

Boating Adventures on the Mississippi

By Papa Jack Hoeschler

Our family first got a boat to use on the Mississippi River when I was about 10 years old. My father bought a 14-foot Wolverine→ with a 35-horsepower Evinrude motor. We kept the boat at the La Crosse Yacht Club on Pettibone Island, until we bought the Dresbach cottage a few years later.



Jimmy and I learned to water ski behind the Wolverine on the ←Mississippi River. Our family would usually go to the sandbars near La Crosse for enjoyable weekend afternoons.

About once each summer, our family would take an overnight trip with the boat. We would pack up a tent and head either up or down the river, looking for a good sandbar→ on which to pitch our tent for the night. We would usually cook our dinner over a campfire in the evening.



For breakfast we would go to a nearby river town and find a good local restaurant. These small town eateries were always interesting places with generous plates of food, and local characters who told good stories. Sometimes we would continue north up the Mississippi River (brown water) to ←Prescott, Wisconsin, then take the St. Croix River (blue water) to Stillwater, Minnesota.



My parents would spend the night at the ←Lowell Inn, a fancy Stillwater hotel owned and operated by a friend of my Dad, Nelle Palmer→.

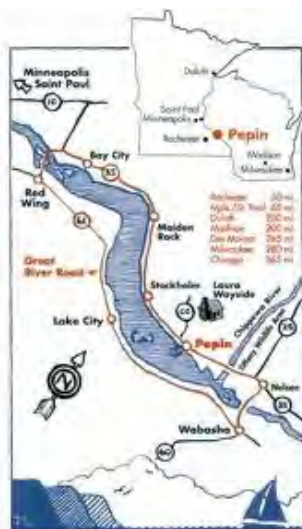


Dad knew Mrs. Palmer from the days when he had his own band. Mrs. Palmer played the cornet, and she and her sister were vaudeville performers. Mrs. Palmer and my father were both dramatic and memorable characters, to say the least.



While our parents stayed in the luxury of the Lowell Inn, we kids camped in a tent on a ←sandbar north of Stillwater. We enjoyed a night alone on the river and weren't scared at all. The next day we would visit the Denecke cottage on the Wisconsin side of the St. Croix River. Julia Denecke was a flutist, and

Henry Denecke was a percussionist and conductor. Their daughter, Leila Denecke, is a well known potter in Minneapolis. We have a lovely porcelain teapot→ which Leila crafted.



One time we were taking the boat through Lake Pepin↓ on our way up to Stillwater, and had an accident. I was driving the boat and the motor stopped since one of the two gas tanks had run dry. As I turned around to switch gas tanks, my father leaned over quickly to put the shift lever into neutral. Now, there was a short antenna that stuck straight up on the boat's center console. While doing the shift change, my Dad accidentally poked his eye on the antenna. Boy, did he swear! When he looked up, all we could see was what appeared

to be an empty eye socket, since his eyelids had been sucked inward. We thought his one eye was ruined and that he was now blind.



We headed the boat toward the Lake City→ marina so that we could drive to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester. We grumbled that our vacation was interrupted and discussed the eye patch my father would get. He joked that he wanted a black eye patch with an eyeball painted on it, and a woman in a swimsuit painted in the pupil.



Our family never took accidents too seriously! As we sped to shore we hit a big wave, and with the bounce of the boat my father's eyelids popped out. Apparently his eye had not been hurt. He blinked a few times, we all cheered, and resumed our trip up river.



Another time we were heading south to Dubuque, Iowa and I was water skiing behind the boat. As we approached a lock and dam→ on the river, we saw a big barge↓ and knew we would have to wait quite awhile for it to get through the lock. As



we circled the boat near the dam, we saw a water ski jump anchored near shore. We used hand signals to indicate that I would try the jump↓ although I had never done that before. My dad made a big swing with the boat and I fearlessly lined up for the jump.

Unfortunately, I didn't know that I was supposed to first wet the jump to make it slippery. When I hit the jump, my water skis stopped immediately, and I fell flat on my face. I dropped



the tow rope, but still slid up and over the jump with my legs and skis headed in opposite directions because of my momentum. Luckily, I did not get hurt badly, and my family thought it was funny. But I never tried a water ski jump again.



