

History of the Auburn Ski Club

A presentation by Paul Chesney in 1992

(Presentation edited) . . . I would like to thank Harry Rosenberry, Dan Rasmussen, Virginia Fleming, Bill Clark, Charlie Fink and Mrs. Mikkelsen for the information I present tonight.

The Auburn Ski Club was formed (at the time of this presentation) 64 years ago in 1928 by Wendell Robie. This was the club that led the way to the modern era of California skiing.

At this time, all the roads to the mountains were closed in the winter time. They were not open as they are now with all the snow plows that work 24 hours a day. It took hard work then - shovels and dynamite to open up the roads. At this time, with the help of a gas-driven "cat", the road was open about as far as Baxter. That's where they started the first Auburn Ski Club. They built a hut, and had a small jump there.

Prior to this time, the skiing was done by the miners in California, during the era of the 1850's and '60's. . . they had to order skis by mail from Chicago.

The Board of Supervisors gave permission to the club to build a hut and ski jump three miles above Towle (near Dutch Flat) on the old highway where Canyon Creek is. . . the first modern ski jump was built in California. At this time, they were given permission to build the jump on what they thought was County land so there was no survey. Later they found they were on PG&E land and were told they had to move. However, they worked out a deal to provide the PG&E with a source of skiing instruction aimed at improving their ski-linemen so they could keep the lines open. So, for a one dollar lease, the deal was made.

Prior to 1931, the state realigned Highway 40 and one portion cut directly through the PG&E leased land. So the Club raised the money to locate the club at Cisco which was at a higher elevation. Here they had a club house and a major jump and many major ski events took place here.

In 1931, the idea was brought forth that skiing would provide extra gas tax money from the mountain traffic, to pay for snow removal to keep the highways open. With the aid of Senator Cassidy, a bill was presented to the legislature to build and maintain stations at Donner Summit and Yuba Pass and to keep the highways open for the winter. Since many of the legislatures had never been to the snow, and with the hearing of the bill coming up in a few days, they decided to take the whole Legislature up to the area.

On January 18, 1931, a motor caravan of 56 automobiles left Auburn, at 6:00am for the capitol. With the escort of the CHP, they loaded everybody into the cars and headed for

the hills. Others cars, numbering over 2400 were also there and created a huge traffic jam. The Legislature passed a bill to keep Highway 40 open.

Cisco was abandoned when I-80 cut through the jump-out run, and the parking lot. When Cisco was closed, the club had to go to court and they were awarded a sum of money from the state. Around 1956, an option to purchase land owned by Mr. Sherritt was negotiated. and with that they purchased the Boreal Ridge property.

The Boreal Museum was started in 1967. In 1972, the Auburn Ski Club hosted the U. S. North American Junior National Ski Championship event. When the Boreal Group took over the operation of the facility, the club was guaranteed a certain per cent of all the money that was taken in. With that money the Club helps the alpine and nordic groups; we help the high school financially each year with their skiing program. We helped Jeff Hamilton attend the Olympics in speed skating and help others in like endeavors.