

CHIC SCHAFFER

ISKI J-2



Chic Schafer of Sea Bright New Jersey, by way of Rumson and Red Bank New Jersey and hundreds of globe points afar, passed away yesterday a few hours before sunset. He had just turned 95. He was a member of the Jay Peak way-backers. Way back past the slides and pillows and hockey sticks and such. He had some of the first Garden-State vanity plates ascribed to Jay Peak. He owned ISKIJ long after his eyesight stole his license from him. He was an ambassador before we really had ambassadors. He'd stand around wearing one of his own jackets with a makeshift Chic Schafer/Guide nametag and a thatch of, at the time, grey-but-whitening beard. He smiled a lot. He said hey to everyone and he gave directions. Some of them, useful. I once witnessed this interaction:

Chic: Hey there shooter.

Guest: Can you tell me if there's anything going on after the lifts close?

Chic: Yeah (insert gravel here), there's some sort of beer-party and one of those bands up there (points to the IR); just take the stairs up and I bet they'll take you there.

Guest: Great, what time does it happen?

Chic: (Smiling) How would I know? I can't stand that noise. (Pats guest on back, sends guest away).

He'd be out there in everything. Sideways snow, slop, cold, pissing rain, everything. He'd duck into customer service now and again (the locations of which would change 3 times across his tenure), his face generally crimson, but his smile still wide. Frozen, likely.

He'd start every day the same. Second or third person in the office early Saturday morning. A stop at Linda or Emilie Starr's for a half a cup of coffee, a borrowed drop of the pure in my office, and a plop down onto my chair. "Ok speedball what do we got today." Not really caring what we had, as his approach to each day was unmoved by any change of business. A smile, a look into a guest's eyes, a handshake, a hug and a few words of philosophy born of what he had borne. New Jersey summers, western ski trips, cycling gangs, stock market seats, investment strategies and family, always family. All of it bound together by a true and mighty craic that encircled him wherever he walked and wherever he landed.

Across the years and seasons he introduced hundreds of people to Jay Peak and they, in turn, hundreds and hundreds more. Some came for a season and left. Others stayed. It's tough to walk the parking lot, on any given Saturday still, and not find 6 degrees of Chic Schafer, oftentimes just 1 or 2 degrees, with whoever you run into. He crossed lines that wound around staff members, season passholders, day trippers, locals, and homeowners. And then he tied those lines together with a glass of Burgundy in one hand, and an arm wrapped around your shoulder.

I last saw him several months back, dropping off food for him in his assisted living space. He had turned it into a view-heavy condominiumized version of the the NYSE, with a fax machine, notes from his broker scattered on the floor, a Baron's Investment News open to the quotes, and a refrigerator full of lo mein, dutifully brought to him by his friend Tom Liu; a fellow Jay Peak homeowner who'd drive :45 minutes with me at least once a summer to see him. We'd break him out of his assisted living area for a few hours and retreat to a garage in the area where Chic held court. He was at home among a community of blue collars in the area who revered him. As importantly, they listened to him. 'A glass maybe two then we're out Steveo. Gotta get back before the warden misses us.' We'd always get him back in time before the market closed. I never saw a warden.

We talked about how the season went. He wanted to know how Joanie was, how Linda Starr was, and her daughter the real smart one. How was she? 'Aw man Steveo', he'd say, 'this winter is going to be a big one isn't it? I can tell. We're due boy, aren't we?' He'd say it every single summer. The winters would generally prove him right.

He passed away last night right around dinnertime. He was surrounded on all sides by a wide, loving family, both in the area and not, that he steered by not steering it. Not consciously at least. He used love, an impossible reserve of generosity, and an honest spirit of hospitality to keep everyone moving in the right direction. If you didn't know him, it still felt an awful lot like you did. Already friends? Well, there was very little he wouldn't do for you. Or your friend. He was a giver and he was glad to help. He looked for opportunities to help. It was something he was very good at; all the way to dinner last night.

There aren't a lot of people like that. And now there's one less. Skol Chickie..

-Steve