



Contributed

This photo from 1949 shows, from left, Pam Leckie, Helen de Pfyffer, Sharon West, Betty Ryder and Dora Kelley.

OKANAGAN HISTORY

Queens of the hill

Editor's note: This year, Heritage Week will be celebrated from Feb. 15 to 21. The programme for that week will be in this column next Monday. The theme this year is Sports and Recreation. To that end, this week, we begin a series of articles on Kelowna's sports history. We welcome any contributions on this subject. Our postal address is at the end of the column. Thank you.

By ALICE (DE PFYFFER, NEAVE) LUNDY

Special to The Daily Courier

The Kelowna Ski Club was formed in 1938. Prior to the club being formed, there was a loose-knit, hardy, fanatical group of enthusiasts who founded skiing at several different locations around Kelowna: Joe Riche on the Cyril Weddell property, up McCulloch Road to the Timberline Ski Hill or across the lake — depending on snow conditions.

The Kelowna Ski Club formed in 1938 held its first competition in 1939 at the Joe Riche Ski Hill. After the Second World War, with the perennial support and persistence of Max de Pfyffer, Maurice Meikle, Lyman Dooley and Verne Ahrens, a new location on Black Mountain was established in 1946-47 on part of the Wallace Ranch. In 1956, Max de Pfyffer was presented with a scroll making him the honorary lifetime president of the club.

The Okanagan Ski Zone Championships were to be held here in 1947, but as today, all eyes were on the

sky, looking for more snow for that particular weekend.

In 1947, the club decided to hold a "ski queen" contest. A wooden 18-foot barometer was erected at the Standard Service Station on the corner of Bernard Avenue and Ellis Street. Each club sponsoring a candidate was to sell ballots at the princely sum of 25 cents each. As the time drew near for the tournament and ski club dance, the sponsors and candidates worked very hard to keep at the top of the barometer. The winning candidate was to be announced and crowned at the mammoth ski dance to be held at the Scout Hall.

The first Ski Queen to be crowned was Betty Ball, sponsored by the Rotary Club with 72,750 votes. Runners-up were Nora Jones-Evans, Lions; Tan Dooley, Stagettes; Joyce Harding, Kinsmen and June Goode, Elks.

In 1948, the beautiful, new ski chalet with large window looking out at the ski hill was built. Here one could keep warm and buy refreshments. On Sunday, Dec. 19, 1948, the new ski tow was opened by then Mayor Jim Pettigrew. According to the paper of the day — "Mayor James Pettigrew got into the spirit of things and donned skis for the first time in his life."

Again the ski club outdid itself in hosting the zone ski meet. Ski candidates for that year were: Helen de Pfyffer, Gyro Club; Pam Leckie, Canadian Legion; Betty Ryder, Rotary; Sharon West, Lions and Dora Kelley, BPO Elks.

Helen de Pfyffer with 35,050 votes was crowned at a dance at the El Rancho Restaurant by Past Ski Queen Betty Ball.

For the next two years, 1949 and 1950,

ski queen contests were held in conjunction with the Okanagan Zone Ski Championships. The queen candidates were not sponsored by any service clubs as they had been in the past two years.

Also, the booster tickets, still at the 25 cent price, entitled the buyer to 50 votes for the candidate of his or her choice. It also gave the buyer admission to the Sunday ski event. Kay Paige was Ski Queen in 1949 with Una Smith and Claire Scantland as her competitors. The 1950 Ski Queen was Mary White, with her competitors being Oli Daum and Janet Scantland.

Several hundred people would come up to the ski hill to see the slalom, downhill and ski jumping events. Event contestants would come from Revelstoke, Salmon Arm, Princeton, Penticton, Summerland, Rossland and Vancouver. Those years were a great time to learn how to ski and to enjoy the close friendship and the outdoors only a short distance from home.

This wonderful ski hill located off Swainson Road was closed in the 1960s when Big White Ski Hill opened.

Alice (dePfyffer Neave) Lundy is currently the Chairperson of the Father Pandosy Mission Committee. She is a Life Member of both the Okanagan Historical Society and the Kelowna Branch of the O.H.S. Alice was born and raised in Kelowna and graduated from Kelowna High School (now K.S.S.). This article is submitted by the Kelowna Branch, O.H.S. Additional information would be welcome at Box 22105, Capri P.O., Kelowna, B.C. V1Y 9N9.