

DOWNHILL SKIING

Curiosity leads brothers to build their own skis

What started out as hobby for freestyle skiers from Vernon is now a business

By J.P. SQUIRE
The Okanagan Sunday

A pair of brothers with pairs of letters in their first names are becoming known for pairs of downhill skis.

Born and raised in Vernon, Glenn and Gregg Anderson learned to ski at Silver Star Mountain Resort because their father was the mountain controller (accountant).

They were freestyle club members who loved to jump, twist and turn, but they also liked to find out what makes things tick. Glenn's inquisitive nature took him to the University of Victoria for a mechanical engineering degree. When Gregg, now 31, worked in the Silver Star equipment repair shop one winter, he took apart broken skis to see how they were constructed.

The turning point was Gregg asking Glenn if he thought they could duplicate the ski manufacturing process. The rest is Skevik Skis Inc. history, something of which their Norwegian great-grandfather, Anton Martin Skevik, would no doubt be proud.

"I've always loved tinkering and building stuff. I was in love with the idea," said Glenn, now 25.

"We didn't know that much at all about ski construction, but the Internet has lots of information. We looked at layout videos from other companies and, of course, took skis apart.

"At the time, we were hoping we could make skis with a reasonable budget, but that didn't end up happening. Today, we use the best materials available to construct a quality ski."

It started as a hobby in 2005, tracing the shape of a ski they found around the house and cutting it out by hand. In 2008, Glenn had the opportunity to invest some serious hours into ski manufacturing when he convinced university officials to let him do an entrepreneurial co-op project for course credits.

"Putting that time into it kick-started the whole thing," Glenn recalled.

Graduation in 2010 was followed by producing about 22 pairs of skis that winter, 42 pairs last winter and 82 pairs to date this winter.

Initially, they made a ski press out of two-by-six-inch lumber using a jigsaw to cut the contour of the camber (upward bend) of a ski. An old inner tube was used as a bladder.

"We look back at how we started, some of the tools we made, and we just laugh," said Glenn. "Every year, we added to the process, learning more efficient ways to do it."

Low pressure and low temperatures when they started meant curing took 24 hours per ski. Upgrading to higher pressure



CHELSEA HAINES/Special to The Okanagan Sunday

Glenn Anderson, left, and brother Gregg relax at their Vernon workshop after Glenn finished prepping the base material for a layup by tacking the steel edge to a new Skevik ski. The base material was cut to the ski shape with a CNC router. Their ski press is in the background.

and using heat blankets means curing at 82 C now takes only one hour.

Glenn now uses a computer-numerically controlled, or CNC, machine, a computerized router, which cuts the ski shape using CAD software on his computer.

Glenn tested their first all-mountain prototype at their old stomping grounds at Silver Star.

"They didn't look the most pretty, and I was a little hesitant when I did the first couple of runs. Like: are these things going to break on me? What's going to happen? By the end of the day, I was trying to break them, so it actually went quite well," he said with a laugh.

Both brothers wanted to produce powder skis, and that's what they have become known for. The current line has three models, each with an increasing waist size for more and more powder orientation: the all-mountain Sevrin, the wider Anton (named after their great-grandfather), and the big, wide and curvy Oda. They are priced at \$700 across the board.

"Our bestseller has been the Antons, by far," said Glenn. "Ski designs have changed dramatically during the past 10 years, even again within the last five years, the progression of what people are skiing on. This Anton



Photo contributed

Glenn and Gregg Anderson have been manufacturing their own brand of downhill skis since 2010.

is 122 (millimetres) underfoot. It is a big ski and excels in the powder, but it still performs on the groomers."

For the first time, Ski Canada Magazine reviewed their Anton skis for Powder Test 2013:

"Our test team really liked the way this ski walked the line between old-school performance and new-school playfulness. Testers enjoyed the easy initiation and lazy feel while having enough high-end performance to keep the experts happy when it came time to tip it over and carve. It's always nice to support manufacturers who are still building skis one pair at a time, and most skiers wouldn't be disappointed with the Anton."

