

BRIAN VANDER BRUG / Los Angeles Times

CHILLING OUT: Valley Calendar staffers Irene Garcia, left, Jim Fowler and Robin Rauzi share a toast as they bask in a ton of snow delivered to the Valley Edition's back lawn.

Gool Options

Sweating It Out

This month marks the 30th anniversary of my moving to the San Fernando Valley. I arrived during the Summer of Love—1967. It didn't take long to figure out that there's not much to love about July and August here. It's definitely not a time or place for sissies.

Usually, I cope by maxing out my air conditioner. Sometimes I add an electric fan blowing directly into my face. But when it gets really bad—as it was the first week of August—more extreme measures are necessary.

First, I tried to think of something cold. Cold? What's cold?

Snow, of course!

In the Yellow Pages, I found out that North Hollywood Ice Co. offers "winter snow scenes" for sale. For a mere \$120, the company will deliver one ton of fresh machine-made snow—enough to cover 160 square feet with 1 to 2 inches of the cold, wonderful white stuff.

But where would I put 2,000 pounds of snow? I live in an apartment; I'm lucky I have a parking space.

> I thought about doing a flotation tank session like in the movie "Altered States." Flotation tanks offer the temporary equivalent of a lobotomy. I could replace over

heated misery with complete sensory deprivation. Why feel bad when you can feel nothing at all?

But then I decided to go in the opposite direction—I would go to Finland Baths in Sherman Oaks for a sauna and a massage. I figured that after the 160-plus degrees of the sauna, the Valley's 107 would be kid stuff.

Finland Baths, in business since 1948, has a funky, Old World charm about it. (At least it seems like Old World charm to me-but what do I know? I've been in the Valley for 30 years and never set foot in the Old World.)

All the people who work there have blond hair and speak with accents. On the wall is a photo of Humphrey Bogart with a wet towel over his head, looking like he just outswam a croc after falling overboard from the African Queen. There are no aerobics, no New Age prayers, no mind-expansion promises, no low-flow shower heads—just Scandinavian deep-tissue massage and a lot of heat. \$50 for 45 minutes, \$60 for an hour.

The sauna felt wonderful, especially after I got out. And the massage was just what I needed after a stress-filled week. I topped it off with a cold shower.

As I stepped outside Finland Baths and into the oven-like air of Sherman Oaks, I felt cool and refreshed.

It lasted about two minutes.

I drove home as fast as I could, trying to remember where I put that electric fan.

-JAMES E. FOWLER