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Safe by Carl E. Beyer

The recent snow got me thinking about the Blizzard of '77. I had to do a little research to refresh my memory. After telling the kids I had to walk uphill both ways in the snow to get to school, I wanted to try and get the facts correct on the "Blizzard".

The winter of '76/'77 was an especially hard winter. In upstate New York we received over two hundred inches of snow that winter. It was a very cold winter with the great lakes freezing over by mid-December. During the several days of the blizzard, we received eighty inches of snow in the country. Compounding the problem was winds over forty miles per hour which compacted the snow. The winds created very high drifts. Niagara Mohawk Electric that winter was fighting to keep the snow below the electric lines. So the next time you pass a telephone pole image snow reaching that height.

We lived about three miles from town. One neighbor lived about quarter of a mile away, and the next neighbor a mile down the road so we were quite isolated. At the time my parents, younger sister and I were left living at home. As it happened, our closest neighbor was snowbound in town so they were not home during the blizzard; so it was just the four of us. Living in the north country, snow was not unexpected. But it was unexpected when it kept snowing day after day. As a sixteen-year-old I was both amazed at the quantity of snow while dreading the inevitable shoveling of all that snow with paths to the garage and the shoveling out of the driveway.

After the three-day storm the sun came out and the weather warmed. Unlike New Mexico where the weather warms and all the snow melts; we are talking about warming into the twenties. One period that winter our temperature sunk to forty below on the thermometer for a week. As we looked around, everything was buried in white. God paints a beautiful picture with snow. When God paints this pictures, he wipes out all evidence of modern civilization shorter than four feet.

With this amount of snow and its compactness, the plows were not able to buck the snow, so the rural country had to wait for the big snow blowers to come through. We ended up being snowed in for ten days before that snow blower headed up to our house. I remember they stopped blowing just past our house because the small one lane bridge between us and the neighbor was too small for the blower. I do not remember how they ended up getting to the neighbor's house but they must have sent the plows to buck it the best they could. My sweetest memory was that blower making short work of our driveway instead of me having to spending hours shoveling snow over my head to clear it out.

Our dog house at the time was three doors nailed together in a triangle with one open end. Our two beagles had a tunnel leading down into their dog house. I remember thinking it looked like a rabbit hole they had created. Normally we feed the dogs only leftovers, if we had any, and they relied on their own hunting for food but with the snow they were not able to get out so we found food for them.

I been trying to remember what we did for those ten days. TV was not big back then so very little was watched. No electrical games, no cell phones, no anything we think of as entertainment now. We had cards and board games and I am sure we utilized these. It did take me a while to shovel the snow up and off the garage so the roof wouldn't collapse. I would occasionally take the snow shoes and go down the road looking for signs of snow removal equipment that was headed our way.

Now all you city slickers may be wondering if we had any worries about food and heat, being stranded and all. Our only real dependence was on the electrical lines and they stood up during the storm. We had two 100 gallons propane tanks which could easily last through the winter. There was a furnace that used fuel oil but it was kept at about forty just so the pipes wouldn't freeze. Our fuel oil tank again could last through the winter. Our wood stove, located in the kitchen, was the sole provision for heat with a woodshed full of wood. If you wanted to be warm you stayed in the kitchen. Upstairs, where my sister and I slept, you could freeze water overnight. The view from upstairs wasn't much either with all the ice buildup on the windows but we had plenty of blankets and were quite cozy at night.

Down in the basement we had enough food for the whole winter. Since toast was one of my favorite foods, I will start our food listing with the jams and jellies. We had homemade apple-butter jelly, wild strawberry jam, strawberry jam, raspberry jam, blackberry jam and huckleberry jam. Then there was the

homemade applesauce, relishes, pickle beets, dill pickles, sweet pickles and some pickle eggs. We always buy half a beef in the fall so there was plenty of canned beef and an assortment of frozen beef in the freezer. We raised chickens and pigs so we had those frozen also. Eggs were just at the top of the hill in the chicken coop and bread was kept frozen so we always had a supply. In the shed we had a “root cellar” kept at a certain temperate with either heating or cooling based on its needs. Inside the “root cellar” were potatoes, carrots, turnips, beets, onions, horseradish and apples.

Obviously when my parents did their monthly shopping it was for simple staples such as flour, sugar, bread, butter, coffee and other things consider extras or treats. Milk, always in abundance, came from the farm I worked at. Cheese came from the cheese plant in town; bought in wheels it was always plentiful.

Now all this food wasn't just there because we bought it from someone. We spent all summer and fall growing, gathering, processing, and canning the food needed. A plaque I remember in our house was one that said; “You are never nearer God's heart than when you are gardening.”

That storm was not so much about snow to a young teenage but it was a reminder of the comfort of knowing you are safe. Safe because you have spent the time and energy to ensure you have the food and heat needed to survive anything thrown at you. God gives us the strength and the knowledge to prepare but leaves it to us to do the preparation. We were prepared.

Is your soul prepared? Are you safe with God? Do you have that deep down feeling that when the time comes you are ready to face our Lord? A great way to start is to volunteer with the church. Don't be a spectator from the sidelines of your salvation. Take action and volunteer your gifts to the church.

Go forth and be prepared for whatever God throws your way. Nowhere in the bible does it say the government should be your safety. Prepare yourself physically and spiritually. God Bless you all.