

**Books reviewed in SKIING HERITAGE and ISHA's Annual Awards include the best writing that is done on skiing history.**

**For the first time, we want to make you aware that three of these books can be purchased directly from ISHA:**

**The Story of Modern Skiing by John Fry**

**Portillo: The Spirit of the Andes by Henry Purcell**

**Skiing in Fine Arts: Gunter Witt, Federation Internationale de Ski**

**Read the descriptions of these books and the reviews below. We know that you will be tempted to order one (or more) as gifts, or decide on giving yourself a well-deserved gift!**

**Note that ordering information is provided following descriptions of these extraordinary books.**

**[The Story of Modern Skiing \(John Fry\)](#)**

**[Price: \\$28.95](#)**

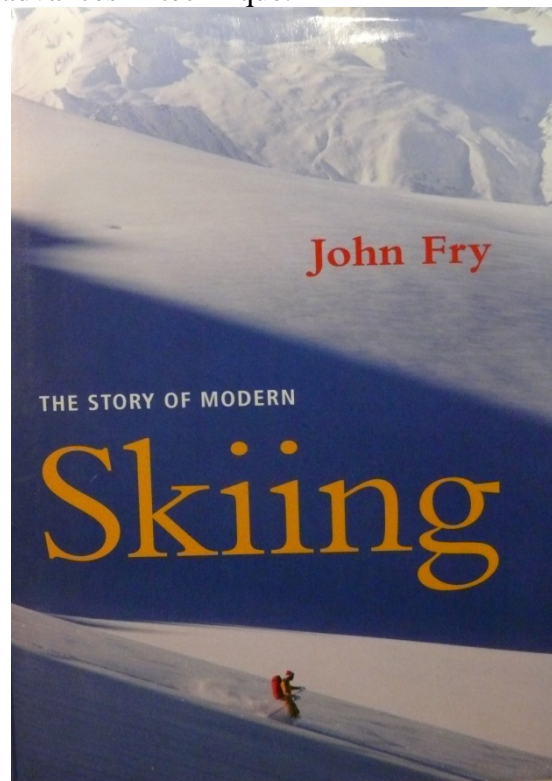
The biggest hole in the ski history library until recently was the lack of a general history of U.S. skiing over the last fifty years. The only general history book that existed to cover the 1990's was John Allen's classic *From Skisport to Skiing*, which stops at 1940.

No one attempted to bridge the gap until John Fry stepped up to the plate and last year hit the ball out of the park with his *Story of Modern Skiing*. It had been a tough challenge, to say the least, for someone like Fry who had never written scholarly history to take on a task of this magnitude – footnotes and all. But the book surpassed expectations of its publisher, University Press of New England. The book was greeted with exceptional acclaim all around the world and sold out its first printing.

It generated a degree of praise so far that can be judged by the rave review of Michael Berry, head of the National Ski Areas Association, who writes of the book that "It does not just set the record straight, it sets the record."

Billy Kidd writes, "Fascinating to read. John Fry put into perspective all aspects of the sport and the business of skiing."

The scope of the book is broad. John defines it in his preface as dealing with “the period after World War II when change came rapidly to the sport of alpine skiing. Especially in the period between 1950 and 1972, many of the sport’s enduring innovations arrived. Metal and fiberglass skis, plastic boots, and lightweight poles opened the way for revolutionary advances in technique.”



“Starting from a 1955 base of only 78 ski areas, over the next ten years the United States and Canada gained 580 new resorts having chairlifts and t-bars. Giant base lodges presaged the arrival of pleasure domes, dramatically different from the dark, dank, low-ceilinged base huts of the 1950’s. The construction of the interstate highway system and the arrival of jet passenger planes gave rapid access to better, bigger, more distant terrain. Visits to U.S. ski areas soared from four or five million per winter to almost forty million. Spending on travel, equipment, and clothing rose above one billion dollars annually.”

