



## THE HISTORY OF THE KIMBERLEY SKI CLUB

Talisman Mountain Resort officially opened its doors on Christmas Eve, 1963. It had 2 chair lifts and 1 T-bar lift. One wintry day early in 1966, Ted Leishman, John Sone, and Norm Valin were sitting in Talisman's T-Bar Lounge (currently the Games Room). The conversation evolved around, "What can we do to keep our kids occupied on the weekends?"

They came up with the idea of hiring some instructors from Talisman's Ski School to teach the kids first how to ski and secondly to keep them occupied for a good portion of the day. After several hours of discussion, they decided that forming a ski club of some kind that would be open to any families interested in having their children learn to ski and race under the Nancy Greene banner would be a good idea. The next day, they took the idea of a Talisman Ski Club to the then owners of Talisman, Alex Graydon and Bruce Pritchard. The ski club idea was well received, but there were legal complications regarding liability if the hotel sponsored a club in a public ski area.

The following weekend, Ted, John, and Norm again sat at their favourite table in the T-bar Lounge after having spent a full day organizing events for their children. At that time, they made a decision to formalize a ski club and name it after the village of Kimberley, and the Kimberley Ski Club was born. Norm Valin was elected the first President; Ted Leishman, Secretary; and Sandy Leishman, Treasurer. They spent the summer and fall organizing the structure of the ski club that they based on their original idea of "learning to ski and Nancy Greene racing." Finally they hired several of Talisman's instructors as coaches for the children of approximately 10 families. Some members of the newly formed club included the Valin, Sone, Leishman (Ted), Leishman (Sandy), McVittie, Langer, Dryden, Hay, Robinson and Middleton families.

In the early years of the Kimberley Ski Club, getting money to run the club and for racing equipment was difficult. Since it was a non-profit club, it was able to take advantage of government grants that became the base for funding the programs. But the members were also creative in finding ways to increase the funding base. There was the yearly Carnival, Pot Luck Dinners, a Barbeque at which the adults could get Gluehwein (mulled wine), the annual Easter Egg Hunt, and on the long weekend in May, the Annual Kite Flying Contest. Sometimes the kite flying took place on the ski hill, other times at someone's chalet. Many creative, unique kites were on display. Judy Heinrich, former social director, started Hot Dogs on the Hill. And the annual banquet, although much smaller in size, also earned some money. One of the club's original families, the Langers-- Al, Erica, Carol, and Linda--was very active in club activities and extremely generous with their time and the use of their chalet for fundraising. Each winter Al and Erica hosted a party at their chalet for all the club parents where a variety of fundraising activities took place—card games, casino events, most creative artist, contests, etc., and every Easter weekend, they provided eggs for the Easter Egg Hunt on the ski hill. Kids of all ages searched the ski hills to see who could collect the most eggs. The family also donated a club trophy that is still given out each year.



During the first years of the club's history, there was no starting or finishing hut, no starting ramp, and all timing was done with a stopwatch. The racing poles, bought by club members, were bamboo—nothing breakaway about them—and the racers didn't wear shin protection. Every weekend, one could see Tim McVittie, Racing Director, riding the double chair up and down the racing hill with a huge armload of poles since there was no building on the hill in which to store them. Since helmets were optional, it was luck that no racer was seriously injured. In the early to mid 70s, the club members worked to build a starting hut with lumber provided by Talisman. Around the same time, a finish hut was put into place. It was an old tool shed that Talisman gave to the club. The members refurbished it and moved it to an appropriate spot on the hill—higher up than the current finish hut. As “icing on the cake,” a club member, Rick Hobbs, donated \$2000 to buy electronic timing equipment. It was all so impressive that Talisman actually used the club's “stuff” for its mid-week ski races.

During the 1980s, many changes/additions were added to the KSC. The finishing hut was moved lower on the racing hill; helmets became mandatory for all racers; breakaway gates, race crew “walkie-talkies,” and more sophisticated timing equipment was purchased; club membership continued to grow; and there was lots of talk (but no action) about building a wind-break at the start hut. Also, during this time, the term of President went from three years to two.

