

# Union Street

A joint zine by Jeanne Gomoll & Scott Custis

reading about other people's experiences in a city I have no desire to see for myself. You also have a wonderfully entertaining style.

---

## Julie Zachman

[SC] Good comment to **Lee** on writing mailing comments. Comments are "contributing to what is essential in good writing." I like that. I think it is important to people putting in a lot of effort producing a zine to get feedback. Apa comments may not always be the most constructive sort of commentary compared with what you might get from a writing class or group, but it at least it lets the writer know he/she is being read and appreciated.

Regarding your comment to **Andy** about his writing on toy figures, yeah, that always happens to me too when it comes to his contributions. I always read every word. I always enjoy them. How does he do that?

---

## Jerome Van Epps

[SC] Thanks for contributing the party report. I like to throw parties, too, but ConVergence, like Las Vegas, sounds like someplace I would rather read about than actually go to.

---

## Andy Hooper and Carrie Root

[SC] Thanks for the terrific pictures. And thanks Andy for your comments on WisCon.

---

## Pat Hario

[SC] Your comment to me on bunk beds, it's no big secret. Most of my experience comes from family vacations where we occasionally encountered bunk beds and, oddly, in college where I very briefly shared a room. My roommate and I decided that a bunk bed arrangement left us more space in the rest of the room.

Excellent rant to **Calvin** about personal information/data. I do not think you are as unique in wanting to maintain control of your personal information as you may

---

## Comments

Issue No. 193 (all

Scott's)

---

## Lisa Freitag

[SC] Harrowing story on Devon's mysterious illness. I hope you do find out what was wrong with him for no other reason than to tell the rest of us. William's T-ball game was hilarious. Thank you for sharing it with us.

---

## Lee Murray

[SC] I am so glad you had a good time at WisCon and that you managed to run into some *Turbo* folks. Maybe next year you can plan on staying longer.

Regarding ducks in back yards, the most curious backyard duck experience I have had was when I was still working on the maximum security forensic mental health units (Goodland Hall West) at Mendota Mental Health Institute. We had a duck move into one of the exercise yards for a season. She managed to get in and out of a small imperfection in the fence, which probably stopped all large predators, making her home seem secure to her. She didn't mind the occasional company of a dozen or so aimlessly wandering, mumbling humans. Those humans who noticed them regarded the duck family with affection and curiosity. No one seemed to want them to leave, so the patients were all careful to keep a distance. For me it was just a bit odd to be supervising the yard and watch a totally contented duck mother and chicks calmly strolling along the high chain link fence topped with circling strands of razor wire.

Great Las Vegas trip story. I never seem to get tired of

sometimes feel you are. It is getting harder all the time to maintain a sense of privacy in our society. We should all get more militant about it.

---

### Maureen Kincaid Speller

---

[SC] Congratulations on the success of your paper on Alan Garner. I understand the UK Worldcon bid was successful. Are you committed then to helping out with Academic programming? That would be cool. I have already suggested to Jeanne that we think about going since I always regretted not going to the last Worldcon in Great Britain.

Thanks for your comment to me on my WisCon piece and thanks for providing the brief history on the railroad in Great Britain. Here, railroad history is similar in the sense that passenger service got nationalized into Amtrak at some point and has been struggling ever since. There is no movement to re-privatize Amtrak, they would rather just kill it off completely. Jeanne and I both think that would be a terrible mistake and, now that people are discovering how awful air travel can be, trains could make a comeback. There are lots of us out here who would much rather travel by train than fly.

Regarding your comment to Jeanne, just this morning I finished *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay* and hugely enjoyed it. She hasn't read it yet, but probably will once I stop raving about it.

---

### Paul Kincaid

---

[SC] Welcome. I thought you provided us with an excellent introduction and personal history, thank you.

I love it when people get excited about WisCon. One of the things you noticed right away has been true about WisCon for awhile, and that is that the convention may have a feminist focus, but over the years the true scope of WisCon has expanded from feminism to embracing a range of liberal, leftist, other radical ideas. In addition to a focus on feminism, WisCon has found time to talk about literature in terms of race, class, economics, radical environmentalism and broad issues surrounding gender and sexual orientation. When people wonder why I work on a feminist SF convention, I say simply that my kind of politically focused discussions happen here and rarely anywhere else.

Thanks also for short course on British politics. It was very helpful in explaining how, if the Labour Party (which I always thought was the furthest left of the three parties) was in power, you wound up with Tony Blair (who I don't see as very much of a leftist?) So it seems that the rich are never really out of power, they just co-opt whichever party is in power and everyone else just has to adopt another party. That is largely how it works

here with two parties that are really only one. Business and the rich are never out of power. Only the name of the party in power changes.

Congratulations on being an Enemy of the People. It is a title I would wear with pride if I were you.

---

### Tom Havighurst

---

[SC] So sorry to hear about your mother's illness. Take care.

