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Leif

THE FLYING NORSEMAN

BY

LEIF HOVELSEN

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Martin Dolan, General Editor

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Dedicated
in gratitude
to the
people of America.

Foreword

The sport of skiing has a long and interesting history, and Carl Howelsen, "The Flying Norseman," is a fascinating part of it. He came from Norway where his ancestors were skiing 4500 years ago, where a Viking king was described by a chronicler of the times as a "skillful skier" 1000 years ago, and where the world's oldest ski race has been held since 1879. He came to the United States in 1905 and gave thousands of people all across America their first look at the sport of skiing. He came to Steamboat Springs, Colorado, and started the town skiing in 1913 and he was called the "Father of Skiing in Colorado."

Today our Colorado ski areas are known throughout the world, but just two generations ago there were very few ski tracks seen in the Rockies. In 1958 I made my first ski trip to Colorado for the National Junior Championships from my home in Stowe, Vermont. Carrying my skis through what was then Idlewild Airport in New York, people kept asking me, "What are those?" I told them they were skis and I remember one person said, "I know skiing. How high do you jump?"

I started skiing when I was five years old and ski jumping was one of the things that originally got me hooked on the sport. Growing up in Vermont, I spent hours jumping in my backyard and tied rope around my bicycle wheels so I could ride over the snowy streets to the jumping hill at the University of Vermont. There I would jump until it was too dark to see the landing hill. All kids love to jump on skis and often find that feeling of flying even before they learn to turn. It's hard to keep them down on the ground. They seem to know instinctively that a pair of skis is more than just a way of sliding downhill . . . it's also a ticket to freedom from the constraints of gravity.

Carl Howelsen, the Flying Norseman of this book, obviously understood this feeling perfectly. A champion skier from Norway, he came to this country to work as a stone mason in Chicago. In that unlikely spot he was discovered by the Barnum and Bailey Circus, and he went on to become a star attraction of the "Greatest Show on Earth," making daring jumps of over 80 feet for enthusiastic audiences in places like Madison Square Garden. In an era that had only a few years before seen the Wright Brothers fly in a rather complicated machine, Howelsen showed how man could fly with a simple pair of wooden skis attached to his feet.

After leaving the circus, Howelsen eventually found his way to Colorado and to the small town of Steamboat Springs where he was captivated by the beautiful Yampa Valley, the surrounding mountains, the ranches and the people. The same thing happened to me. Like Carl, I too left my hometown and came west to settle in Steamboat. I fell in love with this valley, the mountains along the Continental Divide, the friendly people, and especially the combination of powder snow and sunshine that make this one of my favorite places in the world to ski. This book will delight anyone who shares this love of Steamboat Springs and the Colorado Rockies, and will fascinate anyone who loves adventure and the sport of skiing.

It may be appropriate that this exciting story about Carl Howelsen is written by his son Leif, a champion of world peace and human rights who spent two years in a Nazi prison, captured while serving in the Norwegian underground during the German occupation. As a child, growing up in Norway, Leif heard about his father's exploits with the circus — and also about a lovely small town in the Rockies which reminded his dad of his home in Norway. But it wasn't until many years later that Leif decided to come to that town, and learn why it had meant so much to his father.

Carl Howelsen started a skiing tradition that endures to this day and has had far reaching consequences for the sport. He started the Steamboat Winter Carnival in 1914. He built small jumps all over town for the kids to practice on, and he built a big jump on what is now called Howelsen Hill where a world record was set in 1916, and which has now become one of the best ski jumping complexes in the world. Most important, he showed the people of this small Colorado ranching community that winter doesn't have to be a season of hibernation . . . it can provide just as much healthy activity and fun as any other season. When he finally left Steamboat and went back to Norway in 1921 the enthusiasm for winter sports that he had started here remained and Steamboat went on to produce more Olympic skiers than any other town in America. Those skiers, including the great Buddy Werner, not only helped put Steamboat on the map, but also gave America an image of skiing that would influence thousands of people to become skiers.

Even those of us who have been skiing most of our lives are not aware of the roots and tradition of skiing in Colorado. In that respect, *The Flying Norseman* gives us valuable historical information about the adventurous life of Carl Howelsen, and a look at how a form of travel and communication became one of the most popular sports in the world today.

— Billy Kidd
Olympic Silver Medalist, Austria, 1964
World Alpine Championship Gold Medalist, Italy, 1970

OUT WEST PHOTO - BOULDER

Carl Howelsen, after leaping a record 171 feet during the 1917 Steamboat Springs Winter Carnival.

Introduction

SOMETIMES MAN DOES CRAZY THINGS. It is part of his nature. At times, it can even be right to do crazy things . . . such as writing this book. It is a crazy undertaking indeed for a foreigner to write a book in a language other than his own. It is my attempt, however, to tell a story that needs to be told.

The name Carl Howelsen is known throughout Colorado, and in Steamboat Springs in particular. Yet people in the Rockies know hardly anything about the background and life of the pioneer who has been described as the "Father of Skiing in Colorado."

At a time when the young tend to have a small sense of tradition and history, I have attempted to paint a picture of Carl Howelsen in the setting and time in which he lived. His story is told as a contribution to the not-yet-written skiing history of the West.

Working through newspapers, reading correspondence and documents, visiting historical societies in the East and West of America, talking with people who shared memories of the skiing pioneer, Carl Howelsen, trying to form a picture of the 12 years the "Flying Norseman" roamed the mountains and towns of Colorado, it became clear that historical sources are few and insufficient. Enough material is available, however, to get some idea of how modern skiing took root, grew, and then expanded across the mountainous state.

As time goes on, Americans will undoubtedly write a complete history of skiing in Colorado and the West. They will come across new and different material which can enrich and complement this account of "The Flying Norseman."

I want especially to thank ski historian Jakob Vaage of Bekkestua, Norway, for his personal interest and invaluable help, not least of all for letting me so freely make use of his books and research material.

I also thank the Eckbo Legat Foundation in Oslo, Norway, for underwriting the costs of needed research work in the United States which allowed the manuscript to become "airborne."

My special thanks to photographer David Thiemann of Steamboat Springs, and writer David Allen of Seattle for their invaluable help in editing the book, artist William Cameron-Johnson of London for the book cover and to publication chairman and general editor Martin Dolan of Marquette who gave such selfless and valuable help in getting *The Flying Norseman* printed. I am filled with gratitude to the National Ski Hall of Fame for publishing the book in its Mather Monograph Series.

What would I have done without Mrs. Sunny Powell of Seattle, Washington, who, out of the kindness of her heart, typed out the manuscript.

Not least, my deeply felt thanks to Dorothy Wither, Anna Nay, Eleanor Bliss, George and Marian Tolles, and John and Criss Fetcher, who so generously sponsored my stay in Colorado while I wrote this book.

"Sky High," Steamboat Springs, February 1983
— Leif Hovelsen

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1. From Morgedal to the World

Is there anything more fascinating than skiing?

For some, skiing is the latest fashion: the fanciest boots, the tightest stretch pants, the fastest skis, a show of glamour. For some, it is the goldmine of an expanding business. For some, it is the bitter memory of accidents and hospital bills. But for most people, skiing is the unique experience of speed, daring, fresh air and the joy of being one with Nature.

Sweeping down a slope, curving gracefully into a turn while the wind whistles past your ears and a cloud of powder snow shoots into the air — down, down, faster and faster, feeling your skis skimming lightly through the white surface of snow at top speed like a hydrofoil on the blue sea, still body and skis under control . . . does something to you.

Gliding across the countryside with the forest and the hills as your friend, making your own ski tracks and sensing the stillness and the majesty of nature and the universe . . . does something to you.

Sailing like a bird in space, stretching out and resting on the air, then landing on the "outrun" and curving to a stop . . . does something to you.

There is no sport in our modern world that has caught the imagination, the dreams and the active participation of so many millions of people as skiing has today. In America alone, about 18 million people are enjoying the thrill of the "white sport." Only two generations ago, hardly anyone on this vast continent knew about the "long flat runners, called skis."

"The American Indian has his snowshoe," ski historian Jakob Vaage records, "the Eskimo his sled, the Norseman his skis." Skiing is both very old and very new at the same time. The earliest pictorial representation of skiing known to man is a rock carving from the island of Roedoey, Norway, which archeologists date as far back as 2000 B.C. Relics of skis have been found in bogs in Sweden, Finland, and Norway estimated to be 4,500 years old. In Norse mythology, the god Ull was the protector of skiing and hunting, and Skade was the ski-goddess.

Roedoey rock-carving from the Stone Age. Norway.

The great saga writer of the Nordic nations of Europe, Snorre Sturalson (1179-1241), tells us that the Viking kings around the year 1000 were skillful skiers. In the *Saga of King Sverre,* appearing 200 years later, we hear for the first time that skis were used for military purposes. In the civil war in Norway

at that time (1130-1240), ski troopers were used to spy out the location of enemy forces.

Ever since the war between Sweden and Norway in 1716, there have been military skiing patrols and skiing companies as an integral part of the Norwegian Army.

Thus, through the ages, skis have been historically significant in the life of the nations in northern Europe.

There are ski historians who maintain that the Laplanders of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and the inhabitants of the Ural Mountains of Russia, were the very first to use skis. They depended on hunting to exist, and skis were a necessity, particularly for the Lapps who had to look after their reindeer herds.

In remote valleys and scattered farms across Nordic countries, people had no alternative. Without skis, they would have been snowbound for several months each winter. Families went to weddings and funerals on skis. The doctor, the midwife, and the parson could always rely on their skis to bring them to their patients and those in need. Farmers in isolated valleys were glad when they heard the distant sound of the posthorn and the mail carrier arriving on skis with messages from relatives and friends.

IN THOSE DAYS, skiing provided a means of communication and transportation, not recreation. Sport skiing developed in the middle of the nineteenth century. The first organized cross-country race in the world took place high above the Arctic Circle in the city of Tromsoe, Norway, in the winter of 1843. The *Tromsoe Times* of March 19, 1843, published the following "invitation to a ski race:"

"At four p.m., Tuesday, March 21, certain persons intend, weather and skiing conditions permitting, to test the speed of their skis and their own staying power in a race from Town Hall to the well at Merchant Ebeltoft's house on the other side of the island and back. They expect to complete the course in 40 minutes. Assemble in the market place at 3:45. All skiers, including those who use ordinary skis and those who use short ones — in a word, all who are interested in a genuine Norwegian contest — are invited to take part. NB: Those who think they can complete the course in a shorter time on short skis are welcome to try."

Later the paper commented about the race, "On returning, all were red in the face as lobsters. The crowd was also greatly amused when various competitors, skiing downhill at full speed, lost their balance and bathed their tired bodies in the cold snow."

The race was an apparent success. A few days later, the same newspaper could report, "Skiing has become a real national recreation, inasmuch as most youth of the town and some of the older citizens have recently tried this brisk and very beneficial physical exercise."

Although skiing was known throughout the nations in northern Europe for ages, modern skiing, the so-called recreational and competitive skiing, originated in the county of Telemark, Norway, in the 1850s. In the hilly valley of Morgedal, where the winters were long and the snow deep, there lived a man by the name of Sondre Norheim, born in 1825. He started nothing less than a

revolution when he invented his ski-binding about 1860. Norheim was the first man to use a willow binding around the heel from each side of the toe strap to fasten boots to the ski, thus improving the handling of the skis.

Sondre Norheim did something else. He enhanced the steering ability of the ski itself. Built on the experiences of generations, he designed a ski of such remarkable quality that it became the pattern for all modern skis — even for the "sophisticated" slalom skis of today. It was shorter with slightly concave sides.

The steep mountainsides and hilly slopes of Morgedal Valley were a wonderful testing ground for Norheim and his ski equipment. Sliding in curves down the mountains, using trees and bushes as slalom gates, jumping over heaps of sawwood and snow-smothered bunkhouses, speeding down slopes with a halting, graceful, circular turn, known as the "Telemark turn," he became an artist of the skiing craft. Incidentally, it was also he who created the "christiania turn," known today as the "christie." In Morgedal and far beyond, Sondre became the shining example of a skier for the young sports-minded boys and girls who dreamed of becoming his equal.

VAAGE

Sondre Norheim jumps from an 18-feet high roof in Morgedal.

It was several years, however, before the unique idea of Sondre's skibinding won acceptance. When news reached the capital, Christiania (Oslo), a lively discussion about his invention broke loose. People were horrified. The "know-how guys" branded it a most dangerous invention. "With skis fastened to your boots, you're doomed to break your legs!" they said. "No, it's much safer with the old toe-straps! The traditional way, the way it has been done for centuries, is the best," the so-called experts proclaimed. However, the long heavy skis with toe-straps of those days were rather difficult to steer, and almost impossible to handle at high speed.

In the winter of 1868, a ski race was announced. It was to be held at Iversloekken hill on the outskirts of Christiania. The men of Telemark County got wind of it, so off they went on their skis all the way to the capital, a good 100 miles from their valley. Participants from neighboring counties and cities turned up with their long skis and poles. They were all to make a ski-jump, go downhill and end the race with a short cross-country run.

Sondre Norheim came along with his shorter skis and bindings and put in a performance that made skiers and spectators gasp and marvel. He jumped without his poles and maneuvered his skis with elegance and ease. He was far superior to anyone else. People in Christiania had not seen anything like it.

"This day, the 9th of February 1868," ski historian Jakob Vaage writes in *The World of Skiing*, "is a red-letter day in Norwegian skiing history. A new epoch has started."

Sondre Norheim and his ski binding, 1860.

VAAGE

FRITZ HUITFELDT, a prominent skier who invented the Huitfeldt binding a few decades later, was present at Sondre's astounding performance. Many years after, he wrote about it in one of the skiing magazines:

"Without a stick, on a narrow track, Sondre Norheim took the hill's bumps with ease. With the resilience of a steel spring, he leaped into the air at the jump and hovered on his skis like a bird. A light bend of the knees showed that he had landed, and a moment later he had come to a stop with an elegant Telemark turn. . . .

"The astonished crowd stood spellbound. He was like a vision!, people yelled and shouted. They looked about them and laughed and could not believe their eyes . . . . They instinctively understood that something great had happened, and they wanted to see the vision again . . . ."

Sondre Norheim, with his improved bindings, shorter skis, and new technique, had won the day. Through this victory, the skiers of Telemark were sent for again and again to join the winter contests in Christiania. They were invited to give instruction in the new technique, and as a result, in 1877, the Christiania Ski Club was founded. At that time, an ideal jumping and cross-country facility was laid out on the outskirts of the capital, and in 1879 the club arranged the first big national competition on Huseby Hill.

The event turned out to be quite a success. A delegation of 13 jumpers came from Telemark. More than 10,000 spectators found their way to Huseby Hill, coming by their horses and sleighs or travelling on foot in the deep snow. King Oscar II was present with a train of royalty and attendants. He and his retinue were standing close to the takeoff, watching the jumpers as they leaped into the air. When the first skier from Telemark took off, he soared about 60 feet and disappeared in a blizzard of snow, making the Telemark turn on the outrun. Then he sped along the two-mile cross-country track.

Prince Hans of Denmark was spellbound. He turned to the King and exclaimed, "It can't possibly be true! They're absolutely mad!" Before the race, the Prince had refused to believe that anyone could fly through the air on those boards called skis, as Jakob Vaage records in his book, *Holmenkollbakken.*

From that day on, the skiing events at Huseby Hill turned into a national occasion for the whole country. King Oscar II honored the Huseby Races by giv-

ing a grand prize to the best skier. The King's Cup, a big silver trophy, became the most coveted prize one could win. And the King was always present when the yearly Huseby competition took place.

Sondre Norheim was, without doubt, the best skier in the country in the 1860-70s. In the following decade, two other men from Telemark became the most popular skiers at the Huseby races. They were the Hemmestveit brothers, Torjus and Mikkel. They won most of the King's Cups at the time. In 1888, Torjus Hemmestveit also won the first 50-kilometer cross-country race and set a record of 4 hours, 26 minutes and 30 seconds — a record that was unbeaten until 1903 when Karl Hovelsen from Christiania won with a time of 4 hours, 17 minutes and 26 seconds.

As skiing prospered, the facilities of Huseby Hill and its surroundings became too small. In 1892, a new site was found for the yearly high point of sports skiing. A far better jumping hill and an area with unlimited possibilities for cross-country races was developed at Holmenkollen, 1,200 feet above Christiania in the forest and hills of Nordmarka. For generations after, Holmenkollen remained the premier wintersports arena and ski mecca of the world.

In 1903, the first Nordic Winterfestival took place in Holmenkollen and Christiania. A whole week was dedicated to the celebration of wintersports: cross-country skiing, ski jumping, ski-joring (skiers pulled by horses), ice skating, and sleighing. It was the first year that skiers from outside Norway took part in the different races. A delegation of 42 competitors came from neighboring Sweden. Thus, the Holmenkollen Winter Sports Week was established as the national and international winterfestival of the year, a tradition that has been interrupted only once, during the Nazi occupation of Norway in World War II.

Huseby jumping hill, 1879-1891.

Holmenkollen Hill, 1896.

HARDLY 50 YEARS HAD PASSED since Sondre Norheim and the men of Telemark had introduced a new skiing technique. By 1900, the whole of Norway had become familiar with the sport. Old and young, from ages 3 to 93, discovered the thrill of getting out on skis and into the natural wonders of the country. Youngsters were building ski jumps everywhere and learning how to jump. The skiers of Telemark had kindled a fire of excitement that swept through the country and all of Scandinavia.

Few have described the feeling of people at that time better than the legendary Fridtjof Nansen, the man who captured the imagination of the world when he crossed Greenland on skis in 1888.

"Of all sports of Norway," he wrote in 1890, "skiing is the most national, and a magnificent sport it is, thoroughly deserving of the title, 'the sport of sports.' I know of nothing better for hardening the muscles and making the body strong and supple, for developing the qualities of resourcefulness and dexterity, and for strengthening the will or invigorating the mind. Is there anything more exhilarating or delightful on a fresh winter day than to don your skis and set off for the woods? Is there anything more grand and gracious than our northern landscape when the thick snow lies in soft white drifts over woods and hills? Where will you find more freedom and excitement than in speeding, swift as a bird, down the tree-clad hillside, winter air and spruce branches rushing past your face and eyes, brain and muscles alert, ready to avoid the unknown obstacles which at any moment may be thrown in your path? It is as if all civilization were suddenly washed from your mind and left, with the city atmosphere, far behind. You become at one with your skis and with nature. Skiing is something which develops not only the body, but also the soul, and it is of greater importance to a nation than is generally supposed. Long may it continue! May skiing develop and flourish as long as there are men and women in Norwegian valleys."

Fridtjof Nansen in the mountains, 1881.

Modern skiing, having enthralled Scandinavia, spread and expanded outside its native borders. Within a generation skiing had captured the imagination of the world.

This happened in a most extraordinary way. It was not planned, nor was it ever throught of. It happened by accident or rather by the "Norwegian way of life!"

A hundred years ago, Norway was a poor country. People suffered through hard times. Thousands emigrated to find their fortune elsewhere in the world. Wherever Norwegians went in those years they carried the passion for skiing with them. Some also brought their skis, but most people left them at home, not knowing whether they would find snow where they settled. However, wherever white winters set in, Norwegian immigrants soon had skis and, as in their native country, they made their ski tracks in the woods, the hills, the mountains, on the prairies — wherever fate had brought them. They had skiing in their blood; it was their way of life, their expression of joy and adventure, an urge they could not get rid of.

Thus they carried skiing to the countries of the world, to people who had never seen nor heard about it before — and sure enough, the skiing seed took root everywhere.

In Australia, New Zealand, and Alaska, Norwegian gold diggers and miners introduced skiing for the first time. In China, it was missionaries from Norway who brought skis to that vast country as early as 1899. In Japan, skiing was initiated by the Norwegian Consul in Kobe in 1901. In South America, ski tracks could be seen in 1890 high up in the Andes Mountains. Norwegian skiers and adventurers delivered the mail from Argentina over the mountains to Valparaiso in Chile during the winter months when every other means of transport was blocked. In the summer of 1915, two Norwegians on skis conquered the highest mountain of South America, Mount Aconcagua, with its 22,835-foot summit. Since then skiing has become a common sport both in Argentina and in Chile.

Norwegians introduced skiing in the continent of Africa in 1904. It came about because of a military maneuver in the Atlas Mountains. The soldiers were stuck in a blizzard. When they did not return, two Norwegians with skis went out to search for them, and succeeded. That incident provided the impulse for skiing in Africa.

Unbelievable as it may seem, it is a fact that Norway introduced modern skiing in Europe. Around 1900, many students and adult Norwegians who wanted to learn about industry went to Germany, France and Switzerland. They brought skis with them. In their free time, they sought out the mountains and hills in order to enjoy the white sport. Winters were long and snow was abundant in Europe. People did not yet know about modern skiing. In many European mountain towns, people were closed in for the winter. When the students, engineers, teachers, soldiers and adventurers from Norway got around on their skis, it started an avalanche of interest in the sport, and soon Norwegian skiing instructors were asked for in Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Austria, France and Spain.

Russia, too, was introduced to modern skiing through Norwegians. In the 1880's, several Norwegians lived in St. Petersburg (Leningrad). They had brought skis with them and used them eagerly during the winter in Jusupof Park. Soon skis were imported from Norway, and interested Russians were taught how to use them. Other Norwegians brought skiing to Archangel in the very north in 1875.

In the 1890s, skiing was also introduced by Norwegians to Estonia and the Baltic countries. The interest was so great that a sports shop for skiing equipment was established in Riga in 1907.

It was Norwegian immigrants who brought skiing to America and Canada. In many ways, as Jakob Vaage wrote in *The World of Skiing,* "the sport of modern skiing was the gift of Norway to the world." From that beginning, other nations have contributed to the development of skiing as it is today.

THE CONTINENT OF America can serve as an example of how the ski revolution occurred — how immigrants and passionate skiers kicked off the avalanche of that sport thrill which today is enjoyed by approximately 18 million Americans.

In the year 1825, the sloop *Restoration* sailed from the coastal city of Stavanger, Norway, setting course for the New World. On board were 52 poor, but hope-filled emigrants. They were the first large group to set out on the great adventure. The passage to America took three and a half months. In the span of the hundred years that followed, more than 797,000 of their countrymen joined them in the land of freedom and opportunity.

None became as famous among these early pioneers as John Tostensen Rui. Born in a tenant's cabin in Telemark in 1837, he emigrated with his family at the age of ten. In the United States, the Tostensens Americanized their name, as did many other of their countrymen, now calling themselves Thompson. And John Thompson became the legendary "Snow-Shoe" Thompson who crossed the Sierra Nevada Mountains on skis, carrying the mail between California and Nevada.

In October 1886, *Overland Magazine* wrote about Snow-Shoe Thompson.

sted som sivilisasjonen nadde og sokte a overvinne, og hvor vi lever.
Han var pioneren!

Valley nær Woodford's tirsdag aften (16. mai). Han hadde bare ligget til sengs fire dager etter en leversykdom. Hans forste tur ble utfort i 1856 i

VAAGE

The enthusiasm of the Placerville people when "Snow-Shoe" Thompson returned after his first round-trip to Carson City is illustrated by this contemporary drawing.

En gammel tegning som viser begeistringen da «Snowshoe» Thompson vendte tilbake etter sin forste tur fra Placerville til Carson City og retur.

"His first trip was made in January 1856. He went from Placerville to Carson Valley, a distance of 90 miles. With the mail strapped on his back, he glided over fields of snow that were in places 30 to 50 feet in depth, his long Norwegian shoes bearing safely and swiftly along the surface of the great drifts. Having successfully made the trip to Carson Valley and back to Placerville, Snow-Shoe Thompson became a necessity, and was soon a fixed institution of the mountains. He went right ahead and carried the mails between the two points all that winter. Through him was kept up the only land communication there was between the Atlantic States and California." Jakob Vaage records that the actual mail service of Snow-Shoe Thompson was between Placerville, California and Genoa, Nevada — not Carson Valley.

Snow-Shoe Thompson carried the mail for 20 years. He did not dodge a trip, even when snow storms and bad weather raged in the mountains. Every time he skied the 40 miles into the mountains he carried a 40- or 50-pound mailbag on his back. Snow-Shoe Thompson became as popular as the Pony Express, bringing the mail before winter set in. In time he was called "The Snow-Shoe Express." If it had not been for that rugged "telemarking," the mail for those three to four months of winter would have been sent by ship between California and the Atlantic States around Cape Horn. The sea voyage took about two months at that time.

In Diamond Valley, not far from Genoa, Nevada, a tombstone was later erected in his honor. It reads, "In memory of John A. Thompson, native of Norway, departed this life May 15, 1876, aged 49 years 16 days — Gone, but not forgotten."

Historical records show that Norwegian skiers roamed the Sierra Nevada Mountains even before Snow-Shoe Thompson started his mail service in 1856. Stories were told of Norwegian sailors who left their ships in San Francisco and found their way in 1849 to the gold digging counties of Plumas and Sierra to try their luck. When winter isolated those rugged areas, they made skis and explored the tempting mountains. They also passed time in those desolate mining communities by enjoying downhill races.

The following is a newspaper report of such a race which has significance for two reasons. It might be the first report ever printed in the United States

about a ski race. Secondly, the story tells us that skiers were using wax at that time. They called it "dope." It appears likely that miners in California were the first ones in the world to wax (dope) their skis. Not until 20 years later did wax appear in Norway during the races at Huseby Hill, Jakob Vaage records.

The *Mountain Messenger*, Downieville, California, reported on February 14, 1863, that a race was held between a Norwegian, Andrew Jacobsen, and an American, Ike Zent. It was run on February 5 in Sierra Hills, and the report says: "The race came off in the presence of quite a crowd of literally fast men from the neighboring towns of Pine Grove, Poker Flat, Cold Canyon, Gibsonville, Whisky Digging, etc. The friends of Jacobsen appeared quite enthusiastic and confident. It was not generally understood until we reached the course — when the fact was announced, that Ike Zent was the man selected by the Whisky Digging Magnates to battle in their behalf and maintain, if possible, the ancient reputation of Whisky for fast men. The race, heretofore announced in the *Mountain Messenger* was for $100 a side. A great many outside bets were made, and probably $1,000 was lost and won on the results on the race.

"I heard of a miner from Poker Flat, who invested $300 on Jacobsen and doubled his capital. A few words will suffice to describe the race: At the word, 'Go,' the two men got a fair and even start, on ground comparatively level, and before they reached the steep part of the course, where fast running was expected, Jacobsen was so far ahead of his competitor that Zent threw out his pole and stopped himself, remarking to his friends, 'It is of no use to run through; the wax will not work!'

"So, you will see that the race apparently was lost on the part of the Whisky boys from lack of care in preparing their dope!

"Jacobsen, not knowing that Ike Zent had stopped, ran through with, I think, the average speed of a pigeon. It was estimated by those who qualified to judge that he made the half-mile in less than 20 seconds.

"At present we have a right to say, 'Great is dope, and Jacobsen is its prophet' by whom we all swear — Dope. Yours truly, Warren Howland Flat, February 12, 1863."

IN THE EAST, MIDWEST, and Northwest, skiing spread far and wide through settlers who had emigrated from Norway between 1875 and 1895, and they were many — 263,000 altogether.

Records tell, however, that transplants from Norway had been skiing in the Chicago area as early as 1836 and 1841; in Wisconsin in 1844; in Minnesota in 1852; in New Hampshire in 1854; and as far west as Canyon City, Oregon in 1863.

It was through the Norwegian immigration of 1875-95 that skiing took its greatest leap forward. The settlers of that period were mostly poor farmers and tenants who had left Norway out of necessity. Through hard work and with the help of relatives and good friends, they finally got to the "Promised Land." Among them were the elite skiers of Telemark, some 40 in number, the very men who had been competing at Huseby Hill and in the valleys of Telemark.

Sondre Norheim, with his wife and seven children, settled in North Dakota in 1884. Mikkel Hemmestveit arrived in Minnesota in 1886, and his brother, Torjus, joined him in 1889. Another winner of the King Oscar II Cup, John Hauge, arrived from Morgedal in 1882. Most of these men had sold their silver trophies to try their luck in the New World. They bought their lands. They built their log cabins. They started to farm. When winter came and the snow fell deep, they cheered up, made skis and found a way of communicating with each other. Soon jumping hills were built and they organized to race against one another.

In the 1880's, ski clubs of Norwegian settlers grew up all over the Northwest and Midwest: the Minneapolis Ski Club, 1885; the St. Paul Ski Club, 1885; the Aurora Ski Club, Redwing, 1886; the Norden Ski Club — later called the Ishpeming (Michigan) Ski Club, 1887; the Ada Ski Club, 1887; the Stillwater Ski Club, 1887; the Stoughton Ski Club, 1888; the Eau Claire Ski Club, 1888; and the LaCrosse Ski Club, 1888, to mention some of them.

Ski race on the "the tobaggon slide" in St. Paul about 1890. In 1886, St. Paul instituted a yearly Winter Carnival.

In January 1887, 50 to 60 skiers gathered for a meet in St. Paul, Minnesota. A year later on January 17, 1888, a skiing race took place in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. It was reported in one of the American papers:

"This has been a great day for Norway. Seven skiing clubs from Wisconsin and Minnesota were represented. Two hundred skiers participated, and 6,000 spectators were spellbound by the daring jumping and the downhill race. They were surprised by the bravery and the skill of the skiers and cheered them with jubilation, enthusiastic exclamation and shouts of 'Hurray'."

The ski clubs and ski races were of great importance, giving the settlers a sense of belonging together and furthering a tradition from their native land. It was a "little Norway" being merged with that enormous new continent where they now belonged. Equally important was the spontaneously warm contact between spectators and skiers. It gave them a spark of encouragement from their American neighbors which they took to their hearts. There was nothing they now wanted more than to help skiing flourish among America's teeming population.

Torjus Hemmestveit expressed it in a letter to the Christiania Ski Club back home in Norway. "The root of skiing," he wrote, "originated in Morgedal. Then we men of Telemark took a cutting from it and planted it in America where it now is growing and thriving."

AN EVENT OF GREAT importance for skiing took place in 1904. It happened in the mining town of Ishpeming, Michigan. For years Norwegians had lived there. Skiing was already a strong tradition. One of the first jumping hills in the United States had been built in this town. Every year a skiing race was arranged on George Washington's birthday. And on this particular February twenty-second of 1904, a handful of enthusiastic Norwegian ski leaders decided to make something special of the day. After the race was over, Carl Tellefsen, another good skier who had immigrated to Ishpeming in 1888, brought them together in his office. This handful of Norwegians discussed the future of skiing late into the night, and by early morning had founded "The National Ski Association of America." Carl Tellefsen was elected president, and his countryman, Aksel Holter, was tapped as secretary. The framework to organize skiing on a national scale had been established.

The man who did more than anyone else to promote skiing across America for the next two decades was the newly-elected secretary. Aksel Holter's capacity for work was enormous. A man of great initiative, he travelled around, as one American put it, "as a living propaganda-poster for the advancement of skiing." By the year 1919, the National Ski Association encompassed 30 clubs from all over the United States.

