

It was 55 degrees and sunny in north-east Ohio on Dec. 30. I drove around town with the car window down. I saw a guy riding his bike — and he was wearing shorts for cryin' out loud.

Did I say it was Dec. 30, a day that's supposed to be as cold as Jimmy Buffett's cooler in this part of the world? Did I say it was northern Ohio, where it has been known to snow 100 inches a year? Did I say I'm beginning to believe there's something to this global warming stuff?

And I believe in my heart — and my head — that we should all be concerned about it.

I know some of you think I've been sitting in the sun too long if I'm worried about global warming. You think I've bought into this Al Gore-inspired garbage just because of one "unseasonably warm" day in northern Ohio. But it's not just one warm December day in northern Ohio that has convinced me that global warming is a threat. It's also not Gore's movie, "An Inconvenient Truth," which I haven't even seen (but plan to).

There's a bunch of stuff going on that lends credence to global warming. Did you hear about the enormous ice shelf, about 40 square miles in size, that broke away from an island in the Canadian Arctic? Researchers aren't sure how it happened, but they say it could be another sign the Earth is heating up because of an atmospheric increase in carbon dioxide we cause by burning coal to light our homes and burning gas to drive to and from to work every day.

It was also recently reported by the World Meteorological Organization that 2006 was Earth's sixth-warmest year on record. Global temperatures have risen 0.7 degrees Celsius since 1900.

At the Ohio Turfgrass Conference & Show last December, keynote speaker Lonnie Thompson, a world authority on paleoclimatology and glaciology, gave a matter-of-fact presentation on climate change. Thompson, a senior research scientist at the Byrd Polar Research Center at The Ohio State University, astonished attendees with his research findings.

Thompson, who knows the topic of global warming like Dick Vitale knows college hoops, showed photos of the world's great glaciers. They all have one thing in common: They're melting.

The Forecast Is for Global Warming

BY LARRY AYLWARD



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During his presentation, Thompson displayed two photos of Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania. One photo, from 1912, showed Kilimanjaro in all its frosty glory when 12.1 square kilometers of ice covered its summit. Another photo, taken in 2000, revealed that only 2.6 square kilometers of ice remained on the mountain.

Regarding those melting glaciers, where do you think all that water will go? The oceans will expand and change the landscape dramatically, Thompson predicts. Can you imagine the great coastal golf courses, from Pebble Beach to Ballybunion, swallowed up by the surging sea?

Please don't confuse me with some crackpot doomsayer. I'm just going with what the world's top scientists — people who know far more about this topic than you and me — say about climate shift. Many of them agree Earth is heating up like a charcoal grill on the Fourth of July.

Of course, global warming comes with a slew of \$64,000 questions. Is it a new phenomena or is it cyclical? Is trouble right around the corner, or is it 1,000 years away?

I don't know the answers. Does anyone?

I do know one thing, however: Don't dismiss global warming as something political... just another issue Democrats and Republications argue about. And don't write it off as something "that won't happen in my lifetime." There's a chance you'll be required to do your part to help combat global warming in your lifetime.

Back to the weather in northern Ohio, which has changed a tad since late December. On Feb. 15, it was a biting-cold minus 12 degrees. A day earlier, I shoveled a foot of snow from my driveway. I didn't see anybody riding a bike on those days.

But I still believe there's something to this global warming stuff.

Aylward can be reached at 216-706-3737.