



# The Ancient Skier

P.O. Box 15712 • Seattle, WA 98115

Fall 2011

## ANCIENT SKIERS SHARE STORIES FROM "THE WAY IT WAS"

### AHH! FOR THE GOOD OLD DAYS

*Our member emeritus, Paul Crews, grew up in the Bremerton area and started skiing and climbing Olympic peaks in the early Thirties, and in the late Thirties joined the Bremerton Ski Cruisers. Paul wrote "Early Hikes in the Olympics" and, in a chapter devoted to the Bremerton Ski Cruiser ski cabin constructed in 1938 at Flapjack Lakes, he relates this hilarious incident. With his permission, his story is retold.*

One of these winter trips over Christmas 1941 will always stay in my memory. I know that there were seven or eight of us including Swede Johnson and Bob Prichard and others whose names I can't recall. We hiked in four miles, skiing the last two after finding considerably more snow than expected. Upon arrival at the cabin, we had to dig down through about four feet of snow to the door. Unfortunately, the cabin shovel was inside so we improvised, using skis, and obtained entrance after only about 30 minutes with a broad stairway packed onto the snow.

We had arrived in late afternoon and continued to carry on our housewarming activities including starting a fire in the wood stove, breaking a trail to the lake and opening a water hole. It didn't take long for the cabin to warm up and while we were arguing over who would cook dinner, we heard a rustling in the wood pile and our first thought was rats. Nearly everyone grabbed a ski pole and we were just about to start dismantling the wood pile when out crawled a tiny Civit cat!

Everyone immediately backed away, and the kitty walked around the cabin as if it owned the place (it actually did at that point). It finally figured it would be good if we respected its presence. So dinner was started in a very cautious manner and by the end of the evening everyone was used to the situation. We all decided to sleep on the second floor loft as the cat apparently had no interest there, preferring its wood pile home.

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### SKI TRAIN DAYS, AND SOME NIGHTS, TOO

*In the last Newsletter we asked for Ancient Skier stories from the Milwaukee Ski Bowl Days. Richie Nelson, now living in the Swan Valley, Montana, shares some early memories.*

The ski train was an effort by the Milwaukee Railroad to encourage skiing in the Cascades. The trains hauled skiers from Seattle and Tacoma to Hyak, or, better known in the period after World War II, as the "Ski Bowl". At that time the train was the only way to get there during the winter months. Today, if you travel cross-state on I-90, you go right by the area. It is the easternmost ski area of the ski megaplex in Snoqualmie Pass.

January, 1947, marked my first trip to the Bowl. It was a night trip sponsored by the now defunct Tacoma Times. It was for kids that were able to get five more subscriptions. A friend of mine at Lincoln High School invited me to go along. Up to that time my skiing had been hit and miss - usually with my older brother, Mel. More about him later!

The train pulled out of the Tacoma Milwaukee station promptly at 6 PM for the hour and a half journey. The coaches that they put on for the ski trains were old and drafty and only marginally clean, but what the heck -- we were going skiing!

Once the train was boarded, a snack bar was opened up serving various goodies to the mass of potential skiers. The snack bar is yet another story. The actual trip on the way up to the Bowl was fraught with great anticipation. Boots were laced on early and tightly, skis were waxed with various sorts of goo in hopes of great speed once on the slopes.

The Milwaukee rails took the trains through a long tunnel which allowed smoke from the coal-fired steam engine to penetrate the interior of the cars, but we knew that once out of the tunnel the train would arrive quickly at the ski area.

