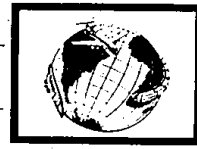


Travel Scene

Iris Sanderson Jones editor



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crossroads
Iris Jones

What's what in skiing

When it comes to skiing, I've flopped on every bunny slope I've ever climbed.

So when I get a letter asking for ski advice, I run for the experts. Sandy Jones of Howell wants to know about cross country skiing: What's the status. Where should we go? Wendy Schwartz of Birmingham wrote for information on local ski clubs, which Ingrid Tomey has covered on this page. She also wants to know about resorts that cater to families, allow kids free in the room or have special rates.

I asked Dick Held, vice president of Bavarian Village ski shops, whether our recent lack of Detroit-area snow adversely affects cross country skiing. "It has to have some effect, because the snow isn't sitting there in your back yard, but people are willing to travel for the pleasure of the trails.

"There are 15 resorts in the Northern Michigan Nordic Ski Council and that they all offer groomed trails, trail maps and other amenities. It's an inexpensive sport. We can put you on skis with bindings and poles for \$99."

Josh Lohmann, Metropolitan Detroit Ski Club president, did Nordic (another name for cross country), downhill and ski jumping when he lived in Germany. Nordic was strong here in the mid-1970s, then it flatlined out. Last year it picked up again because of a few good racers in the Olympics.

The Boynes saw an increase last year. American Youth Hostel (AYH) does a lot of cross country for people of all ages. They stay in hostels or small hotels. Some upscale resorts are really into it as well.

Families! Josh Lohmann: "Families with young children often go to the mountains around Detroit. Experienced skiers may go there during the week and often go north on weekends. Families like Boyne Highlands and Nubbs Knob. Boyne Mountain is mostly a younger crowd, including singles and racers. A lot of groups go to Schuss/Shanty Creek."

Call the MDSC Hotline at (313) 593-1188 for a guide.

Lou Oles, who is the editor of the Metropolitan Detroit Ski Clubs guide, and their magazine, Mountain Crier, tells me that rising ski prices have stopped some skiers from skiing in Michigan.

"It's almost as (expensive) to ski in Michigan as it is to go west. Many ticket prices are the same. Not many people go to the UP from here because by the time you drive so far you can drive a good part of the distance to the west."

Lou says that western resorts have been wooing kids for a long time, and many Michigan resorts now do the same with family programs.

Young and old ski. Bob Hengel, a General Motors retiree, skis Alpine Valley every single weekday morning in season. "They're all suicide hills on weekends so I stay home. I let those who pay my retirement pension ski Saturday and Sunday."

Hengel is a member of the Seventy Plus Ski Club, an international ski organization out of New York. Anybody over aged 70 can join and once you're in you're a member for life!

Here is what some of your other neighbors say about skiing:

Bill Heinz, Milford: "The best thing about skiing? Nobody keeps score." Heinz is a "paramedic of the slopes," a member of the National Ski Patrol.

Mark Bill, Northville: "The only reason I really have a job is so that I can afford to ski." Bill likes hell-skiing, because "you ski untouched snow." And he likes racing because "it's the single fastest way to improve your skiing."

Bill says, "We actually have people that belong to the clubs that go on trips but don't ski. It's still a bargain."

Ginnie Uhley, Orchard Lake: "My son skied for the first time last year. He really liked the chairlift because it's so high. He's 2 years old."



DAN DEAN/staff photographer

High flying

Skis? Well, they might not be for wimps, but for real excitement Pat Schulte prefers to tackle the slopes on a snowboard. These winter contraptions offer the thrills of surfing and skateboarding, as Schulte experiences here doing a halfpipe at Mt. Brighton. For more on Schulte and the not-so-gentle art of snowboarding, see story on Page 9D.

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It's time to wax up the skis, scan the sky for snow, maybe join a ski club and get ready to

Hit the slopes

By Ingrid Tomey, West Bloomfield

So you're tired of roasting chestnuts on an open fire, bored with sitting around watching the white stuff through plate glass? You're ready for something more bracing? Strap on the old K 2s, pull on your bibs and let's go ski!

But what if you don't know a K 2 from a 2 by 4? What if you think a bib is something to catch strained applesauce on? What if you've never skied before? What if you don't even want to ski? The answer, according to seasonal skiers Josh Lohmann, Rick Adomitis and thousands of other metro Detroiters is to join a ski club.

Lohmann and Adomitis are president and vice-president of Metropolitan Detroit Ski Council (MDSC), an organization of 38 local ski clubs with a combined membership of 10,000. Lohmann says that members use the slopes at nearby mountains, in northern Michigan and sometimes out west and in Europe.

"Ski clubs offer something for everyone from the never-skied-before to the advanced racer," says Adomitis. "You get a bunch of people together with a common interest and you go on a ski weekend. You ski with people of your same ability, you save money and you know it will be a good time. Even if you don't ski at all you can have a good time."

