

2020 HOF Inductees

Barbara Alley Simon

In a career spanning parts of five decades, Alley Simon cast a spotlight on ski fashion in thousands of live shows, video, and print; her legacy lives on in a museum collection.

Dubbed the First Lady of Ski Fashion, Barbara Alley Simon used virtually every available medium in the 1970s, '80s and '90s to inspire consumers and the trade, influencing what skiers wore on the slopes and exposing millions of potential skiers to the sport. While working primarily in print, TV and video, she produced some 2,000 live and lively fashion shows over her career, at venues ranging from the Ski Hall of Fame to the annual SIA trade show in Las Vegas.

With a background in clothing, textiles, and modeling—and nurturing a love of the mountains—Alley Simon's life changed in the 1960s when she went to work for Karl Plattner as a weekend instructor at Hunter Mountain. In 1968, she met ski show promoter Jerry Simon (a 2014 Hall of Fame inductee) at a Hunter pro race; they were married Christmas 1970 at the summit of Jackson Hole. Simon put Barbara to work at the ski shows clicking through a fashion slide show projected on a six-foot-high screen. When the slides failed to draw much attention, Jerry gave her a microphone and the crowds soon flocked to her booth. The ski fashion show concept was born, and Barbara's lifetime career—and her many contributions to the sport—was launched.

Barbara Jane Alley was born in Trenton, but grew up in North Carolina, where she attended University of North Carolina-Greensboro (and later, the prestigious Parsons School of Design in New York City). She was drawn to the mountains, working in Jackson Hole and climbing the Grand Teton one summer, then summiting the Matterhorn on a “five-dollar-a-day” trip to Europe with her sister. She learned to ski at Snow Valley, Vt., and “got the bug,” which she shared with her students during her later weekends teaching at Hunter.

With her new husband Jerry providing ideas and entrée into the ski world, Barbara sold, produced, and narrated ski fashion shows from 1968-1995, involving up to 100 outfit

changes. Her 1972 presentation opened the first SIA show held in Las Vegas, and in the early 1990s she turned heads by hiring Vegas dancers.

After Barbara narrated a fashion show for the 1974 Lange Cup in Sun Valley, *Skiing* publisher Harry Kaiser hired her as the magazine's fashion editor, where she also provided the copious apparel coverage for *Skiing Trade News*. She followed that with the same role at *Snow Country*, where John Fry hired her to lead the title's fashion coverage from 1988 to 1992. While there, she created the *Snow Country* Skiwear Design Awards.

While industry professionals and avid skiers already knew and respected Barbara's work, it was her "What's New in Skiwear" 16-city TV tour that reached the masses. The PR man for Jerry's International Ski Film & Video Festival also handled TV talk show bookings. Jerry proposed that a segment of choreographed, glamorous dancers in ski apparel might provide an appealing contrast to diet book authors. Producers loved the idea. Barbara produced and narrated these television productions for 11 years, starting in 1980. These TV segments not only showcased the clothes, but also favorably exposed millions of mostly female viewers — who would plan family vacations — to the growing sport of skiing. She twice appeared on the "Today" show and the "Merv Griffin Show," and on Oprah's early show four times. She also produced ski-action videos to promote the show appearances, hitting the slopes with the likes of Cindy Nelson and Doug Coombs.

In the male-dominated ski era during which she worked, Alley Simon not only had to do all her jobs (print, video, live) but also fight internally to promote the importance of clothing to the sport's growth, a segment that has always been under-valued despite its power to persuade. Her first *Skiing* shoot used mannequins as models, "but we got real people after that," she laughs.

"No one, absolutely no one, has done more to position the importance of winter clothing to all snow sports aficionados than Barbara Alley Simon," says Bernie Weichsel, who ran the BEWI consumer shows for decades and is a 2016 HOF inductee.

Around 2010, seeking to put an exclamation mark on her over four decades in ski fashion, Alley Simon began poring over her extensive archives, from fashions to videos, to curate an exhibit. Alley Simon had assembled about 50 signature accessorized outfits by the time the 2014 Skiing History Week rolled around in Park City, where she narrated a live fashion show (and accepted the HOF induction on behalf of her late husband). The official

opening of the Barbara Alley Simon Collection at the Alf Engen Museum in Utah came later that same year. It has since grown to 75 outfits and accessories, including a scarf collection, sunglasses, skis, gloves, and boots. She led a rousing open to 2019's Skiing History Week in Park City with another vintage fashion show culled from the museum exhibit.

Besides an endless effort to promote winter apparel and explore the mountains, Alley Simon parachuted and once even piloted a plane. She now lives in Las Vegas.

Career Accomplishments

Born: June 15, 1936 (Trenton, N.J.)

1960s: Joins Karl Plattner's staff as a weekend instructor at Hunter Mountain.

1968: Meets ski show promoter Jerry Simon at a Hunter pro race; they marry in 1970.

1970: Narrates first SIA multi-brand fashion show.

1974-80: Serves as fashion editor for *Skiing* and *Skiing Trade News*.

1980-90: At age 44, launches "What's New in Skiwear" TV talk show tours while performing at BEWI ski shows on the weekends.

1988-92: Serves as fashion editor for *Snow Country*, launches the magazine's Skiwear Design Awards at the suggestion of husband Jerry.

1990: Balances four gigs with TV tour, ski shows, *Snow Country*, and SIA fashion show.

1991: Becomes first woman to receive the BEWI Award for contributions to the sport.

2010: Begins work on museum exhibit that will open in 2014.

2019: Earns Far West Ski Association's Snowsports Builder Award and U.S. Ski and Snowboard Hall of Fame's first-ever "Women in Industry Award."