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SNOW PREDICTED —AND PROMISED

By Joerose Tharakan '08

While being interviewed in India, at Mahindra United World College, for admission to Colby, I told Dean Parker Beverage that I was blessed with an abundance of enthusiasm and that Colby seemed like a good outlet for my zeal for life. As an aside, I added that I'd never been exposed to snow, and Colby's climate held the possibility of even greater adventure. Parker Beverage found that comment particularly amusing and warned me that I had no idea what I might be in for.

He was right; at that moment, I couldn't possibly have imagined what it actually felt like to wake up one morning and watch as the grass in front of my dorm slowly, but surely, turned into an endless stretch of white and then proceeded to swathe the rest of my beautiful college. But here I am, trying to pen those nearly ineffable first impressions so that you too may enjoy the new sensations of my first snowfall.

I'd been waiting for it to snow since last June. Actually, I've been waiting for snow since I was 3 and thought Irving Berlin was crazy for writing about a "White Christmas." This was my introduction to the concept of snow in the "western" world. And yes, it was definitely the first thing that crossed my mind as I started thinking about life at Colby. The irony of the situation was a source of great amusement for those at home. My comfort zones were in sync with the temperatures of an Indian summer, and here I was obsessively checking the daily weather report from Waterville. Apparently, the state of Kerala, my home on India's southwest coast, hasn't ever experienced a true "winter." What we call winter pales in comparison to dictionary.com's definition: "usually coldest season of the year; period of time characterized by coldness, misery, bareness and death." In fact, winter in Kerala is five degrees hotter (centigrade, please) than what passes for summer in Maine.

So you can imagine how thoroughly disappointed I was to find warm sunny days (again!) when I landed on campus in the fall. When I told friends and relatives that I was going to Maine to do my undergraduate studies, the first thing they almost always commented on was the calamitous weather. So where were all the snowstorms and icy winds that wreaked havoc on those who dared choose Maine?

Once I was on campus, everyone took an active interest in my lack of snow experience and regaled me with stories—some scary, some hilarious, some

just plain boring, with complex conversions between Celsius and Fahrenheit. Not a single retelling of some famous snowball fight or sledding experience could fulfill my yearning to know what it felt like. I kept on the lookout for possible sites for my own adventures—Lorimer Hill, the new Colby Green—as I created and recreated countless scenes in my imagination. Days turned into months.

"You can never tell when it's going to start snowing," I was told. "Some years we get snow as early as Family Homecoming Weekend or fall break." The skies didn't show a trace of white.

"Looks like we're going to have snow before Halloween." I'm gullible—I totally believed that. But no, the dawn of the dead didn't bring any snow to Waterville.

"It always snows before Thanksgiving." By now, I felt almost cheated by Mother Nature. Just what was she waiting for? We joked about coming back to find Colby lost under the copious amounts of snow that should have fallen over Thanksgiving break, but when we came back—still no snow.

I was at the pinnacle of frustration when, suddenly, almost without warning, on the 2nd of December 2004, Mother Nature pandered to my hopes. I was awakened at six in the morning by a zillion phone calls from friends who had endured my pleas for snow, all of whom were about as ecstatic as I was to find Colby hidden under a layer of pure white.

Everything seemed so calm and clear that it was like looking through one of those little crystal ball things you get for Christmas. But this was for real, and for me, it was a defining moment.

It was like looking at the world through rose-colored glasses, except they weren't tinted pink. My dreams were slowly becoming reality. I was hurried over to my workplace and bombarded with snowballs; as inexperienced as I was, I even managed to hit my boss squarely in the face and get away with it! Some friends took me "sledding" down Lorimer Hill, except my first ride was atop a pizza box—hardly the kind of sled I'd been expecting. Every day posed some novel adventure: the profound thrill of tripping headlong into a sheet of soft white, the giddiness of battling snowflakes on your eyelashes as you trek over to class . . . and footprints! There is a certain satisfaction for a novice like me, in being able to leave my mark on new territory; it was almost as if—step by step—I was christening Colby as my own.

