

POINTS OF VIEW

Fun starts when Mother Nature pulls the plug

Cars were running out of gas conveniently near Spike's Keg O' Nails tavern in Grayling, and the locals were draining their lawn mowers and selling a couple of gallons for \$10, while barmaids were pouring gallons of beer by candlelight. The reason: The power went out.

It was a scene from TV's "Northern Exposure." There were fishermen at the bar, which was lit by candles. My oldest kid was flirting with a barmaid, not for love, but for food. The grill was shut down and she was the keeper of the nacho chips. It worked.

I had a few anxious minutes. No, I wasn't out of gas. It was a question of whether the beer would stay cold through a three-hour power outage. But such worries disappeared when I realized I could switch to Jim Beam, an action for which I needed no prompting.

The television was off and the guy next to me at the bar sat playing soli-

taire. He was from West Bloomfield and had run out of gas. He later paid a local \$12 for a couple of gallons. And we accuse the Arabs of price gouging.

Life without TV was a delight. It saved me from the weekend coverage of the gays and lesbians marching in Washington, D.C. When it comes to deciding between homophobia and supporting gay and lesbian causes, I'll take fly fishing for trout.

That's why I was sitting at the bar.

The weekend of April 24 opened the season for trout fishing in our state. Yes, there's the stereotype of the fisherman doing more to put a dent in the beer supply than in the numbers of trout. But then again, there are reasons for stereotypes.

My sons and I took refuge in Spike's after a day on the AuSable River that started with temperatures in the 30s and a few patches of snow in the woods, and ended at about 7 p.m.,



JEFF COUNTS

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when we fished through what we later discovered was a tornado. We headed to the south branch when the temperature hit about 60. It stayed that way for about two minutes before the hail-bearing storm came along. My kid asked: "Is the sun supposed to come out in the middle of a storm?" A barmaid at Spike's later assured me that when the sun acts in such a manner, you are in the middle of a tornado, but at the time I was blissfully ignorant.

I did have the fatherly concern to tell the kid not to touch his metal reel when the lightning was striking. I didn't want to see another kid at risk, as the do-gooders and social workers now call it.

Those folks even have a new campaign going aimed at social drinking. They contend social drinkers must correct their children. Most kids I know could stand some overcorrection.

Not wanting my kid to be at risk of being overcorrected, I wasn't heading to Spike's, but ended up there anyway. The entire town of Grayling was without power when we arrived, and the folks at Spike's left a candle in the window.

Others followed the beacon, and by 9 p.m. the place was filled and I did switch to Jim Beam so as to save the cold beer for others. Power outages do call for certain personal sacrifices.

Then about 9:30 p.m., Hank Williams Jr. started singing again on the jukebox, the TV came back on, and the beer coolers went back into action.

But some how it just wasn't as much fun as before.

Jeff Counts is the editor of the Plymouth and Canton Observer newspaper and is at risk of having an addiction to fly fishing, but is having trouble quitting because his sons are co-dependent. He can be reached at 459-2700.

Suffering no motive for state's speedy action

It was a little over a year ago when I received a fax from my friend, Shelly. In keeping with Shelly's morbid sense of humor and apparent dislike of me, the fax was a gift certificate good for a complimentary visit from Dr. Jack Kevorkian.

The scratchy reproduction was quickly circulated throughout the office, drawing all sorts of chuckles and comments. We all felt the idea was in very poor taste, and we all wished we had thought of it first.

Jack Kevorkian had become something of a local celebrity for his part in the budding controversy surrounding assisted suicide. Kevorkian's notoriety made for easy pickin' for the local comedy crowd. His seemingly transitory fame had even propelled him to the point where his name had become a verb: To Kevorkian someone or something was to put a quick end to it. The macabre comedy was fueled by the circus-like atmosphere of the new coverage of Kevorkian's actions.

After a few months, and a few more assisted suicides, the humorous novelty wore off, leaving only the ugly con-

trovery over this hotly disputed issue.

Oakland County prosecutor Richard Thompson became the primary opponent of Kevorkian's efforts. Thompson's well-publicized battles with Kevorkian's attorney, Geoffrey Fieger, were often punctuated by name-calling and mutual contempt.

Soon after, this became a full-blown three-ring circus when those frolicsome folks in Lansing — our governor and our Legislature — got into the act by hastily passing a bill making assisted suicide against the law in Michigan.

