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Robert Parker

Born: 1922

Information taken from a short biography submitted by Otto Lang and endorsed by President Gerald Ford

Robert Parker's crowning achievement was as a co-founder of the ski museum at Vail. Its purpose, to collect memorabilia and paraphernalia of bygone days, literature and photographs pertaining to the phenomenal growth in popularity of the sport, not only in his home state but also in all of America.

Robert Parker was born in Evanston, Illinois, in 1922, growing up at his family's home in Massachusetts. Introduced to skiing at an early age, he was active in both alpine and jumping.

Entering St. Lawrence University at Canton, New York, provided an unexpected lucky break. The most personable Otto Schniebs was coaching the school ski team. Parker competed in both the alpine and nordic venues "with plenty of gusto but little finesse."

Shortly after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, he volunteered to join the army as a ski trooper and thus became a member of the 10th Mountain

Division as a part of the 87th Regiment. Participating in combat action during the final phases of WWII in northern Italy, he was decorated with the Bronze Star with Oak Leaf Clusters. After the war ended, he enrolled at the University of Washington in Seattle to finish his college education.

Coincidentally, he also became the president of the "Husky Winter Sports Club" with priority given to developing recreational skiing. His path for the future was set from this point on. Skiing would become his life's vocation.

After a stint as a climbing guide during the summer months at Mt. Rainier and in Wyoming, he moved to Aspen, Colorado, where he joined the local Ski Patrol. This was the first bona fide certified professional ski patrol in America. With his peers, he pioneered methods in avalanche control and improved ski patrol rescue procedures. He also took time out to get married and more or less spent his honeymoon at Grenoble, France. Aside from studying the French language, he also won a few prestigious races and made a host of friends. Furthermore, he passed the demanding French National Alpine School Instructors Exam, in Chamonix.

A position with the postwar American Forces stationed in Austria, as a civilian educational advisor, kept Parker busy from 1951 to 1955. It also gave him the opportunity to win the U.S. Forces in Austria championships several times.

The end to his racing career came when he took a bad fall, resulting in a neck injury with a cracked vertebrae.

Back again in the USA, he became editor of *Skiing Magazine*, building it into a sleek four-color showcase. With this public forum at his disposal, he concentrated on promoting lift safety regulations and legislation. In cooperation with Willy Schaeffler, he and Bill Lash publicized successfully the efforts of the Professional Ski Instructors of America in establishing a unified method of teaching.

On the horizon beckoned a unique opportunity for the always adventurous and farsighted Robert Parker. Vail in Colorado – a new dream resort – was in the making. He joined forces with Pete Seibert (Hall of Famer 1983) the founder and driving force behind this development. They coined the slogan: Vail, Colorado – Ski Country U.S.A. The rest is history. Vail was here to stay.

Parker became vice-president of the corporation and its marketing director, a position at which he excelled with novel ideas to attract skiers from every walk of life. His innovative programs for developing skiers and racers (International Team Races, World Cup Competitions, Legends of Skiing Race, Gerald Ford Celebrity Cup, etc.) are simply too numerous to list but they all showed remarkable results.

After helping with base area planning, and obtaining the essential U.S. Forest Service permit for Beaver Creek, adjacent to Vail, Parker returned to Vail as vice-president, operations. Just prior to retirement in 1985, he conceived of and led a U.S. Ambassadors ski consulting mission to mainland China.

Robert Parker was elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1985.