*Back Home by Chris Hardie*

**Stop for moments of beauty**

A winter man whose head is ice-white with age arose on an early January day to take his faithful canine companion outside. Together they walked, slowly at first, into a gray fog to discover a magical morning painted with the delicate and lacy work of Jack Frost. A fragile and crystalline layer of rime ice coated the valley, prompting the pair to pause whilst the beauty of the moment was not lost.

One benefit of aging is developing a sense of perspective, realizing life is a compilation of moments. It’s capturing and treasuring the special moments that make us appreciate the gift of life. These ongoing chronicles are my attempt to share those moments. Even though many of the columns are about myself, I hope to share stories that find common threads as we journey together.

In my younger days, I probably would have captured that beautiful moment outside as such — I needed to take the dog outside for a poop and noticed frost on the trees. It looked cool, so I took a couple of photos.

Both are true, but the moment deserved more eloquent prose.

Many moons ago, when I was a daily-newspaper editor, I had a reporter who was British. He had excellent reporting skills, but especially as an intern his writing was a bit rough.

He once turned in a routine story that included the word whilst. Being appropriately grounded with journalistic style, I stopped on the word.

I called him to my desk and said, “Ed we don’t use the word ‘whilst’ in stories. This isn’t Shakespeare.’”

I changed it to “while.”

Now that I’m a semi-retired journalist whose time in the daily trenches has long passed, my perspective has changed. My scribbles are hardly Shakespeare, but the moments are mine. And I will selfishly paint them with my own poetic voice. I just appreciate the opportunity and all the good folks who read them.

Speaking of those honorable few, I need to make a correction to the information for a photo included in a column I wrote about the Lone Rock School near Camp Douglas. The photo caption said that it was taken in 1950.

However three sharp-eyed readers notified me the car in the photo was in fact was either a 1954, 1955 or 1956 Chevy.

Rick Charles wrote, “Always good to see your column. The picture of the Lone Rock School captioned ‘taken 1950’ is a stretch, however. It has a 1955 Chevy parked outside.”

Pete Gruendeman said, “Likely you have already heard this but the yellow sedan in the picture of the Lone Rock School, thought to have been taken in 1950 — that sedan looks a lot like a 1956 Chevy.”

And Curt Rohland is convinced it’s a 1954 Chevy.

“I noticed because back in the day all us teens could identify make, model and year by sight,” he said. “Not so easy these days. They all look alike to me. And my college roommate had a ’54 Chevy he didn’t want to let me borrow for a date with my girlfriend visiting campus, but I got him to agree. She’s my wife now — my girlfriend, not his car.”

Whilst the debate rages concerning the year of the car, a few more readers responded to my column about Christmas Eve on the farm.

Lew Ihrke wrote, “I enjoyed your article and it brought back a lot of memories. I was born in 1957 and grew up on a dairy farm in Roberts, Wisconsin. Christmas Eve always involved the animals, and my dad saying that they get a little extra feed for the night. The 40-cow barn was warm, and the cats and dog laid in the manger that was full of straw. The Christmas music played on the AM radio. It was a feeling that is hard to explain to those who haven’t lived it.”

Former neighbor Cindy Tracey, who grew up just over the hill from our farm, wrote, “Just read your article about Christmas and the cattle, and can so relate to it and the work, smells and comfort of farm life and animals being content.”

It’s the beauty of moments we remember forever.

*Chris Hardie spent more than 30 years as a reporter, editor and publisher. He was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize and won dozens of state and national journalism awards. He is a former president of the Wisconsin Newspaper Association. Contact him at chardie1963@gmail.com.*

***Photo cutlines:***

011421-agrv-life-hardie-1: Column readers say the car is not a 1950 Chevrolet, but a model from 1954, 1955 or 1956.

(following information is from NOAA and Wikipedia, added by Julie for captions)

011421-agrv-life-hardie-2: A chair at the Hardie farm is covered with rime ice. Rime ice is an opaque coating of tiny, white, granular ice particles caused by the rapid freezing of super-cooled water droplets on impact with an object. Its crystalline structure shows clearly.

011421-agrv-life-hardie-3: Thick fog with less-than-freezing temperatures leads to accumulation of white ice. The icing is called “rime;” it’s white because of air trapped inside. That’s different from “glaze,” which is what happens in situations of freezing rain or drizzle.

011421-agrv-life-hardie-4: [Meteorologists](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meteorology) distinguish between three basic types of ice forming on vertical and horizontal surfaces by deposition of [super-cooled water](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Supercooled_water) droplets. Soft rime is less dense, and is milky and crystalline like sugar. Hard rime is somewhat less milky, especially if it’s not heavy. Clear ice is transparent and homogeneous; it resembles ice-cube ice in appearance. Its amorphous dense structure helps it cling tenaciously to any surface on which it forms.

011421-agrv-life-hardie-5: Rime ice covers lilac bushes on Chris Hardie’s farm.

011421-agrv-life-hardie-6: Soft-rime formations have the appearance of white ice needles and scales; they are fragile and can be easily shaken off objects. Factors that favor soft rime are small drop size, slow accretion of liquid water, a great degree of super-cooling and fast dissipation of latent heat of fusion.

011421-agrv-life-hardie-7: A heavy coating of hoar frost, called [white frost](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frost#White_frost), is very similar in appearance to soft rime, but the formation process is different. Rime ice occurs in fog, as on a gate on the Hardie farm. Hoar frost happens when there is no fog, and [relative humidity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Relative_humidity) is more than 90 with [temperatures](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Temperature) of less than 17.6 degrees.

011421-agrv-life-hardie-8: Rime ice forms when super-cooled water-liquid droplets freeze onto surfaces.