Now if you always wear your life jackets in any boat, the next time you can hear why Nonna had to throw away a valuable New York Yankees souvenir!

Wheels Around La Crosse

By Papa Jack Hoeschler



When I did not have a ride ←home to Ebners' Coulee from Blessed Sacrament School in town, I would hitchhike once I reached the less traveled rural Coulee road↓. If I were ignored by the first few cars, I would just sit in the middle of the road to force someone to pick me up. This was a simpler age and none of this seemed dangerous.



In grade school I used to walk or hitchhike home at noon, eat lunch, and take a short nap before returning to school. I was usually



10 or 15 minutes late getting back to school, but the nuns never seemed to mind. In the 6th grade I invited a new kid, ←Clem Beeker, to have lunch with me at home several times. But Clem always had an excuse for not joining me. Eventually I gave up asking him and was a little hurt. Clem's rejection of my invitations only reinforced my loner attitude. Many years later Clem told me that it wasn't that he didn't want to be my friend. It was just that our classmates had warned him never to go to my house for lunch, because he would be late getting back to school and would get demerits.



In the winter my father would drive us and the Gundersen kids to school in the small panel truck he used for drug store deliveries. He set up a long bench in the back of the truck that ran from front to back, and we kids sat back to back on the bench. Sometimes

after a snowfall he would drive onto the Blessed Sacrament playground and do tight circles in the snow, skidding the truck around. The only window in the panel truck was in the back, and the world would swirl past us in the window. Our travel adventures were the envy of all!





When I was about 14, my father bought a business that had both a jeep and an old ←Cushman scooter. Since I didn't have a driver's license, I learned to drive the scooter in the Coulee where the police seldom came.

One time I took the scooter to Grandma Hoeschler's house in town. I clearly must have looked too small and too young to be driving, because a guy about 18 stopped me and demanded to see my license. I can't remember what I told him, but I was truly afraid I might get arrested. After that I pretty much stuck to driving the scooter only on the country lanes.



Now if you promise not to hitchhike, and NEVER sit in the middle of the road, the next time you can learn about the day a boxer carried Nonna's cat away!

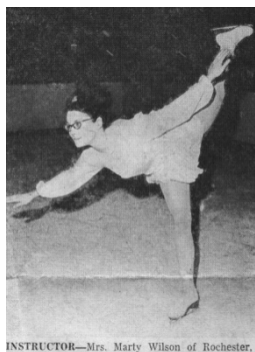
Learning to Skate in La Crosse

By Papa Jack Hoeschler



My mother was a great enthusiast and leader in the La Crosse Figure Skating Club when I was growing up. In those days La Crosse didn't have any indoor skating rinks, so we skated outside on a lovely backwater of the Mississippi River called the Lagoon (A). The Lagoon was located on Pettibone Island, across from downtown La Crosse.

A big warming house perched on the Lagoon's edge→, where the Parks staff played music over speakers that lined the football field-sized rink. Mother would bring down piles of her 78 rpm waltz records and insist that these be played when she was on the ice. She thought the pop/rock tunes that the teenagers asked for were ridiculous, and the Parks Department folks obeyed Mother! The Parks Department plowed and maintained this natural ice arena, especially pleasant since it was sunny and shielded from strong winds by big cottonwood trees.



INSTRUCTOR—Mrs. Marty Wilson of Rochester.

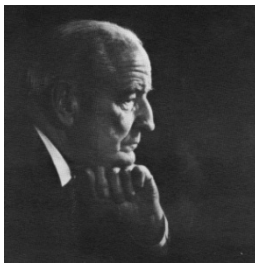
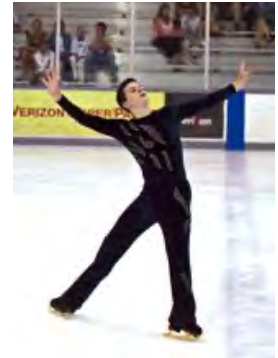
Every year the Figure Skating Club would pay for a ←professional skating teacher to come to La Crosse from Rochester, Minnesota which did have an indoor rink. The teacher would give private and group lessons one day a week at the Lagoon for about 18 kids and 9 or 10 adults.



