

Ski resort has room for family to have fun

By JIM DuFRESNE
ANN ARBOR NEWS BUREAU

FARWELL — Less than 30 minutes after arriving at Silver Ridge Resort my son was playing ski tag with a few of the local children.

They were chasing each other across the runs, zigzagging down the slopes, flying off the snow ramps, getting just a little crazy during the holidays.

And why not? There were probably more skiers in one lift line at Boyne Highlands than there were on all nine runs at Silver Ridge.

"Well, we wouldn't mind if it was a little more crowded," co-owner Dennis Jones said. "But right now, that's the nice thing about skiing here."

The name, Silver Ridge, is new but the hill isn't. Families have been learning to ski at this facility located south of Farwell in Clare County since the late 1960s.

For almost 30 years it was known as Mott Mountain, which was a bit of misnomer. The ski hill is really an elongated ridge with a vertical drop of only 209 feet.

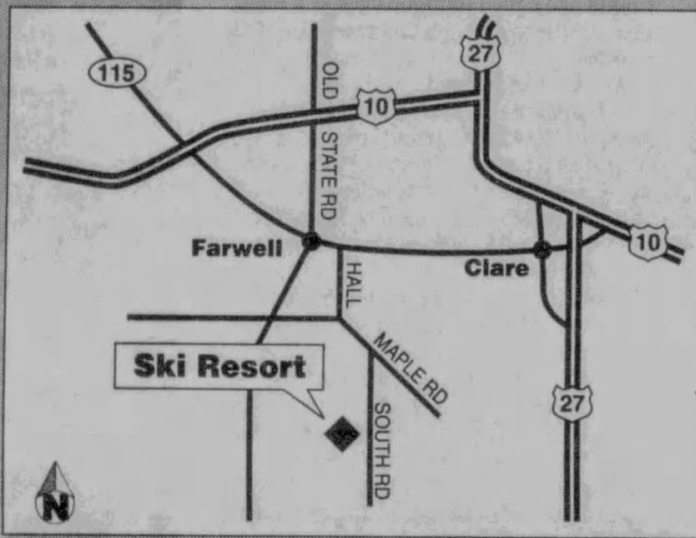
The "Mountain" closed in 1995 and reopened as the Ridge last winter after Jones and a partner upgraded the facility.

First, they tripled the number of snow guns, which is crucial for any hill this far south in Michigan. Then, they installed new lighting, built a year-round restaurant and lounge and improved the rental equipment by adding Olin sidecut skis.

The improvements were needed, but Silver Ridge is still a small family ski hill. It's similar to the community hills scattered across the Upper Peninsula, uncrowded, unpretentious and affordable.

It's a place where a hot dog at the grill costs only \$1.50 and you can ski

SILVER RIDGE RESORT



Skilling: Nine runs, a double chair lift and three tow ropes.

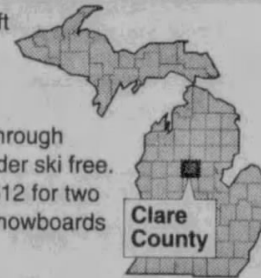
Hours: 3:30 to 9 p.m. Mon.- Fri., 10 to 10 weekends.

Fees: \$12 midweek; \$18 Friday through Sunday. Children 7 and under ski free.

Rentals: Skis, boots and poles are \$12 for two hours or \$18 for the day. Snowboards also available.

Information: (517) 588-7220.

From US-27 north of Clare, head west on US-10 and take the first exit. Follow Old State Road south into Farwell, turn east on M-115 briefly and resume heading south on Hill Street. Signs will lead you to the ski hill.



NEWS BUREAU GRAPHIC



Kidventures

in blue jeans and not stand out.

If you need 45 different runs, a high-speed chair lift and a lounge at the top of the mountain, then you have to pay for it. But if your family doesn't, why drive four hours north and spend \$40 for a lift ticket?

"We're the first ski area in what many consider Northern Michigan," Jones said. "You can get up here, get a full day of skiing in and then drive home. That appeals to a lot of people."

Silver Ridge services its skiers with a double chair lift and three tow ropes.

Once on top of the hill, you have a

choice of nine runs. Two, South Ridge and Side Winder, are labeled black diamonds. Side Winder is the most interesting slope, as it swings briefly into the woods that border the hill.

The rest of the runs descend the open ridge and the longest one — Astrid Alle' — is listed as a half mile in length, although that's an exaggeration.

In short, the slopes at Silver Ridge aren't difficult or long.

Regulars to Nub's Knob and Crystal Mountain would be greatly disappointed.

Hyperactive 10-year-olds, who love spending an afternoon chasing other 10-year-olds, will not. Neither will their parents.

Gotcha!