

# PLUMAS SKI CLUB

## HISTORY OF THE LONGBOARD RACES

### “DOPE IS KING”

**F**ifty-eight miles per hour! No speed record you say? Try telling that to Cornish

Bob, the world's first champion speed skier. It was near La Porte, on the snow-covered slopes of Lexington Hill in February of 1867 that he flew to victory over the 1,804 foot track on twelve foot long wooden skis. Using the magic "dope", "Norway skates," or skis, were first introduced to the mining camps in 1853. For the next ten years races were held between various camps such as Onion Valley, Saw Pit Flat, La Porte, Howland Flat, Port Wine and Gibsonville. In late 1866, the Alturas Snowshoe Club was formed at La Porte and in February, 1867, the first formal ski tournament in the western hemisphere was held there, giving birth to the sport of downhill ski racing. For the

next twenty years or so, organized meets with fifty or more participants, 500 spectators and purses of \$500 to \$1000 were held. The racers, representing their towns, made the winter circuit from La Porte, Johnsville, Jamison City, Poker Flat, Sierra City, Monte Cristo and smaller camps. The skis these early speed demons rode were commonly called "snowshoes" or "longboards" and were constructed of tight, vertical-grained Douglas fir. The skis were shaped with planes, the groove on the bottom with a special "grooving" plane, and the tips bent by a long steaming process. Bindings consisted only of two pieces of leather attached to the sides with three or four holes on each side for lacing tight. A small block of wood was attached to the ski to hold the heel in place. For starting and stopping, a six foot long single stout pole with a wood block at one end was employed. Starting was accomplished by making three or four strong lunging thrusts, while stopping was a matter of sitting on the pole to apply pressure, creating a drag and at the same time, a spectacular "rooster tail" of snow. Although a strong start is definitely a plus in this style of racing, the wax or "dope" applied to the base is equally

or more important. The recipes to create these substances were closely guarded by the dopemaker, and consisted of waxy substances from the brow of the sperm whale, oil of cedar, Venice turpentine, oil of tar, wintergreen, soapstone, balsam of fir, pine pitch, and of course very secret ingredients! The first generation of longboarders continued the sport sporadically during the 1870s and 1880s, slumped, then revived in the late '90s and went full blast until the last races around 1914. During the 1930s there was a small revival, then a much stronger one in the 1950s, another hiatus, and now the present revival, started in 1993. In the spirit of the 19th century racers, three longboard races are now held annually at the Plumas Eureka Ski Bowl at Johnsville. The racers must be



dressed in period style clothing, and only dope from authentic recipes and ingredients may be used on the skis. As in the original races, participants must climb the hill on foot to the starting line. Once a squad of 2-3 is lined up and poised, the gong is sounded and the race is on. The strongest start and the straightest line (along with the best dope and best balance) generally determines the winner.



### 15TH ANNUAL WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP HISTORIC LONGBOARD REVIVAL RACES MARCH 16, 2008

- ☆ Longboard Life in The Lost Sierra ☆
- ☆ Tales from Onion Valley ☆
- ☆ The Role of Johnsville ☆
- ☆ History of Plumas Eureka State Park ☆
- ☆ The Longest Longboard Revival Series ☆

- PLUMAS SKI CLUB** ... questionable decedents of the famed Alturas Snowshoe Club
- 9:15 Race Registration and Practice Runs
  - 10:59 Introduction of Dignitaries and their stories
  - 11:13 Mountain Music of The Lost Sierra
  - 11:32 Race Rules & Regulations
  - 11:33 Womens Draw
  - 11:45 Mens Draw
  - 12:01 Let the Races Begin!
  - 3:53 World Champions Awards Ceremony
  - 4:30 Last Shuttle



**You Too can be a Legend in Your Own Time and on Your Own Boards!**  
Starting in the Fall of 2008, Feather River College will be holding a Longboard Making Class!

# The Plumas Ski Club

The Plumas Ski Club was formed as a non-profit organization in 1950, with founding members coming from Blairsden, Portola and Quincy. The club ran a rope tow until 1954, promoting cross-country and downhill skiing. In 1955, members moved the rope tow to the Eureka Bowl, the same place where miners had raced down the slopes in the past.

