

75 YEARS

# STEVENS PASS

PURE PNW





## IT BEGAN with a love of the mountains.

Before Highway 2, Tye Mill, SkyLine and 7th Heaven, came Don Adams and Bruce Kehr. Adams and Kehr had a simple idea: to share their love of the mountains with the people of the Pacific Northwest. In 1937, they opened a single rope tow on Stevens Pass with nothing but a Forest Service permit, a Ford V8 and \$600 in materials. The people came, hiking in six miles from the west side and from the east side by bus, all to ski that single tow for five cents per ride.

With war-surplus resources and a touch of invention, the pair persevered. When their original Civilian Conservation Corps lodge burned down, they built the T-Bar Lodge. Later joined by friend and business partner John Caley, they pushed up to Cowboy Mountain and into the hearts of a growing family of skiers from Leavenworth to Seattle, Wenatchee to Everett and beyond.

Through the boom years of the '70s, Stevens Pass remained committed to the on-slope experience, eschewing prefab condos in favor of affordable fun. From 47 rope tows to a handful of high-speed quads, they moved into the Mill Valley, embracing snowboarding when it emerged in the '80s. And from Lou Whittaker to Jim Jack to Robbie Capell, Matt Goodwill to Monty Hayes to Kurt Jenson, Northwest legends were born upon its slopes—legends who continue to inspire future generations.

Seventy-five years later, ownership and management may have changed, but the community remains—a community that grows with each passing generation, one that thrives upon a shared love of the mountains. A love for a 75-year legacy that is pure Pacific Northwest.

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## THE 2000s AND BEYOND

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Cover Caption: Used in both the 1978/79 and 1979/80 Stevens Pass brochures, this image still hangs in the Stevens Pass marketing offices to this day. Created in conjunction with marketing firm Sandino Simmons, it represents multiple generations of snow-lovers bound for fun on the mountain. "We basically wanted to coin the term 'The Pass,'" Rick Sola, Director of Skiing at the time, remembers. "We wanted to set Stevens apart from other mountains in the state with the word 'pass' in their names. We also wanted to appeal to a broad-ranging demographic; it was a reflection of who we were already catering to, and who we wanted to continue to attract—those were our peeps. We liked them and they seemed like us." Photo: Stevens Pass Archives.

Background: Chase Jarvis.





# A MAN WITH A MISSION

## John F. Stevens, the Great Northern and Developing Stevens Pass

**FIFTY YEARS BEFORE BRUCE KEHR AND DON ADAMS** fired up their V8-powered rope tow and populated the slopes of Big Chief Mountain with skiers, the only inhabitants of wild and desolate Stevens Pass were black bears, pine martens and lonely ravens. The railroad was just a vague plan formulated in a faraway office; it would be decades before Highway 2 would even be imagined. Local Native tribes knew of the place, but avoided its steep canyons and rugged terrain. Then, following the ever-reaching railways west, came a man with a mission to finally connect America's heartland to the Pacific Northwest.



In 1929, a group promoting the improvement of state roads drives to Stevens Pass. Photo: Lee Pickett Collection, University of Washington Archives.

## FRANK FOTO: SCIENTIST, SOCIALITE AND OUTDOORSMAN

WHEN FRANK FOTO ARRIVED to take over as the Forest Service Snow Ranger on Stevens Pass in 1950, he couldn't ski—despite having attended the Forest Service's first-ever snow science school in Alta, Utah. Foto, however, quickly rose to the challenge.

"He learned to ski quickly, and he learned to ski pretty," Dick Mitchell, a patroller from 1949-1964 says. "He wasn't just helping out with avalanche control, he was directing it."

In the early 1950s, with the support—and often help—of Bruce Kehr, Frank established one of the first avalanche research stations in the country. "He was one of the very first research snow scientists in the United States and collected an enormous amount of data," Court Wing, a current patroller who joined in 1950, says. "Bruce and Frank would bootpack up Showcase every morning of the weekend. They were learning how to do snow-plot studies. Both of them were just really strong, tough guys."

