

POINTS OF VIEW

Seasons bring
on landscapes
of political kind

One man's flower is another man's weed. But a weed is just a plant that's out of place. Or is it? It's midsummer, a time that always brings to mind Betty Sue Dupree. She's the former clerk of West Bloomfield who once got the purple loosestrife designated as that township's official flower.

In full bloom now and well into August, its showy, spiky blossoms on stick-like stems burgeon along roadsides, in fields and at the edge of the area's many wetlands.

West Bloomfield may be awash in it, but it's No. 1 on the hit list of the DNR. They call it a noxious weed, says my guru of all things natural, Jonathan Schechter, a naturalist at Independence Oaks County Park.

That's because it takes over wherever it blooms, crowding out other native wetland plants.

No matter how pretty and prolific, a sophisticated community like West Bloomfield can't have a weed as its flower. So the next clerk, Sharon Law, promptly got the purple loosestrife repealed, replacing it with trillium as the official flower.

West Bloomfield isn't the only place where purple loosestrife once had status. The Greeks thought that garlands of the plant hung from the necks of oxen would encourage a team to plow a field in harmony, according to "Reader's Digest Magic and Medicine of Plants."

Dupree may have had ulterior motives. Contentious members of past townboards and of the current parks and recreation commission could use some of those purple loosestrife garlands around their necks. Trillium won't do.

Now it's mid-summer and the day of the day lily. Yellow, orange, deep maroon, they grow wild along rural roadsides, deliberately frame mailboxes on subdivision streets, add height and color to landscaping around commercial buildings and are a frequently-used perennial in backyards and front.

Once upon a time, a significant stand of tall, orange day lilies grew wild along the side of Walnut Lake Road just west of Middlebelt.



JUDITH DONER BERNE

They flanked the wooden rail fence of the former Frutbof Farm, where horses could be seen loping lazily on a summer's day.

When we learned that the farm, day lilies and all, would be plowed over in favor of a new subdivision, we dug some up and replanted them in our back yard. As any manager of day lilies knows, they spread at their will — not yours. Yes, like a weed. After 20 years, they have been thinned out vigorously and often, plus offered for transplant to any friend or relative who want them. Still, they are both where they belong and where they don't in our yard.

The city of Walled Lake has plans for returning day lilies to the roadside. Walled Lake, which is beautifying its downtown, two years ago attempted to landscape Pontiac Trail with Northern Bayberry bushes and Meiland roses. But many have withered and died.

Oops. Seems as if even roses are weeds in some situations.

To the rescue comes the day lily, so named because usually only one blossom on a stalk opens at a time and lasts for only a day, according to Schechter. The idea is to remove the dead and dying bushes and roses and plant thousands of day lilies along Pontiac Trail over a three-year period.

Based on past history, day lilies should be right at home. Who knows, they may actually have grown there in another era. But, "if it doesn't work out as a roadside flower in Walled Lake, the residents can eat them," Schechter jokes. That's because many parts of the plant are edible. "The fresh orange flower petals can go on salads — if they aren't sprayed — and the closed flower petals can be fried," he explains. "The young shoots of the plant can be cooked like asparagus and the new underground tubers in the spring can be dug up and chopped for salads or boiled and salted."

Tired of defending against rabbits and woodchucks, my husband grassed over his vegetable garden years ago. Little did we know, we've had a virtual vegetable garden all along.

Judith Doner Berne, a West Bloomfield resident, is former managing editor of the *Eccentric Newspapers*. You can comment on this column by calling (313)953-2047, Ext. 1997.

Technology brings impact
of world events to suburbs

The popular and award winning movie "Schindler's List" shown on national television was a stark reminder of man's capability to wreck havoc on other humans with all the fury at his disposal. In this case it displays the means, methods and motives of such heinous crimes. Holocaust, genocide and a more modern but no less devastating term, ethnic cleansing, are all the same manifestation of destructive forces when unleashed.

The Holocaust has been called the bloodiest 100 years in history so far. However, its precursor was the Armenian Genocide. The recent 82nd commemoration of the Armenian Genocide marked the carnage that lasted from 1915-1922, eventually claiming one and a half million citizens of Armenian descent.

The Armenian Genocide took place because of man's inhumanity to man, indifference and the world's very short collective memory. Most of us read history in a vacuum and really think we aren't affected by events that take place thousands of miles away in time and space. We also feel that events that occurred years ago are far removed from us.

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As we near the 21st century, the events that affect us aren't "over there." The world has come into our living rooms through the communications explosion that has jettisoned us into the age of telecommunications. Cyberspace has turned outer space into an unreachable dimension. So the ad on TV states "What a great time to be alive!"

Indeed that is the case. Yet it depends on the use of all this technology. Will it be used to inform mankind about events that need to have as individuals and governments involved to prevent holocausts, genocides and ethnic cleansings? Or will it be used to sanitize us from such occurrences? We can become desensitized and almost insular. Of course, we can give the

GUEST COLUMN

appropriate response "Never Again."

