

# MT. MANSFIELD SKIING

*The Periodical Bulletin of the Mt. Mansfield Ski Club*

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No. 3

## THE TOLL ROAD HAS A PAST

By David Burt

Rare indeed is the week-end visitor to Mt. Mansfield who pauses long enough, as he stands at the junction of the Nose Dive and the Toll Road, to wonder about the past history or the ground over which his skis smoothly glide. Rarer still the beaver who bothers to climb to the Summit House, or to inquire of the hotel or the road that so admirably serves him and his comrades. No, our visitor prefers to careen from tree to tree, yelling and shouting, with little consideration for the thought and toil expended over the same route generations ago.

### Pioneer Ascents

The date of the first ascent on Mt. Mansfield is not known. Certainly it was long before the recorded climb by a girl of fourteen in 1842, for there must always have been someone with the urge to find the top. But there was no road or even a trail when this predecessor of the modern snow bunny toiled her way up a hundred years ago. Afterwards frequent ascents by the people of Stowe wore a faintly marked foot path along the ridge now traversed by the Toll Road.

### Early Trails

It was not until about 1850, however, that a trail of sufficient width to allow the passage of a man on horseback was cut up the mountain. Then in 1857 the Hon. W. H. Bingham, for whom Bingham Falls was named, induced the Town of Stowe to build a road as far as the site of the old Halfway House. Those wishing to see the mountain could ride in carriages part way, refresh themselves with a drink at the spring, and mount horses for the remainder of the climb.

### The First Carriage Road Completed

The work of completing the carriage road was begun in 1868 and finished two years later. This road was used until 1920, when after a new company had taken control it was decided to reconstruct the road so that horseless buggies could drive to the top. Under the supervision of my father, the present motor road was completed in 1923 at a cost of some eighty thousand dollars.

### A Hotel was Built

In 1858 the first Summit House was built. The timbers were carried on men's backs up the west side of the mountain from Stevensville. This original hotel, twenty-four by forty feet, was enlarged and rebuilt in 1923. Today the comfortable accommodations for a hundred guests is a far cry from when the only habitation on Mansfield was that housing a caretaker and a few saddle ponies at the Halfway House.

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## THE SERMON FOR TODAY

Two Sundays ago there was a marked upshot in the number of skiing accidents at Mt. Mansfield. Many of these occurred relatively near the start of the various trails leading down from the top of the Lift. The snow condition was a new fall of somewhat heavy powder, a sudden change from the generally hard snow surface that had prevailed more or less throughout the winter. The obvious deduction is that the average recreational skier has become so accustomed, by preference, to hardpack that he is unable to cope with any other kind of snow.

Let's look at this realistically. It's all very well to preach safety, but safety campaigns too often lose their bite through over emphasis. No skier really wants to injure himself. He looks at the poor devil on the toboggan and thinks that won't happen to me. He knows, unless he is a complete dunderhead which is the exception, that he must ski under control. And as a matter of fact he does ski under control—insofar as he is able. But the plain truth is that the average person on skis, either from lack of experience or training, cannot ski at all, and sooner or later down he comes on the toboggan wondering what the hell he did wrong.

If anyone really enjoys skiing he should learn how to ski as well as his capabilities will permit. Even then, because skiing is a strenuous sport, there is the danger of getting hurt. But at least the odds are more nearly normal when a skier has the ability, besides the desire, to control his movements.

Every season skiers shoot their rolls on new skis, bindings, clothes, gadgets. The trails are overrun with determined individuals blinking through fancy windshields as they lurch along at ten miles an hour. And usually the price of the windshield is the price of a ski lesson. But in the majority of cases there was no money saved for lessons. "What, a buck and a half for a lesson? Say, do you know how much these racing boots set me back?"

There is a ski school at Mt. Mansfield that is tops. For a very reasonable fee anyone can take a course of instruction. It may cramp a flashy practice slope technique for a while, and it may cut down on the ski tow rides, but certainly it will pay dividends in decreased doctors' bills and increased enjoyment.

—Les Collins

## OUR 1941 PROGRAM

March 30

Military Patrol Race (Toll House 9:30 A. M.)

April 4 - 6

Stowe One-Man-Four Event Meet (Toll House)

April 13

Vermont State Downhill Championship for Women (Nose Dive 12 M.)—tentative.

April 26 - 27

Mt. Mansfield Sugar Slalom (Nose Dive)

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Mt. Mansfield Ski Club

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\* \* \* 25 Liberty St., Montpelier, Vt.

