

## Certified Beginings

In 1964, National Director Chuck Schobinger forwarded a committee report, from the Southern Rocky Mountain Division, to George Wesson, Jr. to work out the details for a 'Certified' program. The report read: "It is the desire of the paid patrolmen of the NSPS to continually strive for higher standards for all ski patrolmen. Hence this Certified ski patrolmen program is instituted to give recognition to those who have devoted the extra time and effort to pursue a course of self development beyond the minimum requirements of the senior ski patrolmen. This program is necessary for the NSPS to keep pace with the technological developments in the sport of skiing and to encourage ski patrolmen to better fulfill the ever increasing demands and expectations of ski area management and the skiing public"1

The Eastern Division put together a committee of inspiring New England patrollers, which included George Wesson Jr., Rudy Carlson, Wayne Doss, Dexter Galusha, and Casey Rowley, to work out the details and proficiency requirements for a pilot program that would demand the highest level of proficiency from patrollers through training and testing and would promote a level of patrolling in which there would be no compromise with excellence in skiing, first aid, patrol management, administration and leadership. Two years later, during the 1967-68 season, the pilot program was launched. Thirty-four candidate applications were received of which only 8 were accepted. Seven candidates showed up at Wildcat Mt. in New Hampshire for the first 'Certified' Ski and Toboggan Exam. PSPA was asked for their help in administering the exam to help give credibility to the program for the professionals. The courses were long and challenging using the most difficult terrain Wildcat had to offer. All seven candidates were successful and were invited to the first 'Certified' First Aid Exam to be held at Killington in April 1968. The First Aid problems were challenging and realistic, many taken from actual accident reports of some of the most unusual or difficult accident scenarios New England Ski Areas had seen. In some scenarios the actual patients were asked to 'relive' their accidents by replaying the roles of patients during the exam. In addition to first aid skills, the candidates would be expected to demonstrate a thorough understanding of patrol/management relationship and ski area operation knowledge. Interviews were conducted for

each candidate as if the candidate were applying for a position of patrol leader at their mountain. In the early years of the program, the interviews were conducted by the actual owners and managers of the ski area. Questions concerning snowmaking and lifts, trail markings and grooming, staffing requirements and payroll, equipment needs and costs, mass casualty plans and risk management, legal and liability concerns, federal, state and local laws and protocol would all be fair game. All seven candidates again passed this portion of the exam becoming the first NSPS 'Certified' Patrollers.

It wasn't until March of 1969, at the "Advanced Ski Patrol Techniques Clinic" which was held in conjunction with the "Mid-Season Officers Meeting" that the National Officer had a chance to review and accept the report of the Eastern Division 'Certified' Pilot Program to endorse the creation of the program. The Eastern Division went on to host demonstrations for the other divisions.

Over the past 30 years, the philosophy, purpose and objectives of the 'Certified' program have gone unchanged. The program content has seen the addition of an avalanche and low angle rescue module within the past 3-4 years. Today's 'Certified' exam structure is a 3 day format consisting of the Skiing and Toboggan Skills on day 1 followed by First Aid, Interviews, Lift Evacuation, Low Angle Rescue, Avalanche, etc. on Day 2 and 3, followed by an annual business meeting in the afternoon on Day 3.

This program was set up to be a self-development program with the individual's knowledge demonstrated through testing. Make no mistake about it, this is a 'TEST'. The 'Certified' candidate is tested in 21 disciplines receiving a score in each. Some are Pass/Fail others are on a 1-10 scale with a score of 8 as a passing grade. The examiners pencils are very sharp, however from my own personal experiences found them to be extremely fair. Candidates are expected to practice and to seek out all necessary information ahead of time and come prepared to pass the "TEST" in one year, however there is a three year completion window.

The program envisioned by that group of talented individuals some 30 years ago, has become a successful program within the NSP System. With 600+ 'Certified' patrollers nationally with each one earning their

certification by demonstrating their skill and knowledge at a level without compromise in all areas of patrolling. This is NOT a 'Good Old Boys Club', like I had once perceived it, for many 'Good Old Boys' have come but have not succeeded, rather this IS a group of highly self motivated individuals who have demonstrated exceptional skills as Ski Patrol men and women.