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MT. BACHELOR CELEBRATING ITS 60TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON

Much has changed over the years at Mt. Bachelor, which is now the sixth-largest ski and snowboard area in the United States, but much remains the same

(BEND, Ore.) – It might have been hard for the skiers who first graced the slopes of Bachelor Butte ski area 60 years ago this winter to imagine what Mt. Bachelor would eventually become. The 2018-19 ski season at Mt. Bachelor will mark its 60th since local legends Bill Healy and Gene Gillis brought a dream to fruition. And as with any momentous occasion, Mt. Bachelor’s milestone gives us all reason to look back at just how much it has grown.

On Oct. 18, 1958, when Bachelor Butte ski area opened for the first time, local skiers could enjoy what was then a small ski hill with one 3,900-foot poma lift, two rope tows, and a 1,500-square-foot day lodge. Sixty years later, Mt. Bachelor — a name that became official in 1983 — has grown to become the sixth-largest ski and snowboard area in the United States with 4,318 acres of skiable terrain and the unique experience of 360-degree, lift-served access off the summit of a dormant volcano.

Yet, while so much has changed in the last 60 years, many of the friendly and welcoming traits, and the natural attributes that first drew skiers to Bachelor Butte in the 1950s, remain the same.

“The resort has evolved substantially since 1958 and while we have welcomed skiers and snowboarders from all over the world, Mt. Bachelor has been an important part of our local community that brings friends, families, and generations of Central Oregonians together in the outdoors,” said John McLeod, Mt. Bachelor’s president and general manager. “The stories of

Central Oregon and Mt. Bachelor are tightly woven, and we intend to remain a vital part of this community forever.”

Eleven chairlifts have been added since those first days, most recently in 2016 with the addition of Cloudchaser, providing access to 635 acres of previously unserved terrain. And Mt. Bachelor, along with its parent company POWDR, have become an industry leader in sustainable environmental practices, reducing its carbon footprint by 50 percent over a 10-year period.

As was the case from day one, Mt. Bachelor continues to look for ways to improve the snowrider experience and become the best version of itself for the local community it serves. This year, Mt. Bachelor has added hook-ups for 10 overnight RVs, with expansion likely coming next summer, embracing the mountain’s unique RV and vanlife culture that has grown organically over the years.

Mt. Bachelor has also added two new grooming machines, each more efficient and environmentally friendly than those that were replaced, and improved the ticketing system to make transactions faster and easier in an effort to get people onto the slopes quicker.

“Whether it is continually innovating our systems, embracing our local RV culture, keeping Bachelor among the most sustainable ski and snowboard areas in North America, or adding a lift to open up new terrain, Mt. Bachelor’s aim is always to improve the mountain experience for locals and visitors,” said McLeod.

Despite its growth, Mt. Bachelor will continue to embrace what has always defined it as a mountain. Thanks to its location within the 1.8 million-acre Deschutes National Forest, the pristine mountain experience remains as it was intended — one that will always be as pure as the 462 inches of snow that fall each winter.

At Mt. Bachelor, you won’t find the glitz and glam of other well-known resorts, and it remains intentionally absent of slopeside condos or a fabricated base village. Instead, Bend and Sunriver — each barely 20 minutes from the lifts — still serve as the unofficial base villages.

Jane Meissner, who skied that first season in 1958 and later spent all her winters at Bachelor when her legendary father, Jack, began Bachelor’s ski school program, has seen Bachelor evolve.

The 67-year-old, whose mother is the namesake of the popular Virginia Meissner Sno-Park, is still a Mt. Bachelor regular. And she recalls when Bachelor Butte’s poma lift would occasionally send kids airborne, the small lodge was almost exclusively packed with locals, and the rudimentary parking lot would occasionally strand cars with bad tires on its slick and snowy surface. She remembers when the first chairlift was installed, allowing for shorter and easier

hikes up to the summit (the Summit Express lift wouldn't open until 1983). She was excited about the first triple lift, and blown away even more when Mt. Bachelor's first quad was installed.

"Every few years they would make some improvement: Make an improvement to the lodge or the parking, or add a new lodge, or add a new lift, and so on and so forth," Meissner remembered. "So we never really thought about how much it was growing. All of the things just slowly happened. We looked at other ski areas and they have these things and that was the natural progression for Bachelor, too."

But thankfully some things at Bachelor never change.

"Of course, the terrain hasn't changed, and I think in general people are still very friendly," Meissner said. "You ride up the chair with people, and most of the time you get into a conversation with them. The people loading the chair are friendly. ... People are still very friendly, and that is the way it was back then."

To join Mt. Bachelor on its 60th anniversary season or for more information, visit www.mtbachelor.com. To view a timeline of Mt. Bachelor's milestones, visit www.mtbachelor.com/info/history/.

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About Mt. Bachelor: *Mt. Bachelor is the sixth largest ski resort in the USA, offering 4,318 acres of lift-accessible terrain and the finest spring conditions. The mountain features 11 lifts, eight of which are Express Quads. Mt. Bachelor also features 5 terrain parks, 56 km of groomed cross country trails, snowshoeing, tubing, sled dog rides and summer attractions including downhill mountain biking. Mt. Bachelor is part of POWDR, a family owned and operated adventure lifestyle company. For weather conditions, news, and events visit www.mtbachelor.com.*