

George Salter



“You have kept me skiing. Otherwise I would have left the sport years ago.” It was a simple message on a post card, but a familiar refrain, repeated over and over in cards, letters, e-mails and personal “thank-yous” to George Salter, an 82-year-old problem solver with the curiosity of a kid.

Maybe it was because one of the most recognizable ski shop names in Pennsylvania started life as a hardware store proprietor that George Salter developed a reputation for solving skiing dilemmas. He began selling wooden skis, cable bindings and leather boots over 60 years ago out of a back room. The nuts and bolts were in the front. But after being convinced by partner Charlotte Griffith and some competition from big box stores to go full throttle into skiing, George treated the enterprise like he treated hardware. “People come to a hardware store because they have problems,” mused Salter. And there’s

no end to the problems they have skiing. George set out to solve them.

The fact that George had feet that ached in standard boots helped the process along. George Salter has been tooling and retooling boots and creating the best orthotics to deal with individual situations. He’s a man who loses sleep if a skiing customer was still having issues on the slopes.

And he’s worked on many issues. How about skiers whose turns are a ballet in one direction, a train wreck in the other? Leaning too far forward or doing back flips? To identify alignment, balance, and wedging situations, George used his early machine shop savvy to design equipment that could pinpoint specific problems and suggest answers. That led Salter to become an early advocate and innovator in the development of ski alignment and equipment revisions geared specifically to women. Weight distribution and stance were clearly different. “Standard,” just didn’t work. George got busy and helped inspire other industry professionals who designed programs that brought more women into the sport, and Pennsylvania clinics that helped keep them on the trails.

Among George’s greatest challenge was creating systems that worked for Pennsylvanians with disabilities. Vietnam veterans who returned home as amputees found themselves skiing on equipment tailored by George for their own unique and individual needs.

Literally thousands of Pennsylvania skiers are in the sport today because they benefitted from George’s single-minded approach to snowsports. In a nutshell, he asks, “What’s the problem and what’s the cause.” Then he looks for possible solutions and boils it down to the best solution. It’s a labor and time-intensive effort that pays off in on-the-mountain dividends. It has also brought skiers to his landmark Montgomery County ski chalet from as far as Europe and Hawaii.

George Salter also recognized the need for some skiing missionary work aimed at bringing more Pennsylvanians into the sports. He became a motivating force for the formation of a coalition that included retailers, manufacturers, and ski areas. They shared resources to successfully stimulate interest in skiing and in Pennsylvania as a snowsport destination.

Through it all, George has had the support and confidence of his wife Dorothy, daughters Linda, Carol, Gina, son Barry, and his long-time ski shop partner, Charlotte Griffith.

It is with sadness that we learned George Salter passed away at the age of 82 in August and will be inducted posthumously into the SnowSports Hall of Fame – Class of 2012.