

# Script/documentary

## *Legends of Snowbasin*

Roy McKechnie/narrator

Tonight we are proud to honor twelve local athletes who have skied in, or been closely involved, with Warren Miller Ski Movies. Warren is universally acknowledged as the most accomplished maker of ski movies in history. What you may not know is that he was also an accomplished ski racer in his younger years, and in fact won the inaugural Eccles Cup, held here at Snowbasin in 1948.

What else you may not know is that although Snowbasin was a sleepy, mostly locals ski mountain in the 1970's...when the sport of freestyle skiing was born...there was no other area...including the mega resorts...that produced the number of quality, innovative freestyle skiers as our mountain.

Our honorees skied at a time, and in disciplines, that valued daring and skill...overlaid with elegance and style. They were the elite athletes in their sport...in their era.

### **Gary Nate**

We're honoring Gary for a number of reasons.

He's been a primary force in Warren Miller movies...shooting and directing major segments...for twenty-seven years. Gary can ski faster...and better...backwards...loaded down with 50 lbs. of camera equipment... than most of us could ever hope to ski facing forward. These young dudes just think they invented skiing "switch." As the voice of experience who knew everybody who was anybody in the ski industry...he also took a couple of our honorees under his wing and played a big role in helping them get to the top of the freestyle world. And without Gary's video stash and good memory...we wouldn't have most of the footage you're seeing...or be able to recognize many of our honorees in their "in the day" hair, shades and sprayed-on stretch pants

If you haven't recognized Gary on the mountain, and he's here most days...you can pick him out as the guy with *Warren Miller Films* painted, silk screened, or embroidered on everything he owns. We interviewed a couple of Gary's former girlfriends...he gave us the names of at least a hundred...but couldn't get definite confirmation of a persistent rumor...that Warren's logo is also on his underwear.

Gary's a terrific guy, a terrific photographer, a great skier...and we salute and thank him for the generous contribution of his time and film for this program and the enormous amount of talent and positive energy he has given to our sport over the years.

### **Dean Perkins**

Our next honoree is a great athlete who skied in Warren Miller's 1<sup>st</sup> ski movie, *Deep and Light*, shot in 1949. He also appeared in the 1981 film, *Ski in the Sun*, while in his 50s. And if he blasted by you on the mountain last year you know that he could ski in next year's film...if they're looking for someone who can make *real* turns...with style. We're of course talking about Dean Perkins. Dean was honored at last year's Snowdance as one of Snowbasin's legendary ski racers. *Within the next couple of years there's a good chance we'll be honoring him again...if he can come up with something he hasn't already done...perhaps strapping skis to his custom Harley and setting the runs-in-a-day record on the men's downhill. What about it, Dean...ready to give it a try?*

Dean grew up skiing at Snowbasin, and attended both Weber State and the University of Utah, where he was not only a member of the ski teams, but the tennis teams. He played tournament tennis throughout Europe as well as competing on the International Ski Circuit as a member of the United States FIS World Cup Team. In addition to his accomplishments on the race course, tennis courts and the movies, he has long been one of the most successful businessmen in the Western U.S. ski industry, owning Perkins Ltd., and serving for decades as an agent for Roffe and Demetre. Over the years he has maintained a close, enduring friendship with Warren Miller. Dean is a bonafide legend...and looks like a legend...but always acts like the true gentleman that he is.

### **Tom Leavitt**

Tom started skiing at Snowbasin when he was four, and has been putting in 100 days a year since ...well, he missed a few days of school during the

winter. An early competitor in gelande jumping, he was also judged an excellent bet to win a world championship in moguls on the pro tour. Tom's competitive career ended prematurely in a hang gliding accident, but his considerable skills and distinctive style are still very much intact.

If you've seen him ski, you won't be surprised by the following analysis. Through the extensive use of slow motion...we determined that Tom makes three turns every second...whether he's skiing a 50 degree slope...a groomer...powder...or crud...whether he's cruising down Bear Hollow...or dropping into a chute in Hell's Canyon...whether he's going 50 mph...or 50 mph...which may be as slow as Tom has ever skied. *Considering a lifetime of hundred day ski seasons...thousands of runs at his speed...three turns a second...well, you can do the math. We are honored...to be honoring...the guy who has made more turns on skis than any other human being in history.*

Tom's skill and willingness to ski down *anything* landed him in twelve Warren Miller movies, and his jumping ability, combined with questionable judgment, established him as the early king of "*jumping from things*" in Warren's movies. While the camera's rolled, he jumped from the tram at Snowbird, a helicopter at Brian Head, and a hot air balloon at Sun Valley. And skied away each time.

