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Fiscal Schuss Spells Death of 12-year-old Ski Area

BACKERS LOSE FIGHT TO RESCUE VIRGINIA'S LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN

By BEN KERN

In mid-December 1968 a new ski area called Lookout Mountain, which has gone into operation in the Laurel Highlands divide 2½ miles north of Virginia, Minn.

The area, which was the fastest in the state but the first between Upper Michigan and the Black Hills, Gov. Orville Freeman spoke at the dedication. The working price negotiated in the Curtis Hotel, whose "Underground Room" in an old mine shaft was being redesigned for approximately \$1 million had seemed to be a good deal along the road to the area the "Ski View."



Chairlift, chalet and other facilities will be removed from Lookout Mountain ski area near Virginia, Minn.



A Farm on the Prairie

George Peterson

Friendly Irish Farmers Hoe a Rough Row

DUBLIN, Ireland—Agriculture in Ireland is a particularly personal matter. Observations on the farms are smaller, less mechanized and, in some parts, much more primitive than those in England. Two-wheeled carts, often powered by a donkey, haul a couple of cows and a pig to the market. In the evening beside a peat fire the farmer gathers with his neighbors, listening the time of day as they wait for supper.

It seems a relaxed sort of existence, though not very rewarding financially. A report last published by the Agricultural Institute reveals that the average farm operator in a heavily as well as in the best farm worker. The average of 1,400 farms shows an average family income of \$44 pounds (\$2,200) a year, just a bit above the minimum wage. On a farm of 15 acres or less—and there are many in this category—the farmers live an average of \$460 after figuring wages for themselves at the lowest rate.

As a matter of fact, the report, covering income for the 1967-68 crop year, may be overly optimistic. A large volume of commodities had been held over from the previous year, when the average farm income was only \$400.

Only Efficient Survive

Yet agriculture in Ireland's biggest industry, and not everybody acknowledges that more efficient production and better farm income are more important in an expanding national economy. Thus, along with experts of many kinds, supporters of common sense have been pushing the idea of a new market in Ireland. The largest share goes to Britain, which takes at least 20,000 tons a year under a quota arrangement. Improved methods of raising swine and raising bacon are held as promising a new era for Irish pork.

There seems common agreement that only the more efficient farmers on the larger farms will survive economically. But so much of the land is divided into tiny fields, and often by rock walls, that creating effective production units is difficult. Quite large operations do exist, principally in dairying, the most progressive part of Irish farming.

Highly some Irish farmers, as well as those in Britain, are worried about the effect of possible entry into the European Common Market. Ireland and Britain, as well as Norway and Denmark, have applied for admission and presented their cases at Brussels, Belgium, recently. The negotiations are expected to last at least through 1971.

Common Market Opposed

Irish government officials have estimated that joining the European Economic Community (EEC) would help boost agricultural production by 30 to 40 percent by the end of the current decade. Thus Raymond Conroy, an agricultural economist representing a group opposed to EEC membership, created quite a stir recently with a pamphlet predicting that entry would cut the number of farms in Ireland from 250,000 to 20,000 and the number of people employed in farming from the present 200,000 to 45,000.

Conroy based his estimate on a shift away from small crops in cattle and sheep to accommodate Common Market policies. He argued that, under the common market, Ireland has an alternative employment for farmers. When the Irish leave the land, he said, they leave Ireland.

It's my impression, from talking to farmers and reading a number of agricultural publications, that farmers generally in both Ireland and England oppose EEC membership. They point to the large surplus of dairy products on the continent, and fear that it may provide unfair competition for their own crops.

Australia and New Zealand have been protesting Britain's protected membership. Australia claims that EEC policies violate the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and threaten to use if Britain takes the final step of joining. New Zealand markets all percent of its dairy products in Britain and would lose all preference in that market under EEC.

Despite agricultural problems, Irish farmers find the country very well and Irish cooks do a better job than their counterparts in England. Meats and fresh vegetables have been a delight, and to have the friendly people

The voters separated, apoplexy with each other's aversion. If the historical rise, 250 feet nearly exactly. Son Val's Baldy Mountain, it was a 100-foot and very faintly better equipped than many ski areas throughout the country.

That was 12 years ago. There were only the Virginia City Council men in the crowd. It should be spent \$100,000 to build out a facility. Lookout Mountain. Question: Should it be for the entire responsibility for its maintenance?

If it is not, the chalet, snow tractor, chairlift, ropeway and everything would be moved out and sold off, and that would be that. Down the drain.

It was a long session. There was discussion, from members of the council, the legislature and the tourist-oriented Arrowhead Regional Development, City of Reno. There was a petition signed by a thousand ski fans. Then the council.

It would be the same way it had two weeks previously. "No." Six to three.

"When the vote was finalized," the *Minneapolis Daily News* reported, "the crowd of Lookout Mountain backers left the chambers, some of them near tears."

All down the drain, except for those few willing to dig up or bring up to the hilltop under their own power—a practice now practically extinct.

Will Rogers said, "People's minds are changed through observation and not through argument." So, perhaps, the Virginia ski area had been observing for the last five or six years was a decline in Lookout's fortunes, a decline that has a good deal to say about

what's happening to Upper Midwest skiing and skiing.

