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S. Joseph Quinney

Born: 1892 Died: 1983

Joe Quinney was a skisport builder and public-spirited citizen whose reputation has been felt in the ski world for half a century.

S. Joseph Quinney, born in 1892 in Logan, Utah, to English – Swiss parents, was known as “Mr. Ski Business” to his law associates and to those in the business community. His promotion of the sport covered a span of more than 50 years. This was the period in which ski pioneers successfully bridged the promotion gap between the old days of carrying long wooden skis up an endless mountain to a complex of high speed chairlifts carrying thousands daily to their favorite runs high on the mountains.

Following graduation from Utah State Agricultural College in Logan, he went on to Harvard University where he obtained his law degree. He was elected to the Utah House of Representatives in 1921 where he obtained an understanding of Utah’s land law as they applied to the area’s largest land-holder, the U.S. Forest Service. Little did he know that 40 years later he would be in almost daily contact with the Forest Service, attempting to resolve problems which arose over such matters as avalanche control, placement of lifts, parking facilities, permits for new lifts and building construction, water, roads, trees and even rocks.

In the middle of the 1920s, Joe Quinney began driving his young son and his son’s friends to the nearby canyons where, although the climb up the mountains was longer, the run down was all too short. Joe Quinney found that he couldn’t be a spectator to this new sport, so he too purchased skis. With his entrance into skiing, he opened the door to the sport for thousands in the Mountain West.

Prior to the Olympic tryouts in March 1935, Joe Quinney helped promote and judged the state amateur ski tournament which was sanctioned by the U.S. Western Amateur Ski Association, a member group of the National Ski Association.

The Olympic tryouts were held on the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Utah Ski Club. On hand for the contest, of which Joe Quinney was active as chairman of the reception committee, was Julius Blegan, a Minnesota ski enthusiast and former jumper. Blegan was one of the judges at the Olympic trials.

Joe Quinney was president of Utah Ski Club from 1935 to 1938, and, according to Alf Engen, was the nation’s leading authority on everything connected with snow and skiing. His service with the club included a long term as secretary-treasurer and a member of the board of directors for a number of years.

The Salt Lake City promoters agreed to organize a corporation which, under Forest Service permit, would construct a ski lift and related facilities in 1939. The Forest Service, in fulfillment of its commitments, arranged to keep the canyon open, controlled avalanches, and granted permits to the company as further lifts, tows and related facilities became possible and appropriate.

In 1967, Joe Quinney was the recipient of the Winter Sports Award of the Salt Lake Area Chamber of Commerce. The citation read as follows: “In grateful appreciation for outstanding support and personal endeavor in the furthering of winter sports.”

Joe Quinney’s only interest had been to provide a place for jumpers to jump – a place for skiers to ski, and he remained firm in his conviction that skiing shouldn’t become “the rich man’s sport.” Consequently, he opposed increases in the costs of skiing unless they become necessary for the operation of the lifts.

Joe Quinney said he was “a little frog in the big puddle of skiing.” The opposite holds more truth. Men such as Joe Quinney are the backbone, heart, and mind.

S. Joseph Quinney was elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1975.

