

So it is January 2, 2009 here on the east coast of Florida and thanks to the pack of dogs we have decided to add to our family I'm awake and they are asleep. It all started about 90 minutes ago when Renny, our 13-year-old mutt, let me know the water bowl was empty. Of course she brought reinforcements along to make her point so now I have my daughter Taylor's two dogs, Baby and Lizzie, also barking and licking to get my attention.

I get up and refill the water bowl which should have resulted in a quick trip back to sleepy time but alas now my dog, the beast known as Bacardi, has arisen and he will not be satisfied with mere drinking water. He wants to go outside and chase the ducks that have taken up residence in the retention pond in my back yard.

Normally I like the pond in the back yard and the variety of wildlife it attracts. Look in my photos and you will see many pictures of the varied birds and turtles that enjoy this little piece of nature. About 10 days ago, seven ducks decided that they liked the pond as much as I do and they appear to have taken up residence for the foreseeable future. For the record this is not normal for our pond. In most cases the ducks or geese arrive spend a day or two and then move on. It is more like a Motel 8 or Days Inn for migrating waterfowl. But these ducks have turned the pond into an Extended Stay America. They have paid the rent and look like they are here to stay for a while. Again, having the wildlife is cool but now Bacardi has taken notice of these new neighbors and he wants to spend a lot of quality time bonding with his newfound friends. So Bacardi joins the chorus, howling and whining for me to let him out.

We get to the back door, the pack and me. I put Bacardi on his chain and hook Lizzie and Baby to their leashes (Renny is allowed out without attachment because she stays close by). I open the sliding door and the race is on. Bacardi sprints towards the pond and reaches the end of his 20-foot tether in search of his friends with Lizzie and Baby in chase. The ducks of course were also sleeping since it was about 3 in the morning when this happened and apparently these ducks like to sleep at the same time I do. Bacardi's sudden appearance on the scene startles, no shocks, the ducks from their sleep filled state. Now I have barking dogs and squawking ducks filling the very early morning air with LOTS of sound. Being rudely awakened by a large black dog also sends the ducks into a frenzy of flapping and which only adds to the noise level breaking the peaceful silence. For the record the excess flapping does not result in flight but only serves to move this little band of ducks from the near side of the pond to the far side of the pond.

Once the ducks leave the immediate scene and are no longer illuminated by the single porch light on the back of my house, the pack turns their attention to the other call of nature do their business and return to the house. Collectively we go back into the bedroom where the various dogs retreat to the places they have chosen to return to sleep and soon the room is filled with the heavy and steady breathing of four dogs deep in sleep. But sleep does not return for me. Instead I share my story with you. Good Morning.

A man from Arizona dies and goes to Hell. Upon arrival he meets the Devil. The Devil asks what he thinks of Hell, the man says, "Eh, kind of warm. Kind of like a January day in Phoenix."

This really upsets the devil and he marches off and turns up the heat. Upon returning to the man he inquires again, "What do you think of hell now?" The man casually looks around and says, "Yeah it's warm here but kind of like Phoenix in April."

The devil doesn't take this so well and stomps off to raise the temperature and after a few minutes returns to the man to questions him. The man loosens his collar and responds, "Phoenix in June is the best I can do."

Thoroughly upset, the devil raises the temperature as hot as it will go and lets the man stew. When he catches up with him the man rolls up his sleeves and says, "If that's the best you have I am going to say it is late July, early August in Phoenix. And that's pushing it."

Now the devil is beside himself. He returns to the environmental controls and this time he drops the temperature to sub zero. We're talking Minnesota cold. He lets the man sit for several hours then returns to him. The man is shivering and ice crystals have formed on his eyebrows. There is a big ice sickle hanging from his nose. The devil looks at the man chuckles and says, "So, what do you think now?"

The man, between shivers, responds, "T-T-The C-C-Card-d-d-inals-s-s-s won the Super Bowl?"

Stop and think about how different our world will be if this joke were to become reality and Hell were to freeze over because the Cardinals won the Super Bowl. I personally will be doing a whole lot of things I never expected to have happen. My suspicion is I will find all sorts of old friends that will be hunting me down to do this, that or the other based on the very famous saying, "I'll do _____ (you fill in the blank), when Hell freezes over."

I am already expecting changes in my immediate future because the Cards are up by 20 and only two games away from the Super Bowl. Think about it, how many of us have muttered that famous saying, "It will be a cold day in Hell before I do that." Well your time may be coming. The actual temperature in Hell has to be dropping even as you read this. With the exceptions of a couple of states like Wyoming and North Dakota where you can go from 0 to 80 and back to 0 in a matter of hours, I would imagine it takes some time to go from fire and brimstone to snow and ice in the playground of the devil.

So what does your future hold? For me I am cheering for the Panthers and starting to make a list of all the stuff I may be forced to face in the coming days and weeks. By the way, if I promised you something based on weather conditions in Hell, feel free to drop me a note and I will do what I can to fulfill my obligations.

Why do I feel like I may be reliving the scene from "Bruce Almighty" when the email prayers of the world are delivered to Bruce's computer?