Aksel Holter was, of course, a skier himself, born in Christiania in 1873. As a boy, he went to the yearly races at Huseby Hill, admiring the skiing performances of Mikkel and Torjus Hemmestveit. Then Holter emigrated to America. The ticket for the voyage he earned by himself. From daylight to dark, he shovelled snow for neighbors on the street where he lived. He kept pavements and yards clean and in perfect order. The money he earned was put in the bank. In the spring of 1888, at the age of only 15, he set off alone across the Atlantic. When he arrived in New York, he had four dollars in his pocket. He managed to find his way to relatives in Minnesota, Jakob Vaage records.

Aksel Holter was typical of so many Norwegian immigrants of those years. They came bare-handed to the New World. But in the land of freedom and opportunity, they made it. They, too, played their constructive parts in making America great.

In the time span of 1895-1915, a new wave of emigrants left Norway. This time, the number approached 256,000. Among them were other famous skiers who in their own way were to leave their mark on the Skiing History of America.

One of them was Karl Hovelsen from Christiania. He pioneered skiing in Colorado, and this book is his story.

NATIONAL SKI HALL OF FAME

The founders of the U. S. National Ski Association, Ishpeming, Mich. 1904.

2. Hardship and Victory

Karl Hovelsen was born March 23, 1877, in Christiania, third in a family of eleven. His father was a shoemaker by trade and owned a shoe and repair shop in Pilestraedet, nearly half a mile north of the city center. He must have been a skillful craftsman or "VIPs" like authors Henrik Ibsen and Bjoernstjerne Bjoernson would not have come to him. Mrs. Hovelsen, a keen reader of books, was especially proud of this fact.

Christiania was rather a provincial city at the time with a population of some 100,000 inhabitants. It was distinguished for its bustling harbor, and splendid untouched surroundings of forests and hills, lakes and rivers.

In what sort of environment did Karl Hovelsen and youngsters of those days grow up? It differed sharply from today. There were no fast cars or ten-speed bikes, no discos, no TVs or video games, not even a movie house to go to. There were no supermarkets to get lost in, just the small grocery store around the corner. Life was simple and bereft of the comforts, abundance and thousands of mass-produced toys and sporting goods of today. Thus, choices were simple for youngsters of that day. There was for the most part only the ball, the fishing rod, and the one-speed bicycle.

Nevertheless, they lived in a fascinating time of discovery and adventure. Just beyond the familiar streets and everyday life of the town was the wide world of Nordmarka, free for anyone to explore. All year round, this eldorado of wilderness and wildlife provided a paradise. Youngsters were off hiking, camping, and watching the capercaillie mating game. They were fishing and swimming in the lakes. They were climbing the rocky hills and running races across the marshy fields by jumping from tussock to tussock. And, when winter and snow came, they made ski trails everywhere, tumbling in the snow and building ski jumps where slopes were ideal for them.

The sound of wind through the forest, the song of birds in the trees, and the murmurs of winding brooks were their discotheque. The clear fresh water of streams was their Coca Cola and Seven-Up. A hunk of home-made bread was their Mac-Donald's and potato chips. Bicycles were their "hot rods."

BERGSLAND: *PA SKI*

The alluring Nordmarka.

Perhaps in no other generation in Norway, certainly in none before their's, did outdoor life, skiing, and the adventure of exploring mean so much as to the youngsters of the last two decades of the nineteenth century. The spirit of the times also merged with the awakening of a national identity.

If we compare it with our time, we'd have to use this imagery. Huseby Hill and the Holmenkollen Arena were the Cape Canaveral of that time, and Sondre Norheim, Mikkel and Torjus Hemmestvelt were the daring and earth-defying astronauts. Fridtjof Nansen did not fly to the moon, but he explored the unknown, crossing the arctic wastes of Greenland on skis. He was the greatest hero of that age.

These men challenged, touched and motivated the younger generation to explore and enjoy the outdoor life, and to launch into the adventure of sports skiing as well.

Another feature of the times was the reality of work. People looked at work and skillful craftsmanship with pride and reverence. Labor was one of life's accepted and privileged duties.

The majority of young people had to start work at an early age, some as soon as they completed elementary school. Such was the case with Karl Hovelsen. He wanted to become a naval officer. But, with eleven children, his parents could not afford to send him to the Naval Academy. Education was rather expensive, and too often limited to those who were in a social and financial position of privilege. Hovelsen chose instead to become a stonemason and bricklayer by trade.

Another mark of the time was the quality of strong comradeship which outdoor life and skiing activities produced in the young. Outdoor adventure was the one thing they had in common, and it created a fellowship that transcended social and economic differences.

Friendships begun in the streets of Christiania, in the hills, at campfires and on day-long skiing tours gave young people a bond that lasted through life. Remarkably, wherever fate took them in life, they created the same kind of comradeship and sporting solidarity. It became a characteristic of those skiing pioneers who followed in the tracks of Fridtjof Nansen and the daring men from the Telemark valleys.

WHAT ABOUT KARL HOVELSEN? How did he fare? What kind of lad was he?

Though small in size, he was resilient, a boy of great stamina, a person who never gave up. As a youngster, he could run in the hills for hours. In the winter he could ski all day. Contemporaries say he was good at playing the mouth organ and did well with the accordian. He was always eager to give a hand. He was known for his ready wit and sparkling sense of humor.

Those who worked with him say he was a first-class craftsman as a bricklayer and stonemason, especially skilled at building fireplaces. He was in constant demand because he did quality work. He didn't shun overtime and he didn't charge for it.

As a sportsman, he never accepted second best. Even in his late sixties he worked on improving his style and technique. He had an athletic charisma which people responded to.

The late Lauritz Bergendahl, the great skiing king of Norway, once remarked, "As a boy I used to watch the 50-kilometer cross-country race when the runners passed our home in Soerkedalen. I studied them as they came along, and I longed to become a sportsman like Karl Hovelsen. He was my ideal and the example I followed."

World champion skier Sigmund Ruud, who got to know Hovelsen in later years, remembered him as a dashing type of man who had the wind of vigor about him and whose company everyone thoroughly enjoyed.

When Jakob Vaage collected material for his book, *Norwegian Skis Conquer the World,* he interviewed Hovelsen on several occasions. Vaage described him as one of the greatest ski enthusiasts he ever met. "Skiing was his whole life," Vaage said. "Hovelsen had to go wherever the snow was. He was a skiing pioneer to the highest degree."

Another characteristic of Hovelsen that Vaage used to point out was his extraordinary sense of balance; he was an outstanding equilibrist. The following story confirms it:

Every New Year's Eve, a group of young skiers from Christiania went to the log cabin of ski-maker Thorvald Hansen, a good ten miles from town in Nordmarka. The surrounding hills above the lake of Skjennungen were ideal for racing and enjoying winter sports. A stone's throw from the cabin, they built a ski jump. On New Year's Day they arranged a fancy ski-jumping competition and they would sail through the air, one dressed like an old grandmother, another like Father Christmas, yet another like some fairy tale character, making comical movements with arms and legs before they landed.

Hovelsen outdid them all. He started at the top of the hill, playing a march of Sousa on his accordion. Then off he went to the take-off, into the air. Landing 60 feet below, he made a half-circle turn to stop, still playing the march, without having once interrupted the tune!

A Christiania newspaper reported in 1899 that when a delegation of skiers was returning on the night train from Nordic skiing events in Stockholm, "little Hovelsen" had gone to sleep high up on the luggage rack. When the train stopped with a jerk in Christiania, he fell down — landing on his feet! Hovelsen was like a cat, the paper commented; he always landed on his feet.

Many stories about this sportsman circulate even today. In 1898, the town of Gjoevik held a 17-kilometer cross-country race. The competition took place reasonably early in the morning, and Hovelsen won. Afterwards, the skiers were standing around discussing how to get back to Christiania. They decided

to cross Mjoesa Lake and take the train back home from the nearest town, Hamar. "Why take the train when we can go all the way home on skis?" Hovelsen asked. But not even the hardiest of them responded. So off Hovelsen went alone, travelling 50 miles on skis that day, making his own tracks, and reaching a caretaker's cabin in Elgstoea before dusk. After spending the night, he started early the next morning and cross-countried the remaining 35 miles to the capital. All the food he had on the trip was two oranges.

In 1899, a team of skiers, including Hovelsen, represented Norway at the Nordic Ski Races in Stockholm. It was the first time the Norwegian skiers had been in the capital of the North, and they were deeply impressed by the grandeur and cosmopolitan aura of Stockholm. The team did quite well in the races, and on the final day the Swedes laid on a gala evening in the most famous hotel in the capital for the skiers and their Norwegian guests. Ministers of state, ambassadors and Swedish nobility were present. The Norwegians enjoyed themselves, skidded on the slipper ballroom floor, and commented happily about the "good life" they were experiencing.

Karl Hovelsen, skiing at 17.

As the party broke up, they were standing together on one side of the impressive entrance to the hotel. The glitter of the city, the lavish lights, the doorkeeper with his white gloves and colorful uniform, the herald standing close by and shouting in his deep and loud voice, "Pull up the landau of Count von Rosen. Pull up the landau of Count and Countess Oxenstierne . . . ," dazzled the Norwegians as they stared at the long row of carraiges. Coming from provincial Christiania, they were not used to all this pomp and protocol of high society. They stared at the nobility leaving the hotel like puzzled peasants. Unnoticed, Hovelsen went over to the herald and whispered some words in his ears. Then quickly he returned to his friends.

"Pull up the landau of His Excellency, Prime Minister Bostroem," the herald continued. Then his voice boomed out, "Pull up the horse of Baron von Hovelsen."

The small Norwegian crowd broke up.

Several years ago, the weekly magazine, *Allers,* asked a number of skiing pioneers to tell anecdotes from their sporting past. H. Durban-Hansen, who pioneered skiing in France, told the following:

"We were at the top of the Holmenkollen Hill on a cold and windy day about the turn of the century. A jumper had just taken off. He missed at the take-off, landed on his back, fainted, and had to be carried away. We realized that something had happened. The pause, however, dragged on intolerably in the icy north wind. The man waiting for his turn to jump, a great rogue by the name of Karl Hovelsen, suddenly shouted in a loud voice: 'Why the heck can't you clear the corpse away so the living can take off!' A drastic joke one might say, but for us frozen jumpers waiting for our turn, this spontaneous outburst straight from the shoulder was exactly what we needed at that moment. We

burst into a loud laugh, resounding down the hill, a laughter so penetrating that we forgot the cold and the take-off sensation."

KARL HOVELSEN will be remembered for the winter events of the Holmenkollen Arena. When the first skiing competition in Holmenkollen took place in 1892, he was nearly 14 years old. Still he had to try the hill. He told the story to *Allers* about 50 years later:

"My first jump in Holmenkollen was in the year 1892. Young skiers at that time were eager to jump on his special hill after the competition was over. I stood at the top of the hill together with the other boys and waited my turn. Being the youngest and smallest of them, and maybe a bit shy, I ended up the very last one to make my run. At the time you could not see the take-off from the top of the hill because of a bump in between. However, I took off. Coming over the bump, I discovered the take-off had been closed with two poles! What should I do? My speed was good. I didn't want to lie down, so I took the plunge. In taking off, bending deep to get through the crossed poles, I made a badly-timed spring, fell, and found myself at the bottom of the hill with a sprained ankle. Two Swedish officers discovered me, came along and took me home in their horse-drawn sled."

Barely three years later, at the age of 17, Hovelsen represented the Baerum Ski Club, competing in the youngest class. He placed fourth. The following year he won first prize.

In 1897, he competed for the first time in the cross-country races, winning third prize in the 18-kilometer race, and coming in fourth in the jumping competition. In 1902 and 1903, Hovelsen hit the jackpot, coming in first in the 50-kilometer races. Altogether he won 14 prizes in this mecca of skiing.

Besides the trophies won at Holmenkollen, he also won the top prizes in most other national competitions in the country.

Reviewing the sports results of the year, the *Norwegian Sports Journal* wrote about Hovelsen in its special Christmas issue of 1902: "The old ski bigwig of Baerum Ski Club has turned out to be the most brilliant of this year. In the 50-kilometer race (Holmenkollen) he won with a 4:48.48 time over such a feared and giant runner as Paul Braathen. Then Hovelsen won the first prize in the national meet at Nydalen; subsequently he won at Solberg Hill and was given the gold medal of the Baerum Ski Club. Understandably, he was also honored with the Club's Medal of Merit for long and faithful service."

Winning the 50-K Holmenkollen race, 1902.

The winter of 1903 marked a turning point in Holmenkollen winter sports events. The first Nordic Winter Sports Week was arranged. It set a pattern for years to come.

Christiania had never seen such an international gathering of people. Foreigners streamed in to watch the events. A special train arrived with 500 from Sweden. A delegation of 100 came from Denmark. Sizeable groups came all the way from Germany, France, and Britain, as well as journalists and photographers from the international press.

For the first time competitors from a foreign country were to compete in Holmenkollen. Sweden entered with a team of nine in the combined races, a team of 23 in the 50-kilometer race, and a team of ten in the jumping competition. It was the first time ski jumping events were filmed.

To add festivity to the week, the National Theatre put on a gala performance of the play, *Sigurd Jorsalfar,* by Bjoernstjerne Bjoernson, with music by composer Edvard Grieg. In the audience were the Prince Regent of Sweden-Norway, members of the Cabinet, the diplomatic corps, explorer Fridtjof Nansen, playwright Bjoernson, foreign guests, the press, the skiers and an impressive group of Swedish and Norwegian military officers.

The week was further highlighted by a torchlight procession on skis, an ice carnival, and a sled run from nearby Frognersaeteren Hill to its foot, 1,500 feet below. More than 6,000 people joined in the sled run on some 3,000 sleds mobilized for the purpose. The setting of light powder snow, moonlight, the glimmer of torches, a bonfire and public rejoicing made a lasting impression on foreigners who sledded and experienced speed on snow for the first time. The huge crowd felt like one family, and even the Swedish Prince, Gustav Adolf, took part in the adventure. The event caught the imagination of the international press and was reported all over Europe.

The Christiania daily, *Verdens Gang,* reported that 30,000 people had come to the jumping competition, the biggest crowd ever. Another newspaper reported a curiosity: most of the Danes had brought their umbrellas along, a sight never seen in Holmenkollen before.

The 50-kilometer cross-country race was followed with intense interest. "How will the Swedes do?" the Norwegians asked themselves, fearing the strongly-built Swedes would beat them. But it was not the day for the Swedes, mainly because their skis were far too long and badly suited for the rugged Nordmarka terrain.

Instead, it was Karl Hovelsen's day. The *Norwegian Sports Journal* had this comment about the race: ". . .Karl Hovelsen was the eighth man who crossed the finish line, even though his starting number was 45! Thus it turned out he won the race with a time of 4:17.06, beating the standing record of 4:26.30, set by Torjus Hemmestveit in 1888. With this new victory, following his triumphs in previous races in Holmenkollen, and succeeded by two superb jumps, Hovelsen is already the skiing hero of the winter season."

An interesting fact about the 50-kilometer race was told in the daily *Aftenposten* of February 5, 1903: ". . . The start of the race was considerably delayed due to the scientific and thorough medical examination which a staff of doctors made on each individual. No fewer than 12 doctors, including two chief physicians and several senior residents from the state hospital, were present. Thus, a full understanding may possibly be gained on what harmful or harmless physiological changes such a long and strenuous race will have . . . . Two big bowls of hot milk and bouillion and a pile of open sand-

wiches were ready waiting for the racers whenever they turned up after the first 25-kilometer lap. It was a standing order that every runner, after the first lap had been completed, had to rest for five minutes before he set out for the second lap."

The final celebration of the Nordic Winter Sports Week took place at the Holmenkollen Hotel. It started with a light dinner for special guests and the main competitors in the events. Then, all gathered in the ballroom with royalty and dignitaries present for the awards. First, explorer Fridtjof Nansen gave a passionate talk on the importance of winter sport. Prince Regent Gustaf then proceeded to hand out the prizes. The festivities concluded with dancing and a grand display of fireworks.

Caricature by Olaf Gulbrandson of the 50-K Holmenkollen race, 1902; the doctor feeling the racer's pulse at the finish.

The *Seventy-fifth Memorial Volume of the Baerum Ski Club* gives a glimpse of the excitement of the evening under the heading, "A Proud Moment": ". . . The prizes were first presented to winners of skijoring events. The Prince Regent shook hands with every winner and each received a round of applause.

"Finally, it came to the skiers. The following announcements were made. In the 50-kilometer cross-country event: first prize and the Prince Regent's Cup to Karl Hovelsen! The jubilation was great when little Hovelsen stepped forward and received his royal handshake. In the combined races: first prize and His Majesty King Oscar's Cup to Karl Hovelsen! The cheering rose to a frightening level as the Prince Regent shook Hovelsen's hand powerfully again. At last, the climax: the highest award of the Holmenkollen Races, the Holmenkollen Gold Medal to Karl Hovelsen. At this point, it was as if the roof and walls would burst. The Prince Regent shook Hovelsen's hand for a long time. They both smiled at each other and the whole ballroom was in ecstasy. Men and women yelled with wild enthusiasm, and it was an age before the audience calmed down again. Hovelsen, with his convivial smile, seemed to be totally unaffected by it all. There was another man who nearly burst with pride, and that was the writer of this story, who happened to be the president of the Baerum Ski Club." Alf Staver, (1874-1953).

Aftenposten of February 10, 1903, under the headline, "Concluding Ceremony at Holmenkollen;" gave a full description of the gala evening. Quoting the entire speech of Professor Fridtjof Nansen, the report continued:

". . . After that, the handing out of awards began, punctuated by applause from the audience. Whenever a favorite appeared, the jubilation increased. Thus, when Karl Hovelsen went forward to receive his silver cups and medals, the shouts of enthusiasm would not end until the brave skier was carried in triumph by all the arts."

WHAT THE WINNER of so many prizes and trophies felt and thought is anyone's guess. Perhaps Hovelsen thought for just a moment of the day at Huseby Hill in 1888, when he, as a teenager, watched Torjus Hemmestveit win the 50-kilometer race; the day that Hovelsen himself decided to become a top skier.

The first Nordic Winter Sports Week of 1903 was a unique occasion for Christiania and the people of Norway. It was also an unforgettable adventure for those people of the European continent who had come from afar to participate.

Something intangible had happened. The Holmenkollen races were now more than a national event. A new era had begun. Holmenkollen was destined to become the world arena and mecca for the sport of skiing.

VAAGE

Holmenkollen Hill in 1903 and in 1982 when host to the FIS World Championship.

3. New Adventures

The year 1903 brought triumph and fame to Karl Hovelsen, but also brought the challenge of unemployment.

At the turn of the century, the entire construction industry in Norway was depressed. From 1900 to 1905, another 102,000 Norwegians emigrated to America. This time, it was no longer tenants and poor farmers alone who set out from their homes, but also men from the building trades.

Previous generations who voyaged to the New World were motivated by dreams and visions of their own farmland. Most sought their luck in Minnesota, the Dakotas, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Michigan. Where could craftsmen of the construction industry, crossing the Atlantic in the first decade of the 20th century, find their future?

In the cosmopolitan cities like New York and Chicago, building activities were booming. They became the cities of hope and opportunity for those out of work who had nowhere else to turn.

Karl Hovelsen made up his mind to try his luck in Chicago. But as an unemployed stonemason in Norway, how could he get the money to emigrate?

In 1904, Hovelsen went to work in Germany, planning to earn his passage for the journey to America.

There is no material available, nor any person alive, to tell what Hovelsen did or how he fared until he arrived in Chicago sometime in the summer of 1905. We know, however, that he worked in the city of Hamburg-Altona. His membership card in the German Bricklayers Trade Union shows he paid his first fee to the union on April 2, 1904, and his last fee on May 21, 1905. He had a membership book in the German Social Democratic Party for the year 1904-05.

This information confirms another side of the man whose passion was skiing and the outdoor life. He was a man with a deep sense of justice and an alive social conscience. He felt solidarity with those who suffered, and was ready to share with a brother in need.

It was in Hamburg that Hovelsen was confronted for the first time with injustice and exploitation of the working class, where he experienced first-hand the sufferings of the still young industrial age. What he saw among the workers and laboring class of Germany undoubtedly stirred him to join the ranks of organized labor and a political party whose aim was to create a just social structure for the working man.

We know one thing more about those 14 months in Hamburg. Hovelsen brought his skis along. Whenever he had a chance, he would travel to the Harz Mountains to enjoy his skiing.

During the winter of 1904, he was invited to a skiing competition in Austria. Mathias Zdarsky, an Austrian with a passion for skiing, had developed the "Lilienfeld technique" of skiing, and was eager to challenge Norwegians in downhill races. Hovelsen welcomed the opportunity to compete in Lilienfeld, a small town close to Vienna. He asked the Norwegian Skiing Association for permission to participate. The answer was negative, however, so he remained in Germany.

In the middle of June, 1905, Hovelsen embarked on a passenger ship in Hamburg for New York. The day he had worked so hard for had finally arrived.

As the steamer gathered speed towards the open Atlantic, tender thoughts of his parents, sisters, and brothers whom he loved so much, longings for Nordmarka, memories of skiing adventures and his native country, must have been on his mind. This was a breaking up. He was leaving the known and the cherished behind. Yet it was a fresh start, the beginning of a new and different future. Hope and expectancy, anxiety and insecurity must have stirred him, emotions similar to those at the top of Holmenkollen Hill at the moment of take-off.

AS THE STEAMER SET COURSE for the New World, he left Old Europe behind, a continent in nationalistic ferment and social unrest, a continent of imperial nations in rivalry with each other, seeking restlessly to find an elusive balance of power.

Even in the peaceful Nordic North a serious conflict was brewing. The national aspirations of the Norwegian people were surfacing. They were claiming the right to become an independent nation, free from the supremacy of Sweden. The Swedish establishment, however, denied and resisted the appeals for independence with all their power. The fear was deep that a war could break out.

And ahead of the steaming ship? There the promised land was developing into an economic and industrial giant, growing into a world power under the leadership of its young and colorful president, Theodore Roosevelt, who personified the vigor and drive of the New World.

Like hundreds of thousands of immigrants of the time, Karl Hovelsen and his fellow passengers were processed through Ellis Island, seeing his first vision of America in the crowded noisy streets of New York City.

Arriving in Chicago in July, Hovelsen rented a room with a Norwegian family, the John P. Engedahls, at 12 Edgewood Avenue. Engedahl had immigrated in 1893. He was to stay with the Engedahls during his years in the Midwest.

". . . Mother of Exiles.
From her beacon-hand
Glows world-wide
welcome."

On August 1, 1905, Hovelsen was enrolled as Member No. 241, Local 21, of the Bricklayers and Stonemasons Union in Chicago. His membership card was signed by Union President C. H. Tatledge. The membership card revealed an interesting fact. His name had been changed to Carl Howelsen. Like so many other Norwegian immigrants when they arrived, he Americanized his name to make it easier for the citizens of the New World to pronounce it.

Chicago was quite a city for a newcomer. Spreading along the shore of enormous Lake Michigan, the town had mushroomed in a generation's time from a few hundred thousand to a teeming city of about two million people in 1905.

The hectic life, the noise, the smell, the street trolleys, the cars and the traffic jams downtown must have been both fascinating and shocking for immigrants from so small and undeveloped a country as Norway.

Due to its location, Chicago had become a center both for sea and rail transport. Shipping on the Great Lakes, from iron ore and lumber to grain and packed meat, was booming at that time.

The Union Stockyard, occupying more than 400 acres of land, was a beehive of activity. It was the site of the largest slaughter and packing houses in the world.

Chicago was the world's lumber capital and center for the nation's grain market. This metropolis was the city of trade, transport, and commerce, and industry for the surrounding states of the Midwest. Chicago was the crossroads of a feverish and fast-growing society, a prototype of the American way of life, of its system and of its brand of capitalism.

The fast-growing and over-crowded city had everything from the most beautiful to the most ugly. Along the shore of Lake Michigan were the spacious gardens and mansions of millionaires and the social elite. This area was nicknamed "The Gold Coast."

There was another side to Chicago, too. As the English author and journalist George Warrington Stevens relates in *The Land and The Dollar:*

"Away from the towering offices, lying off from the smiling parks, is a vast wilderness of shabby houses . . . . This is the home of labor and of nothing else. The evening's vacancy brings relief from the toil, the morning's toil relief from the vacancy. Little shops compete frantically for what poor trade there is with tawdry advertisements. Street stretches beyond street of little houses, mostly wooden, begrimed with soot, rotting, falling to pieces . . . ."

The sparkling, shiny and ugly city of Chicago also contained the largest European immigrant population in America: Germans, Poles, Dutch, Scandinavians, Croatians, Slovakians, Lithuanians, Greeks . . . . As George Warrington Stevens put it, it was "a veritable Babel of the age, a miracle of paradox and incongruity."

In this melting pot society, Norwegians were the third largest ethnic group, after Germans and Poles. Norwegians have a strange way of finding each other wherever they are in the world, and in Chicago, too, they stuck together, kept old traditions alive, and found their place in American society.

A few months after Howelsen settled in this worldly city, something significant occurred in Europe. Norway achieved her independence without bloodshed. On October 26, 1905, the Swedish King, Oscar II, renounced the throne of Norway and signed the Convention of Karlstad, giving the country complete independence. It boosted the national pride in Norwegians everywhere in the world.

PERHAPS BECAUSE OF THIS PRIDE, on November 12, 1905, some 28 Norwegians decided to form a skiing club in Chicago. They proudly named it the "Norge Ski Club of Chicago." Among the founding members were Carl Howelsen and his landlord, John Engedahl. Haaken Lehn was elected first president.

The founders of the Club were enthusiastic skiers, and soon rallied all who

loved skiing and winter sports. First on their agenda was to scout for a place where they could build a jumping hill and go cross-country skiing.

A committee was set up and Howelsen was put in charge to find the jumping hill. In the winter of 1906, a site was located in Cary County, Illinois, some 40 miles northwest of Chicago. It was the highest geographical point in the State of Illinois. Howelsen designed the jump, and was elected to be the ski captain of the club. He held this office until the winter of 1909 when he left for Colorado.

The Club soon built a lodge on the jumping hill site. In the summer it became a center for camping with the Fox River streaming along only 150 yards away from the foot of the hill. In the winter, members of the Ski Club went out on weekends to ski and jump. The first official tournament was held there in 1907.

In the following decades, the Norge Ski Club played an important part in advancing skiing in the Midwest. The Club's tournament attracted jumpers from far and near and soon the hill at Fox River Grove was called "Holmenkollen of the U.S.A."

The best jumpers from Norway, other European countries, and across the United States began competing at Fox River Grove. Crowds of 5,000 to 33,000 would gather at the Hill to watch the jumping. In 1924, a member of the Norge Ski Club, jumper Harry Lien, represented the United States in the first Winter Olympics in Chamonix, France. He was one of the youngsters Howelsen had trained while ski captain for the Club.

NORGE SKI CLUB

Norge Ski Club's jumping course at Fox River Grove, Cary County, Ill., 1908.

The traditions started then have been kept alive to the present. The Club is still thriving, and more and more Americans have been drawn into the heart of its activities. On Sunday, January 17, 1982, the Norge Ski Club held the Ski Jumping Championship of the United States Ski Association, Central Division.

Between 1906 and 1909, Carl Howelsen was a delegate from the Norge Ski Club to meetings of the National Ski Association of the U.S.A. At these conventions, he met with pioneers like Carl Tellefsen, Aksel Holter, and Torjus Hemmestveit, to plan how to promote the sport of skiing across the American continent. In those years, he also represented the Ski Club in several ski meets across the Midwest.

Besides the skiing activities at Fox River Grove, the Norge Ski Club arranged jumping exhibitions in Chicago, the first one in 1908.

The Chicago *Daily Tribune* of Monday, January 20, 1908, carried a four-column photo article with the headline, "Lovers of Norwegian Sport Hold Contest in Humbolt Park," illustrating a twin jump by E. Schanke and Carl Howelsen, watched by a vast crowd of spectators in their bowler hats and black coats. The caption under the photo read: "The first public ski contest held in Chicago drew several thousand spectators to Humbolt Park yesterday afternoon to witness the competition between members of the Norge Ski Club."

A twin jump by C. Howelsen and E. Schanche, the **Chicago Daily Tribune,** *Jan. 20, 1908.*

The paper was not quite correct. Members of four other ski clubs from the Midwest also competed.

"Forty entrants started, and all performed creditably," wrote the Chicago *Record Herald.* "The event drew a big crowd of spectators, and it was estimated that fully 10,000 persons lined the space where the tournament was held . . . . The weather conditions were not as good as expected. The warmth made the slide slushy and the contestants were not able to acquire enough speed to give them a good spring off the stand. The best single leap was 48 feet, made by Carl Howelsen, former champion of Norway, in an exhibition. His performance was excellent, especially so considering the condition of the slide . . . . The sport received a big bonus as a result of the contests, and the Club will hold another tournament at the earliest opportunity . . . . Carl Howelsen, S. Borgensen, and S. Severseen officiated as Judges."

No doubt the Norge Ski Club and the Norwegian community of Chicago played a great part in making Howelsen feel at home, giving him a task and purpose for staying in his new country.

Yet Howelsen was a man who could not sit still. He had to look around, explore, and experiment all the time. In the summer of 1906, as he was roaming the different parks of Chicago, he discovered Riverview Park. Opening on July 2, 1904, it was described as "the world's largest amusement park." Howelsen looked at the merry-go-round and the roller-coaster, but what caught his eye was a 90-foot high tower with a chute dropping into a pool. It fascinated him. Stoutly built boats of metal raced down the chute at great speed and hit the water with a huge splash, accompanied by wild shrieks from the riders.

"It would be fun to go down that chute on skis," Howelsen murmured to himself.

On the way home, he figured out how he would do it. He would construct a sheet of metal under each ski.

Early the following Sunday, before the crowds arrived, he went to Riverview

Park with his skis, told the guards what he had in mind, and asked for permission to try. Luckily permission was granted.

Howelsen leveled the bottom of the chute, adjusting its angle relative to the pool so the skis got a better straight-level run into the pond. Then he mounted the 90-foot tower, pushed off and flew down the chute. It worked beyond all expectation! His descent was extremely fast, and it took a good 90 feet on the water before he sank down. Dare one say that Howelsen was the first water skier in the world?

After a few more runs, Howelsen built a ski-jump take-off at the bottom of the chute. That also worked well. He soared about 60 feet through the air, kept afloat on the water for a few yards, and then sank deep to his chest. The guards who looked on were spellbound by the performance, so they allowed him to continue when the crowds came streaming along.

The word got out. One day a man turned up and watched Howelsen perform for a long time. Then he approached and said, "I am a director of 'Barnum and Bailey's Greatest Show on Earth'. Could you jump on skis like this in our circus?"

IT WAS A CHALLENGE Howelsen rose to — not just for the love of skiing but also for another reason. He had been in Chicago long enough to know the value of the dollar. "Here is a chance for a fast buck," he thought, and started discussing with the director how it could be worked out. He had learned something in America: to put his price high. He demanded $200 a week for his performances, a salary unheard of in those days. Even the managers of the circus did not get as much as that.

