COLORADO SKI & SNOWBOARD HALL OF FAME NOMINATION

JOHN LOVETT

SPONSORED BY SETH MASIA

CATEGORY SPORT BULDER

ACHIEVEMENTS 1966 – PRESENT

John Lovett

The inventor of the fiberglass cross country ski forever changed nordic skiing. And ski manufacturing in Colorado.

Nominated in the Sport Builder category

John Lovett's passion for skiing and natural genius for engineering jump-started the fiberglass revolution in cross country skiing, and built the largest ski factory ever to operate in Colorado.

Lovett's career began in high school, when he designed and built the first fiberglass cross-country skis. Lovett attended Colorado Rocky Mountain School, where French teacher Roger Paris, a worldchampion kayak racer, taught his students to build fiberglass kayaks. Lovett, an enthusiastic ski racer and backcountry and cross-country skier, was tired of breaking the tips off the wooden Norwegian skis then in use for three-pin bindings. He saw the potential of fiberglass in creating a stronger running and climbing ski. In 1966, at age 15, he used the school's workshop to build a pair of cross-country skis, laminating a maple core with fiberglass for flexible strength. He made 15 more pairs and sold them to his classmates at $10 a pair. He experimented with the core thickness to get the flex just right, working to duplicate the spring and kick of a good wooden ski.

These were the world's first fiberglass cross country skis. It wasn't until eight years later -- 1974 -- that Kneissl and Fischer introduced mass-produced fiberglass XC skis in Europe. By that time, John Lovett was the owner and operator of the largest ski factory in Colorado and was selling tens of thousands of pairs of high-quality cross country and alpine skis each year.

Lovett graduated from CRMS in 1969 and moved to Boulder to attend the University of Colorado. But what he really wanted was a job making skis at the Lange/Dynamic factory in Broomfield. He talked to Wells Lange and Ian Ferguson, and wound up with a job in the ski-repair department working with Ken Harrell.

When Harrell moved to A&T to work with Dynastar, Lovett went along. He continued to build fiberglass cross-country skis in his spare time. A&T wanted to distribute the ski. They loaned Lovett $54,000 to start and operate the business. He borrowed more money from his grandmother, and built a factory on Central Avenue on the east side of Boulder.

Lovett had invented a cheaper way to make a torsion-box ski. Instead of using an expensive milled cavity mold, as Dynamic, Lange, Head and K2 did, he figured out that aluminum angle stock, riveted to an aluminum sheet, could hold the materials accurately in the press. Lovett could whip out a new mold set in a few days, for about $200.

There were more innovations. Lovett added a mohair "kicker" into the base of a cross country race ski, solving the problem of waxing for snow at the freezing point. In 1973, Lovett introduced the first steel-edged XC ski with a polyethylene base—in effect, the first of the "norpine" skis on which the modern telemark movement would emerge.

The next step was to build an alpine ski for kids, which A&T sold as the Hummer. Lovett took orders for private-label skis from Gart Bros., then for other retailers. With his inexpensive tooling, he could charge a modest fee for design and engineering and then crank out a few thousand pairs of skis under a customer's brand.

In 1974, Bob Burns lost his job as a sales rep at K2. In the fall, he drove down from Sun Valley and asked Lovett to build him an alpine ski to sell. Lovett worked around the clock with his assistant, Laura Clevett. They took an old 207-centimeter Dynamic and made the sidecut deeper, then made a mold from tooling resin. They designed the construction around a Dynastar-style omega foam core, making it torsionally stiff with a soft flex pattern for bump skiing. Burns took the first two pairs of prototypes to Vail for testing, and the skis were an instant success.

A ski company was born, as a partnership between Lovett and Burns and half a dozen investors in Sun Valley, Vail and Aspen. Lovett designed and built the skis and Burns sold them. The new skis still had no paint, nor even a name. In Sun Valley, people called it "Burnsy's ski." Eventually, after a disagreement over the graphics, they settled on big squares of primary colors and called it The Ski. After the first winter, Lovett brought in his brother Kevin to set up a manufacturing facility in Ogden, Utah. Mike Brunetto joined up to help manage the factory. Burns was a genius marketer and sales boomed.

By 1976, Lovett was selling 70,000 pairs a year of foam-core Lovett cross-country skis, privatelabel skis, and alpine skis—nearly twice as many skis as Head made at its factory in North Boulder. He supplied cross country skis to the U.S. Ski Team. He was 25 years old.

In 1977 Lovett sold his half of The Ski Company to Burns, and the following year sold the Boulder factory to Eastern Mountain Sports, the biggest U.S. retailer of cross-country skis.

Lovett worked with Robert Redford for a couple of years. He took over the Frank Shorter line of running gear and staged a turnaround. In 1987, he took over management of Allied Marine in Miami, Florida, and turned it into the world's largest dealership of Hatteras yachts. In 1992, he put together a partnership to pioneer computerized high-frequency stock trading. After 1997, he settled in Edwards, Colorado to help develop an innovative "new urbanist" real estate development combining residential apartments with a walkable shopping mall.

In 2007, Lovett returned to Boulder as CEO of Droplet Measurement Technologies, making highprecision instruments for atmospheric studies. The instruments are used by NASA, NOAA and other leading research organizations worldwide, for pollution studies, climate and rainfall research, weather modification studies, and aircraft icing certification.

