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Klaus Obermeyer

Born: 1919

As a ski instructor in Aspen, Colorado, Klaus Obermeyer realized that the skiing equipment was inadequate. He then began designing high quality skiwear at affordable prices.

Klaus Obermeyer was born in Oberstaufen, Germany, in 1919. Klaus's father was an artist, and his mother ran a retail textile business which helped support her husband's work as a painter. Hailing from a small Alpine village in Bavaria along the Swiss-Austrian border, Obermeyer's passion for skiing was evident from a very early age. The young ski enthusiast fashioned his first homemade runners from a wooden citrus crate at age three.

Klaus became an apprentice at the Maybach Motorworks at age 16 and studied aeronautical engineering at night in Munich. He was trained as an aeronautical engineer. He worked for the Dornier Aircraft Company in the 1930s but became disillusioned with the Nazi regime.

Obermeyer immigrated to the United States in 1947, and came to Sun Valley. Here he met Warren Miller and traveled with him, selling Bavarian neckties and shoestrings from the trunk of Miller's car.

Settling in Aspen, Colorado, he became a ski instructor. Noticing that many of his students would take a few

lessons and drop out, Klaus realized that the equipment was unsatisfactory. The jackets were too cold, the boots hurt their feet, and the sun burned their skin and hurt their eyes. Skiing was not fun! Obermeyer was paid by the lesson, so when a student did not come, he did not get paid. So he turned to designing about a dozen ski industry firsts, including the quilted parka, goose down parka, dual constructed boots, high altitude suntan lotion, turtleneck sweaters, mirrored sunglasses, nylon windshirt, flow inner boot, and ski jeans. He was the first manufacturer to design a clothing line using micro fiber outer materials.

After 12 years of teaching in Aspen, Klaus found his business interests flourishing, and felt he must spend more time with his clothing business. He contracted with manufacturers in Europe to make products to his specification. This was the founding of Sport Obermeyer in Aspen which is probably the only company of its size that is located in a mountain community. On any given day, you could find Klaus skiing or riding on the chairlift with visitors so he could talk to them about what they like and need to wear. Klaus believes, you should never say its too cold, or too windy or too steep. You should embrace it all and love it as it is. That's important. It makes you very capable and very strong in life.

Obermeyer credits much of his success to his philosophy of "Skiing is a celebration of life." If skiing is a celebration of life, then the celebrants must be comfortable to enjoy it.

Klaus Obermeyer was elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1997.

