

# Ray Tuthill



Ray Tuthill was the Founder and President of the Blue Mountain Ski Area, located in Palmerton, PA, north of Allentown. It all began when Ray, an avid skier who began skiing in 1974 at a ski area in New York State and continued skiing with his family in the Poconos and out west, dreamed of having a ski area close to home. At that time he was the owner of the Riebe Construction Company and he wanted to create work for his employees during the winter months.

In 1962 Ray and Diane Tuthill bought 50 acres of land on the very top of Blue Mountain, just east of Little Gap. Ten years later they were able to purchase 223 additional acres, which made it possible to construct ski trails from the top to the bottom of the mountain. Studies were made, designs were created, and construction started on December 22, 1977. Little Gap Ski Area opened with a small ski lodge, one chairlift, a T-bar lift, and four trails. Artificial

snowmaking was an essential part of the operation and this was accomplished using portable air compressors.

Ray planned and implemented many improvements to the ski area. In 1985, the lodge at the summit was tripled in size, the Main Street chairlift was installed and Lazy Mile trail was built. In 1988 the "Challenge" expert trail was added, which ran straight down the mountain from top to bottom, and included a 4000-foot long double chairlift. This trail was the first double diamond in the area. To help the ski area project its new size,

terrain, and facilities, the name was changed to Blue Mountain in 1988. Additional land was purchased in 1992 which provided room for new trails and expanded facilities at the foot of the mountain. The Challenge Lift was extended to the valley, giving Blue Mountain the highest vertical drop in Pennsylvania – 1082 feet.

Under Ray's direction, the improvements at Blue Mountain continued. In 1994 a high-speed detachable quad lift was installed, running from the valley to the top of the mountain. A year later a 6000-foot long trail, Paradise, was built for all levels of skiers. A temporary lodge was built in the valley to ease the overcrowding in the summit Lodge and in 1996 snow tubing was introduced.

On President's Day in 1997 snowboarders were finally invited to join the skiers on the mountain and a snowboard Half-Pipe and

Terrain Park were added for the 1998-99 season. In 2003, the long awaited Razors Edge trail was opened for skiing and snowboarding. This double diamond trail is currently one of the most popular trails in the Pocono region. This same year there the Valley Lodge was expanded, which included doubling the size of the rental shop and the cafeteria. Some of the features currently found at Blue Mountain include 130 skiable acres with thirty trails, ten lifts, a half-pipe, computerized snowmaking, two full-service rental shops and four learning centers.

Ray promoted the Blue Mountain Ski Patrol and provided assistance whenever needed, a Blue Mountain tradition that continues. He was the recipient of the Eastern Pennsylvania Region Ski Patrol 'Irv Naylor' Partners-in-Industry Award for 2001-2002 and received a Distinguished Service Award from the National Ski Patrol.

Ray Tuthill passed away in May of 2007.