

Ottawa Ski Club News

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The Skier's Prayer.—O Patron Saint of skiers, whoever thou art, see our distress and give us snow, not in light airy flurries languidly drooping from azure skies, but dry powdery snow, hard driven by a howling Nor'-Easter, and let it blow and pile up for three days and three nights—and from the Devil and his work, the wretched south wind, the disgusting thaw, the clammy rain, the treacherous icy crust and the bare stones, for ever deliver us.

But the Devil fooled himself this time.—But that heavy and devilish rain of Friday—that appalling waste of nature, whereby what might have been nearly twelve inches of good snow came in the shape of an inch of water—did not do nearly so much damage as inexperienced skiers imagine. The regular trails were a bit hard and icy of course, but the unpacked snow, anywhere in the bush, was in that marvelous shape which has been variously described as “honey-combed” “sugary” or again “salty”, like March snow, soft and yet enabling the skis to grip, in a word “Très skiable” as the French put it, and the going anywhere out of the trails was extremely enjoyable.—So the devil fooled himself, and those of our members who after taking a look at the icy pavements from their window, mournfully went back to their fireside, fooled themselves as well. What a pity it is that there should be so much misconception about snow conditions! Let us remember once for all that far from injuring the snow, a hard rain makes it all the better for the use of skis, unless it freezes as it comes down, or unless it is followed by very soft weather. When the Canyon trail is hard, why not switch over to some old and unused trail like Cooper's or Kirk's Ferry's.—The Descent of the Canyon was a dream—a bit of a nightmare in spots, but generally very good. The rain and the Devil were not however, wholly responsible for this. Capt. T. J. Morin and his squad of Night Riders had been on the job until the late hours of Saturday night—removing bumps, cross checking and placing tons of fresh snow.

Thursday's night hike—Twenty-six people turned out for the first night hike, in spite of the torrential rain, the open creeks and the darkness—the worst conditions perhaps under which a night hike was ever run. They got soaked, but had a very good time otherwise. Let us all go out this Thursday (Jan.24). You can leave any time by the Wrightville car, buses will be available for the return trip on the Chelsea Road at 11.15. The moon will be out.

Second Preliminary race.—Saturday Jan. 19—There were six competitors, S. Robbins, B. Orrell, H. Bagguley, H. Douglas, L. Lagimodière and I. Carrière. Robbins came first in 36 min. and 30 sec., followed by Orell in 37 min. and 35 sec. and Bagguley in 37 min. and 48 sec. Bagguley's ski came off when crossing the open Hootchy-Kootchy creek and floated several hundred feet down stream.

Coming events this week—On Thursday Jan. 24th—Moonlight hike to Dome Hill Lodge. Buses in attendance for the return trip at the Chelsea Road at 11.15 p.m.—On Saturday, Third and last Preliminary race on Ironside course.—Jumping competition at Rockliffe.—Dome-hill Juniors excursion to Ironside (Apply Mrs. Semple Q. 6747) and Gatineau Girls trip to Pink Lake (Apply Miss Roger Q. 936).—Some time during the week—an old fashioned snow storm.—The Club Championship Race will be held on Sunday Feb. 2nd, at Camp Fortune, and the Ontario Championship race on Sunday Feb. 10th.

About those fees.—Just for the sake of those who might still be in arrears, let us say once more that all fees are to be paid at McGiffin's store, Sparks St. Checkers at all lodges have received strict instructions to refuse admittance to repeating guests.

The Trail of the Merry-Go-Round—Progress report. Captain Morin and his squad have reached as far as Desolation Valley in this Westward extension of the trails of the Ottawa Ski Club, clearing as they went the following hills "Big Dipper, Little Dipper, Kicking Horse Pass and Curve of Destiny." The cleaned surface on these hills is as wide as the widest gorges of the Canyon, allowing for ample track room, and there are, in addition, miles of clean bush on both sides for those who would rather take the virgin snow.—The Curve of Destiny will connect with the "Grande Descente" (alias Creely's hill) and the trail returns to Camp Fortune by way of Mud Lake. The inauguration ceremonies will take place on Feb. 3rd. Ye Ed. has been instructed to buy a bottle of Champagne. He will see that it is not spilt uselessly.

