Vonn ties World Cup downhill record

By USSA

ALTENMARKT, Austria – Lindsey Vonn (Vail) made history again, tying Annemarie Moser-Proell's World Cup downhill victory record with win number 36 in a two-run Audi FIS World Cup sprint downhill Saturday.

"I'm really happy to tie Annemarie's record with 36 wins," Vonn said after the two-run event.

Canada's Larisa Yurkiw was second, followed by Austria's Cornelia Huetter in third.

For the Americans it was a great day as Stacey Cook (Mammoth Mountain) grabbed a top-10 spot, finishing eighth, while Laurenne Ross (Bend, Ore.) was 18 and Alice McKennis (Glenwood Springs, Colo.) was 26.

The sprint downhill format featured two runs on the same 25-gate course, with a flip of the top 30 for the second run. The format not only offered a change of pace, but a change of tactics as well.

"I like the two-run downhill – it's nice to do something different," said Vonn, who was the only athlete on the start list to have ever competed in a sprint downhill race. "I think the classic format is the best, but it's nice to do something different. It's nice to challenge yourself and there's definitely a lot more pressure when you're leading the first run."

Vonn won the first run by 0.91, and extended her winning margin to a full second despite skiing a bit more conservatively in the second run.

“I definitely didn’t expect such a big advantage going into the second run. I skied a little more conservatively in the second run,” she said. “It was bumpy and a lot of girls were having trouble.”

Saturday’s victory pulled Vonn to within 58 points of overall World Cup leader Lara Gut of Switzerland, who did not finish the first run of Saturday’s downhill. Vonn also leads of the downhill World Cup standings by 50 points over Huetter.

Up next, Vonn goes for World Cup win number 73 as she chases Ingemar Stenmark’s record of 86 World Cup victories in Sunday’s super G.

Greenway trail in South Lake to expand by 2020

By Kathryn Reed

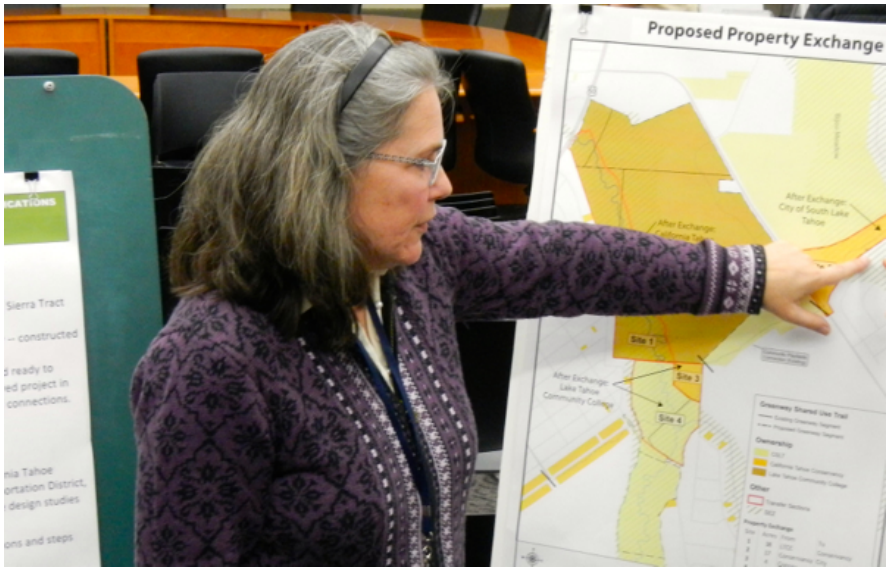
Bridging the neighborhoods of South Lake Tahoe is one of the primary goals of the Greenway bike path.

By 2020 the residential areas of Bijou and Sierra Tract should be linked so the need to travel on Highway 50 or Pioneer Trail can be avoided.

“By minimizing the number of streets you cross it makes it easier to choose not to be in your car,” Sue Rae Irelan said Thursday night at an open house at Lake Tahoe Community College about the project.

