

# *Weather...or Not*

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Earlier this month Punxsutawney Phil saw his shadow on Ground Hog's Day and according to legend, that means six more weeks of winter, bad news for most folks, particularly those in the midst of a wretched winter. Most of them probably question what a furry rodent living in a climate controlled environment in Gobbler's Knob has to do with whether they put their snow shovel away.

Beside death and taxes, weather is one thing we can count on. We know we'll always have some. In a book I'm reading that takes place in Tucson, Arizona where I happen to be at the moment, the author mentions a significant January day in history when the "air was desert-crisp and the sky was a bright blue," but went on to include a summary of the National Weather Service as to that day's meteorological activity in Tucson: "No significant weather was observed." One could probably say that about most days in this city where I once lived. One sunny day after another translates into no significant weather.

Not so in Denver which is still digging out after a record-setting February blizzard or in my hometown Dexter, Michigan where the current morning temperature of 25 is the high for the day. Or any one of over a dozen regions where this winter is expected to be frigid or bring lots of snow or rain as in the Pacific Northwest. Some of us have run away for awhile. Most of the people I've met in Green Valley, Arizona, spend anywhere from a month to eight months in the Sonoran desert. Coming from the Dakotas, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota, and Washington, none of them seem anxious to return to their winter havens. As one woman told me, "I'm not going back to Minnesota until I can no longer walk on water."

When I ambled over to a local plant nursery on a balmy day, itching to buy a few colorful geraniums, I found the shop closed. The sign said: "Closed due to weather. Heat, cold, rain and wind." I guess it was multiple choice. But under a sunny blue sky with a slight breeze wafting about causing a few palm trees to sway slightly, I wanted to find the owner and tell him about real weather. We who live on the Oregon Coast know real weather.

Though the calendar tells us the first day of spring is a month off, new beginnings are appearing here in the Southwest like the new growth of fat fleshy prickly pear pads. A dove builds her nest above my back door, and I've already seen the brilliant red flash of a Vermilion Flycatcher at the feeder. The silhouette of saguaro marching across the purple dusk of desert reminds me to be patient in all things. It takes over 70 years for saguaro to develop those branching arms. Soon, if we're lucky with a bit of rain, the Mexican Gold Poppies with their orange-yellow flowers will carpet the desert. I did find blooming plants at another nursery, so bubblegum pink geraniums, russet snapdragons and purple pansies brighten the corner of the patio. Come spring, it'll be time to return to the Northwest and dig in the dirt.

By 8 am, sunshine already floods my space. A few mares' tail clouds drift across the brilliant blue sky. The day stretches out before me like a lazy childhood summer. Think I'll work on my book project for awhile, then water the garden. Maybe I'll walk to the library or stop in at the *While Elephant*, an

enormously successful thrift shop in Green Valley that earned 2 million dollars last year which it gave to community projects. It's the only thrift store I've seen where the line to get in every morning at 9 a.m. is over a block long.

At a recent open air art festival I bought a tee shirt in the brilliant hues of the Southwest because I couldn't resist the quote on the front of the shirt:

“Just living is not enough.  
One must have sunshine, freedom, and a little flower.”

I think I've got those covered. Sunshine, check; freedom, check; a little flower, check.