

## Our First President and the First Ski Lodge – a Gift from the Past

By Dave Galvin

Another one of those serendipity moments happened not long ago when I received an email from Sandy Mahnken of Bend, Oregon. The last name immediately rang a bell: Carl Mahnken was our club's first president in 1931-32. Sandy is Carl's daughter-in-law, and was cleaning out old clutter when she came across a few ancient photos. Might they be of interest to us?, she asked after finding Sahalie on the Web. Indeed, I responded, since we have so few photos or other details from the earliest days of the club. A treasure trove arrived in the mail.

Carl H. Mahnken was the first president of Commonwealth Ski Club as it emerged out of the Seattle Gymnastic Society/Turn Verein in 1931. He was a U.W. graduate and was 26 years old when he helped to launch the ski club. His younger sister, Arlene Mahnken, was the club's first secretary while still a student at U.W. His older brother, Henry C. Mahnken, must have also been involved in those early days, since he showed up signing documents for the Seattle Gymnastic Society in the 1960s. Henry's son, Conrad Mahnken, was one of the first NASA Aquanauts in the late 1960s, living for extended periods of time underwater to test conditions for space exploration.

Carl went on to help found the Washington Ski Club in 1934 and served as its president in 1936-37. This club took on the nascent task of running the competitive ski races throughout the region – it attracted those organizers like Carl plus the best of the ski racers from the more social ski clubs such as Commonwealth/Sahalie. Washington Ski Club sponsored the Silver Skis races on Mt. Rainier as well as the National Championships and Olympic tryouts in the 30s – pivotal events in the early days of skiing in North America. Sandy said that Carl “retired” from active ski organizing after the war in order to focus on his job at Boeing and to raise his two sons. He passed away in Issaquah in 1987.

Enjoy the trove of old photos on the following pages that Sandy bequeathed to us. Let's hope there are more in other families' attics that find their way back to the club. -- Dave





Commonwealth Ski Club members in late 1931 at their partially-built lodge. (Photo from the Mahnken family collection.)



Commonwealth skiers in front of their lodge in late 1931. (Photo from the Mahnken family collection.)



The original Commonwealth Ski Club lodge under construction in the summer of 1932. (Photo from the Mahnken family collection.)



Commonwealth members enjoying the sun on what is most likely the second Carnival in 1933. (Photo from the Mahnken family collection.)



The original Commonwealth Ski Club lodge in the fall of 1933, with Snoqualmie Mountain behind. (Photo from the Mahnken family collection.)



Skiers in front of the original Commonwealth Ski Club lodge, spring 1933. (Photo from the Mahnken family collection.)

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