Our elected officials seldom act this quickly on anything, but with Michigan becoming known as The Suicide State fast action had to be taken to relieve the high anxiety over at the chamber of commerce. There's no time for the customary gridlock when your image is on the line.

All the legal and political wrangling seemed to be directed at Kevorkian rather than the issue of having the right to die. The rights of suffering people had little to do with the speedy legislative footwork.

Admittedly, Kevorkian is not a very



GARY BELANGER

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embraceable man. He is unpretentious to the point of appearing eccentric. His gaunt appearance and clinical demeanor do not fit the stereotype of the kindly old doctor. He is clearly a man on a mission, but only he knows for sure if it is a mission of selfless mercy or self-aggrandizement.

Frankly, the man and his methods matter very little. What matters most is the concept for which he stands: the right of a terminally ill individual to end his or her own life as an alternative to suffering the physical and emotional agony of waiting for death to come on its own. Without a doubt, that right needs to be framed by responsible legal guidelines, but it must remain a viable option for those whose condition allows no other chance of relief.

When our pets become aged and irreversibly ill, we end their suffering by having them "put to sleep." It is the humane thing to do. Yet we are forced to deny that humanity to our loved ones when they face a death which is certain in every respect except the day and the hour of its arrival.

I've seen people suffer in agony no animal would ever be forced to endure. I've seen family members, friends and total strangers decline to the point that their vital statistics were the only discernible measure of life. I've stood next to a hospital bed and begged God to bring a merciful end to the ravaged shell lying before me. I doubt those righteous individuals who oppose assisted suicide have had the same experience.

This issue is not about Jack Kevorkian, nor is it about knee-jerk politics or playing God. It is not about narrow-minded, short-sighted legislation or insensitive office humor. It is about each of us having the right to die when that is all there is left to do.

When my time comes, I'd hate to find out my gift certificate says: "Void where prohibited by law."

Gary Belanger, a Redford Township resident, is a real estate salesman and school board trustee. To leave a message for Belanger from a touchtone phone, dial 953-2047 mailbox 1890.

Advertisement

Slow or inaccurate readers can be helped with Special program

LIVONIA-Try reading the following sentence. (Hint: the b's, d's, p's, and q's are interchanged and the spaces between the words are altered.)

ob y ou hav etroup lere ading thes esimd lowrbs?

Was it hard for you to read the previous sentence (do you have trouble reading these simple words)? Unfortunately, many children find it just as hard reading normal text.

Children with learning problems struggle with everyday tasks such as reading, concentrating, and remembering because their basic learning skills are not automatic.

We all learn to read on a conscious level. We start by having to think about the sound a letter makes. Next we learn to blend sounds to form words. And then we learn the meanings of these words. Each skill requires a conscious effort, and reading cannot become automatic (subconscious) until these skills are established. And if reading is not automatic, children have to work especially hard to get information in, so their comprehension and understanding suffer.

According to Dr. John Jacob, a locally known expert on vision and learning, having 20/20 eyesight means that a child can see clearly, but does not mean that the child can process or use what he or she sees.



There could be a visual processing problem that affects the child's ability to learn.

Symptoms of a visual processing problem include:

- letter reversals
- avoidance of reading
- poor eye-hand coordination

- lack of concentration
- inability to sit still
- slow work
- careless errors
- troubles copying

Children who struggle with learning have even more at stake than just slow and choppy reading. Also at risk may be their self-esteem, behavior, success in school, and even future employment options.

The Vision Improvement Program (VIP) can help the child place basic learning and visual processing skills into the subconscious level where they belong. Then the child will not put his or her energy into processing the material, but into understanding it.

VIP was developed by a team of visual, psychological, and educational professionals. The program attacks the causes of learning problems.

The 10-week program produces dramatic results, with an average improvement of 3.1 years in the child's ability to comprehend, stay on task, work faster, and handle more complex tasks. Outstanding results are the norm because it is an intense, one-on-one program with a highly trained therapist who specializes the program to meet each child's specific learning needs.

To identify a child who could benefit from this program, a comprehensive screening consisting of 18 different tests is provided without charge to children ages 6 to 15. If the results reveal a problem processing visual information, the program can begin immediately to help the child head toward a more successful future and a better self-esteem.

To help a child who has a problem learning, call Suburban Optometric at 525-8170 to schedule his or her free screening.

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