DO YOU remember on the way to South Haven you would have a real treat and stop on the road around St. Joe for one of those 15 dip ice cream cones and when it was passed around the small change was exchanged it was a day never to be forgotten. Not only were the recipients thrilled but the counter-men were gracious and handed each child the cone as if this was truly the epitome of gracious dining.

Book after book, page after page and column after column extol the gracious dining available at this grots or another. What in the world has happened to the art of dining out? Dining out should be an occasion of relaxation and pleasurable conversation.

TAKE SATURDAY nights for instance. Go to any restaurant. About the only smiling people in the whole place are (1) the hat check girl who finds human conversation more satisfying than her cloth companions impatiently awaiting her for the evening and (2) the maid in the ladies room who can offer the most wonderful advice on everything from what to order that particular evening to what to tell the sitter if the baby does not want to sleep during the late, late movie.

“ATMOSPHERE”

Everyone around the place maintains a staid remoteness of dignity. The hostess or maitre d’ escorts you to the table as if you are 6 years old and you just had better hurry to the table and sit down or... you won’t get cut at all! This social director then tells you over to the practicing intern.

TIS TRUE that table linens must be changed but as soon as you are in front of the cluttered first party left; the glad cap rush over and scoops crockery and tableware noisily into his tin cart... this starts the degeneration of the evening. Thence to the changing to the new. Tell me, is it not like lying in a hospital bed and the sheets changed while you are still in the bed?... Fold, fold, unfiled, fold and... plop, a sweep of the hand and there we are—all nice and neat and Spanking white. The salt and pepper are placed on the worn spots away from us for a fun-filled evening.

In the center sets a glowing candle or burning lamp so placed that close table conversation is akin to the appearance of a fortune-telling seance.

THEN APPEARS the waitress to take the order. Etiquette one