

# Philosophical Ski Tow Bosses, Riders Hoping

By JACK NORSTAD  
Sunday Tribune Staff Writer

"We live on hope and weather forecasts," said Gordie Bowen, operator of Mt. Normandale ski area south of Minneapolis.

"The skiing business is a lot of fun," said Marjorie Benedikter from her Moon Valley retreat near Shakopee, "but I'd hate to depend on it for groceries."

"One good snow, just one good snow," pleaded Gay Harmon of St. Paul's Snail Lake area.

And on and on the chorus rises — from ski tow operators, sporting goods salesmen and frustrated Twin Cities skiers, who must either travel north or stay home and berate the contrary fate that dumps tons of the stuff on Iowa and Chicago and leaves them stranded in a frigid belt of gray, splotchy and totally unskiable snow.

Hardest hit, of course, are the ski tow operators who estimate that a good half of their season has gone by without nickel No. 1 coming into the turnstile.

All have sizeable investments tied up in equipment, much of it new since last year; buildings, labor and a big inventory of ski shop merchandise.

Most are accepting the situation philosophically. ("What else can we do?" they ask) and even manage to make optimistic noises when the word "snow" is mentioned.

But hovering over all of them is the specter of 1953-54 when they were closed down for all but a few short days during the entire long, miserable season.

The last two seasons were kinder as skiing began the first week in December and stayed good well into March.

Last year, by this time, Bowen reports some 18,000 skiers had coughed up their



Norstad

tow fees at Mt. Normandale—about 1/4 to 1/2 of them during the Christmas holidays. Ski shop inventories were dwindling and the life of a ski operator was the life to lead, headaches and all.

This year, pre-Christmas sales of ski equipment have helped, Bowen reports, but his remaining supplies are looking bigger and bigger — almost white elephant size, in fact.

Marjorie Benedikter confidently predicts good snow and booming business through January and February. "Skiers, me included," she said hopefully, "will be out in droves. We've got a lot of lost time to make up for."

Harmon, who operates the Snail Lake area in partnership with John Ernst, is sure that one healthy snow on top of what is already on the ground will go a long way.

"Right now," he said wistfully, "we've got some real fast grass and leaves."

**HERRING BONES:** Norm Oakvik, Minneapolis' former national Nordic combined champion and North American cross-country winner, who coached the cross-country part of Central U.S. combined ski training camp at Ishpeming, Mich., a couple of weeks ago, reports he has a hot 1960 Olympic prospect in one of his trainees, Karl

Bohlin of North high.

Bohlin, competing with 17 of the top Nordic skiers from this area, won the four-mile cross-country race that wound up the training period.

Eight Minneapolis skiers — Bohlin, Clyde Brodt of North, Jack Carson of Robbinsdale, Jim Johnson and Duane Lee of the University, Tom Miller of West, Dean Peterson of St. Louis Park and Steve Reischl — were among those selected on record and ability to attend the camp, designed to raise the standards of the Nordic events in which the U.S. has lagged in international and Olympic competition.

Ishpeming, which offers ideal cross-country terrain and fine jumping hills, will probably be considered for the U.S. training camp for the F.I.S. championships in Finland in 1958, Oakvik reports.

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