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Grand Marais proves it's more than a summer colony

Grand Marais, Minn.
One evidence of Grand Marais' grip on the times can be found in the brisk businesslike Cook County News-Herald published weekly by Dick and Betty Base out of an attractive new building across the street from the Shoreline Motor Lodge.

Dick's newspaper career brought him to Grand Marais via Faribault, St. Paul and Osceola, Wis.

In the News-Herald one finds a Kerfoot's Kove ad in which owner Bruce Kerfoot announces the beginning of a dinner theater, its first offering being "A Christmas Carol."

"I love the food challenge," Kerfoot said. "I'll synchronize it with the play. English waitresses, Yorkshire pudding, lamb, roast beef, plum pudding . . ."

The News-Herald also carries a weekly column, "On the Gunflint Trail," by Bruce's widowed mother, Justine Kerfoot, who has spent most of her adult life up the Gunflint Trail and is a bit of a crusader.

In a recent column she criticized closing a certain dump, which necessitated additional 20-mile dumping drives for 90 Gunflint and Loon Lake residents, figuring out at 18,000 miles of driving over 10 weeks' time. "I could drive to Alaska and back a couple of times," she wrote.

She lyricizes about the scenery around Gunflint Lake on the Canadian boundary, where she lives: "The full moon in its clarity has turned the night darkness into a snow-reflected light . . . the snow crystals sparkle as if they were alive and dancing. Where there is still open water the mist rises and coats the nearby trees with a rime that is slowly dissipated by the sun . . ."

On Nov. 28 she wrote, "There is enough (snow) to cross-country ski but not enough to cover the rocks for snowmobiling." (A heavy snow has fallen since then.) Driving up the trail to visit her and Peggy Heston, another widow, who I was told did a lot of ski touring, I found Justine living in an almost spectacularly excellent cabin which, she said, her son Bruce had remodeled.

Ben Kern
your weekend

Justine Kerfoot

Staff Photos by Ben Kern

Peggy Heston, left, and Alice Gilmore ski-toured through pines near Gunflint Lake on the Minnesota-Canada border.

She was friendly, matter-of-fact and plain-spoken, particularly about getting around in the woods. Among rocks and fallen branches "skis aren't worth a darn," she said. "Snowshoes are better."

She was partial to a light snowmobile and put in a good word for snowmobiles in general. Vandalism and wild-life harassment by snowmobilers are unknown in her area, she said. "When you want to get somewhere, a snowmobile does the job."

"Cross-country skiing," she added, "is a sport." She skis, but she hadn't bothered to get the boards out yet.

Farther back off the Gunflint Trail on a spur along Gunflint Lake I found three people at Heston's Country Store and Lodge — owner Peggy Heston, Loon Lake Lodge owner Kermit Johnson, and Mrs. Orville (Alice) Gilmore.

The latter, wife of a college English teacher, said her husband had been granted special leave after fall quarter. They are enjoying a cabin on Gunflint Lake. The lake is 300 feet deep. Because of its great depth it freezes much later (mid-December) than most lakes and does a lot of breaking up and refreezing to the tune of ice noises, some quite musical.

"I wish we had had a tape recorder the other night," Alice said. "We could have recorded the ice music."

I told her that Justine had done exactly that. "Wonderful," she said. "Perhaps we can hear it."

Having arrived just in time for lunch, I was given a delicious bowl of homemade chili and a piece of lemon pie, after which the women eagerly demonstrated the feasibility of cross-country skiing on the woodland trails and along the beach by the still-open water.

I discovered that much of the Gilmores' time is spent getting wood for cabin heat. It's good exercise and takes them outdoors. "We're enjoying it so much," Alice said.

Peggy, an enthusiastic skier, said she is looking forward to seeing more like-minded enthusiasts this winter at her store and lodge.

On the way in and out, on the Gunflint Trail, I saw two deer, some colorful evening grosbeaks (black and orange yellow), and a snowshoe rabbit.

"This is the year of the resurge of snowshoe hares," Justine had written in her column. "Charlie Cook, my Canadian neighbor, says he has seen very few fisher or wolf tracks this year and maybe the rabbits will have a chance to increase."

Alive with tourists in summer, Grand Marais isn't exactly dead in winter.

Howard Joynes, businessman and skiing enthusiast, tried for years to revive the town's Sawtooth Mountain alpine ski area, but government money wasn't forthcoming.

