

Looking back on the blizzard of '67 in Oak Park

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Get used to it: Snow is piled up 5 feet high at the intersection of Oak Park Avenue and Van Buren Street on Saturday after the greatest single snowfall in Oak Park's history
Photo courtesy of the Oak Park Police Department



Snow is piled over 6 feet high outside the entrance to the Oak Park Hospital emergency room on Jan. 29.
Photo courtesy of the Oak Park Police Department

Failing grades for OP snow removal

By all reports, Oak Park's Public Works Department did not handle the snow very well. Some streets weren't cleared for the first time until four days later, and some thoroughfares in the village's business districts weren't completely clear of snow for days.

Photos taken by the Oak Park Police Department on Dec. 29 and Dec. 30 confirm press reports that there were some streets unplowed until Sunday night.

"Where, oh where were the Oak Park snowplows after the worst snowstorm in village history?" read one outraged letter to the editor from an anonymous resident.

"Some of us may not get out until spring," R.W. Hall wrote in exasperation.

"A great volume of justified complaint is rising from citizens and businessmen of Oak Park over the slowness with which the problem of snow removal was attacked in Oak Park," the Feb. 2 Oak Leaves editorial noted. "The big village, when compared with its neighbors River Forest and Forest Park, showed to great disadvantage. Villagers in North Oak Park found it impossible to get to their churches. They couldn't even get across the streets. Let's have an explanation of the poor service, which left our village snowbound, while other nearby towns were dug out by Saturday night."

"Still Snowbound" wrote that Oak Park, which had once had a reputation for dealing well with heavy snow, was "the most poorly prepared suburb."

Two writers mentioned Forest Park's superior snow-removal operation. Perhaps the most stinging rebuke came from Robert G. Simpson, who wrote, "When will we in Oak Park have snow removal equal to Forest Park?--Right now we look pretty silly by comparison."

However, David R. Holmes said Oak Park's perceived failures were overstated. A salesman who traveled to numerous other towns after the blizzard, Holmes said he personally witnessed poor street conditions in many other towns several days after the blizzard.

"For those who claim there were better jobs of cleaning up, let me inform them that this is purely speculation," he wrote.

By Bill Dwyer

Editor's note: This story first ran in January of 2007 on the 40th anniversary of the 1967 blizzard.

Forty years ago today Oak Park and River Forest were basking in a 65-degree heat wave, the third day temperatures had soared above 60 degrees. That fact tends to be forgotten by some, even people who vividly remember what happened over the ensuing several days.

On Jan. 25, a low front moved into the Midwest, dragging up warm Gulf Coast air, laden with massive amounts of moisture, which hit the Chicago area with rain and 50 mph winds. Over the next 24 hours the moist warm air collided with much colder air and rose above it. Fat droplets of water then began slowly sifting downward. The result was snow--lots and lots of it.

The Chicago area had practically no warning of what would be the largest two day snowfall in its history. After predicting flurries but little accumulation the night before, the National Weather Service issued a bulletin at 3:45 a.m. on Jan. 26 predicting "up to four inches."

Ironically, the Jan. 26, 1967 issue of the Oak Leaves being tossed onto porches around Oak Park that Thursday morning featured a large photo of the park district's new snow-making machine blowing snow onto the bare sledding hill at Ridgeland Common.

"The Park District of Oak Park used a snow-making machine to supply the missing white stuff on the sledding hill at Ridgeland Common," the caption read.

There would be no lack of white stuff that morning, however, nor for over a month afterwards. The snow began falling at 5:02 a.m. on Jan. 26, and by the time the general population heard of the revised weather forecast from the newspapers and radio later that morning, there were at least four inches already on the ground. When it finally stopped 29 hours later at 10:10 a.m. on Friday, Oak Park, River Forest and

the rest of northern Illinois lay paralyzed under a thick 23-inch blanket of frozen white powder, blown into drifts as high as six feet by 25 mph winds. An estimated 75 million tons of snow fell on Chicago alone. Chicago dumped thousands of tons in Lake Michigan and sent many more tons south in empty railroad cars- reportedly to the delight of kids down south who'd never seen snow before. The city also piled it up in 30- to 40-foot mounds in the parking lot by the Columbus Park golf center.

