

DANGER

I suppose that most everyone has come close to a dangerous situation in their lives and probably some of them were not even recognized.

I remember vividly three situations where I probably courted death. The first was connected with Ice Skating. Winters seem to be colder when I was young and Ice skating was very popular in my youth. There was a vast swamp at the bottom of twelfth street west of the Marriott farm. A ditch behind our outhouse coursed its way from that point all the way to that swamp. I could get on the water in that ditch and skate on it all the way to the surface of the frozen swamp.

I need to tell you something about my hand me down skates. These were the Great Depression years and new things were scarce. We were one of the poorer families in the neighborhood and, at Christmas time received a number of things donated to us. That is where I got my skates secondhand skates and also received a used sled. The trouble with the skates was the fact that the runners on the skates were not sharp but were rounded. I had a file and tried very hard to file the roundness flat but did not succeed in improving the bottom of the skates. The ice would get as much as a foot thick in the dead of winter and the older kids would build a big wood fire near the shore.

We also skated on the grounds of the Marriott School in the winter time. The school principle, Floyd Barnett, would flood water onto the school grounds from an irrigation ditch which would then freeze over.

As spring approached the ice warmed, thinned and turned to what the kids called "Spring Ice" and that aptly described the nature of the ice at this point.

One day, I was on the ice with my friend, Max Dana. No one else was around.

Now the swamp reputedly had a bottom of Quick Sand and one person had been known to have been sucked down into the mire and drowned. Max started to urge me on to see how far I could go out onto the Spring Ice without breaking through. I was dumb enough to follow his suggestion and ventured out to the point where the ice began to crack and water came onto the surface of the ice. Fortunately for me, I had the presence to head for the shore and got onto thicker ice.

Kids do dumb things. I feel fortunate to still be alive.