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John Henry Auran

Born: 1927

Taken from a nomination letter to U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame: sponsors – Dinah Witchel, Wolfgang Lert, John Fry, Doug Pfeiffer, Otto Lang, Max Dercum, Joe Powers, Tom Corcoran, Cal Conniff; proposed by Morten Lund

John Henry Auran's passionate pursuit of his profession produced an extraordinary body of work over the years characterized by his thoroughness. He consistently gave time and energy to his writing – far beyond the call of duty.



John Henry Auran entered ski journalism in 1959 as an editor of *Ski*, our first national ski magazine. In 1965, he became general editor of *Skiing*, the second national ski magazine. He wrote the authoritative *America's Ski Book*, an encyclopedic survey of the sport. During his career, John held to the highest standards in his chosen profession, helping the growing sport to publicize itself.

He was born in Aschaffenburg, Germany. Both of his parents were skiers. By the time John was four, he was skiing with his father on the closest slope in town, an unplowed street that plunged down a steep hill. Here he learned to ski well, even mastering parallel turns, rarely seen in those days.

In 1938, John's father, an officer in the German Army in World War I, was incarcerated in the Dachau Concentration Camp by the Hitler regime. Luckily, the whole family survived. John escaped by being whisked away that year to a school in England but was not able to rejoin his parents until 1944 in the United States. Once here, John spent four years at the University of Washington in Seattle as a journalism major, frequently skiing the snows of the Pacific Northwest Cascades.

He graduated in 1951 and, five years later, became city editor of the *Anchorage Daily News* in Alaska, then became managing editor of *The Valley News* in Lebanon, New Hampshire. In 1959, Bill Eldred, who had been successful in founding *Ski* as the first long-lived national ski publication, hired John as his managing editor. John maintained *Ski's* leadership by instituting regular resort coverage and equipment evaluation. From *Ski's* Hanover, New Hampshire, office, John edited most of the text in each issue. He notably encourage some of the sport's best journalists to write their first articles and, in general, took *Ski* a giant step forward at a time when the fledgling sport was in need of a national journal with the high professional polish which John supplied throughout the magazine.

In 1961, *Ski* was bought by Universal Publishing and Distributing in New York where *Ski Life* was merged into it. John was named general editor under Marty Luray and became the magazine's all-around, indispensable staffer, able to plug any gap, take any assignment, and edit any text piece. He put his signature on the *Ski Life* section, soliciting and shaping short, sharply-worded, entertaining pieces, creating a department copied by almost every ski periodical since then.

John's enthusiastic and exemplary persistence in his vocation over years of journalistic endeavor produced an extraordinary body of work. Whatever role he took on, John carried it off with style. His story on the overthrow of the wood cross-country ski by the fiberglass pretender at the 1974 F.I.S. nordic championships at Falun, Sweden, is a classic of ski journalism. John was the sole U.S. reporter who was an eye witness at the finish when Bill Koch won the silver at the Innsbruck Olympics, the U.S. team's first cross-country medal.

John never stopped relishing skiing, putting himself into a wide variety of terrain and conditions to instruct readers. He studied and experimented with every evolving technique during the fast-developing "reverse" revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, gaining an understanding reflected in many of the hundreds of articles he wrote during his career. In 1970, he published his second book, *Skiing is a Family Sport*, and in 1975, *The Ski Better Book*, both excellent in their explanation of increasingly sophisticated modern ski techniques.

John gave to his work time and energy far beyond the call of duty and he still does, even though somewhat incapacitated by multiple sclerosis. His historical perspective remains unmatched, distilled from a length of service only a handful of U.S. ski journalists have ever equaled. His diligence in building a record of the sport year by year was recognized in his selection for the 1993 International Skiing History's Lifetime Achievement Award in Ski Journalism.

John Henry Auran was elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1999.