

## Grand Rapids Achieves Goal—a Major Ski Area

By BEN KERN



For its first downhill traffic Sugar Hills had to put its snow-making machinery into prompt and early use. Here on the first T-bar run (chalet at the foot) are a few tryer-outers.

FOR BETTER OR WORSE, with the weatherman's help or without it, Grand Rapids, Minn., is ready with the Upper Midwest's newest major ski area. It can be found nine miles south of town and west of Hwy. 169 near Lake Sissebakwet among the hills from which the lake gets its name (the area, too, in translation). The Indians used the sugar maples on its thickly wooded slopes. Sissebakwet means "sugar hills."

Sugar Hills, Inc., with its two T-bar lifts, its series of rope tows and its snowmaking machinery whose pipes run a mile from the front of the area near the chalet to the far end, represents a heroic money-raising achievement by Grand Rapids citizens and boosters.

The Jaycees started the ball rolling with a survey of the area, so thickly wooded that Charles Skinner, a young attorney who has become the area manager, and Sel Hannah, New England ski area designer, nearly got lost when Skinner took Hannah into the woods to show him the hills in December 1960.

Soon a private corporation headed by Bill King, president of the First National Bank of Grand Rapids, took the ball and sold stock to 40 shareholders at \$2,500 a share. A \$150,000 Small Business Administration loan, a \$40,000 grant from a businessmen's group, plus gifts, made the total outlay \$300,000.



Aerial view shows the Sugar Hills "ski circus," a Midwest answer to long mountain runs. Multiple tows and lifts carry the skier around a circuit of ups and downs over a wide area. One T-bar lift (left center) is linked to

another at the far end (right rear) by a series of uphill ropes and downhill slopes. With sister areas like those at Virginia and Lutsen, Sugar Hills hopes soon to divert their way some of Upper Michigan's heavy patronage.

30 Minneapolis Sunday Tribune • Picture • January 13, 1963