

Jeffrey Malone

Feature Story Friday – March 12, 2010

The End of Snowmageddon?

We here at WLOY tried to resist a snow-related feature story. It was the story that every other news outlet was covering. It was the story that did not need to be covered anyway. Just look out your window. The story itself was doing the covering. But Mother Nature seemed to know that there were a few reporters who were holding out on their snow coverage, so she added a few more inches to the record winters. So WLOY has decided to bring in its perspective. As we are now getting in the groove following spring break, we ask – nay! – we demand, surely, this must be the end of Snowmageddon.

First, a look back. This winter saw three of the ten biggest snowstorms on record to ever hit Baltimore, and two of those storms occurred within five days of each other. No other winter contributed more than one storm to the top ten. This was also the first winter in which a December storm cracked the top ten. The winter snow total at BWI Airport is approximately 80 inches, a Baltimore record (of course) and more than four times the city's annual average snowfall. More than 60 percent of that total poured down in February. Loyola College was closed for an entire week a month ago, effectively making it so that the semester had two spring breaks (though neither was actually in the spring). For those of you assuming that it must be all over now that we have reached March, keep in mind there was a 22-incher on March 29-30 back in 1942 that still holds a spot in the top ten.

With that in mind, here is the forecast. Punxsutawney Phil did see his shadow a little more than a month ago, and so far it does not appear to have been a false prophecy. Last week's break more or less featured spring-like weather, at least when compared to the blizzard-inflicted February. The last day of classes before break provided one last scare, but that "storm" only amounted to a light dusting in Baltimore that was mostly gone by the afternoon. Ultimately, it seems that the actual spring weather will be occurring in the post-spring break period.

The forecast for this week in Baltimore according to weather.com calls for highs in the high 50's and low 60's and lows in the 40's and 50's. There is a chance of precipitation, but it will be of the especially watery variety. It might even be warm enough for a thundershower. Baltimore residents should continue to tread carefully, though, keeping in mind that winter does not officially end until the vernal equinox on March 20. The six weeks that Phil predicted could have one last gasp. It would not be entirely unprecedented, as record lows of sub-20 degree temperatures have been recorded in Baltimore as late as March 29. As this winter has shown, just about anything may be possible.

And now, some reactions. The sentiment here at WLOY is basically one of exhaustion. From what I have overhead around campus, this seems to be the general attitude of the entire Loyola community as well. I have not come across much speculation regarding whether or not March will bring any weather surprises. But I have encountered prayers and demands to Mother Nature that there will be none.

Some may declare that this winter has been the ultimate nail in the coffin for global warming, while others may take the side of such thinkers as Thomas Friedman, who argue that these storms have paradoxically, and perhaps perversely, been proof of climate change. Whatever your interpretation of the data, surely you can join us here at WLOY in our demands to the forces of nature that finally seem to have heard us but that probably do not care much what we have to say anyway.