



The Ancient Skier

Summer 2016

ANCIENT SKIERS BIENNIAL BANQUET - SUNDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2016 - 5 P.M.

Please come! Our banquet will be held at the Nile Shrine Center in Mountlake Terrace just north of Seattle. We'll gather at 5 p.m. and socialize until 6 p.m. (Beer, wine and cocktails, all at reduced prices.) Dinner (salad, entree, dessert, and coffee or tea) will follow, and the program will be over in time for more socializing.

The main event will be the Hall of Fame awards for the new inductees: Shannon Bloedel, Judy Nagel Johnson, Lenore Lyle and Nobi Kano. Their biographies were in our Spring 2016 Newsletter. This will be a sit-down dinner with entree choices shown on the registration form included with this Newsletter. **Please return the registration form for the banquet to Ancient Skiers, P.O. Box 331, Kirkland, WA 98083, not later than October 7, 2016.** Come celebrate these skiers' lifetime accomplishments.

Or register online: In lieu of sending the registration form by mail, you can register for the banquet and pay by credit card through PayPal. Go to our website at www.ancientskiers.com and click on Upcoming Events. Follow directions from there.

How to get there: The Nile Shrine Center is at 6601 244th St. SW in Mountlake Terrace, Wash. If traveling on the freeway, take Exit 177. Drive west a very short distance toward Edmonds on SR 104 (also called NE 205th Street). Stay in the right lane and, only a short distance from the freeway, take the first right driveway/entrance, where there is a Nile sign. Drive a narrow curving road up through the golf course to the large parking area next to the clubhouse. (Don't bother to look for 244th St., as that will only confuse things for you.)

REMEMBERING JOHN WOODWARD – A NORTHWEST SKI LEGEND

John B. Woodward, one of our most highly acclaimed Ancient Skiers, passed away May 25, 2016, at the age of 101. John's skiing legacy not only spans every major phase of development of the sport in the Pacific Northwest, but he also achieved notable accomplishments in each phase.

To help acknowledge his accomplishments, we have dedicated most of this newsletter to his biography.

Learning at Snoqualmie

John was born in Iowa, but his family moved to Seattle in 1929. At age 14, he joined the Boy Scouts and he and his new friends got hooked on skiing after making use of second-hand skis at a Scout cabin near the Rockdale train stop just west and below Snoqualmie Pass. While attending Garfield High School, he and his friends started their own ski club, the Torvig Ski Club, and, in the winters of 1932 and 1933, they built their own cabin at the pass.

On weekends, the boys would hitch rides in empty box cars to Rockdale, where they would jump off the train with their overnight packs as the train slowed to enter the tun-

nel under Snoqualmie Pass. At Snoqualmie, the Torvigs learned cross-country ski techniques, the basics of jumping, and telemark turns from the Norwegians at the new Seattle Ski Club lodge.

Late in the 1933 ski season, they met Hans Grage, who would translate German ski technique books and help them all become more proficient in mastering alpine high speed turns.

Starting a U.W. ski team

In the fall of 1933, John and several of his Torvig buddies entered the University of Washington, which, at the time, had no winter sports program, let alone a ski team. With skiing still on their minds, they persuaded the university to let

them form the Husky Winter Sports Club so they could race representing their university. In December of that year, Athletic Director Charles Frankland obtained a cabin at Paradise for students to use.

Representing the U.W., John and his fellow Torvigs competed in the Sunday alpine race series at Paradise held



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by the Rainier National Park Company, the concessionaire which ran the overnight facilities for the National Park Service.

For the season, John had the most points in both downhill and slalom events, giving him plenty of confidence to participate in the first Silver Skis race in April 1934. John signed up, although, as many in that race did too, he fell and broke a ski, but he got up and, after some quick ski repair work, found his way to the finish. In later interviews with ski writer Morten Lund, John described the snow on top being like little ice ball bearings, giving the skiers tremendous speeds faster than most had ever run.

