

The
Far West Ski
Association
Turns 90

FAR WEST SKI
ASSOCIATION

90

FWSA

1930 ~ 2020

The 90 Year Journey of FWSA

Published and Produced by Leigh Gieringer Publisher and Production Coordinator of the *Far West Skier's Guide* -

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Ingrid Wicken - new discoveries and authoritative source material from the California Ski Library, often on a daily basis, and the loan of books, documents and stunning imagery from her special collections. Ingrid is a four time recipient of the Western Ski Heritage Award by Steamboat, as recently as 2018.

Eddy Ancinas - the creation of a ski area in Squaw Valley by Alex Cushing and Wayne Poulsen, which would host the Winter Olympics in 1960 and the nearly concurrent development by John Reily of Alpine Meadows.

Eve Chandler - on the only intentionally nonprofit ski area in the USA - Bogus Basin. Eve was the winner of the 2017 Western Ski Heritage Award by Steamboat.

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Debbie Stewart - for her painstaking work to assemble a comprehensive historic record for publication of the FWSA Travel Programs.

The late **Courtlandt T. Hill** - "Skier's Handbook 1947" published in Los Angeles. Corty Hill was President of the California Ski Association in 1948-49. The book cited a program unique to skiing organizations: Area Development.

Jane Jackson - putting her work "Echoes of the Peaks" into narrative format and her tracking of Jimmie Nunn. Steve Nunn, his son, supplied the picture of Jimmie's last visit to the Arizona Snowbowl and his obituary. Jane was honored with the 2016 Western Ski Heritage Award by Steamboat.

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Ellen Loe - for the events and persona leading to the founding of the Far West Racing Association (FWRA).

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Emilio Trampuz - took on the job of assembling a history of skiing on Mt Hood, drawing on Lloyd Musser's work and adding his own research. Emilio was the recipient of the 2014 Western Ski Heritage Award by Steamboat.

Bob Warzinski - insights into the Inland League and support with racing under the US Recreational Ski Association (USRSA).

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Debbi Kor - for her diligence in keeping records of the relationships between the association and the snowsport industry, with their participation in the Silent Auction/Travel Expo, and providing them for this 90th history.

Data and verifications from:

Laura Meldrum, Linda Westlund, Arleigh Meiners, Maxine Hanlon, Judith Miller, Fran Long and Joe Harvis, all of whom have been honored for other services to FWSA. We also extend our sincere appreciation to the **many photographers** whose photos have been included in this historic booklet.

The *Far West Skier's Guide* and **FWSA Convention Delegate Books** were also sources of information.

ON THE COVER: During the later decades of the 1800s, ski jumping became very popular, drawing thousands of spectators to watch these exciting events. These events also provided a curiosity for many to experience the thrill of descending a snow-covered slope. Early 20th Century participants sought out accessible snow-covered hills along roadways such as California's Highway 40 and above Placerville, as well as, many of the slopes in the Southern California mountains to which they could travel. They would walk up the slopes for an exhilarating downhill ride. Recreational skiing was becoming a favorite winter pastime for many. One of the reasons a Californian bid to host the 1932 Winter Olympics was turned down in 1929 was that there was no area Ski Association to coordinate the events. Thus, a group of avid skiers took it upon themselves to found the California Ski Association in 1930. This booklet outlines the 90 year journey of the CSA/FWSA. Famous ski jumper and two-time Olympic gold medalist Norwegian Birger Ruud shows his style. (See page 62.) photo provided by John W. Lundin, Museum of History and Industry, Seattle, Washington



Cle Elum Ski Club's giant new ski jump built in 1931, has been described as "one of the most hazardous in the world, 6% steeper than any in Norway which was the center of ski jumping", courtesy of Cecelia Maybo family and Archives and Special Collections, James E. Brooks Library, Central Washington University.



This map shows the ski runs at Paradise Valley, Mount Rainier, 1938, the first year that rope tows were operating. Trail 11 begins at Camp Muir, elevation 11,000 feet, the start of the Silver Skis Race that went down the glacier nearly four miles to near Paradise Lodge, elevation 5,400 (#2 on the map). The rope tow "eliminated long climbs to the crest of ridges" giving skiers "many more times the downhill running". Washington State Historical Society

About the Author:

John W. Lundin is a founding member of the Washington State Ski & Snowboard Museum. His book, *Early Skiing on Snoqualmie Pass*, received a Skade Award from the International Ski History Association as an outstanding regional ski history book in 2018. He has two new books published in 2020: *Sun Valley, Ketchum and the Wood River Valley*, by Arcadia Publishing; and *Skiing Sun Valley: a History from Union Pacific to the Holdings*, by History Press. John's book, *Skiing in Washington, A Nordic Tradition*, will be published in January, 2021.



