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**Alf Engen**  
Born: 1909 Died: 1997

*Alf Engen was a good athlete, participating in soccer and nordic skiing. He is one of this country's most decorated ski racers. Between 1934 and 1949, he won the majority of events in which he competed. Engen ski jumped until the age of 55, when his back started giving him trouble.*

Alf Engen was born in Nijondalem, Norway, in 1909. He was a good athlete, participating in soccer and nordic skiing. He immigrated to the United States in 1929 as a young man, arriving first in Chicago, Illinois, and later moving to the Salt Lake City, Utah, area where he worked for the U.S. Forest Service as a technical advisor, assisting and planning the development of winter sport areas on National Forests in Utah, Idaho, Nevada, and Wyoming.

In 1931, he won his first major professional ski jumping title, one of several he won during his professional career. He returned to the amateur ranks in 1937 and was named to the 1940 United States Olympic Team,

which was selected but did not compete because of the beginning of World War II in Europe. Engen had qualified in both special jumping and downhill and slalom events. He was a true four-event skier. In 1948, Engen was named as one of the coaches of the 1948 United States Olympic Team, and he put away his racing skis and became a full-time coach and developer. He eventually turned to professional ski instructing, and began the Alta Ski School in Alta, Utah. Engen qualified as a "Master Instructor" in 1949 and received a series of awards and honors, including the Skier of the Century and the Helm's Hall of Fame Award.

Alf Engen was elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in Ishpeming, Michigan, in 1959.

**Alf Engen – Salt Lake City, Utah, is recognized nationally as a veteran in the four events of skiing. He set the American ski jumping record of 244.42 feet at Salt Lake in 1937 and again in 1939 when he made a leap of 251 feet at Big Pines. He won the NSA Class A jumping title at Berlin N.H., in 1940, repeating at Steamboat, Springs, Colorado, in 1946. Engen won the NSA Nordic Combined in 1939 and 1941 and the NSA 4-event title in 1940 and 1941. In 1942, he won the NSA Alpine Combined in the open class. He was awarded the American Ski Trophy in 1940 and the Paul Layman Trophy (for winning Nordic combined) in 1941 and was a member of the 1940 U.S. Olympic team in both jumping and downhill-slalom. He won the Canadian jumping title in 1937. He served as Olympic ski team coach in 1948 and received the Skier of the Century award in 1950 and the Helm's Hall of Fame award in 1954. Engen points to skiing activity in a number of films produced by Fox Movietone, Pathe, 20th Century Fox and Sverre Engen Films and did doubling work for Warners. He has written many articles on the sport of skiing. While in the employ of the U.S. Forest Service (1935-1942) he conducted ski schools, taught winter mountaineering and rescue training and later coached the University of Utah ski team. He also served in the U.S. Army as an inspector of arctic and winter warfare clothing and equipment. He also served as sports advisor at Sun Valley.<sup>2</sup>**

Some advice from Alf follows:

- "As the body stiffens and we become less flexible, we have to compensate, conserve, find shortcuts and use different tactics in our skiing," says Alf. "I think I ski better than ever now. I certainly ski smarter."
- As you grow older, your range of up and down motion decreases. Make up for that by moving laterally – in ways that can be ingrained in your muscle memory.
- Continue to be a student of the sport. You can learn from everybody – kids, old-timers, anyone.
- Know yourself, and avoid being pressured by younger skiers who might lead you into terrain you can't handle. Look forward in your skiing, not backward.<sup>3</sup>

An Alf Engen Ski Museum has been established in Park City, Utah. "It hopes to preserve not only Alf's exploits and spirit but the contributions of many others who have enriched the sport of skiing."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup>United States Ski Association. "Alf Engen," *United States Ski Team*. Denver, Colorado, 1959.

<sup>3</sup>"Alf Engen, 77, Alta (Utah) Ski School," *Ski*, (January 1987): 96.

<sup>4</sup>Alf Engen Ski Museum Foundation. *Alf Engen Ski Museum*, Salt Lake City, UT.