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ALTA POWDER NEWS

Online edition available at alta.com



The new P-ridge Howitzer building with Mt. Superior in the background

Tom Plofchan Long time skier, photographer and Alta businessman

A frequently asked question at Alta is "Who took that famous photo of the late Alf Engen jumping over the road, with Mount Superior in the background?" The answer...Tom Plofchan, who has played an important part of Alta's storied history since the late 1950s.

Tom is currently the owner/proprietor of the Photohaus, across the road from the Alta Lodge and next to the Shallow-Shaft restaurant. He built the building in the late 1960s and it has provided a wonderful place to obtain historical Alta photos taken by Tom as well as other Alta accessories.

What may not be so well known is that Tom Plofchan has also played an important role at Alta, not only as a prominent photographer, but also as a former Alta Ski Lift operator, ski instructor in the Alf Engen Ski School, and, for a time, the assistant manager for the Alta Lodge.

Newspaper clipping about Tom

Photogs Take To Air



LAST DETAILS before the take-off include careful snapping of parachute buckles for Thomas Plofchan before setting up photographic equipment aboard plane at Grouse Tie Naval Station. Tom is the son of Free Press Photographer Andy Plofchan. His training in the air is highly specialized throughout.

His expertise in photography began in his youth. His father, Andy Plofchan, was a highly respected professional photographer

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Message from Alta



The Alta Powder News has taken a few turns since the days when Will and Jean Pickett would ski around the mountain talking with skiers and employees, looking for story ideas for the next issue. In this high-speed time it is hard for us to gather information, get it out and call it news. More appropriately, we think the Alta Powder News' role is a venue for reporting information that should be recorded for history and then to couple that with the Alta Historical Society as they recount parts of Alta's colorful history.

While we gather and report history, the good news is our ski season is off to a great start thanks to abundant, early snow and hard work by snowmakers, cat drivers, shovellers and everyone else who set up the area for skiing.

Onno Wieringa, President & General Manager

Summer 2010

After a great 09-10 ski season filled with late spring storms, we ended up with a 600" snowfall year. With a winter like that, it can take until July to be able to drive to the top of the mountain.

Our upper mountain project this summer was the extension of snowmaking utilities from the top of Collins over to Devil's Elbow, with a spur going up Sugarbowl. With the help of Maura Olivos from the Alta Environmental Center, the construction crew (headed up by Al Tunbridge and Buck Boley) worked through a new Disturbance Protocol that was the playbook for using Best Management Practices for every construction step— from removing plants before digging to replanting with local flower seed. Then, with on-time completion of the project, when the early winter came our snowmaking crew was able to make snow, top to bottom, not only on Sugarloaf, but also on Sunnyside, Collins and Wildcat.

Additionally, this summer we designed and installed bars on the Sunnyside chairs to give skiers another option for something to hold on to.

As always, the bulk of the summer work was done by all of our maintenance crews who do the tasks on the tows and lifts, snowcats, plow equipment, snowmaking guns, parking lots, roads and all of the buildings.

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Tim Thomas delivering the new 105mm Howitzer

In response to the Army direction, the Utah Department of Transportation, with help from the Alta Ski Area, conducted a complete rebuild of the Peruvian Ridge weapons facility. The 105mm recoilless rifle mount was torn down and rebuilt below and south of the old mount. In its place was



Grom and Damian sighting the new 105mm Howitzer

built a full weapons building (storage room, make-up space and garaged shooting platform for a 105mm Howitzer.) The new weapon is better suited for its essential task of firing across the highway into the avalanche slide paths above the Town of Alta. The 105mm recoilless will be used to fire upon Mt. Baldy and serve as a back-up weapon to the Howitzer.

