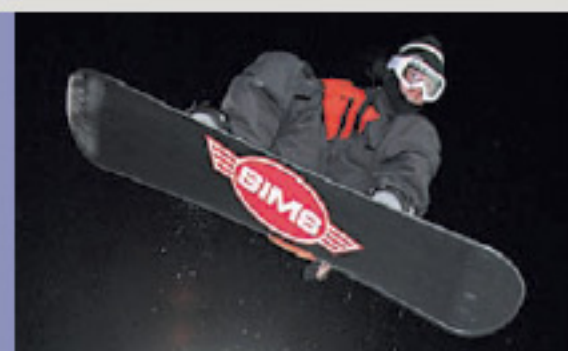


14 snow report

Pope John Paul II: ski fiend The late Pope John Paul II slipped away from his Swiss Guards to go skiing more than 100 times in the early years of his 26-year papacy, the pontiff's longtime personal secretary says in a book released in his native Poland. It was hard at first for John Paul to adjust to the confinement of the papacy, so he made informal "escapes" with his closest friends, Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz says in his book, titled "Swiadektwo" ("The Testimony"). **AP**

Metro's guide to: **Skiing**



Fisher wins 'X' gold

Steve Fisher of Breckenridge, Colo., goes airborne above the superpipe during practice before winning the gold medal in the men's Snowboard Superpipe at the ESPN Winter X Games in Aspen, Colo. **GETTY**

Hitching a ride with the Ski Bums

PROFILE. When the lifts open at Hunter Mountain in the Catskills each Wednesday, the Ski Bums of New Jersey are there. Every week, like Old Faithful, the club hires a deluxe motor coach and, when the bus pulls into the parking lot, a geyser of skiers spews out.

"Our club really doesn't do anything else but take this bus trip every week," says Bill Sabanski, the club's president. "We do not have a ski house and we do not run ski trips to Vermont or out West or anything like that. Our trips take place every Wednesday and have for the last 30 years."

"Oh yeah, and we've had the same bus driver for the last 20 years. Our driver, Rosie, insists on the job each week," Sabanski adds.

That's how much fun the Hunter bus has become.



All aboard!

Back in the '70s, a group of health care professionals (mostly doctors on their days off) came up with the idea of taking mid-week ski trips. A bus was the logical choice.

Since then, the membership has diversified. The

doctors are still there, including a practicing psychiatrist, but now the club includes a couple of restaurateurs, a manager of a car dealership, and even the lead singer of a heavy metal band.

No matter what their

Tuesdays might be, at least half of the club's 36 members are at the Lincroft, N.J. bus stop at 5:30 a.m. every Wednesday during the ski season. The next stop is Clark at 6 a.m. and then Ridgewood at 6:30 a.m. The group is usually at the

The Hunter Bus Schedule

- Lincroft, N.J., GSPKWY exit 109, 5:30 a.m.
 - Clark, N.J., GSPKWY 135, 6:00 a.m.
 - Ridgewood, N.J., Rt. 17 N, 6:30 a.m.
- Call 732-462-7075 for more information.

mountain by 8:30 a.m. The bus leaves the Hunter Mountain parking lot to return home at 5 p.m.

In the past, the bus had the reputation of being a little rowdy, Sabanski says. But things have mellowed over the years. In fact, he says the club's goal is simple — get in as many runs as possible.

"It's a nice trip," he says. "Much quieter, much more relaxed. Although some still head for the bar in the afternoon, I am still on the lift at five minutes to 4. The lift operators expect me. I am never off the mountain until 4:15, or even 4:30."

Each member antes up \$50 at the start of the season to subsidize the bus trips. Each trip costs \$60 for members and \$72 for guests, lift ticket included. The bus holds 44, but the Bums cut off reservations after 35 to make sure everyone is comfortable. The trips usually start in January and run through March.

"We're not looking to make any money off the bus," Sabanski says. "It's what the club does and we're having a lot of fun doing it."

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