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## Richard H. "Dick" Durrance

Born: 1914 Died: 2004

*Richard "Dick" Durrance was an excellent ski jumper, but he was far better known for his skills on the alpine slopes. From 1935 through 1941, he won no fewer than ten national titles in slalom, downhill, and alpine combined.*

Dick Durrance was born on October 23, 1914, in Tarpon Springs, Florida, an unexpected birthplace for a man who eventually would make an indelible mark as a top-notch alpine skier.

Dick was enrolled at the age of six in the New York Military Academy, where he was introduced to snow skiing and soon became proficient at the sport. When he was twelve, his mother took Dick and his brother Jack to Garmisch, Germany, to go to school, learn German, and ski. In 1932, at age 17, he became National Junior Champion – of Germany. By the time the family returned stateside, in the spring of 1933, Dick had established himself among the leading racers in Europe.

Dick worked his way through Dartmouth College, where he further honed his skiing skills under the tutelage of legendary Otto Schniebs and Walter Prager. Between 1935 and 1941, first for the Dartmouth Outing Club and then for the Sun Valley Ski Club in Idaho, he was the dominant male skier in the nation. Among the honors he garnered were the National Downhill Championships in 1937, 1939, and 1940; the National Slalom Championships in 1937, 1939, 1940, and 1941; and the Alpine Combined titles in 1937, 1939, and 1940.

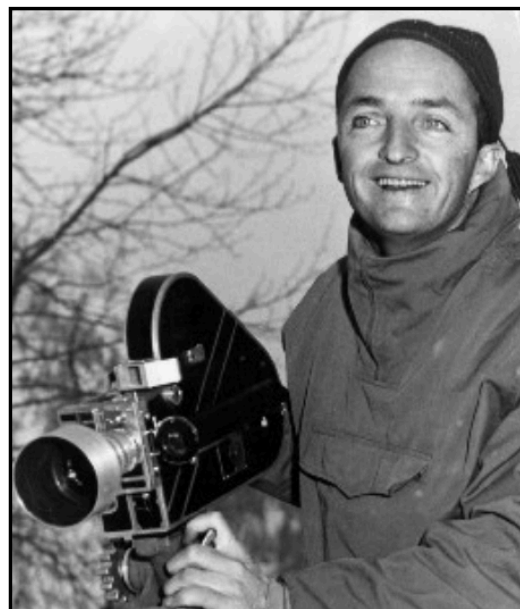
As a member of the 1936 United States Winter Olympic Ski Team, Dick placed 9th in the slalom, 10th in the downhill, and 10th in the alpine combined. He came within an inch of winning the first United States Gold Medal, but a course judge claimed he straddled a pole, and he was penalized 5 seconds. The United States coach did not protest the ruling, so Dick had to accept 9th place.

Although Dick was an excellent ski jumper, his fame lay in his unorthodox style and "devil-may-care" attitude in Alpine racing. Among other things, he became known for this unique "dipsy doodle." He also lent his name to help Minnie Dole publicize the nascent National Ski Patrol. Dick helped layout the first trails in Sun Valley, where he had the distinction of winning the Harriman Cup three times and of retiring it, in 1940. In June of the same year, he married Miggs Jennings, a winning racer in her own right. She and Dick both made the 1940 Olympic team, but never competed because of the war. They spent their first summer as newlyweds in Sun Valley, then helped develop Alta, where they started a lodge, a ski shop, and a ski school simultaneously. In the winter of 1942, Dick helped train 200 paratroopers to ski.

In October 1947, George Berger, head of the Aspen Ski Corporation, invited Dick to come run the Aspen ski area, here he cut trails and also was responsible for bringing the F.I.S. Championships to the area, in 1950. The Durrances have resided in Aspen ever since.

In addition to being a top-ranking skier, Dick also made a name for himself as a photographer and movie producer. He filmed his first ski movie, the classic "Sun Valley Ski Chase," in 1940; it won first prize at the Cannes Film Festival the following year. He made "Snow Carnival," starring Gary Cooper, for Warner Brothers, in 1949; "Norway Nation on Skis," a documentary for the U.S. Information agency, in 1951; and "Olympic Winter," about the Oslo Games, in 1952. All in all, Durrance produced or directed at least fifty movies during his long career.

Dick Durrance was recognized as one of the top four-event skiers the country has ever produced. He was elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1958.



*Photo By Margaret Durrance  
Richard Durrance*



*Dick Durrance receives historic  
first Harriman Cup from Mrs.*