The director countered with a much lower offer, but Howelsen got tough. He refused to budge, knowing he had the cards in his hand. He knew no one else was ready to perform the skiing act. The prospect of having such a sensational jump in the circus won the day, and Howelsen signed a contract for $200 a week. An agreement was signed on November 12, 1906, retaining "Carl Howelsen and two others, one of whom is to be capable of properly performing the 'ski act' in place of Howelsen in event of his illness or disability; the other to assist in putting up and supervising the act, both to make themselves generally useful . . . ." The performers were to go to Bridgeport, Connecticut (headquarters of Barnum and Bailey) four weeks in advance of the opening date of the circus at Madison Square Garden, New York, for the purpose of practicing their act, during which time Barnum and Bailey agreed to pay their board. Their salary would begin "with the first performance of said act in Madison Square Garden at the opening performance of the Barnum and Bailey Season of 1907."

Howelsen somehow succeeded in persuading two of his Norwegian friends to join him in the adventure. The one who was to perform as his alternate was himself a good skier and acrobat, Aksel Henriksen.

In the middle of March 1907, Howelsen and his friends set off for Bridgeport to join the Barnum and Bailey Circus and start their new adventure.

4. Barnum and Bailey's Greatest Show on Earth

P. T. Barnum was the most famous showman of his time. Born in 1810, a man of great imagination, shrewdness, and wit, he transformed the amusement business and developed the circus of "giant style." In 1881, he joined efforts with another genius of the circus, J. A. Bailey, and together a few years later, they launched Barnum and Bailey's Greatest Show on Earth. It became the most popular show everywhere in America. The circus travelled through the different states across the continent, and people flocked to it. In towns both large and small it was a great time of the year when the circus came.

A typical press story, taken from the *Grand Rapids Herald* of June 22, 1907, describes the circus magic well:

"If you bang on the boy's door this morning to tell him it's time to get up and he doesn't answer — if you push open the door and don't find the boy in bed — if the window is open and there is a blanket rope tied to the chair — don't be alarmed. The kid has sneaked out to see the circus come in. He is over near the Pere Marquette, between Shawnut Avenue and Fulton Street . . . . You did it yourself when you were a kid, so don't treat the boy as if he were an outcast when he shows up at noon for his dinner, with wild stories of elephants as big as the barn door and snakes as long as the eave trough. Don't hurt his feelings. A better plan: Take him and the wife and the baby and go to the show yourself. Renew your lost youth. It'll do you good.

"For the Circus has come! Five long trains of it rolled in from Ionia over the Grand Trunk this morning. Barnum and Bailey's 'the biggest show on earth' — aren't those words familiar — is here, and there'll be two big performances at 2:00 and 8:00 o'clock today."

Americans loved, and still love, the big shows. The people of New York City prided themselves as being at the very center of show business, theatres, parades, and spectacular events. And, for that reason, Barnum and Bailey's Greatest Show on Earth always started its season in New York.

So it was in 1907. The opening performance took place on Thursday, March 21, in Madison Square Garden, an enormous convention hall and sports arena, seating 20,000 people. This popular sports and entertainment center in the heart of downtown Manhattan was opened in 1890. It had a history dating back to 1879, however, when the vast interior of an abandoned railway station at Madison Square was converted into an amusement center.

The *New York Times* printed an article on March 18, headlined "Circus Moves in Without A Hitch." The story reads: "New York's biggest annual moving was completed early yesterday morning. The Barnum and Bailey's Circus, late of Bridgeport, Connecticut, is now at home in Madison Square Garden. For the next three days, they all will be getting settled. But on Thursday a series of afternoon and evening receptions (performances) will begin, and will continue for five weeks, to the great joy of every youngster and not a few grownups in town."

The *Times* reporter, who witnessed the loading of the circus at Bridgeport and the unloading in New York, continued:

"Exactly on schedule — animals, attendants, press agents, food, and all the unlimited paraphernalia of a three-ring circus, were stowed away on a special train of 77 cars. The two engines in front sounded a combined toot, as a farewell to Bridgeport, and the circus was on the road . . . striped zebras, spotted yaks, long-necked llamas, shaggy alpacas, simple humped camels, and double-humped dromedaries without number . . . it soon looked as though Noah's Ark had spilled over in the freight yard . . . . It took eight straining horses to draw Miss Mary, the hippopotamus, but six horses did the rhinoceros and only two for the community den of two dozen monkeys . . . . The next division of the procession consisted of a cavalcade of 200 horses, known as the 'ring stock.' These are all trick and performing horses . . . ."

ANOTHER NEWSPAPER, *The World,* carried a story on Howelsen, headlined: "Setting up Ski-Sailing Slides at the Circus — Man Who Will Use Them." The article was illustrated by a diagram of the great jump showing Howelsen in midair, a photo of the "captain" with his tall skis.

The public relations men and press agents of the circus did a thorough and effective job. Within a few days, all of New York City knew about "Barnum and Bailey's Greatest Show on Earth . . . The Wide-World's Mightiest Amusement Institution, Now Bigger and Grander Than Before. Not a Mere Show But a University of Wonders. Nothing Like It Ever Seen On Earth Before!"

Advertising the events at Madison Square Garden, the circus began to use an imaginary picture of Carl Howelsen, sailing on skis over mountains and valleys in a death-defying leap. It was printed in every newspaper and could also be seen in a giant 30 by 18-foot poster all over town.

CIRCUS WORLD MUSEUM, BARABOO, WIS.

The circus' description of the act was as thrilling and heart-arresting as the deed itself. It read:

"A perilous, pyramidal, prodigially proficient reproduction of the most dangerously diverting sport in the wide world. A lightning dive, dash and glide, on skimming skis down a declivitous incline; a sweeping, soaring, sensational flight through space, across a gruesome gap, and a final landing on a resilient landing platform. Presented by the Champion of all Scandinavia, and the holder of 70 prizes for his trained and reckless daring, Captain Carl Howelsen." How did Howelsen become a captain? He never was in actual life, but in show business anything can happen. He was simply "promoted" to the honored rank.

On opening night, Madison Square Garden was packed. Howelsen's performance was a hit.

The *New York Evening Journal* of March 22 carried a seven-column spread of cartoons from the opening night with the following story: "Rah! The biggest circus is here! It's full of real thrillers this year. Captain Howelsen's death-defying bird-like flight on skis is a wonder.

"It was the same old circus, and again it wasn't. They were all there — the adept arenic artists, giving 'expert expositions of nerve, novelty and dextrous handling,' — but

"There were a whole lot of new ones besides. First and foremost was Captain Carl Howelsen, 'the sensation from midnight sun land.' He was a very mild looking man, this Norwegian thrill-creator.

"The crowds that filled Madison Square Garden on the opening night of the great Barnum and Bailey Show, centered their eyes upon the huge incline down which Captain Howelsen was to fly on skis, and then everybody straightaway pictured the Cap'n as a fire-eating Viking who would come out with long hair and whiskers, and do something in accordance with the mythology of the Northland . . . .

"It isn't carrying things too far to say that strong men turned as pale as their shirt fronts and that fair women shrieked. These things they did as the captain went roaring and slushing down the incline. The upward turn at the bottom carried him into the air in such a manner that he resembled some prehistoric bird. Then he soared through the air, and finally perched himself upon his landing cushion.

"The whole thing was over within five seconds, but into that space of time there was crowded a mighty avalanche of thrills."

The *New York Herald* of March 22nd headlined a story: "Ski-Sailing Act is Circus Thriller. Captain Howelsen's Daring Feat At Opening of Barnum and Bailey's Astonished Crowd."

The *New York Evening Journal* also carried a story on the circus in their Saturday edition of March 23: "Wonders of the Great Show at Madison Square Garden described and illustrated by Charles Somerville."

Under a cartoon of Howelsen at the top of the "hill," Somerville writes:

"Gee Whizz! You ought to see the Norwegian gentleman with an uncanny indifference to the fate of his neck come down on the long, barrel-stave-like things they call skis — start up on the roof, and for lack of a mountainside covered with ice, which is always on hand in his dear Norway, he — Captain

From **The World Magazine,** *Sunday, March 10, 1907.*

Carl Howelsen — comes cutting through the air on vaseline. It is like a bird's downward swoop, and then bang, he's up in the air, skis and all, sailing — sailing — and you set your teeth, expecting him to scatter all over the place when he lands. As a matter of fact, he did some rolling last night, and made the girls and women scream, but there was no occasion to fly the flag of Norway at half mast."

A dazzling description of "The Greatest Show on Earth" was printed in the *New York Press* of March 22. Under the headline "Daring Ski Feat Gives New Thrills. Sensational Slide Marks Circus of 1907," was the following story:

"Barnum and Bailey last night made another bow to New York in Madison Square Garden, after an introductory performance in the afternoon, and in the glittering array offered to the metropolis, the management showed the glories of the 'Greatest Show on Earth' had not passed with the passing of the personalities that made it famous. For the circus was bigger and brighter and altogether better than in any other year of its progressive history . . . .

"The most sensational of the many new features was Carl Howelsen's soul-stirring slide down a sharp incline on skis — Norwegian snowshoes. It double discounted anything seen before in the breakneck line, for it was apparent at a glance that the man's life was safeguarded by no mechanical contrivance. On his own skill and strength and courage alone his very existence hung. He lacked even the pole with which the ski skater usually balances himself when skimming down a glacier's broad breast. And his act was a mad dash down a ribbon of wood that didn't look to be two feet wide. Nor was the slide all of it. Sensational enough would the act have been had Howelsen simply coasted

down the wood ribbon and stopped against an air cushion or in a tank of water.

"But the slide started near the roof, and when he was within a few feet of the floor the worst was yet to come. There was a sudden upcurve in the ribbon ending in — nothingness. Crouching for a mighty spring, Howelsen, the long skis still on his feet, shot through the air and landed with an ear-cracking bump on another narrow path that seemed ever so far away, and must have seemed further to the man who made the leap. That breathless feat accomplished, he swept like lightning along the level and plunged into the arms of two strong men waiting to check his cannonball flight. It hardly needed the tumultuous applause that greeted him to tell that the new act was a tremendous success."

It was in New York, the city of show business and spectacles, that Carl Howelsen earned the affectionate nickname, "The Flying Norseman."

Jakob Vaage comments on the Greatest Show on Earth:

"The whole of New York had Howelsen fever. Rarely has Norway had such a good advertisement. He was called 'the greatest thriller' and the newspapers advised everybody to go and see him . . . and while this display was going on in the circus, Norwegian spectators were giving Americans, eager to know more, instructions on how to ski. We can safely assert that Barnum and Bailey Circus was a travelling advertisement for Norway, and for skiing in America . . . . Howelsen jumped in front of a good four million people in 1907, and he was a unique phenomenon in circus history. Even death riders and automobiles that did the 'leap of death' were nothing compared with the sensation of seeing that little Norwegian fly over two rings with elephants and much else."

From **The New York Evening,** *March 23, 1907.*

The observations of ski historian Vaage are confirmed by other New York papers. On Saturday, April 6, 1907, the following appeared in the *New York Evening Journal:*

"Either New York is circus-hungry or the Barnum and Bailey Show is especially alluring to the show-going public this season, for there is no falling off in the crowds that patronize the current engagement at Madison Square Garden . . . Carl Howelsen, who alternatively thrills and delights the Garden crowds with his sensational slide and flight, will add another 10 feet to his already remarkable ski jump. The popularity of Howelsen's act is greatly enhanced by the fact that, while it is sensational in the extreme, it is neither gruesome nor repellent."

The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* was possibly the only paper that did not print any advertisement of the Barnum and Bailey Show at Madison Square Garden nor

carry any review of the events. The editors of the *Eagle* may have found the "Greatest Show on Earth" simply outside their sphere of interest. The paper, a sophisticated political journal, did print a most interesting cartoon, however, on the twenty-third of March, 1907, under the headline, "Ski Sailing," there appeared a three-column replica of the poster advertising Howelsen's Ski Sailing Act. In Howelsen's place, President Theodore Roosevelt was on his skis in mid-air, with outstretched arms, like Howelsen, but with candidate Taft on his shoulders! On the in-run slide was written, "White House Information," and on the landing, it said "Presidency 1908." The text under the cartoon read, "The Latest Thriller in the Political Circus."

On April 17, 1907, Howelsen received a letter proving his ski-sailing performance had created an interest outside America. The letter was from Moss' Empires Limited representing important show business enterprises in England. It stated, "Dear Sir, I shall be obliged if you will state your lowest terms for England and vacant time. Also the figures of the height and space you require for your act. Yours faithfully, Llewellyn John."

As events developed, however, Howelsen was unable to accept the British proposal.

"The latest thriller in the political circus," from **The Brooklyn Daily Eagle,** *March 23, 1907.*

AS SOON AS THE RUN was completed at Madison Square Garden, the "Greatest Show on Earth" started a grand tour of America. Within the course of six months, the circus performed in 146 cities in 16 states. At the pace of two performances a day and 24 cities per month, there was little time for rest. Shows were put on at times under the most difficult circumstances.

The *Illinois State Journal* of Springfield, Illinois, wrote on June 2, 1907:

"Circus day in Springfield yesterday dawned under dismal skies and all day long the army of men employed by the Barnum and Bailey aggregation battled with the elements . . . . The rain was pouring in torrents and there was not the slightest indication of a let-up . . . . The conditions under which the showmen had to work were extremely discouraging. The soaking rain had made the ground a quagmire in places, and it was an extremely difficult task to drive the big stakes so they would support the rain soaked canvas. Herculean efforts on the part of the army of men soon conquered these circumstances and the big canvas was pitched . . . the huge tent capable of seating 10,000 persons . . . ."

These were months of hardship and excitement. Some time during the grand tour, Howelsen had an accident. Perhaps he had become too confident. One day, as we was on the way up the tower to make his jump, he failed to use the safety rope available for climbing to the top. He slipped off a greasy beam, hurtled to the ground and wrenched his back.

For weeks he was out of the game. His Norwegian friend, Aksel Henriksen, continued the act during his absence. Howelsen quit Barnum and Bailey Circus

before the season ended. Soon he was back in Chicago, resuming his work in construction, and continuing his activities in the Norge Ski Club.

HOW MUCH OF A SPORT was the sensational skiing leap of the "Flying Norseman"? And how dangerous? It is probable that Howelsen himself would hardly look upon the circus jump as a fair picture of the skills of skiing. But the act did arouse the interest of the American viewers in skiing. What was lost in true jumping craftsmanship was offset by the daring and skill of the ski-sailing act itself. Howelsen did not consider it more than a "stunt" according to reporter Paul West of the *New York World.* On April 14, 1907, West wrote, "I met him just as he landed. He was quite cool and collected. 'Your hazardous undertaking,' I began —

"He looked around. 'Oh,' he said, 'I thought you were talking about somebody else. Did you mean my little stunt?'

"I said I did, and he denied that his performance was anything . . . ."

At the age of 83, Eugene Peterson, former Secretary of the National Ski Association of America and long-time president and historian of the Norge Ski Club, wrote an article about "Norge Ski Club Pioneers" for the *Historical Bulletin of the National Ski Hall of Fame.* The article has a commentary about the skiing act of the Barnum and Bailey Circus. It is of interest because it gives the sober view of a sophisticated scholar in comparison to the enthusiastic and flamboyant descriptions of the New York press. After some introductory passages, Petersen says:

"But let me get started on my reminiscences from the time of my arrival in Chicago from Norway in December 1904, and only a few months after the National Ski Association of America had been organized in the city of Ishpeming, Michigan, by nine Norwegians and an American newspaperman. The Norge Ski Club, the main topic of my reminiscences, was organized about a year later by 23 charter members, all Norwegian immigrants like myself. However, by that time I had already left Chicago for a position as Norwegian correspondent for a mail order firm in Fort Wayne, Indiana, where I remained for several years with no opportunity for skiing. But my snow sport interest was revived one day in the year 1907, or thereabouts, when Fort Wayne was plastered with broadsides announcing the coming of the world-famous Ringling Brothers Circus, with Captain Carl Howelsen as the star performer in a thrilling ski jumping act.

"Naturally I was most anxious to meet Howelsen, whom I knew as twice winner of the world-renowned 50-kilometer cross-country ski race at Holmenkollen in my native Norway, where he had triumphed in 1902 and 1903. But it was Aksel Henriksen and not Howelsen who on the evening of the performance came hurtling down from way up under the ceiling of the huge circus tent on a steep and only a foot and a half wide slide, to alight in a crash on a slightly inclined canvas-covered platform, after a leap of only a few feet near the ground. As a jump it was a joke, but the steep and speedy descent on such a narrow contraption, with nothing but the wide open spaces on either side and no netting or anything else for protection in case of mishap, required a cool head and plenty of nerve, as I saw it. And thus my ski career resumed in America.

"Both Howelsen and Henriksen were destined to go on to greater ski renown in North America, and their names are listed on the Roster of Ski Greats, which has become the official source for selecting nominees to the National Ski Hall of Fame. These men were pioneer members of the Norge Ski Club . . . ."

The "Captain," Barnum and Bailey, 1907.

5. Allure of the Rockies

The adventures of the circus and thrills of the teeming cities failed to satisfy "The Flying Norseman." Howelsen was too much of an outdoor man, too much at one with nature and the open spaces to be able to settle for long in Chicago or New York or to remain part of the glamorous "Greatest Show on Earth."

Searching for a different future, he went west. He had heard of Colorado, of the snowy Rocky Mountains, and found out that there was also plenty of construction work in Denver. Again, he pulled up the roots of a settled existence, and pioneered new ground.

One day in late March, 1909, he boarded a Pacific Railroad train in Chicago and set his course for Colorado. At last he was bound for the storied West. Now he could relax in the Pullman sleeper, watch the scenery and enjoy good food in the dining car. Travelling across the high plains approaching Denver, he caught his first vision of the Rockies. The sight of snow-capped peaks and the front-range mountains stretching out over the entire horizon so close to where he was going to live, moved him to ecstasy.

He arrived in Denver in the last week of March. On the first of April, he signed on as a member of the Denver local of the Bricklayers and Masons International Union. His union card read, "Brother Carl Howelsen is in good standing as a bricklayer in the Colorado State Conference, and is entitled to all the benefits of the same, for the quarter commencing April 1, 1909. John E. Miller, Financial Secretary."

Denver, still a young city, had become the center for mining, livestock, and commerce in the Rocky Mountain region. Situated on a broad plain at the piedmont of the Rockies, framed by mountains stretching fully 150 miles from south to north, the city was a natural trading center for gold prospectors and miners outfitting for expeditions into the mountains. As ranching developed on the high plains and in mountain valleys, Denver became the crossroads for the cattle and livestock industry. With four transcontinental railway lines merging in town, Denver connected the industrial East with the resource-rich West. It soon became a gateway for railway traffic throughout the western states. With the coming of the railroad commerce flourished. Denver was booming when Carl Howelsen arrived. He had no difficulty getting work, and found a place to stay at 1933 Sherman Street. He quickly discovered the town had a wide mix of first and second generation immigrants. Germans, Poles, Scandinavians, and many East Europeans had settled there.

Little is recorded of Howelsen's first years in Denver. Unquestionably, he started exploring the Rockies almost as soon as he arrived — certainly by the winter of 1910. Not long after his arrival, he ventured on a skiing tour of one of the glaciers in the Rockies, probably St. Mary's Glacier.

Years later, in the winter of 1946, Jakob Vaage interviewed a group of Holmenkollen veterans, Carl Howelsen among them. The interview was held during the first Holmenkollen contests after World War II, and was broadcast over the Norwegian Radio Station. In that interview, Howelsen told about a dramatic skiing tour on a glacier in the Rockies shortly after he settled in Denver.

Eager to explore, he had taken off alone with his skis, rucksack, and enough food for the day. Gliding along the glacier, he suddenly crashed headlong into a crevasse and found himself about 30 feet below on a ridge within the glacier. After recovering from the shock, he found he had not hurt himself in the fall. However, he was shut in, and there seemed no way to get out. The ice walls were smooth, slippery and vertical on both sides.

Howelsen was not about to give up. In his rucksack he had an axe, got it out, and started to work on one of the ice walls. He cut a deep step into it, and placed the back end of one of his skis in it, leaning the front tip of the ski on to the opposite wall. Then he stood on the ski where the step had been cut. Again he used the axe, cutting another step about a yard above. Then he moved the other ski to the next cut and hoisted himself up still further. In this fashion, he slowly reached the top and daylight again with skis and all.

"What did you feel when you reached the top?" interviewer Vaage asked.

"Then I thanked God," Howelsen answered.

The mishap must have shaken him and taught him to be careful exploring the Rockies on his own. There is ample evidence that when he later did his exploring tours in the mountains, he did not venture out alone. He succeeded in getting Angell Schmidt, one of the men from the Norge Ski Club in Chicago, to join him. In December of 1911 these two Norwegian friends set out on an expedition that was to make skiing history.

SKIS, OR "SNOWSHOES" as people called them, were not unknown in Colorado. Just as miners in California had taken to skis when winter set in and mountain communities became isolated, so it was in Colorado. Records tell of a downhill race among miners in Gunnison County at Crested Butte in the Elk Mountains in 1886. Skis had also been used by mail carriers in snowbound communities of the Rockies like Steamboat Springs and Breckenridge.

Jakob Vaage writes: "One of the finest ski makers of early Rockies period was a priest, Father John Dyer. He had left his native Ohio in 1861 to travel to a point in the Rockies (I hesitate to call it a town), named Buckskin Joe, a booming mine camp just across the range from Breckenridge. Father Dyer learned to make his own skis so he could 'ride the circuit' in the winter, just as the parish priests did in Norway. Father Dyer evidently skied as far south as New Mexico on missions of mercy and spiritual comfort. Then, in 1864, Father Dyer was given a government contract to carry the mail over the Great Divide, between Buckskin Joe and Cache Creek, a distance of 37 miles, with a stop at Oro City (later known as Leadville). This was half the distance or less, end to end, than Snowshoe Thompson's Sierra route, yet Dyer's route had its rigors. It was known as 'The Highway of Frozen Death'."

Thus, people already knew about skis and skiing in Colorado. Carl Howelsen was not the first to introduce skis. But he did contribute something of lasting value. He became, like Sondre Norheim in Norway, a catalyst for sports skiing in the mountainous state. He advanced it from the mail carrier stage to the recreational stage. With such enthusiasm did he pass on the skiing "bug" across the land, that people caught the infection. As a result, Colorado today is the Skiing State of America.

In late December, 1911, Carl Howelsen and Angell Schmidt set out on an ex-

ploring expedition. They could no longer resist the temptation to know what it looked like on the other side of the Continental Divide. With skis, 35 pounds in their backpacks, and a rifle apiece, they boarded the Moffat Railroad. Getting off at Corona, they absorbed the majestic view over the front range mountains and the high plains far beyond Denver. It was a spectacular sight. Then, donning their skis, they ventured out, heading for Middle Park. They found their way through the hills and forests and stopped at the gorgeous open plain of Frazer, surrounded by the Continental Divide from north to south and majestic Byers Peak in the west.

They talked with a Swedish rancher for awhile, then pushed on to Hot Sulphur Springs. There they ran into a Swiss "stranger" who had settled in the town for the time being. He had heard of the little Rocky Mountain health resort known as far away as Europe for its hot springs and baths of curing power. So the Swiss, John Peyer, had been drawn to the town. He was full of ideas and initiative, and with long experience in skating, sledding, and tobogganning, he conceived the plan of making a Winter Sports Carnival at Hot Sulphur Springs.

In October 1911, Peyer and other sports-minded citizens of the town founded the Winter Sports Club. They decided to arrange a carnival of skating, races and sled competitions on the thirtieth of December of that year in Hot Sulphur Springs.

Unexpectedly, the two Norsemen turned up on December 29. John Peyer invited them to stay with him. He told them about the sports event the next day and invited them to see it.

Immediately, Howelsen aroused Peyer's imagination by telling him about the Holmenkollen festivities in Norway. It did not take the Norwegians long to convince him to include some skiing in the carnival.

But first they wanted to show him what they could offer. They quickly fashioned a ski jump on a hill outside his house, and demonstrated their skiing skills — jumping, downhill, and cross-country running. Peyer was thrilled, and so it happened that skiing was included in the carnival as a special event on December 31.

GRAND COUNTY MUSEUM

Hot Sulphur Springs' first Winter Carnival, December, 1911.

The Winter Sports Carnival was a great success. It turned out to be so popular that the Winter Sports Club decided immediately to stage a new and bigger one on the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth of February, 1912. Howelsen and Schmidt were urged to come back, and they promised to do so. They returned to Corona and Denver, and repeated the same trek to the carnival a good month later.

Word about the skiing and jumping exhibition in Hot Sulphur Springs got around. In the Sunday edition of the *Denver Post* of January 7, 1912, there appeared a four-column article with three photos, one showing Howelsen in mid-air making a jump of about 80 feet. Headlines read: "Sulphur Springs Successful Winter Sports Awaken Interest for Skiing Carnival in Denver." "Former Residents of Norway Gave Exhibition That Pleased Spectators." "Carl Howelsen and Angell Schmidt Return From Trip in Mountain and Wonder Why Coloradoans Are Not Ski Experts."

The article then followed, "Colorado ought to enjoy more exercise on skis, says Carl Howelsen, a native of Norway, but now living in Denver. The snow here is light and dry and splendid for travelling on skis. It doesn't ball up and pack, as the snow in Eastern states does. I've just come back from a trip over the range and it is splendid sport.

"Mr. Howelsen and Angell Schmidt have just made a notable trip over the range, in the course of which they gave an exhibition of ski jumping at Sulphur Springs. They took the train to Corona, on top of the range on the Moffat Road, and there left the train to go the rest of the way, 44 miles, to Sulphur Springs on skis . . . including a stop at Frazer and another stop to cook some food and rest a little. They made the trip in nine hours.

"The fallen timber between Corona and Frazer gave us the most trouble, they said. We did not know the country, and had to follow the railroad pretty closely, and it was rough. But the last four miles, after we came in sight of Sulphur, we made in a few minutes. It was all downhill and we just slid down that long slope without taking a step.

"We can't understand why more Colorado people don't use skis. There are lots of them in the mountains, for we saw some in front of the houses. We know the United States forest rangers have them, but perhaps they don't know how to use them to the best advantage. All that we have seen using them tie them too loosely on the foot, and if they fall, the ski goes down the hill. Now in Norway we tie them as tight as can be, and if we do fall, well the ski is still there.

"Danger? Well, not much. We've both been hurt a little, but it's nothing like the football and baseball that you Americans love.

"Messrs. Howelsen and Schmidt say that there is no reason why Denver should not have a ski tournament comparable, in a smaller way, to the big skating carnival held New Year's Day at City Park. There are serveral hills within the reach of the streetcar lines where a slide could be arranged. There are several good ski jumpers living in Denver, and perhaps eight or ten could be found who would take part in such a contest of skill . . . .

"They are both enthusiastic over the prospect of skiing in the mountains of Colorado, and they hope that the sport will be taken up by many persons who love athletics . . . .

"During the two days these gentlemen spent in Hot Sulphur Springs they took the pains to look the situation over thoroughly and with professional eyes. Before leaving, they made a statement to the club that they had spent time and care in the examination of different and many points in Colorado with a view to their possibilities in respect to winter sports of all kinds, and no place that they had seen is so admirably suited in that line as is Hot Sulphur Springs."

This article in the *Denver Post* must have inspired two other Norwegians then living in Denver to take up their beloved "national" sport afresh. From early 1912 on, C. Andrews and B. O. Johnson both became great promoters of the skiing sport. They joined up with Howelsen and Schmidt and it wasn't long before their united efforts got Denverites out on skis.

New events in Hot Sulphur Springs were to further arouse the interest of the people of Denver.

John Peyer was a man of great talent for organizing and advertising. From the very first day when Howelsen told him about winter festivities at Holmenkollen, he caught a vision of making the carnivals in Hot Sulphur Springs the great events of the winter season. In preparation for the three-day event in February, he printed a highly attractive program and sent out an equally impressive invitation all over the West, asking experts on skis, sledding and skating to attend, promising "warm, comfortable accommodations." On Howelsen's prompting, he also sent invitations to ski clubs in the East and Midwest.

GRAND COUNTY MUSEUM

The printed program with a front-page photo of Howelsen jumping in Hot Sulphur Springs, announced:

"Saturday: Amateur Ski events; Single Sled events; Quarter-mile Ski Race; Professional Ski Races; Three-passenger Sled Races; Free-for-all Race; and in the evening a dance at the Antlers Hall.

"Sunday: Professional Ski Jumping; Skating on Rink; Races for Boys and Girls; Fancy Skating; Hobble-skirt Racing; Blindfold Races; and others.

"Monday: Professional Cross-country Ski Racing; Coasting; and General Sports."

Commenting on the upcoming carnival, the *Rocky Mountain News* wrote on January 29, 1912:

"Entries have been received from nearly all the States of the Union where snow and ice are to be found, and from Canada for the Carnival of Winter Sports to be conducted at Hot Sulphur Springs, Colo., February 10, 11, and 12, by Hot Sulphur Springs Winter Sports Club.

"Many people residing in Western Colorado will participate in the carnival, as will many from Denver, and hundreds from Denver and elsewhere in Colorado will be among the spectators, while several Eastern publications will be represented by writers and photographers commissioned to tell the world how a summer resort has suddenly become famous as a winter resort too.

GRAND COUNTY MUSEUM

After the ski tournament, participants and viewers gathered for a photo. Howelsen holds the big silver cup; Peyer is in white sweater.

"Members of the Hot Sulphur Springs Winter Sports Club are confident that their carnivals will shortly be more popular than those of Montreal. They are offering every inducement to amateurs and professionals to take part and the response has been so general that the Club feels assured that the carnival has become a permanent fixture for the town."

Immediately after the event, the *Denver Post* had a three-column photo of Carl Howelsen, making a long ski jump at the Winter Sports Carnival, Sulphur Springs, with the following story:

"The first annual winter sports carnival in the West closed here last evening. The carnival was a huge success and attracted people from many different states, as well as a dozen photographic concerns, including the Mile High people of Denver, who secured some very excellent pictures, part of which are herewith reproduced.

"The carnival began Saturday and continued three days . . . . Those who participated in the ski racing, ski jumping, sled racing, and skating events declare the natural conditions for winter sports at Sulphur Springs could not be surpassed — not even in Switzerland, Norway, and other European countries, where these sports originated.

"Next year the various events of the Winter Sports Carnival at Sulphur Springs will be depicted in moving pictures for the benefit of all America, the same as the winter sports of Europe are now being shown to American audiences. Arrangements for bringing moving picture machines to Sulphur Springs next winter are being made, and by the time the carnival opens, everything will be in readiness."

Howelsen leading a touring party in the mountains of Hot Sulphur Springs.

As spring, summer, and fall passed and the first new snow of 1912-13 was falling in the mountains, the people of Hot Sulphur Springs prepared for the new winter adventures. Again it was announced in the Denver press.

"Ski Jumpers Are Ready for Great Midwinter Sport Carnival. Cracks of East and West will Meet in Program of Daring Feats" was the headling of the *Daily News* of Friday, January 31, 1913. The article was illustrated with five pictures of ski jumping, tobogganing, and skijoring. The writer said, "Winter Sports Club will open its second annual carnival tomorrow with the preliminary ski jumping and tobogganing contests . . . .

