

The

Squaw Valley Squawk

22 March 2010

Squaw Valley, California

Flattery works



Gordon skis the Siberia Bowl at Squaw Valley on spring break

‘Awesomer than gossamer’

When Gordon asked a few weeks ago if we could ski during spring break, he knew he didn’t need to twist my arm.

But after I told him I’d freelanced the script for a computer game, he posted a Facebook message saying that made me “officially awesomer than gossamer.”

After that, he could have asked to go to the Alps. Fortunately, Squaw Valley at Lake Tahoe was fine with him.

It had been several years since we skied there, and we picked it Monday for several reasons, mostly mine.

– *Continued overleaf*

Flattery will get you to Squaw Valley

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Squaw Valley opened 60 years ago, and 50 years ago it hosted the 1960 Winter Olympics, the first ever televised live in the United States.

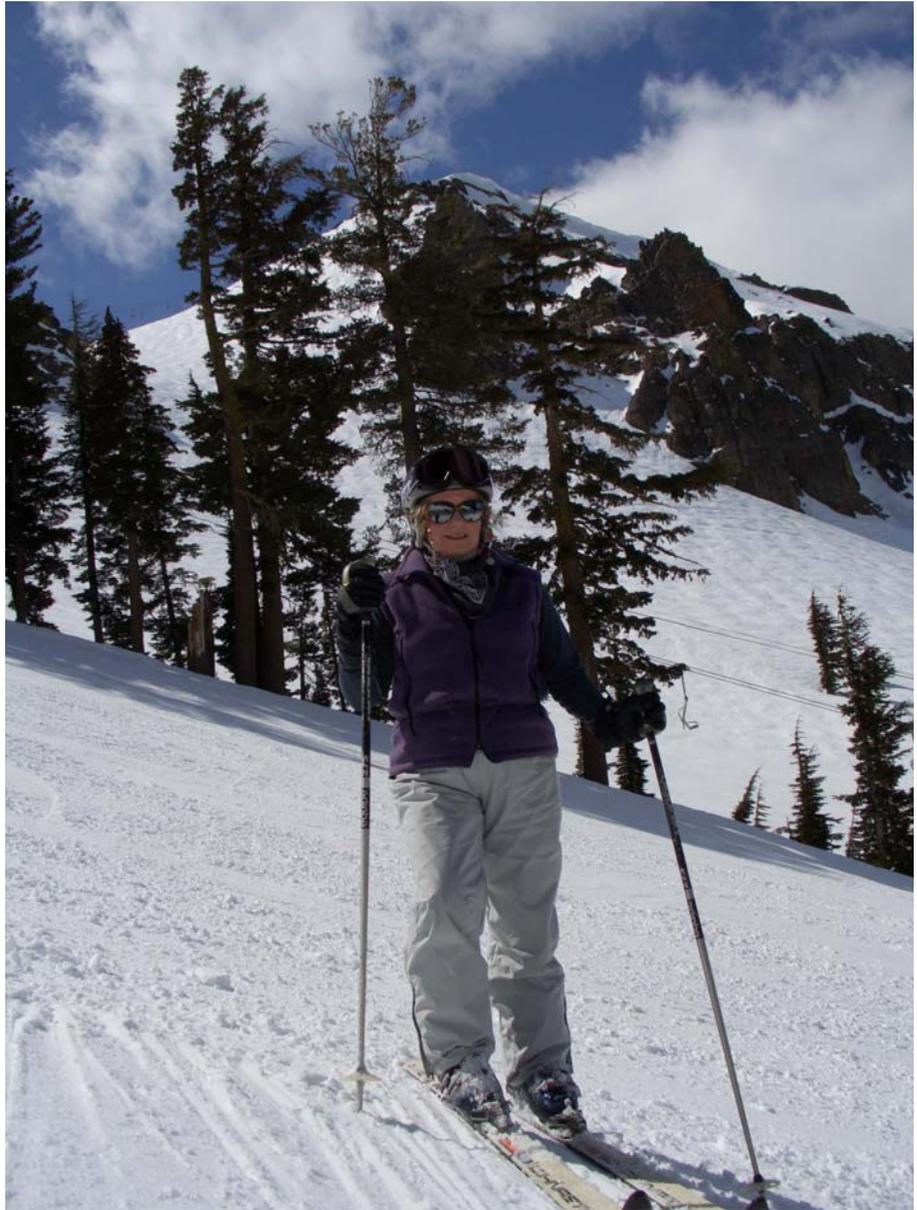
I was a third-grader at the time, sick at home with the mumps with nothing to do but watch strange sports I'd never seen, much less imagined.

