1960 Winter Olympics
Squaw Valley, California

By Roy Feuchter

At the time of the 1960 Olympics, Roy was on the Sequoia National Forest. Other assignments during his career included Recreation Staff on the Inyo National Forest, San Francisco and Denver Regional Offices, and the Washington Office. As the Forest Service Environmental Coordinator Roy shepherded the Agency guidelines response to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Roy retired in 1987 as Forest Service Director of Recreation. This article was written in 2011. Today Roy and Helen, his wife of 51 years, live in Vienna, Virginia.

U. S. Forest Service Involvement
February 18 to 28, 1960

Today, the vast majority of downhill ski terrain in the United States is in the National Forests - the public forests. However, because of the land ownership patterns, the base of almost all of the major ski areas are on private land. Many of the valleys and relatively flat lands of the federal forests passed into private ownership through homestead claims, mineral rights claims and railroad land grants.

So it was that Alex Cushing, the land owner in Squaw Valley, California, and Wayne Paulson, a long time pilot for Pan American Airways, came to apply for a permit in 1948 from the U.S. Forest Service (Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture), to develop a ski area on the lands of the Tahoe National Forest surrounding the private in-holdings at Squaw Valley. Several ski areas had been developed in this manner, where a private landowner controlled access to the adjacent public forest lands. This very successful public sector/private sector partnership arrangement has greatly expanded the capability to provide recreational facilities on the public lands.

The procedure developed by the Forest Service, was to issue a Special Use Permit for the use of the public lands.

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Museum News

By Gray Reynolds, President

Vail, Colorado was the place to be in late September, renewing friendships and making new friends during the 2012 Rendezvous in the Rockies, National Forest Service Reunion. The Museum participated in the reunion with an annual meeting, museum display and presented three awards.

The annual meeting and luncheon was attended by 120 people. Executive Director Dave Stack reported on museum progress. Doug Leisz discussed the importance of increasing museum memberships.

During the annual meeting, we were proud to honor Lynn Biddison and John Sandor for their enthusiasm in carrying out the Museum’s mission and unwavering dedication to telling the history of the Forest Service and its cooperators. As volunteers for the Museum and life members, both gentlemen have contributed to our success in collecting, preserving and interpreting the conservation legacy of the U.S. Forest Service, its partners and cooperators. Lynn and John each received the Gary G. Brown Founder’s Award in recognition for their outstanding volunteer service.

We also presented a plaque to recognize Dave Stack’s work, as Executive Director, preceded by the entire group joining together to sing "Our Mr. Stack", accompanied by Jane Leche, “Fiddling Foresters”, on guitar with lyrics by Liz Madison and Jane Hanson, sung to the tune of the Smokey Bear song.

Museum Board Members and Regional Directors attending Vail Museum Board meeting: Beryl Johnston, Lyle Laverty, Max Peterson, Doug Leisz, Gray Reynolds, Bjorn Dahl, Jim LaBau, Ted Stubblefield, John Drake, Larry Gadt, Lynn Sprague, Larry Anderson, Dave Stack, Patty Limerick and Lynn Biddison (left to right)
as ski terrain. The Permit was similar to a lease but
reserved to the government control of the use of public
land, more than a lease would do, so that
environmental controls can be coordinated with ski
area design. Payment to the government for the use of
the public lands is also provided. The procedure
involved making application for the permit to the local
District Ranger charged with managing that given area
of National Forest. Because of the size of the area
needed to be placed under permit, and the consequent
amount of private capital that might eventually be
invested on the public lands, the permit process
generally required review by successive layers of
Forest Service Administration. From the Ranger it
went to the Forest Supervisor -- in this case in Nevada
City, California, and thence to the Regional Office in
San Francisco. Fortunately, Ranger Roy Saarni in
Truckee, California, and Supervisor Henry "Hank"
Branagh, in Nevada City, were sufficiently aware of
the ramifications of major ski area development that
they passed the application on to the San Francisco
Office with favorable recommendations.

W.S."Slim" Davis was the California Regional
Staff Officer (Region 5) responsible for winter sports.
Davis had an extensive background in winter sports,
snow safety and avalanche control. He served in the
U.S. Army's 10th Mountain Division in World War II.
He had Forest Service permit administration
experience at Arapahoe Basin and Winter Park ski
areas in Colorado. Davis had recently been involved
in granting a permit for ski area development at
Mammoth Mountain on the Inyo National Forest.
Davis became a member of the Olympic Organizing
Committee. As such, he was the liaison between the
Forest Service, the Organizing Committee and the
California Olympic Commission whose chairman was
Charles R. Blyth.

