

DePuy's Views

Weather Bozos

by Dr. Hadley S. DePuy

I used to watch the weatherman on TV. I don't watch anymore because they describe the weather with un-speakable pomposity. Weathermen on TV talk too much about the weather here, there, and everywhere when all I really want from the weatherman is this: HOW HOT IS IT GOING TO BE TOMORROW, AND IS IT GOING TO RAIN?

Not the weather today. This is why windows were invented, and I have a weathervane on the roof.

Not the weather in Cleveland or Brazil. And if you are going to South America, it's not like you're going to cancel because there is a 50 % chance of thundershowers.

Let me be perfectly clear... Weather people: JUST GIVE US A WEATHER FORECAST FOR RIGHT HERE. And the weather report should take only three seconds- HOW COLD? WILL IT SNOW? WHEN? HOW MUCH? THANKS.

And that's it! Goodbye! Bring on the sports.

But this isn't what we are getting. Somehow weather people have tried to become the stars of the newscast. The technology – the satellite maps, the Doppler, the clouds in motion, and the color radar screen – makes the weatherperson into the Brookstone catalog.

In truth, we ask very little from a weatherperson: How hot? Any rain? Do the best you can. We don't get mad when they're wrong – WE EXPECT THEM TO BE WRONG.. (Sometimes.) We're very forgiving.

In the early days of TV, before most of you were born, weather was simple. There was a voluptuous weather girl. Weather girls disappeared and were replaced by weather bozos. Weather bozos were middle-aged men who couldn't tell a storm cloud from a cow pie but had gimmicks for the forecast. The guy in Buffalo, New York, had a dummy named Grandpa Weathervane. When it was going to be cold, they put a scarf around Grandpa Weathervane; if really frigid, they would add earmuffs.

Weather girls were great. Weather bozos were joyful fun. Perhaps of all the weather bozos the one I respected most was Willard Scott, who now lives a few miles from us in Northern Virginia. Scott was the least pretentious person on TV.

Weather girls, weather bozos...

they were pure fun. They weren't sure if it's going to rain this afternoon, so what? Neither am I.

Now, unfortunately, we have meteorologists. They have made weather into a final exam. They all have one skill – pointing – which doesn't require any talent. They act like they're inventing the forecast when the truth is they get the same atmospheric flimflam as all the others get from the National Weather Service. Just once, when all the guys in town call for "sunny, with a temperature in the low nineties, and 30% chance of a late afternoon thundershower," someone ought to say, "Today, we'll have freezing temperatures and hail the size of basketballs."

And why do weathermen preen as a bird does its feathers when it's a nice day or apologize when they predict rain. You don't see Peter Jennings apologizing for the war in Iraq.

Meteorology is the ruination of TV weather. At least one weather person should have his own private forecasting machine. It would look like what the Wizard of Oz used behind the curtain. As soon as he said, "None of the other weathermen have a machine like this," you can be sure of one thing.

Him, I'd watch.

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