~ continue on page 2

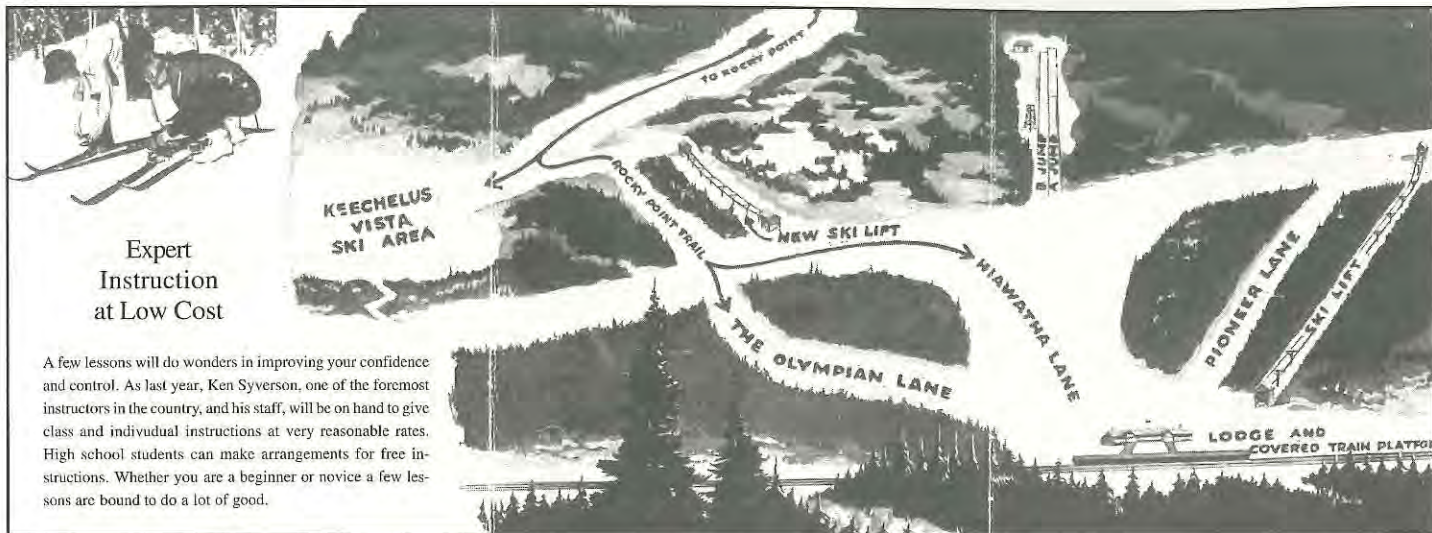
### NEW EMERITUS MEMBERS

In response to our request to find members who had reached their 90th birthday since September, 2010, **Ancient Skiers Emeritus** certificates have been awarded to **Paul Crews, Roy Funk and Ralph McKiernan.**

**Congratulations! You're an inspiration to us all!**



Bremerton Ski Cruiser Cabin minus winter snow. Imagine digging down four feet to get to the door!



**Expert Instruction at Low Cost**

A few lessons will do wonders in improving your confidence and control. As last year, Ken Syverson, one of the foremost instructors in the country, and his staff, will be on hand to give class and individual instructions at very reasonable rates. High school students can make arrangements for free instructions. Whether you are a beginner or novice a few lessons are bound to do a lot of good.

**SKI TRAIN DAYS**

*continued from page 1*

As we excited skiers trooped off the train, we were met with a heavy wet snow with flakes the size of a quarter. They soon covered not only the skiers but also the slopes, The place was beautiful! Other than the sidestep or herringbone, the rope tows were the only means of uphill movement. Can you imagine all these kids trying to hang on to a wet rope?



That first night trip was an eye opener for me in many ways. There was a snack bar in one of the cars which served coffee, various beverages, candy and doughnuts. I thought I'd like a job working there. The two kids who operated the stand told me to go to the Ben Paris Sports Bar in Seattle and ask to see Mel Lipski, who was the man in charge of the concessions. I went

to Seattle the next day, found the sports bar and Mr. Lipski, and he hired me on the spot.

Each week I would get a railroad pass for Saturday and Sunday. I needed to be at the train by 6:30 AM. Once the train went through the tunnel, it was time to pack up the concession stand for off-loading the railroad wagons at Hyak for replenishment for the return trip to Renton.

As soon as I turned in the cash box and picked up my free lift ticket, I was able to ski all day, or at least until 3 PM, when it was time to pick up all the goodies to load on the train.