This year, the brothers plan to start production of several new models in June or July so they

can build up their stock.

"Basically, we just built to order this winter because we didn't have time to build the stock. It's a good thing because you're building what you need to build, but at the same time you're probably losing sales. People want to buy their skis and have them (on snow) the next day," said Glenn.

This winter's production schedule meant skis could usually be shipped within two weeks. Attridge Ski and Board Shop, a few blocks away on 48th Avenue in Vernon, did their base grinding and tune-ups before skis were shipped to customers and is now a Skevik dealer. The brothers also shipped skis to a Norwegian dealer this winter.

Most sales are the result of word of mouth and have come through their website, skevikskis.com. They have been sold mainly to skiers in B.C. and Alberta, notably in Vancouver and Calgary, although the brothers have shipped them to Washington state and as far as Quebec.

As they develop new models, they have friends test them. Their father hasn't tried a pair yet, but "our family has been really supportive of the whole project," said Glenn.

For those not familiar with ski

construction, an Anton, for example, has eight layers (not including the eco-resin adhesive): a bumper on the tip, nylon top sheet, fibreglass, vertically laminated maple core, carbon-fibre stringers, rubber for durability, steel edges and a sintered (created from a powder) base.

Customers can select the ski model they want and then choose from one of five top sheets.

"All of our top-sheet graphics have been done by friends — local B.C. artists. Our graphics are one thing that make our skis stand out in the lift line, but our wooden sidewalls are another eye-catching component," said Glenn.

"All of our ski sidewalls expose the natural beauty of our vertically laminated maple wood cores. We use linseed oil to provide extra protection as well to enhance the wood grain. We have been extremely happy with the wood sidewall's performance and durability compared to the typical, mass-produced plastic sidewalls."

They haven't considered expanding into snowboards since neither brother is a boarder "and it's a total different business," said Glenn.

"We do have a lot of people asking about it, but as a company I don't think we would look at doing that."

B.C. CAMPING

Reserve campsites starting March 15

Discover Camping, the province's camping reservation system at discover-camping.ca, officially opens for the season at 7 a.m. March 15 with even more reservable campgrounds and sites from which to choose. In total, there will be more than 4,500 reservable sites.

With a few clicks of the mouse, up to three reservations can be made online in one transaction. Individual sites are available up to three months in advance while group sites are available up to 12 months in advance.

This interactive system allows campers to view the availability, layouts and amenities at 113 reservable campgrounds that campers can generally drive into (front-country campgrounds), including group sites, in 96 provincial parks. These campgrounds are equipped with picnic tables and fire rings.

B.C. Parks has added four new campgrounds to the reservation system: Kleanza Creek, Martha Creek, Chilliwack Lake and Bowron Lake. Lac La Hache has been restored to the reservation system after a one-year absence. As well, campgrounds at Okanagan Lake North, Kikomun Creek and Porteau Cove now will be 100 per cent reservable.

Customer service has been enhanced this year through improvements to guidelines around refund requests. Group site campers now will receive reminder emails of their upcoming camping vacation.

Discover Camping also offers a mobile platform (<https://secure.camis.com/BCMobile>) so smartphone users can easily make and change plans from the road. This interface is an alternative way to book a campground from any

mobile device or computer.

"Last year, for the first time ever, we saw over 100,000 reservations through Discover Camping," said Environment Minister Terry Lake.

In 2012, there were a total of 102,872 campsite reservations — an increase of more than 10 per cent from 2011.

The non-refundable reservation fee is \$6 per night, up to a maximum of \$18 (plus tax) per party per campsite. Reservations can be made through the call centre at 1-800-689-9025 for a surcharge of \$5 (plus tax).

For more information about B.C.'s provincial parks, go to bcparks.ca.

For backcountry permits, go to B.C. Parks Backcountry Registration System: www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/registration.

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