

For Immediate Release

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94th Annual Steamboat Springs Winter Carnival February 7-11, 2007

History and Background:

This long-standing tradition is the oldest winter carnival west of the Mississippi, and represents the spirit of the Steamboat Springs community. It began in 1914 with the arrival of Carl Howelsen, the man many consider responsible for bringing the sport of skiing to Colorado. Howelsen organized the first winter carnival that featured cross-country ski races and jumping competitions. During the course of its history, the Steamboat Springs Winter Carnival witnessed national jumping records broken and the first jumps to exceed the 200-foot mark and the 300-foot mark. In its second year, skijoring was added. Skijoring grew to include several categories of “street events” that still continue today.



The first winter carnival was held at Woodchuck Hill and then moved over to the present site of Howelsen Hill. Howelsen Hill is the oldest ski area in continuous use in Colorado; it opened for business in 1915. It was named after Carl Howelsen and it is home to the Steamboat Springs Winter Sports Club. The club, originally established to organize the carnival, is the oldest Winter Sports Club west of the Mississippi and has produced 69 Winter Olympians. The club still serves as the organizer of the carnival and carries on a 39-year tradition of selling buttons for admission to all events. All the proceeds from the sales benefit the SSWSC.

Today’s Winter Carnival combines the skiing and ranching heritage of Steamboat Springs and involves the whole community in numerous events including: a snow sculpture contest on main street, chariot racing, ski races, Gelandesprung competition, the Street Events and the Diamond Hitch Parade (featuring the world’s only marching band on skis). Perhaps the most popular events is the Night Show Extravaganza (featuring the world’s only “Lighted Man,” local athletes from age 6 and above skiing in torch light parades, and huge fireworks display), Other special events have been added or dropped from year to year, but the essential heart remains the same: to celebrate winter and local heritage.

Gelandesprung:

Also known as “Gelande” (ga-lun-day), Gelandesprung is the act of using alpine skis, boots, and poles for distance jumping (the word is German for “open field jumping”). It was first demonstrated at Howelsen Hill in 1974 and found its home in Steamboat Springs, where jumping was a tradition, because many athletes could not afford both alpine and jumping equipment. Gelandesprung has been

a part of the Steamboat Springs Winter Carnival for several years and attracts competitors from neighboring states. In 2005 a new World Record was set by Rolf Wilson (Whitefish, MT) breaking his own record at 366-feet, from the 90-meter jump. Nordic jumps are usually extended by several feet for Galende competition; skiers must rely on speed and height to land safely in alpine gear.

The Lighted Man:

Claudius Banks brought his family to Steamboat Springs for a ski trip in 1935. He was in attendance at the Winter Carnival's torchlight parade when he had a brilliant idea. Described as a "natural tinkerer" Claudius devised a plan to attach torches to his poles and skis and convinced the Steamboat Springs Winter Sports Club to add him to their act in 1936. Claudius appeared in 39 Winter Carnivals between 1936 and 1978, fine tuning his ski gear and ski wear so that he was lit from head to toe, skis, poles and all often accompanied by pyrotechnics. His sons Jon and Kent started appearing in the Night Show Extravaganza until 1979 when Jon took over the tradition as a soloist.

The Lighted Man is a Steamboat Springs exclusive and the most anticipated moment of the Winter Carnival's Night Show Extravaganza. From the top of Howelsen Hill's Lower Face, the Lighted Man begins and ends the show wearing over 200 lights and shooting Roman Candles from his backpack to the delight of the crowd.



Street Events:

Introduced in the second annual Steamboat Springs Winter Carnival in 1915, the street events are the Winter Carnival's second longest standing tradition. The events are dominated by horse-drawn "skijoring" events where skiers and snowboarders (age 6 and up) are pulled behind horses down a snow-covered Lincoln Avenue. Steamboat's main street, Lincoln Ave. is closed Saturday and Sunday mornings to all traffic. Crews bring in enough snow to cover six blocks with six inches both mornings. The skjoring events include the ring and spear, slalom, donkey jump and traditional skjoring. All events are timed. Other events include the 25, 50, 75, and 150-yard dash as well as a 3-legged race and an obstacle course all raced on skis. There's a 25-yard "dog dash" where dogs pull kids on sleds and a 25-yard "dad dash" where dads replace the dogs (on all fours). Racers 18 and older can participate in the "Shovel Race" in which contestants are pulled behind a horse on a shovel (helmets required).

The Diamond Hitch Parade:

The Diamond Hitch Parade originated in 1927 as a costume contest and timed event suggested by the Ladies Recreation Club. Groups consisting of four members (one for each point on a diamond) were pulled by a rope, fashioned with a diamond hitch, by a horse and rider down snow covered Lincoln Avenue. Today's parade, organized by the Steamboat Springs Winter Sports Club still clings to this tradition. Some hitches may have one or more diamonds, and participants, local groups and organizations, dress up and don skis or snowboards to make their way down Lincoln Avenue.

The parade immediately follows the street events on Sunday morning, the final day of the Winter Carnival and brings the carnival to its close. It is lead by the Steamboat Springs High School Ski Marching Band, another Steamboat Springs exclusive tradition that started in 1935.

Other helpful facts:

Steamboat Springs Nordic Tradition:

Carl Howelsen dubbed, "The Flying Norseman" by Barnum & Bailey, came to Steamboat Springs in 1913, started the first winter carnival in 1914 and taught the local population how to ski. A ski area, later named in his honor, opened in 1915 and is the oldest ski area in continuous use in Colorado.

Today Howelsen Hill features K-114, 90-, 70-, 50-, 30, and 20-meter jumps as well as miles of cross-country ski trails and has hosted numerous Nordic Combined and Special Jumping World Cups. Steamboat Springs is home to the US Nordic Combined Ski Team including the 2003 World Champion Johnny Spillane, the United States' first World Champion in Nordic Combined.



Howelsen Hill Ski Area

- Opened in 1915: Colorado's oldest ski area in continuous use
- Owned by the City of Steamboat Springs
- Contains facilities for Nordic jumping, alpine racing, freestyle jumping & moguls, cross country skiing, biathlon, snowboarding (both alpine & freestyle)
- Open for night skiing Tuesday-Friday
- Home of the Steamboat Springs Winter Sports Club: trains athletes (age 6 and up) in all Olympic ski & snowboard events

The Steamboat Springs Winter Sports Club

- Established in 1914
- One of the oldest & largest winter sports clubs in the country
- Producing Winter Olympians since 1932, 69 to date, including 20 named to Olympic teams for the 2006 Winter Games in Torino, Italy
- Provides top level training and coaching to 700-900 athletes