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Ernie Blake

Born: 1913 Died: 1989

“There are a select number of people who deserve the distinction of being called “a living legend.” Ernie Blake, the founder and present major domo of “Taos Ski Valley,” is among these. . .and rightfully so.” — Otto Lang, from 1986 nomination letter to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame.

Born in Frankfurt, Germany, in 1913, Ernie Blake was schooled in Switzerland. He had dual German-Swiss citizenship. His father was a successful German Industrialist with business connection in the United States, and his mother was a Swiss National.

Ernie competed in alpine skiing and jumping competition and excelled in ice hockey becoming the school captain in ice hockey, field hockey, and cricket. He came to the United States from Switzerland after serving three stints in the Swiss Air Force (service is mandatory for Swiss citizens) ending in 1938.

He taught skiing in connection with the ski trains when Saks Fifth Avenue ran trains to North Creek, New York, on weekends and sold ski clothing and equipment during the week, racing when he had the opportunity.

When the United States entered World War II, Ernie enlisted in the 87th Mountain Infantry, but never got to Camp Hale. Because of his European background and versatility in languages, he volunteered for special duty in military intelligence. Subsequently, he went overseas as a 2nd lieutenant to serve with British Intelligence for three months and then in a mobile field intelligence unit with George Patton’s 3rd U.S. Army, advancing into Germany. Here he witnessed the final dissolution of Hitler’s Third Reich and was used by the army as a weapons’ specialist and interrogator of some of the highest ranking members of Hitler’s staff.

After the war, Ernie and his wife moved to Santa Fe, New Mexico, to run the Santa Fe Basin Ski Area. While there he was constantly traveling over the southern Rocky Mountains in his Cessna 170 searching for that “perfect spot” to create his own ski area. He found that spot and founded Taos Ski Valley in Taos, New Mexico. Taos Ski Valley is a first-class area drawing people from the New Mexico, Texas, Arizona, and California area as well as many from the Midwest, Eastern, and Southern parts of the country.

Keeping racing trim, he entered and won some trophies placing 2nd in the National Veterans’ Giant Slalom in 1954 and winning this race in 1955. Added to these victories was the prestigious Parsen Derby at Davos in 1956.

Ernie Blake was elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1987.



Ernie Blake, Taos Ski Valley – Taos Meadows

