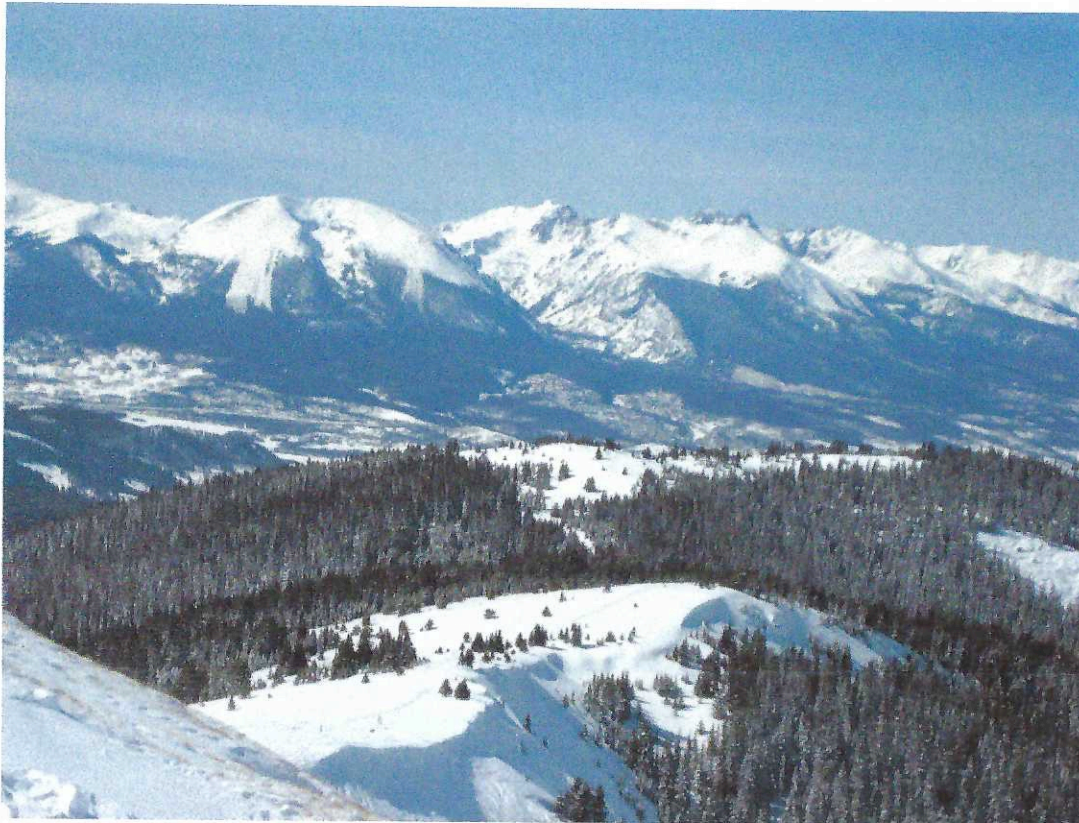




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New Year's Tradition: Skiing at Keystone Resort

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By Kühl Editor (<https://www.kuhl.com/borninthemountains/author/ed/>) on January 11, 2021

Family traditions counter alienation and confusion. They help us define who we are; they provide something steady, reliable and safe in a confusing world.

Susan Lieberman

Decades ago, our family began an annual tradition of skiing at Keystone Resort on New Year's Day. Even though winter break is a peak time for skiers and boarders, few outdoor enthusiasts back then ventured out for first tracks after a late night of celebrating. Without morning lift lines or crowded slopes, our four children loved adding their zig-zagging tracks to the corduroy groomed runs. They gleefully careened down the mountain without concern

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on the empty runs. Our sons looked forward to these tranquil moments skiing at Keystone Resort on New Year's Day. This custom, along with countless other annual family events, offered comfort and continuity in a fast-paced world.



Bornstein Family, Keystone Resort, 1994

Our frequent visits to Summit County opened our sons' eyes to the majesty of the Rocky Mountains. Keystone Resort's childcare facility catered to our two youngest sons when they were infants and toddlers. The ski school's highly qualified and personable instructors taught our four sons skiing etiquette and how to master the diverse terrain. A multitude of uplifting and exhilarating ski experiences stood in sharp contrast to our sons' day-to-day suburban lifestyles. Within a few years, their skiing accomplishments helped mold their emerging personalities.

