

VILLAGE VIEW

ANDREA LEONARD

The summer of 1980 was a winner; by the time the Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce releases the dollars-deposited figures for this past season, there's little doubt we'll learn more money was generated by the tourist business on the Cape than ever before.

Not only did we have more visitors, prices were higher for everything from gasoline to groceries, motel rooms to movie tickets, and clothes to ice cream cones. The price increases didn't seem to deter spending and, with ample fuel supplies, traffic was heavy, beaches were crowded, and business was booming.

If the economy of the United States is in a recession, there was no evidence of it here. In fact, statistics indicate that this summer Massachusetts as a whole had one of the lowest unemployment rates in the nation.

Nevertheless, the summer is over, our country is having an economic recession, and a lot of Americans are out of work. If history repeats itself, and it often does, the recession may not be felt on Cape Cod until after most other places have entered the recovery stage.

Economic swings, experience has shown, can take longer to reach us; I'm not sure why that's true, but it's happened many times in the past. Months after cities start feeling the pinch, we on the Cape find the wave reaching our shores; then, months later, when cities are again riding the crest, the Cape's economy will slowly pick up.

Should the pattern be repeated, the winter of 80-81 may be a rough one for Cape Codders. Jobs may be hard to find and people working now may find themselves laid off for the winter. And that could create hardship conditions because few are prepared for it. We don't expect it; we think because we had such a great summer, recession probably won't affect the Cape at all.

If that's how it works out, fine; however, I'll be a bit surprised if we don't see some hard times before next Memorial Day rolls around. And, if we should, there are some things we can do to help prepare ourselves.

Suppose, just suppose, you got laid off right after Christmas. Probably if you were, lots of people would be, too; instead of columns of Help Wanted ads, there'd be columns of Employment Wanted ads in the paper, and the Help Wanted column would be a short one.

Now there's always plenty of advice handed out when jobs are scarce; we're told how to dress; how to fill out employment applications, what to say in interviews and what's better left unsaid. The thing we're most often left in the dark about is exactly what management is looking for and why one candidate is chosen instead of another whose credentials are apparently just as good.

One aspect of hiring that's been studied recently is the interview process. The first few people interviewed are seldom hired; the last person interviewed has the best chance of getting the job, according to the study. In a way, that's only logical; once a likely candidate is found, why continue to interview? On the other hand, it might be distinctly advantageous to be among the last applicants for a job because it also stands to reason that if earlier ones haven't been hired, they didn't quite fill the bill. And it's also probable that after a businessman has interviewed four or five job-seekers, he starts to get a bit desperate and wonders if anyone with qualifications he's looking for will apply. If you come in on the heels of half-a-dozen others, and you've got what it takes, you'll stand a better chance than did the first person.

After six or seven interviews, chances are good the boss has forgotten what the first candidate said, looked like, or the impression made. If you put any credence in this study, then, the time to apply for the job you want is after it's been advertised for a few days, not the first time it appears in the paper.

Of course, you take a chance that an earlier applicant might be hired before you even get a first interview. If you're worried about that possibility, though, you could answer the ad immediately but be unavailable for your interview until the next week; that would allow time for others to precede you. You might "Come in last and walk out Number One."

Successful business people need, among other qualities,

an ability to pick the right person for each job. Once they establish what qualifications the job requires, they look for someone to fit it. Knowing what advice is given to interviewers of prospective employees can help you land the best job you're qualified to do.

Management is advised to take plenty of time in hiring a new employee. Correcting a wrong choice, they're told, is expensive. Once the job qualifications have been ascertained, it's recommended they interview each applicant more than once and have other staff people also size up likely candidates.

Bosses are urged to list the strong and weak points of each interviewee and to try to imagine each one actually functioning in their organization. They are advised to foresee, if possible, where a lack of experience might cause problems as well as in which aspects of the particular position each person will really function well.

It's suggested, of course, employers check references carefully to determine if the applicant has a past record of good performance and if steady progress has been made. Bosses are warned that frequent job changes might mean the person is a job-hopper, but also might mean the prospective employee makes real contributions and, as a result, is moving rapidly up the ladder. Previous employer's comments can be enlightening.

Candidates for jobs often find an application asks about hobbies and outside interests. This is a key question and should be answered in detail. The things an employee likes to do for recreation reveal a good deal about his personality and how he's apt to get along with other staff members. I once applied for a job and didn't get it because I wasn't a baseball fan. Everyone in that office was dedicated to the game; the boss recognized the whole thing bored me and I wouldn't fit in with his crew. And he was right.

That's what job-hunting is all about. Will you fit the slot? Not only are job-skills assessed, but personality counts too.

If we're lucky, this winter, Cape Codders won't be seriously affected by the current recession; we could come through it without a hitch. But if, come January, the lines at the unemployment office lengthen, and you find yourself reading Help Wanted ads, it might help you to know what employers are seeking.

It can give you an edge over another applicant for the job you're hoping to land if you have some idea what the person interviewing you is thinking. You want the job; he wants the best person he can find to fill his opening. If you play your cards right, and if you fit the slot, you'll be the person he chooses.