

California Ski Association

The California Ski Association [CSA] came into being as a direct result of losing the 1932 Winter Olympic Games to Lake Placid, NY.

Both Yosemite and Big Pines made a bid for the Olympics but the world saw California as the “Land of Sunshine and Flowers” and couldn’t believe there was any snow in the state. In addition, many in California didn’t want the world to know they had snow because they thought it would hurt tourism.

But skiers in the state wanted an opportunity to secure a sanctioned meet and invite the world to experience what California had to offer. To do this, California needed a statewide organization affiliated with the National Ski Association.

A special meeting of the Winter Sports Committee of the California State Chamber of Commerce was held on Tuesday, October 7, 1930 at the Palace Hotel in San Francisco. **Wendell Robie** of Auburn Ski Club was elected president of the newly formed California Ski Association.

Others elected were **Frank Deuprey** of the California State Chamber of Commerce, Secretary; **W. A. Wadsworth** of Los Angeles, Treasurer; Vice Presidents: **Don Tresidder**, Yosemite; **Herbert Fleishhacker, Jr.**, San Francisco, for the northern part of the State; **George L. Eastman** and **J. B. Hanson** of the Viking Club, both of Los Angeles, for the southern part of the State.

The election of the directors was left to the four originating ski clubs— Truckee Ski Club, Auburn Ski Club, Yosemite Winter Club and Viking Ski Club of Los Angeles— to name two each from their respective clubs. A resolution was passed asking that there be an entrance fee of \$20 for each club desiring to affiliate with CSA. California was admitted into the National Ski Association at the annual convention held on December 14, 1930.

In 1931, Wilbur Maynard, representing CSA, went east and was successful in securing the NSA Championships in Jumping and Langlauf [cross-country] for 1932. CSA organized its first annual championships on February 21-23, 1931 at the Olympic Hill of the Lake Tahoe Ski Club. This event was sanctioned by NSA and used as the 1932 US team “California Olympic Tryouts.”

Far West Ski Patrol

In the winter of 1936, the Auburn Ski Club instituted the first ski patrol unit in California after a skier froze to death on Mt. Lincoln above Donner Pass. The patrol was formed as an embryo organization within the Auburn Volunteer Fire Department.

The five members of the patrol— **Harry Rosenberry**, **Roy Sands**, **Al Bequette**, **Herb Clegg, Jr.**, and **George Gianni**— completed advanced first aid and instructor courses at their own expense in Sacramento.

The City of Auburn purchased a resuscitator and other aid equipment for the patrol. They helped fallen or lost skiers and checked trails for people and obstacles.

In 1938, the NSA formed the National Ski Patrol System [NSPS] and the Auburn Ski Club became affiliated with the organization. Far West patrols developed a rescue toboggan equipped with first aid supplies that was later adopted by NSPS and other ski associations throughout the US.

Don Tresidder of Yosemite was the first Far West patroller inducted into NSPS and was assigned number 14 in 1938. In 1941, **Dorothy McClung Wullich** of San Diego Ski Club was named the first woman ski patroller and assigned the number one.

World War II

At the CSA Convention at the Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco, California on October 18, 1942, the board, led by President Dr. Frank Howard, voted to freeze all offices, even if the officer was serving in the war. CSA asked that there be no tournaments.

There would be no sanctioned events, no conventions, and no travel until the war was over. In addition, CSA paid club dues to NSA for clubs unable to do so.

In California, NSPS Division Chairman **Albert Sigal** was bent on building the Ski Patrol into a top-notch search and rescue unit and offered their services to a near-by Air Force base.

Late February 1942, a bomber crashed due to heavy snowfall in the San Bernardino Mountains outside of Los Angeles. When the Air Force was un-able to locate the plane, the California Ski Patrol, led by **Cortlandt T. Hill**, spent 2,113 man-hours on the search.

This success led to the formation of "Operation M'Aidez" [May Day], the code name for coordinating 24 NSPS patrols from San Diego to Seattle in search and rescue missions for the 4th Air Force. This partnership continued for many years.

