

AGING WELL IN THE WEST

Could you be this wild at 90?

At Alta ski resort, the mountain may just be the fountain of youth



“SKIING AWAKENS the inner man.” Listen closely to what Al Kessler says, because at 98 he still skis Alta, in Utah’s Wasatch Range, where the terrain can be a challenge for a 20-year-old. About once a week, Kessler meets up with a boisterous crew of mostly retired, impressively fit 70-, 80-, and 90-year-olds. They call themselves the Wild Old Bunch, with sewn-on jacket badges to prove it.

While Alta’s soaring peaks certainly stir the soul, the Bunch probably keep ticking for less-exalted reasons: They exercise, form friendships, and have a routine.

Most mornings around 11, members trickle in to the midmountain Alf’s Restaurant—in faded one-pieces, old-school CB jackets, flannel shirts, suspenders—to sip coffee or hot cocoa and swap stories of shared powder days before hitting the slopes. For *free*. Alta is one of the few resorts that let the 80-plus set schuss gratis, but that aside, the oldies love Alta for the same reason everyone does: its utter lack of pretension, skiers-only mantra (no boarders allowed), and above all, snow—a whopping 500 inches annually.

As this group will tell you, it sure beats the heck out of bingo.

—RACHEL LEVIN

ONLY SKIERS NEED APPLY
Members of the Wild Old Bunch (Al Kessler is second from left) gather before taking a run. **LEFT** Many wear age-denominated badges with pride.