

The Ancient Skier

P. O. Box 15712 • Seattle, WA 98115

Winter 2011-2012

EXTREME SKIING IS NOT A NEW SPORT!

In 1948, our member, Chuck Welsh, and three ski buddies made the first ski descent of Mt. Rainier and wrote an account of the climb that appeared in the 1948 Mountaineers Annual. The article is reprinted here with his permission. While reading the account, keep in mind that they may have been using U.S. Army 10th Mountain Division surplus 7'3" (220 cm) skis with bear trap bindings, boots, pants, parkas and rucksacks. Their ice axes were wood-shafted. Additional editor's notes in italics are included in the text.

FIRST SKI DESCENT OF MT. RAINIER

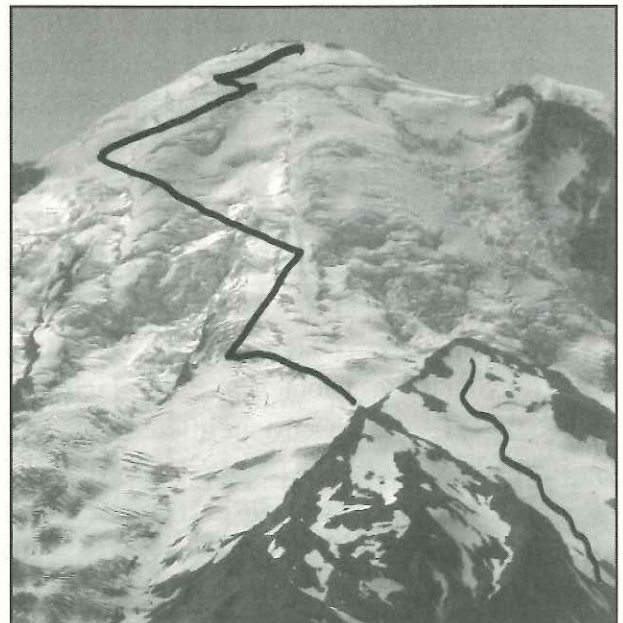
Until this summer (1948), Mt. Rainier had yet to have ski tracks etched from the summit all the way to the base. The late Sig Hall made a complete ascent using skis, but due to icy conditions, found it necessary to use crampons for the upper portions of the descent. Since this effort, the National Park Service has refused to grant permission for summit ski attempts. It was only after two years of rejected applications that the Park Service finally decided to allow us an attempt via the Emmons route, the results of which were to help determine the official policy toward such enterprises. As a safeguard, we were required to have an adequate party. *(After three weathered-out attempts, the fourth attempt began.)*

It started in inauspicious weather. Our support party had gone on to Steamboat Prow, but due to hollow booming of numerous thunderstorms, the ski party, Cliff Schmidtke, Dave Roberts, Kermit Bengston and myself had remained in the warm, dry shelter of a cabin in Glacier Basin. At one o'clock the following morning, we noticed a few stars, forthwith threw our food and extra clothing into our rucksacks and started pell-mell up Inter Glacier. The ascent of Inter Glacier was not the ordinary everyday drag that most ski-mountaineers dread, as frequent green flashes of lightning and occasional rain squalls made it an event to remember. We reached Camp Curtis *(Now Camp Schurman.)* in time for a meager breakfast, and as night and thunderstorms dissipated in the warm rays of a brilliant, gold sunrise, we pushed our skis upward past Steamboat Prow in the direction of the crater rim.

Conditions were ideal for climbing on skis and we made fairly rapid progress up the first 3,000 feet. The weather, which until now had been too ideal to accept without suspicion, now provided a brisk, chill breeze which soon turned the beautiful corn snow into a surface which had the appearance of frosted glass and made the use of skins considerably harder. *(They probably had Army mohair skins which had straps around the ski which lifted edges off the snow.)*

After an hour's struggle on the ice, I remembered the sage advice about discretion being the better part of valor, so I reluctantly shouldered my skis and continued the ascent on crampons. Dave, to whom I was roped, was still able to make his skis climb, so he kept them on and did so all the way to the top. Cliff and Kermit were having the same trouble as I, and they too were soon using crampons. In the meantime several climbing parties, including our support party, had overtaken and passed us as we wearily made our way over Crater Rim; most of the climbers waved us farewell as they commenced their downward journey. We

~ continue page 2



Their route went up Inter Glacier to Steamboat Prow, then onto the Emmons Glacier and on to the summit.

