

BOOKS

'Michigan Bests' full of fresh, fun tidbits about state.

The Michigan Book of Bests, Friede Publications, \$13.95.

By DOUG JOHNSON
STAFF WRITER

Michigan writer Gary Barknecht's latest effort, "Michigan Bests," is full of the same humor found in his "Michillincous" books of several years ago.

You know you're in for some fun by looking at some of the sub-titles of the 500-plus entries: ■ Easiest Shoot Down a Chute (huge run in Muskegon). ■ Most Intriguing Place to Walk Among the Dead (Elmwood Cemetery, Detroit). ■ Most Pervasive Fungus. ■ Coolest Canadian Crossover. ■ Best Place to Tell Your Child to go Fly a Kite. ■

■ Most Intense Fore-Play (about golf).

You get the idea. The state's standouts are spotlighted in brief tidbits of information, many with pictures. Where necessary, Barknecht supplies phone numbers and Web sites. Among the "bests" with a local angle: coolest sledding: The Fridge, a toboggan run at Waterford Oaks County Park; the most viewed film venue: Star Southfield Entertainment Center; most popular traffic tie-up: Woodward Dream Cruise; choicest place to shop for cars: Troy motor Mall, Troy; best place to buy lodgepole pine furniture: Greater Indoors in Birmingham; toniest mall: Somerset Collection, Troy; top-rated restaurant: The Lark in West Bloomfield.

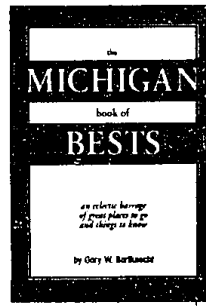
■ Among the 'bests' with a local angle: coolest sledding: The Fridge, a toboggan run at Waterford Oaks County Park; the most viewed film venue: Star Southfield Entertainment Center; most popular traffic tie-up: Woodward Dream Cruise; choicest place to shop for cars: Troy motor Mall, Troy.

Cushiest eat house (for pets): Backdoor Friends in Farmington Hills; greatest inside outdoor show: Novi Expo Center (sponsored by Michigan United Conservation Clubs). ■ Most technically difficult mountain bike trail: Highland Recreation Area in Oakland County; best urban canoeing: Huron River, Milford to Lake Erie.

Most unique high school nicknames: among the top 15, Plymouth Rocks; finest frozen gallery: Plymouth Ice Show; Biggest indoor boat: in Canton at the Yazaki corporate offices; best collection of BB guns: Plymouth (once home to Daisy Air Rifle); most charitable one-night affair: North American Auto

Show Charity Preview, Detroit. Barknecht's book doesn't tackle anything very serious such as "best hospital" but does offer the crème de la crème of such things as biggest hot rod show, best waterfalls, oldest soft drink, highest man-made ski jump and more.

Buy the book and see what he's talking about. No area or facet of the state is left out. The "Bests" book would make a nice stocking-stuffer for those who like their Michigan trivia and geography. As the author notes, where else but Michigan can you travel between Hell and Paradise? Write Friede Publications, PO box 217, Davison, MI, 48423 for more information. Order by phone (800) 824-4618.



Controversy from page B4

Short History of Black People," which will be exhibited this Thursday at the Museum of Contemporary Art, a tiny eight-by-ten room located inside Galerie Blu.

The exhibit, noted Galerie Blu owner David Popa, had been scheduled all along to coincide with Bourgeau's show at the DIA. He conceded the timing couldn't be better.

"Right now, we have people's attention," he said. "It's important to carry through with the dialogue Jef started."

work-in-progress, an attempt to poke fun at the stodgy museum world.

"The recent response is one thing, but the long-term influence is to push for a museum of contemporary art separate from the DIA," said Bourgeau.

"Popular culture has taken over. Museums are no longer a haven for 'culture.' Contemporary artists have to have a context for their work."

Anything but indifference

In the wake of the controversy over the "Senation" exhibit at the Brooklyn Museum of Art, Bourgeau's claim of censorship by the DIA has awakened the local arts community and caused reverberations throughout the American art world.

Bourgeau claims to neither seek publicity, nor hide from it. He calls the media fascination with his provocative work a necessary part of what he refers to as the "dialogue" he's trying to create about contemporary art.

That all sounds like a refined explanation of Andy Warhol's

famous 15-minute-of fame prediction. And ultimately, the dialogue created by Bourgeau is more like a walk through a hall of mirrors.

As an artist who has set out to exhibit work that reflects contemporary sensibilities, Bourgeau is more of a conduit for art world trends, than an originator.

Ultimately, he's a provocateur and artist who believes the absolute worse response to his work is indifference.

