

## **Andy Peters**

My name is Andy Peters. Laird and I were good friends for nearly 44 years. We shared a basket-full of fond memories. He is missed!!

We met in Phoenix in February 1978 at a social group called Desert Skiers. I was an Electronic Engineer newly transferred by Honeywell from Philadelphia, I was divorced, and I wanted to create some social contacts outside of work. I learned that Laird worked for Mountain Bell phone company, recently relocated from Denver, and enjoyed snow skiing and photography. We decided to connect again on one of the club's Colorado ski trips. So began a good friendship lasting 44 years.

We went on several ski trips a year with the Desert Skiers club, both here in Arizona to Snow Bowl and Sunrise, and to CO, NM, and UT. On one such trip to Telluride, CO the tour bus slid into a ditch at around 4AM and landed on a tilt. Pretty scary but no one was hurt. Laird shrugged it off when we got to town and said "we are ok, we have a room, let's ski."

Most of us wore the stretchable downhill ski pants, down jacket, and knit hats, and used "downhill" skis. Laird most often wore calf length wool knickers, long wool socks, a regular hat, and leather boots. He looked European.

He actually preferred cross-country skiing—he loved the quiet and serenity of it. And when we were doing downhill skiing, he still used his cross-country skis! Very difficult to do but he was quite good at it.

A memorable trip for the two of us was to Nelson, BC, Canada. Laird had seen the movie Roxanne, with Steve Martin, that was filmed in Nelson, and thought it would be fun to ski the area. He was right. We skied around Kootenay Lake and the back country wilderness area, and visited many of the places featured in the movie including restaurants, hotels, and most notably the Nelson Fire Station.

In August of 1982 I married my wife, Nancy. Laird was my Best Man, and he offered to also be the official photographer. At that point, I had no way of knowing how good a photographer he was! Nancy was a bit nervous about "this photographer friend" but I assured her he would be fine. Well, in fact, he was great! Rather than spending half the

wedding time taking formal pictures, he took lots of impromptu shots in natural poses and settings. The album he gave us brought the wedding and the attendees to life.

Believe it or not, I actually didn't even know that Laird had a college degree in photography until Kathy told me that a couple of months ago. In 44 years, Laird had simply never mentioned it.

Sometimes Desert Skiers would organize a float down the Salt River in the heat of the summer. While the rest of us were floating in truck inner tubes, Laird would always use his inflatable kayak. I know he and Kathy used that kayak during their trips to Colorado.

We had what turned out to be a fateful canoe and camping trip on the Colorado River south of Parker Dam, to visit some of the hot spring caves there. That was the first major outing that Laird brought Kathy along on, so that's when I met her. Toward the end, we were paddling like crazy against what must have been a 30 mph headwind to get back to the dock in time for me to catch my return flight to Seattle. Laird did great, but I was surprised at how well Kathy did, too! She really hung in there. It looked like they would be a good pair—and it turned out that they were.

Laird liked to hike. We hiked around Phoenix in winter and Flagstaff in summer. A very memorable hike and camping trip in '81 or '82 was to the Havasupai Falls at the bottom of the Grand Canyon. A tough 14 mile hike with a heavy pack. Once we were camped down in that narrow canyon, Laird took a series of pictures—the same photo image at different times during the day—to capture all the changing earth tones and shading.

One of the most remarkable aspects of my friendship with Laird was how easily we got along together. In 44 years of friendship we never said a cross or critical word to each other, never had an argument. That is rare. But then, Laird was a rare human being.

I will miss our long lunches and our ski trips, but most of all our four-decade friendship.