



Tribune Staff Photo by Craig Hansell

Walt Shyluk stirs up the virgin powder at Mill D North Fork in Big Cottonwood

Canyon. There's plenty of excellent cross-country skiing to be found there.

## Mill D Powder Providing Great Skiing

By Craig Hansell  
Tribune Sports Writer

### BIG COTTONWOOD CANYON

— It wasn't the billow-up-and-blow-over-your-head kind of powder here Friday, but there was some good snow to be enjoyed in Mill D North Fork.

After parking in the Spruces area, Walt Shyluk, Rory Hammer, Venice Wynn, Greg Janiec, Milt Hollander and Sandy Eldredge headed north, toward Dog and Desolation lakes, in search of just the right exposure to ski.

Well into Mill D, they picked their spot and ascended toward the ridge. Everyone except Shyluk

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used climbing skins for the ascent.

Shyluk skied on an old pair of short Miller Softs, mounted with a combination three-pin and cable binding. The bottoms were custom grooved into a gripping surface, similar to no-wax skis, and he was able to ascend almost as steeply as the other skiers.

After reaching the ridge, the group peeled their climbing skins and donned parkas for the downhill run. The group was equipped with avalanche transceiver beacons

and shovels. The skiers were cautious, even though the oft-skied slope has been stabilized a lot this season.

Janiec tested the virgin slope and, after determining its safety, stitched a solid set of tracks to the bottom using alpine turns. Hammer tried some totem mark turns, as did Eldredge and Wynn.

Although you could occasionally feel old ski tracks under the light snow, skiing was vintage Wasatch wonderful. It was so good the group skied the slope three times before moving on. After starting at 9 a.m., they didn't return to the Spruces until nearly 5 p.m.

# Veteran Skier Defends Wasatch Backcountry

By Craig Hansell  
Tribune Sports Writer

**BIG COTTONWOOD CANYON** — Walt Shyluk skied more than 200 days last year and he started making turns in Utah's Wasatch, this season, last September.

Shyluk has been a hard-core skier for more than 30 years and his skiing evolution has brought him from alpine skiing, in the east and Europe as well as helicopter skiing in Canada, to backcountry ski touring in Utah's Wasatch Mountains. After descend-

ing some of the world's premier alpine slopes and enjoying the helicopter-pampered perfect-powder experience in Canada, how does he rate Utah?

To listen to Shyluk expound on the Wasatch backcountry skiing, it is easy to visualize a man who has found heaven.

Shyluk spent 29 years working for Hercules Chemical Company in Delaware and then Salt Lake.

"I would start skiing in November and ski through April," Shyluk said. "I skied every weekend and on holidays, driving nine hours each way from Delaware to Vermont. I was just as loyal to downhill skiing as I am to backcountry now. I did a lot for expanding downhill skiing in the east and now [that Shyluk has become a committed backcountry skier] I'm faced with seeing the loss of backcountry to development here."

"I have alpine skied in Austria, Switzerland and France and I probably have close to one million vertical feet helicopter skiing.

"I experienced the interconnect in Europe. Nobody focused on it [interconnect], but it was necessary in Europe because the area is so big. As far as the Wasatch is concerned, as a former downhill skier, I find it difficult to believe it [the proposed Wasatch Interconnect] would be very useful. It wouldn't be much value compared to the backcountry skiing value of the area."

Shyluk moved to Utah in 1980 and

retired in 1984. Since then his existence has been similar to that of a child left with free run of a candy store. Even during this season's worst avalanche hazard, Shyluk didn't miss many days of backcountry skiing.

"I'm not an adventuresome sort. I like to ski an area I know well and know the [snowpack] history of the slope. I'm usually aware of the [avalanche] conditions and I make my own evaluations, like being very selective where I go and being in the company of very experienced people like Milt Hollander. I'm very nervous