Oak Park could only pile it up between garages and on parkways and public parks wait for the white stuff to melt.

The National Weather Service declined to officially label the storm a "blizzard," since, in technical terms, the temperatures weren't cold enough. It sure felt and looked like a blizzard, though, and it would be just the beginning, part of a larger weather pattern that wreaked havoc with the Chicago area's daily life for over a month. The "storm of the Century" was far more than just a two day event. From Jan. 23 through Feb. 24, Mother Nature suffered from meteorological bi-polar disorder, swinging from warm to bitter cold, from rain to snow and from winds as high as 62 mph in the western suburbs.

The villages would be hit with another foot of snow over the next 10 days, as Oak Park and River Forest endured one of the snowiest and coldest winters on record.

Streets were impassable for days, and garbage collection was suspended while garbage trucks were diverted to snowplowing duties. Most grocery stores ran out of basic food items like bread and milk, leading to mini-panic among some. One journalist described people's behavior as "heroism mixed with hoarding."

The effects of the snow were unprecedented. Midway Airport closed for three days while O'Hare Airport, which had previously been shut down for nine hours on the 24th due to fog, was again forced to cease operations and didn't re-open until four days later on Monday morning.

The relatively new Eisenhower Expressway system was reduced to a windswept tundra littered with hundreds of vehicles, half-buried by drifts. Snowplows were called in from as far away as Iowa to help clear the crucial artery. But it would be days before many commuters again trusted the expressway as a viable thoroughfare.

Commuters making their way back from downtown jobs had a range experiences. Some got home with relatively little difficulty. Others spent hours making their way back home from work.

Rapid transit proved to be an invaluable asset as Oak Park and the City of Chicago struggled to clear streets of mountains of snow. Media reports noted that the elevated trains were "packed" with commuters, and for the most part moving on schedule. The Congress line, (now the Blue Line) was knocked out of service for several hours on Sunday by drifting snow around Central Avenue and by a derailment in the Desplaines rail yard in Forest Park.

Chicago had to deal with an estimated 20,000 abandoned cars and buses. Thousands more were left buried under the snow on Oak Park and River Forest streets. Legally parked cars presented a major obstacle for snow clearance efforts, but it was abandoned vehicles left literally in the middle of intersections and roadways that proved to be the biggest headache. Streets had to be plowed before tow trucks could even get close to abandoned cars. Oak Park Police Captain R. Hutchinson was kept busy between assigning tows and managing the necessary paperwork related to the 119 cars that were towed to the Westgate garage through

Feb. 5. Owners also had to be notified of their car's new location, and the Secretary of State's office was contacted about cars that went unclaimed.

River Forest police towed cars to the Wieboldt's garage on Harlem Avenue by the train tracks, while Forest Park officials utilized its four-block-long park along Harrison Street as both a parking lot and a place to dump excess snow.

A letter written to Oak Park Police Chief Fremont Nestor by one angry resident illustrates what officials and residents faced during the worst of the storm and its aftermath.

The man complained that his nephew's car had been unfairly ticketed and towed from the 600 block of North Linden. That block, he stated, hadn't been plowed as of Sunday night and many other cars were on the street. He accused the department of singling out his nephew's car.

"If you pull one car, why not all of them?" he asked in capital letters.

Nestor wrote back that the young man's Ford had been towed because it was blocking the street, not because it had been singled out.

"The Police Department had available to it two tow trucks and one caterpillar tractor to clear off all of the streets," Nestor wrote. "I am sure you can understand that no community in the country had enough equipment under this type of emergency."

Numerous residents, Nestor noted, had actually thanked the police for providing towing services that they had been unable to find anywhere else.

The sheer weight of the snowfall collapsed several roofs in the two villages. The morning of Jan. 27, a large section of the roof over the West Towns bus garage collapsed, damaging numerous buses and at least three cars parked alongside the structure. Smaller garages around Oak Park and River Forest also collapsed or suffered damage under the strain of tons of snow.

