

# Digging out - ACC's snow day procedure

by Rich Spicer  
LBJ staff writer

November 15th, 1989. A noisy snowstorm blasted the area with upwards of twenty inches of the white stuff. Alpena Community College was closed that day.

Remember when people told you that the college NEVER closed?

Not true, according to Michael F Hood, Dean of Administrative Services at Alpena Community College. "Having class can't be as important as the students' safety," states Hood. Anyone who has driven to the campus from a good distance on days when there has been heavy snowfall knows all too well how frustrating traveling can be. This brings to mind a question. Exactly what is ACC's inclement weather procedure? It reads as follows:

The college and the K-12 system will seek to coordinate plans for maintaining educational services at each respective level in the event of inclement weather. The K-12 Superintendent will phone the college president or director of buildings and grounds and inform them of the K-12 decision to close the public schools. The President will make the decision on college closure prior to 6:30 a.m.. The announcement will be one of the following:

- A. ACC will be closed.
- B. ACC will be open as usual at 7:00 a.m.
- C. ACC will be closed until 10:00 a.m. to permit snow removal from parking lots; an announcement will be made later by college officials giving further information.

One problem in deciding whether the college closes or opens is geography. Northern Michigan weather is very unpredictable. There could be a blinding snowstorm in Rogers City or Oscoda and at the same time it might be clear in Alpena. Because of unpredictable weather, and because conditions sometimes depend solely on location, opening or closing the college is a "tough" call for administrators.

On nights when a storm is occurring, Dr. Donald Newport, President of A.C.C., Don Witt, Director of Buildings and Grounds, and Hood come to the campus at 11 o'clock. They receive reports from the State Police, the Sheriff's Department, the County Road Commission, and the K-12 Transportation Director and Superintendent.

If it is not snowing, but a storm is in the forecast, they consult the weather service office at the airport in an effort to find out when the storm may start. By 2 or 3 a.m., they make a decision regarding snow removal.

Can the parking lot be cleared by 6:30 a.m.? If not, the college will close until at least 10a.m., and if the snow continues to fall to the extent that the parking lot cannot be plowed by 10 a.m., the college will usually close for the day. "It's a system of variables," says Hood.

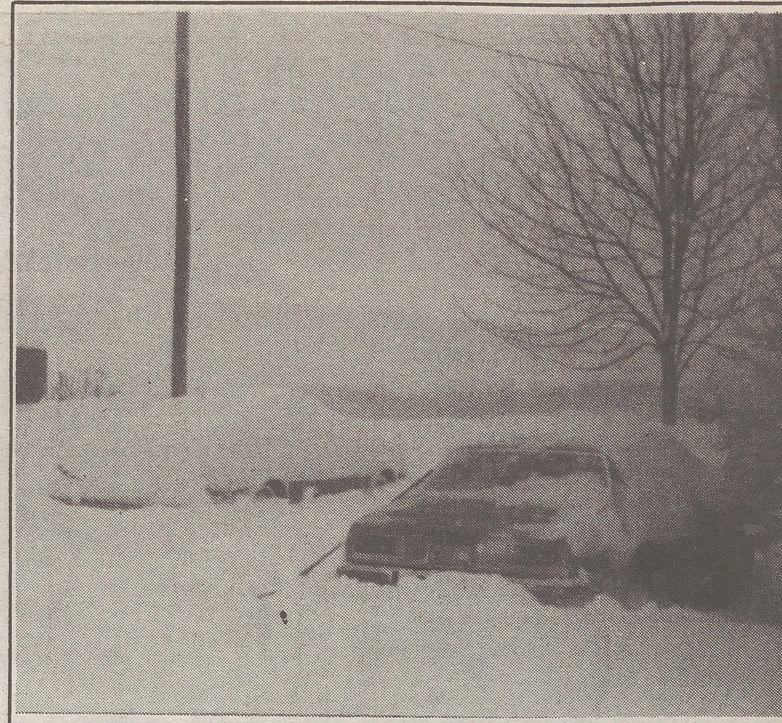
However, whether or not A.C.C. opens or closes does not depend solely on the parking lot situation. "We need to know if people should be on the road," states Hood. "Our primary concern is the safety of students and staff."

