

Keith's Corner/McGill News

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Winter Memories

Whenever any of us, well seasoned McGill heathens start to describe a winter when we were kids, we quickly see the eye rolls of the younger urchins. They taunt us, with, yah, yah and you trudged thru 5 feet of snow barfoot to get to school, etc. etc. .

So to start with, here are some facts about the winter of 1948-49. It was the worst winter in Nevada since 1886. The fall of 48 saw a lot of snow in White Pine and by January cattle and sheep herds were stranded in the deep snow and starving. The snow was too deep to move them and it was impossible to get hay to them. So the ranchers and the Federal Gov. got together and started Operation Haylift. The U. S. Air Force was to fly hay from Sacramento, Minden, Fallon and other points, to a staging area at our local airport. They used the C-82 Cargo planes. The first ones arrived on January 24, 1949. The pilots used local ranchers to guide them and local men were used to shove the hay out the back of the planes to the herds.

I remember watching them coming and going across the valley. I wanted to help shove the hay out but I was just 13 and too young.

Years later I was living in Grants Pass, Oregon, (1998) and met Bill and Wilma Saylor. It turned out that Bill was one of the C-82 pilots in the hay lift. He told me that he had just returned from Germany, where he flew in the Berlin airlift. Bill and his plane and crew had just returned from Germany and were ordered to begin flying in Operation HayLift.

On February 17, 1949 our area was hit with a severe storm that had 70 mph winds and temps. of 40 below. The winds made huge drifts. I remember the drifts on A Row that covered the houses, with only the chimney showing. KCC got a huge Cat dozer stuck for several days on A Row.

We young heathens enjoyed the snow, with the exception that the schools never closed for one minute.

I was delivering the Salt Lake Tribune newspaper that winter. Every morning about 5 am, I swept the new snow off my sled and trudged thru the knee high drifts down to the Sheriff's Office. There Earl Edwards and I got our papers from the P.I.E. truck from Sal Lake. We folded them and put them in our newspaper bags and went on our route. I had K Ave., 1st and 2nd streets and the avenues between, all of F Row, the teachers dorm etc.

We didn't throw the paper into the yard. We went thru the gate and up to the house and put the paper behind the black screen door. It was time consuming, but that's how it was done. Earl and I were paid 1 penny for each paper delivered. The Trib sold for 5 cents. Each month, we had to go to each house in the evening and collect. Lots of exercise for one penny.

I don't have any photos of that winter but here are a few from the winter of 1951-52, taken by Bill Knighton and family, courtesy of Dr. Roger Knighton.





So, yes we did have lots of snow back then!!!!

Old Photo



Nevada Northern Engine #10, at the McGill Depot. The Engineer, Chris Iverson is working on the tuning gear. The fireman was Goddard. Some men are unloading the mail/baggage car. Circa early 1939. Courtesy of Steve Swanson, WPHS 1956.