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Sepp Ruschp

Born: 1908 Died: 1990

Information submitted in a nomination letter to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame by Bill Riley

Sepp Ruschp had the ability to teach skiing and was knowledgeable in business administration and engineering. He became the head of the Mt. Mansfield Ski School as well as the alpine coach at the University of Vermont and Norwich University.

Sepp arrived at Stowe on December 10, 1936, at the age of 28 from his native Linz, Austria, bringing with him three things: the ability to teach skiing backed by a favorable competitive record – four-way, a knowledge of business administration, and of engineering. These came from graduating from the Linz Technical School.

As head of the Mt. Mansfield Ski School, he had little trouble with the director – he was the ski school – a staff of one. He also became the coach of the University of Vermont and Norwich University's budding alpine program. When he wasn't doing these chores, he was busy chasing around the countryside at night giving lessons under lights at such scattered places in Vermont as St. Albans, Waterbury, and Montpelier.

It soon dawned on Sepp that maybe if he stayed at Mt. Mansfield, the pupils would come to him rather than his running all over to them. In February of 1938, he became one of the first seven instructors to be certified in Woodstock, Vermont. The pupils did come to him. By 1940, the ski school had ten instructors working under Sepp.

During this four-year stretch, Mt. Mansfield continued to develop under the guidance of Roland Palmedo and his associates. In 1941, World War II began and the career of Ruschp and the development of Mt. Mansfield went into a four-year hiatus. Sepp served as a pilot and flight instructor in the U.S. Army Air Corps.

Back from the war and again instructing, the genial Ruschp came upon a pupil that was to change the course of both him and Mt. Mansfield. This man was insurance Magnate C.V. Starr – a man greatly disgruntled at waiting in lift lines. A warm friendship grew between them in the winter of 1945-46. Starr saw in Ruschp great managerial potential and between the two they formed the Smuggler's Notch Lift Corporation, with Sepp having 51 % of the stock, and in that same winter built the T bar on Mt. Mansfield. In 1949 with an investment of over one million dollars, the corporation gained control of Mt. Mansfield Chairlift from Palmedo and Associates, and the lodge at Smuggler's Notch, along with 4,500 acres on adjoining Spruce Peak. In 1954, the first year of the Spruce Peak chairlift operation, Mt. Mansfield grossed more than a million dollars, the first time a ski area topped that magical figure.

Through it all, Ruschp maintained great care in the selection of trails to be cut and the location of the uphill lifts. Runs such as The Nosedive and The National are premier racing trails. Countless American Olympians have sharpened their skills at Stowe, and it was a Ruschp policy through his years at Stowe that gave as much attention to junior racing as to Olympic tryouts.

A junior skier many years ago eagerly and gratefully admits to the help – both technical and financial that Ruschp and Mt. Mansfield provided him. Without the help of the mountain and the man, he would have gone nowhere. His name: Billy Kidd.

Thus was the saga of a man and a mountain. From the sleepy little Vermont village, the Stowe area grew to have 70 hostelrys and the mountain went from a single rope tow to eight lifts with a 7000 capacity per hour.

Among his peers, Ruschp was equally recognized. He was past vice-president of the prestigious Federation International de Ski (F.I.S.) and one of the organizing committee for the Olympics of 1960 in Squaw Valley. It was the same year, incidentally, that he was president of the United States Ski Association.

It was a long and fruitful road for the finial Austrian who arrived here to live in a caretaker's house. As president and general manger of the Mt. Mansfield Company, he stepped down and left behind a 30-million dollar facility known as the ski giant of the East.

The skiers simply call it Stowe.

Sepp Ruschp was elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1978.