Tid-Bits—The coldest spot on any of our trails has been found. It is the street car stand, on the Plaza, at 25° below, especially for those who, like Ye Ed. in the haste of changing from working clothes to City clothes before leaving Camp Fortune, forget to put on their underwear. What about putting up a shelter there, with a stove or two, where one could fry a bit of bacon while waiting for a street car?—The long delayed circular of the Toronto Ski Club has at last come to hand. The delay is explained. They had a foot of snow in Toronto and wanted to keep it quiet, for fear visitors from other cities might sponge on them. Their Editor, is asking "for volunteers with axes to clean the trails" Mercy! are they allowed to slash trees that way in the parks of Queen City?—"Mister" said a small boy on the trail "Who is the guy that edits the "News".—Is there any kick coming" prudently asked Ye Ed.—"Well, it ain't bad so far as it goes, but there ain't enough of it. Which goes to show that Ye Ed badly needs assistance!—A young man writes that he was accused of stealing poles and wants his good name to be vindicated in this circular. (I would not worry, W. R. it is an old dodge. Ye Ed. got a pair of new poles once that way, but it does not always work. They thought you were easy).—Messrs Macdonald and Warrington, of Revelstoke fame, were at Camp Fortune on Jan. 5th. They did the Club the courtesy of taking a spill on the Canyon.

Nothing in it! The sweat shop and slave driver's methods alleged to be used by Old Man Joe in the making and maintaining of his trails were the object of a thorough investigation during the cold week-end of Jan. 5th, when it was expected that the abuses of the system would show at their worst at 25 below. Ye Ed. is very glad to report that things are not nearly so badly as painted. The "Workers" or "Night Riders" as they call themselves, are not kept chained in pairs as you may have heard, and hot pokers and whips are only used with discretion. Neither are they made to wield the axe and clippers day and night. The cutting of the trees only goes on during the day; the night is spent in shovelling and cross-checking. They are given time, while on the trail, to eat the grub which they bring and pay for and the alleged cases of cannibalism have not been substantiated. As to sleeping, it is believed they do so when they get home on Sunday night, but Old Man Joe's supervision does not extend that far. The only serious criticism Ye Ed. might offer is that the pay is somewhat inadequate for men who might have families to support, but most of the chaps are young and single. Once in a while, however a comment like the following, made by a big-hearted visitor (generally a guest) makes compensation:—"The Canyon was in fair shape to-day, I guess they have been working on it." Enlistments for the "Night-Riders" are still taken. No questions asked about the past.

Yes! Night hikers to Dome hill Lodge are welcome any night of the week and will continue to be **so long as the revenue from the Cafeteria is satisfactory.** If you are making a party, write John Kritch, Caretaker O.S.C., Ironside, mailing letter at 1 p.m. the day before. With its big orthophonic (the records were chosen by Mabel Rainboth) its ice cream, soft drinks and **hot** dogs stands and its bright fire place, the old Lodge is now an extremely enjoyable place.

Ski Exchange—For sale one pair of ski boots, size 7, scarcely worn. Telephone Queen 1530.—Found, a pair of ski poles on Wrightville car. Owner please phone Q. 2527, from 5 to 6.30 p.m.

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MORE ABOUT CHECKING

"Your suggestion that checking is cowardly and that we should rush headlong full speed on all slopes and hold a post-mortem after the fight is over," says Mabel, "does not appeal to me in the least. I may be dense, but a fall never taught me anything. The only good thing I gather from your rather sarcastic article is that speed can be checked by some manoeuvre which you call "stemming" and I want to know what stemming is so that I can use it when I go too fast."

How you put it, Mabel, and what an ungrateful wretch you are! We never said that checking was cowardly in itself, but that constant checking, where it is not absolutely necessary, takes all the pleasure out of ski-ing. Any skier worthy of that name should know how to check however, and if you do not, it is high time that you should learn.

Before learning to stem, we would advise you to learn "snowploughing" which is a preliminary to stemming as it were, and a most useful, though somewhat painful way, of checking one's speed on hard trails or roads where the snow is packed hard. Do not, however, try it when you are going full speed; that would be useless or even dangerous as you would be likely to fall forward. Use it at the start of a slope, as a preventive.

The snowploughing position is as follows: Points together, heels apart, skis on the inside edge for an outward thrust, skis on the inside edge to pull them inwards.

