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H. MEASURE
H. VAN DEN BURGHE
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SKI BUMMING AT RED

Ski Bumming at Red Mountain

In this interview we try to portray the lifestyle of the local ski bums. Hans approaches the topic from an observer point of view and I approach it from the participant observer outlook. The interviews are of persons ranging from a grade ten education to a person holding a Masters Degree. The common bond between the ski bums is the love of skiing. The social aspect and related desires of the ski bums come through their close communication after they've been together and developed into "the family." The attached article from Newsweek contradicts many of our interviews. We feel the reason for this is as Sam Inch says, "Rossland doesn't realize what's going on," and Craig Dino, "It's a nice cozy little town." There is a slower pace for the ski bums of Rossland compared to Newsweek's larger-area ski bums. The cheap rent in town and the cheap lift tickets contribute to their choice of locale. The area is also very close to the ski hill. Actually, Rossland is built on Red Mountain and much of the time ⁸⁸ people are able to ski down the back of Red Mountain to their homes. The most attractive aspect of the area, to the ski bums, is what Olympic champion Nancy Greene said "its the best ski hill in the world".

Marjorie

She was raised in Kaslo, B. C.

She took up skiing two years ago at Red Mountain.

She was attracted to skiing to be outside in the fresh air. She feels this is beneficial to her mind and her body.

She skis everyday.

Marjorie was attracted to skiing here because of what her friends told her. She doesn't want to go to big resorts because the life is too fast for her. She is curious about them but as she stated, "I wouldn't bust my ass to go there". (She is curious about the skiing, not the social life.)

Diet: She's a vegetarian because she doesn't believe in taking an animal's life for food when better sustenance may be achieved through vegetables, fruits, nuts, etc.

Social Life: There isn't too much social life except for the après-ski parties at friends' homes and in the Allan Hotel.

Hardships: Her only hardships are and have been her ski boots hurt. She has a child, Jason, who is three. He usually stays in daycare centers or with friends.

Income: Marjorie is a lifeguard in the local pool in Rossland in the summer and in the winter she is sponsored by the U.I.C. She isn't really worried about money because she spends very little.

She plans on carrying on like this for the greater part of her life. Her parting statement was "Don't buy Lange Boots."

Gary Camozzi

Gary started skiing in Rossland fourteen years ago because everyone played hockey and he wanted to be different. He started skiing "full-time" five years ago after quitting College.

Ski Pattern: Skis everyday in the winter and most of the spring, summer and fall. In the spring he hikes into Kokanee Glacier on touring skis because there is still snow on the ground. After a few weeks he hikes into New Denver Glacier and skis there for an average of three weeks. In the late summer and early fall he can be found ski-touring on the Illiecillaenat Glacier in the Rogers Pass. In the winter he skis Red Mountain through the week. On the weekends he goes on overnight hikes with his dog. He usually tours in the mountains behind Granite, Grey and Old Glory. Gary hikes on weekends because the ski tours have "really bad line ups" and he doesn't get enough skiing in a day.

Diet: He eats fruits, nuts, grains, vegetables but "mainly good food".

Hobbies and Social Life: Gary drinks, swears, smokes cigars, reads and does yoga. He occasionally goes to the Allan Hotel. Gary stays in Rossland because he believes its the best ski area in the world. He believes it has the most potential for a ski-complex. He also remains here because it is his home country and he knows everyone.

Gary Camozzi - cont'd

Income: Carpenter work, handyman, etc. also U.I.C. in the winter.

Future Plans: Gary's immediate future plan is to go up the Whitewater Glacier above Nelson this spring. His more distant plans are to become a ski-yogi. He "wants to become part of a mountain". (He wants to be in the mountains so much he will feel part of them.) Gary hopes to become a ski guide in the Kootenays to "spread joy to other people". He will achieve this by taking them skiing in unskied powder fields (between February and March). Gary and his dog and a friend countried from Argenta to Invermere over the Earl Grey Pass. He was gone from Rossland two weeks.

