

# LIFESTYLES

## GROUND HOG IS MUCH MORE THAN SAUSAGE

by Robert Williams

By the time you read this, there will be only one more shopping day left before Groundhog Day. And if you haven't done your shopping yet, you are in great danger of missing out on one of the most delightful holidays of the year and certainly one of the best gift-giving opportunities ever.

For those of you who don't know about the day, for all those who think that Groundhog Day is simply that special time of year when some such creature as Punxatawny Phil creeps out of his burrow and spots his shadow before running back in to announce that there will be six more weeks of winter, it's time you knew the truth about the hog and his day.

First, there is a big difference between Groundhogs and ground hogs. The second is sausage; the first is a very special creature who has been picked from all other members of the animal kingdom to represent a very symbolic aspect of religion and family togetherness.

It all started forty days after the birth of Jesus. On that date, which would be February 2 by modern calendars, Mary and Joseph took Jesus to Jerusalem, according to the law of the land, for the consecration and purification rites. You can find the scriptural basis for the date in the book of Luke.

In the second chapter of Luke, verses 22 through 24, you can read that when the days of Mary's purification were accomplished, according to the law of Moses, she and Joseph brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord.

While there, Mary made the customary gift or sacrifice of a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.

However, it was not for decades that the ceremony of Candlemas was initiated. It was actually late in the fourth century A. D. that the first recorded ceremony was noted. The festival was known, in addition to Candlemas, as the Purification of the Virgin Mary and as the Presentation of the Child Jesus.

In the Greek church the ceremony was also called Hyppante, which means "meeting."

A pilgrim known only as Eutheria first wrote of the Candlemas festival and ritual, and later a Jewish abess introduced the procession of candles which cemented the name forever.

It was Pope Sergius I who introduced the festival into Roman culture.

No one seems to know exactly how the gift-giving and the use of the Groundhog entered the Festival or ritual. And there is no definitive proof that the two are an inextricable part of the original observation.

But there are theories.

The first of these is that when the religious meetings were later held to commemorate the purification and consecration observances, the dark and gloomy February day required the use of candles so that the pilgrims would be able to find their way to the church more easily.

There is also the notion of the light versus dark symbolism in the Christian church, and the candles were seen not only in terms of the Light of the World but also as good (light) overpowering darkness (evil) not only in the physical world but also in the minds and hearts of mankind.

It has been theorized by some thinkers that the Groundhog element of the observation originally stemmed from a bear, rather than woodchuck. The idea was that if the winter was to be a very long and hard one, the bear, which was in prolonged hibernation, did not have enough fat stored in his body to keep him alive and healthy until spring, and at this time of the year (early February) he woke, became restless because of hunger, and saw the bright sunlight outside his cave or den.

Taking advantage of the warmth or ideal weather, he ventured outside to replenish his food supply before retiring for another prolonged nap. He, of course, saw his shadow.

But it was not the shadow that was important. It was the instincts of the bear that told him that winter was not nearly over that sent him out in search of food.

Later, the bear became less prominent in the obser-



vance of Candlemas or corresponding ceremonies or observations, and he was replaced by the badger. This creature, whose name actually means "corn thief," was also known for his ability to spend a bitter cold winter in sleep.

But the badger, too, would run out of nourishment if the winter was a long, hard one, and he would emerge from his den just as the bear did—to find enough food to last him until the spring vegetation made life easy again.

The gift angle of the day perhaps came from Mary's sacrifice of the pigeons or doves. Others outside the

faith did not understand the use of the sacrificial birds and assumed that gifts of any sort were satisfactory or even necessary.

Then, for no apparent reason, the Festival or observation underwent a series of changes. Candlemas, no matter what tenuous connections there had been to the February 2 date, became totally separate from any of the folk tales or myths. Indeed, there is no proof that the two events were ever vitally part of each other.

After the badger had faded from use in the February 2 date, the wolferine was the animal used to predict the weather for a brief period of time, after which the right-

ful owner of the day, the Groundhog, made his appearance and has been here since.

