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John E. P. Morgan

Born: 1895 Died: 1971

John Morgan spent many Sunday afternoons visiting with local ski area operators and doctors encouraging the formation of local patrols and working with them instead of skiing.

Born August 9, 1895, in Lennox, Massachusetts, John Morgan first became associated with athletics during student days at Middlesex School, 1907-13, and Harvard College, 1913-17. He starred at ice hockey and also played football, but did not become an active skier until following naval service during World War I. He first skied Eastern Canada and the Adirondacks and in the late 1920's joined the Amateur Ski Club of New York.

During the 1932-34 ski growth period, John was appointed by Roland Palmedo, then president of the Amateur Ski Club of New York, along with Borden Helmer, Charles Collins and Minnie Dole, to study and make a report on skiing accidents and safety in skiing. This first report suggested the need for special training in the handling of ski accidents and emphasized the great lack of knowledge of this growth problem.

About this time the national ski races were held on the Nose Dive at Stowe, Vermont, and Roger Langley, president of the National Ski Association, asked Minnie Dole to organize a ski patrol for these races. This was done – there were several accidents – and the safety patrol received much favorable comment for the way in which the accidents were handled.

After the death of a young man at a ski race near Pittsfield, it was decided that the growing sport needed help, and the National Ski Patrol System was born. The previously mentioned study and the brief experience of the “patrol” at the Nationals at Stowe were the forerunner of the NSPS. Roger Langley O.K.'d the idea, and Minnie Dole became chairman with John Morgan as his treasurer.

John was, for over ten years, also Chairman of the Finance Committee of the National Ski Association. Skiing in those years was still a nickel sport and “raising money was like pulling teeth,” to quote him. His final efforts resulted in raising about \$60,000 for the 1952 Olympics, in addition to keeping the NSPS as well in funds.

During 1934-36, John Morgan was employed by Averell Harriman as assistant to the Chairman of the Board of the Union Pacific Railroad to work on the development of what we know as Sun Valley.

With Charles Proctor, John laid out the first trails and runs. There is a Morgan Ridge on the Sun Valley maps to this day in his honor. He helped design and construct the first chair lift in the world for Sun Valley, and designed the first hot-water circular pools that quickly became the “thing” at Sun Valley. John secured the Nationals there in March of 1937 and helped organize them with the Pacific Northwest Ski Association. Dick Durrance won that event. John organized the Sun Valley Ski Club in a hurry, persuading Al Lindley to be its first president and very quickly gathered enough members together to make the club “legit.”

The history of the 10th Mountain Division is well-known and well-reported, but John Morgan's role is less well known and should be reported. We quote from Minnie Dole:

He accompanied me to Washington in 1940 when we approached the War Department with the hopes of advising them of a weakness they had, troops trained in mountain and winter warfare. When we once got our foot in the door, John stayed on in Washington during the war, handling all the original details, including drawing a most unusual contract between the War Department and the National Ski Association which saved our lives, and laid the groundwork for the post war growth of skiing. The contract had to be with the NSA instead of the National Ski Patrol because we (the NSPS) were not Incorporated though the NSA had nothing to do with it.

Later, Minnie Dole, Corty Hill, and John Morgan went on maneuvers with the mountain troops at Camp Hale in the middle of the winter. "We camped at 12,000 feet, carried our own packs, tented in 25 degrees below zero. When I look back on that venture, I think we should all receive the gold medal for something."

At some point in John Morgan's lengthy ski history, the National Ski Patrol System awarded him their Gold Merit Award for his long years of effort on their behalf. He also was the recipient of an Assist in a Life Saving Event, and was elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1972.