A month later I was home from school again – three times in fact. Three Wednesdays in a row it snowed so deep in Hamlet, N.C., that schools closed and we had our own winter games sledding down Clay Street and playing “ice hockey” using my father’s golf clubs to swat pine cones across the ice in the front yard.

It was another dozen or so years before I learned to ski myself, but that winter is as close as my life has come to divine intervention.

With the exception of one winter I took off for surgery, I've skied 36 consecutive years. Squaw Valley was the first place Emily and I skied on our Tahoe honeymoon in 1984, and I covered four Winter Olympics on three continents as a sports writer. Gordon has been on skis since he was 4.

It will be months before the 10-foot deep snowpack that we enjoyed melts, but



Emily pauses in the Shirley Lake area of Squaw Valley

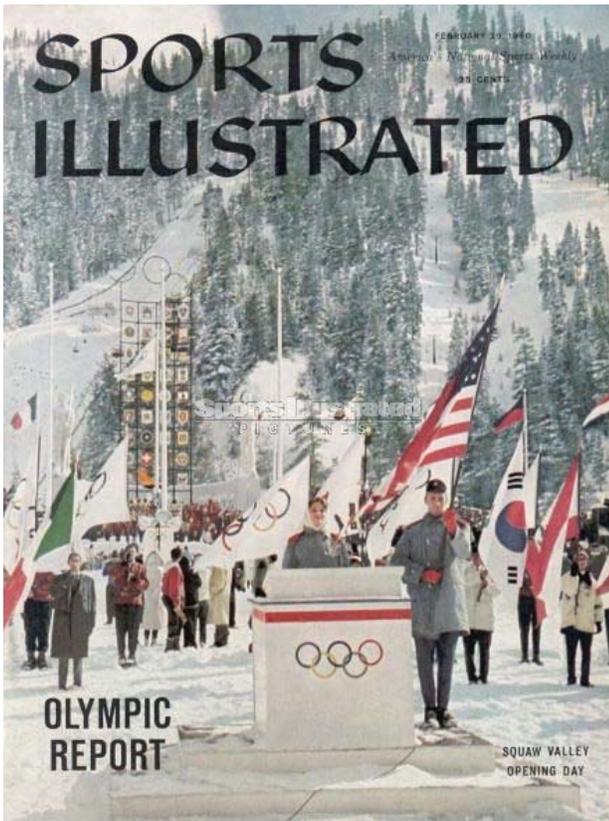
Squaw will close in just a few more weeks. Once people in the Bay Area crank up their lawn mowers, they lose the ski mood and the lifts shut down. I need to cut our grass for the third time this year.

But we squeezed a great, sunny day out of the waning of another Olympic season on the slopes. Before Gordon goes back to Davis, we'll play a round of golf.



Internet photo

Ice hockey and figure skating at the Squaw Valley Winter Olympics were held in this now-demolished open-air arena built in what is now the resort parking lot.



Dashing through the snow

Walt Disney did the opening and closing ceremonies. Walter Cronkite did the TV commentary. And 650 athletes from 30 countries showed up at Squaw Valley for the VIII Olympic Winter Games in 1960.

The Games were repeated last month for the XXIst time in Vancouver, British Columbia for 2,600 athletes from 82 nations.

The Squaw Valley Olympics were the last held in one spot. Every event – whether on the mountain, the speed-skating rink or the ice arena – was held within a five-minute walk from the single athletes' hotel.

Squaw Valley's highlight event was ice hockey in which the United States beat the Soviet Union 3-2 in the semifinals and then won the gold medal 9-4 over Czechoslovakia. Neither country beaten by the United States exists today.

Today's picture pages



Looking into the valley from the top of the Siberia lift at 8,800 feet, a 2,600-foot drop.



Me skiing down Shirley Lake. Demonstrating his journalism genes, Gordon got the crash picture first, then called out to me to see if I was OK.



<<< Two aerial trams pass midway between peak and base stations.



Emily and Gordon in Siberia Bowl >>>

