

Perspective

We like Alpena "a little on the trashy side"

RICHELLE SIELAND
Co-editor

Although the title is inspired by the likes of Jerry Springer and the twang of a country song, don't get mad yet. To be trashy is not always so bad. Just ask a sanitation company, preferably one who is the richest corporation in the world and is paid to take care of what we don't want to: our garbage. Our present system of waste disposal is a trashy issue of careless proportions.

If you think about it, wrestling, fast food, cigarettes and soda pop are the equivalent to the former days of baseball, hotdogs, apple pie and Chevrolet. Our consumer desires are targeted by mass marketing campaigns and seduced with the convenience and beauty of packaging. As the after glow fades, we are left hungry and too broke for a \$30 trash bill.

Changing the present system is a mixed bag of pros and cons. It doesn't matter whether we are working class, businessmen or government officials. Everyone must consider that Northeast Michigan is an area that is dependent on a consumer economy, industry and manufacturers for a quality of life. But we also like to hunt and fish. We can ignore the threats of mercury levels in our water and tuberculosis in deer. Right? To conserve our natural resources and afford to enjoy them seems impossible.

Our city is doing its best to balance environmental issues for the good of everyone. But unfortunately without people to attend meetings and do the groundwork of collecting information and legal support, many decisions are made by a few for the good of all.

Alpena government officials are to be commended for their

efforts. An example is the report on the quality of city water. According to the Michigan-based environmental group Clean Water Action, a survey revealed only 61 percent of state water systems delivered a report to drinking water consumers. Alpena's results were listed in the June newsletter.

Another good note for the city, according to Wayne Hewitt of Evergreen recycling, local officials have been working with the center and Northeast Michigan Recycling Alliance for the past two years developing a program. This affirms there are people working together who are trying to find solutions for the community at large about waste and recycling.

Without the research of grass roots organizations, a strategy to inform the public is not possible. The local environmental group Huron Environmental Activist League (HEAL) has helped the public to know about plans for disposing of hazardous materials and spillage that may have gone unreported. Another local hallmark is the waste incineration that was going at a local plant in Alpena has stopped as of Sept. 15.

But the battle is far from over. The policies and loopholes in Lansing and Washington are instrumental in the legal standards of waste disposal. According to NO-WASTE, a grass roots information website, "Michigan... attempted in the past to stop out of state waste." But "the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that waste is a commodity under the interstate commerce clause and therefore cannot be stopped from crossing the state line." What this means is that waste is a commodity. It has tangible worth that can be commercially bought and sold between the states. The federal

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law says garbage is a product and waste management corporations are just another business. The only changes that can be made are through state laws of regulation.

The trashy side of this editorial is that if we remain ignorant about waste, we are all paying for it. And it will cost us plenty in the future. A negative aspect of our consumerism has turned garbage into big business and the law says so. The more we are uninvolved and misinformed the less things will change.

Local government is doing its part to handle the issues that concern the community, but the work of environmental organizations, outside agencies and the public are also important to the balance. And the other position is this: big business and government are handling the trash anyway, so if you don't want to think about it you don't have to.

I still like Alpena—trashy or not.



Seon Clark

"I like to see the brown leaves on the trees. It looks messy when they fall on the ground."

Lumberjack Voices:

What's your favorite part of fall?



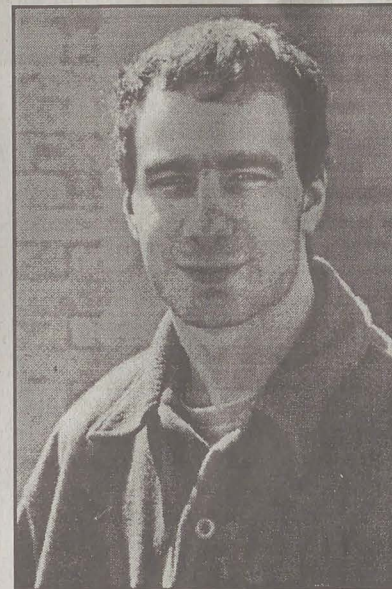
Eric Benac

"It gets cooler. I like to watch football games."



Melissa Johnston

"Definitely my big cozy sweaters, scarves and mittens."



Peter Hines

"The colors, the weather."

THE ADVENTURE OF KAISER PAUL

As "Iron Man" by Black Sabbath rings in his head, Kaiser Paul saves students from the Johnson Street crosswalk.



- Richelle SIELAND 2000

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