

Newsletter84

Keith's Corner/McGill News

December 25,2020— sent earlier on December 23nd.

Christmas Message

Today is **Christmas**, so ho ho ho –and a Merry Christmas to all. If you like and believe in Christmas, enjoy it and don't let the scrooges stop you. Put up a Christmas tree, not a holiday tree. Sing the Christmas songs you like. Let the scrooges wallow in their own misery.

Christmas Memories-3

Christmas Eve in McGill would begin with a nice turkey, ham dinner. Last minute presents were wrapped and put under the tree. Several groups of kids and adults went around town singing Christmas carols. It was a wonderful time. Soon the kids were finally in bed and probably too excited to sleep, but eventually did. Some families opened presents and others waited till morning. We did ours in the morning.

Christmas morning started out with a mad rush to the living room to check out what Santa had left for us perfect little angels, at least, we had been, the last few weeks. Whenever we didn't see a lump of coal in our stocking, we knew we had fooled Santa again. You have to be pretty shrewd to do that .

During WWII toys were scarce. Most presents were homemade stuff and a lot were clothing items. The wrapping paper and gift tags were carefully saved and put away for the next year as paper was hard to get.

Sometime in the morning we heard the KCC milk truck coming down the street and stopping at each house. We made a mad dash to the front door and brought in the annual Christmas box of chocolates from the Community League. I think they were either Glades or Sees.

Nest we had a quick breakfast and then played with our presents while Mom set out a large spread of food for the coming guests. Dad would make his Tom and Jerry batter from scratch. It was a very popular drink back then.

Soon folks would be stopping by for a snack and a drink and visit. After an hour our two small groups of people would team up to visit mutual friends. It was very festive and everyone had a great time. Us little urchin monsters would roam around town to see what the other kids got for Christmas. It was so wonderful to live in a small town where you knew everyone. I've missed that in later years.

After checking out the other kids stuff, we ended up over at the sleigh riding street that KCC had blocked off for us. They also allowed us to build a bonfire at the top of the street and even brought us firewood. That is another great thing about a small town. The main employer, KCC, was staffed by the local folks.

We would sled down the hill and then walk back to stand around the fire. Someone would bring some pine cones to put in the coals. The cones were still green and full of nuts and pine pitch. They smelled so good. Others would bring a potato to bake in the ashes. There was no tin foil available so the spud went into the coals and ended up pretty black, but it tasted wonderful. A little black charcoal was good for the digestive tract.

It wasn't long before our pants were wet up to our knees. The wet pants would be frozen by the time we got down the hill. It was hard to walk with frozen pants legs back up the hill to the bonfire. We didn't have insulated boots or other thermal stuff like today. We had the old long john flannel underwear. It would freeze when wet also. Somehow we didn't care how cold we were. Just got used to it.

Now getting on a sled properly according to McGill technique was difficult to master. You picked up your sled up and started running with it. Then at a good speed you slammed it down and boarded. The real finesse was getting on in a good prone position without slowing the sled down. If done properly you would soon pass up the other kids who didn't use this method.

Another feat of athletic prowess was the ability to "hooky" onto a passing car. The cars in those days (for you youngster) had a novel thing on the back, called a bumper. You could either grab on to the bumper and stay sitting up and go for a ride on your boots, or the ideal was to do it on your sled. The driver of the car would wait until you were hooked on and then weave back and forth. Sometimes you got whipped off like in a crack the whip fashion.

Sometimes, if your gloves were wet, they would freeze and stick to the bumper. Many a glove was lost that way. If you were dumb enough to try it bare handed, some skin was left on the bumper.

You also had to know where every dry spot in the road was located. Cause, needless to say, you didn't fare well on those spots. If you were on a sled and knew the spot was not very big, you could gamble and ride over it. If the spot was too long, the sled stopped, but you didn't. Your sled runners caused quite a lot of spark. Boots usually stopped abruptly. So much for the art and finesse of sledding in McGill.

As darkness fell and the temperature dropped like a rock, we would trudge on home with our frozen clothes. Mom would have a nice fire in the kitchen wood stove and would lower the oven door. We would pull up a chair, take our wet pants and frozen boots off and sit there in our BVDs/ She would make us some hot cocoa with marshmallows

Another treat was to slice potatoes and put them directly on the top of the stove with some salt and pepper until they got brown. I can still taste them.