Post War Growth

After the war, California's ski history has been largely a story of area development. There was a glut of inexpensive "surplus" ski equipment available for the masses. Many of those that served in the Army's famed 10th Mountain Division came home to build their mountain.

In October 1946, at the CSA convention in Santa Cruz, the constitution was changed and the bylaws revised creating a competition committee. CSA established the formation of six districts within the state that would meet monthly.

An Area Development committee was formed in the hopes of securing the opening of the San Geronio Area for skiing. Three years later, the US Forest Service released their prospectus outlining a proposal for the initial development of Mineral King.

Prior to the war, CSA had established a committee to work out a "Plan for Certification of Ski Instructors" and to standardize teaching. In 1947, the first professional ski instructor organization in the US was the California Ski Instructor's Association organized at Donner Summit.

Far West Ski Association

At the CSA convention on October 29, 1948, the association officially changed its name to Far West Ski Association to conform to the designations of the other divisions of NSA and to have a name more representative of the geographical area it encompassed— California, Nevada and Hawaii. The annual convention was also changed from fall to spring.

The primary function of Far West was sanctioning tournaments to be held within the Far West region. This involved scheduling dates, selecting the judges, and regulating the events. Another important function of Far West was raising funds for Winter Olympics and FIS [Fédération Internationale de Ski] to help finance USA teams who participated in ski and jump events.

By 1960, FWSA had grown to 80 affiliated clubs, with approximately 4,500 members of whom 1,250 were competitive skiers. The emphasis of the association was moving more toward recreation. Two things contributed greatly to the growth of skiing in the Far West during the early 60's— the Far West Flight Charter Program and the televised coverage of the VIII Winter Olympics at Squaw Valley.

Thousands of new California skiers joined the ranks and in 1966 FWSA implemented bylaw changes at its Las Vegas Convention, enabling the organization to expand its professional staff and develop a broad spectrum of programs attractive to recreational skiers.

Far West developed a marketing approach, which proved successful in attracting more members. These benefits included dry land training, club and league racing, membership benefits, a newspaper, public affairs programs, insurance, and travel vacation ski weeks.

Far West Flight Program

The story of the highly successful Far West Charter flights goes back a few years before the first Far West Charter in 1958. The very first attempt to charter flights within the Far West region began with the Grindelwald Ski Club in Los Angeles.

Spearheaded by **Sutter Kunkel**, it took just a couple of years to get the Charter Flight Program off the ground.

The Far West Flight Charter Program began with one flight from Los Angeles to Zurich and Paris in 1958. By 1964, Far West had ten charters leaving from Los Angeles and San Francisco to Switzerland, Germany and France.

In 1962, Far West used the proceeds from previous flights to send seven junior racers, with their coach **Dave McCoy**, to Europe on one of the charter flights, allowing these young racers to ski in Europe and get a taste of international racing.

The program grew as flights were added to South America and New Zealand in the summer and domestic flights in the winter. This program continued until the early 80s.

1960 Olympics

The fact that Squaw Valley was awarded the 1960 Winter Olympics in Squaw Valley was an amazing feat.

Andrew Hauk served as Vice Chairman of the California Olympic Commission that supervised the spending of \$8,990,000 appropriated by the State of California for acquiring and constructing all of the major facilities required for the staging of the games.

Far West leaders **J. Stanley Mullin, Walt Disney, Roy Mikkelsen, Albert Sigal, and Harry Rosenberry** were members of the Olympic Organizing Committee.

Gene Williams, Far West Chair-man of the National Ski Patrol System, proposed that NSPS patrol these winter Olympics. Backed by Far West, this Olympics was the first time the games were covered by a volunteer ski patrol. The Olympic Ski Patrol [OSP] was made up of 48 men and 3 women.

Emil "Chris" Christensen of Pasadena, California led the volunteers. **Bud Mills**, who founded the Far West Avalanche Program, was patrol leader of the OSP avalanche detail.