The book breathes authenticity. Veteran journalist Charlie Meyers notes that, “As we have found in such examples as Churchill and Bonaparte, histories written by notable participants sound considerably more convincing than those concocted a century later behind ivy walls.”

“John Fry never won a ski race or built a resort. Yet, as an editor, writer, and activist for five decades, he has impacted the sport more profoundly than many of the icons whose names leap from his keyboard. Such perspective allows Fry to grasp the essence of a sport that has changed character rather than a snow bunny switching from baggy pants to stretch. Metamorphosis fairly oozes through the pages of this book - - from skiing chrysalis years of the 1950s to the bright-winged butterfly of the 1970s to a mutant species in a new millennium.”

Under John’s editorial leadership, Ski Magazine covered a broad range of the ski world and has made Ski into a treasure trove for ski historians who took to researching the back issues for their material. A good many of the stories that are published in SKIING HERITAGE today would not have been possible without the resource of

Ski's back issues that covered the sport from every angle, not just new equipment and new resorts but stories written from a human point of view as well. In that sense, Ski is the father of SKIING HERITAGE, as well as the source of much of the finely distilled ski history found in *The Story of Modern Skiing*.

As a veteran skier and front-ranking ski architect Henrik Bull summed it up, "Fry's...thousands of words (in *The Story of Modern Skiing*) brought back hundreds of memories. He has done a fantastic job of covering every aspect of the sport." (Morten Lund, ISHA Annual Awards Summary, 2007, Vail)

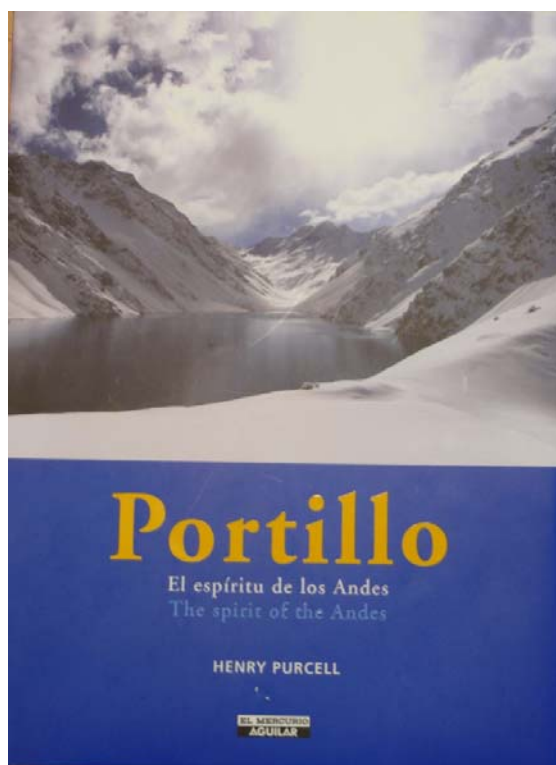
***The Story of Modern Skiing* will be inscribed with a personal message from John Fry!**

**[Portillo: The Spirit of the Andes, Hardcover, 300 pages \(Henry Purcell\)](#)**

**[Price: \\$90.00](#)**

Ski resort history books are typically bought by long-time season pass holders and local residents.

There are few such denizens at Portillo, because it is a stand-alone resort hotel locked in the vastness of the Andes. But the resort's principal owner—and its operator for more than 40 years—Henry Purcell, has produced a coffee-table book that ski aficionados around the world will want to own!



In its pages appear the greatest skiers of the modern sport—Emile Allais, Jean-Claude Killy, and Stein Eriksen, to mention only three. In part, they came to Portillo for the same reason thousands of other skiers do: because if you really love skiing, you can't wait until November to taste snow, and if you want steep chutes, splendid

food, and the closed society of other ski nuts, you come to this lone yellow hotel, which functions somewhat like an ocean liner improbably beached on a high-mountain pass.

