

THE NEWS RECORD

SERVING THE PEOPLE OF MADISON COUNTY

On the Inside . . .

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To Ski In Madison, You Have To Make Snow

By KEVIN MORLEY
County Recreation
Director

When the sky gets gray and the cold wind picks up in the middle of winter, we assume that it's going to snow. If it doesn't snow, we are probably relieved, and happy to wait until the next gray sky

before thinking about it again. But we don't run a ski slope. Vardy Cody does, and he has to think about snow all the time. Varden is hill manager at Wolf Laurel Ski Resort. His primary duty is to see that Wolf Laurel's nine ski slopes are fit to ski on. If it doesn't snow, he has to make snow.

And when his snow starts to melt he has to make some more. The basic need for good skiing is a surface that allows the skier to maintain safe and sure control. This means the snow should be deep enough to provide turning friction but not so deep that the skis bog

down. Then again, if the surface is ice, the skis won't grip at all, resulting in headlong falls and scary slides. And ice is a big problem for Varden Cody. When you remember that in a day perhaps 500 skiers will make five or six runs-a-piece down the hills, you know that the ski slope is going to be packed and scraped repeatedly. What started as a smooth, firm surface can soon become hard and unyielding — an ice sheet. That's when Varden and his crew step-in to maintain a surface that's safe and suited to skiers, not skaters.

In Washington state, Colorado, or New Hampshire, maintaining that surface is a lot easier than it is in North Carolina. Up North, where a ski area may get 40 or 50 feet of snow in some spots and the temperature stays below freezing during the day, the surface is constantly renewed. But in the South, especially this winter, it doesn't snow as often, and higher daytime temperatures tend to melt the surface. At night this melted snow freezes to ice.

So southern surface managers have a lot more work to do than their northern counterparts. Cody estimates that he has to produce with his snow-making machinery anywhere from 90 to 95 percent of the slope surface in the course of a season. The manager up North might make 25 percent. Of course even a northern location is no guarantee of snow. Lake Placid, N.Y., site of the Winter Olympics, has the largest assemblage of snow making machinery in the world, brought in to offset the snowless winter. Much of the \$200 million sports extravaganza will be run on artificial surfaces.

With a crew of four, Varden greets the slopes and works pretty much day and night through the coldest months. If the snow is not falling then Varden makes it fall with machinery that is a great deal more effective than what the average rainmaker would possess. Through the energies of five 250-horsepower diesel air compressors and two electric compressors rated at 180 and 350 horsepower, water is forced through special nozzles that spew it out in tiny droplets. These droplets turn to snow readily in freezing air. An elaborate network of pipes and hoses can produce several inches of snow an hour, keeping the main slope white until Mother Nature augments man's efforts with a blanketing snow fall that allows skiing on all nine slopes.

Now comes the grooming. With a sno-cat, a double-tracked machine that looks like it came straight out of the Arctic, Varden can have an assortment of implements that a farmer would be proud of. If he's faced by an icy slope Varden will hook up the ripper and break up the solid surface. Then he can draw the powder-maker over it and soften it up a bit. Then the drag can be hauled out to even up the grade and everything's ready to go.

Should there be a good natural snow, it might be necessary to use the packer to firm up the surface. One thing about the South, Varden says, is that there are more beginners down here. Beginners are hard on slopes, falling a lot and that gouging the surface and making clumsy turns that spray snow from one place to another. The task of making, maintaining and repairing is constant. Varden estimates she works about 75 hours a week.

Being hill manager means a lot more than just surface maintenance; it also means looking after another essential piece of equipment for a ski