One of the highlights for me, besides being able to ski all day, was lunch -- another "beni". I always selected the roast turkey dinner with all the fixings, plus a chocolate milkshake and apple pie! Unfortunately, my pals sitting close by ate chili burgers or corn dogs. Such is life.

I was much impressed with the skills of the instructors with their high-style ski gear. Most of the skis were from Northland or Anderson & Thompson. The boots were from

Dovre, Bone Dry and others. My gear was army surplus. Gregg skis, split bamboo poles (indestructible), boots with square toes which were two inches high. Poplin pants with lots of pockets. A parka which came below the knees, reversible hooded white on one side and olive drab on the reverse. Big pockets, too! Hardly high style, but very functional.

These ski instructors artfully demonstrated outstanding skiing prowess. After really skiing hard that first season, I asked Ken Syverson, the ski school director, if I could ski along with him and a few of his instructors. His exact reply was, "Hell yes kid -- if you can keep up!" Well I did keep up, surprising them all -- me, too!

From that day on, they knew who I was. They called me "Fast Richy". Three seasons later, I was at Chinook Pass trying out for the instructor certification test!

It was while I was there at Chinook Pass that we received word that the lodge at the Ski Bowl had burned to the ground. What a shocker!

The railroad did bring in some old rail cars to park on the siding for the lodge replacement, but it just wasn't the same! The Ski Bowl, as well as the ski train, rolled into oblivion.

I mentioned brother Mel as the one who early on took me skiing to the Summit ski area. Mel was able to make his own hickory skis while in junior high wood shop. He used "Speed Graph" for the base, which worked well. The bindings were from Anderson & Thompson in Seattle.

On one trip he tried using layers of newspapers for insulation under his heavy wool shirt. That seemed to work well until the shirt accumulated enough wet snow (Snoqualmie Powder) to soak through to the newspaper. It wasn't long until there were clumps of wet paper everywhere. In today's jargon, his dilemma would have been called a "paper trail"!

Looking back to those days, I must say that they were wonderful. A great many young folks developed their love of skiing at the Ski Bowl!

**FALL LUNCHEON INQUIRY**

As there was zero response to interest in a luncheon, none has been planned.

## 29TH S. V. REUNION - JANUARY 14 - 21, 2012

Another fun time is in the plans for our next reunion. Rooms may still be booked by calling Sun Valley reservations at 800-766-8259 and referring to our code **ASK12**. The form for registering for reunion events will in the Winter Newsletter issued about November 1st.

~ Marlys Gerber, Chair, Sun Valley Committee

### IN SEARCH OF THE SUMMIT ROAD

Even when you're not skiing, the chances are good that you, like most Ancient Skiers, have a pretty good sense about what goes on in the mountains around you. But that's not true for a lot of folks.

Walking out of the Paradise Inn on a clear, late spring day years ago, I was approached by two people heading my way along a snow-flanked path. With Mt. Rainier looming behind them, they asked, "Where's Mt. Rainier?"

Since then, I've often asked Park rangers what is the silliest question or strangest comment that's been directed their way. Here's what some said: Several rangers, including one chief ranger, reported variations of the question I was asked, such as: "Which one is Mt. Rainier?" Or, on overcast days: "Where's Mt. Rainier?"

A harder one to answer has been: "How much does the mountain weigh?"

Two women rangers at Rainier said they are asked frequently, "At what age do deer become elk?" One said she tried many times to explain that those are two different animals, but she had little success in getting that point across. So she changed her tune to just answering, "Oh, about four."

A few years ago, rangers had a call, probably via a cellphone, from near the Fremont Lookout, a few miles from Sunrise. The caller was frantic and reported "a silver-backed grizzly bear" nearby. Upon checking out the situation, rangers found the creature was a marmot.

When asked the silliest question that had been directed his way, one smiling Rainier ranger didn't lose a beat to respond: "Where's the road to the top?"

A report in "High Country News" showed that these sorts of questions don't just get asked at Mt. Rainier. Among the favorite queries directed at rangers at a National Historical Park in New Mexico, the site of a large Native American community hundreds of years ago, are: "Why did the Indians always live in ruins?" "Why did they build so far from the road?" And "How many undiscovered ruins are there?"

