

MITCH CUBBERLEY

Mitch Cubberley was the inventor and manufacturer of the famous Cubco bindings that dominated the North American ski market through the 1950's and 1960's. He was the first to successfully develop a multi-angle release binding system, which significantly reduced leg and ankle injuries for recreational skiers.

Cubberley was born in Kansas City, MO on June 12, 1914. He received a degree in mechanical engineering and took up skiing in the 1930's. Employed for a firm that designed water fluoridation and sewage disposal systems he developed the Cubco binding in his spare time until its success and potential led him to devote himself full time to the product.

The development of a releasable safety type of binding for skis had challenged inventors and engineers for years. While the ski bindings of the 1930's were successful in firmly bringing the boot and ski together to provide the control needed for alpine skiing, they also meant that just about every skier could count on at least one broken leg during their career.

Hjalmar Hvam had introduced, in 1939, his "Saf-Ski" binding which released the toe of the boot under stress. It was an improvement but not the complete answer. Cubberley's first innovation came out in 1952 and eliminated the heel cable from the bindings with separate heel and toe sections. His patented toe section would release in all directions. He attached steel plates to the toes and heels of the ski boot answering the problem caused by boot technology of that day where the leather style boots would flex and become wet with a day's use on the ski runs and foil binding technology.

In 1955 he created the first step in heel and 5 years later designed a ski brake, that eliminated the need for leather straps attached to the skis, which in themselves were a cause of injuries.

Working with engineer/inventor Gordon Lipe, he created the first anti-friction device for ski boots, the Cubco Skidder, thus completely solving the problems associated with releasable bindings. The Cubco, while not preferred by racers, was the binding of choice for rental shops across North America.

Cubberley and Cubco faced many competitors, especially from Earl Miller of the Miller Ski Company in the US and Marker and others from Europe. In 1973, The American College of Orthopedic surgeons, recognized the research of Jasper Shealy which found that Cubco bindings, in spite of being the most popular among the most accident prone group, were the safest bindings on the market. He marketed his binding to the skier who had to be at work on Monday morning.

The arrival of the plastic boot meant the beginning of the end for Cubco. Mitch Cubberley passed away in 1977 of cancer and the company he founded was folded up two years later.

