

Kirkwood ski resort still evolving at age 40

By Kathryn Reed

It was 40 years ago that a dream came true for Dick Reuter and Bud Klein. The ski pioneers created Kirkwood Mountain Resort.

Today, the ski resort celebrates its roots without its founders. Reuter and Klein both died in 2011 – both in their 80s. But what they have left is a legacy, a mountain that often gets the most snow in the greater Lake Tahoe area, a place that isn't for the meek, a place that embraces its ruggedness as well as its place along Highway 88 that isn't always easy to get to no matter the direction one approaches from.

The Reut chairlift is named after Reuter.

"From the beginning, Kirkwood was a special place and it still is. Our task is to maintain that," Blaise Carrig, president of Mountain Operations for Vail Resorts, told *Lake Tahoe News*.



Kirkwood Mountain Resort opened 40 years ago.

**Kirkwood's
Dec. 31
anniversary
events**

2pm

Torchlight
parade
tickets on
sale at
Guest
Services

Photo/Kathryn Reed

(tbc)

2-6pm

DJ Village
Plaza – DJ
Berkmon

4pm

Lifts close

5:15pm and

5:45pm

Fire
performance
s in
Village
Plaza

5:30–6pm

Torchlight
parade
skiers are
loading
chair

6–6:30pm

Torchlight
parade

6:30–7pm

Fire
performance
– Village
Plaza

7–7:30pm

Speeches –
Kirkwood
Past,
Present &
Future

7:30–7:45pm

Fireworks

7:45pm

Fire
dancers
lead guests
to party at

Red Cliffs
8pm–1am
After Party
at Red
Cliffs –
(full bar
plus
appetizers
available)
8pm–1am
DJ – SMURKO
9pm–12:30am
Gogo
dancers
10pm
Aerial
performance
at Party
Midnight
Countdown
in Red
Cliffs
12:05am
Aerial
performance
at Party
1am
Party ends

The Colorado-based company bought Kirkwood earlier this year for \$18 million from Mountain Springs Kirkwood.

Carrig said the goal of the new owners is to retain the passion and spirit Reuter and Klein had for the area.

“Kirkwood is about great skiing and it’s about the special landscape,” Carrig said.

When Klein and Reuter developed the resort that is mostly in Amador and Alpine counties, but has a slice in El Dorado County, too, the land was undeveloped and cows were grazing in the meadow.

"I flew over it a couple times. I could taste it, smell it," Klein told this reporter on the 35th anniversary of the resort of what Kirkwood would become.

Klein was at the resort for the groundbreaking of Expedition Lodge. He never got to see that come to fruition. The recession derailed the project.

Kirkwood Mountain Development retained most of the rights to the real estate assets, while Vail Resorts has the mountain to operate.

"Looking ahead, I am extremely excited to work with the very talented and committed staff of Kirkwood to kick-off the next 40 years. The mountain is incredible, the snow is unbelievable and the possibilities are many. My priority is to get behind the scenes to understand where the opportunities are to provide the best experiences for our guests," Casey Blann, general manager of Kirkwood, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "While I won't be around to see the entire next 40 years, I can at least get the ball rolling toward improvements which we hope will resonate with our both our guests, as well as staff."

Vail Resorts is still in the process of assessing what improvements to make first.

Better lift service – Kirkwood has two high-speed quads, with one being on a beginner run – is a big goal. Carrig said looking at alleviating choke points would be on the priority list.

More food service on the mountain is also likely to be forthcoming.

Today, various events will take place to commemorate the resort turning 40, as noted above.

"We want to honor those individuals who had the vision and the passion to make Kirkwood a reality. Without their dedication

and rugged determination; Kirkwood would not have persevered and prospered for all these years," Blann said.