

Olympic 'spirit' finds Sporthaus

So it's not quite like having the Olympics in your own backyard, but it's the next best thing — a visit with an Olympic ski champion.

Stein Erikson will be at the Don Thomas Sporthaus in Birmingham Thursday, as part of "The Best of the Best '89," a formal ski fashion show at 7:30 p.m.

The Sporthaus will introduce ski buffs to the latest in clothing for the slopes and the clubhouse.

The Sporthaus also will introduce ski enthusiasts to the legendary Erikson, who will be the special guest that evening.

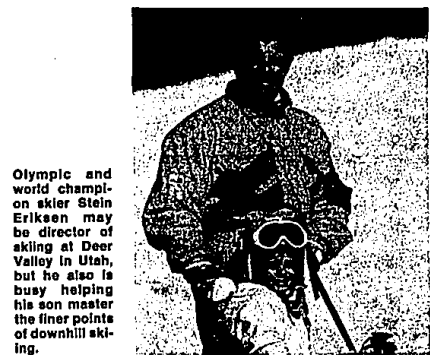
Erikson is considered a "skier's skier" because of his flawless, textbook style of skiing. In fact, Paul Anderson of the Aspen Times wrote that "his presence, his looks, his skills helped lay the foundation... that will go far beyond his years."

He was a bronze medalist in the slalom in the 1959 world championships, a gold medalist in the giant slalom and a silver medalist in the slalom at the 1953 Olympics and won gold medals in the slalom, giant slalom and combined in the 1954 world championships.

Erikson is no stranger to Michigan. At one time, he was director of skiing at Boyce Mountain. He has held similar positions at Heavenly Valley in California, Aspen Highlands in Colorado, Sugarbush in Vermont, Snowmass in Colorado and Park City in Utah.

He currently is director of skiing at Deer Valley in Utah.

The Don Thomas Sporthaus is in the Bloomfield Plaza shopping center at 6500 Telegraph, Birmingham. Seating will be on a first-come basis. For information, call 626-9500.



Olympic and world champion skier Stein Erikson may be director of skiing at Deer Valley in Utah, but he also is busy helping his son master the finer points of downhill skiing.



Actress Valerie Bertinelli drew chuckles from members of the 99s when she talked about her flying experiences during the filming of "Pancho Barnes," a made-for-TV movie.

JOHN STORMZAND/staff photographer

Pancho role hooks Bertinelli on flying

By Sue Mason
staff writer

First she said it's "a better than sex" then she let herself get pinned. What's Eddie Van Halen going to think about his wife?

He'll probably act like a typical husband. After all, his wife is actress Valerie Bertinelli.

Bertinelli was in town last Thursday to promote her CBS mini-series about pilot Florence "Pancho" Barnes. The mini-series, "Pancho Barnes," will begin at 8 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 25, on WJBK-TV 2.

"Better than sex" was what she said after her first flight in an old Tiger Moth airplane. Unknown to

Bertinelli, it was the same comment made by Barnes after her first flight.

"It scared the heck out of me because I didn't think it would take off," she said. "The inside of the plane looked like a bicycle."

The filming was by members of the Michigan chapter of the 99s, the international women pilots association. It was done during at breakfast gathering at WJBK-TV 2 in Southfield.

The 99s, led by Lillian Snyder, director of Detroit City Airport, made Bertinelli an honorary member of the organization.

"THIS is really an honor, but will

someone here teach me how to fly," Bertinelli said. "They wouldn't let me fly the plane. . . Really, Pancho would be proud."

Barnes' name comes up in Bertinelli's conversation quite a bit and she admits that for a while she "was" Pancho.

Barnes was a female aviator, who among other things, set the world's speed record for women, was Lockheed's first woman test pilot and the first female stunt pilot in motion pictures.

She also helped organize the Motion Picture Stunt Pilots' Association as the result of a dispute with multi-millionaire moviemaker Howard Hughes and eventually opened a flying school and club on her ranch in the Mojave Desert, a club that attracted the likes of ace pilot Chuck Yeager.

The mini-series recounts Barnes' life from her first hot air balloon ride and how she got her nickname to her flying school and club.

Bertinelli, who literally grew up on television in her role of Barbara on the sitcom "One Day at a Time," spent eight weeks in Texas, filming the mini-series.

She spent much of her time on the ground in wool jodhpurs, a leather jacket, wig and leather cap in the hot and humid weather. And even being airborne didn't provide relief.

"It really didn't cool off that much at 2,000 feet," she said.

AT THE urging of the women pilots, Bertinelli donned a leather flight suit, complete with a silk scarf to drape around her neck. A bit large for the petite brunette, she needed help getting in and out of it.

And it wasn't until she was zipped into it and the 4-inch wide belt was buckled that it was announced — quietly — that the suit belonged to Florence Lowe, better known as Pancho Barnes.

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