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Roger Peabody

Born: 1920

Submitted by Carole Ann Cannataro, Chairman History Committee, Eastern Ski Association

Roger A. Peabody's association with the sport of skiing spans some 46 years. Roger was born in Littleton, New Hampshire, on September 10, 1920, and he started skiing in the first class of the first ski school in the United States under the direction of Sig Buchmayer at Peckett's on Sugar Hill outside Franconia, New Hampshire.

Roger continued to practice and perfect his skiing technique throughout his school years and became an alpine and jumping competitor for his championship high school team, Dow Academy in Franconia, from which he graduated in 1938. During his sophomore year, he had performed in an alpine exhibition at the 1936 Winter Sports Show in Madison Square Garden, New York City.

From 1936 to 1946, Roger held a Class "A" Alpine Competitor's classification. During those years he participated in the Olympic tryouts at Mt. Hood, Oregon (1939), and also placed among the top ten in the breathtaking American Inferno race at Mt. Washington. He was a member of the University of New Hampshire Ski Team while attending the University from 1938 to 1942. He enjoyed both nordic and alpine events, running cross-country and jumping as well as racing downhill and slalom. His strongest event was the special slalom. In Eastern competition he finished 28 consecutive races in the top ten. Roger set the downhill record on the 1.7 mile Cannon Mt. Trail, running it in under two minutes (1:59.2), a record that held for 17 years until it was finally broken by U.S. Olympian, Gordon Eaton.

From 1945 to 1946, Roger owned and operated the Profile Ski School at Cannon Mt. and Mittersill (an adjoining ski area on Cannon Mt.). During 1946-1947, Roger became a member and later patrol leader of the first professional ski patrol in the United States at Cannon Mt., Franconia, New Hampshire. He assisted in the designing of the first toboggan braking device. This design was then distributed to all patrols throughout the National Ski Patrol System, which he served as Section Chief.

Aside from all his own competitions and achievements in ski racing, Roger got the most pleasure out of helping others learn to ski. He established and competed in the first two National Veterans Alpine Championships in 1952 and 1953. In 1950 he organized the first junior training camp for girls in the East. Among the twelve girls were Penny Pitou, Betsy Snite, Joan Hannah, Imogene Upton and Rene Cox, all of whom eventually became members of the U.S. Olympic Ski Team.

In the early 1950s, there was a surge of enthusiasm for the sport of skiing after the U.S. Ski Team brought home some gold medals from the 1948 and 1952 Olympics. With this increased interest in skiing, the United States Eastern Amateur Ski Association (USEASA), recognized its need for a paid executive to help organize the association and to meet the new challenges and growth potential. At the 1953 USEASA convention in Providence, RI, Roger was chosen out of 100 applicants to fill the new position. He held this position for 19 years until the office was moved from Littleton, New Hampshire, to Brattleboro, Vermont.

One of the many Eastern Association programs which was suggested and established by Roger was that of Approved Alpine Officials. This was a forerunner of the United States Ski Association program. Roger was an Approved Alpine Official and served as course setter, referee, and technical delegate, setting many courses for national events. Under his guidance as executive officer, the Eastern Division of USSA grew from 6,000 members to over 40,000 members. Roger was also a past president of the Franconia Ski Club and Honorary Life Member of the Eastern Ski Association.

In 1960, Roger became the chairman of the Executive Directors Organization for the USSA which coordinates activities between the divisional offices. This is an organization which Roger initiated when he found a need for better communication between the various divisions of the USSA.

In 1973, Roger A. Peabody was awarded the New England Council Silver Bowl Award (the last one awarded) in recognition of his long service to the ski industry, including his 19 years at the helm of the USEASA. The inscription reads "1973 New England Council Silver Bowl Award presented to Roger A. Peabody for outstanding services to New England's winter recreation industry, October 11, 1973."

Roger A. Peabody was elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1976.

