“... a transition that became a part of history...”

By Brook Merrow  
Snow Trail contributor

If only she hadn’t worn the stylish brown Bogner stretch pants and the white and gold turtleneck. But then again, Dawn Pelletier didn’t know she’d be racing that morning in the Aroostook County high school ski championship at Bigrock Mountain in Mars Hill.

Members of the University of Maine’s women’s ski team showed their joie de vivre in the mid-1970s. Team leaders, left to right, are in the lower center of this photo: Co-captain Leslie Miller, coach Kim Pike and co-captain Linda Levesque. Others are above: Kristin Wiese, Annie Zanca, Christine Moulton, Dawn Pelletier, Jan Jabar and Brook Merrow. (Courtesy UMaine archives)
Founded in 1995, the Ski Museum of Maine is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization established with the mission to celebrate and preserve the history and heritage of Maine skiing. The Ski Museum exhibits artifacts, photographs, artwork and documents at its location in Kingfield, conducts educational programs to ski clubs, schools, libraries, historical and civic organizations, and hosts social events and activities throughout the year.

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**Upcoming Ski Museum Events**

**April 15**

Third Annual Skee Spree
Barker Mountain Base Lodge
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**The Mountains of Maine: Skiing in the Pine Tree State**

An exhibit created by the New England Ski Museum, augmented with considerable additional material from the Ski Museum of Maine, will be on display at the Robinson House of the Bethel Historical Society, 10 Broad Street, through spring 2018.

Tuesday through Friday
10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Admission by donation

For more info, call 800-824-2910 or visit www.bethelhistorical.org
Reflecting on the Ski Museum’s *Sisters of Skade* program, celebrating Maine women in skiing, I always come back to the woman who influenced my involvement in skiing — my mom. I’m sure that all of you reading this letter remember the key role your mothers played in your skiing lives — packing the lunches and making sure that you didn’t forget your gloves. And riding that T-bar hunched over with the bar straddled around her knees so you could easily ride up the hill with the bar ‘round your bottom.

My fondest personal maternal memories include the day after a big snowstorm, when school was in session and the snow conditions were excellent. My mom would write me and my siblings excuses for skipping school (I never did see the actual notes or rationale) and drive us an hour away to our closest major ski area. Our dad stayed home, working to put food on the table and purchase our lift tickets.

My mom was a devoted church-goer. When my family took up skiing in the early 1960s, weekends were devoted to this family recreation. Suddenly attending services became a problem. At first my mother convinced the minister to hold a 6 a.m. service so we could combine praising the Lord with playing on the slopes. But the logistics proved to be just too much, and my mother opted for skiing. She convinced her children that being at the top of the mountain, we were nearer to God and Heaven. We bought her reasoning. After all, recreation is just a different way of pronouncing re-creation.

As a 20-something employee at Sugarloaf in the 1970s, my mom was hundreds of miles away. All of my cohorts were lucky to have a surrogate mother: Sonny Jackman, a local resident who we fondly nicknamed “The Mother of the Valley.” She was always there for advice and counsel and of course a good home-cooked meal.

While at Sugarloaf I became a surrogate mother or at least the primary babysitter for the Strunk boys and Webber kids — including the baby of the family, Kate Webber Punderson.

At Sunday River in the 1980s, I became a stepmom. Thanks to generous employee privileges, Luke and Molly Gray grew up skiing at Sunday River with the ability to store their skis in my office and drink too much hot chocolate at a discount.

The most memorable mother-daughter event during my Sunday River years actually happened at Cannon Mountain in New Hampshire. By virtue of being the only entrants in Molly’s age category in the Equitable Family Ski Challenge at Sunday River, we moved on to the regional finals at Cannon. Molly and I were completely outclassed but were able to finish — dead last. It was the ultimate bonding experience. The apres race party featured a prize drawing at which I won a pair of rear-entry Nordica boots — which lasted me 20 years.

I hope these musings on moms will bring a smile to your face and fond memories of the mothers in your skiing life.
This winter has been very exciting for the Ski Museum of Maine! In February, our Fireside Chat titled *Maine’s Nordic Skiing Heritage 1870-2017* was presented to an enthusiastic audience at L.L. Bean’s Flagship Store in Freeport. It was a new version of the chat that incorporated much new material from the L.L. Bean archives, which was a major topic of our last issue of *Snow Trail*.

