

The Bib Chill...Empathy...Footwear...The real hazard...Snowplows

All, the last time I checked my e-mail I saw that I was getting a lot of messages from APT Group folks talking about how cold it was. One person was distressed about 16°F in Camden County New Jersey. Another was concerned about 24°F in Florida. At the moment Camden County is 17° warmer than Black River Falls, WI and 25° warmer than a particular Florida location. I've been following the weather news about Winter Storm Warnings in Georgia and the Carolinas. And it's not exactly balmy in Washington, DC or Richmond, VA.

Empathy...

Subzero January is normal in much of the upper Midwest. And that's precisely where Wisconsin is. I just checked, learning that the temperature here is -1°F. The sky is cloudless affording be an excellent view of the nearly full moon.

Tomorrow, the full moon will be visible. It is known as the Snow Moon. (And snow is forecast for the afternoon.)

It's easy for me to relate to people who are not accustomed to cold weather. Once upon a time, I was startled by it. After slightly more than a half-century in Wisconsin, I've learned how to handle it.

The most obvious advice that I could give to anyone is to dress warmly. Remember to have gloves, better mittens. Thermal underwear is handy. And a nice wool scarf knitted by a friend is great. When it comes to footwear the requirements are a bit unusual.

Footwear...

When I moved to Wisconsin in 1971, people would be fairly well-dressed during the day. Men would definitely be wearing suits year-round. Thermal underwear was often a good idea along with heavy socks during the winter. The winter surprise was footwear.

Back east I was accustomed to seeing men wearing dress shoes during the day, particularly if they were business types in suits. These be worn year-round. Not in Wisconsin.

When the weather got snowy and slushy guys would continue dressing as elegantly as they could until they got to their shoes. Then, everything became very practical. Didn't take me very long to notice this.

It got me wondering about shoe etiquette. So I asked couple of questions of a haberdashery in Madison, **Spoo & Son**. They catered to people who considered themselves to be part of the town's upper crust.

The experienced salesman explained that when the weather is bad (in other words most of the winter) a gentleman is not judged poorly when he abandons his good shoes for what this

fellow called “shit-kickers.” The term surprised me since it did not match the elegance of the store.

I asked the fellow where one would buy “shit kickers” His immediate answer was, “Certainly not here.” He leaned forward, lowered his voice, and confided, “You want to find a store that caters to farmers.” That was not very difficult for me to do. And from then on, I knew what was acceptable footgear for a Wisconsin winter and where to buy it.

The real hazard...

Ice on the sidewalk or parking lot is a very significant hazard. To overcome this hazard we have things called creepers that you put on your shoes. Here’s what they look like:



Think of them as tire chains for shoes. They work like a charm. At least for me. The only problem they present is that you really can’t wear them indoors. This means that you have to take your shoes off when you enter certain places. It also means that you better be wearing nice socks. No holes.

Snowplows...

No discussion about the impact of snow would be complete without mentioning snowplows.

Where I live the city plows streets to make it safe for drivers. That sounds like a good deal, right? Well, it’s a good deal only if you have somebody who can remove the snow that the plow piles up in front

of your driveway. A mound of snow that makes it impossible to get the car out.

Fortunately there are a lot of people who are freelance snowplow operators. Of course, they are very much in demand when it snows. The only way that you can be sure that you going to find someone who will plow your driveway, thus making it possible for you to get gain access to the road, is to recruit them during the summer.

Finding someone to do the job is best accomplished by talking to (1) a neighbor or (2) someone who is doing landscape work in your neighborhood. It doesn’t have to be elaborate landscape work; someone is cutting the grass during the summer probably is doing plowing during the winter.

Lucky for me, I have made a connection with someone who is ready, willing, and able to handle this challenge for me. He’s reliable, reasonable, and cheerful. (During the summer he’s doing landscaping.) Incidentally, we’re expecting snow tomorrow. I’m ready.

Finally, I want to discourage people who shouldn't be shoveling snow from shoveling because it's a strain. Not worth the risk after a certain point in life. And I can see that point when I look back over my shoulder.

First yawn...

Until tomorrow...

Ken

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