Next time you're on the mountain, look for the headband, blond hair, and lightning quick turns...or the guy looking for someone to take one last run with at 3:59. Not only will you see a truly great skier, you'll be looking at a guy who gets as much pure joy out of our sport as anyone ever has.

### **Scott Leavitt**

Yes...they are brothers. Scott is Tom's *younger* brother. Scott offered us more money to say that than Tom offered us not to.

Scott also grew up on the slopes of Snowbasin, was also an accomplished gelande jumper, and continues to put in a hundred days a year on the hill. He's hard to spot other than in the lift line, because he's always either leading...or close to the front of the pack...of the fastest group of skiers on the mountain. And as soon as there's enough snow coverage, he's usually charging down the steepest and deepest of Snowbasin's extraordinary off piste terrain. He's a great guy...but he's not going to wait for you...and you won't have a chance of keeping up unless you seriously juice your downhill horsepower and are willing to risk life and limb.

Scott skied in a number of Warren Miller movies, including *Ski Time*, shot at Big Sky, Montana. When the snow melts, he loves traveling and immersing himself in different cultures. Outside of trips for skiing and the movies, he is among the most widely traveled of our honorees. Russia, Egypt, Finland, Austria, England, France...he has spent extensive time overseas. But Scott confides that through all of his adventures outside of Utah, there is a quaint little establishment in the good ole USA's hinterland of Alaska that remains his favorite. Goes by the interesting acronym of *ABC*. That's all he wanted us to say...he's afraid it might change from overexposure and too many tourists.

### **Jeff Hyde**

Both as an athlete and a businessman, Jeff Hyde has devoted much of his life to the sport of skiing. He was a quick, dedicated learner in his early years at Snowbasin, and ended up among the extraordinary group of young mogul, aerial, and ballet competitors that established this mountain as one of the Mecca's of freestyle - the high energy, free-spirited, creative alternative to the traditional sport of ski racing.

Jeff competed in the Western Amateur Freestyle Association and took third overall in the combined in the National Amateur Freestyle Championships in 1975. He appeared in the Warren Miller movies *Ski Fever* and *Skiing in the Sun*, and coordinated the balloon jump for Sun Valley's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, which was also filmed by Warren.

His business career in the ski industry started with a stint at Alpine Sports in Ogden. Dean Perkins, another of our honorees, then hired to him to work with the Roffe and Demetre lines that Dean represented, and for the past twenty years Jeff has represented Hot Chillys and other ski and outdoor clothing and gear throughout the Rocky Mountain and Western regions.

Jeff is very active as a sponsor and volunteer for local events, and many of you will hopefully bid on...and enjoy...the numerous items he has donated for this event.

The next Hyde generation may one-up the old man, as Jeff and his wife Bonnie's son Dakota is accomplished enough on the skeleton to have appeared in a major, national television ad for Exxon Mobile at the age of eighteen.

## **Bob Salerno**

Bob arrived in Waterville Valley, New Hampshire, for the Eastern Pro Freestyle Championship as a relative unknown on the national scene, and surely not the favorite. He startled the freestyle world by winning, and then dominated the sport for the next couple of years. Among his numerous titles were the World Super Hot Dog Champion, Aerials World Champion, Professional Freestyle Champion, and Mogul Enduro World Champion. He was selected Ski Magazine's Freestlyler of the Year and more recently featured as one of the magazine's "Legends of Freestyle."

With the travel and time demands of freestyle stardom, Bob wasn't able to spend as much time at Snowbasin skiing...and inventing and perfecting new moves and jumps...as he had in his earlier years. But these were exciting times that kept him away...and at the center of the crazy, creative, high energy, let's have a hell-of-a-good-time culture of his sport.

The media often contrasted Bob's friendly, slow, deliberate speech with his lightning quick feet and soaring, inverted, twisting aerials, and it proved a delightful combination that won him many friends, fans, and lucrative contracts. In addition to seven Warren Miller movies, Bob appeared in three full length films, numerous commercials, and his motions on skis are captured as a skiing James Bond in the *Tomorrow Never Dies* Video game.