As a result, Jimmy and I learned to skate on ←figure skates and never had hockey skates→ like most boys. We learned to do “school figures” like the *Figure 8* to show that we knew how to use all of our blade edges.



Besides the \sphericalangle *Figure 8*, we learned the \downarrow *Waltz Jump*, the \sphericalangle *Spread Eagle*, and other more complicated jumps and maneuvers. We became decent, but certainly not competitive figure skaters.



There were some older gentlemen like \leftarrow Dr. Alf Gundersen, one of the famous Gundersen medical brothers, who always skated gracefully and elegantly. Even at age 80, Dr. Gundersen could still do a beautiful “Grape Vine” on the ice. This intricate footwork traces a pattern of vines and grapes on the ice for all to enjoy during and after the performance.



Arthur Hebbard \rightarrow , a La Crosse pharmacist, and Dr. Gundersen both loved to do partner skating and ice dancing \rightarrow with my mother. They would often perform the tango and waltz to music. \leftarrow Mother’s short skirts, wool jackets, and colorful scarves only added to the delight-- of the men, at least.



ICE DANCING—Mrs. James (Jake) Hoeschler and A. E. Hebbard, both club members, dance the Tango. This is known as ice dancing, which is a competitive class.

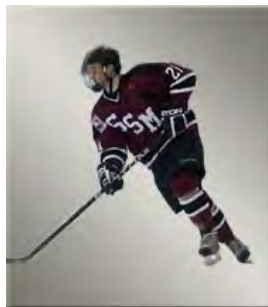
After our figure skating lessons we kids would play pickup hockey at one end of the rink, using a smashed pop can for a puck. Since we didn’t have sideboards lining our rink, a pop can was good since it didn’t travel far, even with a hard hit.



My mother would usually play hockey with us, and I was proud to have her join our gang. Throughout her life she remained ready to join a pickup game at the Lagoon or on any other ice rink. (*Mother, 70, playing with Fritz and Lizzie at Gem Lake, 1988*)

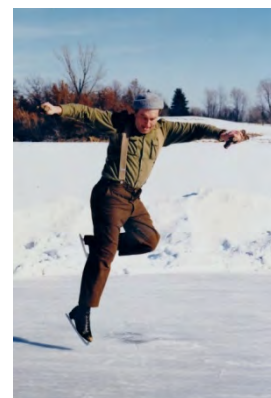


In the late 1950's a local men's service club contributed money to the Parks Department to erect some hockey rink boards at the far end of the Lagoon. Now we could play hockey with a regular puck. Since we didn't have any hockey equipment other than our sticks, we had to use copies of *Life* magazine stuck in our socks as shin guards. No one would mistake us for professionals.



During some Christmas vacations, Frank Hood, a local rich boy who went to boarding school at Shattuck Academy in Faribault, Minnesota, would come play hockey with us at the rink. Shattuck was famous for its hockey team, but Frank was not a gifted player. He would show up at the Lagoon in his complete hockey outfit, however, with all the right pads and proper skates. We hometown kids delighted in showing him up. We would bounce him against the boards or simply outskate him. We were not exactly mean to him, but we were also not very welcoming. We really should have gotten to know Frank, and treated this "poor little rich boy" more nicely.

Hockey never became a big winter sport in Wisconsin like it is in Minnesota. Basketball was the main winter high school sport. I was never very good at basketball and always wished that there had been more of a youth hockey program in La Crosse. I consider my hockey and figure skating skills to be very amateur, although Nonna disagrees. (*I'm biting my tongue during a jump, 1993.*)





Mrs. Jake Hoeschler of La Crosse, who is attending the World Figure Skating Championships in Denver, Colo., is shown congratulating Carol Heiss, Ozone Park, N. Y., winner of the women's world figure skating championship, as her coach, Pierre Brunet, of New York, looks on. (AP Photo)

But we did have a good time at plain old recreational skating. The credit for this goes primarily to my mother who helped organize our La Crosse Skating Club and lessons. She insisted that all her kids, regardless of gender, take advantage of this winter sport opportunity. Because of her I still only skate on figure skates, and am never afraid to play hockey on them with you or with others. *(Mother, on left, with Olympic skater Carol Heiss at the Broadmoor in Colorado Springs)*

Now if you practice the tips you have been taught at your ice skating lessons, the next time you can hear how Nonna's doll finally got some clothes!

