

Let it Blow

By Dennis Knight

We say rain brings pennies from heaven, and we dream of white Christmases, but I've never heard anyone sing, "let it blow, let it blow, let it blow." Nobody likes the wind, but wherever you live, it's inevitable.

The windiest big city in the United States is Boston with an average annual wind speed of 12.3 miles per hour, then Oklahoma City, Buffalo, Milwaukee and Dallas. Chicago, which claims to be the Windy City, is actually twelfth on the list. But even Boston's ambient wind speed pales when compared to Dodge City with an average of 13.9, according to the U.S. Climatic Data Center. My research says the most tranquil big city in America by average is Phoenix, but even that town is known to suffer wind gusts of up to 100 miles per hour.

I don't know the climate numbers, but the single windiest place I have ever lived was Rawlins, Wyoming. A rough and tough prison town, its main claim to infamy is wind. I was there for a couple of years back in the sixties when I had embarked on a career in retail management. I thought it was the grouchiest town in America, and I don't think my breaking out of the joint made it any more congenial.

My intent for this piece, however, is not to damn the wind but to celebrate it. An old expression tells us it is an ill wind that blows nobody good. It's faint praise, but a start, so let's continue with some real bluster.

The wind can slow a jet liner to almost hover speed while keeping it safely lifted in an air foil, and at the same time boost a plane flying in the opposite direction well ahead of its ETA.

The wind cleans the air and brings us the rain that brings the pennies from heaven. We are cooled on a hot day by a current wafting through the trees.

Winds that bring blizzard conditions to the mountains in January roar down the slopes and become the Chinooks that carry balmy temperatures to Denver. But hang on to your hat.

The mighty wind that carries a sailing ship across the sea can be harnessed by a sailor to propel right into and through its face by the art of tacking. Without the wind, either sits idle.

Without the wind, Don Quixote would not have found a worthy opponent. Windmills can grind our grain and pump water for the livestock. Farms of wind turbines supply power to our cities.

The wind that redirects our Frisbee flies our kite.

And down on the mall, the friendly breeze that raises a skirt lifts the spirits of the girl watchers. Now that, my friend, is no ill wind.