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Ski Carnival Line Is Picking Up

By BEN KERN
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There are signs that things might be picking up in the spring carnival line at the ski areas.

Usually attendance is pretty much limited to the "die-hards," another name for skiers who never forget that sometimes, when sun, snow and temperature are right, the world's best skiing is to be had on "corn-snow" in the thawing range.

Some will never know. Paul Augustine at Afton Alps tells how skiers turned out recently when the snow was fresh but sticky, and later, after it has thawed and refrozen several times and turned to "corn," how they stayed away.

Augustine

"One of them called me on a sunny day and asked me how it was. I said 'excellent.' He laughed and hung up."

However, attendance seems to be picking up at the carnivals. Giant Ridge, up at Biwabik, Minn., had 400 on hand at its carnival last Saturday, including two bus loads from Minneapolis.

Virginia's Lookout Mountain is planning one Sunday.

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My Grand Marais, Minn., informant, Howard Joynes, tells me that the Sawtooth Mountain Development Corp. of that city has strong hopes that the Area Redevelopmen Administration will approve a $690,000 loan to fix up Sawtooth Mountain (730-foot vertical) this summer.

What they want to do is put in a chairlift, a lot of new runs and chalets at the top and bottom.

Most of the runs there are south-facing. Joynes insists this is an advantage that far north. They need shelter from the north winds in midwinter and the sun for cornsnow in the spring, he says.

Nelson

George Nelson Jr., who will have them facing both ways after next summer, agrees that south-facing is okay up there.

Joynes, a skier, told me that the cornsnow was "excellent" at Nelson's Lutsen last weekend. Lutsen was outside the heavy snow area during the last storm and has been making snow to cover bare spots.

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Bob Leaper, manager of Quadna Mountain ski area at Hill City, Minn., just got back from a central division Professional Ski Instructors Association examiners' meeting.

Leaper

It looks as if the divisions (eight of them over the nation, including Alaska) are finally getting co-ordinated so that a certificate from any division will be universally acceptable.

This is important to a lot of instructors. It isn't exactly the world's least migratory calling. General acceptance started somewhat last year, Leaper said. "For instance, I taught at Vail last year" (before Quadna got started).

I don't take that to mean much. Leaper could teach on the moon if he had transportation and they had snow up there.

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I wonder whether the "new leisure" won't lead to midweek "weekends," especially during the winter, in years to come.

A breakup of the pattern wherein nearly everyone has the same two days off every week would do a lot to relieve crowding and traffic congestion around the fun centers.

I don't know of any place where the advantages of fewer people are more obvious than on the slopes. Skiing a deserted area in fresh powder, of course, is an ideal achieved maybe once in a lifetime, if one is lucky.

A certain amount of lively company is cheering and stimulating, but even an extrovert can tell you how early

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