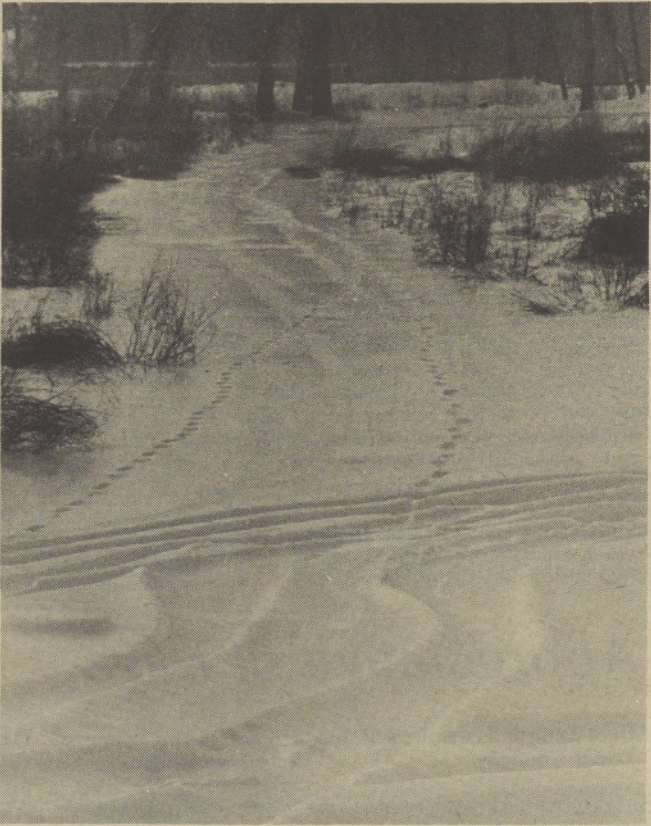


Year-end weather chills residents



Tracks in the Snow

Spilyay Tymoo photo by Leno

by Pat Leno

December is the month that many people walk around singing or humming "Winter Wonderland" or "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas," but this year, by the time that the Christmas and winter season had arrived singing wasn't to be heard from many people.

The winter weather had arrived in Warm Springs and surrounding areas long before the first official day of winter, December 21. The area had had its first snowfall in November but it was not enough to prepare the people for the winter weather that December, 1983, brought.

When the snow arrived, it snowed for several days, giving the area nearly nine inches of powder, a skier's dream. Shortly after the heavy snowfall, a freezing spell followed with temperatures dropping to 14 below zero on December 22. The temperatures for the next several days recorded a high of 4 degrees and a low of minus 4 degrees.

With highways already covered with snow and ice, the cold increased unsafe road conditions. The severe cold was reported to be responsible for snapping power lines, causing power outages throughout the Central Oregon area. The Warm Springs community power went out around 6 a.m. on December 23. Tribal and BIA offices were closed for the day. The electric company attempted to connect the area onto the Pelton Hydro-electric project. Some areas of Warm Springs had power restored within six hours, while other areas were without power for a total of 16 cold and miserable hours. The North End, also was without electricity for 16 hours. A small area of homes in West Hills was without power 10 hours longer than their neighbors just across the street.

The power outage caused havoc with the local television cable system. In the Greenville area a power line snapped and fell across a transformer, causing a chain reaction of

transformers to short out. It took several days for the cable to be repaired.

Road conditions throughout the entire Central Oregon area were posted with travel warnings of high winds, packed snow, freezing rain, and icy conditions. Accidents caused road closures, on highway 26. On the Madras grade a truck jackedknifed caused a closure of 12 hours. Local law enforcement agencies responded to numerous accidents, most of which were vehicles that had slid off the road into the ditch. The Warm Springs police department had only one reported accident with injuries in a total of 21 reported accidents.

Many tribal and BIA employees did not enjoy a three-day weekend from work. The Tribal Utilities department had an increase of work calls of frozen and/or broken water pipes and complaints of "no heat." Utilities crews put in long hours working to return conditions that would make life livable for many families. The BIA roads department were also required to put in long hours. They worked during the holidays and the weekends, sanding and plowing snow the roads.

One group of people school-aged children, seemed to thrive on the winter conditions, in fact, many expressed they couldn't think of a better time to have snow than during their Christmas break from school. A great many of the youngsters spent hours on sled runs they had built on the surrounding hills of Warm Springs.

Following the snowfall was freezing rain which made road conditions worse. For several days the freezing rain fell adding an inch-thick crust of ice to the top of the snow. The frozen conditions made the snow appear almost like a sea of white water covering the earth. It added to the already harsh conditions of the road.

Well, this area had a "White Christmas" and a "Winter Wonderland." Ever wonder what's in store for this month?



Signs of freezing

Spilyay Tymoo photo by Leno



Sea of Ice

Spilyay Tymoo photo by Leno



Nighttime blizzard

Spilyay Tymoo photo by Miller