

THE KG ANNUAL SKI FEST

As my Uncle Allen used to say, "Skiing is the glue that holds this family together." And from 1970 until this very day, he's been absolutely right. Family traditions can pack in a whole bunch of different emotions, but at the end of the day, for good and bad, they help us stay connected and grounded. Every year my cousins, husband, and I gather to keep the tradition alive. It's our tribute to my father and uncle.



My uncle Allen was the Ying to my Dad's Yang. He was as gentle and carefree as my Dad was impatient and anxious. We affectionately called him by his initials – A.G. How the two of them ever became such good friends is a mystery to me, but they were buddies way before my father started dating his sister, my mother. As a matter of fact, they might have been the only two teenage Jewish boys in Brooklyn that skied in 1945. They often regaled us with stories that we never tired of hearing, no matter how many times they told them. Their tales were usually perfectly timed for those moments when we were being brats or unappreciative.

"We'd get up at 2:00am and get dressed in the dark so we wouldn't wake anyone." A.G. would start.

"Yeah, if you woke your Granddad, you'd never hear the end of it," Dad chimed in.

"We'd get on the subway at Kings Highway and take it all the way into Manhattan to catch the ferry to Staten Island," A.G. would continue, as each would volley back and forth telling the tale.



"Next, we'd walk from the Ferry to the train station, schlepping all of our gear up and down the stairs. And in those days, skis were heavy. They were army surplus."

"People would look at us as if we were nuts."

"We'd have to take two trains and then wait for a bus just to get us close to Bear Mountain. Then we'd have to walk at least a mile to the base of the mountain."

"Two miles."

"Yeah, two miles, no maybe three."

"There were no lifts, no lodges, no nothing. You had to pee in the woods."

"All we had to eat were some egg salad sandwiches your Nana

made for us the night before.”

“They were usually smashed by the time we’d get to the mountain and we’d have to melt snow just to wash them down.”

“We’d strap on our skis that had these big bear trap bindings, and grab onto that rope tow with all our might.”

“It was so rough, by the end of the day it would burn through our gloves, and our hands would be soaked in blood by the time we got home.”

“We didn’t care.”

“Yeah, those were the days.”



My cousins and I miss those stories and we miss our fathers. We’ve created a lot of new tall tales over the years as the next generation has joined us, something we know they would have been thrilled to see. Every time the sun cuts through the

clouds, we know they are looking down on us, hoping for some fresh powder so we can make our own new tracks.