

4 F Minneapolis Tribune Sun., Oct. 26, 1975

Ben Kern your weekend

Sleepy Eye, Minn.
With the smell of winter in the wind, one likes to do a little ski-area scouting.

The Golden Gate to Fun Ski Area is reached by driving six miles north of Sleepy Eye on Hwy. 4, turning right on Golden Gate Rd. and following the signs that say "Camping." Yes, it's a campground, too. Also, trout ponds for ice fishing. Also, mobile homes and mobile-home sites for rent.

And don't forget the swimming. It has its own swimming pool, man-made, an acre in size, 10 feet deep, with water from clear-running Golden Gate Creek. And the tubing. In winter, besides skiing they do a lot of tubing—sliding on big inflated inner tubes, cushiony, safer than toboggans. They do this on a special hill, separate from the ski hills but with its own rope tow, just like the two that serve the ski runs.

The vertical rise, I'd say, is about 200 feet, although the owner's guess was more modest than that.

The scenery is more than catchy—one magnificent view that you catch before descending into the valley lets you see 10 miles or more to the southeast where this valley converges with the Minnesota River valley. The fall colors had faded when I drove in, but it still was a grand sight.

It was between seasons, and the caretaker was out. A young woman, a tenant in one of the mobile homes, told us how to find the owners—not, as we had supposed, in the neat white farm house across the creek with its own special bridge. That's a Golden Gate rental property.

The owners, Melvin and Carol Speckman, live in another farmhouse, south of the valley amid the rich black fields of the upland. They own 400 acres in the valley and another 400 above. Melvin was busy working the fields. I returned in the evening.

Their house is considerably bigger than the valley one. They have reared six children, five boys and a girl. Melvin is in the Air Force at Grand Forks. Judy is married and does substitute teaching in St. Paul. Calvin ("Dr. Calvin," they proudly specify) is a research microbiologist in Germany. Keevin is a food science researcher for General Mills. Haven is a university freshman, and Mervin is a high school junior.

He's the one who possibly might carry on with the Golden Gate to Fun. He thought up the last half of the resort's name. The first half is grounded in local history. Very near a ridge on which the resort's chalet stands once stood a sawmill. Half a mile upstream were two more mills (four), a store, a post office, a lyceum, a dance hall, and settlers who named the town "Golden Gate" and thought they had a winner.

They might have if the railroad had come. It didn't. Today it's hard to find the ruins.

So the Speckmans decided on "Golden Gate," but "Golden Gate to what?"

"To Fun," was Melvin's reasonable suggestion.

Their recreation area came into being happenstantially—the way things happen with very industrious people. They had bought the valley to further a money-making hobby of Mrs. Speckman's—a duck and goose hatchery. Taking on custom hatching, making money. After about 10 years of that, they bought the valley farm for a breeding ground.

The hatchery grew into the biggest around. They were importing hatchable eggs from Holland and air-shipping them to China. Then,

with market fluctuations, the whole thing got to be too much. They decided to get out of the hatchery business and go into recreation.

This was no cinch. They developed the swimming pool, the rental properties, the four trout ponds northwest of the campground, filled from a flowing well, the fishing, the swimming, the Ping Pong and Football in the chalet recreation room, the skiing and tubing, the campites with the electricity, sewer and water hook-ups, and the wilderness area across the creek for primitive camping—a lot of winter campers—snowmobilers—camp over there.

Yes, there's snowmobiling, too, in 300 acres of hills and valleys across the bridge. Some park their campers on the near side.

The recreation project started in 1970. Skiing started slowly, for most nearby residents were unfamiliar with it, but it's growing. Skiers are coming in from a 50-mile radius—Wabasso, Lambertson, Marshall, Wanda, Hector, Bird Island, New Ulm, Gibbon and other places.

The Speckmans hired instructors. The two youngest Speckmans, Haven and Mervin, learned to be instructors themselves. They even do some hotdogging," their mother said.

Mankato is the nearest place where skis are sold. Golden Gate sold Northlands, but then Northland went out of business. Speckman is considering taking on another brand, but he's afraid it might be too expensive for his customers. About 70 percent of them are still skiing on rental skis.

