

POINTS OF VIEW

# Travelers find economic stress a beastly show

The beauty and the beast is more than just an entertaining movie; it's an apt description for the way we live.

Two colleagues besides myself were struck by this phenomenon as we traveled in recent weeks from points ranging from New York to Vietnam. The New York visitor and I enjoyed man-made creations: She scouted out museums and scopped plays. I rolled out of bed each morning, sniffing the daffodils at my bedside, to hunt for Virginia antiques or wander about the wondrous of our nation's capital.

She had a good time, she said, "but, oh, the homelessnes." I winced, remembering the man who cringed under a tarp next to a statue in a D.C. park. It was raining. Hard. And at the time it seemed hard to justify my purchase of a perfectly useless piece of old furniture that I had to have.

The Vietnam veteran made his second return trip to the country, on a tour that included remarkable scenery and visit to a countryside monastery. Unlike the two of us, however, his mission was to take a group of physicians, showing them the conditions in the "country of children."

"No matter how bad you saw it,"

said veteran Steve Barnaby, O&E managing editor, "it wasn't as bad as it is in Vietnam."

### Country of children

That's where most of the people we fought are dead, either from the war or from natural causes, according to Barnaby. Hence, he calls it a "country of children" and doesn't understand why the U.S. continues its embargo, prohibiting trade with the population of 70 million. Exports could include oil, minerals and "enough food to feed all of Asia."

Health care is "just unimaginable," he said. "People die prematurely and unnecessarily." The worst case scenario here would be better over there.

The biggest problem is in the countryside, like mountain village tribal communities, which are so remote due to a crumbling infrastructure. Unfortunately, malnutrition is also a problem due to lack of roads and cultural practices, Barnaby said.

"They're just learning how to live together," he added, noting that 1975 was the first time the country was united.

Unlike travelers to other destinations, Barnaby is trying to do some-



SANDRA ARMBRUSTER

thing about the situation. He has warehouse \$1 million in donations of medical equipment for Vietnam, but it's just sitting there, waiting for a winged angel(s) with about \$100,000 to help send it there.

Not many of us have that kind of resources to tap, nor do we have to travel far afield to find the need for our help.

### Homelessness here

Detroit's COTS shelter director Che'row Johnson notes that the problem of homelessness is not just a winter phenomenon somewhere else. "It's year round. A year or so ago it (homeless residents) was up in the hot sum-

mer months (over winter)," she said.

Just this one shelter served 5,000 homeless persons last year, she added. However the face of the person in their program is changing. Their intake statistics show a decrease, but that's deceiving. While the previous length of stay used to be 13 days, it's now 33 days. Other shelters let the homeless stay for just one day before having to leave for a day. COTS lets a person stay as long as the person is "actively pursuing housing."

The economic climate has changed those who are homeless and coming into the shelter. Many are single because there are other programs for families. About 50 percent now have General Education Degrees, high school degrees or some college, Johnson said. There is even a "percentage with Ph.D. and master's degrees or a 22-year work history of employment who have lost their job, if there is no paycheck . . ."

COTS offers a learning center, a PALS literary center, child care center, job search program and a seven-unit transition center for families teaching budgeting and parenting skills.

While COTS relies on grants and city, state and federal funding sources, donations also play a big part of its

budget. It does have a wish list, said Johnson, which includes such small items as diapers, hygiene supplies and clean underwear for adults and children. Most clothes, however, aren't needed because the shelter already recycles that.

Truth is, what they could use most is money. It's like this, Johnson said, "someone could go out and spend \$8.99 on diapers when we could go to another company and have some money left over." Contact Sister Cecilia, director of hospitality, at 831-3177, or send monetary donations to 26 Peterboro, Detroit 48201.

There are a lot of definitions to beauty. For me, there was real excitement at seeing someone putting in a dock on silvery Orchard Lake last week. And the antique is sitting out of harm's way. But whatever beast drove the man under the tarp in D.C. to homelessness may be with him still. There may not be anything I can do about that; closer to home, however, there are other beasts to slay.

Sandra Armbruster is editorial page coordinator for Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. To leave a message for her, dial 953-2140.

# April brings new season for trout, outdoors show

It never does much good, but I go anyway. The trees are bare, the rivers cold, and sometimes snow is still in the woods. But the last Saturday in April is special: it's the opening of trout season.

You hope to spot a rising trout, but the only thing that comes to the top is the foam on the beer you order at the nearest tavern, where you've gone to console yourself. You wonder if the real reason for trout fishing is to give you an excuse to spend a Saturday afternoon in a northern Michigan bar without your wife.

Whatever the reason, suburban Detroit fly fishermen are going to be better armed to do battle with the salmonids this year because of a radio show put together by Farmington Hills resident Joe Derek.

Derek, a naturalist/outdoor educator and fly fisherman, is doing something new with a radio show. "Naturally

Michigan Afeld," which airs from 10-11 a.m. starting Wednesday on AM radio station WCAR, 1090-AM.

He's trying to take the products out of the reporting and produce a show that will appeal equally to the bird watchers and the bird hunters. "It's time to quit bickering," he said. "If we don't get the nature buff together with the hunters and fishermen, we're going to lose what we all love."

He's right. Bird watchers and nature buffs are folks who have been able to give up their lust for blood, unlike folks like me.

And when it comes to overbuying gear to satisfy that lust, I'm guilty. I spend my winter Saturday mornings tuned to fishing shows on ESPN.

Most outdoors shows are a showcase for products. You've seen them. Joe Bonehead, a former NFL lineman, looks at the camera, holding a large fish, and says: "I never could have



JEFF COUNTS

done it without my Bozo reel."

Such outdoors shows create the impression that if you don't have your vest stuffed with at least \$500 worth of gear, you won't be able to catch that two-pound trout that sells for about \$3 in the grocery store.

Derek is on a crusade to straighten things out. It's probably a losing battle. Fly fishing has become trendy, especially this year with the Robert Red-

ford movie, "A River Runs Through It."

My own spending on piscatorial pursuits keeps the Visa to the max. There are waders, flies, the rod from L.L. Bean, a fancy wooden landing net, numerous silly hats and a vest filled with tools.

But I'm changing my ways, thanks to my son, John. It started on an Upper Peninsula river. My kid was 11 years old then and didn't like to be bothered with too much gear. He asked: "Have you ever caught a fish without a rod?"

As I prodded my bourbon-soaked brain for an answer, the kid pulled a brook trout out of the river without the use of his rod. All he used was a \$1.25 fly and about 15 cents worth of fishing line.

Fancy landing nets that sell for up to \$50 also aren't part of John's fishing outfit. He'll never be a cover boy on an Orvis catalog. He reached in the water,

unhooked the fish and let it loose.

Fishing stories like that don't often make it on outdoors programs or into magazines. They don't sell equipment. But they'll be making it onto Derek's program.

But because he has to pay the bills — this isn't National Public Radio — there are sponsors. They include Backyard Birds, Wild Wing Galleries and Panetta's Landscaping of Livonia.

Let's just thank the hunting and fishing gods there are folks around like Derek and his sponsors. We need some honest reporting on this beat, and somebody who can get the nature buffs and hunting and fishing people together.

Jeff Counts is the editor of the Canton and Plymouth Observer newspapers and will be taking his wife for the opening day of trout season. Somebody has to clean the trout. He can be reached at 459-2700.

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