---

### Hope Kiefer and Karl Hailman

---

[SC] I think Forrest's quote this month was the best one ever. I remember on our recent vacation, whenever we had a brief camping setback, I would repeat Forrest's quote out loud and it always brought me a smile.

Hope, congratulations on your pregnancy. I hope it all goes well.

---

### Max

---

[SC] Hi, welcome. Being happy is nice to read about. I don't happen to be one of those people who believe all the best songs are sad. So enjoy yourself and feel free to tell us about it.

---

### Jae Adams

---

[SC] I enjoyed your comments on the Calligraphy Conference, especially the challenge of food on a non-dairy diet. I wouldn't have thought it would be so complicated skipping dairy (notice I said "complicated," not "easy," speaking as someone who loves cheese and ice cream), but now I see that it is quite challenging.

I liked the poem at the end too.

---

### Comments on Issue № 194

---

(Scott only. Jeanne will catch up on this issue next time.)

---



---

### Vijay Bowen

---

[SC] It is nice to hear from you again. Keeping busy is a good thing. I always enjoy going to weddings, and the best ones are those where the happy couple are doing what they want to do rather than bending over backward to satisfy parental expectations.

---

### Georgie Schnobrich

---

[SC] So I assume we are talking here about a *fiction* writing critique group? I have to assume so because I think you are a terribly sharp non-fiction writer and I can't imagine a critique group failing to appreciate an essay from you. Fiction is another matter. I think writing

fiction is very hard. I haven't taken a stab at writing fiction since I was in high school and I was awful at it then. I am always amazed at people who do fiction writing workshops. I think the whole idea of critiquing fiction in workshops is scary. It seems so subjective. So much depends on fashion and taste. I hope you don't feel that your experience with this workshop somehow means you are a bad writer because you're not.

---

### ▣ Tracy Benton

[SC] Ha! You call that being busy? (Oops, turned to page two and three, the list goes on and on) Well, okay, maybe you are pretty busy. You should slow down.

Seriously, it is good news that you and Bill are moving in together. I know what it feels like to move in with someone into a space that is not quite big enough. Back in 1987 I moved into Jeanne's two bedroom apartment on the South side of Madison. It took a little getting used to, and I had very little experience sharing living space with anyone else. I was 31 and had been living alone for many years before I moved in with her. We worked it out and you will too for the same reason we did, because you care so much for each other.

Keynote speakers at WisCon each day? It might be a challenge to do a room setup change to accommodate the whole convention twice each day, but it is still an interesting suggestion. What sort of topics would you suggest?

Regarding your comment to us, it's the puns.

With respect to socialized medicine, no, I hadn't heard the New Zealand story. Have you heard the one about the old folks in the U.S. who are reduced to eating dog food because they don't have enough health insurance coverage to pay their medical bills? No? Probably because the scenario is too common to warrant special attention.

Puzzle? What's the prize?

---

### ▣ Julie Humphries

[SC] You know, you really are a good writer. I liked your "42 Hours in Chicago" piece a lot. Take off on some more adventures and tell us about them.

---

### ▣ Maureen Kincaid Speller

[SC] Wish **Paul** a happy birthday for us. Congratulations on the acquisition of a Palm. Jeanne has been talking about getting one too. I am way too technologically challenged for one, but I have been impressed whenever I've been given a demonstration of one.

Interesting commentary on your attending the Coronation performance. I had no idea they were such big musical events. Of course it makes sense once you think about it, but I don't think I have ever had much of an idea

what a Coronation ceremony really entails, other than a lot of time invested in ritual. I had no idea there was so much music. Cool.

---

### ▣ Vicki Rosenzweig

[SC] I hope to be reading some good news on the job front from you soon. Can the job market be that depressed in New York right now? You've been looking for awhile.

---

### ▣ Jim Nichols

[SC] Good response to **Jerome's** rather hasty comment. I don't necessarily think fans are bad tippers either. The Concourse staff (not just the management) always look forward to WisCon, and I think I would know if we had developed a reputation around the hotel as poor tippers. As for whether some people don't like certain other people at the Wednesday night gatherings, that dynamic works the same in most social groups. I wouldn't lose any sleep over it. Jeanne and I haven't attended Nick's in sometime, mostly owing to the fact that we couldn't afford the weekly time commitment. I don't feel that I am in a very good position to comment on the state of the Nick's gathering other than to say that I think your decision to try out some new places was obviously a good one and I wish you well in your travels. I also hope you keep me posted on your progress. Who knows, maybe I (or we) can afford to resume dropping by once a month or so.

---

### ▣ Julie Zachman

[SC] "Ghosting" a con means showing up, looking around, maybe doing some socializing with people at the convention all without buying a membership. Gaiman never registers and is never an official part of the con, but he tends to drop by and look around. I don't think he has ever gone to panels, but he has gone into the Dealers room and maybe some other common areas. I think the big draw for him is to hook up with some of his friends who are attending WisCon from far away. These friends may be gradually convincing him that WisCon is something he should participate in fully. We'll see.

