

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF PENNY PITOU

Born in Bayside, Long Island, New York, in 1938, Penny moved to Center Harbor, New Hampshire with her parents and younger brother, Kip, when she was three. Like most youngsters in that part of New England, Penny put on her first pair of skis at the age of four. But with her it was different. Before long she was skiing circles around the other kids. She was racing before they could do stem turns. By the time she was eight, she was competing, not with the girls, but against the boys. And she was beating them! In 1955, while still in high school, she astonished the skiing world by winning the Downhill, Slalom and Combined at the Junior National Championships held in Whitefish, Montana. The next year, at the age of 17, Penny was picked as one of seven women to represent the United States in the 1956 Winter Olympics in Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy. What very few people knew was that she had made the Olympic team using skis that were factory seconds! It should be mentioned along this line that just as her times were low in slalom and downhill, her grades were high in school. Gifted with an exceptionally high IQ and quick wit, she ranked fifth in her high school graduating class at Laconia High School and was on the Dean's List her freshman year at Middlebury College in Vermont. Except for Andrea Mead Lawrence, who won 2 Gold medals in 1952 and Gretchen Fraser who won a Gold medal in slalom in 1948, by the late '50's, American skiers had not particularly dented the domain of international competition. Mention of American skiers would bring forth a small shrug of a French or Austrian shoulder and an almost imperceptible, derogatory smile. Of course, they had heard of Penny Pitou by this time. Word gets around in the skiing world. Now they were to see her ski. Penny competed in the F.I.S. (World Ski Championships) in Badgastein, Austria in 1958. On her own (there was no organized National Team at that time), she decided to stay in Europe after the F.I.S. She got a job at the Kastle ski factory in Austria. She polished up the German and French she had studied at Middlebury College until she could speak both languages fluently. She even climbed the mighty Matterhorn, the most forbidding mountain in the Alps, without a guide! And she did what she had done before: she skied, she practiced, she trained with the boys. But these "boys" were the big names. They were the masters. And before long, wherever the great world ski events were run, a new name was found at or near the top of the winners' list; "Penny Pitou-USA".

Then, in 1960, the Winter Olympics came to Squaw Valley, California. Penny was the choice of the nation's sportswriters to uphold the prestige of U.S. skiing. It wasn't as though the public and press Penny could win a medal. They expected her to win. They came very close to **demanding** it! But with all the pressure on her shoulders, Penny didn't "choke up". She skied as she always had--all out, capturing a Silver medal in the Downhill - one second behind the winner, Heidi Biebl of Germany - and another Silver medal in the Giant Slalom--one-tenth' of a second behind Yvonne Ruegg of Switzerland. She is the first American, man or woman, to have won a medal in the downhill event in the Olympics.

Her racing career was climaxed in 1961 with her election to the National Ski Hall of Fame as "the best Alpine skier of the Year". Soon afterward she married Egon Zimmermann (a member of the Austrian Olympic team), turned professional and traded in the tight racing uniforms for the more comfortable ski school parkas. In addition to becoming a wife and mother, she founded two successful ski schools, one at Gunstock in New Hampshire, the other at Blue Hills in Massachusetts. She was co-director of

the schools from 1961-68, becoming a Certified Professional Ski Instructor in 1965. In 1968 she was divorced from Egon Zimmermann and was no longer involved with the ski schools. After the divorce she traveled for two seasons nationally with the International Ski and Winter Sports Show as one of the stars. She was ski fashion consultant for White Stag and has made two movies for them, "Faces of Skiing" and "Clear the Tracks" with Arthur Furrer and the late Roger Staub. She also worked in the same capacity for J.C. Penney and Montgomery Ward. In the mid-60's Penny decided to take up the game of tennis and over the years she notched crowns in Manchester, New Hampton, Concord, and throughout the State. A natural athlete, she has held the title of "N.H. Women's Hard Court Tennis Champion" and was ranked second on clay.

