

Snowbound

by Marilyn Reeves

Back when I was a kid growing up in Salida, and didn't know any better, I used to love winter. From snowmen to snow castles to making snow angels on the ground, I had my share of winter fun.

It took a good 15 minutes to put on the long underwear, leggings, sweaters, overcoat and mittens – the kind with the long strings that fed through the sleeves of your coat so you wouldn't lose one – and, of course, those ugly, glumpy goulashes. Add some earmuffs and a stocking cap and you were set to go out and play for maybe a half hour before your nose and toes got so cold that you had to come back in and thaw out – needles and pins stinging your hands and feet – before you repeated the whole process all over again.

My best times were skating out at the old ice pond at the edge of town and sliding down the hill on the mesa, the one up above Longfellow Elementary – the school the other kids went to who didn't go to McCray (I went to McCray). We'd pile onto our sleds and inner tubes and what-have-you, two or three at a time, slide our way down to a soft crash landing, untangle our various limbs, then slog our way back up to the top to slide back down again. Repeat, repeat, until we were so tired and cold we had to wait until tomorrow to do it all again.

But as I got older, I began to dread the onset of winter – driving on ice, and the endless hours of shoveling snow. My little house in southeast Aurora had a long driveway with a decided slope to it. It took for bloody ever to clear it, and one had to be oh-so-careful not to slip and fall on one's tush in the process! For some reason I never did put in an automatic garage door opener, so I spent 25 winters trudging up that long driveway to open the garage door, then slip-sliding my way back down to my car, which I gunned and caromed up into the garage – but never once hit the doorframe, I'm proud to say.

I think it was March of 1986 when a spring blizzard left a heavy blanket of snow, with drifts up to five feet high, that kept many of us snowbound for several days. My house was on a cul-de-sac, which was considered a non-essential for the City plows, so we were on our own. The men would go out and shovel the street for hours at a time, but made little progress. And I went out about every other hour and shoveled what I considered to be a ton of snow with each effort, but only managed to clear about the top third of my driveway.

But on Day Three, the guy who lived across from me, who happened to own a long flatbed truck, lowered the back end of the flatbed at an angle, and using it like a giant shovel, went around the entire cul-de-sac and cleared a roadway for all of us. He became an instant hero! Then the men came over and dug out the bottom two-thirds of my driveway. I was amazed at how quickly they got the job done! I wanted to hug each and every one of them for finally freeing me from my snowbound prison so I could get to work.

Sometimes the worst of times brings out the best in people, so perhaps there are still some good things to be said about winter after all.