

One final day on the slopes with my dad



The view on Dec. 25 from the top of Happiness Is at Kirkwood. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

KIRKWOOD – It had been a number of years since I spent Christmas with my dad. But that’s just what I did yesterday.

Spending a holiday with a parent isn’t all that remarkable. Only in this case my dad died in April 2010.

Kirkwood Mountain Resort was always my dad’s favorite ski resort. As a kid I remember day trips to the mountain from our home in the Bay Area. The back bowl was his favorite. The wide-open expanse, surrounded in wilderness. He was happy to take lap after lap on the groomers, mostly blues, but he didn’t shy away from the blacks.



Don Reed in 1982.

My parents learned to ski when they were in their 40s. Being the youngest of four kids, I benefited the most from this new found sport by being taken on wonderful ski vacations that my two oldest sisters never experienced.

I grew up skiing at Northstar and Squaw. For years every February we rented a house right on the slopes of Squaw with two other families. Those are some of my most cherished childhood memories.

My dad's last day on skis is still etched into my memory, but in a sad way. It was me, dad and my sister, Pam, at Sierra-at-Tahoe. Dad was having a hard time turning. He couldn't tell his feet what to do. He kept falling.

Neuropathy won that day. This was one of the lingering effects of chemotherapy. He survived colon cancer, but not unscathed.

Dad had to be taken down in a toboggan by ski patrol.

My dad was a strong, prideful man. To see him in this weakened state was hard. I can only imagine what it did to his pride. It was good Pam was there; dad listened to her. And as a nurse practitioner she could explain to the ski patrol what was going on.

I took some of my dad's ashes with me to Kirkwood on Sunday. We rode a couple lifts together. He was protected in my inside jacket pocket. We skied a run together off the Sunrise lift.

Then it was time to say goodbye again. A little part of him is at the top of the Happiness Is run.

It was one of the best days I ever had skiing with my dad. And now my last day of skiing with him, while still sad, is mostly happy in knowing that his ashes are part of the mountain that brought so much joy to him while he was alive.