

PASSION of a lifetime

For 60 years, Alpine has offered more than just great skiing

Nearly 40 years ago the Taylor family made a decision about their skiing holidays: rather than going away once a year as they had been doing, they would join Alpine Ski Club and go skiing every weekend.

had no idea it would end up defining their family dynamic for decades to come.

Philip Taylor was 10 years old at the time, and he's been a member at Alpine ever since.

Not just a member, but a passionate devotee of the club, someone who will fly

back from a business meeting late on a Friday night and still be up at the club on Saturday morning to spend the weekend skiing. He skis at the club nearly every weekend, and never misses opening or closing day. He and his wife got engaged on the chair lift, and their children both race and coach.

"I don't define myself by my occupation. I'm a skier, and I'm an Alpine member," says Philip.

A lifetime of delight
What is it that prompts such intense dedication?

The skiing, of course, is a big part of it. Alpine Ski Club was founded by a group of Toronto-based skiers – many of them European immigrants who had grown up on some of the best skiing terrain in the world. In the 1950s they spent weekends travelling together to various ski hills in the Collingwood area.

Eventually they decided to pool their resources, buy some land and carve their own ski runs out of the Niagara Escarpment. Naturally, they bought the best skiing property they could find, with tremendous vertical height to allow long runs, a wide array of terrain to suit skiers of all abilities, and stunning views of Georgian Bay from the crest of the hills.

Even though the club is bigger than it was then (there are just under 2,500 "badges" or individual members), even on the busiest weekends the hills never feel crowded. "You always get a clear shot down the run of your choice," says Philip.

Member run
Philip and his family were part of the second wave of members. They weren't around for those early weekend work parties, clearing trees from the hills and building lifts by hand, but they were surrounded by people who had done that.

The efforts of those first members created some fabulous ski runs. But more than that, they also helped set the tone of the club as a place where people get involved, support each other, and participate – a club that has been named as one of the top nine private ski clubs in the world (and the only Canadian resort on the list), among many other awards.

Philip got caught up in that spirit early on. "I attended my first AGM when I was 15 – I had to be dropped off there because I wasn't old enough to drive," he says.

He joined the board while in his early 30s and was president when the club celebrated its 50th anniversary. He coached and taught lessons, as have his children.

Because club members are surrounded by people who share their passion – and who see each other nearly every week as they coach, volunteer, and ski with their families – there is an abiding sense of community.

The club's active racing program plays a vital role in those friendships, with young skiers spending time with their peers every weekend, often for years on end.

Philip likens it to the relationship many people have with their cousins: you

see them at regular intervals over many years, and while they may be unlike you in many ways, you also share some profound points of connection.

"This is a place to build and maintain friendships," he says. "You leave here in April and probably don't see any of the people again until December, but you step right back into those relationships like it was days ago."

Clubhouse delights
Those relationships have really blossomed since the club opened its 45,000-square-foot clubhouse in 2016. The building is spectacular – bright and airy, with stunning views of the hill in one direction and Georgian Bay in the other, and with multiple gathering areas where smaller groups can congregate.

Men with Knives were hired as in-house caterers, taking the food and beverage service to a level far beyond

what you would expect to see at a ski club.

"You change the space, and you change the behaviour," Philip says. "If you walked into an après ski in the old chalet 10 years ago, you could have fired a canon through the building. Now, it's packed, and people are lingering until after dinner."

Above all, though, membership at Alpine isn't just about the fast lifts, the après-ski martini nights, or the competitive racing program: "As cheesy and hokey as it sounds, it's about family time," Philip says.

Even if families don't actually ski together, they drive back and forth every weekend, share meals, and ski knowing that their family is nearby. "It's quality family time. And it's just magnificent."

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Alpine Ski Club members include Stacey Murie, Philip Taylor, Linda Leistner (whose father is an original member), Doug and Doris Smith (who helped cut the original runs), Alex Murie, and Melanie Choi.