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Editorial

Global Cooling

The scientific community is greatly concerned with what is known as Global Warming, or the Greenhouse Effect, which is "the phenomenon whereby the earth's atmosphere traps solar radiation, caused by the presence in the atmosphere of gases such as carbon dioxide, water vapor, and methane that allow incoming sunlight to pass through but absorb heat radiated back from the earth's surface" (AHD).

In plain English, the mean temperature of the earth is slowly, slowly rising. To our non-scientific minds, the figures cited seem insignificant, but they aren't. One degree Celsius is enough to bring about changes in our weather patterns and increase the thaw rate on the polar caps, which in turn, over a period of years, brings up the level of the seas.

It can be safely said that scientists are more worried about global warming than the children of God. What we want to discuss in this article is global cooling, something that troubles Christians far more than it does scientists, most of whom are totally unaware of this phenomenon.

We have far less fear of cold than we do of heat or of fire. This is especially true in a tropical country. There are places where a temperature of 15ºC (59ºF) is considered very cold. In southern Brazil temperatures will dip as low as -5ºC (23ºF), yet I have never heard of anyone actually freezing to death. Even in the poorest shacks, when there aren't enough clothes or covers to keep the cold away, a bonfire will do the trick.

Thus someone living in a tropical country has no real concept of cold. Even those living in a temperate zone, such as central USA, have a hard time imagining how cold it can get in parts of Canada, in Alaska, and especially in the Arctic Circle, where the cold is an unshakable, deadly enemy.

Astronauts who travel to the moon in sophisticated space craft and return safely to earth become instant national heroes. Yet their success depends much less on their

own performance, than that of an army of men and women who constructed the rockets and space craft, and especially those in Houston who monitor the minutest details of each flight, including the astronaut's vital signs. In case of emergency, it is they, not the astronauts, who make the crucial decisions. Indeed, should it become necessary, they could fly the craft back to earth by radio signals.

A hundred years ago, when space travel was still Jules Vernes stuff, Polar exploration was in its heyday. To set foot on the North Pole was spoken of as the last great geographic challenge to be met.

(Unbelievably, it wasn't until 1908, less than a hundred years ago, that it was found that Greenland was actually an island, when Peary sailed around the far side of this enormous boreal land mass.)

Contrary to the southern polar cap, which covers a land mass known as Antarctica, the northern polar cap is an unstable floating expanse of ice and snow. Underneath, treacherous currents exert a constant pressure on the ice. With a deafening crack, a rapidly widening breach appears, revealing the ocean beneath. Sometimes these breaches freeze over. Other times, they drift back together like the jaws of a Herculean vice. Jagged blocks of ice erupt, creating barriers up to 30 feet high.

Travel on Polar ice has never been safe nor easy. Contrary to space travel, the early Arctic explorers were truly on their own, with no radio communication. As they advanced over this white expanse, cracks in the ice would separate expedition members. Or, as apparently happened on at least one occasion, the crack would appear exactly under a makeshift igloo where men were sleeping. A dunking in -50ºC (-58ºF) weather is fatal, unless the victim's boots and clothes can immediately be changed. Frostbite was never far away. Rare was the Polar explorer who had all his fingers and toes (Peary lost eight toes) and whose facial features were intact.

Scenes transmitted to earth from space capsules or from the space shuttle show smiling men and women floating in a controlled environment. They rest in special sleeping bags and when their resting period is over, Houston awakens them with gentle music and a cheery Good Morning.

Not so with the Polar explorers. They didn't have a single comfort. Nothing was easy. Nothing was safe. There was a cost attached to every step taken.

At times there is a fine line separating human ingenuity and foolhardiness. In the quest for the Pole, such was the case of Fridtjof Nansen, a Norwegian born in Oslo in 1861. Early in life, Nansen became enchanted with the polar region, and, like Peary, learned to cope with the rigors of Artic life by exploring Greenland. By observing driftwood washed ashore, he concluded it would be possible to reach the North Pole by ship! Knowing the direction in which the polar cap drifts over the Pole, Nansen decided to specially construct a ship that would resist the tremendous pressures of the Arctic ice, let it freeze into the ice, and then get a free trip over the Pole aboard his ship.

This ship, the Fram, was christened on October 26, 1892 and on July 24, 1893, Nansen took to sea in his special ship (which, incidentally, can be seen today in the Fram Museum near Oslo). Explorer, poet and painter, a cultured man, Nansen sailed

for weeks until reaching the iceberg fields, through which he carefully threaded his ship, until he could go no more. There he stopped and shortly his boat was solidly entrapped—hopefully headed for the North Pole.

