

Going Solo

You can see the world your way



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Travel

Thomson News Service

With children back in school now, most family travel is finished for the time being. Who will take up the slack?

The solo traveller, for one. And at one time or another, everybody - attached or unattached - travels solo.

Whether it is a pleasure or a pain depends upon your point of view. The positive side is that the single traveller has maximum flexibility and can therefore change plans on the whim of the moment.

The downside could include a feeling of insecurity, and the notorious "single supplement" that many tour organizers, cruise ships, etc., levy on solo guests (who may, in return for the additional cost, be given the least desirable room).

For singles who would travel double, there's a match-up service: Travel Companion Exchange (Box 833, Amityville, N.Y., 11701), which uses computerized listings to arrange roommates and cabinmates, and publishes a newsletter for single travellers.

On the other hand, many travellers cherish their independence. A poll of single men and women, conducted earlier this year by Louis Harris and Associates on behalf of Travel and Leisure magazine, found that one out of three would prefer to travel alone rather than with a companion.

SINGLES MINGLE

"Solo travel" doesn't mean spending a vacation in isolation. Nor, much less, does it mean a search

for a soulmate.

What it does mean, often, is an opportunity to mingle with people who share one's own situation and circumstances, and whose interests and outlook might be broadly similar.

Bill Schickel, a happily married father of five, seems to have the faculty of gauging what appeals to the well established single person who travels.

Along with his father, Schickel helps to operate a jewel-like resort called Geneva on the Lake, on a bluff overlooking Seneca Lake - deepest (and among the prettiest) of central New York State's 11 Finger Lakes.

The Schickel formula begins with the hotel itself, a mansion built in 1910 on the outskirts of the town of Geneva (where mansions abound, since the town was one of New York's wealthiest throughout the 19th century).

The mansion, and the extensive formal gardens around it, were modelled after the Villa Lancellotti near Rome.

FAMILY TEAM

A decade ago, Norbert Schickel acquired the property. With the assistance of son Bill - a sculptor in his own right - and other talented members of the resourceful Schickel family, he undertook its renovation and conversion into a 29-suite resort hotel (315-789-7180).

Accommodation and dining facilities were designed to a high standard in order to attract the corporate conferences and seminars that now comprise much of the midweek business.

On weekends, when Norbert Schickel and his wife, Marian, are usually on hand in the parlor welcoming arriving guests, those facilities and settings provide a touch of class that leisure travellers can enjoy.

"Singles" weekends, held several times yearly, are built around a theme of particular, yet broad, interest.

One of those themes, not surprisingly, is wines and food. The

Finger Lakes are home to dozens of noted wineries, such as Taylor and Great Western, and the resort prides itself on the offerings of its chef, Richard Leman.

MYSTERY GUEST

Weekends for singles begin with a Friday-evening wine-tasting or cocktail reception at Geneva on the Lake. Later, there's a mystery-guest game - each guest is given a name-tag and a description of the character of a certain participant, then tries to identify that person during the course of mingling with the other guests.

The next vineyards tour and culinary get-away is scheduled for Nov. 3 to 5. "Themes" that are planned for single guests early in 1990 include a ski weekend, Jan. 19 to 21, centering on nearby Mount Bristol and a network of cross-country trails; a special weekend for single parents, Feb. 23 to 25; and a murder mystery to be solved between March 23 and 25 (with the participation of professional actors from Toronto).

The chances are good that participating singles will enjoy the weekend on its own merits, whether or not any new friendships should materialize. Bill Schickel notes that guests on single weekends seem to have a distinct feeling of consideration for each other, so that anyone who might be a bit shy is soon absorbed into the group.

LARGER SUITES

The resort doesn't exist exclusively for midweek conference-goers or weekend singles, of course. Family groups are well provided for - of the 29 suites, 10 have a second bedroom (several with four-poster canopied beds) and all have a sitting area, an equipped kitchen, Finger Lakes wine in the refrigerator and coffee and a coffee-maker on the counter.

Since the dining room is open for dinner on weekends only, the private kitchens provide flexibility for midweek lunch and dinner - although there are several recommended restaurants on each bank

of Seneca Lake.

Activities for guests, single or otherwise, include swimming, badminton, lawn bowling and bocce just outside the door, with sailing and water-skiing at the foot of the steps leading to the lake. Take a stroll or drive along Geneva's leafy South Main Street to see its many 18th- and 19th-century Georgian and Greek Revival homes, strongly reminiscent of an English provincial town.

