

JANUARY 12, 1984

Take my word for it. The worst weather you'll ever see is over if you were part of the Christmas and New Year's storm. From now on you can expect balmy weather. Contracting to snowplow the Arctic won't seem uncomfortable to the survivors of the blizzard of '83.

Around Mertzon, now that it's thawed, folks are having a hard time learning to walk and drive off the ice pack. After so many mornings of creeping and falling and slipping and sliding, the citizens are so sure of foot and so careful of wheel they won't take a step longer than seven inches or make a turn shorter than 16 degrees.

On the first warm morning, the opening shift at the Post Office were hitting their brake pedals so lightly their foot pressure was barely hard enough to make their tail lights flicker. From San Angelo in any direction, everybody had been driving on the same ice sheet. With enough momentum a San Angelo Volkswagen driver could have slid off toward the Gulf. Had anyone tried, messages could have been tapped out to Amarillo on the thick ice. At one time a trucker reported that icicles were 5'9" deep on the plains, but after investigation we learned he was one of the same parties that are always blabbing it around how deep floodwater is when it gets above waste deep.

Once people began to loosen up their driving and walking habits, they had to be reintroduced to indoor plumbing. In one house I visited water rationing was so deeply entrenched from the long freeze that the lady of the house tried to bite my hand for allowing a faucet to overrun a drinking glass.

She'd been weather bound with a pack of small kids so long that the sound of water dripping or a commode flushing would make her pause and bow her head in gratitude. Her husband claimed that When the water thawed and the washing machine was declared sound, she blocked traffic in front of the house while doing a street dance.

Personal hygiene, or the lack of such, became so critical during the storm that communities were divided into the watered and the waterless. As long as no one had a bath, we were under a common bond. But once a few fortunates had a hot bath, the longest of friendships were put under strain. Without further details, let's just say that in spite of the great advancements in the field of tales and bath powders and the masterful accomplishments in the formulation of exotic perfumes, tubs and showers still are the mainstay of human contacts. So just mark it down that once everyone could bathe, there was great rejoicing in all camps.

Out in the pastures the overall water supply was finally reduced to four U. S. gallons to water the whole area. Hombres too hard of heart to form a bucket brigade to put out a fire at an orphanage pitched in and watered the herds. Ice stacked up around the water troughs; feed grounds became bed grounds. The loss of baby calves and baby lambs was too sad to recount.

But now the afternoons are in the 60's. Spring is going to be a precious subject once the people can stop their re-plumbing chores. What a dream it'll be to think of tender buds and green grass. Woe be it to the man that complain of the July heat waves.