



# THE HARDWARE HERALD

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## HAPPY

# Holidays

Rylee

Tim

Kevin

Mila

Woody

Marce

Paul

Kassy

Casey

Jared

Chanda

Robin

Marty

eM

Mike

Clay



*Friendly Reminder*

MARK THE DATES FOR OUR ANNUAL STORE  
CLOSURE DURING CHRISTMAS TIME!

WE WILL BE OPEN SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24TH  
FROM 9AM TO 3PM  
AND THEN CLOSED UNTIL JANUARY 2ND AT 7:30AM

## SNOWFLAKES

by  
Warren Miller

I have had a love affair with snowflakes ever since I saw them for the first time. They had fallen on the beach at the mouth of Topanga Canyon during a winter storm in 1930, or was it 1931? I waded in the small surf barefooted and by comparison that snow was very intoxicating.

It would be five years before I finally got to slip and slide around on it and in it on my home made toboggan. I had built it in my junior high school woodshop. It was for two people and I had fastened the steam bent oak to the cross beams with copper rivets. This would also be the first time I ever saw skiers making turns.

Whatever happened so long ago is still with me today as I start packing up to go to Montana for another winter of turning right and left on my skis until I'm so tired I have to take an afternoon nap so I don't fall asleep at the dinner table.

In all of the years in between living in Topanga canyon and winters today in Montana, I have witnessed and filmed snowflakes in countless arrangements.

I was there at the start of a blizzard in 1943 at Mt. Waterman near Los Angeles when it snowed twenty four feet in twenty four hours.

The Ridge Route from Los Angeles to Bakersfield was snowed shut for almost a week. So the next Sunday, six of us, in my sister's Buick sedan, drove up there on the just plowed out two lane road. We found a place to park in a gas station where the roof had caved in from the eight or more feet of snow that had fallen. The snow alongside the road was as vertical as a kitchen wall and really hard to find a way to climb up to the top so that we could climb to ski.

We climbed and skied all day in the bright sunshine and I learned the hard way that snowflakes can be silent, beautiful and deadly. About midnight I woke up with a bad case of snow blindness. Any light whatsoever made it feel as though someone was pouring hot sand in my eyes and rubbing it in. My blindness lasted almost a week.

My only fights with snow was when I was driving to film a ski resort somewhere and the snow on the road had been pounded into black ice. It wasn't until the mid 1950's that someone invented snow tires. Ground up walnut shells in the rubber of the tires did the job, but you got very little mileage out of them

At Squaw Valley in 1950 it snowed eight feet overnight and an avalanche on the headwall demolished lift tower twenty three. It was never replaced by the owner. A couple of years later the skiing got a lot worse or better depending your point of view. Another eight feet of snow fell overnight that was immediately followed by almost eight inches of warm tropical rain. That deep snow soaked up the rain and over a hundred houses around Lake Tahoe collapsed. The roofs of cars were squashed down to the top of the seats inside and all four tires were blown out. All because of that beautiful hexagonal- crystal- shaped piece of frozen water.

A freezing cold ride in the Post autobus from Langen to Zurs, Austria in 1953 opened my eyes forever to the beautiful mountains of Europe and the potential of freedom for anyone who rode their ski lifts. That night when I walked through the narrow, ten foot high snow banks to the Lorinser hotel and met Herbert Jochum for the first time my love affair with snowflakes was forever exposed on

16mm Kodachrome motion picture film for the entire world to see. They had a T-bar going up to the Zursersee and one up the Hexenboden. The morning and afternoon slopes and the photographic opportunities that existed for my camera, rushed my ski film business into fast forward. The audience's had never seen anything like it in 1954 and I was lucky enough to carve my own tracks with skis and camera and document Zurs and Herbert for the world to see.

On a cloudy day in Badgastein a friend I was skiing with fell and broke his leg. We were in an area of no ski patrol and I wound up hauling him down the hill in a fireman's carry, draped over my shoulders. The long run down to the next village really tired me out but the snow remained soft and forgiving as though it knew we were in serious trouble.

In Yosemite in 1945 it snowed six feet overnight and a skier got lost. Two forest rangers and I were one of the search parties that went out looking for him and we went too far and got caught by darkness. The rangers were smart, they built a lean to, lit a dead tree on fire and we spent a toasty night in a snow bank, except when the embers fell from the burning tree, burning their way through my parka, sweater and t-shirt and finally waking me up.

Just out of range of the heat of the fire, the snowflakes covering the tree limbs were as beautiful as they were on the beach at Topanga in 1930 and as hypnotizing as they will be to me this winter in Montana.