

## BERNARD E. "BERNIE" WEICHSEL



*The Israeli Ski Team*

A self-described "ski bum," Weichsel helped launch freestyle; brought international guests to U.S. resorts; invigorated consumer ski shows; and passionately devoted himself to ski history.

You may not know that you are here tonight because of Bernie Weichsel.

As chairman of the U.S. Ski & Snowboard Hall of Fame, it was Bernie's brainchild, and then his drive and determination, that merged this Induction Ceremony with the annual Skiing History Week held at ski resorts around the country each spring. This coupling dramatically expanded the Hall's reach outside its Ishpeming, Mich., home, and the ceremony now attracts upwards of 500 attendees each year.

Born in New York City to German Jewish immigrant parents, Bernie didn't want to follow his dad into the wholesale butcher busi-



ness (you can still see the "Weichsel Meats" sign in New York's now fashionable Meatpacking District). Bernie dreamed of running away to join the circus. Ultimately, he found something even better: He became a lifelong ski bum who directed the first professional freestyle tour; pioneered U.S. resorts' marketing to international guests; energized the country's consumer ski shows; and served passionately with its historical institutions.

After learning to ski at age 4 in the Catskills and organizing a high school ski club at Brooklyn Tech, Bernie soon caught the eye of New York ski show promoter Harry Leonard, as well as the attention of New York City's finest. His promotional campaign—stenciling "Go Go Ski Show" on hundreds of Manhattan sidewalks—impressed Leonard, if not the NYPD.

After spending several years on the ski show circuit, Weichsel signed on in 1974 as the executive director of the first organized professional freestyle circuit, the International Freestyle Skiers Association. The tour drew huge crowds, TV coverage, and corporate sponsors, while creating a livelihood for dozens of ath-



letes. While it didn't last, it was the precursor to today's Olympic freestyle events and even today's hyper-world of freeskiing.

Bernie's most lasting ski business contribution came with his creation in 1979 of SKIUSA, designed to promote domestic resorts to international skiers. The organization marketed U.S. skiing in 14 foreign countries, and attracted millions of visitors for almost two decades. It also gained Bernie personal friendships worldwide, which he still cherishes today. SKIUSA is his proudest professional achievement: Several top U.S. destination resorts now

draw 20 percent of their business internationally.

From 1979 to today, operating BEWI Productions, Inc., Weichsel has fought to keep his consumer ski shows relevant in an ever-evolving environment. He initially re-energized the format by partnering with a large local retailer in each city to host major pre-season sales, and at times was involved with shows in 15 cities. BEWI still runs successful Expos in Denver and Boston, with Bernie living in a colonial-era farmhouse not far from Henry Thoreau's Walden Pond.

That location spotlights Bernie's deep love and commitment to history in general and skiing history in particular. Over the decades, he has been a mover and shaker with the New England Ski Museum, the International Skiing History Association, and as the chairman of the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Hall of Fame from 2009 to 2014. He also truly loves to ski, and this season is likely to reach his goal of 68 ski days, matching his age.

A natural-born promoter, tireless networker and savvy organizer, Bernie has left a positive mark on skiing and snowboarding for nearly five decades—and he's not done yet. ❄️



## **BERNARD E. "BERNIE" WEICHSEL** Career Highlights

Born: June 30, 1948

1965: Works as dishwasher at Trailside Camp near Killington, parlays role into relationship with Harry Leonard and ski show circuit

1970: Takes official "leave of absence" from City College of New York (which he attended after one year at the Colorado School of Mines) to be a ski bum and join the ski show circuit. Never returns

1974-1976: Serves as executive director of International Freestyle Skiers Association (IFSA)

1979-1996: Founder and president of SKIUSA, industry's first effort to market to and successfully attract international skiers to U.S. resorts

1969-Present: Introduces thousands of under-privileged youths to the sport through urban winter festivals and donations as a board member with Boston's Youth Enrichment Services (YES)

1989-Present: Founder and president of BEWI Productions, producing ski shows around the country and today in Boston and Denver

2009-2014: Chairman of the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Hall of Fame

2012: Receives "Spirit of Skiing" award from the New England Ski Museum



In Honor of Bernie Weichsel

### **CONGRATULATIONS FROM**

Ken & Brenda Fritz • Sy Levenstein •

Stephen Saudek & Janice Durham •

Eva & Irwin Hausman (In honor of our cousin, "Mr. Ski")