Businesses suffered their share of troubles as well. Thursday night, police discovered that a plate glass window at the Village Bakery, 200 block of Harrison, had broken under the force of high winds. The bakery's owner had to make his way through the storm from Elmhurst in the middle of the night to deal with it. By Friday morning, there was also at least one report of a downed power line.

Not just any storm

As Thursday morning moved toward noon, it was becoming apparent that this wasn't just any snowstorm. People slipped and slid about the village early on, which slowed to a laborious trudge as the snow deepened. At times the stiff, gusting winds lowered visibility to just a few feet.

As the day wore on, people endured snow-related injuries ranging from minor to life threatening. Over at Hawthorne Elementary School (now Julian Middle School), crossing guard Adelle Camp ventured out into the blizzard around 12:15 to return to her post at Ridgeland and Washington. As she reached the sidewalk, she slipped on the icy snow and landed on her spine. Police transported her to the hospital for X-rays and treatment.

She would soon be joined by others. Several hours later, a 72-year-old man fell under his car while trying to help push it out of a snow bank, but luckily suffered only a bruised knee. Around that same time, a janitor slipped and injured his back while shoveling snow from the rear of First United Methodist Church.

That night a man suffered a serious laceration to his left ankle when he got his foot caught in a snow blower's blades while clearing snow. The following morning, another man suffered multiple lacerations to several fingers while trying to clear out a clogged snow blower. Another person was hospitalized after being hit on the head by a falling icicle.

Others suffered more serious injuries. Police and fire personnel assisted at least a dozen heart attack victims, including eight who died. By Monday, West Suburban Hospital's emergency room received five people dead on arrival, all older people stricken while shoveling snow. Another 22 people were treated for weather-related conditions such as falls and exposure and heart attacks.

Oak Park was roundly criticized for perceived failures to clear snow from its streets in a timely fashion (see sidebar). Oak Park Village Manager Harris Stevens explained that the sheer volume and weight of the snow caused breakdowns with much of the village's equipment, and frontloader bulldozers were rented to deal with task.

River Forest, by comparison, reportedly had most of its streets cleared initially by Thursday night. However, the continuing snowfall and ongoing winds required the task be repeated numerous times. Fire, police and Public Works personnel in River Forest were later praised for working exceedingly long hours battling the snow. Some reportedly put in 72 straight hours on the job before going home.

There were no serious fires in Oak Park during the main four days of the snowstorm, and only one in River Forest--on the 300 block of Forest. But fire and police personnel were kept busy throughout the long week providing ambulance services for heart attack victims and other snow-related injuries, plus another dozen or so pregnant women trying to reach the hospital. Police from both villages were also busy transporting doctors to and from hospitals for days after the blizzard.

As the snow faded to a halt mid-Friday morning, the sun shone down on a surreal, still landscape of thick virgin expanses of snow. The wind had sculpted an array of shapes over and around trees, garages, porches, fences and cars. Autos accessible on one side were covered to their roofs by drifts. On most side streets, lonely sets of tracks were the only evidence of a human presence.

The cultural life of the villages pretty much stopped. Sports events at the high school were cancelled, including OPRF's home basketball game versus Proviso East, and Fenwick's game at Loyola Academy in Wilmette.

The snow stopped volunteers from going door to door, collecting donations for the annual Heart Fund campaign, which extended its campaign into March. Meanwhile, the start of the annual Community Chest fundraising effort had to be postponed until Feb. 18.

It's unlikely Oak Park Village Players rehearsed much for their latest play, *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*, which was scheduled to open Feb. 10.

Best of behavior, worst of behavior

The storm brought the best--and the worst--in people, with some taking advantage, and others making tremendous efforts to be helpful.

Fair Oaks Pharmacy at Ridgeland and Chicago avenues worked through the night delivering drugs to customers on foot. Through both villages, people helped neighbors plow, blow and dig out. The Oak Park Public Library suspended all overdue fines between Jan. 26 and Feb. 2.

"Three cheers for wonderful young people!" one letter to the editor began, praising the "eager, cheerful, spirited, tireless, crazy, wonderful kids" who helped older people deal with the snow.

"They were magnificent," Donald K. Knable wrote in praise of the youth he witnessed shoveling old folks' walks, pushing stalled cars, and "digging furiously in alleys so that people could get in and out of their garages."

