

FOR AN APPLE GRAFTER, PORAY'S A GOOD HIGHWAY SUPERINTENDENT

2/06/96

It's not hard to find a topic to talk, think or write about this winter. We seldom, if ever, have what can be described as a good winter in the Adirondacks. The thing that makes it stand out, at least in my view, is that it has flip-flopped more times than President Clinton.

My travels take me over many miles of both town, county and state highways each week. I travel from Thendara to Long Lake, Darts Lake, Brantingham and Noblesboro once a week. As one whose work experience included maintenance of 30+ miles of graveled road, I respect and am cognizant of the problems with road maintenance. As I pass through the various jurisdictions and vagaries of weather I encounter, I cannot help but note the differences in the way each highway superintendent handles his bailiwick.

In general, I reserve my opinion, as I am aware that only a few people are privileged to know all the circumstances dictating road conditions.

The duration and intensity of the weather is the one determining factor over which we mortals, as yet, have no control. Availability of equipment and resources are the next dominant factors to enter into the overall scheme of things. Maintenance problems arise when equipment is most needed and thus, becomes unavailable.

Everything has an answer except the weather. Money, or the lack thereof, is the answer. This is particularly true in the case of town highway superintendents. The state and most counties seem to have deep pockets and no dearth of manpower or equipment.

Without exception all of the many town roads I travel are maintained as well or better than the state or county highways. Much of the criticism directed at bad road conditions is unwarranted because of a simple lack of knowledge of the circumstances.

My all time favorite superintendent was Curley Deis of Old Forge. Curley stands out as a most capable and dependable servant. In all the years I knew him, before and after he entered public life, I never heard a word of criticism about him as a person or about his work. My most vivid memories of him, however, are reserved for his singing performances each year at the annual concerts at the high school.

If Vince Poray could only sing half as well as Curley, I might even give him a plug someday. Vince does fairly well as highway superintendent for a man whose real vocation is grafting apple trees. Seriously, Vince, you are much better at your present job than as an apple grafter.

This winter has truly taxed all facets of our local highway crews; so please join me in memory of Curley Deis in saluting them all.

Thanks to all highway superintendents and highway crewmen for a job well done.