

EVERETT KIRCHER

Everett Kircher was named by SKI magazine in 2000 to be one of the “Top 100 Most Influential Skiers of All Time.” He was a passionate skier along with being a mechanical genius, innovator, entrepreneur, and management master who built, from a not quite 500 foot mountain in Michigan, the largest family owned and operated four season resort company in North America.

He left college after his freshman year to join his father in the family’s machine shop. Eventually he became the youngest accredited Studebaker dealer in the country and was positioned to participate in the post-war boom in the automobile industry.

In the 1930’s his passion for skiing was showcased in the creation of one of the first rope tow serviced hills north of Detroit, which he lit with headlights of his truck. He enjoyed his travels to Sun Valley and Michigan’s Ostego Ski Club to hone his skiing skills resulting in his being the sixth person to win the Diamond Sun Award for skiing from the top of Mount Baldy to the bottom within the allotted time. Besides enjoying Sun Valley’s many amenities Kircher studied the resort’s practices and brought those ideas back to Michigan.

In 1947 he and some ski friends purchased 40 acres of land near Boyne Falls. Boyne Mountain opened in 1948 and became the incubator of his growing ski empire.

Kircher installed the Midwest’s first chairlift by purchasing for \$5,000 the original single chair that had made Sun Valley famous. He quickly expanded that into a double chair, again a first for the Midwest, and then was inspired to build the first triple and quadruple chairlifts in the 1960’s. In 1992, Kircher installed the first high speed six place chair, or “Six Pack”, again a historic first in America.

His ingenuity spread to snowmaking, with his patented Boyne and Highlander fan guns. They were the most energy efficient and marginal temperature snowmakers in the world and, while under his patent, were used at the Olympic Games in Sarajevo and Calgary. Grooming advances were also at the heart of his dream to create perfect snow conditions. Kircher developed the first snow tiller grooming technology in the 1960’s. SKI magazine noted in 1967 that the slopes at Boyne Mountain were “manicured like the gardens at Versailles.”

His being the first to hire Stein Eriksen to direct his ski school in the 1950’s showcased his promotional skills and vision to grow the sport through teaching. Eriksen’s great personality did much to enhance the popularity of Midwest skiing and put Boyne Mountain on the national map. After Erickson left for the west, Kircher brought in another 1952 Olympic champion, Othmar Schneider who grew Boyne’s ski schools for 17 years, putting out tens of thousands of “uniquely Boyne style skiers” into the national market place.

Riding on the ski boom of the 1950’s and 60’s and a savvy investment in a chairlift in Gatlinburg, Tennessee Everett Kircher believed in the importance of geographic diversity. In 1976 Kircher’s Midwest operation spread westward to buy Big Sky Resort in Montana from broadcaster, Chet Huntley. In 1986 he bought Brighton in Utah, Crystal Mountain in Washington in 1996 and Cypress Mountain in British Columbia. Today Boyne Resorts stretches from coast to coast, becoming the third largest ski company in North America. Cypress Mountain will be the host venue for the freestyle and snowboarding events during the 2010 Olympic Games in Vancouver, Canada.

In many ways, Everett Kircher was the Horatio Alger of Midwest skiing.

With his passing in 2002 a legacy was left that is unique in the ski business. He was truly an innovator and a visionary.

