

'All Downhill' for 70-Year-Old Trenton Ski Club

[By George Point](#) Mar 1, 2023 Updated Mar 1, 2023

After a few years of COVID-induced cocooning, have you been itching to take off for the great outdoors? Are you eyeing that pair of Rossignols that have been gathering dust in the back of a closet for far too long? Clearly, it's time to book a ski trip. But where? Can you really trust those 5-star reviews you read online? And wouldn't the companionship of some like-minded ski enthusiasts help compensate for all the Zooming and FaceTiming you've been doing for who knows how many months?

Membership in a ski club offers an answer to your dilemma; its members can be an experienced and trusted source of information and a welcome addition to your social circle. **The Trenton Ski Club** has been offering just that for more than 70 years.



According to the club's website, it was founded in 1952 for the purpose of fostering and encouraging skiing. It organizes a number of ski trips throughout ski season, both within and outside of the US. What sets the Trenton Ski Club and others like it above and apart from booking your trip online is the human connection, a bond forged by (quoting the club's website) "a love for the sport, the snow and the mountains. But we admit that we also enjoy the good food and other amenities usually found at skiing destinations. Indeed, some of us may enjoy the amenities more than the sport, since some members are former skiers, relatives of skiing members, and people who simply enjoy mountains and the travel adventures we offer."

New Jersey in 1952 was not exactly a skiing mecca, according to Robbinsville resident **Andrea Broadbent**, a member since 1996 and the club's de facto historian, who found out about the club through a friend. "Think about it," she says. "Nobody in New Jersey skied in 1952, unless they were with the 10th Mountain Division (a mountain warfare division of the US Army) or an expert skier.

"I'm so impressed with what the club has accomplished," she continues. "It helped launch the recreational ski industry in New Jersey; the club actually helped build Belle Mountain ski area outside of Lambertville. They bought and installed the tow rope."

Belle Mountain was a small, community type of ski area that operated in Mercer County and closed officially in 1998 (getoutsidenj.com/places/belle-mountain).

Not that it was all cool runnings for the Trenton Ski Club in the 1950s, according to Broadbent's charting of decade-by-decade club milestones. Getting off to an auspicious start, the club's first trips were to Tuckerman Ravine (New Hampshire), Grey Rocks (Quebec), and Pico Peak (Vermont) in 1952-1953, presumably accompanied by club founders Dick Burton, Wilton Case, George Kuser, and Tom Moore, and by the club's first president, Tom Sweeny. But tragedy struck soon after. The stark notations on her chart of milestones simply states "Al Schmidt dies in avalanche, 1955" and "Al Schmidt Award established, 1957."