---

### ▣ Jae Leslie Adams

[SC] How did you find out about the neighborhood discussion list? I would be very interested in one for our neighborhood. I am not on very many discussion lists because life is just too short, but I would make some time for this. I was amused at the notion that your enthusiastic participation was not well received, oh well, if they didn't want to hear from everyone, they shouldn't have started a list, I say.

Thanks also for the piece on the State Fair. I haven't



been to a State Fair in a long time, but I used to enjoy going to the Iowa State Fair years ago. Sometimes the DOT sends workers out to run a booth at the Wisconsin State Fair. I have not been sent on this mission, but I am told it can be fun. The last co-worker of mine who went to the fair described spending time at the booth calling up people's driving records on a computer to check their driving status. With some young couples, it turned into a game to find out which of them had the worst driving record. Ah, youth.

## Scenic Drive

### A trip report by Jeanne Gomoll

Scott's and my vacation officially began on Saturday morning, August 31, as we drove northeast across Wisconsin to Manitowoc. We were still blitzed from staying up late packing the previous night. I read a couple newspapers aloud to Scott as he drove and sipped on his coffee. But it really felt like our vacation began as we boarded the *S.S. Badger* at 12:30 p.m. The *S.S. Badger* cruises between Manitowoc Wisconsin and Ludington Michigan; it's a huge, coal-burning car ferry capable of carrying 620 passengers and 180 vehicles. Built in 1952, I suspect that some sort of grandfather clause may have allowed its owners to avoid compliance with an environmental rule or two. Black, smelly smoke billowed from its stack and some sort of greasy, chunky *stuff* flowed out of the bilge pipes into Lake Michigan as we traveled. But if you avoided staring with horror at those pipes and gazed forward, it was possible to pretend the smoke and bilge didn't exist and you could enjoy the lake, with no land in sight, for most of the 5-hour trip. The weather was crystal clear and warm, the waves were small, and we managed to snag two reclining deck chairs on a shaded part of the deck.

Taking the ferry across Lake Michigan has been something we'd been wanting to do for years. A couple years ago we tried, but were too late to get a reservation; this time we reserved on-line a month in advance. But I don't think I would recommend the trip to anyone as a *cruise*. It may well be worth the price to avoid diving through Chicago (\$49 for the car; plus \$42 per adult), but you shouldn't go expecting any sort of *Carnival*-like experience. The cafeteria is depressing, a sort of grim and grimy place. Folks sat around in plastic chairs and rickety tables playing cards; kids cried. I'm glad the weather allowed us to stay outside. I meant to get started on one of my vacation books (George R. R. Martin's *A Game of Swords*), but instead dozed comfortably on my reclining chair.

After the ferry docked, we watched from the upper

deck as ferry employees drove cars out from the lowest deck, parked them in the harbor lot, and then sprinted back to get another car. The first vehicles unloaded were three huge semi trailers; next came dozens of RVs and SUVs. At first we began to suspect that we were the only passengers that did not own a truck, but then the smaller vehicles began to emerge. We figure the ceilings in the ferry must get progressively lower further into the ferry. Finally we reclaimed our car and drove out of Ludington's harbor; it was about 6:30 p.m. Ludington seems like a fairly prosperous tourist town, certainly much more lively than Manitowoc, but we didn't dawdle. Our plan was to drive directly north a few miles to Ludington State Park where we hoped to set up our tent and eat the roasted chicken I'd baked the night before.

As we drove through town, I turned to Scott and grinned. "That concludes the *planned* portion of our trip!" Scott looked slightly alarmed, but then remembered that we'd decided not to make reservations ahead of time (except for the ferry). A couple years ago when we did a similar sort of driving-camping trip along Lake Superior's North Shore, we'd had no trouble getting campsites. And it was great to be free to move on when we wanted and stay at parks that were most

beautiful, and also have the option to check into a hotel to get out of the rain or take advantage of a hot shower. (Later we remembered that we did in fact make reservations for the first night of our North Shore vacation. It was Labor Day weekend, after all. It's too bad we didn't remember that before we left for our Michigan vacation which also began on Labor Day weekend....) To save you any suspense, let me say that one should *always* make reservations for Labor Day weekend Saturdays if you plan to sleep anywhere other than your car. We might have been able to snag one of the first-come-first-serve campsites at Ludington State Park — if we'd arrived at 8:00 a.m. when these sites are offered, but asking the park ranger if they have sites available at 7 p.m. on a holiday just makes them look at you like you're a total wacko. Let me assure you.

