Mercury takes awards

Mercury Editor James C. Smith is pictured above with Kentucky Press Association President Russ Metz as the Mercury accepted a first place award from the association for Freedom of Information at the KPA Summer Convention in Cave City last week. The Mercury additionally received awards for topography, editorial page, newspaper promotion, service to agriculture, society page, best use of local news pictures, and general excellence. — Photo submitted.

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Ski slope slated for General Butler

Ground was broken last week to begin construction of the state's first alpine ski area at General Butler State Resort Park in Carrollton, located off I-71 midway between Louisville and Cincinnati.

The new ski area will open this winter with five ski lifts, about 17 acres of ski slopes and the most advanced snowmaking system in the world.

General Butler Ski Area will offer something for everyone. For the beginner skier there will be a huge, wide area with a gentle, even slope. As the skier's skills progress, there is a more challenging winding trail planned which will be called "Kentucky Gentleman."

For the accomplished skier, there will be an exciting steep slope named "Wild Turkey" with a 50 percent pitch. The ski area will also offer wide ridge runs with even fall lines and canyons runs that wind around, appearing to be twice their length. Night skiing will be offered each evening of the prime season.

The ski area will offer a variety of slopes, concentrating on the beginner-intermediate skier. While General Butler is no Aspen nor Vail, there is at least one advantage over the monster resorts — General Butler Ski Area is only 45 minutes from Louisville or Cincinnati.

General Butler Ski Area will be located in General Butler State Park, but the ski facilities will be constructed by private funds and the area will be operated by Northbank Ski Management Inc. through a land lease agreement with the state of Kentucky. The lease agreement of public lands for winter sports activities is how all major Western ski areas operate on national forest land. The present state park lodge and accommodations will continue to be operated by the state.

In addition to the existing facilities, Northbank will construct a ski center building to house food and beverage service, ski school, ski patrol, ski shop, ski rental and other customer requirements.

For an area suffering from a stagnant economy, skiing will provide a needed "lift," state and local officials say.

"I think it will be a great boost to the community," said Carroll County Judge-Executive Robert Westrick. Carrollton Mayor Charles Webster said the ski resort's prospects already have prompted a serious interest among local merchants in restoring Carrollton's downtown area.

Optimism is equally high among state officials. State Commerce Secretary Bruce Lunsford said of the venture, "Skiing will give a shot in the arm not only to General Butler, but to the state parks system in general."

For years, state officials kicked around the idea of offering skiing at a state park. But for one reason or another, skiing remained just an idea.

Then last year Northbank, a North Carolina firm, proposed to build and run a ski area at a state park.

The selection of Northbank reflects Gov. John Y. Brown Jr.'s emphasis on stimulating private development for the public benefit, Lunsford said. The ski area will be the first instance of private investment on state park property directly producing revenue for the park, he added.

After settling on a location for the ski area, two major steps were left to be taken, Lunsford said. One was enlisting local support for the venture.

In short order, the city and county formed a commission to coordinate tourism activities in the area. The commission put into place a three-percent motel room tax to help raise backup funds for retiring debts on the ski area. Meanwhile, the Carroll County Chamber of Commerce began spearheading efforts to revitalize downtown Carrollton.

The second big step was obtaining financing for the project. Northbank agreed to invest $500,000, leaving roughly $2.2 million to come up with.

At a time of state budget shortfalls, using state money was out of the question, Lunsford said. So through the Kentucky Development Finance Authority, the state issued $3 million in industrial revenue bonds. Through the bonds, Northbank has been able to borrow money at favorable rates, yet the state is not liable for bond payments, Lunsford added.

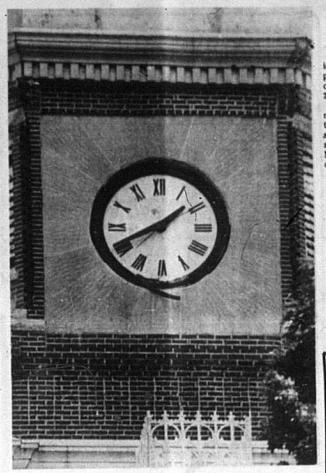
"We believe skiing will fill up the lodge in the winter and substantially increase our winter camping at General Butler," Lunsford said. "It might be the first state park to ever turn a profit."

Democratic unity urged

Kentucky Governor John Y. Brown Jr. and Democratic Party Chairman Tracy Farmer, in a breakfast meeting with the state's Democratic Congressional delegation, issued a call for unity in the party's fall electoral contests. Brown and Farmer stated that the support and help of the State's Delegation in Congress was essential in winning many of the close campaigns in Northern and Western Kentucky.

Citing the history of factionalism in the Kentucky Democratic Party, Farmer said "We no longer should call ourselves 'Brown people' or 'Carroll people' or 'Sloane people' or 'McBrayer people,' we are all Kentucky Democrats and we must start working together. The Republicans have tasted a little blood now and they are mounting an aggressive effort with extensive financial resources."

Since becoming party chairman in February, this is Farmer's first meeting with the congressional delegation. He used the opportunity to outline the state party headquarters' plans for candidate assistance this year, which will make Kentucky one of the most advanced state political organizations in the nation. He cited campaign schools, a comprehensive voter registration drive, field staff assistance, computer targeting, print and production work as examples of the assistance state headquarters will be giving local and legislative candidates. Farmer discussed various summer and fall campaign events with the Congressmen and pointed out where their support and attendance would be especially helpful.



On the blink

After being repaired just two months, the clock atop the Nicholas County Courthouse is on the blink again. C.F. Jackson, Dunnellon, Fla., who repaired the clock in April, is scheduled to return within the week to check the clock's motor over again. Jackson did not work on the moulding that is pictured here dangling from the face of the clock. — Mercury photo.

USDA adjusts food stamp eligibility

Food stamp income eligibility limits will rise reflecting increases in the cost of living by approximately 13 percent for the period beginning July 1, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Mary C. Jarratt has announced.

The 1977 Food Stamp Act requires the Department of Agriculture to adjust income eligibility standards annually to reflect increases in the cost of living. The Office of Management and Budget's poverty guideline is used as the standard for food stamp income limits. The maximum net income limits a family of four must meet to qualify for food stamps will rise from $621 to $705 per month. After allowable deductions are taken, the maximum gross income for a family of four without elderly persons will rise from $1,026 to $1,131 per month.

From July 1 through June 30, 1982, the maximum net monthly income for men and potted out where their support and attendance would be especially helpful.

One person household, $360; Two person household, $475; Three person household, $590; Four person household, $705; Five person household, $820; Six person household, $935; Seven person household, $1050 and Eight person household, $1,165.

Biographical programs

"The Originals: The Writer in America," a series of biographical programs profiling contemporary writers in the country, begins on KET Monday, June 22 at 6:30 p.m. (ET), 5:30 p.m. (CT).

Toni Morrison, whose best-selling novel, "Song of Solomon," earned her the National Book Critics Award, is the subject of the first program in the series. "Song of Solomon," like most of Morrison's works, deals with the roots of black Americans.

The program provides an incisive look behind the writing and lifestyle of this well-known black artist. It also provides a rare opportunity to hear her read from her own material. Morrison's other novels include "Sula" and "The Bluest Eye."

Other writers to be featured in the nine-part series include John Gardner, Muriel Rukeyser, Wright Morris, Eudora Welty, Janet Flanner and Robert Duncan.

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