From this point on, the Plumas Ski Club operated surface tows and lifts until the area became incorporated into the state park system in 1970, through a land swap. The club didn't operate the rope tow in the winter of 1955 because the road could not be plowed. The ski club, Meadow Valley Lumber Company, Plumas National Forest and Plumas County collaborated to improve the road to the ski hill and the county plowed the road that winter, making the 1957-58 season the first with a manmade ski lift operating on the current site.

Skiers used an old paint shed with a capacity of 10 people for a warming hut that first season. The following summer, Plumas County black-topped the road and parking lot and the first ski hut was built.

Portola's high school started the first Plumas Unified School District ski program.

Though for years, the Plumas County School District and local community supported the skier population, the equipment and facilities at the ski area became too unreliable to operate consistently. This led to a drop in

skier attendance and finally the closing of the ski hill in 2003.

The ski club has kept the tradition alive with its longboard races, but many people still long for the days of the fully operational ski hill, which accounted for 10,000 visits per year. The effort to bring the ski hill back into operation began right on the tail of its

This plan passed the California Environmental Quality Act requirements in October 2006, meaning the only thing holding the hill back from reopening at this point is money.

The Plumas Ski Club together with the MOU (45 members) is in the process of securing funds to re-open the Plumas Eureka Ski Bowl, staff and sustain the area for its historic and cultural value as well as for regional recreation. The effort continues to acquire new equipment, open the Ski Bowl and sustain a recreational program for all to enjoy.



Ron Logan, President

closure, with a memorandum of understanding developed by interested parties in 2003 (aka MOU Group). The state park decided that the best choice environmentally would be to install a new chairlift in the "footprint" of the old Squaw Poma lift.

For Plumas Eureka Ski Bowl updates and Race Results, check out the website [plumasskiclub.org](http://plumasskiclub.org)

## JOHNSVILLE JR. SKI TEAM



The Johnsville Jr. Ski Team is on a fast track! To the left are the indefatigable Blizzard Wizards at the top of Homewood Resort on the West Shore of Lake Tahoe gearing up for their 4th race of the 2008 season. With the support of the Plumas Ski Club, the Johnsville Jr. Ski Team has had tremendous success competing with the other teams in their league. While they have not had the convenience of drilling at their local hill like other teams have, they continue to rank among the top in their league. This is a true testimonial to their grit and determination and to the acumen of the coaching staff! GO JOHNSVILLE!

## MEMBERSHIP IN PLUMAS SKI CLUB

*The Plumas Ski Club is a non-profit organization overseen by a volunteer Board of Directors selected from the community. The Ski Club has promoted family oriented skiing and longboarding for over 40 years.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

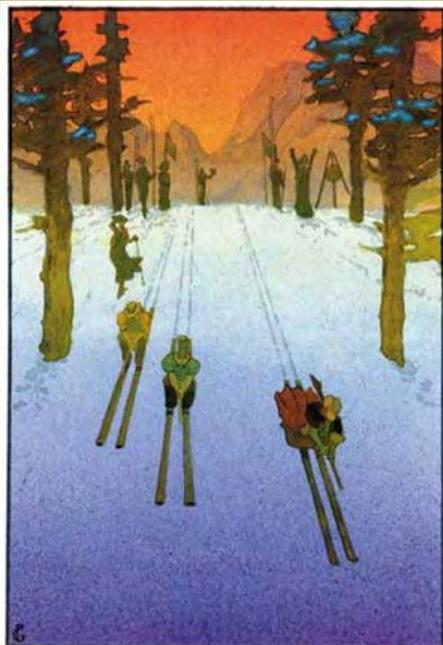
E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Indicate your Area of Interest:

☆ Board of Directors    ☆ Fund Raising    ☆ Committee Work

### Benefits of Membership

*In addition to offering support for community skiing in Plumas County, all PSC membership categories will receive: e-mail updates, a comprehensive website and direct mailing of the PSC newsletter (when available) Individual Membership is \$25*



10th ANNUAL DISCORIC LOGBOARD REVIVAL SERIES PLUMAS SKI CLUB 2002