Adomitis should know about ski clubs. Besides his affiliation with MDSC, he belongs to local clubs — Livonia Ski Club, and Detroit Edison (where his wife is president), as well

as the Toledo Ski Club. His 13-year-old son also belongs to the Hurricane Race Team at Alpine Valley. Adomitis is about to join a fourth club — G.M., one of the larger clubs with a membership of 800. "I want to be able to choose from all the activities, from everything they have to offer."

One of the things ski clubs have to offer is lessons. According to Adomitis, almost every one of the metro ski clubs offers weekend clinics which include lessons for every level of skier. "My son Noel races in the central division of USSA but he started skiing at age 4 and learned to ski with the Livonia Ski Skule at Mt. Brighton. The Ski Skule offers lessons on everything from using the lift for the first time to downhill racing."

One of the largest ski clubs is the Ford Thunderbirds, based in Westland with a membership of 1,700. The T-Birds, as they are known, not only offer a number of ski clinics, they also have their own ski school with 96 instructors teaching every Monday night at Mt. Brighton.

Mark Bill of Northville is a member of the Thunderbirds and a certified PSIA (Professional Ski Instructor of America) instructor.

"It makes a big difference how you learn the information," Bill emphasizes. "The equipment has changed a lot over the years and so has the approach to teaching. You want to start with where they're at, advance their skill at the rate they want to learn."

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'Rusty' ski patroller shines in races

By Ingrid Tomey

Ginnie Uhley is not what you'd call a fun skier. She's too busy patrolling the hills at Alpine Valley looking for injured skiers. And when she's not doing that, she is pursuing her real passion — racing.

Uhley, of Orchard Lake, is not only a member of the National Ski Patrol, the lifeguards of the slopes, but she is also a member of the only strictly racing club in local Detroit — a squad with the unlikely name of Team Rust.

"Team Rust was started some years ago by Ski Patrol members who wanted to race. It

was named after their rust-colored parkas," Uhley explains.

Like many of the 40 members of Team Rust, Uhley serves in Ski Patrol as well, which leaves her little time for recreational skiing. And there are no hot tub parties in Team Rust, no apres-ski carousing. But that's OK with Uhley. "I like racing because it fine-tunes your skiing ability. I think a lot of people who have skied for awhile turn to racing."

Apparently. According to Uhley, who is also membership director for the Alpine Competition Committee (the racing arm of Metro Detroit Ski Council), 450 people turn out for the series of four race weekends held every year at Boyne Mountain. They come from some of the bigger clubs like the Ford Thunderbirds whose serious contingent of racers took national honors in 1988 and 1989 at the United States Ski Association ski week in Vail.

GM, while a smaller club has a larger racing team which took top honors in the 1990 Miller Lite NASTAR Club Grand Prix competition in Aspen. At least a dozen of the smaller clubs have race teams as well.

While the national competitions are generally held out west, most of the racing, accord-

ing to Uhley, is done right in Michigan and by all levels of skiers.

"At the Boyne Mountain weekends, the racing is geared for all abilities. There are elites, who are at the top in ability. These are usually people who skied in high school and college. Then there are other categories all the way down to D Level, which is for beginning skiers. The level D course is set up to be challenging but so that the skier can just possibly make it through."

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Ski Patrol: helping hands in the snow

By Ingrid Tomey

Back in 1936, when U.S. skiing consisted of an hour or two of huffing and puffing up a big hill for a few minutes of downhill thrills, a skier by the name of Minnie Dole was on his way down when he fell and snapped his ankle bone. A friend stayed with him on the cold, Vermont slope while their wives skied for help.

The first person they encountered was a local farmer who said that anyone stupid enough to ski deserved Minnie's fate. The women finally located two people who helped haul Minnie off the mountain on a piece of corrugated tin roofing.

This small, inauspicious rescue led Minnie Dole into the business of organizing the National Ski Patrol System, now, 52 years later, the largest winter rescue organization in the world. With 25,000 ski patrolers in the United States and Europe, their traditional rusky parkas have become a common sight at even the smallest ski areas. But unless you've had the misfortune to have fractured an ankle or

skied into a tree, you may just take these lifesavers of the slopes for granted.

"Most people don't realize what an intensive training program we go through to qualify," says Bill Heinz of Milford, who joined Ski Patrol in 1969. "Back then I couldn't afford to ski and have my family ski so I looked at Ski Patrol as a way to pay my way and also do a service. It turned out it would have been much easier to buy season passes for all of us."

According to Heinz, the patroller's main responsibility is to care for injured skiers. "We administer first aid, take the wounded to the Ski Patrol room (all ski areas have a designated Ski Patrol shelter), and if necessary send them on to the hospital."

Thus, a critical portion of NSPS training is a 60-hour Winter Emergency Care program which covers anatomy, bandaging, shock treatment, splinting, frostbite and even bee

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Micky Jones

Kid stuff

Skiing can be a perfect family affair. While the adults make tracks down the slopes, many ski resorts offer races and courses just for the kids. And some offer lessons, such as this group of youngsters are receiving, at Nub's Knob Ski Resort.