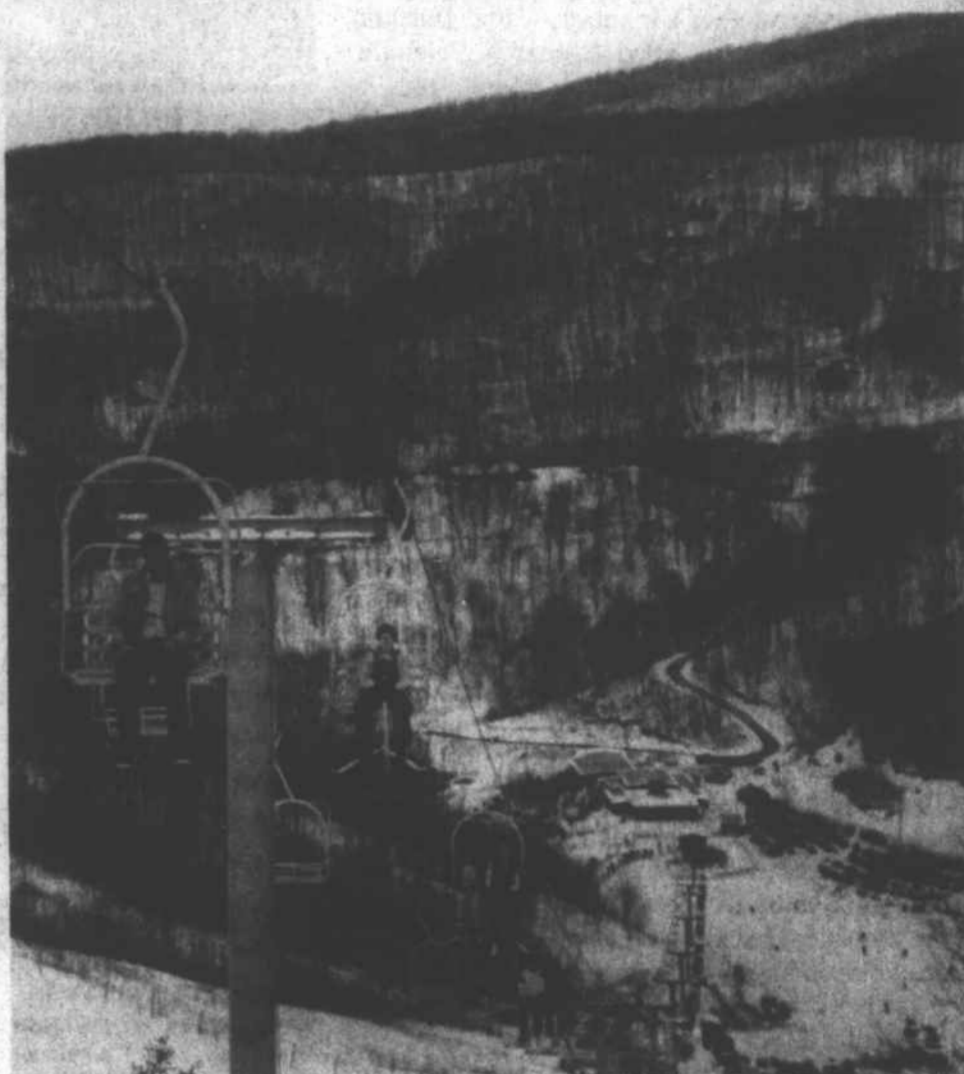
area — the ski lift. Riding the lift is almost as much fun as the skiing, — a leisurely ride up the slope, high above the surface and the skiers, dangling from a smoothly moving cable in a two-person chair. Rising steadily, seeing the massive bulk of Big Bald Mountain, snow-capped, looming in the distance, one is exhilarated, and rested for the coming challenge of sliding back down the mountains.

If you ride to the top most run, you're 1,000 feet above the bottom and liable to encounter slopes that I estimated to be 60 to 70 degrees. I estimated those slopes, I did not ski down them. I just stood and watched in awe at those who did. If I had had a pair of skis I'm sure I'd have been on the beginner's slope, which is a reasonable approach for the novice to take.

Without using the lift, the number of rides that the skier can make is sharply reduced. The experience would be mostly that of hiking. The lift is supported on massive steel towers and safeguarded by an intricate computer-controlled system that senses changes in cable pressure, able to stop the machine instantly if a problem arises. Ski lifts are tightly regulated by the government and inspected often. Varden has to make sure that folks have a safe ride up as well as a smooth ski down.

Varden has been practicing

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VERDON CODY rides the first chair up the Wolf Laurel lift; he is often the only man on the lift without skis. It is his responsibility

to keep the lift running — and to keep smooth snow on the slopes during winters like this one, which is seldom an easy job.



BLUE RIDGE STAFFERS include, seated: Polly Penland and Pete Young; standing: Joe Mar-

tin, Jean Taylor, Arlene Kolilis, and Cheryl Ezell. Not pictured: Betty Clark.

Mental Health: Feeling Good About Yourself And Others

According to a little brochure published recently by the National Association for Mental Health, mentally healthy people (1) feel comfortable about themselves (2) feel right about other people and (3) are able to meet the demands of life.

Since it was founded just over five years ago, the Blue Ridge Community Mental Health Center has been help-

ing county residents to understand what good mental health is and to work toward it in their own lives.

One of the most difficult jobs for the seven staffers at Blue Ridge is the confusion between mental health and mental illness.

"There is no line that neatly divides the mentally healthy from the unhealthy," the brochure states. "There are

many different degrees of mental health. No one characteristic by itself can be taken as evidence of good mental health, nor the lack of any one as evidence of mental illness. And nobody has all the traits of good mental health all the time."

