

## Mark explores trials and tribulations of winter activities

by Mark Owens

**Caution:** This week's column deals with violence and cruelty beyond human comprehension. Individuals with high blood pressure, heart conditions, lower back pain, pregnancy, warts, ingrown toenails or acne should read this only under a doctor's advice, or while blindfolded.

Being February and all, I thought it was time to talk about winter activities and what you should avoid if, by some strange chance, we ever get snow.

There are two kinds of winter activities; indoor and outdoor. Outdoor things are to be dreaded while indoor things are to be merely feared. Its sort of like bad cooking; you dread mom's Tuna Noodle Surprise while merely fearing the Meatloaf from Hell.

There are very few things one can enjoy outside in winter, mainly because (surprise, surprise) its cold out there. Most people I know have this aversion to cold.

Personally, my favorite outdoor activity is going inside. Then I can sit in my recliner, eat Pop Tarts and read classical

literature like Dr. Seuss' *Green Eggs and Ham*, *Hop on Pop* and *Horton Hatches the Egg*.

Anyway, here is a list of outdoor things you should avoid:

**Ice fishing:** Squatting out on the middle of a frozen lake over a hole waiting for fish isn't much fun at all. In fact, why anyone would risk frostbite of the tush and other external organs escapes me.

For those of you truly interested in catching frozen fish, we'll take a trip to the freezer section of Giant Eagle. You can stand at one end while I run down to the other. We'll play catch with some halibut, okay?

**Ice Skating:** Trying to balance on two meat cleavers isn't a problem. Moving forward is, probably because when you start moving forward you also move down. By the way, ice has been classified as the world's fourth hardest substance, right under diamonds, Army beef patty rations and steel.

**Downhill Skiing:** Absolutely the worst thing you can do. Ever. I seriously question the brain cell count of anyone who skies. I should know because I tried it

once. It's a day that's been permanently engraved on my brain with something large and blunt, more than likely a pine tree (if you look close at my forehead, you can still see bark marks).

It all started innocently enough. My then-girlfriend suggested/hinted we go skiing. I



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wasn't too thrilled with the idea, so she bodily threw me in the car and we went anyway.

As soon as we got to the slopes she put the skis on me and tossed me down the bunny hill. I should have taken the fact that all the snow making machines were on as an omen of a bad day on the slopes. It's pretty tough to learn how to ski in the middle of a blizzard. Sled dogs were doing a lot better than I was.

After a couple of hours and 27 crashes (at least 10 involved the sides of buildings) the skiing wench (nope, no hard feelings there, huh?) decided I was ready to move on to bigger and far more life-threatening things.

Something she left out was the fact trees attack skiers. She said they didn't, but I know better. After all, I was mugged by enough of them. Large trees aren't bad though. They just wiggle their trunks around trying to bump into you. Somehow I managed to avoid most of them as I was sliding down the hill at an insane speed.

It was the small tree that got me. Small trees jump out of the ground and run after you. I'm not

making this up. This small tree stuck a root out and tripped me while trying to avoid a mong-well, you know what I mean.

I went tumbling down the slope, coming to rest against a large pine tree. The approximately 200 skiers on the double-decker turbo chair lift were thoughtfully laughing at me and rating my fall (I managed an '11' on the Albanian scale).

Your best and safest bet to pass the time this winter is to play a nice quiet board game, like... Monopoly.

Remember though, some people may take Monopoly too seriously and go to extreme lengths (read: cheat) to win. Always count the number of squares they're supposed to move, make sure \$500 bills don't stick together and threaten anyone who reminds another player that you owe them rent with death by liposuction (I mean the home version, which requires a Hoover upright). If all else fails, get up a rousing game of water polo.

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