Another unusual problem for the decision makers is night classes. According to Hood, many students and instructors are part-time and drive to Alpena from more distant locations. Because some night students work during the day and may have a lengthy commute, it is crucial that a decision be made earlier to eliminate the possibility of stranding a student

or staff member on their way to the campus.

If you find yourself in a situation where you have to decide whether or not to chance the icy or snowy roadways, Hood urges you to "use your own judgement for your own safety." To his knowledge, all instructors are very sympathetic and if there is an important assignment on the day you miss because of rough road conditions, there will be no need to worry.

"We've utilized the same procedure for essentially fifteen years, and if there is a better one, I'd certainly like to know about it." Hood says students and staff can rest assured, "we will make the best decision we can make."



The cars of two ACC students are pictured last winter on Bolton road sitting bumper deep in a typical snowfall for the college service area.

## Two students address Letters to the Editor

Dear Sir,

I am proud to have the privilege of attending Alpena Community College this year as a first-time college student, I am quite impressed with almost every aspect of the campus at this point. However, I have noticed one fault which, I myself, have encountered every day since

the school year began.

The problem is the danger of crossing Johnson street while attempting to make it to class on time. The traffic at certain times of the day can be rather frightening! I have discovered that the majority of the drivers are none too happy about having to stop in the middle of the street to let a rush of students

walk across.

I also feel that the motorists have every right to be a little bit upset, as there are no traffic signs on the street to warn of dangers ahead. With winter approaching, the possibility of an accident is even greater, as the street will become ice-covered, and crossing will be more treacherous.

The only logical solution would be to put up some type of warning light, or stop light, if you will, so students could cross the street safely. I am aware of the expense that this type of endeavor would incur. However, when compared to the value of someone's life, the expense seems pretty minimal. I am sure that the majority of my fellow students would agree. I hope that some time in the near future, some steps will be taken to improve on this hazard.

Sincerely,  
concerned student

Dear Editor:

I am writing to express my concerns about the present A.C.C. student parking conditions. Too few driveways into the parking lot result in driving hazards and accidents. People inch their way into one of the many lines in order to reach the road or accelerate to bulldoze their way through, ignoring other vehicles and pedestrians. An easy solution to this problem would be to simply install at least one other driveway. If for some reason the school is restricted to its few driveways, perhaps a faculty member could direct traffic during the busiest, dangerous hours.

Sincerely,  
Cheryl Huber

## VanDyke editorializes on current snow policy

by Vicki VanDyke

When driving is involved, winter is a season many of us don't want to face. As the wind grows colder and leaves fall from the trees, the fact that snowflakes will soon fly becomes apparent.

This leads us to a question. How is the decision made for closing college due to inclement weather?

Naturally, many students seek this information from faculty members. However, it seems that even from this source, we receive a mixed reaction.

Personally I have heard responses varying from, "If you are here and I am here we will have class" to "If the public schools in your area are closed, don't try to come in." There is even the response of "If the parking lot is cleared there will be classes."

Great! If you live in Atlanta, you can drive to Alpena, find the parking lot isn't cleared and then head home.

In reverse, you may have had the experience of having your car stuck in your own driveway. While the side street you live on in Alpena wasn't plowed, the school parking lot was and you missed classes.

Either way you have just wasted money in one form or another. And money is an item no college student can afford to waste.

But there is still the question. How is the decision made?

An LBJ reporter was told that the procedure used involved a conference between President Don Newport, Dean Mike Hood and Don Witt, director of building and grounds.

These men seek information from other sources, such as the state police, the weather service and the contractor responsible for clearing the parking lot.

After reaching a decision, local media sources are informed. But, in my opinion, often notification that classes will be late or cancelled comes too late for commuting students. Sometimes notification is not made until 7 a.m.. or later.

If students live over an hour away from campus, (and many of the students live even further away) and they have an 8 a.m. class, during inclement weather, they are already on the road. Why do the public schools have an announcement much earlier, sometimes by 5 a.m.?

Of students on campus, 57%