

**CYR from B1**

*'Grand dame of skiing' continued to be athletic, even after surgery*

"She is probably one of the kindest people a person would ever know," McClure said. "Though she was 77, she could speak to all generations."

Philip Peterson was ski school director for Cyr and her late husband, Oscar, at their Pine Bend Ski Area, which closed in 1972. Cyr is "the grand dame of skiing in Minnesota," said Peterson, who runs several ski and snowboard groups, including the Twin Cities Independent Ski Areas Association.

"She was one of the more caring persons in the industry," he said. "She worked hard to get the industry to work together. She was so enthusiastic. . . . There was only one Gabe."

Cyr, raised in St. Paul, learned how to ski from her husband, who had run several ski schools in New Hampshire. They met during World War II, when Oscar visited Lund Ski Co. in St. Paul to buy skis for troops, said their daughter, Gady Blake. Oscar saw Gabrielle Weinhagen playing tennis.

They later married and together cleared the ravines in the Mississippi River bluffs for a ski area at Pine Bend. Blake recalls sitting in the old Jeep that her mom used to

yank out tree stumps.

One time, Blake said, her mother broke several ribs while using a crow bar to pry open a crate containing a ski lift. "She was mad because she was no help for about three weeks," Blake said. The family opened Pine Bend in 1954, not long after Buck Hill opened.

"There was a lot of back and forth with the Stones of Buck Hill, helping each other out with suggestions of what worked or didn't," Blake said.

The Cyrs extended another helping hand in 1965 when the Nelson family opened Welch Village ski area south of Hastings.

"Gabe and Oscar were the first to say welcome aboard and wish us well," Leigh Nelson said. "I'll always remember that."

Nelson remembered that first winter, when it rained at Christmas and again in February. The Cyrs and Nelsons commiserated and partied together, despite the rain, at Steamboat Inn in Prescott, Wis.

"She was a true matriarch of the sport," Nelson said. "She always had an upbeat spirit. I always got a hug from her. I will miss

those hugs from Gabe."

After her husband died in 1966 and Pine Bend closed in 1972, Cyr had some rough years, her daughter said. So, when Chuck Stone asked her to become race director at Buck Hill, she was thrilled.

"She was so happy to get back into skiing," Blake said. "She loved ski people."

Cyr also loved golf and continued playing even after a hip and two knee replacements in recent years. And she put in 60-hour weeks during the two peak skiing months, said Nancy Stone, Buck Hill president. Cyr liked to listen to jazz on the radio in her office and at area jazz clubs. She even brought her dog, Jazz, to work at Buck Hill.

"She was kind of ageless," Stone said. "She had a loyalty to the ski business and her friends and a determination to do a good job."

Cyr also could be outspoken. Blake recalled her mother's account of stopping two young teenage boys whom she overheard swearing by the Buck Hill chalet: "She button-holed them and said, 'Would you talk like that in front of your grandmother?'"

Blake said her mother "was raised to be and always was a lady. But she could put you in your place and use truck driver language if she needed to. She was never dull."