The development at Squaw Valley was still quite
new and rather small when Cushing and his partner,
Wayne Paulsen, next came to the Forest Service with
the proposal that Squaw Valley be proposed to the
International Olympic Committee for the 1960 Winter
Games.

There were only four ski lifts (double chair lifts)
and a small tram at that time. The original lift, a long,
8,000-foot double chair ran up from almost the center
of the private land to near the top of Squaw Peak. The
course it followed was to become the approximate
location of the Men's Downhill Race Course in the
Olympic Games.

A second lift, KT-22, ran at almost right angles to
the first lift and rose steeply up a high mountain rising
out of the Valley. The name came from the fact that
during the original survey of the ski terrain it had
taken some expert skiers 22 kick turns to get down the
mountain. A kick turn was a method used to navigate
terrain that was too steep and too heavily wooded to attack
in a straight down the hill fashion. This area was to
become the site of the Men's and Women's Giant Slalom
races. Because of the zig-zag nature of a slalom race, it
required steep terrain in order to make it challenging.

First reaction to Cushing's proposal was that Squaw
Valley simply wasn't large enough to hold the Olympics.
But Cushing was a dogged salesman and was able to
slowly bring people around as he pointed out that the area
had the necessary vertical drop for the races, and the
adequate, average snow cover and the potential adjacent
cross country ski terrain for the nordic races. What was
lacking was the necessary infrastructure for housing,
restaurants, parking and decent access. However, there
was adequate area for a Ski Village to be built to house the
athletes. Other candidates for the Games were Lake
Placid, Reno, and Aspen/Colorado Springs in the U.S.
International candidates were Innsbruck, Austria, St
Moritz, Switzerland and Chamois, France.

At this point, financing became the key to success or
failure. Most of the financing had to come from the
private sector. However, as enthusiasm built for bringing
the Games to Squaw Valley, and because there was a
piece of government land in the otherwise privately held
land in the Valley, the Congress of the United States
passed legislation authorizing the construction of a major
ice skating complex. The legislation was signed into law
by President Dwight D. Eisenhower on May 15, 1958.

This was a major step because the complex, to be
known as Blyth Arena, was to encompass a large ice rink
for the figure skating competition, two smaller rinks for
practice, and a elongated rink for speed racing. The main
rink was to be partially enclosed so that the spectator seating and the ice itself were under the roof, but the south side would be open to the other rinks and to provide visual access to the opening and closing ceremonies. Heat generated from the freezing of the ice was piped into the stadium to come out of vents under the seating for 11,000 people. This innovative design provided heat for the spectators but eliminated the problem for maintaining the proper, uniform temperature on the figure skating rink itself. The speed racing oval was entirely outside which eliminated any temperature problems but required plowing snow that fell during the Games. All four rinks were serviced by the same refrigeration plant. The Arena was awarded first prize for the Progressive Architecture Award out of over 600 entrants. Although this skating complex provided a spectacular setting for the opening ceremony, which was made most spectacular by the Disney Corporation, it would lead to troubles in the future due to the very high maintenance costs. The original plan was to develop a state recreation area after the Games, and turn the Arena over to the private sector, to operate on a "for-profit" basis, but it was to prove simply too expensive for such an operation.

DURING THE GAMES

For the conduct of the Games, the Forest Service issued a Special Use Permit to the California Olympic Commission. Among its many responsibilities was avalanche control during the Games and for several weeks of training before the Games. At this point in time there were only a few individuals trained in avalanche control in the entire country. They had mostly been trained at the Forest Service Avalanche School at Alta, Utah. Alta was another ski area that operated under permit from the Forest Service, and the school was part of the Avalanche Studies conducted at Alta by Monty Atwater, Ed LaChappell and Dick Anderson. Those Studies provided most of the background lore on avalanche control. Atwater is generally considered to be the first Forest Service "Snow Ranger". He was a Harvard graduate and a consummate showman in the style of P.T. Barnum. While highly capable in avalanche mechanics and control, he was also quick to recognize opportunities for national leadership and public relations.

