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Betsy Snite Riley

Born: 1938 Died: 1984

Betsy Snite's Silver Medal climaxed an outstanding display of collective strength by the United States Ski Team during the Squaw Valley Olympic Winter Games. Led by Penny Pitou, Betsy and Tom Corcoran, the Americans accounted for three medals (two by Penny and one by Betsy) plus two fourths (one by Betsy and one by Corcoran), two ninths, two 14^{ths}, one 17th, one 18th, two 21^{sts} and one 22nd. Outstanding performance by the American women was attributed to experience gained during international competition the previous winter in Europe.

Betsy Snite was the wife of Bill Reily of the Mount Mansfield Corporation in Stowe, Vermont. She could look back to her early skisport beginnings in Hanover, New Hampshire. She came from Norwich, Vermont, to pursue a ski career while a high school student in Hanover. First she joined the Carcarjan Ski Club, but her competitive career was actually sponsored by the Dartmouth Outing Club. While Dartmouth College was not co-educational at that time, its loosely affiliated DOC was not that particular. Betsy's DOC racing companions included Sally Neidlinger and other girls destined to make their marks in the competitive records of the post World War II era.

They made their mark in Squaw Valley, the American women ending with more medals won than any of the other alpine nations. The best told story of American women in Squaw Valley was compiled by Dr. Patricia Peterson of the Ski Hall of Fame and Historical Committee. A physical education administrator at State University of New York in Oswego, Patricia took her doctorate at University of Southern California in 1967. Her doctoral thesis was entitled "Historical Development: Competitive Skiing for Women in the United States."

Here's how her thesis brought the American women into Squaw Valley:

The women's team was rated by Andrea Mead Lawrence (the double Gold Medalist of 1952) as the best that the United States had ever selected. To prepare herself for the Games, Penny Pitou, among other Americans, skied in Europe during the 1959 season and came home in time to compete in only two Eastern tryout races. She felt that this intensive competition was more helpful. She was showing her forte and so was Betsy Snite. At Grindewald, Switzerland, Penny and Betsy came in one-two in the Downhill; Betsy won the Giant Slalom and earned the Combined title. Penny again came in second on the precipitous Hahnenkamm at Kitzbuhel, Austria. While Betsy took a fifth in a Downhill at St. Moritz, Penny was busy winning a Downhill and Combined at St. Gervais. Competing in European classics on rugged courses did seem helpful.

The ladies' training squad included Beverly Andersen, Eleanor Bennett, Renee Cox, Sally Deaver, Cherie Gerbaz, Joan Hannah, Mary Lind, Linda Meyers, Penny Pitou, Betsy Snite, and Sunny Snite. The officials announced were David Lawrence, women's coach, and Andrea Mead Lawrence, chaperone and assistant manager.

More than half of the talented squad had a chance of winning an Olympic medal. The Europe-tested Betsy Snite and Penny Pitou found competition from the stay-at-homes Joan Hannah, Sally Deaver, Linda Meyers, and Beverly Andersen. Top racing schedules in the United States had given them all valuable experience. It was a well-balanced group and the squad had depth.

The six women selected for the 1960 VIII Winter Olympic Games were Beverly Andersen, Catherine Cox, Joan Hannah, Linda Meyers, Penny Pitou, and Betsy Snite. Andrea Mead Lawrence skied down Little Papoose with the torch; the flame had been fired from the hearth of a Norwegian cottage where Sondre Norheim (1825-1897), the father of modern skiing and Norway's first famous skier, had lived. She then passed it to a skater who circled the rink before lighting the caldron.

"In the name of all competitors I promise that we will take part in these Olympic Games, respecting and abiding by the rules which govern them in the true spirit of sportsmanship, for the glory of sport and honor of our teams."

The sound of the *Star Spangled Banner* was to be heard only during the opening ceremony; the flag, however, was unfurled over the victor's stand on three different occasions, when American women reached the "hallowed strata." The United States was also elated over Canada's success: Anne Heggtveit won a Gold Medal in Slalom.

Betsy Snite Riley was elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1976.