



The Ancient Skier

P. O. Box 15712 • Seattle, WA 98115

Summer 2011

STEVENS PASS: 1, 2, 3, 4, GO

By turning an old U.S. Army Airborne motto on its head, those of us who used to ride Stevens Pass's #1,2,3 and 4 rope tows could very well have followed these watchwords: "Squeeze Slowly, Ascend Rapidly."

If you grew up in the Seattle/Tacoma area and you are now a well-seasoned Ancient Skier, it's likely you got your start on the snow at Mt. Rainier, Snoqualmie Pass, or the Milwaukee Ski Bowl. And it's also likely you graduated to Stevens Pass, where the four rope tows on Big Chief Mountain were the center of your skiing existence.

It was the Big Chief ropes where many advanced skiing skills were learned — going uphill as well as downhill — with each of the four successive ropes offering its own challenges in the way of speed, length, steepness, and proximity of the rope to the snow's surface. As Fred Pease points out, this was a unique, captivating place to ski, what with the particular sociability and attention that was focused on each of the four sections of rope and slope. In a sense, as Fred notes, it was "our club" and each rope was a hangout.

This is where stretch pants made a dazzling debut with dozens of the region's top alpine racers clad in the matching red pants of the Seattle Jaycees ski team. This is where the unique Penguin Ski Club sweaters were much in evidence. This is where international skiers like Stein Eriksen, Christian Pravda and Anderl Molterer gave professional racing a shot. And this is where local kids like Cathy and Judy Nagel, Billy Henry, Steve Ryder, and Tommy Dick Okerlund got their start.

What was the attraction?

To find out, you had to dig deep to find \$1.25 or so for a day tow ticket and proceed to ...

Rope #1 – It was just a few steps from the day lodge to #1, a tow that opened up a hill good enough for all-day recreational skiing and for gate races. The best of skiers could handle the fall line moguls adjacent to the top of either side of the rope. The not-so-accomplished could start with a long traverse across the main hill and take on the lesser mogul challenge there. But whatever your skill, it was on display for everyone standing at the top, for those in line at the bottom, and for the clusters of skiers just part way up, because that's all the further they could hold onto the rope.

Rope #2 – To the left of the top of #1 was the shorter, slightly faster Rope #2, which ended where debarking skiers were sheltered by tall firs, one of the four ropes' natural visiting places. From there, there was a fairly uncrowded slope to the right of the rope or a traverse to the notorious Rope #3. In any direction, electrical power poles and tow-related poles provided occasional, but highly visible, obstacles. And, for extra thrills, there often were serious bumps on the far side of the run, where regulars tested their reaction time or took to the air — Phil Seaborn, for example.

Rope #3 – Margi Albrecht's experiences on #3 sum it up nicely: "I couldn't make it up #3 more than maybe two times a day, and then only as far up as I could hang on. And, for sure, I'd get thrown into the air as the guy in front of me got off."

The rope moved fast. It began on a gentle grade but eventually took on more of a rocket-launching trajectory. Gripping tightly and using all your weight to hold down the rope were imperative, particularly in the middle, as was timing your release at the top lip to avoid an airborne launch. From there, you had your choice of a longer run than that on Rope #2's slope or a short descent to the Bowl Tow. And ego days would find some of Stevens' best building bumps near the bottom and trying to copy the somersaults they'd seen Stein perform.

How many Ancient Skiers rode the train to the Milwaukee Ski Bowl way back when? We're collecting anecdotes from that era for a future Newsletter story. Email a special memory of train rides and/or Ski Bowl skiing to: tinarieman@tumwater.net



Fred Pease powers through a GS course on the Rope #2 slope. Directly behind him are part of the necessary gear, supports and rope extending below the Rope #3 bottom station.

Continued on page 2

STEVENS PASS: 1,2,3,4,GO (Continued from Page 1)

Rope #4 (The Bowl Tow) – Very likely, this was the Pacific Northwest’s most exotic rope tow hill – tucked in a basin below the steep face of Big Chief. The north-facing slopes provided higher, colder, usually better snow than the rest of the mountain. You could ski on either side of the rope, and you often had the treat of seeing the more adept

like Jack Nagel get very big air off a mid-slope mound. Ascending the hill could be as much a challenge as getting down, what with a long, fast rope; a mid-section that tried to lift you from the ground; and a very steep conclusion. When she wasn’t selling rope tow tickets in the early 1950s, Tina Rieman skied the

Bowl often. And, much like Margi Albrecht, she recalls “I would always have to have someone tall and heavy to grab the rope in front of me so I wouldn’t be lifted too high off the ground.” One of Stevens’ youngest and best skiers, Ronnie Johnson, solved the problem by sitting on the rope, but Peter Kennedy remembers when that approach went awry, and Johnson fell and slid down the track into another tow rider. The result: a broken leg and the end of a promising racing career.

