

## SLC SAMPLER: "WHERE ARE WE TODAY?" ARLEN ISHAM, TC

After months of planning, Saturday morning finally came! An excited bunch of eight met at Hobby Airport to head out for the Utah "Ski Sampler" trip. Ten people had signed up for the air tickets. The "check in" lines were really busy that morning and unfortunately two members, Frank Yu and Karen Birdwell had to catch a slightly later flight. But everything turned out okay, as we all regrouped at the Salt Lake City airport, luggage and all! Sue Yu referred to it as one of her "many adventures".



Land travelers were Nora & Mike Montgomery, Jim Hodges and Keith Kirkman. Nora and Mike drove in from Durango, Colorado. Jim and Keith came from the last SCSC ski trip in Colorado and then drove to join us to check out the slopes. Mike and Nora Montgomery actually met at the club in 1996 on a trip to Red River, got married shortly after that. They now reside in Durango, but decided to renew their membership just to come on the sampler trip and are looking forward to finding out what trips the SCSC will be offering in 2019, hoping to join us again.

Once united, everyone talked about how excited they were about the days to come....six days, six ski resorts. We were only hoping it would snow.... just a little more.

Bil Cusack and Arlen picked up two luxurious Dodge Caravans which were perfect for transporting ski equipment and bags. After unloading the baggage at the Homewood Suites, a group took one of the van's to Ski N Sea to pick up rental equipment. The store offered a 30% discount which was really appreciated by all. Karen Birdman bought a pair of really nice used skis and bindings. She found some brand new boots that fit perfectly in the bindings. She was outfitted very nicely and could not wait for the next day to arrive to try them. It had been a long 10 years since her last ski trip. In the meantime, Frank, Sue and others went to Smith's grocery to pick up some food while Arlen ran out to the government liquor store to pick up some necessities. Later that night the pre trip party started back at the Homewood Suites. The hotel provided a private room where everyone socialized and enjoyed Pizza from "Litzas Pizza", hors d'oeuvres, wine and beer.

Day 1- Sunday Solitude – Every morning started out with a full hot breakfast. Today's choice included sausage biscuits and gravy. Waffles, cereal, yogurt and juices and coffee was available. This is included in the price which is a huge perk to this trip. Full breakfast at Homewood every day. Everyone but Nora Montgomery and Sue Ann Chu went skiing. Nora and Sue planned to explore Salt Lake City. The rest of the group split up into two parts with Keith Kirkman and Jim Hodges heading



off to parts unknown on black slopes. Karen Leeson, being a newby, took beginning lessons all day. Fortunately, she was the only one that showed up to classes so her group lesson ended up to be private. She described it as “well worth it”. Bil Cusack hit the higher slopes while Arlen Isham led the rest skiing greens and blues. We got a wakeup call coming off the top on “Back Door” just before lunch, bumps and very hard packed. Lunch was at the Last Chance Mining Camp. By moving around the mountain, we found some decent snow on some runs to enjoy the day. Off the mountain about 4:00 PM.

Arlen Isham brought his bright red tasseled hat borrowed from his son all week, so he could be seen easily and found on the mountain all week, but decided to buy a helmet for about the same cost as renting one for the week.

Sunday evening was fun as the group ate the rest of the Pizzas and other food from Saturday night as we took over the Lobby and watched the Super bowl. It was observed by the editor that both Keith and Jim really like Maipé Malbec.

Monday, Park City (Cruise Day) – Beautiful blue sky with a few clouds. Easy drive to Park City with the two rented vans. Keith Kirkman and Jim Hodges decided to take advantage of the better snow at Brighton. In general the challenge each day was to do the entire mountain, not every run, but a great cross section. The snow at Park City was not the best; Craig Campbell and Arlen Isham took the mountain tour with the guide and then cut away to meet for lunch. The meeting place for lunch at the Viking Yurt proved tricky to find, only a couple people made it. We did not ski any of the Canyons, but worked our way around the Park City Mountain to find the best runs. The snow on the top was better. Karen Birdwell missed the return van back to Salt Lake City but found her way home late that night.

The Happy Hour at Homewood included a great salad, combined with chicken wings/legs, great soup, wine & beer. Many of the group never left the hotel to eat outside the food & drink was supplied during happy hour nightly.



