

60TH ANNIVERSARY
SPECIAL EDITION
Black Mountain-Swannanoa
Chamber of Commerce



Cross country skiing set for on mountain challenge



Individuals will compete in one of eastern America's highest wilderness areas during the annual Black Mountain-Mt. Mitchell Ski Challenge

A new cross country ski experience, the 2nd Annual Black Mountain-Mt. Mitchell Ski Challenge, to be held Saturday, February 4th, will open eastern America's highest peak to ski buffs. This event, the only one of its kind in the southeast, will feature two courses; one six miles and the other 10 miles. Sponsored by the Black Mountain Swannanoa Chamber of Commerce's Economic Development Committee, this year's event will not only focus on the "Challenge," but will include a festival occasion in Black Mountain with several activities planned around the ski event.

Up to 150 participants will be accepted. Pre-registration is required. Deadline to sign up is January 27th.

The one-day event is described by officials as "a challenge event in which individuals compete against themselves. Prizes will be awarded for finishing rather than winning."

It is a cross country skier's delight in one of eastern America's highest wilderness areas, and offers some of the most spectacular scenery in the East.

Both courses begin at Balsam Gap, on the Blue Ridge Parkway, and end at the Mt. Mitchell State Park Lodge, which will be opened and heated for the occasion. Course one is a gradual incline with many turns and bumps, going to Stepp's Gap and on to the Lodge. Balsam Gap is at 5,320 feet elevation and the Lodge is at 6,200 feet, meaning a vertical climb of 880 feet in six miles.

Course two is the same as course one for six miles but continues across the summit of Mt. Mitchell, eastern America's highest peak, at 6,684 feet then turns down to the Lodge. The final one and one-quarter miles are all downhill. The distance is 10 miles with an average elevation of 6,000 feet.

Planned as an annual event, the Black Mountain-Mt. Mitchell Ski Challenge has several purposes. They include testing interest in the Mt. Mitchell peak for winter sports activity and testing the economic impact on Black Mountain. It will also lay the

Course two requires some hiking from Commissary Ridge to the summit of Mt. Mitchell. This course is for the veteran skier whose strength and courage match this majestic mountain.

ground work for expanding events. Since Black Mountain is only 9 "air" miles from the peak it is hoped that this community will become the jump-off point not only for skiers but other winter sports enthusiasts.

All Ski Challenge participants will receive prizes, including the much sought after "Challenge" T-Shirt.

Planning for the competition includes volunteer teams helping in such areas as transportation, parking, "special" events, snow plowing, Lodge activities, first aid, shelter, communications, food service, and "Challenge" course logistics. Approximately 75 to 100 personnel from the community are involved in making the event a total success.

In case of severe weather an alternate date of February 18th has been set, a delay of two weeks. As many remember, last year's event had to be postponed twice due to extreme snowfalls. Snow accumulations at the peak last year registered in excess of 160 inches.

A rendezvous of participants and spectators will be at the Chamber of Commerce Lobby on State Street in Black Mountain starting at 7:30 a.m. Challenge morning. Prior to leaving for Mt. Mitchell at 8:30 sharp; coffee, cocoa, donuts, and light refreshments will be served. Also, a brief orientation and tentative agenda for the day will be discussed.

Transportation to the Mountain will be up to the individual with the "Ski Caravan" leaving from the Chamber Office at 8:30 a.m. Participants and spectators would be well advised to come prepared for hazardous road conditions. Car pooling is strongly advised.

For more information contact Wendell Begley at Black Mountain Savings and Loan Association (704-669-2598) or Andy Andrews at the Chamber of Commerce Office (704-669-2300).

Entry forms may be obtained at Mountaineering South in Asheville (704)254-0216) or through the Chamber office.

To pre-register (no registration at the event) participants should mail \$12.00 to: Black Mountain-Mt. Mitchell Ski Challenge, c/o M. Wendell Begley, P.O. Box 728, Black Mountain, N.C. 28711.