

Scott ski poles credited with making turning easier

By Kathryn Reed



The ski pole as we know it today came to the market 50 years ago this winter after Ed Scott saw the need for a lighter pole with a smaller basket.

Steel was replaced with aluminum and the baskets used on kids' poles became the standard size for adults.

In the 1960s, most racers were using Scott poles. But other manufacturers came along, using the same technology, and captured some of those athletes because the companies were willing to pay skiers to use their poles. Scott wanted nothing to do with that.

Before Scott's invention, poles were said to be like using a golf club or steel croquet mallet. As skiers became faster, the steel poles were making it more cumbersome to plant in time before turning. It took great arm and upper body strength, and balance just to use poles.

Scott, who was from Sun Valley, Idaho, died in 1999 at 85.

Today, stores and slopes are filled with Scott poles – as well as others. For many recreational skiers not much thought is put into what pole they use.

"These were the ones on sale," said Alan Asari of San Ramon of his DuraFlex poles while riding a chairlift at Heavenly

Mountain Resort. "I hardly use them. They are a nuisance."

Poles mostly range in price for \$35-\$120 for recreational use, and can be much more for racing poles.

"Poles are a personal preference. You can give me a rental pole and I don't care," said Adam Ruscitto, customer service rep for Porters Sports Lake Tahoe in Tahoe City. "The grip is probably one of the more important things people look for."

Mark Martini of Menlo Park was using Scott poles at Heavenly, saying he likes the flexibility of the pole.

Sports Ltd. in South Lake Tahoe carries a slew of Scott poles.

"They have a pole for every condition," salesman John Whisnant said of Scott. "The biggest advancement is the new material – carbon composites. It's not as stiff and jarring on the wrist as an aluminum pole would be."