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Michael Strauss

Born: 1912

Information submitted in a nomination letter to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame
– Sponsor: Carol T. Hoffman, President, Lake Placid Ski Club

Michael Strauss was a member of the “New York Times” sports staff for 54 years – and its ski editor for 25 winters. He attended St. John’s University and is a graduate of its law school. As the “Times” ski specialist from 1954 through 1979, he wrote more ski stories – by far – than any other writer for a major American newspaper – about 1,600 of them.

Michael Strauss was co-founder of the Eastern Ski Writers’ Association and its president for two years. He also was a regular contributor to *Skier Magazine* and was the author of *Ski Areas USA*, a full sized book published by the *New York Times* covering every ski area in the United States.

A ski article containing 3,500 words was published in December 1991. It was based on the origin of snowmaking and its impact on the ski industry. It was the lead story in *Elks Magazine*, a national publication with a circulation of 1.46 million.

Due to Strauss’ information and research done by New York’s Historical Society, a large plaque was placed adjacent to the well-known Concord Hotel in Kiamesha Lake, New York, in December 1991. It commemorated the first successful continuous use of snowmaking for skiing on its 40th anniversary.

Mike’s stories in the *New York Times* – in both its sports section and travel section – covered every facet of skiing including alpine and nordic competitions all over America, NCAA tournaments, five Winter Olympics, and recreational ski happenings. He sent stories from the sites of the events.

Strauss wrote about ski areas from Maine to California. He had a five-minute nightly ski talk for many years on Radio Station WQXR, a 50,000-watt New York outlet heard from Quebec City to Ohio. He broadcast from wherever his travels took him – sometimes from telephone booths near highways.

He wrote from recreational ski areas in Montana, Wyoming, Washington, Oregon, California, Idaho, New Mexico, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, and all ski areas in the northeast. He also wrote from British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, and Quebec. Geography and travel were never an obstacle.

One winter, he even went to Mount Aleyska in Alaska for the first U.S. alpine championships held in Alaska. There, he saw the great American alpine racer, Bud Werner, for the last time. Werner was killed a few weeks later in a snow slide in Europe. Before leaving for overseas, Bud told Strauss that he had agreed to become the ski school director at Jackson Hole and that when he returned, he wanted Mike to have the exclusive story for his paper.

Strauss was known for a quarter of a century by just about every important ski figure in America. His friends included Lowell Thomas, Willie Schaeffler, Bob Beattie, Al Merrill, Henry Talbert, Walter Praeger, Jean Claude Killy, Bud Werner, Nancy Greene, Chick Igaya, Art Devlin, Billy Kidd, the three Olympic skiing Cochrans, and the dedicated Roland Palmedo, a pioneer in skiing who helped develop the National Ski Patrol.

Strauss covered the Winter Olympics at Squaw Valley, California; Grenoble, France; Innsbruck, Austria; and Lake Placid, New York. At Grenoble, his opening Olympic story in the *Times* ran more than three full columns. In 1988, Mike flew to Calgary, Canada, for the *Palm Beach Daily News*. He sent three long stories on the Olympics there. He renewed many friendships with coaches, former racers and ski officials – maybe for the last time.

Asked through the years why he never became a fine skier himself, Strauss had a ready answer: “I never found time to do much skiing. By the time I finished my interviews, wrote my stories and went into town to send them by Western Union to make my paper’s deadlines, the lifts stopped running.”

Strauss is in several ski halls of fame and is very proud to be the only sports journalist in Lake Placid’s Hall of Fame. Under his photo in its Olympic Arena is the inscription: “Strauss, among his many other contributions to skiing, provided much of the inspiration for Lake Placid to bid and to be selected as the home of the 1980 Winter Olympics.”

Michael Strauss was elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 2001.



Michael Strauss at Waterville Valley, NH, around 1970