

History of the Hollyburn Western Telephone Company (sort of) - A Division of the Blueberry Telegraph

This unique 'company' operated in the cabin area in the 1950's and early 60's with the head office at the 'Ladies and Escorts' beer parlour at the Olympic Hotel in North Vancouver. Directors paid their dues in 10 cent glasses of beer, and the company's mission statement was simple. We are not a public company and it's nobody's business what business we are doing being in business.

The physical plant for the business was started when Bert Baker (Challenger Inn) located some hand crank, battery operated telephones at a closed mine, and a directors' assessment bought the galvanized steel wire and climbing spurs. Utilizing the spurs to climb trees, enthusiastic cabin owners strung a single line from Mel Leslie's Sky Tavern to John Halstead's Rock Mount Manor with branches at Bob Tapp's Red Pony Taproom, Pete Cherry's Ranger Station, John Eaves, Bert Baker's and Pete Berntzen's Viking, Jack Rockandel's Staggering Arms and others. Bert Baker ran Norm Deacon's tows in the Hollyburn area, so the line was extended to Westlake, allowing them to discuss the operation of the eight tows.

With an interconnect at the Ranger Station it was possible to reach the outside world. Bert Baker and his companions called Sun Valley to make reservations one year, and another time it was used to save a heart attack victim, but mostly it was used to call a friend to bring another bottle to the party when supplies were running low, or to find out where the dance was.

On several occasions a fire call was made. In 1957 a group were having coffee one Sunday when the long ring told of disaster - a fire near the Main Trail across from Ron Glover's Zoo. The unfortunate owner, Jack Rockandel, provided the first opportunity for many to meet and become life long friends as a result of helping him rebuild on the site of his present cabin.

Some time later, the careless use of white gas caused a porch wall fire at the Tapp's, and John Eaves, who was on the telephone, shouted "Fire" and jumped out of the window in his bare feet. Fortunately, the group on the end of the line were volunteer firemen - Bert and John from West Van and Jim from Richmond. Like all eager firemen, they arrived with axes and chopped out the flaming wall, and with a few shovels full of snow put out the embers. Greta Tapp, while a little scorched, took the roast out of the oven and finished cooking it with Jackie Baker at the Challenger Inn.

When Chuck Eadie left his snow cat (a jeep with tracks & skis) on the mountain, it became the Hollyburn Taxi - a phone call would give door to door service for those who didn't want to couldn't) walk home.

Those were the days my friends!

(With kind courtesy, reprinted from "Ridge Runner" offic. publ. Hollyburn Ridge Assoc. and author, Bob Tapp)

Hollyburn Heritage Society An update on its activities

We organized in spring 2000. Our collections - both photographic and journalistic, have been growing far beyond expectations. We started this year with approx. 300 photographs, and as this is written, our collection is almost 1,400. We have been recipients of several large collections - loaned to HHS; computer duplicates produced, these then become the 'original' for our collection. One collection, "Eilif Haxthow" contributed by his daughter tells the story of his life as a Hollyburn pioneer from his arrival as an eighteen year old from Norway in 1923. This story has been assembled into a VHS video, "Eilif Haxthow, A Hollyburn Mountain Pioneer," complete with Scandinavian music. It is available for \$15 (incl. taxes) from Don Grant, 604-922-4093. Our first video, "Hollyburn, A Place of Memories" is now in its third printing of 51 copies; and is available in Hollyburn Ski Lodge.

Active member & director, Don Grant has digitalized our entire photographic collection. With this system, we can draw upon topics in photos, a great assistance when a request for specific photographs is required. Cypress Bowl Recreations Ltd. has mounted a collection of pictures related to 'snow fun' in the bar at the Black Mountain Lodge (downhill ski area).

HHS received funding this year from B.C. Heritage Trust, Corp'n Dist. of West Van & West Van' Foundation to assemble film footage of interviews with old time skiers/hikers taken at Pioneer Skiers' Reunion held at First Lake summer 2000 and this summer to produce an archival film.