FIRST SKI DESCENT OF MT. RAINEIR

continued from page 1

dropped our skis and staggered to the register box. It was now 2:00 p.m. so we hurriedly prepared to descend.

We skied two on a rope, each man carrying a ski pole in one hand and an ice axe in the other. (*The slope of the terrain was between 30 and 40 degrees!*) The first 2,000 feet was extremely icy and was cut by two very large bergschrunds, (*Those are large crevasses separating the upper slopes of a glacier from the steeper ice or rock below.*) so we moved one man per rope at a time with the stationary man giving a running ice axe belay. This system proved to be both safe and rapid, so we soon found ourselves below the bergschrund area, headed down to a sea of clouds.

Then the snow changed to breakable crust and we proceeded rapidly since belays weren't needed. Snow conditions changed as we were enveloped in the cloud to deep, wet slush at about 11,000 feet at the top of the hogsback above Steamboat Prow. We moved rapidly down this section passing one of the foot parties and



sloshed to a stop at Steamboat Prow.

A cold wind sprang up and large, very wet snow flakes began to fall. Being quick to take a hint, we quickly splashed down to meet our support party who had been skiing at Camp Curtis and who had patiently waited two hours in miserable weather. We all enjoyed a fast run down Inter Glacier on firmer summer snow. This last run was a fitting climax to the first complete ski descent of Mt. Rainier.

As an experimental trip, we all felt it had been quite successful and that it answered several questions. That a ski party would have an extremely small chance of having good ski conditions from the summit to the

base. We had ice at the top, breakable crust in the middle, slush on the lower section to firm, summer snow on the lower half of Inter Glacier

Our climb proved that. And climbing skins should be the non-strap-on held on with wax and not the strap-on mohair climbing skins which won't hold an edge under icy conditions.

~ Chuck Welsh

ANCIENT SKIERS TO CELEBRATE 29TH SUN VALLEY REUNION WEEK

The Sun Valley Week starts with registration Saturday, January 14, 3:00 PM to 6:00 PM in the Sun Valley Inn's Continental Room. Packets will be distributed at that time and the packets will have your instructions, name tags, weekly schedule, and your dinner reservations. At the registration, there will be a no-host bar and a table where you can pick up your free drink coupon. So plan on staying a while and visiting with your fellow Ancient Skiers.

Enclosed with this newsletter are the registration forms, one white and one yellow. Send the white one to ANCIENT SKIERS at P.O. BOX 1295, SUN VALLEY, IDAHO 83353. Be sure to include your check to reflect your choices. The yellow form is yours to have a record of your registration and of what dinners you chose to attend and entrees you selected.

The Monday night dinner is what we call our Western Night so you are invited to wear western attire (but leave your horse at home) and Friday night is a Dinner Dance so throw in your dancing shoes too. The sign-up sheets for the other events offered will be set up at registration and you should be able to find something fun to do each day of Ancient Skiers Week.

For those of you who did not book a combined package of lodging and lift tickets through the Sun Valley Company and do not have a season pass, your discounted lift tickets may be purchased at the inside ticket desk at River Run Lodge.