As our children matured into adulthood and married, many of the things that previously defined our family fell by the wayside. Eventually, our sons spent winter break with their families, and New Year's Day was rarely spent skiing with their parents. Even though we no longer had the companionship of our adult sons, Ira and I joyfully embraced our New Year's Day tradition of skiing together at Keystone Resort. The crowds increased as more and more people skied on New Year's Day, but we loved the opportunity to usher in the new year skiing and breathing in the crisp mountain air. Few outdoor activities match the ebullience of downhill skiing in Colorado.

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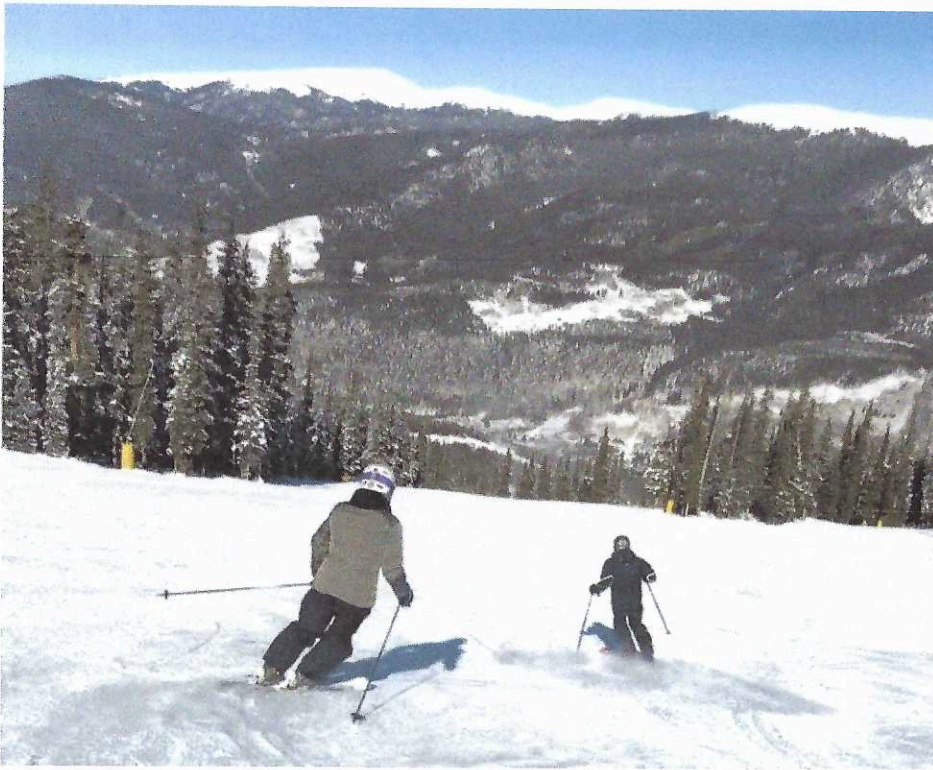
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Frenchman Run, Keystone Resort

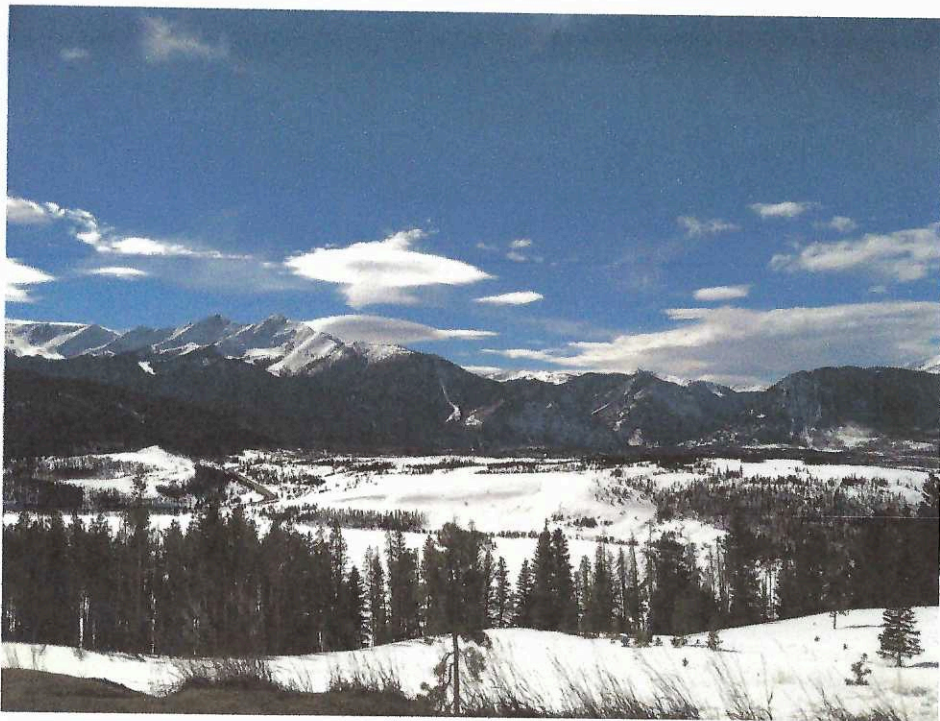
This year, for the first time in decades, we were uncertain if we would ski on New Year's Day. Several obstacles potentially stood in our way. Like many other adventure seekers, we wondered how ski resorts would create a safe environment during the COVID-19 pandemic. We could only speculate on our comfort level. Too many factors could not be adequately assessed until we skied for the first time.

