

FRESHWATER REPORTER

A fresh approach to storytelling in Manistee and Mason counties...and a bit beyond.

FREE Vol V, No. 2

freshwater-reporter.com

Feb. 15 - Mar. 28, 2023

FREE

Cherries in February: What's that about?

By CARMELITTA TIFFANY

If you're like me, you might wonder why February is National Cherry Month. After all, cherries are harvested in this part of the world in July and August. According to <https://nationaltoday.com/national-cherry-month/>, it's because George Washington, who supposedly cut down a cherry tree, was born this month. Of course, we also celebrate President Lincoln's February birthday and honor all presidents on Presidents' Day, a national holiday.

Perhaps it's also because this is the time of year when cherry growers can whoop it up a little. Spring is pruning season, summer is the harvest, and fall is for processing and storing the little ruby gems.

I have a friend whose family raises cherries. She married into one of the first farm families to settle in Mason County. For 128 years, across five generations, the Kistler family has been growing apples and sweet and tart cherries, as well as raising cows. Their pride and joy is their stand of maple trees that produce award-winning syrup, candy, and maple sugar — a favorite addition to many of my recipes.

Sue was raised on a small farm in Free Soil and told herself that the man she would marry would be handsome, rich and NOT a farmer. She is proud to say she ended up with Ron, a handsome farmer.

The whole family is involved in the success of the farm, with daughters Mandy, Meagan and Jesse, and their families, helping in some capacity. Ron's father, aka Grandpa Dan, 92, still helps with the syrup operation.

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Generations of cherry growers

Top left. The first generation of Kistlers in Mason County. Ron's grandfather Maurice is sitting on his father John's lap. Photo circa 1909. Courtesy photo.

Bottom right. The newest additions to the Kistler family are three boys to carry on the Kistler family name. Photo by Carmelitta Tiffany.

AREA EVENTS
CALENDAR
ON PAGE 2

NORTHWOODS
SAUCE
BOSS



Flaming Emeralds

By JOSHUA ELIE. Courtesy photos.

When I was in high school, all of us "good teenagers" would gather in Cartier Park, a campground on M-116, north of Ludington. I was always invited because I could play guitar and sing wonderful versions of "Kumbaya" and "Michael, Row the Boat Ashore". Nary a puff of smoke nor a drop of alcohol entered our bodies.

"A fresh approach to storytelling," right? Truth be told, we really were the good kids, singing around the campfire and camping out, instead of driving.

This is where I met a young man named James (Jake) O'Brien. We were introduced, in a way, by a Dr. Smalley, who was chaperoning because, you know, teenagers.



The O'Briens

Jake and I hit it off right away, and I was invited to "play" a campfire party on his dad's property here in Irons. So, the day arrived, and I showed up and started the fire up the hill at one of their rental cabins. I got a big bonfire going, tuned up my guitar, and nobody showed up but Jim, "The Dad." He didn't know anything about me, and there I was with his property on fire and a guitar in my hands. The conversation went kind of like this.

Jim: "Who are you?"

Josh: "I'm the guitar man. (That was my nickname at the time.)"

Jim: "What are you doing on my property?"

Josh: "Jake and Pauly said we were getting together here tonight."

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Local art exhibit highlights African American artists

By CARMELITTA TIFFANY

This Freshwater Reporter story is updated from the original version published online on February 1.



George Thomas in his art studio in Idlewild. Courtesy photo.

MANISTEE — In observance of Black History Month, an art exhibition called "Journey of Discovery: Honoring the contributions of African Americans in Rural Michigan" is showing now at Ramsdell Regional Center for the Arts, 101 Maple Street.

Two concurrent exhibits, as well as upcoming events and programs, are also being held this month at the Ramsdell in collaboration with the Manistee Area Racial Justice and Diversity Initiative (MARJDI).

The three exhibitions can be seen in the Hardy Hall gallery through February 25.

The poster exhibit, "Welcome to Idlewild: The Black Eden of Michigan", is on loan from the Michigan State University Museum. "Journey on the Underground Railroad," is a traveling exhibit from the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History in Detroit. Featured in

the "Journey of Discovery" art exhibition are works by eight African American artists from rural Michigan.

One of these is George Thomas, of Idlewild. His works have been shown or included in Newaygo County Council for the Arts, Grand Rapids Art Museum, National Folk Festival, National Assembly of State Arts Agencies Conference, Great Lakes Folk Festival, Outsider Outside Art Fair and Midland Outsider Art Show. Two pieces are in the permanent collection at Muskegon Art Museum. One is in the permanent collection in Michigan State University's Folk Art Museum.

"George is what it means to be a true artist; he works from his heart, and it shows," said Pamela Tripp Simmons, former owner of an art gallery in Baldwin and an admirer of his work. "George has established himself as part of Lake County's creative community for years and

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The Easy Run

By **GRACE GROGAN**

My last Christmas at home, my parents gave me a set of cross-country skis. Trying them out in the driveway, I found them easy to maneuver with little practice. My friend Ron and I were headed to his parents' home for a week. What better place to give them a test than snow-covered northern Michigan?

Ron downhill skied, so we went to Boyne Highlands for the day. He purchased a lift ticket for himself and a cross-country ticket for me. The woman selling tickets said mine included the snow-covered golf course and a "nice, easy run through the woods" accessed by a ski lift.

