

Reminiscences of My Boyhood in Roslyn

Skating on the Mill Pond

BY ROY W. MOGER
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I do not remember when I first skated on the Grist Mill Pond in Roslyn, but it must have been after I entered public school. This would have been the winter of 1913-14, when I was in first grade.

Although I cannot recall the exact time, I do remember very vividly wanting to learn to skate and wanting to be with everyone else on the Mill Pond. I begged and begged my mother for a pair of skates. Eventually she gave in and took me after school to Conklin, Tubby and Conklin's hardware store (now the Junior League building on Old Northern Blvd.) to buy me a pair of skates. It was a great day. I not only had a pair of ice skates but my mother bought me a new style which did not have to be put on with a key. I was so proud I thought I would burst.

At that time, no one my age in Roslyn had ever heard of shoe skates. Our skates fit on the shoes we wore every day, which, in winter, were high ones, the tops coming just above the ankles. They were laced through eyelets halfway up and with hooks the remaining half. We therefore had good ankle support. Our skates had a metal heel cup with leather on top with straps that buckled around the ankles. The toe clamp was usually screwed on with a key. My skates, as I have said, did not use a key. Instead the toe clamps were tightened by an adjustable handle with was fitted under the toe plate of the skate.

After Mother had bought my skates — which had been adjusted and fitted by Mr. Charlick, the father of my schoolmate, Constance Charlick — I ran across the road to put them on and begin the great adventure. Mother followed me to observe how I put on my skates. She was from California and had never learned to skate, but she had watched my father skate in Prospect Park, Brooklyn, when they were first married. Later, when I was in high school, she took skating lessons from Mrs. Olson on Scudder's Pond in Sea Cliff.

Once I had put on my skates and joined my friends, Mother left. At last I was on the ice on my own skates. I was free to skate by myself.

What a sad sight I must have been, standing on the pond wondering what to do next. I had shuffled out from shore and coasted a short distance. I waved to my mother as she left and there I was alone. My friends had skated off. I had not fallen down yet, but somehow my ankles kept bending

sideways so that I could hardly move ahead. It was all I could do to stand up. I managed to shuffle a bit further and slide forward. I knew that if I kept at it, I would learn to skate.

Then I fell down. In no time my friends were around telling me how to get up. It wasn't easy, but after a struggle, I was up again and able to shuffle to shore where I could sit down and rest. I still remember how good it felt that first time I was able to rest as my friends crowded around to see my clamp skates.

Eventually I forced myself back on the ice. Again I shuffled out on the pond. My ankles were so bent over that my bones were touching the ice. I remember the bell in the Roslyn Clock Tower sounding four o'clock. Mother had told me to be home before dark but I didn't want to go. I didn't want to give up. I had to learn to skate.

My legs ached, not to mention my ankles and the rest of me, but I had to learn to skate. My friends began to leave. I would soon be alone. I knew I had to give up. I took my skates off and found that I had a hard time walking. My legs and ankles ached in a different way, but I had to be home before dark.

I remember looking back at the pond and seeing the big boys starting a bonfire on the ice. I wanted to stay; the fire looked warm and inviting. But by now, I was hungry as well as tired, so I started toward home again, a weary but very happy six-year-old boy.

In Roslyn during the teens and twenties everyone skated on the Mill Pond (Silver Lake) whenever the ice was thick enough — at least everyone who lived in the village was on the pond. I was there whenever there was ice. Eventually my ankles strengthened and I was able to keep up with the others.

We all took skating very seriously. When it snowed we brought our shovels to the pond after school and cleared large areas, not only for ourselves, but for the little kids as well. In this way, the younger children would have a place to skate while we big boys and girls could play hockey, cross tag and grind-the-bar, or

area. When we played cross tag, grind-the-bar or figure skated, we were joined by the girls. As I had a very special girl from the time I was in sixth grade, I preferred these activities. Eventually she and I were able to waltz together rather acceptably.

