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Dr. Hans Kraus

Born: 1906 Died: 1996

Dr. Hans Kraus was born in Vienna, Austria, and was an orthopedist who served as the orthopedic physician to several Austrian Olympic Teams. He became a member of the National Ski Patrol System in 1944, and became extremely interested in the area of physical fitness and sport injuries. Buddy Werner, Toni Matt, and Billy Kidd, all credit the work of Dr. Kraus for salvaging their skiing careers after serious injuries through his system of innovative orthopedic exercises.

He is a small man to look at – but what a giant he was for the welfare of recreational and competitive skiers in general and the National Ski Patrol System. This briefly sums up the monumental job that Dr. Hans Kraus, who was one of the foremost figures in the world in promoting physical fitness and therapeutic rehabilitation exercises, achieved. This is so much that the late Presidents Kennedy and Eisenhower made him a member, respectively, of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Youth Fitness.

Beginning in 1938, Dr. Kraus, a top all-around sportsman, skier, hiker, mountain climber with many first ascents, and proficient in judo, boxing, acrobatics and fencing, had a deep involvement with skiing's healthy physical growth in this country. He wrote extensive newspaper syndicated articles, a variety of periodicals, several books and many medical papers emphasizing the need of keeping physically fit and in good condition and good health. This stressed the prevention of accidents and the need for reconditioning and rehabilitation for post injuries.

Dr. Kraus was a professor of rehabilitation and physical medicine at New York University, with another outstanding skiing colleague and physical fitness exponent, Bonnie Prudden. They shocked the world with the results of a survey that showed "most of the people of this country, oddly enough, are not really well physically; we are hardly fit for ordinary living, let alone for the strenuous activity of skiing." President Eisenhower was so shocked by this report that "showed that our children by the lowest set standards are woefully unfit – in spite of generally superior medical care and nutrition." These valuable studies inspired President Eisenhower to organize the President's Council on Youth Fitness, of which Dr. Kraus was an important part. It is to be recalled that Dr. Kraus treated the late President Kennedy for his back injury and was a member of his Physical Fitness Committee.

Dr. Kraus continued to be very active in the National Ski Patrol System having earned his badge in 1944. He was the national medical advisor for the Eastern Ski Patrol System, medical advisor to the outstanding award-winner Belleayre Ski Patrol and includes memberships on the advisory board of the Joint Legislative Committee on Sports and Physical Fitness in New York, the President's Council on Juvenile Delinquency and the New York Committee of the U.S. Ski Team Fund.

Through his established and innovative orthopedic and therapeutic exercises, Dr. Kraus brought back many outstanding competitive skiers, as well as recreational skiers, to their former physical ability after suffering serious injuries. Buddy Werner, Toni Matt, Lowell Thomas and Billy Kidd were some of the distinguished ski figures that this transplanted Austrian was credited with returning to their skiing way of life. Dr. Kraus had a cover story of Billy Kidd's winning the world's championship hanging over his desk. Inscribed over it was this note: "To Dr. Hans Kraus, who made all this possible." It will be remembered that Billy had injured himself but came back to the highest skiing honor in the world, thanks to the rehabilitation work of Dr. Kraus.

As a fellow skier of 45 years, Lowell Thomas, so aptly put it, "Dr. Kraus deserves a mighty ski salute over the air for his work 35 years ago as medical advisor to the Nationals and his involvement with the Ski Patrol System ever since."

Hans, married the former Madi Springer-Miller, former U.S. Women's Olympian, and continued to lecture, advise and help recreational and competitive skiers by his constant exhortations and articles emphasizing the need to be physically fit and the importance of practicing therapeutic exercises for skiing. He continued to be a rabid skier and mountain climber.

Yes, this little man with great ideas that impressed two presidents on the need to keep America strong has contributed heavily to the skiing way of life in his adopted country as well as the world at large.

Dr. Hans Kraus was elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1974.