Irelan, who works for the California Tahoe Conservancy, has been leading the charge on this multi-use trail that one day will go from Meyers to Stateline. For now, the project is

approved from Sierra Tract to Van Sickle Bi-State Park.



Sue Rae Irelan with the California Tahoe Conservancy talks Jan. 7 about the next phase of the Greenway trail. Photo/Kathryn Reed

"Winter access is really important in Tahoe," Sue Rae Irelan said.

This year the Conservancy, South Lake Tahoe and Lake Tahoe Community College are expected to complete a land swap that will allow the next phase of the project to go forward. No money will be exchanged.

The next segment, which should break ground in 2019, will be one mile of trail that starts at Bijou Meadow and connects to Bijou Community Park, and crosses Al Tahoe Boulevard to

connect to Lake Tahoe Community College and the community ball field.

The one mile that will be built in the next few years has a $4 million price tag.

Money for this phase comes from:

· CTC – $1 million

· LTCC Measure F – $700,000

· Tahoe Transportation District – $400,000

· State grant – $1.9 million.

“This is the most expensive part of the project because of the bridge,” Irelan said.

A 150- to 175-foot span will cross Trout Creek. Then boardwalk will be in the meadow to protect the sensitive terrain.

Much of the trail follows user created trails. The new trail is 10 feet wide, meets ADA requirements and is paved.

Flashing lights will be installed on Al Tahoe, and at Martin and Barbara avenues to make it safer for cyclists and pedestrians to cross those streets to continue on the path.

Winter use of the trail remains uncertain.

“The Conservancy doesn’t plow. We are actively talking to the city about how to cooperatively maintain all of the trails,” Irelan said. “Winter access is really important in Tahoe.”

The challenge is how to pay for it.

In 2015, 0.42 miles of the Greenway was built between Herbert Avenue and Glenwood Way.

Future sections include going from Herbert to Ski Run Boulevard, and then from Ski Run to Van Sickle. When those are

completed the trail will be 3.86 miles long.

Funding is the obstacle that must be overcome in order for the next phases to commence.

Because there has been a change in the alignment since the project was initially approved there needs to be an amendment to the environmental documents. The revised CEQA document should be released this month for a 30-day public comment period.

El Niño to soon have waterfalls overflowing

By Tom Stienstra, San Francisco Chronicle

For many, to see a waterfall can be love at first sight. Each has a look and a personality.

They go dry in a drought, flood over the banks in a deluge, and each day can provide a different look. When you first sight a waterfall that captures your senses, it can feel like a bass drum is pounding in your chest.

In the coming months, the El Niño-driven winter is reviving hundreds of waterfalls across the Bay Area and Northern California. I've made it a mission to see every one I can find.

Read the whole story

Squaw-Alpine strive to help armed forces

Squaw Valley and Alpine Meadows are offering a season pass to active duty military in exchange for a $25 donation to the Military to the Mountains program.

The partnership between the two ski resorts, High Fives Foundation, Achieve Tahoe (formerly Disabled Sports USA Far West) and Adaptive Training Foundation that will host and train 10 injured veterans of the United States armed forces on the slopes of Squaw Valley this spring. The program has raised $50,000 this season.

The resorts provide a Silver Tahoe Super Pass to military personnel, along with a note of appreciation and a challenge coin for a donation of $25, of which all proceeds support nonprofit organizations 22Kill and Military to the Mountains. Additional donations are also accepted at the resort on behalf of these organizations, and online donations will be coming soon. Those interested in purchasing this pass must present their U.S. active duty military ID at the guest services and sales center at Squaw Valley or Alpine Meadows.

Sugar Bowl to host cross country ski race

A cross country race that begins in the village at Sugar Bowl and winds into Royal Gorge Cross Country will challenge cross

country racers on Sunday.

The Village Nordic Cup, formerly known as the Sugar Rush, will begin at 10am Jan. 10. The course will take racers through the village at Sugar Bowl and into the eastern edge of Van Norden Meadow before climbing back below Crow's Peak to the village. Child racers will complete one 5-kilometer loop, and adult racers will complete two loops for a 10-kilometer race.

