

Our fingers freeze while building our igloo.

With great dignity all four of us kids (the baby stays inside with mom) and dad sacrifice freezing fingers while piling snow upon snow. "Looking good," he says as the mound of snow grows from an inch to four times that size. "Keep the snow coming." We place pile upon pile with our small offerings until we wanted to cry from freezing fingers. When we did, we were shuffled inside to warm up and wrap in our blankies. "Pack it on and tap it hard," instructs dad the following day. "Make it stick. Get more."

Dad liked the snow. During the early 1950's in Montana he could withstand subzero temperatures with sky loads of snow falling each day of winter.

The four of us were young, also. The oldest snow carrier was eight years old and was in third grade. She could cart two heaping mittens full of snow to build that mound up past my head. I was a first grader, good at spelling but horrible at carting wet mittens full of snow. Most of the time my two younger brothers and I would eat more snow than we packed. It was a precursor to picking strawberries. Filling a bucket of fresh berries took just as long as building an igloo.

One day dad turns on the outdoor faucet and soaks that mound of snow. Magically, the igloo formed overnight. A huge frozen mound sits in the front yard.

"Where is the door," says my sister.

"When can we go inside," says me.

My brothers nod while eating a mouthful of wet snow just right for snowballs.

"Well," says dad. "Now we have to dig out all that snow we piled up." (One of life's mysteries.) The mound is frozen, but he carves out a door. "Get your spoons."

We help dig out the snow using mom's biggest spoons. Dad shovels. When we get to walk inside our humble abode, we touch the top, we sit down, we smile and we freeze. The wet wool snow pants soak up the ambiance. Two minutes later we are inside our warm home.

The igloo slowly melts. A city crew then digs a pit in the yard to fix cracked water pipes. Fingers scratch heads as the men wonder how this happened. Lana Russ