Boy Scouts from Troop 22 and other groups set to clearing snow from around fire hydrants in Oak Park.

Other kids were, unfortunately, simply juvenile. One woman on the 500 block of Jackson Boulevard complained to police that a group of 20 or so kids had pushed large quantities of snow back onto the side walks she had spent \$32 having cleared. There were also reports to Oak Park police of teens looting abandoned cars and of kids later dropping snow and ice onto passing cars from expressway overpasses.

Both Oak Park hospitals benefited from the kindness of neighbors. People around Oak Park Hospital pitched in to assist hospital staff with the gargantuan task of removing snow and dealing with various other challenges.

Several fathers present at the hospital while their wives gave birth reportedly stayed on to help operate the laundry facility after many staff couldn't make it to work. And five Navy corpsmen manned stations in the kitchen, preparing and serving meals.

Over at West Suburban Hospital, "hundreds" of people volunteered to do everything from kitchen work to shoveling snow to feeding patients from Thursday night through Sunday.

"The hospital has always been blessed with an active group of volunteers," said Hospital Administrator Wendell H. Carlson gratefully, "but this was something magnificent."

As Friday wore on, residents who ventured outside were treated to the once in a lifetime site of people trudging ahead of sleds, loaded with children making their way along the middle of Ridgeland Avenue. Others took cross-country skies on the deep cover, including Dr. George Krawzof, head of West Suburban Hospital's X-Ray department, who skied to work that Friday.

Many people braved thigh deep snow to reach grocery stores for basic food needs. In most cases, reportedly, stores ran out of the basics by Friday afternoon, though some, including the Jewel Store on Madison Street, were able to stay well stocked.

More than a few kids around the two towns gleefully ran up snow drifts to the top of garages, and built tunnel systems through the towering mounds.

A cleansing effect

Besides providing a sprawling playground for kids, the historic snowfall had at least one other very positive effect--the purest air the area had experienced in decades. The monitoring station at River Forest Middle School reported a pollution rate of minus 13.889.

The heavy snow acted like a magnet on particulate pollution, pulling it from the sky as it fell. With few automobile engines spewing exhaust fumes, the air stayed beautifully clear throughout the weekend.

After the worst impact of the storm had faded, both Oak Park and River Forest passed stricter post-snow parking bans. Oak Park also improved its fleet of

snowplows and other equipment. Oak Park and River Forest would have to deal with massive snowfalls in the future, but nothing quite like the great storm of '67.

[Click here to read part two as Wednesday Journal recalls the personal experiences of various Oak Park and River Forest residents during the Storm of '67.](#)

Aftermath of '67 snow: hard work, play

'Everybody was helping each other'

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Snowbound: Oak Park's two hospitals were ready to care for anyone who could make it through the piles of snow.

Photo courtesy of the Oak Park Police Department



Chesthigh: Cheryl, Karen and Susan Ahern pose by one of the snow tunnels they dug in the first block of Harvard Street.

Photo courtesy of the Historical Society of Oak Park and River Forest

Other big snows

Other significant snowfalls, before and after the 1967 storm:

Jan. 12-14, 1979 - 20.3 inches (on top of a 7 to 10 inch base). Cost inattentive Chicago Mayor Bilandic his job.

Jan. 2 1999 - 18.5 inches, with an additional 7 inches over the next nine days.

March 25-26, 1930 - 19.2 inches in 46 hours. Back then they used sand, cinders and wooden plows.

Jan. 30, 1939 - 14.9 inches in 24 hours. Still mostly sand, cinders and wooden plows.

April 2, 1975 - 9.4 inches of wet snow in four hours, struck quick and hard, with extremely heavy, wet snow in April.

By Bill Dwyer

Editor's note: This story first ran in January of 2007 on the 40th anniversary of the 1967 blizzard.

From Jan. 26 to Feb. 23, 1967 over 38 inches of snow fell on the Oak Park and River Forest area. Between storms, temperatures whipsawed from highs in the 40s to lows well below zero. Winds hit as high as 62 mph.