"Significant 'shock art'

engages you. It forces you to deal with it," said Bourgeau. "Aesthetics is a superficial engagement."

Popa, whose gallery features work with a pop-art sensibility, is one of Bourgeau's biggest supporters.

He along with several other gallery owners circulated a letter to the media in opposition to the DIA's closing of Bourgeau's exhibit.

"Jef is good at eliciting a response, negative or positive," said Popa. "He gets people

impassioned about art."

For Bourgeau, the most significant piece of 20th century art is Marcel Duchamp's enamel tin. What some saw as a piece of enamel that belonged in a men's room, others saw as the ideal creation of form and function.

"If anything is art, then art can be anything," he said.

But is there meaningful art? It all depends.

And that is as unsettling as any of Bourgeau's provocative work.

ART BEAT

Art Beat features various happenings in the suburban art scene. Send Oakland County arts news leads to Art Beat, Eccentric Newspapers, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009, or fax (248) 644-1314. E-mail items to jproczansko@ec.homecomm.net

ARTISTS WANTED
The Ann Arbor Street Art Fair is now accepting applications for its 41st art fair to take place Wednesday-Saturday, July 19-22.

Applications must be post-marked by Feb. 4. The fair accepts new artists in all media every year. It is expected to draw more than 500,000 visitors. For an application, call (734) 994-5260, write the Ann Arbor Street Art Fair, P.O. Box 1352, Ann Arbor, MI 48106, or download an application from the new web site at www.artfair.org

SOLO CONCERTO COMPETITION
The Bohemians, Detroit's oldest music club (also known as the Musicians Club of Greater Detroit), is looking for students for its competition for orchestral instruments (high school and college, ages 15-22). Prizes for First (\$1,500), Second (\$1,000) and Third (\$500) will be awarded. Wayne State University

STAY TUNED

Happy New Year Guns N' Roses fans, from KNAC.com. The band that rose to stardom with "Welcome to the Jungle" in the late 1980s is making its way into the world of cyberspace. Guns N' Roses released a live version of "Coma," which initially appeared on "Use Your Illusion I," for computer-savvy fans. It will be available for download through Windows Media Player — a sort of preview to the release of their live double CD "Live Era '87-'93" on Geffen Records. Check it out on www.knac.com today.

From rockin' on the Internet to turning the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame blue — Bonnie Raitt will be inducted into the Hall of Fame on March 6, 2000 for her contribution to blues. She's known for hits like "Something to Talk About" and "I Can't Make You Love Me." Also being inducted this year are like Eric Clapton, Earth Wind & Fire, Lovin' Spoonful, the Moonglows, James Taylor, Nat King Cole and Billie Holiday. There are five to seven artists inducted annually into the Hall of Fame. Musicians are eligible for consideration 25 years after the release of their first recording. — STEPHANIE ANGELYN CASOLA

will match each prize with a scholarship should winners decide to further their musical education at WSU. Students must submit performance tape by April 1. For application, e-mail CoufLinks@aol.com

PARTNERS IN HISTORY
The Plymouth Historical Museum and Schoolcraft College students have partnered together to edit and publish Civil War materials from the Museum's Archives collections. Students from the college's computer graphics technology Quark Xpress class, taught by Plymouth resident Margaret Fitzgerald, use real projects to teach technical graphic design concepts.

The Museum Archives hold a variety of information related to Plymouth in the Civil War. The students, compiling museum resources, created booklets about two local men who were part of the 24th Michigan Regiment— Lucius

Shattuck and Emil Mettelal. The booklets will be used for museum research, school classes and will also be available in the Museum Gift Shop in spring of 2000.

This is the second partnership for the museum and Schoolcraft students. In 1998, when the museum acquired the Abraham Lincoln Collection, the computer graphics class designed the fundraiser brochure used for the projects.

Students participating in the Civil War project were Sharryl Bailey, Debra Liddy, Joane Thomas, Erin, Bawulski, Judy Berlinski, Sandra Liano, Adam Missing, David Morgan, Yuwei Zhang, James Auzulor, and Jason May. Dan LeBlond, president of the Plymouth Historical Museum, worked with Fitzgerald and the students as a resource person and technical advisor on the project.

BENEFIT THEATER PERFORMANCE

The Farmington Players are holding a performance of John Steinbeck's "Of Mice and Men" to benefit Capuchin Soup Kitchen 5 p.m. Friday, Feb. 4.

Tickets are \$50 and include a theme dinner after the show. For tickets, call the box office at (248) 553-2955.

The Capuchin Soup Kitchen was founded 70 years ago during the Depression and the play is set at that time. The Kitchen serves chronically poor people who lack support to overcome their problems, and people who have the skills and support to survive but periodically need help due to an unexpected crisis.

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