

The last time there was any measurable snow in Las Vegas, Jimmy Carter was in his last year in the White House, and Ronald Reagan was just beginning his campaign to run for President. Baby Britney Spears wouldn't enter the world for three more years.



We were visiting the Nevada desert oasis where daytime temperatures of 110 degrees are common, expecting to swim in the hotel pool and bask in the hot, dry sunshine. Instead, we found temperatures in the 30s, and on our first evening, some strange white stuff began to fall outside our hotel. We could see strollers on the famed Las Vegas Strip laugh, wave their arms and jump amid the thick snowflakes.

Schools were closed, and the snow continued until there were more than two inches on the Strip and six to eight inches in some of the outlying communities. Kids reveled in the strange stuff they had never seen before, and soon snowball fights and snowmen were familiar sights in every neighborhood. Streets and highways were blocked, because there were no snowplows in a desert city that never expected to need them.

We later heard the McCarran International Airport was totally shut down, the first time in its recorded history. It remained closed for more than 72 hours as travelers spent days and nights trying to find places to huddle and get some sleep. When we flew home several days later, many people were still trying to get flights out of town.