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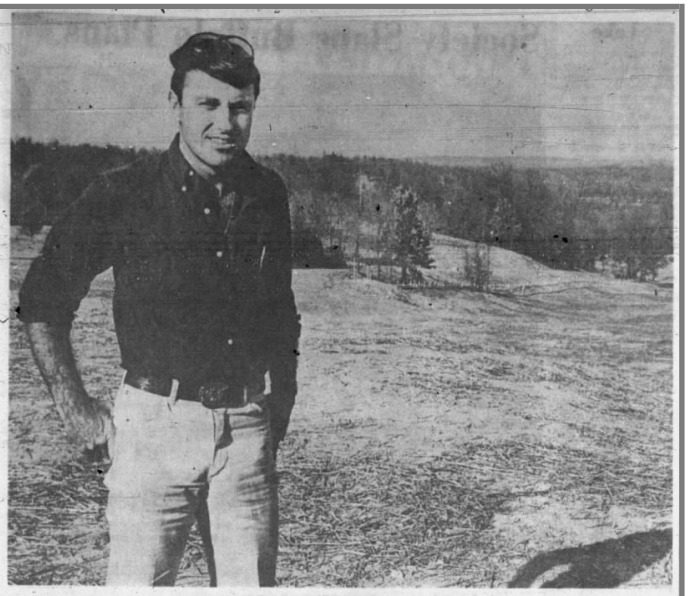

—News and Leader Staff Photo

Toni Krasovic, 30-year-old Austrian native who started skiing at the age of four, is shown in front of one of four ski slopes at the Tan-Tar-A ski lodge near Osage Beach which he will manage. Stretching from the center of the picture to the right are pipes which will supply water for man-made snow. Krasovic, who comes to Tan-Tar-A from New York's Windham Ski Area, has supervised construction of three similar layouts which use man-made snow. Skiing on slopes designed for the beginning, novice, and intermediate skier will begin as early in December as weather permits.

Lake of the Ozarks Resort Areas Move to Attract Winter Tourists

By HANK BILLINGS
News and Leader Staff Writer

Fourteen years ago, a visitor to Camdenton described Lake of the Ozarks tourist attractions this way —

"Fishing, of course, is the principal sport of the visitors. But there is also boating — in everything from a canoe to big excursion craft — horseback riding, hiking, swimming, badminton, tennis, dancing, bowling, etc., etc., etc."

Then the correspondent added a prophetic postscript:

"No skiing — yet."

* * *

That qualification will be buried in two feet of man-made snow by the first week of December — if contruction of a ski resort remains on schedule and the Indian summer weather is swallowed in the teeth of a more seasonable north wind.

The experiment by Tan-Tar-A will be watched closely by other area resort owners and businessmen as the possible end to the tradition that the tourist business — except for an occasional convention — falls off with the leaves.

Toni Krasovic, an Innsbruck, Austria, native who has been skiing for 26 of his 30 years, will manage the ski lodge for Burton Dierks, St. Louis contractor who is the owner and developer of Tan-Tar-A.

Krasovic said construction of the three-story lodge and four ski slopes will be completed by Dec. 1, but when skiing starts depends on the weather.

When the temperature goes below 30, Krasovic said, snow can be formed with water from pipes now being installed and compressed air.

"Give me a good cover of two feet of snow and I can take a week of mild weather," Krasovic said.

* * *

Man-made snow doesn't have to be compacted like natural snow, the manager said. "It takes about three feet of natural snow for a one-foot depth. With a foot of man-made snow, you have a one-foot depth."

The lodge, which includes a cafeteria, lounge, and ski shop, is nearing completion on the Tan-Tar-A access road, west of U. S. 54 and a mile east of the main lodge.

Under sunny skies which held no hint of either snow nor freezing temperatures, heavy equipment was working on a 400-car parking area and workmen were sprinkling the four slopes during a reporter's visit.

There will be two 1000-foot beginners' slopes with an average vertical drop of 8 percent; one 2000-foot novice slope with a 12 percent average drop, and an 800-foot intermediate slope with a 20 percent drop.

Still to be installed are towers and equipment for three rope tows and a 1700-foot T-bar.

There will be eight ski instructors, a ski patrol and first aid facilities, Krasovic reported.

"We're even going to have a St. Bernard dog," reported owner Duenke. "A friend of mine has one he'll lend us and we've got one of those big kegs to tie around his neck."

* * *

Tan-Tar-A, which has finished its fourth full season, was the first of the big developments on the lake and is the first to be encountered by a motorist heading north (or east) from Camdenton on U. S. 54.

The skiing program "has brought inquiries from all over the midwest, said Duenke, from as far away as Evansville, Ind., where a ski club wants to schedule two outings this winter.

