

Keith's Corner/McGill News

February 4, 2022

Snow Camping w/Scouts in 1948

There was a meeting of the Boy Scout Troop 64, held at the VFW Hall in McGill, the week before Thanksgiving vacation started in 1948. It was decided that we should take a crack at camping in the snow during the vacation.

We were all anxious to try out the great WWII surplus stuff that most of us had purchased that fall. The gubberment made the stuff available to the scouts at very cheap prices. There were white skis that the U.S. Army Ski Patrol used in WWII, along with brand new snowshoes and cooking equipment. Some of us bought the two man mountaineer tents that had a floor.



The tent was white on the inside and khaki on the outside and could be reversed easily, depending on whether you were in snow or green surroundings.

We also got some of the pure wool lined flight boots and pants used in the bombers. Those were the warmest boots I ever had on. The prices were

awesome, skis were \$10 with poles and bindings. Snowshoes were \$2 and the boots were also \$2. The tents were \$10. Sounds cheap now, but at the time it was a lot of money..

We planned to camp up Timber Creek, but the snow on the road was too deep past the K.C.C. ranch and so the scoutmasters, Ed Brewer and my Dad, Earl Gibson gave us a choice of either camping in the gap or head home. We ended up at the gap across the road from the K.C.C. fields. The memory still flashes back to me every time I go thru the gap. Those kinds of memories are forever.

The snow was more than knee deep and we had a lot of shoveling to clear a spot for our tents and a fire pit. We used our war surplus entrenching tools that were \$2. For the young and non-military that is a small shovel the troops carried to dig foxholes. Some of us built extra fires on the ground where we were going to put our mummy type sleeping bags, also war surplus.

We thought the ground would be nice and warm, but it turned to mud quickly so that idea was dismissed. We placed a lot of sagebrush branches below our sleeping bags to insulate from the frozen ground.

We cooked up lots of homemade chili and coffee and as the sun rushed to hide behind the mountains, the temperature started dropping. We crawled into our \$5 Army surplus down filled mummy bags. The leaders had instructed us to not leave our socks on, but to change into an extra pair of dry ones. The reason was that the socks we had worn all day were damp and would get cold fast. Another reason, was that the dry socks would be warm to put in the ice cold boots in the morning.

I remember waking up in the middle of the night to a scraping sound outside the tent. I wasn't about to crawl out of a nice warm bag to see what it was. The next morning we found coyote tracks all over the camp site and the scraping was the coyotes trying to get the frozen left over chili out of our cups and pots.

The sun soon warmed the tents and we got the fires going and had plenty of bacon and hot cakes to start the day. It was a nice sunny day and so we goofed around on the snowshoes and skis. There was a large herd of deer in the fields and around our camp. They were leery of us but didn't seem too scared.

All in all it was a great experience and we all learned a lot about winter camping and how to survive and stay dry and warm. Even though it was very cold and wet, we had a lot of fun and all of us would swear that it was better than a day at the local school stockade.

McGill News

Had a visitor in the Drug Store last week from Las Vegas, named Mack Miller. He is running for Lt. Governor.



Oldies

1909—December 23—Fire gutted the Fred Baldwin building next to the Stone's Theater. The building housed a tailor shop owned by A. G Kelr. The building was saved by prompt action of the local fire department.

1909—December 23—McGill's Steptoe Valley football team had a great season and was honored with a gift of a special charm. It was made of copper in the shape of football and was inscribed with , SV09.

Author's note—What a collector's item. Anyone ever see one??

Photo



Jewel Ditomasi Sertic in 2004. She worked at the store in 1947-49, while in WPHS.

I plan to get as many photos of the people that worked there, as possible and put them in a display case in the fountain area. If you have any photos, please let me know, or just names of ones you can remember as a kid.