A picnic table is planned. The concrete pavers base has been installed located near the shore of First Lake adjacent to the bridge over Mar Creek. This area and table to be called "Pioneer Square" is to commemorate those entrepreneurs that operated business in the early 1920's to mid '80's that catered to the needs of hikers/skiers/cabin folk.

Some of these operators included the four Scandinavian men that operated the lodge until 1946 when the Burfields took over; Ron Brewis who built West Lake Lodge; the Jones brothers who moved this lodge to its second site and called it Westlake Lodge; then Norm Deacon who operated Westlake for 18 years. Financial donations are welcome for this project, and will be assigned to it. When sufficient funds have been assembled, this table will be built and installed. It will require approximately \$1,200.

November 2002, meeting with Alex Douglas who is actively collecting history on Mt. Seymour and a conversation with Dick Lazenby who has been collecting history & heritage on Grouse Mountain, both would like to cooperate with Hollyburn Heritage Society. There will further information on this in our next newsletter.

Hollyburn Heritage Society Annual General Meeting

HHS is giving notice now regarding its 3rd Annual General Meeting. If you are interested, please come. You can become a member by being a donor - financial or gift-in-kind. This AGM will be held on Wednesday May 14th, 2003 at 7:30 p.m. in a room in the West Vancouver Seniors' Activity Centre, NW corner 21st Street & Marine Drive. Some unreleased, old & new film from HHS collection will be shown.

Origin of Skiing

In an early published book on skiing by Chas. M. Dudley, "When We Ski," - It is generally believed skiing originated in the Alta Mountains in Central Asia. Origin of word 'ski' probably derived from the Latin word 'skindere' - meaning to split, as skis were once split from solid logs. Eilif Haxthow crafted skis in this manner in 1924 from trees cut around the old ski camp.

Hollyburn Heritage Society



Place of Memories Since 1926
Issue No. 6 - December 2002

Hollyburn Heritage Society(HHS), creators of the Hollyburn Ski Camp Heritage Project and the Hollyburn Cypress Heritage Project, is the official title for a group of pioneer skiers who saw fit to preserve the history, culture and heritage of this area. Come in the ski camp, "Hollyburn Lodge, to have a rest, a hot chocolate or a cool beer and see our displays of old photographs, memorabilia and ski equipment from yesteryear in the "Back Room."

2001 was the 75th anniversary for this lodge at its present site. It was reconstructed from building materials in an old cookhouse from abandoned Nasmyth lumber mill at 2,500 ft. (963M) elevation, brought to this site by stoneboat drawn by a team of horses.

HHS is a registered society and has charitable donation registration with Canada Customs & Revenue Agency. We welcome donations for which you will receive an income tax deduction receipt.

Commemorative coffee mugs and beer steins are for sale at the Hollyburn Ski Lodge. December 2001, our society released a VHS 22-minute video, "Hollyburn, A Place of Memories." Autumn 2002, we have produced a second VHS video, "Eilif Haxthow, A Hollyburn Mountain Pioneer."

Price includes taxes:
Coffee mug \$7.50 Beer stein \$8.50
Video \$15.00

Funds from donations and sales assist in the publication of these information bulletins and support other museum objectives. All funds are used to advance the museum mandate. B.C. Parks or CBRL do not receive any funds from Hollyburn Heritage Society.

Membership to HHS is by way of a donation - financial - volunteer time - items, photos, articles and stories.

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Ski Jumping

1988 Winter Olympic Games in Calgary - who can forget the British ski jumper "Eddie, the Eagle."

Norwegians developed the sport of ski jumping as an offshoot to skiing. Swedish skiers developed cross country skiing which was basically a means of transport over snow. Jumping was fun, fun, to leap off the top of a platform - be it a small cliff or manmade trestle.

