

Life Savers on Skis



by Richard A. Gronquist

The National Ski Patrol has made skiing a safer winter sport.

ON A ROUTINE check of a ski slope, a National Ski Patrolman found a skier lying in the snow. The injured man said he was "all right" and needed no help, but the patrolman gave him the usual examination and found that the man had no sensation whatsoever in one hand. This indicated that his back might be broken.

The patrolman quickly summoned medical help and the skier was carefully taken to a first aid station at the foot of the hill. A doctor's examination showed that the man's spine was fractured in several places. Had the patrolman left the injured skier without ex-

amining him, the man might never have walked again.

At LaCrosse, Wisconsin, a patrolman came upon a fallen skier lying alongside a mountain trail. The man's skull was fractured. If he had not been found, he would certainly have frozen to death.

In 1952 the crack streamliner, "City of San Francisco," was snowbound in Donner Summit Pass in the High Sierras of California. National Ski Patrolmen, first to reach the marooned train, helped to evacuate its 196 passengers.

Those are examples of the work of one of the nation's least-known but most important rescue groups,

the National Ski Patrol. Patrolmen, who volunteer their services and receive no pay, have taken part in rescuing people in plane crashes, searched for stranded motorists and lost hunters, and carried on a constant program for safety in winter sports at ski areas throughout the United States.

THE SKI PATROL, founded on the two words "Service—Safety," is set up "To work towards greater safety and thus greater enjoyment in the sport of skiing." The system has patrols on the country's 500 major slopes from Maine to Southern California.

The organization's first aim is accident prevention and it gives instruction and safety precautions to the beginner. The offering of this training is based on the fact that well-taught beginners do not often get hurt. The Patrol also advises ski area operators on safety practices in skiing.

Patrolmen ski for their own pleasure during the day, but they are always on the lookout for accidents and hazards causing these accidents, such as tree stumps, branches and rocks. The Ski Patrol thoroughly investigates each mishap and forwards a report of each to a doctor in the area in which the mishap occurred. Since its beginning, NSPS has handled more than 36,000 accident cases.

The men and women wearing the distinctive rust-colored parkas

and orange-cross armbands "sweep" the trails just before dark to make sure that all skiers are safe below. At the end of the day the patrolmen are the last persons to ride the chair lift or tow rope to the tops of the slopes.

There are more than 4,000 volunteer men and women in the Ski Patrol, many of whom have been with the organization throughout its 19 years of existence.

Local patrolmen ski at one resort all winter long; national patrolmen, who are selected for outstanding ability and service, are on duty wherever they go. The latter are appointed by the system's national headquarters at Denver.

Prospective patrolmen take 40 hours of courses in first aid, winter safety and ski slope training which determines their ability as skiers. They must qualify themselves for service by a refresher course of at least six hours of first aid before beginning a new season.

The patrolman receives no payment for his services, except for free rides on lifts and tows. He must pay his own skiing expenses, even to the extent of buying his own first-aid equipment. The only material rewards he may receive are embroidered gold, silver or purple stars, given in recognition of meritorious service. These badges are sewed on the patrolman's parka.

The gold star is the highest honor. The silver star signifies that

the wearer has received honorable mention for the NSPS trophy. The Purple Merit Star is awarded for saving a life.

In 1940 there were 82 local patrols, and by the 1955-56 season the number had been increased to 462. Each has a membership of from 10 to 100 men and women, supervised by a district leader.

A divisional chairman directs the activities of regions within his division. The chairman and divisional headquarters are connected directly with the national office in Denver. All serve voluntarily and without pay.

THE SKI PATROL was founded by Charles Minot "Minnie" Dole, a New York insurance broker. In March, 1938, while he was skiing with friends on one of New England's ski slopes, he fell and fractured an ankle. There were no first aid supplies or equipment at hand, so Frank Edson, a member of the skiing party, went for help.

For an hour Dole lay in the freezing snow, unable to move without torturing himself. Finally his friends found a panel of corrugated tin and carried him down the slope. Two and a half hours later he reached a doctor.

While still in his cast, Dole heard that Edson had died in a similar accident. "Minnie" was determined to find a way of preventing ski accidents and providing care if they occurred.

Carrying his campaign to many interested skiers throughout the country, he gradually convinced them that a safety organization was needed to protect themselves and their favorite sport. With the help of the National Ski Association, of which NSPS is a part, the Patrol became the strong organization it is today.

During World War II, NSPS was asked to take part in civil defense work and turned its manpower and resources over to the War Department.

The Ski Patrol was charged with providing recruits for the 10th Mountain Division, an outgrowth of the 87th Infantry Mountain Regiment. NSPS screened more than 25,000 men and officers for this organization and formed Wilderness Patrols, which, as air spotters and anti-sabotage units, were valuable defense groups.

Similar organizations in Alaska, Canada, Germany and Chile have copied the American ski patrol system with the aid of NSPS. The Canadians use the United States' manual, parkas and other equipment.

During the last five years skiing has become one of the most popular sports in the nation. Thousands of new skiers head for slopes all over the country and many new skiing areas are opened each year. According to the United States Forest Service, there are two million skiers in this country and

Alaska and an estimated million more who ski in areas not accounted for by the Forest Service.

Most accidents, of which there were 4,200 reported in 1955-56, occur in the late afternoon (between 2 and 4), because of fatigue from the effects of a long day. Also, the snow usually melts during the day and by late afternoon is freezing over again. With less sunlight it becomes difficult for the skier to see the small irregularities and depressions in the snow's surface. Because there is a definite relationship between the number of accidents and the number of skiing lessons taken, NSPS offers courses

in skiing to beginners. Seventy-five percent of all accident victims have had no lessons, whereas only four percent of the victims have had more than 30 lessons.

A definite correlation between the number of accidents and the number of seasons of skiing experience also exists.

The National Ski Patrol System constantly has tried to prevent such accidents from happening. With its limited resources, obtained mainly through sales of supporting memberships and local fund drives, it has provided the nation a service unsurpassed by any other safety organization.

DOINGS OF A DEMOCRACY

C. Clement Easton, who was elected a member of the Springfield, Mass., city council, listed only one item in his campaign expense account: "Cup of coffee for an independent who was on the fence."

Arrested for begging, a man in Chicago expressed concern for only one thing. "What's going to happen," he wanted to know, "to my automobile?"

State Rep. William J. Kingston of Massachusetts has been vigorously opposing legislation to fine jaywalkers, declaring that "the pedestrian was here before the automobile" and that pedestrians have an "inherent right" to jaywalk.

Mayor Vernon Anderson of Hammond, Ind., gracefully bowed to the wishes of the 18,000 people who signed a petition urging him to run for another term—and then lost when only 15,937 people voted for him, while 16,359 voted for his opponent.



TOKYO'S TWELVE HOURS OF TERROR

by Daniel W. Henderson

On the night before Hirohito's broadcast announcing surrender, a band of soldiers staged a bloody rebellion

THE MORNING of August 15, 1945, dawned a hot and humid day in war-shattered Tokyo. News of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki had filtered through the censors to the people a few days before, but numbed by four years of war and around-the-clock B-29 raids on the city, the news of this new and terrible weapon had little effect upon them.

But the events which took place later in the day aroused the people to an emotional pitch never before experienced by the usually staid Japanese.

Precisely at 12 noon on that date a scratchy recording of Emperor Hirohito's voice went out from Radio Tokyo telling the Japanese their nation had suffered its first defeat in two thousand years and