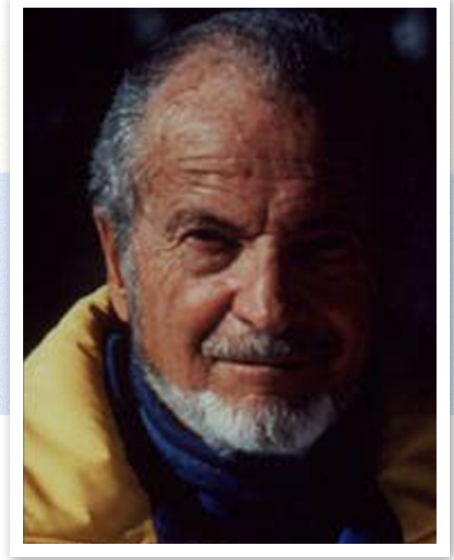


New Mexico Ski Hall of Fame

2003



Ernie Blake



Ernie Blake was born in Frankfort, Germany in 1913 and emigrated with his family to New York City in 1938. Already an avid skier, Ernie worked in the ski department at Saks Fifth Avenue and eventually traveled west with ski-wear pioneer Sepp Lanz. It was Ernie's introduction to the Rocky Mountains that led to his discovery of New Mexico. While flying between the ski areas he was running in Santa Fe and Glenwood Springs, Colorado, Ernie first spotted the snowy surroundings of Wheeler Peak in 1951. An exploratory trip to the Twining area in 1954 with legendary snow ranger Pete Totemoff, convinced Ernie, if no one else, that this was, at last, the place for his destination resort. He moved his family, wife Rhoda and children Mickey, Wendy and Peter, to a trailer in the valley; leased the land and started his ski area in January, 1956.

Ernie began hauling skiers in a snow cat and on a ski-kuli lift that first season, progressing over the next several years through T-bars and Poma lifts until the entire length of Al's Run was lift-served. By 1960, Taos Ski Valley had electricity, telephones, chair lifts and some less intimidating runs. The one thing it never lacked, however, was the buoyant

enthusiasm and charismatic presence of Ernie Blake, who, when answering the phone often identified himself as the janitor of TSV.

After seeing his dream become an internationally recognized reality, Ernie died on January 13, 1989. The following month, it snowed 6 feet in 3 days at Taos and the word was that Ernie had moved from management to snowmaking. He was inducted into the National Ski Hall of Fame in 1995 and is now honored as one of the first inductees to the New Mexico Ski Hall of Fame.