In the beginning - Stevens got its start in 1937 with tree clearing on the main slope and assembly of an 800-foot rope tow powered by a Ford V-8 engine. It grew from there to include several rope tows serving all levels of skiers in its first two decades, a T-Bar for several years, and, eventually, its present comprehensive chairlift network. (If there had been a ski area in place 40 years earlier, snow sliders could have ridden a train directly to the slopes. From 1893 to 1900, the original Stevens Pass railroad route was OVER the pass, not through a tunnel.)

The area’s early prime movers were Bruce Kehr, Don Adams and John Caley, and all three remained in the venture for many years, with Kehr and his wife, Virginia, managing the area and living for a long while in an on-slope house adjacent to Rope #1. As a suggestion of how things have changed, Caley’s son, Rock, notes that when his father went

to a bank to get a critical early loan of \$5,000, a banker asked what the loan was for. When told it was for “a ski area,” the banker responded, “What is that?”

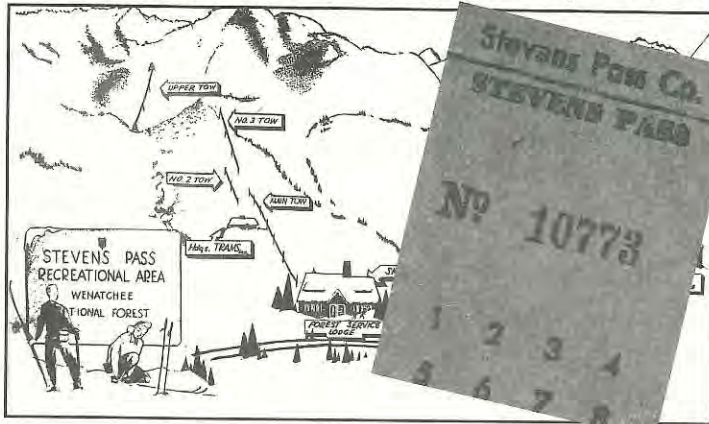
Also working on the mountain in the rope tow days were Ancient Skiers John Hansen and Bob Kruse (A.S.E.), earning \$1 an hour packing gas, smoothing track

and checking tickets. Others often seen snowplowing or side-slipping UP the tow track to keep it in shape included Beryl Payne and John Jay.

Today, one chairlift does all the work of Ropes #1,2 and 3, with another chair ascending the rest of the way to Big Chief’s upper ridge. The Bowl is free of tows and chairs but is within bounds of the ski area.

One at a time – In the rope tow days, most skiing, except in races, was done on one tow slope at a time. But a look today at a Stevens Pass topo map suggests that what was there for the taking was a non-stop #4-3-2-1 run that would have logged about 1,000 vertical feet and just over a half-mile of skiing.

~ Mike Dederer



Stevens Pass - THEN



Stevens Pass - NOW

29th S.V. REUNION - JANUARY 14 - 21, 2012

Plans for our 29th reunion are 99% set. The Sun Valley lift package cost will be the same as last year but Sun Valley's meal costs have risen slightly. The form for booking rooms was with the Spring Newsletter. When booking, **be sure to identify yourself with our code: ASK12.** This gives us a commission which reduces your fees. **Block your room ASAP as our space is limited.**

If you were there in January, 2011 and made reservations for 2012, please **reconfirm** that your room reservation is booked under our Ancient Skiers code, **ASK12.**

The form for registering for reunion events will be in the Winter Newsletter issued about November 1st.

The deadline for sign-up is Nov. 28, 2011. If you're away from your home in November, please arrange for someone to send in your registration before the deadline. See you in Sun Valley for another great, fun week!

~ Marlys Gerber, Chair, Sun Valley Committee

A DAY PASS AT STEVENS PASS circa 1948

In 1948, the lift ticket (*see page 2*) was 25 cents and was good for 8 rides. Each tow had a punch that was unique to that tow. So if Bruce Kehr caught a skier on the #4 tow who didn't have a #3 punch, the #3 operator either got chewed out or fired. Tickets were stapled to your parka in plain sight.

JANUARY 2011 - B.O.D. MEETING MINUTES

The Board met in the Sun Valley Inn Board Room with all members present.