Some people played cards in the lobby, while other showed up at the spa where more wine was available. Talking about building security changes, Bil Cusack told us the story about how he tuned a piano in the middle of the Astrodome 30 years ago with no one there but him.

While on the SLC sampler Frank Yu, informed several of us on the way to ski that Mt Hawaii (Mauna Kea) was the tallest mountain in the world. Sounds like a bold claim, however Frank said you had to start at the ocean bottom then measure to the mountain top. The ocean is 18,860 feet around Hawaii and the 13,802 above sea level for a total of 32,662. With Mount Everest at 29,029 feet above sea level. So Frank's claim is correct. Not sure how many of you measure from the ocean floor however.

Tuesday, Snowbird (Get Serious Day) – Snowing early with low visibility. It was a very tough day to ski with the low visibility, Jim, Keith, and Arlen went through the tunnel and tried skiing Mineral Basin, but quit after a couple runs. You could not see where you were going. Back on the front side around the middle of the morning, it started to clear up. The snow was great with about 6 to 10 inches depending on the location, so there was better skiing in the afternoon. Back at Homewood, dinner was pizza, soup and a great salad with desert. Afterwards, we hung out at the spa.

Bil & Karen were delighted to get to do some other activities in the Salt Lake area like a drive to “Elk Island” for the Thursday afternoon, where they hiked, saw wildlife, and the Great Salt Lake. Then that evening they took a tour that included the major landmarks in downtown SLC, ending with listening to the Tabernacle Choir rehearse with the full 60 piece orchestra!

It was a good group that enjoyed hanging out together at meals, watching the Super Bowl, the





opening of the Olympics, and enjoying the pool and hot tub at the hotel.

Wednesday, Snow Basin (Hang out Day) – Clear day with a few clouds. A pleasant drive north to Snow-

basin, about 70 minutes. Snowbasin missed the snow storm on Monday evening and Tuesday. Not good snow - a lot of hard packed. Jim, Keith, and Arlen went over to Strawberry basin for a couple runs and left there to get back to better snow on the middle of the mountain. The best run was Needles. Lunch was at the top of the gondola. Joe Zurfley and Bryan Yu went to Alta to ski to take advantage of the snow, dropped the day before. Karen Birdwell enjoyed the mountain so much, she stayed over for a while and came back to Salt Lake City later.

Wednesday Happy Hour included beef tacos, a great salad, soup, beer & wine. Craig and Joe went out to Wings to watch the Purdue basketball game. Sometime in the evening, Craig realized his driver's license was missing. Much discussion about whether it was left at the Snowbasin ticket counter. Craig was trying to contact Snowbasin to see if they found it. Eventually on Thursday evening, it was discovered by the room maids in Craig's bed. Much relief, he now knew he could go home.

Thursday, Alta (Good Snow Day) – Cloudy day, with about 2 inches of new snow. Bil Cusack, Karen Leeson, & Karen Birdwell decided to take a day off. Bil and Karen wanted to drive over to Elk Island. The rest of us really enjoyed Alta. The snow was great with lots of fun through the whole day. Great runs. My GPS showed that I traveled about 70

miles including the lift lines and my maximum speed was 48 Mph. Nice social in the lobby in the evening along with enjoying the spa.



Friday, Deer Valley (Last Chance Day) - Deer Valley – Easy drive over. Blue Sky Day. Craig, Joe, & Mike went to Alta. Bil, Karen L, & Arlen went to Deer Valley. Somehow Deer Valley had managed to generate snow that was great. Karen Leeson was doing pretty well on her 3rd. day of skiing.

Keith Kirkman and Jim Hodges checked out of the hotel on Friday morning so they could drive to Beaver Creek before the snowstorm, that was forecast for Friday night and all day Saturday. They beat the storm and enjoyed the new snow at Beaver Creek with the club.

Our evening party included Firehouse Subs, salad, lots of hors d'oeuvres along with beverages. The group takes over the lobby again to watch the Olympics opening ceremonies. Then, unfortunately, it was time to pack and go home.

Saturday, and darn(!) we have to go home. Karen Birdwell decided to donate her ten year old skis to the hotel. Same thing Arlen Isham did 8 years ago. We had a flight from Salt Lake City to Houston, stopping in Phoenix. Not sure who plugged the plane toilets, but they quit working, so our group got relocated for another plane to Houston. Despite the delay, we got home at a reasonable time. Tired, but full of good memories of our Utah Sampler.

