



Photo by Gary Stewart

GOING SKIING - While the weather in North Carolina is hot, Thomas Putnam, left, and Chris Ellis of Grover will be in the cold mountains of Oregon through July 20 taking part in the Mt. Hood Eastern Downhill Ski Camps. They are two of only 40 persons selected to participate in this week's session at Mt. Hood.

It'll Be Ski Summer For Putnam And Ellis

It's not your usual summer camp, but Thomas Putnam and Chris Ellis aren't your usual campers.

The two Grover youths left by plane Friday for a 17-day trip to Mt. Hood, Oregon, where they will participate in the Eastern Downhill Ski Camp and sharpen their skills for another winter of skiing in the North Carolina mountains.

The Oregon camp is the only ski camp in America, and only 40 campers are selected for each of the six summer sessions.

Putnam, 14, and Ellis, 11, have been skiing only two years but both are certified ski instructors on the Appalachian Ski slopes. To earn that certification, they had to undergo extensive training, and pass oral and written state boards.

They are two of the youngest certified ski instructors in North Carolina and Ellis is believed to be the youngest person to ever be certified by the French-Swiss Ski College near Boone.

The two go to Boone just about every weekend during the winter. They're usually accompanied by their parents, Steve and Jo Ellis, and John and Susan Putnam, who are also into skiing.

Thomas's winters are usually filled with teaching skiers ranging from age four through adults. He recalled the first lesson he ever gave was to nine Florida girls who had never been on skis.

On another occasion, he tutored a group of Spanish youngsters and, immediately after he completed his instruction, one fell and suffered a broken leg.

Chris, although he is certified to teach, cannot legally because of his age. "I do a lot of baby-sitting while Thomas is teaching," he says. "I'm waiting for my age to catch up."

Mrs. Ellis, a Kings Mountain school teacher, explained that instructors cannot actually teach until they become old enough to be granted a work card.

When the two are skiing together, it's usually in a racing situation, either at Appalachian or some of the other slopes around the southeast. In a race in West Virginia last year, Chris took fourth place in his division and Thomas was third in his.

"I was teaching last year at Appalachian and didn't get to race much there," said Thomas. "This year I hope to do less teaching and more racing."

The racing phase of skiing is mainly what got the two interested in the Oregon camp, which features slalom and giant

slalom racing.

The two explained that their first two days of camp will include evaluating the areas they need to work on. After that, they will undergo eight days of extensive training, and the last few days of their stay will include tours of the State of Oregon.

Both Thomas and Chris are sports-minded, and do not limit their activities to skiing.

Thomas, a rising sophomore at Kings Mountain High School, is an avid football and baseball player. He played both sports last year at Kings Mountain Junior High School.

Chris, a rising sixth grader at South Cleveland School in Earl, also plays football and baseball, but his greatest love other than skiing is fishing.

"You'll usually find him at some fishing hole," Mrs. Ellis noted.

As he boarded the plane for Oregon, he had his fishing rod wrapped up in his ski bag.



The average American watches 32 hours of TV a week.

Hicks Joins KMHS Staff

Denny Hicks, former head football coach at East Carolina University. After Emory left Wadesboro, Hicks served two more years as defensive coordinator for Coach Lou Fogle, who is now the head coach at athletic director at Dorman High in Spartanburg.

Hicks replaces David Brinkley, who resigned recently to go into business.

A Wadesboro native, Hicks has been in the coaching profession for 14 years and coached the last nine years at mountain schools.

During his five year tenure as head coach at Owen, he compiled a 35-14-1 record and coached the school to two championships in the Mountain 3-A Conference.

His first two years at the helm, he compiled identical 9-1 records and finished his career there with 6-4, 5-4-1 and 6-4 marks.

Hicks began his coaching career at his alma mater, Bowman High of Wadesboro, as an assistant under Coach Ed Emory, who is now the head

football coach at East Carolina University. After Emory left Wadesboro, Hicks served two more years as defensive coordinator for Coach Lou Fogle, who is now the head coach at athletic director at Dorman High in Spartanburg.

Hicks then moved to West Henderson High in Hendersonville, where he was the defensive coordinator for two years under head coach Don Slaughter. He then served for one year as defensive coordinator for coach Jim Levine at Owen High, and then moved to 4-A Asheville High for three years before returning to Owen as head coach.

His move to Kings Mountain, he said, is the result of a desire to get closer to his hometown of Wadesboro.

"My wife, Katherine, and I are both from Wadesboro," he said. "We have been in the mountains for about 10 years and we both felt like we wanted

back in this area."

Hicks received a call from Coach Dan Brooks of the Mountaineers about the vacancy here and decided to check it out. He and his family made several trips to Kings Mountain before deciding to move here.

"We were so impressed with Kings Mountain that we thought it would be a good move," he said. "We are impressed with the school system and are excited about the opportunity. All the people have been great."

Hicks has two children, Mike, a rising senior, who wrestles and plays golf, and Eric, a rising eighth grader.

Hicks has been boarding at the field house at John Gamble Stadium while trying to locate a home here. He works with Champion's Contractors and returns to his home in Black Mountain on weekends. He hopes to move his family here later this month.

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