

## 30<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY AT NORDIC JANUARY 09, 2008



By J.P. SQUIRE  
The Okanagan Saturday

Doreen and Lieuwe Wierenga's thoughts went back to a simpler time as they used their wooden skis at Kelowna Nordic Cross-Country Ski Club's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary party last Sunday.

In 1975, the Kelowna couple, their seven-year-old daughter, Julie, and four-year-old son, Paul, all wore wooden skis and made their own tracks through the snow near McCulloch Lake.

The kids had a great time because they could slide down the hill, recalled Lieuwe.

"I came down at the old log cabin (now fallen down). That was when the stove was in it and everything. My son was dead-tired so I snooped around in there, found a bunch of rope tied together, put it around my waist, let him hang onto it and dragged him back. Once he was rested up, he would go skiing again," he said with a laugh.

Cross-country skiing was "a whole different thing then," added Doreen.

"There weren't as many people and we didn't have as many trails. We were all over the place because the club kept moving. We got turned out of here, there and everywhere (before a lease was signed with the province for the current ski area)."

"Our family bonded and we met a lot of other people, friends, too," said Lieuwe.

"One time, my son and I went from the Big White Road turnoff to the lake behind Big White. When we came back, we got lost and we ended up in a downhill race. And I'm with my wooden skis down there. You should have heard the noise of those skis hitting the ice. Once and never again."

In those days, everyone used three-pin toe bindings on cross-country skis so "you can't snowplow or brake or anything so you have to sit down after a while and slide down," he said with another laugh.

The Madshus Birkebeiner wooden skis that he wore last Sunday were purchased at a garage sale off Spall Road 28 years ago.

They were already several years old, and he bought the skis, boots and poles for \$35.

"I always wanted a pair. Mind you, they were \$150 new in the store so I couldn't afford it," said Lieuwe. He swore by them for the next four or five years was one of the last club members to switch. There was even a handwritten sign in the club's lodge: "Lieuwe 'You'll never catch me on plastic skis' Wierenga." Doreen had wooden skis with a plastic P-Tex base but she couldn't keep up with the other three because they had used the same wax on all four pairs of skis.

So Doreen switched skis with Lieuwe "and I left him in the dust," she said with a laugh.

"I wanted her to enjoy it too," Lieuwe said, so he went to Sears and bought her a pair of high-end Norwegian Asnes skis with the same hardwood edges as his so the softer hickory wouldn't wear down. They both replaced the original three-pin binding with modern Salomon bindings because the three-pin have metal wings which extend beyond the top edges of the skis and hit the new narrow tracks set by modern groomers.

Lieuwe claims his wooden skis hold wax better than fiberglass and says he can ski on one waxing four to six times a week for two weeks before another coat.

However, they are heavier and can be slower if the right wax isn't applied, said Doreen. However, he says they have a wider temperature range, claiming he has used them with one particular wax in temperatures from -5 C to 5 C.

"They ski so nice and have a good grip and I don't slide backwards with these hardly at all."

CARMEN DYCK

/Special to the Okanagan Saturday

Doreen and Lieuwe Wierenga brought their wooden skis to the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of the Kelowna Nordic Cross-Country Ski Club last Sunday. The bindings have been switched but they still use their bamboo poles.