The California Olympic Commission hired a five-man snow safety/avalanche control team headed up by Dick Stillman (The Bear of Berthoud Pass) who was on loan from the Forest Service at Berthoud Pass in Colorado. Joining him were Peter Klaussen, Craig Rawlins, Dick Weiss, and Norm Wilson, from the ski patrol at Squaw Valley. During the Games, in addition to Stillman’s Team and separate from it, there were 76 people on the Squaw Valley Ski Patrol which had first been organized in 1959. Included in that 76 were 5 women, 12 doctors and 8 professional patrolmen. The rest were volunteers. A large patrol was needed to provide for public safety and almost police-like crowd control for the thousands of skiers and spectators that crowded the ski area during the Games. A principal objective was to keep as much of the ski area open to the public for skiing as possible even during the progress of the Games. For example, recreational skiing was available on Squaw Peak on February 19, right after the running of the Men’s Downhill Race. And Little Papoose was kept open, except on February 23 and 26, during the Ladies and Men’s Giant Slalom Races.

It was decided that a team of 6 Forest Service "snow rangers" would be brought to Squaw Valley, under the leadership of Monty Atwater, to provide backup to Stillman’s Snow Safety/ Avalanche Control Team, and as an exceptionally good training opportunity and an outstanding public relations opportunity. This was a major expansion since in 1956 there was only one snow ranger, Nelson Stone, on the entire Tahoe National Forest. Technically, the Forest Service has no formal position of Snow Ranger but the title is so easily understandable that it is often used.

In addition to Atwater, others from the Forest Service were, Roy Feuchter from the Sequoia National Forest in California, Ross Files from the Mt Baker National Forest in Washington, Paul Hauck from the White River National Forest in Colorado, Bob Janes from the Plumas National Forest in California, Ed LaChapelle from the Wasatch
National forest in Utah, and Paul Madden from the Tahoe National Forest in California. This created an unusual organizational structure for the Forest Service. To make it as manageable as possible, Atwater was assigned to Tahoe Forest Supervisor Hank Branagh as his winter sports representative in Squaw Valley. Two other Forest Service personnel were designated as alternates: Bob Safran from the Wasatch National Forest and Al Mullen from the Eldorado National Forest.

Completing the Forest Service Team was Phil Miller, a forester with a background in photography from the Uncompahgre National Forest in Colorado. He was assigned the task of filming the activities of the Team. Movie cameras were large and bulky in those days, a far cry from modern video cameras. Miller's government camera was very large and used correspondingly large film reels. These together with tripods, weather protective gear, light panels and radio equipment amounted to a very large pack. Miller was not a large man but was an extremely strong skier and he often sank almost out of sight as he plowed through deep, new snow. In order to have his scenes as "clean" as possible with untracked snow in the background, Miller would ski ahead of the Team and set up down the hill from where the Team would be skiing and working.

**AVAILANCE CONCERNS**

The two teams of 12 men probably represented the largest and best trained group ever assembled for snow safety avalanche control.

Early on it was recognized that the heavy cornice over-hanging the start of the Men's Downhill Racecourse could pose a threat if the area was hit by a heavy snowfall. It was checked daily but was always found to be solid.

The Games started without any new snowfall. In fact it was turning out to be a very light snow year which did not bode well for some of the cross country races. Then, just a day before the men's Downhill Race, a heavy snow was predicted, and it was felt that the cornice had to be removed. The avalanche teams made the difficult climb to the top of the cornice and laid Bangalore torpedoes across the top of the cornice at about the point where the overhang began. The Bangalore torpedoes were long cylindrical tubes about 4 feet long and about 2 inches in diameter and filled with high explosives. They could be joined together by threads on each end and when so joined they could be ignited at one end and would carry the charge almost instantaneously through the entire line of torpedoes. It was a heavy charge that could over-turn a piece of heavy equipment, such as a tank.

The charge was detonated without mishap and the cornice was sliced off in an almost picture-perfect fashion to the tremendous cheers of the several thousand spectators that had gathered during the preparation of the event.

Un fortunately, the large chunks of the cornice not only dropped as planned but then rolled on down the Men's Downhill Course coming to rest in the middle of the Course for a distance of several hundred feet. Some of these blocks of solid ice were as large as an automobile! The Men's Downhill Race was to start the next morning!