Famous ski jumper and two-time Olympic gold medalist Norwegian Birger Ruud wins the 1938 Seattle Ski Club tournament at Beaver Lake on Snoqualmie Pass. At the end of his "meteoric" descent, Birger "didn't come to a casual, christyng stop. No. He somersaulted. After the tournament, Birger and his brother Sigmund performed "a perfect double jump, both off the takeoff together, and landing in unison, 196 feet down the hill." quote from the Seattle Times. Museum of History and Industry

Washington Ski History

by John W. Lundin
Lawyer, Historian and Author

Washington skiing was promoted in its early days by newspapers and railroads. Newspapers gave extensive coverage to skiing activities and sponsored important events. Northern Pacific, Great Northern and the Milwaukee Road transported spectators to tournaments at Cle Elum, Leavenworth and Snoqualmie Pass. Northern Pacific provided land for the Cle Elum and Seattle Ski Clubs, planned a major ski area at Stampede Pass, and operated a small ski area there until WWII. The Milwaukee Road opened the Milwaukee Ski Bowl at Hyak in 1938.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal contributed to the growth of the ski industry nationally in the 1930s, by building roads and shelters; and clearing hills and trails. Washington ski areas benefiting from these programs included Seattle's Municipal Ski Park, Leavenworth, Mt. Rainier, Deer Park on the Olympic Peninsula, Stevens Pass, Mount Baker, Mount Rainier, Mount Spokane and others.

Ski Jumping was the Most Popular Form of the Sport

The Northwest has long attracted Scandinavian immigrants, because of its climate, geography

and employment possibilities. In Washington, in 1910, Scandinavians were the largest immigrant group, making up 20% of the foreign-born population, and one out of every 20 Seattle residents was born in Norway or the child of Norway born parents. "The Norwegians brought to their new country a passion for skiing..." They organized ski competitions "to strengthen their ethnic ties, showcase their abilities, and generate a new sense of belonging to their new country." (Quote from Harold Anson, *Jumping Through Time*.)

From the earliest days of skiing in Washington, ski jumping was the most popular form of the sport, due to the influence of Norwegian immigrants. Alpine skiing did not appear until the mid-1930s. The only skiing events at the first Winter Olympic Games in 1924, were Nordic (*jumping and cross-country racing*). Alpine skiing (*downhill and slalom*) first appeared in the 1936 Olympic Games.

The state's first formal ski jumping event happened in Spokane in 1913, when Olaus Jeldness, who helped create the Rossland B.C. Winter Carnivals, organized a "ster" jumping and "running" exhibition using a ski jump he built. Jeldness organized the 1915 Inland Empire Ski Jumping Championships, and skiing continued there until the 1920s.

In February 1916, Seattle's Norwegian businessmen held an exhibition to demonstrate the "Scandinavian sport" of ski jumping on Queen Anne Hill, following the heaviest snowfall in two decades. More than a dozen "crack jumpers" went off a ski jump built on Queen Anne Avenue, one of the steepest hills in the city. The exhibition was so successful that midsummer ski jumping tournaments were held from 1917 to 1924, at Paradise Valley on Mount Rainier over the July 4th holiday. A cross-country race was added in 1922. Olga Bolstad, a 22 year old "girl ski jumper" from Norway, won the 1917 tournament, and was called "Champion of the Pacific Coast on Skis". The best jumpers from the Northwest and Canada competed.

In 1913-1914, The Mountaineers began holding annual Winter Outings at Mount Rainier National Park. In 1914, the club built a lodge just west of Snoqualmie Pass summit, used for climbing and later what we would describe as back-country skiing. In 1928, The Mountaineers built Meany Ski Hut at Martin, the Northern Pacific stop near Stampede Pass. The club marked many miles of cross-country trails, and between 1930 and WWII, sponsored 20-mile long Patrol Races along the crest of the Cascades from its Lodge to its Ski Hut, called the country's longest and hardest race.

The Cle Elum Ski Club formed in 1921, east of Snoqualmie Pass, and from 1924 to 1933, held ski jumping tournaments that attracted many of the Northwest's best competitors and 3,000 - 5,000 spectators. In 1931, the club built a lodge on a ridge two miles north of Cle Elum on Northern Pacific land, a two mile uphill hike. In 1929, the club built a giant new jump, with "one of the steepest takeoffs in the world...one of the most hazardous in the world, 6% steeper than any in Norway, which was the center of ski jumping," according to the *Seattle Times*. It was enlarged even more in 1932.

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, new ski clubs formed around ski jumping, built ski jumps and hosted tournaments.

In 1927, the Mt. Baker Ski Club formed after the Mount Baker Lodge and a new highway were built. It held a jumping tournament in 1930, and one featuring uphill, downhill and cross-country races in 1931. A fire destroyed the lodge in August, 1931; setting back skiing there for years. The club held a two-day slalom tournament in May, 1935.

In 1928, the Leavenworth Winter Sports Club formed, east of Stevens Pass on a Great Northern Railway stop, built a ski jump, and held a tournament in 1929. In 1930, the club built a jump in a different location. Its big ski jump was built in 1933, later named after Hermod and Magnus Bakke, long time club supporters. The hill was redesigned several times, becoming one of the best ski jumps in the western United States.

