

Nancy Greene Raine

The two-time world champion serves in the Canadian Senate and is director of skiing at Sun Peaks in BC. **BY EDITH THYS MORGAN**

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY NANCY GREENE RAINE



Left: Nancy and her husband, Al Raine, at Sun Peaks in British Columbia. Above: Senator Raine with Canadian prime minister Stephen Harper, leader of the Conservative Party.

At 4:30 a.m. on Monday, Nancy Greene Raine is out the door of her home in Sun Peaks, British Columbia, to drive 45 minutes to Kamloops. From there, she will spend the day flying to Ottawa, arriving by 5 p.m. to take a bike ride with friends. As a member of the Canadian Senate since her appointment in 2009, she meets all day Tuesday through Thursday, serving on three committees dealing with, among other things, Aboriginal rights and land issues, fisheries and oceans, and the epidemic of childhood obesity. Depending on when her political duties get wrapped up, she heads back to Kamloops on Thursday night or Friday, in winter to be on the slopes and in summer to golf, hike or otherwise enjoy the outdoors.

At 72 years of age, Canada's female Athlete of the Century definitely doesn't need to keep up a schedule as grueling as this, but anyone who knows "The Tiger" knows she wouldn't have it any other way.

Born in Ottawa on May 11, 1943, Greene moved to Rossland, BC with her family and started skiing when she was three years old. All five siblings were avid skiers as were their parents, who helped found the local ski club. Nancy and her older sister Elizabeth took on Red Mountain's most demanding terrain behind their mother, whose paralyzed arm necessitated a skiing style

with minimal upper body movement, thus influencing Nancy's famously precise balance on skis.

"I came along at the perfect time in ski racing," Nancy recalls. Her first Junior Canadian Championships, at age 14, coincided with Lucile Wheeler's double gold medal performance at the 1958 World Championships, and an uptick in interest for Canadian ski racing. Two years later, at age 16 and in her first of three Winter Olympics, Greene roomed with gold medal winner Anne Heggtveit at the 1960 Squaw Valley Games. (Greene would become a link in Canada's "Golden Girl" chain of world champions, spanning Heggtveit to Kathy Kreiner, who shepherded and inspired each other.)

When the World Cup was first introduced in the 1966-1967 season, Greene was in her prime, sharing top honors with Jean-Claude Killy. The following year, at the 1968 Olympics in Grenoble, France, Greene (rooming with 14-year-old future world champion Betsy Clifford) won gold and silver in GS and slalom, respectively. Her 2.65-second margin of victory in the GS was so great that the Omega officials had to confirm the time—the clock's override function kicked in—before displaying it. Greene finished the season by clinching her second straight overall title, again with Killy. Greene retired in 1968 at the age of 24, with 13 World Cup vic-

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Left: Nancy Greene on the podium with Jean-Claude Killy in 1967, holding up the crystal globes they won as overall victors during the inaugural World Cup season. Right: Greene on a GS course in 1967.

tories and 17 Canadian national titles.

After retiring she married Al Raine (then director of the Canadian ski team), who had started the Nancy Green Ski League, Canada's grassroots junior-level racing league. After Al retired from the team in 1975, the couple and their twin sons made their way to Whistler. Both she and Al coached at Whistler while Al helped to plan the development of Whistler Village. From 1982 to 1984 the Raines lived in Crans Montana, Switzerland, where Al was instrumental in landing the 1987 World Championships. They returned in 1985 and built Nancy Greene's Olympic Lodge.

In 1994, Al and Nancy learned that Japanese investors had bought and planned to develop Tod Mountain, halfway between Whistler and Lake Louise in interior BC. Eager for more experience in resort development, they moved to what became Sun Peaks. Nancy assumed the role as director of skiing and Al set up the tourist office. Together they built the Cahilty Lodge, a slopeside condo and hotel that they have since sold, but where they still reside. Shoulder seasons are spent in golf-friendly Kamloops.

Nancy's influence on Canadian ski racing was both immediate and far-reaching. Her international success brought visibility, interest and big corporate sponsors like General Motors to the team. Her legacy also carried a challenge. "When I came to the Canadian team there was a mindset and commentary that we had successful women but guys weren't cutting it. It was a motivating factor," says Ken Read, who became the first North American male to win a World Cup downhill and led the "Crazy Canucks" in challenging European downhill dominance.

Greene skied on Rossignol Stratos, which had a powerful impact on the company's success in North America. She also had a direct influence on athletes. Read recalls an incident in Heavenly Valley in 1977, when he fell in a World Cup downhill, breaking his pole in frustration. Greene, who was commentating for TV, found him at

the bottom. "She tore a strip off me," Read recalls, "and said my behavior was unacceptable for a member of the Canadian national team. I took it like a 21-year-old at the time, but it stayed with me." Flash forward three years to Lake Placid in 1980. Read was a gold-medal favorite, but his ski popped off at the top of his Olympic run. "That [incident with Nancy] is what I was thinking of when it happened. I just sort of poked my poles in the ground. I learned from her to put that energy into winning the next race."

Nancy and Al were both interested in government. ("You get the government you deserve," she says). When the Canadian Minister of Sport, Gary Lunn, asked if she would be up for Senate appointment, she agreed to put her name forward. Much to her surprise she was approved, and embraced the role, taking her seat as a member of the Conservative Party. In Canada, Greene explains, the Senate is not set up as an oppositional force, but rather as a "voice of sober second thought," with 105 members appointed on a regional basis. During an expense scandal in 2013, Greene Raine was among senators singled out for exemplary service and integrity. Meanwhile Al was elected Mayor of Sun Peaks in 2010 when it first became a municipality.

The Senate runs from mid September through June, with five weeks off at Christmas and weeklong breaks throughout the winter and spring, leaving time for Nancy to ski with guests at Sun Peaks as much as she can (she got 86 days last season), host receptions at the Cahilty Lodge and visit family. Her son Willy, a 1992 Olympian (giant slalom), is athletic director of Canada's ski-cross team, and father of their two grandkids. Charlie lives in Whistler. "The only problem," says Nancy, who thrives on activity, "is getting enough sleep!"

The woman who started racing on leather boots and wooden skis opts for Rossi Hero SL skis, because on fat skis "you lose the quickness edge to edge." That, in the life of Nancy Greene Raine, is not happening anytime soon. ❄️



Greene retired in 1968 with two overall World Cup titles and two Olympic medals (gold and silver from the 1968 Grenoble Games).