Winter Carnival...a campus tradition!

Winter Carnival began in 1922 as a one-night show called the Ice Carnival. The event had a circus theme with students dressed in costumes, such as this circus “elyfunt,” and also featured music and a skating contest.

Events were suspended during the early years of The Great Depression, but resumed in 1933 under Blue Key National Honor Fraternity. The first snow statues appeared in 1936, including this statue of “King Winter.” Statues were built by both student and community groups, with prizes awarded by the Houghton Rotary organization.

Winter Carnival began to adopt annual themes in the 1950s. Here, Michelle Peters works on the Tau Kappa Epsilon statue of a saloon for the 1984 theme “Legends & Myths in Snowy Drifts.”

The Snow Ball dance of 1953 was held in the Sherman Gymnasium (a building later transformed into the Walker Arts and Humanities building). Student groups chartered special buses from Detroit and Chicago to bring girlfriends up for the weekend fun.

In the 1960s, Michigan Tech held a friendly exchange with Southwest Texas State Teachers College. Tech would airlift snowballs for airlift to San Marcos, Texas, where their students would stage a snowball fight. Lacking snow, the Texans sent cotton balls to Houghton.

Miss America Rebecca King (on left) visited Houghton for the 1974 Winter Carnival and toured the snow statues.

Did you know?

- The first Winter Carnival was held in 1922. It was a one-day “Ice Carnival”. This carnival also featured a hockey game between the upper classmen and the Michigan Tech faculty.
- The tradition of snow statues began in 1936 and has been a huge part of Carnival ever since EXCEPT during the suspension of the event due to WWII from 1944-1946.
- Blue Key Honor Society has sponsored Winter Carnival since 1934 and has grown to 60 members.
- In 2001, approximately 3,500 out-of-towners come to the area and stay at least one night specifically to attend Winter Carnival.
- In 2001, approximately 2,300 made a day trip for Carnival.
- In 2001, tourists spent a total of about $825,000 over Carnival weekend.

Pictures courtesy of the Michigan Tech Archives

Facts courtesy of the Blue Key Honor Society
Recently, the Smithsonian Institute posted online the first ever photographs taken of a snowflake. Taken by Wilson A. Bentley in 1885, the same year the Michigan Mining School was founded here in Houghton. We’ve all heard the adage that no two snowflakes are alike. Bentley’s photographs helped scientists prove, more or less, that it is significantly unlikely that larger more complex snowflakes have an identical twin.

This time of year our landscape is painted white with millions and millions of unique crystalline structures like the ones Bentley shot yet rarely as we brush the snow off our car windows do we envision these individual flakes. One brush full of snow becomes indistinguishable from another.

It reminds me of how I’ve heard other universities described. Their students feel like just another number, fairly indistinguishable from the student next to them. We know that is not the case here at Michigan Tech. Talk to almost any student and they will share with you how they are on first name basis with their faculty, that they know that staff embrace opportunities to interact with them, or how they can walk across campus between classes and recognize most of the faces they come across. Our students describe being at Tech as joining another family, where they feel individually valued and cared for.

I’m proud that we don’t see our students as more or less the same, as one might view one shovel full of snow against another, but instead we see them as the 6,976 unique individuals that they are – no two of them being exactly like another.

No better time to be reminded of this than Winter Carnival. It’s times like these I’m continually reminded of how lucky we are to be a part of this wholly unique experience. Thanks for all you do to support their success and embrace their passion.

Cheers and I hope to see you in the snow.

Les

**“What are Student Affairs staff looking forward to about 2011 Winter Carnival?”**

**Andre Bonen- Housing Facilities**

“I think what amazes me the most is all the long hours in the cold; the relentless energy and pride that only a “Husky” can understand and appreciate!”

**Lynda Heinonen- Enrollment Services**

“Checking out the snow statues and once again being impressed at what a talented and dedicated bunch of students we have here on campus.”

**Gina Goudge- Career Services**

“I love the snow statues! These beautiful huge sculptures of ice really show the dedication, hard work, and creativity of our students.”

**Susan Liebau- COMPASS**

I really enjoy witnessing the awe from folks who are coming to Winter Carnival for the first time. It is a reminder of how this event is unique. It also highlights why the traditions and community of Michigan Tech are so special.

**Rob Bishop- Judicial Affairs**

“Actually being in town – for the past four years I have been in Florida at a conference during Winter Carnival. This year the conference is a week before so I’ll be able to participate in all of the festivities.

**Jess Turuc- Student Activities**

“It’s hard to pick just one favorite thing about Winter Carnival but I would have to say that Stage Revue is my favorite. It shows the students creativity, talent and humor.”

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**2011 Winter Carnival Events**

For a full listing of all Carnival events visit: http://www.mtu.edu/carnival/

**Wednesday, February 9**

4:00 PM – All-nighter statue construction begins
10:00 PM – Winter Carnival recess begins

**Thursday, February 10**

5:00 PM – Stage Revue in the Rozsa
9:00 PM – Stage Revue in the Rozsa

**Friday, February 11**

12:00 PM – Dog Sled Rides on Campus

**Saturday, February 12**

8:30 PM – Torchlight parade & fireworks at Mont Ripley
9:00 PM – Awards Ceremony in the MUB Commons

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One kind word can warm three winter months.
~Japanese Proverb

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From left to right: Andre Bonen, Lynda Heinonen, Gina Goudge, Susan Liebau, Rob Bishop, and Jess Turuc