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ALTA POWDER NEWS

Online edition available at alta.com



Skiing at Alta on the final weekend

Alan Engen leaves Alta

On April 12th, friends, family, fellow skiers and co-workers celebrated the contributions made by Alan Engen at a gathering at Alf's Restaurant. It was more than appropriate to acknowledge Alan at the Alta venue named after his father, Alf Engen.

A love of skiing defines Alan. He grew up in Salt Lake City, and started skiing at age two and was skiing competitively by nine. He became a five-time Intermountain junior ski champion and a five-time senior champion in both Nordic and Alpine. He was an All American skier for the University of Utah, a member of the U.S. military ski team, and a many times winner in the U.S. Masters Series. Alan was named a Utah Ski Legend, was inducted into the Utah Sports Hall of Fame, added to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame and inducted into the University of Utah Crimson Club Hall of Fame.



Alan and Barbara Engen at Alf's Restaurant

Perhaps Alan's most passionate tribute to our sport was building the Joe Quinney Winter Sports Center/Alf Engen Ski Museum. He also wrote two books on skiing, served as chairman and president of the Alta Historical Society, and was a

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Message from Alta



Another great ski season has wrapped up for the Alta Ski Area and continues on for a few hardy ski tourers that have yet to get their fill.

The great skiing we all enjoyed was, in part, delivered on the backs of our ski patrollers, lift crew and snow cat drivers who dealt with nearly continuous stormy weather. If one were to look for signs of climate change, this past winter could be an example. Near record snowfall with

densities 10% over average and numerous rime events, mixed with freezing rain, and even one major rain event, all added up to a very diverse year.

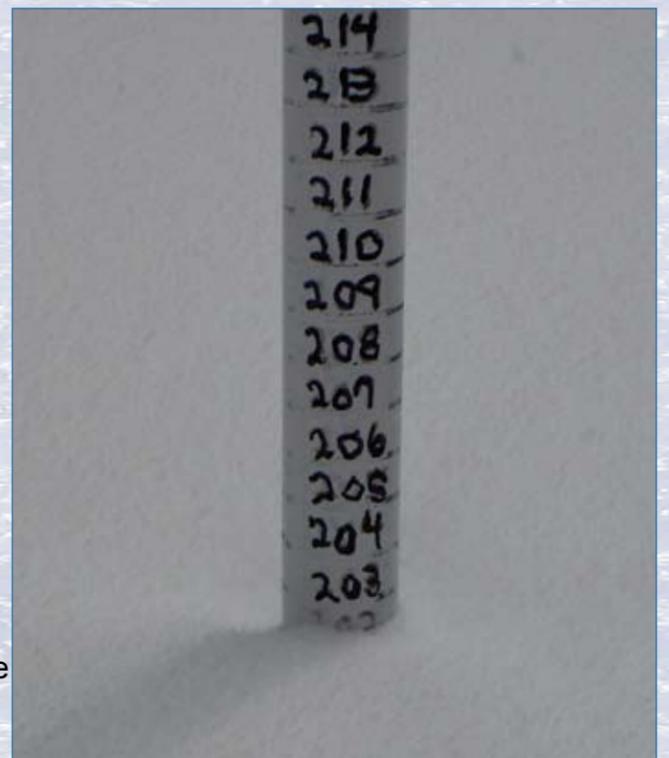
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2010-11 goes down as big snow season

Alta experienced its 2nd biggest snow season this winter. A total of 724 inches graced the slopes, making the season just 24 inches shy of the 1981-82 748-inch record.

Alta is proud of its accurate and long-time record keeping of seasonal snowfall. The snow safety team, headed by Titus Case, has detailed records of daily activity dating back to 1980. The seasonal snowfall is measured from October snow that remains a part of the winter snow pack through April 30. By placing these parameters on the statistical data, Alta is able to compare "apples to apples" from season to season. The average seasonal snowfall is then calculated every May. As of this May, Alta's 31-year average is 563 inches.

At the time of preparing this article on May 23rd, Alta's mid-mountain base depth at the Collins stake was 184". The season ended after skiing on May 1st, with a base depth of 204".