Race entry is $40. Racers do not need a trail pass or season pass to compete. Registration before the day of the event is available at Royal Gorge's Summit Station on Pahatsi Road in Serene Lakes. Registration on the day of the event is available starting at 8am at Village Station in the village at Sugar Bowl.

Prizes will be awarded for division and age-group winners. The Village Nordic Cup is a freestyle race, meaning that skate and classic racers will race in a single division.

EDC teen wins statewide essay contest

An El Dorado County teenager won the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Wildlife Officer Foundation's essay contest.

Brian McCoard, a 13-year-old hunter from Cool, will be awarded a lifetime hunting license at the International Sportsmen's Exposition in Sacramento on Jan. 23.

Entrants explained what "Passing on the Tradition" of hunting means to them in 500 words or less.

McCoards’ winning essay emphasized that his father, Jared McCoard, is his role model in hunting in specific and life in general.

“I took my hunter safety course with three of my cousins. I was very nervous to take the test because I really wanted to pass it, but I have dyslexia and reading and taking tests are very difficult for me,” he wrote. “Through my dad’s hands-on lessons about hunting and gun safety, I was able to pass the written test. My dad is also dyslexic, and since he passed his test when he was my age, it gave me hope that I could pass my test also. My dad is not just my hunting mentor, he is my hero.”

The second place winner is Tyler Benedetti, 16, of Morgan Hill. Two competitors tied for third place: Ty Bauer, 12, of Eureka, and Joseph Lee, 16, of Hayward.

Heavenly at 60 – a ski resort for the ages



Heavenly started out small 60 years ago, but has grown to be one of the largest ski resorts in the United States. Photo/Heavenly Mountain Resort

By Susan Wood

It’s taken more than divine intervention to keep Heavenly Mountain Resort operating and successful for the last 60 years.

It’s taken a group of dedicated, resilient, ambitious individuals – some as ski bums in other lives – who have overcome tragedy and embraced triumph. They reflect fondly on this dual-state South Shore ski area. All have things in common: They love to ski and are willing to go the extra mile

or extra effort to make it a memorable and family-filled experience.

“I’m always nostalgic about Heavenly. I always think about when my dad ran the resort,” said Bill Killebrew, who at age 23 took over as chief for his father, Hugh, when the elder Killebrew was killed in a plane crash on Echo Summit with three others in August 1977.



Clint Eastwood competes in the John Denver Celebrity Ski Classic. Photo/Heavenly Mountain Resort

It was the heyday for Heavenly, ushered in by Hugh Killebrew’s zest for fun, showmanship and racing – most often on World

Cup.

When he perished, the young Killebrew had to fill a tall order: get the ski area out of debt, deal with losing his father and take care of the employees.

“None of us knows how we’re going to react in these times. For me, when I saw my dad’s airplane on the road, it was real. I knew he was dead. I put aside my emotions and drove to the nearest telephone. I spoke to my dad’s secretary (current day executive assistant Nancy McCoy) and arranged to talk to the managers,” Killebrew told *Lake Tahoe News* from his Stateline office. He had a steely resolve that thrust him into autopilot.

“And I wanted to be the one to tell my mother,” he said of Eleanor, who as a consummate hostess ran many of the major events at Heavenly throughout the 1960s and ’70s.

Killebrew, who essentially grew up with Heavenly, worked as a ditch digger, heavy equipment operator and in lift construction. He raced in the winter. In summer, he hiked with his father as a teenager and learned about the constellations. To this day, Milky Way Bowl, Big Dipper, Little Dipper and Orion on the Nevada side that opened in 1968, serve as a fitting tribute to those cherished father-son outings.



Malcolm Tibbetts' contributions to the resort are memorialized at the midstation of the gondola. Photo/Susan Wood

The UC Berkeley graduate felt driven to carry on his father's plans for snowmaking, operations that have saved many a season at this mid-town ski area. Countless explosions and engineering ingenuity later, pipe was laid on Maggie's, Patsy's and World Cup runs.

