



## Getting Out

What to do, where to go, and how to get there

### WHERE IS IT?



**CAN YOU IDENTIFY** this well-known New Hampshire spot from this photo detail? If you can, e-mail your answer (the place and the town), along with your name, hometown and phone number, to [lifestyles@unionleader.com](mailto:lifestyles@unionleader.com).

If your entry is selected from among all the correct answers received, you'll win a prize.

Congratulations to Jerry Boucher of Manchester, who identified last week's picture of the Canterbury Shaker Village.

### WHAT'S UP TODAY

**BEDFORD:** Organists Recital with Instrumental/Vocal Soloists, 4 p.m., Bedford Presbyterian Church, 4 Church Road. Free. 424-4743.

**DURHAM:** Lovin' Spoonful with Guest Rick Deringer, 4 & 8 p.m., Whittemore Center, 128 Main St. \$25.50. 271-7827.

**GREENLAND:** Allento Chamber Players Fund-raiser, 3-5 p.m., Great Bay Discovery Center, 89 Depot Road. Donation. 944-7070.

**HOLLIS:** Holiday Arts Gala, 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Lawrence Barn, Depot Road. 880-4730.

**KEENE:** Keene State College Chamber Singers, 3 p.m., Redfern Arts Center on Brickyard Pond, Keene State College. \$10/\$5. 358-2168.

**MANCHESTER:** "Guys & Dolls," 2 p.m., Majestic Theatre, 281 Cartier St. \$16/\$14/\$10. 669-7469, [www.majestictheatre.net](http://www.majestictheatre.net).

**NEWBURY:** Stories of Christmas Tour, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., The Fells, 456 Route 103A. \$15/\$5. 763-4789 ext. 3. [www.thefells.org](http://www.thefells.org).

**PETERBOROUGH:** Raylynor Opera Company presents "Our Town," 2 p.m., Peterborough Players Theater, 55 Hadley Road. [www.raylynor.org](http://www.raylynor.org). 924-7585.

**PORTSMOUTH:** Portsmouth Comic Book Show and Writers Festival, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., Best Western Wynwood Hotel, Portsmouth Traffic Circle. [www.jetpackcomics.com](http://www.jetpackcomics.com).

**TAMMORTH:** Historic Thanksgiving, 1-4 p.m., Remick Country Doctor Museum, & Farm, 58 Cleveland Hill Road. 323-7591 or 800-686-6117. [www.remickmuseum.org](http://www.remickmuseum.org).



LARRY TURNER

View from slopeside lodging at Loon's Mountain Club. Even when the sun sets, Loon offers skiing and other activities.

# Coming HOME

## A western skier returns to skiing birthplace

By **BRIAN SCHOTT**  
Special to the Sunday News

**W**ITH the first snowfall of the season settling onto the mountain — both in the Rockies of Montana, where I live, to the White Mountains of my youth — I am reminded of my return to eastern skiing last winter, when I glided down the 3,065-foot slopes of Loon Mountain, scheduled (with Mother Nature's cooperation) to open this next Saturday.

Each autumn, I am reminded how deeply skiing has become rooted in my soul. My first ski experience began at 200-vertical-foot Nashoba Valley in Westford, Mass., in the third grade. After a major struggle with the rental equipment, I somehow wound up half-way down an expert run called War Dance, struggling pitifully with both skis off, the safety straps wound in circles around my ankles. My hands were frozen, I was shivering and drenched with sweat, and the bus was



LARRY TURNER

Skiers ride the North Peak Express Quad from the Camp III Lodge to Loon's highest point, North Peak, at 3,050-feet.

leaving, way down in the parking lot that seemed miles away.

Somehow, the following week I returned to try again. And for 30 years hence, I have returned to the slopes each winter to figure out another trick

to the subtle art of sliding on snow.

### Venturing out

Although I would continue skiing in school programs at Nashoba through high school, my folks began to take

us on weekend ski trips to the bigger mountains up north. We'd pack the car in the early morning light and take off for the likes of Waterville Valley, Loon, and Cannon. Now here were some ski runs! Skiing began to take on a new dimension for me. Soaring views. Softer snow. Runs you could hum a whole tune on.

I also got my first taste of powder skiing in New Hampshire, and ooh it was delicious. A deep winter storm dumped boot-deep snow, and we bashed through moguls without sound, launched into the air, laughing when we fell (no bruises on your butt!).

At Dartmouth, I skied surprisingly little. No car, no money — a bad combination for this increasingly expensive sport. But with graduation looming, I hatched a plan with two friends to put off the "real world" for a year and move to a ski town. Prestigious bachelor's degrees in hand, we landed \$8-an-hour jobs in a ski shop in Vail. I skied 126 days that winter, and learned some good life lessons.

▶ See **Home**, Page G3

# Eastern slopes still dazzle

## Home

Continued From Page G1

One in particular: You don't have to be rich to live richly. I also landed my first writing job at Vail Valley Magazine.

