

# VILLAGE VIEW

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Those of you who have spent the worst of the past winter in the Sun Belt will share with me the joys of returning to the Cape this spring, even though the last week of May has been cooler and wetter than we might have expected.

Those of you who have stuck it out through the storms and cold that seemed almost endless this year, culminating as they did in that final die-hard blizzard of Easter weekend, are already making light of last winter's severity. The welcome sight of crocus, jonquil, and forsythia in April, coupled with May's lovely display (better this year than in many a recent season, I think,) of lilac, azalea, rhododendron, and flowering dogwood, are already making misty the memories of ice and snow.

"It wasn't all that bad," I hear them declare.

For me, though, it's good to be back on Cape Cod. Florida's eternal greennesses are greatly appreciated while cold holds New England in its frozen grip, and the lushness of the southeastern states, all decked in spring finery as the northerning miles passed behind, was remarkably fresh and inviting.

Not until the Connecticut-Rhode Island line was crossed were there evident signs of earliest spring. On oak trees, there as here, new leaves no bigger than a mouse's ear were breaking from their casings; the blossoms of those trees still cling at twigtips. All the white pines, strictly a northern

species, were pushing their slender candles skyward, fingering the warmer airs, stretching for the sun.

It rained, and I didn't care. It was damp and raw and chilly and I didn't care. Low-hanging clouds looked growly, and I didn't care. Fog shrouded distant hills and crept inland from surrounding salt waters, and I didn't care.

The pink lady slippers were blooming; mayflowers long gone by. Wild high-bush blueberries were abuzz with bumblebees; hyacinth's season had passed. Honeysuckle blossoms were scenting northeast winds; scotch broom blazed yellow beside beach plum's white bloom along a marsh-edge. Neither marsh nor cranberry bog was yet carpeted with green; each showed torn traces of winter garb.

In the vegetable garden early-sown peas stood knee-high; radishes, both white and red, pushed their swollen bulbous roots half above the soil; spinach, dark green and spring-sweet, curled five-inch leaves, ready for harvest. Lettuce, awaiting first thinning, would soon offer crisp munching. And June yet a week in the offing!

Even the strawberry plants, tucked into a newly-dug bed last October, bore snow white flowers with sunny centers. On some, small green fruits had already formed. In another month the birds will contest me in the gathering; with the help of a plastic netting staked over the plot, I hope to compete.

All these living things welcome me home; so, also did people. In the supermarket a tall man approached from behind me as I stood waiting at the deli counter. His sudden and affectionate embrace took me utterly by surprise to the delight of his wife who watched with a happy smile. She and I, friends from toddler-age, found mere words inadequate to express our mutual pleasure in the brief reunion.

Family, friends, neighbors—dear ones, all—gladden my return. Nice to feel they missed me, for I missed them, as well. After a winter of weekly supermarketing yielding not a single friendly hail nor revealing one familiar face among the hundreds thronging the aisles, a greeting gains special importance. Family and friends lend warmth and fun to the most casual encounter.

My enthusiasms may lead some readers to believe I've been homesick for the Cape these past six months. I would deny that, for I left to avoid winter's weather, and as long as that climate clung to these shores, I was content to remain away. Still, in returning, the happy recognitions swell to bursting and bubble over with engulfing emotion.

For the many who return to the Cape each spring after half-a-year's absence, my description will ring true. For those who return after an occasional trip beyond the Canal, whose homecoming after a few days or weeks away are colored by a somewhat heightened satisfaction, my elation may seem unbridled. And for those who, by choice, restrict their travel to Cape Cod's highways only, today's column may seem sentimental excess.

Providing readers insight to my own thoughts and feelings, my worries and anxieties, my angers and objections, on a weekly basis, has become habitual over the past ten-plus years. Neglecting to share joys after subjecting you to all my other humors would, indeed, be giving short-change.

It's great to be home.