Since 1971 Bob has been training, and training other skiers, on simulators. In 1992 he built the first simulators of his own design, which were to become the foundation for Virtual Snow, the company he runs today. Virtual Snow has numerous locations in the US and Canada, and in 2005 the Virtual Snow Showcase DVD was released.

## **Bob Burns**

Bob Burns is credited by most people in the know for inventing freestyle mogul skiing as it is now practiced on the World Cup and Olympic level.

Growing up in Ogden, Bob was a champion springboard diver and didn't take up skiing until his late teens. In an incredible transfer of athletic ability...he was soon beating European icons in races in Sun Valley... before turning his attention and talent to the more subjective and aesthetic arena of what was to become the freestyle movement. According to fellow ski legend and maverick Dick Dorworth, Bob's trips through the moguls of

the famed Exhibition run at Sun Valley were “improvisational exhibitions of grace, precision and velocity...in terrain where the three had not been combined before”. It was said that the winners of early freestyle contests were whoever “looked the most like Bob Burns.”

But his skiing skill and performances were only Bob’s first contribution to the freestyle movement. As a former chief designer of racing skis for K2, Bob had some unique ideas when he started building his own skis, dubbed “The Ski”, in 1974. The distinct, multicolored squares and rectangles stylized a revolutionary combination of soft flex, soft torque, soft side deflection and high camber...a design which proved ideal for ripping through moguls, throwing aerials, gliding through ballet moves...or skiing powder. If you were a serious freestyle competitor in the 70s...or a knowledgeable wannabe...you were on The Ski.

Bob skied in .....Warren Miller movies. Performing one of the “Burns Turns” he made famous, he was on the cover of the first issue of Powder Magazine. If you read the article inside, you might remember a fact that could win some serious trivia cash. What world class skier, pioneer of the freestyle movement and ski design...was also the national marbles champion?

### **Bobbie Chambers**

Bobbie is our only female honoree...and since there were no women among the legends of racing we honored last year...we need for all you great young skiers on the girls Snowbasin Alpine Team to pay attention here. We *want* to see you up here within a couple of years. Don’t let the guys keep hogging these programs.

Bob Chambers, Bobbie’s dad, was honored last year as a legendary ski racer and jumper. Bobbie has long been involved in the family business, Alpine Sports, where she is now a co-owner with her sister Peggy. She grew up in our sport. But that didn’t guarantee results on the mountain...it just gave her the opportunity to develop the considerable skills she used to compete successfully.

Bobbie had four top three finishes on the Budweiser Pro Mogul Tour and placed 2<sup>nd</sup> in the overall standings of the American Pro Skiing Grand Prix. In addition to Warren Miller’s Ski People and Ski Time, she skied for the camera in the feature film, *Fire and Ice*.

The footage of Bobbie you are watching was shot in New Zealand, and at Snowbird. We think you'll agree that Bobbie's elegant style exemplifies the beauty of skiing when making turns and moving with grace was a *good* thing.

### **Kenny Wright**

Kenny was skiing at Snowbasin at age six, and soon after began building jumps off the roof in his back yard. He progressed from the roof to gelande contests, traveling with fellow competitor Tom Leavitt...who had the car...and was one of the Snowbasin freestyle aces whom Gary Nate befriended and guided onto the Pro Freestyle Tour.

Kenny was among the top freestylers in the world...when he walked away from the sport to go on a two year mission. Among other...more serious reasons for his decision...Kenny has always valued contrast and variety. [He let us in on a secret. There probably wasn't then...nor will there ever be...as stark a contrast to the party-all-night, compete-the-next-day world of freestyle skiing...as a Mormon mission.](#)

Kenny insists that at least one of his good friends wasn't entirely sad to see him leave. "Salerno," Kenny reminisced, "told me he appreciated me going away and giving him a better shot at the world championship."

Kenny may not have competed as long as other freestylers, but he definitely left his mark on the sport. He was on the cover of the November, 1974 issue of Ski Magazine...and a time exposed image of him in inverted mid-flight filled the official poster of the 1974 World Freestyle Open at Aspen Highlands.

