

No Skidding

By Pete Clark

After unloading the freight the previous afternoon, I left Casper, Wyoming on a frigid Saturday morning, beginning a trip back to Denver with my empty bob-tail truck. There was no wind when I left town, but snow had fallen that night and the southbound lanes of I-25 were slick, like a well-greased ring of ball-bearings. To make sure a terrible day got off to a great start, a few miles east of Casper, a car zipped past me and then slowed down. I didn't want that car for a hood ornament, so I began tapping my breaks to drop my speed without going into a skid. When I fell below the car's speed, I was still a couple of feet off its bumper and breathed a sigh of relief. That truck wouldn't stop on a dime, even empty and on dry pavement.

I was moving at a slow pace, but between Orin Junction and Glendo, I drove into a blizzard with near whiteout conditions. To stay on the pavement, I had to watch the white lane markings and finding white in white can sometimes be difficult. I had my lights on to help avoid any collision. I wanted to get off of the highway at Glendo, but visibility was so limited that I couldn't see the sign for the Off Ramp, so I continued on my merry way. As I moved on south, I thought about the time I had come close to driving off into Glendo Reservoir during a whiteout. That brought out chills and goosebumps, but I continued to inch along toward Denver.

The snow began to lessen and the wind died down some, but the asphalt was still glazed with a layer of ice. Visibility was better but avoiding skids was still daunting. At least I could pick up my speed some. The sand trucks were out and that made a difference, especially going uphill. I still had to watch my speed as I didn't want to crest a hill, find an accident blocking the road and be unable to stop.

About fifteen miles north of Cheyenne a civilian pickup with a shell covering its box was upside down in the median. An Air Force vehicle was parked near the pickup and what looked like a SAC Combat Security Team, armed with M-16s were guarding that pickup. I am still curious about what was going on at that moment, but sometimes discretion is the better part of valor, so I did not stop to ask questions.

The snow had stopped when I came to the steep hill south of Cheyenne that drops off to the Colorado border, I shifted the truck into first gear for slow movement. That turned out to be good thinking, as a semi had skidded out of control and was completely blocking the southbound lane. I had to drive into the median to get past him. When I traveled past Wellington, the highway was beginning to dry and I was home free. Alas, there had been no shelter from the storm.