We drove past a couple of KOA campgrounds that were packed to the gills and we quickly decided that we were unlikely to find any open campsites anywhere in the state, certainly not in time to pitch our tent before sunset. We also noticed that hotel after hotel sign flashed "no vacancy," or "sorry." So, Scott pulled over to the side of the road and I pulled out our cell phone and a Super-8 hotel directory. We don't often use our cell phone. In fact we sometimes fail to use it at all from month to month, but boy was I glad to have it a couple times on this vacation. A call to Super-8's 800 number turned up one available



room within reasonable driving distance, about 60 miles west of us, in Cadillac. I didn't hesitate; "we'll take it," I said. The drive through the deep forests of the Manistee National Forest to Cadillac was actually very beautiful, and Cadillac was a very pretty little town whose buildings clustered around two lakes. By the time we arrived at our hotel, it was dark and all we wanted to do was eat some supper. Oh, and *one* of us wanted to run out quick for a six-pack of beers. As we checked in, I heard the clerk turn away two very tired folks who had obviously been driving from hotel to hotel looking for someplace to sleep. "Sorry, no rooms left," he told them. That could easily have been us, I thought. I think we were very lucky.

The next morning we made use of our cell phone again, this time to find out if there were any nearby Lake Michigan shore campsites available on Sunday night. We were relieved to discover that Michigan State Parks hold out a percentage of all their campsites from the reservation system on a first-come-first-serve basis. If we arrived in time, there might be a site still available at Orchard Beach State Park, which is located just 35 north of Ludington State Park, and due west of Cadillac. We packed the car up quickly and drove west back to Lake Michigan's shore. Success! There were still three sites left. We paid for a park sticker, chose a campsite, but decided not to spend the day at Orchard Beach. Our brief glimpse of Ludington the evening before had been tantalizingly beautiful, so we went back south to check it out. We would have a delicious lunch in a Ludington brew pub, hike at the state park, and would return to Orchard Beach in time to set up camp before it got dark.

The main reason we wanted to spend some time on the Michigan side of Lake Michigan is because it's supposed to be very different from the Wisconsin side. I've camped at most of the state parks on the Wisconsin side dozens of times. In fact one of my favorite places in the world is Rock Island State Park, which sits out in the middle of the lake, off the tip of Door County peninsula. Unfortunately, the water on the Wisconsin side of the lake isn't very warm, which Scott points out whenever I talk about swimming in Lake Michigan. The reason it never gets very warm on the west side of the lake — even by late summer — is that the prevailing westerly winds tend to blow warmer surface waters east, and suck the colder deeper water up to the shore. The opposite is true in Michigan. Also, many people have told me about the gorgeous beaches and dunes that line the whole eastern coast of Lake Michigan. That's what we came to see and we were not disappointed.

The beach seems to go forever. No matter how high you climb, you can't see the end of the lovely, wide, white sand beaches. If you stand at the edge of the sand, just where the largest waves reach, you will find that you've

sunk ankle deep into the sand. The gulls swoop, the sun shines, the waves roll in, and the color of the water is turquoise near the shore and steel blue further out in the deeper water. It looks like the Caribbean without sharks. (Flies, however, more than make up in the annoyance department when they're present.)

It was late Sunday morning, the day before Labor Day, when we rolled into Ludington State Park, and we were suddenly confronted by a traffic jam of cars, trailers, RV's and SUVs. Damn. *But of course...* it was Labor Day Weekend. We had to get in line and wait for a parking space. But we quickly moved to the front of the line; within 5 minutes we pulled into a space. We glanced at the dozens of people floating and laughing as they rode the current of Sable River between Hamlin Lake and Lake Michigan. They were obviously having a great time, but it looked too crowded to us. And we decided not even to try the crowded beach just off the parking lot. Instead, after a glance at the map, we strolled through the campgrounds and hiked the path parallel to the beach, behind the first row of dunes, to the lighthouse — about 2 miles north. The path was solid packed sand and mostly deserted. The views of the lighthouse peaking over the dunes were beautiful. We were delighted to find, when we reached the lighthouse, that few folks bothered to hike north of the main park area. It didn't feel like major holiday bedlam anymore.

The beach near the lighthouse was deserted, and only a handful of people explored the lighthouse itself. We climbed the several hundred steps up into the lighthouse and took pictures from the top. Ooooo! Ahhhh!. That's when we realized how extensive the dune system really was. I had already been impressed by the width of the beaches — one city block wide at least — but I hadn't realized that the partially grassed dunes beyond them extended for miles inland from the lake. In fact, I'd been naively assuming that the huge amount of sand on the eastern shores of the lake would turn out to be caused by the same westerly wind system that regulates water temperature; perhaps Michigan sand was stolen Wisconsin sand.... Do not pass Go. Do not collect \$200. The lighthouse guide explained that most of northwestern Michigan was covered by a very deep layer of sand and gravel during the last glacial advance. In fact most of this portion of the lower peninsula was an enormous terminal moraine (deposits left behind at the edge of a shrinking glacier). As water and wind erodes the shoreline, the sand gets blown eastward and forms parallel dunes, like dry, stationary waves rising and falling for miles east of the lake's shore. I suppose the sand isn't very good for gardening, but it sure is gorgeous. Who'd have thought such a beautiful alien place existed just on the other side



Lighthouse at Ludington State Park



View from lighthouse:extensive dune system (left), Lake Michigan (right)



View of beach north from Lighthouse

of Lake Michigan?

