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Marilyn Shaw McMahon

Born: 1924 Died: 1989

Information submitted in a nomination letter to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame by Allen H. Adler

On that March day in 1940, a fifteen year old high school youngster stormed out of Stowe, Vermont and capped a meteoric rise by winning the distaff side of the Harriman Cup and the Women's National Combined Championships. Marilyn Shaw was the only girl who did not fall in the downhill.

Marilyn Shaw McMahon was one of Stowe, Vermont's wunderkinder, the skiing Shaw sisters, Marilyn, Barbara, and Ann, plus brother Gale, Jr. They were heralded far and wide. Charles Edward Crane devoted a full chapter to them in his book *Winter In Vermont*.

Marilyn's mother, an avid skier, taught her the fundamentals. Her skills were further improved by Sepp Ruschp on his arrival in Stowe, in 1936. Stowe hosted the National Championships in April 1938. Marilyn, at 13 years, finished 11th and so impressed the captain of the U.S. Women's Team, Betty Woolsey, that she was asked

to train with the team the following year out west. In 1939, at 14, Marilyn placed second to Clarita Heath in the Far West Kandahar. Against other team members at Badger Pass, she again finished second. The National Championships and Olympic tryouts were held at Mt. Hood and Marilyn placed 4th in slalom and was placed on the Olympic Team. World War II did in those Olympics. After coaching from Friedl Pfeifer, she led the U.S. Team against Canada at Mt. Tremblant. She also won both downhill and slalom at Lake Placid in the Kate Smith Trophy races.

In 1940, at Sun Valley, Marilyn now 15 helped lead the East to victory over the West with the entire U.S. Team in competition. Then, On March 22-23, 1940, when Dick Durrance made legend by running the steilhang straight to win both the Harriman Cup and the National Championships, Marilyn Shaw was doing the same on the distaff side. Marilyn Shaw and Dick Durrance, that day, out-skied the best we had, skiers whose names and exploits today adorn the walls of the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame.

Marilyn captured Stowe's Sugar Slalom that same year. Then, in 1941, she won both the Vermont and New Hampshire Slalom Championships, following which she captured the Lake Placid SnoBirds championship and, again, the Kate Smith Trophy. The nationals were held, in 1941, at Aspen. Marilyn Shaw came away with the National Slalom Championship against a field which included, among others, Nancy Reynolds, Gretchen Fraser (Olympic gold and silver medals), and Virginia Guernsey. W.C. (Bill) Heinz devoted a full article to her in *Colliers*, then a prestigious national magazine. When Sonia Henie filmed *Sun Valley Serenade*, Marilyn doubled for her in several of the ski sequences. She also appeared in the color film *Ski Tree*. In 1942, she again added the Vermont and New Hampshire Slalom Championships to her trophy case and made victory lane again in the U.S. versus Canada series at Lake Placid.

In June 1942, Marilyn Shaw reached a crossroad. She graduated as an "A" student and salutatorian, despite her skiing absences, from Stowe High School and chose education over further top-flight skiing competition. She attended Wellesley and, in January 1944, at 19, she married Lt. Edward R. McMahon, U.S. Air Force.

Marilyn Shaw McMahon had been "A" rated on the U.S. Team from 1939-43. Marilyn and American skiing passed through a happy adolescence together and, for a few years, there was no better woman skier on our national scene. She was a peer among peers and clearly earned her place in the world of skiing.

Marilyn Shaw McMahon was elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1986.