*Back Home by Chris Hardie*

**Procrastinator prepares just in time**

I will fully admit that I am a procrastinator – if you ask me tomorrow. I agree with Mark Twain who said: “Never put off till tomorrow what may be done day after tomorrow just as well.”

But my propensity for last-minute work isn’t because I’m lazy. I’m busy. Some days I feel like I’m straddling a fire hose trying to decide which conflagration to extinguish.

Like getting ready for winter. Yes, we know it’s coming, but until it does, why worry? I keep an eye on the weather but give forecasts a healthy dose of skepticism even with the bells and whistles of alert days and all the fancy gadget notifications that let us know it’s going to snow an inch.

It’s not the end of the world.

But recently when predictions were for a major rain event – and only some snow – something inside of me said it was time to get ready. Getting rain in winter is never good.

I was ready – sort of. The plow was attached to the old pickup and I pried open my wallet to replace its 15-year-old tires and the rundown battery. I found my myriad of battered snow shovels – good enough for another winter – and dug out my 40-year-old stocking cap.

Then there was the snowblower – right where I had parked it last spring. It started right up, but when I pulled it free from the frozen ground I discovered a flat tire

I’m a congenial fellow with a generally positive outlook towards life, but I despise the person or persons responsible for tubeless tires. Because once the connection to the rim is broken, they are very hard to inflate.

I pushed, squeezed, cussed and prayed, but I could not get the flat tire to seal to the rim. I even used an old trick taught to me by my late father by wrapping rope around the tire to squeeze it tighter. The only result was a lost hour and lots of lost air.

But instead of putting it off for another day, I loaded the snowblower into the back of my truck with the clever use of an old pallet as a makeshift ramp and took it to a local garage where I had tubes put in both tires.

I picked up the snowblower the next day. Overnight the rain turned and 12 hours later I was using it to help clean up 6 inches of heavy snow. So heavy that trees around the yard were dropping limbs, including two big limbs on a maple tree that narrowly missed my mother’s house.

Trees were falling on power lines as well, causing power outages for several thousand local folks. We were fortunate that we lost power for only an hour, when it was a few days for many others. It was eerie hearing the cracking of tree limbs up and down our valley.

Most trees will straighten back up once the heavy snow has melted, but we won’t know until spring the full extent of the damage. I certainly have plenty of firewood to cut. I’ll get started on that … soon.

Until then, I’ll take comfort in the words of St. Augustine of Hippo: “God has promised forgiveness to your repentance, but He has not promised tomorrow to your procrastination.”

*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*](mailto:chardie1963@gmail.com)*.*

Cutlines:

Blowing snow: Chris Hardie got his snowblower fixed just in time for a heavy snowstorm. Sherry Hardie photo.

House after: The family farmhouse after limbs from a maple tree broke off because of the heavy snow. Sherry Hardie photo.

House before: Maple limbs were bent under the weight of the heavy snow. Sherry Hardie photo.

Lamp post: The snow cover makes for a pretty night scene. Chris Hardie photo.

Lilacs: Lilac bushes bent over with the weight of the snow. Chris Hardie photo.

Tire: Even trying to squeeze the flat tire with a rope to create a seal didn't work. Chris Hardie photo.