



Pearl Harbor  
memories never fade  
Page 20

# Pine Knot News

*Carlton County's  
only independent,  
locally owned newspaper.*

Vol. 2 No. 49

www.PineKnotNews.com

Friday, December 6, 2019

\$1.25

## Winter roars in

### More than 2 feet falls in county

Jana Peterson and Mike Creger  
news@PineKnotNews.com

The double whammy of winter storms on either side of Thanksgiving Day will surely be remembered by those who endured it. Some were lucky enough to be nestled with friends and family for what turned out to be a weeklong holiday for school kids. Others dealt with trying to dig themselves out and get to work or attend to other essential business as the blizzard that hit Saturday and into Sunday dropped 13 to 20 inches on Carlton County. On Tuesday and Wednesday, Nov. 26-27, the first significant snowfall hit the region as about 8 inches piled up in time to snarl Thanksgiving travel plans.

Carlton County escaped the largest snow totals in the region, according to the National Weather Service. In Duluth, about 24 inches fell while farther up the shore, inland from Two Harbors and Silver Bay, 36 inches was reported. No matter where you live, there was a lot of snow.

Things got bad enough during the weekend blizzard to close down Interstate 35 from 6 p.m. Saturday to 9 a.m. Sunday on the



Cars were stranded on roadsides across Carlton County Saturday and Sunday. The Cloquet Police Department posted this scene from Minnesota Highway 33 in Cloquet to its Facebook page, urging people to stay home.



David Steen turned snowblowing into a sport Monday afternoon, as he struggled to clear a 4-foot pile of snow from the sidewalk in front of his house on 13th Street in Cloquet. "The worst thing is I did this to myself, at least the top 2 feet," Steen said, gesturing toward his cleared driveway. He had deposited that snow onto the sidewalk and had to use a shovel to loosen it enough for his snowblower.

Jana Peterson / Pine Knot News

stretch from Mahtowa to Thompson Hill in Duluth. Chris Cheney, a maintenance superintendent with the Minnesota Department

of Transportation, said stalled cars and "zero visibility" for tow truck drivers forced the State Patrol to close the interstate. It is

believed that it's the first time the roadway has been closed since the Halloween blizzard in 1991.

Despite warnings far in ad-

vance, drivers still tried to brave the storm.

*Continued on Page 10-11*

## Tales of tackling the storm

### Pine Knot News

As Minnesotans, of course, you squeeze the bad and the good out of winter weather. The Pine Knot asked readers to send us their storm photos, and they delivered. Most of them are of people frolicking in the fresh snow Sunday and Monday. Most schools in the county closed Wednesday and some closed Monday (although not Barnum or Cromwell-Wright), as many roadways were still choked with snow. Other pictures show just how deep the snow was and the efforts made to clear it.

Some shared their stories with Pine Knot News editor Jana Peterson:

### Greg Conant, Cloquet

Greg Conant walked to his job at Walmart, leaving his house on Selmser Avenue in Cloquet about 3 a.m. Saturday. He got to work at about 3:45 a.m. Conant figured it was about a mile-long walk. "It's not too, too bad in better conditions," he said. "I mostly just walked down the middle of the roads, because some of the drifts were worse on the sides."



Greg Conant walked to work during the heart of the blizzard last weekend. Jana Peterson / Pine Knot News

*Continued on Page 10-11*



# Snow stories ...

Continued from Page 1

“And I tried to follow the ruts when I could. The ice under the snow, when you got to it, didn’t help.”

He was one of only a handful of employees who made it in, but the store was open all night, staffed either by those who walked in or who couldn’t get home.

Born and raised in the region, Conant said he’s OK with winter weather but he doesn’t like shoveling “and the cold that usually comes after.”

“I’ve seen worse, but it’s been a long while,” he said. “I remember growing up, we’d always have snowfalls like this, snow up to your shoulders. It brings back memories.”

## Jayla and Avaeh Bruneau, Cloquet

Jayla Bruneau was stuck at home on Kelly Avenue in Cloquet for the duration of the storm. So she and her 3-year-old daughter, Avaeh, along with Avaeh’s aunt, 13-year-old Kaley Will, were ready to get out of the house by late Monday afternoon. They headed to the sledding hill at Pinehurst Park.

Jayla said a neighbor with a small front-end loader plowed out most of Kelly Avenue on Sunday, and city crews finished up her end of the street Monday morning.



Avaeh wasn’t happy after her first slide down the hill, when she sat in front and Kaley sat in back. Too much snow in her face, she said. But she was fine doing it alone afterward, as long as Kaley pulled the sled up the hill.

“My mom sledded here, I sledded here, and now Avaeh is,” said Jayla.



Bryan Crew clears his driveway Sunday.

## Bryan Crew, Cloquet

Bryan Crew worked all night at the USG plant in Cloquet, heading for home about 7 a.m. Sunday after a 12-hour shift.

