

# Paul Wick

Paul Wick loved to ski, and he loved everything about skiing. He loved the crisp mountain air, the camaraderie of skiers and the challenge of the slopes. Growing up in Switzerland, Paul, the youngest of fifteen children, became a hut keeper at an early age. During his adolescence he became a hut guide and skier.

The mountains always had a special appeal to Paul, but with hints of war threatening Europe, Paul packed his rucksack, hiked across France, and boarded a ship bound for the United States. The ship landed at Ellis Island. Paul immigrated to eastern Pennsylvania, eventually making his permanent home in Springfield, Delaware County.



As a trained tool and die maker, Paul went to work at Westinghouse. It was there that he met fellow employees who were also interested in the great outdoors and learning to ski. Paul introduced these friends to the sport of skiing. Together they formed the “Buck Ridge Ski Club” in 1946. Skiing jaunts to nearby hills were a regular winter Sunday event. The original group made a rope tow powered by a model A-engine.

Throughout the years Paul accumulated a large collection of skis which he willingly loaned to anyone interested in trying the sport. Paul cultivated a skiing fellowship wherein he provided his friends with equipment and expertise. In 1950, he became an amateur ski instructor.

The first Wick's Ski Shop was opened in 1946, now the oldest continuously owned family ski shop in the United States. It was here that he was really able to share his love and expertise of skiing. The ski season would begin with “dry skiing” on a hill in Paul's backyard. People learned skiing fundamentals on this hill covered with straw. Many local skiers started skiing on that hill.

The shop originally consisted of Paul's enclosed front porch. This served as a retail store, rental, and repair shop. In those days ski edges were installed by hand, piece by piece. Business thrived and “sliding,” as skiing was then called, became a popular winter sport. Paul created a design for a safer binding. Though never marketed, Paul Wick's design helped leading manufacturers construct a binding safer than the old bear trap binding.

The State of Pennsylvania commissioned Paul to layout cross-country trails in eastern Pennsylvania. He was instrumental in constructing the trail that circles Camelback ski area and the trails in various Pennsylvania state parks throughout the region. He was the representative to the Eastern Pennsylvania Ski Council for cross-country skiing, responsible for conducting cross-country trips and providing instruction for cross-country skiing.

In addition to cross-country skiing, Paul sat on the commission for scenic rivers. This commission protected many rivers from pollution and secured the rivers for people to enjoy outdoor recreation for years to come.

In winter Paul skied and raced, in summer he kayaked and swam, and in the fall he hiked. He felt it was important to stay in shape for skiing all year round.

At sixty-five Paul returned to his homeland, because he wanted to climb the Matterhorn, a goal he had set for himself as a youth. Originally the hut guides did not want him to go saying that he was too old, so Paul went to the base camp in the dark, and because there was no light at the camp, he was able to talk a guide into letting him come along. At daybreak the guide was shocked at Paul's chronological age, but was

impressed with his strength and endurance. This same strength and endurance prevailed when the guide slipped and fell and Paul saved his life. Paul never let age get in the way of his dreams.

With his three children involved in the ski shops, Paul was able to race, teach skiing, and lecture at local club meetings. Racing became a passion and Paul continued to win races well into his seventies. When Paul retired from the everyday duties of his shop, he continued to teach skiing fun at the Main Line Night School, worked on designing safer bindings, and shared his love of skiing as a representative to Eastern Pennsylvania. Ski Council.

Paul continued skiing into his early eighties. He was struck with a debilitating stroke, while wind sailing at Marsh Creek State Park. Paul died on Labor Day, 2000 at the age of ninety-two. Forever the adventurer, Paul was a modern ski pioneer, who loved his sports, especially skiing, and willingly shared this love of sports to all