

Toril Forland

The five-time World Pro Tour champion has made a life in skiing. **BY EDITH THYS MORGAN**



KEN GALLARD



COURTESY TORIL FORLAND

Left: Toril Forland won five overall titles on the pro tour, in 1979 and from 1981–1984. Above: A recent family ski outing at Mayflower Gulch near Frisco with (l to r) son Henrik, Toril, son Thomas and husband David Lampert.

If you take a private ski lesson in Vail, Colorado, you might be lucky enough to find yourself with a lanky Norwegian woman whose easy laugh and broad smile are both genuine and contagious. When you watch her ski, you will marvel at how easy she makes it look, slinking through challenging terrain like a stealthy snow leopard. She'll be patient and encouraging, give you some tips, maybe tell you some funny skiing stories and definitely call out the beauty of your surroundings. At the end of the lesson, you'll ski better, but more importantly you'll *feel* better. You'll feel grateful for the opportunity to be active, in the mountains, with your new friend Toril.

Enjoying sports, the outdoors and good company in equal amounts is all part of skiing as Toril (to-RIL) Forland learned it in Norway as a kid, long before she dreamed of where it might take her. Sports—all sports—were a lifestyle. And skiing became a life, bringing with it an Olympic medal, an American education, five World Pro titles and a family of four that loves nothing more than to hit the slopes together. Skiing has

been good to Toril Forland. Now that she and husband David Lampert have traded their empty nest to spend their winters in Vail, she's more than happy to pass that goodness along.

Born in 1954, Toril's early sports education came from tagging along to various physical activities with her dad, Tormod, a civil engineer in Oslo. Whatever the venue, it seemed, Toril excelled. That included the track, the speed-skating oval, the tennis court and a tiny ski hill in their town of Bærum, a suburb of Oslo. She competed in high jump, long jump and sprinting, and even reached the Norwegian Junior National Team in tennis, but it was skiing that stole her heart.

Toril, her older sister Helen, and their friends would trek to the local ski hill every day after school, eat a picnic dinner at 5 p.m. and spend the evening skiing under the lights. Tormod organized trips for the local ski club, within Norway and beyond to mainland Europe. Packing gear on sleds early on Christmas morning to catch the train to another skiing adventure became a family tradition. "The trips were not about training, but about getting youth groups together," says Toril. "They were really fun."

In 1966, at 11 years old, Toril qualified to represent Norway at the Trofeo Topolino, a prestigious junior slalom and GS race in Italy where, since 1958, skiing's

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Above and left: In 1966, at age 11, Forland represented Norway at Trofeo Topolino, a prestigious junior GS and slalom race in Italy. She went on to be a nine-time Norwegian champion, with titles in all events.

Forland (right) at the 1972 Winter Olympics in Sapporo, where she competed in slalom, giant slalom and downhill. Her bronze medal was considered a World Championship medal, since combined was not yet an Olympic event.

greatest names have made their international debuts. It was her first time in an airplane and she remembers being overwhelmed by the event, particularly after winning. “For the awards we had a parade through Trento to the piazza,” she recalls. The quarter-sized 18-karat gold medal still resides in a drawer with a faded Italian flag, and the event made a huge impression on the youngster. “Until then I was not that goal-oriented,” she explains. That changed quickly.

By age 14, Toril was on the Norwegian National Team, and went on to be nine-time Norwegian National Champion, with titles in all events—slalom, GS, downhill and combined. She earned gold (GS) and silver (SL) at the World Junior Championships in 1972, at age 17, and the same year competed at the Sapporo Olympics. Her bronze medal there in the combined was considered a World Championship medal, as the combined was not yet an Olympic event.

In 1975, at age 19 the oldest woman on the team, Toril took a year off to attend boarding school. Her boyfriend, a nordic skier at the University of Utah, encouraged both the university and Toril to connect. “Going to a U.S. school sounded like a great opportunity,” says Toril. Despite barely speaking English, the idea was also familiar. Tormod and her mother Bodil had married at Washington State University, which the two attended on Marshall Plan scholarships, and where Tormod competed on the alpine and jumping teams.