All of us have to answer those questions as individuals.

The Armenian Genocide was a "wake-up call" that no one woke up to! The Jewish Holocaust wouldn't have occurred if the Armenian Genocide had been recognized as an event that needed world attention.

When Hitler in 1939 was commenting about the carnage he was to lead the world to as he prepared for World War II, he was asked about his policies of extermination. His answer was "Who today remembers what happened to the Armenians?" The die was cast.

In fact, the Armenian Genocide is an "alleged event" even in some circles still today.

What does all this signify for us today? Why commemorate an event that occurred so long ago, so far away and to a people far removed from our own nation?

The answer can be found in the continuum of holocaust, genocide and ethnic cleansing. These are all the same words for individuals representing movements that justify their solutions to dealing with "other" groups. It is a mind set most of us don't comprehend. Yet it is still prevalent. Somewhere, someone must declare "Never Again."

"Schindler's List" was an epic story. Its screenplay was written by Steve Zaillian. He stated he drew upon the experience of his own Armenian background to compose such an outstanding drama depiction of the Holocaust.

There is a message there. If one man can make a difference under such circumstances can we do no less? Each one of us will have to answer to that. In the meantime remember not to forget.

That's a beginning.

Robert Kachadourian, a media consultant, is a resident of Bloomfield Hills. He recently received a doctorate in theology. To comment on this column, you may write to The Eccentric Newspapers, 805 East Maple, Birmingham 48009, or fax (248) 644-1314.

Rules differ for Indian law

It has long been apparent that casinos are for suckers.

The lone gambler can't beat the house's odds. Some casinos pump in extra oxygen so that the gambler won't feel fatigue and will gamble longer. If the sucker runs short of cash, there are automatic teller machines, or the house will accept your credit card and mount your debt.

Now we learn that the situation is worse than we thought it was. State Rep. David Jaye, the maverick Republican from northern Macomb County, tried to curb some of the wrongs of Indian-run casinos with an amendment to the casino bill that sailed 107-4 through the House of Representatives July 1. Speaker Curtis Hertel, D-Detroit, ruled Jaye's amendment was "not germane" to the bill, so no vote was taken.

In sum, Jaye argued the Indian tribes have the best of two worlds. They are Michigan residents in terms of benefits but a separate nation if a non-Indian wants the same rights on an Indian reservation.

Jaye gives me credit for pointing out certain abuses about Indian courts to him. I take the cub's share and give him the lion's share of the credit for following up with more research.

"The Michigan and U.S. constitutions which protect our civil liberties are tossed aside as soon as you walk through the door of an Indian casino," he said. Items:

■ Judges — "Indians can vote to elect Michigan local, county and state judges and all other Michigan politicians, but Michigan citizens cannot vote to elect Indian tribal judges."

■ Trial — The gambler who is hurt, has his civil rights violated, is sexually harassed or gets into a dispute on Indian grounds, including casinos, has his case tried by an Indian tribal council — with no appeal.

■ Attorney — If you are charged in a Michigan court and can't afford an attorney, the court will appoint one. You have no such right in an Indian court.

■ Secrecy — Michigan government is subject to the "sunshine" laws — the Open Meetings and Freedom of Information acts. "All Indian trials, Indian political meetings, Indian bureaucratic rule-making and all other Indian government operations are exempt from state sunshine laws."

Journalists in Mount Pleasant told me they have tried to learn how much the Indian casino



TIM RICHARD

there pays in taxes. Big secret. The press had to find out from the state Treasury Department in Lansing.

■ Other taxes — Indians are exempt from property taxes that run schools and municipal services, the single business tax and transportation fund taxes. Jaye thinks they should either "pay the same state taxes or only sell to members of the Indian tribes and their dependents. Like the military PX stores."

■ Scholarships — Indians get preference for \$12 million in free college scholarships, regardless of wealth. Most Michiganders can get scholarships based only on need. "Indians don't have to maintain attendance, passing grade point averages nor progress toward a degree like everyone else," Jaye found.

To his credit, Gov. John Engler has tried to end this boondoggle. His attitude, quite correct, is that the needy and able should get student aid regardless of whether their ancestors arrived via Ellis Island or the Bering Strait.

Meanwhile, a non-Indian couple is trying to sue the Chippewa Tribe over a 1996 crash in which tribal officer Chad Smith ran a red light en route to a non-emergency situation and piled into their car. Smith wasn't operating his siren or emergency lights. The injured folks charge negligence. The tribe contends that as a sovereign nation, it is immune from the lawsuit, and state courts have no jurisdiction over matters involving the tribe.

The matter is pending in Isabella Circuit Court. The plaintiffs haven't lost yet, but one should be stunned by the tribe's arrogance.

Keep that in mind, if you are tempted to try your luck in an Indian casino.

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

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