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## Betty Woolsey

Born: 1908 Died: 1997

*Betty Woolsey was virtually fearless and helped lay the groundwork for competition in the future, because the Americans now knew they could compete against the European women.*

Betty Woolsey, a name out of the West, fairly burst on the ski scene in the early 1930s gaining prominence in alpine racing by competing on the first United States Women's F.I.S. Team at Murren, Switzerland, February 22-25, 1935. Living in New Haven, Connecticut, at the time, Betty was a stalwart member of the American squad.

Virtually fearless, Woolsey was the mainstay of the team. The women's course, nearly duplicating that of the men, was the toughest this fledging team of American women had skied, but ski they did! Betty's results in this first F.I.S. race were not spectacular, a 31<sup>st</sup> and last place in the Slalom, a 15<sup>th</sup> place in the particularly difficult Downhill, and a 22<sup>nd</sup> place in the Women's Combined. But Betty Woolsey and the F.I.S. Team had indeed whetted their appetites, knowing that with some practice, they could compete with the European women.

Betty Woolsey represented the United States on the United States Olympic Women's Alpine Team at Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany, in 1936, the first Olympic in which American women participated. She placed 7<sup>th</sup> in the slalom and 14<sup>th</sup> in the downhill. At the 1936 F.I.S. in Innsbruck, Austria, shortly after, Betty won the F.I.S. Downhill qualifying race at St. Anton to become the top American seed on the 1936 F.I.S. Team. She placed tenth in the downhill at this race.

Betty went on to captain the F.I.S. Team in 1937, gaining valuable experience against the European girls, at that time rated the best in the world. Winning the National Downhill and Combined titles in 1939, her competitive career included races all over the United States. She seemed to have "peaked" in 1939, and if the Olympics would have been held in 1940, it was expected that Betty Woolsey could very well have garnered the first Olympic Gold Medal for the United States.

Betty Woolsey served skiing in other ways as well, as the editor of *Ski Illustrated Magazine*, and author of many articles in the *American Ski Annual* and other ski related publications.

It has been stated that Betty Woolsey was to the American women's teams, what Dick Durrance was to the men's teams. A nearly-fearless skier who knew only one speed – all out, and hold nothing back. An ideal leader and teacher who set an example of what true competition really means, under very trying circumstances. Betty, and the handful of pioneering American women skiers laid a firm foundation for the American women's ski teams of the future.

For her outstanding contributions to skiing, Betty Woolsey was elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1969.