

THE JADED LOCAL'S HOLY COMMANDMENTS PG. 88

powder

Lost

120 IN AN ALEUTIAN
WHITEOUT

108 MONTE BIANCO'S
HIDDEN STASH

Found

096 DREW TABKE'S
EMERGENCE

044 BEND, OREGON,
REBORN



CUSTOM BOOT LINERS

Photo: Ryan Schoen, Skier: Adam Roberts



INTUITIONLINERS.COM

FALL
LINE



THE ALTERNATIVE SKIER RESPONSIBILITY CODE:
RIGHT OF WAY GOES TO SKIERS OVER 60 OR UNDER 10.



Jim Whittaker, the first American to summit Everest, "remembers where it all began."

PHOTO: DIANNE ROBERTS

Fireside Chats

At 89, Warren Miller is still telling stories

BY LEIF WHITTAKER

THE RELIEF CARVING on the oak mantle in Warren Miller's lift-accessed home, which rises from the corduroy flanks of a run called "Pioneer" at the center of Montana's Yellowstone Club, shows a 1937 Buick convertible towing a teardrop trailer buried beneath a hubcap-deep accumulation of virgin snow. To the right of the image, scrawled above the fire in arcing letters, are the words "remember where it all began..."

On a Saturday afternoon in late February, I stood in front of the hearth next to famed alpinist Conrad Anker and my father, Jim Whittaker, who in 1963 became the first American to summit Mount Everest. Miller and his wife, Laurie, had invited Anker, my family, and me into their home to share stories about our respective adventures to the Himalaya. Anker and I had reached the summit of Everest only minutes apart on May 26, 2012, almost 50 years after my father planted the Stars and Stripes in the exact same place. Along with Miller himself, we were the main attractions at one of America's most distinguished (and exclusive) après ski events: Stories with Warren.

Eighty goggle-tanned skiers—mostly members of the Yellowstone Club, their children, and their invited guests—joined us in the living room. There was no set agenda, but the chats happen nearly every Saturday around 3 p.m. throughout the winter. If you can make it inside the gates of the Yellowstone Club—the posh private club near Big Sky—you are invited. The attendees sat on couches, piano benches, windowsills, and the floor surrounding the crackling fire.

"For a guy who grew up watching Warren Miller movies since I was super small, it was a once in a lifetime sort of deal," says Brit Barnes, a ski tech at nearby Big Sky Sports who has spent the past 14 winters in Big Sky. It was his first time to Miller's house. "My favorite part was how relaxed Warren Miller was, just

shooting the breeze."

More than 60 years ago, Miller's career as a filmmaker originated in a similar, if humbler, setting. So what is the secret to attracting audiences year after year? "The difference with my movies was that I always told a story," says Miller, who, at 89, is no longer involved with the films that bear his name.

Everyone listened intently to Miller and my dad describe how they met in 1952, back when Dad was installing metal edges on wooden planks with a miniature Phillips screwdriver at an outdoor store in Seattle and Warren was testing Howard Head skis, trying to determine why they didn't track at high speed. Anker and I talked about climbing through the dangerous Khumbu Icefall and meeting at the summit of Mount Everest on a bluebird morning in 2012. Miller's authentic charm and frankness were the threads that sewed it all together. It felt like a conversation between old ski buddies.

Which is probably why Warren's stories have always struck such a powerful chord. They make us feel like we are sitting in his living room, just a part of the conversation. His iconic deadpan voice reminds us that, no matter how hard we ski or how high we climb, we all share an addiction to the same rare and uncut substance. As Miller puts it: "A snowflake is very little different than cocaine because it can change your life dramatically. But unlike cocaine, which will destroy your life, powder snow up your nose is wonderful."