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Bill Rinaldo

Born: 1911 Died: 2003

Submitted by John Hamiltorn (AMI – Eastern Bureau)

There are few individuals in skisport who have contributed so much from a lifetime spent in so many aspects of the industry as Ben Rinaldo. From his first leadership position as an award-winning National Ski Patrol Leader, to the presidency of the U.S. Ski Writers Association, he contributed his expertise and energies to the sport.

In 1950, Mr. Rinaldo entered organized skiing by joining the NSP at Southern California's Table Mountain Ski Area. The next year he was appointed Acting Patrol Leader, and in 1952 was appointed full Patrol Leader. An indication of his future leadership abilities were the awards his patrol took. Four times it won the championship patrol in the Far West once earning 1st and 2nd place the same year. Mr. Rinaldo was awarded nine merit stars for special services, including one for life-saving. He retired from duty in 1965. His original parka today is on display at the Western Ski Hall of Fame at Boreal Ridge.

While still leading the patrol, he became public relations and promotions director at Table Mountain and contributed to the growth of the "new" winter sport in Southern California.

Within his background he turned to ski writing for a chain of newspapers in the San Fernando Valley. This initiated his desire to communicate his observations about skiing via mass-media.

Mr. Rinaldo acquired a growing knowledge of the roles public relations and promotions played in skiing, and upon retiring from the Ski Patrol in the mid-1960s, was one of the first to see how the sport could benefit from the involvement of large companies. He was selected by Old Crow Whiskey to create a program to take to ski areas in the West. "The Broken Leg" promotion was a preview of corporate involvements to spring up in skiing across the country. This recreation skier-event earned money, the profits of which were turned over to the NPS System. Based on Mr. Rinaldo's successes, Paul Masson Wines retained him to create and promote a recreation skier promotion for their products. The "Barrel Stave Races" were born. He traveled to ski areas from Alaska to New Mexico. Learning about skiers and the ski industry throughout the West, he wrote about his experiences.

By 1968, his ski writing had expanded and he joined the Ski Writers Association of Southern California. In 1970, he was appointed a delegate to the U.S. Ski Writers' National Convention at Jackson Hole, Wyoming. His organizational abilities and parliamentary expertise were quickly recognized by the president and board of directors. He was asked to re-write the associations constitution. He was then elected 2nd V.P. and in 1973 1st V.P. and in 1975 became the president.

It was during this period that he acquired part-ownership of the *Southwest Skiers* – a monthly newspaper devoted to the sport in Southern California. Later, he became a majority stockholder, changed the name to *The Skier*, started publishing by-monthly and increased circulation by going state-wide.

The National Ski Hall of Fame became a major interest of Ben Rinaldo. In 1979 he was made a member of the Selection Committee. While in this capacity, he came to know those who had contributed their time and money to the skisport. He saw their contributions to the growth of the industry, and he deeply involved himself. He undertook a major fund event for the Hall of Fame in Los Angeles. Twenty-six Hall of Famers from all over the Western U.S. participated in honoring Andrea Meade Lawrence and Gretchen Fraser. Lowell Thomas came as guest speaker. Otto Lang was master of ceremonies.

In 1976, Mr. Rinaldo was asked by the ABC Radio Network to bring his expertise as a ski reporter to their coverage of the Innsbruck Winter Olympic Games. His interviews with ski racers, coaches and officials were broadcast on over 1500 affiliates of ABC.

In 1981, he became active again on an executive level of ski writing associations by being elected to the presidency of the Southern California Association.

Ben Rinaldo traveled throughout North America, New Zealand and Russia to the ski areas of the world. He viewed skiing from a position enjoyed by few.

Ben Rinaldo was elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1985.