Also in February, the Museum hosted our annual Maine Ski Heritage Classic at Sugarloaf. Although attendance was down from previous years, everyone had a great time and we were able to raise almost $8,400. (See page 18 for a list of Heritage Classic donors.)

The Museum has had a wonderful insurgence of visitors this winter. I have spoken with people from South Africa to New Brunswick. While giving a tour the other day, I enjoyed retelling the story of how the first skiers came from Sweden and how they settled in Aroostook County. Guests are always amazed that the wooden skis are so long and without edges — and also that women skied in dresses!

In recognition of March being International Women’s History Month, a new *Sisters of Skade: Women in Maine Skiing 1870-2017* program was presented at the Carrabassett Valley Public Library. Skade (SKAH-da) is an ancient Norse goddess who is closely associated with hunting, mountains, winter and skiing.

*Sisters of Skade* was created in 2016 by research director Scott Andrews and president Wende Gray, and it was presented at the Bethel Historical Society. *Sisters of Skade* comprises...

*Two girls ski to school in skirts in New Sweden in 1931. This photo is included in the Ski Museum’s Sisters of Skade women’s program. (Courtesy New Sweden Historical Society)*
two parts, a PowerPoint slideshow and a panel discussion.

This year’s PowerPoint presentation was given by Leigh Breidenbach, who performed some additional research. It covers a variety of subjects and time periods from the arrival of the Swedish immigrants in 1870 to the present. Prominent characters include top female athletes plus other women who made key contributions to the sport and industry in Maine.

The second part of the program was a panel discussion led by myself. This panel included women leaders — both past and present — in several fields of the sport and industry of skiing and snowboarding. It was very interesting hearing the stories from these women who are affiliated with Sugarloaf today. (Please see page 18 for a list of Sisters of Skade sponsors.)

The Sisters of Skade presentation and follow-on panel discussion will form the foundation for the Ski Museum’s continued research and promotion of these Maine women’s accomplishments. The Ski Museum is already planning next year’s presentation of Sisters of Skade at Bates College.

The Board of Directors met in March and three new members were elected. They are Drew Cota, Bob Farrar and Cate Gilbane. Each brings excellent past experience to the group. The board reviewed and updated the Museum’s Strategic Plan. There is a renewed commitment to bringing the Museum to the next level — both in terms of its physical space and as well as the momentum to expand our programs throughout the state. I look forward to the future of the Ski Museum of Maine.

I recently attended the International Ski History Association’s Snowsport History Week at Stowe, Vermont. Every year this organization recognizes and inducts members into the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Hall of Fame. This year, our Ski Museum received an Honorable Mention at the film awards for From Tree to Ski, a vintage movie that was taken in the 1930s inside Paris Manufacturing Company, which was Maine’s first mass producer of skis. The film follows its title quite literally, beginning with massive fresh-cut logs being rolled off a truck and ending with the finished product being wrapped for shipping.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, we thank all that have renewed their memberships. It is through your memberships that we can continue our mission “to celebrate and preserve the history and heritage of Maine skiing.”

Happy spring skiing everyone!

Theresa Shanahan
Executive director, Ski Museum of Maine

Jane Luthe is photographed sometime in the late 1940s by husband, H. Merrill Luthe. Their son, Richard “Rick” Luthe, is a longtime Mt. Abram ski instructor. This photo is included in the Ski Museum’s Sisters of Skade women’s program. (Courtesy Rick Luthe)
From the research director ...

Things are moving in the Ski Museum’s movie department. That’s the conclusion I’ve reached after looking at a number of happenings that pertain to several films that document and preserve the history and heritage of Maine skiing and snowboarding.

For starters, the International Skiing History Association has recognized the Ski Museum of Maine with an honorable mention for its video film titled *From Tree to Ski*, which utilizes about five minutes of vintage 16mm movie film shot in the 1930s inside the factory of the Paris Manufacturing Company. The original film was shot by Clarence Morton, a member of the family that owned the company, and it passed down to granddaughter Mary Morton Cowan, a Standish resident. Seven years ago she contacted me and asked if the Ski Museum would accept it as a donation. You betcha we did!