In 1928, Portland's Cascade Ski Club organized, and built a ski jump on Mt. Hood on a natural hill with a "cribbage of timbers used to sustain the takeoff geometry". It held its first tournament in 1929, and in 1930, hosted the first Pacific Northwestern Ski Association sanctioned jumping championship.

The Seattle Ski Club was formed by Norwegian immigrants in 1929, who built a ski jump at Beaver Lake, 1½ miles uphill from Snoqualmie Pass, using the hill's natural slope for the inrun and outrun. The club's 1931 tournament was the regional tryout for the U.S. team for the 1932 Olympic games at Lake Placid, New York, included jumping and cross country skiing, and attracted 10,000 spectators. In 1931, the club improved its jump to be "one of the best in the United States, with the sheerest pitch of any in America", with "one of the steepest landings in the world, a hill three or four degrees steeper than the famous Holmenkollen Hill in Norway", according to the *Seattle Times*.

The Spokane Ski Club formed in 1929, and in 1932, built a lodge on Mt. Spokane. The club hosted a jumping tournament in 1933, that attracted 25,000 spectators, and others in 1934 and 1938, and a downhill and slalom tournament in 1937. The club installed a rope tow for 1937, the first in the state. A new ski jump was built on Mt. Spokane in 1948, and the club hosted the Esmeralda Tournaments from 1948 to 1953, and the last one in 1955.

Ski clubs were formed in Ellensburg, Yakima and elsewhere to provide skiing for members and occasional tournaments.

Soon, ski jumpers had a circuit of tournaments - at Cle Elum; the Seattle Ski Club's jump on Snoqualmie Summit; Leavenworth Winter Sports Club's jump; and Cascade Ski Club's jump on Mount Hood. Competitors and thousands of hardy spectators went from one tournament to another, braving long drives and harsh weather, hiking through snow to reach the jumping sites, and standing outside for hours, often in snowstorms.

In 1930, the Pacific Northwestern Ski Association (PNSA) was organized to sponsor regional jumping and cross-country competitions and coordinate calendars. It later established standards for ski instructors, pioneered their testing, and was the regional organization for the National Ski Association for sanctioned Northwest ski competitions.

Alpine Skiing Emerges

Starting in the winter of 1931, the road over Snoqualmie pass was plowed during the winter. By 1934, the entire highway had been paved, offering better access from Seattle.

In 1930, The Mountaineers began downhill and slalom races, said by the *Seattle Times* to be the start of this kind of racing in the Pacific Northwest.

A number of private ski clubs and lodges were built on Snoqualmie Pass in the early 1930s. They held regular ski competitions against each other that were covered by Seattle newspapers.

In 1933, a slalom racing series began at Paradise on Mount Rainier on Sundays, organized by Ben Thompson, who was in charge of winter sports operations. Some of the Northwest's best skiers came out of the series, including Don Fraser, Darroch Crookes, Don Amick and Gretchen Kunnigk (later Fraser), who became members of U.S. Olympic ski teams. In winter 1933-1934, cabins and rooms at Paradise Lodge were leased for the winter for \$30 to \$60, and over 400 reservations were made. Paradise Inn was remodeled in 1936. Rainier became the skiing center for Tacoma residents, and the site for Seattle's Junior Chamber of Commerce spring annual carnivals. Several proposals were made to install a tram from Paradise to Camp Muir.

The year 1934, was an important one for Washington skiing. The Seattle Parks Department opened the Municipal Ski Park on Snoqualmie Pass, after the CCC cleared a narrow run and built a warming hut. It attracted many new skiers, as well as spectators who came to watch the athletes. Ray Anderson and Ben Thomson formed a partnership to make ski equipment in Seattle, producing A & T skis. PNSA added slalom racing to its schedule, expanding its charter beyond Nordic events, as the event had "caught on by wildfire". The Seattle Ski club's tournament featured jumping, a cross-country race, and the first PNSA sanctioned slalom race. The University of Washington Ski Club was formed. The *Seattle Times* said 2,500 skiers were in local ski clubs, 3,000 to 5,000 spectators attended ski jumping events at Snoqualmie Pass, and 10,000 persons participated in some form of winter sports every weekend.

In April 1934, the Silver Skis race on Mount Rainier began, sponsored by the Seattle P.I., which became the Northwest's most iconic race. Competitors hiked from Paradise Lodge at 5,400 feet, up to Camp Muir at 10,000 feet. They then skied down in a virtually uncontrolled schuss nearly four miles, to finish near Paradise, dropping 1,424 feet in every mile skied, reaching speeds of "slightly better than sixty miles an hour" before they traveled 300 yards. Seattle's Don Fraser won the first race, with 64 racers starting and 43 finishing, and won again in 1938. The race was held from 1934-1942, and 1946 - 1948, attracting top competitors from all over the country.

