

March Eight, Nineteen Seventy-Seven

*By Pete Clark*

I rolled out of bed at 4:00am on that Monday, having heard the night before that a storm was coming. After doing my ablutions and getting dressed, I drove a couple of blocks south on Laramie's Third Street to a hole in the wall restaurant that served a good breakfast, with coffee, for about a dollar. After eating I drove across town to the junction with Snowy Range Road and headed toward Woods Landing and the Steel Yard in the mountains above the hamlet. I arrived at the steel yard early and walked over to the storage trailer to don my tool belt. At seven o'clock we began laying out the steel for a leg assembly. The wind came up and snow began to fall. The snowfall was rapidly increasing in intensity so we took a vote and called the job.

Most of us stopped at the bar in Woods Landing. I drank a beer, engaged in a bull session and then began the drive back to Laramie. The rest of the crew were still drinking beer and shooting pool. The snowfall became very heavy and I had to watch the yellow lines in the middle of the highway to stay on the pavement. A truck coming out of Laramie passed me and I did not see the vehicle until it went by going the other direction. After a nerve wracking trip, I arrived in Laramie at the motel. A heavy equipment operator with the crew was also staying there. The couple who owned the motel fed us, as even foot travel was next to impossible in town. In return we helped them clear their parking lot when the snow finally stopped falling and drifting. Roads in and out of Laramie were closed for four days, so we had plenty of time to shovel.

Friday morning the roads were open and since we could not get to the job site, I headed home. The sun was out, making for a dry highway most of the way home. Nearing Denver, I passed what was left of the scene where one hundred twenty-six vehicles had been involved in a chain collision Monday, March 8, 1977. There were still a few battered vehicles along the west side of I-25.

Sunday night I drove back to Laramie to be ready for Monday in the snow. A Cat had been used to clear the road from Woods Landing to the steel yard and a bobcat had cleared the snow around the leg assembly we were bolting. We did not have to move much snow to begin working.

A couple of weeks later, after coming close to sliding off of a cliff backwards in a company suburban I quit my job. I was then sent out on a Storm Break. Most of the power poles in northeastern Colorado had been taken out by the March Eighth storm. The job was low pay scale but there was lots of overtime and my living expenses were reimbursed. I helped to finish the restoration of power in the area around Holyoke.