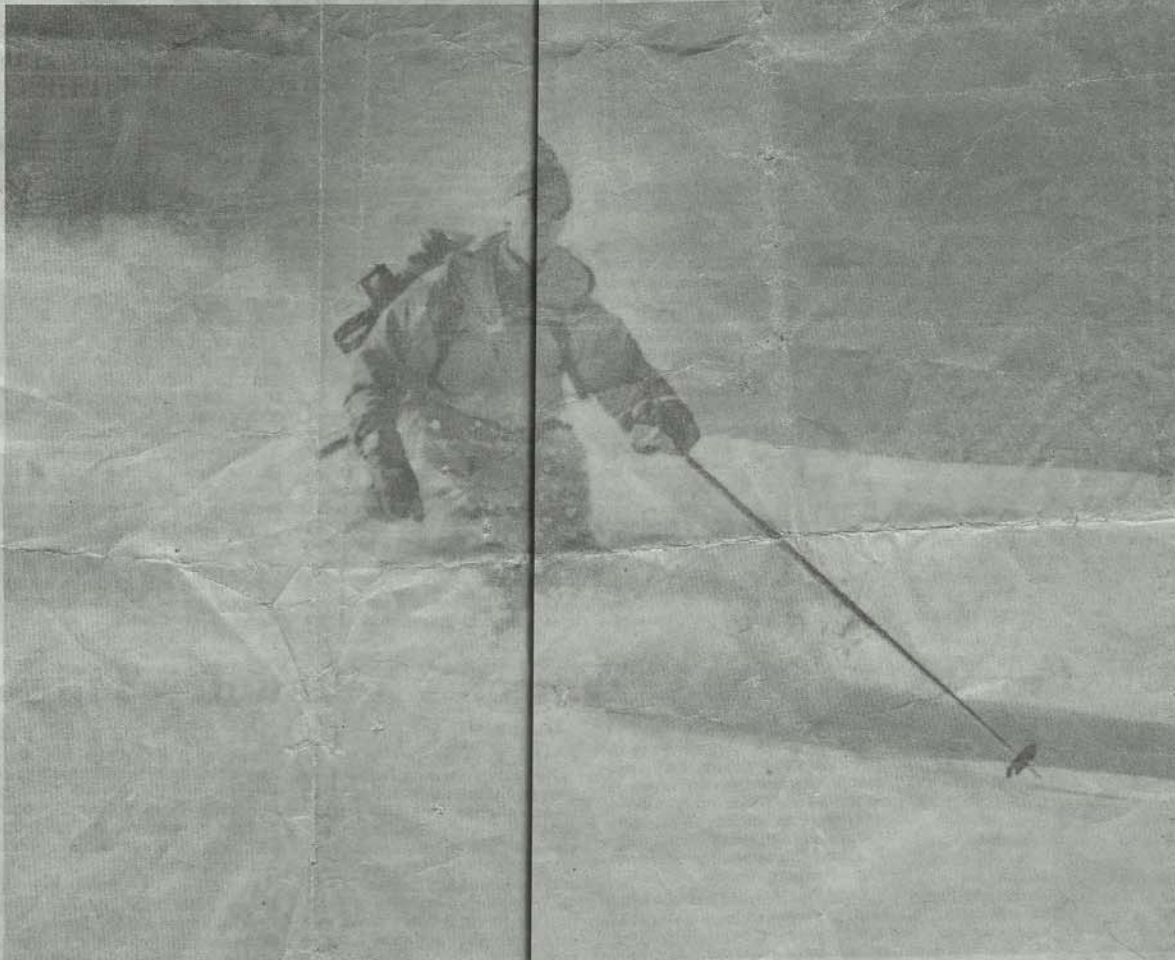
skiing in areas I'm not familiar with. By nature I'm conservative.

"I find backcountry skiing a lot more pleasurable. I'm the type of person who doesn't like to move in crowds. I'm uncomfortable in the city," said Shyluk.

Even this season when the interesting snowpack has kept some skiers out of the backcountry, there are still tracks on most skiable slopes which appear quickly after each storm. The talk among those skiers often rambles to the proposed Interconnect or Snowbird's expansion into White Pine Canyon. The growing number of backcountry converts are counting on Salt Lake County's Wasatch Canyon Master Plan to give them a voice in the preservation of a unique resource.

"We are concerned about development of the canyons. I don't want to see Big Cottonwood developed to the same extent as Little Cottonwood [Canyon]. If you compare Maybird Gulch to White Pine, for example, Maybird is for much more advanced skiers while White Pine can be used by anyone," Shyluk said.

"In the request for a Wasatch Master Plan consultant, they made a statement about the possible relocation of cross country skiers, implying that the nearby locations should be replaced by something further away," Shyluk said. "That would be a disaster because the uniqueness of living here is that the skiing is so



—Tribune Staff Photo by Craig Hansell

Walt Shyluk carves up backcountry powder during a recent trip into Big Cottonwood Canyon. Shyluk skied more than

200 days last year and he treasures the Wasatch Mountains for both the proximity and quality of skiing available here.

close. It is a very valuable and unique asset having the backcountry so accessible.

"In Utah there is a tremendous emphasis on creating jobs — that comes before anything. The people in charge — politicians, bankers and businessmen — are working together for development. The main reason I'm living in Salt Lake City is I can drive out

to the backcountry in 20 minutes.

"I'm not sure the state is in a position to project economic development from skiing. A lot of help was given to the smokestack industries but the state lost out. Then they tried to promote the high-tech industry but they have never been under any obligation to show a return on the dollars spent. They have the power to act and

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hope it will turn out," said Shyluk.

Utah's backcountry skiers have enjoyed the Wasatch long before the advent of ski lifts. Before the Big Cottonwood Canyon road was kept open all year, skiers would take the train

to Park City and ski over Scott's Pass into Big Cottonwood Canyon. The backcountry trend is increasingly popular.

"Most of the people I ski with have substantial incomes and pay a substantial amount of taxes. We don't want our taxes wasted on an overdeveloped ski industry," Shyluk said.