Life soon evolved into a comfortable routine aboard the Fram as the days became shorter and winter set in. Then one day it happened, as the crew sat comfortably below deck "chewing the fat." There was a tremendous boom, everything shook and the ship shot upward. At once it became evident that Nansen's careful planning of the ship had paid off—as it did many times after. Caught in the jaws of a massive crunch, the ship withstood the pressure to which it was exposed. As the pressure lessened, the ship slowly settled back into the sea.

Soundings taken by the crew showed the ocean floor to be much deeper than Nansen had imagined. This he knew meant that the currents would be weaker than he had calculated and that the winds would have a strong influence on their progress toward the North Pole. Daily sightings told them that far from being on a direct course in the general desired direction, they were on an erratic course, one day traveling one way, the next another. The trip which Nansen had initially calculated to take between two and five years, he now saw could easily take seven or eight.

After spending the first winter trapped in the ice, Nansen became impatient. His objective, after all, was to reach the Pole. Thus, with his usual meticulousness, he began organizing an overland—or rather, "over-ice"—expedition to the Pole. He and one of his crew members would with dogs, three sleds and two kayaks, make a run for the Pole.

This is a story in itself which we won't attempt to tell here. Suffice it to say travel was much more difficult than Nansen had estimated. To haul three heavily loaded sleds and the two kayaks over an interminable series of pressure ridges proved more than the dogs could handle. The two men had to fashion harnesses and pull together with the dogs. Then came a time of better sledding in which they managed to cover up to 20 or more kilometers a day. Imagine Hansen's bewilderment, when at his daily sighting to determine their exact position, he found that according to the stars, each evening they were at exactly the same place they had set out in the morning! It was a simple deduction to figure out what was happening. The ice on which they were traveling was moving in exactly the opposite direction of their course, and at approximately the same speed!

Read the book on how these two men survived an Arctic winter in a makeshift camp and eventually, several years later, made it back to civilization.

And the Fram and her crew? Several weeks after getting back to civilization, Nansen received a telegram: *Fridtjof Nansen: The Fram has arrived in top condition. Everyone is fine. We are leaving immediately for Tromsö. Welcome to your homeland! Otto Sverdrup.*

Yes, Nansen's theory was correct. A ship entering one side of the Arctic ice field would eventually be disgorged on the opposite side. He did learn, however, that nature doesn't always chart the same course man charts.

On April 6, 1909, after three decades of effort, Peary became the first man to set

foot on the North Pole (a conquest bitterly contested by Dr. Fredrick A Cook, who believed he was the first).

As we read the story of the conquest of both the North and the South Poles, one constant element is the unrelenting cold. Interestingly, explorers in both the Arctic circle and in Antarctica relied heavily on Eskimos and their ability to survive the most inclement weather.

Many explorers, trappers, traders and travelers have perished in the cold climes of the earth. This is especially true when they travel alone. Death by freezing stands in a category of its own. In *To Build a Fire*, Jack London (1876-1916) imagines what it is like to freeze to death. Because of his extensive exposure to the elements, we believe that his imagination probably tells the variation of a story that many dead men are unable to tell.

In his story, the main character—the only active character, other than for his dog—is identified simply as the "man." Traveling through the Yukon, he hopes to reach his destination shortly after nightfall. We will print only excerpts. Temperatures are expressed in Fahrenheit.

He was a newcomer to the land, a cheechako, and this was his first winter. The trouble with him was that he was without imagination. He was quick and alert in the things of life, but only in the things, and not in the significanaces. Fifty degrees below zero meant eighty-odd degrees of frost. Such fact impressed him as being cold and uncomfortable, and that was all. It did not lead him to meditate upon his frailty as a creature of temperature, and upon man's frailty in general, able only to live within certain narrow limits of heat and cold, and from there on it did not lead him to the conjectural field of immortality and man's place in the universe. Fifty degrees below zero stood for a bite of frost that hurt and that must be guarded against by the use of mittens, ear flaps, warm moccasins, and thick socks. Fifty degrees below zero was to him just precisely fifty degrees below zero. That there should be anything more to it than that was a thought that never entered his head.

As he turned to go on, he spat speculatively. There was a sharp, explosive crackle that startled him. He spat again. And again, in the air, before it could fall to the snow, the spittle crackled. He knew that at fifty below spittle crackled on the snow. But his spittle had crackled in the air. Undoubtedly it was colder than fifty below—how much colder he did not know. But the temperature did not matter. He was bound for the old claim on the left fork of Henderson Creek, where the boys were already… He would be into camp by six o'clock; a bit after dark, it was true, but they would be there, a fire would be going, and a hot supper would be ready…

He was surprised, however, at the cold. It certainly was cold, he concluded, as he rubbed his numb nose and cheekbones with his mittened hand…

