

TRAVEL

Away for the Weekend

Finding a cure
for spring fever
close to home

By Iris Sanderson Jones
special writer

It was 10:30 Friday morning when a co-worker burst into my office with a desperate look on her face.

"I've gotta get outta here!" Dee Head of Farmington Hills said.

I know the feeling well. It's called spring fever.

"Where can I go for the weekend on \$200? That's got to include transportation, hotel, food, everything."

We pulled out a map and drew an imaginary circle: west to Chicago, north to Traverse City, northeast to Toronto, southeast to Cleveland, south to Lima and Indianapolis. That's about as far as you want to drive on a two-day weekend.

"I usually travel in Michigan, but I want to go south toward the sun this time," Dee said.

"What do you want to do when you get there?" I asked. "Walk in the woods? Go sight-seeing? Ride roller coasters?"

"I'm not much on roller coasters, but I like sightseeing, or just walking around. We go camping sometimes, so I like nature. Or I would be perfectly happy to do nothing. I've just got to get out of here!"

"You like to mosey and poke," I said.

She also likes the sun, so we checked all those fabulous air fares that have been advertised this spring. Unfortunately, most of those tickets had to be purchased before April 8. There are still good fares to nearby places like Chicago, Toronto and Cincinnati if you plan in advance, but none of them work if you decide Friday to leave Friday.

For example: buy a Northwest Airlines ticket to Toronto 14 days ahead of flight time, complete your trip before June 4, and you travel for \$103 to \$114 round-trip depending on the day of the week you fly. Remember: most good air fares require you to buy in advance, fly midweek and stay over a Saturday night.

There are exceptions. COMAIR, which coordinates its schedules with Delta Airlines, sells a \$200 coupon book containing four \$50 coupons. Each coupon is good for one flight to any COMAIR destination as long as you fly Saturday, Sunday or Monday morning.

There is no advance purchase required, but limited seating is available. COMAIR flights from Detroit go through Cincinnati. If you fly to Nashville, you will need one \$50 coupon for the Detroit to Cincinnati flight and another for Cincinnati to Nashville.

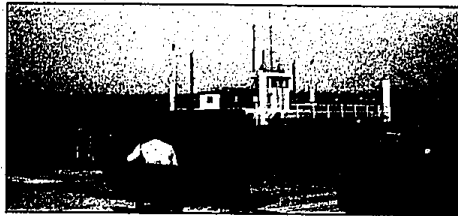
The best buy is obviously Detroit to Cincinnati, \$50 each way. Call Delta toll-free anytime at (800) 221-1212 or call COMAIR toll-free during Monday-to-Friday business hours (800) 543-7308. Coupon books can be bought at the airport. Or buy a Miscellaneous Exchange Coupon from your travel agent and turn it in at the airport for a coupon book.

As it turned out, Dee didn't want to go to Cincinnati. She couldn't buy a ticket in advance, and any other ticket would blow her \$200 budget.

She was determined to go out of state, so our next stop was at a file marked "State Park Lodges." Indiana, Ohio and Kentucky have wonderful state park resorts where you can sleep in nice quarters and spend your days walking, hiking, biking and otherwise enjoying nature.

Pine Mountain State Park was her first choice, but Dee lost enthusiasm when she learned it was in the very south of Kentucky. Too far to drive for two days.

Please turn to Page 5



Ferries like this one regularly take tourists across the St. Clair River to Canada from Marine City.



This is an anchor from a ship wrecked in the St. Clair River in 1900. The Blue Water Bridge is in the background.



Visitors to St. Clair, Mich., can walk on boardwalks like this one and watch the boats go by all day while forgetting about their problems, at least for the weekend.

Iris Sanderson Jones

A lazy day up north, waiting for Engler to show up

It was 9:45 a.m. in the Summit Center at Shanty Creek-Schuss Mountain Resort in Bellaire. Lucille Mosher and Joan Horvath of Milford were gathered around the breakfast tables, along with several hundred other Michigan professionals, at the eighth annual Governor's Conference on Tourism.

We were waiting for Gov. John Engler to come in through the fog to give the opening speech and present three Governor's Tourism Community awards. One would go to Lucille and Joan on behalf of the Charter Township of Milford for their innovative efforts to clean the Huron River.