I had never been to a ski resort, so Ron explained that the lifts shut down at 4:30 p.m., and he would meet me at the lodge then. Looking forward to an enjoyable afternoon, I headed toward the golf course on my skis.

Eventually, I mastered the technique, but the wide-open golf course with no one around was boring. I thought I might as well get the full benefit of my ticket. Confident of my abilities and looking forward to that easy run through the woods, I skied back to the lodge.

Call me stupid, but in my 20-year-old brain the idea of taking a ski lift to an easy run did not compute as a suicide mission for an inexperienced skier. My first important instruction came from the girl riding the ski lift with me.

"You've never been on a ski lift before? Listen quickly, and do exactly what I say!"

I had no idea the lift doesn't stop to let you off, like they do at Disney. I had to put my feet down quickly, stand up, push off and get the heck out of the way for the next set of skiers. Thanks to a stranger, I maneuvered the technique successfully without making a fool of myself. She pointed me in the direction of the cross-country run, and we parted ways.

The trail went through woods, and tall trees on both sides provided a nice winter landscape. I set off full of confidence and looking forward to navigating this easy trail. I quickly learned that "easy" is a matter of perspective. I soon found myself rapidly gaining speed. Ahead was a curve, trees and a drop off. My first thought was—I don't know how to stop! Oh, great. Woman skier plummets to her death first time out.

Thinking fast, I threw myself down on the ground to stop my descent. Success! I was still on the trail and alive. Standing up, I brushed myself off and started again. I plummeted forward, with another curve,



Me, 4, on skis at my grandparents' farm. I don't remember being on skis then, so it obviously was not a traumatic experience. Courtesy photo.

trees and drop-off ahead. Again, I dropped, stopped and brushed off ... and began once more.

The entire trail is a downhill run curving through trees with drop-offs at each turn. What is easy about this? On a positive note, I mastered the timing of throwing myself down so that I gained the most distance without getting too close to the edge.

Boy, was I happy when I saw a man expertly skiing down the hill behind me. I called out, "How do you turn on these things?"

"Just like downhill," he replied as he disappeared down the hill.

Gee thanks, buddy, if only I knew how to downhill!

Finally, two girls my age were coming down the hill.

"Please help me. I have never been on skis before, and I have no idea how to slow down, stop or turn."

They gave me some instructions, then headed downhill. My progress was easier after that, still about the speed of a turtle, but at least I could stay on my feet. I rounded a corner, and the two girls were walking uphill toward me, their skis on their shoulders.

"What are you doing?" I asked.

"We were scared for us, so we knew we had to come back for you."

Oh, great. Just when I was gaining confidence, I learned it was going to get worse.

With one gal in front of me and one behind, we skied our way down the hill. It was a slow procession, and dusk was falling over the heavily wooded trail. Observing our dilemma, the leader announced, "If we don't reach the end of the trail soon, we're going to remove our skis and hike out."

That would seem like defeat but better than trying to navigate this trail in complete darkness. We pushed forward, all breathing a sigh of relief when we emerged from the tree tunnel, the lodge in the distance. A snowmobile came zooming up,

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Just because you couldn't lift it yesterday doesn't mean you can't lift it today. Try again.

Motivational words in the Manistee Health and Fitness Center.

Munson's inspiring health and fitness community

Story and photos by **NIKKI SCHNEIDER**

Living in Chicagoland for most of my life, I was spoiled by the many choices of health clubs, gyms and fitness centers. When I relocated to Bear Lake several years ago, it was the only thing I missed from my previous life in the big city. Until I discovered a hidden gem. Buried among the Munson Manistee Hospital and other medical buildings along U.S. Highway 31 is Munson's Manistee Health and Fitness Center.

The five-year-old fitness center offers state-of-the-art machines, free weights, a TRX suspension training system, bands, balls and all the latest workout apparatus. There is affordable personal training and the Silver Sneakers program, which is a no-cost fitness program for seniors on eligible Medicare plans. A variety of group classes — yoga, Pilates, step, strength — are offered, as well as the only SkyTrak golf simulator in the area, (with golf conditioning and swing-speed training available).

BUT, beyond all that, I have found a community. Likeminded folks from all walks of life and ages gather in this place to improve their health. I am inspired every single time I arrive.

Bob DeYoung is blind. I spoke with him the other day, on his 87th birthday, as he pedaled away on an exercise bike. We didn't get into his medical history; most members don't seem to dwell on the past. During our chat, he told me: "I come here for my physical and mental wellbeing."

He works with Tyler Stec, club manager and personal trainer.

"Tyler keeps me motivated and safe," DeYoung said.

I asked him if he considered quitting the club after he lost his sight.

"Nope, my BODY told me to keep coming back."

Many of the members are older and have suffered an injury, illness or surgery.

"I am grateful to have this amazing job where I can help someone fight their way back," Stec said. "I love making a difference in someone's life."



Member Bob DeYoung pedals away.

Everyone seems to have a story.

Jan Abbey, 71, lifts weights at least three days a week. She loves to work out to '80s hair (glam) band music.

"I love the feeling of strength, confidence and energy," Abbey said, adding, "If I can do it, anyone can."

Since it's the only complete gym in the area, the Manistee Fitness Center is where I often run into friends and neighbors. Chatting while biking or rowing really makes the time fly. It is a great place to catch up on the local gossip, too.

We are truly fortunate to have this facility in our community.

If you are looking for the motivation to improve your health this year, seek out Munson's Manistee Health and Fitness Center and ... Just Show Up. That really is the hardest part.

