

DAILY NEWS-SUN • SATURDAY, APRIL 19, AND SUNDAY, APRIL 20, 2003

# Sun Cities Ski Club attracts all skill levels

**MARC BUCKHOUT**  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

They may be over the hill, but for the 200 plus members of the Sun Cities Ski Club they're enjoying the ride down.

The club, which was founded in 1979, recently completed its 24th year of hitting the slopes.

"I just love it," said 68-year-old club president Ron Langlois from Sun City Grand. "I've been skiing since I was 5 and have no plans of slowing down. We have members in their 80s and it's really impressive to watch some of them go down a hill. You'd swear you were watching a teenager."

The club, which generally schedules three to five trips a year, has five-day visits to Telluride, Colo. (Jan. 11-16), Aspen Snowmass, Colo. (Jan. 25-30), Purgatory Mountain in Durango, Colo. (Feb. 8-13), Lake Tahoe, Calif. (Feb. 22-27) and Salt Lake City (March 1-6) scheduled for the 2004 ski season. Costs for trips range between \$450-\$800 and include travel and hotels. Meals and lift tickets are separate. Club members also take trips to Arizona's ski resorts, Snowbowl in Flagstaff and Sunrise in the White Mountains.

New members are encouraged to show up to the group's first meeting for the upcoming season, which will take place Nov. 6 at the Sun City West Foundation Meeting Rooms, 14465 R.H. Johnson Blvd. in Sun City West. Meetings are held the first Thursday of every month beginning at 5 p.m. with a social hour, with dinner and the meeting to follow. Dues for the club are \$10 a year and dinner at the meetings run from \$10 to \$12.

"We lose some members each year but we probably gain five to 10 new ones at every meeting," said Langlois. "The camaraderie of this group is what makes it great. We have people from all different backgrounds with all different skiing abilities."

Mary Vangelisti, the club's trip chairperson, has been a member of the group for six years and met her husband, Richard, in the club.

"The majority of our members are from the Sun Cities but we have members from all over the Valley," Vangelisti said. "The club is more than skiing. Some of the older members that can't ski anymore remain part of the group to take part in some of our other events like sleigh rides and dances. But on one of our ski trips this year, of the 80 mem-

bers that went, we had more than 40 that were over 70-years-old."

While many members have skied all their lives it's never too late to learn.

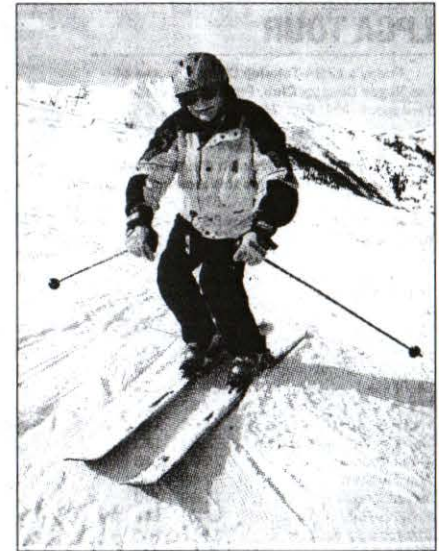
"I'd always wanted to learn but I never seemed to have the time," said 73-year-old Bob Kelepecz of Sun City West. "I met my second wife (Maria) though and I started skiing four years ago because it was something she enjoys."

Kelepecz said he took things slow while learning the sport, taking lessons the first three years he skied.

"I started on the real easy runs but now I can do the intermediate slopes," he said. "The hardest part about skiing is you have to be agile enough to turn and slow yourself down. You have to be in shape physically and you have to have the confidence to be able to stop when you need to and turn."

While Kelepecz has four years of experience skiing, vice president Bob Barnes of Sun City has been skiing for the last 43 years.

Barnes, 75, said he'd like to ski until he's at least 80. In order to stay in shape for skiing he plays tennis four times a week, bikes three days a week and works out at the recreation center three times a week.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Floyd Posey of Sun City West, who has won numerous skiing competitions, went to Aspen, Colo., from Jan. 26-31 as a member of the Sun Cities Ski Club.

