

Mud Season **August 27, 2002**

As I drive Route 28 north from Otter Lake to Tupper Lake I have become increasingly aware of the changes that have taken place since we first moved to the area in 1958.

I guess the best way to describe it is to say how much more commercialized it has become. I never really thought about it before, but is following a trend consistent with much of the rest of the country.

I cannot get over how the small town rural area where we grew up has changed since the '30's, '40's and '50's. When we visit there, my better half and I invariably remark to each other how things have changed and we would no longer consider living there.

In many respects the allure and attraction this area initially held for us has faded over time. Much of the reason we feel that way is because we are dinosaurs and unwilling or unable to accept change willingly.

When we came to the area timber related activities just about evenly shared the business climate with a budding recreational sector. The recreational activities in those days consisted of equal parts of today's traditional recreational activities of dining, shopping, hiking, boating, etc., with those whose main pursuits consisted of hunting and fishing.

Instead of the leaf peepers we are inundated with the fall, it was red plaid garbed deer and bear hunters fueling the coffers of the local bars and eating establishments. The same scene was repeated in the spring with eager trout fishermen. Today, the older traditional outdoor activities are a miniscule part of the outdoor activities that are now dominated by hikers, skiers, bird watchers and nature buffs. As quickly as they replaced the first outdoor activities, the tee-shirt compulsive shopper crowd is dominating the scene.

I defend my statement of that fact with the proliferation of gift and curio shops stocked to the rafters with items entire generation could go through life without any appreciable need of. Further proof is the fact that they all seem to be flourishing and indeed, multiplying and improving on scope and size. How long will it be before we see our first mega chain Wal-Mart-style gift outlet?

Thankfully one thing has not changed appreciably over the years, and that has been our air and water quality. Although we are experiencing some problems in both respects they no where approach the seriousness or magnitude of those facing many other parts of New York or other states.

Seasonal traffic problems are escalating and becoming minor nuisances we never faced before, but they pale compared to much of the rest of the state. Most of the full-time residents look forward to – or I should say used to- the end of the summer season. Forget that anymore because every season and time slot has been filled with new and innovative activities. The only time the true worshipers of peace, tranquility and relative solitude have to look forward to is the spring and mud season. My least favorite time of the year in days gone by has, like everything I have outlined above, changed into the one season I truly appreciate and look forward to.

Oh, oh, what have I done by giving away my best-kept secret? For those of you reading this, forget what I just said. Few businesses are left open to cater to you. They are all visiting elsewhere.