The lighthouse museum displayed lots of information about shipwrecks, a theme that repeated itself as we traveled north that week. Lots of ships carrying wood down to Chicago in the late 1800s (wood that built the city twice — once before and once after the great Chicago fire) foundered on transient, submerged sand bars along this shoreline. It looks like the first community building project undertaken by most seaside towns was their lighthouse — even before the church. But we didn't spend much time in the museum; we wanted to make sure to get back up to Orchard Beach before dark to set up camp.

We also wanted to walk back via the very empty beach, so we bought a couple of bottles of water, waded in the surf for a little while, and then headed back south. The walk back was cooler going south, because we were able to enjoy the lake breezes that the dunes had blocked on our way north to the lighthouse. But the walking was a little harder. Most of the back beach was fairly hard-packed, but some of it wasn't and we were pretty tired of slogging through soft, deep sand by the time we got back to our car.

We've got an easy 2-person tent to set up. (Whoever invented shock-corded poles was a genius.) Within a half-hour our pads, sleeping bags and gear were stowed in the tent. We finished off the rest of the baked chicken along with some watermelon for dinner, and walked up the hill to watch the sun set over the lake. Orchard Beach's shore was accessible via a long set of wooden stairs that scaled the cliff west of the campground. The waves crashed onto the shore as the sun sank brilliantly under the waves to the west. Sounds sort of idyllic doesn't it? Well it was, and romantic too. But... That night I learned to appreciate the Wisconsin State Park system. Wisconsin campground sites tend to be widely spaced, with trees between each site. Especially at some of the parks with fewer amenities (i.e., pit toilets only), you can camp for days without seeing anyone. Michigan's park system operates under a very different philosophy. They pack as many campsites into the minimum amount of space possible. They don't provide separate campgrounds for RVs and tent campers. They assume everyone needs electrical outlets. Individual campsites are just big enough for an RV, a car and a picnic table and most people have RVs AND cars; it's extremely crowded, well-lit, and wouldn't remind anyone of a wilderness. In spite of that, I was surprised how considerate people were. It didn't get noisy at all and we slept well. Nevertheless, we decided before drifting off to sleep that we would head north, skipping two state parks along the way, and make camp next at Sleeping Dunes National Seashore. Federal Park campgrounds tend to be much less crowded.

We were surprised to wake up the next morning to the sound and feel of high winds and soon afterwards, to falling rain. We suddenly realized that we hadn't checked any weather reports since leaving Wisconsin. Heavy, gray clouds filled the sky, and it felt like the kind of rain that might go on for hours, maybe even all day. So when the wind let up a bit, we donned our rain gear and began to break camp. I stuffed the sleeping bags, rolled up the pads, and packed clothing into a bag while Scott transferred stuff into the car. The tent got a little wet as we collapsed it in the rain, but not too badly. We drove over to the bathhouse and took showers before leaving the park. By the time we were finished, it had stopped raining and the sun was emerging from



the clouds. \*sigh\* Oh well, we'd gotten an earlier start than we had expected, but that was all right. We decided that we weren't all that impressed by Orchard Beach anyway, and it was time to roll northwards to Sleeping Dunes National Seashore.

An hour later, our car slowly crunched over the narrow gravel roads into Glen Haven campground at Sleeping Dunes National Seashore. It was lovely, everything a good campground should be. This one was devoted mainly to campers; the sites were widely spaced and there were lots of trees. There was only one problem. The blackboard next to the park office warned: "Violent storm tonight. Possibly *dangerously* high winds." Not the sort of thing you want to see if you're planning on sleeping in a little two-person tent. So we decided to spend the rest of the day (before the storm began) exploring the park, find a nearby hotel and spend the night in a building, and then camp at Sleeping Bear on Tuesday night. We found a nice little hotel (Maple Lane Resort) just outside the park with no trouble. The owner even let us hang our tent on their clothesline to dry it out. Then we hurried back to the park.

Sleeping Dunes is probably the most famous part of the Lower Peninsula's entire seashore, and rightly so. Set in a hilly region fringed with massive coastal sand dunes and dotted with clear lakes, there are breathtaking vistas every direction you look. Towering sand dunes, secluded islands, Maple-Beach forests (which must be gorgeous in the fall), and ghost forests! Ghost forests occur when migrating dunes bury trees and later, when the dunes move on, are exposed —white, stark and a little spooky looking. We got our first look at the park by driving the one-lane 7.5-mile Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive. We picked up a printed tour guide from park headquarters and were reminded to make sure we got out of the car and hiked out to sites #9 and 10. One of the first stops was a lookout over Glen Lake, where we learned that the erosion process along Michigan's coastline involved not only the wearing-away of land, but also the sealing in of bays. Michigan's shore is dotted with hundreds of shallow lakes, separated by narrow isthmuses. They were created by sand bars that grew to permanence, cutting off the bays and making them into separate lakes. Looking at Glen Lake from the overlook, made it quite clear what had happened. In fact we could see Glen Lake campground right in the middle of the isthmus separating Lake Michigan from the smaller lake.

