

BROCK'S BANTER: Silver White Winters

By Brock Weir

I'm continually reminded that sarcasm simply doesn't translate well in the wilds of the internet.

Through the written word, it is rather difficult to sufficiently convey the nudge-nudge-wink-wink so often present in verbal communication. Without an emoji, readers are often unaware that you're raising your eyebrow quizzically, rolling your eyes as the words pass your lips, or that your voice is taking on a tone, usually a half-octave higher than your own, that could only be described as mocking ? even though the person you might be imitating sounds nothing whatsoever like the sound spewing forth from your mouth.

It is very much a twenty-first century problem, but recently I've come to see ? or fallen victim to ? the very opposite of the above: people seeing sarcasm where there isn't any to be found. No, really.

Perhaps my online persona comes with a level of built-in snark, a perception that despite my occasional earnestness, there is something a little bit cockeyed bubbling away below the surface. Sure, this perception is often accurate, but every once in a while that genuine earnestness does poke through.

Take, for instance, the first half of last week when we were preparing for what was to be the first significant snowfall of the season. I mused about one of my favourite things associated with a snowfall and, evidently, many of my heat-seeking friends assumed it was a sarcastic jibe. Yet, it wasn't. Despite being born in the dying days of summer, I am very much a winter baby at heart and, in the end, some of my very own favourite things are incomprehensible to those who prefer to bask in the sun.

So, as I sit here at my desk preparing to head into the city for a traditional viewing of *The Sound of Music*, I thought it appropriate in this, our last edition of 2017, to expand upon this unlikely favourite thing that elicited such a response and, taking a page out of Fraulein Maria's book, expounding upon it.

Bright copper kettles
and warm woollen mittens

Although we have more or less collectively moved past the days of bright copper kettles, the same warm feeling is still with me during the Christmas season. An enduring tradition in our household each year, after the Queen's Christmas Message, is to turn on the modern day counterparts to a bright copper kettle, the decidedly less bright and nothing-remotely-close-to-copper griddle or waffle iron and whip up a scratch batch of gingerbread pancakes.

Although there is something to be said for complete originality, in this case, a hand-up from Aunt Jemima is nothing to be ashamed of.

The spice and molasses of the finished product warms you from the inside out and the smell of the gingerbread throughout your house is a welcome one to come back to after a delightful family reunion.

That's sarcasm, folks.

As for the warm woollen mittens, I'm not a particular fan.

Leather gloves with fleece lining do the trick for me, but when it comes to socks at this time of year, nothing will do but 100 per cent wool.

There is an age factor here. I don't know if women go through the same thing, but there comes a time in every man's life where, all of a sudden, you're alarmed to find socks rising fast on your list of Top 10 gift ideas. Up until a certain age, there is nothing you'd like to find under the tree than a six-pack of new socks. But, come that magical year that is different for everyone, it shoots straight to the top.

I'm there, I'm old, let's move on. But as much as men-of-a-certain age would love to open up a new pair of slippers this year, for me it's all about the thick woolly socks to wear around the house.

Brown paper packages
tied up with strings

This is becoming something of a lost art.

Admittedly, it is an art I've never been able to master.

From the time I was first trusted with a roll of wrapping paper, a pair of scissors and a roll of scotch tape, it was pretty much a crap shoot on whether the paper I lovingly carved from the roll would ultimately be too small to cover the gift, or large enough to wrap a

lifetime's supply of whatever the recipient was getting.

It was invariably a mess, but each disastrous effort spurred me on to try and achieve perfection.

Alas, it's still a far off dream. My packages, although not covered in brown paper, and usually with bows or curled ribbons replacing the strings of yore, are still, in some cases, wrapped in a double layer of excess paper or patched up here and there with trimmings.

Each patch, a symbol of my love and determination.

(Yes, that too is sarcasm)

Snowflakes that stay

on my nose and eyelashes

Okay, so here's where I was falsely accused of sarcasm last week.

In the lead up to the snowfall, I posed a simple question: Who else loves the sound of the snow plow blades scraping the pavement in the dead of night?

Depending on your point of view, perhaps you're not surprised there were relatively few hands that popped up. For some, it generated a chuckle; others an angry face; and others, a smattering of eye-rolling gifs.

Nevertheless, I was serious.

In the warmer months, there are few sounds more soothing to me than a thunderstorm on a hot, sultry night. The sound of nature doing what she does best never fails to lull me into a deep and relaxing sleep.

Conversely, when the snow flies, the sound of people working to clean up nature's wrath elicits a similar feeling.

The sound of the blades scraping along the ground is something I unapologetically find soothing, although the whys and the wherefores are out of reach, even to me. Perhaps it signals that despite being wrapped up cosily in bed that the world is still going about its business. Maybe it's the fact the sound is a pretty good indicator that one will be waking up to the beauty of a fresh layer of gleaming snow.

Whatever it is, I'm just going to roll with it and enjoy.

The same goes for that delightful feeling when you go out the door first thing on a crisp winter morning, less than half an hour removed from a warming shower, and the inside of your nose ever-so-slightly freezes on first contact with the air.

Silver white winters

that melt into springs.

Yes, I think it's safe to say Maria was a winter enthusiast as well, and for so many the best part of this season is the knowledge that once December 21 is firmly out of the way, the days start becoming longer and longer and each day is one closer to the warmth and vitality of a new spring.

However ? and wherever ? you derive your pleasure this Christmas season, I hope you find what you're looking for and have a safe and happy holiday. I'll see you in 2018.