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From time to time some of our members become very disturbed because the Club does not advertise itself and the Mt. Mansfield region. In this day and age apparently anyone who does not advertise is considered deficient. Regardless of whether or not one is trying to sell something, ballyhoo is believed to be a necessary form of self expression. The fact that our Club has no commercial or promotional obligations makes no difference to those who feel that the primary function of all ski clubs is to lure people to their home centers.

We have tried to keep the Mt. Mansfield Club purely on an amateur basis. Those to whom has been entrusted the administration of the Club, having no motives other than an interest in skiing at Mt. Mansfield, have aimed at building a membership of skiers with the same interest, so that our cooperative effort will encourage the development of facilities for our mutual enjoyment.

Naturally the Club has become associated with interests other than those of a sporting character. And such commercial enterprises have provided the many attendant facilities without which no winter sports center can be complete. But while the Club's relationship with the various commercial interests has been extremely friendly, we have left strictly to them all promotional phases of the development work.

## EASTERN ASSOCIATION PUBLICITY

Sparkplugged by Harry Pollard of Lowell, Mass., the USEASA Publicity Committee is doing a terrific job this winter. Not only have there been a regular stream of press releases and feature stories pouring into the newspapers, but the Committee has sponsored a number of radio programs, conducted a poster contest, and generally brought the work of the Association to public attention.

One of the really noteworthy successes has been the popularizing of the third class proficiency tests. During the past three years only thirty-five tests had been passed. With the recent revision of the tests and the publicity campaign put on by the Association, over five hundred have been given so far this season. And this record is not due to the tie-up between the tests and the downhill racing classifications, since only about half as many classifications as last year have been awarded.

The Eastern Association through its officers, committees and member clubs is responsible for the sound progress of Eastern skiing. Every Eastern skier should join if he intends to do his part in the development of the sport. Thanks to the dynamic Mr. Pollard, both skiers and non-skiers are becoming more aware of all that the Association can do and is doing for skiing.

## A PRACTICAL SKI TECHNIQUE

By Ergo

In a previous article I explained my simplified classification of skiing turns based, you will recall, upon whether they are carried out in the vertical or in the horizontal plane. As the skier begins to feel more at home on the snow, however, it becomes advisable to master the art of shifting from one plane to another during the actual course of a turn. Thus, by fitting together separate phases of different manoeuvres, one is able to multiply indefinitely the movements at his command.

While of course the average skier is able to change planes in mid air without any difficulty, I must stress again the fundamental principle of my practical technique. Only by harnessing the instinctive reflexes can one hope to salvage anything from what otherwise must be complete chaos. Rather than seeking to break the skier into unfamiliar and impossible patterns, as seems to be the aim of other schools, the practical technique seizes upon the inevitable, and by carrying it aggressively through to its logical conclusion, turns it to somewhat less disadvantage.

### Half Roll Off A Traverse

Suppose for illustrative purposes you are crossing a steep slope from right to left. That is, if you were facing directly down the fall-line, or line of least resistance, you would be moving toward your left, only really you are not, so you are moving more or less straight, which would be left if you actually were going straight. Your skis are well separated of course, with the body leaning heavily in toward the slope.

You would like now to go the other way. With a quick movement insert your left pole between your knees and exert enough pressure to pry your right ski over into its outside edge. At the same time your left ski is forced more firmly to the outside edge, which is not too good, but by then you will be facing downhill in reversed stem position. At once dive forward with determination onto your intended outer shoulder, freeing your skis and poles as you do so, and execute a smart half roll on your shoulder blades. Before you know it you will find yourself moving across the slope from left to right.

The beauty of this turn is that if you should miss regaining your skis on the first roll, you can continue rolling, which if prolonged sufficiently will get you to the bottom of the slope anyway.

## RANCH CAMP NEWS

A decade ago the song heard everywhere was evangelist Billy Sunday's "Brighten the Corner Where You Are." Remember it?

Apparently the admonition must have taken root in the minds of the various folks who have looked after things at Ranch Camp during the eight years it has been operated as a ski camp. Not only has the Ranch cook house always been a colorful spot, but each bunk house as well. The means of decoration—ski posters.

This winter has been no exception and the Camp is displaying old favorites along with a brand new crop more colorful than ever before. Some of the ski

posters being put out these days by railroads, skiing centers, State publicity departments and skiing equipment manufacturing concerns, are real works of art in their way. Several displayed on the walls at the Ranch are examples of what it is possible to do, even in a commercial way, with such glorious subjects as snow blanketed mountains, twisting ski tracks and ruddy faced skiers.