He made it as far as Eighth Street, but couldn’t get his car down Selmser and around the corner to his driveway on Seventh Street.

Continued on next page



Snow pushing and removal has been the activity for the week in Cloquet and all around Carlton County after two storms last week left more than two feet of snow on the ground. This plow went up Carlton Avenue Sunday afternoon while a resident with a tractor headed down. Photos by Jana Peterson / Pine Knot News

# Storm ...

Continued from Page 1

Troopers dealt with 10 crashes and 36 vehicles stuck on the interstate or just off it. There was one crash with an injury, the state patrol reported.

The Cloquet police department said it dealt with three dozen weather-related calls beginning Wednesday and through the second storm.

“A lot of people took the storm for granted initially, then ended up stranded or in the ditch,” said interim police chief Derek Randall. “Unfortunately, other calls for service and crime don’t stop during a storm, so it was an added stressor, especially because those cars could become a hindrance and a safety risk.”

## Hustling to the hospital

Things were abnormal at Cloquet’s Community Memorial Hospital, where staff members went above and beyond the call of duty to make sure patients were taken care of and the hospital was a safe and secure place to be.

Jason Peterson, director of environmental services (responsible for house-keeping, custodians and more), snowmobiled in from Barnum at midnight Saturday because none of his staff could get to the hospital. He made it despite heavy snow that was blowing sideways due to high winds. He cleaned rooms and shoveled throughout the night.

Health unit coordinator Eric Simon stayed to clean rooms and scrub toilets, not part of his usual clerical job duties for the unit.

Dr. William Haug, an emergency room doctor who lives in Duluth, walked a half-mile in waist-deep snow to get an Uber to get to CMH. Fellow doctor Jeff



The volume of snow last week meant Cloquet plows had to make more passes than usual to clear streets.

Rapp drove on a mostly deserted and partially buried I-35 to get there. Director of emergency services Etta Souder also made her way in and worked.

Dr. Ken Ripp had to ski to the hospital twice during the storm. On Saturday night he was the overnight doctor and got stuck trying to back into the street from his driveway. On Sunday, after he finished his shift, he returned on skis to deliver a baby.

Although he is an avid cross country skier and lives a little more than a mile from the hospital, it was the first time Ripp had ever skied to work. He said he skied down the middle of streets to get there. The wind was at his back on the way in Saturday night. The return trip home in the morning was tough, he said.

Then he got a call from a nurse at about 1 p.m. Sunday. A woman was in labor and on her way to the hospital in an ambulance that was struggling to get there. Again, he donned his skis. Luckily, a snowmobile had gone down the road and compacted the snow, and Ripp said he made good time getting back for the

birth.

“Both mom and baby were fine,” Ripp said. The baby was sent to Duluth in one ambulance and mom followed in another ambulance.

“It was a war zone there,” Ripp said of the snow snarl in Duluth. “She ended up walking the last two blocks because the ambulance couldn’t get through.”

In the meantime, a total of 28 CMH staff members who couldn’t get home continued to work and slept on the floor and in reclining lounge chairs. Pat McCoy, the director of nutritional services, came in and opened the kitchen to serve meals.

“Throughout the storm, everyone at the hospital did what they had to do,” Ripp said. “Every spare bed taken, you’d open a door and someone would be lying there. But no one complained. They knew it was a once-in-a-lifetime adventure.”

## Complicated removal


Local industry didn’t stop, either. Sappi interim mill manager Tom Radovich praised his staff and Kiminski Paving, which did a good job of keeping the roads clear enough to keep the mill running.


“They’re probably regretting that (contract) now,” he said with a chuckle. “Our site is challenging, it’s so spread out, with lots of doorways, overhead doors, and we need to get trucks in and out. The question after a while is where do you put the snow? We have lots of piles of snow.”

Radovich said about 250 logging trucks come and go from the site every day, and nearly as many trucks leave the Sappi mill loaded with paper products.


Some supervisors went to pick up workers who couldn’t get out of their driveways. “We didn’t slow down at all,” Radovich said.


Continued on next page





Nv Series





N-Generation CITY MULTI®

## Introducing N-Generation CITY MULTI® VRF and Nv Ductless Series.

Ductless and variable refrigerant flow (VRF) systems give you precise control, energy efficiency and design flexibility for all commercial building applications. Ideal for both modern and older structures of all shapes, sizes and uses, ductless solutions allow you to:

- Deliver complete zone control to heat and cool precisely where it is needed
- Accommodate high ceilings and other modern architecture elements
- Eliminate costly modifications and duct installation in older buildings
- Create an ideal environment for tenants and cost efficiencies for customers

To learn how you can put your business on the right track with a new Trane/Mitsubishi Electric HVAC system. Contact:

## ECLIPSE, INC.

207 Ave C, Suite 110, Cloquet • 218-576-8931



Russell Kurhajetz and son Gavin, 6, revelled in the weather last weekend in rural Esko, creating a snow sculpture along with snow removal after the blizzard. Roko the dog joined Gavin for a picture. *Contributed photo*

## Storm ...

*Continued from previous page*

### Digging out

The blizzard ended Sunday morning and then it was time to dig out. With drifts 3 and 4 feet high, it was slow going for people and plows.

