

It's been an odd winter — how about yours?

Random thoughts on a drear March day, with a terrible head-cold, about the fourth this winter.

About which many people have been most unhappy. For ski and snowmobile enthusiasts, ski resort operators, ice fishermen and snowplow owners, this winter has been the pits.

For people who get sick to death of shovelling snow, of driving in blizzards, of wading to the thighs through snow-banks to get to work, this winter has been a boon.

I'm in the second category, but I'm not raving about this particular open winter. I don't like bitter cold, and I detest battling snow.

However, it's been a dreary winter. Too much rain, mud, ice; too little sun. Dull day after dull day makes Jack a dull tool, and even the winter worry-wart would like to see a bit of sunshine.

It's also been a rotten winter for the health. I don't know whether the wild swings of temperature have anything to do with anything, but I've never seen so many people so lingeringly ill with 'flu and colds. Seems that a bright, cold crispy winter is better suited to the Canadian physique than the kind of hermaphrodite we've been through this year.

Besides the head, it's been a tough winter on the other end, because of freezing rain. I wonder how many Canadians busted their bums this winter, slipping on ice.

Recently, I slithered out the back door, skidded down the back steps, and went on hands and knees to the car. Arrived at the school parking lot, which was like a skating rink, and almost wiped out a couple of cars when I tried to stop.

Crept from car to school like ancient Chinese coolie. Score for the day was: one teacher with badly broken wrist, one teacher with badly wrenched back, one teacher's wife with badly bent head.

Didn't mind the broken wrist. It was only a guidance teacher. But I was fed up with the rest. The wrenched back belonged to one of my English teachers, and I had two missing already.

He'd come down his (unsalted) front steps, taken a flier, and landed on his not inconsiderable back. Thought he'd shake off the pain and shock, drove his daughter to school, and by this time was ready to head for the hospital. Had just checked in to tell the great white sahibs of his intentions, when he got a phone call saying his wife had gone down their steps (still unsalted) in similar fashion, knocking her head hard on every step. They went off to the hospital hand-in-hand.

I can put with teachers staying home with minor things like heart attacks, but when they take a day off for a twisted

by
Bill
Smiley



back, just because they can't get out of their car, or up from a chair, that's a bit much, forcing me to soldier on with hangnails and a corn on the sole of my foot.

Hoping to cheer myself up, I took a look at the fashion page in the newspaper, featuring the new spring models by Chanel of Paris.

Thank the Lord I'm not a woman. That peek at the paper would have plunged me into a deep depression. Here are some of the items: "The deceptively demure dinner dress in navy silk with a wide waistline defined by stitching, \$1,150; the revised Chanel suit has a cropped jacket over a slender skirt, \$1,950; worn over a tucked silk blouse, \$500. Separates are a \$795 knit cardigan and a wrap skirt, \$475.

How would you like to read that if your old man had just been laid off, indefinitely? For a miserable \$4,800 you get a dinner dress, a suit, and a casual outfit. None of which you could wear more than once, twice at the outside.

Some idiot once remarked that the poor are always with us. They are indeed, but that's obvious. No so obvious is the fact the rich are always with us, come hell, high water, shaky economy, unemployment, down-right depression.

Something else that failed to cheer me up this winter was *The Night of the Long Knives*, when the Tory party once more made a national ass of itself by indulging in its favorite game: cutting its leader into large chunks and throwing them to the wolves. Hear those Liberals laughing?

Oh, the winter hasn't been all dark and gloomy. My tailpipe has not fallen off. Yet. My rubber boots haven't sprung a leak. My wife hasn't wracked up neither the car nor the garage, as is her wont.

One more cheery note. My old lady finally bought a stereo outfit, and she plays it so loud she can't talk to me, though she tries, oh, she tries, mouthing words while I just put my hand to my ear. Sometimes I even get the paper read.

And there's a bonus. The kids gave us a rag-time and a couple of jazz records for Christmas. After forcing the classics on long-suffering me for years, the old girl has discovered she loves jazz.

Unfortunately, she has insomnia, and gets up about 4.30 a.m. About 5 a.m., I am awakened by the booming of ragtime, dixieland, or far-out modern jazz shaking the very foundations. I like it, but there is a time and a place.

Yes, it's been an odd sort of winter. How about yours?

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