At the man's heals trotted a dog, a big native husky, the proper wolf dog, gray-coated and without any visible or temperamental difference from its brother, the wild wolf. The animal was depressed by the tremendous cold. It knew that it was no time

for traveling. Its instinct told it a truer tale than was told to the man by the man's judgment. In reality, it was not merely colder than fifty below zero; it was colder than sixty below, than seventy below. It was seventy-five below zero. Since the freezing point is thirty-two above zero, it meant that one hundred and seven degrees of frost obtained. The dog did not know anything about thermometers… It experienced a vague but menacing apprehension that subdued it and made it slink at the man's heels and that made it question eagerly every unwonted movement of the man, as if expecting him to go into camp or to seek shelter somewhere and build a fire…

He held on through the level stretch of woods for several miles… This was Henderson Creek, and he knew he was ten miles from the forks. He was ten miles from the forks. He looked at his watch. It was ten o'clock. He was making four miles an hour, and he calculated that he would arrive at the forks at half-past twelve. He decided to celebrate that even by eating his lunch there.

The dog dropped in again at his heels, with a tail drooping discouragement, as the man swung along the creek bed… The man held steadily on. He was not much given to thinking, and just then particularly he had nothing to think about save that he would eat lunch at the forks and that at six o'clock he would be in camp with the boys…

Empty as the man's mind was of thought, he was keenly observant, and he noticed the changes in the creek, the curves and bends and timber jams, and always he sharply noted where he placed his feet. Once, coming around a bend, he shied abruptly, like a startled horse, curved away from the place where he had been walking, and retreated several paces along the trail. The creek, he knew, was frozen clear to the bottom— no creek could contain water in the arctic winter — but he knew also that there were springs that bubbled out from the hillsides and ran along under the snow and on top of the ice of the creek. He knew that the coldest snaps never froze these springs, and he knew likewise their danger. They were traps. They hid pools of water under the snow that might be three inches deep, or three feet. Sometimes a skin of ice half an inch thick covered them, and in turn was covered by the snow. Sometimes there were alternate layers of water and ice skin, so that when one broke through he kept on breaking through for a while, sometimes wetting himself to the waist.

That is why he had shied in such panic. He had felt the give under his feet and heard the crackle of a snow-hidden ice skin. And to get his feet wet in such a temperature meant trouble and danger. At the very least it meant delay, for he would be forced to stop and build a fire, and under its protection to bare his feet while he dried his socks and moccasins…

In the course of the next two hours he came upon several similar traps…

At half-past twelve, to the minute, he arrived at the forks of the creek. He was pleased at the speed he had made. If he kept it up, he would certainly be with the boys by six. He unbuttoned his jacket and shirt and drew forth his lunch. The action consumed no more than a quarter of a minute, yet in that brief moment the numbness laid hold of the exposed fingers… Also he noted that the stinging which had first come to his toes when he sat down was already passing away. He wondered whether the toes

were warm or numb. He moved them inside the moccasins and decided that they were numb.

He pulled his mittens on hurriedly and stood up. He was a bit frightened. He stamped up and down until the stinging returned into his feet. It certainly was cold, was his thought. That man from Sulfur Creek had spoken the truth when telling how cold it sometimes got in the country. And he had laughed at him at the time! That showed one must not be too sure of things. There was no mistake about it, it *was* cold. He strode up and down, stamping his feet and threshing his arms, until reassured by the returning warmth. Then he got out matches and proceeded to make a fire. Working carefully from a small beginning, he soon had a roaring fire, over which he thawed the ice from his face…

When the man had finished, he filled his pipe and took his comfortable time over a smoke. Then he pulled on his mittens, settled the ear flaps of his cap firmly about his ears, and took the creek trail up the left fork…

There did not seem to be so many springs on the left fork of the Henderson, and for half an hour the man saw no signs of any. And then it happened. At a place where there were no signs, where the soft, unbroken snow seemed to advertise solidity beneath, the man broke through. It was not deep. He wet himself halfway to the knees before he floundered out to the firm crust.

He was angry, and cursed his luck aloud. He had hoped to get into camp with the boys at six o'clock, and this would delay him an hour, for he would have to build a fire and dry out his footgear. This was imperative at that low temperature—he knew that much; and he turned aside to the bank, which he climbed. On top, tangled in the underbrush about the trunks of several small spruce trees, was a high-water deposit of dry firewood—sticks and twigs, principally, but also larger portions of seasoned branches and fine, dry, last year's grasses. He threw down several large pieces on top of the snow. This served for a foundation and prevented the young flame from drowning itself in the snow it otherwise would melt. The flame he got by touching a match to a small shred of birch bark that he took from his pocket. This burned even more readily than paper. Placing it on the foundation he fed the young flame with wisps of dry grass and with the tiniest dry twigs.

