

Our short, but intense, snowstorm makes me think back to many other snowy days and the various ways in which people respond to weather of this kind. It isn't all that calm today, either, so the frenzy of activity after a period of snow and wind—everybody out with plows, snowblowers, and shovels—probably hasn't reached a peak yet. Not that we would know—our 400 meters to the gravel road are pretty well plugged up, and no other driveways are visible from our farm lane. We won't worry about that today. There are more immediate jobs on the agenda here at Coe Creek.

First, of course, is getting all the livestock fed and watered. That always takes a little longer when we have "weather." This morning, cleaning the barn required a good deal of shoveling, and feeding necessitated a different routine, as well. Blue and Kate went with us, as usual, but after swimming through the drifts on the way to the barn, they were content to stay there when we came home for midmorning coffee.

Some people we know are in an absolute panic if they cannot "get out." Even if they have no reason to leave home, they are very upset if: 1) the county snowplow doesn't come immediately; 2) their driveways are plugged, and 3) they are just plain SNOWED IN!

Then, there are those folks who never plan for weather that keeps them at home. They buy all their food—even if they live in places with plenty of space for gardens and even if they are people who are perfectly capable of raising some of what they eat—, they don't "stock up" on nonperishable foods that they purchase, and, they have no plan for a day they can't get to a store. These people do not belong in a rural area.

The only people I feel sorry for in cold, snowy weather are those who are homeless and without any resources. The rest of us, especially if we have lived in this area for any length of time, should be prepared for winter weather.

Then, too, there is the issue of "dressing for the weather." There is a much-repeated saying that puts the blame on the judgement of the individual instead of on Mother Nature: "There is no bad weather; there is just bad clothing." There is a certain amount of truth in this. But, the advent of homes with central heating, heated garages, warm cars, and heated buildings at most destinations have given too many people the idea that they can dress for summer in the middle of the winter. This does not always work. Just a couple of days ago, I saw a teenaged couple walking from a car to a grocery store. The girl was dressed in "normal winter wear," but the boy had shorts, sneakers, and a light sweatshirt. To be sure, that day was relatively mild, but it was still winter, and a few hours can change the weather. A slip on an icy road that causes a minor slide into a snowy bank or ditch is no big problem—if the car's occupants are wearing boots, caps, jackets, and gloves.

I remember reading an article that included the experience of a woman doing some kind of research who was in Norway during the winter. She was talking to children at a school. It was recess time, and they were outside playing in the snow. She was freezing in spite of a jacket. She asked one of the little girls how she could enjoy being outside in weather like that. The girl—wiser at 10 than the interviewer was at 30—said, "Why don't you wear some

warm clothes? It isn't cold then."

The main response to winter weather—of many older Americans who have the resources—is, of course, to go somewhere else (warmer) for the winter. The stated reasons vary. The most honest is probably, "I don't like cold weather." Then, there are those who feel they need more sunshine than we have here in western Michigan during the winter. Others have health problems that are exacerbated by winter conditions. Some folks are afraid of falling on the ice and don't want to be confined to the house as much as might be necessary during severe weather. And, of course, there are always those people who find spending the winters in a warmer climate a "status thing."

Some of these reasons are, undoubtedly, legitimate. And, for that matter, it is none of my business. But still, since I don't pretend to be passive on the issue of winter, I must say that I do believe that a few pairs of warm mittens, some wool stocking caps, long underwear, a pair of good boots—and some ice grippers to pull on during slippery conditions—and, if necessary, a pair of Carhart insulated bib overalls, would go a long way toward making winter in our area not only endurable, but pleasurable.

Regular trips to the local library don't hurt, either.