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In the spring the young skier's fancy turns to thoughts of short pants. From left in front of the Ashwabai Ski Area chalet are James Petersen, 16, and Jerry Dunn, 18, both of Ashland; James Wollan, 19, Bayfield, and Ronnie Ogren, 17, Port Wing. —(Staff photo.)

Idea Builds Hill

By W. W. Morgan

This is the story of the Amnicon Ski Area and how it grew.

Once upon a time there was a young Twin Ports area tugman who acquired his own ski hill because he was so fond of the sport. He's been happily busy ever after.

Within the last five years Charles Orville, 29, Wentworth, obtained 80 acres of land for the hill without much expense and gained a vast store of experience "the hard way." Almost single-handedly he cleared the land of timber, established two 700-foot runs and erected a 525-foot rope tow.

As the current skiing season draws to a close, Orville figures

he has about \$2,000 invested in the hill 13 miles east of Superior with no prospects that he will get his money back. But he's not complaining. "Maybe it will be something for my children," he says.

Meanwhile, he's had fun and he's brought pleasure to neighborhood youngsters and some adults. Orville considers one of the big plus the change in his wife's attitude toward skiing.

"Once she didn't favor it at all," he explains. "Now I can't keep her off the hills."

When he got the idea for a private hill it was merely that he hated to drive 80 miles to ski. But once the hill was ready he found he couldn't deny it to friends and neighbors.

"That's when I decided I'd better get insurance against accidents," says Orville. "After I found out the seasonal cost (about

Wentworth Man Turns Dream Into Ski Area

I decided I'd have to charge, and perhaps lay out several ski trails and a bunny slope.

for use of the hill. I figured I might get my insurance cost back this season but I didn't come close. I only took in about \$200. There were 27 skiers on my biggest day, a Sunday."

There were some who came in summer to watch Orville clear the land and fight mosquitoes and a few who remained to help—but not many. He gained a few ideas in producing skiable terrain and last summer "demolished" two rotary lawnmowers in brushing operations.

Orville had help in installing the rope last fall. Before that all Amnicon skiers "walked upstairs and saved," as he puts it. The tow and a wide-tread crawler-type tractor for snow packing are about all the modern equipment at the hill. There is no chalet but Orville hopes to build a log one soon

"I feel badly," he explains, "when parents won't let their children ski because there is no really gentle slope."

Orville is proud of the electrically-operated safety device on the tow which he guarantees will prevent injury to a skier whose clothing becomes entangled in the rope. He also is pleased with the reads he rigged on the tractor, an idea he got from the Lutsen Resort Ski Area for grooming hillsides.

In case you want to see a ski area which started from nothing and retains a rather informal character you'll be welcome at Amnicon. Take Highway 2 out of Superior, turn left at the Highway 13 junction and go a mile past the old sawmill. Then watch for a modest sign on the left side of the road.



Charles Orville uses two automobile wheels as a sheave for his tow rope.

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Mathieu, 93, Supervises Mill Opening

FORT FRANCES — At 93, J. A. Mathieu, widely known Fort Frances lumberman, is supervising preparations for reopening the sawmill he closed here in 1954.

Mathieu, who started at 16 to raft logs down river from Beef Slough near Alma, Wis., expects the mill to start operations in May or June. He estimates there is a backlog of 15 million board feet of timber in the region.

Much will be wind-damaged pine in the Rainy Lake area. Another source will be farm wood lots where chiefly balsam will be harvested. Ash and elm also figure in Mathieu's plans.

Tim Lyons, a veteran sawmill man, has been engaged to operate the Mathieu mill. It is estimated 40 men will be given employment in two shifts.

The mill is the ninth that Mathieu has built in his career. He was born in Alma in August 1869.



Mathieu