For more information, email tstec2@mhc.net or call 231-398-1520 and visit: munsonhealthcare.org/services/fitness.

Nikki Schneider lives in Bear Lake with her husband, Mark, and her best furry friend, Max. She combines her loves of junkin' and repurposin' for Patina, the resale home-and-garden shop in Onekama she co-owns.




Trainer/Manager Tyler Stec cheers on Jan Abbey.

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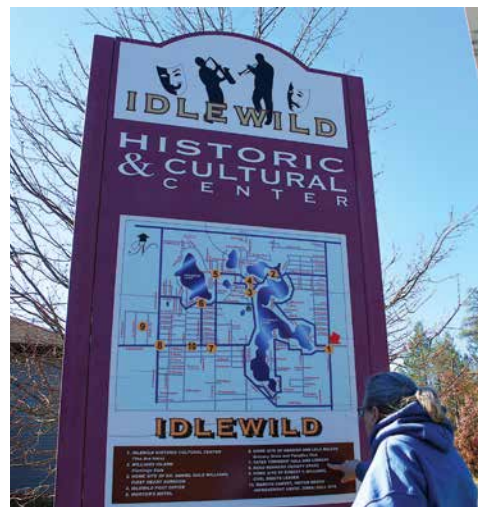
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Above. The entrance to the Idlewild Historic and Cultural Center, operated by Five Cap in Scottville. Photo by Kevin Howell.

Left. The former Wilson home in Idlewild was purchased by the Lindseys in the late 1960s. Photo courtesy of Lake County Historical Society.

An Idlewilder's place in Black history

By KEVIN HOWELL

Looking for a story in anticipation of Black History Month, and knowing Idlewild has a place in that history, I turned to Lake County Historical Society researcher Bruce Micinski for names of folks I might contact.

Joe Lindsey, Bruce told me, was a good person to talk to.

Lindsey is approaching 85 and moved to Ludington in the mid-1960s. I met him at his place in Idlewild where he still owns several properties, including the former Wilson home built in 1927.

Originally from Mississippi, he made his way north, like many others during that time. He said it was his dry-cleaning business that brought him, and he spent 53 of his 55 years in business as the owner of Blue Ribbon Dry Cleaners in Ludington.

He said he was the city's first black business owner and most of his employees were white, but that didn't affect how he ran his operation or, for that matter, how he got along in a mainly white community.

"I had no problem with it in the '60s because I had worked for a company out of Cincinnati before I come here," Lindsey said. "I worked in neighborhoods that I had no problem with going into all-white at all."

Lindsey told me he developed his own philosophy that he has followed for most of his life.



Joe and wife Fredna Lindsey, in earlier years at Idlewild. Photo courtesy of Lindsey Park brochure.

"When I went to Ludington, I had been groomed. I had worked in some of the richest neighborhoods with all white, no blacks, and I had been taught, I had learned on my own, if you're in a business you do one thing. You're there to take care of your business and not give a hoot about other people's business."

He wasn't familiar with Idlewild when he moved to Ludington in 1965. It was through the owner of the Paradise Club that he learned of the Black resort.

"(Arthur) Braggs was running the Paradise Club," Lindsey said. "He's the one who used to bring the shows, used to call

all over the world to get the best shows. He was the one who got me interested because I was up there (Ludington) and he kept asking me, 'You ever go to Idlewild, Michigan?' So, I come down here and fell in love with it, and I've been here since."

By 1967, the Lindseys had moved to Idlewild and became fixtures in the community.

Lindsey focused on taking care of business, working hard at it, as he and his wife Fredna, Idlewild's postmaster for more than 30 years, raised their family. He also worked weekends bartending at the Paradise Club and served as the assistant fire chief for Yates Township.

Idlewild, an African American Resort

Joe Lindsey witnessed the period in the late '60s, early '70s, when Idlewild began to fade. However, before the civil rights movement, things in Idlewild were much different.

Mary Trucks, executive director of Five Cap in Scottville, also oversees the Idlewild Historic and Cultural Center.

"African Americans were in Lake County before what's known as Idlewild was developed," Trucks told me. "They came here and worked in the community, the lumber mills that existed in Lake County."

That was from the late 1800s to the early

1900s, when the greater part of the forests were cut for timber, leaving a lot of land available for other uses.

Ironically, it was four white men — Alvin Wright, Adelbert Branch, Erastus Branch and Wilbur Lemon — who developed the idea of a resort for African Americans.

"(It was) at a time when racism created what was known as Jim Crow Laws and all kinds of restrictions of who could live where and go where," Trucks said. "Obviously, there were African Americans not only in northwest Michigan but throughout Michigan and the Midwest who were affected by these laws and were restricted where they could go to live, to school."


So, Idlewild was the result of a for-profit economic venture by the men who acquired the land initially and developed it to make money, according to Trucks. The developing resort encompassed about 2,700 acres, and the Idlewild Resort Company, in turn, sold it in lots to African Americans.

Idlewild was becoming a true community and a haven of sorts, a place of safety during times of racial troubles, according to Trucks. For example, in the early 1900s — when Idlewild was first being developed, and before it's fame for great music venues came about in the '40s, '50s and '60s —

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an influx of African Americans from the south led to race riots and deaths of African Americans, a period Trucks described as a "red summer."

"It was an economic engine as well for Lake County," she said. "It was a community with everything from undertakers to funeral homes, dressmakers, hairdressers, the grocery stores and gas stations. So, it was economically a thriving community with schools and churches."

