



#267

Suzanne "Suzy" Chaffee

Born: ?

Information submitted by Will Grimsley (AP Special Correspondent) in a nomination letter to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame

Suzy Chaffee placed 5th of World Championship Downhill in Portillo, Chile in 1966. Winning four consecutive races in 1967, she was the highest ranked woman on the 1968 Olympic Ski Team as well as team captain.

Suzy Chaffee was politically instrumental in keeping the silver suit for the U.S. Olympic Ski. Suzy's wearing it at Grenoble also had a major impact on ski fashion and the Italian press voted her "Miss Olympics."

Suzy was the first racer to use plastic boots in international competition in Portillo in '66. In 1969, upon retiring, Chaffee appeared in a Henke ad wearing the first colored boots.

Through the prize winning Bogner and Roger Brown films, Chaffee developed a graceful ski ballet based on her early training as a ballerina. She incorporated those ideas in the ballet part of the first professional freestyle event at Waterville Valley, New Hampshire in 1970 and soon after presented the new sport of freestyle skiing to the American public on the Johnny Carson show.

In 1973, Suzy got Chevy to sponsor a women's division. She also secured Pepsi and a million dollars from Colgate. Although Suzy competed against the men in the early years in open competition (and won a contest), she was the world women's champion for 71-72-73. She also introduced music to freestyle and popularized the short ski for ballet (and therefore, beginners too).

After being forced like everyone else to perjure herself to compete in the '68 Olympics, she co-founded with Jack Kelley in 1972 the World Sports Foundation which successfully lead the international movement to reform the Olympic rules to honestly allow for the first time, government, private, scholastic, and corporate subsidization of athletes in the Olympics.

As the first woman (along with Teneley Albright) to be put on the Board of Directors of the USOC and its eligibility committee, she personally wrote the rule that "athletes can be in ads individually as long as a portion goes to helping other athletes..." This rule-as well as getting rid of the scandals by making the Games honest, helped multiply the budgets that the U.S. Ski Team was able to raise from here-to-for scandal sponsors.

Chaffee also got a bill introduced in '72 which resulted in the passage of the Amateur Sports Act of '78 providing for 20% representation of athletes on all sports association, boards, etc., including the U.S. Ski Team. Through skiing with President Ford, who commissioned the study the bill was based on, she also defended in the media the image of the President who brought a lot of attention to skiing. She made his falling sound gutsy. *Ski America* dubbed her "The First Lady of Skiing."

Through President Ford's ad man, Chaffee starred in the Chapstick commercials which appeared on Johnny Carson's "Best Commercials of the Decade" and caused SKI magazine to dub her, "Best PR of the Ski Industry."

Suzy co-hosted ABC live radio from Sarajevo, hosted the World Pro Racing Championship and world freestyle events, CBS Challenge of the Sexes Series. Because of Suzy's cover girl looks and expertise modeling around the world, she is credited with helping to glamorize the image of women athletes, including skiers.

As a spokesperson for billion dollar companies like Colgate, Revlon, the hot dog industry and Avis, Chaffee was able to generate millions of dollars to popularize the sport of skiing.

Chaffee also co-produced a two-hour ESPN special at Breckenridge. "The World Freestyle Invitational" that was pivotal, politically, in making freestyle an Olympic demonstration sport in 1988.

She brought attention to the needs of women skiers who are about 50 pounds lighter than most men, when she co-designed (with Hart Ski Company) the first successful line of superlight-weight, flexible, and colorful skis for women, the "Suzy Chaffee Signature Ski."

Because of her belief that we should upgrade the artistic value of trophies given to skiers, Suzy got the prestigious Bennett Brothers, to design a sculpture for the Legends of Ski Racing.

Suzy Chaffee was elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1988.