Kenny still skis for fun, with his wife Debbie and their four children, who share his love of the sport. He's also got a couple of grandkids...and he can't wait to get them on that new roof ramp he's designing.

### **Doug Coleman**

Doug is the only one of our honorees who still appears regularly in the movies and movie credits. He's gone from Warren Miller, the king of ski films...to Steven Spielberg...the king of *films, period*. Doug has been a top stunt man, and for the past fifteen years a stunt coordinator and director, as a

member of the Academy of Motion Pictures of Arts and Sciences, and his films include Spielberg's *The Terminal*, Martin Scorsese's *The Aviator*, and Johathan Demme's *The Manchurian Candidate* .

Doug's playground when he was young was the mountains surrounding the Ogden Valley. He had a serious background in gymnastics, and it showed as he quickly moved to the front of the pack of freestyle aerialists when he started jumping on skis over snow. In addition to competing, he was one of the first American International Judges in freestyle...and helped create the judging criteria, competition organization, and safe training techniques used by competitors.

Doug's other areas of athletic expertise...which made him a sought after stunt man...are diving, sky diving, trampoline, mountain climbing, cliff jumping, and the martial arts. Oh yea...and juggling.

Doug lives with his wife and two children in Los Angeles and Park City.

### **Michael Hart**

Mike was immediately hooked the first time he put on skis, which was at Snowbasin, and says he has skied a minimum of a couple of days a week for all of the 44 years since.

Mike competed on the Midas World Cup Tour in the early 70s with Bob Salerno and Robert Young...he had many top ten finishes...and more than a few in the top three. In Mike's own words "I was blessed with the opportunity to ski at Snowbasin and learn to ski and teach from my mentor and hero Earl Miller, the director of the Snowbasin Ski School. Earl inspired me and others to be the best skier/athlete I could be, and gave me the confidence to succeed in my competitive skiing career."

Mike was the first skier that Bob Burns hired to ski on "The Ski", and Mike says he is "extremely proud of representing Bob and his company."

With his close friend Al Johnson, Mike created American Pro Skiing in 1979, and for over half a decade transferred his love for the sport into the production of dozens of top flight ski competitions. They had their own TV program on channel 4. Mike is rightly proud of their goals of "giving skiers a place to exhibit their skills and be recognized for their accomplishments, and celebrating athletic excellence as only skiers can." He goes on to say,

“I was also very lucky to have Gary Nate as a friend. He recorded and documented our passion, and for him I am truly grateful. He is skiing’s biggest fan.

Mike still shares his passion for skiing and teaching by working on weekends here at Snowbasin...as an instructor with the Snow Sports Learning Center.

### **Robert Young**

We are honoring Robert tonight in memoriam...as he unfortunately passed away in .....

Robert was not only one of most accomplished and respected aerialists of all time, but one of the warmest, friendly personalities the ski world has ever known...a favorite of fellow competitors and fans alike. He is sorely missed by many...and for many admirable reasons.

Robert was an award winning gelande jumper, with many years of gymnastic experience, including a divisional championship of the Western States AAU. His skill and experience in the two disciplines laid the perfect foundation for his successful run at the National Aerial Championship and World Grand Prix Championship, both of which he won in 1975. But winning the title also took creativity and innovation in the air, and Robert’s performances moved the sport of aerals to the next level.

In Robert’s own words...”Finally I just figured out that jumping as far as you could wasn’t the thing, and maybe getting upside down and backward might be a little more exciting. So I started working on the more difficult aerals. The most important thing is developing a kinescetic or air-ground sense...both visually and mentally. You have to know exactly where you are in relationship to the ground the whole time you’re in the air.”

Robert was also a judge for numerous national freestyle competitions, and directed judging clinics for both the Professional Freestyle Association and the International Freestyle Skiers Association.

In a sport that was seen by some as too dangerous...Robert was one of the loudest, most persistent voices for the intensely serious, personally paced,

constant practice and caution that was necessary in order to make the sport safe.

In addition to Warren Miller movies, Robert skied in a number of other films and commercials, including playing one of the three villains who chased James Bond on skis in (.....)

It has been an honor to recognize these great athletes and superb skiers, who have contributed so much to both our sport and the reputation of Snowbasin and the Ogden Valley as a hotbed of talent and innovation.