

## *Above and Beyond The Call of Duty*

It was to be just another catering job. The local snow machine dealer was giving his customers a treat, a long, delightful ride through some of the most attractive country in Canada and then back to the Community Hall for a hot, satisfying meal. It was to be a thoroughly relaxing day. The Branch discussed the particulars. Seventy-five very hungry snowmobilers after a day in the bush! The menu — meat loaf, macaroni casseroles, scalloped potatoes, two kinds of vegetables, tossed salad, rolls and butter, coffee, tea and homemade pie! All this for \$1.25 a plate! Oh well, money isn't everything.

The weather was beautiful; the snow had been exceptionally heavy this year and it had been a hard winter, but the temperature was up and the sun was shining — that was on Thursday! It rained all day Friday; by Saturday morning, the member who had had the misfortune to have room in her freezer for the meat loaf ingredients realized that she was on her own at least until the plow came through. She did a good job! Her husband helped her take some of the loaves by snow machine to another member's home so they could be cooked. By noon, the sad truth was known — most of the members, and the food, were snowed in — what a problem! Thank heavens, the telephones were working. We would have to move whatever food we could out to the hall by snow machine. The people who could do this made some extra supplies of food and pies, but cargo space on the snow machine is limited. Two members had sleighs and this was to prove the undoing of one caravan. The roads were northern Ontario at its worst. The banks were in most cases six feet high, and the tunnel that we now called road was a white mass of swirling snow and sleet. The bottom was frozen ruts or wet slush, depending on whether you were in the valley or on the hill. One member with a sleigh could find as a chauffeur only her ten-year-old son. They bounced and battled their way three miles to the hall with two large casseroles and seven pies. Another member who was fortunate in having her husband at home (he had been scheduled to break trail for the party but had to turn back after a minor breakdown) made it to the hall with several pies and a casserole. We then had two members, a ten-year-old boy and a helpful husband. We swept floors and set up tables (there had been a dance the night before — in pouring rain) and we had to stack chairs and tables and tidy the hall. We had also to clean the kitchen because the old wood

stove had backed up in the heavy rain and wind had filled the kitchen with thick, black smoke and a million little particles of soot. The snow plow operator no longer could see, so he came in to get warm and pitched in and helped stack chairs and tables.

Hurry-hurry, they will be here soon. They started coming in, snow-covered and hungry. The ride in the bush had been wonderful. On the open roads it had been a true test of skill.

The two members had brought what they had ready, tables set and coffee perked — but still no vegetables, rolls, salad or meat and it was five o'clock. The members who were bringing the above items and casseroles and pies were missing; a trek to a telephone brought no result; then a few minutes later a snowy messenger appeared at the door. The snow machine and sled had been bogged down and were unable to get through — heavy slush and high drifts had prevented them. The heavily laden snow machine sled had been a real problem — it was a sturdy one made of steel but it quickly became encrusted with slush and had to be shovelled out. The member whose husband was driving it had an additional worry, as her husband had had a heart attack many years before and the poor man had been battling snow all that day. She walked back to their home and got their son to come and help shovel and turn the equipment around. The other member had her own machine, her own packsack, and her own problems, but she managed to get the sled and machines turned around, and headed for home. They were wet to the skin, exhausted and frustrated.

When the word was received that the meat part of the food wasn't there, several men took the machines and the one sleigh (a lighter model one) and headed out by another route to see if they could get through. They were successful and some time later arrived snowy but safe. The sleigh had been a problem in the heavy slush but the food was here. We still had to warm it, make the salads and cook the vegetables. A helpful neighbour who was again pitched in and we had the food hot and in order on the table in short order. We had catered for seventy-five; there was only half there. They were ravenous since it was then shortly after six o'clock and a good many had had only breakfast and had been outdoors all day. The food didn't take long to disappear and the crowd quickly dispersed. By this time darkness had fallen and the wind was, if anything, rising

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