

Cold Canadian rail ride extravaganza

Continued from Page 7

from car nine to a warmer car. "We can find a place for you up front," senior hostess Kathy McFadden said. "They have lots of heat up there behind the steam car."

But fortified with hot chocolate and plenty of gray wool blankets which McFadden and the conductor brought back for us, we hung on, hoping the constant clanking of the pipes meant warmth was on the way.

And like children ready for bed, we settled under our blankets, sipped our chocolate and listened to McFadden's stories of her 20 years on the Algoma Central Railroad. There was the farmer who lost his head of goats on the tracks once ("That was the end of them," McFadden said.) and the man who spit his teeth into the toilet. They backed up the train and recovered them, only slightly soiled.

For respite we went to the dining car where they were serving huge bacon, egg and hotcake breakfasts. A few hours later we had thick submarine sandwiches with steaming bowls of chili.

Around us, people were downing a variety of soups, sandwiches and entrees that looked every bit as tasty as ours. The train food prices were

reasonable, too, especially considering the Canadian dollar is worth about 15 percent less than its U.S. counterpart.

It was on one of these dining car trips that we discovered the broken pipe in car six. There, the tour hostess, wily, wrinkled, mops and putting down layers of paper towels. For the kids, though, the aisles were as good as a skating rink. "Mind you don't slip," they all warned us as we passed through.

By the time we reached Agawa Canyon, the turnaround point, there were only 10 of us left in car nine: The Lyons, the Knechts, my husband and I, a couple from Minnesota and, amazingly, another couple we encountered from our subdivision in West Bloomfield, Mike and Sharon Medwid and two-year-old Sammy, who kept warm inside his mother's sleeping bag. None of the rest of us had thought to bring one.

Inspired by the stalwart souls outside our windows and bound together by a survivor mentality, we fetched more coffee and hot chocolate for each other and listened to more of McFadden's tales.

She told about delivering babies on the train and the time the train hit a skunk. "That was really hard on ev-



Huddling outside the Snow Train are the three area couples who traveled into the northern reaches of Ontario: (from left) Pat and Sharon Knecht of Farmington Hills, Ingrid and Paul Toney of West Bloomfield and Carol and Bob Lyons of West Bloomfield.

everyone," she said. "Smelly, you know?" The train, which runs in the summer and fall as well, hits a number of moose every year and, once in a while, a black bear. "They just come out on the tracks and there's nothing you can do, you know?" McFadden said.

When the train stopped at Agawa

Canyon, the conductor gave all of us in car nine permission to get off and take photos, even though the brochure said disembarking was prohibited. Canadians seem to have a more relaxed attitude about rules and liability than Americans.

We snapped pictures of the frozen streams and the steep, white walls

rising 500 feet around us. Here and there, long draperies of frozen water hung like crystal waterfalls against the canyon walls.

Then we watched while three southbound engines, a steam car and several passenger cars coming from Hearst, 180 miles north of us, were hooked up to the back of our train. The engines that had been pulling us now went to Hearst along with a few passenger cars. We were ready to go back the way we had come, pulled by a different engine.

"You'll get heat now," McFadden promised. "You're much closer to the steam car."

No such luck. Two or three times the pipes rattled like old bones and coughed out a little warmth but then died once and for all.

We rode back under our blankets, sitting on our feet, drinking up after cup of hot chocolate, feeling we had somehow penetrated deeper into the awesome, frozen Canadian wilderness than those passengers in the forward cars, sitting in their shirt sleeves, huddling through "Time."

On the return trip the shadows were longer, the sun not quite so brilliant, but the scenery was still breathtaking. The snow-covered cliffs and deep white valleys passed like Christmas cards.

'Come back again,'
McFadden and the
conductor said
cheerfully. And in
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do it.

It was nearly five when we once again saw the steel mills below us and the smoke rising from St. Mary's Paper Company against the gray sky.

"Come back again," McFadden and the conductor said cheerfully. And in another winter, in a warmer car, we might do it.

The Snow Train runs Saturday and Sunday through March 17. It leaves Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario at 8:30 a.m. and returns about 4:30 p.m. Tickets are \$41.50 for adults, \$20.75 for children and high school students and \$7.25 for children under 5 (Canadian dollars).

Tickets can be ordered in advance by phoning (705) 946-7300. For more information, write Passenger Sales, Algoma Central Railway, 129 Bay St., Ste. Marie 15, Ontario P6A 1W7. Dress warmly!

Luxury-laden boat to cruise Caribbean

Continued from Page 7

ation, including swimming, snorkeling, windsurfing and the use of sail boats.

Initial plans call for the SSC Radisson Diamond to be launched in May of 1992, spend the summer in the Mediterranean Sea, and a month during the summer Olympics based in Barcelona, Spain.

The ship will then cruise to the Caribbean where she will trace the route taken by Christopher Columbus on the 500th anniversary of his arrival in the New World. San

Passenger rates on the 18,400-ton SSC Radisson Diamond are expected to be about \$600 per person, per day.

Juan, Puerto Rico is expected to serve as the ship's home port and current plans call for cruises of four, five and seven days.

Michigan is loaded with winter festivals

Continued from Page 7

ice sculptures complement the main event, ice-fishing. For more information, call (800) 55-TAWAS.

• "I-500 Snowmobile Race," Sault Ste. Marie, Feb. 2. Fifty racers travel at speeds of 85 miles per hour on a banked oval track. For more information, call (906) 632-3527.

• "North American VASA," Traverse City, Feb. 9. This \$8-billion-dollar, cross-country ski race attracts 1,400 skiers to Grand Traverse Re-

sort. For more information, call (800) 748-0303.