On Jan. 29, after the initial dump of 23 inches, an additional three inches of snow fell in Oak Park, followed by six more on Feb. 5. The snow is said to have caused the greatest disruption of Chicago area commerce since the great fire in 1871.

Once the snow stopped, most people, especially kids, made the best of it. With many of life's presumed realities temporarily suspended, people had the opportunity to look about and see the world in a different light. There were challenges, but there was also a lot of play.

Running through all of the stories is a sense as deep as the snow that fell back during that late January that what they were experiencing was something one-of-a kind--and something to be remembered.

My mother, Patricia Dwyer, recalls listening to Wally Phillip's weatherman, Roger Triemstra, telling listeners around 6:30 a.m. on Jan. 26 that they could expect no more than flurries that day. By 7 a.m., when my father walked out to the station wagon to head to work, the snow was flying horizontally. It would take him seven hours to return from work on the northwest side, a trip that usually required 20 minutes.

How the storm struck you depended largely on whether you were an adult or a kid. Adults and teens shoveled, while younger kids built massive snowmen and burrowed tunnels through the deep snow. Throughout the villages, kids ran across the tops of suddenly very accessible garage roofs and flung themselves giddily into huge snow drifts.

Tom Grundin, now executive director of the River Forest Park District, recalls being an excited grade-schooler at St. Luke in River Forest, delighted at the return of snow on Jan. 26 after a warm spell. Walking home and back eight blocks each way during

the lunch hour, he wondered hopefully along his with friends if the deepening snow might prove to be a rare and welcome "snow day," canceling school.

At the very least, Grundin hoped it would provide an opportunity to suspend the nun's strict rules regarding tardiness. He and the others dawdled about in the blizzard as only kids do, returning to class 20 minutes late. Unfortunately, as Grundin and his little snow-caked colleagues trudged frostily into the school, they were roundly castigated by the ever-strict taskmasters in black.

"The fact that we were practically walking snowmen made absolutely no difference to the dear sisters. They accepted no excuse," Grundin recalled.

For the rest of the long three-day weekend, the incline along the embankment of the Soo Line railroad tracks was a popular destination for dozens of area kids, who spent happy hours sliding down its side. Modern liability concerns and risk management practices were not an issue.

Ed Polfus spent 30 years on the Oak Park police force, the last 10 as the beat cop in the Oak Park Avenue/Lake Street area. He was an eighth-grader living on Menard Avenue near Madison Street in '67. After classes let out at Resurrection School that afternoon, he walked over to the old two-flat his family still owned near Jackson Boulevard and Leamington to get the mail and check on the empty house.

"I remember looking out the kitchen window and seeing the snow piling up over the chain link fence in the backyard," Polfus recalled. When he walked out of the house and looked down to Jackson Boulevard, he saw the CTA bus pulling up through the swirling snow. He thought, "I better get on that bus, or it's gonna be a long walk home."

Polfus said the most indelible memory from that time was the city trucks piling the snow sky high in Columbus Park.

"I'll never forget those piles of snow," said Polfus. "Must have been three, four stories high."

Another Oak Park cop, Ed Hadac, lived across the alley from Wednesday Journal Publisher Dan Haley on the 700 block of Lombard. He vividly recalled the family dog standing on top of the garage, having walked up a snow drift. He also recalled walking over to the old Pan's Grocery on Harrison to buy a few necessities.

"There was nothing there," he said. "It all went 'Pfft!'"

"The stores were empty," agreed Polfus. "No milk, bread, whatever."

Laying in provisions

Tom Brouder had better luck on Saturday at the Jewel Store on Madison. A young property manager and newlywed living on Washington Boulevard, he bought groceries for both himself and his parents and two brothers in Westchester on Saturday morning, then drove the food out to them.

"They couldn't get out. I drove up Roosevelt."

His brother walked two blocks to meet him. Despite the snow and unplowed streets, Brouder said he had no problems getting to work downtown the next day in his large, heavy Ford. He took secondary streets, though.

"Not the Eisenhower," he said. "You stayed the hell away from that."