Mid-mountain snow stake on April 26, 2011

Slopeside Spotlight



Scott Mathers, Alf Engen Ski School

In the 1980's, Scott was teaching skiing and coaching racers at Mt. Bachelor in Oregon. He was exposed to Alta and Snowbird through PSIA (Professional Ski Instructors of America) educational events, and was considering teaching skiing at Snowbird. He had an opportunity to ski at Alta in the spring of 1989. Scott fell in love with the atmosphere, terrain, snow and scenery. PJ Jones, the Ski School Director at the time, offered him a position as Alf Engen Ski School Trainer. Scott has no regrets!

Scott considers the AltaSnowbird Connection and the bottom to top Collins lift as definitely the biggest changes he has seen over the last twenty years at Alta. He feels that both have been very positive for our skier's experience.

When asked about his experiences working and teaching at Alta, Scott has this to say, "As an instructor, I have met so many interesting and great people. After twenty plus years of skiing daily at Alta, I have had a few good runs! The most awesome opportunity has been living with my family in Alta for the last 8 years. The opportunity for my kids to attend public school and ski daily at Alta is priceless. We are so fortunate to have all that come together for our kids. We love our lifestyle at Alta. Oh yeah, I did meet my wife, Kristina, here at Alta. That was really the best move I ever made!"

Scott's vision for Alta is to continue to offer our customers the highest quality skiing and ski school experience found anywhere. Quality ensures our longevity. Scott hopes to be here for many, many years to come.

When asked about the best advice he can give new employees, Scott feels that to ski every day, no matter what you think the skiing conditions will be like, is paramount. He remarks that he has had days when he thought the skiing would be poor, but often a little wind, maybe an inch or two of graupel, or a quick snow squall, can transform a blah day almost instantly into fantastic skiing. He has a motto: "You don't know how the skiing is until you go skiing." Scott feels it is a mistake to make judgments from the parking lot. His parting advice? You can almost always find a few great turns at Alta!



Jeremy and Scott Mathers circa 2009

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charter member of the University of Utah J. Willard Marriott Library Ski Archives Advisory Board.



Alta is honored to share Alan with the world of skiing, but we try to claim him as our very own. He was involved at Alta for over 50 years as a ski instructor, ski school director, and Director of Skiing. His joy for being on the mountain was something he never hid. Alta is very fortunate to also be the beneficiary of Alan's passion for history. In his quiet, but stubborn way, Alan coaxed others at Alta into understanding the importance of the history of the ski area and community, and the importance of gathering that history, both from the past and from those who could share the stories before it was too late. Thank you, Alan, for leaving Alta a better place because of your kindness, professionalism, and quiet dedication.



Alan Engen, April 12, 2011 at Alf's Restaurant

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Snowcat Skiing in Grizzly Gulch

by Jarrod Blouin

Being dropped off at the highest point in Grizzly Gulch had its advantages. The snow was so deep, I remember thinking how Alf Engen skied all day long in a wool sweater, sunglasses and skinny skis. They were tough back then. Every bit of terrain was skied by those pioneers and Grizzly Gulch, the world famous sidecountry at Alta, was no exception. I found myself standing in waist deep snow, shredding fresh tracks with a some of skiing's most avid enthusiasts.

When I drove down Little Cottonwood Canyon the night before, the super-hyped storm had not even started yet. On the way up the canyon in the morning, storm amounts were nothing for an Alta local to write home about. But when I put my skis on the rack, the new snow was over my knee. It was glorious to know that all those beautiful inches of snow (sub-6% moisture) had fallen in a matter of hours, and since it was deep at the base, I could only imagine that Grizzly Gulch would be a little deeper.

Meeting at the Albion Grill for coffee and a great breakfast, there were eight of us total; doctors, lawyers, financiers, two Alta patrollers, and a camera person. Then there was me, a local ski bum invited for the ride of a lifetime. Having skied Alta three hundred plus days, I knew this was a special occasion. It weighed heavy on my excitement scale. We loaded the snow cat, then it jolted forward to begin exploding through deep drifts the whole way to the top of Grizzly Gulch. This was an Alta skiing experience unlike any others.

Gear unloaded, standing on skis, we listened to the guides. Events started blurring together. Drop in. Turn after waist deep turn, face shots, over the head.