And in isolated part of the country unique gift-giving customs have evolved. One of the nicest is the tradition that is described below.

In, for instance, a family of five, each member of the family buys or obtains five small but desired gifts. The father may buy gifts for his wife and three children as well as one for himself. He wraps the gifts, including the one for himself. Other members of the family do the same, with each one buying a gift for himself as well as for others in the immediate family.

It is important to keep the gifts secret. That is an important part of the entire observance of the day.

You, as a case in point, will buy yourself something that you have wanted for some time but no one ever thought to buy you. So the rest of the family waits to see what it is they never dreamed you would want.

By the same token, your wife has bought herself a gift that you and the kids never dreamed she wanted, so you wait and wonder how you could have known her so long without ever realizing that she wanted the gift.

Even the children who are old enough to shop can be part of this special day.

However, buying is not emphasized. And, even if bought, the gifts do not have to be new.

You can find Dad an old tool that was in the barn of the neighbors for years before they decided to discard it. Or he may like an old book that you picked up on the used book rack for a quarter.

It isn't the money, and it isn't the fancy wrapping. Colored comics pages from newspapers will work great. And if you don't have colored pages, black-and-white ones will work perfectly.

If nothing else is available, you can use a brown paper bag or, for that matter, a garbage bag—unused, preferably.

Homemade gifts work wonderfully for this special day. Just remember that it isn't cost and it isn't glitter; it's simply an occasion in the middle of winter on which you can make your family a little happier. You can brighten up an otherwise rainy and cold February day with a very small gift.

And why not? At this time of the year there are no real celebrations at hand. It's been forty days since Christmas and a week since you spend the evening glued to the television set to watch the Super Bowl.

You have been watching the ACC teams knock each other out of the national rankings in the basketball world, and you have watched these same teams whale the daylight out of other nationally ranked teams.

This practice, incidentally, is to get you hyped up and thinking that this year, finally, another ACC team will win the NCAA tournament championship. And, deep inside, you know what will happen.

The ACC teams will blaze past all comers and make it into the Final Four, at which time Slippery Rock State Teachers College or Podunk U. will wipe up the floor with the Blue Devils or Tar Heels or Wolfpack.

It's still a few days until Valentine's Day, and after that you have no reason to celebrate until Easter.

So celebrating Groundhog Day is the answer to your problems. You can have a big meal, give the family gifts that don't cost more than a buck or two, get yourself back in good graces with the rest of the family that you have been neglecting since Christmas, and in general have a great time and have to do very little in order to enjoy yourself greatly.

Incidentally, you don't have to send Groundhog cards with pretty scenes and touching poetry on them to people you detest; you don't have to sit around and sing Groundhog carols with a group of other people who can't carry a tune; you don't have to brave the crowds of shoppers and blow the next month's budget on costly and worthless presents.

All you have to do is try to be a good sport about it all.

The traditional meal can be whatever you like, from pinto beans and corn bread to soup, hamburgers, spaghetti, or bologna sandwiches.

You can have anything you want and can afford.

Anything, that is, but sausage.

Don't spoil Groundhog Day by eating ground hog.

## The Weather's Fine Now...

... But Be Prepared For Winter Storms

By JAMES E. HEFFNER

Winter storms are killers. They can immobilize, isolate and kill anyone in any area of the United States. Whether it's from a heavy snowfall or strong winds and cold temperatures, wintertime can be dangerous. Over 450 Americans die each year from winter weather according to a bulletin issued by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

So far the winter of 1988-89 has been tame as a kitten in these parts but there are two months left in the season and Mother Nature could deal us a bad hand yet. Should that be the case it's best to be prepared. There are many precautions one can take and now is the time to go through your checklist.

Pay attention to weather news presented by the print and broadcast media and act accordingly. When bad weather is forecast, be sure you have enough supplies to see you through. Extra batteries for flashlights and radios are a necessity because of the possibility of power interruptions. Adequate supplies of food and fuel should be a prime consideration. And be very careful about fire when using stoves and fireplaces for emergency heating and cooking. A housefire in Charlotte on January 19th killed three people, including a nine year old girl. A New Year's Day fire in Charlotte killed five more. These tragedies always seem to occur when the weather gets extremely cold.

