

## CHRISTL CRANZ-BORCHERS † 1 July 1914 - 29 September 2004



Christl CRANZ-BORCHERS, the first woman to win an Olympic Skiing gold medal has died at the age of 90.

She competed in the 1936 Garmisch-Partenkirchen Winter Olympic Games when alpine skiing competitions were introduced to the programme for the first time: The competition was a combination of downhill skiing and slalom for women and men. By today's standards astonishing results were achieved in the women's competition. After the down hill race the Norwegian Laila Schou NILSEN had established a 19 second lead over Christl CRANZ who was only sixth. But she recovered to dominate the slalom competition and take the gold medal whilst Nilsen only finished third overall.

CRANZ was born close to Brussels in 1914 where her family emigrated to two generations before from Hamburg. During World War One the family had to leave Belgium and moved to

Traifelberg close to Reutlingen. Christl learned skiing in the 'Rauhen and Alber' and won her first race at the age of nine. After a short stay in Switzerland the family moved to Freiburg. In 1935 Christl passed her school leaving examination and begun her studies at the successor of the *Deutsche Hochschule für Leibeserziehung*. A year earlier she'd already won her first FIS-races in slalom and the combined competition, before winning the down hill race and the combined competition in Mürren the following season. So perhaps her victory in Garmisch-Partenkirchen was not so surprising.

(It should be mentioned that some of the best skiers – those who taught the sport at hotels – were excluded from the Olympic Games because of the particularly defined amateur rules.)

As a result of her Olympic success, she was offered a position at the Institute for Physical Education in Freiburg. After the Olympics, she won 8 titles in World Championships between 1937 and 1939. In 1941 she finished her skiing career and married the air force officer Adolf BORCHERS two years later.

Because of her clear position in relation to the National Socialists she was banned from teaching at schools.

In 1947 she opened a skiing school with her husband that she ran for the next 40 years till 1987.

In the following years she worked for the German Skiing Association and looked after the female skiing team at the 1956 and 1960 Olympic Winter Games. At the 1960 and 1964 Games she was also a judge. In 1991 she became a member of the Hall of Fame of International Women's Sports.

Even at an advanced age she was able to visit meetings and events to talk about her outstanding career. Three years ago she visited the *Cologne Sport and Olympia Museum* to give an interview. She celebrated her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday on 1 July, 2004 and passed away on 29 September.

*Karl Lennartz*