Freestyle skiing was a very active part of the program for the Kimberley Ski Club in the 1970s and 80s. The Freestyle Program's first coach was Barry Colgrove, who continues to fulfill a leadership role in the club. One of our freestyle competitors, Chris Robinson, was a medalist at the first Canadian Freestyle Championships in the disciplines of Moguls and Ballet and a medallist in two provincial Mogul and Ballet championships. He participated in the World Cup Program for 4 years for Canada, was chairperson of the Canadian Freestyle Ski Association from 1996 to 2000, is a Level 3 CSIA Instructor, and is currently Chairperson of the Canadian Freestyle FIS Program and President of the Canadian Ski and Snowboard Association. His brother Bruce was also involved in the Freestyle program as a coach and competitor. Chris is the current owner of *The World of Skiing* TV program.

Throughout the club history, parents have always volunteered their time in one position or another—from gatekeeper to President—to ensure that the club was a fun, family place to be. A few parents require special mention because they helped the club by serving in one position for many years. Norm Valin served as President for seven years and Bob Middleton for 6 years. Mary Porteous was Treasurer for 9 years. Ron Scherer served for 12 years, including holding positions of Vice President and President, and as a grandfather has returned to an active roll as a member of the race crew.

The Gardner family joined the KSC in 1970. The three girls, Deidrie Lesley (Lee), and Meredith, were active in the racing program. Lesley ended up having considerable success in the Division A racing program. She went to university and competed in the



Eastern Canada/U.S.A. University League where she ended the year in third place. Meredith became interested in the Freestyle program, qualified for the Ontario Team and the National Team. She was a member of the National Freestyle Ski Team for 8 years where she won 77 World Cup medals (21 being gold). She won medals in all three Freestyle disciplines—Moguls, Ballet, and Aerials, and was the World Aerial Champion in 1985 and 1988. Meredith was elected to the Canadian Skiing Hall of Fame in 1995. Their father Jack was racing director at KSC for a period of time, became Chairperson of SOD Freestyle, Chairperson of SOD Division, was a member of CSA National Executive, Chairperson of Freestyle National Team Board for 8 years, and at age 75, he qualified as a Level 1 CSIA instructor. Lesley's husband John Fisher has served for many years in a variety of executive and on-hill positions, including president and racing director and continues to fulfill a leadership role in the club.

Another family that was involved in the club for many years was the Sehl family. Jack and Mary Sehl built their chalet on the ski hill in 1971 and joined the club in 1972 with their 6 children—Mike, Mary Fran, Anne Marie, John, Caroline, and Lisa. Mike and Caroline were in the Freestyle Program, Lisa was in the Tigers Program, and the other 3 were in the Racing Program. Mary tells me that the ski club logo at that time was *Good Day To Ya*, and the club even had mugs made to promote the friendliness of the club and to earn money. She even thinks that there might still be one of those mugs in the Colgrove chalet. At the yearly Carnival, the whole family entered it in a variety of disguises—Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Sunflowers, Bunnies, Birds, etc. Jake Hammer was general manager of Talisman from 1968 to 1975 before he went into real estate. As we all know, he bought the hotel, married Anne Marie, and had two boys, J.J. and Michael, who grew up in the racing program. Jake and Anne Marie owned and operated Talisman until its sale in 2006.

Leo and Rosemarie Wickens started working weekends at Talisman as members of the Ski Patrol the year the hotel opened. They then moved on to become instructors. Leo instructed, and later was Ski School Director, from 1967 to 2002. Both their sons, Tyler and Brendan, were excellent racers in the Racing Program. In memory of Tyler, the club now offers the prestigious Coach of the Year Trophy.

Barry Colgrove joined the Ski School in 1972 when he was a student. That first season he coached a team that included Anne Marie Sehl (Hammer). He then coached freestyle and other programs and then returned to race coaching in 1979. He took over as head coach in the early 1980s, married Marlene a little later, and retired from instructing after 15 years. Barry is still performing a leadership role within the club and is serving his second year as Vice President of the club. Marlene has been a Team Manager, and is currently the club Secretary.

The Dunlop family deserve special mention as well. Gary was our head gate-keeper for many years, a position now assumed by his wife Barb. Both Barb and Gary have acquired



advanced credentials as Alpine officials and have trained many of our club members as level 1 officials. Barb and Gary continue to fulfill vital on-hill roles in our racing club.

In 2006 Andrew Heinson brought glory to our club by becoming the first of our young racers to place first in the Hershey All-Stars competition.

*Thanks to Avanel Scherer for providing content for this history section. This history section is evolving - we welcome your input and photos at [webmanager@kimberleyskiclub.ca](mailto:webmanager@kimberleyskiclub.ca)*