

Sahalie Historical Note #18: Ski Racing and the PNSA from the 1960s through the '80s – the Gue and Atwood years

Sahalie members have a long history competing in races near and far, as well as sponsoring or hosting events at Snoqualmie Pass. Sahalie names are associated with the Pacific Northwest Ski Association going all the way back to its founding in the early 1930s. In this **second installment**, I focus on the racers affiliated with the club and the races sponsored by the club from the 1960s through the early 1980s.

After a post-WWII hiatus that extended throughout the 1950s in which there is almost no mention of ski racing involving Sahalie in either the local Seattle newspapers or the club's newsletter, things started to blossom again in the 1960s.

The February, 1964, *Sahalie Sentinel* contained this entry: "Two of our Sahalie lads, **Larry Smith**¹ and **Bob Gue**², represented Sahalie at the 'Mighty Mite' race at the Summit last Sunday. Although it was a tough course and even tougher competition, 'our' boys both placed well up on the list. Bob and Larry both learned on our hill. Their 'training' has consisted mostly of having fun skiing with friends and family at Sahalie. We are very proud of you, boys. You've put Sahalie back in the 'Racing Club' class." Note that Larry was 10 years old at the time, and Bobby Gue was 8.

The February 17, 1964, *Seattle Times* contained the first listing of our rising star skier, **Bob Gue**, who won the 8-and-under age group Mighty Mite slalom race at Crystal Mountain.³

And in March, 1964, the *Sahalie Sentinel* further reports: "Our list of racers carrying the Sahalie name is growing – **Bobby Gue, Ronnie Gue, Ronnie Gangnes, Arne Almaas, Mike Smith, Larry Smith** – all have entered races. Lots of the kids placed, with Bob Gue winning first at the Mighty Mite race at Crystal Mountain recently. Jerry Hopp and Terry Gangnes raced for their alma mater, West Seattle High School – traitors."

"**Robbie**" Gue repeated wins in Mighty Mite slaloms at Ski Acres in March, 1965, in the boys' 5-9 age group.^{4 5 6} The April, 1965, *Sahalie Sentinel* notes: "Congratulations, **Ronnie and Bobby Gue**. The boys have brought home four firsts and one second between them in recent Mighty Mite races."

Gue Repeats Win Mighty Mite Slalom

Robbie Gue repeated his first-week victory in Ski Acres' second of three Mighty Mite slalom races yesterday. Gue won the boys' 5-9-year-old race. Other winners yesterday were: girls' 4-9, Jan Frederick; girls' 10-14, Becky Viggers; boys' 10-14, Bob Reeves.

Seattle Times, March 8, 1965, p. 13.

Now back to “**Bob**” **Gue**, the young Sahalie racer continued to win in 1966.⁷ John Roalkvam, the WAC ski instructor who gave lessons to Sahalie members in the winters of 1962 and ’63, recalled the young Bob Gue as a real standout: “he was a natural.”⁸ In 1968, at age 12, Gue was the Washington State Chamber of Commerce champion in both slalom and giant slalom. In February, 1968, Bob Gue won the silver medal in the Jaycees’ national junior finals in Minnesota, missing the gold in the giant slalom by 0.03 seconds.⁹

In March, 1969, the *Sentinel* reports: “Congratulations to **Tom Atwood**¹⁰ and **Richie Gangnes**¹¹ for their racing performance at Sun Valley. They both won a Snowflake pin racing on Baldy. Rich received a Golden Ram on Dollar. Tom fell twice but just missed the silver by two tenths of a second.” Note that Tom was 8 at the time, while Rich was 14.

Tommy Atwood first appeared in the *Seattle Times* in March, 1970, taking first place in a Mitey Mite slalom race for boys aged 5-9.¹²

Carol Majnarich¹³ joined Alpental’s junior ski team in 1970 when she was 12. Carol recalls being invited to the Sahalie Ski Club’s lodge by an older racer by the name of Bobby; when she was invited to stay overnight, Jeanne Gue insisted on having Carol sleep right next to her “for safety.” Carol’s parents, John and Wanda Majnarich, joined the Gues as well as Lorraine and Stan Atwood on the sidelines and as timers at many races, and as a result were invited to join Sahalie Ski Club. Tommy recalls waking up from a night’s sleep in the Majnarich’s Mercer Island bathtub on at least one occasion. Carol married Chris Rathe in 1986, rejoined the club in 1990 and encouraged older daughter, Caitlin Rathe, to race for Team Alpental Snoqualmie (“TAS”) in the early 2000s. (More on Caitlin as well as Meghan Gue and other next-generation Sahalie racers in a later article.)