N.W. college ski racing begins

The next winter, the newly formed University of Washington ski team started competing against other colleges. In early March 1935, the first Northwest Intercollegiate Ski Competition was held at Paradise and the U.W. ski team beat out the University of British Columbia and College of Puget Sound, with John taking first in the cross-country and slalom events.

The early collegiate ski competitions were three-way events, with the scores of the cross-country, slalom, and downhill events each contributing to combined individual and team titles. Later in the year, U.W. skiers competed with the region's best skiers in the first PNSA alpine ski championships at Mt. Baker. John won the downhill and Don Fraser won the slalom, with Portland's accomplished Norwegian competitor, Hjalmar Hvam, taking the combined slalom and downhill title.

Splash made at the U.S. Olympic Team tryouts

At season's end, the Washington Ski Club held the biggest American ski race in history – the American Olympic trials and 1935 U.S. Alpine Championships. It was the first time top Eastern racers would meet top racers from the West and compete for coveted berths on the first-ever U.S. Olympic Alpine Team. John and his fellow U.W. skiers now had the chance to race against Dartmouth's skiers, including Dick Durrance, who had learned to ski in Europe and become a top youth racer in Bavaria. Dartmouth skiers decisively won the top slots, but John, at the age of 20, took 5th place overall, being the top-scoring Westerner. That made John eligible for the 1936 Olympic team, but the University of Washington was not interested in helping sponsor

such a long trip to Europe during the academic year, and John had two more years of college ahead of him.

U.W. skiers move into full swing

Over the next two ski seasons of 1936 and 1937, John served as team captain for the Husky squad. With the founding of the Pacific Coast Intercollegiate Ski Union in 1936, the U.W. was poised to compete against California schools. The first major meet was at Yosemite, where the U.W. easily beat out 10 other schools including Stanford, California, Nevada, and Reed College from Portland.

For the cross-country event, John later recalled the south side of Badger Pass as having particularly wet and sticky snow and his fellow teammate and former Torvig, Fred Thieme (whom, decades later, became president of the University of Colorado), won the cross-country event by waxing one ski and pushing with the other.

The next season, the Pacific Coast Intercollegiate Ski Union events were held at Paradise and the U.W. team won again, with John as three-way champion, taking first in slalom and second in

downhill and cross-country. In open competition that year at the 1936 PNSA Alpine Championships, John took seventh in the downhill at Mt. Hood and fourth in slalom at the Tom, Dick and Harry Ski Bowl (now known as the Mt. Hood Ski Bowl).

In 1937, the PNSA Alpine Championships were held at Mt. Spokane and John took second in downhill behind Don Fraser on the infamous Teakettle run.

As a climax to his collegiate ski career, he took part in the Nationals at Sun Valley that also became known as

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John and Verone skiing on Baldy at Sun Valley in April, 1942

PLAN NOW FOR 2017 SUN VALLEY REUNION

Another event to mark on your calendar is the 34th annual Sun Valley Reunion, which is scheduled for Jan. 21-28, 2017. Enclosed with this newsletter is the Sun Valley room reservation form for booking rooms and providing information on lift package rates. There is no longer a reservation code, but to secure these room rates, make your reservations with the Sun Valley Reservation Office by Dec. 8, 2016.

the first Harriman Cup. John took a horrendous spill in the trees on what is now named Durrance Mountain, but he still ended up taking 17th in the downhill just behind Swiss skier Andre Roch, who was skiing for the Aspen Ski Club.

Skiing into active military service

John received a degree in economics and business and also earned a second lieutenant commission from the university's Reserve Officer Training Corps. In the 1937-38 season, John skied for the Penguin Ski Club but also helped with coaching of the U.W. skiers. Notably, he beat Don Fraser in the regular Rainier Park Company slalom series that year. However, he took second behind Fraser in the 1938 PNSA championships. In this period, John worked at The Bon Marche and then at the University Bookstore selling skis and sporting equipment.

