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Meet the Snows

By Arleen M. Kaptur

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For those who live and work in the Northern parts, snow and cold are around for what seems like forever. Those in the warmer climates can only dream about snow, snowpeople, and carrot noses. Wherever you call home, these snow munchkins can be a joy to have around, and a bit of whimsy when life crowds in a bit too much.

Children and adults can build snow families right in their own front yard with Mother Nature supplying the essentials. But anyone can "create" a snowperson with a myriad of craft scraps. Styrofoam balls in various sizes are great for making lightweight and easily decorated snowpeople. Felt, and even worn-out white socks that are filled and given button noses, scarves, gloves, add to the fun of winter or wintry thoughts. You can wear snowmen/women on sweaters, on children's coats or fleece tops just by cutting out, embellishing and sewing or using fusible backing so that your special creations stick when the going gets cold and wet.

Several snowpeople on a window ledge with snow covered pine cones are sometimes just the touch needed to brighten up an area. Coloring pages offer a variety of patterns to choose from – the country version of thin or the old-fashioned robust, smiling, and cheerful lot.

How about greeting your guests and family as they come through your front door or walk up your front steps? Using tomato cages for body frames, cover with strong white cloth that will withstand the blowing winds, and the beautiful snowflakes that fall, and attach earmuffs, vests, and they can even hold an old sled or set of skis for that quick-decision trip through the woods.

You can even decorate hot chocolate with whipped topping snowpeople, trace on cookies with icing and snowpeople pancakes are a hit for week-end brunch. The possibilities are endless and are only reigned in by your time and willingness to spend a few minutes in the land of Frosty and friends. So gather up grandma and grandpa, aunts, uncles, children, cousins, and whoever else is within reach and start creating a whole family of snow friends to share your wintry days, even though it might be sunshiny bright with nary a cloud in the sky, but the fun will just "melt" away the after holiday days.

ENJOY!

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Arleen's site:

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Indian Summer

By LeAnn R. Ralph

It was a warm, sunny October afternoon one day when I was a kid, and as I walked up the hill of our driveway after getting off the school bus at our Wisconsin dairy farm, I wondered how many more nice days we would have before winter came.

I was still wondering about winter when I entered the kitchen a few minutes later.

"What did you learn in school today?" asked my mother, who was in the middle of peeling potatoes for supper.

Every day Mom asked what I had learned in school, although most of the time I didn't know how to answer because it didn't seem like we had really learned anything.

Today, though, I had something to tell her.

"We learned about Indian Summer," I said.

My mother paused and looked over at me. "It's not Indian Summer today."

I frowned. "It's not?"

Mom shook her head.

"But our teacher said so."

"That's what the weatherman said on television this morning, too. But it's not Indian Summer," she replied.

"How come?" I asked. "Our teacher told us that it's Indian Summer when we get a warm, sunny day after it freezes."

My mother shrugged. "Seems like just another nice fall day to me," she said.

"Then what makes it Indian Summer?"

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Mom paused to select another potato.

"We have to get snow first before it's Indian Summer," she explained.

"Snow?"

Even though it was already October, I didn't figure it would snow for a long time yet.

"Does it have to snow a lot?" I asked.

"No. Just a little bit. Then after it melts, and if we have some nice, warm, sunny days, then

THAT's Indian Summer," Mom said.

"How come?"

My mother sighed. "Well, I don't know why, exactly. Except if it's a warm fall day, how is that any different than any other warm fall day?"

I thought about what she'd said for a few moments.

"But if we think it's going to be winter, like when it snows," she continued, "and then it turns warm and sunny again, then we think it's more like summer."

Her explanation made quite a bit of sense, but still, if my teacher AND the weatherman said it was Indian Summer...

"Did you just make that up?" I asked. "About it not being Indian Summer until after it snows?"

"No," my mother said, "I did not just make it up. That's what MY mother and father always said."

My mother's parents, Nils and Inga, were immigrants from Norway who had died long before I was born.

"Does Norway have Indian Summer, too?" I asked.

My mother shook her head.

"Why not?"

"No Indians," she replied.

We had learned in school that Native Americans were the first people who lived here. And if they were American, then of course they wouldn't live in Norway, too.

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"Did Grandma Inga and Grandpa Nils know any Indians?" I asked.

"No," Mom said, "although there were still a few in this part of Wisconsin when my grandpa first came to live here. Or so I've heard."

"Did they call it Indian Summer?" I asked.

"Who?" Mom inquired.

"The Indians who were here when your grandpa was around," I said.

My mother shook her head as she finished peeling the last potato. "I wouldn't have the foggiest notion,"

she replied.

Later that fall, it snowed a little bit. After the snow melted and the weather turned warm again for a while, I could see what Mom meant about how if it snows, we think it's going to be winter, but then if the weather turns nice again, it seems more like summer.

Nowadays I often hear weather forecasters proclaiming that a sunny, warm, fall day is Indian Summer.

I know better, though.

If my grandparents — and my mother — believed that snow was a prerequisite for Indian Summer, well — that's good enough for me.

LeAnn R. Ralph is the author of the book, *Christmas In Dairyland (True Stories From a Wisconsin Farm)*. Share the view from Rural Route 2 and celebrate Christmas during a simpler time. Free shipping on autographed copies. Read sample chapters and other Rural Route 2 stories —

Indian Summer

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