"Two of the best ski jumpers from Red Wing, Minnesota, Charles Eck and Olaf Benson, members of the National Ski Association, who have guaranteed a jump of at least 110 feet, have been secured. In addition to these men, Howelsen and Dahle, the noted Routt County jumpers, will be here throughout the carnival. All these men will compete in the cross-country runs and in the skijoring races.

"Judging from the reservations already made at local hotels, the attendance this year will far outnumber that at the carnival last year. Accommodations for 65 Denver people has already been engaged. The Moffat Road is making a special round-trip of only $7.40 from Denver."

The *Denver Post*, Sunday, January 19, 1913, carried half a page with photos and a five-column headline, "Skijoring, with Horses Hitched to Men on Skis to Be Seen at Sulphur Springs Winter Carnival." "Novel Sport will be Witnessed in U.S. for First Time."

Then the article reads: "Ever heard of skijoring? No? Well, that is not to be wondered at unless you were born in Norway or Sweden, for it is a pastime that is indigenous to the Northland, and never has been introduced in America. But it is on its way, and those who attend the carnival and contests of the Winter Sports Club here on January 31 and February 1, and 2, will see it for the first time on this side of the Atlantic.

"For those who are curious to learn the nature of this sport, it may be explained that it consists of racing over the snow with fleet horses as the motive power, and sturdy men on skis as the rolling stock. The speed attained in skijoring contests in Sweden is remarkable, and the men who act as drivers and vehicles combined exhibit great skill in their efforts to maintain their balance, for a fall means the loss of a race and possible injury.

"Skijoring will be only one of the features of the carnival, though the most novel. Ski jumpers, who have made their mark and won prizes wherever the sport is practiced, both in Europe and in America, will compete for valuable awards, and the course which has been selected and laid out under the direction of Carl Howelsen, last year's champion, is regarded as the sportiest in the country."

The *Denver Post* of February 4, 1913, printed the headline, "Denver Ski Star Slides All Over His Opponents," and the story reads, "The Winter Sports Carnival closed here today with the largest crowd of the three days, and with some of the most exciting events. Carl Howelsen of Denver, also champion of Norway, proved to be the star performer of the carnival, while Dahle, Eck, and Benson displayed remarkable ability in all lines of skiing."

The Winter Sports Carnivals and the people of Hot Sulphur Springs unquestionably played an important part in the beginning stages and later development of skiing in Colorado. They pioneered a pattern soon to be followed in Denver and in the neighboring communities of Steamboat Springs and Dillon.

GRAND COUNTY MUSEUM

6. Denver Gets Going

It was the winter of 1913, according to most sources, when skiing got started in Denver.

Municipal Facts, a bi-monthly Denver magazine, ran a story in its January-February issue of 1922, with the title, "The Ski Riders of Genessee." It stated:

"The big snow of December 4, 1913, marked the real birth of winter sports in Denver, for immediately after that storm, when streetcars and traffic of all kinds were blocked in the business district of the city, Carl Howelsen, professional ski rider and winner of many skiing contests, glided gracefully up and down the streets while a snowbound city looked on, marvelled, and admired.

"That winter a ski course and take-off was built at Inspiration Point, and attracted great attention. Each succeeding winter the sport gradually spread to a larger number, until in Feburary 1921 the National Ski Tournament was held on Genessee Mountain, Carl Howelsen, Father of Denver Skiing, winning the prize for jumping."

The *Denver Post* of December 2, 1913, featured five photos of skiing with the headline, "Ski Jumping Added to Denver Winter Sport Schedule. Champion Carl Howelsen is Instructor in New Club." The text of the article said, "A ski club has been formed in Denver, with the hope of establishing the sport here, the ultimate end being a big winter carnival to be staged here the latter part of January. C. Andrews, 304 Colorado Building, and Carl Howelsen, 1933 Sherman Street, are at the end of the new club, both being expert ski men. Both are natives of Norway, the latter being a holder of many championship medals . . . .

"Howelsen has volunteered his services as instructor for the local club, and it is thought that with the famous foothills and Rockies at Denver's very door, the ideal sport will be put on a good plane there.

"By the consent of the Park Board, and also a donation from the same source, a course will be built at Inspiration Point. Additional financial backing to insure a first-class course has been made by local men.

"Mr. Andrews, who is heading the new club, is enthused over the prospects here. He said, 'There is no reason why we should not establish this attractive and exciting sport here in Colorado, where the foothills and the mountains furnish an ideal place for this sport.'

"To this end a ski club has been formed in Denver. The purpose of this club is to cultivate the sport here. By making frequent trips on skis to the surrounding hills, the members will get sufficiently skilled in the sport. Then a public jumping exhibition can be given.

"At least three months of skiing can be enjoyed around Denver. Inspiration Point is an ideal place for jumps.

"At Hot Sulphur Springs, Colorado, there already have been held two ski carnivals, and these tournaments aroused the greatest interest. The tournament to be held there this next January will be bigger and better than ever.

"These exhibitions are held every winter in many eastern states. At Red Wing, Minn., last winter, 20,000 spectators witnessed the exhibitions.

"Colorado as a winter resort, with an attraction like this, should have an advertising asset.

"The ski club just formed wants new members," Andrews concluded, "and anyone interested in this sport can obtain further information from me."

THE VISION OF Howelsen and Andrews was fulfilled — not in the winter of 1913 as hoped, but a year later. The traditional and popular "Round-Up Week" sports events of the Press Club included a ski-jumping contest at Inspiration Point in the winter of 1914. And, as always, the press of Denver showed a remarkable interest in "the white sport."

The *Denver Post* of Sunday, January 18, 1914, had a three-column half-page photo of Carl Howelsen jumping, with the headline, "Norway's Champion Ski Jumper to Thrill Denver Folk Today." The text under the photo said, "The noted Norwegian ski jumper, snapped in midair, at the slide on the top of Inspiration Point." The story runs:

"A spectacle worth seeing today will be the Denver Press Club ski tournament at Inspiration Point. The slide is really 100 feet long from the platform to the take-off, and the distance from the take-off to the ground, which slants away, is 22 feet. Howelsen, who has a record of 150 feet for a jump, jumps nearly 100 feet when he leaves the slide at the Point. He then slides into the gulch — a distance of two or three blocks — before he stops. The slide was completed yesterday, and Howelsen made two good jumps.

"This will be the first ski tournament ever held in Denver. Howelsen is anxious to make this event a success."

"I am going to give as good an exhibition as I can tomorrow," he said, after making one of his thrilling jumps. "I want to get the people of Denver interested in this sport, so that we can have better tournaments in the future. Then we can have some of the best jumpers in the world come here and compete. With plenty of snow it affords great sport."

The *Denver Post* of January 19, 1914, ran the headline: "International Ski Tournament To Be Staged in Denver. People Enthused By Thrilling Contests at Inspiration Point Sunday. Snow in Dangerous Condition But All Entrants Escape Without Injury."

The *Post* continued:

"Denver saw its first ski tournament Sunday, and thousands of people who thronged to Inspiration Point cried for more as they watched the daring feats of the jumpers. The novelty of it all, the daring, the enthusiasm of the contestants, bodes well for other and greater events of a similar nature bound to follow the introduction of this inspiring sport.

"The Denver Press Club sponsored the show — the first of a series for the entertainment of stock show guests — and when it was all over, the Press Club stood ready to assure the people that they had not seen the last exhibition. There are hundreds ready to back an international ski tournament in Denver.

"Carl Howelsen, of course, was the chief attraction, but the crowds stood in awe and wonderment at the exhibition put on by clever local jumpers.

"The snow was sticky and was looked upon by the ski men as dangerous and not conducive to the right sort of sport. It did not faze Howelsen, however, for he negotiated 130 feet without trouble from the 'bump' and went through the

air like a rocket. His landings, as well as the landing of the others, were perfect.

"About one in every two thousand of the spectators had seen real ski jumpers in action, and the afternoon's entertainment furnished them some new-fangled thrills.

"It is probable that a contest will be held at Mount Morrison before the winter passes, as the jumpers are in favor of accepting the invitation of John Brisben Walker to pull off a show in the hills near the Red Rocks, where ideal conditions are said to exist. Mr. Walker extended a personal invitation Sunday."

The *Rocky Mountain News* of Monday, January 19, 1914, printed these headlines about the contest at Inspiration Point: "20,000 Witness Ski Exhibition. Remarkable Jumps Made Despite Soft, Sticky Track Caused by Thaw. Event Complete Success. Throng Hold Breath As Carl Howelsen, Champion of West, Rises Thirty Feet into Air." The story reads:

"Twenty thousand persons witnessed the ski tournament on Inspiration Point yesterday . . . . As the form of Carl Howelsen shot with bullet-like speed from the apex of the bump and rose thirty feet in the air, they stood aghast, most of them believing he was doomed to injury. He landed 'standing' on each of three jumps in the exhibition class, negotiating great distances. . . ."

The first ski jumping exhibition and contest at Inspiration Point caught the imagination of Denver. It awed. It thrilled. It conquered. It awoke interest in a fascinating sport. That was just what Howelsen had in mind. But he wanted something else to come out of it as well. Most of all, he wanted to enlist people for the outdoor life, for skiing in the mountains, to make the "white sport," as in Norway, a people's recreation and shared activity.

Howelsen knew from this own experience as a contestant, a professional, and an outdoorsman, the truth and value of Fridtjof Nansen's words: "Skiing is something which develops not only the body but also the soul, and it is of greater importance to a nation than is generally supposed." It was skiing as a way of life, as an expression of culture, and a character-building pursuit which Howelsen wanted to pass on to the people of Colorado.

***"Howelsen's Daring Leap at Inspiration Point,"* Steamboat Pilot, *1914*.**

DENVER NEWSPAPERS REPORTED the spectacular side of Howelsen's skiing art, the daring feats of jumping. But there was an unnoticed work he did that was equally or more important — the training of hundreds of people, well-known or unknown, in the fundamentals of skiing. It made no difference to Howelsen whether his pupil was wealthy or famous or a common laborer like himself. What mattered was to pass on the joy and invigorating passion for skiing. He was a gifted instructor. He not only mastered jumping and cross-country techniques, but he was an extremely good downhill racer. A few sentences in the *Denver Post* of January 7, 1912, reporting on the Hot Sulphur Springs Winter Carnival, confirm this:

"Sled events: Race for single sled on toboggan run, one-fourth mile, won by Dick Allen of Parshall. Time: 14.1/5 seconds. Carl Howelsen of Denver made the same course on skis in 11 seconds."

Besides cross-country techniques, Howelsen taught his students the Telemark and Christiania (Christi) turns and the best way to get down mountainsides with the skiing equipment of those days. Howelsen had a rare compassion and enthusiasm for novice skiers, encouraging every beginner to do his or her very best. Thus they became enthusiastic themselves. Wherever he went, he never took a dime for his skiing instruction. It was his way of life.

Between 1912 and 1921, there were hundreds of people who caught the skiing "bug" from Howelsen. In one of his notebooks from that time, he wrote down about 100 names of people in Denver alone, people whom he taught the art of skiing. In addition, there were names of people living in Estes Park, Leadville, Yampa, Craig, Clark, Oak Creek, Hayden, Steamboat Springs, Phippsburg, Breckenridge, Golden, Hot Sulphur Springs, and Rocky Mountain National Park. These hundreds of people never became known for their skiing prowess, but they loved it and passed it on to their children and to others.

Skiing tours in the mountains were a treat and a discovery for most — and for Howelsen too. He was constantly scouting for new areas in the Rockies where ski tracks had never been before. He brought Denverites mainly to Genessee Mountain and the Middle Park region, and at times made a special trip with people to the surroundings of Steamboat Springs. Tours in Estes Park or other parts of the Rockies were most rewarding. In a photo album of the late Marjorie Perry, a sportswoman of Denver and Steamboat Springs, there are photos of Howelsen taking a party of skiers on a day's tour from

PERRY

Teaching skiing in a Denver Park, 1914. Marjorie Perry is second from left.

Leadville over Fremont Pass to Dillon. To judge from the photos, it must have been a dream tour.

In the winter of 1912, shortly after the first carnival at Hot Sulphur Springs, C. Andrews, B. O. Johnson, Schmidt and Howelsen got to know one another and became a "Norwegian nucleus" for the sport of skiing. They were not satisfied, however, to arouse interest solely in ski jumping. They needed American support, strong Americans with influence and drive behind them.

B. O. Johnson introduced Dr. Menifee R. Howard to Howelsen around 1913, and soon both the Norwegians had taught the doctor how to ski. Being a man of initiative, vision, and action, Dr. Howard opened many doors. He was the man who planned and organized the construction of the jumping course at Inspiration Point and later, when Howelsen pointed out a much better site for a jumping hill at Genessee Mountain, it was Dr. Howard and B. O. Johnson who built it. At the time of the first Press Club contests at Inspiration Point, it was Dr. Howard and B. O. Johnson who initiated and founded the Denver-Rocky Mountain Ski Club. The local Denver ski club that Andrews and Howelsen had started a year earlier was dissolved. The *Colorado Statesman* of January 24, 1914, writes: "Enthused at the interest shown in the first ski tournament at Inspiration Point in Denver, members of the Denver Ski Club participated in a banquet, following which a permanent organization was perfected. The new club is known as the Denver-Rocky Mountain Ski Club. Officers elected were R. Gordon Chaney, president; B. O. Johnson, vice president; C. Andrews, secretary, and Dr. M. R. Howard, treasurer."

In the next two decades, the Denver-Rocky Mountain Ski Club played a significant role in developing skiing in Colorado and in shaping national skiing activities.

ON THE FIFTH of December, 1915, the *Rocky Mountain News* ran a full page of eleven skiing photos and an article by Dr. Menifee Howard, headlined, "Sport of Skiing in Colorado Mountains." It is a most interesting presentation as it traces the rapid development of skiing since the snowy winter of 1913 hit Denver.

The article states: "SKI SPORT, as illustrated on this page, comes to us as a healthy, clean and exhilarating out-of-doors pastime that brings the beautiful nature of the Almighty close to the hearts of men and women. The mountain slopes, as we have them in Denver, present an ideal place for such sport in the wintertime. As there seems to be an

ever-increasing interest in the beauty of our mountains in snowy season, the increase of popularity in ski sport will make them still more popular. And just now I might say that there are several ski fans in Denver who are just longing for the first big snow, so that they may take themselves to the edge of the mountains and there again enjoy the stimulating and invigorating slide down the mountain slope, their lungs inhaling pure air, every muscle receiving its share of properly adjusted exercise.

"Skiing is practically a new sport in the United States, but the spirit of it is of such a catchy nature that now there are many thousands of fans, and about 50,000 pairs of skis sold in this country annually.

"Once an individual has mastered, even slightly, the daring and graceful art of skiing, with its sensations, thrills and inspiration, he will always be a ski enthusiast. In the most sensational part of skiing, the jumping, where the rider comes from a lofty height on the hill with the speed of the wind, leaving the take-off and jumping below, then rushing out on the plain, suddenly swerving and executing a telemark swing, the scene is spectacular and heart stirring.

"Carl Howelsen, a professional ski jumper of national fame, came to Denver six years ago and introduced the art of skiing in Colorado, and all Colorado fans owe a debt of appreciation to Mr. Howelsen for his untiring work in promoting ski sport and in coaching many of us when fear and trembling characterized our first efforts on skis in walking, sliding downhill, or jumping . . . .

"Less than a dozen Denver people had used skis previous to the 'big snow' of December 1913. Necessity at first, and later amusement and recreation, put the ski sport on the map in Colorado and brought out many enthusiastic ski fans. Afterwards many ski parties of various social sets indulged in the sport . . . .

"In January, 1914, the first ski tournament for Denver was held at Inspiration Point. It was a great experience for Denver people. Most of the crowd had seen skis for the first time at this tournament . . . .

"Enthused over the success of the Denver Tournament, Steamboat Springs in February held its first tournament, which was a big success. Ski enthusiasm has grown by leaps at Steamboat and during the past winter more than half of the younger population were on skis . . . .

"The champion jumpers of Colorado at the present time are: Amateur: Horace Jensen, Sulphur Springs; Professional: Carl Howelsen, Denver.

PERRY

A group of Denverites skiing with Howelsen at Genessee Mountain about 1914-15.

"After the big tournament in Denver, the Denver-Rocky Mountain Ski Club was organized. The club has been instrumental in promoting ski sport in Denver and other towns in Colorado.

"It is constantly planning to help other towns in Colorado, well situated for such a sport, such as Colorado Springs, Telluride, Aspen, Leadville, Cripple Creek and others in organizing ski clubs, and holding tournaments.

"The club's ideal is to have a clubhouse on Lookout Mountain, or some convenient location at the edge of the mountains where the members may go when they desire to spend the day or night, and have a jumping course and plenty of slides nearby. Membership in the club is open to all lovers of the sport, men and women, the club having a ladies' auxiliary.

"If you love outdoor sports, if you like to feel a steady flow of strength through your body, and warm, pulsing, invigorating red blood corpuscles in your blood, adding new vitality to your being, then join the Denver-Rocky Mountain Ski Club, whose members will help you accomplish all of these things."

Seven years after Dr. Howard wrote this article, he was elected president of the ski club. In the *Rocky Mountain News* of November 7, 1922, there is a report on the club's annual banquet. A good 200 members were present, and the program and future plans of the club were discussed. In his speech at the banquet, President Menifee Howard said,

"It is the purpose of the club to develop skiing, as well as other winter sports in Denver and Colorado to such an extent that the State will be known for these recreations as well as for its fine climate.

"Denver should be the St. Moritz of America," said Dr. Howard. "It is the greatest place in the world for winter sports. It furnishes fine conditions for skiing and tobogganing, and at the same time splendid climatic conditions. Denver is destined to become the ski sport center of the nation — and with the cooperation of this club — this destiny will be fulfilled at an early date."

It took hardly a generation for his vision to be fulfilled.

BACK IN THAT SNOWY WINTER of 1913 in Denver, when Howelsen "glided up and down the streets while a snowbound city looked on, marvelled and admired," one man did more than marvel; he acted. He stopped Howelsen and asked, "Can you teach me to do the same as you are doing?" His name was George Cranmer, a Denverite of unusual vision and vigor. From that day a friendship started which lasted for life. Cranmer and Howelsen scouted more places in the Rockies on skis that most, and in later years, Cranmer played a most important part in the skiing world of Colorado.

In a letter to the author in 1955, Cranmer wrote:

"Dear Leif,

"Knowing your Dad so well, I have the feeling I know you well. He was my good friend and companion for whom I have a feeling of affection and admiration because of his fine character and courage combined with judgment.

"He was the real founder of ski sport in Colorado. Through his inspiration, I organized the Genessee Winter Sports Club, and we built a stone clubhouse and a jump on Genessee Mountain. This was the first ski club in Colorado.

"Later we used to go to the Winter Park Area to ski. He had located the good places. After he returned to Norway, I built the Winter Park ski facilities with government money. It was a combination of National and City of Denver money. Winter Park is 60 miles west of Denver. It is run as a non-profit enterprise by a citizens committee. All the earnings go into development. Last winter's net earnings were about $40,000. Last winter the number of people using Winter Park was the largest of all ski resorts in the USA. Your dad was the original inspirer of Winter Park . . . ."

And Winter Park today? Over the last two decades, it has developed into one of the finest, most well-rounded and up-to-date resorts in America. Winter Park has 52 trails and 770 acres of superb skiing facilities with six jumping hills and 37 miles of cross-country trails for lovers of winter sports. It has also pioneered a skiing program for the blind and handicapped. Run by a highly trained staff, it annually brings the joy of skiing to about 2,000 of the blind and handicapped.

Facilities for children and families are carefully planned. There is daycare for kids from one to eight years old, and skiing courses and classes for children from four to twelve, allowing parents to enjoy the slopes and the fun of skiing by themselves.

Developed by two brothers of Norwegian origin, Thor and Jerry Grosvold, Winter Park has indeed become the "Nordmarka" for Denverites. As many as 800,000 skiers are enjoying its facilities during the winter season today. Denver itself has become the most ski-minded and winter sports-oriented city in the country.

DENVER POST

George Cranmer, creator of the Red Rock Theatre and Winter Park, joyfully skating at the age of 75!

7. From Steamboat Springs to the World

On February 12, 1913, Marjorie Perry was travelling from Denver to Steamboat Springs on the Moffat Railroad. As usual, the train stopped for some time at Hot Sulphur Springs. In those days, townspeople would rush to the station whenever the train stopped, and when some friends discovered Miss Perry among the travellers they immediately told her about the Winter Sports Carnival then going on.

"You must stay to see the ski-jumping exhibition tomorrow morning," they told her. "It is so exciting."

Miss Perry did not need further urging. A lover of all outdoor sports, she had a flare for adventure and decided to spend the night.

What she saw the next day, she liked. She was so enthused by the ski jumping that she persuaded Howelsen to come to Steamboat Springs for an exhibition. Howelsen accepted.

Miss Marjorie Perry was a lady of unique character and independence. Born to a well-to-do family with roots in coal mining and railroading, she shunned Denver "High Society Life." Following her father on his hunting trips, she was a sportswoman and loved the outdoor life. She became the patroness of professional skiers and came to mean something special to each one of them. She rejoiced in entertaining and caring for these men whenever they came from the east and midwest to compete in Colorado. Through her initiative, enthusiasm and refreshing quality of leadership, she played an important part in the development of skiing and mountaineering in the Rockies. It happened more than once that she picked up the competing skiers from winter sports events in Hot Sulphur Springs; bringing them in the David Moffat private coach to reach the Winter Sports Carnival in Steamboat Springs in time. Her friendship was of a rare kind, hardly known today.

Marjorie Perry

While there are no actual records to confirm when Howelsen first visited Steamboat Springs, it is probable he went with Marjorie Perry right after the carnival at Hot Sulphur Springs.

What is clear is that when he saw the town, he immediately knew Steamboat Springs was the place for him. The mountains, the open valleys, the ranches and the people, everything appealed to him. Before he returned to Denver, he had decided to settle in Steamboat and make it his home.

"Here I have found what I was looking for in the United States and I am content," he wrote a couple of years later. "Here I shall stay if nothing happens to keep me from it."

THIS ISOLATED TOWN OF Routt County was known for its hot springs. Only a few hundred people lived there. A coaching inn, a post office, a few shops, a couple of hotels, some bars, and a school formed the "built-up area," and around them were the large cattle ranches. About the time Howelsen first came there, Steamboat Springs shipped more cattle from its stockyards than were shipped from any other single point in the United States. Much earlier, before white people had settled there and the Denver, Salt Lake and Pacific Railroad had been linked to the town, the Ute Indians had the run of the fine grazing lands, wildlife and rich fishing rivers of that area. Gold diggers and gold miners had passed this remote place on their way to California. The "spirit of the West" was still alive in the people of Steamboat Springs.

On that very first trip Howelsen apparently stayed long enough to build a small jumping course on the side of Woodchuck Hill. He did some jumping and cross-country skiing, thrilling spectators who had gathered for the occasion. His small exhibition might have accounted for the fact that the *Steamboat Pilot* reported the first winter carnival as taking place in February 1913, whereas the official record dates February 1914 as the first carnival.

Author John Rolfe Burroughs writes in his booklet, *Ski Town USA,* that Howelsen came again to Steamboat Springs in the summer of 1913, his fame as a skier preceding him.

That autumn he bought a small ranch in Strawberry Park, a couple of miles north of Steamboat Springs. Surrounded by hills and mountains, the protected meadowland grew wonderful strawberries. The ranch lay at the base of Buffalo Pass, an old Indian trail made into a road in the 1890's and an ideal place for cross-country skiing and site for jumping hills.

Howelsen Ranch, Strawberry Park, 1913-21.

Naturally, when the first snow came in late fall, he raised the question about holding a winter carnival in town. The townfolk responded positively. Howelsen went to the tournament in Denver and the Third Winter Carnival at Hot Sulphur Springs in early 1914, and invited other skiers to join him at the coming winter carnival in his new hometown.

Marjorie Perry may never have known that her persuasiveness and enthusiasm had catapulted Howelsen and Steamboat Springs into the pages of American skiing history.

THE *STEAMBOAT PILOT* of Wednesday, January 28, 1914, announced that "Steamboat Will Hold a Two-Day Ski Tournament."

"Some of the Most Noted Ski Experts of the Country Will Be Here."

"February 12 and 13 are the dates set for the big Midwinter Sports Carnival at Steamboat Springs," the story ran. "Committees have been working diligently on the project, and there is much interest and enthusiasm throughout the county. Many are coming from Denver and other points along the line (Moffat Road) . . . .

"Messrs. Howelsen, Andrews, and others gave an exhibition at Inspiration Point near Denver the Sunday before the stock show and 20,000 people attended. Denver is ski-crazy and a number of clubs have been organized and will hold frequent contests . . . ."

On Wednesday, the fourth of February, the *Pilot* carried the headline, "Splendid Program for Big Midwinter Sports Event. Two Days Filled with Thrilling Sports That Will Interest Everybody."

A week later another front page headline hit newspaper readers of Routt County: "Course is Laid Out For Midwinter Ski Carnival. Howelsen Has Placed Track In Condition and His Party is Ready — Many Local People To Take Part." Then the news story reads:

"Routt County's first midwinter sports carnival opens tomorrow at Steamboat Springs. A great deal of interest has been worked up regarding the sports and many local people will take part. The program previously announced will be adhered to. It is as follows:

"Thursday,	9:30 a.m.	Annual Medal Shoot of the Steamboat Gun Club
	1:30 p.m.	Boys' Race, 18 years and under. Contestants to make top of Woodchuck and return.
		Amateur Ski Jumping Contest
		Ten-Mile Race, being twice over a 5-mile course, including two rides off Woodchuck. Contestants will leave the Cabin Hotel two minutes apart.
"Friday,	10:00 a.m.	Stake Race for Boys 15 and under
		Ladies' Race, free-for-all, quarter-mile and return.
	1:30 p.m.	Boys' Jump, 15 years and under
		Amateur Jump, any age, contestants from Routt or Moffat County
		Grand Professional Ski Jump

"Dances will be given each evening under the auspices of the Committee at the Cabin Hotel."

The article continues:

"Carl Howelsen returned Saturday evening from Hot Sulphur Springs, where he took part in the carnival. He has been busy since that time preparing the course, and putting up the platform for the big jump. He is delighted with conditions. There are six in the Howelsen party, three professionals and three amateurs. They arrived last night and are all ready for the big events. The course is off Woodchuck Mountain, near the Cabin Hotel, and in plain view of most of the town."

The *Steamboat Pilot* listed the prizes for the Carnival as follows:

Boys' Jumping Contest, 15 years and under:
- First Prize: a pair of birch skis with bindings, value $6.50
- Second Prize: wool sweater, value $3.50
- Third Prize: pair of ski poles, value $2.00

Amateur Jumping Contest, for Routt, Moffat, and Grand Counties:
- First Prize: silver loving cup, value $10.00
- Second Prize: pair of birch skis, poles and bindings, value $8.00
- Third Prize: wool sweater, value $3.50

Ten-Mile Cross-Country Race:
- First Prize: cash $75.00
- Second Prize: cash $50.00
- Third Prize: cash $25.00

Ladies' Race, Free-for-All:
- First Prize: cut glass bowl, value $8.00
- Second Prize: silver fruit spoon, value $6.00
- Third Prize: birch skis with bindings, value $4.25

Girls' Race, Under 18 years:
- First Prize: pair of birch skis, pole, and bindings, value $8.00
- Second Prize: cut glass bowl, value $3.50
- Third Prize: silver spoon, value $1.50

Amateur Skijoring Race:
- First Prize: pair ash skis, value $6.00
- Second Prize: wool sweater, value $3.50

Rocky Mountain Amateur Jumping Contest, from any part of the state:
- First Prize: grand silver loving cup, value $15.00
- Second Prize: pair of hickory skis and bindings, value $10.00
- Third Prize: pair of ash skis and bindings, value $8.50
- Fourth Prize: leather suitcase, value $5.00
- Fifth Prize: thermos bottle, value $3.50

Professional Ski Jumping, World's Championship:
- First Prize: cash $100.00
- Second Prize: cash $75.00
- Third Prize: cash $25.00

ON WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 1914, the *Pilot* carried the headline, "Midwinter Sports Were Enjoyed By Large Crowd. First Events Have Proved Such a Success That Plans Are Being Made to Continue Each Year. Local Boys Show Up Strong and Must Be Reckoned With."

The article reads, "The Midwinter Sports Carnival at Steamboat Springs was the biggest celebration of the year, far surpassing in interest and enjoyment even the most sanguine expectations of the promoters. It was a pleasant surprise, and has given such an impulse to the sport that it is already assured that the affair will be made an annual event, with a meet of the National Ski Association in prospect. Those who follow the sport say that the conditions here are ideal — steep hills in proximity to town, plenty of snow, and fine weather in midwinter.

"One gratifying feature is the way the local boys are starting to practice. From their performances on the course it is certain that in future events there will be Routt County boys who will have to be reckoned with . . . . The platform for the small jump was put up only four days before the event, but more than a dozen local boys went into the contests and some of them showed remarkable ability . . . .

"There were a number of entries in the Ladies' Race, and the first to cross the wire was Miss Margaret McPhee of Denver, with Miss Marjorie Perry also of Denver, second . . . .

"The professional jumping, of course, was the big event, the contestants being Carl Howelsen, James Presthus and Frank Finnegan of Beloit, Wisconsin, and Gunnar Dahle of Middle Park. Howelsen's three jumps were 102, 101, and 108 feet, but later, as an exhibition, he got on a little more speed and made 115 feet. Presthus made 91, 94 and 103 feet. Dahle's record was 82, 88, and 94 feet. Finnegan made 81 and 87 feet and injured his ankle so he did not complete the score. Howelsen and Presthus then made a twin jump for the entertainment of the crowd. In the professional jumping, Howelsen took first money, and Presthus second . . . .

STEAMBOAT PILOT

The first Winter Sports Carnival at Steamboat Springs, 1914.

"All the visiting contestants went away with many expressions of satisfaction over the contest, and the way they had been treated at Steamboat Springs, and all say they will be back next year."

A participant and eye witness of the Carnival was Dr. Menifee Howard. In his previously quoted article, "Sport of Skiing in Colorado Mountains" from December 1915, he refers to the first winter sports carnival in Steamboat Springs as a great success, and describes what he himself felt was the high point of the skiing contests:

". . . The most spectacular hair-raising event was the close ten mile cross-country between Gunnar Dahle and Carl Howelsen. Both could be seen a mile or more off on top of a steep hill. This was their last stretch, and they were not far apart. Howelsen was ahead, and both of them came down the hill almost like a streak of lightning, jumping over low places and ditches, and at last made the final jump over a break in the hill onto the elevation of the flag."

AND SO IT HAPPENED in Steamboat Springs as it did in Hot Sulphur and in Denver. The white sport had come to Colorado to stay, and the Winter Carnival became the focus and high point of the long winter months.

In the summer and fall of 1915, Howelsen worked on his ranch at Strawberry Park, raising hogs and finding jobs as a stonemason around Routt County. He also had another enterprise up his sleeve.

