



The Easy Run

By GRACE GROGAN

My last Christmas at home, my parents gave me a set of cross-country skis. Trying them out in the driveway, I found them easy to maneuver with little practice. My friend Ron and I were headed to his parents' home for a week. What better place to give them a test than snow-covered northern Michigan?

Ron downhill skied, so we went to Boyne Highlands for the day. He purchased a lift ticket for himself and a cross-country ticket for me. The woman selling tickets said mine included the snow-covered golf course and a "nice, easy run through the woods" accessed by a ski lift.

I had never been to a ski resort, so Ron explained that the lifts shut down at 4:30 p.m., and he would meet me at the lodge then. Looking forward to an enjoyable afternoon, I headed toward the golf course on my skis.

Eventually, I mastered the technique, but the wide-open golf course with no one around was boring. I thought I might as well get the full benefit of my ticket. Confident of my abilities and looking forward to that easy run through the woods, I skied back to the lodge.

Call me stupid, but in my 20-year-old brain the idea of taking a ski lift to an easy run did not compute as a suicide mission for an inexperienced skier. My first important instruction came from the girl riding the ski lift with me.

"You've never been on a ski lift before? Listen quickly, and do exactly what I say!"

I had no idea the lift doesn't stop to let you off, like they do at Disney. I had to put my feet down quickly, stand up, push off and get the heck out of the way for the next set of skiers. Thanks to a stranger, I maneuvered the technique successfully without making a fool of myself. She pointed me in the direction of the cross-country run, and we parted ways.

The trail went through woods, and tall trees on both sides provided a nice winter landscape. I set off full of confidence and looking forward to navigating this easy trail. I quickly learned that "easy" is a matter of perspective. I soon found myself rapidly gaining speed. Ahead was a curve, trees and a drop off. My first thought was —I don't know how to stop! Oh, great. Woman skier plummets to her death first time out.

Thinking fast, I threw myself down on the ground to stop my descent. Success! I was still on the trail and alive. Standing up, I brushed myself off and started again. I plummeted forward, with another curve,



Me, 4, on skis at my grandparents' farm. I don't remember being on skis then, so it obviously was not a traumatic experience. Courtesy photo.

trees and drop-off ahead. Again, I dropped, stopped and brushed off... and began once more.

The entire trail is a downhill run curving through trees with drop-offs at each turn. What is easy about this? On a positive note, I mastered the timing of throwing myself down so that I gained the most distance without getting too close to the edge.

Boy, was I happy when I saw a man expertly skiing down the hill behind me. I called out, "How do you turn on these things?"

"Just like downhill," he replied as he disappeared down the hill.

Gee thanks, buddy, if only I knew how to downhill!

Finally, two girls my age were coming down the hill.

"Please help me. I have never been on skis before, and I have no idea how to slow down, stop or turn."

They gave me some instructions, then headed downhill. My progress was easier after that, still about the speed of a turtle, but at least I could stay on my feet. I rounded a corner, and the two girls were walking uphill toward me, their skis on their shoulders.

"What are you doing?" I asked.

"We were scared for us, so we knew we had to come back for you."

Oh, great. Just when I was gaining confidence, I learned it was going to get worse.

With one gal in front of me and one behind, we skied our way down the hill. It was a slow procession, and dusk was falling over the heavily wooded trail. Observing our dilemma, the leader announced, "If we don't reach the end of the trail soon, we're going to remove our skis and hike out."

That would seem like defeat but better than trying to navigate this trail in complete darkness. We pushed forward, all breathing a sigh of relief when we emerged from the tree tunnel, the lodge in the distance. A snowmobile came zooming up,

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*Just because you couldn't lift it yesterday
doesn't mean you can't lift it today.
Try again.*

Motivational words in the Manistee Health and Fitness Center.

Munson's inspiring health and fitness community

Story and photos by NIKKI SCHNEIDER

Living in Chicagoland for most of my life, I was spoiled by the many choices of health clubs, gyms and fitness centers. When I relocated to Bear Lake several years ago, it was the only thing I missed from my previous life in the big city. Until I discovered a hidden gem. Buried among the Munson Manistee Hospital and other medical buildings along U.S. Highway 31 is Munson's Manistee Health and Fitness Center.

The five-year-old fitness center offers state-of-the-art machines, free weights, a TRX suspension training system, bands, balls and all the latest workout apparatus. There is affordable personal training and the Silver Sneakers program, which is a no-cost fitness program for seniors on eligible Medicare plans. A variety of group classes — yoga, Pilates, step, strength — are offered, as well as the only SkyTrak golf simulator in the area, (with golf conditioning and swing-speed training available).