The ramifications of the pandemic were only a small part of our concern. In the aftermath of a summer hiking accident, I underwent arthroscopic knee surgery in late October. A slower than anticipated rehab process delayed the start of my ski season.

More pressing was Ira's situation. Brain cancer surgery in August followed by chemotherapy and radiation altered Ira's lifestyle. While Ira rebounded remarkably well from his cancer treatments, we didn't know how he would respond to the challenges of skiing with his Optune device in frigid temperatures and at high altitude. After careful deliberation, we decided to ski. Using our annual ski passes, we made a pandemic reservation to ski on New Year's Day.

A single digit temperature greeted us as we strutted through the parking lot with part of our family. Even though the parking lot was nearly full, the lift line at the Summit Express chairlift was relatively short. Signage reminded visitors of the COVID rules. Almost everyone complied by covering their mouths and noses. Ski personnel gave gentle reminders to those who chose not to voluntarily conform.

Every time I ride the gondola or chairlift to the top of Keystone Mountain, I'm awestruck by the view of the adjacent mountain ranges and Lake Dillon. While I've reached this apex hundreds of times, it's hard not to feel energized by the full scope of this experience.



Snowscape in Summit County, Colorado

As an empty nester, I no longer need ed to be concerned about the safety of young children. Now my focus was on Ira and me. Had I rehabbed my knee sufficiently to withstand the pressure of skiing downhill? I would know shortly after I got off the chairlift. I also wondered how the cancer treatments would affect Ira's ability to ski. Would any previously undetected cognitive or physical deficits impair his athleticism?