Learning to Ski: La Crosse

By Papa Jack Hoeschler

My brother, Jimmy, and I learned to ski about 1951 when we moved to Ebners' Coulee in La Crosse (*red balloon*). Dr. Thorolf Gundersen's family (*Aunt Ruth and Uncle Toa, 1963→*) were neighbors (*yellow*).



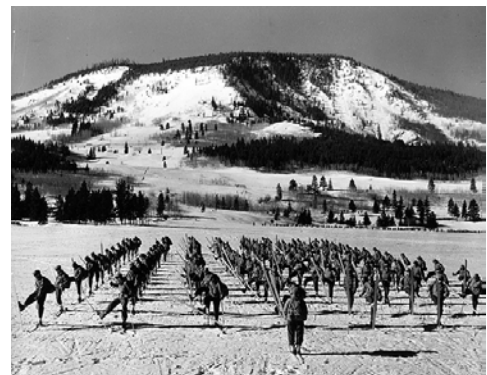
their daughter Tore was my age, Finn was about Jimmy's age, and Rolf was just a little younger than



Janice. The Gundersens had Middelfort cousins, also about our age, who lived across the road (*blue*). Their uncle, Dr. Gunnar Gundersen (*green*), past president of the American Medical Association, had land on the valley's south side with good ski terrain (*snowflake*).



Uncle Toa Gundersen had served in the famous 10th Mountain Division of the U.S. Army during World War II. This unit trained in Leadville, Colorado→. He was an experienced skier at a time when La Crosse had few who knew of the sport, much less excelled at it.



Uncle Toa took the lead to teach all of us Coulee kids how to ski, a great gift that has lasted a lifetime. He was an admirer of ←Stein Eriksen, the 1952 Norwegian Olympic ski champion, and I remember he had new Stein Eriksen skis that featured multiple grooves down the base, rather than one thumb sized groove down the middle.



The 1950's winters in La Crosse were mild, without much snow. Note how the La Crosse photographer had to draw in some snow for our 1959 Christmas card.



Few of our friends learned to ski because they did not have our advantages: a native instructor and a neighborhood ski hill nicely situated on the shaded north slope of a 400 foot-high bluff. Moreover, our ski hill had a rope tow powered by the spinning rear wheel of a war surplus jeep → that was jacked off the ground. I believe we did the local tow bit for two years before we graduated to the La Crosse Snow Bowl, an early commercial ski hill located southeast of La Crosse on Highway 33. It had a steeper rope tow and hill, with the greatest danger presented by frozen cow pies that were like sharp stones when our skis hit them.



In the late 1950's Ted Motschman came to town from Green Bay. He opened the much larger Mt. La Crosse Ski Hill on Highway 14. It had snow making equipment and better lifts. You can see the hill from Uncle Jay's Waterford Valley development. *(Our family, except Dad, at the chalet)*



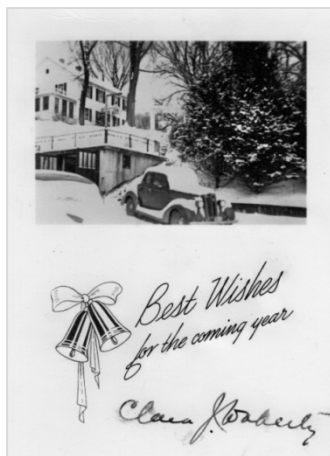
If the snow were good on holidays or weekends, our family would often go to Mount Telemark in Cable, Wisconsin, north of Hayward. Tony Wise had developed this four-season resort → which was quite grand by mid-1950's standards in Wisconsin.





By this time our parents had also learned to ski, so these trips were wonderful family experiences. We would stay with other La Crosse families at resorts on nearby lakes, such as Lake Owen. When our parents went out for dinner we kids had great pillow fights and other rough-housing opportunities.