In January, 1971, **Bob Gue** came in third in the Schwaegler Cup slalom and giant slalom competitions at White Pass.¹⁴ In the 1972 season, he raced in the Northwest Cup competition.¹⁵ Around this time, Bob experienced a major accident while racing at Mission Ridge, where he skied off the course and into the trees, breaking his arm in multiple places. This injury set him back somewhat, although he went on to continued racing success.¹⁶

In 1972, **Bill Gue**, Bobby’s dad and Sahalie member since 1957, was recognized by PNSA with the **Norrie Lamson Award** “for outstanding service to Juniors and [the] Junior Race Program over a period of several years.”

Bob Gue was considered a “national caliber” ski racer from 1972-1975.¹⁷ In 1973, Gue raced in the Barrier Cup competition, qualifying for the PNSA divisional slalom. Gue raced against Phil and Steve Mahre in the Rainier International Spring series in March, 1973, coming in 22nd in a field of 60 racers.¹⁸ In January, 1974, Gue “dominated” the men’s Schwaegler Cup downhill races, winning two firsts and a second and thus the **combined Schwaegler Cup** honors.^{19 20}

Gue, Miss Cleary aim to widen leads

Seattle Times, February 21, 1974, p. 56.

Gue was considered one of the “region’s elite ski racers” in the Northwest Cup competitions in 1974.²¹ He represented PNSA in the junior national alpine championships in 1974 at Vail, Colorado, along with teammate, Steve Mahre; Gue finished fourth, the highest-place Northwest skier, in the men’s giant slalom, and tenth in the men’s slalom, out of more than 50 national competitors.²² At the end of the 1974 season, Bobby was the **Northwest Cup giant slalom champion** and came in second in overall Northwest Cup standings.²³

Bob Gue was 42nd in the Can-Am downhill races in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, in January, 1975. He was part of the PNSA men’s downhill team in February, 1975, and finished third in the “elite” Cranston Cup downhill competition at Bogus Basin, Idaho, in January, 1976.²⁴ He came in second in the Cranston Cup giant slalom races in February, 1976. He won the Edelweiss Cup slalom at Alpentel on February 14, 1976, and was in second place in Northwest Cup standings at the time.²⁵ Gue was part of the PNSA team to the senior national alpine championships at Copper Mountain, Colorado, in February, 1976. He was fourth at the Suncup Downhill competitions at Mt. Bachelor in March, 1976. Gue finished fourth in the final standings for the Northwest Cup in 1976.²⁶

Gue raced on the Colorado Pro Ski tour in 1978-79.

Tommy Atwood raced in the junior (age 17-19) USSA national alpine championships in Sun Valley representing PNSA in March, 1978, coming in sixth in the slalom.²⁷

Tommy was selected for the PNSA team for the Nor-Am races at Bridger Bowl, Montana, in January, 1979. Tom finished second in the men’s slalom in the Western States championships at Park City, Utah, in March, 1979.²⁸

Sahalie Ski Club sponsored a PNSA-sanctioned ski race at Snoqualmie Summit in March 1979, called the “inaugural” **Lars and Emma Nerland Cup**. One hundred and forty-one boys and girls raced in intermediate slalom. **Lorraine Atwood** was the prime organizer. Sahalie was credited with supplying 95% of the volunteers to make the races a success. **Bill Gue**, certified race official for USSA and PNSA, noted in a thank-you letter that “this race did a lot to put Sahalie on the PNSA map and to let a lot of people know what a fine ski club we have.”²⁹

Bobby Gue won first place in the “Special Class” senior giant slalom championships at Crystal Mountain in January, 1979. **Ed Link**, formerly of Sahalie in the late 1930s and early ‘40s, won the Class 6 competition.³⁰

