



**Peak PERFORMERS**

## Retiree / ski instructor

**Ernie Mareske** has skied since he was a child. "I love the winter, and that's why I will never go south," he says.

**Name:** Ernie Mareske  
**Age:** 75  
**Hometown:** Dubuque  
**Training:** Skis several hours four mornings a week, in addition to instructing school groups on skiing at Sundown Ski Area in Dubuque. He walks about 45 minutes each morning along with his wife, and in the off-season he plays golf three times a week.  
**Diet:** Nothing special, but tries to watch fat intake.  
**What got him started:** He has skied since he was a child. Back then, it was trudge up the hill with skis over the shoulder, then ski down and do it again. Eventually Mareske got involved in designing tow ropes for access to the top of the hills. A friend built a ski jump, which he started using. When he was younger, he competed frequently in ski jumping.  
His interest in skiing and outdoor activities landed him in the 10th Mountain Division during World War II. He first was in Colorado for training and then was sent to Italy.  
Eventually a local ski club was formed and the group, along with the city of Dubuque, kept a ski hill open until the 1970s when Sundown Ski Area opened. This is his 12th year as an instructor at Sundown, which coincides with the time he has been retired from John Deere.  
**Accomplishments:** Mareske just wants to have fun, enjoy life and teach children how to ski. He was part of the core group that formed the Snowmad Ski Club and helped keep the early ski hill running in Dubuque for area children. He also likes the fact that he taught his children and grandchildren how to ski. It's not that any of them went on to be competitors, he says, but they enjoy skiing.  
**Advice:** Anyone with some coordination can ski, Mareske says. And it's fun. "When you are going down the hill with the wind in your face, you forget all your troubles."  
— Juli Probasco-Sowers

HARRY BAUMERT/THE REGISTER