Gary hopes to be skiing all his life. "I Ain't Quitting."

Gary summarized his future in these words, "Striving for the egoless state, but still conscious of my body".

D. E.

Doug is eighteen years old and was born and raised in Rossland.

He began skiing when he was eleven.

This is his first season "ski-bumming" but he likes it because it's fun".

Doug worked for the parks branch up Kokanee Glacier last summer as assistant ranger. He was able to ski everyday from the end of June to the middle of September. His present source of income is from the U.I.C. His social activities include parties at their house and going to the bar.

Doug reports no hard times at all but this may be due to the fact he just moved out of his parents' house last March.

His diet is the same as it was when he was living with his parents.

Next year Doug plans to go to College into first year.

Pat

Pat lives with Doug in a house in Rossland. He started "ski-bumming" in April, 1973 at the age of sixteen. He wanted to be a full time skier because all his friends were. He wanted to try it and also wanted to avoid having to work for Cominco. Pat likes the life "because it's slack".

Pat was born and raised in Rossland and likes it here because the ski hill rates are cheap and "the people are down to earth".

Pat skis mainly through the week because the area is too crowded on Saturdays and Sundays. He doesn't ski on days he has a hangover. He does the laundry and house-cleaning on the weekends. He started skiing at nine years old. Pat skis all day and then comes home and has a beer. The social life for Pat is lots of parties and the Trail bars. He also goes on ski trips. This year he went to Sun Valley, Fairmont Hot Springs, Snowbird (Idaho), and Whistler Mountain. Pat says he likes the big resorts because "lots more chicks and night life (but sking's bad, they don't know what's up because they ski on short skis)". He doesn't like the resorts because everyone is rich and arrogant. Pat eats meals like he used to at his parents' house and occasionally has "some of the ski hill's bad food" but he says he mainly drinks.

Pat worked for the Parks Branch last summer. He is supported by the U.I.C.

Pat - cont'd.

Hard Times: Pat has a few hard times because everyone in Rossland knows him. He can't get into the Allan because the owner knows he's too young. Pat tries hard to make a good impression on his parents and their friends. Pat says he always has to watch his budget and makes frequent trips to Manpower so it appears he's looking for a job.

Pats' future plans are to finish High School and go to College but he says it's too far away to decide.

Rick B.

Rick B and Scott C came to Red Mountain in the fall of 1972. They had skied Tod Mountain in Kamloops all their life until the Spring of 1972 when they lived at Whistler Mountain. Upon arrival they lived in a Tepee on a friend's farm in Rossland. In a short time they rented a house and spent the rest of the Fall fixing it up. They would work on it from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. each day. At 3:00 the mail would come in so they would go downtown and pick it up. They would then proceed to the Allan Hotel bar until supper time. This season they have the same house in Rossland. In November they ski toured into Kokanee Glacier with three other friends. Rick says they "got into some outrageous powder". After he returned from the hike he worked in the local ski shop in Rossland for a month. Rick says he's skied everyday since it opened. On the weekends he skis in the mornings and goes cross country in the afternoons because the crowds are too great. Rick says he's cross-countryed all Fall when there wasn't enough snow to alpine ski. Rick's social life includes the once a fortnight ski bum party in the Allan and many private parties at their houses. He enjoys full time skiing because "It's a way of life and I've never felt better". Rick works in Sport shops during the summer but in the winter he depends on U.I.C. for support. He also makes extra money mounting ski-bindings and fixing equipment.

Rick B. and Scott C. - cont'd.

Diet: Rick eats meat once or twice a week but it's too expensive to eat much more. His diet consists mainly of vegetables, noodles and rice. He makes bread, yogurt and beer. They buy most of their groceries in the Rossland grocery store but for staples such as flour, sugar, rice, etc. they buy through the co-op in Nelson.

Their heat is cheap because they have a fireplace and two wood stoves in the house. They saw wood in the fall to supplement them.

Rick says they mainly live on "Mountain Mix". This is a nourishing conglomeration of food that is "cheap to make for what you get".

