

#222

## Wayne Poulsen

Born: 1915 Died: 1995

*Wayne Poulsen started skiing as a ski jumper but went on to be a promoter of skiing as well as inspiring the development of skiing in Squaw Valley.*

Wayne Eddlemon Poulsen was born on July 24, 1915, in Richmond, California. At the age of 11, he made his first pair of skis and began skiing in the nearby Sierra Nevada mountains.

His first love was ski jumping, and he learned through a lot of trial and error. Eventually he came under the tutorship of Lars Haugen and Roy Mikkelsen.

Wayne's competitive career saw him win the Far West Junior and Senior jumping championships; take third in the National Four-Way Championships, and be a member of the collegiate team which defeated, in Poulsen's words, "The German World Champions in collegiate skiing, which included the best collegiate skiers Hitler could find in Germany to meet us." He was always very proud of that victory.

He also was instrumental in promoting and competing in jumping meets on imported snow on Oakland's Tightwad Hill in 1933; the Oakland Auditorium in 1936; and at the World's Fair on Treasure Island in 1938.

Poulsen began making long ski tours for the purpose of assisting Dr. Frank Church, the father of snow surveying, in determining the annual water run off from the Sierra. Dr. Church, an innovative and meticulous scientist and ski mountaineer, was an enormous influence on the young Poulsen.

While he was studying business at the University of Nevada, Poulsen, began showing talents as a coach and organizer. He was one of the main instigators starting the University of Nevada's ski team as well as its annual Winter Carnival. He coached this team for four years, claiming the National Championship in 1939. That same year he started his first ski area at Grass Lake near Mt. Rose which he operated until 1941. That area is the present Sky Tavern. In 1939, he took out an option to buy Squaw Valley.

He then learned to fly airplanes and joined the RAF prior to the United States' entry into World War II. Eventually he became an instructor for the United States Air Force and was based in California. While he was waiting for orders, he went to Sun Valley for the 1941-42 winter where he taught skiing for Otto Lang. There he met Gladys Kunau who he married on August 16, 1942.

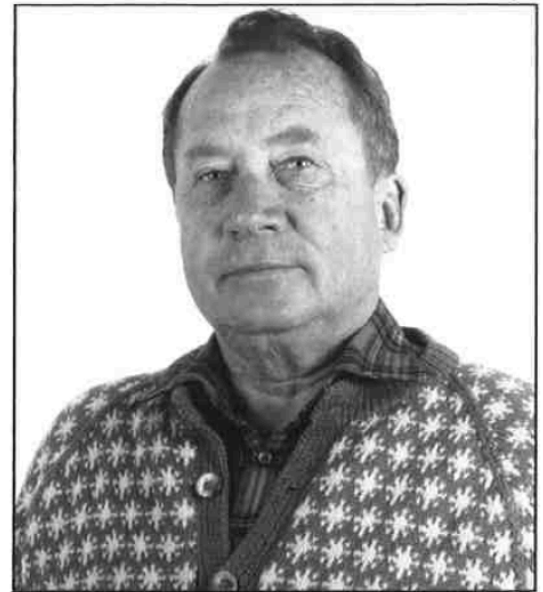
In 1943, he joined Pan American Airways, a company at that time under contract to the U.S. government. He flew throughout the Pacific during the war, and wound up remaining with Pan-Am for 31 years.

At the same time he bought 600 acres in Squaw Valley. While vacationing in Alta, in December 1945, Wayne Poulsen met Alex Cushing. Cushing had capital. The rest is history. In 1948, Poulsen purchased an additional 1200 acres of Squaw Valley land and started the Squaw Valley Development Company, serving as its first president. In 1950, he began the Papoose Ski Area in Squaw Valley which he operated until he sold it in 1978. He was a consultant for ski resorts in Australia, as well as for the U.S. ski areas such as Sugar Bowl, Bogus Basin, Mt. Rose, Incline, Boreal Ridge, and of course the original Squaw Valley.

One of Poulsen's major contributions was maintaining the integrity of Squaw Valley's natural beauty. He carried on a successful though extremely costly battle to keep the valley meadow from being turned into an asphalt parking lot for the 1960 Olympics in Squaw Valley.

Of the eight Poulsen children, four have been members of the U.S. National Team. Eric and Sandra both competed in the 1972 Olympics in Sapporo. Lance was the first Can-Am winner in 1971.

Wayne Poulsen was elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1980.



Information submitted by Bill Southworth to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame