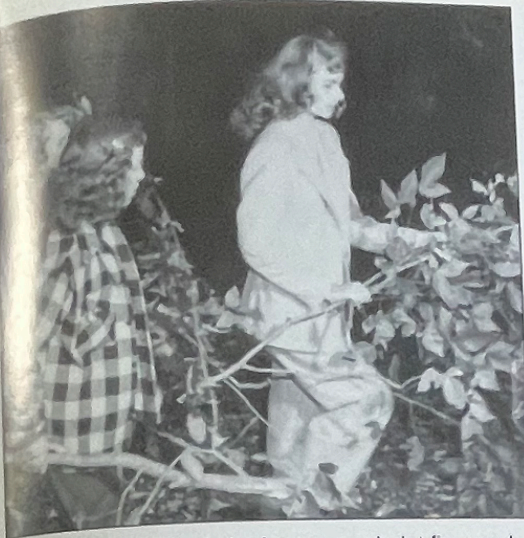


(Photo courtesy of Larry Erb.)



Women hauling tree limbs for use as chalet firewood.

weather, or huddled together for warmth in stormy conditions. Otto, a stocky, barrel-chested sturdy fellow would peel strips of bacon off a slab with his jackknife and eat them cold. After lunch he spent the rest of the day teaching us downhill skiing and the telemark turns that the Austrian troopers, carrying heavy packs, used during the war. Otto Heidinger carved the most beautiful telemarks you ever saw.

Years later, according to Gerry, he and his buddies took bushwhacking to a new level with the purchase of a portable Swedish tow. This gas-powered engine was light enough that four or five skiers could haul it up any hill on a toboggan, attach pulleys to upper and lower trees, fence posts, farm implements or whatever was handy, attach the 100-yard rope and voilà – instant ski hill. Gerry Stransky and his die-hard cohorts had a good dozen years of skiing under their belts before they came down out of the wilderness and joined the Roald Amundsen Ski Club in 1946.

Of course, there were half a dozen other clubs he might have chosen and it is in the story of these that our skiing heritage resides. Here are sketches of all.

Roald Amundsen Ski Club 1929-1950. Roald Amundsen, named for the famous Norwegian explorer, was by my research the first ski club in Western New York. Today if you were driving south along Route 240 from the village of Colden toward Glenwood you would have to know just where to look to find the slope that attracted this group of Norwegian immigrants. To them it was perfect for jumping and skiing, so they rented the property from Kenneth Gould and hired nearby farmer (and later member) Al Gutekunst to remove boulders from the hill with his team of horses.



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