

## IN MY OPINION

Caroline Porter

# A sloth's guide to sightseeing

The state of Florida is about as strange as Illinois, politically and otherwise. I'm not a typical tourist. For one thing, I vacation there so I can visit my parents in Sarasota, and more family members are moving to the sunny climes every year.

Secondly, I'm not a very good sightseer. Having to battle traffic and crowds and pay money to view exotic birds and fishies is not my idea of fun. Our visit to Disney World last year was enough to cure me forever. I know this is unAmerican, but what a rip-off.

Thirdly, if we are aware of our surroundings, the entertainment of everyday life is usually adequate, especially if we are taking a real vacation, which means doing as little as possible. At our little resort community in Siesta Key the wildlife came to us. A sparkling, white egret was fond of wandering up on porches and looking at (or through) the window. It sported green eye shadow - most attractive. As it quietly stood in front of me one day, staring at me as only an egret can do, my cousin remarked that the bird probably thought I was it's mother.

Now I know I have a little head and my eyes are close together, but I thought that was just a tad insulting. Besides, I never wear green eye shadow. We all wondered how the bird could keep itself so clean and white.

Then there was a large, grey heron wandering the streets of this little community. These birds walk slowly and carefully, which is probably a necessity with their skinny, long legs and toes. It was fun for a "snow bird" like me to observe these striking birds at such close range.

Just to add to the excitement, the front page of the Sarasota Herald-Tribune featured a photo and article about a bobcat wandering around Siesta Key! Having completely lost my sense of adventure, I didn't think this was a fun bit of news. It was not imaginary, for my cousin-in-law was sitting on their patio when the animal, about the size of a German shepherd walked by her and looked about as afraid of her as she was of the big cat.

You see? Now how neat is that? Wild animals and birds, right there, and it didn't cost a dime.

Not quite in the same category, but to a Democrat, maybe in the "dirty bird" department, were all the appearances, photos and print about Katherine Harris, Florida's Secretary of State. She is a candidate for Congress in that district, attends every fancy social gathering and speaks at many events. She is wildly popular with Republicans (big surprise) and will have no problem winning her primary election contest or winning the Congressional seat.

Another form of entertainment is reading about Florida's gubernatorial races. Former U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno is popular with the Democrats, but I can't imagine anyone being able to beat incumbent Jeb Bush. My mother, biased political analyst and staunch Democrat, indicates he is considered to be a pretty good governor.

I should devote another whole column to the fascinating article telling about the first humans to hit North America, in that area, during the Paleoindian Period 12,000 to 9,500 years ago. Archaeological evidence indicates that with sea levels much lower during that period, the first humans arrived via land bridges from eastern Asia. The Calusa and Seminole Indians found seafood and a warm climate and exclusively inhabited these Florida shorelines for 10,000 years until the Spanish conquistadors arrived and brought warfare, disease and enslavement.

Gosh, and we've all been hoodwinked to think Christopher Columbus discovered

America. There are now archeological sites up and down the Western shoreline of Florida.

We vacationed with my first cousin and his wife from Colorado Springs. Since they are devout Republicans, we tiptoed around some political subjects, but agreed on some

issues. One can hardly ignore the Enron mess, for example, a subject on which we agreed.

Well, that's enough excitement for one vacation. But the crowning example of how strange it is in Florida is the headline that caught my eye just the day before we came

home, "Cold front expected to drop temperatures into low 70's." Now that's ridiculous.

*Caroline Porter is a freelance writer from Galesburg who can be reached at [porter@galesburg.net](mailto:porter@galesburg.net).*