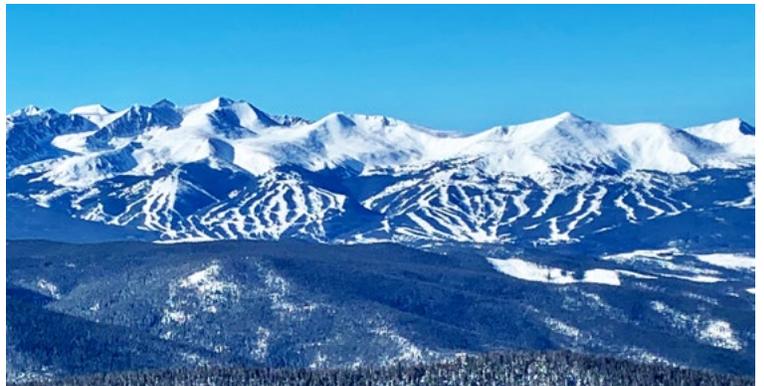


## KEYSTONE 2019 TRIP REPORT by MIKE WILLIS, Trip Coordinator

The Keystone group, most of whom were SCSC trip veterans, arrived very early to make sure that they could get through security in plenty of time to make the plane, a direct flight into Denver from Houston Hobby. Seeing a fresh coat of snow on the ground on the approach into Denver added to the excitement, giving us a hint of what we would experience in Keystone. All of us were lucky to get our bags and skis without much of a wait, and the bus was ready to make our trek to Keystone. Little did we know that we had a rogue bus driver who was going to blow past the regular grocery stop at the King Super in west Denver, intent on making a stop in Idaho Springs. But all was well as the grocery store was well stocked; however, there was a bit of grumbling about the adjacent liquor store that was sporting higher prices than most of us were used to. The bus trip into Keystone was a bit longer than usual due to heavy traffic – a sign of all the locals that were headed to the mountains for the weekend to enjoy the fresh snowfall.

After a bit of confusion about some of the sleeping arrangements in the condos, we were able to get settled in at the Pines Condominiums. Later that evening, all of the group made it to the TC's condo for a welcome party of pizza, appetizers, salad, and wine, beer, and nonalcoholic drinks. Kudos to my honorary ATC's, Stephanie Willis, Sandy



Fowler, and Miranda Kelly for doing the heavy lifting of getting everything set up for the evening. We all could sense the electricity in the air with the expectation of a great ski week on the horizon. Fresh snow was on the ground with more falling as we peeked out the windows.

Most of the group got out early the next morning in a gray, cloudy day with the winds beginning to turn to gusts. But the weather quickly turned in a day or two to bluebird days with seldom a cloud in the sky. The Big Dog skiers were leading the pack – heading out early for any black runs they came across. On speaking with Keith Kirkman, the leader of the Dogs, they must have skied practically every black run during the ensuing days at least once if not many times. Steve Ying, sporting his yellow ski suit, was all over the mountain as well; skiing alone not due to unpopularity, but because no one can match his speed and stamina. It's amazing what blue skies and fresh snow can do to make us all feel like youngsters again! (But most of us can only imagine skiing with the vigor of Steve.)

Craig Campbell made good use of his Epic Pass – he had returned from the Japan trip early Saturday morning, jumped in his car at the airport and hot footed it straight up to Keystone. I was surprised to receive a text from him that he was in town Saturday night and in his condo sometime around 9:00 pm, only a few hours after our bus had arrived. Needless to say, he was out early Sunday morning skiing the mountain, enjoying another great week of skiing.

Meanwhile, many of us were getting our ski legs, enjoying the green and blue runs with an occasionally black run mixed in. David Klaus was doing his best imitation of a ski instructor leading several of us down some blue runs and navigating us to the next run for us to do. Anne Thomas, Sandy Fowler, and Bob Reidenbach kept up a good pace following his speedy skiing. Bob started out slow in the morning, but really got his act together in a very short time. He looked like a completely different skier by the second day out.

Meanwhile I heard that Angela Zumwalt, Melinda Hughes, and Susan Stanley were schussing down the slopes, intent on setting the unofficial record for the fastest woman down the blue runs. According to reports, Angela may have done just that – when are the next Winter Olympics?? Brigitte Florshulz and Sandy O'Balle made good use of their 6-day lift tickets – I don't believe they missed a day of skiing while, later in the week, they also enjoyed some late night live music at the Snake River Saloon and Steakhouse. Karen Leeson and Bil Cusack went tubing off Dercum Mountain early in the week, and relayed the fun time that they had to many people. Miranda Kelly and Stephanie Willis took a day off from skiing in the middle of the week and did the tubing thing as well – much laughter and fun was had.

Since our condos were on the shuttle route and not ski in, ski out, many of the group met for après ski each evening,

relating their exploits of the day and gulping down some alcoholic beverages before making an early dinner date or heading back for a hot meal at the condos. We consistently had more than half of our group taking over a larger area of tables wherever we met after skiing. Charlotte Cooper, with her bubbly personality, was the life of the party at most of the happy hours even though she chose not to try her hand at skiing. She was also a font of information about the bases and surrounding area, having spent several days of energetic shopping and exploration. On our last après ski happy hour of the trip, it was a shame that all of us but Karen Leeson had left before Bil Cusack got up on stage and joined the band, playing the hand drum, doing an outstanding solo during one of the songs.

On Wednesday night we met at the Zuma Roadhouse for an optional dinner. The food was great and everyone had a great time. Most of us broke up into large and small groups at various tables. Stephanie Willis was making her usual rounds snapping pictures of everyone. Chuck Albright mentioned to me that night that this was his third evening in a row enjoying a steak dinner – what more can you ask for?

From Wednesday through the end of the week we had absolutely perfect bluebird days with little wind and blue skies. What better way is there to finish up the week!

We were all given lunch cards worth \$15 for each ski day – several of the group said they just barely used up the entire amount before the end of the trip; however, finding a place to spend our additional Mountain Money proved to be a challenge for some of us. But rest assured, what was left was spent at the Last Lift Bar on our final happy hour. Anne Thomas relayed that Chuck Albright said after the week that it was like winning at Monopoly what with all the vouchers, mountain money, and gift cards being passed out.

Saturday morning 20 of us had our bags picked up by the porters, and we trundled down to the bus to make a quiet bus ride back to Denver, catching our flight to Houston while the other 13 went their merry way on to Breckenridge for another week of skiing. We arrived to a humid, cloudy Houston early in the evening and headed back to our humble abodes – a little tired but refreshed and full of life with a week's worth of wonderful skiing and mountain living under our belt. The one question most of us had on our mind: Where are we skiing next year!??