Idlewild attracted both summer vacationers and year-round residents. Black bankers, Black churches, Black investors, including folks such as Madame C.J. Walker, invested in Idlewild and helped it grow.

"It became an entertainment draw as an evolution," Trucks explained. "What do we do now? We fished all day, played all the cards we could play, so it was a natural evolution."

Great entertainment brought whites and blacks alike to Idlewild to listen to musicians and entertainers such as Bill Cosby, when he was starting out, Cab Calloway, Sammy Davis Jr., Duke Ellington, Aretha Franklin, Step and Fetch-it, Lionel Hampton and B.B. King.

"You name it, they came to Idlewild," Trucks said. "Temptations made records up here. Sara Vaughn. Four Tops. Stevie Wonder. Joe Louis was a regular. Satchel Paige."

Idlewild also had numerous listings in the Green Book, published by Harlem postman Victor Hugo Green. The Green Book provided black travelers with a guide to hotels, restaurants, service stations, and other facilities where they would be welcomed in the era of Jim Crow and "sundown towns." (From a description of "The Green Book: Guide to Freedom", a documentary film by The Smithsonian Channel which was shown this month at the Ramsdell Regional Center for the Arts in Manistee.)

Civil rights and Idlewild's decline

Then came the civil rights bill of the early

Good News for Those Who Travel

After four years absence, The Negro Motorist Green Book, the official guide to hotels, tourist homes, restaurants and other places where Negroes are welcomed without embarrassment, will be in circulation once again. It will be of the press next month and will list some 3,500 places

An announcement for the Green Book notes places friendly to African Americans during the Jim Crow era. Idlewild had numerous listings in the book as indicated by the endorsement of the Idlewild Chamber of Commerce. Photo courtesy of Lake County Historical Society.

'60s, leading to the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This was Joe Lindsey's time, and things in Idlewild began to fade.

"The civil rights movement up here, it wasn't the same thing like in (a lot of places), wasn't no problem or anything, but the only thing that happened up in Idlewild, after the civil rights movement came, people vanished, they left, that's when it started going down," Lindsey recalled.

"People started going places they hadn't been able to go before," he added. "Integration built that pace; I said all the time, that's what happened to Idlewild."

"When they passed the bill, people had been wanting to go places, they had money to go places, but they didn't let them (before), so they said, 'Hell, let's venture out (and) see what's happening.' I don't blame them."

Lindsey bought abandoned properties and acquired the former Wilson Grocery, one of the main grocery stores in the earlier years. The Paradise Club faded and was torn down, and Lindsey bought that property as well.

He re-sold some of the houses as new people came in, and has plans for the old grocery building and the Paradise Club property — now called Lindsey's Park —

throughout the country, all the leading Negro newspapers, schools and colleges and information about the new cars.

The Green Book is used by all the Automobile Clubs of the United States, the United States Travel Bureau and endorsed by the Idlewild Chamber of Commerce.

next to it.

He wants to help revitalize Idlewild and rents out the Paradise property and Wilson storefront for festivals, summer concerts in the park, and camping.

Marshalean Garrett, a friend of Joe's who came with him when we met, is helping to organize Joe's ideas.

"We always do Juneteenth (a federal holiday marking emancipation of slaves on June 19, 1865) here," Garrett explained. "And there'll be a calendar of events online, we hope. Mr. Lindsey does this wonderful thing on weekends for the community in the summer; it's Sunday in the Park. Just bring a picnic basket, sit on the lake and talk to people that come up ... it's just community."

Lindsey will also offer limousine golf cart tours of Idlewild.

"(It's) something to get people more interested and see more things, rather than try to ride around and figure things out for themselves."

He wants to see Idlewild come back, not just for African Americans but for everybody who wants to be a part of the community.

"I hope the young people step up to the plate to keep it going, (that) everybody (will) work together."

"This is known as a black community because that's what it was in the beginning, but that can't continue going that route because families are so mixed up now — that can be a great thing."

For more about Lindsey's Park and golf cart tours, call 310-677-1238. Email Lake County Historical Society at lakecountyhistory@hotmail.com with questions about Idlewild, or visit the Idlewild Historic and Cultural Center website: www.historicidlewild.org.

Kevin Howell lives in Mason County. He loves the Michigan woods, lakes, people and, especially, Michigan craft beers — not necessarily in that order!



The Paradise Club at Idlewild is no longer there, but the Lindseys purchased the vacant property and turned it into a park. Photo courtesy of Lake County Historical Society.

Refuge on River Street

a Valentine to our northern small towns' main street escapes from the winter wind. Pop in your own favorite names for restaurants, bars, shops!

Is the sun in a mood?
The sky?
Melancholy
as a shabby winter scarf.
A north wind on River Street presses us along cold bleak blocks ahead.
We're shivering hostages until Happy Owl's brightly lit windows or Anne's Used Books invite us instead to huddle and chat with the cheerful booksellers or find a jolly classic in the Children's nook but then: back out to face bitter blasts again.
Why not retreat to T.J.'s Pub for an early hot Toddy or soup de jour.
O, this furious wind we endure may try to chill our souls,
our town.

Have no fear!
The shops and pubs all gather round,
a community of cosy pals to take us in.
Now the wind can only flail against the windows' glow on a lonely mission to wail, to howl, to blow.
O, the orphan wind, Wild Outsider!

