

SUBURBAN LIFE

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JOE DEREK

Urban slobs trash 'lady'

How have we abused thee, let me count the ways. The Rouge River, long thought of as an urban sewer, is making a strong comeback despite many of the abuses we have put this natural resource through.

It amazed me through the years how people never considered the Rouge a treasured river. Many jokes have been made about this resource, especially the time it caught on fire years ago near the Ford Rouge Plant.

When I was a kid, my dad took my brother and me for Sunday morning walks along the Rouge River. We chased frogs and saw all varieties of the wonders of nature. I never really realized what slobs we as modern civilized people were until my wife, Judy, and I moved onto a piece of property that had a tributary of the Rouge meandering through it.

The last eight years have really been an eye-opener to me. Let me tell you about a few of the wonderful ways our cultured suburban residents have treated this lady.

A real thrill on a warm summer afternoon is to come home from work and find that a neighbor upstream has put all his chemical-laden lawn clippings in the creek. The clippings lodged in areas of my yard, started to decompose in the water, robbed my area of the creek of its oxygen and caused a fish kill. All the small fish came to the surface gasping for air and died a short time later. Nice going, folks.

It's hard to beat that special time that I saw a group of kids take loads of trash out of their parents' house in a neighboring subdivision and dump it into the water. Thanks, kids. Where were the parents? I really needed those car tires, bottles and boards that I'm sure made your garage a cleaner place when you through them out.

How can I forget the work it took to get a half-submerged washing machine out of our creek? Maybe, whoever you are, you thought it would make a great crayfish condominium.

Then there was the day the oil slick floated down. The Department of Natural Resources came over with absorbent pads to clean it up. I was told the oil slick was a type of basement waterproofing compound. Imagine that, someone tried to waterproof the creek. Is that sort of like sandblasting the desert?

I am blessed a few times each summer with a visit from the Tidy Bowl fairy. The creek turns blue because of an illegal discharge from a retention pond that is treated with chemicals and dyes each year because a natural pond with algae, plants and things is offensive to some people. I am told turning the pond blue reminds some of these people of the ocean.

All these incidents have occurred on just one little creek. For all of the eight years we have enjoyed this creek in our yard, I am sure we do a week during warm months taking trash out of the water.

Thankfully, with the help of groups like the Friends of the Rouge and the commitment of many individuals, the Rouge has started to see the light of day.

Unfortunately, human slobbery made a mess of this river, but fortunately, now human care and kindness is starting to bring the river back to life.

For years, people gave up on the Rouge but Mother Nature never did. The blue herons, kingfishers, hawks, turtles, insects, plants and myriads of fish species, just to mention a few, never knew that this flowing urban jewel was dead and forgotten.

On the bright side, Friends of the Rouge and others have worked hard to educate our youth to grow up cherishing this grand lady. We now have other concerned citizens from various walks of life who along with the DNR and the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments have formed the Rouge Remedial Action Plan Advisory Council which will further the goal of cleaning this once-pristine life-giving treasure of nature.

Chinook salmon returned to spawn this past fall in the Rouge for the first recorded time and some were even caught on rod and reel. Not bad for a river many consider dead. Many other fish have been seen along with muskrats, like mink and muskrat. Life abounds in the waters and along with our help more will return.

For those of you who will continue to abuse this river, I have some advice for you. If I see you wantonly abusing our precious Rouge, I will turn you in. Who am I, you may ask? I am someone who gives a damn. I ask that all of you get involved and help make the future of this lady something we can all be proud of. Remember, each and every one of you can make a difference.

Rouge River, dear lady, may you someday flow with your wonders of nature to the song of frogs and birds instead of the crackle of broken glass and the unsightliness of people's trash. Someday run free and true as you were meant to be.

Joe Derek is a Farmington Hills resident, naturalist, outdoor educator and radio talk show host.



STAFF PHOTOS BY SHARON LEMUEUX

Time-honored: Marvin Yagoda offers gadgets, videos, arcades and kiddie rides, antiques, collectibles and odd gizmos for viewing.

Hey, Marvin

It's a Marvelous Museum you have



BY DIANE GALE
STAFF WRITER

Marvin Yagoda loves to tell the story of the little boy who looked up at his father and asked if he could live at Marvin's Marvelous Mechanical Museum.

But you don't have to be kid to appreciate the warehouse extravaganza of arcade machines, video games, kiddie rides and barn-size circus posters that Yagoda said is probably the largest collection in the world.

Unusual fans hang from the wall and are in constant motion along with neon signs, plane replicas, mechanical dolls, carousel horses and antique signs. A putt-putt green is tucked in another corner. Old-time booths that produce strips of photos in black and white or color are new to the museum and work. An animated antique window display is near the kiddie rides.

Tickle your brain
Everywhere you turn, there's something odd to be seen, a joke to be found, an antique to appreciate, a game to play, anything to tease and tickle your brain, including female

stocking-adorned legs hanging from a ceiling trap door.

Pocket change will give you a glimpse of your love appeal, sex appeal and just about anything else. One gadget opens the curtains to plastic Siamese Twins that were used decades ago in circuses.

There are 1,000 electrical plugs to keep it all going. Yagoda said he couldn't remain open without the help of people like Dan Keely and Lou Gessup who repair the machines and make parts for the aging gizmos.

The museum on Orchard Lake in Farmington Hills in what was formerly Tally Hall is a playground for tykes, a place to play video games for teens, a quick retreat for adults and a museum for history buffs and antique lovers of all ages.

Jokester has fun
Showing off suspenders clipped with a dime on a pin, Yagoda explains it's his diamond pin as he points to another off-the-wall character he collected for 25 years. While most of his time is spent at the museum, which is open daily, Yagoda also owns a drugstore in Detroit and works there occasionally as a pharmacist.



Time out: West Bloomfield High School juniors Brian Levine, Tony Saur and Scott Shapiro play Mortal Kombat II during their lunch break.

macist.
"There everyone is sick and here everyone is having fun," said Yagoda, adding that he's pleased his 20-year-old son, Jeremy, likes the museum.
"I hope he follows in my footsteps."

Yagoda's fascination with the odd and unusual started when he spotted a nickelodeon at Diamond Jim

Brady's on Seven Mile and Greenfield. Some items were collected from closed-down amusement parks, like Edgewater in Detroit. He had other gadgets made.

Heaven for kids
Nedra Kapetansky of West Bloomfield recently took her grand

See MUSEUM, 2C

Season of love stories

Cupid is priming his bow for would-be sweet hearts on St. Valentine's Day, Feb. 14. Help us celebrate this season of love with short anecdotes about your first love, everlasting love or even tales of love gone sour. All G-rated entries submitted on or before Feb. 4, 1994 will be printed in your Farmington Suburban Life section. Send entries to, Farmington Observer, 21898 Farmington Road, Farmington, Michigan 48336. Or send it by FAX: 477-9722. Please include your name and telephone number.