Bordering the town was a steep hill on the far side of the Yampa River. Howelsen earmarked it as an ideal site for a new jumping hill. A lot of trees needed to be cut down before the course could be shaped according to Howelsen's plan. He convinced the townspeople about the need for the course and was given permission to cut the trees. He went at it joined by other jumping enthusiasts who volunteered their labor. By the time winter set in and carnival time was near, the hill was ready to be tested.

Again the *Pilot* headlined the coming events on the front page:

"Many Experts Coming For Midwinter Ski Carnival. Howelsen and Beust Already Here To Prepare the Course, On Which It Is Hoped World's Record Will Be Broken . . . A Splendid Program Arranged." The article states, "The Midwinter Sports Carnival to be held at Steamboat Springs February 12 and 13 will set a new record in this most fascinating of outdoor sports.

"All have entered heartily into the plan to make the event the best of its kind ever held in the West. A comprehensive program has been arranged to furnish amusement every minute of the time. The expense will be in the neighborhood of $1,000. About half of this will be raised by subscriptions and it is proposed to have a tag day, the tags as admittance to all events on the grounds. The young ladies are to be interested in selling tags, and a handsome prize is to be given to the most successful one.

"Carl Howelsen has charge of preparing the course. He has been working on it, with several assistants . . . .

"So pleased are the ski jumpers with the course provided that it was easy to prevail upon Ragnar Omtvedt, the champion of the world, to come to Steamboat for the tournament. He holds the world record with a jump of 169 feet. He is now filling an engagement at Chicago. He is in great demand in all the

northern cities during the winter and has cancelled engagements in order to come to Steamboat, for he hopes to break his own record here. In addition, there will be other professionals — Howelsen, Beust, Welhaven, Johnson, Dahle, and others — making the largest collection of experts ever gathered in any country town.

"The Amateur Contest and the Boys' Contest also promise to be of great interest, for a score of persons in this neighborhood are practicing for these events.

"Chairman Salter of the Executive Committee yesterday received a letter from C. Andrews of the Denver-Rocky Mountain Ski Club, which will have charge of the Steamboat Carnival, in which he says:

"I take great pleasure in reporting to you that I have secured for Steamboat Springs the services of the Hearst-Selig Company of New York, and I have just been advised that they will send a camera man to Steamboat February 12 and 13 to take moving pictures of the ski tournament.

"It is hardly possible to overestimate the importance of this. It means that our tournament and the name of Steamboat Springs will be thrown on the screen in all of the principal cities of the United States and Europe, and the advertising value of same can hardly be estimated at this time. In my opinion it will go a long way toward making Steamboat Springs the winter sports playground of America, the same as Switzerland in Europe.

"I am also able to report that I have secured for the tournament the services of Messrs. Underwood and Underwood, commercial photographers of New York and Chicago. This firm will send a representative to Steamboat to take pictures of the different events. This firm furnishes pictures to all the principal magazines and journals in the United States, such as *Colliers, Harpers, Leslies,* and the newspapers. The advertising resulting from this should be of great value to your town and ski sports in Colorado.

"The committee is now soliciting subscriptions and is meeting with success. A full report of the donations and all expenditures will be made public after the carnival.

"Dances are to be held Friday and Saturday nights at the Cabin Hotel."

On Wednesday, February 10, the *Pilot* reports:

"The stage is all set for Steamboat's big carnival. The committee has found it necessary to make one change in the program. In the ski-jumping event heretofore announced as exclusively for participants from Routt or Moffatt County — Grand County has now been added to the list. Lou Nelson, Moffat Road Agent at Sulphur Springs, has been taking great interest in Steamboat's Carnival, and has induced a great many Grand County people to take part. The adding of Grand County to the event insures more contestants and more entertainment for people. Steamboat's amateurs are not afraid to meet all comers and have raised no objection to the change . . . ."

A week later, the *Pilot* reported,

"The splendid success of Steamboat's Mid-Winter Sports Carnival Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, has assured it a permanent place as one of the festive events of the State, and one that will grow in interest and attendance each year. In the professional event, the big drawing card of the show, there were over

2,000 persons on the grounds, while many viewed it from favorable points in town . . . .

"The experts who came to contest for the prizes confirmed what heretofore has been claimed for Steamboat's ski course — that it is one of the fastest and best in the country. This was shown not only during the regular contests, but more particularly on Sunday when Ragnar Omtvedt, champion of the world, upon being offered a special prize to break his own record of 169 feet, made two magnificent efforts, scoring 166⅔ feet at the first trial and riding the course standing, and making 170 feet at the next trial, but falling when he made a poor landing, spraining his ankle. It was a great show and was witnessed by hundreds of people. Omtvedt said the course is the best he has ever seen, and that his 166⅔ foot jump was the best he had ever made aside from the one in which he established the world's record at Ironwood, Michigan, last winter. His 170-foot jump was the longest he had ever made, or anyone else ever made, but under the rules he would have been penalized for falling . . . . The champion was delighted with his trip here and the treatment accorded him. He says he will be back for the carnival next winter.

"Carl Howelsen was a favorite with the crowd . . . . He is the most graceful jumper of them all. He has been at the game for many years . . . . Omtvedt says that as a boy he many times rustled hard for 25 cents in order to gain admittance to the grounds where Howelsen was the acknowledged star.

"The ten-mile cross-country race was five times around a two-mile circle, the contestants remaining in sight practically all the time.

"The snow was soft and it was hard going. Carl Howelsen won the first prize of $75; Sumner Dahle of Grand County won second prize of $50; and Harper Forgy of Routt County won the third prize of $25. These three took the lead at the start and maintained it throughout . . . .

"C. Andrews, Secretary of the Denver Rocky Mountain Ski Club, and Dr. Menifee R. Howard of Denver performed valuable service in managing the various events . . . .

"It was plainly evident that the Steamboat boys are becoming artists in the skiing game, and they carried away many of the prizes. Many of them have been practicing only a very short time. One of the best is Hollis Merrill, 10 years old, who is a regular jack rabbit when it comes to getting over the ground . . . .

"The unanimous sentiment of the town makes it certain that the Mid-Winter Carnival will be established on a solid basis as an annual event. All the visitors who were here during the recent carnival were greatly pleased with the affair, and the attendance will grow each year."

Thus, in the course of just two winters, the population of Steamboat Springs had become fully ski-minded. They were proud of their jumping hill and skiing trails, and the *Steamboat Pilot* did not miss a chance to keep its readers up to date on skiing events in the world — and always on the front page!

On March 3, 1915, the *Pilot* reported the following news:

"An Associated Press dispatch from Chicago, dated February 27, says: 'The world's record for ski jumpers has passed from America to Norway,' it was announced here today by Aksel H. Holter, secretary of the National Ski Association of America.

"Ragnar Omtvedt, the Chicago professional, whose jump of 169 feet at Ironwood, Michigan, established a world's record February 16, 1913, was outjumped by Amble Omundsen of Christiania recently when he jumped 177 feet at the Eker Ski Club slide, an especially steep slide graded by the Norwegians with the idea of winning the record."

On the sixteenth of February, 1916, under the headline, "Ski Contest Under Rules of National Association," the *Pilot* carried a most interesting story of skiing for its readers:

"Ski sports have an important place in Norway and Sweden, and are coming into great popularity in the United States. Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan are the states which have taken the greatest interest in skiing so far. Records, to be official, must be held under the auspices of a club affiliated with the National Ski Association of America. Steamboat Springs is the only club in the Rocky Mountains belonging to the National Association. Each year there is a national champion tournament, the twelfth one having just been held at Glenwood, Minnesota. It is at this tournament that the national champion is determined.

"In ski jumping, prizes are awarded on points, and not necessarily on the longest jump. There are always two and frequently three trials by each contestant, depending upon local rules, and the points are added together, the one with the largest total being the winner. To understand the system, there is quoted below the rules of the National Association . . . ."

Thus, in a detailed and instructive way, the *Pilot* was introducing its readers to the "Rules Governing Ski Contests," and "The Form of Skier."

A headline follows: "Chance To Break Record. Steamboat Ski Course Excels All Others in United States." The story reads, "The fond hope of Steamboat Springs' residents that a world record will be established on the local course during the tournament is not such a wild dream as might be supposed. The Steamboat slide has been built by experts, and they pronounce it the very best in this country. Not only do they say so, but the distance made in Steamboat Springs bears out their assertion. A great improvement has been made in the course since last year. At that time Omtvedt jumped 170 feet, which is close to the world's record. Sunday, Carl Howelsen made 168 feet in one of the prettiest exhibitions ever seen on the course, and he now believes he has a chance to equal the record held by Omundsen.

"The official report of the National Ski Association gives the longest jump made at the many tournaments held in America last year, and they fall far below the distance now being covered by Howelsen. At the national tournament held at Glenwood, Minnesota last week, the longest jump was made by Lars Haugen, 132 feet; at the national meet last year the best record was made by Henry Hall — 126 feet," the *Pilot* concludes.

THERE WAS EXCITEMENT in the air as the Mid-Winter Carnival of 1916 approached. Would Ragner Omtvedt beat the world record, wresting it from the Norwegian, Amble Omundsen? Would he bring fame to Steamboat Springs again?

"Not the slightest doubt exists," wrote the *Pilot* on February 16, "that a world's record will be established, and it is the unanimous opinion of the com-

ing contenders for the world's honors that no better course or more propitious time could be found for accomplishment of this."

The most experienced hand on the hill, that old fox of a skier who had prepared the improved course to perfection over the last ten days, knew for certain it would happen, but Carl Howelsen kept that certainty to himself.

On Wednesday, February 23, 1916, the *Pilot* splashed the news on the front page: "World's Ski Record Raised 15 ft. 9 in. Ragner Omtvedt, on Steamboat Springs Course, the Fastest Ever Known, Jumps 192 feet 9 inches, and Says That 200 Mark Will Be Reached Here At Next Carnival."

PERRY

Framed under the headline, the following story appeared:

"World's records in skiing went to smash Friday afternoon on the Steamboat Slide, long claimed and now proven to be the fastest in the entire country. Never since human beings have travelled the snow on skis, not even in Norway where men are trained from the cradle to excel in snow sports, have men hurled their bodies through the air such a distance as was recorded on the Steamboat course. Every contestant broke the previous American record of 169 feet. The weather conditions were perfect, bright and clear, without a breath of wind, and the course was at its best. Omtvedt's great feat, as well as the tremendous records piled up by the other contestants, has placed the Steamboat Ski Club and its wonderful course as important factors in the world of snow sports. And it is freely predicted by the professionals who were here that the end of the record breaking has not been reached. The Steamboat course will see new records established in coming years, and it is even talked of now that 200 and 210 feet is not impossible with such conditions as exist on the Steamboat Slide, and that such a record may be made at the next carnival, for it is believed that many of the professionals of the country, ambitious for championship honors, will be glad to come here next year to try a course which makes possible such phenomenal distances."

Another headline on the front page ran: "Three Thousand Witness Record Breaking Flight," "Greatest Crowd in County's History Cheers Champion to Greatest Effort — Records Broken In All Lines of Winter Sports."

"Hanging in midair for three seconds," the report said, "plunging upward

and outward a distance of 192 feet and 9 inches, and coming back to earth with all the grace and ease of a bird of the air, Ragnar Omtvedt of the Norge Ski Club of Chicago, broke the world's record for distance ski jumping on the Steamboat Springs ski course Friday afternoon . . . . The previous distance record of 177 feet was exceeded by two others of the jumpers, Anders Haugen, making 184 feet and Lars Haugen 182 feet and 6 inches, but neither of these riders stood. Carl Howelsen beat the record of all years previous to last year with a jump of 171 feet and 2 inches."

Under the headline, "Wind Freezes Tears On the Ski Jumpers' Eyes," the *Denver Times* of Thursday, February 24, 1916, ran an interview with Ragnar Omtvedt.

" 'You have the fastest course in the world here,' he says, and 'I am coming again next year and will bring a number of people with me. In Norway, these sports are witnessed by crowds sometimes as many as 75,000 or 80,000 people, and there is no reason why they cannot be made a big thing for Colorado. It is the cleanest sport on earth and the most fascinating.' "

The story continues: "The entire distance from start to finish was 350 yards, and this was covered in 9 seconds. In making the jump, he made a perpendicular drop of 90 feet. In order to keep his balance while in the air, he uses his hands to steady himself.

" 'The water froze in my eyes before I had covered half the distance,' said he. 'I couldn't use my hands, and I was unable to see the ground when I struck.'

DENVER TIMES

Left to right: Anders Haugen of Chicago; Carl Howelsen of Denver; Ragnar Omtvedt of Chicago, World's Champion and All-Around Record-Breaker; and Lars Haugen of Chicago.

"In spite of that situation, Omtvedt retained his upright position on his skis when the jump was finished.

" 'In Norway the King gives a medal to a ski jumper who holds the record for a certain length of time, and after that he cannot compete for prizes in that country,' continued Omtvedt. 'Carl Howelsen of Denver is a winner of one of these medals. I remember watching him jump when I was a boy, and he was one of the inspirations which made me engage in the sport.' "

THE RECORD-BREAKING FEAT of Ragnar Omtvedt made the name of Steamboat Springs known throughout the world, and the town people loved it. Steamboat Springs was now on the map of the world! Only three winters before, practically nobody knew of the little town in the Rockies. When winter set in, few visitors ever made it to the snow-bound isolated community. Now, suddenly, two to three thousand people came annually to see their Mid-Winter Sports Carnival. The isolation of past winters was over.

The Colorado press gave an enormous amount of coverage to skiing. It was considered front page news. The *Denver Post,* the *Rocky Mountain News,* the *Middle Park Times,* and the *Steamboat Pilot* played an important role in promoting the white sport throughout the state.

The *Middle Park Times* of February 16, 1917, carried an editorial entitled, "Ski Sport Growing in Favor." It read in part:

"There are many signs that point to Ski Sport as the coming winter sport of the U.S., as it already is of the Scandinavian countries of Europe. The demand for skis has been so great this winter that it has been almost impossible for merchants to secure a supply for sale, and what they have been able to secure has not been what they ordered, but what the jobbers could send them.

"This week one of the most widely circulated magazines in the country, *The Literary Digest,* came out with the picture of a ski jumper on its front page. Many others are boosting the sport.

"Wherever there is enough snow to ride on, the young people all over the country are falling in lines, and as they become familiar with its many attractions, they invariably become enthusiasts. There is no more healthful and pleasant outdoor pastime, and it will take its place in the years to come as the greatest factor we have in building our boys and girls into strong and healthy men and women."

On February 7 of the same year, the *Steamboat Pilot* carried a story of equal interest:

"That the Steamboat Winter Sports Carnival has attracted attention far and near is evidenced by many letters being received by Sam M. Colman, secretary of the local ski club. One party from Estes Park plans to come in a manner most fitting for such an occasion — the members are to make a goodly portion of the trip on snowshoes and skis. Secretary Colman yesterday received a letter from one of the Higby Brothers, proprietors of the Estes Park Hotel, telling of their intention, and a portion of the letter is here reprinted:

"Some eight or ten of us from Estes Park, including my two brothers and myself, with our wives, expect to snowshoe and ski across the range to Hot Sulphur Springs via Grand Lake, and thence by rail to Steamboat Springs, reaching there the 27th or 28th. I am writing to ask about reservations.

"We leave here Sunday, the 25th. We will bring with us Herman von Beust of Switzerland, who was with you at your tournament two years ago, and his companion, Franz Tiermann, from Austria, also a skier. Mr. von Beust will participate in the amateur jump.

"We hope to cooperate with you next year in securing professional jumpers and also in the dates of our tournament . . . ."

Soon it was time for the Mid-Winter Sports Carnival of 1917. It was destined to top the carnival of 1916. The headlines of the *Pilot* were longer and bigger than ever before. On March 7, the whole front page was filled with news of the events.

"Henry Hall, Representing Local Ski Club, Jumps 203 Feet, Beating World Record By Over 10 Feet." "Native American Athlete Demonstrates Superiority Over Representative Hardy Norseman and Tops Champion Ragnar Omtvedt's Last Year's Jump Decisively."

"Not Once," the paper states, "but twice within a few minutes this new champion made 203 feet. In the finals of the professional contest he cleared the same distance but was unable to ride the jump, so, according to the rules, was penalized thirty points for the fall. Confident of his own ability, Hall commenced to re-ascend the steep hill, and before the spectators imagined he had had time to reach the top once more, was sailing through the air. Again he landed squarely on the 203 mark, rode gracefully on his skis, and a new champion had come into his own.

"Because of the advantageous location of the course, practically all anxious spectators could plainly see that the jumper had passed the flag marking the spot that brought fame to Ragner Omtvedt twelve months previous, and wild cheering awakened an immediate response from the echoes of nearby hills and mountains. Borne on the shoulders of his unsuccessful competitors, members of the Steamboat Ski Club and other admirers, the new champion of the world made the trip from the course to his quarters at the Cabin Hotel.

"Henry Hall, to whom all skidom is now bowing, is 23 years old and American born, although he inherits much of his fondness and ability for skiing from Norwegian ancestry. He is a splendid type of physical manhood, and has won because of clean living and determination. He and the former champion, Ragnar Omtvedt, have been running neck and neck for some time."

The Newspaper That Everybody in Northwestern Colorado Reads

The Pioneer Pilot

THE STEAMBOAT PILOT

Job Printing

HENRY HALL, REPRESENTING LOCAL SKI CLUB, JUMPS 203 FEET, BEATING WORLD'S RECORD BY OVER 10 FEET

Native American Athlete Demonstrates Superiority Over Representative Hardy Norsemen and Tops Champion Ragnar Omtvedt's Last Year Jump Decisively

SAUCE FOR THE GOOSE.

MARJORIE DINS CROWNED QUEEN OF BIG CARNIVAL

Popular Steamboat Springs Young Lady Wins Exciting Contest by Whirlwind Finish and Is the Principal Figure in Impressive Coronation Ceremonies

PERRY

On the editorial page, headlined "Winter Sports Carnival," the paper gives an evaluation of the events:

"Again Steamboat Springs has demonstrated its ability to do things in the public celebration line in a manner giving pleasure to visitors and reflecting credit upon her citizens. The fourth annual Winter Sports Carnival held Thursday and Friday proved all that its advance agents claimed it would be. It also settled the question of the finest and fastest ski course in the United States, which now will be generally admitted to be Steamboat Springs, Colorado, for again the world record was broken . . . .

"Steamboat Springs Winter Sports Carnival is now placed on the sporting map ever to remain," the *Pilot* concluded.

A special happening at the Fourth Carnival was also reported on the front page of the *Pilot* that same day. Headlined, "Father of Sport Honored," "Hill where Ski Contests Are Held Christened 'Howelsen Hill'," it reads:

"Carl Howelsen, referred to by orators as the young-old father of skiing in Colorado, has been honored in a singular fashion. Mr. Howelsen is the man who introduced the sport into Routt County; he has spent months of his time and effort in encouraging the youngsters to perfect themselves in the sport. He has been unselfish in his help and assistance to the professional riders even when such help meant that the honors that he had gained undoubtedly would be wrested from him by younger men. He stood at the head of the sport for many years and holds more medals and records than all of the other professionals put together, and in addition to this, he designed and built the wonderful take-offs where two world records have been broken. In recognition of this, and to perpetuate the name of this altruistic Norseman, the world's best ski course, across the river from Steamboat Springs, has been christened 'Howelsen Hill,' and to the lovers of the sport from now on Howelsen Hill will be the center of their hopes and achievements."

STEAMBOAT PILOT

Howelsen Hill, 1917.

8. The Time of Their Lives

A few days after the Fourth Mid-Winter Sports Carnival was over, the *Steamboat Pilot* carried an article, stating:

"The professional ski jumpers are still in Steamboat, and while they appear no more on the jumping hill, their skis are brought into use many hours each day. They are making pleasure trips in the vicinity and say that they are having the time of their lives."

For professional skiers, Steamboat Springs had become something special. It was an experience they did not want to miss. Men travelled thousands of miles from the East and Midwest every year to take part in the tournament, and then stayed on for days.

A unique relationship grew up between these professional skiers and the people of the town. Performing heroes of the slopes and enthusiastic spectators merged together in a bond of irresistable friendship. This relationship permeates a front page editorial of the *Steamboat Pilot*. Nicely framed, as though the writer wanted to emphasize the importance of his feature, the editorial runs:

"The Sport That Makes For Clean, Healthful Men." "Success in skiing and in similar sports depends upon a clear brain, trained eyes and muscles as firm as whipcords. No one may succeed who does not live a clean life, for every manly faculty must be at its best, the delicate mechanism of the human body must act in unison and at its highest efficiency. The professional skiers who aided so materially in making last week's carnival a success are a fine lot of men and made many firm and lasting friendships while here.

"The people of Steamboat Springs who have seen the midwinter carnival grow from a small local celebration to an event of nation-wide importance in two years quite naturally place Carl Howelsen first in their regard. To his enthusiasm, encouragement and hard work the largest measure of credit is due for he never tires in his efforts to make a success of the Steamboat Carnival. Whether it is building a course, fixing the course, giving advice and encouragement to the youngsters or entertaining the people, Howelsen is always on the job. He is ready at all times to entertain and to instruct. He has been heaped with honors for his athletic prowess in his native Norway, and while the years are accumulating upon him and by an inexorable law of nature his hardened muscles lack the spring and elasticity of earlier days, he maintains the enthusiasm and the heart that comes from a never failing kindness and goodwill. The unselfish labors of Howelsen have made him, perhaps unknown to himself, a popular and idolized hero, and when other champions have come and gone and the world is busy greeting some new star in the athletic world, Carl Howelsen will retain his place in the regard of the people of Steamboat Springs and Routt County.

"Ragnar Omtvedt, again undisputed world's champion for long distance jump, with a record so far in advance of all competitors that in all probability it will be years before it is equalled, made many friends in Steamboat last year and was one of the first to announce his intention of participating in the 1916 carnival.

"Mr. Omtvedt is modest in regard to his honors and made himself popular by entering heartily into all the sports of the carnival and assisting materially in making it a success.

"The two quiet, gentlemanly and athletic brothers, Lars and Anders Haugen, made a big hit with local people. Lars, the elder, has twice held the American championship. The official organ of the national association says he is one of the most popular men who ever held that honor. Both men are graceful artists on skis and are in great demand at all the carnivals throughout Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan. The home of both gentlemen is at Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin. Each showed high class on the Steamboat Slide and made record-breaking jumps, but because they were unfamiliar with the course, each was disqualified by falling. If they had made the ride after landing, each would have broken the previous world record, as Lars Haugen made 182 feet 6 inches, and Anders Haugen covered 184 feet. They frequently have taken honors from Omtvedt on other slides. Lars Haugen expresses the belief that he can make over 200 on the Steamboat course and promises next year he will come in advance of the carnival and become familiar with the slide, when he hopes to do a little record-smashing himself. Both boys were delighted with their trip to Colorado, pleased with their reception and treatment and promise to come back next year and they made many friends who will give them a cordial greeting.

"Steamboat's amateur talent showed up well and furnished entertainment that was highly appreciated. Of the many good ones the youngest deserve special mention: Hollis Merrill, Edward Trinder, George Dickson, George Mann and Walter Ziek. The latter is a new contestant, but is fast overtaking the older ones. Paul Trinder, Ralph Mann, Marcellus Merrill, Nathan Shore and a number of others are rapidly improving on already fine records and some of these days it will not be necessary to send away for the best professional talent."

TWO OF THE PROFESSIONAL SKIERS of that time who are still alive are Anders Haugen at the age of 94, and Henry Hall at 90. They recently told the author that the high point of their visits to Steamboat Springs was skiing tours in the mountains. An especially treasured trip was the outing to Hot Springs.

Quite a group would leave Steamboat early in the morning for the six-mile climb, arriving at Hot Springs in time for lunch. The Denverites would often come along: Andrews, Howard, Johnson, Cranmer, and those sportswomen Perry, Berger, Coors, McPhee as well as anyone from Steamboat who could take a day off. The "dean of the skiing corps," Carl Howelsen, would take them on up into the mountains. Reaching the spot, they would take off their skis, find a place to sit on the bare ground around the springs and put eggs in the boiling water. They would relax, chat, joke, and savor the day's outing. Some would climb the heights and race downhill. Others would make a somersault and tumble in the snow — all of them enjoying life to its fullest. Then they would race the downhill slope back to town. The professionals would help the ladies down the fast run, holding their arms. It could be quite an adven-

PERRY

Joy of life!

ture. Once Howelsen escorted Marjorie Perry. The downhill speed was considerable. Suddenly a road was ahead of them.

"What are we going to do?" Miss Perry shouted.

"Jump!" Howelsen answered.

It worked!

Back at Steamboat in the evenings they would gather in different homes — most of the time at Marjorie Perry's. She looked after these sportsmen heart and soul while they were in town. Her house at Stevens College, Perry Mansfield Camp, had space for everyone and many were the evenings they would sit around her fireplace discussing the day's adventures. Their love of the outdoor life, their common enthusiasm for skiing and their genuine liking for one another created friendships that lasted through life.

STEAMBOAT PILOT

Henry Hall carried in triumph to the hotel.

The townspeople of Steamboat knew enough to value, appreciate, and applaud the craftsmanship of world-class skiers. Henry Hall never forgot the day he jumped 203 feet on the Steamboat Slide, the crowd roaring and colleagues, friends, and admirers throwing him in the air, carrying him in triumph all the way to the Cabin Hotel. Everyone shared with him the joy of the new world record.

Apart from tours and their growing friendship with the people of Steamboat Springs, the professionals had their own gatherings. They would "compare notes," exchange views, and discuss jumping style and the finer techniques of the skiing sport. Lars Haugen experimented with new racing waxes, and had produced a particularly fast one called "Black Magic." Carl Howelsen constantly experimented with different kinds of bindings and skis. The yearly tournaments in Steamboat Springs gave these professionals the opportunity to catch up on the latest techniques and know-how in their common field.

Comradeship was also built through hard work together. It took a lot of sweat and teamwork to prepare the hill when fresh snow had fallen. Once the snow was so deep, the professionals could not manage the job by themselves.

They went to the sheriff and asked for help. He generously gave them a hand, and let five prisoners then in jail work the whole day to get the hill ready for the contest!

For some skiers, Howelsen's ranch was a home base and a beehive of skiing activity. Lars Haugen always stayed there when he was in town, and one winter, Hans Hansen, another great jumper of Norwegian ancestry, stayed for several months. He worked together with Howelsen on construction sites in downtown Steamboat.

How did they use their spare time? One journalist wrote in the April 16, 1919, *Pilot:*

"Hans Hansen — Now Expert At Turning Aerial Flip-Flop."

"Hans Hansen left Steamboat for his home in Minneapolis this morning after spending almost two months here perfecting the somersault on skis. Hansen, who is a professional ski jumper, with the aid of Carl Howelsen, built a jump near Howelsen's ranch and ordered a special pair of skis, and has practiced until he now has the aerial flip-flop perfected. His special skis are short, evenly balanced, and turn up at both ends. The jump from which he makes his spectacular leap is six feet high, and he goes from 35 to 53 feet through the air before alighting. Hansen is an expert tumbler and the flip-flop is naturally easy for him, although he states that it is harder than he thought it would be. Hansen will undoubtedly be a great attraction in all parts of the country next year as this is a feat that is seldom performed."

There was a special relationship between the Flying Norseman and the people of Steamboat. They took to each other from the moment Howelsen first came to their town. They sensed they had something in common. They found in each other a mutual adventurous and pioneering spirit.

Jean Wren, writer and librarian, put it this way in her booklet, *Steamboat Springs and the 'Treacherous and Speedy Skee'*:

"Beginnings like endings, often have a way of arriving quietly. No one could have guessed the coming importance of the stocky blue-eyed Norwegian when he stepped down from the train during the fall of 1913. Forthright, quick to smile, 36-year-old Carl Howelsen carried a new destiny for Steamboat along with his long skis . . . .

"The vital spark of enthusiasm that Carl Howelsen brought with him into the isolated winter valley set fire to the energies of a whole community. He became the focus, the catalyst, that directed all the pent-up drive of a restless snowbound people out of doors. When he showed them skis and poles that would work better and set them free out on the tilted pastures that rimmed the town, he started a massive chain of events that would, in time, change the lives of their children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren . . . ."

Another description of those first years is given by author John Rolfe Burroughs in his book, *Steamboat in the Rockies.* He writes:

"Prior to the arrival of Carl Howelsen, skiing in northwestern Colorado had been a utilitarian affair. When travel was imperative and heavy snows made the roads impassable for horses, the natives had recourse to skis . . . .

"In those days people who needed skis made them. These items, judged by current standards, were exceedingly crude. They were shaped out of native

pine or spruce lumber. Very generally they were eight or nine feet long, with smooth bottoms and spatula-shaped tips. Howelsen introduced the community to skis made of maple or hickory that had one or more grooves on the bottom to keep them from slewing sideways like a skittish horse. Short push type poles that didn't have to be yanked out of three or four feet of snow as you used them were another of his innovations. Of even greater significance, Howelsen, in making skiing a sport instead of work, induced people to bind their skis to their feet so that, if they fell, retrieving their skis was not the arduous task it once had been . . . .

"The Steamboat Springs Winter Sports Club, like Topsy, wasn't 'born'd, it just grow'd.' Under the aegis of Carl Howelsen, in season, virtually every able-bodied person in town of both sexes between the ages of seven and seventy who wasn't demented or pregnant, looked forward eagerly to a Sunday outing on skis. If the weather was decent, anywhere from 50 to 150 Steamboat Springs skiers set out in a body early Sunday morning, possibly with Fish Creek Falls, four miles distant in the mountains east of town, as an objective. Or the multiple ski tracks might lead to the Hot Springs, a six-mile uphill climb that afforded a magnificent ride back to town . . . ."

AS STEAMBOAT'S MIDWINTER SPORTS CARNIVAL developed, it broadened into a festival staged by the local population. Almost everyone participated in one sport or another or involved themselves in the popular "street events" taking place on Lincoln Avenue. Cowboys came along with their horses from surrounding ranches and created events of their own. Demonstrating the cooperation possible between horsemen and skiers, they competed for speed and skill at the different skijoring events. Finally, on the last day each year, people rallied on Lincoln Avenue to watch the Grand Parade, led by marshals and the Queen of the Carnival. Then followed a pageant of colorful floats, demonstrating the art and creativeness of people in Steamboat and Routt County.

No longer was it merely professional skiers alone, but everyone in town who had "the time of their lives" at the mid-winter sports events.

A party at Hot Springs. Champion Omtvedt is on Howelsen's shoulders.

THE CARNIVAL OF 1917 was special for Carl Howelsen. Already the slide and hill facing town across the Yampa River had been named after him, but another event took place that year which touched him deeply. The *Steamboat Pilot*, under "Carnival Notes," told it this way:

"New champions may come and old champions may go, but in the hearts of Steamboat's ski enthusiasts, Carl Howelsen will go on forever. Just to show how 'the grand old man' is appreciated in this vicinity, a number of admirers 'chipped in' Friday and handed him a pot of about a hundred dollars."

Moved, grateful, maybe a bit embarrassed, Howelsen must have found it difficult to express what he felt. He was a shy man, and did not speak much. His life was service in action, a dedication to people and the sport he loved. He could not imagine taking a cent for what he did. This spontaneous gift from skiing friends surprised and confronted him with a challenge he did not know quite how to tackle. The way he did is rather touching.

