

New Mexico Ski Hall of Fame

2004



Buzz & Jean Bainbridge



Both active skiers back at home in Minnesota, Buzz and Jean Bainbridge ventured west in 1945. Buzz in his first post-Navy job as western sales representative for the Northland Ski Company. Calling on ski entrepreneur Bob Nordhaus, they fell in love with New Mexico. In the autumn of 1946, Nordhaus hired both of them to manage his Hyde Park and Big Tesuque ski slopes. While living in a depression-era log cabin, the couple supervised the construction of two rope tows, clearing of trails, running both a ski school and ski patrol, providing a simple food service and teaching a novice ski crowd how to navigate the unique dog-leg rope tow at Hyde Park.

Pleased with their success at Santa Fe, Bob Nordhaus hired them to manage his La Madera ski operation, today known as Sandia Peak. At La Madera, the Bainbridges lived in a cabin they built themselves, sledged fuel up to the lifts from the highway and dealt with porcupines occupying their cabin. After a four year Korean War hiatus, they returned to Santa Fe to manage the new Santa Fe Ski Basin. At Santa Fe, the couple initiated many ski marketing programs especially in Texas, showing ski films, hosting fashion shows and creating ski clubs where none had existed before.

After five years at Santa Fe, Buzz designed and built the new Red River Ski Area. At Red River, Jean taught ski classes in an Alaskan style parka that earned her the reputation of a skiing fashion model. In 1959, they moved to Ruidoso to help their friend Kingsbury Pitcher launch the new Sierra Blanca resort.

After several years in Arizona and Colorado, Jean and Buzz returned to Santa Fe as custom home builders. Here Buzz helped to create Ski New Mexico and served a term as State Tourism Director, with Jean excelling as “hostess with the mostest” in both areas. The Bainbridges both had outstanding careers exuding extraordinary energy, creativity and adventure as New Mexico ski pioneers. Buzz passed away in Jan. 2015 at age 93. Jean passed away in Sept. 2017 at age 95.

