

## **IF YOU HAVE TO DEAL WITH ICE ACT LIKE A PORCUPINE MATING 12/19/00**

Fortunately, many readers suggest topics for my column, for which I am truly grateful. One welcome suggestion I received this week is timely as well as being one I am fairly well versed in. It is interaction with ice in the everyday pursuits many Adirondackers engage in. The reasons are many and varied for traveling or working on the ice.

Working, traveling or cutting of ice for refrigeration were (and still are) all the reasons to deal with it. Some of the mishaps had tragic consequences while others when viewed in retrospect may have proved to be quite humorous.

Raquette Lake by its very nature has long been utilized by locals in its frozen state to accomplish tasks that may have been much more costly otherwise. The harvesting of ice for refrigeration was for years an important industry for an area that offered very little in the way of economic opportunities.

On January 26, 1929, Father Henry, a well-known and highly respected clergyman, drowned when he accidentally drove his car into an area that had just recently been harvested. It was at night and he was returning from driving a parishioner home after services. When his body was recovered, it was learned that he was able to free himself from the car, but was unable to find his way back up to the surface.

Many horses were victims of thin ice and teamsters became proficient in rescuing them when they went through. Frank Lamphear remembers his father relating one such incident. Two sets of sleighs loaded with logs were proceeding across Raquette when a sleigh and logs broke through the ice dragging the horses in after it. The teamster quickly cut the harnesses and the team following with the other sleigh unhitched and quickly driven around the hole in the ice and used to pull the first team from the water.

The horses hurried back to the stable, a drug was given to them to increase their heartbeat, and they were rubbed down and dried. They were then run all the way to Sagamore and back. Frank's father told him the barn was full of steam after they returned.

Red Perkins told me a story of a team that was not as lucky. He parked them behind Bisby Lodge while he went in for coffee. He looked out the window just in time to see them walk out on the ice and go down with the sleigh behind them in an area where the ice had been cut the day before. They never came back to the surface.

Floyd Gallagher told me how he helped rescue a horse that went through the ice on Woodhull Lake. They choked the horse and he bloated enough so he and the rest of the crew were able to pull it out onto the surface.

Ernie Blanchard and Ernie Woods both tempted fate on a regular basis and lived to laugh about it. Ernie Blanchard brought his children across the newly frozen lake in a canoe with outriggers on both sides. He skated behind it providing the power.

He nearly tempted fate once too many times when he went to the bottom on a bulldozer. His overshoe became entangled in the brake lever and he rode it down. He found his way to the top and then made his way to Frank Lamphere's house. Doris gave him some of Frank's dry clothes and then asked him how deep the water was. Ernie demonstrated by putting his arms over his head and bringing them down to his side twice. Two of these, he told Doris.

Ernie Woods skated as soon as the ice was thick enough for him to get started. He said he had to skate uphill all the way.

Most of my experiences with ice came about in my trapping and forestry activities. They were conducted much like porcupine mating movements – very carefully. When one is alone, far from help in sub-zero temperatures and your life may hang in the balance, it pays to take no chances.

Bobby Wall was a legendary trapper and woodsman who paid the ultimate price. His body was discovered by a trout fisherman. Bobby's snowshoes were still fastened to his feet in the Independence River.

There are as many stories about mishaps with ice as there are men who worked with or on it. Even those who truly know their business can have close calls and misadventures. Like many other things in life, there are fewer risks and problems when one knows his or her trade.

To make a long story short, if you do not know what you're doing when it comes to ice-covered lakes, streams or rivers, stay off them!