I remember one Christmas day when we woke up to an unexpected, glorious overnight snowfall. We couldn't bear to waste this gift, so my mother pulled the turkey out of the oven (to complete its cooking later), and we packed up the car and drove to Telemark.



The only victims of this abrupt change of plans were George Doherty, an old bachelor friend whose parents had previously owned our house, and Grandma Hoeschler. They had been invited for Christmas dinner, and were now summarily told that they should enjoy that iconic meal at the Holiday Inn on Pettibone Island which my father owned. So much for respect for our elders.



One time at Telemark I was starting to ski down a hill when I heard a commotion at the top of the rope tow lift. I could see that the tow was not moving, and that someone was caught hanging from the rope, up in the air. I skied over and found that the victim was my brother Jimmy, and that he was hanging by one wrist from his ski pole. His pole was caught on the rope by a small friction hook that he had failed to unlatch as he was getting off the lift. Dragged by the hook and his wrist straps, Jimmy's skis had tripped the safety gate, and the rope had stopped just before whipping him around the pulley.



It took a pyramid of men three-high to reach Jimmy and release him from his hook. As he fell free the entire pyramid collapsed, but no one was hurt although everyone was wearing ski boots. Jimmy was uninjured and continued to ski, something we all expected. The Hoeschlers were always lucky that they usually escaped serious injury in many risky situations.



EIGHTH IN NATIONAL DOWNHILL RACE—Jim Hoeschler, former La Crosse Aquinas All-State (1961-62) halfback, placed eighth in national downhill skiing competition at Vail, Colo., which estimated activity for 110 participants in a field studded by Olympic slalom and national champions. Hoeschler, third and sixth in time trials, finished ahead of Gordon Eaton, an Olympic performer who was 15th. Ni Orsi, 20, of Stockton, Calif., won the downhill event and was one of eight men selected by the U.S. Ski Association for international events at

13 Selected For U.S. Ski Team At Vail

←Jimmy/Uncle Jake became the finest skier La Crosse has ever produced. He was a national junior ski champion and raced downhill at the University of Colorado. He was also the first person from the Midwest to make the United States National Ski Team and compete in the World Championships. He would have raced in the 1964 and 1968 Olympics, except for serious injuries he got during the qualification periods. Jay was also a very good racer for the University of Colorado. *(Jimmy, Mom and Jay in 1972 after a race)*



Now if you work hard at your ski lessons and race me to the bottom of the hill, the next time you can hear how Papa would try to sleep in the train luggage racks until the conductors kicked him out!

Learning to Ski: Aspen

By Papa Jack Hoeschler

High points of our early family skiing experiences were our trips to Aspen, Colorado, organized by Uncle Toa Gundersen. When he had trained with the 10th Mountain Division in Leadville, Colorado → during WWII, his wife, Aunt Ruth, lived in the old silver mining town of Aspen.



In 1947, ← a single-chair lift was built on Aspen's Ajax Mountain. That savvy \$250,000 investment helped Aspen become one of the premier skiing locations in the country. Other grand ski destinations in the United States at the time included Sun Valley in Idaho (developed by Averell Harriman and the Union Pacific Railroad), and Lake Placid in New York's Adirondack Mountains.



The Gundersens and our family would board the *Burlington Zephyr* train at the depot → at the foot of Grandad's Bluff, just down Ebners' Coulee road. We headed for Chicago, but would get off 40 miles west of the Windy City in Aurora, Illinois.



There we would board the west-bound *California Zephyr*, reputedly the greatest train in the United States. The *Zephyr* featured fancy ← Vista-Dome observation cars and Pullman sleepers, for a most comfortable two day, two night journey to California.

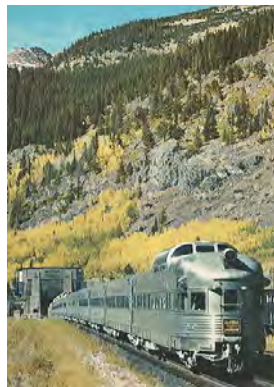
Unfortunately, it was against my father's religion to spend the extra money for a sleeper, so we all slept as best we could in the coach seats. This was not a problem for us boys. We quickly figured out that we could use



the armrests and high seat backs to climb up and into the overhead luggage racks. Once in the racks, we could stretch out for a really good night's sleep. Unfortunately, sometimes a new conductor at a midnight crew change would evict us, claiming he was doing this for our own safety.



