

PORTER, MIKE (597 words)

In a career that began in the 1960s and spanned over a half-century, Mike Porter left an indelible mark as one of the world's most influential ski educators. He served the PSIA National Alpine Team as a member and, later, its longest-standing head coach. Porter was also one of the founders of the American Teaching System. Through his long-time leadership, he became a key mover in bringing global recognition to the PSIA-AASI, overseeing much of the U.S. content presented at the International Congress of Ski Instructors (Interski). With his in-depth research on ski racing, he also served a pivotal role in uniting coaches and instructors.

He grew up in Berkeley, Calif., in a household that didn't ski – until mom discovered the sport by chance at Badger Pass. Just ten days later, the family took a ski vacation. And it stuck. As a teen, he picked up jobs at a Berkeley ski shop working for gear. In college, he started instructing at Homewood in Lake Tahoe, working his way up to Jorg Dutschke's ski school at Alpine Meadows.

It was a time when ski schools were fiercely competitive, featuring different genres of technique with each foreign instructor. Porter sought to bridge the gap, seeking common ways for those teaching techniques to come together.

In 1975, he was named to the PSIA Interski Team that demonstrated at Štrbské Pleso. Porter then led his teammates in lobbying with PSIA to support a national team to carry on its mission annually, not just at Interski every fourth season. A year later, he continued as a member of the PSIA National Alpine Demonstration Team. He went on to serve four terms as head coach from 1980 until 1996.

Much of America's reputation for excellence worldwide in education can be traced back to Porter's leadership role both as head coach and a key member of the PSIA Steering Committee. He was instrumental in visioning and crafting the educational content presented at Interski, held every four years. His content reached instructors nationwide, improving ski instruction at ski schools in large and small resorts and making PSIA-AASI the successful organization it is today.

He has taught skiing literally around the world, from St. Anton in Austria's Arlberg to Mt. Buller in Australia. In America, he served in leadership roles for decades at the Vail/Beaver Creek Ski School, as well as consulting with major resort groups.

He was also a student of racing technique, serving as head coach and program director at Ski Club Vail and working closely with the U.S. Ski Team. His observations greatly influenced how both instructors and racing coaches understood efficient skiing. His influence helped unite U.S. Ski Team and U.S. Ski Association coaches with ski instructors to share expertise. His study of World Cup ski racers gave him a wealth of knowledge in skiing efficiently, which he would then pass on to the instructional world.

Knowing that equipment was a big factor in learning to ski and ride, Porter worked with both resorts and the hard goods industry to drive innovation in equipment and to advance technology to evolving teaching systems.

But for all his work on the technical aspects of teaching, the secret sauce for Porter was his charisma and selfless devotion to the growth of snowsports. He has been called a ski guru with a discerning mind and a Bohemian soul – funny, subtle, accessible, the ultimate coach, and the Papa Bear of PSIA. He brought out the best in all those around him, making the inherently dry topic of education fun, entertaining, and effective.