

July 13, 2001

Cindy, your trip sounded fun. Who would have thought to vacation in Iowa?

We took a little vacation the weekend before the 4th. We went to Higgins Lake and stayed with Carol's parents on Saturday. The water was unusually warm for Higgins, and I spent over an hour playing in the water with granddaughters Eliana (3) and Elyse (2). (Carol and the other adults in her family are crazy about the kids, but when we get together, the adults talk among themselves and I play with the kids.) On Sunday, we drove to Ludington, where we had a motel room reserved for 3 nights. We took our canoe to Ludington State Park and paddled around the shallow "hidden lakes" around the edges of Hamlin Lake. Carol likes to see the fish. We saw a swarm of baby bullheads, a 15" dogfish with a little fish in its mouth, lots of little perch and sunfish and small-mouth bass, and gars. The gars laid at the surface, skinny as a stick, about 18 inches long, and spotted like a leopard.

Other than that, we didn't do much. Ate almost all our meals at House of Flavors, whose specialties are turkey and ice cream. We did rescue a mouse. While driving out to the park along the lakeshore, we saw a bird pecking at a mouse, so I did a U-turn. The bird flew off, and the mouse was fine. There were 2 of them, apparently dune-dwellers. Very tiny and cute. Carol wouldn't let me keep them.

We also got a glimpse of a pileated woodpecker, a big bird with a Woody Woodpecker crest. I've seen one only once before, in our back yard, and that also was only a brief glimpse.

Speaking of our back yard, we made a beach. Our next-door neighbor bought a canoe and decided it was too difficult to launch it off the riverbank. So we went in on a truckload of pea stone. We had them dump it on the riverbank and then we raked it down, creating a pea stone beach about 20 feet long, 6 feet wide and 6 inches above the water – during summertime low water levels, that is. It is nice now, but what will happen when the river rises is yet to be seen. Now we need to fix up the riverbank so we can more easily get down to our beach.

We haven't been getting to the movies much. The last one we saw at the theater was Shrek, which was OK. We liked Best of Show, but thought Nurse Betty was bad. The other night Red Green was saying he and his wife hadn't seen many movies lately. He said as they get older, married couples get out less and less. He said about the only thing that gets him and his wife out of the house these days is a grease fire.

Deb, you are right, it is foolish to jeopardize my job by tangling with my superiors. I wouldn't be able to find another. So I am trying to stay calm. The latest was a dispute over reporting deadlines. Our customers send us reports each month, and our policy is that they are due on the 10th, but there is no penalty unless they are later than the 20th. One of the managers is after me because I tell people the deadline is the 20th. She wants me to tell them it is the 10th. I try to explain to her that if there is no penalty for being later than the 10th, it is not a deadline. The word deadline comes from prisons. There was a line around the prison yard, and if a prisoner crossed it, they got shot.