But since Mother Nature has the last say, the snow melted in snowmaking's infancy. And there went the money.

In 1978 around Thanksgiving, Killebrew made the last payroll, exceeded his credit card limit, laid off most of the staff and made an appointment to file bankruptcy papers. But one Sunday brought about a milestone when the rain turned to snow. He got a brilliant idea to mark the end of drought with two days of free skiing. The daring gamble paid off. He burned the bankruptcy papers and called the media. Reservation lines were slammed, and 6,000 skiers showed up the first day and another

7,000 on Thanksgiving Day. The major networks showed up, and Heavenly made a mound of cash from meals and rental equipment.



Incredible views have always been a selling point for Heavenly. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Lessons learned and passed on

Heavenly's origin had humble beginnings. In 1947, Lee and Daisy Miller built a warming hut in Bijou Park where skis and boots could be rented near a rope tow that transported skiers up 1,000 feet. At times, they even erected floodlights for night racing.

In 1951, Miller leased the Skiway to Bill Sutherland. Four years later, Miller turned over the operation to George Canon, Rudy Gersick and Curly Musso – who with Chris Kuraisa, a local casino owner who arrived in December 1953, had visions of promoting South Lake Tahoe as a winter destination for tourists. As hotel operators, Rudy and Trudy Gersick pitched the idea of visitors staying at the Ski Run Lodge and skiing with local instructor extraordinaire Stein Eriksen. In only a year, the Olympic gold medalist and world-renowned skier ran the ski school. (Eriksen died last week at age 88.)

No one was particularly wealthy at the time, but the early players were rich with dreams of placing South Lake Tahoe on

the ski map for good. They were visionaries – a theme that carried on with subsequent owners, operators and planners.

Take Kuraisa, the founder. Not only did he lose his son in a fatal bicycle accident two days before opening, he endured immense financial challenges and hardships, but came out ahead in the end.

First, Kuraisa placed his life savings in the Tahoe Sport Center store when he arrived and got into the ski industry with a rope tow. Sutherland sold the rope tow to Kuraisa for $1,950 in cash, with a $50 option attached to the property Sutherland was originally selling for $3,750. Dorothy Kuraisa was nervous about living on the edge with her husband spending the last of their grocery money. But according to Heavenly's chronicled history, Chris Kuraisa pledged the investment in what become to be known as Heavenly Valley would produce a return because of snow in the forecast the night of the deal day. The next day, the two feet brought out skiers spending $483 on lift tickets and sandwiches.



Heavenly Valley opened in December 1955 with a double chairlift on Gunbarrel, several rope tows and the Pioneer Warming Hut.

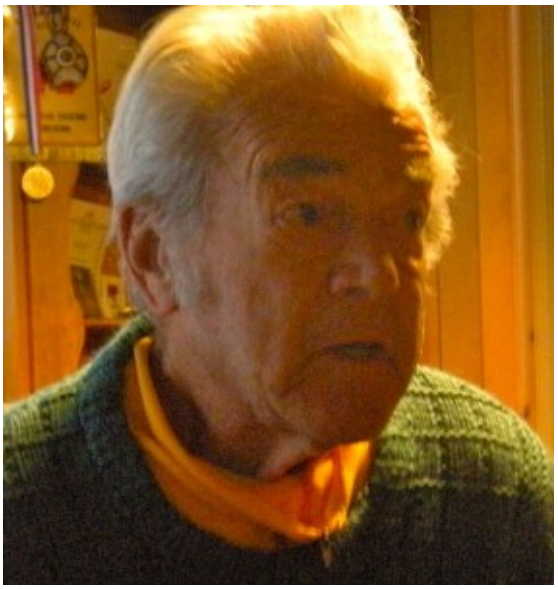
Building from the early investment in the mid- to late 1950s, the aerial tram was constructed in 1962. This opened up the mountain to year-round sightseeing from the ridgetop that provides Heavenly’s sweeping, signature view and took skiers to the backside of the mountain.

The site has transformed into various hang out eateries and watering holes. (In 2003, the Monument Peak restaurant at the top of the tram was the setting for a party honoring founding partners Patsy Gilman Wood and husband Bob, who were

instrumental in getting the tram off the ground.)