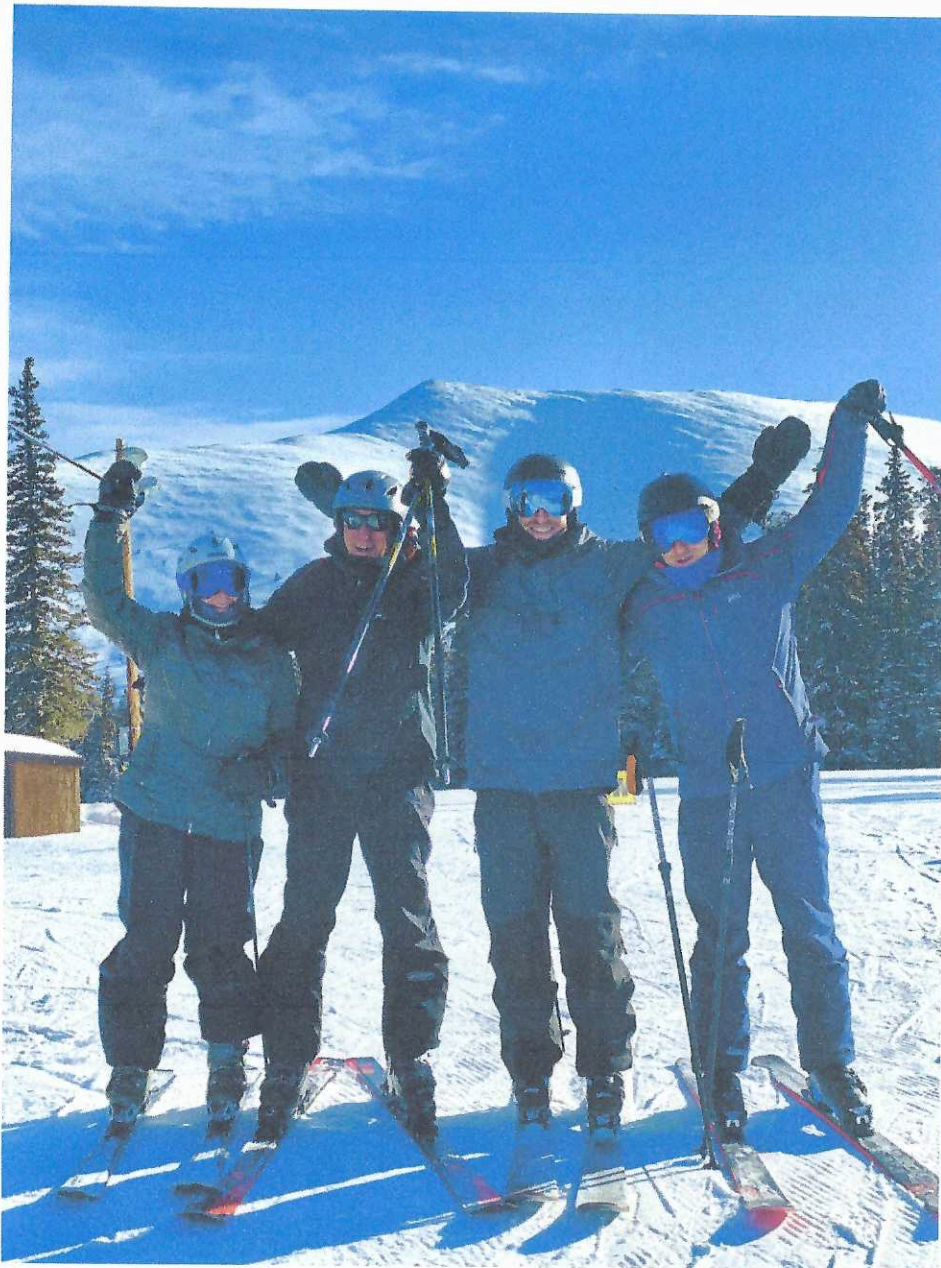
One by one, we made our descent down the first slope. Hard packed, groomed snow crackled as we carved our turns. At first, I moved slower than usual so I could determine how much pressure my knee could absorb. As my pace accelerated, I quickly realized that my knee was ready to ski again. I was delighted and thankful that Dr. Noonan had successfully addressed my issues. By choosing to have knee surgery, I could ski without discomfort. Simultaneously, I watched Ira. He swiftly weaved his way down the run without hesitation.



Ira & Sandy, Keystone Resort, 2021

Last July, our lives were turned upside down by an incurable brain cancer diagnosis. A week later, Dr. Lillehei removed the tumor at Anschutz Medical Campus. It was impossible to predict what tomorrow would bring, let alone the beginning of the next year. While our future remains up in the air, we are grateful we had the opportunity to reinstate a family tradition of skiing with some of our children on New Year's Day.

Our sons' early ski days were marked by mastery of new skills. Each added a notch to their confidence and was matched with a wide smile. Decades later, their carefree childhood days were replaced by the realities of life. As our two youngest sons and one of their wives skied alongside us, they admired their Dad's courage and perseverance. In contrast to individuals who find no value in fighting a terminal diagnosis, Ira's actions demonstrate his intense desire to embrace life.



Sandy and Ira with sons, Jordan and Aaron, Keystone Resort. 2021

Periodically, we stopped to gaze at the magnificent snow covered mountain peaks and acknowledged this precious family time. In 2021, our New Year's Day tradition of skiing at Keystone Resort illustrated the value of creating priceless family moments in the aftermath of a glioblastoma diagnosis. For us, there is no doubt that family traditions instill much needed stability during turbulent times.

*When Sandy Bornstein isn't trekking in Colorado or writing, she's traveling with her husband Ira (<http://www.thetravelingbornsteins.com/>). After living as an international teacher in Bangalore, India, Sandy published an award-winning book, *May This Be the Best Year of Your Life* (<https://sandraborstein.com/>), as a resource for people contemplating an expat lifestyle and living outside their comfort zone. Among other things, Sandy writes about family, intergenerational, and active midlife adventures highlighting land and water experiences*

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