

New Mexico Ski Hall of Fame

2003



Robert Nordhaus



Robert Nordhaus was a visionary man. Someone who saw great things in ideas. Born in 1909 and raised near downtown Albuquerque, Bob looked at the Sandia Mountains and saw them as his backyard and place for a boy to play. After returning to Albuquerque in 1935 with a law degree from Yale he looked past the dry arroyos and founded the Albuquerque Ski Club, a year before Sun Valley Lodge was built. From his position as president of the ski club, he helped direct the construction of 2 rope tows and in 1939, held New Mexico's first downhill race at the club's ski hill called La Madera. As a member of the 10th Mountain Division during World War II, Bob would fight side by side with some of his fellow ski pioneers. Back in Albuquerque after the war, Bob turned La Madera into a commercial operation, installed the longest T-bar lift in the country and created what was hailed as the first true ski area in the Southwest.

From it sprang other New Mexico skiing legends; Ernie Blake, Buzz Bainbridge and Ben Abruzzo all learned from Bob.

Then there is the Sandia Peak Tramway. More than a vision, the tramway was thought by most to be Bob and Ben's impossible dream. But two years after work began in 1964, the world's longest tramway was completed there in Bob Nordhaus' old backyard. Expansion of what was now called Sandia Peak Ski Area continued as its popularity grew, linked as it was by the Tramway from the front side of the mountain and connected by a double chair lift to the Crest highway side. Bob was active in many civic posts and was honored as a Santa Fe Living Treasure in 2002. Bob skied into his 90s and passed away in 2007 at age 97. His star shined brightly on a lifetime of inspired accomplishment.

