



Frankfort Area Historical Society of Will County, Illinois

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January – February 2020

Happy New Year!

FAHS member Dale Reils submitted the following story and challenges his fellow members to do the same. – Ed. note

1967 Winter Memory

Whenever there is a cold spell with heavy snow and high winds like the ones we experienced in the Midwest this past January, we reminisce with our friends about the terrible storms we have lived through sometime in our past. It had the most now, the strongest winds, the coldest temperature, etc., etc. I guess I'm no exception because I survived the storm of 1967.

My wife and I, our three-year old son and new-born baby girl lived near Marley, just north of Mokena. I worked at Caterpillar on the west side of Joliet and had to get to work regardless of the bad weather or scary predictions. I could not afford to miss a day's work or a day's pay. There was no extra money. I left for work that fateful day, about 5:30 a.m., and drove as far as Cedar Road in New Lenox where it crosses over I-80. There I was stopped by a huge snowbank and a line of cars. Before long I

was blocked from behind by more cars so there was no turning back. The news on the car radio said the storm would continue all day and through the night.

I shared a ride with another Caterpillar employee and after evaluating our situation for some time we abandoned our car in almost white out conditions to look for shelter. We found a home nearby that took us in, let us warm up and use their phone. We discovered that nothing was moving between Marley, Mokena or New Lenox. The only possibility to get back home would be on the Rock Island Railroad on a train from Joliet heading to Chicago. My wife and family were safe at home but there was no milk in the house for the new baby. I had to get home with supplies. We enjoyed the comfort and hospitality of the people that took us in but soon realized time was flying by.

My traveling companion and I decided to walk from our location on Cedar Road into New Lenox and catch a ride on the Rock Island back to Mokena but we had to move quickly. We had procrastinated long enough. My friend had relatives living near the railroad station in Mokena and we could spend the night with them. The next day we

At the turn of the century, Constable Knippel had the dual job of law enforcement officer and lamp-lighter. Each evening just before dark, he would make his rounds lowering each lamp, lighting it, then raising it back into position. The lamps were hung on pulleys over the intersections. To conserve on tax payers' money, he would make the rounds once again at 1:00 a.m. and turn out all of the lamps.

would walk from Mokena to Marley cross country to our homes.



1967 snowstorm By 58follow - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=55656876>

By morning all the roads in our area had drifted shut. We walked to a grocery store for milk but found they were sold out of almost everything. I settled for a box of powdered milk and we started down Frances Road heading west. Neither of us was dressed for this trip. I was wearing a suit, tie and trench coat, no boots or hat and my friend was dressed similarly. We stayed on the road when we could but had to take to the ditches when the snow was too deep in the middle. Our plan was to take Town Line Road north towards the Marley area but when we got there, we could just see the tops of two cars that had been abandoned and were now buried in the snow about a block down the road. We decided to cut through the fields having already seen many places where the snow was blown clear in the open areas. There was a wooded area and a creek we would have to cross before we could get home and that bothered us, but we decided to take that on when we got there. The fields were not completely blown clear and to our surprise many areas in our path were drifted three to four feet deep.

We found that there was enough of a crust on the snow that it could support our weight most of the time. Unfortunately, every so often we could break through to above our waist. We soon learned that if we spread our weight out by crawling on our hands and knees in those areas, we made better time. I would throw the box of powdered milk out in front of us and crawl up to it. The disadvantage was that when we again broke through, we went in face first and had to literally dig our way out. The woods proved to be the easiest traveling, but the creek was a different story. Everything was frozen to the ground or buried in the snow, no chance to put anything together for a bridge or stepping-stones. We were within a half mile of home and at a point of no return. It was father to go back than it was to go forward. We were getting tired and we were cold but I felt, maybe wrongly so, that I had to get the powdered milk home. We started to pick our way across the frozen water in the creek but the ice was not thick enough to support us and we both eventually went into the water to our knees. Now we were totally exhausted, wet in several places, and had the beginning of frostbite. I have never felt as close to death as I did that day. The one thing that kept us going was we could now see the roofs of our homes and smoke from the chimneys. We started again but I don't remember much of the rest of the journey until we reached my friend's home which was only a block from ours. I dried my clothes and shoes as quickly as possible, had a couple shots of whiskey and left for home. I was greeted enthusiastically but wanted nothing more than to sit in a bathtub full of warm water to thaw out. That was a mistake. With the onset of frostbite, the