But the most beautiful stops by far were provided by overlooks #9 and 10. We parked the car and walked up the dunes on top of wooden boardwalk and finally got up to the top of an extremely windy, extremely tall dune. In fact, this one towers 500 feet over Lake Michigan's surface. We approached it via the gentle eastern slope. The steep side of the bluff plunges down to the shore from the vista on which we stood. Several signs warn that its steep grade is very dangerous, that the return climb is extremely strenuous and should be undertaken only by those in the best physical condition. Scott and I decided not to try it. Some people have told me that the climb down is really fun, that you sort of "slush" down the slope and that it feels like skiing without skis. But they also say the return climb is a killer. Signs warn that a minimum of 1.5 hours should be allotted for the climb back up. People said that if you can't make it back up, that boats can be sent to rescue you, but that the rescue costs \$250. From an overlook platform, we watched several folks trudge back up the slope. They looked like ants on the



500-foot sand dune



Exhausted climbers reaching the lip of the dune



Warning! You Could Die!



It's really, really steep!



Rain coming



Campsite at Sleeping Bear Dune National Seashore and scene of the crime



Castle Mall

shoreline. Some were writing notes in gigantic letters on the beach to those of us up on the top of the dune, but it was too far away to make out what they wrote. (Maybe "Help! Please send a boat!") The two or three people climbing the slope moved very slowly and stopped a lot, though it looked like it was risky to stop, because they had the tendency to slowly sink backwards if they stayed still too long. I took pictures from the top, but none of my pictures really convey the pitch of the slope, the distance ... or the breathtaking beauty of the scene. As we stood there looking and hanging onto our hats against the high wind, we could see the storm approaching from the west, miles and miles away. Veils of slanting gray mist crossed the sky between clouds and sea.

We got back to our hotel ahead of the storm and were able to roll up our tent and put it away into its stuff bag before it began raining. But, as it turned out, the storm was a bit of an anticlimax. It sprinkled gently for a half-hour or so, and then the sun came out again. Since our hotel was located on the shore of Glen Lake, Scott and I strolled down to the beach and watched the sunset over its calm surface. Then we drove into town for a yummy dinner of whitefish with crab salsa. What happened to the dangerous storm? the violent winds? Days later we heard that a violent storm had passed just south of us. We could easily have camped that night as it turned out.

First thing the next morning, we were able to snag a prime, shore-side camp site. We quickly set up our tent, laid out pads and sleeping bags in the tent, and secured the rest of our gear. I changed into my swimming suit; Scott changed into shorts. We carried blankets, towels, books and water bottles out to the beach, prepared for a relaxing few hours on the beach. The holiday weekend was over; it was Tuesday and the campground had almost entirely emptied. The park ranger said that they had had no vacancies since early June this year; we definitely arrived at the right time of year! We had the huge beach almost to ourselves. There were a couple people playing in the surf about a half mile away. Scott says he forgot his suit, but had to admit that even he did not think the water was cold. I think he may have regretted not having a suit along. My swim was quite delightful, though the process of getting into the water was pretty amusing. Our beach had a fair amount of stones mixed in with the sand, and the lip of the beach resembled a rocky stair step of about 12 inches into the water. The stones required that you move carefully on bare feet; the forceful waves kept you off-balance. In fact the first thing that happened after I'd stepped down into the lake was that a sudden wave caught me pushed me over into the water. It's a great way to get wet quickly, but highly undignified. I swam for a while in the crystal clear water, enjoying every moment of it. There were some fairly serious currents operating near the shore so I didn't go way out. And when I returned, treading carefully on the rocky sand near shore, a wave took me again — this time knocking me over and then lifting me up and over the "step" and delivering me onto sand at Scott's feet. It was so funny, all I could do was lay there for a few moments and laugh.

We applied plenty of sun screen and it wasn't too warm, so we were able to spend several hours talking and reading on the beach. The flies were a little obnoxious then, and later in the evening at camp, but it was close to a perfect day. The sky was perfectly clear, perfectly blue. The water ranged in colors from Caribbean turquoise blue close



to shore, to steel-blue far out in the very deep water, both contrasting nicely with the golden sand and white surf. Graceful dune grass moved in the wind in liquid waves. Gulls flew overhead and there were oatmeal-chocolate chip-coconut-pecan cookies to nibble.