The film shows the entire fascinating process of manufacturing a ski, from the time huge logs are rolled into a sawmill to the point where finished products — skis and poles — are shipped to retailers. Paris Manufacturing Company was by far the most important ski builder in Maine and was a significant factor in that market from 1900 to 1965.

After the 16mm film was converted to digital, board member Russ Murley supervised an edit that added some historical interpretation in the form of vintage still photos plus a voice-over narrative by Lou McNally.

Rick Moulton, who chairs ISHA’s awards program, noted that there was no suitable film category for *From Tree to Ski* to win an award, but he praised us for an important piece of historical preservation and interpretation. Hence the honorable mention.

As part of our *Sisters of Skade* program, I went to Auburn to visit Leslie Miller Morrill, who grew up in Rumford, competing in the Chisholm Ski Club’s youth program along with her three older brothers. Among Leslie’s memorabilia was a reel of 8mm film shot in 1965 by her father, Al Miller. Although it suffers from most of the problems with 8mm home movies, the 12-minute film provides some interesting footage from Rumford’s first family of skiing in the 1960s and 1970s, including

*A worker in the factory of the Paris Manufacturing Company sands a ski on a revolving drum in this scene out of From Tree to Ski, a film produced by the Ski Museum of Maine that is based on historical footage shot by Clarence Morton in the 1930s. (Original film donated by Mary Morton Cowan)*
cross-country, alpine and jumping at Black Mountain. The Ski Museum converted the film to digital. Now it’s up to us to figure out how to incorporate it into our programs.

One of our films, 21st-Century Ski and Snowboard Competition in Maine, has found a new use. This season and last I pressed it into service in the Ski Museum’s fourth-grade in-school outreach program, which was presented in four schools this past season. Featuring about 10 minutes of action footage, both contemporary and historical, the film makes a big hit with children, really grabbing their attention and leading them into the balance of the hour we spend with them.

The film was created in 2014. The original concept and outline was mine, and Russ executed it beautifully, combining existing action footage with new interviews with some of the principal movers and shakers in the sport and industry, including athletes Nikki Pilavakis, Simon Dumont and Seth Wescott, plus industry leaders Les Otten and Andy Shepard.

Some of the interviews are a bit tedious to fourth-graders, so president Wende Gray and I agreed that we’ll ask Russ to re-edit the film into a package that is especially designed for young audiences.

Finally, I urge everyone to take a look at 1,000 Feet and Below, a wonderfully evocative short film produced and directed by Joel Osgood. The film is a cinematographic paean to Maine’s smallest community ski areas, from Powderhouse Hill in South Berwick to Lonesome Pine Trails in Fort Kent.

While the Ski Museum was not involved in creating 1,000 Feet and Below, we supplied most of the archival footage that was used. Plus the 27-minute film includes several minutes of commentary by three ski history experts, including former Ski Museum president Glenn Parkinson, former executive director Bruce Miles and yours truly. The film was aired this past February on Maine Public, and is currently available online at www.mainepublic.org/post/1000-feet-and-below.

Scott Andrews
Research director,
Ski Museum of Maine
Continued from page 1

The year was 1971 and Pelletier, who would later ski for the University of Maine women’s team, was experiencing her first lesson in how gender equity functioned back then.

With no girls’ ski team at Madawaska High School (and most other Maine high schools), coach Howard Paradis had been trying to enter his freshman prodigy — she’d been skiing under his tutelage since age 12 — into boys’ meets all season long. Sometimes it happened; other times it didn’t.

“They were afraid I’d get hurt,” Pelletier recalled. “But they offered to let me forerun.” As if that made sense.

The Aroostook County meet found coach Paradis scheming once again. He told Pelletier at the last minute that she’d be racing giant slalom. Although there wasn’t much she could do about the girlish outfit, she stuffed her blond hair beneath her helmet, secured her goggles and promised not to talk to anyone. The entry in the running order read “B. Pelletier.” (The “B” was for Buck, a nickname Paradis had bestowed on Pelletier because her red, white and blue K2s were the same color combination as country singer Buck Owens’ guitar.)