BUT, beyond all that, I have found a community. Likeminded folks from all walks of life and ages gather in this place to improve their health. I am inspired every single time I arrive.

Bob DeYoung is blind. I spoke with him the other day, on his 87th birthday, as he pedaled away on an exercise bike. We didn't get into his medical history; most members don't seem to dwell on the past. During our chat, he told me: "I come here for my physical and mental wellbeing."

He works with Tyler Stec, club manager and personal trainer.

"Tyler keeps me motivated and safe," DeYoung said.

I asked him if he considered quitting the club after he lost his sight.

"Nope, my BODY told me to keep coming back."

Many of the members are older and have suffered an injury, illness or surgery.

"I am grateful to have this amazing job where I can help someone fight their way back," Stec said. "I love making a difference in someone's life."



Member Bob DeYoung pedals away.

Everyone seems to have a story.

Jan Abbey, 71, lifts weights at least three days a week. She loves to work out to '80s hair (glam) band music.

"I love the feeling of strength, confidence and energy," Abbey said, adding, "If I can do it, anyone can."

Since it's the only complete gym in the area, the Manistee Fitness Center is where I often run into friends and neighbors. Chatting while biking or rowing really makes the time fly. It is a great place to catch up on the local gossip, too.

We are truly fortunate to have this facility in our community.

If you are looking for the motivation to improve your health this year, seek out Munson's Manistee Health and Fitness Center and ... Just Show Up. That really is the hardest part.

For more information, email sttec2@mhc.net or call 231-398-1520 and visit: munsonhealthcare.org/services/fitness.

Nikki Schneider lives in Bear Lake with her husband, Mark, and her best furry friend, Max. She combines her loves of junkin' and repurposin' for Pattina, the resale home-and-garden shop in Onekama she co-owns.



Trainer/Manager Tyler Stec cheers on Jan Abbey.

Cherries

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The farmer's life is far from easy, and most of the Kistlers also have day jobs, adding to their workload. But, as Ron says, the pros and cons of farming are both the same: working outside and being self-employed. Sue sees lots of blessings, like making sure the public has healthy and tasty foods, and getting to bake a pie whenever she feels like it. Her favorite recipe (below) is a Kistler family favorite, using both cherries and maple syrup.

Find their seasonal Kistlercrest Farm Market, established last year, at 4049 S. Pere Marquette Hwy., Ludington. Contact the farm at: kistlercrest@gmail.com or 231-843-3032. Their products are also sold online at kistlercrest.com and at local farmer's markets and other venues.



Sue and Ron Kistler are proud that Kistlercrest Farms received Michigan State University's Environmentally Verified designation. Courtesy photo.

Sue Kistler's Cherry Maple Pie

Crust:

- 2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 cup cold unsalted butter, cut into 1/2" cubes
- 2 Tbsp maple syrup
- 4 to 8 Tbsp ice water

Filling:

- 8 heaping cups cherries, fresh or frozen
- 2 Tbsp lemon juice
- 1/3 cup maple syrup
- 3 Tbsp arrowroot powder
- 1/8 tsp almond extract (optional)
- 2 tsp vanilla

Top Crust:

- One egg, beaten
- 2 Tbsp sugar



Sue and her cherry maple pie. Photo by Carmelitta Tiffany.

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees and grease a 9-inch pie dish.
2. Add flour, salt, and cubed butter to a food processor. Blend 20-30 seconds or until dough begins to form, stopping to scrape down sides.
3. Add maple syrup. Blend for 10-15 seconds or until ball begins to form. If still crumbly, add cold water, 1 tablespoon at a time. Dough should hold together when pinched.
4. Place dough in bowl and form into ball. Refrigerate while making pie filling.
5. Add cherries to large saucepan over medium-high heat. Add lemon juice. Cook about 10 minutes or until liquid is expressed. Turn heat to medium.
6. In a separate bowl, mix maple syrup and arrowroot powder. Stir mixture into cherries.
7. Let cherries cook down and thicken, about 5 minutes. Turn off heat once thick like filling. If too thick, add a little water. Let cool completely (about 1 hour).
8. While filling cools and has about 15 minutes left, take dough out of fridge. Separate into two even balls.
9. Roll out one of the balls into a circle, wide enough to fit into a 9-inch pie dish. Place in the bottom of a greased pie dish. Roll out the remaining dough and set aside for the top crust.
10. Pour cherry filling into pie dish. Add top crust, pinching edges together for a crimped look. Add a few slits in the top to allow steam to escape. Brush with egg wash and sprinkle with sugar.
11. Bake 50-55 minutes or until golden brown. Let cool. Refrigerate at least 3-4 hours.

