

Gulf Shores snowmageddon vacation was time consuming

BY EMILY BURTON SHERMAN

Nothing is so humbling as snow. The best laid plans of mice and men and their flying machines are thrown asunder by a few flakes falling on the wrong town. This I know, not from the nightly news but from the personal experience of being held captive--in a camper, no less--by the recent blizzard in Gulf Shores, Ala.

For nearly a week, I lived in close quarters with my parents, our collective digestive issues and an aging beagle named Petey with squatter's rights to the couch.



EMILY SHERMAN

What was meant to be a relaxing weekend camping at Gulf Shores State Park turned into a six-day saga of canceled flights and road closures. Clean clothes and privacy were at a premium by week's end.

As the snow began to fall in heavy clumps, all area airports closed. All roads and bridges were impassable. It will melt soon, my mom assured me. This is Alabama,

not Alaska.

I rebooked my flight three times in as many days. The roads remained closed. In the interim, we relied on my mother's endless ability to uncover silver linings and frozen leftovers. We bonded, grit our teeth, retreated into books and took several deep breaths. When temperatures fell to single digits, my father stayed up all night monitoring the propane space heater he'd brought to keep us warm. We kept the faucets running so the lines wouldn't freeze.

The similarities between us and the Donner Party were casually tossed about until we could no longer see grass poking through the drifts. Mom quietly took stock of what was left in the fridge. I eyed the bottle of wine. We were lucky to have any supplies--Walmart and the rest of the town had shuttered its doors before the snow even stuck. Phone calls to Waffle House went unanswered for days.

I did laundry in the sink and embraced the challenges of a camper shower. My parents and I reconnected over scrambled eggs and the silence of so much time together. I sat in that stillness and counted my blessings even as I missed my kids.

Each morning we checked social media for updates. Yes, we were still stuck, but tomorrow it will melt. It has to melt soon, we'd say. Our nightly treat was selecting a movie from their collection of bargain bin DVDs. Spoiler alert--they were in the bargain bin for a very good reason and my emotional scars may never heal.

I can attest to the beauty of snow gently drifting down on verdant palm trees beside the shoreline. I can describe the awe of having an entire gulf coastline to yourself among the snowdrifts and a single cheeky surfside snowman. I remember the hilarity of some of the city's snow response--two road workers spreading salt, by hand, sitting in the back of a pickup. That's the ticket, we laughed.

It was both beautiful and absurd, demoralizing and reaffirming. We were the first people in generations to witness this much snow on the coast. We got to spend precious days together without distraction, lack of clean pants aside. I got to enjoy my mother's cooking, listen to my dad laugh, take a deep breath and reassess. I was someone's daughter again and I realized how much I'd missed it.

I even teared up when hugging my parents goodbye at the airport, waving until their truck slipped through the parking gates and disappeared into the rest of the world's hum. I was incorrect in assuming I'd be home that evening.

That's the tricky thing with adventures--they don't appreciate your hard work in counting all those chickens before they've hatched.

The first and last plane out of Mobile Regional in three days broke as it was pushed back from the gate. We were ushered off, back into the darkened, silent airport.

There were no other flights any time soon from there or anywhere else in the region. It's this plane or no plane, a harried gate worker told the family from Poland in front of me. What will happen if it can't be fixed, they asked? What will we do? Their two young daughters looked on wearily, waiting, anxious.

We reboarded an hour later and arrived in Charlotte to the piercing shriek of the airport's fire alarms, just shy of midnight. We rebooked our next flights and waited in the frigid air for the hotel shuttle we'd been promised. Five hours later, on my next flight, we were delayed on the tarmac by a fuel leak. I was running on two hours of sleep, airline pretzels and days-old socks. I nearly cried. Instead, I said a prayer, changed my playlist and turned my face towards the sun. By Friday afternoon, I was home.



CHEERING FOR the Mustangs is Jessica Floyd in a Greenville High School uniform during Legend 7 night as the Mustangs hosted district rival McLean County on Jan. 14.--Times-Argus photo by Mike Groves



A LONELY snowman sits on the beach at Gulf Shores State Park in Alabama last week. Lower Alabama received over eight inches of snow just as newspaper columnist Emily Sherman arrived on vacation.

I wouldn't call this trip entirely peaceful--being trapped in a small space, even with those you love dearly, calls to mind that absence makes the heart grow fonder. But I would call it an excellent adventure, and that is just as valuable.

Life as planned follows a prescribed path. It's comfortable. Safe. But there is no change in the landscape to challenge your views. You have a map to avoid the muddy bit and arrive home in time for tea. Just as you left. Just as expected.

Adventure tears at your pants and dirties your shoes. It stirs your blood even as it leaves you

bloody. You come home excited to don your clean, dry socks yet you have changed in the process. But isn't that the point of life to begin with?

"Real adventure...forces you to have firsthand encounters with the world," wrote author and explorer Mark Jenkins. "...Your body will collide with the earth and you will bear witness. In this way you will be compelled to grapple with the limitless kindness and bottomless cruelty of humankind--and perhaps realize that you yourself are capable of both. This will change you."

Check, check and check. Now on to the next one.

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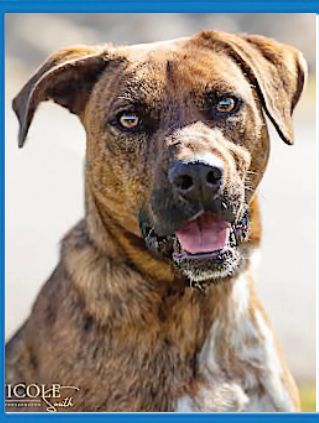
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The Muhlenberg County Fiscal Court will be accepting sealed bids on replacing the VRF-HVAC system located at the Muhlenberg County Courthouse, 100 South Main St., Greenville, KY 42345.

For further information please contact Judge-Executive Mack McGehee's office located on the second floor of the Courthouse, P.O. Box 137, 100 South Main Street, Greenville, KY 42345 (270) 338-2520.

Bids should be delivered or mailed to the above address by 2 p.m. February 13, 2025. Bids will be opened at the Fiscal Court meeting on the same date at 4 p.m.

Muhlenberg County Fiscal Court reserves the right to reject any and/or all bids and to waive any irregularities.