Then it was off to bed with a hot brick wrapped in a towel and put under the covers at our feet. Exhausted after such a great day, we were soon in that wonderful kid's dream land, with another great Christmas in our treasure chest, of unforgettable memories.

Merry Christmas everyone.

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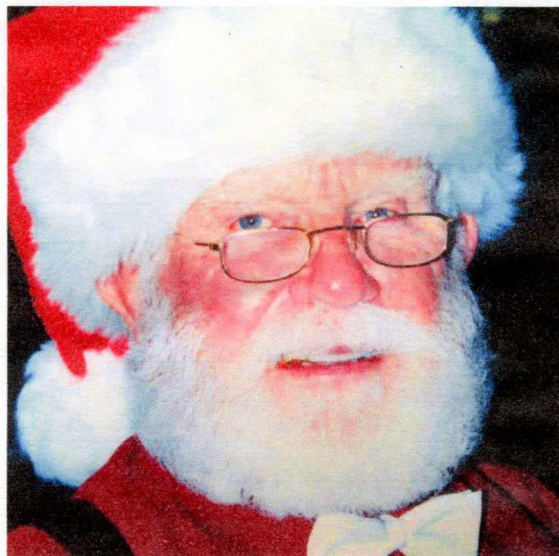


Here is one of the light poles decorated. I am guessing that it says Merry Christmas.

Old Photos

Instead of an old photo, this little Christmas story might be better. It is about my Uncle Don Reed. He not only looks like Santa, he also has just as big of a heart as Santa.

Will Santa Be Well By Christmas??



Do you remember when you were young and started hearing about Christmas, just after Thanksgiving Day?? People were decorating their Christmas trees. Holiday trees had not been invented yet by the PC crowd. The word PRESENT was being used again. This word penetrated vey deeply into the dark recesses of the lad's head and triggered the beginning of a master plan of action. The first thing to do was to start a wish list of all the things you REALLY needed to survive until the next Christmas. The Sears and Roebuck catalog and the Montgomery Ward (or as we called it "the monkey ward catalog) were gone thru for ideas. Why couldn't Santa just make it easy and bring you one of each item. The essential items were first on the list, such as train sets, Gilbert Chemistry Sets, Erector Sets

and farm sets, Louisville slugger bat and other important stuff. The things like warm winter clothes, boots were non-essential and you always got those anyway. It was time to start doing the proper things and be the perfect little angel that you knew lurked under your regular persona of doing as little as possible without getting in trouble. You dug up from the dusty rafters in your head all the right words to start using. Such as, "thank you, yes teacher, yes Mom or Dad". Even though it was very painful you might even muster a "thanks sis". You knew that such sacrifices to your sterling character would only be needed until that great day on December 25. After that, you could return to normal. This would of course be good training for any future politician as they do this same thing right before election day.

The Friday after turkey day finally arrived. It was the day of the Christmas parade. You scrubbed your face and without any threats from Mom, you actually washed behind your ears. It was the day to sit on Santa's lap and you had to be the perfect kid. Clean and humble. With the angel look you had practiced for in front of the mirror, in between looking for that first whisker, you looked up at Santa and said, "All I want is something for my little sister". You had already sent your long list to him at the North Pole and now he will remember you as being so humble. You prided yourself on the plan and how you pulled it off. It was foolproof and of course no other kid in history had the smarts to do it.

It was such a little boy that was peeking thru the curtain around his father's bed in the University of Utah Hospital. He was looking at the bearded man in the other bed. That man was Don Reed of Ely. He had suffered a stroke and was there for treatment. His white beard surrounded his rosy cheeks and the big grin he always had. Don was one of those folks that shared his cheery outlook on life with others.

He noticed the little boy staring so hard and with a very concerned look on his face. Don knew at once what the boy's concern was all about. Would Santa be able to make his rounds on Christmas eve?? Don motioned for the boy to come closer and then told him that Santa would be just fine and would be certain to stop at his house. A big grin soon flashed over the lad's face and he happily went back to his father's bed and announced that Santa was going to be fine. Even though Don was hurting he never failed to grin and make others happy. That little boy will have a huge story to relate every Christmas for many years.