

Trip to 'armpit' revives appreciation

Man, is it ever a good thing to be back in sweet, clean Idaho. Especially after a hot and harrowing drive into the armpit of the nation.

Only a truly momentous occasion could have dragged me from my desk to drive the dreaded 2,000 mile round trip to Southern California. My son's graduation from high school, and subsequent move with his brother to my Boise home, qualified as such, and I made the trip over the last two weeks.

And what a torturous drive it was. Fortunately, I was smart enough to do most of my driving at night and avoid the deadly heat of the relentless deserts of Nevada and California. But it was daylight when I descended the Cajon Pass and saw the stinking brown pall over the Inland Empire valley below. Nauseous, I almost turned around before remembering my mission: I had two sons to rescue from this Hell.

I'd almost forgotten how nasty it is to drive down south. Return-

ing to my daughter's San Bernardino house from an all-day excursion at Knott's Berry Farm reminded me. Even at midnight, the traffic was as horrendous as any Idahoan's worst nightmare.



From where I sit...

by Ken Levy
Editor, *Messenger Index*

And then, of course, there's all that wonderful Southern California ambience: Razor wire wrapped around freeway signs to avoid graffiti, which is everywhere; dirty, unkempt streets and gutters strewn with refuse and yesterday's newspapers; tightly-packed subdivisions; strip malls on every other corner, many with boarded-up store windows where mom-and-pop shops failed to compete with the big chains. And over it

all a general sullenness that matches the gloom of the steel-grey haze that obliterates any hope of a clear view.

My boys had never lived anywhere else. After a couple of

visits to Idaho, however, they were ready to make the most important change of their lives. Now that they're here, they've demonstrated a real respect for what Idaho doesn't have, as well as for what it does. Within less than a week of their arrival, both have secured jobs and goals and hope, and love being here.

As do I. Sometimes you have to go away for awhile to really appreciate what you're leaving behind. And, sometimes, you

have to see what other communities have done to themselves so you can help your own community avoid the same mistakes.

For example, Emmett and Gem County could stand some real growth, especially the kind that employs people. Certainly we shouldn't become a smoke-stack region, but some light industry could do much to build our quality of life and bolster tax receipts. We don't have to surrender our rural atmosphere the way California communities like Perris and Moreno Valley have, with innumerable subdivision lots often under 7,000 square feet, yet we could attract well-planned new residential areas that complement, rather than disrupt, the beauty of our own valley.

As the community reaches out for new opportunities for prosperity, it should also be aware of what it might sacrifice for that prosperity. Good planning and foresight should help prevent history from repeating itself in our own back yards.

We have only to pay attention.