

When we travel, my husband often watches for signs announcing "Waterfront property for sale." He gets the gleam in his eye of a bargain hunter who has spotted the sign of all signs, "GIGANTIC Neighborhood Yard Sale!" I have that same gleam when my glance falls on a character-rich old barn. There is tremendous pleasure in the pursuit of hopes and dreams.

It is fascinating to explore roads that lead to new places. Such forays frequently offer up memorable moments. In early June we traveled to Michigamme in the northern Upper Peninsula. As expected, we put many extra miles on our van jouncing down side roads to check out waterfront property or to look for ethnic barns. The U.P. is famous for its stovewood barns and, to its credit, still has a decent number of log barns.

We hadn't been across the Mackinac Bridge on the Superior side of the state very many miles, when Doyle spotted a "For Sale" sign. We ventured down a steep hill to a sheltered bay along Lake Michigan. A few lefts and rights, then blacktop to gravel and gravel to little more than a two-track and found ourselves before a pair of restored log cabins well-shaded by old-growth trees. Except for an electric light visible through the window of one of them we seemed to have traveled back in time to an 1800s Michigan. Everything about the cabins, the setting, and the serenity, said, in please-respect-me terms, "beloved history." The cabins were not for sale, we had passed that property a few turns back, but had ventured on out of sheer curiosity.

Many miles later, near Marquette, on little more than an ATV trail along a nearly cabinless lake we spotted a snapping turtle laying her eggs. This was only the second time I had ever witnessed this process, the first being last summer when a slightly smaller leatherback chose to deposit her eggs behind our barn.

The snapper had attempted to make her nest in several other places nearby before unfortunately choosing this particular spot in harm's way. By the time we happened along, she had dropped at least 14 smooth white eggs into a tube-like hole maybe eight inches deep.

The trail did not appear to be heavily traveled, at least not this time of the year, but was directly in the route where ATVs split the sweet stillness with their abrasive roar and grinding tires. Could the eggs survive the compaction and vibration? Would this grand turtle survive?

A day later, as we approached Gladstone, a big black dog lumbered onto the highway several yards ahead of us. Seconds later, the "dog" reared on its hind legs batting the air with massive paws before skittering back into the underbrush.

Trips down side roads have yielded many memorable images over the years; scenic lakes, log cabins, extraordinary barns, and glimpses of nature's creatures.

Someday, I will sit contentedly with those memories, perhaps at a cottage on a bit of waterfront property, or maybe nestled in the porch swing at my barn-turned-house in a place where turtles and black bears can safely wander by. These are the things of which hopes and dreams are made.