Friends new and old bundle in to share warmth and fool the fierce cold.
Then a deep sigh, we return outside, brace for the wind's frosty grip our breath puffs of white yet carry within us this brief hearth of companionship and main street delight.

By Louisa Loveridge Gallas



Artist George Thomas stands beside his diorama, "Jazz Jazz Mo Blues", on exhibit through Feb. 25 at the Ramsdell Regional Center for the Arts. Courtesy photo.

Journey

continued from page 1

has shared his talent and passion for art with students through school programs."

According to his artist's statement, George Thomas knew he wanted to create art at age 7, when books and drawing were his best friends as a boy in Atlanta, Georgia. He described his mother as his best supporter; she would scrape together the money to buy his drawing supplies. When he was 12, his family moved to Detroit. Four years later, his home became Idlewild.

That community's history as a hotbed of musical and literary creativity made it a perfect venue for a budding young artist.

Thomas uses "found" objects to create dioramas of people and places he cherishes from his childhood — from his grandmother doing the wash outside and his grandfather preaching in church, to his mother and grandmother as they quilt. His joyful family memories can be experienced through his work, including his paintings, primarily created using acrylic paints.

His entry of "Jazz Jazz Mo Blues" is emblematic of Thomas' work; this diorama shows the joy of jazz in dance.

His admiration of innovative artists like Pablo Picasso led him to his style.

"He could draw and paint like the other artists but chose to do something different," Thomas said of the master painter, who is also known as the co-founder of cubism and collage.

Thomas didn't know exactly what his style was until he started exhibiting his work and, in his late 40s, attended Kendall College of Art and Design in Grand Rapids.

"They called it 'folk art,'" he said of his work. "I am what they call 'self-taught.'"

His piece joins those of the other featured artists: Georgia Allen, of Manistee; Grand Rapids Art Prize finalist Tyree Broadway, of Kalamazoo; internationally known American realist painter Paul Collins, of Grand Rapids; celebrated "construction painter" Rufus Snoddy, of Traverse City; self-taught abstract artist Nicolena Stubbs, of Idlewild roots; Imani Swain, of Manistee County; and visual media and culinary artist Danielle Thesiger, of southeast Michigan.

"Journey of Discovery" is made possible by National Endowment for the Arts, National Endowment for the Humanities, Michigan Arts & Culture Council, Michigan Humanities, and Manistee County Community Foundation.

Gallery hours are Wednesday-Sunday, 12-3 p.m., and Wednesdays, 5-7 p.m.

Other free programs and events remaining on the Ramsdell's schedule for Black History Month are:

- Social justice singer-songwriter Crys Matthews in concert, Feb. 16, 7-9 p.m., and

- A presentation by Anna-Lisa Cox, Ph.D., called "With Liberty and Justice for All: The Black Pioneers Who Upheld the Values of the American Revolution in Frontier Michigan and Manistee" on Feb. 18, 2-3 p.m.

Attendees are asked to RSVP to: ramsdeltheatre.org

Carmelitta Tiffany resides in Mason County, where she spent the last 30-some years enjoying the blessings of rural life. She is a semi-retired journalist who serves those needing "wordy" advice through her business, West MI Editorial Services.

Property sleuths: Surveyors in our sights

By STEWART MCFERRAN

A surveyor's workplace is your yard, your property and your neighbor's yard. Surveyors are sleuths. They investigate every corner of your property and the surrounding land for markers. Sometimes those markers are steel rods, sometimes they are concrete monuments. And sometimes property has been marked with wooden stakes that rotted away years ago.

The bright flags at the top of those survey markers define the edges of the property and the boundaries with neighbors. They are the hard lines that at times limit the dreams of aspiring builders. Other times, they expand dreams.

The work of dropping abstract points and lines onto the land is the subject of scrutiny by buyers, sellers and banks. Pounding stakes into the ground — where the earth may be soft sand or unforgiving rock or gravel — surveyors must stand behind their work.

They use instruments to sight from point to point and create lines. There must be a line of sight between those points. The machete is a tool of choice and used to cut greenery that obstructs the view. New "robotic" surveying equipment has replaced 200-foot tape that used to measure distance. A two-person crew is no longer necessary.

My friend Steve Bye is a professional surveyor who often works alone. He has made his mark, leaving stakes in the ground at precise points all over northwest lower Michigan. These markers assist those moving forward with building projects.

One time, Steve was assisting with a new road project in Elberta. The road curved up and over a hill to a parking lot overlooking Lake Michigan. A name was needed for the new road; Steve suggested Bye Road. The name stuck, and a fine road it is.

He also suggested I speak with Christine



Left. Steve Bye in the field with his Leica robotic surveying instrument. Right. Christy Andersen, professional surveyor, at her home in Benzie County.



"Christy" Andersen who, like Steve, has a degree in surveying from Ferris State University. I asked her what she loves about surveying, and she replied: "I love everything about it. The original appeal was that it was an outdoor job. I like the math; I like solving the puzzles. Every job has a challenge. You have to figure things out, and if you come across someone else's work and it doesn't quite match yours you have to figure out what they did."

"And every job is different, it's always a daily surprise. Most surveyors I know just really enjoy it and we do it forever."

Christy told me she was the first female to work outside the office while employed by the Benzie County Road Commission.

"They didn't know what to do with me, so they put me on their survey crew," she said.

She worked with a staff engineer and his helper, laying out roads.