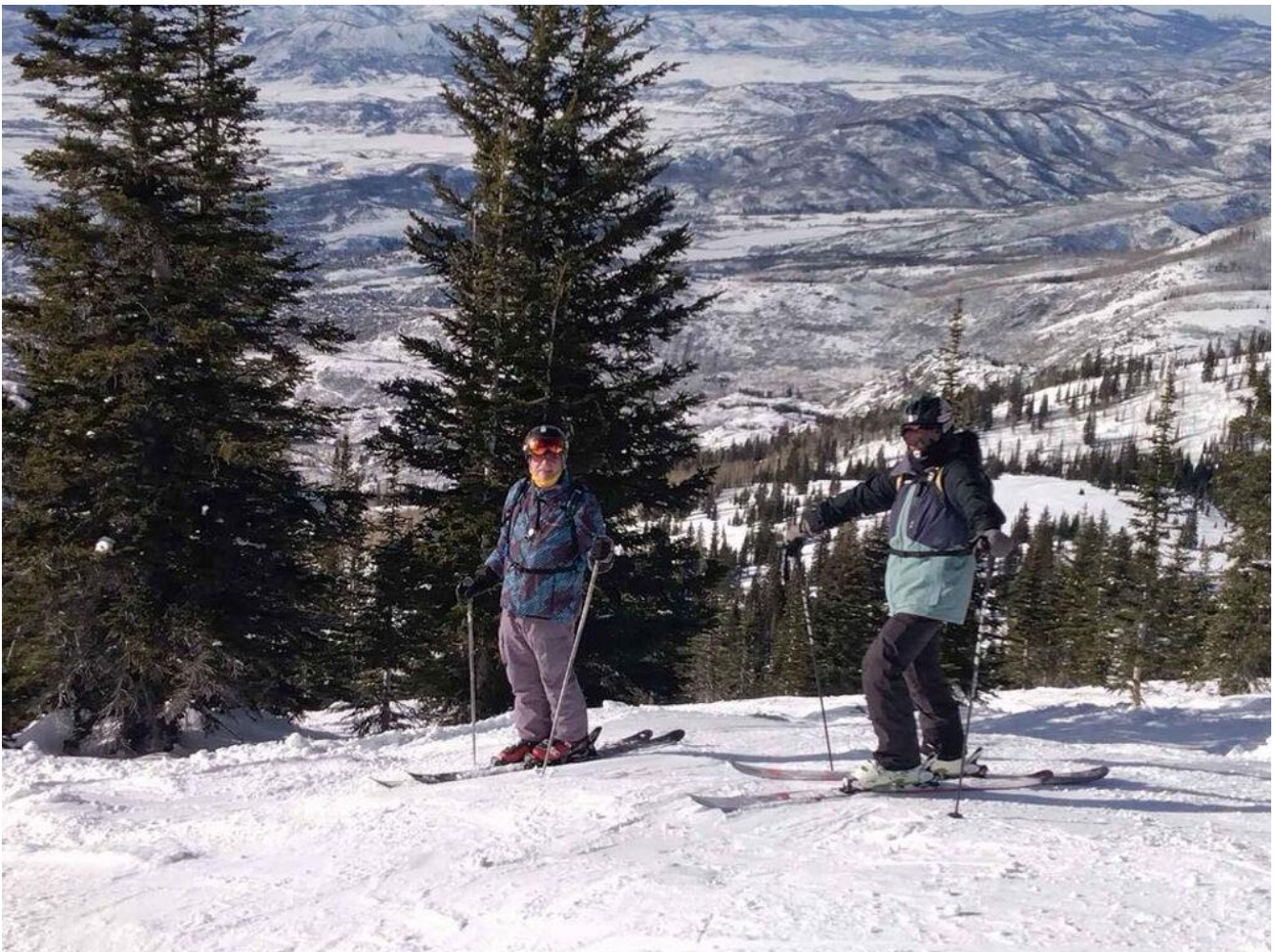
Art Esposito started skiing in 1982. When he learned about the club in 1992, he checked it out and became a member. He is currently serving his second one-year term at the club's president.

Esposito notes that the current membership numbers just over 150. "Most of our members are from the greater Trenton area, Mercer and Bucks County," he says. "People move out of the area but still belong. Some of them have moved down the shore but still remain members. We have a couple of members in north Jersey and Vermont, and a little

Florida contingent, too.” Meetings are currently held at **VFW Post 3525** on Nottingham Way in Hamilton.

Esposito notes that the club's ski trips are open to skiers of all levels, and, thanks to group discounts the club is able to negotiate rates that suit a range of budgets. Non-skiers are also welcome as well. “My husband is 91 and doesn’t ski any more,” says Andrea Broadbent. “He was skiing until he was 88, and he still goes with the club on trips, like our trip to Aspen last year.”

“Some people go just because they’re beautiful places to be,” Esposito adds. “On the European trips for example, we have a number of members go just for the sightseeing.” According to the club’s website, individual memberships begin at \$25 annually, and range upwards for couples and families.



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How did COVID affect the club? “We had two trips in February 2020,” he says, the Killington drive-up, which came off without a hitch. “We heard the stories about what was happening in China. Then we went to Red Mountain (British Columbia) the last week in February.”

“And then the world closed down,” Broadbent recalls.

“The VFW where we held our meetings was locked down, so we had our meetings on Zoom for at least six months,” Esposito continues. “Even after things lightened up, it was still affecting us. Now we’re getting back to normal. Our trips are just about all sold out. They’re all domestic this year, but next year we’re looking to resume trips outside the country.” A full schedule of trips is posted on the club’s website.

He notes that he is also looking to resume the year-round activities curtailed by COVID that make the Trenton Ski Club a club for all seasons. If all goes according to plan, members will again have the opportunity to socialize in the off-season with events such as happy hours, mini golf tournaments, bike rides, picnics, tubing on the Delaware, trips to Lakewood Blue Claws baseball games, and more.

After speaking with Esposito and Broadbent, one is left with the feeling that one of the most appealing aspects of joining an organization like the Trenton Ski Club is making the connection with its history, and the club’s history that Broadbent is putting together is clearly a labor of love.

“I just got curious,” she says. “I guess I’m a historian at heart and I like to write. Every ski club is in danger of turning into a travel agency. Trenton Ski Club is not a travel agency. In a word, camaraderie is what we offer. You feel it in the story boards I’ve put together highlighting major milestones in our history. The club has done so much to promote recreational skiing. There is such enthusiasm, I could feel it through the pages as I read the old minutes.”

Meanwhile, 70 years on, the Trenton Ski Club is remaining true to its motto, “It’s All Downhill From Here.”