

The cold weather began a couple of days before Halloween 1975 in Fairbanks; it was -11 and -26 F for the high/low on Halloween. There were then 24 days of zero or below zero weather prior to Thanksgiving in Fairbanks in 1975. Surprisingly, Thanksgiving Day was relatively mild, with a high of +30 F and a low of +16 F. The bottom then fell out after that.



Here are a few photos of some Fairbanks bank thermometer temps I recorded during that first week of December 1975. After working the 4 p.m. yard engine job I would walk about four blocks to downtown Fairbanks from my apartment to get a little exercise. The warmer temps photos of -34 F and -41 F were taken on December 2-3 and the coldest temps pics were taken between December 4 to December 7, 1975 when, during those four days, the temperature ranged only between -45 F and -51 F. This was a time where my car - which sat outside all the time - needed, in order to start, 5W motor oil, a heavy blanket thrown over the engine, an electric circulating tank heater, electric battery blanket, and maybe a squirt of starting ether into the air horn. The first few blocks of driving were quite bumpy with the tires being frozen and flat on the bottoms until rolling friction warmed them up. At the ARR shop building, we were lucky to find an open outlet to plug in the warming apparatus and really lucky if the foreman would open the big shop doors and let us park our cars inside the building during our shift. I know my car always breathed a sigh of relief then it got to spend a shift inside the relatively warm diesel shop building.



Following that cold snap, the temperature bounced back up to above zero on December 15 (+9 F) and stayed "relatively warm" until mid-January 1976 when the daily high/low again dipped to between the negative mid-teens and -40 F into the first two weeks of February when -20 F to -40 F was the normal daily range. By the end of February with the stronger sun and longer days, the exceptionally frigid weather ended. I returned to Anchorage and thawed myself out. I remember upon arriving in Anchorage by train the temperature was about +10 F and it felt like spring. I was really ready for summer of 1976 to begin.





Steve on Number 5 at Nenana during the cold spell of December 1975