Tommy Atwood won the Northwest Cup giant slalom race at Mission Ridge in January, 1980.³¹ He finished third in the Engen Cup slalom at McCall, Idaho, in February, 1980,³² and first in the Snoqualmie Valley giant slalom in March, 1980.³³ Tommy won the **1980 Northwest Cup**, in men’s overall as well as in slalom and giant slalom.³⁴

Tom Atwood was part of the PNSA team at the U.S. alpine championships at Squaw Valley, California, in March, 1980.³⁵

The second annual **Nerland Slalom** was run in March 1980, noted as an “official PNSA ski race.” Over 200 kids participated in novice, intermediate and advanced runs. The *Sahalie Sentinel* notes, “Not only did many of our members support the racing efforts of these young skiers, but also demonstrated Sahalie spirit and good nature.”

In 1980, **Tom Atwood** won PNSA’s Schwabe Award as the “outstanding alpine competitor during the past year.” (Phil and Steve Mahre traded this award back-and-forth a few years earlier, and, in 1981, a year after Tommy, it was given to Debbie Armstrong!) The nearby photo shows the trophy, now sitting on the mantle at the Mission Ridge ski lodge, confirming T. Atwood’s claim-to-fame.

A planned “third annual” Nerland Ski Race sponsored by the Sahalie Ski Club had to be cancelled in March, 1981, due to lack of snow.

Skiing for the University of Wyoming, **Tommy Atwood** finished tenth in giant slalom at the NCAA championships at Park City, Utah, in March, 1981.³⁶

In the fall of 1981, Tommy joined the **U.S. Ski Team** in Europa Cup races. After a year of racing internationally, he was invited to stay on the U.S. team, but (as he tells the story), his dad, Stan Atwood, said, “get your butt back to school” to finish his undergraduate degree at Wyoming. He helped the University of Wyoming win the **NCAAs in 1985** – “the thrill of my life!” he noted in a 1989 magazine quote. The 1985 U. Wyoming Ski Team was inducted into the U. Wyoming Intercollegiate Athletics Hall of Fame in 2012.³⁷ Tom was honored in a half-time induction at the U. Wyoming football game on September 15, 2012.



Bob Gue was listed as one of the “Top Ten” Northwest skiers by *SportsNorthwest* in 1983. **Tom Atwood** shared that honor in the 1989 “Top Ten” list.³⁸

And that concludes the recorded escapades of two of Sahalie Ski Club’s greatest alpine skiers from the mid 1900s, as well as the club’s participation in Northwest ski racing from the 1960s through the ‘80s. Next up are the exploits of more recent young Sahalie racers: Meghan Gue, Caitlin Rathe and Geneva and Simone Machmiller among them. Young talent continues to grow in this 82-year-old ski club. Who might be next at national or World Cup honors?

Let us know if there are gaps in this record, or if any errors of commission or omission occurred. Photos are particularly welcome.

- Dave Galvin (© Copyright 2012, Dave Galvin, galvind53@gmail.com)

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Send comments or correction to galvind53@gmail.com .



Schwabe Award trophy 1972-2006
(photos by Dave Galvin)