"It's the thrill of going fast, but being under control and then the scenery is breath taking," Barnes said. "It's extremely rewarding. It's one of the main things that keeps me going."

For information on the club, contact Langlois at 584-5886.

To reach the reporter, call 876-2598 or e-mail him at mbuckhout@aztrib.com.

OVER

# HITTING THE SLOPES



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Marie Jones, left, and Bruno Berg stop to help a downed skier during a trip to Durango, Colo., in February.

# Ski pioneers

## Sun Cities club pays tribute to Peoria couple

By ANN T. DALEY  
Assistant sports editor

PEORIA — Miner Patton used to stop people on the streets and invite them to join the Sun Cities Ski Club.

Anna DeMunn was one of those people. **Skiing**

"My husband and I were driving through from Maine to see friends," DeMunn said. "We were stopped at a stoplight at Del Webb (Boulevard) and Bell Road. Miner and Connie drove up alongside us and asked, 'Do you want to join the ski club?'"

"We pulled into the Safeway parking lot to talk and we've been close friends ever since."

That was 18 years ago. Since then, more than 200 ski enthusiasts in Sun City and Sun City West have experienced the Pattons' excitement.

Club members honored the founding couple on Thursday with a "Miner and Connie Patton Night" program at the Sun City West Foundation.

"We presented a bouquet of flowers to Connie and gave a dissertation on Miner's life," said club member Bob Faltermeier, who served as emcee at the event.

"He was quite a ski instructor and a great skier."

Although he was the honoree, Patton brought a pair of skis to give away at the event.

"One of the greatest pleasures in life is to bring pleasure to others," said Miner, 86. "It was so nice to see this group of friends. I get a great deal of pleasure knowing I was a factor in this."

Upon moving to Sun City in 1978, he joined Union Hills Country Club and sent letters to all 1,500 members, inviting them to be charter members of the Sun City Ski Club.

"I got six replies from that batch of 1,500," the Harvard graduate said. "At first I was discouraged,

► See Club honors, C4



Steve Cherek/Daily News-Sun

Miner and Connie Patton founded the Sun Cities Ski Club, which now has more than 200 enthusiasts.

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## Club honors Peoria couple

■ From C1

but then I realized there were 45,000 residents here. I figured if I could get six out of 1,500, I could get about 200 from the whole area.

"Anytime I saw somebody with skis or a rack on their car, I'd leave a notice."

A newspaper notice and active recruiting by the Pattons were all it took to develop a solid base of members.

Patton's favorite memories include a trip to Telluride, Colo., when a blizzard hit.

"We had so much snow, they had to close the big lifts one day," Patton said. "The skiing before and after was really great."

While Miner Patton served as club president, treasurer and secretary through much of his involvement through 1987, Connie specialized in honoring members' other athletic and social interests in a club scrapbook.

"She felt it was very important to keep track of other

people's activities and all the ski activities," Patton said. of Connie, 89.

As a young adult, Miner Patton accepted a friend's invitation to a ski outing in Milton, Mass.

He recruited Connie to join him at Mount Hood, near Portland, Ore. As a longtime elementary school principal, Patton would take his family to Mount Hood on weekends during ski season.

One week after retiring at age 65, he decided he wanted to teach in a well-known ski school, tried out and was hired at Winter Park Ski School in Winter Park, Colo.

"I'm a good teacher, but I'm not a top skier," the Sierra Winds resident said. "I wasn't able to float like a bird and keep my feet together."

"I did teach beginning adults in their 20s and 30s. I had to demonstrate how to fall and get up. Falling forward is most difficult because you have to bring your skis up and over your head."

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# Senior skiers have healthy slant on life

By Jim Gintonio  
Staff writer

The skit involves a dummy and some old clothes.

Good material perhaps for a stand-up comic, and some of the one-liners that Loren Trabert comes up with could earn him a shot on the stage. But the 86-year-old, one of the original members of the Sun Cities Ski Club, jokes that he's happy just to stand up, period.

+ A skier until last year, the former engineer for General Electric and superintendent of the Pickard china factory in Illinois still has the skiing outfit he bought when he took up the sport in 1957.

