

Member Stories

A Memorable Winter Wonderland



by Gayle (Avery) Hoyle

Growing up on Graham Hill in the Beacon Hill neighborhood of South Seattle was idyllic. There were only four houses on our block of 31st Avenue South. Across the street was a large field where the power lines crossed. The nearest household to us to the south was the Hoyle family. In fact, my parents bought our home from Jack Hoyle. This turned out to be especially fortuitous for me. Jack's youngest daughter, Ethel, became my best buddy. After some time, Ethel's older brother, Frank, became my husband. Such a lucky gal!

One of the most memorable seasons of my youth was the winter of 1949-50. In January 1950, Seattle experienced record snowfall and frigid temperatures. Amazingly, and this has to be related to my age at the time, I don't recall ever being cold. I do remember my little brother's hands being so cold that he couldn't enjoy the snow like I did.

I remember walking home from church youth group one evening, which was on the corner of Beacon Avenue and Graham Street. There was already snow on the ground, but not like what was to come. It

wasn't even dark because of it. By the time I had walked about four very long blocks, my feet were so sore that I took off my high heels and ran the last block home in my stockinged feet. This was just at the beginning of the big snow.

On Jan. 12, 1950, much of the state was slammed with extreme cold and snow. I remember Seattle coming to nearly a standstill. Whenever we ventured out, there were no cars on the road.

A highlight of the winter wonderland for me was riding on the stone-boat (sledge) used as a sleigh and pulled by draft horses, Floozie and Daisy, owned by our neighbor, Marge Kerr. The picture at the beginning of this article was featured in The Seattle Times. It is of Marge giving several of the neighborhood children a ride, including my little brother and sister, two Hoyles, and two Wehmeyers. The caption indicated that Marge was one of the few people who was able to get around during that time. My mom ordered this copy of the picture from the newspaper. How I missed this opportunity for fame I do not know!

However, I did have one particularly memorable ride with Marge to the store at the corner of Columbian Way and Beacon Avenue. Ethel and Bob were with us, also. I think what made it so memorable was that there were no vehicles of any kind sharing the road with us. It was magical! Beacon Avenue was as pristine as the fields around it.



WINTRY VISTA: South Seattle presented a wintry vista from the air over Beacon Hill. The Jefferson Park Golf Course (center) was more attractive to skiers than to golfers. Snow covered the roof of the uncompleted Veteran's Administration Hospital (right) and rimmed two city water reservoirs to the west of Beacon Avenue. The Lake Washington Floating Bridge was a pale streak across dark waters. The picture was taken looking north.

Another fabulous adventure during this snowy time was grabbing our sleds and heading out to Jefferson Park Golf Course. I'm not even sure how we knew to go there. Must have been the local grapevine. Dragging a sled through deep snow, it felt like we had walked at least three miles. After checking Google Earth, I learned that it is only a mile and a half, and not even uphill!

When we returned from snow-covered playgrounds that winter, sometimes we gathered at my house. Sometimes, we gathered at the Hoyle house next door. Both moms made the best homemade bread and raspberry jam. Those, along with hot chocolate, ensured that we were warm, fed, and happy.

The whole city of Seattle was impacted by this storm, which lasted into February. I remember hearing that the shores of Lake Washington froze and Green Lake in North Seattle. Even the milkman had troubles because of the storm. The pictures below were published in The Seattle Times at the time.



ICE COVERING SPREADS: Ice was covering more and more of the north end of Lake Washington today as the cold continued. This aerial photograph shows Sheridan Beach at the left, Kenmore and Lake Forest Park in the center and Inglewood on the right, with the Cascade Range in the background. Officials have warned the ice was not safe for skating.



FROZEN GREEN LAKE: One of the first bodies of water to freeze over during Seattle's cold spell was Green Lake, and a chill sight it was today. Lake Sammamish and parts of Lake Washington, Lake Union and Elliott Bay, among others, followed suit. Snow covers most of the ice on Green Lake except for streaks where the ice has separated. This aerial photograph is looking northeast.

Housewives: Put Out Your Milk Bottles

Failure of housewives to return milk bottles because of the cold weather is causing a shortage, the Seattle Milk Dealers Association said today.

A. Frank Bird, association secretary, appealed for co-operation in having bottles ready when milkmen make their deliveries, and warned that milk should be taken indoors promptly to prevent freezing.

Despite the snow-filled rural roads, dairymen were getting an adequate milk supply to the city, Bird said.