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# A Lesson From History

What a winter we have had! Our history-making cold made me think of other times when cold became a part of history. The most often thought of time may be from grade school lessons on the Revolutionary War.

Think of what it must have been like for General George Washington at Valley Forge, Penn., in the winter between 1777 and 1778. Paintings and writings depict our Continental Army surviving blizzard conditions for the duration of their encampment.

## Preparation Makes The Difference

However, once again poetic license has blurred the facts. The winter between 1777 and 1778 was not worst winter during the War of Independence. In fact, it was not even the second worst.

Historians tell us that two separate winters were much worse than the one experienced at Valley Forge. What makes the difference is the soldiers were not prepared for winter, even a moderate one.

Washington wrote of his grief at how unprepared his men were, how greatly they suffered, and yet how deep their devotion to the cause was that they continued to prepare for battle. "Without clothes to cover their nakedness (which then meant a lack of proper clothing), without blankets to lie on, without shoes, by which their marches might be traced from blood of their feet...we cannot enough admire the incomparable patience and fidelity of the soldiers..."

The National Weather Service recorded our own situation as follows: Tues., Jan. 12, 2010: Long lasting cold spell has set new minimum temperature records. As of today there have been 11 consecutive days with minimum temperatures less than or equal to 32 degrees at Gainesville, Fla. This sets new records for consecutive days with minimum temperatures at or below freezing.

## Everyone Has Been Affected

It would have been hard to imagine so many freezes in a row, but it could have helped us better prepare. A list of ways to prepare for cold weather appeared in the October issue of *Florida Monthly*, and additional tips are listed on page 5 of this magazine. Unfortunately, everyone is now dealing with the shock of their utility bills.

Prepared or not, heat simply costs more and this example shows why. When it's 90 degrees outside and you are cooling your home to 70 degrees, you only need enough energy to lower the temperature 20 degrees. However, when it is 30 degrees outside and you are heating your home to 70 degrees, you have to have enough energy for a 40 degree change in the temperature.

Being prepared means saving enough money to be able to pay the utility bill when it comes due. I can assure you that everyone is experiencing much higher bills, including myself, our employees and trustees. This has hit us all.

## It's All In The Attitude

A conclusion to this column can be found in my history lesson. Conditions for the soldiers were so deplorable that they could have deserted the cause and gone home. Thank goodness they did not.

Instead, they carried on. By the end of the winter, soldiers were receiving a pound of bread a day, their clothes had been repaired and the sick that survived were nursed back to health. A highly skilled Prussian drill master by the name of Friedrich Wilhelm von Steube arrived from Europe and taught the untrained soldiers to be an Army.

The Continental Army that marched away from Valley Forge, having won a great moral victory, was now a true army of soldiers ready to wage a War of Independence.