

The History and Benefits of Ski Patrol

John goes down the hill, hitting new speeds. He sees the jump and decides to go for it. He lands with a crash and pain soars through his body. He's hurt and he doesn't know what to do. Out of the corner of his eye he sees a red coat coming down the hill. The man puts him on a sled and takes him to the bottom of the hill where an ambulance meets them. At the hospital he learns that he has a few broken ribs and a punctured lung. If any more time had passed, he probably wouldn't have made it. He has one group to thank for his life, the ski patrol. Ski patrol is a national organization that is dedicated to creating safe environments for skiers across the country. Ski patrol has branches on ski hills all across the country, including Granite Peak. According to the National Ski Patrol (NSP), there are over 30,000 patrollers involved in ski patrol who serve at over 650 patrols. Many of these members are volunteers who are doing their part to help serve the skiing community. Ski patrollers have played a very significant role in the skiing community throughout history and continue to do much to help this community.

Throughout history, ski patrol has played a major role in ski communities, both nationally and locally. The NSP was founded in 1938 by Charles Minot "Minnie" Dole and has followed the creed of "Service and Safety" ever since. When Dole retired, 12 years later, the organization had grown to 4,000 members serving 300 patrols. The NSP also had involvement in World War II by screening the 10th Mountain Division. Many men who served in this division ended up being responsible for the establishment of ski areas across the country and had very influential roles in the national ski community. In 1980, the NSP was recognized with a federal charter by the United States Congress because of its altruism and service to the community. Aside from this national history, however, ski patrol has played a significant role in the history of the ski community in

Marathon County. This patrol was originally named the Rib Mountain Ski Club Ski Patrol and changed its name to the Rib Mountain Ski Patrol then to the Granite Peak Ski Patrol, which it still is today. This name was changed when the hill was bought by different people and organizations over time. The patrol was originally activated in 1938 when the NSP was formed. Over time, the patrol has grown to what it is today. It is now made up of 130 volunteers who serve 17,000 hours annually to Granite Peak. "I skied as a child and then I skied in high school on the race team and then, after I got done with college and I moved back to town, I wanted to get involved at the ski hill," Granite Peak ski patroller Jared Savage said. "They had tryouts and they explained what it was like and it sounded like something I wanted to do and I continued on from there and got all the necessary training." Members must try out and complete extensive training to become a ski patroller. This process insures that ski patrollers are highly qualified to keep everyone as safe as possible on the ski hill and to make the best patrol that they can be. "In 2006, they received an award recognizing them as the best large alpine patrol in the Central Division of National Ski Patrol." (Granite Peak Ski Patrol)

Today ski patrol participates in many altruistic things for the ski community as a whole. "The ski patrol does recruiting and they try to get more people involved with the ski patrol. We do a thing called 'Know the Patrol', where we go out and we go to the hill and we talk to people about what we do and how they can locate us if they need help and maybe give them ideas of where they should be skiing based on their skill level," Savage said. "They also help with other events, like when they do the fall rides on the chairlift, the ski patrol help with stuff like that. We try to make our presence known by wearing the same uniform and the red coats and being seen out on the hill." Ski patrollers have provided first aid and have helped with many occasions on and off

of the ski hill. Granite Peak patrollers also participate in other community service activities and have worked with organizations such as Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and Special Olympics. These activities make a very positive impact on the community and help many people.

Over the years, ski patrol has evolved, both locally and nationally, to what it is today. It is an altruistic organization that does a lot of good for the community as a whole. Ski patrol also allows many more people to enjoy all aspects of skiing and has benefitted patrollers as well. "It's a winter sport that I enjoy doing with the family," Savage said. "It's something that my kids and family can come up and ski with me and I really enjoy helping people." Like many others, ski patrol has positively impacted Jared Savage's life because it has allowed him to continue a sport that he loves and has given him opportunities to enjoy skiing with his entire family. Because of this, ski patrol has not only made a huge positive impact on the lives of many community members, but also on the individual patrollers' lives as well.

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Interview with Jared Savage