He wrote an article. It took him four weeks, and it is the only thing he ever wrote in America.

On Wednseday, April 11, 1917, the *Pilot* carried the following headline on its front page: "Interesting History of Winter Sport in Colorado. 'Father of Howelsen Hill' at Steamboat Springs, Where World's Remarkable Records Are Made Each Year, Reviews Progress of Skiing in This Country."

The article was written by Carl Howelsen:

"During our recent Winter Sports Carnival, some of the boys of Steamboat got together in regard to taking up a collection for me, as a result of which I received $80 from Dr. Bennett and Mr. Norwell, whom I judge were at the head of the movement. I am sending my heartfelt thanks to these gentlemen and to all who pitched in and thought of me.

"I shall do my part in the future as in the past, not for the sake of the money, but because I am a lover of ski sport. I want to see this healthy and beautiful sport take the lead of all winter sports in this country, and I believe it will in time. Not that alone, but I want to see the biggest tournament of its kind pulled off right here in Steamboat. It is the biggest now so far as jumping is concerned, but my idea is to get the biggest crowd.

"We have several other places along the Moffat Road which are excellent for ski sport. Yampa, Oak Creek, Bear River, Mount Harris, Hayden, and even as far as Craig, where we have located a good hill up at Cedar Mountain. Eastern riders may look twice before they try this Cedar Mountain Hill, not because they can't make it, but they are not used to these big hills we have in Colorado, especially here along the Moffat Road.

"I know from experience there are a number of people who would like to try skiing in this mountainous country, but have been in Steamboat and seen those jumpers and how they handle their skis, and from this might get a little discouraged and think they would never be able to do any like stunt, so what is the use of trying? Let met tell you, people, we have boys in all these counties along the Moffat Road that will be able to pull off the same kind of jumps as the Eastern riders did at Steamboat's last carnival. In a few years you will see them right here among us. But I want to say that jumping is not the only pleasure one can have on skis.

"We have a whole lot of people where this sport is enjoyed who would never think of taking part in a jumping contest. These people find more fun in using them for exercise and cross-country runs, and there is more pleasure in it. But whenever a jumping contest is pulled off, you will always find the skiers there to watch. And the funniest thing about a ski jumping contest is that after people see one, they will never miss one afterward if they possibly can get there. Those who were present at the last Steamboat Carnival saw something that cannot be seen in any other place when it comes to real ski jumping.

"I have been asked several times if I do not get hurt when falling, and from this I judge that parents do not want their children to take up skiing because of the danger of injury. It may look dangerous to you, but let me remind you that you never heard of a bad accident in skiing or jumping. Therefore, if your boys and girls want to ski let them have the pleasure. It will not do them harm but good.

"In his talk at the Cabin at the close of the last tournament, Mr. Omtvedt said a few nice things about me, remembering the time as a child he saw me in tournaments in Norway and that he still sees 'Old Howelsen' in the game. We all have been young and we all know that boys and girls have to have some exercise and enjoyment and hardly can be kept away from it. I know from experience that when a boy or girl has a pair of skis they are not going to lay idle. Then you may say the youngsters will neglect school and their work at home and this may be true in one respect. But I believe as a rule a boy, knowing that he must practice to keep up with the others, will hurry with his work in order to get his practice. That was my experience, and I believe boys are very much alike in any country. But I will say this. As far as money prizes are concerned in any tournament here or in Europe, no boy should think he can make a living of skiing. At home in Norway, we always got prizes, but no cash, and it is a sport for everybody, and there is no chance to become a professional. So skiing over there is the cleanest and best sport they have today. I do not mention this as a knock on the professionals. I have been a professional ever since I came to this country, but if it were purely a matter of amateur sport, it would be cleaner. Knowing it useless to try to do otherwise, I have followed suit wherever I go. What I mentioned to the boys about the money there is in ski sport, I will say that when your boys have been in the game long enough and have received plenty of prizes and honors,then it is time to quit. This doesn't mean that you are going to quit skiing and I know you can't do it. Simply let the younger ones take your places and you will have more fun and exercise than the fellows who are tied up in the tournaments all the time. Some may wonder why I have stayed so long in the game, so I will tell you a little about it.

"I commenced taking part in tournaments at the age of 12, and kept it up until I was 28. As a rule, a ski rider seldom takes part in tournaments after that age. So, when I was 28 and had got what I longed for in the way of premiums, I made up my mind that that should be the last year I would go into the tournament. I had plenty of time, got in good trim shape and made good in every tournament we had over there that winter. Then I went to the national ski tournament at Holmenkollen, Christiania, where skiers and spectators from all over Europe meet. I had taken part several times and landed some good premiums, but had not got what I was longing for. Finally, this year I got it,

and was satisfied. This is a medal of gold and in order to get it, one has to make good for a number of years so there have been very few of them given out. Naturally I feel proud of this one.

Holmenkollen Gold Medal.

"I had a friend who had been in the United States and spoke so well of it that I finally decided to see more of the world. I first went to Germany and worked at my trade for about two years, after that crossing the ocean and landing in Chicago, where I met several of my countrymen. Soon there was talk of forming a ski club and I asked about the snow, receiving the information, 'Oh, we have three or four inches here every winter.' They had forgotten what snow we had to have in the old country to make good skiing. We never thought of skiing unless we had a few feet. Anyway, we formed a club and this is the club Mr. Omtvedt now belongs to. We picked out a nice hill and built a cabin 37 miles from Chicago and got plenty of members. During the five years I lived in Chicago, this did not really suit me as there was never enough snow for real skiing.

"I had heard of Colorado with its fine summers and plentiful snows in winter, and thought this is the country for me. I always had in mind when I struck this country to get a place where one need not hunt for snow and furthermore see the healthy and useful sport of skiing enjoyed by American boys and girls.

"I came to Denver and during my five years there, the ski sport grew in interest every year. I liked Denver, but once I commenced to travel on the Moffat Road, I thought this must be the country for me and my skis. My first skiing in this section was at Sulphur Springs six years ago when they had their first tournament. You have doubtless noticed how the boys from there have improved and to what advantage they show themselves whenever they take part in a Steamboat Carnival. I have taken part at Hot Sulphur Springs every winter since the first, except this year, when I was unable to attend on account of my work at Craig, and have had good times there. But even at this I wanted to find a place where a world record in ski jumping could be made.

"A couple of years after they started the carnivals at Sulphur, I took a look at Steamboat, having heard much of the hills and the snow there. I need not go into details anymore, but you people had just what I was looking for and you had plenty of it. We have had several tournaments, and all have been successful, and they always will be in my opinion. Skiing is not a money proposition but a clean, useful and healthful sport. It is sport for all the people, and we have many already who are taking an active interest in it. There will be many more. It may take a little time, but they sure will come. This ought to be worth something to us.

"Here I have found what I was looking for in the United States and I am contented. Here I will stay if nothing happens to keep me from it. The last tournament, with its jumps beyond all jumps, showed that it will not be necessary to make any more changes in the ski course. The above will give you an idea of why I have been 'on the jump' all these years. I trust that we will all work together in the future as we have in the past so that Steamboat's Winter Sports Carnival will be bigger every year."

Bold men conquering the Rockies. Carl Howelsen (center) and George Cranmer (right) with friends, c. 1919-20.

A healthy spirit of competition grew up in those early years among the communities where tournaments were held. Hot Sulphur Springs and Steamboat Springs developed a close link together and cooperated with Denver and Denver-Rocky Mountain Ski Club. Later, this skiing network extended to Estes Park and Grand County. By 1918, Dillon and Summit County came into the picture.

Peter Prestrud, another eager skier from the "old country," migrated to Colorado in 1910. He became postmaster of Frisco, a small town in Summit County. Prestrud and Howelsen knew of each other from previous years in Norway, although Prestrud was a few years Howelsen's junior. A link was soon established and Prestrud came to winter sports events in Hot Sulphur and Steamboat Springs, and took part in amateur jumping tournaments across Colorado. Sparked by what he saw in Steamboat Springs, Prestrud picked the site for a marvelous jumping hill at Dillon. Through the help of the Denver-Rocky Mountain Ski Club and a Norwegian mining engineer in Frisco, Eyvind Flood, the hill was constructed. The first meet took place in 1919, and it was a strong challenge to Steamboat Springs jumpers.

On March 12, 1919, the *Steamboat Pilot* carried the headline, "New Record Ski Flight at Dillon." "Anders Haugen Surpasses The Record Jump Made Here By Ten Feet on Fast Track in Summit County."

It is obvious that the writer of the article was a local patriot, none too happy that the ski hill in Dillon had beaten the record in Steamboat. He wrote, "The Steamboat track is said to be equal to, or better, than the one at Dillon, but weather conditions were favorable there for the record leap . . . .

"Carl Howelsen of Steamboat believes that the Steamboat track is still the best in the world and that with little work on it this summer, and if conditions are right at the next carnival, that 230 feet can be made from the jump here."

The Dillon slide. Howelsen (left) and Prestrud packing the outrun.

During the summer of 1919, the Howelsen Hill course was further improved and preparations were made for a new world-record-breaking event in 1920.

"Getting ready for Steamboat's Big Ski Carnival" headlined the *Pilot* on February 4, 1920.

"Three carnivals are to be held in Colorado. The first will be held at Denver, then Dillon and lastly comes Steamboat . . . . Of course, Steamboat is out to capture the world championship, long held on the Steamboat Slide, but last year captured by Dillon. The Denver-Rocky Mountain Ski Club last week purchased ten acres on Gennessee Mountain for a new course. On this site will be built the slide for the club. Carl Howelsen is assisting the Denver Club in preparation. The hill is 1,000 feet long and has a grade of 35%."

At the tournament in Dillon, the Steamboat Springs Winter Sports Club did well. "Local Jumpers Win Honors at Dillon Meet," the *Pilot* reported on March 3. "Steamboat ski jumpers made a creditable showing at the Dillon Tournament when they captured first, second, and fourth in the Colorado amateur and third in the professional jump . . . . Ed Trinder of Steamboat Springs won the Colorado Amateur events, jumping 126 and 135 feet respectively. Hollis Merrill of Steamboat Springs jumped 84 and 85 feet (second place); Louis Dalphes of Steamboat Springs jumped 71 and 89 feet (fourth place) . . . Anders Haugen, the world champion ski jumper, broke his own record of 213 feet Sunday by jumping 214 feet . . . Henry Hall took second place with 201 feet, and Carl Howelsen was third with an even 200 feet . . . . The meet was conducted by the Summit County Winter Sports Club, and the skiers all agreed that it was run off in first-class style. The course was in ideal condition and the weather conditions of the best."

THE PEOPLE OF Frisco and Dillon, like the people of Steamboat Springs, were thrilled with the world records set on their ski jumping hill. Local pride thrived. The *Summitt County Journal* of February 28, 1920, carried the headline: "Why the Dillon Ski Course is Rated as Best in the World." And the paper knew why. "The principal reason: at an altitude of over 9,000 feet a great speed could be attained and a greater distance beyond takeoff could be made because of lesser resistance in the rarified atmosphere."

The newspaper had a rewarding word for Carl Howelsen as well: "One of the most remarkable exhibitions of ski jumping was made by Carl Howelsen of Steamboat Springs. Mr. Howelsen is 47 years of age, the veteran professional jumper of America. He exceeded all his previous records with a perfect jump of 200 feet. For true professional form, grace and cast of action, it is said that Howelsen has no equal."

A few days after the Dillon meet the *Pilot* carried a "Welcome to Visitors" issued by Mayor Clay Monson. Following a cordial welcome to all visiting guests, Mayor Monson stated:

"The fame of our mid-winter carnivals has traveled so far that we are now able to attract the best talent in the United States in this class of sport. Other towns in the mountains have recognized the success of this attraction and are copying it. All unite in declaring it the cleanest and most healthful of sports.

"The world records have been established on the Howelsen Slide at Steamboat Springs. Last year it was taken from us by our neighboring town of Dillon. We will not be satisfied until it comes back to us and we are recognized as the center of the ski sport of the World."

"Skiers Ready to Jump For New Record," announced the *Pilot* on the eve of the carnival. "Champion Anders Haugen of the Dillon Ski Club, Carl and Henry Hall of Detroit, Michigan; Lars Haugen of Chippewa Falls, Minnesota; Hans Hansen of the Steamboat Ski Club, and Carl Howelsen of Steamboat are the professionals who will compete for honors on the Steamboat course tomorrow and Friday.

"Nels Nelson of Revelstoke, Canada, and Sig Steinwall of Stockholm, Sweden, top-notch amateur jumpers of the world are also eagerly waiting for the contest tomorrow and the next day."

The cream of jumpers in the United States had gathered in Steamboat and the town was seething with excitement and expectancy as the contests started. But sadly, the weather did not cooperate.

"A blinding snow storm, accompanied by a biting cold wind, prevented the Seventh Annual Midwinter Sports Carnival from being a complete success. The jumpers were not able to make any long jumps under the conditions and were flirting with death when they did jump, for the wind and snow made it a desparate gamble," reported the *Pilot* on March 10, 1920. Carl Howelsen was about the most disappointed man in Steamboat Springs. He had been expecting to see a world's record broken. Then it snowed and blowed."

The winter of 1921 brought both challenges and rewards to skiers in the Rockies. At the beginning of the year, a news item went across the world that disturbed the competing towns of Steamboat Springs and Dillon. The *Pilot* of February 16, 1921 reported:

"All Ski Records Badly Smashed At Revelstoke Meet (Canada). Henry Hall

again becomes World Champion with 229 feet to his credit. Amateur Record broken by Nels Nelson - 201 feet."

Then, in spite of "Spring Weather, Good Crowd and Fine Sport at Carnival," no new world record was set at Steamboat Springs. Lars Haugen made the longest jump at 202 feet. Anyway, "the Eighth Annual Mid-winter Sports Events were a success," the *Pilot* reported, "and such a success financially that there is a comfortable cash balance with which to start the sports next winter."

Seen in wider perspective, the winter of 1921 was a most important one for Colorado and for Carl Howelsen. Both saw a dream fulfilled — the national jumping championship was going to take place in Colorado for the first time.

Ever since the National Ski Association had been founded in 1904 at Ishpeming, Michigan, every national jumping championship had been held in the East and Midwest. It hadn't been easy to break the tradition.

The men of the East and Midwest were deeply rooted in traditional skiing from Norway, and they remained faithful to it. As a result they tended to view professional and long distance ski jumping as incompatible with the aims of the organization. In their opinion, jumping style was more important than setting distance records. This gave rise to a certain hesitancy about ski jumping as practiced in the West.

Therefore, when the National Ski Association finally decided to stage the national jumping championships in Denver, it was a long-awaited recognition for Colorado. It was also an important step forward in widening the influence of the National Ski Association as the promoter of "classical" skiing across America. This objective had been eagerly pursued by vigorous Aksel Holter, and also by Howelsen's close friends in the Denver-Rocky Mountain Ski Club, secretary Andrews and president Menifee Howard.

Howelsen knew the leaders of the National Ski Association personally, having attended national conventions as a delegate from the Norge Ski Club of Chicago. Thus, he realized their aims and the goals of the organization. They were basically the same as his. Through Howelsen's conviction and persuasion, the Steamboat Springs Wintersports Club joined the National Ski Association as the first member from Colorado. The Denver-Rocky Mountain Ski Club followed and soon afterwards, the Hot Sulphur Springs Winter Sports Ski Club.

Howelsen advocated amateur over professional skiing wherever he went, pointing to Norway as an example. Not long after one of his periodic visits to Hot Sulphur Springs in 1917, the *Steamboat Pilot* carried some highly unexpected news:

". . . A letter from Hugh Gilmore, secretary of Middle Park Sports Club, stated that the organization will not offer cash prizes at their tournament this year . . . . Good prizes, medals, and merchandise will be offered, but owing to the fact that no cash prizes will be given, there will not be any professional jumpers. Amateur jumpers will be asked to attend from all of the clubs in this part of the state, and a special request was sent to Carl Howelsen to attend and give exhibition jumps. They plan to have a good meet, with plenty of attractions, and the meet will be under the rules of the National Ski Association."

Was this a signal from the West, an effort to build a bridge to the National

Ski Association in the East? Howelsen was a skiing purist at heart. He also badly wanted a national tournament to take place in the Rockies. His wish had already been expressed during the first Winter Sports Carnival at Steamboat Springs. As early as February 18, 1914, the editors of the *Pilot* had mentioned the prospect of a National Ski Association meet.

As important as the first National Skiing Tournament was to the West, something else happened in Denver at that time of even greater significance. At the Annual Convention of the National Ski Association, held in Denver's Albany Hotel, Dr. Menifee Howard of Denver, Peter Prestrud of Dillon, Throck Morton of Hot Sulphur Springs, and Carl Howelsen of Steamboat Springs, were appointed delegates from Colorado and invited by the Committee on Credentials "to be seated and entitled to vote in the Convention . . . ."

It was a great moment for these men of the West to be recognized as equals with skiing leaders of such long standing as those from the East and Midwest. The leaders of the National Ski Association were impressed for their part by the activities and unique winter sports facilities in Colorado. Moreover, they were unaccustomed to the strong interest of the news media. A special thanks was extended by the Convention to "the Press of Denver for its generous publicity before and during the Convention and Tournament."

The national championships took place on Sunday, February 20, at the new hill on Gennessee Mountain. Howelsen once again proved himself a timeless champion. On February 21, the *Rocky Mountain News* splashed a headline across the entire sports page:

"Carl Howelsen Wins National Professional Ski Championship — Steamboat Springs Rider Carries Off Title at Big Meet."

"Skimming down over ice," the paper reported, "then hurtling out through space at the terrific rate of one and one-third miles a minute, Carl Howelsen of Steamboat Springs, Colorado, easily won the professional ski riders championship of the United States for 1921 yesterday afternoon on the Denver Rocky Mountain Ski Club's course on Gennessee Mountain . . . ."

The *Steamboat Pilot* noted:

"Carl Howelsen of Steamboat Springs . . . took first place at the national meet at Gennessee Mountain near Denver Sunday.

"Steamboat Springs came out with honors at the national meet for in addition to Howelsen, Hollis Merrill took second prize for Colorado amateurs and Clarence Patterson took first for the standing amateur long jump of 72 feet.

"Denver traffic patrolmen who directed the automobiles through the mountain parks said that between 40,000-50,000 people attended the contest and that 7,000 cars were used to transport spectators from Denver."

In the *Ski Annual,* official publication of the National Ski Association of America, the new secretary, Eugene Peterson, gave tribute to the Flying Norseman. In the official report on the Denver Tournament, he wrote: "In the professional class, Carl Howelsen easily captured the first honors. His contribution to the tournament was four splendidly executed jumps. Howelsen has spent practically all his time in Colorado since coming to this country, and it is needless to say that he was returned a popular winner by the crowd which gave him several rousing cheers. Well can I remember Howelsen when, as a boy, I watched him at Holmenkollen and Solbergbakken in Norway. He was

GEORGE CRANMER

Carl Howelsen winning the National Professional Ski Championship at Gennessee Mountain in 1921.

the idol of the people then, as he is now. His greatest feat, however, was undoubtedly his two successive victories in the 50 kilometer cross-country race at Holmenkollen, Norway, some twenty years ago. I believe it will be a long time till his equal is found as an all-round skier. Hats off to the 'old man' of the game."

Thus, the winter of 1921 turned out to be a most rewarding one for Carl Howelsen. True, the National Championship of jumping was not held in Steamboat Springs, but it did take place in Colorado. True, the big crowds did not come to Howelsen Hill — however, he saw a dream fulfilled at Denver's Genessee Mountain. Crowning it all, he won the National Professional Championship title of 1921, probably surprising no one more than himself. What meant even more to him was how well the youngsters of Steamboat Springs and Hot Sulphur had performed.

The events of 1921 and of previous winters gave Howelsen profound satisfaction. What he longed for had happened. Skiing had taken root in Colorado.

Fate can be strange. The winter of 1921 was the last one Howelsen spent in America. In the fall of that year, he ventured out on a visit to the "old country." Neither he nor his many friends realized he would never return.

DURING THE TWELVE YEARS Carl Howelsen had spent pioneering skiing in Colorado, America had emerged from war and developed into an economic and industrial giant. One financial writer observed: "Never before was capital so plentiful. Never before were such profits rolled up by corporations. Never before were such wages enjoyed."

"Prosperous ranchers spend fortunes for farm machinery and automobiles," the *Denver Post* related during a Stock Show in the capital of the Rockies.

But for many people, these were also years of poverty and social unrest. About 8,000 Colorado coal miners went on strike for seven months in 1913-1914. During the riots and demonstrations of that period, five were killed and one hundred wounded. The Federal Government searched for industrial regulation and social reform.

Henry Ford established the assembly line, mass-produced Model-T Fords, and transformed a horse-and-buggy continent of isolated towns and rural communities into a fast-moving and dynamic nation.

The Panama Canal was completed and it opened the way for wider trade and communication. On June 4, 1919, Congress passed the 19th Amendment to the Constitution. It stated that no citizen could be denied the right to vote "on account of sex." The suffragists had finally won.

"The victory is not for women alone," stated the *Kansas City Star,* "it is a victory of equality for democracy and the principles of equality upon which the nation was founded."

The poems of Robert Frost and Carl Sandburg started to touch the hearts of Americans. Hollywood brought the first long feature films to the public. Willi Ritchie became lightweight boxing champion of the world. Journalist John Reed joined the Russian Revolution and stirred his countrymen with *Ten Days That Shook The World.*

When Carl Howelsen came to Denver in 1909, President Theodore Roosevelt had just been replaced by President William Howard Taft. By the time the "Flying Norseman" initiated the first Winter Carnival in Steamboat Springs, President Woodrow Wilson had moved into the White House. When the Norwegian stonemason left to visit his home country, President Warren G. Harding was in office.

In the "Old World," imperialist powers launched the most devastating war in centuries and by the spring of 1917, the United States could no longer stay neutral. President Woodrow Wilson declared war on Germany, and America moved from isolation toward international involvement. The whole nation was mobilized for the war effort; even remote Routt County was not spared.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THIS PEACEFUL COUNTY in the Rockies to the survival of democracy in Europe is impressive. In the years between 1917 and 1919, no fewer than 440 men joined the armed forces, most of them travelling to the battlefields of France under the command of General John J. Pershing. Another 270 men served the war effort in America. And 340 ladies gave their voluntary services to the Red Cross.

This can be read in *An Honor Roll,* a pictorial and biographical record of the gallant and courageous men from Routt County, Colorado, who served in

the Great War, 1917, 1918, 1919. The publication is dedicated to "The Boys of Routt County," and reads:

"Welcome back from the far land and strife of scenes of War's desolation. Welcome home to the land that you served so well and that will ever hold you in honor and affection.

"The memory of those who did not return, who 'gave the last full measure of devotion,' will ever be cherished in the hearts of the people. Their tombs are a shrine before which the liberty-loving people of Routt County bow their heads in reverence."

There were 22 of them who never returned.

9. New Generations

When the "stranger from Norway" first came to Colorado, Howelsen discovered the Rockies were a skiing "El Dorado," a paradise for the outdoor man. From then on, his main task in life became clear: to help Americans realize and utilize the magnificent opportunities nature offered them.

His most far-sighted move was to invite the best skiers of the East and Midwest to Colorado. Although he performed some jumping exhibitions alone, it was the excitement of competition with riders from the East that created the sensational spectacular atmosphere around the arena he had built, known as a ski-jumping hill. The crowds came to watch. People were stirred, and an interest for the sport was planted. The first ski clubs were founded, and young and old started to ski. This pattern was followed in Hot Sulphur Springs, Denver, and Steamboat Springs — and the seed of skiing was sown. It is to Howelsen's credit that he got the jumpers from the East and Midwest to come West. He was the one who collected the money for them to come. In doing so, he sold Colorado as a skiing country to the East.

As the interest for skiing grew, Howelsen began the "grassroots" job of coaching people in the skills of skiing. He travelled far and wide to help and instruct. It could be to Denver, Hot Sulphur Springs and Middle Park, or to different places in Routt County. Gradually, a network of eager skiers came to life. Howelsen then ventured further to Estes Park, Summit County, and Leadville.

It was remarkable how rapidly the sport of skiing developed and spread. In large measure, it was due to the extraordinary coverage of the Colorado news media. Skiing was front page news and was reported with such enthusiasm it couldn't help but fascinate and encourage readers to go out and try skiing themselves.

The Norwegian pioneer expressed what was most in his heart and on his mind many times. "I want to see American boys and girls take to the healthful and meaningful sport of skiing." Howelsen's idea was simple: if he could win youngsters to the love of skiing, the sport would become a way of life for generations to come. This was his dream. He succeeded in fulfilling that dream. Hot Sulphur Springs and Steamboat Springs are the evidence.

When the first winter sports carnival was held in Hot Sulphur Springs, a young lad of ten followed the events with keen interest. He went to every jumping exhibition, and was spellbound by what he saw. A railwayman watched the boy gazing at the skiers floating through the air, and asked him, "What are you going to become, my boy?"

"I want to be a ski-jumper like Carl Howelsen," the lad answered.

"You can't live by that," the railwayman shot back.

That boy — Horace Button — did not become a professional skier like Howelsen, but he did develop into one of the most outstanding promoters of skiing in Colorado. He became a fine all-around skier himself, winning state awards in jumping and cross-country racing, and in downhill and slalom races as well.

Now approaching 84 years of age, Button is still skiing and is one of the few alive today who experienced those early days in Colorado. He has an exceptional memory and a rare knowledge of the skiing art. He recently told this story about Howelsen:

"One day, I was doing a jump. It went all wrong. One ski got in one direction, the other in another, so I fell on my stomach and slid down the course and broke a ski. I was very disappointed. Next day, I got a new pair of skis and Howelsen helped me. I guess he used a half a day in fixing them up. He wanted me to have the best. He used a blow-torch and burned linseed oil into the skis to make them tougher; then he put on the bindings and waxed the skis. He was more intereted in helping and doing something like that. I was rather touched because he was a professional and I was only an amateur.

"I can remember him jumping one day while it was snowing and blowing. I was pretty small and could hardly stand up. He was jumping quite a long distance in the storm.

"Howelsen had stamina," Button said. "Howelsen wanted people to get out. He took us boys out on skiing tours here. And in Steamboat Springs he quite often took crowds, up to 150, out skiing. He was quite a cross-country man . . . .

"All the basic knowledge of skiing, I learned from Howelsen. He did not talk much, but he showed us how to ski and to jump."

On March 23, 1981, Horace Button was inducted into the Colorado Ski Hall of Fame. The *Record Stockman* of Denver, a state-wide paper for cattle ranchers of Colorado, said about Button:

"He has the ability to watch a skier and immediately offer pointers for the skier's improvement. He kept skiing alive in Hot Sulphur Springs, skiing in from his ranch each day to help, encourage, and instruct youngsters in the sport. His methods of teaching were well ahead of the times."

"Button Helped Show The Way," headlined the *Denver Post* of February 4, 1976.

"In fact," wrote Charlie Meyers, the paper's well-known sports writer, "had Button been possessed with a flair for displaying his talents, he might be remembered as one of the grand old-time skiers. Instead, he spent his competitive life in local events and, more important, helped younger skiers learn about the sport so dear to him.

STEAMBOAT PILOT

Horace Button of Hot Sulphur Springs is interviewed by Steamboat's Marvin Crawford.

"Button continued to race and jump until he was almost 40, often winning against nationally known competitors. But always there was that shyness, that reluctance to assert himself, which prevented his venturing out.

" 'That's the way Howelsen was,' Button replied when asked about the trait. 'He won a lot of things, but was much more interested in helping others. I wouldn't do it any differently.' "

The winter of 1932 brought good news to Hot Sulphur Springs. Jim Harsh,

a youngster Button had coached for years; was chosen to be on the United States Olympic Team, and to compete at the Winter Olympic Games at Lake Placid in the Nordic Combination event.

The greatest skier Hot Sulphur Springs and Horace Button "produced" was still to appear — Barney McLean. In 1942, McLean won the National Downhill and Slalom Combined. He won the National Championship in jumping for 1945. He was also a good cross-country racer. In 1948, he served as the captain for the United States Olympic Ski Team competing at St. Moritz, Switzerland. McLean is honored in both the National Ski Hall of Fame at Ishpeming, Michigan, and the Colorado Ski Hall of Fame at Vail, Colorado.

Barney McLean told the author in Denver in January, 1982:

"Horace Button passed on to me what he had learned from Carl Howelsen. For us youngsters, the 'Flying Norseman' was a legend. Horace meant a lot to me. He was waiting at the ski hill every afternoon when I got out of school. He was responsible for all my early training."

ALTHOUGH HORACE BUTTON is the only one alive today of the generation that started skiing about 1911, there were a lot of other youngsters of the time linked to Carl Howelsen who added color to the Colorado skiing scene. An editorial in *The Middle Park Times* of February 25, 1916 gives a picture of that period.

"Colorado as a whole, and Middle Park in particular, has in the past brought up an unusually hardy and self-reliant lot of boys and young men. Our boys have from earliest infancy been taught to rely on themselves; they have been accustomed to find their way through the hills and woods, to fight the storms of winter and take care of themselves under any circumstance.

"In the past, we have taken pride in the crack shot, the champion rider, the roper, and the all-around horseman; but now we are developing another kind of athlete, the boy on skis. And he bids fair to excel them all. To an onlooker who, in his younger manhood, was accustomed to ride any horse 'that wore hair,' as the saying went, it seems that the old time bronco rider had nothing on the boy who throws himself through space for a distance of from 50 to 100 feet to light on an icy incline of 45 degrees at the speed of an express train, with a certainty to fall over and over for hundreds of feet if he makes the slightest mistake in balancing his lithe body or in managing his awkward-looking eight-foot skis. How many things must flash through his mind in that brief second of time as he flies through the air like a bird. And even the onlooker can feel the thrill of pride and exhilaration that he feels when he rides through clean, like a swallow, skimming over a lake. And the thing of it is that it is not just now and then one of the boys will try the ski sport, but they are practically all doing it. Of course, as is natural in all things, some of them stand out from the others in excellence, but there is no jealousy in their rivalry, for it seems that a sport which develops such magnificent nerve and bone and muscle, also develops the truest sportsmanship.

"When five years ago we saw for the first time that wonderful athlete, Carl Howelsen, jump sixty feet on skis, we were wonderstruck, and Mr. Howelsen made the remark at that time that it was nothing, that any of the boys who witnessed that performance would be beating it in two years, and this has

proven to be true. Our 14-year old boys are jumping sixty feet now, and what a glorious, healthy, manly bunch they are. And when we look at Carl Howelsen, a man past middle age, but with the heart and body of a boy, we can but wonder if it was ski sport that made him so. And what better can we do for our boys than to encourage a healthful sport which promises so much. With proper patronage and encouragement we will soon be producing a brand of young men and boys whose fame will far outdistance our already famous cattle and horses."

