

Nominated by:
Jennifer Coutts

Bill Mackey Nomination

Omar Fricke

Omar Fricke was a 65-year member of the **National Ski Patrol** at Bogus Basin. He received **National Appointment # 2603** in 1962. Omar started patrolling in 1958 continuing through early 2019. He started patrolling when the single-track muddy road to Bogus was one way up in the morning and one way down in the afternoon.

While serving on the Bogus Basin paid patrol, Omar oversaw many changes during those years. From additions to the Patrol building to numerous NSP changes to the Outdoor Emergency Technicians training, Omar moved forward with all of it. One of the most significant was when he coordinated with Dr. Alex Homaechevarria of St. Luke's Sports Medicine to bring the new **Ski Injury Prevention Program (SIPP)** to the Bogus Basin Ski Patrol. SIPP was the brainchild of Doc Alex (as we affectionately call him), implemented by St. Luke's technology department. Doc Alex grew up in the Treasure Valley and learned to ski at Bogus Basin.

He was looking for an effective way to capture injury details. The program allows patrollers to identify the slope areas most affected by injuries by identifying potential hazards and collecting data describing the location, potential cause of injuries and the injuries themselves. Omar said the software gave patrollers real-time observations to see where accidents are piling up and to quickly determine if changes are needed to make an area safer.

Although basic guidelines exist, as we understand, to date there are no officially adopted U.S. ski industry uniform safety standards for identifying and/or mitigating common slope hazards at ski areas. Omar and Doc Alex believed this research will advance safety and injury prevention practices.

Omar was born in Glenns Ferry, Idaho where his grandma taught him to "call sheep". He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology and Zoology at the College of Idaho. While in college, Omar met his wife, Beverly Huffman. They married in 1959 and moved to Meridian where they raised their daughter, Tamara. Although he described himself as a practicing ne'er do well, Omar held simultaneous professional positions as a teacher, pilot, and ski patroller. During his 20 years at Meridian High School, Omar taught math and aeronautics and was the ski club advisor. A charismatic and dedicated teacher, Omar was named Idaho Outstanding Aerospace Science Educator in 1973. Omar retired from teaching in 1980.

As a photographer in the Air National Guard, Omar developed an interest in aviation. He became a flight instructor and spent summers as a lead plane pilot for the BLM Office of Fire and Aviation. He retired from teaching to work full-time as a pilot for the U.S. Department of the Interior.

Lest you think Omar was all business, he had a fun side, too! One of Omar's lifelong patroller friends said...*"Growing up on a ranch came in handy one day. Omar and I were together when a call came in reporting sheep roaming the backside of the mountain. The sheep belonged to a local ranching family. We called them and they said if we could collect them, they would send someone to fetch them. Off we went and quickly found them, but discovered no one had taught them to come when called. Omar started knocking his ski poles together over his head. (Did Grandma really do this?) Didn't work, so we chased them around eventually lassoing one, but soon found they weren't leash trained either! With me dragging and Omar prodding, off we went. Then it began to rain so I decided to pick up the wet, heavy, squirming, stinky sheep and ski down to the cat track with Omar right behind. Mercifully another call came in, this time for an injured skier, and we happily abandoned our wrangling adventure."*

Omar was a dear friend to many, a teacher and mentor to hundreds of Bogus patrollers. Bogus Basin was his home away from home and the Bogus crew was his family.

Omar Fricke died of natural causes at his family's home on December 14, 2022. He was 88.

