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William C. "Bill" Janss

Born: 1918 Died: 1996

Information submitted by Gretchen and Donald Fraser in a nomination letter to U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame.

Bill Janss's policy was to ski for fun and pleasure, providing service to skiing guests. This included many restaurants on the mountain, a variety of terrain, a separate mountain for beginners, and those who enjoy easier slopes.

By the age of 20, Bill Janss had already established a brilliant skiing and racing career. He was a member of the Stanford University ski team for 3 years, a California State Champion, and was selected as a member of the 1940 U.S. Olympic Alpine Squad.

In 1942, Bill was a flight instructor for the Royal Canadian Air Force, and later taught at Oxnard Army Air Base, then was made an officer in the Army Air force flying P-38's. Bill had a very creditable flying career, with thousands of hours flying army and civilian planes. He then commuted all over the country flying his own pressurized twin engine Airstar.

During World War II, Bill married Anne Searles, a creditable racer in her own right. Later, in the 1950s, while Bill was away on business, their house burned to the ground. Anne's heroics saved three of their children, the fourth burned to death. Severely burned, she had to jump from a second story window causing her to have a miscarriage, broken leg, and many operations to burns on her face and legs.

Bill's father was a prominent doctor in the Los Angeles area and also developed real estate. To mention one, was Thousand Oaks, California. After the war, Bill developed the feeder lot business of the Janss Corporation from a 2,500 capacity to a 225,000 capacity in the West and Hawaii. Skiing was still uppermost in Bill's mind, and in 1955, Bill and his brother Ed bought ranch country. His father questioned it being suitable, due to the altitude. Because of Bill's knowledge of ski areas here and abroad, an ideal village grew from those range lands and opened in 1957. Called Snowmass, Colorado, it was a credit to the skiing areas near Aspen.

In 1964, the two Janss brothers bought Sun Valley, Idaho, from the Union Pacific Railroad. In 1968, Bill took entire control of the Sun Valley stock, and it was held by Bill and his immediate family until it was sold to Earl Holding.

In the ten years Bill owned Sun Valley, he replaced all but one of the 16 lifts and added 3 new lifts. Janss helped to develop equipment to groom the slopes, adding machines until he had some 22 pieces of rolling stock on the mountains. His knowledge of flying helped him start the advent of helicopter skiing back in 1966. His work to increase capacity of the chairlifts raised the new lifts to 1800 and 2000 an hour. The back-up system Bill installed allowed the diesel auxiliary engines to run the lifts all day in case of power failure. All this was accomplished without a major accident.

Bill saw to the development of six separate condominium complexes. They include some 390 separate units, plus home sites in and around the valley.

Anne Janss was killed in an avalanche in 1972 near Sun Valley. The following year, Bill married Glenn Candy Cooper, and excellent skier, a patron and guiding light of the Sun Valley Creative Arts Center.

Bill's devotion of time and money to the organization of skiing, and representation in International Skiing, put him on the boards of the U.S. Ski Association, U.S. Alpine Committee, at which time he helped instigate the point system for racers that is used today. Janss helped the U.S. Ski Educational Foundation and Sun Valley Ski Education Foundation bring better coaches to the sport.

Bill's contribution to skiing cannot be measured, it is too multi-faceted – it includes resort development, racing, financing, U.S. Ski Association board work, and a sincere desire to help the progress of skiing.

William C. "Bill" Janss was elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1979.