He worked slowly and carefully, keenly aware of his danger. Gradually, as the flame grew stronger, he increased the size of the twigs with which he fed it. He squatted in the snow, pulling the twigs out from their entanglement in the brush and feeding directly to the flame. He knew there must be no failure. When it is seventy-five below zero a man must not fail in his first attempt to build a fire—that is, if his feet are wet. If his feet are dry, and he fails, he can run along the trail for half a mile and restore his circulation. But the circulation of wet and freezing feet cannot be restored by running when it is seventy-five below. No matter how fast he runs, the wet feet will freeze the harder.

All this the man knew. The old-timer on Sulfur Creek had told him about it the previous fall, and how he was appreciating the advice. Already all sensation had gone

out of his feet. To build the fire, he had been forced to remove his mittens, and the fingers had quickly gone numb. His pace of four miles an hour had kept his heart pumping blood to the surface and to all the extremities. But the instant he stopped, the action of the pump eased down… The extremities were the first to feel its absence. His wet feet froze the faster, and his exposed fingers numbed the faster, though they had not yet begun to freeze. Nose and cheeks were already freezing, while the skin of all his body chilled as it lost its blood.

But he was safe. Toes and nose and cheeks would be only touched by the frost, for the fire was beginning to burn with strength. He was feeding it twigs the size of his finger. In another minute he would be able to feed it with branches the size of his wrist, and then he could remove his wet footgear, and, while it dried, he cold keep his naked feet warm by the fire, rubbing them at first, of course, with snow. The fire was a success. He was safe. He remembered the advice of the old-timer on Sulfur Creek, and smiled. The old-timer had been very serious in laying down the law that no man must travel alone in the Klondike after fifty below. Well, here he was; he had had the accident; he was alone; and he had saved himself. Those old-times were rather womanish, some of them, he thought. All a man had to do was to keep his head, and he was all right. Any man who was a man could travel alone. But it was surprising the rapidity with which his cheeks and nose were freezing. And he had not thought his fingers could go lifeless in so short a time. Lifeless they were, for he could scarcely make them move together to grip a twig, and they seemed remote from his body and from him. When he touched a twig he had to look and see whether or not he had hold of it. The wires were pretty well down between him and his finger ends.

All of which counted for little. There was the fire, snapping and crackling and promising life with every dancing flame. He started to untie his moccasins. They were coated with ice; the thick German socks were like sheaths of iron halfway to the knees; and the moccasin strings were like rods of steel all twisted and knotted as by some conflagration. For a moment he tugged with his numb fingers, then, realizing the folly of it, he drew his sheath knife.

But before he could cut the strings it happened. It was his own fault, or, rather, his mistake. He should not have built the fire under the spruce tree. He should have built it in the open. But it had been easier to pull the twigs from the bush and drop them directly on the fire. Now the tree under which he had done this carried a weight of snow on its boughs. No wind had blown for weeks, and each bough was fully freighted. Each time he had pulled a twig he had communicated a slight agitation to the tree—an imperceptible agitation, so far as he was concerned, but an agitation sufficient to bring about the disaster. High up on the tree one bough capsized its load of snow. This fell on the boughs beneath, capsizing them. This process continued, spreading out and involving the whole tree. It grew like an avalanche, and it descended without warning upon the man and the fire, and the fire was blotted out! Where it had burned was a mantle of fresh and disordered snow.

The man was shocked. It was as though he had just heard his own sentence of death.

For a moment he sat and stared at the spot where the fire had been. Then he grew very calm. Perhaps the old-timer on Sulfur Creek was right. If he had only had a trailmate, he would have been in no danger now. The trailmate could have built the fire. Well, it was up to him to build the fire over again, and this second time there must be no failure. Even if he succeeded, he would most likely lose some toes. His feet must be badly frozen my now, and there would be some time before the second fire was ready…

He made a new foundation for a fire, this time in the open, where no treacherous tree could blot it out. Next he gathered dry grasses and tiny twigs from the high-water flotsam. He could not bring his fingers together to pull them out, but he was able to gather them by the handful. In this way he got many rotten twigs and bits of green moss that were undesirable, but it was the best he could do. He worked methodically, even collecting an armful of the larger branches to be used later when the fires gathered strength. And all the while the dog sat and watched him, a certain yearning wistfulness in its eyes, for it looked upon him as the fire provider, and the fire was slow in coming.

