



#57

## Julius P. Blegen

Born: 1890 Died: 1942

*Julius P. Blegen helped organize the Central United States Ski Association. He served as its president for three years and its secretary for the next four years. Blegen was also the treasurer of the U.S. National Ski Association from 1937 to 1942. He was an excellent athlete, and he was the N.S.A. Cross-Country Champion in 1911 and 1912, and was a respected jumping style judge.*

Julius P. Blegen was born in Norway and grew up near Oslo. He competed in the prestigious Holmenkollen events as a youth, before immigrating to the United States. After settling in the Minneapolis area, he promoted skiing and helped design and build hills. He worked for the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Department and also wrote for ski publications.

Blegen was the national cross-country champion in 1911 and 1912. Although he qualified for the first United States Olympic Ski Team which competed at Chamonix, France, in 1924, his work prevented him from joining the team. He was the head coach of the U.S. Olympic Ski Team for the 1932 Olympics at Lake Placid, New York.

Blegen helped organize the Central United States Ski Association, serving as its president for the first three years and its secretary for the next four years. He was on the Selection Committee for the 1932 and 1936 U.S. Olympic Ski Teams and on the Committee for International Competition, in 1940. Blegen also served on the Ski Jumping Board for the F.I.S.

When the Nazis invaded Norway, Julius became active in the Norwegian War Relief. After a visit to Camp Little Norway in Toronto, Canada, he and a committee of eight returned to form a Camp Little Norway Association in Minneapolis, with chapters in Chicago, New York, and other large cities. The facility trained Norwegian Nationals to become fighter pilots during World War II.

Blegen was an excellent athlete who participated in nordic and alpine events, served as an early member of the National Ski Patrol, and won world renown as a ski jumping judge who considered style more important than distance. He was NSA Treasurer from 1937 through 1942.

A robust, friendly man, "Uncle Yoolius" – as he was known to many – was a tireless worker in anything he undertook, whether it was fundraising for the Norwegian War Relief or for the NSA. An excellent speaker, he was sought after repeatedly to deliver the keynote address at various ski functions. Audiences enjoyed his humor, easy-going manner, and lighthearted delivery, which invariably conveyed an important message.

In 1945, the Central U.S. Ski Association presented the NSA (now U.S. Ski and Snowboard Association) with the Julius Blegen award. This trophy, which is given annually to the USSA member who has contributed outstanding service to the sport of skiing during the year, has become the Association's most prestigious award. Those honored read like a "who's who" of skiing. Among the recipients are Roger Langley, Art Barth, Albert Sigal, Harold Grinden, Dr. Amos "Bud" Little, J. Stanley Mullen, Ralph A. "Doc" DesRoches, Merritt Stiles, and Bob Beattie.

Julius Blegen was elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1968.