Mountain Mix:

raw peanuts

raw cashews

sunflower seeds

granola

chocolate chips

cocanut

they buy these materials through the co-op and eat it mainly when they go skiing.

Rick says there's no real hard times but his budget is tight. He enjoys the area because it's cheap rent and close to the hill.

Rick plans to go tree planting in the spring and then buy some property at Trout Lake in the summer. In the Fall he plans to go tree planting and then come back to Rossland and ski all winter.

Craig D.

Craig skied four years in the Vancouver area then came to Rossland three years ago because he heard skiing was good here. Craig has skied here most of the days its been open in these last three years.

Social Life: Craig likes Rossland because "it's a cozy little town". He says everybody gets to know each other quickly. Craig says "everybody that skiis are fine people, us ski-bums are like a family". He goes to the ski bum parties in the Allan but he usually is in there making sure there are none going on while he isn't there. Craig prefers skiing in the day but he skiis at night when he's missed that day because of a hangover.

Diet: Craig is a meat eater and he eats everything else. He says he has no special diet. He likes "Boigers" in the summer. He considers himself a connesseur of V.O. and pale ale.

Craig works as a fisherman and carpenter in the summers. He is unique because he also contracts for log cabin building. This summer he is hired to build a log cabin in Kimberly. He likes working outdoors.

Hardships: He has a lack of funds in the spring but he goes to work at odd jobs such as carpentry.

Future Plans: He always says he'll never do it again but he always comes back to Rossland. He wants to go surfing in Mexico next year but hates to leave Rossland because "it's the finest skiing this side of Beaver Valley". (Beaver Valley is a very small ski hill at Fruitvale.)

"Goo": (26 years old).

Goo skied four years in Vancouver at Whistler and Grouse Mountains. He and Craig came here together because friends told them how good the skiing was. He left his native Vancouver because he hates Vancouver winters. Goo returns every year because "it's a quiet easy life". He likes the people who ski. He says when they first came to Rossland there was no more than twenty-five ski bums. He estimates about ninety are here now. His diet is like Craig's, "only not as much at once".

Hardships: Goo broke his thumb last year. He plans his winters so he doesn't worry financially.

He works at the Canadian Fishing Company in Vancouver in the summers.

Social Life: Goo also patronizes the Allan Hotel and goes to the parties. He likes visiting people in Rossland. He finds the dances at the ski hill exciting. He also likes to go bowling. He and Craig went on two ski trips in February. They went to Fairmont Hot Springs and the Bugaboos. They did some helicopter skiing in the Bugaboos. This cost them each fifty dollars a day but he said you get two week's skiing there in one day to what you would at Whistler.

Future Plans: Next year he is going to Mexico with Craig. He would like to surf and fish. He plans on returning in a couple of years. He concludes this interview by saying he likes this life but he is in that stage right now. He feels he's at an end of the era.

Christa:

Christa likes to be outside and she says, "skiing is the best thing for me to do in the world".

She was already living in Rossland and skied since she was eleven year old.

She is a part-time substitute teacher in Rossland and Trail.

Most of her friends ski too.

Christa skis almost every day but not very often on the weekends, "too many turkeys".¹.

Diet: "regular and lots of cheese".

Social Life: "it's a poor man's life but a good time". "Skiing enriches you." Christa works in the summer. She doesn't go to parties that often. She reads lots.

Hardships: "none".

Skiing for her is: "a good time to get by the winter, keeps you in shape."

She would like to go on like this.

1. Turkey is a term used for week-end skiers. (and tourists)

X

He likes: skiing,

people, mostly girls,

having fun,

sunshine,

parties,

drinking,

smoking:

"Lodge skiing is really nice."

"It's nice to get stoned out of your mind on top of
the hill."

X went to university last year but failed. At the moment he
collects unemployment insurance and sells dope.

Diet: "Never eat regular." He usually has lunch at the ski
lodge.

Social life: As has been mentioned, he likes going out.

The people around the hill are "all right, pretty funny, not
loose enough".