Peggy and Irv Studney, who have lived at Clinton Avenue and Harrison Street overlooking the Eisenhower since before it was built, extended a helping hand to

numerous commuters defeated by the blizzard that Thursday. The Studneys' house is the only one actually facing the expressway, and Peggy recalls a succession of "very tired, very discouraged" drivers who found themselves stranded on the Ike, far from home as the snow piled into drifts across the roadway and over the tops of their suddenly useless cars.

"There was just a low wire fence [at the top of the incline], and people were hopping it," she recalled. For all their misfortune, those motorists couldn't have found better hosts.

"We just gave them what we had in the house. A cup of coffee or some sustenance or some help," she said. A telephone, too.

No help pushing any cars, though. They would remain solidly stuck in the snow for days.

"There were cars all over at funny angles," Studney recalled.

Friday morning, when the relentless snowfall finally ceased, as people rode sleds and toboggans down the incline and across the expressway, Studney trekked down with her kids.

"I told them, 'This is the first and the last time in your life you'll walk down the center of the Eisenhower,'" she recalled. And they did just that, trudging from Clinton Avenue to Harlem Avenue, past buried vehicles through deep snow.

She also recalled buying milk from stranded milk delivery trucks throughout the neighborhood.

"Right from the drivers," she said.

Her fondest memory, however, is the silence. No fan of the expressway or its noise, she relished the stillness.

"It was a glorious feeling to have silence. Complete and dead silence, instead of the roar of the traffic," she said

Above and beyond

Not everyone was home from work, of course.

Friday, Jan. 27 was an ordeal for Oak Park police officers Paul McCloskey and Jim Stryker. Shortly after 6 p.m., the officers were called to transport a pregnant woman just down the street from the Studneys. The officers managed to travel up Harrison as far as East Avenue.

"We were unable to continue westward due to the terrific amount of snow from a past blizzard the past couple of days," they wrote in their report. Stryker got out and ran through the snow to where the woman--in labor and accompanied by her husband--were slogging through knee-deep snow. Her contractions were two minutes apart by the time they arrived at the hospital.

Shortly after 8 o'clock, Stryker and McCloskey were dispatched to North and Harlem avenues to pick up a sick child from the Chicago police and transport the child to Oak Park Hospital. Just as they arrived at the hospital, their squad car's battery went dead. Unable to re-start the engine, they told their Chicago counterparts to radio for another car, then sat back "for quite some time," awaiting their own rescue.

Earlier that morning, Monroe Sullivan was shoveling snow around his house in the 1100 block of South Scoville when his very pregnant wife, Fran, stepped out on the porch and gestured that it was time to head to the hospital. Unfortunately, their

doctor, who lived in River Forest, was totally snowbound, unable to get out of his house even to visit his own son at St. Anne Hospital in Chicago. So the Sullivans called the Oak Park police.

"We got another one," Monroe Sullivan recalls the police dispatcher calling out to his colleagues. After making arrangements with their neighbors to watch their three children, Monroe and Fran waded through deep, rutted snow half a block to reach the squad car at East Avenue and Fillmore for transport to Oak Park Hospital.

"The neighbors were wonderful," said Fran Sullivan. "It was wonderful to have such a friendly neighborhood around us."

The elements were another matter.

"It was unbelievable," Monroe Sullivan said of the snow. "It was waist deep."

Fran Sullivan said she was fine until the officer turned on the squad's siren.

"It was so loud," she recalled. "I told people later, 'Now I know why so many babies are delivered in squad cars.'"

But not Fran's. Five hours later at 4:45 p.m., the Sullivan's last child, Patrick Gannon Sullivan, nicknamed "The Blizzard Baby," was born.

The city newspapers were keenly aware of history literally piling up around them. The Tribune's editorial, production and circulation staffs geared up for the herculean task of putting out the next day's paper in the teeth of the storm's full fury. The Trib rented dozens of rooms at downtown hotels for staffers. Reporters and photographers were dispatched throughout the city to capture over two dozens stories for the next morning's edition, along with numerous photos.