In its early years Lookout did a good business. Skiing was done along in the early '50s, mainly by the children of Northern Shoshone. Moon Valley's pioneering snow game had a kind of heavy chair that settled into a hard mass. For most ski it on tube skis.

Soon, however, the product improved, and operators learned to ski in groomed and chairlift ski. Snow, for less and durability, it usually was better than what came out of the sky.

By the mid 1960s snow-making ski

areas were mushrooming around the Upper Midwest, their lifts at least comparable with Lookout's and many of them closer to the population centers. Skiers no longer had to drive very far to find good snow.

Lookout still had its chairlift, but its chairlifts began pulling up all over the place there are now 11 of them around the "Two Cities." Lookout also had its own chairlift, its friendly people, its Centre House, Jack Burdick, Ski View Motel and other good ones, but other people also traveled, were raising other areas and building other facilities.

Some of the better places had another advantage—the intense attention of a private owner, often with a long background in skiing. Rod Peterson built Minnesota's second chairlift on his own land at Mt. Chase near Park Rapids, Minn.

It is a family operation. Peterson's wife runs the chairlift restaurant and the children help make and out. He began on a short string, advanced slowly and is still growing. Perhaps Lookout started too late.

—Minn might be a small chairlift. Peterson said, "but it's all in one package. Min has been moving their operation to get back to work."

Lookout ski through some good full time paid managers, some part-time volunteer managers and full-time consultants, and finally into a bankruptcy sale. The Lookout stockholders not only had to pay the cost of getting the ski area up and running, but also had to pay the cost of getting it off all the wrong directions.

The Small Business Administration (SBA) approached to mortgage on the area lift and equipment, to recover whatever it could.

Jack Peterson, who runs a Virginia sports-supply store, took over the operation in a bankruptcy sale. He had had no idea of getting the ski area up and running, but he had had a good idea of getting it off all the wrong directions.

We missed and we hit, and again we were home with our best of ducks. It had been two days of gloomy hunting.

But why, I wondered, should this seem to have been a hunt for many years? It had to be something that had been done before.

It belongs to the U.S. Forest Service. It is the trail of a hundred years, of countless hits and misses, of endless wilderness in the land.

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Hunting Inspires a Boy and a Man

Until five autumn ago, Jim Kimball was a duck hunter in a dark blind. Carl C. Carlson was his favorite hunting companion.

At that time, his son had a job in the lumber mill. He was a bright, clear afternoon with the sun glimmering from the red, orange and yellow foliage surrounding the marsh.

The strong wind had the curtain lower, closing the curtains. He was in a dark blind, and I claimed we had lost on who shot the first duck.

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By the time we pulled our canoe into the marsh one of my favorite hunting spots, I realized that the responsibility for the duck season was his last weekend in the marsh. I had a strong wind and I connected. A minute later he had one down and said, "Send Zerk."

In a very strong wind, it was tough shooting, but the ducks were flying. Bob missed and I connected. A minute later he had one down and said, "Send Zerk."

My eyes black Lab was off in a splash and brought in a splash and brought in a splash and brought in a splash.

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Jim Kimball

shot, but made some good ones, too. By 4 p.m. we had had at the leading looking over the ducks. Bob said, "We've sure got

a lot of picking and choosing to do tonight."

"Maybe," I replied, "if you handle this situation with great finesse, we can get your mother and my wife to help."

"You wife, perhaps," Bob said, "but my mother—never, and I'll bet on it."

Of course, I demanded heavy odds and finally settled on four to one — my quarter against his dollar — and he promised to cooperate in executing the maneuver.

The Carlson cabin neighbors on the lake. Mrs. C. was there and Bern Carlson was sitting about this night. As we ate dinner, Bob and I professed great weariness after a day in the marsh, and we missed about the duck-drawing tack which lay ahead.

I proposed a duck-drawing bet by which we could all get the job done in a hurry. Mrs. C. agreed, but Mrs. C. said, "I'll tell you what. You three work on the ducks while I do the dishes."

"Oh, no," I replied. "That's not the usual way. We've got to go to work together. Bob and I'll start on the dishes."

I carried things the duck-pipe with hot water and boiled black labhead.

You never saw two more bewildered women. Finally convinced that we were actually doing the

chairs, they got a camera and the features of the horizon unattended phenomenon. Then we all picked ducks.

It was calm, and the whistling of wings reached our ears long before we could see flying ducks. A heavy cloud in the east held back the light.

The most exciting moments in a duck hunter's life are those just before the dawn when a duck bursts out of the darkness, are visible for a fleeting instant and so quickly disappear into the lingering night. It is a tense, exciting time when you know the shooting is at its best and its most difficult.

We heard again in the distance and finally spotted the thin black line and "V" as they approached. They would not come to our little marsh, of course, but, as they passed overhead in all their majesty, the hunters hope for a few minutes to shoot at ducks and the marsh was silent.

All that said was "Go!" but it conveyed all the sentiment of the hunt's most powerful force.

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Bob Carlson held his first duck of the season.