There are few men in Colorado today with the knowledge of skiing as Horace Button. He competed for a period of 30 years. He was a close friend of Anders and Lars Haugen, Henry Hall, Ragnar Omtvedt, Hans Hansen, and the leading jumpers who followed them. His observations on ski-jumping, because of his 70-year perspective, have historic significance:

"Steamboat Springs advanced the jumping sport. I know it because I saw it," he told the author. "The Howelsen Hill changed the jumping style. The first time Anders and Lars Haugen jumped in Steamboat Springs, they jumped well, but could not stand up, and they fell. Both Anders and Lars said to me that they couldn't handle that speed. They decided to leave at an earlier time the following year to be able to practice on the hill. They learned that they had to change their style. All the riders coming from the East went through the same transformation. The fast course and the size of Howelsen Hill demanded a new way of jumping. The style changed with Howelsen Hill."

A practical proof of Button's statement is Carl Howelsen himself. He had a passion to improve jumping performance. How his own jumping style changed over the years can be observed through photos of him riding the Steamboat slide. When he came to Colorado in 1909, he still used the traditional Nordic style of jumping. But a photo from 1916, called "The Ski Rocket," shows him using a style of such aerodynamic quality that it could almost be accepted as a perfect jump today, although it was performed 67 years ago!

THE STEAMBOAT SLIDE WAS DEFINITELY faster and bigger than the many hills of the East and Midwest. When Anders and Lars Haugen first came to Steamboat Springs in 1916 and saw Steamboat's 22-foot high take-off, Anders burst out, "I would rather take poison!" Ragnar Omtvedt, who related this comment to Jakob Vaage, added, "I was scared myself."

In Steamboat Springs, many people looked upon Carl Howelsen as a hero. He was admired and loved by the townspeople. How did the Norwegian handle it?

Howelsen seemed to possess the rare gift of just wanting to be himself, nothing more, nothing less. He didn't allow anyone to put him on a pedestal. He was real, natural, and genuine in his relationships with people. Maybe that was the deeper reason they loved him.

Is this too rosy a picture of "The Flying Norseman?" No instrument can better test the genuine quality of a person than the reaction of kids and youngsters of a community. How did the young people of Steamboat Springs respond to the newcomer from the Viking land?

"When I first met Howelsen in 1914," author John Rolfe Burroughs writes

Carl Howelsen shows his form at Hot Sulphur Springs (top row, from left) in 1911 and in 1913; at Denver (center, left) in 1914; and at Steamboat Springs in 1916 in the other two photos.

in his 1962 booklet, *Ski Town USA,* "he was in his late thirties, a stockily built man who stood 5 feet 7 inches in his home-knit Norwegian wool skiing socks. He wore a short blond mustache. His face was seamed with crinkles at the corners of his eyes, and deeply tanned. He radiated vitality and good humor, and his blue-gray eyes fairly sparkled with the love of life. Some people you instinctively don't like, some you do, and then once in a blue moon someone comes along who is absolutely irresistible. That's the way we Steamboat Springs kids of almost half a century ago reacted to Carl Howelsen."

In *Steamboat in the Rockies* (1974), the same author writes: "Carl Howelsen had taken the local small fry in charge. More accurately, we kids had taken him in charge. Howelsen was a man of infinite patience and inexhaustible enthusiasm. He taught us how to wax our skis to get the most speed out of them. He took us on langlaufs for the purpose of toughening our legs and knees, the better to withstand the terrific pull of gravity as we approached the outrun of that very big, very fast course. He also taught us the finer points of ski jumping form, and how to change direction, or counteract the effect of the wind by using our hands as rudders in mid-flight."

The *Steamboat Pilot* wrote a tribute to Carl Howelsen on February 13, 1918:

"During his time here, he taught the young riders to compete for the love of the sport, and has set an admirable example by never letting his medals get too heavy for him."

Besides John Rolfe Burroughs, another person of the "local small fry" is still around today. His name is John Steele, the first man to represent Steamboat Springs on a United States Olympic Team in the Winter Olympic Games of 1932. Now a man in his late 70's, Steele and his family live in Loveland, Colorado. He is still an active skier and a lover of outdoor life.

John Steele of Steamboat Springs, 1932.

"Howelsen stayed at Strawberry Park," Steele recalls, "and almost every day in the winter, he would ski into town to practice on the ski jump. He would come down a fast hill and pass right by our house which was on Hill Street. Then he would speed on and cross over the Yampa River bridge to the Hill. I would watch him as he came. I had just started to ski and it was just wonderful to see him ski, the way he speeded down the hill across the countryside. He had a wonderful motion which to me is what cross-country is all about. Today, I think they are racing too much. As he came by our house, I would pick up my skis and follow after him. Many of us youngsters watched him jump — we all wanted to jump like him one day. That was the big aim we had, to jump at Howelsen Hill . . . .

"We youngsters often joined him in packing the Hill. He worked on the take-off and would finally go up and jump. I remember one Saturday morning

when we went up to jump. The take-off was 22 feet high. We thought in those days that the higher the take-off, the longer you would jump. Well, he went up to try. He took off. It was rather soft snow, so he got stuck in the landing. Of course his skis went out and his face went down, and like that he sailed down the hill. We thought he was badly hurt, of course, and all of us kids rushed over to see if we could be of help. But he got up like a spring, and then he spit. I thought it was blood, but it was only his chewing tobacco.

" 'Well,' he said, 'do you kids have any questions?'

"I said, 'I would like to know how to ski'.

" 'Of course,' he said, 'I want to teach you to ski. Well, the first thing you need to learn, is to fall. If I had not known how to fall, I would probably have got hurt just now. So, the first thing you want to do is to learn to fall. And at the time that you do fall,' he said, 'don't wait till the last minute; don't try to right yourself. If you are going to go down, go down. It isn't worth the trouble to try resisting, just let go and relax fully.'

"I always remember that, and think it was probably one of the things that helped me most. In my skiing career, I have taken a lot of spectacular falls . . . .

"Howelsen knew how to ski, so we studied him. 'By watching others,' he said, 'you learn more.' He wasn't like some instructors today who think they know everything and show off. No, he was the quiet type of man who wanted us to learn through watching and asking questions. Many a time, I am afraid, we asked him stupid questions. But he did not brush us off. He listened and took care to explain until we understood. He never lectured, but would mention things to help us out, and we would pick it up and learn from him as we went along. Howelsen was old, but we did not think of that. He always listened to us and took us seriously. He gave us the feeling we were his equals. He never brushed us aside as kids, as other grown-ups so often did . . . .

"When we had to pack the Hill, he was always ahead of us. Then we rode down and packed it again. We got that Hill in shape. It was a tough job, but hard work was part of the training. He showed us youngsters how to do a proper landing and how to hold our balance. He was the one who taught us how to burn pine-tar in the bottom of our skis and then how to wax on the top of that . . . .

"When I watched Howelsen jumping, I noticed carefully that when he left the take-off, he always jumped up and out rather than just riding on the speed. It was exactly that technique which gave me my best jumps. When I got my lift at the take-off, I usually got 10 to 20 feet longer distance than others. I learned from watching Howelsen because that was how he did it. Later when I trained young jumpers, I told them, 'Imagine that you have a rope up there which you have to jump over . . . .'

"Every time Howelsen went up on the Hill to jump, he'd go up a second time to do a better jump. He was never satisfied by jumping the same way all the time or by just riding the Hill. He worked hard at skiing to perfect his performance. Sport to him was perfection.

"That sporting spirit was something I will never forget. It got into me as a kid and will stay there — always, I guess. Everything was adventure. We would take skis along to high school and as soon as school ended, over to the

Hill we would go. We had a lot of fun. We had some really good cross-country trips too. We learned a lot and always look back at Howelsen, because he started it all. At that time every kid was engaged in skiing. There was no need to take care of kids then, they took care of themselves. After races we went to each other's houses and had donuts and hot chocolate. Then we would gather for dancing at the Cabin Hotel, sometimes as many as 150 of us . . . .

"Howelsen took senior people out on skis, too. Often they went in groups of 50 to 60 people. My Dad was pretty active and eager on those Sunday trips and that tickled me. When the carnivals took place the whole town came alive. Everyone participated, and it was a festive time.

"We kids had a ski jump at Withers Hill next door to us, and when Howelsen came from Strawberry Park down the slope towards our home, he was going full speed. But still he would stop, look at us, then come along, jump and have fun with us. We loved that. . .

"When people talked to Howelsen about skiing, it was like talking to God because he was tops in skiing. He started it all here and everybody knew it. People lived through that and that's what they remember. When we kids were around and older people were with him, they would always take the mike and we were pushed aside. We had to stay back and could not get to him. But when we were alone with him, he always had time for us and when we were out on skis, he would never take off and leave without notice. He would say, 'Now I am leaving.' That was one of the things we admired about him, because when you are kids, you are just pushed aside most of the time anyway. He was himself and identified with us. When we rushed over to him that time he fell and was spitting tobacco, you might have figured he'd be kind of angry or cursing, but he wasn't. He was just relaxed about it, and told us about falling and actually made it a demonstration for us children. That was the way he was."

John Steele was not among the lucky ones when he jumped for the U.S. Olympic Team at Lake Placid. He did not get the medals he hoped for. At

STEAMBOAT PILOT

Carl and the Steamboat kids.

several meets in the United States, however, he scored the best, and even beat world-famous jumpers like Norway's Birger Ruud and Reider Andersen.

Shortly after the Olympic Games, Steele returned to Steamboat Springs. He received a royal welcome from the townspeople and was asked to speak about his experiences at Steamboat schools. In time, Steele became "godfather" to the most outstanding skier of the Rockies in the 1940's and 1950's, the man who proved to be one of the world's best jumpers at the 1948 Olympics. As described by sportswriter Charlie Meyers in *Skiing in the Rockies.*

"Every eye is on the stage of the auditorium at the small school in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, that winter day in 1932. Resplendent in his red, white, and blue warmup uniform, ski jumper John Steele speaks eloquently and emotionally of his feeling of pride in being a member of his nation's Olympic Team, his delight in representing his home town before the world. Far in the back of the room a young boy still in grade school, small for his age, leaps spontaneously to his feet and shouts, loud enough for those around to hear, 'I'm going to do that. I'm going to be in the Olympics.' The boy's name was Gordy Wren."

WORLD WAR II STOPPED ALL COMPETITION on the international level, but when the Winter Olympic Games were resumed in 1948, Gordy Wren was there. He received fifth place in the special jumping competition at St. Moritz, Switzerland, the best ever achieved by an American jumper at that time. He also competed in the cross-country races, and to date, he is the only skier to quality "four ways in the Winter Olympics." Wren was the first American to jump over 300 feet, jumping 303 feet at Howelsen Hill in 1950. He is honored in the National Ski Hall of Fame and in the Colorado Ski Hall of Fame.

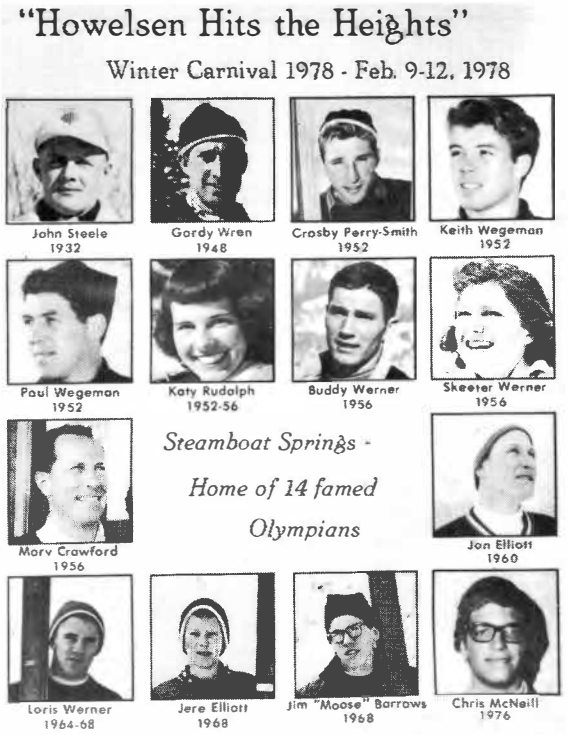
When Gordy Wren returned with his laurels from Europe, he took on the local small fry and youngsters of his hometown, just as Carl Howelsen had. A

Gordy Wren, the first American to break the 300-foot barrier at Howelsen Hill, 1950, with a jump of 303 feet.

group of outstanding skiers were developed in those years: Buddy, Skeeter and Loris Werner in the Alpine field, and Marvin Crawford in the Nordic field, all competing on United States teams in the Olympics and the FIS World Championships.

At the Winter Olympic Games in Norway in 1952, Steamboat Springs could boast of having four skiers on the United States Olympic Team. Another four new skiers were on the United States Team for the Olympics in Cortina, Italy in 1956.

That tradition has been kept alive to the last Olympics at Lake Placid in 1980. Steamboat Springs has brought more skiers to the United States Winter Olympic Teams than any other place in America. Only a decade after Howelsen had left Colorado, Steamboat Springs was nicknamed "Ski Town USA," and each generation has carried the torch that Howelsen lit among young skiers of his time.



The front cover of the 1978 Winter Carnival shows the U.S. Winter Olympic participants from Steamboat Springs up until that time.

Jeff Davis and Gary Crawford represented Steamboat Springs on the United States team for the Winter Olympics in Lake Placid in 1980.

10. Still Going Strong

Why did Carl Howelsen go to Norway? Why did he never return to Colorado and Steamboat Springs? What happened to him?

These are questions many people asked. One who wanted to know was Dr. Menifee Howard. Writing Howelsen, from Denver on December 30, 1922, he asked:

". . . would like to hear more about you and your activities . . . . Everyone asks about you. Do you think you will get back to Colorado by next season . . . ?"

Responding to Dr. Howard, around January of 1923, Howelsen wrote:

"Your letter is on hand and I am very glad to hear that the skiing is coming along fine. You mention in your letter that I ought to be proud of what I did for the skiing in Colorado; to this I have to say that I am too. I really loved Colorado and its surroundings, and I am often thinking about the time I was there.

"Do you know the reason why I went back to Norway? I will tell you why. My sister wrote me and urged me to take a trip to Norway to see my mother and father while they were still alive, and in particular at that time, as they were going to have their Golden Wedding Anniversary, and both of them were more than 80 years old.

"I remember so well that day I left Steamboat Springs for Norway. I went around and said good-bye to all my friends and promised that I was going to come back in a couple of months. Just for the wedding anniversary I was going. So it is peculiar to think how things go in this world . . . ."

In an earlier letter to George Cranmer, from Christiania, dated November 7, 1922, Howelsen writes:

". . . I am thinking of Colorado and of you and our skiing friends and would love to be there — and this is as far as I get. You know it is pretty hard for me now to leave my old folks, mother and father at this time when I first have gotten here. I have not the heart to do it. Therefore, I have decided to stay with them the time they have left . . . ."

Two years later, on February 24, 1924, he writes George Cranmer: "You know I am married now and at Christmastime we brought a little boy to the world. I have a good wife, and we live happy together. My father and mother are doing nicely — that is when one considers their old age. I am glad that I can be with them . . . ."

Just before Christmas 1922, Howelsen had married Anna Skarstroem, a dark-haired and beautiful woman ten years younger than himself. They had long known about each other since her older brother had married Howelsen's younger sister. They exchanged a few postcards even while he was in America. They met face to face for the first time at his parents' wedding anniversary in 1921.

A year after their wedding, Carl and Anna bought a house in the outskirts of Oslo. Carl had plenty of work as a stonemason, and travelled early every morning to the center of town. When winter came, he got his skis out. Anna

was no skier, coming from one of the coastal cities of southern Norway where snow was seldom seen. To please her husband, however, she joined him briefly in his adventure.

During the second year of their marriage, Carl proudly took Anna to watch the international jumping tournament at Holmenkollen Hill. Howelsen wasn't allowed to compete at that time since he had been a professional jumper in the United States. Nevertheless, they brought their skis with them.

After the tournament was over, Howelsen gave his wife a nice meal at the Frognersaeteren Restaurant. Then he wanted to ski back home.

"Now we are going to have some real fun," he said to Anna, and took her on the downward "Bob-run" to town. A steep run with many bends, it had been named "The Corkscrew." It was later used for the Winter Olympic bobsleigh competitions in 1952. On that day the run happened to be rather fast, and Howelsen loved speed. "The faster the better," he said to Anna. Holding her firmly in his left arm, he guided her securely on the track. Her heart was in her mouth the whole way. Every time they were "holding the bend," he was roaring with joy; she was screaming from fear. Whenever her skis approached the precipice of the curve, he pulled her in with his tight grip. He got her safely down the run, but it was a dreadful experience for Anna.

It was the last skiing trip in her life — and the first quarrel in their marriage.

THEY WERE DIFFERENT BY NATURE and background and yet they strongly complemented each other. Anna was deeply religious, a dedicated Christian and a gifted home-maker. She was able to create a warm atmosphere in the home and was an exceptional cook. She let her husband ski as much as he desired, but was occasionally fearful that something would happen to him.

Anna often took care of the sick and needy in the community. She was also the local treasurer of a Christian mission society, helping to send missionaries to Africa.

The day their son came into the world was a day of joy and anxiety. The child was premature, and the doctor and midwife both doubted he would live. Anna got the pastor to hurry over and the boy was baptized in the drawing room of their home. She then went off by herself to pray. "Loving God," she pleaded, "If You let my son live, I will never make any demands on him as my son, but put him at Your disposal to be used in anyway You see best."

Their son did survive. Carl and Anna treated this as a gift from heaven, and treasured the boy over all else in their lives.

In the township of Hoeybraaten, Howelsen became heart and soul of the local ski club. He built two excellent jumping slides at a hill close by, instructed the youngsters to jump and took them to tournaments whenever needed.

In a letter to George Cranmer on February 24, 1924, Howelsen writes, "I have now gotten my amateurship back and can, if I want, join the tournaments again. I don't know if I will, since I have been out of the race for a couple of years now. Of course I have been jumping off and on, and it might be that I will try next winter because I am feeling as good and fit as ever."

Howelsen did. In several tournaments that year, he joined the "senior class" — 32 years old and over — and did well, in spite of competing with men

Carl Howelsen getting fifth prize at Holmenkollen at the age of 50!

who were 10 to 15 years younger. In the following year, 1926, he took part in the Holmenkollen Meet and turned out ninth in this class. A year later, at the age of fity, he won fifth place. Between the first and the last time he competed and won a prize in the "Mecca of Skiing," there was a span of 32 years!

On April 7, 1931, Howelsen wrote Marjorie Perry, "I think much of Steamboat Springs and its surroundings — and always will. Next winter I suppose you are going to Lake Placid, to the Olympics. There will be quite a few riders sent from Norway to take part there. I wish I were 10 to 15 years younger . . . . Of course, if there were a class between 40 and 50, I would have been right there . . . ."

When depression hit Norway in the 1930's and unemployment was a reality for so many, the Howelsen family was lucky. Carl was never out of work. His craftsmanship as a stonemason was well-known and valued so much that there was always a job for him.

World War II came. Norway was invaded and occupied by Hitler. Carl resisted the Nazification of the Bricklayer and Stonemason Trade Union and was several times threatened with arrest. Their son, Leif, who worked underground as a Resistance fighter, was captured by the Gestapo and kept in jail and concentration camps until the war ended. Carl and Anna never knew if they would see their son again.

The Howelsens, unlike many others, were lucky. Carl avoided arrest, and Leif was released unharmed from a concentration camp in 1945. With great joy and relief, the family was reunited, and joined in celebrating Norway's liberation.

During World War II and the Nazi occupation of Norway, all public sports events and skiing tournaments were abandoned. Although Nazi authorities attempted to keep winter sports going and tried to force active sportsmen to compete, they were met with contempt and a firm, united opposition. Many of the top skiers were leaders of the Resistance Movement. In all those years, as a form of silent protest, the Holmenkollen competitions were never held.

Not until the winter of 1946 did competitive skiers enter tournaments again. That winter Carl Howelsen also resumed his skiing activities. In spite of his

Still jumping at age 70!

VAAGE

age, he joined a jumping tournament of the "Old Boys," a group of Holmenkollen veterans who had made a "rendezvous" to catch up after those five years of inaction during the occupation. Of 36 skiers who competed, Howelsen turned out ninth. He was the oldest competitor of all at 69. A newspaper commented, "There is a lot of kick in the old man."

Whether in war or peace, Carl Howelsen could never forget Colorado or Steamboat Springs. He kept in close contact with his friends in America, and they with him. A good part of their correspondence went astray or was lost, but whatever is available confirms how much Howelsen was attached to the people and the land where he spent so many years.

Dr. Menifee Howard, George Cranmer and Andrews kept him posted on skiing developments in Denver and Gennessee Mountain. Others corresponded from Steamboat Springs: Edgar Cook, a former president of the Steamboat Springs Winter Sports Club, Judge Addision Gooding, and Dr. Blackmer, two staunch promoters of the sport who ski toured with Howelsen in the Rockies; and the redoubtable Marjorie Perry. In later years, Gates Gooding, son of the judge, became president of the Steamboat Springs Winter Sports Club. He wrote Howelsen regularly about the development and rebuilding of Howelsen Hill, and about new skiing areas around Routt County. Peter Prestrud and Eyvind Flood from Frisco and Lars Haugen from St. Paul, Minnesota, wrote about wider events in the American skiing world. These friends asked Howelsen to write his impressions of Colorado from the years he had been there.

Answering one of these requests, Howelsen wrote:

"In writing a little on Steamboat Springs as it was during the many years I lived there, I must say it is one of the finest places I ever was in America. Sitting here in old Norway, remembering all the nice times we were skiing together — those were experiences I will never forget . . . .

"It sometimes could be hard work to get the hill prepared for a ski contest, but it was fun for I was interested in skiing and in promoting this fine sport in Steamboat Springs, in Routt County, and in Colorado as a whole.

"I remember very well that when the boys in Steamboat Springs had gotten skis, it did not take them long until they could manage them pretty well.

"You mention those trips which we had together to the Hot Springs. Yes, I do remember. How wonderful it was to put the eggs and sausages into the hot water, and they were done in a few minutes. That was quick service all right and it was great fun doing it . . . ."

In a letter to Edgar Cook, written in May, 1947, he told the following story:

"I remember very well one of my last skiing trips in Colorado. We had been to a ski tournament in Dillon, and Lars Haugen and I decided that we would return to Steamboat by skis. I cannot remember how long the distance was, but it was a pretty long way. The first day we went to Kremmling and arrived in the afternoon, and we decided to stay overnight there.

"The next day we started very early in the morning for Steamboat. From Kremmling and up to Rabbit Ears was simply wonderful for skiing. When we reached the top of Rabbit Ears we came across a hut belonging to a trapper. We could only see the tip of the chimney above the snow. As we saw smoke coming out of it, we thought we would drop in and see how he was doing.

" 'How can we get to the door?' I said to Lars. All we could see was snow! At last we found the way through a snow tunnel into a kitchen and a little room where the trapper was. He was wondering how in the world we had gotten to his place in all that snow. He asked us where we were coming from and we told him, and that we were heading now for Steamboat Springs. He thought that we had done quite a trip, and wanted to give us a meal — and I tell you it tasted very good. After that he wished us good luck and we went on our way.

"Between the trapper's cabin and Storm Mountain, there was an enormous amount of snow. Now and then the telephone wires were hidden under the snow. Up on the top of the mountain in wintertime it was very pretty. It was rolling country for a good while. Then we saw Steamboat far below us, and it was quite a sight. But when we were going to find the way down there, it didn't look so good. It was not easy for us to find the way down as we had never done it before. So we decided to follow the canyon which we call Fish Creek Falls. But how we got down there is a wonder. We finally reached Steamboat in the evening. But the worst thing of all was that both of us on that last bit of the trip had become snow blind! It took about three days to get rid of it, and then we were all right again."

In a letter from Ogden, Utah, Lars Haugen writes to Carl Howelsen:

"I am out in the mountains to help 'fix up' a few ski hills. The so-called ski sport is slowly but surely taking hold and spreading in this country. I left St. Paul nearly three weeks ago to go to Lake Tahoe, California — that is where the 'main job' is. But they are trying to get a three-point circle (Lake Tahoe, Ogden and Ashton, Idaho) so I have been at Ashton and here all that time, trying to get these places started and find places to have ski jumping. I am here with a fellow from California who is in charge of the wintersports program at Lake Tahoe. We are leaving for Lake Tahoe today, and it looks like everything is 'ready to go' here and at Ashton.

"We were down in Salt Lake yesterday — they may join in also. A few Norwegians down there have had a ski club more or less to themselves for about 17 years. This three-cornered circle is to have dog races and ski jumping as their main show. They may add ski racing and other events later on."

AFTER SOME YEARS IN NORWAY, Howelsen felt his English was getting bad. Most of the letters he sent to Colorado went through several drafts before being sent. At times, a Norwegian word "blended into" the English. His notes were scribbled on all kinds of scrap paper. It is often difficult to tell for whom they were intended.

One reads, "I lived about two miles outside Steamboat in a little wooden house, but at that time it was no distance for me. Every time I was in town, I looked at Storm Mountain and thought it would be great if some of the trees there could be cut and we could get a track from the very top down to Steamboat. To see a man coming down from the top of Storm Mountain in shortest time must be exciting."

The idea of a trail down Storm Mountain was always on his mind. He repeated the idea in a letter to Gates Gooding around 1950: "Would it not be a fine idea to get a course from Storm Mountain down to Steamboat Springs? It would be a distance of about ten miles, I suppose — something like that I imagine. Of course it would take some work doing this, but I am sure that it will come. You might speak to Mr. Gordy Wren about this, Mr. Gooding, and see what he thinks about it."

As a postscript to the same letter, Howelsen added: "Regarding the ski course I have spoken of from Storm Mountain down to Steamboat, I might call it a legend. But you can be sure, in years to come, you will have it."

He was right. This trail is no longer a legend. Mount Werner, as Storm Mountain is known today, has become a very popular skiing area for thousands of alpine racers from Colorado and far beyond. The mountain was, in fact, renamed to honor the greatest alpine skier Steamboat Springs ever produced, the late Buddy Werner, who through his outstanding sportsmanship, brought fame and respect to Colorado and the United States.

D. R. PENDLETON

World renown alpine skier Buddy Werner with his father, Ed, who learned to ski from Carl Howelsen.

After World War II, Howelsen corresponded quite often with Gates Gooding in Steamboat Springs. From his letters and notes, it is evident Howelsen felt deep gratitude to this man who had been so faithful in sending news, photos and pamphlets of Howelsen Hill and the different skiing projects being planned at Steamboat Springs.

After one of the tournaments at Holmenkollen in 1947, Howelsen sent a letter to Gooding, saying:

"Once in awhile during the winter time and at ski tournaments, I think of Steamboat Springs and that I might one day see some of the boys from that part of the USA in our great Holmenkollen Ski Tournament which we have every winter. Last winter we had riders from all parts of Europe, and why should we not have some from Routt County, Colorado also? I certainly hope it will happen in the future."

Steamboat Springs skiers came sooner than Howelsen expected. In 1948, Gordy Wren turned up at the Holmenkollen Meet. Before that, he had placed fifth in the Olympic jumping competition at St. Mortiz, Switzerland.

At the following Winter Olympic Games in Oslo in 1952, Paul and Keith Wegeman were on the United States jumping team, coming directly from Howelsen Hill to the Holmenkollen course. After the Games were over, Howelsen wrote Gooding in Steamboat:

". . . I met Paul and Keith Wegeman. Paul had bad luck in his third jump at Holmenkollen. He fell and hurt himself and went to the hospital. Next day I went to see him. He was then pretty well again and was going to leave the hospital. Paul will soon be good as ever. I saw Keith in his jump. He jumps beautifully. He received twelfth place, and that is pretty good when you consider that the 44 best riders of the world were here at the Olympic Games."

In another letter to Gooding, Howelsen wrote:

"I suppose you are busy with the arrangement of the 1952 Carnival now . . . . Yes, Mr. Gooding, Howelsen Hill is a fine one, and you fellows have done a whole lot for the Hill, improving it since I left Steamboat Springs, so the Hill is much better now. I understand very well that the riders brag about the Hill . . . . Early in the spring I read here that Ansten Samuelstuen had jumped 316 feet at Howelsen Hill, Steamboat Springs, Colorado. That was quite a jump, was it not? I felt proud when reading it."

Even in his old age, Howelsen kept up his skiing as he had all his life.

"I, for my part, love skiing as much today as I have ever done," he wrote Gooding in 1953. "Of course, I am not much of a skier now, but I love to travel on them, doing cross-country. It is a whole lot of pleasure in skiing when you first get on to it. Therefore in Steamboat Springs you got the right start . . . ."

Howelsen continued to participate in jumping contests of the "Old Boys," competing for the travelling trophy which could be kept once it had been won three times. He won the trophy twice and hoped to win it a third time too, but then, he had a slight stroke and could not participate that year. He recovered and tried a year later for his third chance to win the trophy. He placed second at the age of 76.

A year later, he had another stroke and again he recovered, although his ability to speak was reduced, and his left arm and leg were affected by the

stroke. Still, Howelsen kept that daring and get up and go spirit that marked his life, and never lost it until his last breath. In spite of his growing limitations, he continued to ski during the winter that followed.

Not long after the first snow had fallen in 1954, an incident took place which typified the old skier's indomitable spirit.

IT WAS EARLY DECEMBER, and the snow wasn't deep. Howelsen took to the track and skied to "Liabakken," the sports center of the local ski club, where he had been instructing youngsters in jumping for several years. A group of teenagers had also travelled that day up to the skiing area.

The teenagers stood by the hillside, discussing whether they dared to try the 35-yard jump or not. There was not much snow and rocks appeared here and there on the landing slope. The youngsters couldn't make up their minds what to do and remained standing in the same place for a long time.

Howelsen thought they were talking too much. He went over to them on his narrow cross-country skis with their "loose rottefella" bindings. He stopped, and as he wasn't able to speak properly, he just looked the boys over with a sharp glint in this eyes. Then he went up on the hill.

He flew down the jump, sprung into the air landing at the 75-foot mark, rode down the outrun and turned at the end of the hill. Then he skied to the teenagers again, stopped, still not saying a word. They looked at him. Then, one by one, they went up and jumped.

"The Flying Norseman" was still going strong.

Outside his Olso home, Carl takes to the hills in 1953.

11. Father and Son

Sometimes in life, educators who do splendidly with the children of others, do rather poorly with their own children. How did Carl Howelsen do with his only child?

With regard to the winter sports I never reached the heights of my father. In comparison I was an amateur. But, strangely enough, that fact did not bother "The Flying Norseman." He was happy if I just loved the outdoor life and enjoyed skiing as he did. With that as his aim, Carl hit the mark.

The relationship between the two of us began poorly. Perhaps because of my premature birth, I cried more than any children of the neighborhood and kept my father awake most nights, making him angry. My mother had to live with outbursts from both of us. But after the first year, things changed for the better.

Even before I could walk, my father carried me on hikes in the hills and mountains around Oslo. I was put in a small framed rucksack, and off we went. Dad loved those trips to the hills, and whenever he was fishing, he simply hung the rucksack high in a tree. There I dangled in the fresh air while Dad caught brown trout. It cannot be proven, but those early experiences dangling in trees may have given me my unquenchable passion for flying and desire to become a pilot.

