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**Georgene Bihlman**  
Born: 1925



*Georgene Bihlman teaching skiing on the plastic hill at Bakersfield College, CA (1970-91). Georgene created this ski hill.*

Information from a nomination letter to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame by Don G. Simpson

*Over the past 50 years Georgene Bihlman has devoted her life to the sport of skiing as a competitor and teacher in a manner that is both unique and inspirational. She has overcome crippling injuries and near fatal illnesses to rise to the top as a masters racer while at the same time introducing thousands of young students to the sport of skiing.*

Georgene Bihlman was a member of the Stanford University ski team where she completed a physical education degree. Upon graduation she joined the faculty at Bakersfield College and remained there until her retirement in 1991.

She began her ski racing career in 1948 at the Shirley Meadows Ski Area (600 vertical feet with two rope tows) on Greenhorn Mountain approximately 40 miles from Bakersfield, California. In 1949, Georgene entered the downhill at Yosemite, California, in a Class "B" race, winning the race by such a large margin that she was immediately upgraded to Class "A."

Between 1950 and 1959, Georgene won over 200 races in Far West Ski Association Competition. In 1959, she was selected to attend the Olympic tryouts for women's alpine events as a representative of the Far West Ski Association. Unfortunately, she was involved as a passenger in an automobile accident on her way to Mammoth to join the team. The accident resulted in very serious injuries, which ended her Olympic hopes but not her racing career. Since that time she has been actively engaged in veteran, masters, and open racing.

Georgene became a PSIA Certified Ski Instructor in 1963 and in addition to all her other activities, taught skiing on a part time basis at the June Lake Ski area in California.

In 1971, she was given the award as the "Outstanding Veteran" by the Far West Ski Association. This award included both men and women skiers.

In 1975, the Alpine Ski Club of Los Angeles created a junior race in her honor named the Bihlman Cup, which was subsequently moved to Mammoth and continues today.

In 1979, she was inducted into the Kern County, California Bob Elias Hall of Fame, a hall of fame for athletes from Kern County and the surrounding area who have distinguished themselves locally, nationally, and internationally. Honored Members include Frank Gifford, All American and All pro Football Player and Dennis Ralston, Wimbledon Doubles Tennis Champion and Davis Cup member and coach.

Also in 1980, at the age of 55, she won the "Super 40 World Cup" called the "Coupe De Monde for Women Over 40" which consisted of 15 races in Europe and the United States. She took 1<sup>st</sup> place in all 15 garnering a total of more than 1,300 points. Only 800 were needed to win the cup.

Every year since its inception in 1980, she has been named to the USSA Masters National Team.

In 1993, she won the "Top Skier" award at the Mahre Training Center at Keystone, Colorado.

In 1998, she was selected to receive the North American Ski Journalists Association "Outstanding Competitor's Award" for skiers who have distinguished themselves in amateur and/or professional competition. Others who have been so honored include Phil Mahre, Cindy Nelson, Billy Kidd, Diana Golden, and Julie Parisien. She is the oldest skier to have received this award.

On the way to this extraordinary record of achievement, Georgene experienced two significant battles with cancer. The first occurred in 1975 when she was diagnosed with stomach and colon cancer. The second came in 1990 when she faced a reoccurrence of her cancer. Both times she was back teaching and racing in less than a year.

Georgene has won more than 800 trophies and awards in all parts of the world. Approximately 85% of those medals are gold. This includes 19 combined national titles and 15 international medals. This record was accomplished while holding a full-time teaching position.

Georgene Bihlman was elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 2002.