

From Level 30-Level 71: A Skier's Journey Through Time

in [Features](#) – by [Marc Liebman](#) – January 30, 2017

How “Moving Up The Levels” Kept Changing This Skier's Style.

Correspondent Marc Liebman might have indulged in this risky technique when he was Level 30. Now, not so much.

Kids and millennials often brag about getting to level 4 or 5 on a video game. To relate, I tell them I'm level 71 as in seventy-one years old. What I ski and how I ski has changed as I've moved up levels. For the record, I'm a former ski instructor certified in two countries, ski

tester and racer.

Back in the good old days when I was Level 30, I skied anything and everything—the steeper and more difficult the conditions, the better. Blue ice that turned a narrow trail into a skating rink was viewed as a challenge to demonstrate my edge holding skills.

By the time, I got to Level 40, maturity started to set in. A short ski was still 203cm long. Blue ice was avoided whenever possible. My skiing ego was maintained with a low-single digit NASTAR handicap!

Level 50 was a revelation. Mashed potatoes, wet soggy spring and late fall snow was no longer skied. Thirty thousand vertical feet a day was still the goal. Reflexes and strength weren't what they used to be so I skied a lot slower. I called it “instructor demonstration speed!” Skiing a long bump run well was still a joy, but only once a day because it took way too much out of my legs. More wasn't worth the aches and pains from my knees. Tucking flat spots became a thing of the past! It wasn't getting into the tuck that was a problem, it was getting up after more than 30 seconds.

Glades with closely spaced trees drove caution at Level 60. Rather than plunge right in making quick, tight turns around the trees, I'd look before going to another trail. Yes, I'd slowed up and open groomed runs became the order of the day. Yet, when powder beckoned, I couldn't resist. Moguls were skied (a) out of necessity; (b) just to do a few to stay in practice; or (c) to show younger skiers that us oldsters can still ski bumps.

At Level 70, I started to feel the cold. Solution: ski in warmer parts the country. And, despite exercise and stretching, I'm a lot less flexible. Getting a pair of ski boots on and off is a whole lot more difficult than I remembered. But then again, my memory isn't what it used to be. And, after the rare fall, I'm no longer ashamed to stick my hand out for assistance.

So, at Level 71, I ski steep (the steeper the better) groomed runs, powder and love to carve on frozen granular. The goal is 30,000 vertical feet a day made easier to document using apps on a smart phone. Occasionally, I'll let the skis run but when I start going fast, fear takes hold, and I slow down. At this level, one doesn't break, one shatters!

Net, net, for all of you who haven't yet reached Level 71, keep skiing. We can still show the young'uns we can keep up.

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Marc Liebman is a retired business executive and naval officer/Naval Aviator who in his deep dark past was an Associate Editor of SKI Magazine and a certified ski instructor. He is also is the author of four novels.

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4 Comments

**Mike Stebbins**

January 30, 2017 at 12:30 pm

Yep. The annual Spring rite of skiing the “New Hampshire Blue” at Tuckerman’s has gone from “Kowabunga!” to “Honey! Where’s the remote??”

[Reply](#)**Ole Retlev**

February 3, 2017 at 9:56 am

Starting as a Level 5 and now having advanced to Lev 70, maintaining 3 certs., one ACL and one Total Knee Replacement, the skiing has gone from ‘overdrive’ to cruising... moguls and off-piste look pretty from a distance... Now and then, it is definitely fun to get in third gear, rock ‘n roll and haul -ss, but for the most, it is just nice to ski “correctly” and let the skis do the work...

Thank you for a great post!

[Reply](#)**Duane L Smelser**

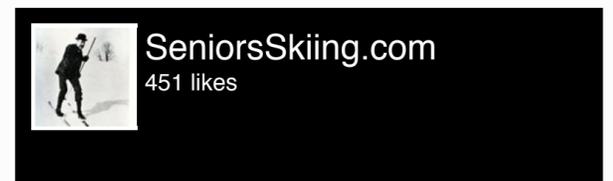
February 3, 2017 at 1:53 pm

Last weekend I participated in my first Masters race in about 30 years at Aspen Highlands with the Rocky Mountain Masters. I’m 63. I hadn’t been on the used 201 SG skis or the 213 DH skis I’d bought online, and here I was standing at the top of the course thinking I was completely out of my mind to be on these long fast skis, let alone hurling myself down Golden Horn and Thunderbowl at speed approaching 50-60 mph. But, I had been intensively and intentionally working out for the past 14 months in preparation for this. I’d dropped 25 lbs. of fat and felt better than I had in too many years of being mostly sedentary. Being relatively sane, I resolved to be careful and simply make it down without injury. Mission accomplished. What a thrill! With each run, my confidence returned. After 2 runs down the SG course and 4 on the Downhill, I discovered that I really can do this at 63. And, that with continued conditioning can perform better now than I did in my 30s. How do I know this? Well there were a bunch of men, and women my age and up to 81, who cleaned my clock. A 50 something had the fastest time down the downhill, beating 20 somethings, and 14 seconds faster than me. Truly mind blowing! These amazing “old” people have completely redefined what it is to be “old.” As they say, “Growing old is not for weanies.” My journey has been one of pain and hard work every day to regain my flexibility and strength. But, it has totally been worth all the pain. My wife and I are now looking forward to riding our tandem bike up and down the Alps in 2018.

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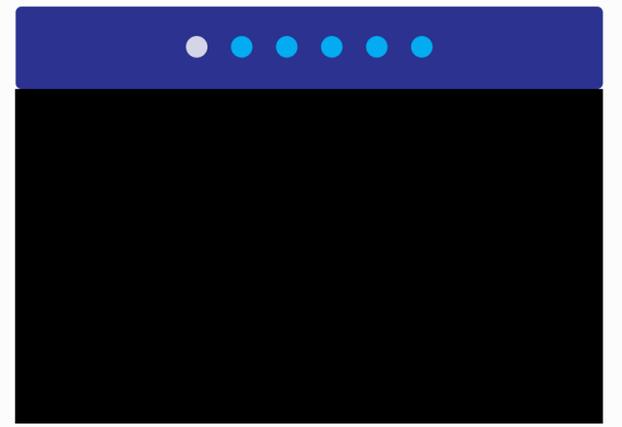
Jim

February 3, 2017 at 8:14 pm

I identify with Marc's excellent, enjoyable article. Personally, it pretty much described my chronology. Sadly, but wisely, no more black diamonds for me although I am at L75 this year and I'll soon be in or on Utah powder.

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Down Corbet's Couloir At Jackson Hole



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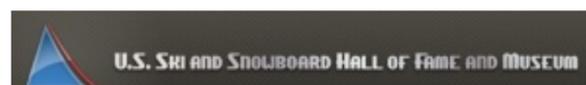
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