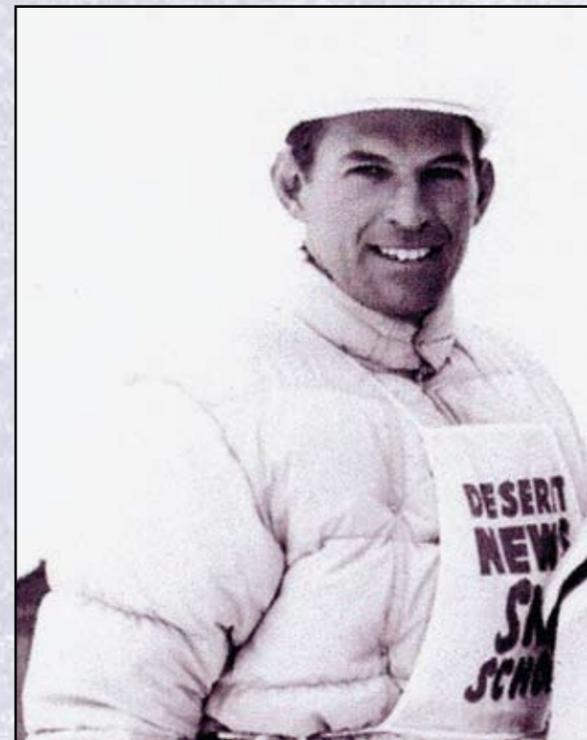
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and passed along his knowledge to Tom. As a Petty Officer, years 1949-1953, Tom was assigned by the Navy to do specialized photography during the Korean War.

Tom hails from the Michigan area and learned to ski at Boyne Mountain in the mid 50s. The legendary Stein Eriksen, who won 'a gold medal' in the 1952 Winter Olympic Games, was heading the ski school at Boyne Mountain at that time. Plofchan took lessons from Stein and worked his way onto the Boyne Mountain ski patrol.

What brought Tom Plofchan to Alta was a fortuitous set of circumstances involving a short visit to Alta in the mid 1950s with a friend, Bob Jacobson. He liked it so much he made a decision to return the next year to seek employment. After several interviews, Tom was hired by the late Chic Morton to work on the lift crew servicing the Wildcat lift. This led to Tom meeting Alex Brogle, Assistant Director in Junior Bounous's ski school located at Sugarbowl Ski Area in California. After some discussion Tom elected to accept a position in Junior's ski school and taught there until he returned to Alta in the early 1960s.

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Tom Plofchan, ski school instructor circa 1960

Slopeside Spotlight



Barb Altum and Kozi, circa 2007

Barbara Altum, Alta Ski Area Office Manager

Alta has benefited by many noteworthy personalities. Barbara Altum is one of those who, behind the scenes, make a sizable contribution to the administrative side of Alta Ski Area operations. Her dedication and loyalty to Alta have played out in numerous ways over the years. Not only does she play a key role as a member of the Alta management team, but her outstanding contributions in search and rescue operations are recognized throughout the Intermountain region.

Barbara first came to Alta from her home in Clovis, California in 1970 where she was employed as a junior high and high school educator. Her initial assignment was in the Alf Engen Ski School Office. This was followed by a move over to the main office

in 1979 where she took over responsibilities, which she still retains, of secretary and office manager.

Her entry into search and rescue activities along the Wasatch mountain range began as a result of finding a way to keep Alta's first trained avalanche dog, Jingo, active during the summer months. Barbara took responsibility as Jingo's trainer in 1981 and joined the Rocky Mountain Rescue Dog program in 1983. Since then, she has personally trained other Alta search dogs: Marley, Bailey, and Kozi. All current Rocky Mountain Rescue Dogs and their trainers are available for emergency operations whenever called upon. She credits her involvement with FEMA on September 11, 2001, as among her most memorable experiences.

Although Barbara Altum has witnessed a number of changes at Alta over the years, she credits the installation of detachable lifts among the most significant in her opinion. In her words, "I think Alta has done a very respectable job of keeping the mountain environment the same but putting considerable effort in upgrading it's infrastructure. My hope is, as we look to the future, that we can remain snowboard free and continue to be sensitive to Alta's fragile and beautiful surroundings by carefully controlling that which might adversely affect its environment."