"I'd like to sell that," he said. "It would be a good thing to put on a dummy to show people what the outfit looked like that far back.

"I don't have any of the stuff I skied with, but I remember I paid \$60 for the whole set. Doesn't sound like much, but that was about a week's pay."

Trabert is the oldest member of the club that will honor its founder, Miner Patton, at its season-ending meeting April 4.

The club, which began with 25 members, has grown to about 200. Members take one big trip a year, to places such as Telluride and Purgatory, and numerous shorter trips.

Ninety percent of the members are from the Sun Cities.

Trabert, a native of Evanston, Ill., remembers the origins 18 years ago.

"We used to go around putting stickers on every car that had a ski



Special to Community  
Among members of the Sun Cities Ski Club are (from left) Elmer Dyer, Richard Birke and Loren Trabert.

rack," he said.

He's been on most of the big trips but had to miss one two years ago.

"I was just getting over being

sick, and the doctor said I could go," he said. "But the boss — that would be my wife, Angie — said no. You have to keep peace, so I didn't go."

The club caters to those with at least some experience.

"We have an equal distribution of high- and low-end skiers," club President Rusty Richardson said. "It's not a club to teach someone how to ski. We just come together for the common enjoyment of skiing."

Although most of the members' hot-dogging days are over, a lot of former ski instructors and freestylers are in the club. Annual dues are \$5.

"Of course, we can always break that \$5 down into monthly payments if somebody can't afford it all at once," Richardson laughed.

Most members of the club have been skiing for decades, and they've had their share of injuries. A few suffer bumps, bruises and breaks during club trips. On the latest venture, a broken hip was the worst mishap.

Trabert never has had a severe injury. But he came close once.

"Once I hit my head when I fell and broke the strap on my ski goggles," he said. "I saw stars."

An ice skater and water-skier before he hit the slopes, Trabert believes in staying active. He still swims, is a member of the Sun City photo club and is a hospital volunteer. But he's used to hard work, having painted a two-story house solo during his youth and caddying for 25 cents an hour when he was having trouble landing a job after he obtained his degree from the University of Illinois.

# Sun Citians take to slopes

By LAURIE HURD

Taking their skis to challenge the slope's many snowy twists and turns is what the Sun Cities Ski Club seems to do best.

But touring through wintry forests and ascending through the silence of snowy mountains are not the only events that occupy the club member's time together.

The 160 members also spend time listening to guest speakers, sharing experiences and stories,

and of course, planning for future trips to the high country.

"Our members are active and interested in a variety of things to do," says Miner Patton, president/secretary of the club and certified ski instructor. "And we keep at it because it's so much fun."

When Patton first came to the area in 1973, he contacted people

at the Union Hills Country Club to see if he could get a ski group together. He found six people.

"I reasoned that if I could find six people out of 1,500 then I should be able to get 180 out of 45,000," says Patton.

Patton says the main goal of the club is to provide a place for

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MINER PATTON

## • SKI

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those interested in skiing to come together, either to ski or just to talk about it.

"We have quite a few non-skiers in our membership. They like to go along on the trips just for the pleasure of being out in the open. Many of our non-skiers are former skiers and enjoy watching," says Patton.

The club has traveled to resorts such as Purgatory in Utah and Arizona's Sunrise to participate in the winter sport. Extra expeditions are also made by members on their own.

As of yet, no member has had to return home from an excursion on crutches.

"We've had no ski accidents. Accidents only occur with begin-

ners who don't take instruction. We are beyond the age of challenges," says Patton.

"We've already tested the challenge, now we're out for the pure enjoyment of it."

Patton says because of the 8,000 to 10,000-foot elevations, skiing does represent "quite a bit of exercise." It's important to check with a doctor before one hits the slopes.

"Skiing involves the lower body muscles primarily. So if one can play golf, they're a good candidate to learn how to ski," says Patton.

For more information on the club and its activities, call Miner Patton at 972-1937.

