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Siegfried Buchmayr

Born: 1906 Died: 1964

Submitted by J.H. Carruthers, Chairman, Historical Committee

Fate brought Sig Buchmayr to the alpine ski scene at exactly the time the sport needed a svengall and master showman to champion its virtue and exhilaration.

Katharine Peckett, daughter of a posh hotel owner located at Sugar Hill, New Hampshire, already had a small but enthusiastic band of skiers tromping around on the snow and filling the rooms during the winter season. It was through her foresight that the colorful Sig was enticed to come north and establish the first bona fide ski school in the United States in 1929.

Born Siegfried Buchmayr in Holf Gastein, Austria, on September 2, 1906, Sig learned his alpine and jumping skills in Europe. Like a small number of ski greats, he was proficient at both. During the early 1930s, he participated in a number of eastern jumping tournaments as a Class "A" competitor usually finishing in the top ten. This however, was not the criteria to earn him a place among the ski greats.

It was Sig's wizardry at selling the ski sport during the 1930s from his ski school at Peckett's on Sugar Hill in New Hampshire that would etch his name into American ski history. Greater alpine technicians and teachers would come to America, but none would outshine Sig as a bon vivant and master showman.

As the winter clientele of Peckett's grew, it came to include many of the social elite of the New York-Boston area, many of whom were amazed to learn from the society, or gossip columns in Monday's paper that they had been skiing at Peckett's over the weekend. Little did many of them know that the same snow train which carried them back to the city also transported mail pouches with dispatches written by Sig. Some swore Sig taught all day and wrote dispatches all night.

Ever the fashion plate either on or off the hill, Sig managed to convince Saks of Fifth Avenue in the Fall of 1936 to sponsor him and a group of teenage skiers from Down Academy of Franconia, New Hampshire, to the first Winter Sports Show held in New York City. Sig and his teenage tyros would perform in the morning on a small slide covered with borax at Sak's store and then beat it up to Madison Square Garden where they would demonstrate all afternoon and evening on crushed ice. Cries of "Sig, darling," weren't too uncommon and to be seen speaking with the master was socially in. Not only had skiing taken hold, but the development of uphill contrivances to get the skier back up with a minimum of effort was making the sport positively bloom.

The winter migration to Peckett's hill continued unabated and two young fellows named Lowell Thomas and Minnie Dole became addicted to the sport. Much would be heard from these same two later.

Nearby Cannon Mountain would be further developed along with Cranmore. Tuckerman Ravine would become commonplace in ski talk while down at Hanover men such as Otto Schniebs and Walter Prager would be coaching the young gentleman of Dartmouth to prominence in the sport.

Sig was eventually to leave Peckett's and establish himself in the ski fashion and equipment business at Fred Pabst's Big Bromley in Manchester, Vermont. By the time the ski boom started its dizzy spiral to major proportions in the mid 1950s, Buchmayr was well established in a chain of ski slopes spread across the eastern ski scene at locations such as Lake Placid, Mad River Glen and Sugarbush in Vermont.

The metropolitan New York area had its share of Buchmayr sporting shops at West Orange, New Jersey, and Yonkers, New York. Last, but not far from the least, Sig had established himself in his own shop next to Saks Fifth Avenue between Fifth and Madison Avenue back where his New York exposure had begun at that first winter show in 1936.

Fate truly seemed to destine Buchmayr to be outstanding and different. When his wife, the former Mary Heritage Bamburg of England, went to the Littleton, New Hampshire, hospital on January 26, 1942 to give birth, the hospital had its first set of triplets. Sig named them Sig Jr., Charles, and Norbert.

Siegfried Buchmayr was elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1977.