There’s even a funny account of Patsy delivering dozens of doughnuts for one of the races and losing several of them as they rolled down the Face.

The 1960s and ’70s at Heavenly Valley established a reputation for celebrities and contests honoring beauty and speed.



Martin Hollay

Martin Hollay, who is in his 90s and still lives within walking distance to the tram, skis most every morning. He remembers with affection the early days of his 30-year career with Heavenly. A glove maker from Budapest, Hollay has worked as a groomer and patrolman. For years, he’s made custom ski gloves for the Heavenly patrol. He was honored for his work in 2002 by skiing the Olympic torch down the World Cup run before it made its way to Salt Lake City.

“Skiing may be more crowded, but it really hasn’t changed to me. It’s just as it was before,” Hollay told *Lake Tahoe News* recently.

He sticks to Heavenly, and in particular the tram, as his method for getting on the mountain for good reason.

“It takes me almost an hour to drive anywhere else. In that time, I’ve already made turns already,” he said.

The Killebrew years

It took a former submarine commander in World War II, airplane pilot since a teenager and San Francisco lawyer to steer the ski area into the generation of Heavenly dreams.

Hugh Killebrew took over Heavenly Valley at a time when “skies the limit” fell over the world of skiing. Being a visionary, he knew that being at the mercy of Mother Nature meant making other arrangements to keep visitors and locals interested in paying for the sport that was growing in popularity.

Pop culture in the 1970s spawned the John Denver Celebrity Ski Classic and Chevrolet Freestyle Championships, among other races. The Heavenly Blue Angels, the first alpine ski club, provided growing interest in many skiers improving their skills.

The 1970s also brought about what has become known as the Hot Doggers of Heavenly.



The gondola under construction. Photo/Heavenly Mountain Resort

Malcolm Tibbetts, former vice president of mountain operations, was one of them.

At age 23, Tibbetts started with Heavenly as a ski patroller in 1971. He’s held posts as the assistant director, ski patrol director and mountain manager. Tibbetts was so instrumental to Heavenly’s growth, an honorary plaque was installed at the midstation of the gondola to commemorate his contributions to snowmaking, designing the midstation and getting the gondola off the ground in 2000.

Tibbetts, 66, grew up and later served in the military in Germany on skis – having never missed a winter in 60 years. He hails from New Hampshire and plans to return to the East this spring to hike the Appalachian Trail, which sits on his bucket list. Along the way, he’ll be thinking about completing his memoirs – much of the life story about his tenure at Heavenly.

After serving in the Armed Forces, he packed a Volkswagen van and traveled the country.

“All over, I heard about Tahoe and had a friend here,” he told Lake Tahoe News.

Money was lacking at the time, but Camp Richardson provided a free spot to camp if he cleaned the bathrooms and collected fees. Hollay gave Tibbetts his first job at $1.77 per hour.

“I came here for a year of ski bumming,” he said. After a year of “hot dogging” at Heavenly over gigantic jumps, he broke his back doing a flip. Even that didn’t keep him from hitting the slopes.

He skied with the likes of Eriksen, having to race against him in the World Cup. There were races, parties, events and challenges.

“I had a great career. Who can claim to have an office over 22 square miles,” he said. “I met my wife Tere here and raised two kids.”

Even after knee surgery, Tibbetts went out skiing recently and shared feelings of nostalgia.

“I look all around and see things I built,” he said at the base of the Comet chairlift.



Nancy Greene and Jean Claude Killy when World Cup races were held at Heavenly. Photo/Heavenly Mountain Resort

Tibbetts commended the younger Killebrew for getting Heavenly out of debt in the late 1970s and having the foresight to make snowmaking a priority after the elder Killebrew died.

“The plane crash was the saddest time. There are certainly events in life you remember where you were. That was one of them for me. The ski area was in ruins when Bill took over. He was incredibly lucky,” Tibbetts said of the good fortune bestowed on Bill at his time of need.

