

OLGA KOTELKO (March 02, 1919 – June 24, 2014)

Canadian Masters Athletics lost our matriarch of Masters track and field. After suffering a massive cranial hemorrhage three days earlier, Olga Kotelko passed away peacefully in the early hours of June 24th, in the Palliative Care Unit at Lions Gate Hospital.

Olga competed in her first Masters track and field competition at the age of 77. In 1999, she competed in her first World Masters Championships in Gateshead, England. This March Olga competed in her last World Masters Championships in Budapest, Hungary. Just last weekend, in the cold and rain, Olga competed in three events at the Langley Pacific Invitational meet. She had three more meets on her schedule this year, the BC Masters Championships, the Trevor Craven Memorial and the BC Seniors Games. You won't be at these meets with us Olga, but we'll feel your 'spirit and presence'.

Olga was a valued member of the Greyhounds Masters Track and Field Club. She had a passion for competition and a hunger for life. She set a wonderful example to everyone, locally, nationally and worldwide of how to live a healthy and active lifestyle and how to compete fairly. She was strong, positive, independent and was always quick to give you a smile. She had bright eyes, a keen sense of humour, and loved to share little stories with us. She was an inspiration to all who met her and to those who had the privilege to compete with her. She was an ambassador for track and field to young and old and received much applause and admiration from both competitors and non-athletes.

Olga had an outstanding career in Masters track and field. She won hundreds, perhaps more than a thousand, of medals in competitions around the world. She participated in many provincial, national and international championships, almost always winning about 10 gold medals in the sprints, jumps and throws. Olga set or broke more world Masters track and field records than any other athlete, setting records in the W80, W85, W90 and this year in the W95 age categories. At the end of 2013, Olga still had 26 individual world records (indoors and outdoors) as well as two relay world records. Since turning 95 this year, Olga competed in only three meets but she set or broke 14 more world records (7 indoors and 7 outdoors) in the W95 age group.

Olga won several awards. She has been chosen as BC Athletics Female Athlete of the Year, Sport BC's Masters Athlete of the Year, Canadian Masters Athletics Female Field Athlete of the Year, and has won the Vancouver YWCA's Women of Distinction in Sports award. Olga was often sought after as a motivational speaker, especially for seniors, to help promote fitness and health.

The name "Olga Kotelko" is undoubtedly the most recognized name in Masters track and field, not only by her peers, but also by the general public. She has been interviewed by many magazines, newspapers, radio and television stations. Olga has been interviewed by The Readers Digest, New York Times, Zoomer, Chatelaine, Parade and the Huffington Post (online) magazines. She has also been interviewed by

CBC Radio, CBC TV, Global TV, CTV, the BBC and the Daily Telegram of London, England. Just this month Olga was interviewed by Aljazeera TV for a future program on older athletes.

In 2009, Olga was inducted into the Canadian Masters Athletics Hall of Fame.

Olga Kotelko always did it "The O. K. Way"

Prayers for Olga will be on Wednesday, July 2 at 7 pm.

Funeral will be on Thursday, July 3 at 10 am.

Both will be at St Mary's Ukrainian Catholic Church, 550 14th Avenue West, Vancouver, BC (Near City Hall)