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Emile Allais

Born: 1912

Emile Allais has left his mark on the ski industry as a skier, designer, and coach.

Emile Allais was born February 25, 1912, in the high mountain region of the French Alps in the village of Megève. His parents owned a small bakery there. Nearby Chamonix, is where the first Winter Olympics were held and is also the birthplace of the F.I.S. Growing up in this area, where organized French skiing had its roots, was instrumental in Emile becoming the most renowned skier of his time.

During World War I, Emile's father was killed in combat. After the war, his mother remarried and the family bought a small hotel, Le Beusite, where Emile learned the family business.

By the age of 17, in 1929, Emile had spent several winters skiing in the mountains working for his uncle, Hilaire Morand, who was a guide for ski tours. Emile's job was to pack in supplies for the skiers. After he left this job to work full time in the family hotel, Emile entered his first ski race – a cross-country race. In 1931, at age 19, he entered his first alpine race.

In 1933, he met Anton Seelos of Austria, the first "great" skier, who was by then a professional. Emile studied and took notes on Seelos' technique and



developed the first, true parallel ski system. Emile took the system to the 1936 Olympics where he won the bronze medal in the alpine combined.

In 1937, Emile and fellow Frenchmen, Georges Blanchon and Paul Gignoux, published a book on the "French Method," *Ski Francais*. It was the first book to explain and show through clever description and photographs how to ski the parallel method. Allais went to the F.I.S. World Championships at Chamonix, France, and proved the theory by winning gold medals in the downhill and slalom.

Emile coached the Canadian National Team in 1948 and the U.S. Olympic Ski Team in 1952. He inspired confidence in his team, allowing them to excel. Emile helped the 1952 U.S. Men's Team to rise from last place in international racing to a 5th place in downhill by Bill Beck and a 6th place in giant slalom by Brooks Dodge.

In all his years of developing ski resorts, trails, and coaching, Emile was incredibly inventive. He seemed to perform miracles at places like Val Cartier in Quebec; Squaw Valley in California; Portillo in Chile; and Courchevel, La Plagne, and Flaine in France. He also consulted at U.S. resorts such as Telluride in Colorado.

In 1984, Emile was presented with the first Legends of Skiing Award from *Ski Magazine*. It was in France, however, that Emile Allais was most recognized for his outstanding ski racing, original teaching methods, and as a top designer of new resorts. Finally at the age of 91, in Flaine, France, Emile acquired his own ski shop – the one he had always dreamed of.

Emile Allais was elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1999.