

# MOUNTAIN HIGH



DECADES AGO, LENORE LYLE DISCOVERED THAT THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH DOESN'T BUBBLE FROM THE EARTH—IT FALLS FROM THE SKY.

AND YOU CAN SKI ON IT.

*By John Kinmonth*

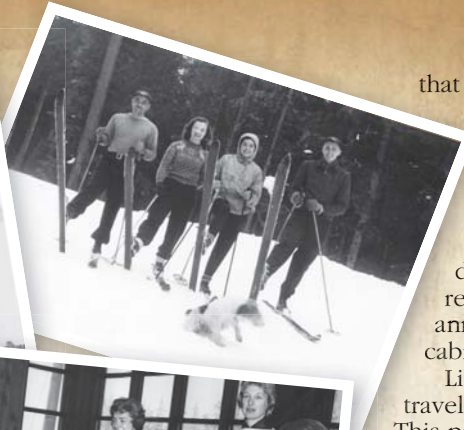
INTRODUCED TO SKIING AS A 9-YEAR-OLD IN 1936 BY HER FATHER, LENORE WAS AMONG THE FIRST GENERATION OF SKIERS IN THE CASCADES. WITH A TWINKLE IN HER EYE, LENORE EVOKES THE DAYS WHEN SKIS WERE DEVOID OF METAL EDGES, BOOTS WERE STILL LEATHER AND CHAIRLIFTS WERE NONEXISTENT.

“OUR BINDINGS WERE LIKE BEAR TRAPS AND WE HAD TO RUB ICKY BLACK STUFF ON OUR WOODEN SKIS EVERY WEEKEND JUST SO WE COULD GLIDE,” SHE SAYS.

DESPITE THE HUMBLE BEGINNINGS, LENORE SKIED HER WAY INTO THE NORTHWEST HISTORY BOOKS,

LITERALLY. IN 1978, SHE BECAME THE FIRST FEMALE PRESIDENT OF THE PROFESSIONAL SKI INSTRUCTORS OF AMERICA'S NORTHWEST DIVISION, AND HER SMILING FACE CAN BE SEEN IN THE BOOK, “IMAGES OF AMERICA: SNOQUALMIE PASS,” AS THE REIGNING “QUEEN OF THE MOUNTAIN” AT THE SUMMIT SPRING CARNIVAL IN 1967. BUT DON'T THINK LENORE IS LIVING IN THE PAST.

NOW IN HER 80S, LENORE STILL SKIS AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK IN THE WINTER AND EXUDES A DEEP PASSION FOR THE OUTDOORS THAT COMES FROM MORE THAN 70 YEARS SPENT IN THE MOUNTAINS.



*Clockwise from top: Lenore with Ski Masters students; Showing off the vintage gear; Ski fashion show.*

"I would live outdoors if I could figure out a way to make it work," she says.

Lenore studied English literature at the University of Washington and married her college sweetheart, Ron Lyle, soon after graduation. The pair built their house in Yarrow Point in 1954 with only second-growth Douglas firs for neighbors.

"Bellevue only had one spotlight back then," she says.

Both she and her husband skied regularly, but it wasn't until they began working with

Ski Masters Ski School in 1964 that it truly became a lifestyle. Lenore started out as technical director and instructor with the Bellevue-based ski instruction program and became sole owner in 1982. For more than 40 winters, Lenore worked a full season on her skis. While the equipment and technique have changed drastically, she says the idea is still pretty much the same.

"The basic principles of skiing hasn't changed much. You still make turns to slow yourself down," she says. Although she sold Ski Masters in 1998, old habits die hard. She stopped teaching lessons two years ago, but still has sharp instructor instincts.

"Whenever I'm riding the chairlift, I still find myself analyzing people's technique," she says.

Today, her two children and five grandchildren are avid skiers and snowboarders, and her daughter is also a level 3 instructor and heavily involved in the skiing industry.

"My kids never had a choice, and I don't think their kids did either," she says with a smile.

Besides instruction, Lenore and Ron also led regular ski trips

to Europe for 22 years, ranging from the Austrian Alps to Zermatt. Lenore laughs about their first trip to Austria.

"We ended up getting 108 skiers, which is three busloads. We didn't have e-mail or fax, and I'd never get anybody on the phone at the hotels who could speak English, but we had a great time," she says.

With all of her globetrotting, she's ambivalent about choosing a favorite mountain.

"The mountain where I'm skiing at the moment," she says. But when pressed, she goes for multicultural powder turns.

"It might be Zermatt because of the variety of terrain and scenery, and you can ski down into Italy from Switzerland," she says.

It was on one of these trips

that Ron suffered a debilitating stroke on the mountain in 2003.

"Our lives have changed so much. It's been such a challenge," she says. Despite the drastic changes, they recently celebrated their 60th anniversary with a trip to their cabin at Deception Pass.

Like skiing, Lenore's love for travel hasn't dampened either. This past summer, she fulfilled a longtime desire to explore Ecuador and Peru, visiting the Galapagos Islands and Machu Picchu.

"I'm so enthralled with the people and culture down there," she says.

When she's not skiing, Lenore is a regular in the Bellevue Club's Water Aerobics class, which she says helps her joints for skiing and hiking. For both novices and experts alike, Lenore offers this advice:

"The main thing is don't get so wrapped up in whether you're doing the right thing on skis. Just take a deep breath and look around."

## 5 REFLECTIONS

### FAVORITE BOOK:

The people I've read that have influenced my philosophy on life and the outdoors: Emerson and Thoreau, Wordsworth and Jefferson.

### FAVORITE FOOD:

Bruschetta made with tomatoes and basil from my garden and broiled, smoked mozzarella on Pugliese bread

### BEST ADVICE:

No matter what you do, whether you're skiing, learning or raising kids, try to stay in the moment and just appreciate living. Every day is a gift.

### HERO/GREATEST INFLUENCE:

My dad was probably the greatest influence on my lifestyle, and my husband embraced it too.

### FAVORITE ACTIVITY AT THE BELLEVUE CLUB:

Water aerobics now. It used to be tennis, but my doctor said he'll give me skiing if I give up tennis.