

WORLD & NATION

Snow surprises Washington, Marchers for Life

By Patricia Zapor
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — There was a foot of snow in late January in Jerusalem — yes, the one in Israel.

The same week, there also was a foot or more of snow in the desert capital of Jordan and the Deep South's Little Rock, Ark. The Sierra Nevada Mountains had up to seven feet of new snow.

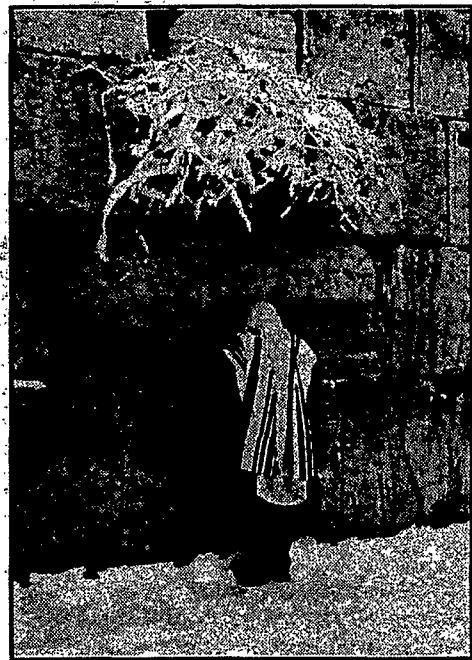
But somehow, the snowfall everyone heard about was the 12 inches or so that surprised Washington on Jan. 25, forcing the federal government and almost everything else to close for two days.

Schools and shopping malls closed, congressional hearings and press conferences were canceled. Some participants in the previous day's March for Life were trapped in Washington an extra night by shut-down airports and snow-clogged highways.

People who needed information from Washington offices about their Social Security accounts or their applications for funding from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development reached answering machines for two days.

Newspaper columnists, talk show hosts and TV weather forecasters across the nation had their little bit of fun at Washington's expense.

"Weather wimps," said one Illinois native who now braves the balmy winters of Phoenix.



Reuters/CNS
An Ultra-Orthodox Jew prays at the Western Wall following an unusually heavy snowfall in Jerusalem Jan. 28.

"You folks in Chicago would be rolling on the floor laughing if you saw what it was like in Washington today," quoted Chicago Tribune columnists Ellen Warren and Terry Armour Jan. 27, citing an e-mail from a former congressional staffer from Illinois.

Liz Guertin's 18-year-old daughter, Katy, was one of 13 teens and adults from Christ

the King Parish in Tampa, Fla., who spent the night in Baltimore-Washington International Airport. The group had flown up for the March for Life on Jan. 24 and been stuck when flights were canceled.

"I think they had fun," Guertin told Catholic News Service.

So did 29 March for Life pilgrims from Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Dunedin, Fla., who spent more than 30 hours at Reagan National Airport. That group of teens caught the attention of a Washington television crew, which reported on their efforts to entertain themselves throughout the day.

Many of the Florida teens had never seen snow before, so they got their fill of snowball fights and snow angels despite having only athletic shoes and light jackets.

People who live in places where snowfall is routinely measured in feet, like Buffalo, N.Y., Boston or Boise, Idaho, don't understand how a major metropolitan city that gets snow regularly can be crippled by a winter storm that their cities would brush off like a pesky mosquito.

They can see Raleigh, N.C., having trouble with a once-a-century 20-inch snowfall, but Washington? Isn't that a fairly northern city?

In fact, Washington recovered from the Jan. 25 storm relatively quickly, especially compared to previous years when broken equipment and unpaid snowplow contractors meant more than a week passed before some people could get out of their neigh-

borhoods.

Theories abound as to why Washington has to shut down in bad weather.

One problem is that Washington's government and business offices are staffed by commuters, many of whom drive in from 20 to 40 miles away.

Employees who live within walking distance of the city's subway system might have no trouble getting in to the office in any weather. But they're the minority of the 250,000 federal employees.

Those who depend on the street-clearing capabilities of a small town, a couple different counties, one or two states and the District of Columbia have learned that consistency in road conditions during a storm is a naive dream.

Then there's the "newcomer" factor.

The Washington area is famous for having a fluid population — lots of students, military and government workers on temporary assignment, and immigrants.

For instance, the Census Bureau reports that the number of Hispanic residents in the region has grown by at least 50 percent in a decade, to more than 350,000 people. Many are immigrants from Central America, where driving in snow is not a skill many people need.

After two unusually warm winters, Washington hadn't seen a significant snowfall in several years, so new residents haven't exactly had a chance to practice driving in ice and snow.

Super Bowl championship athlete tackles college classes

By Joseph Kenny
Catholic News Service

ST. LOUIS — Fontbonne College staffers chuckled when St. Louis Rams' lineman Kevin Carter predicted prior to the season that he would be too busy in January to attend classes.

The Rams had ended the previous season with a 4-12 record and people from the Show-Me State were big-time skeptics.

A zoology major finishing a degree he started while at the University of Florida, Carter would be sitting in a biochemistry class right now if his season had ended in early January with other teams that missed the playoffs.

Instead, Carter and the Rams ended up winning the Super Bowl, and Carter was named to the NFL's Pro Bowl.

Carter and a teammate, John Gerak, have attended classes at Fontbonne, and another player, Isaac Bruce, has taken a cor-

respondence-type course.

Fontbonne, a small Catholic college in Clayton, west of St. Louis, is the principal provider of academic services for the Rams team members through the National Consortium for Academics and Sports.

Fontbonne offers both credit and non-credit college-level programs tailored to fit the schedule and needs of Rams players, staff and families.

Carter, for example, chose to attend classes in the spring semester and last year attended an organic chemistry course in addition to a calculus class.

On Jan. 21, Fontbonne students and staff signed an oversized banner wishing Carter and his teammates good luck in their NFC championship game Jan. 23 against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

A staff member's husband promised to bring the banner to the game to hang it in an end-zone seating area at the Trans World Dome.

Kay Graves, Carter's calculus teacher, said it took about three classes before she learned Carter played pro football.

"I knew he was an athlete," Graves told the St. Louis Review, newspaper of the St. Louis Archdiocese. "When I asked, he told me he played with the Rams. I said 'OK.' I didn't know who he was. Then I told my husband and he said, 'You have WHO in your class?'"

Graves said Carter is conscientious, sincere and extremely smart. "He didn't put on any type of airs. He worked with the other students just as anyone else would."

An education is important to Carter, who wants to be a pharmacist after his football career ends. He told Graves that his mother especially has encouraged him. And his wife is finishing a degree in physical therapy at Washington University.

Jennifer Filippi, who took the calculus course with Carter, says he joined her and other students in homework sessions. "He's

just another student. He talked about life, school and football."

Another student, Ken Hart, said he met Carter at a campus carnival and at the restaurant where Hart works. "He's very personable, a regular guy. He's a pro football player, yet he wants to get an education. I think it's great."

When they first met in chemistry class, Emily Bickel was thrilled that Carter knew her favorite St. Louis Cardinals pitcher personally. Kevin laughed and said, "You know, I'm a professional athlete too!"

After one tough session, Carter took the whole class to a Cardinals baseball game in a limousine.

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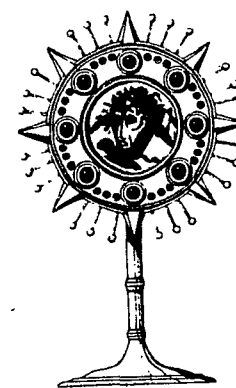


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