

There Are Some Things I'll Miss About The Flood

It was a year ago today that water flooded the 23,000 square foot building that houses my family business. I'm not great about remembering anniversaries, but this one will stick in my mind for awhile – it was early morning on Friday the 13th of June.

Since then, there has been much speculation about who to blame and what we can do now to mitigate future flooding. I can argue either side of the issue about how much money to spend on which incredibly expensive project that may or may not help much.

Raising Dubuque Street is one of those. I honestly think that road would flood if everybody in Coralville flushed their toilets at the same time – it doesn't take much. But is it worth \$32 million to keep that stretch of road dry and to replace the Park Road bridge? Probably – there would be a lot less rebuilding the next time it happens.

One of the (few) benefits of last year's flooding was that it provided an instant perspective and reality check. What seemed to be the most important things to me on June 12 didn't even make my list the following day. I never was one to sweat the small stuff, but it's even clearer to me now that pretty much everything is small stuff.

Floods are equal-opportunity events – the mansions get washed away along with the refrigerator boxes. Fortunately, the flood prevention and recovery efforts are nondiscriminatory as well – when else would you see bank presidents slinging sandbags alongside the homeless?

It's not often that you can feel such pride about an entire community, and you have to wish that this kind of universal cooperation could be achieved outside of natural disasters.

It's easy to understand those who believe that eventually Mother Nature will always get her way and our puny efforts are often wasted. I share this view to some extent, which is why we didn't bother to sandbag our building

last year – it seems to me that most sandbag walls are either never reached or eventually breached. As it turned out, it wouldn't have helped us.

I suspect that a similar laissez-faire attitude is also shared by a nesting pair of mallards under the freestanding sign in front of our building - they were there last year as well. When the water forced them from their nest, they moved to a small spot of dry land at the front of our building.

I admired their nonchalance and immediate acceptance about what had happened. They would waddle and quack and swim happily in the biggest lake they had ever seen. They were probably thinking, "This is weird, but we'll be fine." Not that they had much choice – ducks have very limited control over their environment.

Human beings, however, seem to spend much of their time figuring out ways to insulate themselves from the great outdoors and the whims of Mother Nature. That makes it all the more surprising and distressing when she refuses to be ignored.

As a community we're not often forced to demonstrate the kind of resilience and determination that we did last June. For some of us it may have been the first time in our lives. It's good to know that we have it in us when we need it.

Dave Parsons is a member of the Press Citizen's Writers Group. His business on the Coralville Strip was closed for one day and operated at an alternate location from June 16 until August 25th last year due to the flooding.