

GEORGE FREUDEN (1932 – 2015) is recognized for his tireless service to ski safety and volunteering.

George was born in Budapest on 30 August 1932. In his own words, he came from an affluent and deeply religious family. His grandfather, originally from Poland, ran a Polish minyan in Budapest. When the Nazis invaded Hungary in March 1944 ‘life became a fight for survival’. His astute parents placed George, together with his cousin, in a monastery in the care of monks. But George was homesick and escaped. Fearful for their only child’s safety, they ordered him to return. But it never happened because over that weekend the Nazis came to the monastery and shot all the priests and all the children including his cousin. At the end of the war the communist government made life intolerable, and so his parents arranged his escape. From a very young age George had to learn the fundamental survival techniques to get through, which carried him throughout his life.

Nobody could have foretold the impact George was to make on Australian patrolling and skiing when he joined the patrol in 1967. George together with John Barclay, John Rumble and Adrian Studley late in 1969 initiated a meeting in Goulburn with a representative from Smiggin’s Patrol to establish The NSW Ski Patrol Association. The inaugural meeting saw George Freuden elected Secretary, and John Rumble as President. From 1971 as Secretary of Thredbo Ski Patrol Association George was responsible for the rapid development of many ideas which the patrol, still use to this day. His ability to fundraise and acquire money from the government was legendary. George was a founding member of The Australian Ski Patrol Association and became its first President in 1972, a position he held until 1984.

George had an adventurous spirit. He and Hilary travelled the world, and no matter where they went it nearly always included skiing. He was able to combine his passion for skiing, travel and public service throughout his involvement with the ski patrol. George not only helped to set up the Australian Ski Patrol Association; he co-founded the International Ski Patrol Federation; he was on the legal and safety committee for the International Ski Federation; he set up the international patrol exchange schemes with Val d’Isere in France and Canada and he spent time on the National Parks Advisory Committee. The personal connections he made globally in the ski fraternity were passed onto his kids, and where ever they went skiing in the world they were warmly welcomed.

Throughout his life a large part of George’s time was dedicated to volunteering. Not just to the ski patrol that he was best known for, but also mentoring small business people through the Business Enterprise Centre and supporting various Jewish programs. He was the founder of the Macabbi Basketball Association; he taught kids to be strong and compassionate through the Courage to Care Program; he shared his Holocaust story with school children at the Jewish Museum and he supported many Jewish charities.

George’s service to ski patrol and ski safety was formally recognized on several occasions. He was awarded Her Majesty’s Silver Jubilee Medal in 1977 and in 1992 he received the Order of Australia Medal, an OAM. He received many other accolades and awards throughout his commitment to volunteering.

George Freuden - didn’t tread lightly, he has left a very large footprint on a global scale – an exemplary Face of Thredbo.