"When I first started, they had just come out with EDMs (Electronic Distance Measurement equipment) ... The new

equipment makes it possible for surveyors to work alone. I don't like being out in the woods by myself near the roads. There are too many hazards. Being female, I was a little more in tune with that."

Christy worked with many all-male crews.

"I wasn't always accepted," she shared. "It was definitely a man's field when I started in 1974."

She worked in Beulah for Harold Bruning, who owned a surveying company in Benzie County.

"And it's thanks to him that I got a chance," she said. "There weren't many surveying companies that would have hired me."

Bruning was the Benzie County surveyor for many years.

"He hired another woman, and she was my rod person," Christy explained. "We always said we were the first and only female crew in the state."

Christy said the jobs can change by the day.

"You get to see the worst of people's property ... You're in their backyards. You find all the dumps in the woods. In the spring when the snow melts and before the leaves come on, and (in) fall after the leaves drop, (these) are absolutely the best times because you can see everything. You have to be able to have a line of sight to do your work."

"Yes, I do have a machete, and I got pretty good with it."

Christy wants to encourage young females who might consider surveying as a career. She wants them to know that "they can do it." She is now retired and lives in Benzie County, where she keeps horses and only occasionally takes on surveying projects.

Stewart A. McFerran illuminates current environmental issues in a historic context. He hopes readers will gain an understanding and insight into ways people interact with their environment.

MI BACKYARD

Look to springtails, not groundhogs

By JENNIFER DEVINE

Snow fleas (*Hypogastrura nivicola*) are tiny arthropods. According to Britannica, 84% of all known Earth species are arthropods, which have exoskeletons. This phylum includes insects, mites, centipedes, millipedes, spiders, and crustaceans such as lobsters and crabs. Snow fleas are related more closely to lobsters and crabs than any insect, even though the fleas have six legs.

I didn't notice them until a few years ago, when I saw puddles with what looked like dirt floating on their surfaces. Then I realized that dirt specks on the snow were popping like corn kernels. My first thought was to lock up the dog because there was a flea infestation outside. Were other people experiencing this? Was it just a phenomenon that occurs every so often, like locusts? Digging in, I discovered there was no problem. Thousands of little hexapods inhabiting a cubic meter can cause concern when you first sight them, but they aren't what we think of as fleas. They will not bite, are not parasitic, and do not live on your fur baby. In fact, they are extremely beneficial to our ecosystem. Now I use them as my sign that spring is near.

A flea by any other name.

Our snow fleas are blue-black and about 1/16 inch long compared to the larger 1/8-inch size of a normal biting flea and a 1/4-inch sand flea. Snow fleas have a tail-like appendage, called a furcula, that unfolds from their abdomen to help them spring a few inches at a time, hence their nickname, "springtails." Think of a mouse caught in a mouse trap. The trap springs into the air and flips around uncontrolled as the mouse tries to get away. In contrast, a regular flea jumps using its hind legs and has more control.

Springtails live year-round and have few predators in winter. In warmer months, they are food for ants, beetles, centipedes and fungi. Especially fungi with host plants. The plants attract the springtails, which feed on the fungi. In the process, the springtails are paralyzed and become the food — providing nitrogen to the host plant. Adults work their way to the surface on warmer, sunny winter days. Their dark bodies bounce around and contrast with the snow cover. Their diet consists of decaying organic matter, leaves, bacteria and fungi that cause disease to our flora. Page 198 of "The Great Lakes Entomologist", Vol.



Top. Snow fleas congregating. Stock photo. Above. Snow fleas. Pixabay photo.

1, No. 6 [1967], Article 1, states: "...I have seen uncountable numbers feeding on maple sap in the spring." They play an important role in natural decomposition and make fertile soil by promoting nutrient recycling. Think earthworms. It's worth noting here that earthworms are not native, but springtails are.

There is a symbiotic relationship between that springtime smell from a chemical called geosmin, made from the bacteria *Streptomyces*, and springtails. This was studied in both the U.K. and Sweden then published in the scientific journal "Nature Microbiology". You can also read an

article on popularmechanics.com further explaining this relationship and referencing that study.

Short lifecycle of an ancient arthropod.

Spring is when mating occurs, and the female lays her eggs in the warming soil. After about three weeks, nymphs appear. They grow throughout the summer and molt several times. In fact, they are in the dirt in your hand while you're gardening! There are groups of people in the vermiculture community continuously finding these guys in their wormy compost (vermicompost) bins. They've

also been found taking up space under commercial mushroom farms, according to InsectIdentification.org. In the fall, the "snow lice" reach their final molt stage, becoming adults ready to work all winter. Their lifespan averages two years, but they've been around as a species for millions!

Bad fleas are inside and good fleas are outside.

That's not to say they won't infiltrate a damp home or basement and cause chaos, including feeding on anything that can decompose, including damp cardboard. Please do your due diligence with moisture issues; put down some diatomaceous earth indoors for them to consume, or call a pest company if needed. For the most part, you never have to worry!

According to a study published in "Biophysical Journal", snow fleas are able to withstand bitter winter temperatures, thanks to a "glycine-rich antifreeze protein" which lowers their body temperature. The protein in the snow fleas binds to ice crystals as they start to form, preventing the crystals from growing larger. In fact, by isolating this protein, researchers from places like the University of Chicago have been able to study not only the medical potential of its structure but also the suggested possible applications of this protein in safely preserving organs for human transplantation. See: <https://www.esa.org/esablog/2011/01/28/snow-fleas-helpful-winter-critters-2/>

"Got bit" by a winter phantom?