When all was ready, the man reached in his pocket for a second piece of birch bark. He knew the bark was there, and, though he could not feel it with his fingers, he could hear its crisp rustling as he fumbled for it. Try as he would, he could not clutch hold of it. And all the time, in his consciousness, was the knowledge that each instant his feet were freezing. This thought tended to put him in a panic, but he fought against it and kept calm. He pulled on his mittens with his teeth, and threshed his arms back and forth, beating his hands with all his might against his sides…

After a time he was aware of the first faraway signals of sensation in his beaten fingers. The faint tingling grew stronger till it evolved into a stinging ache that was excruciating, but which the man hailed with satisfaction. He stripped the mitten from his right hand and fetched forth the birch bark. The exposed fingers were quickly going numb again. Next he brought out his bunch of sulfur matches. But the tremendous cold had already driven the life out of his fingers. In his effort to separate one match from the others, the whole bunch fell in the snow. He tried to pick it out of the snow, but failed. The dead fingers could neither touch nor clutch. He was very careful. He drove the thought of his freezing feet, and nose, and cheeks, out of his mind, devoting his whole soul to the matches. He watched, using the sense of vision in place of that of touch, and when he saw his fingers on each side of the bunch, he closed them—that is, he willed to close them, for the wires were down, and the fingers did not obey. He pulled the mitten on the right hand, and beat it fiercely against his knee. Then, with both mittened hands, he scooped the bunch of matches, along with much snow into his lap. Yet he was no better off.

After some manipulation he managed to get the bunch between the heels of his mittened hands. In this fashion he carried it to his mouth. The ice crackled and snapped when by a violent effort he opened his mouth. He drew the lower jaw in, curled the upper lip out of the way, and scraped the bunch with his upper teeth in order to separate a match. He succeded in getting one, which he dropped on his lap. He was no better off. He could not pick it up. Then he devised a way. He picked it up in his teeth

and scratched it on his leg. Twenty times he scratched before he succeeded in lighting it. As it flamed he held it with his teeth to the birch bark. But the burning brimstone went up his nostrils and into his lungs, causing him to cough spasmodically. The match fell into the snow and went out.

The old-timer on Sulphur Creek was right, he thought in the moment of controlled despair that ensued: after fifty below, a man should travel with a partner. He beat his hands, but failed in exciting any sensation. Suddenly he bared both hands, removing the mittens with his teeth. He caught the whole bunch between the heels of his hands. His arm muscles, not being frozen, enabled him to press the hand heels tightly against the matches. Then he scratched the bunch along his leg. It flared into flame, seventy sulfur matches at once! There was no wind to blow them out. He kept his head to one side to escape the strangling fumes, and held the blazing bunch to the birch bark. As he so held it, he became aware of sensations in his hand. His flesh was burning. He could smell it. Deep down below the surface he could feel it. The sensation developed into pain that grew acute. And still he endured it, holding the flame of the matches clumsily to the bark that would not light readily because his own burning hands were in the way, absorbing most of the flame.

At last, when he could endure no more, he jerked his hands apart. The blazing matches fell sizzling into the snow, but the birch bark was alight. He began laying dry grasses and the tiniest twigs on the flame. He could not pick and choose, for he had to lift the fuel between the heels of his hands. Small pieces of rotten wood and green moss clung to the twigs, and he bit them off as well as he could with his teeth. He cherished the flame carefully and awkwardly. It meant life, and it must not perish. The withdrawal of blood from the surface of his body now made him begin to shiver, and he grew more awkward. A large piece of green moss fell squarely on the little fire. He tried to poke it out with his fingers, but his shivering frame made him poke too far, and he disrupted the nucleus of the little fire, the burning grasses and tiny twigs separating and scattering. He tried to poke them together again, but, in spite of the tenseness of the effort, his shivering got away with him, and the twigs were hopelessly scattered. Each twig gushed a puff of smoke and went out. The fire provider had failed. As he looked apathetically about him, his eyes chanced on the dog, sitting across the ruins of the fire from him, in the snow, making restless, hunching movements, slightly lifting one forefoot and then the other, shifting its weight back and forth on them with wistful eagerness.

The sight of the dog put a wild idea into his head. He remembered the tale of a man, caught in a blizzard, who killed a steer and crawled inside the carcass, and so was saved. He would kill the dog and bury his hands in the warm body until the numbness went out of them. Then he could build another fire. He spoke to the dog, calling it to him; but in his voice was a strange note of fear that frightened the animal, who had never known the man to speak in such a way before…but he would not come to the man. He got on his hands and knees and crawled toward the dog. This unusual posture again excited suspicion, and the animal sidled mincingly away.

The man sat up in the snow for a moment and struggled for calmness. Then he pulled on his mittens, by means of his teeth, and got upon his feet. He glanced down at first in order to assure himself that he was really standing up, for the absence of sensation in his feet left him unrelated to the earth. His erect position in itself started to drive the webs of suspicion from the dog's mind; and when he spoke peremptorily with the sound of whiplashes in his voice, the dog rendered its customary allegiance and came to him. As it came within reaching distance, the man lost his control. His arms flashed out to the dog, and he experienced genuine surprise when he discovered that his hands could not clutch, that there was neither bend or feeling in the fingers. He had forgotten for the moment that they were frozen and that they were freezing more and more. All this happened quickly, and before the animal could get away, he encircled its body with his arms. He sat down in the snow, and in this fashion held the dog, while it snarled and whined and struggled.

