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Thom Weisel among eight chosen for U.S. ski shrine

Financier, athlete has close Sun Valley ties

Express Staff Sep 24, 2017

A star-studded group of eight noted skiing athletes and sport builders have been announced as inductees to the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Hall of Fame's Class of 2017. They will be formally inducted next April in Olympic Valley, Ca., site of the 1960 Olympic Winter Games.

The new inductees include Thom Weisel, 76, of San Francisco, Ca., a passionate fund raiser for the U.S. Ski Team whose work over four decades helped bring home more than 200 Olympic and World Championship medals for this country.

Weisel has long ties to the Sun Valley area, actively supporting the Sun Valley Ski Education Foundation (SVSEF). One of his seven children, 22-year-old Kipling Weisel, is a SVSEF alumni and current member of the U.S. Alpine Ski Team.



Other inductees are freestyle icon "Airborne" Eddie Ferguson, freestyle's somersault king Herman Goellner and legendary cross-country coach Marty Hall.

Joining the class are two of the most accomplished ski mountaineers alive—twin brothers Mike and Steve Marolt—along with the late, 130 miles-per-hour world record holder in speed skiing, Steve McKinney.

Rounding out the Class of 2017 is the motor sport and snowboard pioneer Shaun Palmer. The new inductees bring the total to 435 honored members in the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Hall of Fame.

Squaw Valley Alpine Meadows has been selected as the resort site of the 2018 induction ceremony of the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Hall of Fame and the Snowsport History Celebration.

The Ski and Snowboard Hall of Fame induction will take place at The Resort at Squaw Creek in the Grand Sierra Ballroom April 14, 2018.

The induction will be the culmination of four days of activities at the Village at Squaw Valley during the April 12-15 Snowsport History Celebration which attracts hundreds of skiing history enthusiasts and recreational skiers.

The induction is expected to sell out, with a field of skiing and snowboarding greats. More than 500 are expected to attend the installation of the class of 2017's eight inductees.

The nomination process is open to all, with detailed information available at www.skihall.com.

Here are further details about Weisel and the other inductees:

Thom Weisel enters ski shrine

Weisel, a native of Milwaukee, Wisc., built a passion for skiing in his early days as a rising business star in San Francisco. He earned an economics degree from Stanford University in 1963 and MBA from Harvard Business School in 1966.

He was a pioneer Silicon Valley technology financier starting in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

In 1977, Weisel channeled that passion into becoming one of the key supporters of the newly established U.S. Ski Educational Foundation.

In the years to follow, Weisel provided both financial and leadership support that has touched hundreds and hundreds of Olympic skiers and snowboarders.

As chairman of the Ski Team's Foundation during the pivotal period from 1983-94, his leadership helped to raise tens of millions of dollars to support U.S. Ski and Snowboard Association programs.

In 1988, Weisel played a key role in consolidation of the U.S. Ski Team's Foundation with the then-U.S. Ski Association to create a centralized organization for the management of ski sport in America. His drive, passion and love for athletes kept Weisel intimately involved in the USSA for 35 years. In 1999, Weisel was recognized by the USSA in 1999 with its highest honor, the Julius Blegen Award.

He is considered one the most influential leaders in the more than 100-year history of the USSA.

In 2011, the U.S. Olympic Committee recognized Weisel with its George Steinbrenner Award.

Weisel's impact came not only through personal support but by building a network of supporters from the highest level of American business. He played a role in recruiting over 100 trustees.

The co-chairman of Stifel Financial Co. has also been an active athlete.

Weisel was a five-time national speed skating champion in the 1950s. In 1982, he was a U.S. Masters alpine skiing bronze medalist. Weisel was also three-time world champion in Master's cycling, and a five-time national Masters' cycling champion.

Bill Marolt, former president and CEO of the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Association, said, "Thom Weisel's unwavering passion for athletics has directly benefited our athletes for nearly four decades. His vision, as well as an amazing ability to draw a focus and persevere to achieve a goal, has been a key component in our athletes' ability to become best in the world in their sport."

Olympic alpine skiing champion Phil Mahre said, "Thom Weisel has a passion for the sport of skiing and has always been a huge supporter of the U.S. Ski Team. During my career, every World Cup race that Thom attended, I was victorious.

"I remember him wishing me luck at the 1984 Olympics the night before the slalom in Sarajevo. Referring to Steve and me, he said he'd like a gold and silver medal performance—and it didn't matter who won. Luck was on my side that day."

Other new inductees

Ed Ferguson, Chelan, Wa: Known as "Airborne" Eddie Ferguson, Ferguson helped to create and grow the hotdog freestyle skier movement in the 1970s.

With his national and international camps from 1972-79 he reached over 4,000 students. He captured the World Freestyle Championships in 1973 and later commentated for ABC's Wide World of Sports. He was the youngest PSIA instructor at age 14.

Herman Gollner, Verdi, Nev.: A coach, competitor and inventor, Herman Gollner was best known for performing the world's first double backward somersault in 1965 and the first triple forward somersault in 1967.

In 1968 the aerialist completed the first full somersault with a full twist on skis, the infamous "Moebius Flip." He invented the screw-in hinged alpine pole that greatly reduced race delays in slalom and giant slalom races around the world.

Marty Hall, Durham, NH.: Marty Hall was a major force in bringing U.S. cross-country skiing to the international stage.

He was the first U.S. women's national coach to support a team at FIS competition outside of the U.S. in 1970. Hall played a key role in coaching Bill Koch to America's first (and only) cross-country Olympic medal in 1976.

Hall was also a noted innovator with waxing techniques such as base sanding and applying mohair strips to skis. In 1981 he published "One Stride Ahead: An Expert Guide to Cross Country Skiing."

Michael Marolt, Aspen, Co. and Steven Marolt, Aspen, Co.: Mike and Steve Marolt were referred to by Outside Magazine as "... two of the most accomplished ski mountaineers alive."

Identical twin brothers Mike and Steve Marolt have combined genetic gifts and actuarial efficiency to build an impressive resume of pure-style climbing of ski descents from 5,000-8,000 meters in the world. They have climbed with no supplemental oxygen, porters or altitude drugs.

The brothers represent true pioneers in Himalayan skiing with 13 expeditions in that region alone.

They spent most of their lives climbing and skiing, entirely together, without exception, nearly 50 of the highest and greatest peaks in the world.

Their identical resumes in skiing list multiple first climbs and descents to include the North Ridge of Everest and peaks in Bolivia, Peru and South America. They were the first Americans to ski from an 8,000-meter peak (26,273 feet) in Tibet.

Steve McKinney, Olympic Valley, Ca.: The late Steve McKinney was the dominant speed skier in the world in the 1970's and 80's setting a world ski speed record in 1974 of 117.7 mph.

After breaking his own record several times, McKinney in 1987 skied over 130 mph and was the world speed skiing record holder from 1977-82. He also helped design the Trout Head Helmet and brought other aerodynamic equipment onto the speed skiing scene—leading to dense foam ski boot design.

Shaun Palmer, Lake Tahoe, Ca.: Known as one of the forefathers of extreme sport, Shaun competed in professional snowboarding for almost 20 years.

His prowess in the pipe from 1995-2014 earned him six X-Games gold medals, another gold the 2002 Gravity Games and a berth onto the 2010 Vancouver Olympic snowboardcross team before an injury took him out. At the 2001 ESPY Awards he was named Action Sports Athlete of the Year. Palmer attracted thousands to snowboarding.

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