After the first half of the run, the group gathered to catch our breath. I looked down the canyon at a view that hadn't changed much in a thousand years. Those mountains and trees have been gazed upon, both winter and not, by droves of outdoor enthusiasts lucky enough to make it to Alta. I was standing on snow that has beckoned kings and queens from around the globe. That snow seemed to converse with me, mid-run, like we were old friends. All those famous Alta conditions were simple and pure in this very moment.

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Jarrod enjoying Alta's cat skiing terrain in Grizzly Gulch

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I struggled to find something to compare this experience with. I was at a loss for words. Plainly stated, there was no other place like Alta at that moment. While the rest of the world busily zoomed forward making more things to buy and sell, my worries faded, deadlines diminished, and every thought of work disappeared. In fact, the whole world shrunk to 8 people, a snow cat, and 29 inches of the greatest snow on earth.

It was only the first of eight trackless, perfect runs labeled later by our ski patrol guides as some of the deepest snow that they have ever skied. Snow continued to fall heavily. Another intense snowstorm was expected that evening.

Alf Engen can have his wool and his sunglasses, I was happy for modern outerwear and equipment. The snow had a way of being in every pocket and seam in my heavy winter coat. I needed the GoreTex and the goggles and fat skis. I thanked him, though, for his powder skiing techniques, and his vision as our local hero.

Alta Ski Area has a snow cat skiing operation that will surely wow the most distinguished of skiing tastes. Its affordable, friendly and most of all, unforgettable. Booked through the Alf Engen Ski School office, participation is limited, so inquire early and frequently. The trip does not go often; only when the snow is perfectly deep. Unsure of how to shred deep snow? Instructors at the Alf Engen Ski School can set you straight. Arrange a private lesson or take a Powder Workshop. Come cat skiing in Grizzly Gulch.

Hope to see you on the slopes.



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Alta says goodbye to its Ske-Cology intern

The Alta Environmental Center has now successfully worked with two interns and this spring it said goodbye to its second, Matt Hundhammer. Alta sends a big thanks to Matt for all of his hard work, willingness to learn and extreme passion for this internship.

Matt's internship focused on retooling Alta's Ske-Cology program. With his fresh eyes on Alta, he reminded all of us how special and rich Alta's culture and ecology is. So, the next time you find yourself off Sunnyside's Home Run or Crooked Mile, keep an eye out for the Ske-Cology signs to discover Alta's true wild side!

A note from Matt:

Dear Alta,

It has been a splendid couple of months. The powder-rushed mornings, dreamscape sunsets, and cross-tow "hellos" will not soon be forgotten. I have been here for the last two and a half months designing an Alta-centric environmental education program that could be utilized by both K-12th grade formal educators and non-formal educators.

For the past decade Alta has hosted the National Ski Area Association's Ske-Cology® environmental education program. Up until my arrival, Ske-Cology® updates had been left to the loving hands of Alf Engen Ski School's, Robyn Christiansen. After recognizing the additional strain updates and maintenance of the program was having on Ski School, our Sustainability Coordinator, Maura Olivos, decided it was time to utilize Alta's long-term relationship with the Utah Society for Environmental Education (USEE) and the swelling population of environmental interns to create a project-based internship focused on updating the Ske-Cology® sign series.

As it turned out, I was that "ambitious intern" who was awarded the task. With the guidance of the Environmental Center, USEE, and the Cottonwood Canyons Foundation (CCF) I have updated the Alta Ske-Cology signs, formulated an educator's manual and hosted three program workshops. The success of this internship could not have been achieved without the help of the Alf Engen Ski School, Maura Olivos, the Green Team, Robyn Christiansen, Connie Marshall, CCF, USEE, Andy White, Julia Head, Ski with a Ranger Program, and Onno Wieringa. Thank you all for your edits, input and consideration.

Throughout my time here I have absorbed the "Alta Experience" like a dry sponge. This place truly is the sole of skiing. I say this now, and I mean it! I'll be back.

Sincerely,
Matt Hundhammer



Alta's authentic Facebook page - My Alta

www.facebook.com/altaskiarea

Alta's foray into social media took a leap this season with the re-creation of its very own Facebook company profile. For a number of years there have been a few profiles set up by our skiers- and we were very appreciative of the activity and postings. One profile, in particular, was very popular, having garnered over 9,000 "likes".

Please make sure that you find us and become a part of this niche of Alta skiers and of the conversation.



The official MyAlta facebook profile picture

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