But it was all he could do, hold its body encircled in his arms and sit there. He realized that he could not kill the dog. There was no way to do it. With his helpless hands he could neither draw nor hold his sheath knife nor throttle the animal. He released it, and it plunged wildly away, with tail between its leg, and still snarling. It halted forty feet away and surveyed him curiously, with ears sharply pricked forward. The man looked down at his hands in order to locate them, and found them hanging on the end of his arms. It struck him as curious that one should have to use his eyes in order to find out where his hands were…

A certain fear of death, dull and oppressive, came to him. This fear quickly became poignant as he realized that it was no longer a mere matter of freezing his fingers and toes, or of losing his hands and feet, but that it was a matter of life and death, with the chances against him. This threw him into a panic, and he turned and ran up the creek bed along the old dim trail. The dog joined in behind and kept up with him. He ran blindly, without intention, in fear such as he had never known in his life. Slowly, as he plowed and floundered through the snow, he began to see things again—the banks of the creek, the old timber jams, the leafless aspens, and the sky. The running made him feel better. He did not shiver. Maybe, if he ran on, his feet would thaw out; and, anyway, if he ran far enough, they would reach the camp and the boys. Without doubt he would lose some fingers and toes and some of his face; but the boys would take care of him, and save the rest of him when he got there. And at the same time there was another thought in his mind that said he would never get to the camp and the boys; that it was too many miles away, that the freezing had too great a start on him, and that he would soon be stiff and dead. This thought he kept in the background and refused to consider. Sometimes it pushed itself forward and demanded to be heard, but he thrust it back and strove to think of other things.

It struck him as curious that he could run at all on feet so frozen that he could not feel them when they struck the earth and took the weight of his body. He seemed to himself to skim along above the surface, and to have no connection with the earth. Somewhere he had once seen a winged Mercury, and he wondered if Mercury felt as he felt when skimming over the earth.

His theory of running until he reached camp and the boys had one flaw in it; he lacked endurance. Several times he stumbled, and finally he tottered, crumpled up, and fell. When he tried to rise, he failed. He must sit and rest, he decided, and next time he would merely walk and keep on going. As he sat and regained his breath, ne noted that he was feeling quite warm and comfortable. He was not shivering, and it even seemed that a warm glow had come to his chest and trunk. And yet, when he touched his nose or cheeks, there was no sensation. Running would not thaw out his hands and feet. Then the thought came to him that the frozen portions of his body must be extending. He tried to keep this thought down, to forget it, to think of something else; he was aware of the panicky feeling that it caused, and he was afraid of the panic. But the thought asserted itself, and persisted, until it produced a vision of his body totally frozen. This was too much, and he made another wild run along the trail. Once he slowed down to a walk, but the thought of the freezing extending itself made him run again.

And all the time the dog ran with him, at his heels. When he fell down a second time, it curled its tail over its forefeet and sat in front o him, facing him, curiously eager and intent. The warmth and security of the animal angered him, and he cursed it till it flattened down its ears appeasingly. This time the shivering came more quickly upon the man. He was losing in his battle with the frost. It was creeping into his body from all sides. The thought of it drove him on, but he ran no more than a hundred feet, when he staggered and pitched headlong. It was his last panic. When he had recovered his breath and control, he sat up and entertained in his mind the conception of meeting death with dignity. However, the conception did not come to him in such terms. His idea of it was that he had been making a fool of himself, running around like a chicken with its head cut off—such was the simile that occurred to him. Well, he was bound to freeze anyway, and he might as well take it decently. With this newfound peace of mind came the first glimmering of drowsiness. A good idea, he thought to sleep off to death. It was like taking an anesthetic. Freezing was not so bad as people thought. There were lots worse ways to die…

"You were right, old hoss; you were right," the man mumbled to the oldtimer of Sulfur Creek.

Then the man drowsed off into what seemed to him the most comfortable and satisfying sleep he had ever known….

It can safely be said that never in the history of mankind has the world been in worse shape than it is today. True, before the flood things were really bad. But compared with today, there was only a thimbleful of people living on the face of the earth. And of this diminutive group, possibly not even a thimbleful was literate or acknowledged the true God. Thus, when the fountains of the deep were opened, their waters probably drowned few who had rejected the true God (the exception would be the locals who heard and rejected Noah's preaching), but rather souls who had no knowledge of a better life.

Today, much of humanity is aware of the existence of a Divine Power. In the Americas, from Alaska to the Terra del Fuego, God is worshipped, in one form or another, by almost everyone. The same is true in much of Europe and parts of Asia and Africa.

