

The Kohnstamm Family

Operators of Timberline Lodge & Timberline Ski Area

Richard L. Kohnstamm was the president and area operator of Timberline Lodge and Ski Area from 1955 until 1992, when he turned the operation over to his son Jeff.

Dick Kohnstamm passed away in 2006. U.S. Representative Earl Blumenauer memorialized him before the House of Representatives as "a visionary leader who conceived and then for half a century led the Kohnstamm family crusade to restore the jewel that is Timberline Lodge."

When he first saw Timberline Lodge in 1955, Dick Kohnstamm was immediately enamored of the building. Built in 1936-1937 under the auspices of the Works Progress Administration and furnished with art and furniture commissioned under the Federal Art Project, the lodge had opened to the public in 1938. It fell into disrepair and was closed in 1955. The U.S. Forest Service, which administers the lodge, revoked the permit and sought a new operator.

With the encouragement of lodge employee and former WPA worker Jim Duncan, Kohnstamm applied for and was awarded the permit. He

formed R.L.K. and Company and set about developing the lodge and ski area—a labor of love to which he devoted his life.

Kohnstamm installed the Pucci and Victoria Station chairlifts, and he purchased SnoCats to transport skiers and tourists to snow fields above the lodge's 6,000-foot elevation. Kohnstamm created the first summer skiing opportunities in North America with the completion of the Palmer chairlift in 1978.

When Kohnstamm lobbied Congress for funds to build a convention center and day lodge for skiers, he told congressional committees that Timberline was both a hotel and a museum. Running the lodge without a day lodge, he said, was "like trying to run an exclusive restaurant in the Lincoln Memorial."

Congress added supplementary funds to the U.S. Forest Service budgets for the new wing and the day lodge, The C.S. Price Wing was completed in 1975, and the Wy'East Day Lodge opened for the 1981-1982 ski season.

Recently, under Jeff Kohnstamm's leadership, Timberline purchased a



small ski area called "Summit" in Government Camp. Now called "Summit Pass," the area will be the location of a new day lodge and a new Timberline Gondola that will shuttle guests from the Government Camp area to Timberline Lodge and Ski Area. The Timberline Gondola is the cornerstone of Timberline's Upgrade Plan which was reviewed and accepted by the US Forest Service in 2022.