

# KIDS IN PRINT

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## Ski Lifts & St. Bernards: an interview with the Fosters

By the middle school students of Black Butte School

Black Butte School students in Camp Sherman, Oregon interviewed Sylvia and Leon Foster, a retired couple that helped make Central Oregon what it is today.

The Fosters worked on building and managing the early skiing facilities at Mt. Bachelor and Hoodoo Ski Bowl. Later they bought Cold Springs RV Resort in Camp Sherman.

They were really nice and answered our questions with a lot of details. We documented what they said in class and took careful notes. The following is part one of our collective article. — *Emily Bourdage*

### The Early Days: Mt. Bachelor

Mr. Leon Foster was very excited about skiing.

Leon used to climb Mt. Bachelor and ski down with his brother and a friend. The snow was up to eight feet. "We'd start a campfire and...in the morning it would be beneath five feet of snow," Leon said.

They did not ski at Mt. Bachelor very often. It took a lot of effort to climb it. They had skied at Skyliners up to that point.

Leon decided that he wanted to be part of the Mt. Bachelor ski program when it started up. He helped build the first chair



PHOTO PROVIDED

Mt. Bachelor ski area, circa 1960.

lift in 1962. He also helped build the runs with a D8 Cat, a large tractor/bulldozer made by the Caterpillar company. — *Daniel Yoder*

### Their Sweet Meeting

This story is going to be about how the famous Sylvia and Leon Foster met! Bend used to be a small little mill town, nothing like the bustling city it is now.

Leon explained how they met at Bend High. Leon saw her, the one, the only Sylvia. Their sweet meeting made me and some of my classmates tear up.

Leon explained, "We graduated from Bend High in 1950 and we were also married in 1950, in November."

Leon told us, "We spent some time in Southern California during the Korean War, building airplanes for the Navy—and that was the time we were needed in the defense." — *Addison Russell*

### Living at Hoodoo

A long time ago Leon and Sylvia Foster managed Hoodoo, the ski area near the summit of Santiam Pass. Before then, Leon said, "I will take over Hoodoo and run it."

Sylvia and Leon's family lived in the old Hoodoo lodge. It was a four-story building with 52 rooms. It was built in 1938.

They had five kids at the time, living in the lodge at Hoodoo. They also told us about their two dogs: a German shepherd and a St. Bernard named St. Santiam. St. Bernards are very large dogs that are famous for rescuing people in snowy conditions.

St. Santiam did not like fur. Sylvia said, "A lady came into the parking lot had fur boots on. He saw those fur boots and took off after them."

Sylvia laughed. "He had her up on the roof of the car, trying to get rid of the St. Bernard."



PHOTO BY TL BROWN

Weston Dean shakes hands with Sylvia Foster. His class interviewed Sylvia and her husband, Leon, about their life in Central Oregon over the decades.

She said that St. Santiam loved people. Back then, there was a flat area at the base of the chair lift, and people had to walk or push on their skis to get back to the lodge. "He would come up behind you and take ahold of your ski pole or glove..." Sylvia said. "...and Santiam would tow the people back to the lodge," said Leon. "One time he was at the loading ramp and he decided he was going to go up with them."

The dog jumped into the ski-lift chair with a skier. The skier pushed Santiam into the net under the chair — then the skier fell into the net after him. Leon chuckled, "We had to shut it all down."

Later a forest fire came to Hoodoo in 1967 and burned most of the trails. It burned their double chair lift, which Leon said was "the first double chair lift in North America." — *Kellen Petke, Ace Chew & Weston Dean*

**Coming Soon...** That wasn't the only fire the Fosters lived through. In next month's issue of *Kids in Print*: the Foster family flees Hoodoo.

Our Reporters: Emily, Kellen, Ace, Daniel, Weston and Addison



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**Submit to Kids in Print:** Bring your original illustrations, paintings, stories, and poems on down to The Nugget! (442 E. Main Ave., 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Mon., Tues., Thurs., Fri.) Include child's name, grade level, and school or homeschool. You can use a full name, or just first name with last initial. Submissions are also accepted by email, [kidsinprint@nuggetnews.com](mailto:kidsinprint@nuggetnews.com), or at the front office of Sisters Elementary School. Please put them in a clearly marked envelope or clip on a cover sheet reading: "The Nugget - Kids in Print."

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Want to join the crew?  
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