Even without skiing, the owner said, fall business has been "twice as good as this time last year."

No decision has been made on rebuilding the lakefront restaurant which burned recently. Other eating facilities are in the main lodge, along with a bowling alley.

Under construction, however, is a building which will house 75 units, a skating rink, a health center, and an indoor pool.

The new units will increase Tan-Tar-A's capacity to 650 persons.

"I've always had confidence in this lake," said Duenke, "and I think Missouri is the prettiest state in the union.

"People like to be right down on the water, especially in the summertime, and that's the beauty of a privately-owned lake like this one. On a government lake, they won't let you build right on the water."

Tan-Tar-A is as cosmopolitan as its clientele — its main lodge has an architecture with a Japanese flavor, its ski lodge is Swiss, and its name is Indian, meaning "the swift."

* * *

Further along 54 — visible as you cross the Grand Glaize bridge — is Mai Tai, a 95-unit resort with a Polynesian motif and name, meaning "the finest."

Manager Curt Matthews said Mai Tai will close Nov. 22 this year, after staying open until Dec. 15 in its first season.

"The lake isn't enough," said Matthews. "You have to have nightly entertainment or skiing or some activities like that to attract people in the winter time."

The Lake Ozark Holiday Inn, which opened its 42 units in July, 1963, was closed last winter for addition of 48 units.

All 110 units will remain open this winter and business so far has been "very good," reported a spokesman for manager Richard Robbins.

Newest of the lake's big resorts, and closest to the dam, is the Lodge of the Four Seasons, a 128-unit air conditioned and fireproof building operated by St. Louis' Chase-Park Plaza Hotel.

The resort opened in June and already plans are being considered for another 50 units.

Construction is complete, a spokesman said, but it will be some time before the impressive landscaping is in shape "because it takes awhile for things to grow."

The lodge, which describes itself as rising "above the Lake of the Ozarks like the prow of a proud galleon . . . a contemporary curve of field stone and rough-hewn wood," sponsors a water ski carnival and has a private golf course on Hwy. 54, access road from 54.

* * *

In the Camdenton area, you can see the usual "closed for season" signs on many businesses — including two or three country music theaters and several rodeo arenas inspired by Harry Nelson's growing annual J-Bar-H rodeo in Camdenton.

But you can also see out-of-state cars and convention clusters at the big resorts and hear such traditional spring sounds as hammers and saws ringing among the hills and oak trees with their stubborn - clinging brown leaves.

Mingled with those sounds are the snorting and grinding of the road machinery widening and straightening 54 on both sides of Camdenton to make things easier for future tourists.

Meanwhile, the $2,252,217 job — awarded to the Tobin Construction Company of Kansas City — is quite a shot in the arm for the area economy.

Begun in July, the 6.2-mile job — extending from Linn Creek southwest through Camdenton to the Niangua bridge — probably will last through 1964.

Included will be construction of bridges over the north and south forks of Linn Creek.

* * *

Although tourism remains Camdenton's number one industry, the newest industry for the Camden County seat isn't related to the tourist business.

In December, 1962, the W.T. Cox Company occupied a building west of Camdenton on U.S. 54 — originally built by the Camdenton Industrial Development Corporation for a boat factory, subsequently occupied by a mattress firm.

The company employs about 20 persons in the assembly and milling of railroad flange wheel attachments for autos and trucks. It also manufactures spray equipment and does contract spraying for railroads.

The company, founded in 1931, has another plant and its home office in Santa Ana, Calif. Edwin W. (Ed) Cox is president.

Camdenton's other main industry, the tourist - oriented Blair Cedar and Novelty Works, has grown in the 14 years it has been in the resort community.

The latest addition to office and warehouse space, as new that owners began had time to install a new sign, has brought the plant to about 20,000 square feet.

There are about 50 employes engaged in manufacture of about 300 different cedar items, reported John Blair, Jr., the firm's secretary-treasurer.

* * *

About a year ago, the firm installed IBM equipment for billing and accounts receivable.

The products are distributed nationally, with Missouri, surprisingly enough, trailing such other heavy tourist areas as New York, California, and the Great Smokies as a customer.

Blair has expressed faith in the area's year-round tourist po-

See LAKE, Page D-2

—News and Leader Staff Photo

The three-story Swiss-type ski lodge, a mile east of the main Tan-Tar-A lodge on the Lake of the Ozarks, is nearing completion and will be ready for the start of the Ozarks' first skiing season this winter. The building will house a cafeteria with seating for 250 persons, a lounge for 150, a ski shop, and a rental and repair shop. The ski lodge will be open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on weekends and from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. on weekdays; will serve breakfast and lunch.

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