In 1935, Washington skiing got a major boost as the National Downhill and Slalom Championships and Tryouts for the US Olympic Ski Team for the 1936 Games in Germany, were held on Mt. Rainier. Tacoma's Ethelynne "Ski" Smith won the women's National Slalom title, and her sister Ellis Ayr, won the Combined National Championship

title. The U.S. Forest Service spent \$35,000 building warming huts at Leavenworth and Mount Baker. A shelter was built at McClure's Rock on Mount Rainier, "a welcome protection for high altitude skiers".

The 1936 Winter Olympics at Garmisch, Germany, featured Alpine skiing for the first time, with downhill and slalom racing and a combined event (downhill and slalom), along with Nordic events. Five Washington skiers were on the Olympic team - Tacoma's Ethelynn "Skat" and Ellis-Ayr Smith, and Seattle's Grace Carter, Darroch Crookes, and Don Fraser.

In December, 1936, Union Pacific Railroad opened its Sun Valley Resort, built for \$1.5 million dollars in the remote mountains of Idaho. It was the country's first destination ski resort, with an ultra-modern lodge, chair lifts invented by U.P. engineers based on a system to load bananas onto boats, and a ski school with Austrian instructors that made skiing sexy, changing U.S. skiing forever. The resort attracted skiers from all over the world, including Hollywood movie stars, socialites, New York businessmen, and legions of Seattle area residents. Sun Valley became Seattle's "back yard". Seattle newspapers regularly reported on its races and the large number of locals who traveled there to ski and vacation. Sun Valley became the country's ski racing center, and many Washington skiers competed in races there. Skiers began lobbying for ski lifts to be installed in Washington.

In 1937, ski instructor, Otto Lang, started the country's first official Hannes Schneider Ski School on Mount Rainier, bringing the latest ski techniques to the Northwest, later expanded to Mt. Baker and Mt. Hood. In December, Norwegian ski jumping star Olav Ulland moved to Seattle to coach local jumpers. Ulland, who competed for Norway from 1929 to 1936, was the first to break the 100-meter mark by jumping 103 meters in 1935, and became a mainstay of Northwest skiing.

The period from 1938 to WWII was a seminal time for Washington skiing, which the *Seattle Times* said was "the greatest skiing area in North America".

For the winter of 1938, Ski Lifts, Inc., installed and operated rope tows at Mount Rainier, Snoqualmie Summit, and Mount Baker, providing an alternative to walking up the hills. The Municipal Ski Park 1,000-foot long tow cost 10 cents a ride or \$1 for all day. "Skiers could get downhill training without the long uphill climbs and sudden, weary-legged returns."

The Milwaukee Railroad opened its Snoqualmie Ski Bowl (later renamed Milwaukee Ski Bowl), at Hyak east of Snoqualmie Pass in 1938, offering access by train from Seattle in two hours. The Ski Bowl had the Northwest's first over-head cable lift (a J-bar called a Sun Valley type lift without chairs), a modern ski lodge, lighted slopes for night skiing, and it dramatically changed the area's ski scene. Ski trains had reserved seats, a baggage car with ski

Seattle's Olav Ulland and Portland's Hjalmar Hvam entertain spectators by doing tandem somersaults after the 1938 Silver Skis Race on Mount Rainier.
Tacoma Public Library, Richards Studio.



racks and waxing tables, and a recreation car for dancing. The *Seattle Times* offered free ski lessons for Seattle high school students, to learn "controlled skiing".

The Stevens Pass ski area was started in winter 1937-38, after Chambers of Commerce from Everett and Wenatchee bought 100 acres of land for the area. A rope tow was installed, costing 5 cents per ride. The Forest Service built a \$10,000 lodge using "30 CCC boys aided by skilled workmen," that was dedicated in December, 1938; although it burned down in 1940, and rebuilt after the war.

In March, 1938, two famous Ruud brothers from Kongsberg, Norway, Birger (Olympic gold medal winner in 1932 and 1936) and Sigmund (Olympic silver in 1928), toured the United States, participating in numerous jumping tournaments, including one hosted by the Seattle Ski Club at Snoqualmie Summit. Showing the dominance of that country's jumpers, seven of the 16 competitors were from Kongsberg. Birger won the tournament in front of 4,000 spectators.

In 1940, the Seattle Parks Department got out of the ski area business, concluding that Snoqualmie Pass was too far away for a city park. Ski Lifts, Inc. took over the ski area's operations, and renamed it Snoqualmie Pass Ski Area.

From 1940 until WWII, there were a number of epic battles for new distance records between Sun Valley's Alf Engen and Torger Tøkle (member of the Norway Ski Club of New York), a recent immigrant and rising jumping star.

Alf Engen won the 1940 Pacific Northwest Championship Tournament at Leavenworth, jumping 252 feet, thought at first to be a new national distance record.

