

# Ski Band



**Dedicated to the people who have  
been involved in Ski Band.**

*By Julie Lewis*

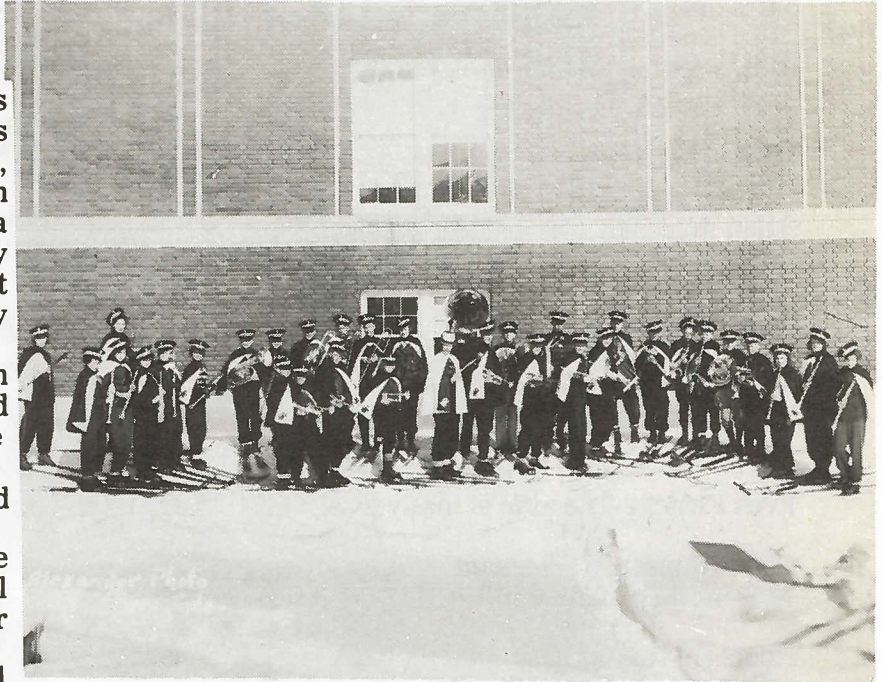
## **Band in 1936-37.**

"Ski Band started around 1937, and legend has it that the director was so mad at his students that he said, 'You guys play so dog gone lousy, but you ski well, so I'm going to put you all on skis, so you can do something right for a change.'" I learned by interviewing many different people throughout the community, that the director who started Ski-Band was Jerry McQuirie.

Steamboat Springs Ski-Band is a legend within its own time. Its many outward appearances and stylish improvements through the years have brought them acclamations and awards.

One highlight was in 1950 when the Ski-Band skied in Chicago, in the summer!

When talking with Mr. Dean Bowker he remarked, "There were never any fatal accidents, but I think every new band director who comes here probably has a heart attack even when he stops to think about Ski-Band. When they went to Chicago, well, obviously in Chicago in July, there isn't any snow, so someone had the bright idea to put roller skates on the skis, since it was the famous ski band and the only one of its kind in the whole world. So they took the entire Ski-Band to the Lions' International Convention in Chicago, and they skied down Michigan Avenue in the middle of the summer in 1950. They took two buses called 'The only ski-sized band in the whole world.'"



**When things were just getting started.**

"I came here in 1943 as a science teacher, and when the war started I became a band director and bought the band some new uniforms," Mr. George Sauer remarked. "The band went to Chicago in 1950 under the direction of Robert Flanders. They didn't really use any roller skates; an inventor in Denver, Marcellus Merrill, invented four wheels to put under the skis. The four wheels would lock, when you leaned or pushed back on them. They would slide into a crest, and brake the wheels. When you leaned forward the rollers would release the lock and start rolling again. Mr. Bob Smith promoted them. He should be given a lot of credit. You see he was president of the Lions' International Convention. They made the band uniforms in red and white with the Lions' symbol on the back of the shirts to represent the Lions Club."

**Steamboat Springs  
has the only**



**Ski-sized band in the whole world**



Mr. Bowker also told me about his reactions to Ski-Band. "My first reaction to the Ski-Band was help! I wasn't one of the world's greatest skiers. As a matter of fact, when I first came out here I had only skied once, and I think if I would have never skied at all, I would have been better off. What I didn't know is that by then, they already knew how. My first reaction when I first saw them was that they looked like a bunch of pregnant penguins.

"Skiing down the road at the first rehearsal, we had so many problems! First by putting the whole Ski-Band together. I don't think most people realize what problems go into it. When the Ski-Band first started they marched on long skis and painted them red. So then they would all have the same color. Through the years the band has grown so large that now fifty percent of the band members do not know how to ski. A lot of new students have moved to this town from so many other places. There are so many non-skiers, and they have trouble with equipment, and some don't have any.

