

After a colder than usual November, December has—so far— been a quiet, rather mild month. The clear, frosty nights, lit by stars that seem to hang above us just for our enjoyment, give way to days at or a little above freezing with some sunshine. The climate change that is happening in spite of those who don't "believe in it" makes it impossible to even guess what the seasons will bring. But, it is certain that individual reactions to weather—whether good or bad—have at least a little to do with how each of us was brought up and perhaps even with our cultural heritage.

Even after several generations and much mixing in this "melting pot" called the United States, many of us in this community are still, for all practical purposes, Swedes. This means that some of us believe, whether it is true or not, that our genetic makeup predisposes us to love winter and inclement weather. After all, our ancestors came from a land in the far north where winters are longer and darker than they are here.

My father often told how he and his brothers would, as young fellows, open their mackinaws to the North Wind and defy the cold. All his life he loved ice fishing, working in the woods during the winter, and skating on a frozen pond. Winter pleasure, we learned, was the best fun of all. We grew up casting ourselves into the snow to make angels, eating snow, rolling in the snow, skiing, skating, and embracing the cold. We have to be this way.

Of course, there are some among us Scandinavian-Americans who really don't like winter. A few of them even admit it. They sometimes qualify their dislike, though.

"I'd like winter," one hears, "if I didn't have to drive in it every day."

Or, "I'd like this weather, but it is so hard on the wildlife."

Some of those who read this may not believe me when I say that I really do like winter. They may conclude that I am not being completely honest when I call winter my favorite season of the year. But, right now, I am sitting in this cozy cabin, too warm with the combination of a still evening, good wood, and a moderate twenty degree temperature. I am barefooted and am wearing an old T-shirt and shorts. And I still have to go outside on the porch now and then to cool off. It reminds me that my sister and I used to run outside and around the house barefooted when we had a nice fresh snowfall.

It is still fun to wallow in the snow, make snow angels, build snowmen, ski, and skate. One writer declared that Swedes really feel at home only in the woods. In the case of some of us, "the woods in winter" might be even more accurate.