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Many hoped the comet would appear more like this in the night sky. That was not the case. Image by Jim Bonser on Pixabay.com.

It's hard to catch a comet

By BROOKE EDWARDS

Lake-effect clouds did not ruin our ability to see the green comet. Expectations, unfortunately, were overly high. Still, it was worth a shot. (In my case, several camera shots.) In the science of astronomy, the unknown is the most fun.

This comet must have come as a shock to those who study the night sky. In March 2022, astronomers at the California Institute of Technology's Zwicky Transient Facility first spotted this comet, which they classified C/2022 E3. A comet can be difficult to detect, depending on the size of its tail and its position in relation to the Sun.

Scientists estimate C/2022 E3 last paid this part of the solar system a visit 50,000 years ago and may have been much brighter. Humans at the time must have found these strange sights in the sky quite alarming, perhaps supposing them to be supernatural.

On Feb. 2, C/2022 E3 made its closest approach to Earth, coming within 26 million miles, but it did not put on the spectacular show that was promised. In terms of distance in space, 26 million miles is minimal. That is only .2 AU (astronomical units) or 20% the distance between the Earth and the Sun. The entire distance from the Earth to the Sun is 1 AU, or around 93 million miles.

My journey to catch C/2022 E3

On Jan. 29, the Michigan winter skies cleared briefly after sunset. Knowing the comet was nearing its closest approach, I rushed to the beach with an optimistic mindset.

A bright Moon lay overhead as I quickly set up my DSLR camera for some long-exposure captures. Pointing the camera in the area where I knew the comet to be, between the Big Dipper and Little Dipper, I took in the rare cloudless sight of a January night sky.

Looking through astronomical binoculars yielded nothing. I figured it was because of the bright Moon and hoped for the best when I studied the photos.

The bitter cold (20 degrees F) made staying outside the car for long impossible, forcing me to pack up after only a handful

of long exposures. With nature working against me, I was unsure I had even captured it, and I drove home feeling defeated.

Checking the small-body database from JPL, I found the comet to be at a magnitude (brightness) of 10.5. This is not visible to the unaided eye. At most, it was estimated to be a magnitude 6, making it only slightly visible in a truly dark sky. The lower the magnitude, the brighter the object. For example, Neowise, the comet that we saw in 2020, was a magnitude 1 object. Jupiter, one of the brightest planets in the evening sky, is a magnitude -2.

Examining my photos at home, I studied the area between the Big and Little dipper. Comparing the images with the location of the comet, which was given by the StarWalk2 app, I was able to zoom in. A tiny green speck caught my eye in the exact location. An overwhelming sense of accomplishment came over me. It felt like I had just done the impossible.

The green color captured by dedicated individuals was from the emission of carbon that occurs when the comet is struck by UV rays from the Sun. Gas and dust emitted by the comet give it the appearance of having a tail, which I was unable to capture in any single frame. This was only possible by stacking multiple long-exposure photos.

If you are feeling let down by the promise of this celestial show, you should know you did not miss much. It's difficult to know how bright a comet will become, as astronomy is a science based on observations and educated predictions. In our universe, anything is possible — of course, within the laws of physics. For all we know, we may have a comet swing by next year!

JPL Small-Body Database Lookup: https://ssd.jpl.nasa.gov/tools/sbdb_lookup.html#/?des=2022%20E3&view=OPC

Brooke Edwards is a NASA/JPL Solar System Ambassador. She lives in Manistee and has given area presentations and hosted night-sky viewings at Fifth Avenue Beach and Orchard Beach State Park. Follow her on Instagram: [brooke_of_stars](https://www.instagram.com/brooke_of_stars)

Easy Run

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"Are you Gracie?"

"Yes"

"I'm with ski patrol; your boyfriend requested we look for you. Do you want a ride back to the lodge?"

"No! I made it this far. I'm not giving up now."

"Okay, I'll let him know we found you," he replied, then headed back toward the lodge.

As we neared the lodge I could see Ron walking toward me, so I turned to thank

the girls for their help, then looked back at Ron.

"Did you send out the ski patrol for me?"

Ron couldn't find me when the lifts closed at 4:30 p.m. Ski patrol doesn't go out until 6 p.m., but he told them I was alone and had never been on skis. They agreed to search early.

Although I learned the basic technique for cross-country skiing, I think that easy run killed the appeal for me. I never put my feet on skis again.

Grace Grogan is a freelance writer and native of Michigan who lives and travels full time in a motor home.