

## I have to stay home March break



I am fully aware that this column appears in print during March break.

That means a lot of you aren't around to read it.

Some of you may have joined the crush of those many who have cut out of here to seek warmer climates. Others of you might have gone off in the opposite direction in the search of more winter fun without the burden of worrying about having to go to work the next day. And then there are those of you who are enjoying the time off and decided to stay put, maybe catching up on your reading, household chores or getting a start on your income tax. That means you're around to read this, so I wish you some happy down time. Then there are the rest of us who have to work, whether it's March break or not.

I shouldn't complain too much. For at least this one week, I can drive to work every morning without having to worry about a school bus delaying me. And since there are few night events during this week, I should actually be able to get home for supper every night this week (my wife is probably sick of me by now, no matter how much I compliment her cooking).

It's been more than 35 years since I graduated from the public school system, meaning it's been that long since I eagerly looked forward to March break. Post secondary institutions (at least in my day) had their down week in the middle of February (I remember because it always fell around my brother's birthday). As a school kid, I naturally looked forward to getting a bit of time off. It had benefits for my parents too, especially my father. It offered a small amount of justification to his constant observations that I was a chronic loafer. Even my father deserved the occasional vindication, since I usually devoted the week to doing as little as possible (to this day, I try to devote the same amount to effort to the same cause when I'm on vacation).

But I have found over the years that March break does not add up to down time for many of us in the work world. Do you know that I'm expected to get a community newspaper on the street, March break notwithstanding? Christmas, this ain't.

Yes, I am still expected to work.

That task is generally complicated by the fact that councils boards and authorities close down with the schools.

But I have been in the business long enough to know there are always things happening, so I just have to go out and find them.

So March break is always going to be a time when I can't get too far away from work. And when I consider some of the horror stories that go on at the Airport at the start and end of March break, that isn't such a bad thing.

Now if, for some reason, I was able to get away for March break, I would probably opt to head north.

It's not for the skiing or other winter sports. For one thing, I haven't skied since I was in high school. There was a time that I would have given snowshoeing a try, but that was some years ago. Somewhere in the basement of my house are skates with my name on them. There they are likely to remain. My doctor has indicated to me that my knees and back are not up to such tasks any more.

Besides, the great Canadian north is very well suited for the time-honoured vacation activity of doing nothing.

I have made it clear many times that I'm not a big fan of winter, but my real problem is with the snow; both shoveling it and driving in it. Beyond that, the season is something I can deal with. Cold isn't that big a problem, not when you have an extra sweater during the day and an extra blanket at night. As long as I can get myself (and I guess I have to take Beth too) up north, we're happy little campers, especially since someone else worries about any shoveling that needs to be done.

As well, I have very little desire to visit any of the traditional 'hot spots.' For one thing, I can find better ways to fritter away what little money I have to get the sunburn I'm going to get in a couple of months anyway.

Besides, this time of year (and especially around March break), it seems that everyone wants to head south, meaning one wouldn't

get lonely. At the risk of sounding anti-social, when I go on holiday, I want some elbow room.

My parents took a couple of trips to Florida as they got older. Now it is true my mother had a cousin who had retired there, meaning they had someone to visit. I don't know anyone down there, unless I walked in on the former governor and exclaimed, "Hi Jeb, I once met your cousin?" (a completely accurate statement, by the way).

Beyond that, what has the southern climes got that I'm not going to get in due course in this climate.

And before anyone accuses me of not having experienced such an experience, I have.

Granted, it was many years ago, like when I was 17, meaning I don't feel like divulging how long ago that was.

My family made the great Boxing Day escape to Cuba.

In fact, it was a near thing. The snow storm that day was so bad the airport limo we had arranged never showed. We eventually drove ourselves to the airport, arranging for my uncle to collect the car later, at his leisure. That solution, incidentally, was my idea. But we got to the airport, got on the plane (my first time on an aircraft) that was delayed several hours anyway, and by the time it got dark, we were basking in the heat of Havana and my old man was mystified over the fact that for the first time in his life he had been obliged to pay more than a buck for a cigar.

There were other things about that trip to remember, such as the fact that Cuba, in those days, had no legal drinking age (I have no idea what the rules are today). Since I had pesos in my pocket, my folks had no problem with me going up to the bar like any adult and ordering myself a drink.

"Just don't get yourself smashed," I well remember my dad telling me. He should have known better. He probably did.

Funny, how you remember your first hangover.

It's not that happy memory that discourages me from heading south for the winter like the rest of the birds. It's just an understanding that I was born in Canada. That means dealing with winter, realizing that you get just about all the sunshine you can handle in the summer.

Besides, there are few places where you can't get a hangover, if you really want one.

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