Don't blame the springtails! Many bugs that bite can still be found inside and outside during winter — bugs such as fleas, deer ticks (what??), mosquitoes, chiggers, bed bugs and spiders — though they are less active in low temperatures. Unless you're in the process of decay, you are safe from springtails. So, go out and live like there's one less biting critter to annoy you. Put your foot in a puddle.

Jennifer Devine has a passion for writing and plants. Living in cities and homesteading off grid has offered a myriad of experiences, memories and adventures with her family, as they utilize the natural resources Michigan has to offer within their crafts, cooking and all-around lives.

Emeralds

continued from page 1

Jim: "Well, they are not coming, and I suggest you leave now."

Josh: "OK. I'll just put the fire out and be on my way."

Jim: "No, you won't. You will leave now, and I will take care of the fire."

Now, Jim had raised a large Irish family. He had a stern voice and a glare that would scare the Devil, himself. I left immediately.

A few years later, Flea Roast weekend in Irons rolled around. (You read my "Cowboys, Chili Sauce and the Oak Grove Tavern" story in the July 27, 2022 issue of Freshwater Reporter, right?) I was of drinking age by this time, so I can admit to this tale from my youth. The after-party for the roast was in Jim's front yard. My friend Pauly was being a party pooper by trying to sleep at 3 a.m., so I poured a beer on his head. Unfortunately, he happened to be sleeping in one of Jim's beds. Then,

I drove my 455 Rocket Olds down to the riverside, where it sank. I told Jim I would be back in the morning to retrieve it and heard the same thing: "Time for you to leave, and I will take care of it."

A few years after that, I was in a car accident. I was not driving, though the police were convinced I was. I ran through the woods in the middle of the night and used Jim's phone to call my mother to come pick me up. I do not believe I asked his permission.

He never held any of this against me, and after meeting his kids (and getting to know a few of them quite well when we were young), I get it. They all know when to "let things go" or "grab the bull by the horns" — just like he raised them.

New Year's Eve, I decided to throw a party. (If you can remember the year, you weren't there.) Actually, it was my dad's idea. Parties at the Elies' are legendary and always in a good way. We set up the band — my parents are master musicians, too —



in the dining room. To my surprise, Jim and his wife Janet not only showed up, they sat "front row" for the music and had a blast. After a 4-hour set, about 30 of us piled into a wagon for a big hayride. Off through the snow we went, laughing and carrying on as we circled all the other parties. When we got back, we had a fresh drummer ready

Mark Richards' and Peter Elie's Flaming Emeralds

In a shot glass, pour Creme de Menthe to within a quarter inch of the rim. Pour Southern Comfort over the back of a spoon to layer it evenly and gently, so the two do not mix. In dim light, use a long handled lighter and light the Southern Comfort. When the flame goes out, kiss the Blarney Stone. Sláinte!

to go and the party lasted about 24 hours, start to finish.

Jim, his wife Janet, and the whole O'Brien family have a very special place in my heart, so ...

Here's to the "Flaming Emeralds" and to all our Irish traditions.

Happy St. Patrick's Day! Sláinte!

Cherries

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The farmer's life is far from easy, and most of the Kistlers also have day jobs, adding to their workload. But, as Ron says, the pros and cons of farming are both the same: working outside and being self-employed. Sue sees lots of blessings, like making sure the public has healthy and tasty foods, and getting to bake a pie whenever she feels like it. Her favorite recipe (below) is a Kistler family favorite, using both cherries and maple syrup.

Find their seasonal Kistlercrest Farm Market, established last year, at 4049 S. Pere Marquette Hwy., Ludington. Contact the farm at: kistlercrest@gmail.com or 231-843-3032. Their products are also sold online at kistlercrest.com and at local farmer's markets and other venues.



Sue and Ron Kistler are proud that Kistlercrest Farms received Michigan State University's Environmentally Verified designation. Courtesy photo.



Many hoped the comet would appear more like this in the night sky. That was not the case. Image by Jim Bonser on Pixabay.com.

Sue Kistler's Cherry Maple Pie

Crust:

- 2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 cup cold unsalted butter, cut into 1/2" cubes
- 2 Tbsp maple syrup
- 4 to 8 Tbsp ice water

Filling:

- 8 heaping cups cherries, fresh or frozen
- 2 Tbsp lemon juice
- 1/3 cup maple syrup
- 3 Tbsp arrowroot powder
- 1/8 tsp almond extract (optional)
- 2 tsp vanilla

Top Crust:

- One egg, beaten
- 2 Tbsp sugar



Sue and her cherry maple pie. Photo by Carmelitta Tiffany.