At the time, a lift ticket was $3.50.

“Now you can’t buy a cup of coffee for that,” he said.

Snowmaking didn’t come without its challenges. Tibbetts recalled renting pumps and closing off Keller Avenue’s fire hydrant to get snow to fly on the World Cup run.

“We were babes in the woods and learned the hard way,” he said.

One pipe blew out and temporarily blinded him. He was forced to count the numbers on a rotary-dial phone to call his wife.

With snowmaking and all things Heavenly, what a ride it was.

How has the ride changed?

Tibbetts thinks back on the Killebrew days as a period where he could waltz in the office and give his two cents on Heavenly operations. He didn’t always see eye-to-eye with the Killebrews, but he said they always respected his opinions.



Heavenly is now a year-round resort with ropes courses available in the summer and more activities coming soon. Photo/LTN file

In 1990, the Kamori Kanko company bought the ski resort from Killebrew – taking the first step in Heavenly’s transformation

into an international company. The Japanese investor was known for taking good care of the employees, according to Tibbetts. A year later, the Mott Canyon chairlift on the Nevada side opened. The year after that, the top of the mountain Sky chairlift made its debut as an express lift.

By that time, Kamori under the direction of chief Dennis Harmon had bragging rights to 65 percent of snowmaking coverage and lifts dotting two states.

Owner Katsuo Kamori endured his own tragedy when he lost his son in a fatal accident.

In 1997, Kamori turned over the reins to Les Otten of American Skiing Company – a corporation with roots in the East.

The following year, Sonny Bono, the entertainer and congressman, was killed when he hit a tree while skiing.

Despite the ups and downs of Heavenly's history, ASC pursued Kamori's tireless efforts dealing with government agencies on a $4 million master plan for the resort amid environmental regulations, one of the resort's largest challenges.

The gondola opened in 2000 due to ASC's efforts – with employees taking part in the physical end of laying the cables. When it opened, Tibbetts recalled it as "the scariest day of my whole career because of my decision to run that thing" since the spotlight was on the ski area. The gondola was finally the link between the casinos at Stateline and the high part of the mountain.

"We had (wind) gusts of 70 miles per hour," he said.

The gondola may have been a blessing to the town, but it came at a price for ASC. Its stock was so low – less than $1 – by the time it sold Heavenly to Vail Resort, it was delisted on the New York Stock Exchange.

Vail leads the way

The Broomfield, Colo.-based company has invested tens of millions of dollars in Heavenly, launching the South Shore ski area into the corporate arena in 2002.

Most stakeholders and observers see the change in atmosphere as “different.” Many of the ski resorts from the 1950s to 1980s were run by families. Now the ski industry has gone corporate, with stockholders to satisfy, as well as cash to improve tired infrastructure.



The Heavenly Village with the gondola links the town to the mountain. Photo/LTN file

And Heavenly was special to this Colorado company. Having a resort in California helped it diversify its regional portfolio in case other areas where it owns resorts have tough times. Take a look at its first Chief Operating Officer Blaise Carrig, who moved from running Heavenly to being in charge of western mountain operations at corporate before retiring last summer.

Heavenly has spawned many a ski industry career.

Former Vice President of Planning and Governmental Affairs Stan Hansen started as a ski instructor and patroller in 1966 before retiring in 2001.

“I used to say I degreed in Hugh Killebrew,” he said from his Puerto Rico home where he relishes the retirement life. “Heavenly’s come a long ways.”

Hansen embraced working with Tibbetts during Heavenly’s growth years.

“Malcolm could build anything,” Hansen said, adding the gondola was “a destiny”. The early pioneering Heavenly stakeholders thought about the benefit to hooking the town with the upper mountain. Kamori wanted it. Marriott stepped aside from the ground level, but built its two hotel condominium projects at Heavenly Village at the base in 2002. Vail swooped in when it saw the promise of having the eight-person cars whisking skiers and boarders up the mountainside.

Even former President Bill Clinton endorsed the idea. Upon his visit for the Lake Tahoe Environmental Summit in 1997 he mentioned the lift specifically.