Foto also ran a marten trap line across from the ski area on Skyline Ridge, which he checked with a number of other patrollers. However, he was as much a socialite as he was a scientist and outdoorsman.

"There was dancing in the lodge at night," Mitchell says. "Frank was always there, dancing and teaching traditional Scandinavian and European dances such as the schottische, polka and hambo. Then Frank dated a couple of the gals on ski patrol, and he eventually married one of them—he was married to Edie for the rest of his life."


Frank Foto and some of the early ski patrollers, including some from a group that won national ski patrol honors in 1956. Photo: Stevens Pass Archives.



Hanging cornices need to come down, and sometimes that takes a healthy dose of explosives to achieve.  
Photo: Mike Power.







Skiers at Stevens Pass  
have never shied away from  
powder—although taken in  
1989, this image could fit in  
any era. Mike Stanford makes  
turns under Rooster Comb with  
a snowpack that would make  
current freeriders lose their  
minds. Photo: Grant Ramaley/  
Stevens Pass Archives.

# 'I GUESS THAT GOES'

Robbie Capell, Matt Goodwill and Big Mountain Progression

**IF YOU'VE EVER RIDDEN STEVENS**—and it wasn't dumping snow—you've seen the cliff on Cowboy Mountain, hanging above the spines, pillows and chutes that spill off the peak down into the trees. It is a monster, close to 80 feet tall, with no realistic landing. Dropping that cliff, by all appearances, would not end well.



Although Matt Goodwill later gained notoriety in the snowboard world for his Alaskan exploits, his charge-it-all style was a clear product of Stevens Pass. Photo: Bill Shigley.

Robbie Capell, however, dropped that cliff. And, if he wasn't on rental skis at the time, he very well might have stomped it.

Capell—the only skier ever sponsored by Seattle's Snowboard Connection (owing to the fact that he was broke and the shop's owner felt bad for him)—was one of a number of skiers and snowboarders in the 1980s and early '90s who took advantage of Stevens' renowned terrain and snowpack and brought freeriding to the mountain. The crew, which included such riders as Mike Tracy, Orien Yeckley, Russ Ricketts, Brian Schaefer, Elan Bushell and snowboard legend and local hero Matt Goodwill, sported long hair and piece-meal gear, listened to Judas Priest, drank 40s of malt liquor—and went huge off of anything and everything they could.

"The early Stevens boys modeled our riding around Robbie Capell and Matt Goodwill," local snowboard icon Monty Hayes says. "They were insane. The things they were doing then would still be top-level bionic now. Goodwill obviously went on to some stardom. Those guys set the standard for us. We wanted to do things big because that's what Matt and Robbie were doing."

At most areas in the 1980s, snowboarding—if it was allowed at all—was seen as blasphemy by traditionalist skiers. Stevens was one of few exceptions. After the moun-

tain opened to snowboarders in 1987, the main criterion for the selection of riding partners was how hard each wanted to rip, and none ripped harder than the duo of Capell and Goodwill.

"Robbie and Matt were a notch above anybody, so we were always pushing it and always pushing each other," says Brent Kirk, a snowboarder from the early crew and friend of Goodwill and Capell. "The unique thing about it was one was on a snowboard and one was on skis. Robbie was the token snowboarder on skis. He used to get disqualified in mogul competitions in late '80s to early '90s because he was doing backflips. Years later, when [1998 Olympic gold medalist] Jonny Moseley was doing dinner rolls and flips, we were saying, 'Robbie was doing that 10 years ago!'"

Aside from having some of the best terrain in the Northwest, the management at Stevens—although they were not necessarily excited about it—was lenient in their rules regarding jumping, something that gave Goodwill and Capell's crew unprecedented freedom. But that didn't mean they never got busted.

