

by Bill Smiley

## Thank you Mother Nature

There's one thing that brings people together and makes them forget, for a few hours at least, all their normal rotten, little, miserable, petty, private troubles. That is a good smash in the midriff from that gentle old lady, Mother Nature.

Whether it's fire or flood, blizzard or drought, a blunt reminder every so often from good old Mother has a salutary effect on the perpetually whining denizens of the twentieth century.

This time it was that "cold snap" in January. I like that term. It's a typical Canadian understatement.

And we delight in it, as we do at barn fires, heat spells, terrible thunderstorms, beautiful autumns and three-foot snowfalls. It's peculiarly Canadian, and it makes us all become human again, if only until it's over.

People who normally trudge around with a face like an old rubber boot, people who wouldn't be caught dead in a ditch together, suddenly start shouting witticisms like, "Cold 'nuff fer yeh?", beaming through dripping noses and purple countenances.

People who wouldn't be caught speaking to each other in the Black Hole of Calcutta find they have a great deal in common: neither could get his car started this morning.

Then there are the brag-garts, but we even put up with them, whom we would normally detest, with the greatest of good spirits. They come in different wrappers. Let's say it's 30 below outside. But there's always some character who lived in Kapuskasing or Yellowknife who swears it was 80 below there all winter, and wasn't even cold, just refreshing. Hacking their lungs out, they say, "This is nothing."

And there's the reverse snob. Through rattling teeth and hunched shoulders, he too claims this is nothing. Why back in '53 it was down to 50 below and stayed there for a week.

Then there's the rugged type. Pounding himself on the chest, he bumbles, "This is great; this is the real Canada; this is what makes us a sturdy, independent people." Three days later you get a card from him. From Florida.

Two types are happy, everything is golden, when there is a "cold snap." They are the fuel man and the tow-truck chap. And bully for them, say I.

But my point is that a nature crisis gets people out of themselves, and perhaps it's better than medicine in this neurotic 20th century.

Forgotten during the "cold snap" are the Vietnam war, higher taxes on booze and fags, your rotten boss and the fact that you can't live another week without an automatic dish-washer.

There is a certain joyous drawing together against the elements and a definite pride in the fact that you can cope. For once, including Expo, there is a common bond, as we rub our ears and stamp our feet and blow our noses in a great national chorus that, to me, expresses the real spirit of Canada, and at least temporarily freezes all thoughts of separatism, divorce, abortion and who's going to be the new Liberal leader.

When you go out in the morning and find that the battery is flat, you don't fuss and cuss. You feel sort of proud that you're taking part in a heroic adventure. You know you're not exactly Scott of the Antarctic, and that you can phone a cab, but you know that all over town, other cars are going, "Argh - argh - arh - ah - uhn," and it gives you a sense of shared danger and hardship.

**There's a tingling and a jingling in the atmosphere. People are grinning and shaking their heads and shouting, "Isn't that a brute of a day?"**

And even the domestic problems abate. The other night, it was 28 below zero. My wife is always saying that she might as well leave unless I can "Show some understanding." Kim continually threatens to run away to Vancouver and become a hippie. I opened the door and said "goodbye, chaps." Eighteen seconds later, they were upstairs, watching TV.

Good old Mother N. Once in a while, she nudges us back to normal, even though the nudge knocks the wind out of us.

## THE SPORTS BEAT

By Glen May



### A champion's champion

If individuals have been called a "man's man," then we must refer to the Green Bay Packers as a "champion's champion."

This superb collection of gridiron giants has achieved total perfection. It has often been said in sport that any team or individual which has remained at the top, has but one way to go — down. In theory this will be true when the reign ends for "The Pack."

**However, be they second or last, the Packers will always be Number One. Perhaps a statement of this nature smells of hearts and flowers? Perhaps it sounds overly dramatic? Perhaps it appears to be just plain stupid?**

In the case of the Green Bay Packers against the rest of the professional football world, the verdict must go to Green Bay.

Vince Lombardi's horde has established irrefutable evidence . . . their opponents have been allowed to appear. Although many observers feel this in itself constitutes manslaughter, it cannot be judged as such; rival coaches have convicted their own teams by saying: "They (Green Bay) put on their pants the same way we do."

What opponets don't realize is that the Packers never do anything you expect them to do, and when you feel they are doing something the same way as you are, chalk it up as nothing more than a mirage. Although American's first president may cringe at the idea, it becomes crystal clear that Packers can "fool all of the people all of the time."

To recount the Green Bay triumphs and glories during the last three years will be left for the record books and those other columinists who thrive on facts and figures.

The Pack has beaten everybody when it counted during the past three seasons. Other teams feel a win over Green Bay in an exhibition game is

more gratifying than a championship. This is understandable as the Packers are always in the championship game, and they always win.

The day will come when Dallas, Baltimore, Los Angeles or Oakland does win a Super Bowl. And they will have beaten Green Bay along their victory route. But the Packers won the first Super Bowl, and the second, and three consecutive National Football League titles. Never in the game's history had this been accomplished.

It's highly probable this pinnacle will never be attained again, unless of course, Green Bay does it. This is why The Pack was . . . is . . . will be . . . Number One forever And this goes for those idiots who stand misty-eyed with hand over heart singing different words to Onward Christain Soldiers.

Victory has become so commonplace in the Packers' dressing-room that they drink pop after a big payoff. Other title winners bathe in the bubbly, but after all, these other guys are still learning what it's all about.

When you see a Packer in street clothes you find yourself gaping in awe. You say to yourself — "there goes a professional man." When opposing players and coaches have finished meeting the Packers on the gridiron, they say: "Those fellas are really pros."

It is little wonder Oakland coach John Rauch was estatic about playing Green Bay in the Super Bowl. He rationalized that the Packers are the best in pro football, and so, if his team had met and defeated any other than Green Bay, Oakland's supremacy would have been dubious.

Rauch said: "If we beat Green Bay we beat the best. Beating the Packers is in the realm of possibility."

As we said before — oh yeah.