Hardships: Lack of dope and alcohol.

X plans to go back to university next year, and hopes to ski
for one month then.

Skiing for him is "the nicest way to spend the winter".

Rick:

Rick skis three or four days a week.

He lives in Castlegar and has been skiing on and off for the last six years.

He likes the skiing, the people and he doesn't mind the parties.

He has been on unemployment for the last month, and worked every once in a while for the last year.

He skied at two other places this winter.

Diet: Rick is a conventional eater and eats regularly. He usually has lunch at the lodge.

Social life: He likes going out but not too often or too fanatically.

"The people here are basically not friendlier than anyone else, they're just doing the same thing."

Hardships: "none."

Rick finds that "skiing isn't everything".

"People come here just to lay around, at least many of them."

"People should start thinking about other recreational possibilities." Rick would like to get into something besides skiing.

Next year he will start studying wild-land resource management at Selkirk College.

Nevertheless Rick states "he was born for the skiing".

Vicky:

It's a sunny afternoon, 1:30 p.m.

I already knew her.

"Oh man, I'm so loaded," not mentioning on what.

"Are you a ski bum?"

"Yes!" She laughs.

It is her second year as a ski bum and she likes the skiing and the people. She skis five days a week.

She lives in Castlegar and collects unemployment insurance.

Diet: "Good breakfast: milk, toast, eggs, juice."

She takes her lunch with her to the ski hill, "fruit mostly."

For the rest she is an irregular eater.

Social life: She likes going out and likes to drink as well as smoke, preferably dope.

Hardships: "No, only running out of money, or not enough powder on the hill."

Vicky wouldn't feel satisfied if this way of living would be continued. She is going to take photography in the airforce.

When I'm finished, I go because I'm tired of it."

Tim:

"You're a ski bum too hey?"

"Yeah."

Tim is a full-time skier for the second year now. He never skied before last winter. I tell him our intentions and he shows a big smile: "wow, that's my first interview."

Tim lives in Rossland and usually works during the summer.

Diet: He eats mostly vegetables but is not a vegetarian.

"He makes excellent pumpkin pies", someone else says.

"He doesn't drink nor smokes dope, but surely eats lots."

Social life: He's usually too tired to do anything at all at night and he visits the ski hill only in the daytime.

He sometimes even skis on the week-ends.

Skiers are the friendliest people he has ever met - "there's no strong small groups and no class systems."

"Even bad skiers are tolerated, but -----"

Hardships: "Damned turkeys ruining the powder."

Tim plans to go on for a few more years, and will study biology when the skiing will be finished.

Sharon: (This interview demonstrates why a Red Mountain Skier is attracted to the ski bum life.)

She is a full-time student at Selkirk College right now, but wants to ski the whole coming winter; potential ski bum!

She has had three years of experience in skiing.

She likes the 'ski-scene', the people and the things they are doing, but more than that she likes skiing.

Sharon has already been living in Trail for the last five years.

She wants to take up summer and fall employment.

"What about unemployment?"

"No way"! "No respect, bums"!

Diet: Average, but healthy. She plans on having some kind of diet next year.

Social life: She would like to ski in a big resort with lots of entertainment and has already done so a few times.

Hardships expected: "Maybe lack of money."

She already studies biology and wants to go on in marine biology after her winter of skiing.

CONCLUSION

As it has been said by Sam Inch, ski bumming is something that is growing fast now. It could be compared to the Californian surfing movement of the early sixties, and probably to future ^{man-carrying} kite-flying, since several people are starting to be very active in that field.

It must be made clear that we, after approaching and interviewing a group of people, of which a relatively large portion collects unemployment insurance, and of which some might not act too socially responsible, purposely do not want to make any social comments. We feel that it is not up to us to make any judgements of this kind. We can only say that a tendency like this can only take place in a semi or complete welfare state. ✓

Ski bums are people coming from various groups, in any respect, but they all fight the elements and find pleasure and often satisfaction in doing so. ✓

Harry Measure

Hans van den Berge