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2 PAGES

This is a story about some kids from another generation and all the fun we had skating at Klode Park ice rink. By including the (edited) perspectives of some of my friends in bold italics, I hope to accurately recreate the spirit of the rink and what it meant to all of us.

A Generation Remembers Klode Park Ice Skating

The Highlight of a Winter Day

I remember watching the second hand on the clock at the front of the classroom tick, tick, tick on its final circle toward 3:30. When the bell finally sounded, we could not get out fast enough. Skates hung around our necks, we Richards School kids made our way across the school field and hurried the few blocks to the ice skating rink at Klode.

Inside the warming house was a happy jumble of excited voices, laughter, musty, wooly smells and hot cocoa.

I remember sitting on those long benches, putting on my skates, feeling the anticipation of what would happen on the rink that day. ~Bob

High-Speed Flips and Fire Hydrant Hoses

Stepping out of the damp warming house, my nostrils often felt like they might freeze shut. But that was only the beginning of the explosion of sensations experienced on the ice rink – the freedom of speeding along with the wind in my face, the daring attempts at executing a jump, and even the pain of a hard fall.

I can still feel the cold on my cheeks and smell the crisp Wisconsin winter as we skated for hours in bliss. We formed a line with a large group of people, all holding hands, and skated in a circle so fast that the ones on the ends flew around the rink; we skated as fast as we could from one end of the ice to the opposite side and flipped into the snow! ~Nancy

The town would bring in the snow plows when it snowed. When it was clear that the snow plows were not coming that evening, we would go home to get shovels, make a long line of kids, and push our shovels together to get to the ice. The best time was when they hooked up the fire hydrant hoses and laid down a new sheet of water. ~Sarah

Romance at the Rink

Many of us were drawn to Klode by hopes of romance. Each day brought the thrilling possibility of skating hand-in-hand with the boy or girl of our dreams.

The sweet and innocent times skating at Klode Park are etched in my mind, especially holding a girl's hand while skating. The anticipation and thrill overwhelmed me. There were some formalities to it too. The boys always asked the girls to "skate". We always skated counter-clockwise. But the ultimate skating experience was holding hands WITHOUT a glove! What a wonderful time of life! ~Jim

I was a shy girl who didn't get asked to skate often, but just the possibility made my heart thump. I would rehearse what I might say (should I ever get the chance) so there would not be uncomfortable silences. ~Kathy

My favorite ice skating partner was my father. On some Sunday mornings, instead of going to church, we would head over to Klode Park with our ice skates. We had the place to ourselves, albeit without the benefit of the warming house. ~Meg

Who Could Forget the Scorching Hot Cocoa?

When our feet felt wooden and our scarves froze stiff from our breaths, we would stomp back into the warming house to thaw out. We put dimes into the hot cocoa machine and the chocolaty water poured into a paper cup. Most of the chocolate flavoring stayed in the bottom of the cup, but the thin, dark drink *was* hot and warmed us from the inside out.

The windows would be steamy with all of the warm bodies huddled in there trying to get warm. ~Sarah

Freezing hands with stiff fingers struggled to loosen icy laces and pry skates from numb feet. We jumped and stamped to bring them back to life again and then, with our skates around our necks, crunched back home with plans to return after dinner.

Moonlight Skating

On a clear night, the moon and stars shone over Klode. Even though we still “cracked the whip” and flipped into the snow banks, a quiet peacefulness descended over the ice. Every sound seemed to echo.

I took her mittened hand and we started around the rink. As we picked up speed, there was only the sound of our blades gliding and skimming the ice in a one-two rhythm, over and over; only the warmth of her hand through the mitten; only the silvery moon and the heady cold; only us. ~John

Some Things Never Change

Back then, we didn't much notice the littler kids or the “old” people (anyone over twenty) at the rink. I didn't even consider that “old” people thought the same way that we did. Now over fifty myself, I wonder if the “old” people on the ice weren't smiling at us, remembering their own fluttering thirteen-year-old hearts.

The girl I usually skated with, hand-in-hand, asked me 25 years later why I had never kissed her. I told her that we were kind of shy back then and that I thought that I was doing pretty good at the time.

I now live in the far west in a town hugged by the Cascade Mountains. The town owns a refrigerated outdoor rink. I've been a manager there, as well as a member of the Board of Directors, always hoping to recreate the experience we teens had at Klode. Every time I strap on my speed skates, step across the rubber mats and push out onto the ice, the memories rush back. I'm still looking for someone else to hold hands with and go round and round the rink. I'll keep you posted. ~Thome