

#148

## Frank Elkins

Born: 1910    Died: 1973

*Frank Elkins was one of the most influential ski writers ever in this country. His 28 years at the New York Times, and 18 years at The Long Island Press is testimony to his devotion to skisport.*

The 45-year newspaper career of Frank Elkins produced an unprecedented flow of ski reporting, snow sports historical research and ski columnizing. At the time of his death (Sept. 5, 1973) he had been Ski Editor of *The Long Island Press* for 18 years and earlier had spent 28 years on the sports staff of *The New York Times*. He also was a contributor to official ski publications throughout the United States, Canada and Europe.

Elkins' numerous contributions to skisport were lauded by several Honored Members of the National Ski Hall of Fame, including Lowell Thomas and W. Averill Harriman.

In proposing a posthumous nomination, Lowell Thomas stated: "Frank devoted his life to telling about what has been going on in the ski world. I suspect Frank did more than anyone else in his field to interest the American public in skiing.....an almost unparalleled contribution."

The Frank Elkins "hallmark" of colorful ski reporting was tabbed by Harriman in 1940 when he wrote to *The Times* that "Mr. Elkins finally got across the excitement" of the sports to Americans. This was soon after Harriman had founded the famous Sun Valley ski resort in Idaho.

Newspaper friends of Elkins often marveled at his speedy ski-story typing while simultaneously maintaining a machine-gun-like dialogue with anyone within range who wanted to discuss skiing. Sometimes the dialogue became a monologue as fascinated listeners heard a near-stream-of-consciousness delivery that spanned five decades as if they had been minutes. When he said, casually, that he knew everyone in skiing he really did.

The Elkins sense of ski "excitement" began when he joined *The Times* in 1928 and continued through to a graveside eulogy by Lowell Thomas.

Illness prevented Frank from attending the 51<sup>st</sup> annual convention of the Eastern Ski Association, the first time he had missed such a gathering during his ski writing career. However, an accolade in absentia was extended for his many years of ski writing, a well deserved tribute from a divisional association of which he already was a lifetime honorary member. He also held honors from the National Ski Association, the United States Ski Association and the National Ski Areas Association. And in March, shortly before he was stricken while on a ski-writing trip into Utah, Nevada and California, Frank was applauded by his long-time friend and skiing crony, Lowell Thomas, in a national broadcast discussing the Elkins role in the formation of the National Ski Patrol System 35 years ago.

The Elkins' published ski works, other than articles and columns in *The Long Island Press* and *The New York Times*, included hundreds of magazine articles and two major books, "The Complete Ski Guide" and "The World Ski Book and Encyclopedia." The two books contain many valuable American and Canadian skisport records, compiled by Elkins in cooperation with Historian Harold Grinden and Historian Bill Berry.

Frank maintained his skiing archives in his residence. The biographical material and pictures available through him aided materially in recent years in helping the Historical Committee create the National Ski Hall of Fame into an actuality rather than something in name only until the permanent records came along. Without the able help of Frank Elkins the Ski Hall of Fame as we have it today in Ishpeming would not have been possible.

But even to the extent of which skisport appeared to have dominated Elkins' life, he was equally active in academic and public relations circles. Since 1966 he had served as assistant to the President for Public Relations at State Agricultural and Technical College in Farmingdale, NY. And in 1972 he was selected for inclusion in the International Who's Who in Public Relations.

A Frank Elkins Memorial Scholarship has been created at the college. His was a skiing family, the widow, Flora, having accompanied her husband on numerous ski trips, while a son, Howard, was a ski competitor in his own right while attending St. Lawrence University at Canton, N.Y.

Frank Elkins was elected posthumously to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1974.

