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## Morea Chiropractic Wellness Center’s Community Event



do spinal screenings. Kids enjoyed games and prizes. Len, the massage therapist, provided free chair massages. A local golf pro, Ryan Ruthkowski gave some great tips on how to improve golf swings. Jennifer Fricano, from West MI Jazzercise in Ferrysburg, led a group in a fun exercise dance class. Vendors, such as Wild Blue, Norwex, Modern Woodman, and LulaRoe provided some great information as well as some fun shopping! Vegetarian pizza was provided by Little Ceasars.

Morea Chiropractic thanks the Fruitport Community for their support!



## Back in my Homestate

by Liesa Swejkoski

Towards the end of his life, my father and I would spend evenings on the balcony of his home in Saint George, Utah where he had retired fifteen years earlier. “Why would you want to leave all this beauty?” he would ask, gazing east to the red sandstone mountains as the sun set behind his home. The sunbeams cast an ever-changing light show, more beautiful than words can describe.

After several years in the desert, I’d become disillusioned with the harsh, dry climate. I turned to my father and said, “I miss Michigan.”

Flabbergasted, he asked, “Why would you miss that place? It’s humid in the summer and bitter cold in the winter. I couldn’t wait to get out of there!”

What did my dad expect me to say? How could I express to him what I felt?

Yes, I’d been raised to hate the state. For decades the man complained about sticky heat whenever he was doing yardwork or repairing the barn. In the winter he would put an electric heater into his car to knock off the chill before driving to work in the pre-dawn hours.

In the desert, all I could see was drying grass and a lack of trees. Year after year I would start a garden, just to watch it dry up. Some years I would have a little success at the start. Then just as my tomatoes, green and plump, would look like they had some hope, a sandstorm would raze Saint George, scouring my little plants down to one inch nubs. Finally I just gave up. Growing a garden in the desert wasn’t worth the tears.

I went to a couple reservoirs because I love to swim in lakes. I tried to make the best of it, but it just wasn’t the same; not by a long shot.

I remember the summer I returned after five years away from Michigan. Dad, his grandchildren, and I drove eastward and watched as day after day, we’d see more trees and grass. One night we made it to our home state and stopped at a hotel in Saint Joseph. The next morning, I put swimsuits on my children to spend the morning at the beach along Lake Michigan. Nine-year-old Kay looked out to the west and gasped, “Mommie! Was this lake here when you were a little girl?”

I answered, “Why, yes, it was!” I realized she only knew about reservoirs from our picnics and a few school field trips. Then I said, “People didn’t make this lake, Heavenly Father did.”

She had a look of amazement and spent a long time playing with her little sister May on the shore. More than once she would stop to gaze at the horizon, awestruck.

I’d spent five years trying to love the desert. Now that I was back in my home state of Michigan, I realized I’d been gone for too long.

My birth took place at Zieger Hospital in Detroit. My own babies each came into the world along the Detroit River: Kay at Wyandotte General Hospital and May at Riverside Osteopathic in Trenton. It’s as if the river is flowing in my blood!

Each season in the Great Lakes has its own splendor. Fun for me growing up was lightning

bugs, jumping into piles of leaves, building snowmen. My memories were filled with watching freighters gliding up and down the Detroit River, fishing with my father, and sitting on his shoulders watching boat races. I can’t do any of those things in the desert.

When May and Kay were tiny, we still lived in Michigan. When the snow came, I pulled them on a sled in the woods. The near silence, the muffled sounds in the snow, delighted a place deep inside my soul. Sure, driving in a blizzard can be a challenge, but that doesn’t happen every day. (Then again, man-kind in his wisdom built snowplows, so why worry?)

Still, with the urging of family and a heavy dose of anti-Midwest brainwashing, my husband and I made the move to St. George, Utah. The first thing Kay and May did in our new sandy backyard was dance in a sudden unexpected downpour. The monsoon had come. All the way to the desert and my kids played in the rain!

That was another thing: People would call and ask, “How do you like the desert?”

I’d reply, “It’s ghastly hot!”

To which I’d get the comment, “but at least it’s a dry heat!”

Then I’d explain that since mid-May it was 90 degrees and then 100 degrees plus in June. As soon as we got into July and August, the hottest months at about 115° to 118°, the rains started up, mainly in the surrounding mountains. This added humidity to the weather. Many times we had to deal with the mugginess, but no rain, unless it came in the form of a downpour resulting in a flash flood. That first summer we lost a couple hens to the heat and a rabbit, too.

Year after year we could see the clouds in the mountains but we’d seldom get rain in the valleys. People from out of town called it a drought. I said, “It’s not a drought. Welcome to the desert.”

Countless times, lightning storms would strike the mountain woods twenty miles away, setting off massive forest fires. The smoke pooled in the valley where we lived and everything smelled like a campfire. I had no problem with the smell—I had issues with breathing in the ash. (California gets all the media attention, but I can verify it: the entire west is a tinderbox.)

To sum it up, when someone says, “At least you have a dry heat out there in the desert,” it’s all I can do not to reach out and slap the assuming face those words come from.

So, now that I am back in Michigan, I breathe in the moist air and give thanks for the woods, four seasons, and the Great Lakes. After all, I was raised in all this grandeur. I just didn’t appreciate it when I was a child.

I am back to stay. It is with great pleasure and satisfaction, that I now call west Michigan my home. I had to journey through desert Hell to return to my first love here in the Great Lakes. Maybe some folks don’t feel the same way that I do, but I am willing to bet many people reading this will smile – and agree.