How to get in the snowploughing position—Push the skis apart symmetrically and stand forward on both. The speed is regulated by the width of the plough and by edging. Edging inwards is produced by making one's self knock-kneed, changes of direction are obtained by unequal weighting of the skis (Rickmers) As Richardson puts it:—"Straddle the legs as widely apart and turn the toes inward as much as possible." The difficulty is in straddling sufficiently. Another difficulty is that the skis always have a tendency to cross each other in front, and so to occasion a fall forward, but this can be avoided by practice. Richardson recommends practising a minute or two every night before going to bed. Bilgeri (See Annual, 1925-26) makes his pupils practise on the flat, by **jumping** into position, (knees up) with the ski points together and the heels well apart, but tells them that when running they will push the heels outwards (never jump) into the snowploughing position.

With a good and firm snow-plough, heels well apart, you will check your speed to a snail's pace, and you will understand why the night riders cross-check the slopes of the Canyon every Saturday night. This is to give you a chance to snowplough.

From the snowploughing, one passes into the stemming position, the most useful accomplishment of the skier, and the manoeuvre from which all turns are derived. See next issue of the "News."

He Has Got Them Memorized.—"I have carefully memorized your instructions on turns and stops" writes a correspondent "and intend to make use of them at the first opportunity. Watch me making a neat jump stop next time some clumsy skier drops ahead of me on the trail."

Our correspondent is joking, of course. He knows, as we all do, that ten minutes' practice are worth a whole life's memorizing of theory on turns and swings. And yet a good many of us are satisfied with a vague bookish knowledge of these accomplishments, trusting that somehow we will know just what to do when occasion arises. And when that occasion comes, when a tree or a ravine or some other obstacle suddenly looms ahead of us on a mad descent, all we can do is to sit down ignominiously.

The main reason perhaps why so many people are unwilling to practice swings and turns is that they imagine that they cannot be learned without a great deal of falling, and they do not care to go through the ordeal. If they have to fall one hundred times learning a turn, they would just as soon fall occasionally on the trail, which is not so bad reasoning after all. There is an idea that all these turns

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and swings can only be performed at a high rate of speed. Nothing is farther from the truth. The best instructors see to it that their pupils fall as little as possible when they attempt to master the turns, because falls teach nothing and the pupil gets discouraged. Practice at first on a very gentle slope. Go carefully, slowly and deliberately through all the motions of the turn, whether it be a Christiana, a Telemark or a Jump turn. They when you are sure that you are doing it right, start from a little higher up on the slope, and keep practising until the motions become instinctive as it were, when you are able to perform at a high rate of speed.

ABOUT SKIS AND SKI-ING EQUIPMENT

For general purposes the right length of ski is one which comes even with the finger-tips, standing with arm upraised. A ski that is too long is unwieldy and difficult to control; too short, it will break speed and interfere with balance. A slightly shorter ski, however, may be used on occasion. It has advantages in bush trailing where the path is narrow and the underbrush thick; in climbing, particularly in the herring-bone where an inch or two less make a great difference in ease of manipulation; and in the practice of turns and stops on steep slopes. But if it is too short, it is a nuisance. It slows up ones progress both on hills and on the level and in breaking trail in fresh snow is continually sinking through or sticking at the tip, particularly if there is surface crust and soft snow beneath. A ski of the right length distributes the skier's weight more evenly.

Width depends a good deal upon the use for which the ski is intended. The jumper chooses a very broad ski, with two or more grooves, flat top and squared edges. This insures staidness in his spring and a good gripping surface for landing. The beginner likes a wide ski, not too heavy, and with a single groove. The racer adopts a slender blade of hickory or specially selected mountain ash, in which width and weight are reduced to the closest margin compatible with efficiency. This fragile ski is very attractive, its graceful lines making the ordinary ski appear clumsy in comparison. When it first appeared here, it was taken up enthusiastically by some of our more ardent skiers, particularly the fair sex with whom beauty naturally takes precedence over utility. After a season or two of experiment, however, they found that it was not so good for general use. A wider ski is better for trekking in fresh snow and is easier to control in the practice of turns and stops. The racing ski should be left to the racers who use it on prepared trails, well packed down before the race, and who of course are well versed in control and style before they enter the racing game. The average skier will get more satisfaction from the semi-racers, or "trek" ski, which has been imported from Norway within the past year or two, and which is a compromise between the old "Northland" width and the racer, combining the good qualities of both. This ski can be used equally well for cross country or for hill work, in fresh snow or on packed tracks; it is narrow enough to manipulate easily, yet steady enough for skilful execution of style manoeuvres.

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