### Settling in

After that post-grad winter, I jumped north to Whitefish, Mont., in search of something less glitzy. And I ended up staying. Skiing had its hold on me, a playful grip that turned into a writing career.

Fast forward 13 years across deep winters and visits to a majority of the West's best ski resorts, and I am a member of the North American Snowsports Journalists Association. Our grueling annual meeting last winter called upon us to test the slopes of Loon, Bretton Woods, and Cannon. For me, it was an opportunity to return to the birthplace of my skiing soul.

Arriving at Loon, I actually felt like a kid again. My wife and I checked into the Mountain Club, a comfortable 175-room slopeside hotel bathed in the glow of the setting sun. We checked into the room, jumped on the bed, and sipped some wine on the deck before dinner at the Seasons Restaurant, where we laughed with old friends and shared tastes of Black Angus beef and sea scallops. But it was off to bed early; there was work to be done in the morning.

### Great start

After breakfast, we caught a ride to the rental shop: a miniature, old-fashioned, wood-fired, steam train that runs from the Octagon Lodge to the Governor Adams Lodge. The tracks stretch only about a third of a mile, but it was a wonderful way to start the day. My inner child was re-awakening.

And for the next two days, all we did was play. Full steam ahead.

The sky was a beautiful blue and the air crisp as we loaded the Kancamagus Express Quad and ripped down intermediate Blue Ox as we skied to the gondola. I delighted in the leafless, deciduous trees that lined the trail, so different from the evergreens of the west. And as I carved over a little roller, I just had to jump into the air, testing my newly-rebuilt knee, the result of a nasty crash in Montana the winter before.

"This is a cruiser's paradise," Mark Randall from Averill Park, N.Y., told me as we rode the cozy, four-person gondola, gazing out at the old, rounded mountains. "It's my first time here—and I'm already in love with it."

On another lap, Mike Gorman from Worcester, Mass., offered, "Loon is such a great place to bring a companion, because the grooming is great and the trails are so diverse. I love the big rollers on the trails. It's dreamy, steep cruising. The length and width of the trails is very accommodating. But you know—I've never been to a ski area that I didn't like."

That makes two of us. From the top of Loon Peak, we checked out Big Dipper and the icy moguls under the East Basin chair. Slide. Slam! Slide. Slam! I'd forgotten how the ice glitters in the sun, but I enjoyed the shimmer, setting my edge carefully to find just the right place to turn. A lot of western skiers might complain about the hard-pack. Not me. I'm just playing around on these old-style, double fall line trails, whistling a little tune.

We zipped up the North Peak express quad to Loon's highest point, old boulders and gnarled trees scattered around the peak, and raced down Upper and Lower Flume runs, steep and fast, then took another lap and moved over to Walking Boss run. Although the conditions weren't right for it, I sneaked into the expert trees of Buck-

saw, just for the challenge.

Recently I discovered that one of my good Montana friends also cut his ski teeth here. "Loon is one of the reasons skiing turned into a passion for me, because it was such a good experience to start with," Mike Powers said. "I skied my first black diamond run there."

### Filling food

Hungry after skiing the steeps of North Peak, we filled up on the delicious venison stew served in a bread bowl at the beautifully rustic Camp III Lodge, and then decided it was time to check out the new \$16 million South Peak expansion, offering two new trails.

From the 2,450-foot summit of South Peak, my wife and I looked west to Mt. Moosilauke and north to Franconia Notch, and then carved figure eights down Cruiser and Boom trails, two classic, winding runs that drop toward the historic village of Lincoln beyond the Pemigewasset River.

On the way up the Lincoln Express Quad, I noticed the thick crack of timber and the smell of smoke. A wrecker was clearing trees in the woods, part of Loon's multi-year expansion that will offer two new trails this winter, including the resort's first-ever double black diamond, Rip Saw.

With tired legs, we celebrated the day with a Tuckerman Brewing Company's Pale Ale at the Paul Bunyan Room in the base area, and then later that evening drove into Lincoln and dined at the Common Man restaurant, where we were warmed by a massive fieldstone fireplace. The New England baked haddock was flakey and delicious, while the low-brow atmosphere was as comfortable as a family meal at my Nana's as a child.

The next day, we just kept playing. Zig-zagging down the narrow runs. Marveling at the



LARRY TURNER

A skier carves his way down Boom Run, one of five new trails on Loon's South Peak expansion, which opened last season.

old worn rock. Loving being back here. Even with some ice.

As I grow older and the heavier responsibilities of life can add layers to our natural,

more lighthearted cores, there is no better way for me than a day on the slopes to remember that we are born to play.

The West may have captured

my skiing heart, but the East will always hold my skiing soul.

♦ Brian Schott is a freelance writer based in Whitefish, Mont.