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Jakob Vaage

Born: 1905 Died: 1994

Jakob Vaage was considered the world's foremost ski historian. He was the curator of the Norwegian National Ski Museum at Holmenkollen until his retirement and contributed many little known facts, and assisted in the memorialization programs of the NSA and USSA for many years. Vaage was a prolific writer and willingly shared his vast skisport knowledge with other historians.

The library archives of Norwegian Ski Historian Jakob Vaage contained what may be the world's greatest collection of recorded ski facts. Hundreds upon hundreds of ski books, ski annuals and historical documents were neatly shelved from floor to ceiling of a second-floor study in the lovely home the historian and his charming wife Berit occupied in Bekkestua. The Vaages were retired educators, their home in a suburb of Oslo and close by the Norwegian Ski Museum at Holmenkollen. He was the curator since 1947 – gathering ski facts for his library and memorabilia for display. It came from all over the world, including many treasured items from America.

Born in Oslo on February 9, 1905, Jakob Vaage was qualified for his historian's role. First he was an accomplished skier, then a student of languages, and educator and scholarly botanist. And more, too!

Twice a Holmenkollen competitor, Jakob, in 1924 won the Norwegian Junior Ski Jumping Championship (18-20 years). With revival of slalom interest at the F.I.S. level in 1933, he turned to the alpine phase of skisport and three years later became first chairman of the Norwegian Slalom committee; then first chairman of the ski instructors' committee in 1939, meanwhile having served since 1925 as a certified ski jumping judge. He coached the Norwegian jumpers for the F.I.S. World Championships of 1935 in Poland, and managed the Norwegian Olympic Slalom team during the Winter Games of 1936 in Germany. Chairman of the Norwegian ski judges for many years, he also served on the F.I.S. judges' committee for 10 years.

Vaage's writing career began in 1939 with *On Steel Edges*, a book about slalom racing. Other works included *The Holmenkollen Hill*, both Norwegian and English versions, *Sports Books of Norway*, a monumental research listing of 1500 titles published during the last 200 years. For the Norwegian year book, *Sno og Ski*, he wrote historical and technical articles for 30 years about skis, poles, wax, jumping and slalom origins and other matters relating to several hundred years of ski history. From his typewriter came sports reports, feature articles and historical material for ski publications, newspapers and periodicals in Norway, the United States and other nations. He also lectured more than 1000 times on skisport, including a dissertation during the Sierra Ski Centennial.

Much of Vaage's research related to North America. He visited the United States three times, including participation in the 1954 dedication of the National Ski Hall of Fame and Museum in Ishpeming, Michigan. In fact, it was Vaage who provided the Ski Hall of Fame with what amounted to the nucleus of an "instant museum" when he presented 20 pairs of historic skis during the dedication ceremony. Five pair were from Norway of the mid-19th century, while the others he gathered during travels in mid-western America.

Vaage came to the United States in late 1953 to study the origins of skiing in North America. His work was funded by the Norwegian government in cooperation with the Foreningen til Ski-Idrettens Fremme (the Association for the Promotion of Skiing). He also visited California and Nevada, coming to Reno as a guest to participate in the 1954 Centennial of Sierra Skiing. At nearby Genoa was the ski-crested grave marker of Snow-Shoe Thompson, while back in North Dakota in an unmarked plot was Sondre Norheim.

Jakob knew he must and would come back.

And he did! Twice!

First during the 1960 Olympic Winter Games in Squaw Valley, where he acted as a ski jumping judge and took time out to lead members of the Norwegian Ski Team on a pilgrimage to Snow-Shoe Thompson's grave.

Jakob Vaage was elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1976.