

GARY BLACK (Sun Valley, Idaho)

A lifelong adventurer and newspaperman, Gary Black's stewardship of Ski Racing International magazine for over three decades beginning in 1984, played a pivotal role in the growth of the sport of ski racing internationally. He gained global respect for his insightful sport coverage, focus on athletes and the active role he played with the International Ski Federation (FIS), using his editorial voice to push for positive change in the sport.

Black was born in 1941 into a newspaper family, following his father's footsteps at the Baltimore Sun as a journalist. He left to begin a financial career in San Francisco, but later returned to a business role at the Sun's parent company. As a young man he traveled the world, hopscotching from country to country on many continents, even serving a stint on the ski patrol at Portillo, Chile. He would often regale ski friends with his travel adventures while sitting in ski town bars from Aspen to St. Moritz.

His passion for skiing came from his mother, Catherine, an avid outdoorswoman. He never took to racing himself, but spent weekends on the slopes teaching skiing at Maryland's Oregon Ridge in college. During his business period in San Francisco, he was a patroller at what is now Palisades Tahoe.

He brought that love of skiing to his own family, taking the kids every weekend to Wisp where he was easily the strongest skier on the ski patrol. During school holidays, the family packed the car for drives up to Sugarbush in Vermont, which would later become his home.

In 1984, he followed his love for ski racing, acquiring Ski Racing International. His passion for the sport, combined with his vast knowledge on media publishing, helped enrich the magazine which had begun in 1968. In its heyday, Ski Racing published 20 editions each year including the annual Redbook, a yearbook on the sport.

Growing up a journalist, Black saw the need to establish global credibility for his new acquisition. He focused on building relationships with the global sport community, forging alliances with World Cup founder Serge Lang and the Association of International Ski Journalists (AIJS). He established a formidable presence with Ski Racing at the 1985 FIS Alpine Ski World Championships in Bormio, Italy to build the brand of his newly-acquired magazine.

He quickly made an impact with both the depth of coverage and the active voice he used through Ski Racing International to influence change in the sport. He established his own footprint in the sport through an active role on International Ski Federation committees and within the then U.S. Ski Association.

What most drove him, though, were the people in the sport – from athletes and coaches to team officials to governing leaders. An affable and friendly character with a distinctive laugh that often echoed through press centers, he became a friend to all, wielding strong influence through the words in his *Black Diamonds* column in Ski Racing – loved or loathed by many, but respected by all.

He served a key role as a trustee of the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Team Foundation, as well as a member of the FIS PR and Mass Media Committee for over 20 years. After leaving Vermont, he made Sun Valley his home, serving on the board of the Sun Valley Ski Education foundation and was instrumental in the initiation of the Sun Valley Ski Academy. But the affiliation with which he took special pride was his more than 50 years as a member of Austria's Ski Club Arlberg.

U.S. Ski & Snowboard recognized Black in 2003 with its John Clair Award for his support of the U.S. Ski Team. In 2005 he was acknowledged with the Russell Wilder Award for contribution to youth. In 2008, he received the Julius Blegen Award, the highest honor for service to sport. In 2017 he received lifetime achievement awards from the AIJS international journalists' association and the International Skiing History Association. In 2007 he received the International Ski Federation's FIS Journalist Award.

He made his final appearance in a World Cup press room in October, 2016 at Sölden, Austria, passing in February, 2017 at his adopted home of Sun Valley after a short illness.