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Dave McCoy

Born: 1915

Born on August 24, 1915, in Los Angeles, California, Dave McCoy spent the first five years of his life in the coastal town of EI Segundo. Now, almost seventy years later, Dave has become an icon of the Eastern Sierra. His name is a living legend, an exceptionally nice guy who is also an acclaimed businessman, athlete, coach and philanthropist.

Dave's business fame stems from his grassroots method of developing Mammoth Mountain into a world-famous ski area. His passion for skiing drove his business decisions. During 1935-36, his first

winter in the Eastern Sierra, Dave and his friends built a portable rope tow, quite possibly the first rope tow ever used in the region. By 1937, he had secured a job as a hydrographer for the DWP, but he spent his free time skiing, helping local ski clubs with their rope tows and building tows of his own which he ran mostly on the northern slopes of Mammoth Mountain.

In 1941, Dave asked his new wife, Roma Carriere, to collect fifty cents per skier for a day of riding their rope tow – reason being, the newlyweds did not have any money to buy food. After the war, Dave welcomed home veterans with two permanent rope tows he had built on McGee Mountain and a 1946 Memorial Day race off the top of Mammoth using five tandem portables. By 1948, he had installed two “temporary tows in a permanent location” on Mammoth. He received a Forest Service permit to build a chairlift on Mammoth by default because no other investors had made a bid on the 1953 prospectus. Consensus was that Mammoth Mountain was too high, too windy, too remote, too dangerous, and had too odd of a shape.

With six children and a wife to feed, Dave gave up his hydrographic job with the DWP and focused his energy on building Mammoth Mountain Ski Area. It took grit work, mechanical creativity and a little bit of magic, but Dave and his small crew of devoted workers opened Chair One right on schedule, Thanksgiving of 1955. For the next half a century, guided by his continued passion for skiing, Dave reinvested his profits to enhance the mountain for better skier service, eventually building twenty-seven chairlifts.

Being a ski area operator complimented Dave's athleticism and competitive spirit, characteristics that had surfaced at a young age. In 1935, he declined four football scholarships to pursue his dream of living in the Eastern Sierra. In April 1942, competing in the California State Championships at Sugar Bowl, he shattered his leg into pieces. Refusing to accept the doctor's recommendation for amputation, Dave struggled through a long and tedious recovery. Eventually he made his way back to the racecourse, winning the title of California State Slalom Champion in 1949. He continued to ski race through his seventies, walking away with several Master's Championship trophies. At the age of 88, he still can be seen taking twenty-mile mountain bike rides and spending hours racing his motorcycle up and down Eastern Sierra dirt roads.

As one of the best ski racers in the Eastern Sierra, Dave fell into the role of ski coach to local skiers. His positive attitude and sensitivity to the individual proved successful. He guided Charlotte Zumstein to national skiing fame in the forties, Jill Kimmont and Linda Meyers in the fifties. By the mid sixties, skiers from all over the country flocked to join his program. Nineteen racers, including his own children (Penny McCoy won a bronze medal in the 1966 World Championships and his son, Dennis McCoy, was one of the top downhillers in the world from 1966 to 1972), advanced to international levels of competition. For several years, almost the entire United States National Women's Ski Team consisted of Mammoth girls. One of his racers, Jean Saubert, who won two medals in the 1964 Olympics later said, “Dave was by far the best coach I ever had.”

Dave McCoy was elected to the U.S. National Ski hall of Fame in 1967.

Dave McCoy received the following skiing awards:

- 1999 National Ski Areas Association Lifetime Achievement Award
- 1994 US Ski Association John Clair Award for Outstanding Support of the US Ski Team 1990 Ski Business Hall of Fame Award
- 1989 Jimmie Heuga Center Recognition Award for Outstanding Contribution in Re- animating the Physically Challenged
- 1988 Charley Proctor Award for Continued Improvement in Skiing Experience and Commitment to young skiers
- 1988 Ski Writers Association of Southern California Newsmaker Award for Dedication to the Spirit and Sport of Skiing
- 1986 City of Los Angeles Commendation for High Caliber of Recreational Activity Offered to the Citizens of Los Angeles
- 1986 Far West Ski Association Tommi Tyndall Award for Outstanding Ski Area 1978 US Ski Writers Association Golden Quill Award
- 1968 Served on the President's Coalition for the Great Outdoors