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- ¹ Lawrence N. Smith, born 28 January, 1954. His older brother, Michael W. Smith, was born 29 November, 1950. Sister, Shirley Y. Smith, was born 1 January, 1948.
- ² Robert T. Gue, born 15 December, 1955.
- ³ "Berg Wins Slalom at Snoqualmie," *Seattle Times*, February 17, 1964, p. 19.
- ⁴ Gue Repeats Win Mighty Mite Slalom," *Seattle Times*, March 8, 1965, p. 13.
- ⁵ "Pam, Jody Parcels Win Mighty Mite Races," *Seattle Times*, March 15, 1965, p. 19.
- ⁶ "Might Mite Champs Crowned at Ski Acres," *Seattle Times*, March 29, 1965, p. 17.
- ⁷ "Gue, Smith Win 'Mite' Ski Races," *Seattle Times*, March 14, 1966, p. 35; "Four Win Trophies in Mite Skiing," *Seattle Times*, March 28, 1966, p. 14.
- ⁸ John Roalkvam, personal communication with Dave Galvin, June, 2012.
- ⁹ Bud Livesley, 1968, "Atkins Shows Promise as '72 Olympic Skier," *Seattle Times*, February 23, 1968, p. 62.
- ¹⁰ Tom Atwood, born ...
- ¹¹ Rich Gangnes, born ...
- ¹² "Mite Skiing Champs Named," *Seattle Times*, March 23, 1970, p. 49.
- ¹³ Carol (Majnarich) Rathe, born October 26, 1958.
- ¹⁴ "Simonson Repeats," *Seattle Times*, January 18, 1971, p. 20.
- ¹⁵ "Crystal skiers win at Stevens," *Seattle Times*, December 20, 1971, p. 28.
- ¹⁶ Arvid Berg, an older competitor of Bob Gue, was the one who pulled young Gue out of the trees in that 1971/2 accident. Arvid Berg, personal communication with Dave Galvin, June 25, 2012.
- ¹⁷ Oregon Cancer Ski-Out, 2009, posted on-line at:
http://www.cancerskiout.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&catid=3:newsflash&id=49:coaches-09.
- ¹⁸ "Adgate wins Blossom Cup giant slalom," *Seattle Times*, March 31, 1973, p. 14.
- ¹⁹ "Local skiing; Schwaegler Cup," *Seattle Times*, January 19, 1974, p. 12.
- ²⁰ Rich Johnson, 1974a, "Traverses," *Seattle Times*, January 24, 1974, p. 59.
- ²¹ Rich Johnson, 1974b, "Crystal Ball," *Seattle Times*, January 31, 1974, p. 46; Rich Johnson, 1974c, "Gue, Miss Cleary aim to widen leads," *Seattle Times*, February 21, 1974, p. 54; "Two elite ski races set at Snoqualmie," *Seattle Times*, March 1, 1974, p. 20.
- ²² "Alpental skier fourth in junior alpine giant slalom," *Seattle Times*, March 15, 1974, p. 38; "Three N.W. skiers in jr.-national top 10," *Seattle Times*, March 16, 1974, p. 11.
- ²³ "Jenkins wins N.W. ski title," *Seattle Times*, April 29, 1974, p. 26.
- ²⁴ "Cranston Cup; Elite Downhill at Bogus Basin, Idaho," *Seattle Times*, January 31, 1976, p. 11.
- ²⁵ "Edelweiss Slalom at Alpental; Elite Men," *Seattle Times*, February 15, 1976, p. 114.
- ²⁶ "Oregon skier wins N.W. Cup women's title," *Seattle Times*, March 29, 1976, p. 21.
- ²⁷ "37 skiers on P.N.S.A. team for nationals," *Seattle Times*, March 14, 1978, p. 52; "Junior National Alpine Championships at Sun Valley, Idaho," *Seattle Times*, March 19, 1978, p. 132.
- ²⁸ Rich Johnson, 1979, "Traverses," *Seattle Times*, March 22, 1979, p. 89.
- ²⁹ Bill Gue, 1979, letter to Bob Hallowell, Sahalie Ski Club president, *Sahalie Sentinel*, May, 1979.
- ³⁰ "Senior giant slalom championships at Crystal Mountain," *Seattle Times*, April 16, 1979, p. 27.
- ³¹ "Northwest Cup at Mission Ridge," *Seattle Times*, January 6, 1980, p. 48.
- ³² "Engen Cup at McCall, Idaho," *Seattle Times*, February 14, 1980, p. 38.
- ³³ "Snoqualmie Valley Ski Race at Snoqualmie Summit," *Seattle Times*, March 5, 1980, p. 92.
- ³⁴ "Northwest Cup Final Standings," *Seattle Times*, March 5, 1980, p. 92.
- ³⁵ "Storm ends ski practice for nationals," *Seattle Times*, March 21, 1980, p. 45.
- ³⁶ "N.C.A.A. Championships at Park City, Utah, Giant Slalom, Two Runs," *Seattle Times*, March 12, 1981, p. 38.
- ³⁷ "UW Intercollegiate Athletics Hall of Fame Selects Class of 2012," University of Wyoming Athletics, February 25, 2012, <http://www.wyomingathletics.com/genrel/022512aaa.html>.
- ³⁸ "Top Ten – Our Annual Look at the Northwest's Best Skiers," *SportsNorthwest*, November 1989, pp. 9-11.