

Shoveling snow can be deadly

IT HAPPENED exactly 12 years ago just a few days before Christmas. I remember the day vividly — almost as if it were yesterday.

The snow started falling shortly after noon. The temperature plummeted. At first the snow was fairly light and mixed with rain. Later in the afternoon, the snow became heavy with considerable blowing and drifting.

A graduate student at the time, I remember driving home that evening from the research laboratory. Barely able to see through my windshield, I drove at no more than five miles per hour.

ON SEVERAL occasions, the car slid on icy road spots. I became more and more nervous. Apparently the earlier rain had now frozen beneath the fresh layer of snow.

After what seemed like hours, I finally reached the driveway of our apartment. I was pleased to see that



fitness
Barry Franklin

the manager had hired a plow to clear the parking lot.

I walked through the heavy deep snow and entered our second floor apartment. The room seemed particularly warm. I picked up the evening paper and turned on the television set.

"It looks like we're going to get another 6 to 8 inches tonight," the weatherman said.

I was glad to be inside.

AFTER DINNER I remember gazing for some time out our large picture window. I became mesmerized by the snowfall. It was hard to believe that

these beautiful white flakes were such a menace to me only a few hours earlier.

That night I went to bed rather early. I must have been around 10:30 or so. At 10:40, however, I jumped from a sound sleep to answer my ringing telephone.

It was a fellow graduate student. "Barry, Dr. Burg is dead!"

"I can't believe it," I exclaimed.

Seems he went outside around 9 o'clock to shovel his driveway. He never returned. His wife became concerned, went outside and found him lying in the snow. Although the EMS promptly responded, they couldn't re-

vive him. They told his wife it was either a heart attack or a cardiac arrest.

DR. BURG was our laboratory physician who had assisted many graduate students with their research. He was a close friend. He was only 61.

It seems that each year this story is repeated over and over again. The names and places change, but the tragic results are always the same. Unfortunately, too few people truly realize the hazards of shoveling snow, particularly for elderly individuals or those with heart problems.

The Christmas holiday that year is one the Burg family will always remember.

A Farmington Hills resident, Barry Franklin, Ph.D., teaches physiology at the college level and is co-director of cardiac rehabilitation at Sinai Hospital.

Dramatic beauty on the roadside

By Timothy Nowicki
special writer

IN THE morning and evening, on my way to and from work, the low angle of the sun backlights the vegetation along the freeways. It's a dramatic sight.

Some freeways lined with billboards and littered with trash are less than pleasant to view. That is why, when the cottony flowerheads of the tall reed grass phragmites are highlighted, we enjoy an esthetic contrast.

PHRAGMITES, a tall grass, is very common along roadways. Very large groups are noticeable on I-94 near Metro Airport. Many scattered groups can be seen along ditches which provide some standing water.

The name Phragmites is derived from a Greek word meaning "hedge," relating to its tendency to border watercourses.

This grass is more conspicuous than most grasses, because phragmites around Detroit grows to a height of 9-10 feet. However, this very adaptable plant, which grows on all continents of the world, may reach a height of 20 feet in warm, tropical climates.

It is a very adaptable plant in many ways. As our water becomes more polluted, phragmites can tolerate more impurities than many plants. It thrives particularly well along freeway ditches in Michigan because it prefers slightly salty water.

IN ADDITION to being adaptable, it has a couple ways of propagating. One

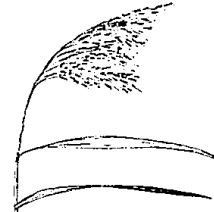
method is by an underground root system that spreads outward producing new shoots. That is why phragmites often grows in large mats or groups.

A second means of propagation is the flowerheads. They lean to one side and produce seeds on little "parachutes." The seeds float to distant places.

These large flowerheads in dense mats look like feathers swaying in the breeze. Their soft edge is dramatically accented by the early morning or late evening sun.

Some people collect these flowerheads, spray them with hairspray, and use them in dried flower arrangements.

However you view phragmites, it is another natural subject that provides beauty as no man-made object can.



Phragmites, a tall reed grass, adds beauty to metropolitan freeways, especially when they catch the sun's light.

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