

*Tempus fugit!*

Time flies, in the words of the Latin phrase. That was one of my father's favorite expressions, and certainly one we now understand better, as the days, months and years flit on by. We're both thankful for reasonably good health - knock on wood! - especially when we hear from our contemporaries who are not as fortunate in this regard. So we'll keep moving while we can.

And move is what we did last February when eight of us took the Algoma Central Railway north out of Sault Ste. Marie, Canada for 118 miles, where the train stopped and dropped us off in the middle of the Canadian Bush. Our destination was a cross-country ski lodge 11 miles away, which we reached in good shape, if not very quickly. We then had four wonderful days of skiing, snowshoeing, and lots of eating, with saunas and storytelling tossed in. Then we skied back to the train for the return trip out to civilization, with sunshine and six inches of fresh snow to beautify the scene.

In April, we returned to one of our favorite spots, the Chiricahua Mountains, in southeast Arizona. We first stumbled on to this area in 1969 while on a cross-country camping trip with our girls. The peaks go up to nearly 10,000 feet. As a result, they display four different life zones as one proceeds upward, from desert to Douglas fir forests and snow banks on top. There are perennial streams, eight or ten species of hummingbirds and lots of trails. The American Museum of Natural History has a field station there, where one can stay and get meals, hiking out on the wonderful trails that lace the area, which is mostly national forest. We plan to lead a group there for a week's outing in the spring of 2001. Let us know if you'd like to consider joining us.

We returned home in late April to find that all of our bees had died over winter. It is the first time this has happened in our 40 years of beekeeping. The presumed cause was mites that have infested bees all over this hemisphere for a decade. We attended a beekeepers' meeting at Michigan State University, something we've wanted to do for a long time, and for which retirement now affords time. We won a queen bee as a door prize, learned more about mites, then purchased six new hives from a purveyor of bees in Georgia. They established themselves in our northern clime very well, and gave us a honey crop of 725 pounds - very good (both quantitatively and qualitatively).

The asparagus bed that we started 35 years ago was beset this year with asparagus beetles. They got more of the crop than we did. All of which fed nicely into a course in entomology that I decided to take last summer at the University of Michigan Biological Station, located twenty miles north of Petoskey. The course met all day, two days a week for eight weeks during the height of the summer. I discovered the advantages of auditing. courses - I don't need the credit, and didn't want to overtax myself trying to keep up with the sharp undergraduates who were my classmates. It was a great experience - I highly recommend going back to school at this stage of life.

I took my own advice in this regard earlier in the year too, by signing up for a Course in Shakespeare at our local community college - again as an auditor. I'd never read *Titus Andronicus* before - what bloody butchery! Again I had the fun of being around young people, and getting what I could out of the course. but without the stress of studying for exams.

Mary Lou plugs away on her campaign to tame billboard blight: under the aegis of Scenic Michigan. Nineteen ninety-eight was her last year as president, after Five years in that saddle. Her other big concern is evident from the organization's title: The International Dark Sky Association. The effort is to save energy. cut down on glare, and end spurious night lighting so we can still see the night skies.

Our big family event for the year was our older daughter Laura's wedding to John de Olazarra. whom she first met some 15 years before. The ceremony was on Key Largo, fortunately between hurricanes, and was very nice. They live in Miami. Daughter Jane has announced her plans to marry Hugh Thomson this coming June, so there is a lot of family formation going on.

Let's see ... ah yes, politics! I'm still plugging away at the immigration and language topics. Both have been much in the news this year. We've had some gains and losses on both fronts. but no lack of stimulation. Some folks have been urging me to run for U.S. Senate against incumbent Spencer Abraham, who is our key congressional opponent in the immigration question. I went so far as to form an exploratory committee. The most I'll say at this juncture is that it has been a very interesting experience.

The longest trail in the country, the North Country Trail, runs right through our county. It starts in New York State, and continues to North Dakota. It is still under development. Mary Lou and I have not used it much in the past, but this year we've hiked a good bit of it in our area. We signed up to be the caretakers on one segment. Walking is great, and full of surprises ... like the nest of bumblebees we encountered along the trail at the end of summer.

We took another hike late in the summer into the McCormick Tract in the center of Michigan's Upper Peninsula. It put us in mind of our state motto: *Si quaeris peninsulam, amoenam circumspice* - "If you seek a beautiful peninsula, look around you" (no more Latin, I promise). This tract of 5000 acres of woods, hills, lakes and streams was owned by a scion of the McCormick/Deering, International Harvester family. He left it to the U.S. Forest Service as a research area. Magnificent white pine, hard maple, yellow birch and hemlock abound.

I guess that we're tree huggers after all. We put the quarter section of forest that we own under the Commercial Forest Act this year, as a way to help dedicate it to non-development and to the raising of forest products. It is a great place to go for a camping trip, as it is quiet, being surrounded on three sides by state forestland. There really are Dark Skies there at night.

While at the Biological Station for my last entomology session of the summer, I encountered Dr. Frederick Test, who had taught vertebrate zoology there for many years. He was getting ready to sell the cottage he had built 25 years ago on Douglas Lake, where the Station is located. He agreed to sell it to us - so now we're the pleased owners of a "get away" place for all seasons. We were summer cottagers on this lake for 13 years when our girls were small.

That is a little of what we've been up to. We hope that you have had an engaging year, and will join us in looking forward to what the year 2000 will bring.

John and Mary Lou