The year's biggest tournament was the 1940 National Four-Way Championship Tournament. Downhill and slalom races were held on Mount Baker, the cross-country race on Snoqualmie Pass, and the jumping competition at the Milwaukee Ski Bowl, on a new giant ski-jump built for the event.

The best skiers in the county competed. Seattle's Sigurd Hall won the downhill race, Alf Engen was third, but won the slalom. In the jumping event, Torger Tøkle had longer jumps than Engen, but Engen won on form points. Showing he was an all-around skier, Alf Engen won the Four-Way Championship. Engen's brother Sverre was second, Sigurd Hall, third, and Portland's Hjalmar Hvan, fourth. Hall was tragically killed the following month in the Silver Skis race on Mt. Rainier, when he hit some rocks after skiing into a fog bank.

In February, 1941, at Iron Mountain, Michigan, Alf Engen jumped 267 feet to set a new the North American distance record. His success was short-lived. Two hours later at Leavenworth, Washington, Torger Tøkle exceeded Engen's distance, setting a new record of 273 feet. At the National Jumping Championships at the Milwaukee Ski Bowl in March, 1941, Tøkle, jumped 288 feet, to set his second North American distance record in less than a month. Alf Engen was second. Showing the level of competition, six jumpers at the tournament were later inducted into the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Hall of Fame.

In 1941, nearly one-half million people went to Washington's mountain resorts. Skiing was a \$1 million industry and there were 65,000 local skiers in Western Washington. Tøkle set another distance record in 1942, jumping 289 feet at Iron Mountain, Michigan, with Engen finishing fourth.

World War II changed everything. Skiing stopped as men went off to war, and women had to deal with war-time living conditions that included rationing of items such as gasoline and tires. U.S. Army Mountain Troops trained at Mount Rainier from 1940 to 1942, before moving to Camp Hale, Colorado, in 1943, and local ski clubs taught soldiers and sailors how to ski on Snoqualmie Pass. Snoqualmie Pass was the only ski area to remain open, as skiers shared their gas ration coupons to drive there. In 1945, Torger Tøkle was

killed in Italy fighting as a member of the 10th Mountain Division. In his short, remarkable career, Tokle had broken 24 jumping records and won 42 of the 48 tournaments in which he competed.

Skiing After WWII

Skiing resumed after WWII, and Washington ski areas were expanded and upgraded. Snoqualmie Summit Ski Area tripled its ski terrain, new rope tows and lights for night skiing were installed. Small ski areas, often with a single rope tow, opened around the state, most of which later closed.

In February, 1945, the Associated Students of the University of Washington bought the Martin Ski Hut from Northern Pacific. The Husky Winter Sports Club improved the lodge, installed rope tows, and offered ski lessons to students. From 1945 to 1949, when the lodge burned down, Martin was used by the U.W. ski team for training and races, and by student skiers.

The National Park Service hardened its policies regarding winter activities within National Parks after the war. It would not allow Mt. Rainier to be used for sanctioned ski meets, permanent ski tows, or ski carnivals or events that would attract large crowds of people. Portable tows could operate if they were removed in the spring. This meant the end of Mount Rainier as one of the state's major ski areas.

The Mount Baker Ski Area planned to spend \$500,000 to build a 100 room lodge and two chair lifts, and four rope tows would be in operation the winter of 1946.

For the 1947 ski season, the Milwaukee Road resumed operations of its Ski Bowl. The first high-capacity ski lift on Snoqualmie Pass was installed, the SkiBoggan. It was a surface lift, a "massive sled that carries 32 snow riders a time up", capable of carrying 1,440 skiers per hour.

In 1947, six jumpers were selected at the Milwaukee Ski Bowl for the U.S. jumping team for the 1948 Olympic Games at St. Moritz, coached by Alf Engen. Gustav Raaum, who won Norway's junior Holmenkollen, stayed to attend the University of Washington, and lead its jumping team, becoming a mainstay of Northwest ski jumping. He was the first of many Norwegians to study at local schools and jump for their college ski teams. Raaum listed 56 Norwegian students who competed for Northwest schools, 41 in Washington.

The big skiing story of 1948 was the winter Olympics in St. Moritz, Switzerland, the first held since 1936, and the first to feature a full array of Alpine events. Three Washington skiers were on the U.S. Olympic team - Gretchen Fraser, Don Amick and David Fairies. Tacoma native Gretchen Kunigk Fraser was the "unexpected heroine", winning a gold medal in the slalom and a silver in the Alpine Combined, narrowly losing to Trude Beiser of Austria by 37/100 of a point in the combined. She was the country's first athlete to win an Olympic medal

in a skiing event.

