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OIWC Member Profile: An interview with Neide Cooley

By Kathy Pilney

On September 2nd, Neide Cooley announced she was stepping down from the OIWC board of directors after volunteering with the organization for more than 10 years.

Neide joined the OIWC Education Foundation after its first year of inception. From 2001 to 2005, Neide served as Board President, then continued her service on the OIWC Executive Committee. In 2009, Neide received the Pioneering Woman Award for her steadfast dedication to mentoring those who aspire to make their mark in the outdoor industry. The role served her and her protégés well, since she has 30+ years experience in the outdoor and ski industries.

Neide has done it all; from working as head of apparel design at Marmot Mountain Ltd., to independent contractor that started up the apparel division at Salomon Sport S.A. Neide also has a substantial writing background, contributing to publications like *Outdoor Retailer* magazine and *Skiing Trade News*. She also has a MFA in creative writing from the University of Denver.

Neide feels her greatest contribution to OIWC was helping the organization reach its non-profit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) status. After a year of paperwork and hundreds of hurdles, that goal was finally realized last year. What started as a loose networking organization centered around fun transformed into a more formalized group with financial aid to develop its education programs.

Checking tasks off of her to-do list in the competitive outdoor industry wasn't always an easy feat for her - especially considering Neide was part of what she called the 'transitional generation of the 60s.' As she explained, that era was a time when Neide banged her head on the glass ceiling.

Despite her impressive list of professional accomplishments, Neide suggests her most significant contribution is in raising two daughters. "I think they are the most extraordinary things ever. Parenting them is humbling," said Neide. "I must have done something right because my daughters are so neat." Neide is also a proud grandmother of five grandchildren.

The million-dollar question now is: what will Neide do after she retires from her volunteer post with OIWC after years of dedicated service?

"Now that I'm retired, I'm so busy," said Neide. For someone who knows the ins and outs of the ski industry, and who has traversed her share of mountains on two planks, you may think the obvious answer is ... more skiing. But Neide has exchanged the mountain lifestyle for Denver - and she has no regrets about that decision. "I have my horse here, which I couldn't do up there [in Breckenridge], so I'm very happy." Living in Denver also allows her more time to spend with her grandchildren; and to enjoy the fruits of her gardening labor.

Congratulations, Neide, for embarking on your next phase of life. Let us raise our glasses for all you have done for OIWC - and for busting through all those glass ceilings. Those gaping holes you've left behind will serve us well. Now we'll truly see the sky's the limit.



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