We believe that God is far more displeased with today's "religious" iniquity than yesterday's "heathen" iniquity. Nominal Christianity, in spite of its shortcomings, historically has had a moralizing effect on humanity. It is exactly this positive influence that is in an advanced stage of deterioration. And this, probably more than anything else, is responsible for global cooling.

Today's religious scene is one of utter confusion. In many churches, the question of women preachers and homosexual members is no longer an issue. Divorce and remarriage have ceased to be sin. Moral purity is relative. To judge another's iniquity is seen as more serious than the sin of the one being judged.

The sanctity of the home has been demolished. Few children growing up today know what it is to spend evenings with their parents. Many homes—or shall we say, *houses*—have only one parent. When there are two, often one is a stepparent. The home in which parents spend an evening together with the children, without the tutorship of a television set, would be an honorable exception.

All this is creating a cold, cold climate. Nominal Christianity today is adrift on Arctic ice.

And doesn't know it.

During the time of our recent Conference, I received my copy of the Mennonite World Conference periodical (which, probably more than anything else, is what prompted this article).

Some of the headers in this paper are:

Sharing the stories of God's Faithfulness,
International choir builds global unity,
Jubilant music, communion mark final assembly worship,
Art exhibit creates 'holy space,'
Biscuits, thousands; complaints, zero,
What the Spirit said to me in Bulawayo,
Feeding the 7,000,
God's calling to leadership subject of gathering of African and Latin American women theologians,
MWC General Council charts direction for future,
Global Mission Fellowship to chart new directions in outreach,
Riding the roller coaster,
Mesach sings, Bedru prays,
A place for conversation and worship.

While the MWC deals with challenges, we, in our Conference, dealt with problems…

Problems?

Problems to us, but foolishness to others. The Internet, courtship, materialism, the proper use of the head covering, the beard, modesty… A foreign language to most.

In his doctoral dissertation, Victor Weins, a Mennonite missionary in Brazil, writes that "rigorous requirements for membership [in the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite], while non-negotiable, do slow church growth in a context where most other churches do not have such requirements."

This is an accurate observation—and an unintended accolade. Truly, membership in the CGCM is non-negotiable. Rigorous entrance requirements? They are, we believe, exactly as rigorous as those set forth in the Scriptures. Our challenge is to never add to nor subtract from the "gold standard."

Global cooling. Really, that isn't an adequate term. Global freezing would be better. Churches today are full of people shouting Hallelujah and Praise the Lord. They triumphantly speak of blessings and challenges…while the ice is cracking right under their own igloo.

The "man," believed he was capable of traveling alone in the numbing Arctic cold, and even as his extremities were turning to ice, mocked the solid advice of the old man from Sulphur Creek.

Today we see multitudes of "men" and "women," alone (even though in a crowded church), waving congealed arms and shouting victory, making themselves believe they will soon make it to "camp."

Yes, this old earth is a frozen wasteland.

I am told that the recent Conference was held on ice—a hockey rink, to be more exact, covered with insulated panels for the occasion. I am also told it was a very "warm" Conference.

What does this tell us? It tells us that just as Fridtjof Nansen's ship withstood the tremendous pressures of the Arctic Polar cap and provided a warm haven for its crew, so God's church continues to provide warmth and safety for her members. It also tells us that soon, soon this "ship" will complete its journey, and instead of being confined to a museum, will rise to meet its Builder.

Yet, let us beware, lest we fall into the "most comfortable and satisfying sleep [we have] ever known," and be found lying on the trail, alone, even as the "ship" sails into Port. ▲

A Story for Children

by Sylvia Baize

My Pets

It is amazing the part that pets play in one's childhood. They come and go, but leave their imprints on our lives, some more, some less.

The first pets I can recall were two dogs, Tiny and Panther. They were little, short-haired, good-natured pets, that let me do with them anything I wanted. I would make

them sit upright on my lap, like a child, and we'd play church. Then I'd make them walk on their hind legs, as we would go to the next service.

They were old dogs and when they died, we got a little Pekingese puppy with white paws, which is why I called it Mittens.

I claimed Mittens as my own, but when my brother Carlos had a birthday, I gave half of her to him.

Mittens and I had a special relationship and she would do most anything I asked of her. She learned to sleep on her back with her little white paws folded over her abdomen, or in whatever position I placed her.

She was smart too. Carlos would go to work and every afternoon she would go up the lane to wait for him.

Some time after we got her, my folks brought home a baby boxer. She was all black and wrinkly. My sister Sandy named her Mintura, after a song she knew.

