

If Caberfae's open, its a sure bet Larry Walters will be skiing

If Caberfae's open, its a sure bet Larry Walters will be skiing

There is a saying attributed to Ben Franklin that goes, "In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes." Equally certain is that, if the chair lifts are operating at Caberfae, Larry Walters will be riding them.

Since the ski resort began its winter season, on Nov. 18, Larry Walters has only missed punching his ski pass twice.

"And on one of those days, it rained here, so I drove up to Nubs Know to ski." Larry informed me.

Most years he'll ski 100 to 110 times.

Larry, who grew up in Cadillac on Bremer Street, has been fascinated with downhill travel just about since he could walk.

"At recess at McKinley School, we used to slide off the top of Diggins Hill on our boots. If school wasn't in session we'd slide down on sleds. When I got a pair of my dad's old long skis, I'd kick my feet under the straps and go with those. Pretty scary rides since you couldn't steer the skis," he said.

Although he was on the Cadillac High School ski team as a freshman, Larry's real love at that time was hockey. After

graduation he attended Ferris and to make some extra money he applied to work on the Ski Patrol at Caberfae. Fred Box, the manager there hired him in 1960.

"Seven days a week, eight hours a day," Larry said. "I loved that job. I had a chance to be a ski instructor. I tried it. It was fun, but I went back to the ski patrol. With ski patrol, I got paid to ski all day. It doesn't get better than that."

Caberfae in the 1960s was quite different than it is today. It offered more hills for skiing — a series of runs were established to the east of the ski lodge.

Larry remembers there being 35 rope tows, five t-bars and maybe one chair lift. North and South Peak hadn't been created yet. In those days "Shelter" was the big hill. "I loved it but going to school really cut into my ski time," he said.

Larry enrolled at in the teachers' college at Central Michigan University. Vacations and weekends, he worked at Caberfae, although he took off for a year to be a ski instructor at Aspen. Once he finished his bachelor's degree, he took a teaching job in Mount Clemens where he coached football and wrestling. His wrestlers won the state title

in 1989. In those days his trips to Caberfae were limited.

When he retired in 2004, he moved back to Cadillac and made skiing a daily habit. Most days, he picks up his gear at the ski club and is heading for the slopes by 10 a.m., often with Ed Bosworth or Waddy Potthoff.

"We usually ski 3-4 hours then head over to Waddy's to play pool," he said. Wednesday night is race night at Caberfae.

"The other night the wind was blowing about 35 miles per hour; it was about 15 degrees. Brutal conditions but a bunch of us standing at the top of the hill waiting to go down didn't pay much attention to the conditions. We were there to race," he said.

Larry's competitive interest extends beyond the local scene. Most years he heads out west for the National Nastar race championships. "I usually drive out; I don't want to take the chance of my skis and boots getting lost in a luggage mix up. Most years the Nationals are held at places like Steamboat, Snow Mass, or Winter Park," Larry said.

In 2014 Larry won the gold division in his age group and he's placed third a couple times. This winter the Nationals are held in California. "I might go, but it's a long drive to California. I'm glad most years they're held in Colorado," Larry said.

While this year's winter has underperformed making it tough on snowmobilers, cross



DAVE FOLEY | CADILLAC NEWS

If you're skiing at Caberfae, it's a sure bet that Larry Walters is out there too.

country skiers, and snowshoers, the downhill set has had a great season. And Larry agrees with that assessment. "I get asked sometimes why I do almost all of my skiing here, I love the hills

and since they added North and South Peak, we've now got big hills. And the snowmaking crew really does a nice job. I don't know why I'd need to go elsewhere."