Geneva is southeast of Rochester, about 10 km south of the New York State Thruway. Nearest airports are at Rochester and Syracuse, although plans are afoot to create a commercial airport at Seneca Falls, 15 km east of Geneva.

TRAVEL NOTEBOOK

Here are notes on news of current interest to travellers:

- Toronto-based Executive Travel Apartments has just opened a 15-storey "executive residence" at 40 Scollard St. in midtown Toronto, with 96 furnished suites. Special introductory rate is \$135 per night, with a two-night minimum. Details: 416-923-3000.

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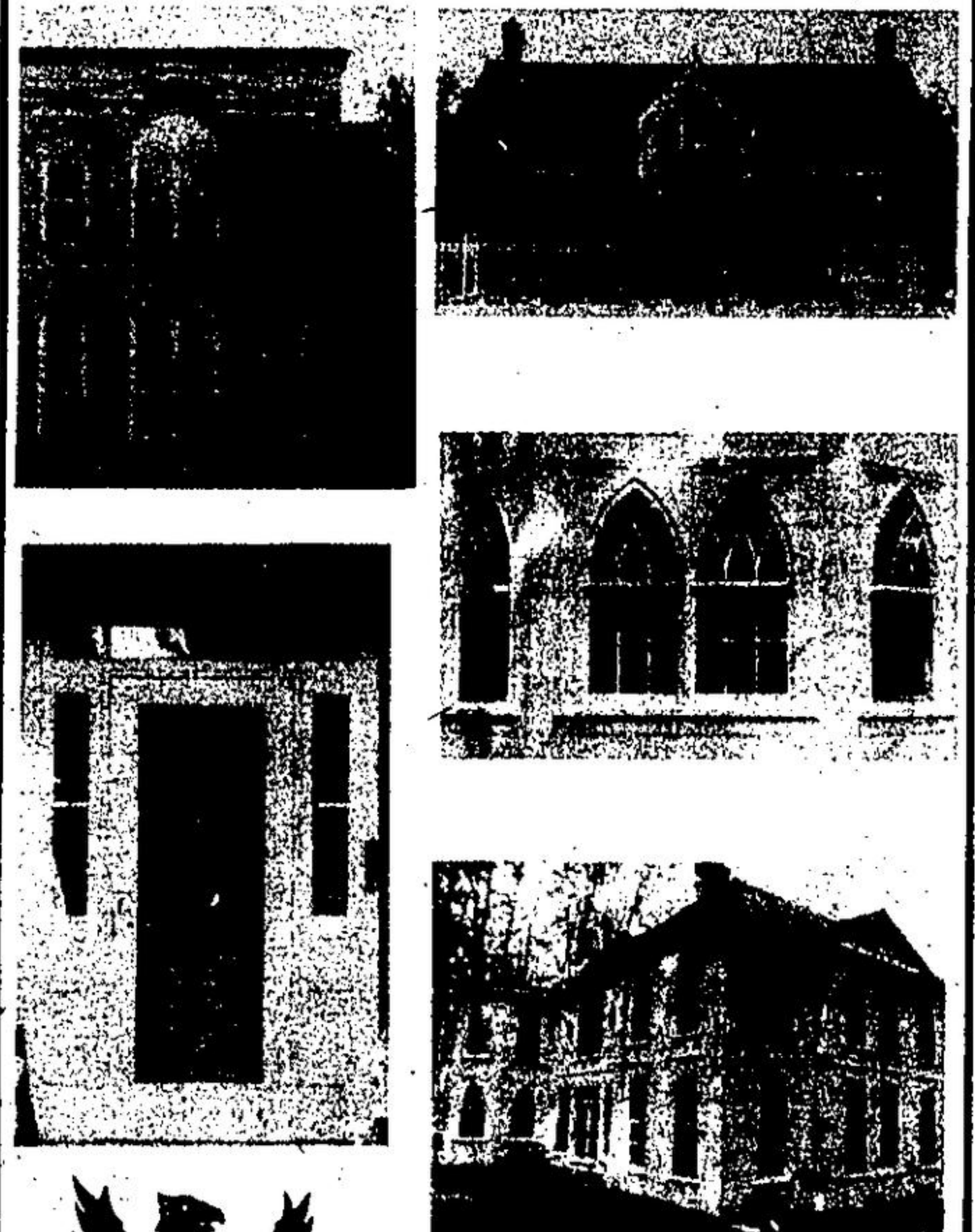
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