Any Questions???? Please call Marlys Gerber, Chair, 206 271-1575

BREMERTON SKI CRUISERS CELEBRATE 75TH ANNIVERSARY

About 130 present and past members of the Bremerton Ski Cruisers gathered at the Olympic Lodge at the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard September 24, 2011 to reminisce about the events of the club's 75 years of existence and how their first cabin was built on Forest Service land but was torn down when it wasn't permitted in the newly created Olympic National Park. Also how they rented facilities at Mt. Rainier in the late 30's and the 40's and how their lodge at Stevens Pass was built in 1947. (*The Fall Newsletter had Paul Crews' skunk story which was set at that Olympics cabin.*)

Several members of the Cruisers who are Ancient Skiers were recognized: Ken and Kathy Hand for their many committee chairmanships, Paul Crews ASE* for his contributions to the original cabin in the Olympics and Ralph McKiernan, ASE, for his work on the Olympics cabin and three terms as BOD Chairman. In addition, Ken, Kathy and Ralph had each received a C.J. Ritchie Award

*ASE is Ancient Skier Emeritus for those 90 and over.

The invitation to the party included a picture of the cabin with the following poem:

I think that I will never see, a stick as tricky as a ski,
Steer the damn thing as I will, it always rides me to a spill,
It sits so quiet 'til I'm on, then without warning we are gone!
Down, down we run, I'm filled with glee.
My God! I'm sunk - here comes a tree!
It's got me telemark'd - I'm back for more.
My well-waxed skis stand by the door.
Only God can make a tree.
But who in hell first made a ski!



THANKS TO VOLUNTEERS

Your Fall Newsletter came to you through the stuffing efforts of Mary Lynne Evans, Dave Gossard, John Hansen, Chrissie Marshall, Carole and Ed Taylor and Solveig Thomson.

NEW EMERITUS MEMBER

Due to an oversight in response to find members who have reached their 90th birthday, an **Ancient Skiers Emeritus** certificate has finally been awarded to **Jim Whitman**

Congratulations, Jim!

You're an inspiration to us all!

BREMERTON DAYS AT PARADISE, MT. RAINIER ~ THOSE WERE THE DAYS!

Beginning back about 1934-1935, cities and towns neighboring Mount Rainier would celebrate a weekend at the mountain to help promote the new winter sport of skiing, holding downhill, slalom, cross country and obstacle course races. There would be a queen-crowning and a dance held in the Lodge on Sunday

Naturally, Bremerton being only a little over 100 miles away, wanted in on the action. The Bremerton Ski Cruisers Ski Club always tried to have a party that would be declared, "The Best Yet." They had a huge 30-foot banner that was hung near the festivities proclaiming "**Bremerton Days.**" Huge handmade chairs were "borrowed" from the Inn for the Queen's throne. The races were held on Alta Vista with the finish lines always near the Inn.

Back in Bremerton, the Mayor lead a parade (20 to 30 cars and floats) through town. Then he would be brought to Paradise to preside over the festivities. It was proclaimed that Bremerton Days happened during the "best Spring skiing anywhere in the world!"

By 1941, the war was closing down most skiing activities. The Bremerton Days that spring had sparse attendance. The Ski Troops were training at Paradise and they helped with setting courses and all the hard work. After WW II, the last Bremerton Days at Mt. Rainier were held in April, 1947.

The next year, 1948, the event moved to Stevens Pass, where the club had built a lodge. Each spring since, Bremerton Days have been celebrated with spring snow almost as good as at Paradise and the parties as good as, if not better, than those at Paradise. "Those were the days."
~ Ralph McKiernan ASE

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

- remember when, on the way to the Pass, the sign required chains and you put three strap-ons on the rear tires and sometimes only on the right tire which the State Patrolman at the side of the road would see as you passed him.
- remember the smell of "Faski", the lacquer painted on the ski base to increase running speed.
- remember "Blue Streak," the competitor to "Faski."
- remember using U.S. Army 10th Mountain Division ski wax, Blue for very cold snow, Red for medium snow and Yellow for wet snow, which you bought war-surplus at Chubby and Tubbys.
- used a U.S. Army 10th Mountain Division rucksack. The tubular frame model was for G.I.s and the wire frame model was for officers (wire frame was the "cool" type).
- spend as much time looking for your skis afterward as you do having lunch.

