

Obituaries

Gratia Maria Margaretha, baroness Schimmelpenninck van der Oye was born on 10 July 1912 in the village of Doorn, where her father Alphert, baron Schimmelpenninck van der Oye was the Mayor. Her father had been elected President of the Netherlands Olympic Committee in 1925 and as such was also President from the Organizing Committee for the Games of the IXth Olympiad in Amsterdam in 1928. That same year, he was chosen to be one of the IOC members during the Session in Prague.

Gratia was thus raised in an Olympic environment. In the years 1932 and 1933, her mother owned a chalet in Kitzbühel, which allowed her to join a training course in skiing. She apparently did well, because she could keep up with the boys from Kitzbühel for whom the course was actually meant. She always skied in a skirt, and continued this until the end of her skiing career. Only when it was very cold, I changed into a plus-four, she once told Ruud Paauw, who interviewed her in 1993.

In 1934 she participated for the first time in the so-called FIS-runs, together with a friend. They wore specially made jersey's with red-white-blue on the sleeves and thus formed a Dutch team. The race was not a big success.

Then a British friend of her introduced her to professor Wolfgang, the Austrian trainer. He accepted her and made her a much better skier. She even became third in the downhill at the Arlberg-Kandahar Race in Mürren. This made her a threat for the Austrian girls and she felt that she was no longer welcome, and thus left the Austrians. However, she sometimes trained with the British skiers and much more with



the French men's-team. There she was able to improve her breathing technics.

Because she had now moved up to being among the best twenty female skiers, she wanted to participate in the Olympic Winter Games in Garmisch-Partenkirchen in 1936. Her father gave her money to train and especially for good food and for the rest she had to find out everything by herself. In the running up to the Olympic Winter Games, she joined the American team and went to Sestriere in Italy, where they had enough snow. Later she trained again with the French team.

During the Winter Games, and being the daughter of one of them, she got a room in the hotel with all IOC members and not with the other Dutch team members. The Chef de Mission had arranged this without consulting her. She felt isolated!

Then something happened which she will tell in her own words, because on December 2, 1995, she wrote an article for the Foundation "Topography of Terror" in Berlin, which organized an Exhibition in Berlin under the title: "The Olympic Games and National Socialism" in 1996.

Since she wrote the article in perfect German, she gave me (the author of this biography) a copy, which I have now translated in English. I have kept it over the years and since she has passed away, I now feel free to use it:

"In 1936, there was no interest in international skiing whatsoever in the Netherlands and also not within the Netherlands Olympic Committee, nor did they have any knowledge about it. Because I would be the only participant, the chef d'équipe, Mr. Karel Lotsij, had decided to quarter me in with my father and sister in the Grand Hotel in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, where the complete International Olympic Committee and several other 'very important persons' were housed. This, instead of with the Dutch bobsleigh- and skating-teams.

During the previous seasons, I had trained as guest with the Austrian and British female teams, but during the Olympic Winter Games, I had to stand on my own feet, without coach or chef d'équipe. In fact, during the period of training, previous to such high quality matches, one has to be surrounded by the ambiance, where everything is being arranged for you and where your thoughts only has to focus on your sport – on eating – and on sleeping, and you are screened off from the outside world.

This did not happen for me in Garmisch, and so I was, while sitting at dinner 'en familie', called to the telephone, where I was told by an anonymous voice that I was no longer regarded to be 'amateur' and as such could not start three days later in the downhill.

Each team had an adjutant of their own – liaison with the Organizing Committee – who arranged everything necessary or informed. I could understand that everything was all right. Above, I was one of the last real amateurs, because up to the Winter Games itself, the Netherlands Olympic Committee had paid nothing for my training, or whatever else.

However, I was quite upset by this anonymous 'attack' and came back to the table to my father, very

Ski-Mode anno 1936: Baroness Gratia Schimmelpenninck van der Oye wore during her races in Garmisch-Partenkirchen a short skirt. She was the oldest living female Olympic participant and passed away on February 12, 2012, in The Hague.

