

IN MY OPINION

Caroline Porter

Yessireee, when I was a kid, the weather was a lot worse

Young people always hate it when their elders talk about how far they had to walk to school, how bad the weather used to be, how poor they were and other hardships endured as youngsters.

Most of it is true, of course, and when it comes to the weather, especially so. Am I the only person who gets a kick out of school being called off at the drop of a hat? Maybe there are some things I don't remember, but I don't remember school EVER being called off for ANY reason. And yes, in Kewanee we had school buses traveling the rural areas. My husband recalls school being called off in his small town of Alexis because of the rural students, but as he says, "By nine o'clock, there are a hundred pick-up trucks in town." I didn't have far to walk to school, but I rarely got a ride. After all, my father needed our only car for work.

Part of our problem in recent years is that we have had so little snow and such mild winters that we think real winter weather is a big disaster. It doesn't help that for days ahead of time, news and weather stations tell us in lurid detail about the horrible storms bearing down upon us. By the time winter weather arrives, we've cleared the streets, cancelled all events and battened down the hatches. A week ago Sunday, because of the scary weather reports, I was expecting a sheet of ice over everything and didn't go to church. Eventually I discovered the shiny stuff all over the streets was water and it was a pretty nice day after all.

"A likely story," my minister will say.

I hate to sound like other old people, but for most of my life this kind of weather was typical for at least three or four months of

the year. I can remember continuous weeks of subzero weather, like minus 15 to 20 degrees and thinking it was positively balmy when temperatures rose to zero.

Something else we used to do. We took responsibility for our public sidewalks. For five years, for example, I lived on Fremont street and my children and I would be out early in the morning of a snowfall shoveling the walks before the children arrived on their way to for Silas Willard school.

Now, few people shovel their walks. I've seen school children struggling to get through the snow and waiting for school buses with snow half-way up their little bodies. Along Hawkinson Avenue, used by many children to walk to high school, the public walk on the East side of the street is impassable. Children and adults have to walk in busy streets, which is dangerous. As the old Sunday cartoon was called, "There oughta be a law."

But there are two events which are never cancelled in bad weather — men's coffee groups and women's beauty shop appointments. No matter what age, one cannot afford to miss these social events and the daily gossip. It's practically unheard of for a woman over 55 to cancel a beauty shop appointment.

I used to write a column for Senior Life and Leisure magazine called "As Life Gets Funnier." In one column I told about the time it was 18 below zero, the wind chill factor was minus 65 degrees. Public safety officials were warning everyone to stay inside if possible, especially the elderly. My office was in my home, so I could have stayed inside. But what did I do? I bundled up, warmed up the car, drove carefully across icy streets to

— you guessed it — the beauty shop.

Yep, we older people are a tough breed, and that's 'cause life was so much harder in the old days.

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