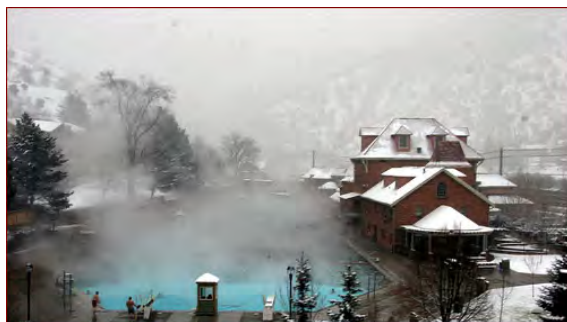
The train would arrive in Denver at dawn. After an exciting trip through the train washing machine→,



our shiny, silver *Zephyr* would head into the mountains toward the ←Moffat Tunnel, for a breathtaking journey to Glenwood Springs.



We would go through long switchbacks where you could see the whole train as it snaked up the mountain gorges to and from the 6 mile-long tunnel, with Rollinsville at the east entrance and Winter Park at its west portal.



When we reached ←Glenwood Springs we would see the steam rising from the great hot sulphur spring baths that gave the place its fame. We would not stay long, however, and would quickly get all of our gear on the

bus for the 30 mile trip to Aspen. (*Aunt Ruth Gundersen with her luggage, our sturdy bus in the background*)





We were always disconcerted to see so little snow in Glenwood Springs. The Springs was in a dramatically different microclimate from ←Aspen, something it took a few years of experience to appreciate. The view changed for the better as we approached Aspen, since the hills there were always snow-covered.

Aspen in the 1950's was a quaint, somewhat down in the dumps former silver-mining town→. Whole long blocks, where the miners' boarding houses or supply shops had stood, were now ←vacant. The streets were potholed with wooden-board sidewalks on many blocks.



The ←Jerome Hotel→, where we stayed the first years, looked like the turn of century buildings in downtown La Crosse. The Jerome was drafty and quaint, at best. Aspen was part Wild West and part mountaineer, all with a 19th century flavor.



Every day at Aspen we would wake up early to get to the single-chair lift at the base of Ajax Mountain by the time it opened at 8. We wore our lace boots↘ and carried our skis with bear-trap non-release bindings, ←trudging the 5 or 6 blocks from the Jerome Hotel to the lift. We skied, virtually non-stop, until 4 pm when the lifts closed. (*Aunt Ruth brought us mittens like these from Norway.*)



The highlights on the hill included the ride on the new Little Nell double chair→ and the traverse over Tourtelette Park. The lift went from peak to peak, and the chairs swayed more than 100 feet over the terrain below.



We would also feel a tingle of danger when we would find an abandoned mine shaft while skiing off-trail and through the woods.



An unexpected revelation came during our second time at Aspen, as we started down the black-diamond expert Silver Queen run. We saw Uncle Toa, whom we had always viewed as a near-professional skier, just ahead of us on Silver Queen. We were taken aback when we saw that he had to ski across the steep trail face and do ←kick turns at the edges, just like a beginning or intermediate skier.

We skied once a year at Aspen all through high school, usually with the Gundersens. By our second year we got safety bindings that released when you fell so that you were less likely to break your leg.



Our parents took much longer than us kids to learn to ski well. My mother would use the gentler slopes at the top of the mountain, and ride the lift back down at the end of the day, to avoid the steep runs. One day she boarded the lift late in the day and it suddenly stopped, with her chair hanging more than 100 feet over Tourtelette Park. She thought the lift had closed for the night and that she would freeze to death up there. Luckily, they were just loading supplies at the bottom, and the lift eventually restarted. The attendants at the bottom were quite startled when they saw my mother. But this episode didn't affect my mother's enthusiasm for the sport. She kept skiing until she was 80.

Now if you promise to stay off the luggage racks on trains, the next time you can hear how Papa discovered human bone decorations in Rome!