"The only time I ever remember security getting us in trouble was on one of the last days of the season," Kirk recalls. "Robbie didn't have a pass, so he was mooching tickets all year, and this day, Matt—you know if you forget your season pass, you can get a



Kurt Jenson during the formative years of Sound Straight Productions; in a suit, on a cell phone and in character to fit the story line of their early 2000s release, "The Convention" Photo: Scott Wicklund





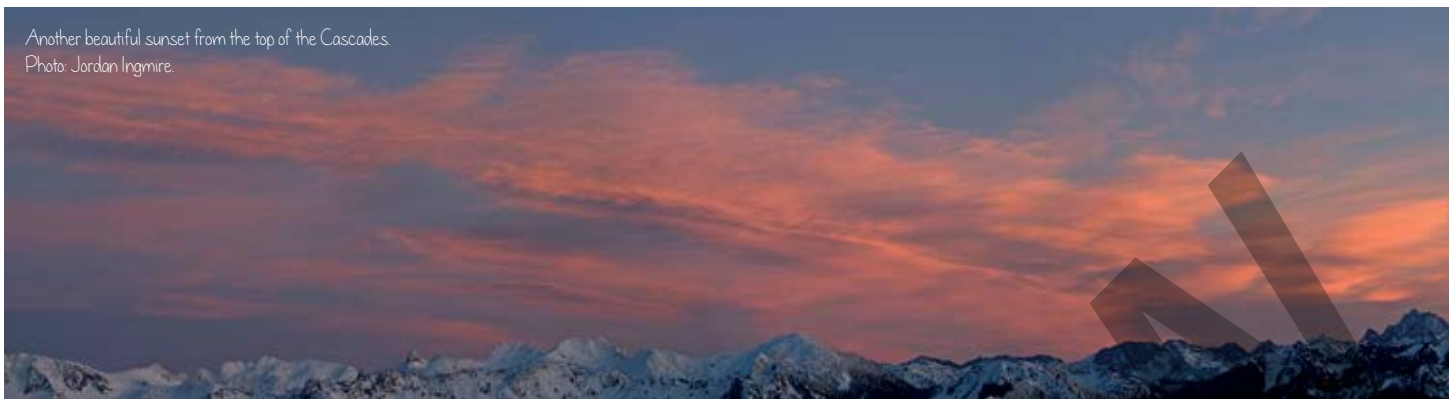
# THE 2000s AND BEYOND

Pure PNW





Another beautiful sunset from the top of the Cascades.  
Photo: Jordan Ingmire.



## FROM THE TERRAIN PARK TO THE BACKCOUNTRY

A MAJOR FACTOR In freestyle progression over the past 10 years has been the Top Phlight terrain park off the Brooks chair, which is known as one of the more progressive parks in the Northwest. Kurt Jenson was riding Stevens before the Top Phlight era and, as he explains, "All we did when we were young was hike and find lines and build jumps—we found our fun in natural terrain. In the past decade, Stevens Pass has moved light years ahead in terrain park building. I have watched the park scene evolve and develop with the younger guys like Joe Bosler and B-Rad [Brad Miller] and all those guys that were a part of that Top Phlight crew. They really brought a lot to the whole park scene. There has been a lot more freestyle progression—all of a sudden there were kids that could do 720s and 900s and all these tricks that would take us all season to learn in the backcountry. So that has been awesome to see.

"Now we are seeing this whole new generation in the backcountry and there's another crew of up-and-coming riders. Matt Penny, for example; he was a park rat and now he comes out with us in the backcountry and he's doing double corks and he's only 16. So that's really cool to see; it's the whole evolution of freestyle and freeriding and the different generations coming through."

Not to mention young skiers like Kohl Schoening, who comes from a purebred backcountry family, as well as guys like Derek Spong, Coby Trudell and Grant Domer, who continue to push their skills from the Top Phlight to the abundant natural terrain of the area. From the terrain park to the backcountry, new generations drive freestyle progression and pay homage to the freeride roots of Stevens Pass.

Tanner Hall spins over a custom-built feature while filming with Teton Gravity Research in the spring of 2009, during the first 3D ski/snowboard shoot in history.  
Photo: Chase Jarvis.







This book is dedicated to Chris Rudolph, Jim Jack and John Brennan, who lost their lives on February 19, 2012 while enjoying the mountain they loved. May you and all the souls we have loved and lost live on in the hearts of the Stevens Pass family. Ride in peace.