In 1949, Sverre Kongsgaard, a Norwegian exchange student at the University of Idaho, set a North American distance record at the Ski Bowl, beating Torger Tokle's hill record set in 1941, and his 1942 record at Iron Mountain, Michigan. Ski Acres opened one mile east of the Snoqualmie Summit, with the first chair lift on the Pass. The Spokane Ski Club built a ski jump on Mt. Spokane

A major blow to Northwest skiing came in December 1949, when a \$180,000 fire destroyed the lodge and train depot at the Milwaukee Ski Bowl, and the Milwaukee Road decided not to rebuild the area in the fall of 1950. The *Seattle Times* cancelled its ski school that operated since 1938, teaching more than 20,000 students the fundamentals of controlled skiing. This set back Alpine skiing in Washington for a decade, and the loss of the Ski Bowl's Olympic caliber jumps was a major blow to Northwest ski jumping.

The Leavenworth Winter Sports Club continued to host ski jumping tournaments until 1978, including national championship tournaments in 1959, 1967, 1974, and 1978. Between 1965 and 1970, three North American distance records were set there, and the club hosted several try-outs for the U.S. teams for the Olympic Games. In the early 1960s, Leavenworth native Jim Brennan won the national jumping championships, equaled the national distance record, and competed internationally. In 1972, Leavenworth's Ron Steele was on the U.S. Olympic team, and competed in Saporro, Japan.

Three Washington skiers were on the 1952 Olympic team that competed in Oslo, Norway - Jack Nagel, Janette Burr (later Johnson), and Dorothy Surgenor (who was also on the 1956 Olympic team). In 1952, a poma lift was installed at Snoqualmie Summit Ski Area, and in 1955, the first double chairlift on Snoqualmie Pass was installed there, the Thunderbird, along with the Thunderbird Lodge on the top of the area's highest hill.

In 1954, "a hardy group of Norwegian ski jumpers", led by Olav Ulland, Gustav Raaum and others, formed the Kongsberger Ski Club after the Seattle Ski Club lost interest in ski jumping. The club built a ski jump at Cabin Creek east of Snoqualmie Pass, held competitions, gave jumping instructions, and assisted with jumping competitions at Olympic Games and international competitions. Ragnar Ulland, Olav's 17 year old nephew, was on the 1956 U.S. Olympic Jumping Team coached by Olav, but was hurt and did not compete. In 1958, Olav coached the U.S. team at the World Championships in Finland, and Gustav Raaum was team manager. In 1960, the Kongsbergers ran the jumping events at the Squaw Valley Olympics. At the 1980 Lake Placid Olympics, Raaum was Chief of Competition and Olav Ulland and Magnus Bakke were measurers.

In 1958, the Hyak Ski Area opened. In 1967, Alpentel opened as the fourth ski area on Snoqualmie Pass. Alpine skiing grew as Washington ski areas expanded or were started in the 1950s and 1960s. Major investments were made at Stevens Pass, Mount Baker, Hurricane Ridge (opened in 1957), Mission Ridge (opened in 1962), Crystal Mountain (opened in 1962), White Pass, Mount Spokane, 40 Degrees North, Badger Mountain, Bluewood and elsewhere, as skiing became more popular. In 1965, Crystal hosted the National Alpine Championships that attracted the world's top skiers, including Jean Claude Killy, Jimmie Heuga, and Billy Kidd.

Interest in ski jumping diminished in the 1960s, dropped further in the 1970s, and funding for the sport dried up. The last Leavenworth tournament took place in 1978, (a *National Championship*). In 1982, the *New York Times* said ski jumping's popularity had nosedived and the sport was struggling.

Washington ski resorts have changed ownership over the years. Ski Lifts, Inc., owned by the Webb Moffett family, purchased the three other Snoqualmie Pass ski areas, bringing all four under single management (1980, *Ski Acres*; 1983, *Alpentel*; and 1992, *Hyak*). In 1997, Ski Lifts, Inc. was sold to Booth Creek Holdings and the ski areas were renamed. In 2007, CNL Investment Properties bought the properties, and Boyne USA managed the four areas until 2018, when Boyne Mountain Resorts purchased them. Mission Ridge was purchased in 2003, by Washington's Larry Schrivanich. Crystal Mountain was sold to Boyne Mountain Resorts in 1997, then sold in 2018, to Alterra Mountain Company. Vail Resorts bought Stevens Pass Ski Area in 2018, for \$67 million. The Mt. Spokane Ski Area is operated by a non-profit, Mt. Spokane Ski & Snowboard Park.

The ski industry has long been an important part of Washington's economy. By 1938, skiing was a \$3 million industry bringing 20,000 skiers to the mountains every weekend. According to the Pacific Northwest Ski Areas Association, from 2011 to 2014, there was an average of 2,102,488 annual visits to Washington ski resorts. According to a 2015 report prepared for the Washington State Department of Recreation and Conservation Office, in 2013, expenditures for Alpine skiing in Washington were \$840,706,347, and \$110,327,122 for cross-country skiing, for a total of \$951,033,346, spent by 1,956,469 participants.

