

DO YOU REMEMBER?

Historical notes from the Big Butte Historical Society
Recollections of Charleen Brown



When I began writing this article, it was snowing hard and I was reminded of the snowstorms of the past. Little did I know that the severe windstorm that followed would be the worst ever seen. Even the 'Columbus Day' storm of 1962 did not hit Butte Falls as hard. We can all be proud of the resiliency of the people who live in Butte Falls and how they came together under adverse circumstances. It only proves what most of us have known for a long time. We are survivors!

In the winters of the 1940's and 50's it would snow for days, just like the snowstorms over the 2007 Christmas holiday. Then, after putting down 10 to 12 inches or more, it would freeze and the snow would stay on the ground sometimes for a couple months. After the roads and streets were plowed, any snow left by the plows would pack down and become solid sheets of ice.

Snow did not usually close the schools in those days because the buses would just chain up and make their runs. Sometimes the buses would run late so some of us would walk to school. We knew that if our bus driver caught up with us, he would stop and pick us up. Even if the electricity went out, we still had heat because of the wood stoves and we just moved the desks closer to the windows and went on with our lessons. In the 50's, after electricity controlled the heating system, a lengthy power outage would mean the schools would have to close. When that happened, the older kids would get an inner tube and tie it to the back of a car to be pulled around town. We were always careful not to go too fast so no one was ever injured.

Another favorite sport was tobogganing on the road to the old 'Three C' camp up above Whiskey Springs. We would all pile into the back of an old pickup, wrap up and drive up to the camp. Inside one of the buildings was a stove where we could build a fire to keep warm and make hot chocolate. Four or five kids at a time would take turns being pulled up and down the road on the toboggan.. The road was straight with very few hazards so once the road was broken in, we could get going pretty fast. The worst crashes were caused when the toboggan would ride up on the snow bank at the side of the road, tip over and dump everybody off.

During one winter, we had a particularly heavy snowstorm and some said the snow measured three feet in the park. As usual, the streets around town were plowed but there was so much snow that there was nowhere to put it. It was pushed up into huge piles along the streets or at the corners of intersections. Some of these piles were 10 to 12 feet high. We used them for playing "King of the Mountain." I remember, the biggest pile was pushed up in front of the vacant store where the City Hall is today. Chunks of dirty snow from that pile were still melting through the 4th of July.

As mentioned, the electricity would frequently go off, but when it did, it stayed off much longer than it does today. Sometimes it would be off for a week at a time. I remember one winter when the electricity was off for so long that the store owners gave away all the ice cream because it was going to melt anyway. My mom brought home several cartons, far more than we could eat before it melted. She used her head and took it outside in the yard where she packed snow all around it. Then she covered it with our metal wash tub and packed snow around that. It worked just like a freezer and we were thrilled to have ice cream every night for over a week.

MEMBERSHIP FORM - \$5.00 per household

NAME _____

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