During the 1939-40 ski season, John, with fellow U.W. skier Lon Robinson, spent the year skiing in Europe, including participation in FIS competitions in Poland and at events in Trondheim, Norway.

By the spring of 1940, things changed because of the war in Europe and the U.S. War Department's directions to its northern-based divisions to test ski patrols as potential winter reconnaissance units. The U.S. Third Division, based at Fort Lewis (then Camp Lewis), assigned its 15th Infantry Regiment to quickly pull together a ski patrol test program. John was a likely candidate, being a reserve officer and accomplished skier, and he willingly signed up to serve as an instructor for the new ski patrols.

John and Reserve Captain Paul Lafferty, a mountaineer enthusiast from Eugene, Ore., led groups into the Cascades and Olympics that winter with such success that military leaders took notice and the next year activated ski troops starting with the formation of the first units of the 87th Infantry Division.

Meanwhile, at the 1941 Silver Skis race at Paradise, John took 4th place and met his future wife, Verone Lynch, a Yakima racer who skied for the Washington Ski Club.

Leading the Ski Troops

For the winter of 1941-42, the army rented Paradise Lodge and started the first-ever high altitude training, with John and Lafferty in charge of several groups. It went well enough by March 1942 that the army decided to activate a

full mountain division of 10,000 men to be stationed at the new Camp Hale on Tennessee Pass in Colorado.

Prior to heading to Colorado, John traveled to Sun Valley to work with Otto Lang and John Jay in making training films for the ski troops. It was here he and Verone were married in April 1942.



Vail Pro-Am races 1972: 10th Mountain Vets Nick Hock, John Woodward, Ralph Lafferty and Bob Parker

In Colorado, John commanded the first Mountain Training Center detachment and directed all ski instruction for the new 10th Mountain Division at Hale. In this command he was responsible for standards used to train over 600 instructors, more than existed in all of the United States in 1940. For two years at Camp Hale, John, then a captain, commanded the specialized 10th

Calvary Reconnaissance Unit, where many of America's finest skiers and mountaineers were selected and overseen by him.

Ultimately, as a lieutenant colonel, he served as executive officer for the 87th Infantry in Italy in 1945, where the troops defeated the Germans, many of whom surrendered while in retreat.

Returning to Seattle

By the fall of 1945, John was discharged with honors and returned to Seattle, regaining his old job at the University Bookstore. In the post-war years John started teaching skiing and became a ski instructor for the Seattle Times Ski School under the direction of Ken Syverson. Naturally, John specialized in teaching racing, where he led classes of high school students on weekends at the Milwaukee Ski Bowl.

It was during this period as a ski retailer that John reacquainted himself with Sam Roffe, who had helped outfit the ski patrols in 1941. Woodward took note of the quality of Roffe's gabardine

ski togs and convinced Sam to make more practical and stylish garments.

Shifting from retailer to manufacturer and wholesaler

In 1953, John was hired by Sid Gerber to work at his Anderson & Thompson Ski Company that Sid had owned since 1939. Gerber was wanting to retire and, in a complicated process, John and skier friend Hank Simonson, bought A&T, with Simonson taking two-thirds and John one-third. He and Hank continued A&T's successful manufacturing



December 1965, John and Hank Simonson check out the A & T catalog.

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of their patented laminated skis, but also upgraded the line by adding new cellulix plastic bases and new A&T-patented bindings. However, Hank and John also took note of skis being made in Japan at lower costs. Soon after, they stopped making skis and became major importers of skis, including A&T-designed skis from Japan and Le Trappeur boots from Europe. They also continued to manufacture ski poles, rope tow grippers, and car ski-racks for the growing recreational skiing market.

By the 1960s, their operations spanned the continent with distribution warehouses in Seattle, Wisconsin, and Vermont. It was during these years that John served on the board of Ski Industries of America (SIA) and obtained exclusive rights to market equipment from Europe, including Salomon bindings and Dynastar skis.