• "Continental Cup International Ski Flying," Ironwood, Feb. 15-17. Competitors come from around the world to Copper Peak's 26-story steel scaffold, said to be the only sky-flying hill in the Western Hemisphere. For more information, call (906) 932-5406.

For more information on these and other Michigan winter activities, call the Michigan Travel Bureau, (800) 5432-YES.

travel notes

1-800-WEATHER

Travelers interested in up-to-date information on weather conditions in their destination area can call 1-800-WEATHER. This telephone service from American Express provides hourly-updated reports on current weather conditions and three-day forecasts for more than 600 domestic and international cities.

Seasonal information, such as coastal beach and boating reports, ski reports including snow and slope conditions for ski areas, and highway conditions in the contiguous 48 states can also be obtained.

The number is a 24-hour service and can be accessed from touch-tone phones anywhere in the U.S. (Some businesses, hotels and all pay phones currently block 800-number calls.) Callers are charged 75 cents per minute, billed directly to their home phone by local telephone companies.

For free information, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to 1-800-WEATHER, 261 Central Ave., Farmingdale, NY 11735.

MOMENT'S NOTICE

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WISCONSIN DELLS

Wisconsin Delles has a "furry" of winter activities planned in 1991.

that include downhill and cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, sledding, ice skating and winter fishing.

Special events scheduled for January and February include the Mirror Lake Candlelight Cross-Country Skiing Jan. 19, Feb. 2 and 16; the seventh annual Wisconsin River Walleye Rally & Seminar Jan. 26-27; the Wisconsin Delles Flake Out Festival snow-sculpting competition Feb. 1-3; the 10th annual Wisconsin Sled Dog Championships and Christmas Mountain Winter Carnival Feb. 9-10; and the Mid-Continent Railway Steam Snow Train Feb. 16-17. For more information call toll-free (800) 22-DELLES.

GRAND TRAVERSE EVENTS

The Grand Traverse Convention and Visitors Bureau invites vacationers to take advantage of the many special winter events and activities planned for 1991. Nordic racers skate and glide in such races as the White Pine Stampede Feb. 2 and the internationally-known North American VASA cross-country race Feb. 9.

Another area highlight is Winter-

fest, a variety of winter games, snow sculptures, skating parties and a five mile "Frozen Foot Race" Feb. 1-3. For a free copy of the 1990/91 "Celebration of Winter" brochure and other vacation information, call toll-free (800) TRAVERS.

POLAR ICE CAP GOLF

Dedicated golfers waiting for warm spring weather can get their clubs out early and participate in the 21st annual Polar Ice Cap Golf tournament 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 19 on the frozen waters of Spring Lake near Grand Haven, Mich.

The course consists of a "Penguin 9" for the hesitant and the "Frostbite 18" for the truly brave. Official winter USGA rules will be in effect for the tournament. Players tee up anywhere on the course and are allowed to use a five, seven and nine iron and a putter. Fluorescent golf balls should be used.

Participants may enter the tournament as individuals or teams. Pre-registration is available by contacting the Chamber of Commerce or Visitors Bureau Office, One South

Harbor, Grand Haven, MI 49417, or by calling (616) 842-4910 or (616) 842-4499. Registration is also available on the day of the event at tournament headquarters, Spring Lake Country Club, on Fruitport Road, north of M-104 in Spring Lake.

Registration fees: Children 12 and under, \$2 per person; Penguin 9, \$5 per person or \$16 per team of four; Frostbite 18, \$7 per person or \$24 per team of four. In case of sunny, warm weather, the tournament may be canceled and all participants will be notified.

ST. PAUL WINTER CARNIVAL

Minnesota's capital city turns into a winter wonderland Jan. 23-Feb. 3 when the St. Paul Winter Carnival makes its annual return. A Minnesota tradition for more than 100 years, the carnival is the nation's oldest city festival. Seventy different events take place during the 12-day carnival including parades, balls, mini festivals, ice-carving contests, treasure hunts, sporting tournaments and a more. For more information contact Lois Glewe, St. Paul Winter Carnival Office (612) 297-6953.

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Birmingham T/Ms- 2nd & 4th Tues. 6:30 p.m., COMMUNITY HOUSE, 280 S. Bates, Birmingham.

Windbaggers- Every Thur. 6:30 p.m., SVEDEN HOUSE, 31830 Grand River, Farmington.

Federal Mogul T/Ms- 2nd & 4th Thur 12 noon, 26555 Northwestern Hwy., Southfield.

NCA Voices/Excellence- 2nd & 4th Tues., 5:00 p.m., 17330 Northland Park Ct., Southfield.

Lawrence Tech U.- Every Thur 6:00 p.m., 21000 W. 10 Mile, #E-159, Southfield.

Northwestern- Every Mon. 6:30 p.m., FRANKLIN CLUB Apts Library, 20830 Franklin, Southfield.

REDFORD, WESTLAND, WAYNE

Phone 561-8853 or 455-1635

Dearborn Dynamics- Every Tue. 6:30 p.m., RAMS HORN, Plymouth & Telegraph Rds., Redford.

Holy Toastmasters- Every Thur. 6:30 p.m., DENNY'S, 7725 N. Wayne Rd. Westland

The Advocates- Every Thur. 6:00 p.m., OMEGA, 34824 Michigan Ave., Wayne.

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Phone 363-3690 or 434-8369

Jewish Community Center- Every Tue. 7:30 p.m., 6600 W. Maple Rd., West Bloomfield.

Huron Valley- Every Mon. 6:30 p.m., MICHIGAN LEAGUE, 227A Englis (N. Univ.), Ann Arbor.

Washtenaw- Every Thur. 7:00 p.m., DENNY'S, 3310 Washtenaw Ave., Ann Arbor.

Dominos Farms- Every Wed 6:00 p.m., 30 Frank Lloyd Wright Dr., Ann Arbor.

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