“I’ll never forget all of us sitting around in a meeting, and Clinton said: ‘I think you should build a gondola from the town to the top’,” Hansen said, snickering. The governmental affairs guru looked over at Andrew Strain, who worked for the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency – the regulatory agency tasked with keeping projects in line the region’s lake clarity mission.

“He rolled his eyes and said: ‘You got to him’,” Hansen said of Strain, who now works for Heavenly as the vice president of planning.

“It’s been an interesting ride,” Hansen said.

Don Evans, Heavenly's marketing manager, also placed the gondola construction in 2000 on the top of the list of pivotal moments for the ski resort.

"What hit me is I knew all the people building it, and they got in such good shape, they looked like body builders. I barely recognized them," Evans said.

Evans said he has thoroughly enjoyed his tenure at Heavenly. He arrived in 1974 after leaving Pennsylvania, where he taught skiing.



Miss Snow used to be an annual event at the resort. Photo/Heavenly Mountain Resort

"The first day I went out on Heavenly I didn't know much about the place," he said. "We all went out. It was a cloudy day with fresh snow. When I skied the California side, I thought 'I'm skiing with the big boys.' I realized I was in a pretty special place."

Through the years of promoting it, he’s learned about and embraced Heavenly’s storied past.

“We’re lucky to live here. I’ve felt such a sense of community,” Evans told Lake Tahoe News. “I look at where I am now and where the mountain is now – there’s been a real organic connection between the mountain and the town.”

Even those who move away get the connection.

“I started skiing there in the seventh grade,” said Linda Jahn, daughter of South Lake Tahoe’s resident historian Betty Mitchell. The 69-year-old got nostalgic about being a member of the youth ski club – the Heavenly Blue Angels.

“Everybody knew everybody back then,” she said. “I skied every day after school. This was such a memorable time.”

Rethinking the safety behind heli-skiing

By Paddy O’Connell, Skiing

There exists both a sincere desire and an obvious need for the standardization of safety protocols within the heli-skiing industry, especially in the great wilds of Alaska. What is unclear is what those standards should look like and who should set them.

Alaska has been home to helicopter-skiing operations for almost 40 years, and with every heli segment that lights up the screen in a ski film, the public froths to claim an AK spine. But a recent spike in on-mountain deaths has led to both public and governmental pressure for change.

Most observers agree there’s a need for standardized protocols—rules by which all operators abide so that clients and guides are safe and the playing field is level for competing operations. But the specter of increased government regulation worries many operators, who think they know best what standards are and aren’t needed. Their hope is to guide the process to a conclusion that enhances safety and oversight while still allowing them to operate profitably and show guests a good time.

Read the whole story

Olympian Bowman to meet with fans at Sierra

Sierra-at-Tahoe will host Subaru Conquer Winter Day on Jan. 9.

This free event highlights an athlete signing with women’s freeski halfpipe Olympian Maddie Bowman.

Bowman, 21, grew up on the South Shore and went to South Tahoe High School. She won the gold medal in women’s ski halfpipe in Sochi in 2014. Bowman will be signing autographs from 9-11am.

Subaru Conquer Winter Day is open to guests of all ages and will be at Sierra’s Solstice Plaza.

Can too much exercise harm the heart?

By Gretchen Reynolds, New York Times

With many of us contemplating marathons or other prolonged endurance events in 2016, we, our spouses and other family members most likely have wondered whether such strenuous training could be harmful to our hearts. Could any of us, in making ambitious resolutions, exercise too much?

A newly published scientific review offers both reassurance and some caution. It found that while most athletes' hearts can withstand most exercise, there are exceptions. For some people in seemingly good health, heavy loads of exercise might be problematic. That's why all of us who work out should be as informed as possible about our family's cardiac history and our own potential genetic risks.

Exercise, of course, is in general extremely beneficial for heart health. Dozens of large-scale epidemiological studies have found that people who exercise in any amount, whether five minutes a day or two hours a day or more, are much less likely to develop or die from heart disease than people who are sedentary.

Read the whole story