



David L Jacobs

Inducted CSHF: 1988

Hometown: Montreal, QC / Boulder, Colorado

Date of Birth: October 1, 1933

Affiliated Discipline(s): Alpine: Downhill, Slalom, Combined. Instructor, Coach, Builder

Active Career Date(s): 1957 - 1988

FIS Code: n/a

Club: Nordik Ski Club, Red Birds Ski Club

There are few people in the world who can claim the knowledge and experience of Dave Jacobs in so many facets of the sport of skiing. He is a man of many talents. From the time he received his first pair of skis at the age of 13, skiing has remained an integral part of his life, first as a competitor, a member of the Canadian National Alpine Ski Team from 1957-1961, a Canadian Downhill Champion, 1957, recipient of the Senior Canadian Ski Instructor's Medal, 1961, Head Coach of the Canadian National Alpine team from 1964 until 1967, Ski School Director at Val, David, Quebec, 1962/1963, Designer and Manager of the Talisman Ski Area, Ontario, and successful businessman in the ski industry.

He was a first place finisher in many national races including the Quebec Kandahar Downhill and Combined titles in 1956. In the same year, competing against members of the Austrian and French national teams, he had a 3rd place finish in the Canadian Slalom Championships. Unfortunately, a broken leg suffered while training as a member of the Canadian Federation Internationale de Ski (FIS) Team of 1958 forced him to withdraw before the championships at Bad Gastein.

He is best remembered perhaps for his long and original contributions to the ski industry. In 1965, while he was still coaching the Canadian National Alpine team, he was contacted by Bob Lange (of Lange ski boot fame). Lange, the originator of the plastic ski boot, asked Dave Jacobs if the Canadian team was prepared to test them for him. They did, and in Dave Jacob's words, "They were really bad boots". As a consequence of the constructive criticism offered by the Canadian team members, Dave Jacobs was invited by Bob Lange to the factory at Dubuque, Iowa to offer development help and advice. What emerged were three pairs of re-designed boots, "They were fantastic. I couldn't believe how good they were. Gerry Rinaldi, Rod Hebron and Nancy Greene tried them on and went skiing, and they thought they were great. They wore them in the race and had some of their best results." (*Ski Tech, January/February 1988*)

Shortly afterwards, Lange-Jacobs Inc (originally Lange-Jacobs Ski Boots Inc) formed a Canadian Company and opened a small factory in Montreal in 1967 to assemble the Lange boots. Meanwhile, in the United States, "The boot became the hottest thing in the country." (*Ski Tech*) In 1968, Bob Lange wanted to go public with the company and move the operations to Colorado. Dave Jacobs moved from Montreal in 1969 to Boulder, Colorado as a director and vice-president.

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By the end of the '60s, sales were up to \$12 million annually with Dave Jacobs being responsible for the international operations and the company's expansion into Italy (where a plant was established in Trento) and Japan.

Although Lange was still flourishing in 1971, Jacobs interest began to turn to clothing after buying Fusalp French clothing for his children which generated considerable interest on the slopes. He immediately sensed an opportunity when he visited some local ski shops to discover that what children's clothing was available was drab and uninteresting. He resigned from Lange in February 1971, but remained as a director, and formed the Jacobs Corporation, registered the name "Hot Gear", and hired a clothes designer. The Hot Gear clothing, made in Hong Kong, made its first appearance at the SIA Show in Las Vegas Nevada in 1972. It was a remarkable success. Sales were about \$300,000 in the first year, jumping to \$600,000 in the second. Although he was able to sell part of his holdings in Lange for \$80,000 to capitalize the corporation it was insufficient to finance the rapidly expanding company. Fortunately, the necessary financing came from the Garcia corporation and by the fourth year, gross sales were almost \$6 million. At about the same time, in 1978, the source of cash dried up as Garcia went into bankruptcy. Hot Gear was assumed by the bank and sold to a group from Hong Kong when Jacobs was unable to raise the \$1.2 million that the bank wanted for the company.

In the fall of 1978, he formed David L Jacobs Incorporated (the Hot Gear owners also owned the Jacobs Corporation name) with the intention of marketing a line of adult racing clothing. While he was still working at Hot Gear, he was working on a padded stretch pant different from that already available. The new pant would incorporate injection molded pads stiff enough for adequate protection and curved to allow the knees to bend. They appeared on the WPS racing circuit where they were known as spider pants. Spider would become the name of the new racing clothing line only the spelling would substitute a "y" for the "i". It would be marketed by direct mail as a "one stop shop" for racers. Success came quickly and by the second year the operation became too large to be marketed from Jacobs' kitchen. An early connection with the Hanson boot company which allowed Spyder to be warehoused and shipped by Hanson resulted in Spyder becoming a division of Hanson. The connection was eventually severed in 1981 to allow a new company, Spyder Active Sports, to be formed. Seven years later, in 1988, world-wide sales were just under \$10 million. Many years later, the name Spyder continues and remains synonymous with high quality skiing clothing. From plastic boots, to Hot Gear children's clothing to Spyder, the world of skiing has benefited greatly from the ideas of this creative man.