One of our vacation traditions is that whenever we go camping, I make a special batch of oatmeal-chocolate chip-coconut-pecan cookies for us as a traveling treat. This time, we kept the cookies in a Tupperware container and kept the container in a soft-sided, zippered cooler. We had some cookies for dessert Tuesday night. Unfortunately, that was the last taste either of us would have of them. Scott left the tent before me on Wednesday morning and I woke to the sound of his anguished cry: "They ate them ALL. They're ALL GONE!" It turns out that a clever squirrel had pushed the zipper open with its nose, crawled into the cooler, somehow managed to remove the Tupperware top, and had eaten or carried away every cookie and every cookie crumb. Scott suggested that yellow crime scene tape might be in order. Both of us began glancing around for sugar-crazed, fat rodents. This was the only tragedy of our trip. Scott never really saw the humor of the episode, but I made him another batch of camping cookies when we got home.

We'd dismantled camp by 9 a.m. and began driving north to our next destination — Wilderness State Park — which is located on a bony finger of a peninsula that points west into Lake Michigan, just west of Mackinaw Bridge. It's an enormous park, more than 8,000 acres, and most of it really is wilderness. On Monday I had noticed a description of that park in one of our guides and was intrigued by its mention of "Rustic Cabins" available for rent. I called and it turned out that, yes, one of the cabins was available on Wednesday night so we reserved it.

The drive north to Wilderness State Park took most of the day since we chose smaller, scenic routes along the lake. We looked for cherries to buy, but it turned out that a late freeze this spring destroyed most of Michigan's cherry crops, so we brought home no gallons of pitted cherries as I had hoped to do.

One of the things that surprised us was that the further north we traveled, the more wealth we saw. In Wisconsin it seems that the further north you go, the more rustic things get. But in Michigan, the shops get more trendy and more expensive looking the further north you go. There are a lot of extremely rich people in Michigan whose vacation houses are more lavish than any house ever built in Madison. Around Petosky (which is famous for being close to Earnest Hemingway's childhood home), we began seeing gated communities. Of course the gates weren't meant to keep out local riff-raff so much as they were to keep out us tourists.... As we drove along Highway 31 just south of Petosky, we pulled over to the side of the road when we

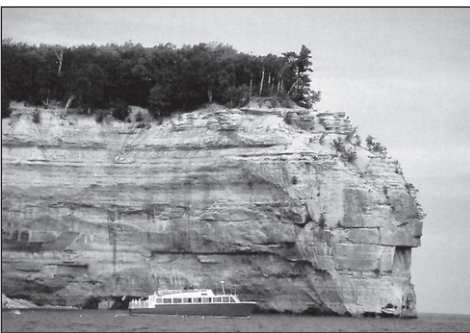
noticed what looked like a castle built below and on the other side of a ridge, right along the lakeshore. The castle turned out to be a collection of 3- and 4-story buildings, and the architecture of each building was different and unique ... but most remarkably—fanciful. It was as if we'd driven into a different dimension and everything was going to be different from now on.... We had to take a closer look. We turned around and took the turnoff down toward the lake and the castle and as we got closer, it became clear that we were entering a newly-built gated community. Gigantic, mansions, hidden from the road were connected by an artfully designed system of canals, so each owner would be able to tie up their boat(s) right next to their homes. Some of the homes were built into the side of and below a cliff that paralleled Highway 31. The "castle" turned out to be an extremely high class shopping mall. We drove down the cobblestone road through the center of the shops; it felt like a gentrified medieval village to me, if you can imagine that. There were a couple people strolling on the sidewalks window shopping, but mostly the whole place was practically deserted. The nearby homes were still under construction after all, no had moved in yet. Nevertheless, here were these very big, very expensive, glitzy shops, open and ready for business. I imagine it must have been very expensive to build and open the shops before any prospective customers existed. And yet there they were, open to encourage people to buy houses, I imagine. It was a little spooky. Next time we come this way, I doubt that we will be allowed through the gates.

North of Petosky, the highway turned into a twisting, extremely narrow (but exquisitely cared for) asphalt road. There is just barely room for two cars side-by-side, although rear view mirrors might have to be sacrificed. Driving off the road to make room for oncoming traffic is risky too, since there is no gravel shoulder, and trees grow inches from the edge of the asphalt. I suppose that's why the speed limit was 20 mph for all 23 miles. Why is the road so narrow, but obviously so well taken care of? Scott and I think the road used to be a gravel road, and fairly recently too. Wealth has taken over the area in a big way (imagine three-story log "cabins" with cathedral windows, 8 or 9 chimneys, glassed-in pools and saunas, tennis courts and tree-mounted cameras.) But the new owners don't want to encourage tourists to continue driving through their neighborhoods. There are lots of wider east-west roads off this road, so the locals can get in and out fairly easily, but the lakeshore route is made as discouraging as possible to people attempting to drive north along the lake. It seems to be working. We encountered only one car along the way.

Anyway, it was later than we expected when we finally arrived at the southern part of Wilderness State Park. It took us more than an hour to discover that the park was



Rustic Cabin at Wilderness State Park



Views of Painted Rocks National Seashore

huge and that there were no roads directly north into the main part of the park and that we would have to drive east several miles, then north, and then west again in order to get to the park headquarters. By the time we finally located the park office, it was past 6 p.m., the staff had locked up and gone home, and we didn't know what to do about our "rustic cabin" reservation. Everything turned out fine, though. One of the rangers had put our key and a map in an envelope with my name on it, and clipped it to a message board outside the office. Ahhh! In a few moments we'd find our cabin, get settled in and then go out to find some supper. Well it wasn't quite that easy.