During 1972 and '73 she coached the Laconia High Schools Girls' Ski Team to two very successful seasons. In 1974 Penny purchased Lakes Travel Agency in Laconia, NH and renamed it Penny Pitou Travel, Inc. In April 1979 she opened a branch office in Concord, NH, and in 1995 another branch in North Conway, NH, so that she might better serve the people of her State. She has done extensive traveling in connection with her business and attended numerous seminars. Penny coordinates and personally escorts ski trips to Europe each winter, as well as leading hiking trips to those same Alps in the summer. She has trekked in Nepal and Northern India, tracked Gorillas in Zaire and has escorted a group to East Africa in the fall of 1991 to climb mighty Mt Kilimanjaro. In September 1992, she organized a group to climb Mont Blanc, the highest mountain in Europe.

Penny lives in Gilford, NH. Her two sons, Christian, born in 1962 and Kim, born in 1965, are both very fine skiers in their own rights. Christian is a Civil Engineering graduate of the University of New Hampshire and is CEO of Pike Industries, a major paving company in New England. Kim is an Economics graduate of the University of Vermont and lives in Holderness, NH. He works as a carpenter in the summer and coaches at Cannon Mt for the Franconia Ski Club and for Holderness School in the winter. Penny first became a grandmother March 25, 1992 when Dylan J.P. (Jacobson Pitou) Zimmermann was born. Dylan is one of the best junior ski racers in the State. Zane Zimmermann came onto the scene in May 2000 and has already won a gold medal in the Nastar 4 and under group and has summited several 4,000ers including Mt Washington (at age 4!) and his sister Zoë Zimmermann, born in 2002 who is fast catching up with her brother as she hones her mountain climbing skills on Mt Major and Gunstock.

Penny was one of the first board members of the International Skiing History Association (I.S.H.A.). She is a board member of the United States Ski Association National Historical Committee and the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame & Museum Board. She chairs seminars on drug and alcohol abuse and speaks before various organizations on women and travel. She serves on the honorary committee of the Hannes Schneider Meister Cup Race held annually in North Conway. She is served as the honorary chairman of the Capitol Campaign for the Circle Program, an organization that works with young girls between the ages of 9-11 who are at risk.

SOME OF PENNY'S ACHIEVEMENTS IN SKI COMPETITION

- 1955 Junior Nationals, Whitefish, Montana: First in Downhill, Slalom and Combined
- 1956 Member of U.S. Olympic Team competing in Cortina, Italy. Competed in all three Alpine events
- 1957 1956 Ribon Blanc, St. Moritz, Switzerland: First in Downhill, Second in Combined
- 1958 ARLBERG-KANDAHAR, St. Anton, Austria: Second in Slalom
- 1958 COPPA FEMINA, Abetone, Italy: First in Downhill and Combined
- 1958 GRAND PRIX, Zakopane, Poland: Second in Giant Slalom, Second in Combined
- 1958 Member of the US World Championship Ski Team competing in Badgastein, Austria
- 1959 LADY'S INTERNATIONAL RACES, Grindelwald, Switzerland: First in Downhill, First in Combined
- 1959 HAHNENKAHMRENNEN, Kitzbuhel, Austria: Second in Downhill and Second in Combined
- 1959 GRAND PRIX, St. Gervais, France: First in Downhill and Combined
- 1960 HAHNENKAHMRENNEN, Kitzbuhel, Austria: First in Slalom, Second in Downhill and Combined
- 1960 OLYMPICS, Squaw Valley, California: Two silver medals--Second in Downhill, Second in Giant Slalom

OTHER OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENTS AND AWARDS INCLUDE:

