

Of a certain age.....

By Sue Stafford
Columnist

I've always loved snow days. To a child out of school due to snow, it meant sledding on the hill in the neighbor's pasture on our Flexible Flyer wooden sleds. If we did have school, snow meant the girls could wear long pants, the only time we were allowed to wear pants to school.

My memories include building snowmen taller than me, constructing snow forts from which we bombarded the other neighborhood kids with snowballs, and, of course, snow angels all over the yard. When we finally did come inside, tired and wet, we would put our frozen hands under cold water and it felt warm. I had the good fortune of being in grade school in Portland in the early 1950s, when we had a number of winter days that approached the recent snowfall here in Sisters.

When my own children were young, snow days meant hours outside with them, sledding and doing all the same things I had done when I was young. We even

had one of my old sleds, with metal runners, which we kept waxed for speed.

Sometimes while the kids played, all the moms would gather at one house for coffee and cookies, and share concerns of being young mothers in suburban Bellevue. When the snow was particularly deep, and our long driveway was impassable, I would round up my younger kids, pile them on a sled, and I'd pull them as I walked the mile to our local grocery store. The return trip found the groceries on the sled, while the offspring frolicked, teased, and threw innumerable snowballs at each other and me.

Those special days, when the outside world slowed down or stopped, are among my favorite memories of my own childhood and of being a young mother. I've never lost my excitement when those first tentative flakes start to fall, hoping that this will be the big one. Well, I certainly got my wish last week. Between the two snowstorms, my deck accumulated about 20 inches of snow.

Each morning, first thing, I eagerly peek through the bedroom curtain to see what Mother Nature left during the night. The temperatures have stayed cold enough to maintain the pristine white of the winter world. The last super moon of the year reflected off the snow, turning night into almost-day.

The silence created by a heavy blanket of snow brings me peace and a snug feeling of security inside my warm home, with ample groceries stored away in the kitchen.

As this latest snowstorm lingers, and overnight temperatures plummet into the subzero range, my thoughts often turn to those within our community who are subsisting out in the elements, simply trying to stay alive.

The efforts to establish a cold-weather shelter, scheduled to open on January 1 at Westside Church, warm my heart greatly. Close to 60 community members attended a training meeting last week, led by gentlemen from the Shepherd's House shelter in Bend and the

Redmond shelter.

It takes great dedication and energy to get a project like the shelter up and running. It also takes many willing hands, actually staffing the shelter or providing food and other needed materials.

While I can revel in wonderful memories of fun in the snow, for those who find themselves without shelter, snow and cold is the enemy. We are only two weeks away from the shelter opening its doors, but that must feel like an eternity to someone huddled in minus-zero temperatures.

I never take for granted my good fortune of having a home, a car, a part-time job as a writer, and basically pretty decent health. That good fortune also affords me the opportunity to share my time, talent and treasure with those among us who could use a little compassion and support.

I will be doing my first overnight shift at the Sisters Cold Weather Shelter from midnight to seven in the morning during the first

week in January.

Rather than fussing over one seven-hour shift that will require me to remain awake and functioning, I am grateful to have the opportunity to reach out to my fellow travelers, offering warmth and safety.

I hope you will consider joining me in the community-wide effort to provide shelter from the winter cold right here in Sisters. There are still plenty of slots on the schedule left to fill.

We, like each crystalline snowflake, have our own unique design — our individual gifts, abilities and interests — and when we gather them all together to work on a collective goal, there will be an aggregate beauty like that of the blanket of snow now covering Sisters. Unlike the cold of the snow blanket, however, our blanket of love will provide warmth.

My very best wishes for a blessed and magical holiday season! Let's all work together to make 2017 a very special year in this charming little town we call home.

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From Sisters, take Hwy. 20 toward Bend. Turn right on Gist Road (past the rodeo grounds). Follow to Harrington Loop Road and turn left. The church is on the left at **67130 Harrington Loop Rd.**
For more info go to www.sistersnaz.org or call 541-647-4838.

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