The Golden Gate tubing hill gets a big play from youngsters and church groups who crave instant action without the learning process. They come in bunches of 75 or moreabouts. "One time we had 200," Speckman said.

One Speckman specialty they'll never sell is worth a fortune—fresh apple cake. Mrs. Speckman bakes fresh apples into the cake with a lot of other goodies, rich and crumbly. Then, a little home-made ice cream on top and then on that some fine syrup from a Speckman maple tree. M-mmmm!

There will be a Pheasant Cleaning Bee 7 p.m. Tuesday at National Super Markets, Inc., Excelsior Blvd. and Interlachen Rd., to prepare for a 34th Annual Pheasant Dinner to be given 3,500 veterans in six hospitals. Hunters contributed the pheasants. Star and Tribune truck drivers picked them up around the state. National Super Markets will clean 1,600. Sponsors: Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion.

Classes in the Bicentennial Craft of Making Corn Husk Dolls will be taught 10 a.m. to noon Nov. 8 at Como Park Conservatory in St. Paul and same hours Nov. 22 at Sun Ray Branch Library, 2105 Wilson St., east side of St. Paul. Call 224-3383 (extension 28) or 489-1740 about fee and registration.

Get the lowdown on why geese at Wood Lake Nature Interpretive Center have their own University of Minnesota computer numbers by hearing about City Geese, 3 p.m. today at the Center, 735 Lake Shore Dr., Richfield.

Bonnie Drake will tell about and demonstrate the pioneer craft of hand-dipping beeswax candles 1-4 p.m. today at the Ramsey County Historical Society's Gibbs Farm Museum, 2097 W. Larpenteur Av., Falcon Heights (81 adults, 25 cents age 18 and younger).

"Natural Inventions," a slide show and outdoor walk, will teach how many of man's inventions are adap-



Staff Photo by Ben Kern

A one-acre swimming pool at Golden Gate to Fun will be used as a cooling pond for ski-area snow-making this winter.



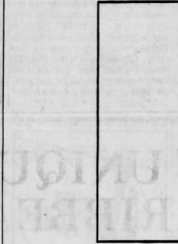
tations from plant and animal life, 3 p.m. today, Whitney Eastman Nature Center, Elm Creek Park Reserve—turn north from Hwy. 152 onto County Rd. 121, then east on Elm Creek Rd. Phone 425-2324... Same time next Sunday, explore the inner "time clocks" plants and animals have.

Learn about attracting Backyard Birds, foods to use, birds you might find, 1:30 p.m. today, Hyland Lake Park Reserve Nature Center, 8737 E. Bush Lake Rd., Bloomington... Nature walk 4 p.m. every Sunday... How to capture nature's communications on paper, 4-6 p.m. Tuesdays Nov. 4 through Dec. 2. Call 941-7993 for reservation... Use natural materials for Christmas gifts. Session on terrariums 9:30-1:30 a.m. or 7:30-9 p.m. Nov. 5. Call 941-7993 for reservation.

Observe the behavior of Canada Geese as they gather in large flocks to begin their journey south, 1:30 and 3:30 p.m. Saturday, at Lowry Nature Center in Carver Park Reserve, Carver County Rd. 11 between Hwy. 5 and 7... Fall dried plant arranging. You may bring your own container, 1:30 and 3:30 p.m. next Sunday. Plants will be provided. Call 472-8011 for reservations and more information about both of the above.

Wisconsin Indian Head Country's fourth annual Snow Show comes Friday through next Sunday to the London Square Mall in Eau Claire, Wis. Films on skiing and snowmobiling, cross-country skiing demonstrations, style shows.

Two members of the Rossignol Freestyle team will do hotdog tricks on a deck-ramp in front of the Sitzmark Ski Shop, 1160 W. County Rd. E., Arden Hills, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday and noon to 4 p.m. next Sunday.



Envision a 16 from the lush jungles of all Mayan cities.

We could show you a picture magnificent temples and palaces beautiful of all Mayan cities.

But to find the special meaning genius has for you, you need to see for yourself. And that is our point: tell you what you will feel on a vacation only promise you the freedom for yourself.

