

Interview with SIA President David Ingemie



SIA President David Ingemie joined SIA in 1976 as Marketing Director, where he developed and implemented many successful marketing projects, including the Subaru Deduct-A-Ski program which offered incentives for existing skiers to trade in used equipment to charitable groups for a tax deduction and the Cross Country USA program which encouraged urban development of cross-country ski centers. He has served as SIA President since 1981.

David oversaw the development of a number of programs designed to grow participation in snow sports like Learn to Ski and Snowboard, Bring a Friend, and Winter Trails Day, among others.

David helped facilitate the agreement for having U.S. Ski and Snowboard Association (USSA) be the governing body for snowboard events and helped develop the agreement for how snowboard athletes would be selected for USSA teams, all with the goal to insure the best athletes represented the U.S.

From 1989 to 1992, David was president of United Ski Industries Association (USIA) which was the merging of National Ski Areas Association (NSAA) and Ski Industries America (SIA). The new organization was created to implement an industry wide snow sports marketing program. When the organization disbanded, David resumed the presidency of SIA.

One of the biggest projects that David oversaw while President, was the successful moving of the SIA Snow Show to Denver, Colorado. The show had been held in Las Vegas, Nevada for 37 years.

David serves on boards for many snow- and outdoors-related organizations. He is an avid skier and snowboarder and also enjoys bicycling, golf, hiking and upland bird hunting.

What was the health of snow sports industry like when you began at SIA? What were the important issues at that time? How were they solved?

The industry was rocking, but the industry also knew that they had to work on growing the sport from a participant and participation perspective. Hence, NSAA and SIA funded a study called by the Glendening Marketing Company titled, "More People on Skis." When I started with SIA, it was my job to initiate some of the ideas from that study. Retail sales were good and specialty retailers were growing. With about only 10 million skiers, we were selling over 1 million sliding devices and just cross country alone was about 750,000 pair of skis. The important issues were the cost of gas and liability insurance for resorts, suppliers and retailers. Pooled insurance programs helped, but we lost a lot of small local areas which had made access really easy to get people started. Where I grew up in Massachusetts, there were six areas in about 10 miles from my house that are all gone today.

What are the compelling issues facing the snow sports industry today? What solutions do you see that address those issues?

The biggest issue from a business perspective is maintaining and growing the number of participants and participation. I also think another issue is the big companies that are getting involved in both the resort and the equipment side, as sometimes they are more concerned with profit than they are with the resort community and our industry. We also must also consider Climate Change as a major issue we all face. The consolidation of brands and retailers is also an issue, as the target today is more sales from a share perspective than a growing industry perspective. I don't know that there are any quick solutions to these, other than keeping the players involved in the industry organizations, be it suppliers (SIA), resorts (NSAA and Regional Associations), Retailers (NSSRA), Reps (Regional Rep Associations), so resources (money and ideas) can be pooled and used to address the issues.

Do you see the role of the specialty snow sports retailer changing? How do you see retailers adapting to meet new challenges?

The role of the specialty retailer has not changed, but how they do business has. I don't not see an adequate number of specialty retailers adapting to the modernization for "service oriented" expectations of our very

high demographic customer. It is not easy for most snow sports retailers who have about 22-25 weeks to make it happen and they don't all have the necessary resources to make the changes to adapt to today's consumer.

How can specialty retailers, manufacturers and resorts work together better to grow our industry?

Do their job and stop pointing fingers at the other stakeholders. We can improve our communication and have a better understanding of what each of us can do. We all need to be more aggressive in reaching out to the other side to be more engaged and develop productive relationships on a grassroots level. We need to remember we are all in this together; it's an industry we're passionate about and are in it for the same reasons.

As you start to contemplate life after SIA, what is your vision of the industry's future? Do you see yourself staying involved in the industry in some way?

I think the industry has a good future, when you look at the issues the country is focusing on, like health, obesity etc. Snow sports is a fun way to get off the couch and enjoy outdoors in the winter to address these health issues. We also have a bunch of Baby Boomers retiring, so they will have more time to participate (me included) and bring the grandkids along. I hope to stay involved in a reduced capacity as the snow sports industry has been my life for so long. I'm hoping to get many more life days on the hill, perhaps do some instructing again. I also would like to work with individual companies on a consulting basis to assist them in increasing their business be it resort, supplier and retailer. I have been very lucky in my time at SIA to be able to see the 360-degree perspective of the industry which I think can be helpful.