

## TODAY MEETS TRADITION AT TIMBERLINE

Summary: Guests with disabilities now can take an elevator to reach the upper floors of the Depression-era lodge

The new elevator that will carry wheelchair riders and others with disabilities from the ground level to the main area of **Timberline** Lodge makes use of an entrance where workers once repaired the Sno-Cats that groomed the ski slopes. It was later used for firewood storage.

Richard L. Kohnstamm, longtime operator of **Timberline** Lodge, said Tuesday that the area also housed a dumbwaiter that was used to lift all the lodge's food and supplies upstairs. "I have no idea how we got all that up there," he said, remembering the small size of the dumbwaiter.

Visitors new to **Timberline** will have to take Kohnstamm's word on the unsightliness of the entry area. For Tuesday's ribbon-cutting ceremony, the entrance looked shinier than its surroundings, but otherwise fit right into one of Oregon's best-known buildings.

That was part of the challenge of making a significant mechanical renovation in a national historic landmark in which the building and nearly all its decor are handmade.

**Timberline** was built to create jobs during the Depression under the Works Progress Administration, and at the time little thought was given to barrier-free design. The newer Wy'East Day Lodge, ski lifts and slopes are fully accessible, and during the years restrooms and guest rooms of the original lodge have been made accessible to those with disabilities.

### More hospitable entry

There is an elevator in the guest area, but until now people in wheelchairs could enter from outdoors only by going past the garbage bins to the loading dock and a lift elevator.

"We're in the hospitality business, and that wasn't a very hospitable way to greet our guests," said Jon Tullis, **Timberline** spokesman.

The U.S. Forest Service owns the lodge. Jeff Jaqua, a U.S. Forest Service archaeologist, oversaw the preservation part of the work. Jaqua said the new wall and doorway are set in from the original stone arch even though that meant giving up some of the room for people to maneuver outside the elevator.

"We needed to keep this space to honor this arch," he said.

Similarly, posts and beams have been left exposed in the small lobby in front of the elevator, painted to match a chip taken from what is thought to be the lodge's original paint, Tullis said.

Lights hanging from the ceiling were handmade to suit but are not an attempt to reproduce the lodge's original light fixtures. That follows a rule for preservation: New items should fit in but are not intended to be replicas of the original details.

"We don't want to fool the visitor into thinking it is original if it's not," Tullis said.

An interior door that was dented and scuffed after years as part of a utility area is freshly painted, with frosted glass. "It was really beat up," Jaqua said. "We wanted to preserve some of that." The marks on the door, after all, are part of the lodge's history. So the door and glass were restored, not replaced.

### Access versus preservation

Federal buildings come under access laws that predate the Americans With Disabilities Act, but it was only last year that Congress appropriated \$1.24 million for updating **Timberline** Lodge.

Jaqua said the conflict between the law requiring accessibility and the laws on preserving historic buildings were eased because the new elevator is in what were service areas at **Timberline**. Those "back of the house" areas generally have a lower preservation priority than public areas.

Chuck Frayer, regional accessibility specialist for the Forest Service, who has long worked on the elevator project, said it was remarkable how far **Timberline** has come.

"The U.S. Disabled (Ski) Team trains here now," he said. "A couple of years ago there was no way of doing that."