According to center director Joe Martin, the public is beginning to understand that virtually all of us go through periods in our lives when emotional stress becomes difficult to handle — and that this has nothing to do with "craziness."

Emotional stress can be caused by many things — financial troubles, poor performance at school, family arguments, the strain of raising small children, the anxiety of living with a heavy drinker, loss of a job and so on.

Polly Penland, a social worker at the center, says that frustration with such problems is a good reason to talk with someone at Blue Ridge.

"If there's something going on in your life," she says, "that bothers you and doesn't seem to go away, it might be that someone else can help you with it. I would say that coming to the mental health center to ask for this help is an act of strength. It's a positive choice to take care of your own health and your own self."

An intern at the center, Peter Young, suggests that ignoring a persistent emotional problem is like ignoring a mechanical problem. "It's like driving a car — with the front end out of alignment," he says. "You don't want to keep driving it that way or the car will just keep getting worse. You want to talk to a mechanic about fixing it. In the same way, you want to talk to someone about working on an emotional problem."

Everyone on the staff at Blue Ridge is trained to do just that kind of talking with people.

Joe Martin came to his job

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JULIA WILLIAMS has joined the staff of The News-Record as advertising manager. She was born in faraway Anchorage, Alaska, but has lived for much of her life in Madison and Buncombe Counties. She moved to Asheville in 1968, and to Marshall in 1970. She graduated from Marshall High School in 1973, the year before consolidation, and studied English and history for two years at Mars Hill College. Previous to joining The News-Record she worked as manager of the Camera Department at K-Mart on Tunnel Road and as secretary to the Burgess Nurses Registry. She is the daughter of the Rev. George Moore and Moselle Moore of Marshall, and she has a 3½-year-old daughter, Katherine Ann. She plans to move to Skyway Drive, Marshall, in a few weeks.

County Heart Fund Drive Begins

Dr. Richard Hoffman, chairman of the Fund-Raising Campaign for the Madison County Heart Fund, announced the selection of the fund-raising team and a schedule of events which will begin on Feb. 19 and continue through June 1.

This year's goal, set by the Fund-raising Committee, is \$5,000. Dr. William Sears, president of the Madison County Heart Fund Association, stated that less than \$1,000 was raised last year, due to some unanticipated problems. However, the Heart

Fund Committee believes that Madison County will support a major campaign for this important charity in 1980.

Serving with Dr. Hoffman on the Fund Raising Committee are: Jeanette Wilde, special events chairman; Marie Ponder, chairman of

Solicitation of Corporate Industries and Employees; Claude Gibson, Special Gifts chairman; Dr. Joseph Godwin, chairman of the College Division; Shirley Baldwin, chairman of the Madison County School Solicitation; and Helen Lanekin, Heart Fund town chairman.

The kick-off for the solicitation of the college community, corporations, and businesses will begin Feb. 19 and continue through March 19. Mrs. Ponder and Mrs. Lanekin hopes to contact every business, industry, and corporation in the county.

Jeanette Wilde, chairman of the Special Events Committee, is planning a county-wide flea market, bar-b-que and fair to be held the second week in May. Details of this day of fun and frolic involving the whole county will be announced in the near future.

Shirley Baldwin is planning several events involving students in the county school system. There will be basketball games and a dance held in cooperation with the Student Government Association of Mars Hill College, and individual projects in the various grade schools.

Dr. Hoffman asks that any persons in the county who would like to volunteer for any of the projects to contact the chairman of the project.



HEART FUND COORDINATORS gathered for final organizational meetings this week, including Jeannette Wilde, Shirley Baldwin,

Claude Gibson, Richard Hoffman, Joseph Godwin, Helen Lanekin and Bill Sears.

Commissioners Honor Liston Ramsey

The Madison County Board of Commissioners passed a resolution at its regular meeting Feb. 8 acknowledging the "exceptional service of Rep. Liston Ramsey to the citizens of Madison County." The resolution reads as follows:

"Whereas, Rep. Ramsey has assisted Madison County in acquiring funds for the following projects:

- Construction of Madison County Industrial Park.
- Purchase of equipment for the Madison County sanitary landfill.
- Program monies for nutrition and day care centers.

• Construction and programs for elderly citizens.

• Program monies for Madison County recreation program.

• Program monies for regional colleges and universities. And

• Support for various programs in our elementary schools and in Madison County High School.

Now, therefore, be it resolved, that the Madison County Commission express its appreciation for the exceptional service Rep. Ramsey has given and continues to give to the citizens of Madison County.