- 1956 Received the ANDREA MEAD LAWRENCE award as "America's Junior Skier of the Year"
- 1959 Governor Wesley Powell declared February 25th of that year to be "PENNY PITOU DAY" in New Hampshire
- 1959 Received the MADEMOISELLE MAGAZINE award in the field of sports
- 1960 Received the NEW ENGLAND COUNCIL award for outstanding contribution to New England skiing
- 1960 Appeared on the cover of SKI MAGAZINE in January and on the covers of LIFE and NEWSWEEK in February
- 1961 Received the NATIONAL SKI HALL OF FAME award
- 1961 Founded PENNY PITOU SKI SCHOOL with former husband, Egon Zimmermann at GUNSTOCK SKI AREA in Gilford, NH
- 1963 Opened another PENNY PITOU SKI SCHOOL at BLUE HILLS SKI AREA in Milton, Massachusetts
- 1964 Was named one of the Ten Most Outstanding Women in America by the U.S. Women's Clubs
- 1965 Became a CERTIFIED PROFESSIONAL SKI INSTRUCTOR
- 1965 Was named "WOMAN OF THE YEAR" by Mademoiselle Magazine
- 1966 Was instrumental in helping to raise \$1,000,000 for the Lakes Region General Hospital
- 1967 Was named as a Director to the Board of Laconia Peoples National Bank (She was the first woman director of any N.H. Bank)
- 1968 NH TENNIS HARDCOURT CHAMPION- Runner-up on Clay
- 1968 Represented BONNE BELLE COSMETICS at winter OLYMPICS in Grenoble, France
- 1968 Traveled throughout the U.S. test marketing a new soft drink for CANADA DRY

1969 and 70 Traveled nationwide with the INTERNATIONAL SKI & WINTER SPORTS SHOWS as one of the featured stars

1969 Principle Sports Program speaker - York, PA

1970 BOAT SHOW - Miami, Florida (SUNGUARD)

1970 Sports Speaker at annual MAJOR LEAGUE BANQUET, Manchester NH

1970 "FACES OF SKIING" (Ski film for WHITE STAG)

1970 KILLY CHALLENGE RACES - Squaw Valley, California

1971 "CLEAR THE TRACKS" (Ski film for WHITE STAG)

1972 Sports Banquet Speaker at LACONIA'S SPORTS NIGHT in Laconia, NH

1972 Coach of undefeated Laconia High Schools Girl's Ski Team

1972 Centerfold "BUSINESS WEEK", February 19, 1972

1974 Purchased Lakes Travel Agency, renamed PENNY PITOU TRAVEL, INC.

1976 Elected to NATIONAL SKI HALL OF FAME in Michigan

1976 Represented President Gerald Ford as Head of the Presidential Delegation to the OLYMPICS in Innsbruck, Austria

1979 Opened a branch of PENNY PITOU TRAVEL, INC. in Concord, NH

1983 Incorporator - Taylor Home, Laconia, NH

1988 Donated (with Milo Pike) \$1,000,000 to the NH Charitable Foundation

1989 Honorary Head Coach - NH Special Olympics

1989 Member - Travel Agent's Advisory Board for Austrian Tourist Office

1990 Incorporator - NH Charitable Foundation

1990 Honorary Board - Jimmie Heuga Center, Vail, Colorado

1991 Board of Directors - International Skiing History Association

1991 Board of Directors - Lakes Region Charitable Foundation

1995 Incorporator - Capitol Center for the Arts

1996 Opened another branch of Penny Pitou Travel in North Conway, NH

1996 Development and Communications committee - Society for the Protection of NH Forests

1998 Member of the Sports PLUS Advisory Team

1999 honored by the Women's Fund of New Hampshire as one of eight recipients who have made a difference in the quality of the lives of women and girls in NH in the 20th century ("A Tribute to NH Women of the 20th Century")

2001 Inducted into the New England's Womens' Sports Hall of Fame

2001 BEWI Award for "Outstanding Contribution to the Sport of Skiing"

2004 Received the "Medaille de Fidelite" from the Compagnie des Guides de Chamonix in honor of 20 years of working together

SOME TV NETWORK APPEARANCES INCLUDE:

THE JONNY GRANT SHOW
 WHAT'S MY LINE
 TO TELL THE TRUTH
 WHO DO YOU TRUST
 THE TODAY SHOW

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