Pelletier called her first run “spectacular,” smoking the course for a top five finish. There wasn’t much time to celebrate, however, because an irate Central Aroostook coach approached her at a run in the finish area.

“He ripped my bib off pretty violently,” she said. “And shouted something like, ‘No girl is going to ski in my meet!’”

Pelletier found the rejection puzzling. “I had not been denied ski racing before,” she said. “It bothered me that I was being treated differently. It was important for me to compete because that’s what I liked to do.”

Thus began Dawn Pelletier’s journey as one of Maine’s premier alpine and cross-country skiers in an age when girls and women began elbowing their way into starting gates, onto playing fields and into arenas. Like her peers, all she wanted was a chance to compete.

That chance came the following year when Madawaska fielded a girl’s ski team. Several slalom and GS and cross-country state titles later, Pelletier landed at the University of Maine for the women’s 1974-1975 ski season, its second as an official intercollegiate team. (It had been a club sport since 1971.) She did not know her experience that March day as a high school freshman would repeat itself in a different manner later in college.

The UMaine team was stocked with some of the state’s finest skiers, like Linda Levesque and Kristin Wiese in alpine and Nordic legend Leslie Miller. And there was Pelletier with her St. John River Valley joie de vivre and high school skiing resume.

Thanks to Pelletier, her teammates learned to swear in French, and when they needed a boost on the racecourse, it was
“Allez, allez, allez!” Pelletier, who also raced alpine early in college but later specialized in cross country, was a technically astute nordic skier; her 5-foot, 10-inch frame, long arms and long legs formed a finely-tuned machine, her subtle grace belying a gritty competitive streak.

The team won the Eastern Division II Championship that year, bumping UMaine up into the Division I carnival circuit the following season. The women piled into university station wagons on Thursdays, driving six to eight hours for meets at Dartmouth and Middlebury and University of Vermont, some knitting wool hats and others studying the whole way. They slept on mattresses in school gymnasiums and ate in cafeterias.

“Dartmouth was the best,” she recalled. “The food in the cafeteria blew me away.”

They skied hard, and after the meets they played hard, occasionally entertaining themselves and others with dubious renditions of the Maine Stein Song. They’d arrive back on campus bleary-eyed and try to catch up on homework and write papers and study for tests. At the end of the week, it was off to the races again.

The first year in Division I UMaine placed second in the eastern championship.
And the following year, 1976-1977, came in fourth in the national championship on a warm March day in Stowe, Vermont, the highest finish ever by any UMaine ski team.

Looking back, Pelletier treasures relationships over races. “I have such warm feelings about these people who’ve become lifelong friends,” she said. “I keep thinking, Was it just luck or did the sport draw people who are outgoing and active and positive? I loved training with everybody, going on long runs and talking with each other.”

She maintains close ties with longtime men’s coach Brud Folger, the unsung hero of the women’s ski program, who provided constancy, coaching and encouragement as the program developed.

Despite the sensational success of UMaine women’s skiing, there’s a backstory that parallels Pelletier’s early experience skiing with the boys and illustrates the challenges women of this time faced. After a series of qualified coaches, the athletic administration hired an individual with no ski coaching experience who lacked the skills to advance an intercollegiate program. The team felt betrayed and diminished.

That prompted Dawn’s first visit to the office of Harold Westerman, athletic director at the time. “It seemed like we weren’t given credibility,” she said. “We deserved a qualified coach. We weren’t asking for a lot.”

That same winter, women athletes were denied access to state-of-the-art Nautilus weight lifting equipment. Using it to train had never been an issue; then one day a sign on the Nautilus room door read, “No Women Allowed.”

Pelletier marched right back to Westerman’s office. “We weren’t asking to be equal,” she said. “We just wanted things to be fair.”

You can imagine the reaction when Westerman explained his stance in a Maine Campus interview: “We want the very best for our girls here at UMO, but I’m not going to take the responsibility of them using the Nautilus. They’re just not (physically) geared for it.” Ouch.

