

New Mexico Ski Hall of Fame

2007



Kingsbury Pitcher



Kingsbury Pitcher was born in 1919, the grandson of Otto Mears, a Lithuanian immigrant who had made his way to the San Juan Mountains area of southern Colorado and proceeded to build roads and railroads to impossible places in the mountains.

The Pitcher family spent summers in the Silverton area, but attended school in Pasadena because the schools offered a better education. He graduated from Stanford in 1941 where he had been a member of the Stanford Ski Team and the California State Ski Team.

After graduation, Pitch went to Sun Valley where he became the only American instructor in Freidl Pfeiffer's ski school. He joined the Army Air Corps in 1942 as a private and became a training officer at the Air Central Instructors School at Randolph Field. After the war, he returned to Sun Valley for a final year of teaching under Freidl Pfeiffer and Fred Iselin. He moved to Aspen in 1951 and taught skiing there until 1960. During this time, he renewed his acquaintance with Bill Janss who had taught him how to ski race. Janss wanted to develop a ski area and Pitch located and designed the area that would become Snowmass in 1964.

Kingsbury also became acquainted with Hondo Oil Company owner, Robert O. Anderson. Anderson invited Pitch to design

and build a new resort on Sierra Blanca Peak near Ruidoso, New Mexico. The resort was completed in 1962 and opened with the first gondola lift in the US. Anderson was a partner in the Santa Fe Ski Area when Hondo Oil Company was acquired by Atlantic Richfield in 1964. ARCO was not interested in ski areas, so Anderson sold the Santa Fe area to Pitch. Santa Fe Ski Area had been languishing and during the next 20 years, the Pitcher family built it into a successful business. Pitch also used his ski expertise consulting for the Jay Peak area in Vermont, the state of West Virginia, Sun Valley and Big Sky Ski Area in Montana along with the country of Iceland.

Wolf Creek Ski Area in Colorado was in financial trouble in 1978, when Kingsbury was persuaded to buy the area. He sold the Santa Fe Ski Area to the Abruzzo family in 1984, to concentrate on running the Wolf Creek Ski Area.

Kingsbury's family has been active in the ski business with son Davey Pitcher the president at Wolf Creek where new areas have been opened. Kingsbury continued to be the guiding influence as Wolf Creek was emerging as one of the most popular areas in the West.

Kingsbury died at his home in Santa Fe on December 29, 2017. He was 98.