Art Clay, Ben Finley will be the first African Americans inducted into the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Hall of Fame this month.

“Black folks don’t live near ski towns in America,” said Clay, a retired social worker from Chicago. “There is always a good vibe here.”

“T**here is always a good vibe here.”

By TONY TEKARONIATE EVANS
Express Staff Writer

They came to ski and to party, but also to raise money for a good cause. The sixth visit of the National Brotherhood of Skiers to Sun Valley brought some 600 African-American skiers to town this week.

“T**here is always a good vibe here.”

And, at least two members will be back later this month. On Saturday night, March 28, the co-founders of the NBS will be inducted into the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Hall of Fame in Sun Valley.

Art Clay, 83, and Ben Finley, 81, took time to talk to reporters on Wednesday, following a dance party with locals the night before at River Run Lodge that Clay said exemplified the NBS’ Sun Valley experience.

“There is always a good vibe here,” said Clay, a retired social worker from Chicago.

Finley, a retired engineer, recalled the first NBS Black Summit in Sun Valley in 1975 when some attitudes were different.

“We showed up with two white women at the party at the Boiler Room under the Sun Valley Lodge and there were some good old boys who didn’t like that.” Finley said with a smile. “Let’s just say some interesting words were exchanged between us.”

The National Brotherhood of Skiers was founded in Aspen in 1972 to promote winter sports for minorities, in part to counteract misconceptions, Finley said.

“There has been a stereotype that blacks don’t ski,” Clay said. “Well, we always thought that white people can’t jump. They proved us wrong and so we’re going to prove them wrong about skiing.”

The two men were nominated to the “builders” category in the Hall of Fame, which honors people who have been “involved at a significant level in ski or snowboard sports” and “must have had a clear national impact for their contribution and be widely known for their work.”

NBS President Peggie Allen said in an interview that Clay and Finley’s induction will provide NBS with a voting membership in the Hall of Fame.

“For years to come we will also have a say as to who is inducted in the Hall of Fame,” Allen said.

“The Black Summit is the NBS’ annual fundraiser, yielding from $30,000 to $100,000 each year to support the nonprofit organization’s Olympic Scholarship Fund, Allen said.

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“Black folks don’t live near ski towns in America,” Finley said.

“The big challenge is to get them to the mountain.”

Allen said a major factor in success will be to find “very supportive” parents who could encourage their sons and daughters to reach for the highest levels of competition.

“Our goal is to have youth of color stand up on the Olympic podium,” Allen said.

The NBS currently supports 10 black winter sports athletes, including rising star Brian Rice II of Detroit.

Known as “Flyin’ Brian” by his fan club, 15-year-old Rice was described by Fox 2 Detroit in December as “on the fast track to becoming the country’s first Black Olympic snowboarder.”

Rice is a member of the Jim Dandy Ski Club, one of the oldest ski clubs affiliated with the National Brotherhood of Skiers, Finley said.

Allen said the NBS’ T**here is always a good vibe here.”

April 2020 feature.

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WIN TODAY!

EXTRA! EXTRA! READ ALL ABOUT IT!

1. Buy yourself a little more time on Wednesday mornings with a free subscription to the Idaho Mountain Express! We are giving away a working home delivery subscription to one very lucky winner for today’s Free Friday Contest. Simply find the newspaper somewhere in today’s paper, be the 15th caller during business hours starting at 2 p.m., and you’ll be enjoying your morning news in your pajamas every Wednesday for a year! Please note, you’re not eligible if you have won the contest in the last 30 days. Call 208-726-8560 to play.

2. Spring forward Sunday morning.

Idahoans might want to get to bed an hour earlier on Saturday night, or risk losing an hour of sleep. Clocks “spring forward” at 2 a.m. on Sunday, March 15, for the start of daylight saving time.

The spring ritual of moving clocks forward one hour brings longer evenings, and for many serves a harbinger of even longer, warmer days of summer.

Daylight saving time originated in 1918, during World War I, to save energy, but not all America’s can participate. Arizona and Hawaii don’t change the clocks.

Neither do American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

The rest of the country, though, can expect longer evenings until their clocks “fall back” one hour on Nov. 1.