These were great times on the ice. I often wonder today if the young people have as much fun skating on the rink in Christopher

Morely Park as we had on the Mill Pond. There were days when the pond was covered with black ice which got thicker and thicker as the weather stayed cold. Great cracks would develop as the ice expanded. There would be a tremendous roar and we could watch the crack travel across the pond.

As I grew older, I was allowed to stay on the ice until six o'clock and join the older boys, or young men, who came out skating after they had finished work in the stores, the lumber yards and the banks, I remember Herbert Wood — he helped me with my figure skating

— worked in the Roslyn National Bank and Trust Company.

The men would build our bonfires out of boxes, barrels and other wood which was discarded by the local stores. The bonfire gave us warmth and light as we played snap-the-whip or grind-the-bar.

Everyone on the pond was encouraged to play, boys and girls, men and women, old and young. The snap-the-whip would often be very long, and those on the end would be snapped off with great force. At other times everyone would form a huge circle and grind-the-bar, or as Dan Beard called in his book, "The Outdoor Handbook," cutting the circle.

This was done left and right, forward and backward. The excitement would come when the leader decided to change direction when all were skating at top speed.

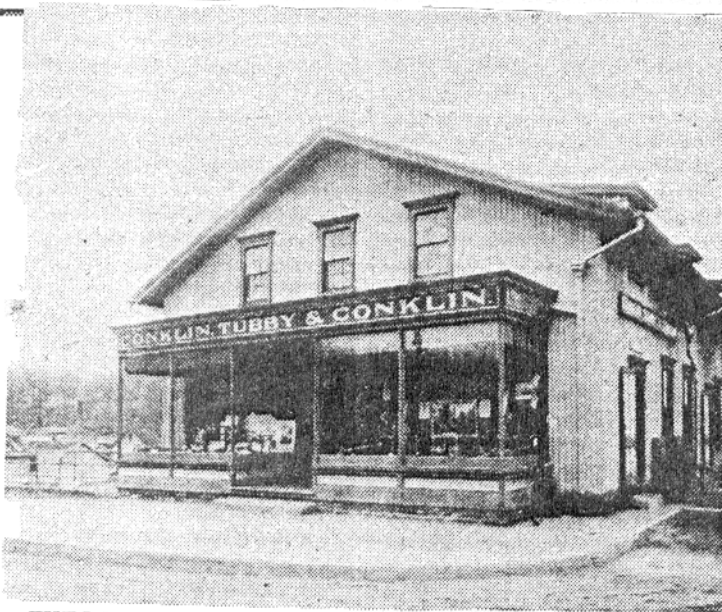
One night, one of the young men drove a model T Ford touring car on the ice. He and his friends had great sport getting the car going and then putting it into a spin and skidding around and around on the ice. I don't know how long they kept this up because I had to go home for dinner. I believe it was a successful adventure, though. The car wasn't around the next morning and there were no holes in the ice large enough to be made by a model T Ford.

(over)

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ALL KNICKERED UP, an insouciant Roy Moger shows off his skating style on the Mill Pond in 1924.



THE LOCAL HARDWARE STORE, Conklin, Tubby and Conklin, carried all kinds of goods needed by Roslyn villagers, including the latest in ice skates.

'CLOSER TO ANOTHER WAR'

To the Editor:

Senator Hollings recently introduced bill S756, giving the President the power to draft young men between 18 and 22. This bill, introduced at the same time as our increasing military commitment to El Salvador and President Reagan's mammoth military budget, should be a signal to Americans that the administration is pulling us ever closer to another war.

A draft, a spiraling military budget, and the emergence of a war machine are not in the best interest of Americans. Our nation still has not recovered from the

scars of our involvement in Vietnam. When will we learn?

We have always recognized that a registration leads to a draft. Once a draft is in effect we can be sure that the next step is war, for it becomes that much easier to use military intervention as a tool of foreign policy instead of using negotiations.

The draft bill is now in the Senate Armed Services Committee, chaired by Senator Roger Jepsen. Public opinion does make a difference to our legislators. Speak out against Bill S756 by writing to New York Senators Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Alphonse D'Amato, and to Senator Jepsen, all at the United States Senate, Washington, D. C. 20510.

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