

SKIING

Once upon a time, someone was making skis of ash wood. Poles were a heavy bamboo & the plate sized baskets were bamboo & leather. There were 2 stores in the City that sold ski equipment, 1, the Ski & Sport Shop, downtown Cambie run by French Canadians, the Laurillards, & another, run by Gerry Everell. The Department stores probably sold as well. Where else would the ash & leather bindings come from. A boatmaker, Hamish Davidson began making laminated skis & these would be our next step up in equipment. I don't think maple was the intermediate step. It was probably 1937.

I began these notes, handwritten some years ago because they begin with: Yesterday, I went skiing to Whistler, a clear cold sunny day with daylight about 8 but no sun until 9 on the crest of the highest run. This was the 1st skiing of the season & I expected to be tired. I knew that since my seizure/stroke a year before, I wouldn't recognize any of the runs & I didn't but followed Ron Bruce who, with new 'fat skis' was running faster than I was & I thought I would lose him. He quit by 1:30 but I took 1 more run & actually wondered if I would emerge from the network of runs at the lot where he was parked. I'm here so I guess I did. I would have skied longer had we not been on runs in alternating sun & shade & some scraped areas. Anyway, I was pleased that at age 77 I was still skiing, not as tired as Ron appeared to be, & today my calf muscles weren't sore. This would be 2001.

It is now, 2001, my 66th year of skiing if I began skiing in 1937 as brother Henry believes. Henry knew a Larry Bruin from school. Larry skied on Grouse Mountain & he worked at the Two Skiers a few doors North of Hastings East side of Cambie. Henry & Larry would help Eric with mounting steel edges on skis, a luxury mine didn't have, & mount bindings, a time before great factories in who knows where, perhaps China, began producing skis by, I suppose, the millions, a time when skis were not like cars, with a new model each year. Eric had a cabin on Grouse & he invited friends for overnite stays. I was flattered to be invited to move in such company.

Our skiing began on the big hill, a descent of about 300 feet. I don't believe we used the rope tow & I know we took no lessons. We learned by watching & probably Larry & his friends showed Henry. We did acquire a book that taught in text & pictures how to turn, beginning with the snowplow turn & then the stem Christiana & from there, the Christiana, a turn that began with a slight opening of the skis into a V (still a far more graceful turn than what is learned at great expense today & performed at speed, as if the purpose of getting downhill was to travel fast & not that of enjoying the graceful movement of the turns we once did)

By 1939, Henry, Larry & 2 or more others began building a cabin out of lumber on Grouse & this was used by them until Henry entered the Army in 1941. We-for I got included, would go up to the cabin on a Saturday nite after newspaper delivery, so I guess there were Sundays when we didn't go to Church. The trip up would be by streetcar on Lonsdale to about 25th St. & from there we walked in the dark using a 'bug' a candle in a tin can. We couldn't afford batteries. The cabin was in what was called 'The Village' which was still a good distance walk below the ski area. Somewhere about the cabin area was a place called the 'Banff' which served some commercial function. I skied very seldom till after the War in 1945, probably by 1947-8 when I began going to UBC. Once I joined the Newman Club at UBC I began going with them to Mount Baker. By this time, Henry & I had laminated skis made by Hamish Davidson on Georgia, South side near Denman. These Davidson skis with steel edges, & cable bindings & U.S. Army ski boots were the standard equipment then for most Vancouver skiers.

During these Mount Baker years, the Newman group went to Sun Valley in Idaho, then the skiing site for the rich, made famous by the movie, Sun Valley. We may have, we must have also skied at Alta (how could I forget?) Aspen in Colorado was the 3rd of the names in skiing & there I didn't go. What made them the 'places' to go probably because they each paid someone to say they were good & they provided places to spend money when you didn't ski.

We did ski at Stevens Pass in Washington for it was the 2nd Washington mountain Vancouver people skied on weekends. I don't recall when chairlifts came into local use but certainly by the time we were skiing Mount Baker. I think the chairlift may have been 1 of the reasons we skied Baker, along with longer runs.

