

The Colors of Winter

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Stars and Sun Date 34626

Winter wears coats of differing color, varying with location.

This observation from personal history.

For those in northeastern States, winter's daylight was often seen in shades of grey, shadows, the horizon disappearing, stark colors fade, the vivid red, green, blue, slued into a mix of blah pastels.

There sky was seldom high above, as common in Colorado. Lacking mountain barriers, crags and trees to hug year round, no barrier, miles of flatness west, tends to calm throughout the year. Then snow falls. Quietly. Land marks disappear. To the eye of all, trees are white blobs, the distinct demarkation between land and sky, erased. As everywhere in winter when the temperature falls below freezing, the moisture-burdened air insists of dropping its guest onto earth to again nourish that realm. Nature doing its thing, a delight to the eye, misery to those not protected from natures winter gift.

This scene is duplicated in other climes. But not everywhere. Christmas season here is the onset of summer in the Southern Hemisphere. There it would be odd to imagine dwellers delighting in seeing a oversized male, red-suited, driving a sleigh over their roofs, bringing presents to the deserved, needy any Christmas eve.

I have enjoyed Colorado winters since my first, 1948-49. That year Colorado was blessed with heavy continuous snow after Christmas, cities of immovable traffic. The snow expected, fascinating at first, then crippling. People hunkered at home; traffic, auto and Street-Car, immobile. Police and Fire only responding to Emergency. Then for Police, four men in car, driver and three with shovels to help them reach the needy. Factories, business, school, closed for days creating unique silence, beauty.

Eventually the storm heads east, disclosing the Plains below with that blanket which trapped cattle where they grazed; the animals recognized the threat, congregate in herds, bodies touching, warming one another, until nature or humans arrive. Survival's instinct.

In the Rockies, wild animal herds were affected. Non-vigorous large animals died; all that year yearlings starved to death in the week-long storm and its crippling aftermath. The cruelty of nature. Then I m reminded of an earlier winter, no snow.

In the last weeks of 1945 assigned to duty on that small piece of Pacific land at the Truk Atoll near the Equator, the blues of sky and water merge; highlight the greens of growth, reds of soil, as white puffs meandering. A Paradise similar to Hawaii; but on Truk all frills absent. My first odd Christmas celebration. Those days, sleeveless shirt, short pants, the uniform of the day for all military. And 70,000 long bypassed Japanese soldiers await transport home to peace and homeland not seen in years, reunite with family.

I Return to Oahu to await reassignment.

Then a call from a College classmate. He's in Honolulu, with two other classmates, suggest we celebrate. They furnish refreshments, I hustle the food and small boat. Pick them up, drive to a secluded beach. We build a fire, eat and swim for hours. I return them to their different ships; the four of us, one-third of our Detroit Engineering class eighteen months earlier.

Then orders. To Japan. Leave at once.

Shock at the destination. Tokyo's winter of 1945-46, bitter cold from Siberia. Flying from Oahu's constant temperate climate to Tokyo, an awakening. Tokyo and all Japanese cities, their dwellings gone, burned by war. Peace, wearing USA uniforms, meaningless to their return to the routine pre-war life.

That winter, devoid of warmth and color.

Then and every year, regardless of climate, get to work.