

POINTS OF VIEW

Nature nuts are self-serving, greedy people

Let's face it, most of what passes for environmentalism in suburban Detroit is nothing more than property values and greed.

And the reporting of such issues is at best shallow. Sure, we see a picture of some tree hugger standing in front of a wooded area screaming about some developer who is taking aim at the property.

But chances are that tree hugger lives in a \$200,000 house adjacent to the wooded area and sees his or her property values going up, if a new subdivision doesn't go in.

That's not usually reported. It's tiresome.

And then there's landscape racism. It's always woods and wetlands that receive attention. That's because few want to appreciate the beauty of a former farm field with its grasses, bushes and wildlife.

The reason for this is we've been beat over the head for too long by the granola-eating fanatics from the Sierra Club and the Greenpeace save-the-animals-of-the-day types.

But there is an antidote to granola. It's a book by poet Gary Snyder, "The Practice of the Wild."

While the fanatics envision a world without people and berate us for our intrusion on nature, Snyder gently shows us how we could live at peace with the land. And that includes land that doesn't have trees, wetlands or a great view.

This isn't to say that Snyder is some sort of front for Dow Chemical. This is a radical environmentalist, but he does it without the heavy doses of shrillness that usually come from such folks.

Part of his gentleness comes from studying people who live in their envi-



JEFF COUNTS

ronments. He has spent much time studying native Americans, and approaches this subject without the cheap sentiment of feeling sorry for these folks, which usually comes when our attention is turned to American Indians.

Instead of dwelling on the obvious ultra liberal tripe of how we displaced Indians, he looks to these people for

methods of living with the earth.

One quote that jumps off the page is from a Crow elder who said: "You know, I think if people stay somewhere long enough — even white people the spirits will begin to speak to them. It's the power of the spirits coming up from the land. The spirits and the old powers aren't lost, they just need people to be around long enough and the spirits will begin to influence them."

The idea here is that all landscapes can be important in our lives, not just the Rockies and that all animals can be significant in our lives, not just the whale.

The quote is also a great antidote to the idea that all land is real estate waiting to be developed or re-developed. And the idea in it can be applied to the city of Detroit where pheasants have been sighted near the eastern Market.

There is much talk about re-developing Detroit, which conjures up ideas in our minds of a building on each vacant lot. We're thinking real estate again.

Re-development in older neighborhoods could also mean nature preserves, no not parks, preserves. Parks are mowed to death by workers and turned into baseball fields.

As the Crow elder said, we should live in a place for a while and listen to the spirit of the land.

It would certainly be a welcome change.

Jeff Counts is the editor of the Plymouth and Canton Observer Newspapers and has been listening for the spirit of the land near the Jeffries Freeway. It's pretty hard to hear.

New telephone technology rips off consumers

Technology, I still insist, always costs more and frequently does a poorer job than the old ways. And when telephones are in the act, get ready to be ripped off, gouged and skinned.

Consider the promotion in one of the daily papers — a telephone horoscope. For \$1 a minute, you can get Joyce Jillson; for 95 cents a minute, Jeanno Dixson.

To chat with a "live psychic/astrologer/reader," the price is a penny — for the first minute. Then it becomes \$2.99 a minute. I don't know how many minutes they tie you up because my religious frowns on astrology, but I suspect a believer's phone bill would be hefty.

If you like comics, you can order facsimile copies of Dick Tracy, Gasoline Alley and Archie for \$2.50 a minute. Things are expensive by telephone.

But for 25 to 50 cents, you get horoscopes, comics, the news, features, the

wisdom of columnists, sports, display ads, classified ads and coupons by buying an entire newspaper.

The press, though a 16th century invention, is a whale of a lot more cost efficient than the touchtone telephone and fax. Smart people read. Dumb people use the telephone.

Are you a gambling person? Are you a gambling person who likes to throw money away? There's a telephone contest just for you.

If you spell 30 or so words correctly, you win big money. It costs about \$3 a minute, and the tiny words in the TV commercials say a typical call takes five minutes. That's a \$15 wager.

The Michigan Lottery is not a particularly good deal, as wagers go, but the payback is something like 45 cents on the dollar. Or you can bet the horses, where the payback is in the upper 80s per dollar, and the ticket price is only \$2.



TIM RICHARD

Those gambles are a lot safer than a \$16 telephone call where you don't know the odds, don't have impartial judges and never learn who won.

So much for the extremely high cost of technology. What about its failures?

Believers in technology made fools of themselves on general election day. I've already told you the story of the prima-

ry where Kalamazoo County held up the entire state because of a private contractor's computer glitches.

Apparently things were even worse up north on Nov. 3. George Weeks, my brother political columnist at The Detroit News, tells the story of that snafu:

The state House of Representatives is split 55-55 between the two parties. In the 104th District, Democrat Geraldine Greene lost her race by a scant 261 votes and demanded a recount.

"The problem is that there were so many foulups in Grand Traverse County that two-thirds of the votes could not be recounted. . . Part of the problem is that the voting machine company just 30 days before the election added an 'updated' computer chip to the machines that on Election Day occasionally printed commands to which election workers were not trained to respond."

Candidate Greene likened it to "an

out-of-body experience. As a friend said, if this had happened (overseas), they'd send in United Nations troops to oversee the count," Weeks wrote.

Note well: Ballots could not be recounted. If they had used 1940s paper ballots, there would have been no problem.

Not only do computers count votes slowly, they fail to count accurately, and you can't get a recount.

In my nightmares, Michigan Bell Telephone Co. sells the state on voting by telephone — you know, punch 1 or 2 for president, 11 or 12 for state rep, etc. Bell refuses all recounts, claiming it's exempt from the Freedom of Information Act.

And the staggering cost of all the calls (the government must pay for elections) bankrupts the state.

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

FOOD LOVER'S DIET

To introduce a new approach to dieting, free diet pills were given to 50 people. With The Omicron Diet, one man lost 14 pounds in 5 days and one woman lost 18 pounds in 10 days. The average weight loss was over a pound a day for women and over 2 pounds a day for men. The Omicron Diet is a revolutionary new concept for unbelievably fast weight loss developed and clinically proven by National Dietary Research of Washington, D.C. This significant breakthrough in metabolic weight control was made possible by the utilization of biological information overlooked by other diet programs. With a formulation of natural enzymes along with real food, you shed unwanted pounds extremely rapidly and safely.

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