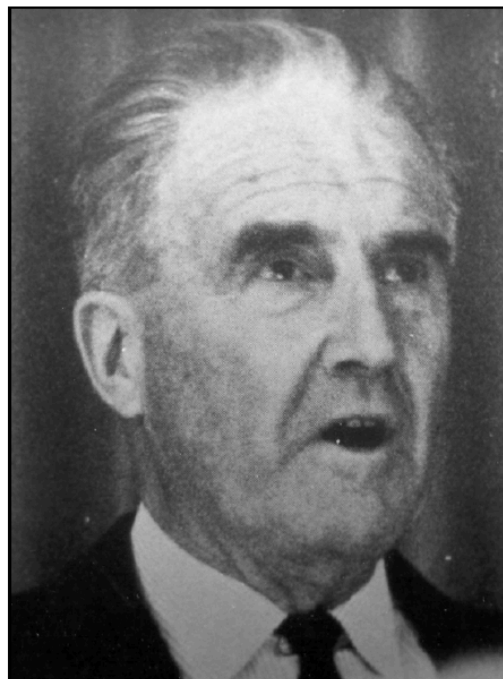


#134

Erling Strom

Born: 1897 Died: ?

Erling Strom has always been highly regarded as a storyteller and non-professional entertainer. In fact, his ability in this line was almost equal to his mastery of skiing, and over the years he appeared before scores of audiences from coast to coast lecturing and urging Americans to get out in the winter and enjoy the thrills of skiing.



Erling Strom, born August 26, 1897, in the mountains of Norway. The first eight years of his life were spent above timberline in Norway, where winter lasted for seven or eight months. His father was an engineer, who put in big installation tunnels.

Given his first pair of skis when he was two years old, Strom began winning prizes as a jumper in 1907 – when he was ten, in small-boy competitions in the hills above Oslo.

In 1916, when he was 19, he became involved in major competitions and continued this for four years, with a number of firsts in top competition. He represented Norway in the Stockholm “Nordiskspelen” which was the forerunner of what is now called “The Winter Olympics.” During these years, he took part in the Holmenkillen, on a much more difficult jumping hill than it is today.

In 1918, he served in the King’s Guard, and was among the ski experts who coached the Crown Prince who became King Olav.

Erling came to America in March 1919 and during his early years rode the range and herded cattle as a cowboy in Arizona. Hay fever finally caused him to give up range life and go to Colorado to visit a friend who was an engineer. Here he discovered that Colorado was a ski jumpers’ Mecca. Borrowing skis, he entered a meet, won first prize the first day he put them on, and soon after became the Colorado State Champion in jumping. The following year he also won the title in cross-country. In 1927, he was U.S. Western Champion in the Combined, winning the prize given by *The Denver Post* for running up the highest point-score in Colorado’s five major ski meets in both jumping and cross-country. His friend Lars Haugen outscored him in jumping by a point or two, but Lars was not proficient in cross-country. Johan Satre beat him in cross-country but was not a jumper, so Erling won the Combined.

That same year, on a dare, with several other Vikings he made the first, and so far as we know, the only ski ascent of Long’s Peak. Also when the jumping season was over, he and Lars Haugen, when told it was impossible, crossed the range on skis making the trip from Estes Park to Steamboat Springs and back. “Quite a trip,” said Erling Strom, “when you have to break trail in deep snow all the way.”

In the autumn of 1927, he was asked to go to the Lake Placid Club and spent eleven winters there instructing people in recreational skiing. Among those who took their first ski lessons from Erling was none other than C. Minot “Minnie” Dole, father of the American Ski Patrol system, and sometimes referred to as father of the 10th Mountain Division. Because Erling Strom was one of the first to give instruction in what was then a simple form of “downhill,” he helped give skiing its early momentum in this country.

The Marquis d’ Albizzi, a Russian-Italian-English soldier-of-fortune and former officer in the Czar’s cavalry as well as an officer in the Italian Mountain Troops in World War I, was associated with Erling at Lake Placid. “The Markee” also went with him to The Canadian Rockies where they started spring ski trips to Mt. Assiniboine. Later, Erling had his own ski areas, including ski schools in the Canadian Rockies and at Stowe, Vermont.

One of his most notable achievements was in 1931 when accompanied by Alfred Lindley of Minneapolis (later head of the Sun Valley Ski Club and prominent in the American ski world), he led a two hundred and fifty mile expedition across the Canadian Rockies for a winter ascent of the Columbian ice fields.

In 1931, Strom teamed up with Alfred Lindley in a two hundred and fifty mile trek across the Canadian Rockies to the Columbia ice fields. The following year, Strom, Lindley, and two Alaskans, Grant Pearson and Harry Leek, climbed Mount McKinley on skis – the first time this had ever been done.

Erling Strom was elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1972.