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# The last degree...

By **DICK WEST**  
United Press International  
WASHINGTON — In a way it is edifying, albeit rigorous, to have much of the nation enduring the most horrendous winter on record. This country, as you know, is in the process of shifting over to the metric system. And a slow process it is.

The weather service is doing its part by including Celsius readings in its temperature reports. But most of us continue to think Fahrenheit. Due to the severe cold wave,

however, we are paying more attention to temperature reports than we usually do. Which means the Celsius scale will become meaningful to us that much sooner.

In that regard, it seems fitting that we should pause at this time and pay tribute to the men who gave us our temperatures.

All of us are familiar with the redoubtable Gabriel Daniel Fahrenheit, the German instrument maker who in 1714 devised the scale that bears his name.

And most of us are familiar with

Anders Celsius, the Swedish astronomer who in 1742 devised the scale that is now part of the metric system.

Originally, Celsius' scale was called centigrade, but that created a good bit of confusion. It caused many people to assume that the

## The Lighter Side

scale was developed by Ludwig Centigrade, a Polish storm door salesman.

To make certain credit was given where credit was due, the General Conference on Weights and Measures in 1948 officially named the scale after Celsius.

So much for the Big Two of temperature. But what of the Big Three? Does the name Rene An-

toine Ferchault de Reaumur ring a bell?

If not, you may need reminding that de Reaumur was the French naturalist who in 1730 cooked up a scale, still in limited use, graded from zero to 80.

Note that these temperature titans were Europeans. Jingoists that we are, this causes us to wonder whether any Americans have contributed to the onward and upward march of thermometer readings.

The answer is a ringing affirmative. There is, for example, the wind-chill factor.

Contrary to what they would have you believe in Great Britain, the formula for measuring the cooling effect of moving air on the human body was not worked out by Churchston Windchill, the English

weather vane designer.

The measurements were developed from experiments performed by a U.S. expedition to Antarctica in 1939. And that isn't all.

In 1804, Hiram Blazes, a Mt. Baldersdash, N.H., bear bristle importer, discovered that when he ran around the house naked in temperatures below 26 degrees, he began to turn blue.

That led to development of the scale by which we determine temperatures that are "as cold as blue

Blazes."

Similarly, in 1784, Elrphet, a Sump City, N.C., digger, found that when the temperature dropped below 27 degrees would freeze corned beef hash.

That was the origin of the scale which we identify weather "as cold as a well digger's hash."

All of us in the U.S. owe a debt of gratitude to these temperature pioneers. For not been for them, we would know how cold we are.



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## Texas roads to be improved Cities involved help pay

The Department of Highways and Public Transportation Commission has approved the 1977-78 Urban System Program, Joe Hanover announced today.

Hanover is the district engineer.

There are four new projects for district 17 in the proposed program. One project is the proposed extension of Finfeather Road to FM 2818. Right of way has been acquired and Brazos County will help pay for the cost of curbs and gutters.

The extension of Holleman Drive in College Station from FM 2154 to seven-tenths of a mile east is another project.

New overhead directional signs have been planned for certain sections of Texas Ave. between 21 and Southwest Parkway in Houston and College Station.

Other projects include the extension of road from Huntsville and Navasota.

The approved program is estimated to cost \$964,000. Contributions from the local government are estimated at \$147,000.

Hanover said preliminary work on all of these projects will begin soon.

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