

Laurentians offer it all

Gray Rocks Inn -- No.1 ski school resort

By TOM DONOGHUE
Sports Editor

After years of being a "rocking chair skier"—the time was now to see how the real skier lives, in his conquest of slope and snow.

And to take on this challenge of actually putting on a pair of ski boots and even a set of skis it was off to the Laurentian Mountains in Quebec, Canada.

A flight to Montreal was first in order, followed by a 74-mile drive up the Autoroute.

At the conclusion of mile 74, I found myself at the front door of a cozy, recreational resort accommodating 450.

I was about to embark upon a ski week at Biff and Tom Wheeler's Gray Rocks Inn located in the St. Jovite



MAKING IT A COMPLETE HAUL on the practice run before the races



DOING A LITTLE HOT-DOGGING of his own.

area, under the watchful eye of Real Charette's Snow Eagle Ski School.

The Snow Eagles have 40 fulltime instructors, all certified by the Canadian Ski Instructors Alliance. With this number on the payroll, the classes usually range from eight to 12 students per instructor.

The ski week begins with a Sunday evening movie and introduction period, and then it's quickly into hour one Monday morning.

First there was getting use to standing on skis and learning how and how not to fall.

Next came the grading of skiers (and I use that word loosely at the this stage) into classes of ability. I was right at rock bottom, class 38 I believe.

Everyone is assigned to a class and can progress or be set back accordingly.

The Snow Eagles use the short ski progression method of teaching during sessions from 10 a.m. to noon and from 2-4 p.m.

My opening conquest was a slope of not more than two or three feet. Then came the magic of the snow-plow.

Day one ended with a great sense of accomplishment — I had not fallen and had mastered the art of snow-plowing.

Day two, Tuesday, opened with me progressing up a class, under the eyes of Chris Lloyd. It was right into paralleling and then came the infamous T-bar.

My first adventure with the T-bar had me clinging to the pole and monkey hang for dear life. The skis didn't do what I had hoped for them, they crossed, and I and my partner, a young lass from Buffalo, N.Y., went tumbling down the mountain.

Attempt number four mastered the T-bar and parallel turning rounded out the day's chores.

Day three was my final push, and first year instructor Randy Banks from North Carolina got the call, class 31.

I was starting to enjoy skiing and still had not fallen. Just before the lunch break, our class ventured forth to a steeper slope, one I had cast dirty looks at before.

And needless to say, wipe-out number one was performed in graceful style.

A parallel turn that was supposed to be wasn't and over I went... skis in the air down the slope on my back some 500 feet. Arriving to a standing ovation from my class, I noticed that everyone laughs with you, not at you.

Day four and five, Thursday and Friday it was work on paralleling and parallel turns and onto the chair lift. Saturday morning is race time and the 30 some odd classes are broken down into three divisions.

It was ski around the flag time and a second place in the novice earned a silver pin.



TAKING THE TURNS through the flags on race day is Sports Editor Tom Donoghue

If you are looking for that special teaching method with special effects, Gray Rocks isn't the place. Attitude and friendship is the key and Quebec's first resort had "all" to offer.

At Gray Rocks, a various assortment of colorful ski outfits and the latest of all equipment is not expected and not really looked for.

There doesn't seem to be the pretense of trying to impress everyone on the Gray Rocks slopes.

There are no great challenging slopes or heart stopping descents. What there is, is down to earth honest instruction and an intense week of good old fashioned fun.

There are sleigh bell rides and hot wine parties for the classes after ski hours and an all-around general atmosphere that has made the Snow Eagle school and Gray Rocks the "Dean of the Laurentians."

The ski season at Gray Rocks goes from Nov. 20 to the beginning of May. Average snow is 165 inches with base around the 48 inch mark to 12 feet in spots.

There are five novice, six intermediate and seven expert runs with the longest run — one mile.

Gray Rocks has two double chair lifts and two T-bars with uphill capacity at 4,300 per hour. Everything that you would possibly want and need can be rented.

The ski week package, which was created by Real Charette, includes three of the most exquisite meals per day, lift tickets, and 22 hours of lessons along with complete entertainment program (dancing seven nights a week).

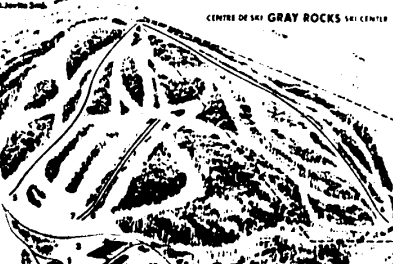
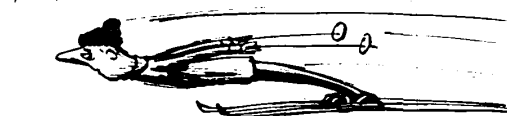
The cost per person per week starts at \$151.50.

Gray Rocks — the Dean of the Laurentians, has been tabbed with the "hell-bent for teaching attitude" and can only be surpassed by the atmosphere created by the people there.

Yearning to learn how to ski or to just sharpen up on the style — give Gray Rocks an honest shot. I am going back up, lookout class 29.



INSTRUCTOR ERIC SKAT PETERSEN does the hot-dogging on the slope above the Gray Rocks Inn.



THE GRAY ROCKS SKI CENTER map shows the hotel at the bottom of the mountain, No. 1.

Photos by
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