The Beginning of Councils

In the beginning the Association was divided into districts. In 1941, the 5th District was added to cover the Bay Area. District 4 began calling itself the Southern Council of the FWSA in the 40s. In 1947, the Bay Area Ski Federation was organized "for the welfare of Bay Area skiers" but they didn't vote to join Far West as the Bay Area Council of FWSA until 1961. Far West recognized Central and San Diego Councils in the 1960s.

The council development program of the 70s, headed by **John Watson**, hoped to bring the purposes of the councils and the association into alignment within Far West. This process began in 1969 with the Southern Council that regarded itself as a district arm of the association and promoted the programs of the Far West, even creating council positions mirroring the program positions at the regional level. This resulted in a synergistic benefit to both council and Far West.

The program also concentrated on encouraging the smaller councils to become more active in the Far West programs and solicited nonaffiliated councils to join. Strenuous but ultimately unsuccessful attempts were made to bring in councils such as Arizona, Sacramento, and Tahoe-Reno [latter as the Sierra Nevada Council].

As a result of this emphasis on smaller councils, there was a spinoff from Southern Council of the Inland and Orange Councils in 1971. Southern was a huge council, including over 60 clubs meeting as far east as San Bernardino, south to cover Orange County, and north to Santa Barbara and even Mammoth Mountain!

The realignment of Southern Council [later renamed Los Angeles Council] made it far easier for club representatives to make it to meetings and ensure meaningful involvement and activities.

Far West Fight for Ski Areas

In 1947, only a handful of skiers showed up at the first hearing proposing San Gorgonio as a ski area. It was evident that a national voice was needed. The West faces different problems from the rest of the nation in that most of their ski areas are on public lands and hence dictated to by the Forest Service and the public.

In 1964, the **San Gorgonio Fund** was established by Southern Council to get "San G" developed as a ski area. Although the fight continued for many years, the Wilderness Act of 1964 put an end to the hopes of ever developing San Gorgonio.

In 1965, the Forest Service issued a second prospectus for developing Mineral King Game Refuge as a ski area and accepted the Disney bid. The Sierra Club sued and in 1969, the San Francisco District Court issued a preliminary injunction.

Save Our Skiing Fund was created by **Jerry Garrett**, Single Ski Club, in November 5, 1969 in the battle over Mineral King. Far West served as amicus curiae all the way to the Supreme Court only to have Congress move the area into the Sequoia National Park, thus preventing further development.

Far West convened a **Public Lands Advisory Board** [PLAB] to search of suitable ski sites in California. Among the 20-plus sites identified by **Royall Brown** were Moses-Maggie, Trail Peak, Independence Lake, Sherwin Bowl, and Peppermint Mountain.

The **Skisport Defense Fund** was incorporated January 8, 1974 to raise funds to support the advocacy of these areas, notably led by **Chuck Morse**. It is highly unlikely that these areas will ever be developed.

Far West Programs

Throughout the 60s and 70s, Far West continued to develop programs for the recreational skier that included a Membership Benefit Book, Ski Theft Insurance, Ski Weeks, Flight Charters to Europe and within the US, Public Affairs and Intramural Racing. In return, the clubs sponsored events that raised money for junior racers and US Olympians.

By the mid 70s, Far West expanded to the point where recreational skiers far out-numbered competitive skiers. This was a dramatic contrast to USSA and the other ski associations, where competitive skiing continued to dominate. A conflict began to develop between USSA and Far West because only 20% of members club elected to affiliate with Far West, and hence USSA. While clubs were the lifeline of Far West and provided the volunteers needed to run the Far West programs and raise money for the US Ski Team, the discord continued.

Far West Ski Competition

It wasn't until 1976 that Far West was finally divided into two separate operating organizations, one concentrating on the recreational and political aspects of skiing and the other directing the operation of the sanctioned race programs that developed the youth of America for the US Ski Teams. Far West Ski Competition, the official sanctioning body for junior racers, was founded.

Today, Far West Skiing, a division of USSA, is the body that develops young athletes from all clubs in the Far West with the objective of placing elite competitors onto the US Ski Team. [fwskiing.org]

Far West Rebuilt

The conflict between USSA and Far West came to a head in the 80s. Following the 1983 USSA convention in Boston [referred to by some as the Boston Tea Party], USSA voted to de-emphasize their recreational programs and concentrate on supporting the US Ski Teams.

