

#343

## David R.C. "Darcy" Brown

Born: 1913



*David R.C. Brown is a true patriarch of Colorado skiing. He played a pivotal role in the development of Aspen as a major destination ski resort earning a reputation for being one of the best professional ski area managers.*

Born in 1913, Darcy Brown was the son of a very successful silver mining investor and developer. His father, the legendary David Robinson Crocker Brown, played a key role in the birth of Aspen. A self made millionaire he was able to diversify his investments and business activities so that when the silver boom came to an end his fortune was safely protected. This enabled Darcy to attend prestigious private schools and Yale University where he graduated in 1935. He began his career in the oil industry but joined the navy during World War Two. On his return he settled in Carbondale, to run the family's cattle ranch, married and with Ruth raised five children.

In 1946 a fledgling company, the Aspen Ski Corporation, began to build chairlifts on Aspen Mountain. Darcy was an original investor. An avid skier from the age of

23, he claims he was tired of walking up his favorite slopes and so decided to support the project. His role was significant as he arranged the leases on the thousands of acres required for the project that were under the patented claims held by his family.

By 1957 the company was sputtering with a mere 25 employees. Darcy came on board as full time General Manager and President. Under his direction over the next 22 years the Aspen Ski Corporation grew to become a powerhouse in the ski industry. It was the first ski area to receive over a million skier visits annually. It grew to 1200 employees. It also became the first to control several ski areas under one management.

Darcy first bought the Buttermilk ski area with its predominance of beginner and intermediate terrain. He then worked with Bill Janss to develop Snowmass from scratch, thus providing a variety of ski experiences to Aspen's customers. Further purchases included the long neglected Breckenridge and later Mont Tremblant in Quebec and a share of Blackcomb in British Columbia.

Darcy Brown exercised a conservative management approach, plowing back profits to invest further in the skiing side of business.

Passionate about the sport, he skied until he was 90, he made it a habit to be on the slopes everyday to chat with customers and watch how things were going. He ran a tight ship and his tenure was not without controversy but he also developed an intensely loyal following. According to one of his employees, Sue Smedstad, "D.R.C. was the kind of person who made you want to do your best."

His efforts were not confined to the Aspen Ski Corporation. He was one of the founders of the National Ski Areas Association and served as its second President in 1965. Community work included a high profile position on the Colorado Federal Reserve Bank board, the Colorado state senate and assisting whenever he could with the Carbondale Board of Education.

Darcy Brown played a substantial role in influencing the development of the entire U.S. winter resort industry. He build a nation wide reputation of being on the highest level of ski resort presidents, a stalwart, highly skilled executive who ran one of the biggest operations in the ski business.

David R.C. "Darcy" Brown was elected to the National Ski Hall of Fame in 2005.