Treasure Frank Leibly reported that expenses exceeded income for 2010 by \$4,800 primarily due to subsidies to the Hall of Fame banquet last October.

John Hansen and Frank Leibly were re-elected as directors with terms ending 12/31/13. Officers were elected: John Hansen, president; Len Gerber, vice-president; Ed Taylor, secretary; Frank Leibly, treasurer; Mary Lynne Evans, membership chair; Dick Merritt, member-at-large.

Len, co-chair of the 2011 Sun Valley reunion, reported that it was a huge success due to the effort of the Sun Valley Company and the Ancient Skiers Reunion Committee. The Board extended their many thanks to Len and his co-chair, Marlys Gerber for their outstanding leadership.

Mary Lynne's membership report showed new members in 2010 about replaced those who died. She felt we should be recruiting new members to keep the association vital.

All this was accomplished in 49 minutes! What moved this meeting along must have been the carrot of Happy Hour!

LOOKING FOR NEW EMERITUS MEMBERS

Anyone who has had their 90th birthday since last September is eligible for our **Ancient Skier Emeritus** award. Recipients receive a framed, official certificate that can be proudly displayed. To obtain your certificate, let John Hansen know at 206-726-0674 or e-mail him at:

johnski2sea7047@aol.com.

U OF W GRAD RECOGNIZED

In the June 2011 issue of the University of Washington alumni magazine, "*Columns*," John Woodward, class of 1938, is shown in a picture with his wife, Lois, in their ski clothes and identified as being at Sun Valley with the Ancient Skiers. He is noted as being "on the first UW ski team in 1935, starting Armstrong (sic) & Thompson Sports Store in Seattle and outfitting most of the earlier Seattle skiers".



Ed. Note: John managed the UW Book Store Men's and Sport Shop after being discharged from the 10th Mountain Division and went on to be the co-owner of Anderson & Thompson Ski Co. with Hank Simonson.

SURVEY; INTEREST IN A FALL LUNCHEON?

After the evening banquet last October which was held at the lovely Newcastle Golf Clubhouse, some requests were received that a mid-day get-together would have appeal to many of our older members who no longer feel comfortable driving at night. If there is sufficient interest, consideration will be given to arranging a luncheon on a non-Husky home game Saturday in the fall. Someone to chair the event and arrange a subject of interest would be needed. If you're interested, call John Hansen, 206-726-0674 or e-mail him at johnski2sea7047@aol.com

YOU'RE AN ANCIENT SKIER IF YOU . . .

- remember the two shoemakers in Pioneer Square: Stewart who made ski boots by hand to your individual measurements; Mastodi who tweaked your leather boots to fit comfortably.
- remember after a big fall on the slopes having someone yell at you, "Fill in your Sitzmark".
- took the ferry from Madison Park to Kirkland to go skiing at Snoqualmie Pass.
- remember the name of the rope tow area created by the Seattle Parks Department and operated by Webb Moffett known as the "Municipal Hill" at Snoqualmie Summit.

REMEMBERING

NORMA ZIMMER 1923 - 2011

Norma was born in a little mining town in northern Idaho, moved to Seattle and graduated from Lincoln High. She developed her wonderful singing voice at University Congregational Church. She began skiing at Sahalie Ski Club at Snoqualmie Pass in 1942/43 where she met her husband, Randy. They were married in 1945. He died in 2008.

They moved to the Los Angeles area where Randy built mobile home parks and Norma pursued a singing career. She sang with the Girlfriends, a quartet that performed with Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, and Bing Crosby and sang on Crosby's famed recording of "White Christmas". She also sang with Billy Graham.

During this period Norma and Randy were actively skiing. Starting in the late 40's, she helped Randy with building and operating a new ski area, "Krakta Ridge," on Mt Waterman, about 35 miles from Los Angeles. It was sold twenty years later.

In 1960, Norma started singing on the Lawrence Welk TV show and became his "Champagne Lady" for 22 years. She appeared on and hosted the Welk specials that have aired (along with the repeats of the series) since 1987.

Norma and Randy loved Sun Valley and bought a condo there. In the first years of Ancient Skiers Sun Valley reunions, the Zimmers always hosted great cocktail parties for the group when Ancient Skiers were one-tenth the present size. Later, they moved their ski home to Park City, where they enjoyed Park City's "over 70 ski-free" policy.

About 15 years ago, Norma was elected, "Idaho Woman of the Year".