"Those early years in the ski industry were the best time," Lovett says now. "Maybe everyone feels this way about the beginning of a career, but that era brought the most interesting challenges and the chance to work with the most stimulating people. It was a golden time."

John Lovett put Colorado at the forefront of cross-country ski technology, building and selling mass-produced high-quality cross-country skis seven years ahead of the European factories. He built the largest ski factory ever to operate in Colorado. He richly deserves recognition as an honored member of the Colorado Ski and Snowboard Hall of Fame. *–Seth Masia*

ELDORA

MOUNTAIN RESORT

John Lovett

Colorado native, ski design and manufacturing pioneer

It is my privilege to second the nomination of John Lovett to the Colorado Ski and Snowboard Hall of Fame. My relationship with John spans nearly 30 years.

John developed his lifelong love of skiing growing up in Durango and attending the Colorado Rocky Mountain School. John is a natural born engineering genius. He would begin designing and making his first skis in high school and founding Lovett Ski Company, as he attended the University of Colorado, at the age of 20. John had a number of firsts. He designed and manufactured the first production fiberglass Nordic skis. He then created the first light foam core fiberglass wrapped skis. He produced the first no-wax, mohair bases and incorporated the first dynamic flex patterns in Nordic skis. He was a pioneering innovator in exotic materials, including both carbon fiber and Kevlar and became famous for producing the iconic brand, "The Ski".

John, ever the perfectionist, had factory efficiencies that could provide for small-number production runs so that he would be able to design innovative "boutique" skis, and at the same time produce skis in large quantities for such companies as K2, Spalding, Jofa, Gart, A&T, and Company 3. His production techniques would be copied by every major ski manufacturer.

John was able to capitalize on his background as a ski racer, both alpine and Nordic, as well as his interest in back country skiing, to design and develop the very first modern back country "touring" skis, combining both greater widths and dynamic flex profiles with cutting edge, space-age materials.

John has an exacting reputation for honesty and integrity in both his personal and business dealings. I first came to know him as a purchaser of "The Ski" for my fifteen retail stores in Lake Tahoe. When I acquired Eldora Mountain Resort and moved to Boulder, John became my first friend. He is a trusted advisor to Eldora Mountain Resort, providing invaluable guidance through his lifelong personal connections to the Colorado ski industry.

Today, John is the President and CEO of Droplet Measurement Technologies where he continues to apply his futuristic imagination. DMT is the world's most advanced atmospheric sampling and testing equipment manufacturer. Their products are applied to aircraft which sample the atmosphere, providing accurate data to the scientific community, including NASA and NOAA, enabling the forecasting of potential climate change effects. This is naturally of great importance to the future of our ski industry.

John is an outstanding example of an individual who, through his personal efforts, ability and integrity, contributed to the growth and improvement of the sport of skiing world wide.

Respectfully submitted,

William D. Killebrew
Owner, Eldora Mountain Resort

To the Colorado Ski & Snowboard Hall of Fame:

John Lovett is a true pioneer and innovator in the use of fiberglass in sports products.

John started out making fiberglass bows and arrows in junior high school, and when he was 16, after noticing the breakage of wooden cross country skis, had an epiphany about the concept of wrapping fiberglass around a core. By the time he was 19, John was already making fiberglass foam core wrapped cross country skis, along with his own fiberglass kayaks, in his basement.

In 1968 Bob Lange built the Lange boot factory in Broomfield, and amassed the best and brightest people in the ski industry to join him. In 1969, Lange bought the license to manufacture Dynamic skis and built a ski factory next to the boot factory, and John, then only 19, was among them. That's where I met and worked with him. John already was making his kayaks, and I was impressed at how smart he was and amazed at how such a young kid could know so much about fiberglass.

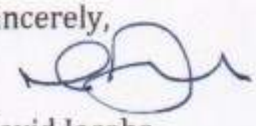
In 1970, John left to build his own cross country skis as he didn't want to seem in conflict with Bob if he worked on them while working for Bob. He started Lovett skis and pioneered the concept of wrapping fiberglass around a foam core (Dymanic was wrapping fiberglass around a wood core). This also allowed him to use low pressure molding so that he could use lighter presses that were cheaper.

In 1974, John met Bobby Burns, and they collaborated on an alpine ski, called The Ski. John developed a compound low density foam core he called the Omega core, which when wrapped in fiberglass made a softer but torsionally rigid ski that was light and high performing. In 1974 John was the first to put steel edges on a slightly wider cross country ski, which was the precursor to today's backcountry skis.

The Ski developed into a cult product driven by the personality of Bobby Burns, and by 1978, Lovett was making about 70,000 pairs of alpine skis a year, under the The Ski name and many private label brands as well. John sold his share of The Ski to Burns, who moved production to Ogden, Utah. Lovett later sold his Boulder factory to Eastern Mountain Sports.

John is very deserving to be included into the Colorado Ski and Snowboard Hall of Fame for his valuable contributions to the fabric and innovation of the Ski industry in Colorado.

Sincerely,



David Jacobs
Founder, Spyder Active Sports
Boulder