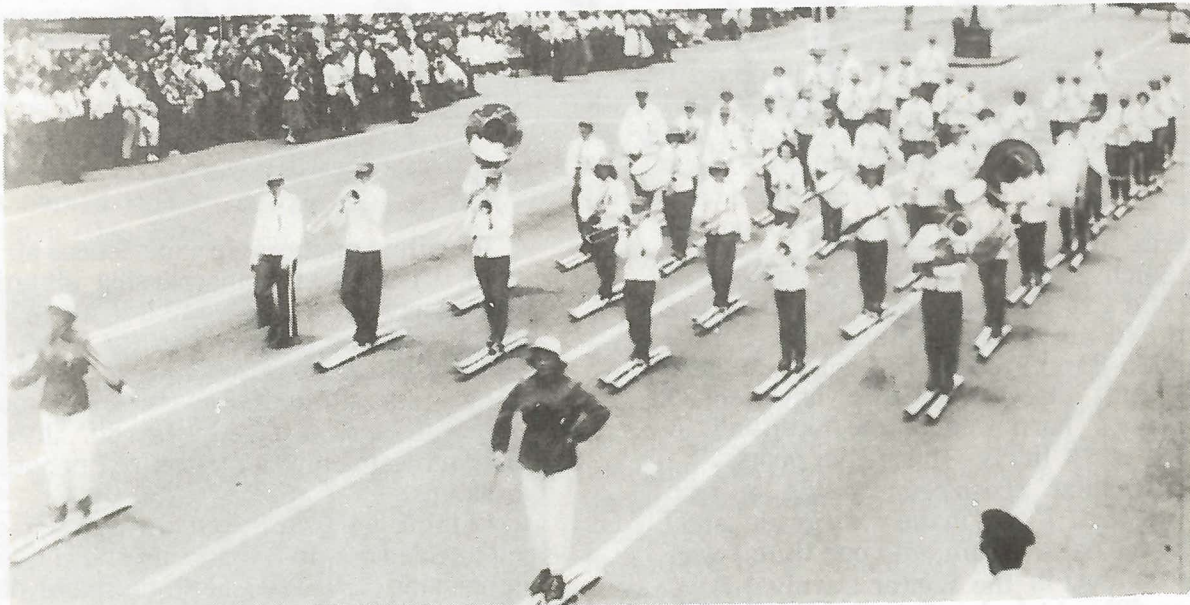
"You have problems rehearsing at 8:30 a.m. in the morning with ten below temperatures. The brass instruments won't play the right way. The trombone slides stick or freeze completely. Just try to play a brass instrument; the lips tend to stick to the mouthpiece and this can be very painful and very awkward. The students in Ski-Band just always assume they're going out to work. They easily overcome the cold."

Mr. Bowker also remarked, "Every year we pray that we will have a little better weather for Winter Carnival than we do at rehearsal time. Usually we do, and it's later on in the day when the band performs, which really helps each individual give a better performance. The other problem we have—skiers, then non-skiers, alongside each other. The skiers tend to take a little bigger steps, or slide with the skis. And the non-skiers take smaller steps. So you can see that we have a hard time keeping the band together. In the later years, with the new problem being the quality of the snow that they put down on Highway 40 for us, and because they put down big clumps of ice, it's all you can do to keep your balance and to keep going. Other problems, I know when they had fifteen or

## Summer of 1950-

### Ski-Band marching down

### Michigan Avenue, in Chicago.



**How do you ski in the spring? With rollers.**



twenty people, they used to have all kinds of maneuvers. They'd do some kick turns, and all sorts of things. Well, with seventy, eighty, or ninety people in today's current band, it's tough just to put those people in the street without overcrowding it. So turns would almost be impossible, unless we went with the really short skis."

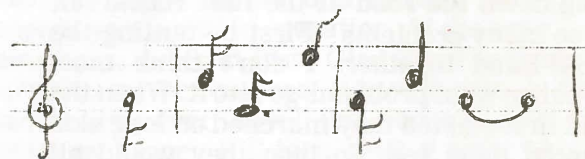
Mr. Sauer had an explanation about marching also. "The band did kick turns always at a certain point in the Winter Carnival Parade. The drum major or majorette would do a kick-turn first, then the band would do the same after them. I can remember the bass drummer one time having trouble with the turns. They used regular skis, and you could just imagine a bass drummer doing a kick turn with six or seven foot skis."

## Kick-turn!

## Ski Band doing maneuver.

## Winter Carnival

1957



My interest aroused more about this; I talked to Ralph Selch. I discovered that he has been a National and Pro Ski Patrolman for thirty two years. He told me about Ski-Band and said, "I started in Ski-Band in 1938-39. Charles Mormon was my first director, and everyone in school who could play a horn was in the Ski-Band. I think there were thirty—thirty-five people."

