

Feeling Conflicted About Winter in Iowa

I hate winter.

You would think that as a native Iowan I'd be used to cold weather. Not to mention hot weather and everything in-between. But for me winter is a season to be endured – an involuntary Purgatory between my two favorites; fall and spring.

It doesn't help that I live with LuAnn, a woman whose normal body temperature could melt lead. The "approved" temperatures in our house are 58 at night and 64 during the day, unless she feels (as she often does) that even those frigid settings are too balmy. I'm thinking of recommending that the military adopt these thermostat settings as a replacement for waterboarding as an enhanced interrogation technique.

To add insult to injury, LuAnn loves the winter. She jumps up and down and claps her hands like a little girl whenever the snow flies. Meanwhile, all I can envision is unshoveled snow, clueless drivers and four months of shaking hands with people who invariably say, "your hands are like ice!"

Perversely, LuAnn and I always take a week off every February to get away from our harsh Iowa winters and...go downhill skiing in some other state with a harsh winter of its own. It seems odd to leave one bitter cold location to visit another, but our local ski options (the delusionally-dubbed "Mississippi Mountains") don't quite cut it for more than a day trip.

If I stop to think about it, winter isn't *all* bad - it's arguably our most scenic season. A blanket of snow or coating of ice provides monochromatic beauty everywhere you look.

I also derive a certain amount of self-satisfaction from braving the elements every time I leave the house. It's easy to fancy oneself as a rugged individualist when wearing high-tech thermal clothing. It's wonderful stuff – properly decked out, it's easy to be too warm in subfreezing temperatures.

And is it just me or do people act nicer during this time of year? In the face of a common adversary (winter), we all seem to display a camaraderie and forbearance that is not as apparent during the rest of the year.

Come to think of it, weekends are definitely more relaxing because I can sit indoors doing nothing, not feeling any guilt that something in the yard requires my attention – mowing, raking, edging, mulching, or setting my lawn sprinkler to spray the neighbor's barking dog.

I guess winter does have a few things going for it. I'm even looking forward to clearing snow this year thanks to my latest purchase - a badass two-stage snow blower that can fill a neighbor's driveway from 20 feet away. The one with the barking dog.

It's hard for even me to believe, but last November I discovered I was longing to hear Christmas music several weeks before the usual irritating (for others) stations started playing them 24/7. Is there some rule saying we can't hear them all year long?

The same goes for holiday lighting – we leave our display running until spring. Or longer – I was pulling strings of lights off our yews in September so I could prune them.

Finally, I'm sure it would be boring to have the same weather year-round. I have a mild case of attention deficit disorder that fits perfectly with the changing of the seasons.

Just one more reason why I love winter.

Writer's Group member Dave Parsons co-owns a business on the Coralville Strip, and he doesn't actually abuse his neighbor's dog.