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MIDWEST SKI UPDATE -- 2/9/09



By Jim and Ann Neff

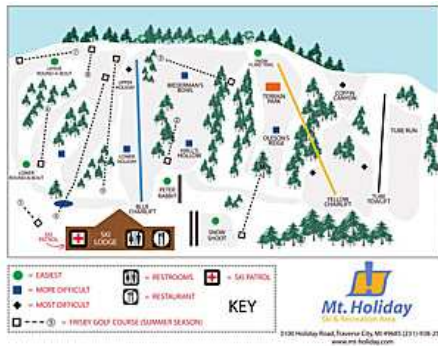
Sometimes you don't pay attention to what's right in front of you. We had that "head thumping" realization last Friday. We had to be in Traverse City in northwest lower Michigan and we had some time to fill. Naturally, we thought about skiing and that led us to [Mt. Holiday](#), a small ski area literally ten minutes north of downtown Traverse City.

Now, we knew that Mt. Holiday existed, but truthfully we never gave it much thought. Like many small ski areas in the Midwest, Mt. Holiday doesn't have a big budget for promotion so it kind of gets lost in the shuffle. To say we were pleasantly surprised would be a huge understatement.

Mt. Holiday was opened in 1949 and now exists as a not-for-profit community organization. The circa-1950's lodge has been updated and features a pub, the original stone fireplace, and picture windows overlooking the slopes.

Out on the hill we found slopes groomed from stem to stern and sideline to sideline and serviced by two double chairs. On this day the temps warmed into the 30s and sun splashed the whole complex. From the top we were treated to amazing panoramas of Lake Michigan's Grand Traverse Bay.

Well, we hammered the heck out of the place for the better part of three hours. Wide-arcing GS speeds turns on the Holiday run right down the center of the area off the blue chair was a hoot. When we got tired of that we switched to the yellow chair and nailed Oleson's Ridge while letting the boarders and bangers in the terrain park entertain us.



As a bonus, the lift-op at the bottom and Jim got into a friendly exchange of Detroit Lions jokes, so every load was a laugh fest. (What

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do you call 40 guys in a room watching the Super Bowl? The Detroit Lions...How do you get a Lions' draft choice off your front porch? Pay him for the pizza...there's a million of 'em.)

We ended the day with a bowl of Spagettios (\\$2.50 in the cafeteria), so it couldn't have been much better! And to top it off within ten minutes of leaving the parking lot we were at the bar at the North Peak Brewery in downtown TC, hands firmly around a pint of oatmeal stout. What a great day.

We were told by one of the workers that the real deal is Monday night skiing, Community Support day. If you donate to your favorite charity (dog/cat food, animal toys, blankets, bleach, laundry soap, dog/cat beds, non-perishable food, paper products, baby products, writing materials, coloring books, reading books, new clothing, hats, mittens, blankets, etc.) you can ski for \\$5 lift, \\$5 rentals, \\$5 tubing & \\$5 beginner lesson. How cool is that?



Overall, it reminded us that there are all kinds of these ski gems all over the Midwest, small operations that are just a delight if we just give them a chance to strut their stuff.

HECK OF A DEAL:

Afton Alps, MN – <http://www.aftonalps.com> – Ski & Ride Simplified – 3 Lifts, 3 rentals, and 3 lessons only \\$89.95 – When you sign up for Ski and Ride Simplified you receive a swipe card valid for 3 lift tickets (after 4:30pm any day), three Ski or Snowboard rentals and three 1-hour lessons. This allows you the flexibility to come out any three nights of your choice. Upon completion of your three sessions you will also receive a card or coupon book that entitles you to various discounts throughout the ski area. You can register anytime and you can use your card anytime after 4:30pm, any three days during the season you choose (card is valid only for current season).

CALENDAR:

2/13-14-15 – The 2009 Pine Mountain Ski Jumping Tournament – Pine Mountain, MI – This is one of the best spectator events in all of Midwest skiing, and a good party, too – <http://www.kiwanisskiclub.com/>.

2/ 22 – 8th Annual Dash For Cash – Buck Hill, MN – <http://www.buckhill.com/winter/dualdash.shtml> – Head-to-head ski racing with cash prizes.

Every Sunday during the rest of the ski season – Sunday Bloody Mary Bar at Chestnut Mountain, IL – <http://www.chestnutmtn.com> – Stop in the Chalet Lounge any Sunday during ski season from 10am - 2pm and build the perfect remedy for a spectacular day. Choose from an array of garnishes that include shrimp, stuffed olives, peppers, beef sticks, string cheese, horseradish, pickles, celery, limes, lemons, salsa, and more. Plus, you get to enjoy all this while overlooking spectacular vistas of the Mississippi River.



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2 weeks ago

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3/29/2009

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