Learning to Ski: Europe

By Papa Jack Hoeschler

After our family learned mountain skiing in Aspen, my parents decided to join some ski tours to Europe. We took our first such adventure in 1957 when I was a freshman in high school and my brother, Jimmy, was two years younger. He already was a fearless skier. This was the first of many European ski vacations our family took over the years.

In 1957 we flew Lufthansa Airlines from Idlewild (now JFK) Airport in New York to Frankfurt, Germany, in a Lockheed Constellation→. This propeller plane had engine exhausts which belched about 3 feet of fire. The wings looked like they were going to explode and burn up. I remember that Lenny Bruce, a popular comedian at the time, did a funny skit about the Constellation and its flaming engines.



The plane was very noisy, and the trip was a long 9 hours from New York (A), to Frankfurt (C), with refueling in Gander, Newfoundland (B).

The food on our Lufthansa flight was plentiful and delicious. We felt like honored guests as the stewards and stewardesses fussed over each of us with hot towels, clean pillows, drinks on order for the adults, fine table settings, and gourmet food. You barely get that same level of service today in First Class.

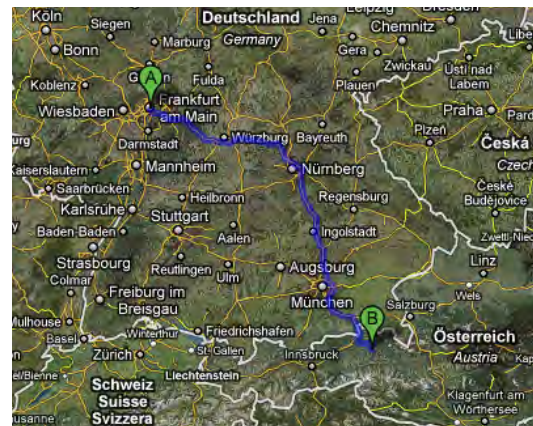


After landing in Frankfurt→, we walked around the city to see the sights, and were truly innocents abroad. We gaped at the female bathroom attendants in the men's bathrooms, and stared at the novel white sausages sold by street vendors. Frankfurt was draped in smelly clouds of smoke from burning coal, the only fuel available then.



Since World War II had only ended about a dozen years before, we would see many battle veterans on the streets. You could identify them by their missing arms and legs, and only a few had prostheses. The war seemed very real and more recent to us when we saw the wounded soldiers, as well as the damaged buildings being torn down and replaced, or repaired and rebuilt.

From Frankfurt (A) we went by luxury European bus, much more commodious than American buses, to the ski resort at Kitzbühel, Austria (B). There we experienced European-style skiing where a single pass allowed you to ski at several different resorts on the same day.



We would take comfortable local trains along the valley floor between various lifts and mountains. Then we would either take a ←cog railway or a cable car to get to the mountain tops, since we primarily skied on the crests of the mountains. Within each ski area we would take chairs and smaller lifts to get up and down. It was all very relaxed and very lovely.

One day Jimmy and I decided to ski down Kitzbühel mountain↓ to a point down the valley road, then hitchhike back to our hotel. We misjudged the distances and ended up skiing below the snowline, through several pastures and to another village. When we finally made it to the valley road, we had to walk in our heavy leather ski boots for quite a distance. We finally found a kid about our age. We asked him how far it was to Kitzbühel. He immediately replied, “Twenty minutes, if you go swiftly.”



We picked up the pace and after 15 more minutes we finally got a ride in a passing car. The driver did not speak English but he understood that we wanted to go to Kitzbühel. He drove us all the way, but the car ride was at least another 30 minutes. Jimmy and I were amazed by how much we had underestimated the distances in the valley, even though we could see everything from the top of the mountain.



We went skiing in Europe two years later in 1959. After first skiing in Austria, and before we went on to Switzerland, I joined my parents for a side trip to Rome. Jimmy stayed to ski with Uncle Toa and Aunt Ruth Gundersen. Our family trio stayed at the lovely ← Majestic Hotel on the Via Veneto.