Our cabin turned out to be at the end of about 4 miles of narrow gravel road. We drove almost all the way out to the end of the bony peninsula that juts out into Lake Michigan, mumbling thanks all the way that it hadn't rained recently. If the roads had been muddy, we would never have made it without four-wheel drive. About an hour later we finally jolted, bumped and ground our way to the door of our cabin, which was a lovely sight. We had our own outhouse close at hand, and inside there was a wood-burning stove, bunk beds (no bedding, but we had our sleeping bags), wooden tables and benches, a comfy chair of wood and leather, and big windows looking west out at the marsh between the cabin and the lake. It really was beautiful. I think bird watchers would think they'd died and gone to heaven. We couldn't believe our luck that we'd been able to reserve it. But after we'd hauled in our gear it was 7:30 p.m. and we no longer felt like a long drive (probably all the way into Mackinaw City) to get food. And we really didn't relish the idea of the drive back through the forests and gravel roads to our cabin. So we took a shorter drive to the camp store a couple miles down the gravel road and discovered that the proprietor had mostly run out of food. He explained that the season was practically over and it just didn't seem worthwhile. We bought a couple sticks of beef jerky and microwaved two frozen sandwiches but couldn't finish eating either of them because they were so awful. Supper that night was beef jerky and some cheese and crackers from our cooler. But it didn't matter. We heard loons cry out to one another and when it got dark, it got utterly and completely dark. There was no moon at all and the sky was full of stars. And then it got completely and utterly quiet. Scott claimed that it was too quiet to sleep, but I had no trouble falling asleep at all. The next morning we looked at the map again and noticed that the cross-country ski trail starts right outside the cabin. Our cabin must be a popular one among winter skiers.

Thursday morning we loaded up the car again and headed east to Mackinaw City, crossed the amazingly long Mackinac bridge, and left the Lower Peninsula. We stopped a couple times at overlooks along the northern shore of Lake Michigan (more sand but fewer dunes) and gradually turned northwards and headed toward Painted Rocks National Seashore and the town of Munising. We rented a hotel room and just managed to arrive in time to take the 1:00 p.m. boat tour along the 40-mile lakeshore cliffs. What a beautiful place! The cliffs along this part of Lake Superior are layered sandstone and limestone. The harder, more durable limestone is on top; sandstone is below, and so as the rock erodes, the sandstone tends to undercut the limestone resulting in remarkable formations. Beautiful as these rock sculptures are, it's not what makes this place famous. Mineral-rich water seeps out

of the rocks and down over the cliffs. Iron paints streaks of red upon the cliffs; Manganese paints with a black brush; and copper traces brilliant greens and turquoise strokes. Water heavy with tannin from the forests above adds a wash of gold and brown to the rock surfaces. If I'd had ten rolls of film with me I would have snapped every picture on the rolls. (Unfortunately the day was overcast and the few pictures I did take simply don't do the place justice.) I wanted extreme close-ups of the cliffs to capture the natural "abstract" paintings of the rocks. Indeed it sometimes looked as if someone had used a palette knife and applied thick smears of oil paint. The cliffs descend immediately into the lake; there is only a single beach along the shoreline. Mostly, the boats can glide right next to the cliffs, almost close enough for its passengers to reach out and touch the cliffs. As we headed back to harbor, the wind started picking up and grew to gale strength. I thought about humming *The Edmund Fitzgerald*, but couldn't remember the tune. But we made it back safely. We enjoyed a great steak dinner made even more tasty having missed a real supper the night before and having skipped breakfast that day too.

The last day in Michigan, Friday, we stopped briefly at the very strange "Da Yoopers Tourist Trap and Museum" which **Jae Adams** recommended to us. Da Yoopers (as in Upper-Peninsula resident) is "the home of the world's largest running chainsaw, the largest working rifle in the world, the world's largest Yooper gift shop, an underground mining display, a Camp-Go-For-Beer, and free bathrooms (with flush toilets)." We stayed long enough to buy Jae some suitable thank-you present for having suggested we find the place. If you're interested, check out their web site at [www.dayoopers.com](http://www.dayoopers.com).

But finally it was time to head eastward out of Michigan and toward Ashland Wisconsin. We stayed one night at the Hotel Chequamagon, an elegant, wonderful hotel that pretends to be a refurbished hotel from the 19th century. We hope to schedule a WisCon retreat there next fall and wanted to gather information about it in preparation. We enjoyed really excellent meals there and spent Saturday and Sunday traveling slowly south back to Madison, stopping along the way when we found something interesting. It was a good trip.

—Jeanne Gomoll & Scott Custis  
20 September 2002

