

A Hot Topic

Last week, the air conditioner at the *Sunshine* offices was out of commission for about a day and a half. The Florida summer sun does a pretty good job of heating up enclosed, uncooled spaces, and we soon found that we were no exception to the general rule. The inside temperature steadily rose, eventually leveling out at an uncomfortable 86 degrees.

In a vain attempt to cool down, we opened the windows — which didn't help much, as the outside temperature hovered near 95 degrees. But at least we could hope for a breeze. Next we broke out the electric fans, which were more effective — at least for cooling purposes. It was a little aggravating to have our papers continually blowing off our desks, but this was deemed a necessary evil.

Because we were in the final stages of putting together this August issue, no respite was possible, and we slogged on through the unpleasant conditions. We wiped the sweat from our brows as we talked on the phone with writers, cover artist and printer; we fanned ourselves with page proofs as we solved layout problems; we ran to the refrigerator for cool drinks in between making text corrections. And all the time, we wondered how we could possibly be expected to work in this unreasonable situation.

This story ends in the usual manner. The repair man was called, the air conditioner was fixed and within a short period of time, everything was back to normal. And as I sit here happily working in cool comfort, I find that just one question keeps popping into my mind:

Are we spoiled, or what?

As we sweated it out last Friday, I got to thinking about all you artists and craftsmen out there, braving the summer heat week-end after week-end. This issue of *Sunshine* will arrive at your doorstep right at the end of July — the beginning of the hottest part of the summer. Although most of you probably won't be subjected to the constant heat and humidity we experience in Florida, you're sure to run into some real scorchers no matter where you are. And because of your chosen profession, you'll likely be stuck outdoors throughout the hot spells.

We constantly receive reviews that inform us in no uncertain terms, "There was no attendance at this show because it was just too hot!" In other words, while thousands of people had the sense to stay inside and drink icy beverages on a particularly warm week-end, you were committed to standing in some shadeless field at high noon. Perhaps you were lucky enough to have electricity and a fan, or maybe you were reduced to waving a festival program at yourself. You were sweaty, wilted and cranky.

I'm no doctor, but I know there's something about being overheated for an extended period of time that is absolutely draining

to both the body and the spirit. And yet throughout the course of the hottest outdoor show, you're expected to look and act professional at all times. You're standing there in your good clothes, feeling your shirt stick to your back. You'd love a cold drink, but there's no booth sitter in sight and you're stuck. A wide-brimmed hat can keep the sun off your head, but it can't stop the roof of your canopy from heating up and turning your exhibit into a 10-by-10-foot oven.

When that shopper comes into your booth on a 100-degree Sunday afternoon and comments, "My cousin made something just like this in her pottery class yesterday," do you ever just want to give it all up and return to the sterile, air-conditioned world of the office worker?

Does it bother you just a little bit when customers emerge from their cool cars, walk a couple hundred yards and promptly give up? "It's too hot, I just can't enjoy the show!" they proclaim as they sweat their way back to their vehicles and take off for home. And the shoppers who brave the heat and stay awhile may be more focused on the next lemonade stand than they are on your booth.

In conditions like this, your chosen profession takes on a whole new dimension. Only a labor of love could keep you going through the long, hot summers.

I think about my own state in last week's heat; I was hot, tired and feeling that the focus I needed to conduct business was beyond me. I find myself mightily impressed by the determination shown by those of you who are out there doing your thing despite the occasionally unbearable temperatures of high summer. And because you don't have the option of calling the repair man and fixing the air conditioner, allow me instead to wish you cool breezes, moderate temperatures and shady trees. Remember, autumn is just around the corner — and so are those fabulous autumn shows!

— Kris Petterson

"There's something about being overheated for an extended period of time that is absolutely draining to both the body and the spirit."