The American Jesse Owens during training in the Olympic Village in 1936 – filmed by "Guzzi" Lantschner, the winner of the Olympic silver medal in alpine skiing.

nervous. He immediately called the Minister for Sport Hans von Tschammer und Osten. The Minister was, of course, very embarrassed and promised to do everything to find out how such a thing could be possible. Later I heard that there had been heavy betting about who from the women would finish among the first five in the downhill (the first event of the ski-combination), and it seemed that a plan had been put in motion (by a 'terror' group, which wanted the first five women in this event to be German) – to try to eliminate the best foreign participants one way or other. In my case this went quite easy, and alas it was also successful. Because the snow was bad (too little), we were only allowed to start training on the Olympic track three days before the real event. At such moments, you need to talk with your 'captain' about the 'how and why' – first reconnoiter – then with speed. Now I had to decide this all by myself. The first run was normal, but during the second training run, where I had a very high speed, I made an enormous fall. And the next day, I found that I had lost the appetite. I owed nobody anything from the NOC, and I informed the chef d'équipe that I was thinking of retiring. After a long talk he persuaded me to start anyway. But the little flame, or the 'flame of energy' and total concentration were lacking. I fell again, became fourteenth of the ladies. The best twenty were always the top group. I would never have been able to finish within the first five, but had the intention to be among the first ten. Therefore, I was very much disappointed. The next day followed the slalom, organized on the northern slope and on an ice-cold day. Stands had been built for the spectators. This was filled with public from 'Kraft durch Freude', who had been brought from Munich by



special trains. This public knew nothing about skiing, they cheered and laughed when someone fell. Extraordinary unpleasant. In all, this anonymous attack made happen what it intended. When one live in such high tension, such a shock is difficult to handle and for me the glory of the Olympic Winter Games was gone. Afterwards I felt, staying with friends, tarnished and depressed. Sometime later, at the World Championships in Innsbruck, I became ill and could not participate. Because I usually am rather optimistic in nature and rather strong in character, I was able to win in the then following weeks the Jubilee Hahnenkamm Races in Kitzbühel, and again later, during my very last race, I won the downhill in Arlberg Kandahar. This softened the blow! I survived the real active NAZI-terror of the occupation from the Netherlands. In 1948, I went as an official from the Dutch Ski Association to the first Ski-Congress of the International Ski Federation in Pau, in France. Because they needed a new member for the International Board, I was elected, because Germany and Austria were still out of the question. I was then the first woman, together with ten male members and for

a long time I was a member of the Jury at many international competitions, including the Olympic Winter Games. Because in the same meeting in Pau, also an International Ladies Committee was founded, from which I also became a member, I have been able [as far as possible] to take care of the safety measures for all the female participants in all international events. I have done that with much pleasure and in good cooperation with my male colleagues."

She continued in the Executive board of the FIS until the mid fifties. During the rest of her long life, she followed skiing on television and especially her personal favorite the downhill. For many years remained in the shadow, but in 1969 she again came in the news with the founding of a new initiative, when she organized a very successful course titled: "Gratia Club voor Slankblijvers" (the Gratia Club for Lining), which in that time was a precursor for the international "Weightwatchers"! Many participants in that course, still spoke about her in a very positive way. With regard to her personal life: in 1939 she married Mr. Henri van den Bergh. The couple got four children.

In 1971 they divorced. In the late nineties, she moved into a home for the elder in The Hague, where she spent the remaining years of her life!

Tony Bijkerk

Gustav Adolf Lantschner (GER), *12 August 1910 in Innsbruck/AUT; †19 March 2011 in Krailling; was with his age of over 100 years the oldest living winner of an Olympic medal. As second in the Alpine Combination in Garmisch-Partenkirchen in 1936, "Guzzi", as he was named, was also the last living German who had won an Olympic medal before the Second World War. Born in Austria, he won the world championship in downhill for his home country in 1932 in Cortina d'Ampezzo. He stems from a family in Tirol very enthusiastic for skiing. His oldest sister, Inge Wersin-Lantschner (1905-1997), was a three times world champion in 1933. His second oldest sister, Hadwig Pfeifer-Lantschner (1906-2002), won silver at the world championships in 1935 and became fifth in the combination at the Olympic Winter Games in 1936. Also his two brothers, Otto (1908-1989) and Gerhard (1912-1943) belonged to the best skiers. Both of them were student world champion. And not to forget: cousin Hellmuth (1909-1993), who was world champion in the downhill in 1939.

