

There are few of us that don't reflect on past memories and ponder what we did "back in the day". We wonder how things may have changed if we behaved differently. Procrastinating is a skill that I began to develop as a teenager, and now, as I enter my senior years, I continue to put this technique to use, when the situation dictates, from time to time.

My earliest recognition that I had a knack for procrastinating was on a beautiful Christmas Eve Day around 1980. Sports was always a huge part of my life, and being an Ottawa Valley boy, I spent countless hours twirling around outdoor ice chasing vulcanized rubber. Although I never reached any prolific competitive level honing my craft for hours outdoors, my memories of skating under a clear blue sky will remain with me for life.

Outdoor rinks are part of the Valley's fabric and my fondest memories of growing up include all day hockey on the pond at the farm with my cousins in Lower Stafford. Since our grandfather's farm had a creek that tuned into an ideal skating surface, given the right weather conditions, it was a great place to learn and fall in the love with the game of hockey. Later, we graduated to more formal rink environments with actual boards, a warming shack and maybe even a metal gong to signal the fact that time was up.

Time often slipped away from me while I was embroiled in what I felt was a rite of passage for local youngsters on outdoor ice. After school, all day Saturday and as

much as you could Sunday made time management somewhat easy in those days- hockey, hockey and more hockey! Perhaps some procrastination was beginning to creep into my world in those days as homework was completed as quickly as possible (or not at all) in order to get back to the ice. Some exotic locations I remember my Dad taking me to include ODR's in Shady Nook, Micksburg and Snake River, all of which are no longer standing.

Kids, these days, don't have the same opportunity to skate outside as we did yesteryear, mainly due to challenging weather conditions and over-organization by parents in sporting activities. My friends and I, hailing from a non-urban area, enjoyed even our "League" games outdoors and when we got to move inside and play, we appreciated that even more.

Perhaps the act of having to shovel the ice pre-game, mid-game and sometimes even post-game, made our time on ice even more rewarding as we were almost "earning" our right to play. Even the extra chilly venues such as outdoors in Cobden and Queensline bring back fond memories and oddly enough, indoor ice sheets in Westmeath and Beachburg meant you also had to bundle up as these places were often colder than the ODR's. A familiar sound of skates tapping on wooden floorboards during intermissions could be heard resonating throughout the various dressing rooms, drowning out coaches trying to deliver inspirational messages to their players.

Parents frantically spent intermissions re-tying skates after adding an extra pair of wool socks for players who weren't handling the frigid temperatures so smoothly. Fingers and toes tingled, icicles formed on eye brows and we could see our breath as

we raced up and down the ice chasing puck. Goalies got especially cold if they didn't face enough rubber to stay warm. Skaters wore thin gloves under their hockey gloves, stuffed toques under their helmets, even did their best bank robber impression and donned a ski mask if conditions dictated these drastic measures.

On this particular Christmas Eve Day, it was a beautiful and sunny at the old ODR in Greenwood, only minutes away from Pembroke. After a group of friends congregated at the rink, shovelled off the light snowfall that accumulated during the previous night, it was GAME ON!

It was around midday and it looked like there was an All-Star game happening in Greenwood. To clarify, this is by no means referring to the quality of play, but considering the number of team jerseys represented on the ice, an array of allegiances was represented. "Wannabe" Leafs and Habs participated, as did supporters of Philly, Chicago and Boston. Heck, there was even a Minnesota North Star gold and green jersey out there. Games went till one team scored five or ten goals, teams switched and we did it over and over and over again.

Somebody made the sacrifice to take the blades off and go for supplies and fled to nearby Mullens Esso for Pepsi and chips. No Gatorade in those day- we got a Pepsi into us then continued the on-ice marathon. What an amazing day!

Then it hit me...

The day was all but over as the sun began to set. I felt that sinking realization that I hadn't done my Christmas shopping yet...and yikes, it's Christmas Eve! I peeled off my skates and hurled on my boots after rescuing them from their position as

**makeshift goalposts only moments ago. I hopped in the truck and took off for town.**

**Panic had set in, as I zeroed in on my shopping destination, wearing my sweat-soaked orange jersey and woolen toque. It was only moments before five o'clock as**

**I reached the doors of F.W. Woolworth. A staff member was about to lock the store up as I pulled upon the handle with a sheepish grin. Thankfully, this kind lady was truly in the Christmas spirit as I darted past, very focused on my mission.**

**A five minute shopping spree completed, I exited the establishment with chocolates, a book and a gift basket with candles. Why had I not done my Christmas shopping earlier? Only needing a gift from my mother, I managed to salvage this pressure-filled scenario despite my procrastination tendencies.**

**Did I learn my lesson? Well, perhaps we could discuss my procrastinating habits at an outdoor rink next Christmas Eve somewhere in the Ottawa Valley... or maybe even afterwards at a shopping mall near you!**