

Sasha Nekvapil née Prihoda

Born on October 5th, 1919, in Prague, Sasha was christened Sasha Alexandra Prihoda .

Growing up in the city, skiing holidays together with her parents, younger brother Frank, uncles, aunts and cousins were a regular feature in the family calendar year.

However it was not until she went to the Krknose(Giant) mountains three times a year with school friends from the age of fifteen that she began to ski properly. At 16, Sasha began ski racing and became competitive. In her first race she placed third and was extremely annoyed because she thought she should have won it.

In 1945 Sasha married Karel Nekvapil, son of a restaurant and night club owner. He was a keen skier and supported Sasha in her ski racing career.

After the War the first international ski race was held in Zermatt, Switzerland in 1946. A Czechoslovakian team was sent and Sasha was with them. She placed second in two races. After that she competed with the team in 1947 and in the 1948 Winter Olympics in St Moritz. Up until just before the Winter Olympics , Sasha had never received any formal ski tuition. Then a week before the competition, Tony Mart from St Anton was appointed the team manager.

Life changed for the Nekvapils following the political upheaval known as the "Putsch" in Czechoslovakia 1948. After many plans to leave Czechoslovakia failing, it was planned that Sasha should defect after her ski races in Grindelwald in Switzerland with the Czech team. She escaped communist rule in Czechoslovakia by climbing out a stationary train window. Sasha said - "I was ski racing in Switzerland. This was some months after the Putsch, because after the putsch we were trying to get out and couldn't. When in Grindelwald with the Czechoslovakian Women's Team, before I was to go home to Prague at the end of the Games I had a telephone call from my husband Karel saying, '*we are going skiing tonight,*' so he and her brother Frank were defecting that night. I was leaving the next morning, so on the next morning I absconded. When the racers were returning we changed trains in Zurich at Enge, I just didn't get on the train, I defected."

Sasha together with her husband, Karel, disembarked in Melbourne in 1950. Following the 1950 winter at Mt Buller, Sasha accepted a ski instructor's position at the Chalet at Charlotte Pass in 1951.

In 1959, Karel and Sasha, with 1600 pounds and a bank loan, built a ski lodge named Sasha's Lodge in the new ski resort of Thredbo. Twelve years later the original lodge was sold and the Nekvapils built Sashas Apartments next door. With a talent for style, Sasha opened in 1963 a fashionable ski wear boutique in the new apartments. Sasha over the years travelled the world to choose fashionable ski wear for Thredbo ski cognoscenti and built a loyal retail following.

Sasha and Karel were very supportive of children's ski racing and organised a race every year for the Thredbo children. For a time, Karel was president of the Thredbo Ski Racing Club established in 1976. In the mid sixties a Junior Ski Race the "Sasha Cup" was established in her honour.

In 1980 Sasha and Karel moved to their farm on the Alpine Way and Sasha operated a gift boutique in Jindabyne. When Karel died, Sasha moved to Canberra to live close to her son, Michael and family.

At the conclusion of her 89th year, Sasha put away her skis but her love of Thredbo and the snow never ceased. On Thredbo's mountain, Sasha's Run is named after her. She died peacefully at the age of 94, on June 10th 2014 in Canberra.

Always a gracious woman with style, Sasha was one of a number of Thredbo's early pioneers who became a local identity to many regular visitors and locals alike. She had recently commented "There are so many lodges and they are so beautiful most of them. People demand only the best, they demand service and they get service".

In the year 2000 Sasha carried the Olympic torch on its journey through Thredbo. Sasha was a founding member and Life Member of the Thredbo Historical Society.