Washington's ski industry is thriving today. There are nine Alpine ski areas, six Community ski areas, 24 Nordic Ski Centers, and one helicopter and snowboarding center. Information about these and Washington's 18 "Lost Ski Areas", as well as, the state's 39 Olympians (15 medalists), can be found at the Washington State Ski and Snowboard Museum on Snoqualmie Pass (WSSM).

See www.wssm.org. ■

A Short History of the Sun Valley Ski Resort

by John W. Lundin
Lawyer, Historian and Author



Austrian Count Schaffgotsch, who found the location for Union Pacific's ski resort in the remote mountains of Central Idaho, and Union Pacific Board Chairman Averell Harriman, whose idea it was to build a destination ski resort to restore train passenger service during the Depression, stand in front of the new Sun Valley lodge, 1937



RIGHT: Some of the world's best skiers taught for the Sun Valley Ski School. Here, US Olympian Jack Reddish, Norwegian Olympian Stein Eriksen, Ski School director Sigi Engl, and Austrian Olympian Christian Pravda ski on Baldy, circa 1953.

"Nobody skied better on ice than Stein Eriksen" and Christian Pravda could "go down a hill of extreme bumps and make it look as smooth as a floor." Stein said Sun Valley was "one of the most desirable resorts in the country," with a beautiful mountain and a "certain romance."

photos provided by Center for Regional History Community Library, Ketchum, ID

In December 1936, Sun Valley opened in the remote mountains of Idaho, built for \$1.5 million by Union Pacific Railroad. It was the pet project of U.P. Board Chairman, Averell Harriman, designed to stimulate passenger service decimated by the Great Depression and to generate publicity to add luster to rail travel in the winter. Sun Valley was the country's first destination ski resort, with an ultra-modern lodge and big city amenities, a ski school with Austrian instructors that made skiing sexy, and chair lifts invented by U.P. engineers based on a system to load bananas onto boats, so skiers could ride up mountains quickly and in comfort. Chairs were installed on Proctor and Dollar Mountains, but not on Bald Mountain until 1940, because Baldy was seen as too challenging for most skiers at the time.

Skiing in this country was in its infancy when Sun Valley opened. There were few lifts so one had to be physically fit enough to hike, herringbone, or use skins to climb up hills before skiing down. Equipment was rudimentary, there were few formal ski lessons, and the sport involved more back-country mountaineering than downhill skiing, limiting the sport's appeal.

Called the "St. Moritz of America", Sun Valley began modern skiing in this country. It attracted the carriage trade, Wall Street barons, the Chicago social set, Hollywood stars and producers, and serious skiers from all over the world. Ski racer, Dick Durrance, said it was "the most important influence in the development of American skiing...Its concentrated and highly successful glamorization of the sport got people to want to ski in the first place." It had a monopoly on skiing grandeur for several decades and influenced ski areas that developed later.

Steve Hannagan, Sun Valley's brilliant publicist, said the key to establishing a "chic image" was to use celebrities, attractive women, Olympic stars and monied families. Hannagan convinced *Life* magazine to publish an eight page spread on Sun Valley in March, 1937, giving the resort millions of dollars of free publicity. Articles about the resort appeared throughout the country in many different magazines and newspapers, making it a cultural icon embodying fun and affluence while the country struggled with the effects of the Depression..

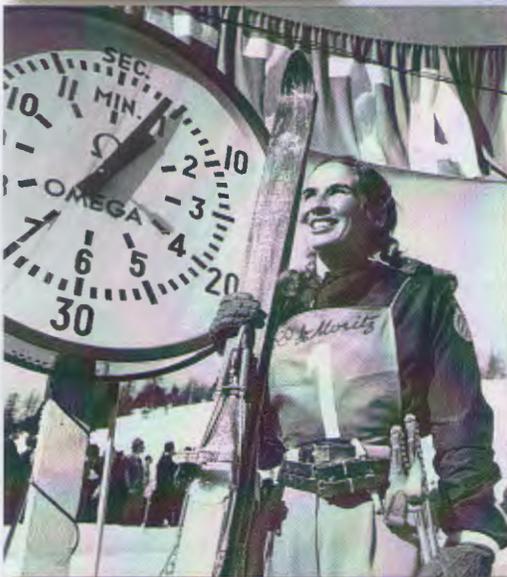
Sun Valley was never intended to make a profit, and required a significant yearly subsidy from Union Pacific, ranging from a quarter million to three quarter million dollars. Harriman said Sun Valley operated with a deficit, but "we didn't run it to make money; we ran it to be a perfect place...and the publicity I thought was worth very much more than the deficit".

Harriman used ski racing to make his new resort an international destination and the country's center of skiing. Sun Valley offered young, talented skiers room and board, jobs and coaching, and hosted major ski tournaments. Harriman Cup Tournaments were the country's most prestigious and competitive events, attracting the best skiers in the world. The American Ski Annual 1943 said, "just as it is the dream



Dartmouth's Dick Durrance, winner of three Harriman Cup tournaments, demonstrates his distinctive skiing style on Bald Mountain, 1940.

photos courtesy of Center for Regional History Community Library, Ketchum, ID



U.S. Olympic teams for the 1948 and 1952 Games were selected at Sun Valley, and trained there afterwards. Best known is Gretchen Fraser, who in 1948, won a gold and silver medal at St. Moritz, the first American to win an Olympic medal in skiing.