Engler was scheduled to appear at 9 a.m. You can only keep several hundred people waiting so long, even for the governor, so at 9:15 the long lean form of Harold Skramstad, president of Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village, and chairman of the Michigan Travel Commission stood up. He lingered over his welcome.

"The Chinese character for crisis is a combination of the symbols for danger and opportunity," he said, setting the tone for a drastically reduced tourism budget. Lucille and Joan could have told him about crisis, about the danger the Huron River was in when they formed the Friends of the Huron and started hauling things out of the water with their canoe crews.

"We met in my living room for the first meeting," Joan said. "Lucille brought the agenda and I made coffee and cleaned the toilets."

They were both on the planning commission at the time. It didn't take them long to bring representatives in from Kensington and Metro parks, from Camp Dearborn and Proud Lake, or to line up three canoe liveries and the services of Milford's retired postmaster, Jack Gillow.

"We put two or three volunteers into each canoe, gave them a poker stick with a hook on the end and a net funnel to scrape the glass off the bottom of the river," Lucille said.

"We gave each canoe a section of the river, handed them garbage bags and told them to meet us at Kensington Park for lunch. We provided lunch."

At Gov. Connie Binsfield was at the podium now, making jokes about the weather to fill time. By the time Arthur Ellis, director of the Michigan Department of Commerce, got to his feet, they were saying, "When the governor talks this afternoon..."

None of this seemed to bother the two co-founders of the Friends of the Huron, sitting at a table directly in front of the podium. I guess you develop patience when you haul up racing tires, picnic tables and old shoes ("There's usually only one shoe.") out of the river from a canoe.

The two Milford women have a very practical attitude toward awards. When they won the Earthworks Award from WKBD-TV, "people came from five counties to volunteer to clean up the river."

Their main concern during our whispered conversation at this conference was not whether the governor would arrive, but whether they'd have enough volunteers for their next river cleanup August 17.

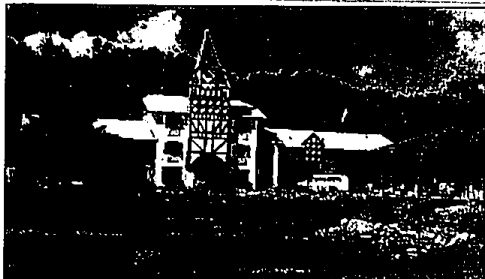
We took a brief break. The coffee was still steaming in the cups when the room began to stir as if a breeze were blowing through it. The governor had arrived. He had been unable to fly into Traverse City, so flew to Gaylord, drove to Bellaire and stopped to cut a ribbon somewhere along the way.

He talked about tourism as a \$20-billion industry in Michigan. He squelched the rumor that the Department of Natural Resources would close several state parks.

Please turn to Page 5

Travel cuts are big topic at state conference

The eighth annual Governor's Conference on Tourism took place last week here at Shanty Creek-Schuss Mountain Resort near Bellaire.



By Iris Sanderson Jones
special writer

Travel industry professionals from all over Michigan gathered at Shanty Creek-Schuss Mountain Resort in Bellaire last week to attend the eighth annual Governor's Conference on Tourism.

We had all been in limbo since last fall's elections, wondering what kind of budget cuts the new administration would propose. The proposed arts cuts are dramatic. Would that happen to tourism, even though it is among the top three industries in Michigan?

We're not selling many cars these days, so tourism and agriculture may now be the top two industries in Michigan. To put that in perspective, tourism is a \$20 billion industry, creating 340,000 jobs and producing state tax revenues of \$750,000.

Arthur Ellis, Director of the Michigan Department of Commerce, which includes the Travel Bureau, made the rumors official at the conference. Gov. John Engler has proposed that the department budget be slashed from

\$114 million to \$16 million. Fortunately, the core of the state program would be left intact.

Outreach grants, which supported tourism activity in community governments and organizations, are completely eliminated from the proposed budget. If Engler gets his wish, you won't see any more advertisements that are cooperative ventures between the state and regional tourist bureaus.

Those booklets that tell you about bed-and-breakfast places, fishing boats and other things, would be available only if their costs are picked up by the private sector.

If you call the toll-free number (800) 5432-YES you will be sent a basic package, limited to save postage, that includes a state travel planning guide, events calendar and map. If you want more, you must specifically ask for it. You may even be given another phone number to call so that you can get it elsewhere.

Please turn to Page 5