The resort at 9,500 feet sits next to a pass that for centuries has enabled travelers and goods to move across the Andean divide between Chile and Argentina. The snow lies deep in August, and avalanches are frequent. Portillo is actually among the western hemisphere's oldest dedicated alpine ski places. The first skiers in 1887 were Norwegian engineers building the trans-Andean railroad. In the 1930s, a small Hotel Portillo accommodated guests. The railroad (no longer in use) served as a lift, affording a 3,000-foot vertical descent.

The present Gran Hotel Portillo opened in 1949. It was government-owned, with a primitive chairlift. Pioneering, charismatic world ski champion Emile Allais was the ski school director. It came to happen that Allais was followed by a bunch of distinguished directors. They included Olympic gold medalists Stein Eriksen, Othmar Schneider, and Pepi Stiegler; Peter Estin and Sigi Grottendorfer from Sugarbush; and in recent years PSIA demonstration team member and technique authority Michael Rogan.

Beginning in the 1950s, European and North American ski teams adopted Portillo as their favorite summer on-snow training camp. Ski and boot designers used it to test new equipment. On the steep *Kilometro Lanzado* run, Americans Dick Dorworth and CB Vaughan in 1963 set a new world speed record of 168 kilometers per hour. Californian Steve McKinney later broke through the 200 kph barrier here.

The government sold Portillo to private investors, led by Dick Aldrich and Bob Purcell with his 26-year-old nephew Henry Purcell as general manager (a graduate of the Cornell School of Hotel Management, he had worked for Hilton). To celebrate, the new owners in 1961 invited the VIPs of North American skiing to come to Portillo. As it happened, the special guests spent their first day in a railroad tunnel closed by avalanche. They included metal ski inventor Howard Head, Mt. Tremblant ski school head Ernie McCulloch, coach Willy Schaeffler, short-ski pioneer Clif Taylor, and *Skiing* publisher Merrill Hastings.

Portillo's peak moment came five years later when it hosted the 1966 FIS World Alpine Skiing Championships, the only such event ever held in the Southern Hemisphere. Because the hotel's rooms were filled with racers, coaches, and officials, and few of the media were interested in covering a winter sport during the summer anyway, Dick Barrymore made a movie of the competition, *The Secret Race*. Meeting in the hotel bar, FIS officials, unofficially led by the dean of European ski writers Serge Lang, formalized the new World Cup of Alpine Skiing. Jean-Claude Killy won two gold medals. The only Austrian gold was won by Erika Schinegger, who was subsequently discovered to be a genetic male. It would be an understatement to say the Championships were an exotic affair!

In the years that have since passed, the action at Portillo has never dimmed. Now, on the monstrous peaks lined with precipitous chutes, the sport of extreme skiing flourishes.

