

POINTS OF VIEW

Changing climes follow geology in state's history

Up North they don't read the environmental writers in the big city papers or hear about the "greens" on the local country-western station. So last week no one, not even Gitchee Manitou, knew a global warming trend is affecting the climate.

It was in the 40s at night and low 60s during the day with leaden, overcast skies and winds howling out of Canada at 20 or 30 miles an hour. That was in the northern Lower Peninsula. The Upper Peninsula was 8 degrees colder. The Fourth of July weekend usually is one of the warmest of the year. Not in 1992. But campers didn't seem to mind.

The biggest bunch of spoiled softies I ever saw were at Indian Lake State Park a couple of summers ago. No roasting hot dogs around the fire for those dudes, no aroma of fresh fish frying. The campground is near Manistiquie, where they have pizzerias.

Did those campers drive to town for pizza? Never. Did they pile into the

family van and drive in? Fat chance. No, those denizens hiked all the way to the camp pay phone and ordered pizza delivered to the campground.

It was an obscenity, the worst display of human behavior I have seen since the San Francisco convention of 1984. I won't go back to Indian Lake.

We did compromise a little bit by camping at a state park with electricity. The chap next door was from the area and knew more than a little about the Wisconsin professor who erected platforms on dead trees in a nearby flooded area. Ospreys, cousins of the bald eagle, nested on one platform. Through binoculars we got a good glimpse of junior osprey poking his head above the nest of sticks waiting for mom and dad to bring a dinner of fish.

The neighbor chap was nice and well-informed, so we forgave his wife for using a microwave oven to roast a turkey for Sunday dinner. Our Sunday dinner was northern pike broiled over a



TIM RICHARD

pinewood fire.

We hardly saw the woman in the camper on the other side. No sitting around the campfire singing "Home on the Range" for her — not when she had the blue glare of a television to distract her from the songs of the Baltimore Orioles and rose-breasted grosbeaks in the pines.

One chill morning, a father and son moved in nearby. Dad was unshaven

and bleary-eyed. They had been in northern Ontario, got fed up with the frost (literally), packed up the previous evening and drove all night back to Michigan. I offered him a cup of coffee.

"Thanks, that's the first coffee I've had in three days," he said. "We wanted to camp in a provincial park with electricity, but there were no spots left. I only brought an electric coffee maker, so I was out of luck."

Now, this man turned out to be capable of catching two fish to my one, but I still felt a bit smug about having an old-fashioned aluminum percolator — and about being able to use the open-pot method in a pinch.

But this is about the weather. Our camp was in the northern lower peninsula, not far from limestone sinkholes formed eons ago by warm seas, not cold lakes. It's a short drive from the Pigeon River State Forest where they drill for oil made from tropical plants tens of millions of years ago. I made a pilgrimage to a favorite gravel pit and added

several fossils of tiny sea animals to the collection. And I climbed hills formed when the two-mile thick glaciers receded 12,000 years ago.

Michigan's climate has changed due to natural forces, long before anyone invented the depleted ozone layer. Indeed, the climate has changed in our lifetimes. My dad used to tell us kids about his camping trips as a young man.

"We didn't use hot water and shaving cream to shave," he said. "We'd splash cold water on our faces, let it freeze, and use the flat end of an axe to knock the ice off our faces. The whiskers came off with it." Wow, that must have been cold.

In an area once covered by tropical forests, shallow seas and glaciers, a week in the 60s doesn't seem so bad. Not when the pike are biting and the predator birds are making a comeback.

Tim Richard reports regularly on the local implications of state and regional events.

Indifference fuels resentment between races

I can understand the anger that fuels the explosive violence of the inner city. I can understand, more, I can feel the barely checked rage that seethes just below the heart of the male who was both fortunate and, at the same time, unfortunate enough to have been born black and to live in this particular time and place.

I know the defeats, the humiliations and the uncertainty experienced by black men through the ages and I, too, have been guilty of howling to an unhearing moon about the injustice of my treatment by an unthinking majority.

Growing up black and poor and male in the war-like projects of Chicago's south side taught life's lessons early. Survival meant toughness, emotions shown could betray you, sometimes kindness was mistaken for weakness. Women were there to be appreciated, then chased after and ultimately rejected for a newer model.

There is an indifference that drives the resentment of much of white America toward the perception of black citizens' achievements. I can understand, more, I can feel the mistrust they have when confronted by the average black/white situation. I can relate to wearing affluence like a shield.

At age 13, survival in the Beirut-like terror of Chicago's mean streets to some meant being shipped off. Lyndon Johnson's great society programs were in full bloom then, and to benefit from federal dollars, private schools were made to integrate. Being a dubious beneficiary of one of the earliest examples of affirmative action, I was brought into the loop as one of two black boys in an otherwise all-white New Hampshire boarding school.

Living, studying, playing, eating and rooming with young white boys in the formative stages of their lives again taught life's lessons early. It mattered little how smart you were, or how well



JEFFREY MILLER

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you played sports, or how hard you studied, what really mattered in that little New Hampshire school was what color you were and how much money your Daddy had. And though that was 25 years ago, the equation hasn't changed that much.

While I can understand the anger felt by those on society's bottom rung, while I can feel the mistrust of blacks by whites, I cannot stop the rage which grips me at the injustices perpetuated on people of color by those intent on maintaining the status quo, just as they cannot shake the indifference which drives the wedge deeper still and further fuels a smoldering rage.

We're too different, those who have given up on the dream of racial equity declare. Different culture, different values, different mannerisms, different agendas. There's no way we can ever pull the races together; better to maintain separateness and ensure personal growth and satisfaction.

I disagree. As a man who has had a foot solidly anchored in both cultures for a quarter century, I see more similarities than differences. Work, health, happiness, justice and peace drive us all and could form a tie that binds.

Opportunity based on contribution is a belief shared by both black and white. The final truisms embraced by many in both camps that no man is an island could, if given the chance, lead us from the path of further alienation.

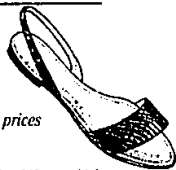
I can understand the anger that fuels the violence of the inner cities. I can understand the indifference of the majority that drives the rage of the minority. I can't understand how we have allowed the anger and indifference to rise unchecked, nor do I understand how to fix it. Have you got any ideas?

Jeffrey Miller, a Southfield resident, is producer/host of "Transition," shown locally at 8:30 a.m. Saturdays on WXON-TV 20.

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