Norwegian Stein Eriksen, winner of an Olympic gold medal in the 1952 Olympics, taught at Sun Valley after the Games. Eriksen had been a gymnast as a child, and he performed somersaults every Sunday on Bald Mountain's Ridge Run on the flat area before reaching Rock Garden, entertaining many interested spectators, circa 1953. Warren Miller filmed Stein teaching Christian Pravda and Jack Reddish how to do a forward somersault on skis."

of every tennis player to compete once at Wimbledon, it is every skier's hope to participate in the famous Harriman Cup Races at Sun Valley". U.S. Olympic teams for the 1948 and 1952 Games were selected at Sun Valley, and trained there afterwards. Best known is Gretchen Fraser, who in 1948, won a gold and silver medal at St. Moritz, the first American to win an Olympic medal in skiing.

Averell Harriman began full time war service in June 1940. After the war, he became President Truman's Secretary of Commerce, severed his ties with Union Pacific, and never again played a major role in its management. This was a turning point for Sun Valley, since the resort was Harriman's pet project, never fully supported by railroad management. After serving as a Naval Rehabilitation Hospital during WWII, Sun Valley reopened in December 1946, but it never regained the status it had before the war. It attracted skiers from a broader range of social and economic levels, not just the rich and famous, and focused on convention business. Increasing competition from airlines and cars caused rail passenger traffic to plunge, and Union Pacific began to reduce its subsidy to the resort during the 1950s. Its glory began to fade, although Sun Valley continued to be the country's primary destination ski resort and center of ski racing, and employed some of the world's best skiers in its ski school, such as Stein Eriksen, Christian Pravda and others.

Sun Valley brought European skiing ambiance to America. Illustrating its international influence, in 1950, an Austrian newspaper said with the help of the Marshall Plan, its Arlberg region could become "Austria's Sun Valley".

Sun Valley has had three owners since December, 1936. Each showered the resort with love, support and money (at least for Union Pacific when Harriman was involved), with each owner taking it to a different level. The Janss Company, and later Bill Janss who acquired the resort from his family's company, made significant investments into the Sun Valley Village and the mountain, and developed condominiums, making it a year-around attraction. However, Janss lacked the capital to take it to the next level, and sought a buyer who had the resources to continue development of the resort.

In 1977, Janss sold Sun Valley to the Holding family, owners of Sinclair Oil Company, who made Sun Valley one of the premier year-around resorts in the country and restored its international status. However, unlike the 1930s and 1940s, when Sun Valley was the only high-end ski destination resort, it shares its position in a highly competitive business with other resorts started after WWII.

Ski Magazine's 2020 Resort Guide rated Sun Valley the number two resort in the West for the fifth year in a row, one of the most consistent resorts in its survey, with "an impressive" seven No. 1 category rankings - Lifts, Service, Lodging, Down Day Activities, Family, Charm, and Overall Satisfaction. That's the most No. 1s of any resort - West or East. "If there was a ranking for ski history, Sun Valley would be No. 1!" ■

**The Intermountain Ski Council
joined the
Far West Ski Association
in 2007. States within ISC include
Idaho, Utah, Wyoming and
South Dakota.**

About the Author:

John W. Lundin's great-grandparents moved to Bellevue, Idaho, in 1881. They were early pioneers in the Wood River Valley, and John has done extensive research about the history of the area. His two books about Sun Valley and the Wood River Valley were published in 2020. *Sun Valley, Ketchum and the Wood River Valley*, an images of America series book, describes the history of the Wood River Valley from its mining days and the arrival of the railroad, through the sheep raising and agricultural era, to the development of the Sun Valley Resort, using 200 historic pictures. *Skiing Sun Valley: a History from Union Pacific to the Holdings*, is an in-depth history of the Sun Valley Resort using original Union Pacific materials, oral histories from people involved with the resort from its beginning, other contemporaneous documents, and 180 historic pictures. The books are available from local and national bookstores. John was scheduled to give the First John Fry Memorial lecture on *Early Sun Valley, Union Pacific, Averell Harriman and Alf Engen*, to the joint meeting of the US Ski and Snowboard Hall of Fame and International Ski Hall of Fame in Sun Valley in March 2020, but the meeting was cancelled because of COVID-19.

John is helping to prepare an exhibit on the history of ski jumping in Washington with the National Nordic Museum and Washington State Ski and Snowboard Museum, scheduled to open in January, 2021. John's book, *Ski Jumping in Washington - a Nordic Tradition*, published by History Press, will be part of the exhibit, with profits going to both museums.