

Tough Times - Tough People

“I think that I shall never see, a poem lovely as a tree.” Walt Whitman penned these words many years ago. Because I see everything as a metaphor, when I gazed upon our weather-beaten trees, I thought of our members and our businesses.

A tornado swept through my town several years ago, then the remnants of a hurricane blew us away last fall and then the most devastating of all, an ice storm that paralyzed our state. The President declared us a Federal disaster area and sent aid. National Guard was called in and we had a State of Emergency. Temperatures were in the single digits.

We are known as a city of trees so you can imagine the damage. As I looked at thousands of trees, totally preserved in ice encompassing all of those spring buds with limbs that hadn't broken off completely, I thought of us. Many huge shrubs and small trees laid on the ground, their weak bones just couldn't hold them up. It was an ice palace, dangerously and eerily beautiful.

Then the temperature leaped upward to 60 degrees! Ice and snow melted and gutters and creeks ran deep in water. Miraculously, most of those shrubs and small trees that were lying prone on the earth, shook off their icicles and stood boldly upright! They spread their limbs and reached for the sky.

We proudly claim the oldest and largest sassafras tree in the world—quite a 300 year old tourist attraction. It was hammered by the tornado, damaged again by the hurricane winds and brutalized by the ice but she still stands stately and strong on our main thoroughfare.

We are like that and our businesses reflect our character. Battered and bruised by horrific acts of nature and knocked around by the economy, we still stand upright and lift our arms to the heavens. We shall all be stronger by the tossing about known as “life.” The floods will recede, the broken limbs will be removed and we shall once again return to a “normal” life. We shall all be stronger and wiser for the experiences.

We watched our communities come together in a wonderful bonding of neighbors and citizens. Many workmen came from other states and remained for weeks helping to clear homes and roads. Our Association came together in the same way. We closed ranks as we faced the recent legislative storm known as CPSIA. Our leaders stepped up and took charge—our members stood up and activated our Campaign to Congress and our customers joined us to “Save Children’s Resale.”

In Kentucky, our state motto is “United We Stand - Divided We Fall.”

Everyone who supports this, please lift your limbs to the sky!



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