

1963 After Christmas Entertainment

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In the sixties, once Christmas holidays were over, life nearly became one big, depressing letdown for my friends and me. For two weeks our houses had been full of relatives and friends coming, going and overlapping. Out-of-town relatives stayed for a few days while others dropped in for just a meal or a drink. Excitement, family news, and lots of presents were the order of the day.

Once New Year's Day had come and gone, we had to plan our own entertainment. Weekdays after dinner we could go skating at the Fisher Park rink for. Weekends required planning.

Hampton Park had a few hills to slide on, and somebody's dad could usually be persuaded to drive us over. In 1963, Dave was lucky one who found a shiny red and beige toboggan under the Christmas tree.

The rest of us loaded a pile of cardboard box "sleds" into the car. Many such sleds were needed since wet cardboard would stop short halfway through your run, leaving you a sitting duck for the next person flying down the hill.

Our park's "Devil's Hill" had a big pine tree in the middle, and Karen and I did the first run together. We leaned just far enough to avoid the tree, but lost our cardboard craft as we were picking up speed. We rolled and tumbled the rest of the way down the hill, yelling and breathless.

Judy, Dave and Mike were primly lined up on Dave's brand new toboggan. "Watch this, watch this!" Karen gasped as we rescued our sheet of cardboard and scrambled out of the way. They pushed off and shot down the hill, avoiding the tree by a foot, and slid all the way into the creek at the bottom. Luckily the creek was frozen solid.

Cold, soaked with snow, and ready to go home, we started the long walk down Island Park Drive in the gathering darkness. Thankfully, we spotted Mike's dad coming to pick us up in his stationwagon. We piled in the car and he dropped each of us off at home. Once thawed out, dried, and stuffed on Sunday dinner, we could look forward to a relaxing evening with Ed Sullivan and Bonanza. Topo Gigio followed by Little Joe and Adam Cartwright – who could ask for more?

Elmgrove Arena in Westboro, now the Ottawa Gymnastics Centre, was another favourite weekend destination, and another long walk down Wellington Street and Richmond Road. We skated around the rink to the music of Lesley Gore, singing "She's a Fool", Bobby Vinton remembering his girl who

wore blue velvet and our favourite, “Sugar Shack”. After a hotdog and a Coke at the canteen, we started the trek home on foot. By the time we reached Jimmy's Restaurant (now the 3 Tarts Bakery) at Wellington and Clarendon, we were tired, frozen and ready for a hot chocolate.

Other times when the weather was too cold or snowy, we holed up in somebody's rec room. We loved board games. Clue was a favourite, Sorry (the game of revenge) was bound to start a fight and Monopoly games could easily take up a whole day. Favourite TV shows were My Favourite Martian, the Beverly Hillbillies, and on Friday night, the best of all, Shock Theatre.

We still had a long winter ahead of us until our next holiday, which would be a week off at Easter when relatives and friends would descend on our houses again causing chaos and merriment. In the meantime, we kept ourselves amused; time flew by and before we knew it spring was on the horizon.