The Amateur Athletic Act of 1978 was used to create a national governing body that required a focus on the national competitive effort. The United States Recreational Ski Association [USRSA] was founded as the national recreational organization and Far West withdrew from USSA to begin rebuilding the association. Clubs were left to determine which association(s) they wanted to affiliate with – USSA, USRSA, and/or Far West.

Meanwhile, the race leagues of Far West formed an independent nonprofit corporation, named the Far West Racing Association [FWRA], to focus on their specialized programs. FWRA continued to generate operating funds through sponsorship, the Los Angeles Ski Dazzle ski swap, and race fees. The president of FWRA currently serves as a member of the Far West Board of Directors.

On November 6, 1984, the Executive Committee of Far West met to decide on the direction the association should take. This committee proposed a new set of bylaws that were approved at the 53rd Annual Far West Convention held at the Oakland Airport Hilton, May 17-19, 1985. Far West was restored as an all-volunteer organization with **Janie "Frankie" Hansen** as president. To encourage clubs to stay with Far West, dues were waived and are not required by clubs as long as they belong to a member Council.

Far West Today

As an all-volunteer organization without dues paying members, Far West had to figure out a way fund their numerous programs. The annual FWSA convention, hosted by Balboa Ski Club, held at the Irvine Hilton & Towers in Irvine, California on May 16-18, 1986 was historic.

Special programs attracted a record number of delegates. More importantly, the first annual Silent Auction was introduced and managed by **Jane Wyckoff**. The continued success of this fundraiser set the stage for enabling financial support of Far West programs for the future.

The 90s saw the rebuilding of the Far West travel program by **Gene Fulkerson** with both domestic and international trips being offered. The public affairs program under **Mike Sanford** was rejuvenated and has assumed a significant role on the national stage on a wide variety of issues—area development, safety, transportation, insurance, taxation, consumer advocacy and snowsports history.

The council development program has had dramatic successes in the last decade. Arizona Ski Council and Northwest Ski Club Council [then Portland Area Ski Club Council or PASCC] joined Far West in 1991 and 1992, respectively.

Meanwhile Sierra Council built a strong race program and in 1996 once again became actively involved in Far West. In 2000, New Mexico Council joined the association as the tenth council and Far West became one of the founding members of the National Ski Council Federation [NSCF]. The intermountain council, covering Colorado, Idaho, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming joined in 2008 and hosted their first convention in 2012.

Past Presidents of Far West

Throughout the years Far West Presidents have molded and directed the organization.

2006-	Randy Lew
2003-06	Mike Sanford
2000-03	Steve Coxen
1996-00	Harry Davis
1993-96	Norm Cullen
1991-93	Paul Arrigo
1988-91	Mike Favia
1987-88	Howard Wickersham
1985-87	Janie "Frankie" Hansen
1981-85	Jane Wyckoff
1976-81	Ed Gehle
1973-76	Dick Croft
1971-73	John Watson
1969-71	Richard Goetzman
1968-69	Carl F. Grover
1966-68	Stanley V. Walton, Jr.
1963-66	Leonard Speicher
1962-63	Sutter E. Kunkel
1959-62	Byron Nishkian
1957-59	Edward J. Johnson
1955-57	Wesley B. Hadden
1954-55	Robert J. Schenck ²
1952-54	Paul H. Smith
1951-52	Frank Ferguson
1950-51	Arthur H. Van De Kamp
1949-50	B.M. "Milt" Zimmerman
1948-49	Cortlandt T. Hill
1947-48	J.C. "Criss" Schwarzenbach
1945-47	Albert E. Sigal
1941-45	Frank H. Howard
1937-41	James F. Connell
1934-37	Arnold Weber
1932-34	Cecil Edmunds
1930-32	Wendell Robie

² It is not clear if Robert Schenck, elected in 1954, served out his term.

Thanks to the following contributors: Jane Wyckoff, John Watson, Mike Sanford, Jane "Frankie" Hansen, Gene Fulkerson.