We used regular cross-country skis, or just whatever we had. I was in the sixth grade, and I used to play the bass drum, and one time I was marching (skiing) in the Winter Carnival Parade and we did a kick turn on our skis. I remember falling down right in front of the news reel camera; I don't think they saw me though. So I got up and kept on marching.

Recalling memorable experiences Mr. Bowker said, "The most embarrassing situation well, there were several, most of it is just trying to ski along with the band, which for my knowledge, not too many directors have attempted. But I figure that anything the kids have to do, I ought to do it too, so I always do. Just that is embarrassing in itself, because I'm not that good a skier."

"I think one year they had a big mound of snow alongside Lincoln Avenue, and here I was on the other side. I tried to slow the band down, and circle up on it, but I kept falling back, and I got so far back that I fell forward. So it was a very difficult thing to keep going. I believe problems are well out of the way of the embarrassing ones. Anytime you have a bunch of kids that sacrifice as they sacrifice in concert work, you realize that Ski-Band is different than concert work. The kids sacrifice skin from cold and sacrifice being





**One of**

**Mr. Flanders' bands in the 1950's, Time of Romans- note uniforms.**



**Under direction of Dean Bowker-1974**

**Opening of**

**the Marriot Hotel, in Denver..**



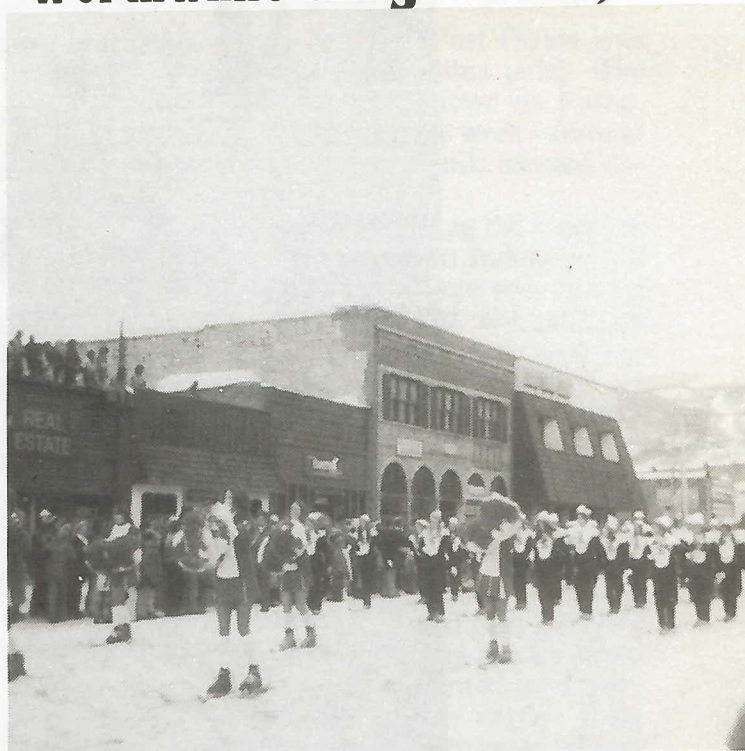
out in many miserable moments, being out in blizzards and below zero weather. They also dedicate their Sunday of Winter Carnival time, which is certainly beyond the call of duty. Worthwhile things in life are what you've sacrificed for."

I learned from researching interesting facts, that in 1950-51 Robert Flanders, a band director, was really good. In the Winter Carnival Parade he would create things like dragons, castles and once he even had Snow White. Flanders directed two years after Mr. Sauer did. During Mr. Flanders' time the band was featured in the movie, "Ski Town U.S.A."

Three years ago in 1974, the Ski-Band was asked by the governor to attend the opening of the Marriot Hotel, in Denver. Mr. Dean Bowker, the band director, took twenty-two people. The Marriot Association paid all of their expenses, and the band was on television. Mr. Bowker remarked, "We were the only band who started the show. We were also very honored and proud to receive 200 dollars for our music foundation. We all had a wonderful time and feel the Ski-Band was well represented."

Winter Carnival is usually held the first or second weekend of February, and this year Winter Carnival is the weekend of February 11-12. So watch for me and the only ski-ized band in the whole world.+

**"Worthwhile things in life,**



**are what you've sacrificed for."**



**Watch for the famous Ski Band  
at the next Winter Carnival !!!**

Most precious thanks go to those who took time to help me on Ski-Band. Mr. Dean Bowker, band director 1974-76. Mr. George Sauer 1930-1975. Mr. Ralph Selch, ski-patrolman for 32 years. And to fellow students - Carla Jones, and Duncan Craighead.