warm water made me tingle and itch so badly I had to get out of the tub. I wrapped up in a blanket to lie on the couch but that, too, was a mistake because I immediately started to cramp up. I had used muscles crossing the snow-covered fields that I had not used in a long time. I was cold and exhausted and every muscle in my body was cramping. I had to get dressed and go outside to shovel snow just to get comfortable again. It wasn't long before I finally started feeling normal and could go back inside to relax and recover.

This is my "Winter Storm Story." Over the years I've told it to my friends, relatives, my children; even my grandchild and now I've told you. I don't think I embellished it too much, but it was 52 years ago. Today I go upstairs and can't remember why I'm there. I lose my keys and forget where I put my glasses but I can still remember almost every step of my journey home on those cold snowy days in 1967.

I believe we all have stories like this we could tell. You can't live 75 years totally uneventful. It would be very interesting to hear your story.

That's your challenge. Tell your story.

- Dale Reils

Ed. Note – Please feel free to accept Dale's challenge and submit your story.



NOTES FROM THE BANDSTAND

You have got to know that 2019 was a great year for the Frankfort Brass Band. Even without our important Honor Flight performances we still managed to stay extremely busy.

We finished the year in our usual manner providing Christmas holiday music for several organizations including the Frankfort Area Historical Society.

Now we start the new year with, perhaps, our most important function. The Brass Band gives scholarship money to promising young musicians. We invite them and semi-retired musicians to join us. Contact us through the Historical Society.

- John Herder

FAHS 39th Annual Candlelight House Walk

On Friday, December 6, 2019, the Frankfort Area Historical Society held their 39th Annual Candlelight House Walk. The House Walk was a huge success! We wish to thank the Andrews Family, the Gluch Family, the Hertz Family, the Muscarella

Family, the Riemen Family, and the Zulanans/Rasch Family for sharing their beautiful and unique homes with our guests. Those who went on the House Walk were also able to visit an Open House at the Frankfort Chamber of Commerce. A big thank you to the Frankfort Arts Association for their Open House and being on the House Walk this year. Also, a big thank you to Dean Vaudry and Chuck JaBaay for inviting us to their Winter Wonderland at C·D&ME. The FAHS Museum was open so guests could tour the museum, eat cookies made by our very own John Clavio, and drink Wassail made by Enrico's Fine Italian Dining. Local florists, BoKay Flowers, Green Glen Nursery, Mitchell's Flowers, The Flower Cottage, and Mariano's provided floral arrangements to the homes, museum, and Chamber. Please support these local businesses!

A special thank you to the Majestic Lower Brass for playing Christmas carols at the homes, Chamber, FAA, C·D&ME, and the museum. A big thank you to Sue Corkery for the sketches of the homes and the program cover, to Sue Lotysz for the framing of the sketches for the homeowners, and to Connie Reitsma for putting the program together. Thanks to Jim McFarland from Local Printing + Design for printing the tickets. Thank you to Mary Beth Deady and the LWE National Honor society for the House Guides for the homes. Thank you to Judy Schultz and Tanya Benton, for decorating the museum, and to the wonderful museum volunteers. Additional thanks to Debi Giordano, Judy Hageman, Cheryl Hamill, Marcia Steward, and Paula Wallrich for the home histories provided for the programs. Finally, a big thank you to

Cristina Ruiz, Jessica Petrow, and Christopher Herder for helping to find our homes this year.

Thank you all for making the FAHS Candlelight House Walk such a tremendous success!! Plans are already underway for our 2020 Fortieth Anniversary House Walk!!

Frankfort Preservation Foundation



Members of the FPF/FAHS Board are in discussion with Village of Frankfort officials about the future of the Water Tower.

Frankfort Area Historical Society



Thank you to everyone who helped during the 2019 Holiday House Walk!!

The museum will be closed until mid-March. Special visits can be arranged by contacting the FAHS at 815-469-6541.

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