



# MICHAEL BERRY



Working tirelessly behind the scenes, Michael Berry shaped and strengthened the National Ski Areas Association; and led resorts to evolve and attract new customers.

On Michael Berry's first day in the ski industry, he was handed the keys to a four-wheel drive pickup truck, a chain saw, and a few boxes of dynamite. It was 1961, he was 14 years old, and the location was Hunter Mountain in the Catskills. Cutting trails back then for the Slutzky family was no problem, Berry recalls, and lest you think this was some reckless enterprise, he quickly adds, "My supervisor was 15!"

The ski business has changed dramatically since those early days, and Berry's unwavering leadership as the president of the

National Ski Areas Association since 1993 played a major role in its professionalism, growth and ultimate success. Berry assumed the NSAA helm after the dissolution of the United Ski Industries Association (a failed experiment to merge SIA and NSAA). After rebuilding the organization from scratch, and basing it in Lakewood, Colo., Berry turned his attention to forward-looking demographic research to help resorts understand their market and create strategies. The result was the NSAA Model for Growth, which recognized the challenges of the aging Baby Boomer, the sport's critical customer base. The project focused on new ways to attract and keep customers, including Learn to Ski and Snowboard Month and Bring a Friend program. In the 15 years previous to Berry's tenure, resorts drew an average of 50 million skiers annually. In the past decade, the average is 57 million, a 14-percent increase.

In a ski world dominated by outsized personalities seeking the spotlight, Berry operated as the consummate behind-the-scenes consensus builder, seeking "to be, but not be seen." (The proof is in

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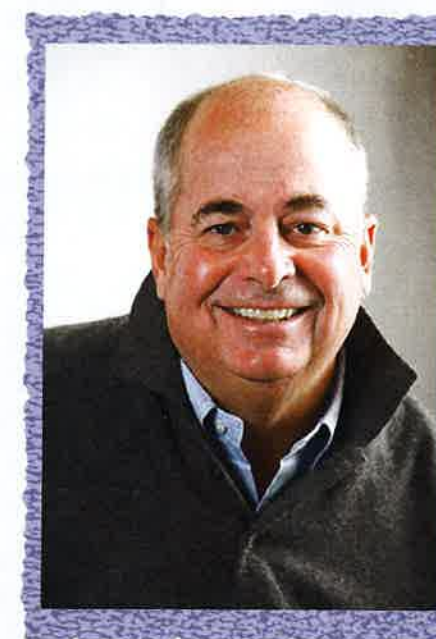
the photos, or rather lack thereof: images are tough to come by for Michael Berry, even on the ubiquitous Internet.) Berry consistently deflected credit for success to others, even discouraging colleagues' efforts to nominate him to the Ski Hall of Fame—simply because he thought it would be a distraction to his job and to his constituency, the ski resort operators.

After his industry inauguration at Hunter Mountain, Berry earned a degree from Franconia College in New Hampshire and became a certified ski instructor. As Hunter Mountain was pioneering early snowmaking efforts, Berry became one of industry's foremost experts. This impressed the big resorts out West, which were just entering the artificial snow world,

and led to a job as Vail's first professional snowmaker, and on to management posts at Keystone and Sun Valley.

When he was lured away from his role as president at Kirkwood, Berry planned to give the NSAA job five years to "reorganize, reinvigorate and re-establish" the association, before returning to a resort management position. By then, Berry had proved so invaluable in his NSAA role that the resorts couldn't afford to lose him (and may have conspired together to not offer him a Plum Resort job, although this has never been proven).

Berry plans to retire at the end of 2017, after having spent more than 50 years shaping the ski industry. ❁



## **MICHAEL BERRY** Career Highlights

Born: June 30, 1947

1968: Certified as ski instructor by the U.S. Eastern Amateur Ski Association

1980: Hired as vice president of Kirkwood after serving in management positions at Keystone, Sun Valley and Vail

1985: Named president of Kirkwood

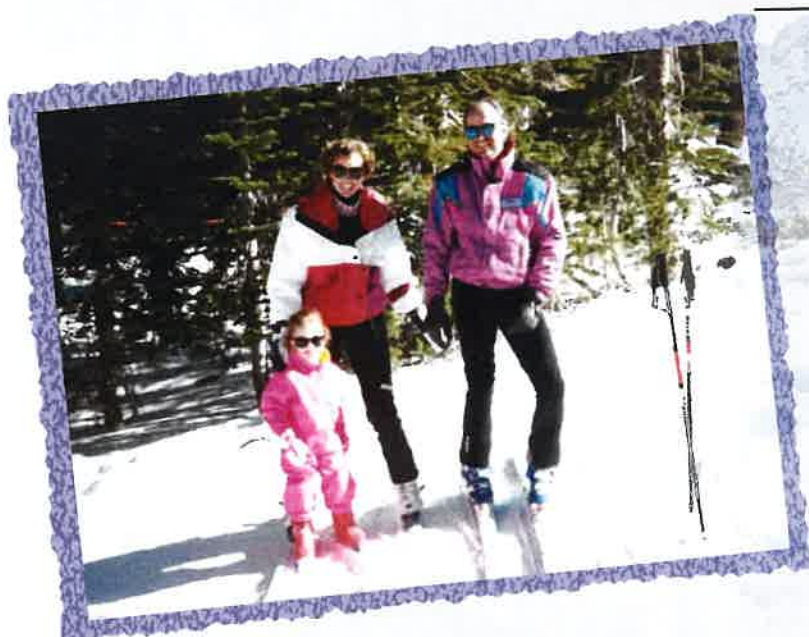
1988: Elected chairman of the board of the California Ski Areas Association

1993: Named president of the National Ski Areas Association

1998: Named to the board of the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Association

2005: Honored with the Julius Blgen Award from the USSA for outstanding service

2014: Named the Carson White Golden Quill Award winner from the North American Snowsports Journalists Association for outstanding contributions



**NATIONAL  
SKI AREAS  
ASSOCIATION**



**N S A A**

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