In the fall of 1975, Utah had barely started offering athletic scholarships to women (who then competed in

the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women), and was certainly not recruiting female European alpine skiers, even someone ranked in the top seed in the world who would compete in both skiing and tennis. The school did, however, offer Toril some living expenses and a bed in a sorority. Once there, “she dominated totally— by four and five seconds,” recalls teammate Lyndall Heyer. “She was so unbelievably talented.”

Chris Jones coached the women’s team in 1978, Toril’s last season at Utah and the year they won the AIAW national title. “It was the most fun I ever had coaching,” Jones recalls. “The moving force was Toril. She won every race and was athlete of the year in the AIAW.” Jones recalls a comment from Utah’s then-new gymnastic coach Greg Marsden, who retired in 2015 with the most wins of any gymnastics coach in NCAA history. Marsden had Toril in a gymnastics class and marveled that “She can do things right off the bat that take other athletes years to learn.” In 1980 the University of Utah established the annual Toril Forland Outstanding Skier Award, and in 1995 inducted her into its Hall of Fame.

In the spring of 1978, Toril went to Alpine Meadows to try out the pro circuit, assisted by countryman Otto Tschudi and encouraged by Heyer, who had recently joined the tour. She won both races, and the next season joined full-time, meshing perfectly with the spirit of the tour. “We had to sell the tour and do a lot of promotional events,” says Heyer. “She loved all of that.” As on the college circuit, Toril dominated, winning the overall title every year except one from 1978–85, even while breaking away midseason to compete in the ABC Superstars Events. After blowing out both knees in the spring of 1980, and getting them rebuilt by Dr. Richard Steadman, she won her first race after returning, and also won the 1981 tour title.

In 1985, Toril married David Lampert, who then worked for K2, and moved on from competition. They settled on the Massachusetts North Shore and raised two sons, Henrik and Thomas. Toril coached their weekend ski racing programs, first at Attitash, then at

Waterville. When the boys took to other sports like hockey, soccer and lacrosse, Toril maintained her ski racing ties as a regular on the Legends Tour (she won alongside Stein Eriksen in 1996) and as a perennial ski tester for *SKI* magazine.

Sports—on land and water, competitive and not—remained integral to her lifestyle, as did long summer vacations at the Forland family cottage in Norway’s Hvaler Islands.

Three years ago, with both boys out of college, Toril and David got an “out of the blue” opportunity to rent a condo in Vail during the winter. David, now vice president of business development at Plum River, an outdoor retailer software company, can work from anywhere. Vail was as central as anywhere, so they signed up as part-time ski instructors. The experiment worked well enough that they now live between both places. During early summer and shoulder seasons, Toril leads bicycle tours on Cape Cod and reserves mid-summer for Norway, where she visits her sister, an elementary school principal, and her mother who turned 90 in May and swam in the ocean daily last summer. Tormod passed away in 2014.

Toril admits the nomadic life is not for everyone, but the willingness to try new things is the core of her life philosophy. “I was just so fortunate growing up in an environment where so many wonderful opportunities were provided for us. David and I do everything we can to provide nice experiences and opportunities for our kids. Then the rest is up to them.”



COURTESY TPRI FORLAND

CAPTION TK FOR THIS 1993 EVENT.

Thomas, 25, is now in law school at Boston College, after a three-year-stint with Teach For America. Henrik, 28, having dabbled on the freeskiing circuit, is currently editor-in-chief of *Freeskier Magazine* in Boulder. The boys did some payback and got their mom back-country ski gear this year, which “opened up a new world” of self-powered treks into the mountains with friends. “It’s so beautiful and peaceful out there,” she marveled after one such adventure. “It feels like Norway.” ❄️

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