Like his siblings, the only 1.60 meters high "Guzzi" belonged from the start to the "Red Devils", as the members from the Skiing club in Innsbruck because of their red sweaters were named. From 1929 onwards, he worked as actor, and before all as ski-acrobat in Arnold Fanck's mountain movies ("Der weiße Rausch" and "Abenteuer im Engadin").

At a young age, Lantschner joined the National Socialists. In 1931 he became a member of the Austrian NSDAP, which was banned in 1933. After the failed try to destabilize Austria by the followers from Hitler,

he and his brothers escaped to Germany in 1934, where he attended the Movie-academy in Berlin. In January 1936, he received the German nationality – just in time to take part for Germany in the Olympic Winter Games. Contrary, Austria was not presented in the Alpine skiing, because its best men were ski-teachers, who were "Professionals" according to the IOC regulations.

His debut as a camera-man made Lantschner in the NS-propaganda movies about the Reichsparteitag (NS party days) from 1934 and 1935. Afterwards, movie-director Leni Riefenstahl also used him for the Olympic film about the Olympic Games in Berlin in 1936, where he worked as one of the three chief-cameramen. During the Second World War, he was a war-reporter in the rank of a Sergeant-Major in the SS.

After the end of the war, Lantschner escaped via South Tyrol to Argentina, where he opened a ski-school and showed films about nature. In 1952, he returned to Munich. He stayed bound to the sport of skiing during his whole life. As a 99-years old man, one could see him for the last time in the Austrian documentary "Ski Heil – Die zwei Bretter, die die Welt bedeuten".

Volker Kluge

Vasili Alekseyev (URS), *7 January 1942 in Pokrovo-Shishenko; †25 November 2011 in Munich; relieved his compatriot Leonid Zhabotinsky as "strongest man in the world". The Russian mountain engineer from Shakhty was world champion in heavyweight, or superheavyweight eight times and set 80 world records. Alekseyev was twice Olympic champion in weightlifting: in 1972 in Munich and in 1976 in Montréal with a lead of 35 kg before the second placed. In 1980 in Moscow, when his weight was 161.75 kg, he tried a comeback after two years of pause in competitions. However, he

already failed in the starting event of snatch. In 1992, he showed also to be a successful national trainer, when his pupils won ten Olympic medals, from which five were gold ones. In 2011, he returned to Munich, the place of his first Olympic triumph – however this time for a heart operation, which he did not survive. (VK)

Bohumil Golián (TCH), *25 March 1931 in Moštenica, Slovakia; †11 January 2012 in Bratislava. He was a great Slovakian volleyball-legend. From 1946 to 1950 he studied at the vocational school of textile in the city of Ružomberok. In spite of his performance he wasn't included to the army sports club UDA. In autumn 1954, he returned to Bratislava and he started to play for club ČH Bratislava. Next year (1955) he moved to club Slávia, where he was competing for highest positions in both national and international level. In 1959 Slávia came second in the national championship tournament. In 1955, Golián became a key member of the Czechoslovak national team. Following year the national team, he was part of, has won world championship in Paris, first in history of Czechoslovak volleyball. The second title came in 1965 in Prague. Golián was the captain of the national team from 1965 till 1968. Among those many other successes it is necessary to mention silver medals from WC in Rio de Janeiro (1960) and Moscow (1962), gold medals from EC in Prague (1958) and silver from Istanbul (1957). He won the Olympic silver medal in Tokio (1964). Four years later, in 1968, he was a Czechoslovak colour-bearer and with his team won a bronze medal. Mexico was also a farewell with national team, where he played in 350 games. For two years he was a playing coach in Italian team in Bari. Since 1970 he was an assistant at the Faculty of Sport and Physical Education of Comenius University in Bratislava.

