

So, What Can You Take Into The U.S. Embassy in Ottawa?



Sign on the sidewalk outside the US Embassy on Sussex Drive in Ottawa.

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How Do Americans Perceive Canada : An Example!

By Doug McGregor

When my wife and I were newly married we embarked on a move to Saskatoon. It felt like a brave thing to do at the time as neither of us had been to the prairies before. In particular, we were concerned about how we would cope with the extremely cold winter. I remembered reading W.O. Mitchell's *"Who Has Seen The Wind"* in school and winter seemed like a lot to deal with. However as time went by we adapted, thanks to down parkas. Adapting to the length of the winter was the real tough haul!

The business I was employed by took off and within a couple of years the US market was exploding. It's hard to sell into the states from a Canadian prairie address so a second office was opened in Atlanta, Georgia. As with most expansions it was seeded with locals from HQ (Saskatoon) who then hired locals in Atlanta.

This is where it started to become evident how little the Americans knew about Canada or for that matter Northern climes.

Eventually the stories started to drift back from the Saskatoon crew about getting their Saskatoon cars serviced. The Atlanta mechanics were totally confused by all the electrical cords hanging out. I should explain to those that have never lived through Prairie winters that in order to get your car to start at -45 degrees you need a block heater (two of them if it was a large V8), and a battery blanket. Most cars also had an electric interior heater as well. It seems most of the Atlanta mechanics thought they must be looking at some kind of electric car. Those crazy Canucks, eh!

But my favourite story from that time came about from a phone conversation I overheard between two techs, one down the hall from me and the other, a new hire in Atlanta. I should add at this stage that the Saskatoon business was in a new business park and there was very little around except wide open prairie. It was April and while the start of hot weather in Atlanta was just around the corner, Spring was still weeks (months?) away in Saskatchewan and there was still lots of snow everywhere.

As the conversation went on, clearly the US guy was having difficulty getting his head around the differences so he asked his counterpart to look out the window and describe what he saw. As I heard this I glanced up as well to look. Just at that exact moment, as if it was meant to be, a snow sled with a team of huskies rushed by! This is a sight I had never seen before, or for that matter since, but there it was and described to the American.

To this day that American tech probably still believes we all live in igloos and dodge polar bears on the way to driving our snowmobiles to work.

Hey, can you pass the seal blubber.