~ Mike Dederer

### YOU'RE AN ANCIENT SKIER IF YOU . . .

- remember that a Sun Valley weekly pass was \$22.50 and was stamped on a 2" x 4" cloth flag with a metal grommet and wire which could be attached to your clothing or ski pole.
- remember using a bar of ivory soap to "wax" your skis for warm spring snow conditions and enjoyed the comments on the bubbles you trailed behind as you schussed halfway down No. 1.

### AHH! FOR THE GOOD OLD DAYS *continued from page 1*

In the morning, we were up with the sun and as soon as the cabin had warmed up, Bob Prichard mixed a little Eagle Brand milk with water, placed in a tin plate on the floor. When we left for a day of skiing on Mt. Gladys, the cat was busy licking up the milk. That night, the same thing happened. As soon as the stove heated up the cabin, our little friend came out of the wood pile. Bob offered it more milk and it lapped it right up.

Now Swede is a very nervous guy, and he had been fretting about the skunk's presence from the very first. He finally said, "This is ridiculous. It's our cabin and the cat must go!" He proceeded to locate a bench adjacent to the door, put a fresh pan of milk on the floor at the end of the bench and put on his right ski mitt. Then he climbed on the bench on his hands and knees. The cat was still licking up the milk with its tail erect. At this point, Swede instructed us to open the outside door and after holding his right arm up in the air, started a long, straight armed sweep, out, down and toward kitty. Using extraordinary control, he grabbed the cat's tail midway of his swing and then, following through, released his grip and it flew out the door and up the steps, alighting about 10 feet away. The door was instantly closed, and we all breathed a sigh of relief. Unfortunately, we also breathed the aroma rising from Swede's mitt and it was immediately condemned to the outdoors.

We were all commending Swede on his excellent solution to a perplexing problem when we heard rustling in the wood pile - and you guessed it - kitty was back. It showed no animosity toward us and it went over to the milk pan to finish its meal. Needless to say, we were all super cautious from that point on and really kept an eye on Swede to keep him under control. Two more days of skiing were enjoyed and then we said goodbye to kitty and left for work or school, realizing it had been a marvelous holiday, albeit somewhat exciting.

It was February, 1946, about five years later, and my wife, Betty, and I were staying with friends at their Skykomish River cabin and skiing every day at Stevens Pass. In those days there were three rope tows in a row just above the lodge carrying skiers up the mountain, one tow after another. I had just arrived at the top of the lower tow when I spotted Karl Stingl. I hadn't seen him since before the war and we talked for a while. I asked him if he had seen Swede. Karl replied, "Ja, he iss here somewhere." We said goodbye and I kept my eyes open for him. Suddenly, I caught the unforgettable aroma of skunk. Turning around, I saw Swede about 10 feet away, holding out a very smelly mitt. Because of old times sake, I stuck mine out too and, with a hand shake, we greeted each other for the first time in almost four years. If it had been anyone else but Swede, I wouldn't have touched that mitt with a 10-foot pole.

Okay, Ancient Skiers. Let's hear your most fun memory. Send to [tinarieman@tumwater.net](mailto:tinarieman@tumwater.net) Pictures welcome to!

## REMEMBERING

### DAVE RABAK 1919 - 2011

Dave grew up in Edina, Minnesota but his family moved to Seattle inspired by the grandeur of the mountains which allowed him to pursue his life-long dream of climbing and skiing. He graduated from the University of Washington where he met and married Jean Reeder. He entered the 10th Mountain Division but transferred to the Air Force, became a pilot and later, a flight surgeon. He was active in family practice in Seattle and was recruited to direct family residency for the U.S. Air Force, three years in Germany and seven years at Andrews A.F.B. He loved all things "mountain," skiing, and 10th Mountain activities.

