

A solstice or an equinox?

Apparently, it happened yesterday.

At precisely 2:06 p.m., so the weather girl on the radio said.

You see, Thursday afternoon, at 2:06 p.m. (or 1406 hours for those military types out there) summer arrived.

Over the years I've always watched the changing of the seasons, and have always been interested seeing the 'official' first day of the season, as noted in our day timers, or from the weather people.

A few years ago, I wrote about the change of the seasons, asking 'who decides what time is the start of summer anyway?' with a tongue-in-cheek approach.

I received a letter from some meteorologist with the best of intentions, explaining how 'the solstice is the determining factor for the time and date of the first day of summer, when the most northerly travel of the sun above the equator is measured at that precise time, and the time is recognized as the precise moment summer arrives,' etc...

I suddenly realized he'd all taken my words waaaaay to seriously—I was kidding!

Geez, I was almost feeling a little bit sorry that I'd put him to all that trouble setting me on the path to enlightenment by educating me to overcome an obvious lack of knowledge about the changing of the seasons.

So, for the record, I know all about the solstice thing, okay?

But this is more of a rhetorical question—how can we say summer has arrived, by the simple passing of a date?

I put the finishing touches on this column, Thursday afternoon, as the time on my clock was nudging up to the 2:06 p.m. mark.

And I kept a sharp eye out for that flash or rumble or something—geez anything, signaling that summer had arrived.

But the day looked exactly the same as it did an hour before.

I figure we've had summer the past three weeks or so, with the hot temperatures, the

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sunny weather and the obvious lack of apparel with the young female crowd.

But according to the experts, it was spring.

By their same argument, spring arrived March 21, as that was the 'Vernal Equinox.'

Now I ask you, thinking back to the weather we had in March, did it feel at all like spring out there? Not in my recent memory.

I rest my case.

As the time hit 2:06 p.m. I looked around.

The office looked the same, outside the weather was the same and I felt much the same as I did at 2:01, only five minutes older.

But I was pretty sure, at that precise time, in some observatory, somewhere on this planet, a bunch of scientists were smugly looking at each other, smiling and congratulating each other on calculating the exact time, once again.

To the rest of us ordinary folks, it doesn't really matter. Summer's here now, has been for a few weeks, and will be here until the leaves change colour and fall, sometime in September.

Then we can concentrate on raking them.

Until then, I'll enjoy the sun, the rainy days, the summer breezes and the warm nights.

And I won't worry a bit about that upcoming 'Autumnal Equinox,' thing on September 23.

(Ted Brown can be reached at tbrown@independentfreepress.com)

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