25¢ PER COPY

1985

ARIZONA **SKIER**

Vol. 2 No. 1

November, 1985

Skiing—A Big Plus For the Sun Cities



NOVEMBER 1985

ARIZONA SKIER

VF - SKI CLUB

By William H. Chandler

Isn't it great to act like kids again! Here we are, playing softball, splashing back and forth in swimming pools, dancing every Saturday night to big bad music, skiing in beautiful powder snow — hey, hold it! Did you say skiing? You bet we did.

This area may be a paradise for warm weather sports, but the Sun Cities have another big plus in being only hours away from the best powder snow skiing in the United States. This means there is no need to restrict our activity to sports like tennis and golf that thrive in the dry warm climate of Arizona, but we can experience once again that unbeatable thrill of pushing off on our skis on a steep downhill run.

To the many northerners who retire to the Sun Cities, easy accessibility of ski regions offers a dramatic dimension to their lives. Once having felt the tingle of brisk frosty air in snow covered woods on a downhill or cross country trail, a skier hates to abandon that pleasure.

Miner Patton, a lifelong skier whose adventures spanned from Mount Washington in New Hampshire to Mount Hood in Oregon, was reluctant to give up his favorite sport when he moved to the desert southwest. So he organized the Sun Cities Ski Club in 1978 with a modest beginning of twenty members. Today the club has one hundred fifty members and is still growing.

Club activities include monthly dinner meetings and organized ski trips to various ski areas. Often movies or slides are shown to whet skiing appetites. The basic organized trips have been to Brian Head in Southern Utah, Sunrise in the Eastern Arizona White Mountains, and Purgatory in Southern Colorado near Durango. From twenty to fifty member set off on these junkets of four to six days. From friendships formed within the club, smaller groups have visited many other ski areas.

The 1986-86 season will open with a four-day trip to Sunrise as soon as weather permits. A six-day trip to Purgatory is planned in January.

The drive to Sunrise is a scenic ride through Payson and over the Mogollan Rim to the area near McNary. Accommodations are individual rooms at the Sunrise Lodge located a couple of miles from

the base of the mountain. The area has a wide variety of ski trails ranging in ability levels from beginner to expert, and rises to an elevation of 11,000 feet on Apache Peak.



## Skiing—A Big Plus For the Sun Cities



Sun Cities Ski Club Members on the Slopes

By William H. Chandler

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Trip coordinator Richard Wohl, right, gives some last-minute tips to beginning skier Mike Rutgard. Rutgard says he plans to return to the area for more skiing.

## Sun Citians discover Arizona's skiing country

*News-Sun Photos  
by M.J. Hoppes*

*Story written by  
Lynn Newton  
Staff Writer*

Although many Sun Cities residents move to the area to get away from snow and harsh winters, a group of 29 residents last week left the sunshine to brave snow and 30-degree temperatures in northern Arizona's mountains.

Bundled in scarves, mittens and winter coats, the group traveled to Mormon Lake, 25 miles southeast of Flagstaff, where several ski instructors waited to teach the Sun City students the sport of cross country skiing.

After being fitted with ski equipment in Mormon Lake's rental shop, the beginning skiers tackled the "kick and glide technique," skiing down hills, stopping and learning how to fall, while a few experienced skiers skimmed across short forest trails.

"I'M THE TYPE of gal who trips over a toothpick, yet this is my first time and I was able to cross country ski," Sun City Wester Bea Drucker said enthusiastically. "I just wish I'd started this 20 years ago."

In contrast, John Stoops said he had driven up on his own so he could pick up his ski equipment in Pinewood. "I started skiing on the sand hills as a boy back in Kansas," he recalled. "I put many miles on those \$5 skis before I left."

Following the two-hour lessons, groups began meeting in the lodge for lunch and to compare their morning experiences.

**ONE PARTICIPANT**, Helen Starkey, compared the sport to ice skating. "It's not really that hard once you get started. I'll bet if I was stronger I could really do this," she said. "I skied downhill and didn't fall. The instructor even told me I was fabulous and asked me how long I'd been skiing," she said with a grin.

Well-groomed trails awaited skiers once again after lunch, because rental owners, Kent and

Sue Pierce, said they had taken extra care in preparation for the Sun City group. "Special groups like this are a lot of fun," Pierce said. "This is the first time we've had such a large group composed only of senior citizens."

