**Surveyin’ Da Situation**

**Reality Lies in the Eyes of the Beholder…**

I apologize if you see me around and all I am doing is smiling. I have always been a pretty happy person, but lately the smile has been even a little broader. I guess the reason is all the things I am encountering here in the northland are making me smile that much more. They are either shaking a great memory loose or giving me a new one to file away.

I thank the Big Guy upstairs every day that I was born and raised in an area that was built on hard work and strong beliefs. The area really isn’t about material things or what might be in your wallet, but instead people care about what kind of person you are and how do you treat others. That being said, I still have to shake my head sometimes when I encounter folks who haven’t ventured far out of the area and have their scale set to local rather than broader.

I remember an instance when my parents came down below da bridge to visit their oldest son and see how he was faring in the big city of Flint and the surrounding suburbs. I had been living in Genesee County for almost a year and because of my work, I got around the county pretty regularly and enjoyed meeting folks there. Most of the folks I met were big supporters of their towns and schools which reminded me of home, so I felt pretty comfortable.

My mother and dad had just got in my car to take a ride and visit the area when my dad took off on me about living here as the traffic was so bad. We had just gotten on I-69 and other that the occasional car or truck, traffic was pretty light. In fact, in my 35 years in the county, I can’t think of a time when traffic wasn’t manageable perhaps other than southbound I-75 on a Sunday night of a holiday weekend. Of course, no locals got on I-75 at that time anyway so the side roads worked just fine.

I tried to explain to my dad that this traffic was pretty tame compared to the county to the south where I don’t ever remember having an easy time getting around. Dad wasn’t having any of that because he had never driven through Oakland or Wayne County at 5:00 pm on a work day, but I had. This whole experience made me think about how we get used to things happening in our surroundings and that becomes the norm.

Dad was right of course if you compared Genesee County traffic to Gogebic County traffic. In my 30 mile trip into town to go to my woodshop during the week, I may have 12 vehicles coming in the other direction. Three are logging trucks, one is from the road commission, one may be a state trooper and the rest are folks heading somewhere else. Hardly busy traffic, but it is what you get used to.

I stopped in a local pub the other day on the way home from the shop. It is a nice place to catch up on local news and may be even a little gossip. One of the gents there was telling a story about his dad that caught my attention. The man telling the story grew up in this small town where the pub was located. He went to school there and still lives there today. He was telling the crew there that when he came home the day he got engaged some 30 years earlier, his dad threw a fit. He didn’t know the young lady very well and didn’t have any reason not to like her except as he said in his own words, “She’s a city girl…she’s from Ironwood.” To me that was a little bit of a stretch. At that time in history, Ironwood may have had a population of 7000 people and while it was the largest town in the county, I am not sure I would have called the young lady a “city girl”. I couldn’t help but smile as I was listening to the story because I could relate to his dad’s reaction.

I am not sure what’s in store for my bride and me as we continue our journey through life, but all I can hope for is that we get to continue to smile and find reasons to laugh every now and again. I think we have a good chance at that happening here as much as anywhere, but I have to be careful because Steph is originally from Dearborn and while it may not be as sophisticated as Ironwood, I wouldn’t want anyone to think she was a city girl….

And that’s the situation as I survey it….