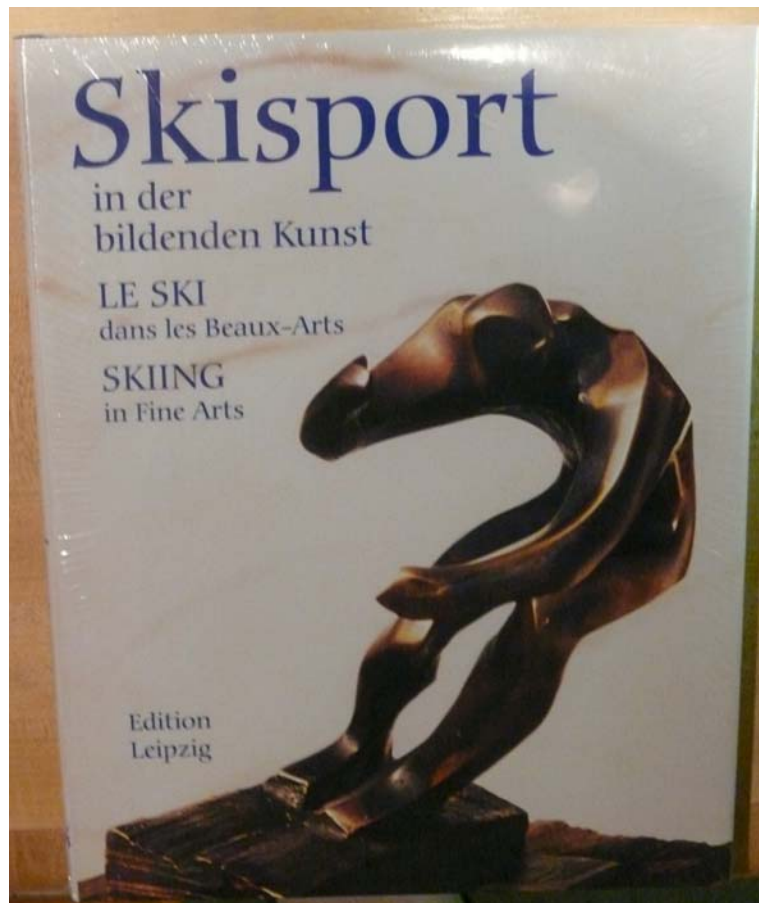
*Portillo: The Spirit of the Andes* is an extravaganza of finely reproduced photographs, not the least interesting being one of him standing alongside Fidel Castro, who visited the resort in 1972. Castro inadvertently left his revolver behind in the dining room. When the *maitre d'*, waving the gun, came rushing out of the hotel to return it to Castro. . .but you have to read the book. It is in Spanish and English, and concludes with a photographic portfolio to dazzle the eyes. (2009, Skiing Heritage review, John Fry)

**Your gift of *Portillo* will be signed by the author!**

*Skiing in Fine Arts (Gunter Witt - Federation Internationale de Ski)*

Price: \$37.50

This beautifully illustrated book has a refreshingly far-reaching selection of art from classic Victorian-era works through modern schools of art and testifies to the imagination and understanding of Gunter Witt who selected the book's art. The quality of reproductions is extraordinary, managing to bring the viewer great subtlety in shading and detail.



For instance, “Skiing Girl from Saetesdal,” dated 1889, is a popular, much-reproduced work but here reveals the girl’s expression of a certain wariness, which makes the painting the masterpiece that it is. Its caption identifies the foreground figure of a woman on skis as having been a work awarded a gold medal at an art competition during the “1912 Stockholm Olympics.” Although there were no such Olympics, the 1912 Stockholm international meet was a Winter Games forerunner, one of the earliest of international winter sports competitions. This evidence of the existence of such an early international exhibition of skiing art is a milepost.

The publication of this book was timed to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the German Ski Association with support from the Federation Internationale de Ski and Fritz Aagnerberger of the Marc Hodler Foundation. The illustrations include sculpture, paintings, even several cartoons. The works are presented in loosely chronological order from the 1880’s, when skiing began to rise as a popular European recreation.

There is also a painting of history's first-ever circulating overhead cable ski lift, which was in operation in 1934 on Bolger Hill in Davos, Switzerland and which shows an aerial view of skiers riding single-seat J-bars attached to an overhead cable hung under A-frame towers made of heavy timber. The construction of this lift in 1934 marks one of the most important occasions in the development of skiing (and since there are no known aerial-view photographs of the lift), it is heartening to have this visual confirmation. The J-bar, incidentally, served as the engineering model for the first chairlifts in America, at Sun Valley, in 1936.

The man who made the book's marvelous selections, Professor Gunter Witt, Ph.D, devoted himself to collecting and studying works of art that connect sport and the fine arts. From 1976 to 1991, Witt taught at the College for Physical Cultural in Leipzig. Through his efforts, the University of Leipzig assembled a unique collection of art showing a great variety of leisure and competitive sport. Dr. Witt became the founder of the collection, "sport in Fine Arts," of which this book contains first-rate examples.

Happily, within its 100 illustrations, *Skiing in Fine Arts* manages to include a wide range of artists, from little-known practitioners to such towering figures as Juan Miro, Andrew Wyeth, and Edvard Munch. (2009 Skiing Heritage review by Morten Lund)

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