Members of the indoor track team spearheaded a complaint that was filed with the Office of Equal Opportunity. Eighteen months later, access was restored.

“I look back and I think we all were experiencing in different ways a transition that became a part of history,” Pelletier said.

Pelletier explained that her advocacy for women’s skiing led to a career in family law with a practice in Bangor: “I was always interested in civil rights and
women’s rights. That interest propelled me to speak out and become the lawyer I am today.”

These days, you’ll find Pelletier, along with husband Leland Martin, at Sugarloaf always reconnecting with ski team pals. She’s still in training, too, skinning with Martin up Tote Road preparing for the next athletic endeavor — skiing hut-to-hut in the Italian Alps.

Left: Dawn Pelletier and Brook Merrow, pictured here on a recent ski adventure in Europe, met at the University of Maine in 1974. Both were members of its women’s ski team. They graduated in 1978, but remain close friends to the present day.

(Courtesy Dawn Pelletier)

Editor’s note: Author Brook Merrow and Dawn Pelletier were both on the University of Maine’s women’s ski team and became best friends. They remain close, often traveling together with their husbands to ski in Europe.

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Long and winding trails

By Scott Andrews
Editor, Snow Trail

History can be described as collection of long and winding trails that connect people, places and events in the past with people, places and events in the present. That statement also holds for the study and writing of history. That’s certainly the case with the cover story on this issue of Snow Trail, which describes two key events in the skiing life of Dawn Pelletier, a 60-something Sugarloaf regular whose personal long and winding trail began as a schoolgirl in Aroostook County.

The story behind the cover story in this issue of Snow Trail began in 2012 with the exploration of the long-defunct Mt. Carmel ski slope in Madawaska. The thread began with two people: Karla Wolters (second from left), the late Ski Museum board member, and Howard Paradis (right), the former coach of the Madawaska High School ski team. (Scott Andrews photo)
The story was written by Brook Merrow, who met Dawn 42 years ago. They’ve done some miles together. And there’s a backstory behind how they got together again for this issue of Snow Trail.

That story also began in Aroostook County when I spent a late summer week in 2012 with the Ski Museum’s late board member Karla Wolters and her husband Tom. I stayed at the Wolters’ camp a few miles northwest of New Sweden. Each day Tom would head off with his posse of fishing buddies, while Karla and I explored the County’s rich skiing history.

Karla and I visited local historical societies and libraries, interviewed old-timers and scrambled through thickets of puckerbrush in search of long-defunct ski areas. Some of our adventures have previously been described here in Snow Trail, while others can be found online at the Ski Museum’s website’s County Connection section.

Karla had done some research on Mt. Carmel, a long-defunct rope tow hill in Madawaska, the northernmost town in our state. She contacted several people connected to Mt. Carmel, and one sunny afternoon all of us — half a dozen in total — gathered at the site along Route 1 and hiked the hill, searching for artifacts and talking about the good old days at Mt. Carmel.

Among our little group was Howard Paradis, the former coach of the Madawaska High School ski teams. Howard had also been involved in building the little ski slope and its two rope tows — and over the years had a hand in most other regional skiing happenings.

Listening to Howard’s story, it struck me that he would make an excellent candidate for the Maine Ski Hall of Fame, and I asked Karla to do some additional research and nominate him. She did. Included in Karla’s sheaf of supporting documentation was a letter from a Bangor lawyer, Dawn Pelletier, which described the incident at the Aroostook Country Ski Championships that can be found on page 8 of this issue. Dawn further added that Howard confronted the offending coach and ultimately obtained a written apology for his atrocious behavior.

Fast forward a few years to 2016, when Wende Gray and I created Sisters of Skade: Women in Maine Skiing 1870-2016. I remembered Dawn’s letter — but not her name or any other details — and I was determined to track down the story again and incorporate it into Sisters. It took some time, but at last I contacted Dawn last fall and asked her to participate in our second edition of Sisters of Skade. She readily assented. I also suggested that her high
school ski racing drama would make a good Snow Trail cover. Dawn suggested that it be written by Brook, a longtime ski buddy who teaches a college writing course in Bozeman, Montana.