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Upon his return to Alta, he was hired part time as an instructor in the Alf Engen Ski School and full time in the Alta Lodge owned by Bill Levitt. This, in turn, allowed Tom to continue to pursue his deep passion for taking photographs at Alta. Some of his most memorable photos include a series of images with the late Robert F. Kennedy at Alta, just a couple of months prior to Kennedy's tragic assassination in 1968. His outstanding photo of an avalanche running off Eagle's Nest in 1964 has been highlighted in a number of books including FIRST TRACKS – A Century of Skiing in Utah (2001) by Alan Engen and Dr. Greg Thompson. Many other photos taken by Tom over the years with VIP dignitaries such as Lowell Thomas, William Buckley, Art Linkletter, Robert MacNamara and other visitors can be found in past issues of the Alta Powder News.

Tom was asked to relate his early beginnings with the Alta Photohaus. In his own words, this is how he explained it. "After leaving my position of Assistant Manager of the Alta Lodge, the late Gene Huber let me sleep in a house trailer that he had brought up the canyon and parked behind the Old Deep Powder House shop (now the Shallow Shaft building). I spent the following winter in the Snow Pine Lodge but was hired by Peruvian Lodge owner, the late Edwin Gibbs, to be the lodge photographer. While working at the Peruvian Lodge, I put my request in with the Forest Service to build the Alta Photohaus. During the next several winters, I taught skiing in the Alf Engen Ski School providing private lessons to selected clientele. In 1968, I opened my retail store, selling fleece ware, T-shirts, film, and my scenic and action photos of deep powder skiing....(along with many families of guests in the various lodges at Alta.) I also did action movie photography and was hired to take guests helicopter skiing into Gad Valley and White Pine areas before Snowbird was developed."

During the 1970s and 80s, Tom Plofchan spent time as a member of Alta's Town Council with other well known Alta personalities, such as Jim Shane, Chic Morton, and Al Capp. Also, not known to very many people, Tom was appointed as the Town of Alta's first Chief Deputy Marshal and was also a member of the Salt Lake County Sheriff's Office for four years in the early 1980s.

Tom is currently a young 80 years of age but does not ski any more due to having total knee replacement on both legs. When asked how he would like to be remembered for his many years at Alta, he replied in his quiet demeanor, "I would like to be remembered as a successful entrepreneur, who completely loves Alta, and thanks God for being here."

Alta Ski Area and many others at Alta thank Tom for his many contributions and for helping to make Alta the special place that it is.



Current picture of Tom in front of the Photohaus.

Alta.com My Alta Launch

Alta launched its new Web site on November 18th— just in time for Opening Day. With the goal of including more rich imagery and a "fresh look", many on Alta's staff worked hard on the project.

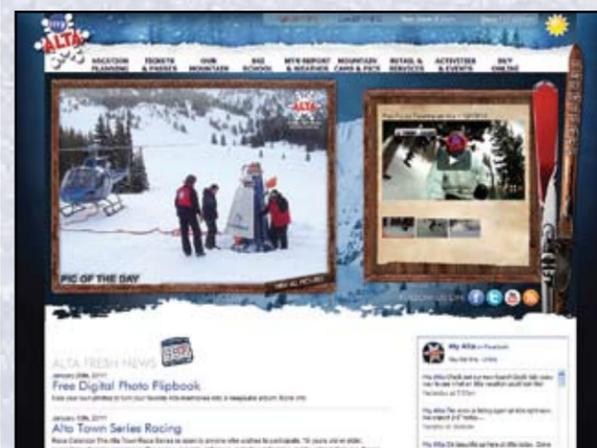
A part of the site that has drawn a lot of attention is the community page. It can be accessed by clicking on the Social Media icons at the bottom of all of the pages on the site.

However you choose to use My Alta, we encourage you to connect with us and make your voice heard (most of the news posts will be open for your comments). Socially you can connect with us in the following ways, so pick your passion.

- Twitter > myAltaUT
- Facebook > My Alta
- YouTube > myAltaUT



The new look of alta.com



The new MyAlta page on alta.com

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