A guest bunking in one of the Ranch cabins expressed a bit of surprise, but also a bit of admiration at finding two attractive winter sports posters, advertising a neighboring State, prominently framed on the walls. Well, skiing knows no State lines, or boundary lines of any kind for that matter. And furthermore, as long as visiting skiers can look out our windows and see the heaps and heaps of Vermont powder we have been blessed with recently, we're willing to use all the ski posters we can get for inside decoration.

—Trim Conkling

## LETTERS

Manchester, N. H.

Dear Sir:

About a year ago your professor of the practical ski technique mentioned during one of his inspiring lessons a little blonde in a red parka. In the last issue he again speaks of a blonde who is staying at The Lodge. Is it the same one?

Austin Blakley

(Ergo says it is her daughter, and she's a honey.--Ed.)

Sun Valley, Idaho

Dear Sir:

That guy Bentner what wrote the Snow Slinger column in your Feb. issue sure is some smarty-tarty. Where does he get off at talking about women's ski clothes? We girls out here are mad all the way through.

"Disgusted"

## THE SNOW SLINGER

Ten years ago the downhill-only boys in this neck of the woods had to get their schussing the hard way. And climbing a mountain was only a small part of it. First you had to reach the mountain, over single track roads until with luck you arrived at the end of what passed as plowing. Then on skis for several miles to where the real uphill started. The ski trails were foot paths and abandoned logging roads. Seal skins were something you read about in the occasional foreign skiing journal that came your way. We were men in those days, my son—but we aged quickly.

Last winter I heard a husky lad complain that there had been no fire in the summit hut, so he had to ski down to the hotel for lunch. Well, he was smart. Frozen sandwiches in a blizzard, with the perspiration forming icicles up and down your spine, don't exactly keep the family doctor at arms' length.

Mt. Mansfield in the late twenties and early thirties required a major expedition to make the summit. You skied in from as near Harlow Hill as you could drive, and battled up the Toll Road through a couple

of feet of untracked powder. Nowadays the Toll Road is packed enough so that one can keep moving, but then the so-called ride was as much work as the climb.

The foot trail at Camels Hump was better running, but harder to reach. It always was a good idea to fill the Model A with enough strong arms to lift it out of the ditch. Burke Mountain near Lyndonville had the sweetest trail of any, an old cart track that was ten feet wide and downhill all the way.

Things are different now, and I for one am not sorry. The old days may have produced a rough and ready brand of skier who could get around anywhere without benefit of technique or first aid, but in this year of grace there isn't a high school kid in the State who by his second season can't run hoops around the old timer six days a week and twice on Sunday.

Today trails are better and equipment is better. There are warm shelters on most all the mountains. And there are plenty of proficient instructors who can teach you more in ten lessons than we ever learned in ten years.

Sure we got our kicks. But now there are opportunities to satisfy every mood. So unless rheumatism has got you down, don't shed any tears for the good old days.

—Harry Bentner

## MILITARY PATROL RACING

The Club's first venture in sponsoring group recreational competitions can be considered a success. Despite the fact that the military patrol race held on March 2 had only three teams entered, it was greeted enthusiastically by those participating. The comparatively small field was due perhaps to a lack of definite advance information, but more entries are expected for the next one.

The idea of the military patrol race is for teams of three, carrying packs, to tour by map through several checking points and return to the start. The pack requirement is fifteen pounds for men and eight for women. The maps are distributed fifteen minutes before the start, and each patrol may pick its own route as long as it passes all of the checkers.

The best time for the first race was turned in by a mixed patrol composed of Miss Sybil Wilkins, Richard Austin and Bob Johnson. The course was between seven and ten miles, and the winners finished in 4 hrs. 33 min. Next was Roger Adams, Waddy Way and Warren Demeritt with 4 hrs. 42 min. Miss Betty Ware, Miss Alice Newell and David Burt stopped at Ranch Camp for tea, so chalked up 5 hrs. 21 min. for the booby prize.

All packs were weighed at the starting line—and this operation provided most of the laughs. Every movable object was utilized to bring the packs up to the weight limit. Miss Wilkins carried a mud-hook and a monkey wrench. Austin and Johnson each had a couple of mud-hooks and assorted tools. Miss Newell used a car jack for ballast, while David Burt loaded himself with three bricks. Some of the other boys carried bottled goods which could be consumed when the going got tough.

