

Winding Trails:

by Al Hobart

Thursday, January 28, 1965
Illinois Valley News, Cave Junction

Learning To Ski Part 2

It may sound silly to you, but I have discovered a number of ways of getting myself half killed and enjoying it – enjoying it so much, in fact, that I can hardly wait to get back and try it again. I say this while my swollen foot is parboiling in the little foot tub, and I’m trying to figure a way to get my wrenched shoulder in there with it, a feat that looks utterly impossible but that I should be able to accomplish after the session of weird acrobatics I performed in Mt. Ashland recently.

It’s all the fault of Bill and Claudette Pruitt, who invited me to go to Mt. Ashland as their guest for a bout of skiing. Bill, who, among many other top-notch athletic accomplishments – mountain climbing, hiking (he recently set a one day record for hike-running the 54-mile distance between Grants Pass and Agness, on the Rogue), river boat guiding, et al. – is an expert ski artist, is also well known for his mountain rescue work, and as organizer of the Mt. Ashland ski patrol.

Bill found out somehow – probably from my climbing-hiking pals up town – about me being the classiest skier

in Packer’s Gulch. So it was inevitable that we get together to compare our various points of excellence. At fancy skiing, Bill’s superiority vastly outshines anything I’ll ever be able to perform on skis, but I quickly demonstrated my superior skill at complicated falling and ski entanglement.

We were at the resort eight hours, and if Bill had been free, as he had expected to be, he would have given me lessons the whole time. But a ski patrol emergency took him away from Claudette and me for much of the time. The emergency consisted of an acute shortage in the ski patrol due to the unexpectedly great crowd of humans that flooded the resort – about a thousand people, six or seven hundred there to ski. So Bill was shanghaied into helping patrol the slopes, watching for accidents, ready at a moment’s notice to dash to the rescue with stretcher and first aid treatment. Six injured skiers were carried off the slopes on stretchers by the alert ski patrol while I was there.

Much of my time was spent standing on the sidelines watching, fascinated, as the more advanced skiers zig-zagged so swiftly and gracefully down the steep slope past me, sadistically rejoicing when even one of these would

occasionally take a spill.

My first lesson was given by Claudette, who watched over me until I had mastered, after a fashion, the first rudiments of the “snow-plow,” then she left me and went flitting off down the slope like an ecstatic swallow, making graceful parallel turns to start each new traverse, then back up the long slope on the ski lift to begin all over again.

Now and then Bill took time off from his patrol duties to check on my progress, give me encouragement and new pointers to practice. Once he took me up on one of the ski tows, the one for beginners, and guided me back down the slope on our skis, instructing me on every detail as we went along. A few more sessions like that one and maybe I’ll be ready to start making those parallel turns. That’ll be the day.

At the beginning of our day I was filled with apprehension, the fear of failure that always grips me when I undertake something new and ticklish, an annoying personal trait, but one that makes my joy all the greater when, and if, I finally succeed. At the close of the day’s experience, though, I was happier than I dared hope that morning. I had learned to do the snowplow turn, and could traverse down the slope in passable imitation of

a few hundred other skiers that were all around me. I could do the kick reverse turn, and a straight traverse without once falling, accomplishments that, after practicing alone on my rough home slope, I had all but given up hope of learning.

The method I used, before my day with Bill and Claudette, I call the retrospect method – when it’s too late, when I finally get myself untangled, I remember how I should have done it, the way the man in the book said. I learned from experience – and from Bill – that the man in the book and the man on the ski slope are chapters and volumes apart.

I don’t expect to ever achieve Bill’s perfection on skis, but after that Sunday’s thrilling experience I’m more determined than ever to learn how to ride those galloping, bucking, darting slats. Thanks to Bill and Claudette I’ve got a foot in the door now, and I’m going to squeeze my way in if it finishes killing me.

Some of my muscles feel as though they had been used as tow ropes, and various ligaments are hanging by a thread; in that one day I lost 4 lbs. of sweat and blubber. But it was one of my most thrilling experiences to date, and before Old Man Winter packs up and heads back to the North Pole I hope to have it repeated at least a dozen times or so.

Classifieds



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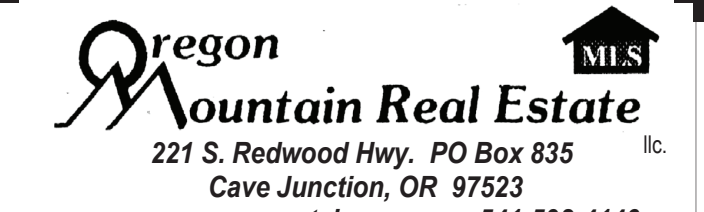
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Public Notice

Fire District Board Meeting Change
The Illinois Valley Fire District Board of Directors will hold a regular meeting at 7:00 p.m. at the Administration Building, 681 Caves Hwy., Cave Junction, OR, on Thursday, February 19, 2015. (Due to conflict in schedules - this meeting will be held on the 3rd Thursday of February).

The Board meeting agenda will include the annual Year in Review, as well as, the 2014 Annual Report. Additionally, the Board of Directors will be going through the Chief’s annual evaluation. And, any other matters that may be presented to the Fire Board of Commissioners for review or determination. The public is encouraged to attend this meeting.

(The meeting location is accessible to persons with disabilities.)
(The Board reserves the right to hold an executive session at this meeting under the authority of ORS 192.660.)
(Any comments or concerns must be submitted in writing.)
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