Mintura lived through all my little girl tortures—which is amazing, considering how many blankets she was wrapped up in, even on the hottest days. I loved her little puppy breath and I learned that if you blew on her little nose, she'd open her mouth and lick at the breeze. She grew up to be a good watchdog. Even though she was very harmless, she looked quite fierce, and she loved to chase anything that ran. She treed many a scared visitor.

One night she found a porcupine down by the creek and barked and barked at it. Then she came up to the house with her face covered with quills. So my brother Lucas and my Dad pulled out the quills with a pliers and a forceps. She stood perfectly still the whole time. She had them in her mouth, way down into her throat. They pulled and pulled and we saved the quills for the sake of the occasion. What we didn't know was that we would be saving more.

That brave dog went right back to that porcupine and got herself "quilled-up" again and came back to have them removed.

Another night she was out by the bamboo barking endlessly, so my Dad took a flashlight to see what she was after, and there was a poor little anteater that had been injured and dragged itself to the bamboo for shelter. Anteaters are dangerous if they feel threatened. They will hug their attackers and dig in their long claws. Even wildcats have been found "hugged" to death.

There are big black anteaters and little brown ones that climb trees, like the one we found. They are swifter than the big ones.

We called Mintura off so that the poor hurt thing could run for it, but it wouldn't go. My Dad, being a vet, took pity on the anteater and put merthiolate on its wounds and I think we even brought it to the house. Mintura slept with it, guarding it all night. The next morning it walked away, without so much as hugging us goodby.

Mintura had another favorite pastime. She loved to chase armadillos. She could run faster than they, but couldn't get a grip on them because of their hard armor. But the fun began when the armadillo began digging in. Once their forelegs were underground, it was impossible to pull them out of the hole they were digging.

Well, Mintura didn't let that discourage her and would dig too. All you could see was some black disappearing into a hole, out of which came a geyser of dirt. She managed, somehow, to get a lot of barking into this whole digging operation. The amazing thing is that she wouldn't give up. She'd fuss with that thing for hours on end (often at night when we were trying to sleep). Persistence would win the race. She would often have an armadillo to haul around and snarl at the next day.

She did a lot of little-girl-chasing too. She'd be way up the lane and I'd be a short distance from the house, all unmindful of her whereabouts. I'd take off running for the house. Suddenly I'd realize she was about upon me and the race would be on. If I would have just stopped short and stepped aside, she might have run on past, but it was risky. Chances were she wouldn't stop short enough and knock me over, so my best bet was to run for my life. I'd scream for the sheer thrill of having escaped, as I managed to get in the door just a second ahead of her.

We once had a pet lamb that also felt compelled to chase anyone on the run. Only it wasn't as fast as the dog. That lamb and I spent a lot of time running around the house. It was easier to get away from the lamb than from Mintura. We didn't have our lamb for very long, although it was a fun pet while we did. We bottle-fed it when we first got it. That was a thrill for a little girl. It grew to full size and one stormy night it pushed up against the fence during a storm and got electrocuted.

Another pet we had that came to a sad end was a parrot called Molly. She learned to say quite a few things and would often sit in the orange trees close to the house and chatter. She especially liked one particular tree. If we didn't keep her wings clipped, she would follow us when we would go biking. We lived close to a creek and now and then we would see monkeys jumping from palm tree to palm tree. One day some really big monkeys ventured close to our house. They chose Molly's tree to jump around in. Either she wouldn't give ground and put up a fuss, or because her wings were clipped, she wasn't fast enough to get away. Anyway those monkeys injured her so badly that she ended up dying the next day. I was one sad girl. ▲

This & That

The church in Brazil was well represented in the 2003 Conference. By one calculation, there were 52 members represented, which included six staff members. Eleven non-member children accompanied their parents. One Brazilian couple, Leide & Marta Peixoto, from the Pirenópolis Cong., were present too. All five of the congregations were represented.

We had hoped to get in on the telephone network and listen to the evening lectures at Conference. Wednesday evening was a total failure; Thursday evening was quite good, and Friday evening pretty much of a disaster. We are looking forward to receiving the transcripts of the talks, which will also be translated to Portuguese.

The evening of December 3, the Rio Verde (Town) School had its last-day-of-the-year

program. Once again I was amazed at how our church schools are multi-cultural. The parents, the school board, the teachers, the students, think and act like their counterparts in any N American church school. I really believe that the brethren here would suffer persecution rather than permit their children to study in public schools. As we have mentioned before, the Rio Verde School follows the Brazilian school term, which begins in February, has an extended vacation in July, and ends the middle of December.

Crops, both corn and beans, are looking beautiful.

Since we probably won't get another issue out before Christmas, Faith and I want to wish all you readers a memorable Holiday season. May the new year bring you spiritual prosperity. As we say in Portuguese:

Feliz Natal e um Próspero Ano Novo.