Today, encouraged by the rise in cross-country ski interest, Howard is happy. He's selling cross-country equipment in his department store. Seventy-five local skiers attended a ski-touring season's opening meeting at the high school.

The Tip of the Arrowhead Association (Grand Marais 55604, ph. 218-387-1330) has printed a map of 24 cross-country ski trails.

George Peet, owner of the Shoreline Motor Lodge, the Harbor Inn and the Lamplighter Motel, all in Grand Marais, was sanguine enough about winter prospects to have joined with Lutsen's George Nelson Jr. in a deal with the Medicine Lake Bus Co. for transporting Twin Cities customers northward. Along with its alpine skiing Lutsen advertises "miles and miles of scenic ski touring" plus "complete rentals and guide service" in the Tip O' the Arrowhead map leaflet.

With the new snow, cross-country skiing will play an important part in Grand Marais winter activity.

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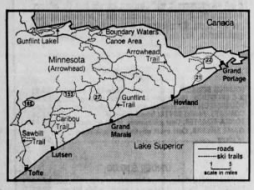
St. Paul's **Como Park Ski Area** will be open to the public with special Christmas vacation hours from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily except Friday until Jan. 4.

The Minneapolis Park Board **Ski Area at Theodore Wirth Park** is installing snow-making equipment and hopes to open by Jan. 1.

Holiday Films at the **Science Museum of Minnesota**, 30 E. 10th St., St. Paul: "How the Animals Dined on Christmas" and "The Red Balloon" 1, 2 and 3 p.m. today; "Science in Space" and "The Eagle Has Landed" same times **next Sunday.** The museum's Science Clubhouse, 11 a.m. to noon **Saturday** will show "Hang Your Hat on the Wind" (ages 8-14, 50 cents).

Nature Films: "Death of a Legend" 3 p.m. today, **Hyland Lake Park Reserve** Nature Center, 8737 E. Bush Lake Rd., Bloomington. Same time and place Saturday and next Sunday, "Spruce Bog." These will be the last of these films until spring.



Pet ideas

Diane Christianson

There are many pitfalls to watch for when bringing an animal into a home.

For example, perhaps you hadn't thought it important to find out what kind of food the animal had been eating so you could continue with the same kind. There are several reasons for doing so, the main one being that a sudden change of food can cause diarrhea in a pet. Both the pet and the new owner will have problems enough without diarrhea.

It is important to be aware that diarrhea may also result when a young animal is suddenly switched from mother's milk to regular grocery store milk. Milk, by the way, is not necessary in an animal's diet once it is weaned.

Similar problems will face the first-time horse owner. To switch a horse that has been receiving large amounts of concentrates (grains, pelleted feeds, etc.) to hay may cause impaction.

Water is of the utmost importance. The horse drinks several gallons of water a day, and the only proper way to provide it is in a stock tank with an electric heater designed to keep the water just warm enough to prevent freezing.

To expect a horse to obtain enough water from a small bucket or by eating snow is risking colic — and possibly death.

Straw is not a proper food for a horse; it is used for bedding, but horses will eat it if they are not fed enough of the right foods. If a horse eats enough straw it could become impacted and die. Another caution, just in case a horse is being shipped up from the South where grass is still the diet: a sudden shift to hay can also cause impaction.

Another area that calls for caution is registration papers. Be sure you get them at the time of sale.

Sometimes animals are simply too young to leave their mothers, yet breeders in a hurry to unload them during the peak demand of the Christmas season may try to push them off on unsuspecting customers too soon. Improperly weaned young animals need the most painstaking care to survive.

I know of some novice breeders who try to unload their puppies at four weeks of age. Without effort on the part of the purchaser—feeding them several times a day, special foods, and the like — they usually do not survive.

I personally prefer holding puppies and kittens till at least eight weeks old.

There are those who feel that puppies, to adapt to humans properly, must be sold at six weeks. Granted, the puppy should have contact with people daily and be handled gently and with care. There is the danger, however, that if the puppy is removed too soon from its mother and its littermates it will adapt too well to humans and may never breed or adjust to its own kind in later life.

Diane Christianson will discuss subjects of general interest in this column. She may be addressed in care of the Tribune. Shows and exhibitions will be listed if information is forwarded to Mrs. Christianson four weeks before the event.

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