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## Alexander Cushing

Born: 1913

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Information submitted in a nomination letter to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame – Sponsor: Bob Roberts, California Ski Industry Association

*Alexander Cushing is the only ski area founder to grace the cover of TIME magazine. He built Squaw Valley in 1949, attracted the 1960 Winter Olympic Games to his mountain, and popularized skiing at Lake Tahoe. Visionary, stubborn, inventive, artistic, aristocratic, combative, and charming are but a few of the adjectives to describe Alex Cushing.*

Born in 1913, the grandson of an affluent Boston tea merchant, and son of well known painter Howard G. Cushing, Alex was educated at Groton and completed Harvard in three years. Following his graduation from Harvard Law School, he went on to practice law in Washington, D.C., as a special assistant to the Attorney General in the U.S. Department of Justice. His stint included an appearance before the Supreme Court. Returning to his home in New York, Alex joined the Wall Street firm of Davis, Polk and Wardell until the outbreak of World War II.

His chance meeting with airline pilot Wayne Poulsen, who had bought the key sites in the valley, refocused Alex from life as a socially well-placed New York attorney to the rather different milieu of leading a high-mountain, high-concept ski resort development. Squaw Valley USA opened to the public on Thanksgiving Day, 1949, with a small lodge, a rope tow, and the largest double chairlift in the world. Alex's talent at building bigger and better advanced with the years.

His imagination was always in high gear. In 1954, what began as an advertising gimmick soon snowballed into a wild ambition. No matter that Squaw Valley had but one ski lift and one small lodge. The mountain terrain was magnificent and the promise unlimited. To the astonishment of all, Alec's charm and diplomacy, along with the state of California's million-dollar guarantee, carried the day. Alex steered Squaw Valley through its huge and necessary expansion of terrain. Millions watched daily television coverage of the 1960 Winter Games as well as the introduction of computers and the housing of all the athletes under one roof, all for the first time. It was a significant boost in visibility that signaled that American skiing had begun to verge on the level expected of European resorts.

In 1963, Alex built Squaw Valley's first gondola and in 1969 installed North America's largest aerial cable car, both technical marvels. By 1985, the resort had constructed several state-of-the-art, high speed, detachable quad chairlifts. Alex's drive never wavered. In 1998, Squaw Valley installed North America's first and only Funitel, a revolutionary transportation system. The lone chairlift in the remote Sierra valley in 1949 had bloomed into a great and glittering resort by the end of the 1990s.

In the spring of 2000 Intrawest broke ground for the resort's new pedestrian village, changing the complexion of Squaw Valley, ushering in still another new era. Alex Cushing's pioneering, toughness, and imagination had by then continuously raised the bar in the sport, shaping the American concept of the ski resort through more than a half century.

Alexander Cushing was elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 2003.



*Alexander Cushing with his wife Nancy*