Very cold weather can be uncomfortable, even inside the house. That discomfort sometimes makes us use flawed judgment in how we deal with the elements. Don't just turn up the heat. There are other measures that can be taken.

Consider long johns. Thermal underwear can be used for sleeping, just lounging around and for wear under your clothes should you need to go outside. Here's a tip: buy your long johns a size large as tests have shown that textured knits tend to shrink more than regular knit fabrics. Besides thermal underwear does a much better job of warming the body if it fits rather loosely.

Think about buying cotton-flannel sheets. They are soft and comfortable and do an excellent job of retain-

ing body heat.

An electric blanket is good for sleeping warmly but it's hard to beat a good old-fashioned down comforter. Lamb's wool comforters are good also but try to avoid the ones filled with polyester as they tend to mat and lose their warmth.

Nevertheless, an electric blanket is a good way to keep warm and the cost is minimal, less than ten dollars per season for the electricity you will use.

Try one of the new body sacks if you're going to sit around and watch TV. These sacks are a cross between a comforter and a jacket. They come in many sizes and are quilted. They, too, are made with several different fabrics, including down and lamb's wool. The polyester fiberfill sacks are less expensive and are machine washable.

Sweaters and leg warmers are good warmth aids. Those leg warmers you see dancers and exercise gurus wearing are manufactured in several different lengths and are not expensive. Some can be pulled as high as the waist. They can be worn indoors or out and, again, you can get them made from several different materials. Bulky sweaters are best and wool ones the warmest. Some of the newer ones are lined for extra comfort.

Finally, keep out cold drafts as much as possible. Window shades and blinds help. Keep them up when the sun is shining directly into the room and some of that solar heat will be retained for use at night. Lined drapes help to retain heat and slow leakage through windows.

How fast does a snowflake fall? Too fast if you're caught in a blizzard. It's the most dangerous and deadly of all winter storms. The National Weather Service issues blizzard warnings when it expects winds of 35 miles an hour with falling or blowing snow for any sustained period. Never venture out in a blizzard, even for short distances, unless sit is an extreme emergency. If you have any doubts about making your destination, don't chance it.

The best way to experience snow is by standing by the window with a cup of hot coffee watching it pile up

outside.

Last year's heavy snow was bad enough at about 12 inches, but many people recall the late winter of 1960. On February 13, 1960, the area experienced a six-inch snowfall. Not much by most standards, but the temperature stayed cold and most of the snow was still around when, on the morning of March 2, it started snowing at 8:30 a.m. and continued until 4:30 p.m. When it finally stopped there was 12 inches on the ground—ten inches of snow and two inches of sleet. The figures tell you that it snowed at the rate of one inch per hour. Just before the storm started the temperature dropped to 27 degrees and the ground was covered in less than thirty minutes. The snow was so dense it was hard to see through the swirling flakes. Thousands were marooned at home and hundreds of cars and trucks dotted ditches throughout the piedmont. The roofs of three buildings collapsed in Gastonia. It was the worst snowstorm in 33 years.

One week later, on March 9, another six inches fell all but paralyzing the entire area. When the snowplows finally got out they could hardly move and it took several days to clear streets and roads. Some businesses hired tractors and heavy equipment to move the snow in their parking lots and some of the piles were so high they looked like the sand dunes on the outer banks.

Some weatherman will tell you that freezing rain is worse than snow and, in some cases it is. Any freezing rainstorm can be dangerous during the winter. They occur when temperatures near the ground are at or below thirty-two degrees and rain freezes on impact. Driving or walking becomes hazardous, especially if tree limbs and electrical wires are down, as they frequently are. Travel should always be avoided when there is a layer of ice on the ground. Many people have gone out after ice storms and returned with casts.

So, even though we've had a mild winter thus far, it's best to keep abreast of forecasts. Snow or ice could be in the offing and it's best to be on good terms with old man winter.

Incidentally, a snowflake falls at the rate of one mile per hour.

