

The New Minnesota

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SPORT AND SOCIETY FOR H-ARETE - THE NEW MINNESOTA
FEBRUARY 7, 2018

It is the "**Bold North.**"

The "Frozen Tundra" has been jettisoned and the "Bold North" is the new brand for Minnesota. I am assuming that this is the winter label only, and that the "Land of 10,000 Lakes" still reigns over that small window of time called summer, or if you prefer, August.

As someone who was born and raised in Minneapolis, the City of Lakes, on the Frozen Tundra, I must admit I like the new title. Minnesotans have seldom been described as "bold." More often the state is characterized as the home of "Minnesota Nice." I am not sure if "boldness" will diminish "niceness." Maybe they can coexist.

During the lead up to Super Bowl LII, I have been reacquainting myself with the Twin Cities and the state of Minnesota, largely through the Minneapolis newspaper and the reports from the media people that were forced to go to the state to cover the Super Bowl. As is always the case, the local scene is captured in quick snapshots in time. Taken together these offer a collage or set of first impressions that may, or may not, give a comprehensive view of the place.

One of the first requirements for the visitor is to familiarize themselves with the local language. Those who listened to Garrison Keillor on radio have some acquaintance with the peculiarities of the local dialect and syntax. For others the newspaper offered a brief guide to the local language peculiarities.

Two of the most useful phrases are "you bet" or the less formal "you betcha," and "that's interesting." These can be used in most any conversation at any time to indicate non-committal agreement or as cover for sheer boredom, which is most frequently induced by interminable discussions of the weather or where to go for dinner. And as to dinner, or is it supper, better have some "hot dish."

One of the most puzzling things to outsiders is the "dangling with," as in, "Do you want to go with?" I must admit that the first time someone questioned me on this usage, I was startled and had no idea how to respond. Another puzzler is the tendency

to reverse "lend" and "borrow" when using them as verbs, e.g. would you borrow me a dollar?

When the temperature heads into minus territory, with wind chill factors at minus thirty, be prepared to be asked repeatedly "Is it cold enough for ya?" This is best answered with the aforementioned "you betcha." I seldom hear this phrase living in Florida where the equivalent is "Hot enough for ya?" My preferred response to that query is not polite.

The city of Minneapolis still looks familiar to me and in its winter mode it even looks attractive. Snow, in the first few hours after it hits the ground, brings with it a muffling of sound and a pristine white beauty. It improves the look of nearly everything. Saturday it snowed most of the day and it gave the downtown Nicollet Mall and the Stadium an enhanced beauty. Super Bowl visitors commented on this repeatedly.

Visitors were also struck by how nice everyone was, even to those wearing Eagle gear in the land of the Viking, although perhaps not to those Eagle fans who walked out of the stadium with their seats. Someone needs to remind them that a ticket entitles the holder to a seat, but not to ownership of the actual chair.

On his radio show, Jim Rome mentioned the great atmosphere and the hospitality of the people. He said that he had never had a better Super Bowl week in several decades of broadcasting from radio row. He seemed to almost enjoy the cold, and on his simulcast on the CBS Sports Network he showed a marvelous video he had taken stepping out of the dugout at the snow-filled Target Field.

Among the many attractions during the week, one that received major attention was the zipline across the Mississippi River. It stretched from Nicollet Island (the location of my high school) to the West Bank. Over 10,000 people rode the line at \$30 a trip. The river at this point is fairly wide and my recollection is that the banks are high. It must have been a rush.

All of the winter activities were on display in the downtown area with snowmobile drivers and ice skaters entertaining the crowds. If you got cold, you could get inside and move about the area on the covered walkways that tie the downtown together. When I left Minneapolis over a half-century ago there were two of these in existence connecting a few buildings to a parking garage. Now there are eleven miles of walkway in the Skyway

System. I can tell you it is easy to get lost in the Skyway, so, for the Super Bowl, guides were posted throughout. Reports indicated they too were very nice.

The Super Bowl was in Minneapolis because the State of Minnesota was willing to underwrite the construction of the architectural wonder of a stadium designed to suggest a Viking Ship. It photographed very nicely, especially in the snow and at sunset. This, of course, points out one of the downsides of the Super Bowl. The costs exacted on the host city by the NFL are extremely high, and if you factor in the cost of the stadium, not to mention lost tax revenues, the costs to the city and state hit the stratosphere. It is not a stretch to say that yet unborn Minnesotans will be paying the debts associated with this extravaganza well into their adult lives.

It is no wonder then that in a poll of Minneapolis *Star-Tribune* readers only 5% said they were "very excited" about the Super Bowl being in town, and another 7% were "pretty excited." At the other end of the spectrum 45% indicated they were "not excited at all," and another 28% were "not very excited." The sample was very small but nonetheless a bit surprising, when you consider how many times you heard it said that the community was overwhelmingly behind the Super Bowl.

For me, sitting in Florida, the game was very exciting. The hoopla and conspicuous consumption was certainly interesting, especially when it went way over the top, as it usually does.

Indeed, it must have been "very exciting" for that five percent.

On Sport and Society this is Dick Crepeau reminding you, in the words of the legendary Minneapolitan, Morgan Mundane, you don't have to be a good sport to be a bad loser.

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