Following their afternoon treks, other beginning skiers described their encounter with the sport as "tremendous" and expressed surprise at the ease with which they were able to learn.

**ETHEL EPSTEIN** and Renee Gold attributed their newly gained expertise to rhythm gained in jazzercise classes, while Peter Harben compared the swinging motion to race walking.

"I just think the experience has been delightful, and I know I'll come back the first chance I get," Mrs. Epstein said.

After learning both the "left-handed and right-handed fall," Mike Rutgard said he wasn't worried and was able to relax and have fun. "All of this is very exciting—seeing the snow, and learning a new skill. I plan to come back as soon as I can."

**ENTHUSIASM** for a return trip was expressed by both beginners and experienced skiers as they praised trip coordinators Richard and Annette Wohl.

The opportunity to learn the winter sport was provided by the Wohls, who have organized Arizona State University-Sun Cities on Wheels trips and minicourses since summer 1982.

Wohl, an avid cross country skier, said he was pleased with the outcome of the trip, saying he liked to see the people get out and learn a new skill. "It gives them a certain amount of confidence.

"Even if some of them never go skiing again, the next time they watch the Winter Olympics they can critique the cross country skiers," he joked. "They'll be able to watch for style and technique."



Cross country skiing has no age limits, as Bertha Meana, 82, demonstrates in her downhill step-turn.

## Sun Citizen interested in ski club

A retired educator from Portland, Ore., who recently moved to Sun City is looking for area residents interested in forming a ski club.

Miner Patton said it would be his plan to form an organization that could make trips to Arizona ski areas and possibly even longer junkets.

Patton, who has skied for over 50 years, and was a certified instructor in the Pacific Northwest Ski Instructors Assn., asks that interested persons contact him at 972-1937.

Sun City News-Sun  
January 29, 1979

## Ski club <sup>News-Sun</sup> sets trip to Bowl

The newly-organized Sun City Ski Club used its first meeting last week to plan three events.

With 30 skiing enthusiasts on hand for the meeting at Union Hills Country Club, the group decided to make a four-day trip to Arizona Snow Bowl March 5-8.

A fall dinner meeting was set for Oct. 3, at Union Hills, at which time officers will be elected and bylaws will be considered.

The organization also made preliminary plans to travel to Arizona State University in November for a special ski film.

Additional information is available from Miner Patton, 972-1937.

## Ski club inaugural meet set

The inaugural meeting of the Sun City Ski Club is scheduled at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, in the Gold Room at Union Hills Country Club.

Organizer Miner Patton said, "It is a result of a story in the daily News-Sun seeking interested skiers that this first meeting is being called."

Patton added that organizational plans as well as scheduled activities will be the order of business at the initial meeting. Interested skiers can receive more information by calling Patton, 972-1937.

Sun City News-Sun  
February 12, 1979

## Sun City Ski Club prepares to schuss

The first meeting of the Sun City Ski Club will be held Thursday, Feb. 15, at 7:30 p.m. in the Gold Room of the Union Hills Country Club.

All persons interested in skiing are invited to attend to discuss further plans for organization and activities.

For information, call or write **Miner Patton**, 17803 Conestoga Dr., Sun City, 85373 - 972-1937.

Sun City Citizen  
February 14, 1979

### DOWN GRADED

I bought myself some skiing togs  
And went out to test my skill.  
I made it to the top all right  
But the rest was all downhill.

—Bill Ihlenfeldt  
Sun City

Feb. 21, 1979—21

## Sun City Citizen SECTION II

### SC skiers plan year's ventures

Some 30 skiers attended the inaugural meeting of the Sun City Ski Club at Union Hills Country Club Feb. 15 and made plans for three events.

A four-day trip to the Arizona Snow Bowl is being scheduled for March 5-8, a dinner meeting at the Union Hills Country Club for the first Wednesday in October, and a bus trip to see

Warren Miller's ski film at Grady Gammage Auditorium in November.

Election of officers and the adoption of a constitution and bylaws is to be considered at the club's fall meeting.

Any persons interested in participating in any of the club's activities or in joining the Sun City Ski Club should contact **Miner Patton** at 972-1937.