



The Brady's bunch

Do it yourself ski
operation keeps hills open
for Montcalm folks

by Ardyce Czuchna

Talk about a doting father. Here's one who leased a ski lodge so his 17-year-old daughter could ski close to home.

Well, approximately. It's true that Robert Chenoweth, a Stanton real estate man, was all set to buy his daughter, Jane, a complete skiing outfit for Christmas, but learned that the ski area which was handiest, Brady's Hill's, off M46, near Amble, was closed. That's what started it.

Chenoweth at first was disappointed about the lodge closing. "There went the skiing," he remembers thinking to himself. But then he gave it another think, wondering why Brady's Hills — which has been the favorite ski place for Stanton area people for 18 years — had shut down.

He called the lodge and talked with Jack Paulson, one of the members of the Paulson family which has operated the ski lodge all these years. "We're farmers, not ski resort operators," Paulson told Chenoweth. He added that the ski area was for sale for \$100,000.

The price included 100 acres, six tows, a Poma-lift on which

skiers can sit as they ride up the slopes, the \$30,000 lodge, and about 200 ski outfits for rental to customers including skis, poles and boots.

The Paulson family goes back a long way on that piece of land. Jack's grandfather, Brady Paulson, a skiing Norwegian pioneer settler, bought 400 acres of timberland exactly 100 years ago.

Brady's son, Arthur, and grandsons, Jack and Rick, together with their wives, have operated the lodge and ski area. But their first love, as Jack Paulson explained to Chenoweth, is their farm — now grown to 700 acres — which adjoins the ski area.

Although the family adores skiing and every member learned to ski almost as soon as he learned to walk, operating the ski business had grown to be a hassle.

This was interesting to Chenoweth both personally and professionally. Personally, there was Jane, and not only Jane but her skiing schoolmates at Central Montcalm High School, and not only them but hundreds of

other Montcalm area skiers who were facing a bleak winter without a handy place to ski.

Professionally, here was this unique real estate deal which would be enhanced considerably if the property was in use so a potential buyer could see all those happy skiers enjoying themselves.

"The best way to sell the place would be to open it," Chenoweth said. That put sound business thinking squarely on the side of parental affection, and Chenoweth lost no further time.

He cajoled two fellow real estate salesmen in Stanton, Mrs. Judy Brooks and Larry Brundage, to go partners with him, and they leased Brady's Hills and opened it the day after Christmas.

Business was hurting, however, mainly because of the early-season announcement that the lodge would be closed, and no season passes were offered for sale.

But Chenoweth and his partners were not discouraged. They let the word get around and discovered a groundswell of support for keeping the lodge open. The Stanton and Greenville Junior Chamber of Commerce — with many young skiers in the membership — as well as Lakeview area folks and area Ski Patrol members all wanted to ski. Members of each group came out and volunteered to do whatever necessary to keep the ski slopes operating.

Chenoweth's daughter, Jane, the instigator of it all, works at renting out ski equipment when she is not on the slopes. Volunteers operating the ski lifts work awhile and then ski awhile, trading off with partners.

"Any profits made on the slopes this season will go to the Jaycees because they're providing the muscle," Chenoweth said.

"We're really just trying to break even and sell the ski lodge, but meanwhile the volunteers, their families — and Jane — are able to ski close to home."



Robert Chenoweth and daughter Jane



The Paulson family, which had operated Brady's Hills for 18 years, enjoys a card game in the lodge. Standing, the daughter, Gail, and Mr. and Mrs. Rick Paulson. Seated, left to right, are Mrs. Jack Paulson and their parents, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Paulson.



Don Rassmussen of Stanton, Community School director at Central Montcalm Schools and a member of the Junior Chamber of Commerce, takes his turn in equipment rental.

The Grand Rapids Press, Sunday, January 19, 1975

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