



As Predictable as the Weather

Most everything you read in monthly magazines has been written a couple months earlier; but *dtown* has a nice, comfortable “closing” date, and I don’t need to get this column in till mid-month. But stuck in the house once again after last night’s ice storm, listening to the sound of my husband chopping away at a trench for the fuel deliveryman – we are dangerously close to being Code Blue after overlooking the plummeting level in the sight glass – I thought I’d write this one today.

It’s Groundhog Day. And by now, at 8:19 am, we know that Punxsutawney Phil did not see his shadow, which means that spring will arrive early. I’m hoping Phil’s prognosticating acumen is far more accurate than those weather predictors of the human ilk, who warned of five to eight inches the other night before we woke to near 20. My grandmother used to say, “If you want to know the weather, stick your head out the window.”

When I lived in New York City, one of our local stations – if memory serves, it was NBC Channel 4 with their Live Doppler Radar – scrolled tickers at the bottom of the screen with moment-by-moment updates as to when a storm would hit your area: *Fort Tryon – 7:05 p.m., Broadway and 125th Street – 7:09 p.m., 309 East 89th St., 1B (the apartment in the back with the garden) – 7:11 p.m.* To check, I would stick my head out the window.

You may not realize this, but the weather report is the number-one reason people tune in to the news. And it’s always on at the end. Oh, they may tease you earlier with, “When we come back, more on the apocalyptic tsunami heading our way,” but that’s just to keep you on the couch during the commercials for which advertisers are paying lots of money.

Weather forecasting is like furniture delivery: They tell their customers about when they’ll be there, but no one really expects them to keep their word. And still we tip them, further rewarding poor service. I recall the Blizzard of ‘96, which dumped more than two feet on Manhattan. One of the local tabloids did a tale-of-the-tape on the city’s top TV forecasters. Below their glamorous and debonair headshots, the paper printed their way-into-the-six-figure salaries, followed by their percentages of accuracy so far that season. Let me just say that in my next life, I want to be a celebrity weathercaster. You get a wardrobe allowance, great seats at posh restaurants without a reservation and you don’t have to be particularly reliable at your job.

I hear our snowblower gurgling through the slush. May this column find you wearing a nice cotton sweatshirt, nursing a cappuccino outside on an already predicted early-spring day. **dt**