

Snow Day – January 25, 2023

For the past several days weather prognosticators – professional and arm chaired – have been busy with predictions of today's snow. Estimates vary from 3" to 10" with the National Weather service leading the pack. They must house some bureaucratic leftovers from the Federal budgetary offices—enchanted with the big numbers.

School was cancelled last evening. I'm sure the grandkids are ecstatic although not as much as I was in the days before "e-learning." As a boy, on days snow closures, my sister and I were joy filled -- donned our winter gear and grabbed a sled. My Grandkids might do that later but for now they are staring at a screen.

Charlie Wilson and his County Highway crew have been out sanding and scrapping in the predawn. There are unsung heroes in combat with the forces of nature as they cover our 700 miles of county roads. Although they receive deserved gratitude, they also catch the howling from those whose mailboxes fail the flying wet snow test.

We had a local plumber, Ronny, come this morning to repair the bathtub faucet I had given up on. As he was getting his tools and parts out of his van, a tree sized limb crashed and hit the side door where he was. He was rather excited when he returned to our kitchen. He does have a story—a memorable one.

And as memorable weather days go, January 25th is one. On this date in 1978, the worst blizzard for Indiana as well as the Midwest and Northeast began. It lasted for three days. Over 15 inches of snow fell in Indianapolis with 50 mile an hour winds causing drifts of 10 to 25 feet and wind chills as low as -50. Major roads in Indiana were closed. It was weeks before some of the local roads were opened. The National Guard was called out to rescue and deliver lifesaving prescriptions. There were 11 deaths in Indiana, 5 in Kentucky and 51 in Ohio. It was one for the books.

I experienced the Blizzard of '78 in my Lazy Boy. I was recovering from a double hernia surgery received two days after Christmas. Recovery from that surgery in those days was six weeks minimal. I dearly remember my wife, Lynny, putting our larger dog, Ginger, in the warmth of the basement. Ours is an older home. The entrance to the basement is from the outside. I was fortunate to spend hours with our new pup, Spunky, in my lap or asleep at my feet. Dogs are great healers and sleeping partners.

Down the road about a quarter mile is the farm where I raised a small herd of cattle. Big round bales were unknown in '78, thus my cattle were winter fed with summer baled fifty pound square bales—five or six a day. Fortunately, I had--and still have -- one of the finest neighbors a man could have, Jim Byrnes. The only problem I have with Jim, is he wears me out just watching him work. During my six weeks recovery period he tended my cattle. He also dug us out from the massive snow when he got my old Allis WD 45 running. He tended to all my laborious jobs so I could follow my Doctors orders. I am blessed to have neighbored with Jim for over a half

century. A “Hello, Mr. Adams” is warmly answered with a “Hello, Mr. Byrnes.” There is something irreplaceable and invaluable about having a Jim Byrnes for a neighbor- a life blessing.

I was released by the Doctor on the 6th of February. Our first outings was with Jim and his wife Judy. Their daughter, Lee Ann was a fine athlete and point guard for the local girls’ basketball team that ended up going to the state finals. The sectional games were played in Eminence that year. Eminence is a small school in western Morgan County, the flatter part of the county -- the opening chapter of the Great Plains. We drove with Jim and Judy to the event. Although it had been weeks since the blizzard, the a road was a channel with sides higher than the car in many places.

The blizzard of 78 also had an unexpected impact on my high school teaching. In October, there was a spike in births in the county. The class of 1996 was larger than others. Some of those students still proudly wear, “Blizzard Baby” tee shirts. I suppose if I could find a “WWII baby” shirt I would proudly wear it as well. Sometimes the best comes from the worst.

Don Adams, On Bethel Pond, January 25, 2025