

Keith's Corner/McGill News

January 14, 2023

Winter Fun In McGill—1940s, 50s

Most of my memories of the winters in McGill in the 40s were about having fun in the snow.

There were the ones on I Avenue. KCC blocked off 2nd and 3rd streets and put a black sand barrier at the bottom so we couldn't go onto main street. They trusted us heathens to use the street to have fun on in a sensible and common sense manner. They brought us wood for a fire at the top of the street and would lecture anyone that drove their car on the street. I think they did E Row in townsite also.

One of the dumb things we did, was run behind a slow moving car and slam our sled on the snow and grab onto the back bumper and go for a ride. We also did this without a sled, by grabbing the bumper and crouching down and using our boots as a sled. Great fun until you hit a dry spot in the road.

I belonged to Boy Scout Troop 64 and we were always doing something in the snow. We started to build a cabin over the mountain from Steptoe. It was a good hike in the summer and a fairly rough one in the winter. Our boots were not insulated and even though we oiled them all the time with Neetfoots Oil, they still got soaking wet. To keep our feet warmer on the hike we wrapped our boots in gunny sacks. This was a trick John Carlson showed us. A few years later, he graduated

from West Pint. We never did make a cabin but did make a lean to that we hiked up to and goofed around rolling rocks and chasing rabbits etc.

I went back up to the site 60 years later and found few traces of our labors, but restored some good memories.

Four wheel drive vehicles were extremely rare in those days. Bob Bell had purchased a four wheel drive Dodge, called a Power Wagon. It was like a tank on wheels. It had a winch on the front bumper and one on the back bumper. It was a monster and would go anywhere, any time.

One cold November day, Bob, his brother Jim, my brother Paul and I went for a ride out to Duck Creek. The road from the Highway was still a dirt road back then, but KCC kept it plowed to the KCC Dams. The road past the Dam was not plowed, but it didn't faze the mighty Power Wagon. Bob put it in 4-wheel drive and we kept going. We decided to try the Upper Berry Creek road and see if we could get to the Ranger Cabin.

Just as we turned up the road, we saw something moving about a ¼ mile ahead. At first we thought it might be some deer, but it turned out to be 2 men. It was 'Buzz' Buzzetti and Emery Holland of McGill. They were almost frozen. We managed to cram them in the cab with us.

They had a light jacket on, no gloves and just oxford type street shoes. The snow was knee deep and the temp. was around 15 degrees. It was surprising that they had not frozen to death. As they warmed up, they told us how they came to be on the road.

The day before, they were having a few drinks in the McGill Club and decided to drive out and look for deer. Buzz had a 2 wheel drive

pickup, with a barrel of sand for weight and a good set of chains. They stocked up on beer and whiskey and left town. At the end of the plowed road, they stopped and put the chains on, had a few beers and were soon on their way. They decided to try the Upper Berry Creek road and figured they could make the Ranger Station. Halfway there, they hit some drifts 3 feet deep and decided to turn around and head for town. Buzz backed off the road right into a ditch. He gunned the motor and managed to dig thru the snow and then thru the frost layer and into some mud. They shoveled and shoveled, but just got deeper in the mud. Before dark settled in, they made sure the exhaust pipe was open so they could still sit in the cab with the heater on and not get gassed. Buzz always carried extra Jerry cans of gas, so they were OK. At daybreak they started shoveling but finally decided to walk to the main road.

Bob said he could pull them out, so he drove up to the stuck truck. He could not pull them out with the Dodge, so he tried the winch on the back of the truck, but no luck. Then we hooked the front winch onto a large tree and he started the rear winch. We all could hear the creaking and groaning of the stuck vehicle, so Bob stopped the winch. Buzz hollered out, "pull in half in you have to". Bob kept the winch going and soon the truck came out of the frozen ground and on to the road.

The only problem was the rear wheels, axle and drive line were still in the frozen ground. Buzz stood there for a few moments and then told Bob, "looks like my truck won't get us to McGill, so could you drive us to town"?

We all squeezed into the cab and went back to McGill.

Old Photo



I have this photo but no names. I think they are
I-r Pete Rosis' mother, don't know, Kiki Londos ,
Thalia Giannopolus, Mrs. And Mr. Giannopolus.

Anybody know for sure