



EPIQUEST

SUN VALLEY ADDRESS

by Mark Baumgardner

Snow has come early to Sun Valley. While we “old timers” have seen it snow every month of the year, two feet the first few days of October are unusual in anybody’s book. This event does bode well for the upcoming winter, as we are in an “El Nino” pattern, which can mean a big year or a lean one, depending on how the jet stream sets up.



The best thing about early snow is that it gets everyone fired up for the upcoming season. We all put a little more energy into our workouts. Gear is dragged out of various nooks and crannies, inspected and refurbished. The “action item” list gets longer, shrinks, and grows again. It is a very exciting time, winter is coming!

Last season marked our return to the newly refurbished Sun Valley Gun Club. Major storms early in the season allowed us to capitalize on the proximity of our huge, historic terrain. Balcom Ridge, a series of open, consistent bowls of over 3000 vertical feet is an example. The deep local snowpack also allowed exploration of the “Burn”, several acres of terrain opened up by the Castle Rock Fire of 2007. This very scenic terrain is featured in [Warren Miller’s new movie, “Dynasty”](#), with Reggie, [Zach](#) and Roger Crist. Last fall another fire, which finally stopped two miles from the [Smoky Mountain Lodge](#), had a similar effect on some of our remote terrain, burning out brush and opening lines and landing zones. Many first descents will be made this winter!



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I would say the biggest news item for Sun Valley Heli Ski Guides is a stronger relationship with Sun Valley Company. Tim Silva, the new General Manager for Sun Valley is an old friend, an avid skier, and a bit of a visionary. With his support, we will have some new cooperative programs this season, including a “How to Heli Program” with the Sun Valley Ski School, and an increased presence of the



helicopter on Baldy. In addition to returning to the Gun Club, we will offer briefings and breakfast at the Sun Valley Inn this winter. We have also added the “[Classic Sun Valley](#)” package based out of the [Sun Valley Lodge](#), that is sure to be a big hit. At the [Smoky Mountain Lodge](#), we have added satellite internet access to improve communications, so be sure to sign up for Skype so you can talk to home for free. We will also set cross country ski trails this winter and have a quiver of skinny skis, or bring your own!

One of the best features of the Sun Valley Heli Ski experience is what doesn’t change year after year, our staff. While there are a few new faces, the core of the group has been working together in this area for over 15 years, including [Bozo Cardozo](#), [Pete Patterson](#), [Jake Amadon](#), [Pat Deal](#) and lead guide [Erik Leidecker](#) . I am proud to say this is [my 27th season](#). I look forward to skiing with you in Sun Valley this winter.

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