

Hollyburn heritage celebrated

The word "Hollyburn" has significance far greater than the mere name of a mountain

by Laura Anderson,
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Hollyburn means hiking the mountains behind the mountain, climbing snowy trails illuminated by "bugs" and carbide lamps, warming up in cabins after days of skiing and before a night of dancing at Hollyburn Lodge. It means lifelong friendships and unforgettable memories. On September 19, Hollyburners will celebrate their mountain's heritage.

Swedish hiker Rudolf Jules Verne realized Hollyburn's potential in the 1920s. In 1925, amid the logging industry's legacy of scars and stumps, Verne opened the first commercial ski camp on the North Shore. One year later his business partner, Eilif Haxthow, built the first private cabin on Hollyburn Ridge. During the 1930s, as the Depression took its toll below, 300 cabins proliferated on the slopes of Hollyburn.

20 years ago, Hollyburners vintage 1930s - and 1940s and 1950s - gathered at Hollyburn Lodge for the first Pioneer Skiers' Reunion.



Don Grant, historian and archivist for the Hollyburn Historical Society, shows off ski gear from the early days of winter sports on the mountain. Grant is helping organize the 20th annual Pioneer Skiers Reunion at Cypress Creek Lodge, Wednesday, September 19, noon-4 p.m.

NEWS photo, Paul McGrath

Iola and Gordon Knight and Bob and Greta Tapp have been Hollyburners since the 1940s. The Knights were hikers. Bob was about 13 when he first skipped Sunday school to "go up Hollyburn." The Tapps have owned their cabin, the latest of five, for close to 50 years.

With time, the hikers and skiers who enjoyed the bounty of Hollyburn died and with them their stories. The Lodge showed signs of age. The cabins disappeared. Today, there are

about 100 cabins remaining on Hollyburn, the only cabin community left on the North Shore mountains.

The Knights, the Tapps and many other Hollyburners who recognized the mountain's heritage were determined to preserve those stories and to restore the Lodge for the benefit of future generations. In 1998, they formed the Hollyburn Heritage Society.

Enter Don Grant. Don and his twin brother, Derek, inspired by their mother's love of the mountains and undeterred by their father's fear of heights, grew up hiking, climbing and skiing the North Shore mountains. One day in 1999, a day like any other, Don went up the mountain and his life changed.

Lured by a display of elderly cross-country ski equipment, Don fell into conversation with Bob Tapp and Gordon Knight. Inspired by their mission to preserve Hollyburn's stories and restore the Lodge, Don signed on as a volunteer.

He began by scanning photographs. Two years later, after retiring from 35 years as a music specialist, most of them at Gleneagles Elementary School, Don took up the cause in earnest. As the society's historian and archivist, Don has interviewed hikers and skiers, made films about the Lodge and collected films and photographs from the early days – all available on the society's website. Among the 9,000 plus photographs now in the society's collection are those taken by Eilif Haxthow in the 1920s and 1930s. With them are

Haxthow's journals from the time he left Norway until he arrived in Vancouver and teamed up with Rudolf Verne to create the North Shore's first mountain cabin community centred around Hollyburn Ski Camp, now known as Hollyburn Lodge.

From Haxthow's journal, *"Now we are going! Now things are moving! For a long time it seemed hopeless. But today, Sunday the 11th of January, 1925 we were surprised early in the morning as people streamed in more and more. . . . They climbed up the hills, slid down with arms and legs flying, sat down on their seats, shouting and laughing!"*

Don Grant describes his vision of Hollyburn. "You have people who have been coming for many decades and little kids that walk up the trail and through the door of the Lodge for the first time. It's a little like stepping back in time. Hollyburn is the people. And it's the Lodge. And it's the mountain."

Hollyburn will get its due on Wednesday, September 19, the 20th anniversary of the Pioneer Skiers' Reunion. Next year the reunion will be on Mount Seymour.

For details about the Pioneer Skiers' Reunion, call Don Grant at 604.922.4093 or visit Hollyburn Heritage Society, www.hollyburnheritagesociety.ca.