



REMINISCENCES

By H. P. Douglas

IT IS well established that ski were first used in Montreal as far back as 1881, and in 1889, a group of McGill professors, headed by R. J. Durley, took up the sport actively, using the old Finnish-type of long ski with only a toe strap binding. The Montreal Ski Club was founded in 1904, the first officers being—Honorary President, E. S. Clouston; President, C. J. McCuaig; Vice-President, P. E. Nobbs; Secretary-Treasurer, J. L. Kerr. The first committee meetings of the Montreal Ski Club that I attended some twenty-five odd years ago were held in the back room of Jack Kerr's store on St. Catherine Street, where, seated on tables and boxes, we discussed our various problems, seemingly as important then as today, the question of funds being always the principal. We had no clubhouse, just a shanty at the foot of our jumping hill and a membership of less than fifty. Tom Drummond was President, a most delightful man and a great sportsman, and by virtue of his high office, he occupied the only chair. He was one of the first to realize the ski-ing possibilities of the Laurentians and spent many winter week-ends in the North country, making his headquarters at Mrs. Marshall's at Shawbridge. He was a civil engineer by profession and made a series of ski maps which I remember quite well and which, unfortunately, were destroyed or lost many years ago.

In making these maps he used a most original contraption—a bicycle wheel equipped with a cyclo-meter, mounted on and between a pair of short ski. As the ski were pushed along over the snow the wheel revolved and the mileage registered. I recall meeting him one day back of Shawbridge on ski himself, pushing along up a slope with his compass on the handle, plotting a new bit of ski country. That reminds me that Huntly Drummond, now Vice-President of the Bank of Montreal, was one of our early ski enthusiasts and won the jumping championship of The Montreal Ski Club in 1905, and today he is as keen and active as ever.

By 1914, with a few enthusiasts, ski-ing was becoming a popular sport, though on Mount Royal the snowshoe still predominated and the evening tramps over the Mountain to Lumpkins of the gaily blanketed snowshoe clubs with their bugle bands, torches and roman candles were a sight never to be forgotten. I also think this was the last year of the famous Ice Palace. Saturday afternoons and Sunday mornings a few of us would meet at the crossroads and with our rather primitive equipment and complete lack of technique slide around the gulleys, ending up on the long cleared slopes in the cemetery, our most popular playground. The Mountain was a perfect ski ground in those days, and "Thank God" we had

no Chalet, street car tracks or progressive aldermen to contend with. In the early days poles were quite unknown and I cannot imagine today how we ever navigated without them, particularly in the North country; but we did, and in some fashion worked and laboured up the biggest hills and thought nothing of it. Later on came the long single pole and then the pair, most flimsily constructed, the rings ever coming off. Turns were simply not known; when we wanted to stop we just sat down, and I well remember the thrill of seeing a telemark for the first time performed by a visiting expert. About then I got hold of a copy of Vivian Caulfeild's famous book, "How to Ski," and my eldest son and I, after much practice and following the instructions, finally, to the envy of all my friends, were able to do a snappy turn ourselves, and I can tell you we were proud of it. Jumping was of first interest in the club, our activities mostly confined to Montreal and Mount Royal, with an annual club trip to the Laurentians, first to The Manitou Club and later on to Cochand's at St. Margaret's, then to Mrs. Marshall's at Shawbridge. Racing was also popular and the Mount Royal cross-country race inaugurated in 1915 was the first ski racing fixture on this continent. The MacKinnon family played a great part in the early history of the Montreal Ski Club—Tom, Russell, Peter and Frank, all expert skiers and fine sportsmen. Frank, in particular, was one of the best all-round ski men we will ever see, and was famous as a jumper and a runner, winning consistently all over the country and at home.

When the war came along the members of the Montreal Ski Club enlisted at once almost to a man, and no club in Canada had a greater record than they in all branches of the service. In 1919, I was elected President and took hold of a disorganized club, without funds or members, which had been dormant for five years, just held together by a few of us older men. The Park Toboggan Clubhouse on Mount Royal was acquired and proved to be so popular that the membership soon built up and the club became again a live organization with an active membership of over five hundred. The present property on Cote des Neiges was purchased in 1921, with the assistance of many local sportsmen, the majority of whom had never been on ski, for a jumping hill, and after the Toboggan Club returned to their house on the mountain, our present clubhouse was built in 1925. Just about this time interest began to awaken in the Laurentians and the club's schedules included several week-end trips to St. Margaret's where we were always well looked after by Emile Cochand, and later on to Mrs. Marshall's at Shawbridge, famous for her bean suppers.

The most important happening of my long ski life was the founding of The Canadian Amateur Ski Association, the idea of which was proposed by me at a dinner of The Montreal Ski Club in their Park Toboggan Clubhouse on the evening of February 28, 1920, following the Quebec Open Tournament. At this dinner were a large gathering of prominent ski men from Eastern Canada, and after a full discussion the Association was unanimously

approved and the following year the first meeting of the C.A.S.A. was held at the Windsor Hotel. I was honoured by being elected President and continued in office for ten years when I resigned, carrying on as Honorary President. Our Association now reaches from Coast to Coast with a most representative club membership and has exercised a splendid control and influence over amateur ski-ing. Under the leadership of Bill Thompson, our new President, I expect an even greater advance this coming season.

Ski-ing is a delightful winter pastime. I have taken an active part in all sports and place ski-ing first; for interest, good health, exercise, and as a medium to explore and enjoy our lovely Northern snow country. For people of middle age, I particularly recommend it, as I started in at over thirty and have certainly enjoyed every ski-ing minute and have benefited directly in mind and body. To those of us who have tried to do our part in the development of ski-ing its present popularity and the amazing growth of the sport is indeed a rich reward for all our efforts.

MILITARY SKI TROPHY

W. B. Converse, Honorary President of The Red Birds, with the desire to stimulate military ski-ing, offers a Military Ski Trophy, open for competition to Officers of any Military Unit in the Fourth Military District, and also to Members of the "Canadian Officers Training Corps," affiliated with McGill University.

The Trophy will be known as "Hill 70 Military Trophy" and will be competed for under the auspices of the C.O.T.C. annually. A suitable Trophy will be given to the winning team each year for the next five years.

These competitions will be held at St. Sauveur, Quebec.

Mr. Converse is also raising a fund to build a Military Ski Barracks at St. Sauveur for the C.O.T.C. to be ready next winter.

WINTER ROAD TO STE. AGATHE

It is interesting to learn that there is a movement afoot to keep the highway open to the Ste. Agathe district during the wintertime. Being so near the heavily populated metropolitan area of Montreal and being within reach of the tourist, it is believed by many, that the maintenance of this road would benefit business in the Laurentians and would facilitate the plans of skiers. Enthusiastic promoters of this idea are the Ste. Agathe Chamber of Commerce, whose Vice-President, Mr. H. J. Leliere is soliciting the Government, and Mr. R. G. Perry, Passenger Traffic Manager of the Provincial Transport Company. If this undertaking is successful the Provincial Transport Company will operate special services, direct from Montreal to the heart of the skiing district at St. Agathe.