

A Minnesota State of Mind?

The ice is off the lakes now. The ducks and the geese have returned home. Soon to be followed by other wildlife emerging from their dens. The temperatures are in the seventies. City folks, having shed their winter coats, are now wearing shorts.

Almost instantly the landscape has been transformed from a grey mass to sprouting green grass. The sounds of the snowplows and sand trucks have been replaced by the sounds of leaf blowers, garden tillers, and car stereos. Car stereos blaring their constant boom-boom reverberating through our heads and spines.

For us, coming out of winter is a dramatic event. From October to April we live in withdrawal. It is dark and cloudy all the time. By February of most years we're screaming for sunshine and blue skies. If we're among the lucky thousands who make the pilgrimage to Arizona or Florida, it is not as dramatic. For the rest of us, casinos are the only outlet for our frustration by January and February. Some of us don't go outside at all. Some people even sleep through winter.

What is this place we call Minnesota? Are we strange or just a little off?

It is clear this is a land of extremes. It is a land of extremes in temperature and attitude.

From minus 30 in the winter and dry bone humidity, to 115 in the summer, with sweat poring out of every gland in your body, we've earned the right to say we're survivors. Some say it's time to take off your long winter underwear when the mosquitoes start to bite.

It's been said that Minnesotans are emotional and they talk funny. I mean with a little emphasis in their voice that can't be replicated elsewhere. Do you remember the last time a Minnesotan got excited and there was this sing-songy quality in their voice? I can remember vividly the soaring temper of my father for whom the heavens seemed to part. I can remember the quiet lilt in my mother's voice as she tried to calm him down. It was almost as a prayer.

What causes this? Is there a Minnesota state of mind?

My parents weren't the only emotional people I've come across. Whenever my relatives would get together we laugh, sing, and tell jokes until we'd thought we'd died.

It is a place where we are drawn to do the best the Almighty wants of us. It is a place where our souls are lifted to the heights of ecstasy or brought down to the depths of despair.

We get depressed and we become alcoholics.

This is a land that is replete with musicians, artists, composers, and poets. It is home to the some of the best theatre, opera, orchestra, and art galleries in the world.

It is home for 1,345,000 fishermen, 582,000 hunters, and 2,200,000 bird and animal watchers. There are over 10,000 lakes in Minnesota; over 6,564 rivers, and 16.3 million acres of forests.

Minnesota is home to **Twins, Vikings, Timberwolves, Saints, Wild, Lynx**, and many non-professional sports teams. At one time we were the “sports capital,” of the nation, hosting the 2001 NCAA Grand Slam in Minneapolis. All of the pent up emotion and frustration we feel at work is released in a frenzy of game related activity. In Minnesota we teach our kids sports as if it were a religion. I read an article recently that said we have the “craziest sports fans” in the world.

It's a state of mind.

At one time, the Twin Cities had the world's largest slaughterhouse and meat packing plant. Now it is home to one of the world's largest shopping malls. Every Saturday, thousands of Minnesotans exercise their credit card and fill their closets with stuff they might need.

Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing are big here, but not as much as before. Once the **Grain Capital of the World**, Minneapolis still is home to many food and natural resource businesses. We're home to the Pillsbury Dough Boy, the Jolly Green Giant, and Spam. Betty Crocker lives here. Tony the Tiger doesn't.

The industrial might of Minnesota has atrophied. The Iron Range is all but non-existent. Long gone are the steel plants, and the factories that turned out rail cars, steel cranes, tractor parts, and washing machines. Today, I read one of our most famous factories will be shutting down soon.

The ice is off the lakes now. For thousands of us it is time to go beyond ourselves and search out new surroundings. Soon, it will be fishing season. The parks will be ready and our campers loaded for weekend treks. The rivers and lakes will call to us. Golf caddies will await us at numerous courses. There are miles of uncharted forests that need to be traveled. It is time for a rebirth of the human spirit and a journey into the great outdoors.

Typically by April we start to get our first wave of rainstorms. Around about June the fields will all be planted.

July is a noisy month. The corn will be growing so fast you can hear it. In addition to the sound of fireworks that last all month, the skies will echo loudly with lightening and thunder, sometimes days on end. Sometimes, it feels the sun will never set.

In six months it will be winter again. Time to hibernate. In six months we'll be scrapping the ice off our windshields and putting our coats back on. Country folk will be piling firewood come August. The ducks and the geese will be leaving home, and the temperature will start to drop. By November, we'll be swearing when our anti-freeze leaks, or our battery goes dead. In December we'll have forgotten how hot the summer was.

Lastly, Minnesota is the native home for pick-up trucks and snow blowers.

After all, it's a Minnesota state of mind.

END OF ARTICLE.