The skiing fraternity in Vancouver in the 1930's & 40's & probably the 50's was small. Walking up mountains carrying skis was not everyone's idea of fun. One knew & socialized with those who skied on the North Shore mountains. Many had cabins (there were about 300 cabins on Hollyburn in those years. There was little mixing as I recall it, of people who skied on Hollyburn, Grouse, Seymour. one skied 1 or the other; & skiers in B.C. were a hardy crowd. There was no transportation for Vancouver skiers up their mountain, from the paved road end. Those who had no cabin carried skis & lunch 2000-3000 vertical feet, skied, & walked down. For we on Grouse, this meant a street car or walk to the North Van ferry & then the street car up Lonsdale when we 1st skied before the War-end.

At some time (was it by 1950) I discovered Diamond Head Lodge in Garibaldi Park built by the Norwegian Brothers, Ottar & Emil Brandvold. West Vancouver resident, Joan Matthews, (built like a brick s.s. we would once have said) was with them by the time I 1st went to the Lodge. I vaguely recall her mother, of like build. I don't think Joan & Ottar were married when I 1st was there. Perhaps they were 'shacked up' at the Lodge cabin. They did marry & had 2 sons at least. The buildings were a main Lodge with room for about 10, a cabin occupied by the B's & a 3rd building of lesser size was built while I was still working there part of 1 summer. What a place to live!

Emil never married. He was a tall blond haired quiet man, big boned & strong who looked Scandinavian & spoke with the 'lilt' of one. He was a man I have always treasured knowing. Their cook was Millie, a short woman in her 40's, with straggly hair, who cooked plain fare, well, & fed us well.

I worked with the Brandvold's 1 summer when they were erecting a 3rd building. I recall only that I was carrying sod for the roof. In ski season during the time, Christmas, Easter, when people were staying at the Lodge for a few days & before a snowmobile was in use for transporting guest & for clearing a track needed because of the heavy snowfalls, I would go out the 7? miles or so to bring in the guests. I must have done so at other times because I have so strong a sense of having done so a number of times. Going through the forested area from the end of gravelled road out of Squamish, the track could be difficult to follow in a new snowfall & often with snow falling & low cloud once one was in open country for it was not a track used daily. To put on a pair of skis at the Lodge & set out for the road, with the snow falling, & alone, meet a few people at road end & return with them to the Lodge. What a wonderful experience, often, the only sound when alone was the skis tracking through the snow & the squeak of the leather bindings on the skis.

At nite, we wore battery powered headlamps or carried 'bugs' (a candle in a tin, usually a 4 pound jam tin). The skis were downhill & not cross-country skis of the type used when cross country came back into fashion-when was this, beginning by the 1970's?), with a binding that could be used for both downhill & touring. The skins were a strap-on mohair, usually U.S. Army issue, as often, so were the skis, painted white. The cross-country would have been too narrow in the deep snow, with an overnite pack to carry. These trips over several years will never be forgotten, not individual happenings but the 3 hour ski in, at times less, often in the dark, the deep powder snow, at times untracked, the stillness but for the snow & the movement of people. The Brandvolds eventually acquired a snowmobile for transport.

I still skied at Mount Baker in Washington State, I think because there were people in the Newman Club at UBC & in the Alumni who skied, until Whistler came into Being. I must have skied on Mt. Seymour but few times & Grouse, few times as well but only because of brother Henry & early in the War.

I never became skilled in turning on skis going downhill. I may have taken a lesson. I have the sense of being a timid skier in my early years, & later I graduated from the snowplow to what was known as a stem christie to a christie (where you kept your skis together in making a turn. Henry & I both acquired U.S. Army skis & boots at the end of the War. I graduated at some time, probably with the opening of Whistler, to the black metal Head's ski.

Bey was not much interested in skiing. She learned quickly & quit quickly; so with William, Janine & Patrick who were soon skiing better than I. I was buying a season pass until 2005-6 but did not ski the 2 years before, nor the last. For the last 3, I paid \$ 99 for 2 of the years only. Whistler had become too busy, too rich I keep saying to people, & too distant with its 4 hours on a busy road. I know today that I associate skiing with quiet & few people. Beverly would not have been pleased if I had skied for Ron Bruce was skiing then & she would have been having a guest for dinner as we returned home.

I have been looking through what were to be daily notes, a 'Diary' made since 1974 & I seem to be going skiing Saturday or Sunday or both once Whistler's season began. I would have a season pass as would W. & P. & for a time, J. Driving to Whistler in those early years with them didn't seem such an ordeal & hazard. We must have left Vancouver early in the morning. Who made breakfast? How soon was it that W. & P. were skiing better than I. I still have the Rossignol Strato skis, as does B. & then their successors. & my boots