBLE vacalioner would consider packing this much into four days, visiting artists and resorts up and down the Lake Michigan Coast, cruising around Saugatuck, visiting White Pine Village and the Gilmore Car Museum, fishing the Grand River and more. However, there is no other way to see even a small part of a big state like this. Pve been on convention with fellow members of SATW in many parts of the world — Poland, India, Hawaii, Bahamas — so it was a particular pleasure to hear them exclaim over a 1937 Chardonnay from the Chateau Grand Traverse winery, to watch the its Gwen Frostle of Boulab.

Frostle is one of three tremarkable women I met on that short stretch of Michigan coastline between the Leclanau Peninsula and Tockenia. Mary Ann O'Neul of Birthinghain coastline between the Leclanau Peninsula and Tockenia Mary Ann O'Neul of Birthinghain Called La Becasse, in Burdickville, needs an earlier story of her own, as does Michigan's own Gwen Frostle.

Today I would like you to meet Marllyn Luck-

Today I would like you to meet Marllyn Luckman, the Director of Operations and the daily driving force behind the great white sprawl of wood known as the Fortage Point Inn.
Marllyn and ber husband, sculptor Stewart Luckman, have owned the lins for the last two years. She has a love affair with the Portage Point Inn which is near where she lived for a year in nearby Mintle cas a school girl. For many years she came back to work in the Inn for the summer, holding every job available on the premises at one time or another.

Luckman had carried coursel.

er.
Luckman had carned several degrees and was a school principal in Minneapolis, Minn., when her brother telephoned one day from his home in North Dakota.

"THE INN is for sale," he said. "Let's buy it!"

The Portage Pointe inn is a rambling expanse of white clapboard, great pillers, porches and bright red geranium window boxes. The inn was built for wealthy turn-of-the-century passengers

who came by steamship and played croquet in long skirts and white flannel trousers on the lawns. Overlooking Portage Lake, the inn is a five-minute walk from Lake Michigan. double occupancy, including all three meals, in the Beech Lodge, Terrace, Main Hotel or Doll Houses; the same for a minimum of three or four people in the cottages. Bed and Breakfast rate is \$70 for two. Discounts are available by the week (\$410 per person double occupancy) and for groups. For information, write to Portage Point Inn, P.O. Box 248, Onckama, Michigan 49075 or telephone (516)889-4222.

It was a preposterous idea of course. She had a god ollo in the city school system. Stewart was an established professor at a Minneapolls university, so well as an established supplor.

What do a school teacher and a sculptor knows a substant muning a rambling old inn, restoring sagging roots and rusted plumbing, or attracting visitors to a white clephant of a place in the woods of western Michigan?

It was an old Irishman, full of old Irish legends, who encouraged Luckman to do it by telling her the story of the brass ring.

"The brass ring is a golden opportunity," Luckman said. "It is sounds like a wonderful idea but it's for somebody clse and not for you, pass it by, But if it's something you'd like to do, except the timing is wrong, change your thinking. Opportunity always comes at the wrong time."

THE LUCKMANS started the 1984 season a THE LUCKMANS started to 1908 season sowners of this 17-acre wonderland — seenle and full of problems. Martlyn and Stu had worked the kitchen, waited on tables and tended the boats, but this was no Job for starry-eyed youngsters. It was a couple full of horse-sense and good business practices that closed the screen door behind them and

lices that closed the screen door communication set to work.

Part of the Inn has been renovated. The original hotel, where you had to wait 20 minutes for the bot water to arrive, is at this very moment having its new plumbing installed. The building behind the hotel and the inn is having its walls knocked out to double the size of the rooms, next season it will hold corporate meetings.

corporate meetings.

ALL OF THIS has a time-capsule feeling to the Luckmans. One or other of them worked at the ina from 1934 to 1971. Their son Sean was born at the close of the 1985 season. Another son, (Nils, is a bus boy these days in the dining room. The family is always walking in and out of another age.

Marilyn Luckman often sees what she thinks is a guest from the long-age days, only to realize that it is the son or daughter of a former guest, bringing children and grandchildren back to the inn.

A few things are new to her, like fighing state and local bureaurracy for permission to build docks, or filling out the forms needed to the hand local bureaurracy for permission to have a place on the National Historie Registrant.

But the state of the state of the state of the National Historie Registrant of Development Block Grant was the up side of all that; that money is at work right now restoring the inn.

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THERE ARE lots of things to do on this little lake or along the shore of Lake Michigan. You can windsurf or sail, fish and swim, play tennis or stretch out around the pool, tour the restored downtown streets of nearby Manistee.

But the nicest part of staying in an old inn like this is just sitting on the porch and watching the sunce one up over the lake. It turns the sky to jeweled plnk, backlighting the beats muttering along in search of salmon, while a fall mist rises and shapes itself around the scene. These writers have photographed the Taj Mahal and the skyline of Bangkok, but they've never seen a sunrise quite like that.

The Portage Point lin is open through October. The Luckman's hope to keep it open most or all of the year in future. Bates are \$60 a day per person

Fall color show to debut

The curtain is going up on Michigan's fail color extravagants for a lar-week run staged for hikers, bikers, boaters, festival goers and, of course, motorists, reports AAA Michigan. This year's autumn showcase begins in mid-September and early October in the Upper Peninsula and northern tip of lower Michigan. Trees should wear brilliant base of magenta, gold and orange from late September to mid-October south Mackinaw City to north of a line from Laddington to Standish.

The best time for color viewing should be early

Standish.

The best time for color viewing should be early and mid-October in the lower peninsula's midsection, south of a line from Lidington to Standish anorth of a line from Holland to Port Huron. Fall color should peak in southern Michigan in mid- and lets October.

ty.

Among the most favored partimes is touring the state by car. Motorists and filters may wander through more than 8 million acres of state and national forest land to see vivid fall displays. Sugar maples turn brilliant golds and red maples are

noted for bright red leaves. Aspens are drenched in brilliant yellow while eats become light brown to russet and sume trees glow nearly indexent red. Local parks and several scenic gardens in the state, such as Midland's Dow Gardens and Kalama-no's Nature Center, also are choice spots for color

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se of overwhelming demand; the General Women's Club has added a bus tour of

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Marilyn Luckman worked every job at the Portage Point inn as a girl. Years later she left a job as school principal in Minneapolis when her brother said, "The inn is for sale. Let's buy it."

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