She was a talented painter, had the most infectious laugh, was as lovely on the inside as she was on the outside, and had the biggest smile making turn on the slopes!

She is survived by sons Ron and Mark.

ROSTER CHANGES

New Members

Herrell, Gregg & Sandra: 9205 171 St. NE, Redmond, WA 98052;

206-248-7317; gherrell@kiddermatthews.com

Jones, Nigel A.S. & Theresa; 9105 Matthews Ave NE, Seattle,

WA 98115; 206-780-8552; njones@appianconstruction.com

McRory, Ed & Irene: 5425 Elleray Lane NE, Seattle, WA 98105;

206-276-1626. Winter: 221 N. Washington St. #2, Ketchum,

ID 83340; 208-726-6203; edmcroly@comcast.net.

Mitchell, Donald & Joan; 5915 Seward Park Ave. S. Seattle, WA 98118; 206-721-2252;

mitchell.dj90@gmail.com

Roster Corrections and Additions

Butterfield, Maureen: 55 Pine St. #201, Edmonds, WA 98020; 425-582-8773

Gerber, Len & Marlys: typo in last newsletter address; Sun Valley PO Box is 774, not 794

Lucas, Joy: new email joylucas@q.com

McNicoll, Al & Barbara; 9001 Lake City Way NE, Seattle, WA 98115, same phone

Ronning, Earl & Dorothy Surgenor-Ronning; 1825 W Ray Road #1068, Chandler AZ 85224;

541-521-2124; ronning.dorothy@yahoo.com

Steere, Tex & Nancy: 1610 Quail Hollow Lane, Wenatchee, WA 98801; 509-556-0817 home,

206-499-5488 cell; tex.steere@att.net

Williams, Ross & Corky; 116 Fairview Ave. N. #514, Seattle, WA 98109; 206-254-1655,

cell 206-707-2545; rosswilliams228@gmail.com.

Passed Away

Del Ulrich Walt Walkinshaw Dick Chappelle

Lost Members

Rod and Frances MacIntosh, Robert Peterson - send info to tylorskiers@comcast.net

BOB MICKELSON 1924 - 2011

Bob grew up in Minneapolis, Minn., served in the U.S. Naval Air Corps and earned a B.A. at the Univ. of Minnesota and an M.B.A. at Harvard. He met Mary Lou Cleave while at Harvard and they married in 1951. Bob became involved in the clothing business in Seattle and founded Edelweiss Ski Wear, manufacturer of the first stretch pants in the U.S. Edelweiss outfitted the 1964 U.S. Olympic Ski Team.

He was co-founder of the Ski Industries of America. He co-chaired the Pierce County Crystal Mt. fund raising. Bob founded Whittaker's Chalet and Sports Chalet in Tacoma. In 1967 he co-founded the creation and development of the Alpentel Ski Area including building three condominiums there. He built the Edelweiss condo in Sun Valley and the Pioneer Inn at Bogus Basin near Boise.

Career honors for Bob were induction into the Apparel Hall of Fame in 1957 and the Northwest Ski Hall of Fame in 2004.

In 1983, he married Joan Robb, making their home in Sun Valley. They were involved in the early years of the Ancient Skiers committee for the annual Sun Valley reunions which resulted in the increased attendance at future reunions.

Bob was a gifted athlete, was on the U.S. Olympic "B" hurdles team, played semi-pro football, and was active in tennis and golf, as well as being an avid skier.

JACK KAPPLER, ASE 1916 - 2011

Jack started skiing when riding the train to Hyak (Milwaukee Ski Bowl) was the popular way to the slopes. He was in the first group of skiers in the state to be trained and admitted to the National Ski Patrol. This led to his joining the 10th Mountain Division in WW II where he trained troops in the US to ski, climb and function in winter conditions. One skill he gained which he never wanted to use after the war - how to pack mules. Jack was part of a reconnaissance group that trained Allied troops in Italy and provided technical guidance on the best routes for the troops heading into the Italian Alps.

He was a member of the Penguin Ski Club and helped build its lodge at Stevens Pass. After the war he met his wife to be, Evelyn, on the ski slopes and they were married in 1946. He is survived by his wife, Evie, and sons, Chris and David.

Jack was a life member of the Granite Curling Club and helped build their rink in North Seattle. He was an avid fisherman and in 1938, caught what is believed to be the largest salmon landed in Elliott Bay on sport tackle, 52 1/2 pounds!

Ancient Skier Officers

John Hansen	President
Len Gerber	Vice President
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 marylynnevans@comcast.net

Address Changes

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