—H. H. Prestwich

## THE SKI PATROL

By Luther S. Booth

When everything seems to be going wrong and we have that "Ah, what's the use!" feeling, we can look through our files and read some of our fan mail which, in this year of adjustment to a difficult situation, has outnumbered our pan mail. We wish we had the space to print some of these letters, but that is not possible. Some of the more grateful—and financially able—writers inclosed generous donations. The donations were gratefully received but, best of all, it is nice to know that one's efforts were appreciated.

It is also gratifying to see an awakening interest on the part of skiers in general in the work of the Ski Patrol. Many have asked about the patrol and have become Associate Members of the National Ski Patrol System. Others have applied for membership in the Mt. Mansfield Patrol. It is evident that we must set a limit as to the number of members of the patrol and establish a waiting list. But there will be changes from time to time and, eventually, the older generation must give way to the youngsters. So, if you are truly interested and willing to work, write in now and get your name on file. Be sure to give name, address, skiing experience, first aid training, and any other qualifications you believe yourself to have.

### New Equipment

A short time ago we purchased some furniture pads, the kind the movers wrap around your grand piano—if you have a grand piano. They are large enough to wrap the largest skier up like a mummy; they serve the double purpose of keeping the victim warm and padding the toboggan. We used one on a recent Sunday and on the way back from the hospital decided to try it out for ourselves. On the floor of the station wagon was the toboggan with the pad in place. We stretched out and had a most comfortable ride in spite of the fact that the bottom had dropped out of the road and ruts a foot deep wandered in all directions. If you must ride on a toboggan, ask for one with the new pad.

### SLALOM

In a recent issue of THE CENTRAL SKI SPORT David J. Bradley writes of the slalom—"Too often the over enthusiastic course setter will set out such a tangle of flushes, blind gates, pipe-lines, and rat-traps that the course only needs the addition of a water hole and a couple of barrels to crawl through to complete the job. A slalom isn't supposed to be a sort of outdoor version of the pin-ball drug store game. When the gates are set so close that a man can't get his ears through, then it isn't a race."

Although Bradley is discussing the slalom in connection with Midwest skiing terrain, his remarks on course setting are applicable to a tendency fairly frequent here in the East. A tight course, we call it, using every flag obtainable and cramming them onto an open slope so that all the spectators can watch the racers tying themselves into running bowlines.

As Bradley points out in his article, slalom setting is an art. And like any art form it achieves per-

fection by simplicity, by a rigorous subordination of unessential details. There is no virtue in using three pairs of flags if two will attain the same result.

The slalom is a test of speed judgment. Not all-out speed as in the downhill race, but still the absolute maximum speed possible within the limitations imposed by the course. Arnold Lunn has called it a test of morale. And because speed is the essential factor, the runner who can ski fast with precision should not be penalized by a course that gives an advantage to one who crawls down through the flags on his hands and knees.

### The Toll Road Has a Past

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When Admiral Dewey made his triumphal return to Vermont at the turn of the century, Dr. C. Seward Webb of Shelburne financed a celebration of Dewey Day on Mt. Mansfield. Two steam boilers, an engine, a dynamo, and a searchlight were hauled up to the hotel. The searchlight was placed on the Nose, and the rest of the equipment set up to generate electricity for the display. The boys who dragged the camera laden toboggans up the Toll Road a few years ago will appreciate the task which confronted those entrusted with carrying out the celebration in honor of the Hero of Manila.

As early as 1915 my father skied up Mansfield. But those trips were made as a convenience to reach timber rather than as pleasure jaunts. Recreational skiing on the mountain dates back only to 1923 when father, my oldest brother Craig, and Bob Wells took an all-day trip up and back. In these times of ski tows and chair lifts it is worth a moment's pause to recall a hardier age, not so long ago, when a winter ski ascent of Mansfield consumed the greater part of a day and was a feat to be talked about with no small amount of respect.

### NOTES & COMMENTS

The statement of Sepp Ruschp that Marilyn Shaw is the finest slalom racer among women skiers in the country was substantiated when Marilyn won the National Women's Slalom Championship recently at Aspen, Colorado.

Skiers who drive over the badly rutted gravel road between Stowe and Mt. Mansfield are prone to forget the excellent work done by the Highway Department in maintaining good driving conditions throughout the winter. It must be remembered that one of Vermont's pressing problems in highway improvement is to complete the surfacing of its large gravel road mileage within the funds available. There still are many gravel sections in the State carrying a great deal heavier travel than the Mt. Mansfield highway, and these on a basis of people being served naturally must be given priority in any long-range construction program. However, the Department is conducting a traffic count on the road to the mountain, and the volume of winter recreational traffic will receive proper consideration in the State's highway planning studies.