

Newsletter138

Keith's Corner/McGill News

December 31, 2021

New Years in the 1940s, 50s

The great WWII was over and America was slowly getting back to what some considered normal. It was vastly different than before the war, when the depression was in full swing. The economy was booming and there was a multitude of new items on the market. The advances made in electronics and other products that were made during the war was staggering. TV was starting and the new cars were full of new stuff. The fenders were slowly going bye bye. There were no longer slots in the front of the radiator to put a hand crank. The air vent in front of the windshield was gone. Some windshields were one piece instead of two. Automatic transmissions were in their infancy. I remember the first car I rode in with one, was an Oldsmobile with hydramatic. It was owned by Ed Pesout.

The advances in medicine were many. Penicillin was out and we got a shot of it for everything. All in all those were exciting times.

New Years was no exception. Kennecott would blow the loud shift whistle at midnight to start the new year. There were lots of house parties in the area.



I took this photo of a group of us McGill heathens and some local girls. Most were in the 7th and 8th grades. It was the New Year's eve of 1949/50, i.e. the last New Years eve in the 1940s.

The McGill Club and Victory Club were bulging at the seams with party goers. The sound of the great shift whistle brought many folks outside to make their own noise and listen to the rest of the town. I remember going outside the house and standing under the eaves and shooting several guns. We stayed under the eaves to protect us from the BBs of the shotguns falling back to earth. We shot our deer rifles at Heuser mountain. For a few minutes it sounded like a war was going on. all over town.

The Ely Volunteer Fire Brigade held their annual dance at the WPHS gym. They had a huge fireman's hat on display. It sat on the trophy case in the front of the gym for all to see. The dance music was always live and usually a local group, such as Doug Hawkins. The bars were full of a lot of folks that only come out on New Year's Eve. The bartenders usually labeled them as the "amateur drinkers".

January first was a slow day for the adults that had partied late. However, us youngsters were eager to get out and sleigh ride, have snowball fights and generally get our bodies frozen to the bone before our brains finally had enough

and made us go home to the comfort of a wood fire. We had trekked all over town for a week checking out our friend's Christmas toys. Another treat was the goodies left over at the various houses. Each section of McGill had different foods that they served for Christmas. All over Middle town and townsite there was turkey, ham and lots of fudge, chocolates, divinity and a great assortment of homemade cookies. In the Greek homes we had tasty lamb and more baked goods such as baklava, kourambiethies, and diples. I always seemed to get the powdered sugar all over myself. The Austrian/Slavic homes had BBQ'd pork and fresh homemade bread and many other goodies. The pork was done outside over mahogany coals on homemade wooden spits. When the meat was done the man of the house would shoot his pistol to let everyone know. All the others headed there, for a celebratory glass of wine. The entire Christmas holiday was a lot of fun. I hope you all had a safe and wonderful Christmas.

The end of the year is usually the time when most folks make New Year resolutions, that they soon break. I solved that situation many years ago. I limit myself to one resolution and have never broken it in over 50 years. My resolution is---never make any resolutions.

This New Year's eve temperature is projected to be a minus 5-10, with a 10 MPH wind. The chill factor will be around 20 below. So, have fun and stay warm and safe.