

16 THE BRANDON SUN, Thursday, December 9, 1976



with JOHN DRABBLE
Sun Staff Writer

Rumors of Ski Valley's death are greatly exaggerated, says Al James, Minnedosa lawyer and one of the ski hill's directors.

It's quite true, he says, that the board of directors was giving serious consideration to staying closed this season but, "as far as we know right now we are going to try to open again."

James says many of the directors were a bit pessimistic about opening this fall because of the Brandon Hills ski development proposed by the Canada Winter Games Society. "We wondered about putting more money into something that would be ruined for sure once the new hill opened."

But the Brandon Hills proposal has seen a lot of slush and rocks in the last two months, and this has raised the hopes of Ski Valley proponents considerably.

Actually, the spectre of a Brandon ski development has been rather an academic problem for Ski Valley in the last few weeks. The big block to opening has been a lack of water. The hill's well dried up in the heat of the summer, leaving the chalet kitchen and washrooms without water.

A driller had to go down 82 feet to find a new supply, says James. For a while they didn't think they would find any. Now they have to wait for warmer weather in order to make new connections.

On the subject of rumors, there is one floating around that the provincial government is secretly negotiating to buy Ski Valley and turn it into a park. "That's a nice dream," says James. "If only it were true."

It will be another two weeks before Glenorkey is ready for downhill skiers but the cross-country trail may be ready before then, depending on snow. This year the Glenorkey board of directors has decided to charge cross-country skiers an annual membership fee for use of the trail and chalet facilities. The rate will be \$2 for an adult and \$5 per family. Memberships are available at Gooden's, Spectrum Sports, the chalet, or from board directors.

Glenorkey has also raised its alpine memberships. The new rates run as follows: adult — \$45; child 14-and-under — \$28; family of two adults — \$66; first child in a family — \$17; each additional child — \$11. (Maximum for a family is \$105).

Rates aren't the only complicated thing at Glenorkey. The organizations full name is fun too: The Mount Glenorkey Brandon Winter Recreation Club corporation (or MGBWRCC for short).

Snow has finally landed here (I never doubted for a minute it would come.) Mount Agassiz's Ravens Flight run was open on the weekend and it drew a reasonable crowd of skiers.

Cold arctic air landed with a thump on Agassiz Sunday, but the day before was a skier's delight; a warm bright sun plus tremendous (artificial) snow conditions.

This will almost certainly be the year of the hot-dogger. It won't be too surprising if the lower slopes, especially the novice runs fill up with freestyle skiers, practising ballet slides and rolls.

The Canadian Ski Association has decided to officially recognize freestyle as skiing's fourth discipline. It has hired Johnny Johnston, former freestyle champion, as a full-time program director. The Canadian Ski Instructor's Alliance has also added freestyle to its courses for instructors. Soon, perhaps, there will also be freestyle coaches.

The Europeans, apparently, prefer their downhill. At least they aren't about to recognize freestyle as an official sport. Canadian officials, however, believe it is here to stay, and my bet is they are right. I would not be surprised to see hills set aside as special freestyle areas in the near future.

All summer long sodden tourists in British Columbia waited for the rains to stop. Well they have stopped and B.C. ski operators are beginning to think they are the victims of a bad cosmic joke. Ski conditions aren't bad, says Franz Wilhelmson of Whistler Mountain. They're nonexistent.

He says this time last year 20,000 people had passed through at \$7 or \$8 a ticket. But so far this year not one single solitary skier has moved up the lift line.

Conditions are tough along the southern Rockies too. Resorts in Colorado have had to rely on snow-making equipment to stay open. And temperatures have plummeted.

Hill operators in traditionally snow poor, frigid southern Ontario, would probably shed a tear for their mountain bound colleagues — except they are too busy packing snow and selling lift tickets.