One evening my dad caused a big stir at La Bibilioteca or the library room→ of the Ristorante Valle. The waiter poured him a small amount of wine to taste test, before everyone else was served. As a joke Dad spit out the wine as if it were vinegar! The flabbergasted waiters ran around trying to figure out what to do. But our friends thought that my father’s spoof of the wine tasting ritual was very funny. *(Dad is center front, Mother is 3rd on Dad’s right, and I’m wearing a sweater.)*





On my own I discovered an underground cemetery at ←*Santa Maria del Conceptione dei Cappuccini*, a church located across the street from the Majestic Hotel. I noticed a sign in English directing those wishing to see the cemetery to use a side door near the far end of the church. I figured this must be an important place to visit since it had a sign in English. It was about dusk when I found the recessed door. I could hear the monks chanting inside when I knocked.

After a few minutes, a monk with a cowl→ covering his head opened the door. Behind him I could see a line of monks filing out of the church. I told the hooded monk that I wished to see the cemetery, and he said nothing, but held up his finger, indicating I should wait a moment. Then he closed the door. After another few minutes a door beside me opened, one I had not seen in the murky gloom. A monk holding a candelabrum beckoned me to follow him down a flight of stairs. As we descended down and down, he lit candles on the inside wall.



As my eyes became accustomed to the dim light I saw rooms filled with ←skulls and other human bones, all arranged like giant doilies. These were the remains of 4000 friars from 1528 to 1870. I could barely believe what I was seeing and couldn't wait to tell my parents. The next day I led a tour for my parents and other adults, all of whom were equally amazed.

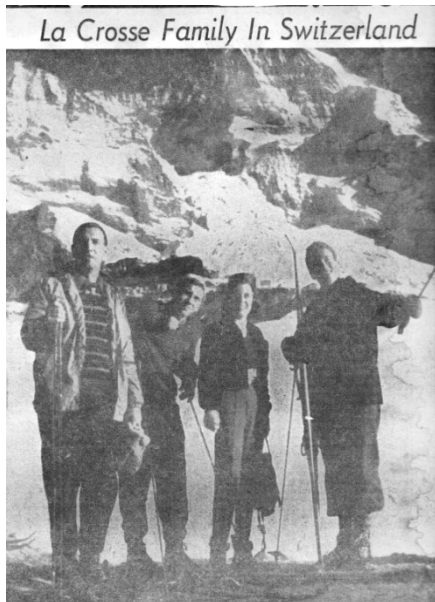
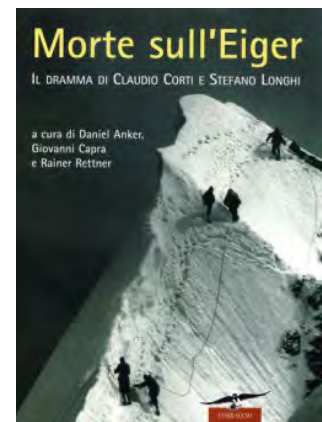
Later on I learned that since cemetery space was limited in European cities, a body was often buried for only 25 or 30 years. At that point it would be dug up, but only the skull and skeleton remained. The monks evidently decided to use the exhumed bones of their dead colleagues in a decorative way both to honor them and to remind us all that life is short. Only in the Catholic Church!

After the trip to Rome, our family rejoined Jimmy, the Gundersens, and the rest of the ski group in Grindelwald, Switzerland. Grindelwald→ is at the base of the Eiger (the Ogre) Mountain, whose north face was a famous rock climbing challenge.



Jimmy was all excited to show me the body of ←Stefano Longhi, the dead mountain climber who had been hanging for over two years from his safety rope on the north face of the Eiger. Jimmy took me to an observation deck to use binoculars to better see the frozen body which never thawed, since it was on the mountain's shady side.

When you took the funicular railway through a tunnel and to the top of the mountain you could also see Longhi's body through a lookout window. The government had made it illegal to cut the body down since others had died trying to do so. Later on there was a big article in *Sports Illustrated* that Jimmy and I read line by line, describing the original accident.



I feel so fortunate to have been able to take these European ski vacations at a relatively young age. Not only was the skiing much different from that in the Midwest and Colorado, but the adventures made for great stories for you and others. (March 1959, *La Crosse Tribune*)

Now if you promise not to enter gloomy church cellars without us, the next time you can hear about some extraordinary gifts many people gave Nonna!