

The Glamor of Sugarbush

Sugarbush. The very name evokes a different kind of skiing image: tinsely and sweet instead of rugged and daring. It was hard for an old Mad River skier even to acknowledge its existence. If they weren't the Glen, areas were supposed to have names like Suicide Six; and trails, if they weren't the Chute or the Fall Line, were supposed to be called Pabst's Peril or maybe the Nose Dive. Gondolier? The Jester? It had to be a joke.

But you couldn't help being curious. There were all those names, the pictures of pretty models, the goings-on of the Jet Set, and on top of all that, the whispered reports that, the sneering Mascara Hill description to the contrary, there was some honest-to-goodness skiing there ranking with the best in the East.

And so, you were sucked in. You hated to admit it, but from the outset, you loved it. Yes, there is all that glamor. And snow bunnies aplenty. But some of that pulchritude is on the slopes, too, and not just on the easy runs. Sugarbush is not just the juxtaposition of after-ski with active ski; it is actually their unification.

First of all, there are the *ménage-à-trois* gondolas. Ah, whoever dreamed a mid-winter ascent to a 4,031-foot Vermont peak could be so comfortable. Or, since they've been freshly painted, so colorful! And then, a 2,400-foot-vertical descent. That's three miles along the Jester—and not such a joke if your legs are used to the shorter runs that are typical of Eastern fare.

But best of all, there is the skiing itself.

A bowl formed by Lincoln and Nancy Hanks Peaks and Mt. Abraham, Sugarbush has variety—33 different runs. It has charm. The Glades is an instant slalom run dotted with just enough trees to make it interesting without the worry of "how'm I ever going to make it around that

one." And Sugarbush has challenge. From the top there are Paradise and Organgrinder—and of late, Spillsville. Off the Valley chair there are the Twist and the Mall and Stein's Run. All are steep enough and mogully enough to make anyone work for his passage back up.

And then there is the Castlerock lift and the Rumble trail. The Rumble seems deliberately designed to quash that Mascara image and to upstage those who make disparaging comparisons of Sugarbush's trails with the National or the Fall Line.

The Rumble is narrow, it's steep, it's twisty, it's mogully, it's ungroomed, it's frequently untracked—it's tough. All the Castlerock runs, in fact, are rugged, at least on the upper portions. Result: The avid skier can get in his vertical. No matter how mobbed the area is, the waiting line at Castlerock is apt to be at a minimum.

From the outset, the base facilities at Sugarbush were something else. The Valley House started out plush, has grown bigger, plusher. *Class* is the word that comes to mind. And it stays in mind as you walk through the chalets and shops of the village. Sort of a fitting climax to the first rate inns and lodges that line the mountain approach road.

And parading through all this, sunning on the decks, browsing in the shops, and beckoning at the bars, are all those *femmes fatales*. At first, they said they were Peter Estlin's friends. Later, they were supposed to be Stein's fans and admirers. And now Sigi Grottendorfer's students.

The ski schools have always been good, and the beginner terrain more than adequate. But the suspicion arises that maybe the dolls are there for the very same reasons you are. Because everything that's glamorous about skiing is wrapped up in this package. For many, Sugarbush is the excitement of the sport. AHG

This full-color gatefold of Sugarbush is the eighth in a series of original paintings by famed water-colorist Cecile Johnson. Each deftly done painting of this MEMORABLE MOUNTAIN series captures a bit of the nostalgia and a lot of the excitement found at some of the favorite haunts of America's great skiers. Full-color reproductions of this series, printed on superb quality 16" x 20" art stock, and suitable for framing, are now available from Ziff-Davis Service Division, 595 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012. Last year's full series of six paintings costs \$7.50. Prompt delivery assured. This painting costs \$2 and will be available for delivery early December.