Also in the early 1960s, Bill Kirschner came to John to discuss his new fiberglass ski prototypes. John liked the idea enough that he helped Bill acquire moth-balled manufacturing equipment used for the defunct Dynaglass fiberglass ski and began advertising the new K2 ski line in the 1962 A & T catalog. A&T continued to market K2 skis during its formative years helping them launch toward attainment of worldwide success.

Skiing continues in retirement

Upon retirement from the ski business in early 1980s, John revived his career in competitive skiing, leading to his distinction as a senior athlete in the skiing world. In 1998 at the International Masters Ski Race at Sun Valley, he finished with two firsts in slalom and two firsts in giant slalom events. Earlier, in 1989, he was Masters Alpine Champion in Class 10 events in slalom and giant slalom at Mt. Bachelor, and, in 1991, he was Masters Alpine Champion in Class 11 in slalom, giant slalom, downhill and combined at Vail. In 1994, he won three silver medals in downhill, slalom and combined for Class 11 at Big Sky. In 1996, after recovering from a severe knee injury for which he was told he would not race again, he won the U.S. Masters Champion in Class 12, earning four gold medals in slalom, giant slalom, super G, and combined at Breckenridge.

John Woodward was honored many times, including induction into both the Northwest and National Ski Hall of Fame in 1998; and, over many years, he was very active with 10th Mountain Division alumni groups and the Ancient Skiers. May we never forget John's wonderful enthusiasm for skiing and friendship.

~Kirby Gilbert

PLEASE HELP FIND NEW MEMBERS

Whether you are reading this by email or a mailed edition, your help is needed in bringing in new members. It's easy, and members enjoy the great lift and lodging prices at our annual week in Sun Valley. We also highlight our unique Pacific Northwest skiing history in our newsletters; and the biennial Northwest Ski Hall of Fame banquet is a great place to find old friends, meet new ones, share skiing memories, and help us enjoy our skiing legacy together.

Ancient Skiers involvement is open to anyone over age 55, and membership is by reference by current members. Some of the best candidate members are those who, like many of us, have skied in the Pacific Northwest since childhood. Please send your skier friends and families to our website <http://www.ancientskiers.com>. From there, the Ancient Skiers application can be accessed, printed, and emailed. We also have a Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/AncientSkiers>.

Thanks for helping keep the Ancient Skiers a great group of friends.

MEMORIES AND HISTORY REQUESTS TO SHARE?

We are looking for old issues of PNSIA newspapers, old ski newsletters and magazines from the Northwest for future stories. If you have any memorabilia to share, contact Kirby at kirbywgilbert@gmail.com

Visit online at www.ancientskiers.com

ALSO REMEMBERING**John Wellsandt**

Ancient Skier John Wellsandt died at his Ketchum home on July 21, 2016, with his wife by his side. John was born in Ritzville, Wash., and graduated from WSU as a CPA. After college, he worked for Arthur Anderson in Seattle. He eventually went back to the family farm where he and his brother, Don, were third-generation wheat farmers. He loved the challenge of farming, the career he followed until retiring in 1993.

John loved the outdoors—he was an avid skier, golfer and white-water rafter. John was preceded in death by his only son, Jason, and is survived by his wife, Sharon, and a large, extended family. John was extremely important to the Ancient Skiers' Sun Valley committee, and many of us will remember John for his enthusiasm and support at the Sun Valley reunions, where he helped make each reunion memorable and successful. He will be missed by all.

**Ancient Skiers
Board of Directors**

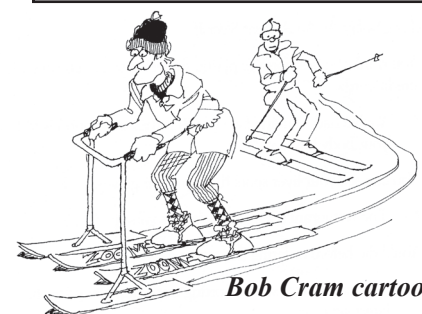
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& Roster Chair**

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Bob Cram cartoon