Cloquet public works director Caleb Peterson said the city had to change its usual plowing strategy to tackle the 77 miles of streets and 5 miles of alleys it plows, along with numerous parking lots.

“On Sunday alone, we had to pull trucks out 29 times,” Peterson told the Cloquet city council Tuesday. “We found out really quickly that due to the depth and the density of the snow, our normal plowing operations wouldn’t suffice.”

Normally, the Cloquet crews plow with both a front and wing plow down. They couldn’t move doing that on Sunday, with the volume of snow. A grader went down the middle of streets to “punch down one lane,” then plow trucks would come along and widen the path. “What would usually take one or two passes became four or five passes,” Peterson said.

City staff also had to work a lot of overtime — 440 hours among 17 employees — between cleaning up after Wednesday’s storm on Thanksgiving Day and the blizzard Saturday into Sunday.

The smaller city crews couldn’t work around the clock, but they worked long hours, including 16 hours on Sunday, when they were still clearing side streets in the heart of town after 5 p.m. Peterson said the city threw everything it had at the snow, including some plows that were semi-retired, to get the roads clear as fast as possible.

Most county roads and city streets were cleared with at least one pass of a plow by late Monday, with most city streets widened beyond that but still narrowed by the mounds of snow along each side.

“We lost all our snow storage in one storm,” Peterson said. In short, there’s no place along streets for snow to go, so removal will be done throughout the month.

Weather permitting, he said city crews will get the main roads cleared, then spend a few weeks clearing all the city streets of the extra snow, and carrying it away to make space for the next big storm.



Isaac, age 3, and Ryker Owens, age 4, played in the snow outside their home in Cloquet last week after the snowstorm before Thanksgiving.



Snow plowed into the median on Cloquet Avenue in downtown Cloquet began to pile up this week as crews dug the city out from more than two feet of snow.

“Staff and I got a chance to sit down the morning and regroup,” Peterson said Tuesday. “We’re pretty happy with where we’re at, especially if you look at the surrounding communities.”

## Snow stories ...

*Continued from page 10*

So he went home and got his snow-blower, and blew a path a block-and-a-half to his home.

“I didn’t get all the way down to the bottom but I took the top foot off, so my car could get through,” Crew said. He pulled into his garage at 9 a.m. Crew was back out with the snowblower by 4 p.m. trying to figure out how he was going to get back to work. Luckily for him, city crews came by and plowed the street about 15 minutes later.

### Russell and Camden Kurhajetz, rural Esko

Camden Kurhajetz of rural Esko spent the storm “making cookies and watching Hallmark movies” with her mom and older sister at Grandma and Grandpa Costley’s home in Walker, Minnesota. They came back Sunday.

“It looked like a winter wonderland all the way home,” Camden said, adding that when they got to their own driveway, her dad, Russell, was trying to clear the drive, which was covered in about 3 feet of snow. “It was so funny because he looked so little and there was all this big snow.”

As for her dad, he said he was out of the house by 8 a.m. Sunday and spent about 12 hours shoveling and snowblowing ... and making a snow sculpture that reads “I (heart) WINTER.” See the photo at the top of this page.

He had hoped a neighbor would be able to plow the 500-foot driveway, but his plow truck got stuck.



### Barb Davis, Cloquet

Barb Davis, above, was trying to dig out her SUV so she could get to her job as a security guard at the Fond du Lac Tribal Center. It was parked along the alley behind her house, and Davis had a long trail to dig to the road, then had to take on a 4-foot pile of snow from the plow before she was going anywhere. She was hoping some teenagers in a pickup truck with a plow would come back and help her make a pathway out; otherwise, she was facing several hours of shoveling.

“This is about as bad as it was in ’91” Davis said, referring to the Halloween blizzard back when she worked at Potlatch and her husband drove a Superswamper.

“It’s tougher when you’re alone, but you do it,” she said. “I grew up with three brothers. I’m tough. I used to work on the cement crew at the mill. I love shoveling, so this ain’t all that bad,” she added with a chuckle.

## GO ONLINE

For a blizzard of storm aftermath photos from readers and more from the Pine Knot, visit **www.PineKnotNews.com**



2nd Generation  
**Santa**

Available for small parties  
and large gatherings.

Reasonable rates.  
Scott Jezierski  
**218-340-6896**



- Exclusive EMAIL SPECIALS
- Birthday TREAT
- Daily DISCOUNTS
- Personalize YOUR OWN MUG ...and More!

TO FIND OUT MORE INFO OR TO SIGN UP VISIT  
THE CAFE OR [MAGNOLIACAFECARLTON.COM](http://MAGNOLIACAFECARLTON.COM)