

# Far West Ski Association

presents the **Snowsports Builder Award** to



## *Nancy Ingalsbee — Skiers' Voice in Washington DC*

Skiing and skiers were under great pressures in the 1965–1985 era, due not only to the immense increase in the popularity of skiing, but from political action and litigation by environmental activists. Environmental activism created a long, bruising battle that mobilized FWSA members, clubs and councils to their highest level that has not experienced since.

The skiers' battle crescendo was focused on the Disney proposal for the development of Mineral King. Mineral King became the poster child in the great battle for skiing.

In an extraordinary set of actions, **Nancy Ingalsbee** took the initiative to do something about a significant threat to the future of skiing. She started her campaign in her own ski club, Balboa, and in 1977, the Southern Council and San Francisco ski shows.

She produced the world's "longest letter" to the Forest Service— and whoever else would listen— to proceed with the development of Mineral King. She had no expense money, so Balboa members raised \$632 to send her to Washington DC with her letter in September 1977. Later, thanks to a generous donation from Disney to fund Nancy full time, she commenced flying into DC regularly.

Nancy opened a Washington office for FWSA in May 1978 and a new USSA/ Sports Government Relations office on Pennsylvania Avenue in June 1981. She served as the principal DC voice for skiers' interests for nearly ten frenzied years. She became a go-to expert in DC on skiing matters for many agencies and political figures.

She had evolved from club activist to Association committee person and then to full-time Director of Public Affairs in October 1977. The Sierra Club sued the Forest Service over its environmental impact assessment for Mineral King.

The suit ultimately reached the Supreme Court. FWSA and others had filed an amicus curiae brief in favor of skiing. The suit failed. But then came legislation to put Mineral King into Sequoia National Park. This would kill Mineral King for skiing, because the Park Service does not allow lift-served skiing on park lands.

But we started too late; Mineral King went into Sequoia National Park October 16, 1978. One of California's Senators defected and the transfer was made. It is considered by many skiers to be the mortal blow that ended further expansion of skiing in California.

But there remained a further significant threat to terrain identified as suitable for skiing and the RARE II (Roadless Area Review and Evaluation) by the USFS was that threat. Nancy and the California Public Lands Coalition (Nancy was the organizer) systematically identified ALL potential ski terrain in roadless areas in California as identified by the Forest Service itself.

Provisions were then drafted to exclude ski terrain from unfavorable land use decisions that would be made on the basis of the RARE evaluations. And this systematic approach became a template for other regions. Her efforts benefited both the future for grass roots skiers as well as that for ski area expansions.

We hope there will never again be another battle with our fellow environmentalists, nor the mobilization of our own members. We are unlikely to see the likes of a Nancy Ingalsbee again. She is a star in our western skies. She was a major force in preserving the possibilities for future skiing on public lands. And she made skiers a force to be recognized. Salute her during your runs and raise an après ski toast to her.

*The FWSA Snowsports Builder Award is given to an individual who has made an indelible positive impact on snowsports. The builder honored may be for achievements in athletics, the press, publishers, historians, industry, humanitarian work, area development, or technology. In short, FWSA honors those who have made significant contributions to snowsports.*

Respectfully nominated by *John Watson*.