**Changes after Spring Newsletter but too late for Summer 2011 Newsletter
Plus changes after Summer 2011 Newsletter that were NOT included in Fall Newsletter.**

New Members

Bystrom, Arne & Valerie Ann: 1022 Summit Ave. East, Seattle, WA 98102 206-323-6511 valeriebystrom@comcast.net
 Cary, John & Susan: 3704 S. Ridgeway Place, Seattle, WA 98144 206-725-7678 scary@capitalhillhousing.org
 Cutter, Edward & Susan: PO Box 7330, Ketchum, ID 83340 208-622-9213 edcutter@gmail.com
 Fremont-Smith, Paul & Carol: PO Box 10009, Ketchum, ID 83340 208-725-0283 pfsjrigo@aol.com
 Links, John: 117 E. Louisa Street, Apt. 143, Seattle, WA 98102 206-459-3838
 Lumpkin, Ned & Kirsten: 1212 42nd Ave. E, Seattle, WA 98112 206-324-6708 pngrower@yahoo.com
 Pauly, Ruth (Rudi): 351 19th St. NE, Apt. 19, East Wenatchee, WA 98802 509-884-4107

Roster Corrections and Additions

Anderson, Wilbert & Suzanne: 4739 44th Ave. SW, Apt 401, Seattle, WA 98116 same phone wander4501@comcast.net
 Hayden, Michael & Sylvia: 2324 1st Ave., Apt 204, Seattle, WA 98121 same phone mchayden@comcast.net
 Morse, Russ: 900 University St. #12-0, Seattle, WA 98101 same phone
 Paterson, Robert: 999 3rd Ave., Ste. 4000, Seattle, WA 98104 same phone
 Simpson, Mary Lou: PO Box 4912, Ketchum, ID 83340 same phone
 Steneide, Helen: 9791 Mountain Home Road, Leavenworth, WA 98826 same phone
 Taylor, Ed & Carole: new land line 425-629-3501, same cell 425-417-6435
 Waterhouse, Ted & JoAnn: 5624 East Lighthouse Dr., Port Orchard, WA 98366 home phone 360-871-4012, Elkhorn 208-622-6621

Changes after Fall 2011 Newsletter**New Members**

Billesbach, Bill & Carol: 20639 Miracle Mile, Leavenworth, WA 98826 928-919-0992 billesbach@hotmail.com
 Dietz, Bob & Bee: 7906 E. Mercer Way, Mercer Is., WA 98040 206-230-6989 beedietz@comcast.net
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 McKay, Scott & Cathy Coultier: PO Box 65347, Port Ludlow, WA 98365 303-589-4636 cloutier2045@gmail.com
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Roster Corrections and Additions

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 MacIntosh, Rod & Frances: 3710 Kern Way, Yakima, WA 98902 same phone
 Savage, Ann: 2599 NE Studio Rd., Unit 215, Bend, OR 97701 same phone
 Sherman, Jr., William & Patricia: 650 Bellevue Way NE, Suite 004, Bellevue, WA 98004 206-300-3349
 Sullivan, Jack & Marion: 723 9th Ave., Apt. 208, Seattle, WA 98104 same phone
 Woodward, John: 9921 W. Riverside Dr., Bothell, WA 98011 425-402-8349

Passed Away

Simpson, Peggy, 2/2011

Lost Members

If you have information about any of these please email Carole Taylor at tayloraskiers@comcast.net

Jean A.W. Furneaux: 6300 Flotilla Dr., #306, Homes Beach, FL 34217 no such address, unable to forward. Had been ok since the roster was printed 12/2010.

Martin, Sandy & Shirley: #316-19121 Ford R, Pitt Meadow, BC Canada 604-465-2776

McRory, Ed & Irene: 221 N. Washington St., #2, Ketchum, ID 83340

**Appropos of Mike Dederer's story on the infamous
"Bowl Rope Tow" in the 2011 Summer Newsletter:**

You know you're an Ancient Skier if you used to ride the upper rope tow at Stevens Pass that lifted you ten feet off the snow if you weighed less than 135 pounds.

Bob Cram, you always got it right!

**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

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