

TOM JACOBS

Tom Jacobs is an icon in the ski industry. His career has seen him compete in the Olympics, reach the top in American collegiate ski racing as a four event competitor, coach ski racing at the collegiate level, serve as Executive Director of the National Ski Association, and found the innovative and exceptional Reliable Racing Supply company.

Born in Montreal in 1926, Tom Jacobs grew up in Berlin, New Hampshire. Prior to three years of service in the Army during World War Two, he had established a record as a top schoolboy racer. Following the war he helped Middlebury College win the National Collegiate Championships in Aspen in 1948.

He competed at the Olympic Winter Games in Oslo in 1952 in both cross-country and nordic combined. He was the first full time ski coach at Colorado University and recruited non-foreign born racers, building a team that eventually won the NCAA title in 1959 under his successor, Bob Beattie. In 1953 he chaired a NCAA rules committee and authored the NCAA rulebook for skiing. He was the National Ski Association's executive director in 1956 and 1957.

In 1958 he moved his family to Glens Falls, New York and took a non-skiing job as a salesman to support his family while directing the ski school at Hickory Hill. Soon after he was offered the opportunity to "moonlight" at West Mountain directing its ski school and operating the rental shop with wife Marilyn. In 1965 they opened West Mountain's first ski shop and two years later moved it to downtown Glens Falls, committing themselves full time to their business. They started Reliable Racing Supply, to serve a market needing quality competition supplies. They printed their first racing bibs out of the cellar of their shop. In 1969 they published their first mail order catalogue.

The catalogue expanded over the years to include hundreds of exclusive products. Among those was the first modern slalom flex pole known as the "Breakway" which was the official slalom pole at the 1998 Olympic Games in Nagano and at the FIS World Championships in Vail, Colorado the following year. This innovation greatly improved and speeded up slalom competitions.

In 1968 they established a parallel company, Inside Edge, devoted to Nordic skiing equipment. Thirty years later Inside Edge would be recognized by the SIA as the "Nordic Retailer of the Year."

His love for skiing went beyond his business operations. He spearheaded the construction of a 20M ski jump on West Mountain, and was the first President of the Eastern Professional Ski Instructors Touring Association. In 1970 he worked with Glens Falls officials to build the first lighted cross-country ski trails.

Tom Jacobs' passion, innovative spirit and enthusiasm has benefited skiing for over sixty years.

