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## Friedl Pfeifer

Born: 1911 Died: 1995

Information submitted by Jack A. Benson in a nomination letter to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame

*Born in St. Anton am Arlburg, Austria, where skiing was as much a necessity as a form of recreation, Friedl Pfeifer became one of Europe's most proficient racers and instructors. Three times in the late 1930s he captured both the Grand Prix de Paris and the Gross Glockner Championships. Twice he took top honors in the International Races at Sestriere, Italy. Twice, in 1939 and in 1940, he won the U.S. National (Open) Slalom title. His greatest triumph, however, came in 1936 when he won the combined downhill and slalom championship in the Arlburg-Kandahar.*

When he was not racing, Friedl Pfeifer was teaching others how to ski as an instructor in the world famous Hannes Schnieder Ski School. After ten years of service to Schnieder, Friedl moved to Sun Valley, Idaho, in 1938, to direct his own school. By

World War II, under his careful management, the Sun Valley Ski School had become the largest in America.

During the war, like so many of his peers, Friedl served in the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division as a ski instructor. While fighting the Germans in Italy, he was seriously wounded, losing a lung.

After a period of recuperation, Pfeifer moved to Aspen, Colorado, a community he had first seen while serving with the ski troops and set out to convert Aspen into the American equivalent of his native St. Anton. As a first step, he established the Aspen Skiing Corporation in December 1945. Then, with the financial help of Walter Paepcke, he spent the next year clearing trails and building lifts. However, before the area was completed, Pfeifer was forced to resign his position within the corporation after a falling out with Paepcke. Aspen, itself, opened to the skiing public on January 11, 1947.

Pfeifer's career as a skiing entrepreneur, however, had just begun. From 1946 until the mid-1960s he headed the Aspen Ski School. In 1958, he built the Aspen Buttermilk to provide adequate terrain for beginner skiers, something of which Aspen was in dire need. During the 1960-1961 season, he established the International Professional Ski Racer's Association (IPSRA) to increase job opportunities for pro-skiers. For the next six years, Pfeifer directed IPSRA conducted pro-races throughout America. Among Friedl's innovations was the dual slalom race, whereby competitors descend parallel courses at the same time – a format which has since been adopted by the current pro-tour.

Besides contributing to skiing as an instructor, racer, and entrepreneur, Pfeifer was also an active coach. In 1950, he directed the American Women's team in the F.I.S. Championships at Aspen; six years later he served as coach of the U.S. Women's Team at the Winter Olympics in Cortina d' Ampezzo, Italy.

Surely skiing is a more enjoyable sport for having known Friedl Pfeifer.

Friedl Pfeifer was elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1980.