A Company of Navy Seabees from the Marine encampment at Pickle Meadows, on the Toiyabe National Forest, was stationed at the entrance to Squaw Valley to be available if manpower was needed for any unexpected emergency. The cornice had provided just such an emergency! Some 100 Seabees worked through-out the night and by daybreak had the course cleared of cornice ice and also boot-packed into an outstanding racecourse. The Seabees also helped out by boot-packing the 12,000 car, on-snow parking lot in the Olympic Village, after 10 inches of snow had fallen.

Forest Service avalanche studies continued at Alta and new research was conducted by the Forest Service Experiment Station at Fort Collins, Colorado, early methods and knowledge were refined and a larger body of skilled experts developed.

"FIRSTS" AT THE GAMES

- Use of Recoilless Rifles. Such weapons had been used elsewhere on a few occasions but never as part of the Olympic Games.
- The construction of an entire Olympic Village where all of the competitors were housed together and within a 5-minute walk of all of the events except the Nordic. Two centers included lounges, restaurants, bars, shops, first aid and restrooms, and an athlete recreation center.
- Artificially refrigerated speed skating oval where control of the ice surface temperature would prove to increase record-breaking possibilities.
- A separate telephone system and prefix (OLympic 8-1960) for the Squaw Valley Complex.
- First nationally televised Olympic games.
- The introduction of an official Winter Sports Uniform for Forest Service Snow Rangers. Black ski pants with the standard uniform shirt over a black turtleneck and a light green, nylon parka with an orange and black felt patch to replace the official bronze metal badge for visibility and safety in case of a fall.

*Contributors to the article: Dave Mohla, Ted Gregg, Dick Benjamin, Cheryl Oakes, and Deborah Osterberg*
Minerals We Use Traveling Exhibit

At MINEexpo Convention, this September in Las Vegas, the Museum launched its first traveling exhibit and virtual galleries with Minerals We Use Every Day: Mined from our National Forests.

Following its debut in Las Vegas, the exhibit will travel for at least three years to Forest Service Visitor Centers, museums and other public spaces throughout the nation.

Museum webpage link:
http://www.nmfs-history.net/mining.html
Recent Artifact Donations

The 2012 Forest Service Reunion’s silent auction provided an opportunity for retirees to donate artifacts and archival documents to the Museum. Donations were received from Richard Woodrow, a 1938 recreation report manuscript; Douglas G. Smith, a porcelain sign; John Korb, carbide light and marking ax, Donald Campbell, lantern and Colorado National Forest sign and David Hoefer, caulk boots. Additional items were received from anonymous donors. We thank every donor for helping to preserve the history of the Forest Service.

Arch Coal Receives Conservation Legacy Award

During the Forest Service Reunion Banquet on September 20, President Gray Reynolds presented the Museum’s Conservation Legacy Award to Arch Coal, Inc. in recognition of their commitment to protect natural resources, wildlife and water quality values during mining and restoration operations on public and private lands. Kenneth D. Cochran, Senior Vice President, accepted the award on behalf of Arch Coal. Mr. Cochran expressed the company’s great appreciation of this recognition and thanked the museum for its good work preserving and interpreting the conservation history of forests and grasslands.

The Museum board saluted Arch Coal for passing on a conservation legacy through its outstanding actions to restore landscapes, safeguard wildlife and enhance the public lands where the company operates. They have set a stellar example for public-private cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service and demonstrated an unwavering commitment to serving as long-term custodians of our nation’s forests and grasslands.

In Utah employees designed, funded and installed a guzzler system on National Forest System lands to provide birds and small mammals with a reliable water supply as a counter measure to extended periods of drought. In addition, a company mine in Utah voluntarily haul water to two national forests each spring to benefit more than 2,000 grazing cattle.

In Colorado, Arch Coal employees improved fish migration and spawning by modifying beaver dams. In the Rocky Mountain region, the company helps sustain sage grouse and migrating hawk populations through partnerships with the U.S. Forest Service and conservation groups.

Dave Stack presented the Conservation Legacy Award to Deck Slone, Senior Vice President of Arch Coal, at a scheduled press conference at MINExpo in Las Vegas, NV on September 25, 2012. The museum’s news release was picked up by hundreds of news outlets, radio, TV, newspaper across the United States.
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Missoula, MT 59806-2772

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