



Plumas Ski Club celebrates 150th Anniversary of American Ski Racing

By Rob Russell

Carol Burney of Quincy, California, and Eric McGrath of Reno, Nevada are the new world champions of longboard racing, as the Plumas Ski Club celebrated the 150th anniversary of the first ski racing and ski club in America, March 19 and 20, 2011, in Johnsville, California.



In stormy but fine style, it could have been a race scene from the 1800's as men and women longboard contestants gazed down the track trying to see the prior lines inscribed by earlier racers. The track was hard to see and many memorable tumbles took place! (Thankfully, no known injuries!) 18 inches of new snow fell Saturday night adding to the 3 feet that the club had shoveled and groomed the prior day. Despite snowy, low visibility conditions, new "World Champion Snowshoer's" were crowned and presented with champion belts as occurred 150 years ago in Onion Valley, credited as the site of the first organized American ski races and first ski club in 1861. The Sunday's race event, preceded by Saturday's special longboard reception, commemorated the 20th anniversary of "Plumas Ski Club sponsored longboard revival races" and the "right honorable" 60th anniversary of the Plumas Ski Club! A good time was had by all!

The Saturday March 19th anniversary reception was held at the Plumas Eureka State Park Johnsville Museum and the "World Championship" races were held on Sunday the 20th in the historic Eureka Bowl, home of the Plumas Ski Club "Historic Longboard Revival Series". Gold seeking miners flooded into the Lost Sierra in the early 1850's passing from the east below Eureka Peak en route to diggin's throughout the Lost Sierra region. The gathering of longboarders and ski club supporters at Saturday's special reception featured a new commemorative slide presentation which chronicles the unique ski history of the region and

the role of the Plumas Ski Club in keeping this history "alive". The weekend's impressive storms prevented many people from making the Saturday and Sunday trip to Johnsville but a good crowd of quite hardy spectators and nearly 40 men and women participated in Sunday's races in what seemed "very authentic" winter race conditions.



Long time racers Carol Burney of Quincy and Eric McGrath of Reno, Nevada took home the coveted champions titles. Ski club organizers hoped the "spirits" of past Lost Sierra longboarders were "right honorably proud" as races commenced and flasks were lifted to toast what race organizers believe is a "right honorable, momentous, multi-anniversary, ski history occasion!"

The first Plumas Ski Club sponsored longboard revival race was held in 1952 at "Snowshoe Flats" followed by 19 years of revival races at the Eureka Bowl Track beginning in 1993. The Plumas Ski Club has been promoting community skiing and longboard history for 60 years including long time operation of the "Plumas Eureka Ski Bowl" ski area. The ski bowl facility is currently not in operation though efforts are ongoing to fund installation of a small chair lift to replace outdated poma surface lifts. It is believed by many ski historians that mining ore buckets operating on Eureka Peak in the mid 1870's may well have been the world's first ski lift... a distinction worthy of ski club and community efforts to bring the ski bowl operation back to life! In the mean time, the ski club is proud to continue it's sponsorship of longboard revival race "doin's" as the only remaining ski club in the entire Lost Sierra! Long live longboards!

Plumas Ski Club President Ron Logan and long time longboard promoter Rob Russell acknowledged the contributions made by many people to allow the longboard revival races to happen. "As has been the case since the 1950's, big thanks must go to the Plumas County Road Department for their 'above and beyond' efforts to keep the road passable to the ski bowl". Thanks also went to Ranger Scott Elliott of Plumas Eureka State Park for allowing the museum to be used for the reception. Russell noted that the Johnsville museum had served as a ski lodge for the club dating back to the 1940's and 1950' when a rope tow operated nearby. Braving stormy conditions, the crew from the Plumas Eureka State Park Association helped reduce parking lot chaos. Club member Pete Bartels noted the special contributions of lumber made by Sierra Pacific Industries. Over the years, "SPI" has donated wood used to make many new pairs of longboards in the Feather River College "longboard construction class". Logan also noted the special contributions made by Plumas Sierra Rural Electric Cooperative allowing use of their snow-cat and thanks to machine operator Paul Erwin for race track grooming in a blizzard!. Loren Hartwig and John Fischer provided invaluable help

shuttling longboards and supplies to and from the Intorf Lodge. Additionally, Russell made special mention of club member Jim Webster for his ongoing "behind the scenes" hard work. "Jim has put in an amazing amount of time and effort for many, many years and has played a key role in keeping the longboard festivities and other club efforts going! When I and many others have a ski club question or need an opinion, Jim is the guy we seem to go to first." said Russell. Scott Lawson, curator of the Plumas County Museum, got big thanks for his ongoing help documenting the historical record of the races not to mention serving as right honorable "Dope master" for the club. Following the historical themes made in an earlier presentation to the "International Ski Congress" in 2009 at Mammoth, Lawson and Russell have prepared a new "power-point" show with expanded Lost Sierra and ski club story-lines. The show describes more about Lost Sierra ski and race history and the role of the ski club and community organizations in promoting "snow-sport activities". This presentation will supposedly be part of an upcoming "Far West Ski Association" (FWSA) movie that the club was asked to contribute to.

Thanks also went to the now famous "Lost Sierra Orchestra" who have made great mountain music at these events for years. "Without music at the longboard events, it just wouldn't be the same" said event planner Lisa Kelly. Long time supporter John McMorro and Jeff Glover also got kudos for start line duties and recognition was given to the "Clamper's" for their continuing assistance with "right honorable" judging and gong duties. "The Clampers have been part of the longboard scene dating back to the 1800's" said Lawson. Rounding out some of the acknowledgments, Phil Gallagher was recognized for his longboard art contributions dating back to 1990 and Jim and Pam Babbitt and John Sheehan were thanked for their long time help with race announcing, registration, and general "yabber jabber". "There are so many people to thank" said Russell. "We truly appreciate everyones team-work assistance and we look forward to keeping the longboard races going for years to come!"

Keep an eye on plumasskiclub.org for further information and race photos.

See an preview story [here](#).

JOURNAL OF ISHA, THE INTERNATIONAL SKIING HISTORY ASSOCIATION

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