No one, it seemed, was spared the job of confronting the storm. Mike Royko's Jan. 27 column in the Daily News recounted his experience of losing his little red sports car in a snow drift and wandering about lost and freezing, with the snow caking his glasses, until he finally found refuge in a small diner. After some hot coffee, Royko stumbled six blocks to the el, where he said he practically kissed the conductor in relief. Reaching the lobby of the Daily News building at 1 a.m., deliriously happy to be safe and warm, he hugged his typewriter.

The Tribune's Jan. 27 editions were produced and printed despite staffers being unable to get to work. Some circulation drivers worked 18-hour shifts, battling fatigue, stranded vehicles and snowdrifts. Distribution of newspapers to outlying areas was disrupted for days. Circulation drivers slept in locker rooms and lunchrooms--even washrooms. One driver, from Lake Geneva, Wis., spent two weeks at the garage before heading home.

Rick Meegan, who still lives on the 700 block of Wisconsin, was one of those Tribune drivers. The 48-year circulation veteran worked Thursday and Friday night on the late edition runs down Halsted and Ashland avenues as far south as 79th Street. Friday night on his way back downtown he picked up several people on Ashland near 79th Street who'd been waiting for a bus.

"They were there for hours stranded," said Meegan, whose impromptu passengers included a Chicago cop who'd left his home in Orland Park Thursday morning. For over 30 hours he'd struggled to reach his station house at Racine and Chicago.

As Meegan and his passengers approached the Eisenhower Expressway overpass at Ashland, they saw a circle of abandoned buses.

"Don't stop, keep going," Meegan recalled the police officer saying. But Meegan had to stop. When he did, he said, it was just seconds before over a dozen youths began making their way toward the truck from several directions. The cop, riding next to Meegan, stepped outside, drew his pistol, and fired two shots into the air. The men scattered.

When he finally reached home, Meegan was greeted by a sight repeated throughout the village.

"Everyone was out shoveling," he said. There were, by Meegan's count, 60 kids in his neighborhood (nicknamed "Fertile Valley"). All were out working.

"The neighbors all got together, and everyone shoveled," he said. "Everybody was out. There were two women in their 70s. They were shoveling."

Entrepreneurship

Nancy Dillon, now a River Forest village trustee, was a young mother and school teacher who braved the storm after classes let out Thursday and ventured out with two friends to her graduate school class at UIC. Unbeknownst to her, classes had been cancelled.

"We were the only ones there," she said. "By that time it was getting really bad," she said. "I was a nervous wreck." Dillon got back home to River Forest safely, and stayed there for three days, though she did venture out for groceries, walking down the middle of Lake Street to the Jewel.

"It was a friendly time, everybody helping each other," she recalled. "Everybody was in the same boat. And you saw people you wouldn't normally see during the winter because they were at work."

Mary Tansey, now the admissions director at Trinity High School, was in seventh grade at St. Giles in Oak Park. Her favorite memory is her father placing a ladder against the garage and letting them climb on the roof.

"We slid down the roof and into a huge snow drift," she recalled. "There was a line at that ladder. There must have been 20 of us. You're not cold when you're little," she observed. "My mom made pots and pots of hot chocolate. Everybody was going in and out."

The massive snow fall was a boon for numerous entrepreneurs. When William Dwyer, Sr. finally got home Thursday evening, he immediately set out for Polk Brothers Appliances on North Avenue to buy a snowblower. He got the last one available, a monster of a machine, with double-digit horsepower that cost a then-steep price of \$300.

With his three oldest sons in tow, all armed with shovels, he stopped on Bonnie Brae in River Forest. Amazingly, the street was largely cleared Thursday night. Driveways and sidewalks, however, were a distinctly different story. My dad recalled wondering how he was going to proceed with his new business opportunity.

"I thought to myself, I've never done this before." Then a man came running out of his house waving a fist full of currency, shouting, "Do mine first! Do mine first!"

"I have no idea what to charge you," my dad admitted a bit sheepishly.

"Look, I'm a business man," the homeowner replied. "We'll negotiate. I'm going to give you a figure--\$60."

"\$80," my dad countered.

"Deal!" the man said.

So began two and a half very busy days of clearing snow. There was so much work that we never left Bonnie Brae. People were coming out and making reservations.

Monday morning, nearly \$1,000 richer, my dad returned to Polk Brothers to pay off the snowblower.