

POINTS OF VIEW

Local landscape lost as resource to feed hungry



HILL BRESELER/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Goosed: Like many communities, Livonia is searching for a way to control the geese that populate its fairways and flock to Hines Drive in Wayne County.

Driving Hines Drive in Wayne County on an almost daily basis, I've thought about and plotted ways to turn the Canada geese that proliferate there into dinner.

There's the 20 gauge in the closet, but that's bent left there. A wet towel thrown over one at midnight is one idea, or a sling shot.

But the ideas are quickly dismissed. What we've done to our feathered friends is disgusting. We've fed them so much bread that we've made them too lazy to fend for themselves, and their numbers are growing to the pest stage in Livonia. But then part of the problem is our own laziness. Thoughts of a goose dinner don't stay around long.

Liberals with a heart can screw up a free lunch — their own. Native Americans have the idea that one shouldn't interfere with an animal unless it's for a good cause — dinner. It's a good idea.

But there are others. I once knew an old Italian man who came to America to work as a janitor in a downtown Detroit building. He knew little English,



JEFF COUNTS

but an Italian-speaking friend interpreted.

The old janitor didn't understand why there was any hunger or poverty in Detroit. His reasoning was that there were flocks of pigeons roaming free for the taking. In Italy the lowly pigeon is a game bird and the old janitor just couldn't imagine that people in need wouldn't shoot and eat them.

My wife's family has similar stories. They're Greek and one of their ethnic dishes is greens. Not collard greens, but dandelion greens.

My wife cringed with embarrassment when driving through Detroit at the

sight of old Greek ladies picking weeds in vacant fields. They would be clad in black dresses, standard issues for widows, and nylons rolled over their knees. They were bent over at the waist so you could see all the way to Cyprus.

One writer I know says his family got through the lean years by eating blue-bird pie.

We've become either too rich or lazy from welfare and food stamps to see the riches in the landscape around us and too regulated by government to act.

In the old days, Livonia and other communities wouldn't have had the problem of devising the dreaded government program to do something about having too many geese.

It never would have developed if there were enough old Italians around like my friend. And as for a weed-cutting program, a village of Greek ladies would have kept that problem in check.

Jeff Counts is editor of the Plymouth and Canton Observer Newspapers and is in search of recipes for wild geese and dandelion wine. He can be reached at 459-2700 or faxed at 459-4224.

Journalists forget truth carries its own magic

Be happy Bill Clinton just wanted to be president and not head of a '90s cult, because we might still be bearded, braided and barefoot.

Clinton was simply spellbinding at last week's Town Meeting in Southfield, the first of many he intends to create across the United States. His ability to relate to a group and to each individual is a gift. He is the ultimate salesman, the bully preacher, charisma personified.

He moved at least two people to tears. One young audience member burst into tears as a reporter asked her to describe her experience. "I don't want him to leave," the young girl sobbed.

Later on Nightline, also telecast from Southfield, a native of Puerto Rico cried as she said Clinton's answer to her question made her feel for the first time that her people might get stashed. She'd lobbied every president since Nixon, she said.

But Nightline host Tod Koppel

wasn't about to let one audience member after another relate that.

Yes, they felt the president was really listening to them.

No, they didn't think the Town Hall had been in vain.

There must be someone here who was disappointed, Koppel wheedled and coaxed. Finally one man got up and mildly made the point that the president still must turn his words into deeds.

As a journalist, I understand Koppel's desire to get more sides of a story. But this time he was after the side many journalists wanted to tell.

We wanted to hear that the event had been staged; that people hadn't been able to ask follow-up questions; that it was just one more campaign speech.

We wanted to hear them say that it is only journalists who ask the tough questions; who follow up with the tougher ones; who see through rhetoric.

We wanted to hear that they were



JUDITH DONER BERNE

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upset that we had been herded into a makeshift press room in a garage on the grounds of the WXYZ-TV complex and forced to watch the whole thing on television — just as they did.

And it didn't matter whether we were from the New York Times or the Southfield Eccentric.

This was a town hall for the people. It didn't need a middleman to describe and interpret. It was there for all to see and come to their own conclusions.

In fact the only "other side" which surfaced on Nightline was a surge of antagonism toward journalists — as audience members disagreed with Koppel that it was wrong for the president to bypass the Fourth Estate.

When did we become such experts — interviewing each other on Sunday morning talk shows as often as we interview the people who make the news. We are not newsmakers. We are reporters.

If Watergate was the pinnacle of excellent journalism, what we now have

may be the bottom. NBC News faking the explosion of a General Motors pickup truck is a scar all journalists must bear.

Following Watergate, college journalism departments were flooded with young people signing up for reporting classes. Their eye was on becoming the next Woodward and Bernstein.

The Oakland University classes I've talked to most recently are flooded with young people taking news writing classes — only because it's required to fulfill their communications major. Then they'll go on to public relations or advertising.

That hurts. But we have brought it on ourselves.

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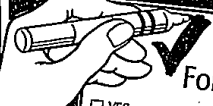
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