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees and grease a 9-inch pie dish.
2. Add flour, salt, and cubed butter to a food processor. Blend 20-30 seconds or until dough begins to form, stopping to scrape down sides.
3. Add maple syrup. Blend for 10-15 seconds or until ball begins to form. If still crumbly, add cold water, 1 tablespoon at a time. Dough should hold together when pinched.
4. Place dough in bowl and form into ball. Refrigerate while making pie filling.
5. Add cherries to large saucepan over medium-high heat. Add lemon juice. Cook about 10 minutes or until liquid is expressed. Turn heat to medium.
6. In a separate bowl, mix maple syrup and arrowroot powder. Stir mixture into cherries.
7. Let cherries cook down and thicken, about 5 minutes. Turn off heat once thick like filling. If too thick, add a little water. Let cool completely (about 1 hour).
8. While filling cools and has about 15 minutes left, take dough out of fridge. Separate into two even balls.
9. Roll out one of the balls into a circle, wide enough to fit into a 9-inch pie dish. Place in the bottom of a greased pie dish. Roll out the remaining dough and set aside for the top crust.
10. Pour cherry filling into pie dish. Add top crust, pinching edges together for a crimped look. Add a few slits in the top to allow steam to escape. Brush with egg wash and sprinkle with sugar.
11. Bake 50-55 minutes or until golden brown. Let cool. Refrigerate at least 3-4 hours.

FRESHWATER REPORTER

A fresh approach to storytelling in Manistee and Mason counties...and a bit beyond.

P.O. Box 188, Manistee, MI 49660 231-835-0867 editor@freshwater-reporter.com

Publisher/Editor: Pat Stinson Co-conspirator: Mark Videan

Graphic design/layout: Amy Hansen Advertising Sales: Pat Stinson/Stewart McFerran

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It's hard to catch a comet

By BROOKE EDWARDS

Lake-effect clouds did not ruin our ability to see the green comet. Expectations, unfortunately, were overly high. Still, it was worth a shot. (In my case, several camera shots.) In the science of astronomy, the unknown is the most fun.

This comet must have come as a shock to those who study the night sky. In March 2022, astronomers at the California Institute of Technology's Zwicky Transient Facility first spotted this comet, which they classified C/2022 E3. A comet can be difficult to detect, depending on the size of its tail and its position in relation to the Sun.

Scientists estimate C/2022 E3 last paid this part of the solar system a visit 50,000 years ago and may have been much brighter. Humans at the time must have found these strange sights in the sky quite alarming, perhaps supposing them to be supernatural.

On Feb 2, C/2022 E3 made its closest approach to Earth, coming within 26 million miles, but it did not put on the spectacular show that was promised. In terms of distance in space, 26 million miles is minimal. That is only .2 AU (astronomical units) or 20% the distance between the Earth and the Sun. The entire distance from the Earth to the Sun is 1 AU, or around 93 million miles.

My journey to catch C/2022 E3

On Jan. 29, the Michigan winter skies cleared briefly after sunset. Knowing the comet was nearing its closest approach, I rushed to the beach with an optimistic mindset.

A bright Moon lay overhead as I quickly set up my DSLR camera for some long-exposure captures. Pointing the camera in the area where I knew the comet to be, between the Big Dipper and Little Dipper, I took in the rare cloudless sight of a January night sky.

Looking through astronomical binoculars yielded nothing. I figured it was because of the bright Moon and hoped for the best when I studied the photos.

The bitter cold (20 degrees F) made staying outside the car for long impossible, forcing me to pack up after only a handful

of long exposures. With nature working against me, I was unsure I had even captured it, and I drove home feeling defeated.

Checking the small-body database from JPL, I found the comet to be at a magnitude (brightness) of 10.5. This is not visible to the unaided eye. At most, it was estimated to be a magnitude 6, making it only slightly visible in a truly dark sky. The lower the magnitude, the brighter the object. For example, Neowise, the comet that we saw in 2020, was a magnitude 1 object. Jupiter, one of the brightest planets in the evening sky, is a magnitude -2.

Examining my photos at home, I studied the area between the Big and Little dippers. Comparing the images with the location of the comet, which was given by the StarWalk2 app, I was able to zoom in. A tiny green speck caught my eye in the exact location. An overwhelming sense of accomplishment came over me. It felt like I had just done the impossible.

The green color captured by dedicated individuals was from the emission of carbon that occurs when the comet is struck by UV rays from the Sun. Gas and dust emitted by the comet give it the appearance of having a tail, which I was unable to capture in any single frame. This was only possible by stacking multiple long-exposure photos.

If you are feeling let down by the promise of this celestial show, you should know you did not miss much. It's difficult to know how bright a comet will become, as astronomy is a science based on observations and educated predictions. In our universe, anything is possible — of course, within the laws of physics. For all we know, we may have a comet swing by next year!

JPL Small-Body Database Lookup: https://ssd.jpl.nasa.gov/tools/sbdb_lookup.html/?des=2022%20E3&view=OPC

Brooke Edwards is a NASA/JPL Solar System Ambassador. She lives in Manistee and has given area presentations and hosted night-sky viewings at Fifth Avenue beach and Orchard Beach State Park. Follow her on Instagram: [brooke_of_stars](https://www.instagram.com/brooke_of_stars)

Easy Run

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"Are you Gracie?"

"Yes"

"I'm with ski patrol; your boyfriend requested we look for you. Do you want a ride back to the lodge?"

"No! I made it this far. I'm not giving up now."

"Okay, I'll let him know we found you," he replied, then headed back toward the lodge.

As we neared the lodge I could see Ron walking toward me, so I turned to thank

the girls for their help, then looked back at Ron.

"Did you send out the ski patrol for me?"

Ron couldn't find me when the lifts closed at 4:30 p.m. Ski patrol doesn't go out until 6 p.m., but he told them I was alone and had never been on skis. They agreed to search early.

Although I learned the basic technique for cross-country skiing, I think that easy run killed the appeal for me. I never put my feet on skis again.

Grace Grogan is a freelance writer and native of Michigan who lives and travels full time in a motor home.