The upshot: Dawn joined our panel when we presented Sisters of Skade in Carrabassett Valley last month, and Brook came through with this issue’s cover story.

And the long and winding ski trail doesn’t end here. In several conversations with Brook, it became obvious that the Ski Museum of Maine should also tell the story of Alison Buck, the doggedly persistent student who created the University of Maine women’s ski team in the early 1970s.

As I like to say, that’s another story for another day. And that day will come in Spring 2018, when Brook will make her second appearance on the cover of Snow Trail, describing another heroine of Maine’s long and winding skiing history trail.
3rd Annual Skee Spree
April 15, 2017
Sunday River

Saturday, April 15, 2017
Barker Mountain Base Lodge
10 am to 2 pm

Sunday River Memorabilia Display
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www.skimuseumofmaine.org
(207) 265-2023
RUMFORD, Maine — The Chisholm Ski Club observed its 100th anniversary this past February with three days of events at Black Mountain, a celebration that underscored Chisholm’s vaunted status as Maine’s oldest active ski club.

Among February’s happenings was the publication of a history of the club and Black Mountain. *A Century on Skis* was written by Ski Museum of Maine historian Scott Andrews and published by the club. Subtitled *The First 100 Years of the Chisholm Ski Club of Rumford, Maine*, Andrews’ book traces the history of organized skiing in the papermaking town, beginning with the arrival of a handful of Norwegian immigrants in the period shortly before World War I.

Jack Lufkin, a Chisholm standout and former Olympic skier, wrote the preface, while Paul Jones, the club’s unofficial historian and archivist, wrote a group of eight appendices. *A Century on Skis* is dedicated to Wendall “Chummy” Broomhall, a two-time Olympic skier and lifetime Chisholm stalwart who is generally recognized as the patriarch of the sport in Rumford and the River Valley. Both Andrews and Broomhall were on hand at Black on February 4 to autograph copies.

Seven chapters span the club’s long history. The first chapter, “Ancient sport for a new town,” details the Norwegian heritage that underlies the club’s origins in 1917, while the last, “New visions for a new century,” describes the arrival and departure of Maine Winter Sports Center, bringing the narrative up to the present.

A highlight is the World Ski Championships in three cross-country disciplines that were hosted by Chisholm in 1950. Four Chisholm men have skied in the Olympics, and the club’s youth program sent more than three dozen young skiers to Junior Nationals and Junior Olympics.

*A Century on Skis* runs 210 pages with about 20 photos. It is available through members of the Chisholm Ski Club and online through the Bethel Historical Society’s website: www.bethelhistorical.org/shop. Price is $20.
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Tenth Annual Heritage Classic Fundraiser raised $8,400 for Ski Museum

The 10th Annual Heritage Classic raised nearly $8,400 this year. The Heritage Classic Auction helps to support the Ski Museum’s mission of preserving and celebrating our state’s rich heritage of skiing and snowboarding.

We celebrated this event with the annual Ski Museum booth in the Base Lodge, then the festivities continued on at the Sugarloaf Inn. New this year was the addition of music during the silent auction by Tom Obomasein. This set the stage for quite a bit of active bidding. Although attendance was lower than last year, the Sugarloaf community came and bid on some wonderful new items. Thank you to the enthusiastic support from our loyal Sugarloafers.

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Memberships are an important part of our ability to sustain the Ski Museum. Please support generously. Please either go to our website at www.skimuseumofmaine.org or use the application below and send to:  
Ski Museum of Maine, P.O. Box 359, Kingfield, ME 04947

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☐ $100  •10% off gift shop purchases

☐ $250  •SMOM logo coffee mug

☐ Lifetime $1,000  •black fleece vest with SMOM logo

☐ Additional Donation:

$ __________

Mission Statement

“To celebrate and preserve the history and heritage of Maine skiing.”
Many Maine women became involved in skiing in the 1930s through college outing clubs and winter carnivals. Pictured here is a group of Colby Outing Club members in the 1930s. This photo is included in the Ski Museum’s Sisters of Skade women’s program. See more inside on pages 4-5. (Colbiana Collection, courtesy Colby College)