### DEL ULRICH 1919 - 2011

Del was born at home in Connell, Washington. He graduated from the University of Washington and went on to the University of Minnesota to become a MD. During WW II, Del served in the U.S. Army Medical Corps. Interning at Harborview Hospital in Seattle, he met Swanie and married her in 1946. She introduced Del to skiing and they and their family went to the Sun Valley Ski School to learn how to ski from Olaf Rodegard. The family skied at the Mountaineers Stevens Pass lodge before becoming one of the first owners in the Silver Skis Chalet at Crystal Mountain in 1963. He and Swanie joined Meg Barto on a number of Meg's European ski trips. They were Sun Valley reunion regulars with Del skiing well into his 80's. He is survived by his active skiing children, Bev Allen, Jim and Dean and their spouses and Del's five grandchildren.

### JUDY PETERS 1932 - 2011

Judy was born in Ludell, Kansas but moved to Seattle, graduating from West Seattle High School. She met and married Bill Peters and had 58 enjoyable years of marriage. They skied with their children, Doug, Lynn and Lori at Snoqualmie, Stevens and Crystal Mountain. She and Bill bought a condominium in Sun Valley in 1977 and skied there avidly ever after. Attending the Sun Valley reunions were always a great time for her.

#### THANKS TO VOLUNTEERS

We're indebted to these members for stuffing and mailing the last two Newsletters: Pat Berg, Nick Parish, Len Gerber, Herschel Cox, Frank Norton, Dave and Carolyn Gossard, Solveig Thomson, Delight Mahalko, Carole Taylor (the label maker), Chrissie Marshall, Mary Lynne Evans and John Hansen Also, kudos to Tina Rieman, Newsletter Editor, and Mike Dederer, proof reader extraordinaire.

#### ROSTER CHANGES

##### Address and Name changes:

Bob Bartleson (This is his primary address, retain his secondary Sun Valley address)  
3509 - NW 67th St., Seattle, WA 98117  
206-406-7167

Constance S. McCamant (Pete Smith's widow)  
P.O. Box 1165  
Sun Valley, ID 83353  
208-726-1864 cell 208-720-3780

##### Lost Members

Rod and Frances MacIntosh  
send info to  
taylorskiers@comcast.net

### HANS A. THOMPSON, Sr. - 2011

Hans was born and raised in the Seattle area, graduating from the University of Washington in 1949. His lifelong ambition was to be a ski bum, but World War II intervened and he became a decorated WWII veteran, serving with the 10th Mountain Division in Northern Italy. He was a loving husband, a devoted father of eight and a caring uncle, grandfather and friend to countless others. His passion for nature and his commitment to the conservation movement led him to a career in Parks and Recreation, serving for six years as a civilian recreation specialist for the Air Force in Europe and culminating in a stint as Superintendent of Parks and Recreation for the City of Seattle. He was an avid skier until the age of 80, and in his retirement to Vashon Island, he became a leader in the solar energy movement, building one of the first solar envelope homes and adding 10 solar panels to his and his wife Adele's home at the age of 84. His kindness, generosity and enthusiasm live on in his family and friends.

*Published in The Seattle Times on July 6, 2011*

### BOB BOWDEN 1922 - 2011

Bob was born in Seattle. Sailing and skiing were the major passions of his life. After graduating from Garfield High School, he served on the Sun Valley Ski Patrol. Bob was at the University of Washington before entering the Merchant Marines during WW II. Then, he was in Portland working in marine insurance and with his wife, Virginia, raised three children, Gail, Scott and Suzi. He returned to Seattle and married Marion Blanchard. He loved the Sun Valley reunions and he skied into his 80's.

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Ed Taylor	Secretary
Frank Leibly	Treasurer
Mary Lynne Evans	Membership Chr.
Richard Merritt	B.O.D. Member

#### Newsletter Editors

Tina Rieman  
tinarieman@tumwater.net  
Joy Lucas, Editor Emeritus  
joylucas@q.com

#### Membership Applications

Mary Lynne Evans  
P.O. Box 15712  
Seattle, WA 98115  
marylynneevans@comcast.net

#### Address Changes

Carole Taylor, Roster Chair  
425-629-3501  
taylorskiers@comcast.net