Scandinavian men coming to Canada in the early 1900's brought their skis. In winter, when a group got together in western Canadian logging or mining camps, on a day off work they went for a ski. To add excitement and a challenge, they built a ski jump trestle. Some of these early immigrants were ski jumping champions in their homeland. While they enjoyed the thrill of leaping off the trestle, flying through the air, then gliding down the slope of the outrun, the non skiers enjoyed watching them. Thus everybody had fun! Ski jumping was a passion with these men. Competitions were organized between jumpers in British Columbia interior communities of Wells, Quesnel, Pioneer Mines, Smithers, Revelstoke, Rossland. On our coastal mountains, from the 1920's to 1950's, Hollyburn was known as the "ski jumpers' mountain." This was due to skiing being organized by the Scandinavian men that developed Hollyburn Ski Camp and founded Hollyburn Pacific Ski Club and development of Vancouver Ski Club, "Viski".

A jumper stands at the top of the trestle with 20 marks to his credit. From the moment the starter blows his whistle, the jumper is being judged by two or three judges watching his every move as he performs the leap until his final landing at the bottom of jump hill to reduce those 20 points for every mistake made.

Among the many Scandinavian skiers coming to Canada were three from Kongsberg, Norway - Nordahl Kaldahl, Tom Mobraaten and Henry Sotvedt, known as the "Three Musketeers." They found their way to the mining and logging camps in B.C.'s Cariboo, Wells and Barkerville. Kaldahl and Sotvedt along with the Brandvold brothers, Emil & Ottar, from Gudbrandsdal, Norway, built ski jump hills and organized the provincial Nordic championships in Wells during 1930's. Later, they moved to Vancouver where they participated in ski tournaments throughout the Pacific Northwest. Aside from their families, their fervour was ski competition. On a Friday evening after work, they would drive to Spokane for a tournament; then drive back to Vancouver on Sunday. They won many competitions. Since 1987, some of their dozens of silver cups and medals are displayed in the Kongsberg Ski Museum in Norway.

After his competitive career, Henry Sotvedt became a leading technical consultant and spokesman with the Canadian Amateur Ski Association. He served as manager of the 1964 Olympic ski team and a delegate to the FIS (International Ski Federation). Sotvedt was on the Olympic Bid Committee in 1968 for the Winter Olympics to come to Whistler. He was also the first Canadian to receive certification as a judge in international ski jumping. Nordahl Kaldahl, a member of B.C. Sports Hall of Fame, trained young Canadian ski jumpers. Jack Roocroft was a member of this group.

Tom Mobraaten became part of a retail ski business. In 1987 he had the honour to represent Canada and the Norwegian-Canadians Kongsberg, Norway at the official opening of the ski museum.

Some of the ski jumpers following the three musketeers were Jack Roocroft, Ron Glover and Jack Pratt. Jack Roocroft was outstanding. Trained by Nordahl Kaldahl & Henry Sotvedt, Jack started ski jumping at age 11 years. His hero was Nels Nelsen, one of the best jumpers of that era. Roocroft was 1950 North American Champion. In 1954, he went to Norway as a member of the Canadian jumping team at the World Championships. Jack participated in many jumping competitions before retiring in 1960. Now, at 75 years, he still enjoys recreational downhill skiing.

Jack Pratt was another Hollyburn ski jumper that showed promise. However, for Pratt it was not to be. His life was cut short by cancer. Today, there is a sign high in the trees on the Jack Pratt Run, testimony to the Jack Pratt Memorial Ski Jump. This jump trestle was built, but it had to be moved as it was in Brothers Creek watershed, rebuilt, it had just one tournament, only to be destroyed by falling trees during Typhoon Freda in 1962.

Worthy of mention is that during 1940's there was a deaf ski jumper, on Hollyburn, Ernie Marwick, who enjoyed this challenging sport.

Mobraaten had a bit of advice, always look at the take-off and in-run to make sure they are in good condition before going up to the top. In other words, look before you leap!



Photo Descriptions

TOP LEFT "The Three Musketeers", (L-R) Henry Sotvedt, Tom Mobraaten, Nordahl Kaldahl" (Rosemary Clapham Collection)

TOP RIGHT Harald Smejda, Canadian Combined Champion, on the First Lake Ski Jump, 1931 (Ommund Ommundsen Collection)

BOTTOM RIGHT "Club Tournament", First Lake Ski Jump, Hollyburn Ridge, 1930 (Ommund Ommundsen Collection)