When I reached the age of two, Dad took me on his skis, racing down the steep slope outside our home with me between his knees. Mother stood looking out the kitchen window with her heart in her mouth, fearful but rather proud all the same.

Soon I developed the bad habit of doing the opposite of what my parents told me. By the age of four, I loved playing with water and wouldn't stop no matter how much my parents urged me. A brook next door and a pond on our property were my constant playgrounds. Much as I was told not to get wet, I came home soaking every time I returned from the brook and pond. One Sunday, when our family was about to leave on a visit, I was dressed in my best "velvet suit," looking like Little Lord Fauntleroy himself. My parents gave me the sternest warning not to go to the pond while they readied themselves for the party. A few minutes later, Dad discovered me lying flat on the ground, playing with a toy boat in the pond. That was too much for my usually patient and loving father. He rushed up to me, grabbed me by the back and said, "If you want to get wet, you are going to get wet," and ducked me under water.

At the age of seven I reluctantly began elementary school. I was no Einstein, just an average kid like most others. The first time I brought an example of my writing home and proudly showed it to my parents, Mother exclaimed, "Oh, Carl, what is to become of our son?"

"He will turn out all right," Dad answered, "I have faith in him."

Naturally, I do not remember these early episodes told to me by my family, but I confirm it was the gracious attitude of "I have faith in the boy," and the way Dad constantly challenged me that made my teens such a fascinating time

in life. A number of things happened when I was about 11 years old that brought me close to my father. It was the beginning of a friendship that grew increasingly deeper as life went on.

The record of that growing comradeship between father and son, I believe, supplements and completes the life story of skiing pioneer Carl Howelsen.

During a school vacation in the fall of 1933, I wanted to go on a four-day cycling tour with two of my classmates. We hit upon the idea of making a 100-mile trip, camping, fishing and living out in the wilderness. But my mother, with her cautious maternal concern, responded with a definite, "NO!" She was afraid "wild car drivers" would run over us and that, through carelessness around a campfire we would start a forest fire. There had been several fires during the drought that fall. Mother tended to be protective, while Dad had an adventurous spirit. When I told him our plans, he backed us.

"What a fine idea," he said to mother. "It's good for him and the boys to get out on their own. They need to do these kinds of things and they'll have a whale of a good time together." And he helped get us on the road.

It was a marvelous expedition. None of us were run over by "mad drivers," nor did we cause forest fires. We cycled about 25 miles a day, then found a place in the woods, or at a lake, or close to a river where we pitched our tent. We caught fish, cooked our meals together, and explored the woods and the hills. When we ran out of milk, we did what we shouldn't have done, milked the cows grazing freely in the woodlands around us. Every day was full of new and exciting experiences. We learned a lot, and had a bundle of stories to tell when we returned home.

Letting us have the freedom to venture out on our own, trusting us to explore and to learn by ourselves, did something for us. Without Dad, our little expedition would not have occurred.

Over Easter vacation the following year, Dad decided to take a week-long skiing tour in the mountains 50 miles north of Oslo. Snow conditions were excellent and the weather forecast promising. He invited two neighbors in the same position as he — having wives who did not want to ski. Finally he announced that I should come along.

"It will be too strenuous for him; he is just eleven," Mother said. "Let him stay at home."

"He'll make it all right," Dad maintained.

It was another great experience in my young life. Every day we took long skiing tours with backpack and picnics of hot chocolate, oranges, sandwiches and apples. Dad taught me how to "read" the tracks of foxes, rabbits, lynx, roedeer, and moose. One day, we came close to a moose family which had come down to a riverbed for water. It was the first time I had seen moose. I marveled at what big animals they were!

We skied all day long, and stayed overnight in rental cabins. On the last day of the tour, we skied all the way back home, a stretch of 35 miles with backpack and all, and we did it in six hours. Though I must have been tired, I cannot remember it at all. What I do remember was that I had achieved something. I had done what grown-ups did, and I had been racing in front of them all the time. That tour meant so much because Dad believed in me and he knew I would make it. Because he expected the best, I tried my utmost.

At the end of February that same winter, a national jumping tournament was scheduled in Liabakken, the local ski club course that Dad had built. One day while we were having dinner, Dad said to me, "On Sunday I want you to be a forerider at the national tournament." He was chief of the hill that day, and wanted to give me a chance.

"No, I won't," I answered. I was too scared. The course had a 12-foot take-off, and a knoll that stretched 75 feet before it started to curve. I was small, and when I stood on the take-off and looked down, my heart sank into my boots.

Dad looked at me and said, "It is as easy to jump in Liabakken as on any of the smaller hills you are mastering."

"No, Dad," I stubbornly repeated. "I am not going to do it."

Dad hit back, "Are you a frightened sissy?" That was his final word.

In midweek, I skied to Liabakken with a classmate. I glanced at the hill and the take-off and I felt scared as ever. My friend decided he wouldn't jump. I climbed up the hill and remained standing at the in-run. I was paralyzed as I kept looking at the take-off down below. It started to darken and I knew I couldn't tell Dad I had been in Liabakken, but hadn't dared to jump. Finally I tried, and what I feared most of all happened — I landed on the knoll. But I did not hurt myself and it wasn't as bad as I had imagined, so I tried once more. The same happened again. We skied back home.

Dad wasn't too impressed when I told him. He said, however, "You will make it all right on Sunday."

For the day of the tournament, Mother ironed my ski pants, and I wore a

Father and son on their way to a jumping competition, 1936.

white and black wool sweater, white wool gloves and a white wool knitted cap. What had been wrong with my jumps during the week was I hadn't dared to go full speed. On tournament day, I had to start from the same place as all the other riders, and that was on the very top of the hill. Some of the best jumpers of the country were there. They joked with me and I guess I got a bit more relaxed.

When the red pennant waved and the trumpet call sounded, I knew I had no other choice than to go flat out — and so I did.

To my own surprise, but maybe not to Dad's, I made a good leap and landed on the 125-foot mark — and stood! People applauded. In those years, it was quite unusual for an 11-year-old boy to jump on a hill of that size or as far as 125 feet.

I "booked" the day as a great victory, and somehow it catapulted me into a new stage of jumping. Dad said the jump was good, but he didn't praise me to the skies or tell me I had made an extraordinary jump (which I felt I had!). He simply expected me to jump well. That was all there was to it. He also said something I still remember: "You might be scared, my son, but you're not a coward."

SOMETIMES IT WAS TOUGH to grow up under Dad's guiding hand, but he knew what he was doing. He always set the challenge high, but never so high it was beyond what he knew I could do. Still he always "upped" the next mark to conquer so that it cost me something.

In my mid-teens I was taught a lesson of a different kind. We were a family of no great means, yet we never suffered the anxiety and want so many experienced during those years of unemployment and depression. My parents were meticulous in using and spending whatever money they had. I was expected to be responsible for running things too, and we all pulled together.

One day, I was told to sell a transferable railway ticket that Dad had left over, a ticket that could be used by anyone for week-end travel. The custom was to go "on the knocker," asking neighbors and families in the vicinity if they wanted to buy such a ticket. If I sold the ticket, my reward was 10 cents.

I went around but hated it. I heartily despised any kind of selling . . . but I tried. Finally I got the ticket sold to a local roughneck who cheated me out of 50 cents, a fellow known to our family for his shady dealings. Nevertheless, I was happy to get rid of the ticket. When I got home, I gave Dad the money. I thought I had done well, but Dad didn't.

"Why did you let yourself get cheated?" he asked. "Why did you let him get away with it? Now son, you go back right now and tell him straight out that he cheated you and that it was wrong and mean to do so, and then get the rest of the money he owes you. If he doesn't change, get the ticket back and return the money he paid you."

That was the last thing I wanted to do. Everything in me resisted it. Instead, I went to my room and got 50 cents out of my savings box.

"Here," I said to Dad, "is the full amount of money for your ticket." He was annoyed.

"I do not want your money. That's not the point. I want you to straighten out a thing that was wrong, and I want you to go and do it NOW."

Finally I went and got the money. I remember that I acted more like a chicken than a roaring lion. I still recall how painful and humanly difficult the experience was, and how puzzled I was that it should be so hard to go straight up and challenge that man, even though truth was on my side.

At the time, I could not understand why Dad was so hard and uncompromising with me. Today I know. He wanted me to learn a basic lesson for life. Whenever a man condones what is wrong, whenever he gives in where a fight is needed, he gradually, often without noticing it, becomes an accomplice in that wrong. Whenever a man keeps silent when his conscience urges him to speak out, it corrupts and corrodes his will and human dignity. On these very issues and choices hang the freedom and personality of man.

THE MOST IMPORTANT DAY of the year in our family was New Year's Eve. How the tradition began I do not know, but it was our family practice as far back as I can remember. Dad, Mother, and I would gather before midnight and spend a time of searching our hearts and reflecting silently together. We would review the past year and consider what we had learned, what we might have done better, and what we had to be thankful for. If any wrong from the past year still had to be faced and cleared up, the time we did it was on that very last day of the year. The purpose was always to begin the New Year with a clean conscience and new start. As midnight turned, we would thank God and each other for all our blessings in the year gone by, and pray for His wisdom to guide us in the year to come.

One New Year's Eve, when I was 12, I had a most agonizing struggle with myself. I had done something wrong and hidden it with utmost care. In the past spring, I had stolen 50 cents from Mother's coin purse, had bought a pack of the strongest cigarettes I could get and had gone into the forest and smoked like a chimney. Of course, smoking was strictly forbidden. Dad had told me all the reasons I should not smoke, but I wanted to keep up with my schoolmates. I tried to inhale, and to exhale smoke through my nose as others did — something I previously had failed to do. Having smoked most of the pack, I dropped into the railway station and drank a lot of water, rinsing my mouth vigorously to get rid of any smell of smoke. Back home I was struck by dizziness, vomited, ran a temperature and had to go to bed. My parents wanted to know what I had been doing. As always, when you tell a lie it leads to another one, and I made up a story to hide the truth. I do not know if they really believed me, but they accepted what I told them.

On that particular New Year's Eve, the memory of those lies, the smoking and the stolen money, hit me like a ton of bricks. As the clock moved closer to midnight, I felt more and more uncomfortable. I was scared Dad would give me a spanking if I told the truth.

Instead, when I did tell the truth, I found Dad to be most humane, forgiving and caring. He gave me a loving hug and said how grateful he was I had told the truth.

"It is not the wrong thing we occasionally do that I am against," he said. "We all fail and behave wrongly. It is the cover-up and the smokescreen of falsehood and lies I am against because that is deadening to a man's character. We must live in the open, son. Then falsehood and lies do not get any power over us."

Through the years, Dad wanted me, above all, to be faithful to the Truth. For that reason, nothing was hidden or covered up in our family. I believe the open and honest way we lived together was the strength and the bedrock of our home.

In later years, I have learned to value the simple lifestyle of my home more than anything else. My boyhood and teenage experience gave me the alert conscience and moral fiber to resist the evil onslaught of the Gestapo, the inner strength to survive when tested in the harsh reality of Nazi prison camps.

THE WAR YEARS BROUGHT OUR FAMILY closer together than ever before. In May 1945, when we were reunited after two years of forced separation, a different and more mature relationship developed among us. I was no longer Carl and Anna's youthful lad. The years in prison and concentration camps made a man out of me.

When we resumed the many treasured activities of the past — the summer vacations in the mountains, the yearly visits to Holmenkollen tournaments, the weekend hikes, the fishing tours, and the festive celebrations — we experienced everything in a different way, with "new eyes" and with deeper emotions. We looked at everything as a precious gift bestowed on us. It corresponded in many ways to what the whole nation felt about our regained freedom in May 1945. Never had freedom meant so much to us as at that time.

In the fall of 1945, I started studying at Oslo University. Dad was 70 years old, still doing a full day's labor as a stonemason. He loved his work, but did it primarily to make enough for me to receive an education. He did not want me loaded down with a huge debt to pay for my studies. We agreed he would go on working as long as he had the health and strength, and that I would take care of them when I completed my studies.

We had many interesting discussions together during those years. We could disagree heatedly on the basic issues of the day, but we never turned angry or divisive because we had developed such deep respect and affection for each other through the years. Naturally we continued to make our cross-country tours and to compete in races over a ten-mile distance together, he on his old skis, and I on my new ones. Even then, it was a hard job to beat Dad.

Unexpectedly, something then happened that challenged all three of us and vitally altered our future.

To understand the nature and consequences of that challenge, I have to return to the war years and that time of separation and imprisonment. Some events took place then that put me on a different life course than I had designed or ever dreamed of.

At dawn on June 10, 1943, five Gestapo agents surrounded our house. They smashed the window of the front door, broke into our home and with bright flashlights and Sten guns forced me out of bed. Dad and Mother witnessed it all. Chained in handcuffs, I was taken to the Gestapo headquarters in Olso.

After a rough interrogation at their headquarters, the German security police took me to the prison in the center of town. They left me in solitary confinement under strict guard for several months. I suddenly found myself in a world of evil I never believed possible. I saw humans behaving like beasts. I had been robbed of everything — freedom, home and family, friends, and

everything I possessed. I felt utterly alone and destitute. There was not a living person to talk to, just four brick walls. There were no books, no pencil, not a bit of paper. The only material property available was a spoon.

After a couple of months, one of the Gestapo chiefs came into my cell and told me I was to be executed. "But your case has to go through Police Court first," he said.

I faced the fact that I was about to lose the last thing left to me — my life. At that moment of bitter realization, everything in me cried out to live. It was then that I discovered no darkness or man-made hell could prevent the Divine Hand of God from breaking through to man. I experienced a power of the Spirit that transcended my physical existence and my intellectual understanding.

I consciously turned my life to God. "Whatever be Your will, God," I prayed, "let that come to pass. But if I may live and even be free once again, I give You the whole of my life for You to use as You see best."

From those dark hours on, I was filled with an inner poise and peace. The Gestapo no longer had any power over me, nor had death, nor had the fear of execution. At that moment when, humanly, everything was lost, I gained the greatest gift of all: freedom, in the deepest and widest meaning of that magnificent word. For some inscrutable reason, the execution was never carried out. My court case was postponed repeatedly until World War II ended. God gave me the privilege of life. For what purpose was I spared?

I had been put in jail as a 19-year-old idealist, humanist, and freedom fighter who believed in the greatness of man. The words of Goethe, "Edel sei der Mensch, Hilfreich und gut" ("Man is noble, helpful and good"), was my declaration of faith. I did not accept that man could also be evil. This became an issue with my parents. "You are too naive and gullible, Leif," they said, and they warned me about Hans, one of my friends. "Be careful with Hans," they repeated several times. I would not listen and was exasperated that they could distrust him, and even believe him capable of evil.

After I had been put in prison, the truth came out. Hans had not only betrayed me as well as some of my close friends in the Resistance Movement, but he also collaborated with the Gestapo and was beating and torturing his own countrymen.

There was another incident outside the Gestapo Headquarters that shook my faith in the innate goodness of my fellow man. I had been interrogated for 24 hours and as I was taken back to the prison, a Norwegian stranger came up to the Gestapo officer in charge of my case. With shifty, greedy eyes, this Norwegian stretched out his hand and said, "When do I get the money?"

Confronted with such stark realities, my castle of lofty idealism collapsed. In the evil world I now encountered, the forces of hate, revenge, and the desire to meet evil with evil raged in my heart and mind. I concluded that man and society were involved in something more profound than the clash of differing economic, social and political systems. A historical drama was also being played out within man himself, a waging of war between Good and Evil. For that reason, the choice still rests with man for what kind of a world will be built.

The discovery of these insights both challenged and committed me.

IN THOSE LAST WEEKS of the Nazi holocaust, and the days of jubilant liberation that followed, we Norwegians were preoccupied with our own future, studying, and getting a job, starting a family, and rebuilding our country. Nevertheless, beneath the surface of personal and national interests there stirred a feeling that more was demanded of our generation. For those of us who had been in the anteroom of death, who had been snatched out of the clutches of the Gestapo and given life and freedom again, there remained a disturbing unrest. We had seen and experienced too much to remain passive and let the world go by. As we rose from the ruins of man-made hell, we dreamed of building a different and better world. We felt a longing to see Europe emerge as a continent freed from the strifes and divisions of the past. But how were we to do it?

Burdened with this question, I started to study in the fall of 1945. It was no coincidence I chose history as my major.

I found those undercurrents of feeling difficult to define and even more difficult to discuss with Dad. In one of the concentration camps, I had met a professor of history who became a close friend. He was to prove a helpful adviser to me in years to come. One day in the camp, he had told me about a global network of people called Moral Re-Armament (MRA). In the summer of 1947, he invited me and several other students to attend one of their world conferences at Mountain House, Caux, Switzerland.

What I experienced at the conference convinced me the basic principles and aims of MRA were sound. But I felt uncomfortable about the presence of Germans in Caux. The MRA people sensed my hostility.

"We cannot build a new Europe," they said, "without Germany." It was a logical statement that I had to admit.

"Europe has to be rebuilt by people with a new attitude," they said, "whose motive is to change the hates and hurts and divisions of the past. Only through the spirit of forgiveness, repentence and reconciliation can a different Europe arise from the past."

The people of MRA saw France and Germany as a nucleus and the cornerstone for the emergence of a new Europe. For that reason they invited all kinds of people from France and Germany to Caux for the purpose of building a network of dedicated men and women to take on that task and fulfill that vision in the future. This made sense to me. I knew that neither hate nor revenge nor bitterness would be able to bridge the past or build anything lasting for the future.

"We must build bridges from man to man, from land to land," they told me, "and we must start with ourselves."

That also seemed obvious to me. Caux was an inspiration that stirred me and stayed with me as I went back to Norway.

In January 1949, the unexpected happened. I attended another international gathering of Moral Re-Armament for several days in a mountain valley of Telemark. One evening, I was invited to "go on the road" with MRA. It came as a shock. I had not thought of MRA as a personal career. The invitation was a serious one, however, and could not just be pushed aside.

In the days that followed, I could not think of anything else. The challenge absorbed me entirely. The consequences would be drastic. It meant leaving the

university, my home, and sacrificing all the plans I had made for my career. It meant serving a great cause, but without salary or any security for the future. Hardest of all, it would mean leaving Mother and Father alone without the support I had promised and planned to give them. I didn't have the heart to do that.

Still, there was an inner "call" that persisted. I could not determine whether it came from man or from God. It became clear to me that if I was to find inner certainty, I had to free myself of all plans for the future, and of my anxieties and fears of what my family and friends might think and say. I had to be ready to place both my parents' and my own fate in the hands of God.

One night, I lay awake thinking. I saw before me the friends who had been taken out and shot in concentration camp. One by one they passed before me singly in review. I remembered the promise I made in the darkest hour in my prison cell, that if God gave me life and freedom again, I would be fully and wholly His.

In the silence of that night, all doubt vanished. "Follow Me," the inner voice said. "Launch out in faith. Have no fear. I will look after your parents. I will look after you." It may be possible to argue with the Devil, but not with God — so I didn't.

When I got home, my Father and Mother welcomed me so warmly I did not know what to do. How could I tell them of my decision? How could I get them to understand it?

I decided to talk it over with Dad first. I knew it would be very difficult for him to accept what I had decided to do. All the hard work he put in to pay for my education would now be lost. How could be possibly approve of it?

In the evening, when Dad and I were alone, I told him. Rather bent, he sat and listened to what I had to say. I could see how heavily my words fell on him. At length, he looked straight at me and said, "Leif, you know how much I have longed to see you complete your university education and how hopeful I was of what you might become. But I will not stand in the way of your conscience. Follow your calling."

Never before had I felt such devotion to Dad as at that moment.

Carl, Anna, and Leif in 1953.

It was harder for Mother when I told her the next morning. She wept. When she calmed down, we talked openly about the whole situation together and when Dad came home from work, he was so sensitive to her and still so down-to-earth.

"Anna," he said at one point, "I cannot understand you. You have been praying for years that God would call Leif to become a Christian missionary in Africa. Now God has called our son to work with Moral Re-Armament in building a better world and you are weeping. I can't understand you."

As the days went by, Mother began to sense God's design in what had happened. She told me how she had once surrendered and dedicated me entirely into His hands and keeping at the time I was born.

What happened in our family soon became the topic of conversation in our community. Neighbors and friends respected my new sense of calling and dedication but thought I was crazy when they heard I was going to work in Germany. A close friend from Resistance days even called me a traitor.

All three of us were launching out into the unknown. The day I left for Germany, we felt more united and humanly closer to one another than we ever had. Still more unexpected, and what we could not foresee during those painful days of decisions, was that the years still granted us were to become the crowning experience of our lives as a family.

From Germany, I often wrote letters home giving impressions of the country and people I had met in politics, industry, and labor. I told of the families I stayed with and what I learned as I travelled in a country that for me was filled with still-fresh memories of an evil past.

NEW WORLD NEWS

Mountain House,
Caux, Switzerland.

Back home, Dad studied the European Atlas carefully, and followed my journeys wherever I went. He read articles and books related to what I was doing. When there was a commentary or description in my letters that particularly interested them, they read it to neighbors and friends. Whenever I was home for a short visit, I found Dad extremely well-informed on the situation in Germany. I noticed our neighbors and friends had changed their attitude toward Germany and what I was doing there.

In the summer of 1950, Mother and Father came to the industrial area of the Ruhr where I had spent most of my time in Germany. I showed them around and introduced them to the families with whom I had stayed.

I will never forget one particular incident. There were still a lot of ruins from war-time bombing raids. One day, travelling through a heavily damaged area, I noticed Mother looking around at all the debris and "ghost-buildings" about her. Suddenly tears streamed down her cheeks and she uttered, "Think of all the suffering these people have been going through!"

We drove to Caux together, and they commented on the way through Germany and Switzerland how different it was from Norway. We spent two weeks together at the MRA Conference. They loved every minute of it and enjoyed meeting people who had come from all over the world. Then they returned to Norway.

A while later, I came north for a special MRA meeting in Olso, and I stayed on afterwards for a few days. During those days, I went through a lot of soul-searching, and considered leaving the task I had committed my life to. I felt I was not good enough for the high calling of MRA. I hadn't been successful, I felt, and I sensed my own shortcomings in so many areas. I knew my parents needed me and would appreciate having me around.

I had a talk with Dad and told him about my concerns.

He was annoyed with me. "You must never give up, Leif," he said. "That is the greatest sin of all." In his most wonderful way, he made it plain that a calling was not a question of success, but a question of grace and commitment. He expected me to be faithful to the highest calling I knew. He told me that doubts, wavering and temptation would come again as surely as night would follow day, but that the course I set out to follow was the right one for me, and that I should pursue it as long as I lived.

A few days later I returned to Germany.

AFTER TWO YEARS TRAVELLING WITH MRA in India and Pakistan, I returned to Europe. In the fall of 1954, while in London, I got a cable from Oslo that Mother was seriously ill and in the hospital.

As it happened, I was free to go to Norway for several months, and spent a long unhurried time with my parents. Mother had cancer and could not be moved from the hospital, but she revived noticeably after I arrived. I visited her every day. We had so much to talk about. It was a liberating time for both of us as we talked freely about death and eternal life and the topics resting deepest on her heart.

Dad and I managed as well as we could at home. Our cooking was markedly inferior to Mother's. As Christmas approached, we hoped to bring her home for a few days, but she did not have the strength. I felt it was up to me to make the best of Christmas for both of them.

Last year of skiing together Geilo, 1955.

Dad, too, was facing a crisis as winter approached. The previous January, when the weather had been nice, and plenty of new snow had fallen, Dad had gone out skiing. It was far too cold, minus 25 degrees F. He had been out for several hours and returned refreshed and full of joy. The next day he had a stroke. He survived and recovered, but his ability to speak was impaired. His left arm was out of action for some weeks, improving through exercises but never reaching its normal condition. Mother demanded that Dad leave his skis in the attic forever. Family and friends agreed and made it abundantly clear to Dad that his time for skiing had come to an end. In the end, his doctor too said this would be the best for him. It was difficult for Dad.

I was the only one to disagree with all this talk and pressure against his skiing. I knew it would break the "life nerve" in him if he quit and so I opposed it. I did feel, however, that Dad should no longer ski with his old equipment. His skis were worn out and useless, even dangerous on hard icy snow. The boots were over 30 years old, and ready for the "museum." As a Christmas present, I decided to buy him completely new equipment.

I scraped together all the money I had saved, and went to the sports shop of Sigmund and Asbjoern Ruud, ski jumping heroes of the 1930's to 1950's. Asbjoern helped me pick out the very best equipment on the market. We mounted "state of the art" bindings on his skis. It cost me all the money I had, but it was the best investment I ever made. I hid the skis under the sofa and the boots somewhere else.

On Christmas Eve, I cooked the best meal I knew how to prepare, and tried to create as festive an atmosphere as possible. Despite my efforts, there was still an emptiness because of Mother's absence in the hospital. After dinner Dad and I followed our family tradition of handing out Christmas presents to one another.

After the pile under the tree had vanished, Dad assumed that everything had been handed out. I then said, "Dad, see if there is anything in the cabinet!" He found a square parcel, opened it and his eyes popped when he discovered the ski boots. He felt the quality of the leather, and then looked at me with a boyish smile. He did not know what to say.

"Now, what is under there?" I said to him, pointing to the sofa. He knelt down and looked. Then he discovered the skis and pulled them out. He was speechless, staring at his skis, feeling their surface with his hand. He turned to me, wanted to say something but could not manage to. He embraced me and wept.

We spent the rest of the evening planning skiing trips together.

Mother had to celebrate Christmas in the hospital. We spent as much time with her as we could.

On the last day of 1954, she died.

In the days that followed, although Dad was handicapped in his speech, we still could communicate through words and feelings what Mother had meant to us. They had been married for 33 years.

When the funeral was over, Dad and I set off for a ten-day rest and skiing tour in the mountains.

The day we left Oslo by train for Geilo, the sun was shining, fresh snow covered the trees, and nature radiated its winter splendor as we looked out from the train. It was Nordmarka at its very best. As we passed through the very places where Dad raced the Holmenkollen 50-kilometer tournaments so many years before, we were stirred to the roots of our beings.

Dad loved his new skis and boots, and claimed they were the best he ever had. He went down mountain sides like a whirlwind and raced across the plains. I was amazed at his agility and strength, even though I was a bit frightened that he might fall at such a speed. He didn't.

We had time to ponder many things at length during those ten days at Geilo. I believe they were the best days we ever spent together.

Back in Oslo we fixed up our house. Close relatives moved into the first floor. Dad's nephew and his family were more than willing to look after Dad. He moved upstairs and had his own apartment with ample room for me stay whenever I was around.

In the middle of March, there was a call for me to return to Germany. Dad was eager for me to do it. I found it hard to leave him, but he insisted and almost pushed me off. He had such a deep understanding of the calling I had

taken up that he would never stand in the way of its fulfillment. It was the deepest bond we shared together. He never discouraged me but always urged me to live up to my highest ideals and to follow God's design. Dad and I understood each other beyond words, and I knew when he gave me the signal, I had to go. Nevertheless, I found it particularly difficult to leave him that time.

On a cold March day, a friend picked me up in his car for the airport. Dad waved me off with determination and with such a twinkle in his eye that I knew he was pleased in my return to Germany.

I did not have that soldier's quality. Emotion overpowered me and I cried as a child once he no longer could see me. Intuition told me it was the last time we would see each other.

It was.

Carl Howelsen, April 1955.

12. On Trodden Tracks

Ever since I was a boy, I wanted to go to America and see Colorado. Dad told me about the Rocky Mountains and Steamboat Springs. He showed me photos of his ranch in Strawberry Park, of cowboys on horseback, of street events from the Winter Sports Carnivals, of himself on skis catching an elk with a lasso, fishing for trout, and touring in a Model-T Ford. All this planted in me the dream of some day visiting the country of freedom and adventure.

As a youngster, Dad's photo album became my favorite refuge when it rained heavily and I couldn't play outside. I would take the album and settle down under Mother's big sewing machine. The old Singer was so large, and I so small, that I could sit on the wide pedal and rock. To get more speed, I would creep out and use my hands, pushing the pedal up and down so the big iron wheel would spin around at a fast rate like an airplane propellor.

My imagination would race just as fast across the Atlantic. In my dreams I skied in the Rockies, lived with the cowboys, caught "train robbers" single-handed . . . until Mother discovered me and I was chased away from her cherished and "forbidden" property.

During the winter of 1960, I realized my boyhood dreams and was able to retrace the "trodden tracks" of Dad in the Rockies, meeting his friends in Denver and Steamboat Springs.

George Cranmer, the grand old man of Denver, drove me to the jumping hill at Gennessee Mountain, now desolate and no longer in use. The hill had a certain drawback, Cranmer said. The very long outrun was exposed to the sun and the snow melted away. The rest of the hill was in the shade and had plenty of snow.

"Your Dad," Cranmer said, "wanted to make use of the hill as long as possible. So, he got the idea of covering the whole snowfree area with horse dung. With the help of a rancher they got it done. Howelsen then wanted to try it out. He went up and did a long jump; the speed on the outrun was quite fast, and as he skied into the 'artificial snow patch,' it threw him around. He slid for quite a distance, then got up with a broad grin, his face and whole body covered with horse dung."

Cranmer roared with laughter when he told about it.

It was a treat to be shown around by George Cranmer. He drove me to the monumental Red Rock Theatre which he had conceived and realized while Manager of the Department of Parks and Improvements in Denver. He told me a lot of stories about his friendship with Dad as we toured around.

Marcellus Merrill of Steamboat Springs is an inventor and engineer who now lives in Denver. He drove me to Inspiration Point and showed me where the first jumping tournaments in Denver took place.

The Merrill family had been close friends with Dad and he frequently stayed with them in Steamboat Springs when the weather was too bad to get out to Strawberry Park. He taught their three boys, Marcellus, Conrad, and Hollis, to ski and jump. Hollis was a promising jumper. To "groom" him for the big tournaments, Dad trained him over the week-ends at a hill in Strawberry Park,

and followed up with further instruction during school vacations. It was a proud moment for both of them when young Merrill placed second after Peter Prestrud in the Colorado Jumping Championships at Gennessee Mountain in 1921. Not long after, Hollis Merrill unexpectedly suffered a stroke and died before he reached the peak of his skiing career.

The name of Marcellus Merrill is closely linked with Howelsen Hill. In memory of his brothers, Hollis and Conrad, he instituted the Merrill Trophy, given annually for the longest standing jump during the Winter Sports Carnivals. It has become the most coveted trophy of all.

On a gorgeous day in February 1960, Marcellus Merrill and his family drove me to Steamboat Springs. The drive over Berthoud Pass down to Winter Park and over to Frazer gave me a sense of the majesty of the Rockies. The valley at Frazer, with its rare view to the surrounding mountains and the Continental Divide, struck me as one of the most beautiful places I had ever seen. When we filled up with gas there, an old Swede who owned the station said he often had talked with Dad when he came skiing from Corona on his way to Hot Sulphur Springs. He pointed at the Continental Divide and showed me where Dad used to come across.

MERRILL COLLECTION

Marcellus Merrill

As we passed Hot Sulphur Springs, Merrill pointed to where the ski jumping hills once had been, and where the first Winter Sports Carnival in Colorado had taken place. The drive over the Rabbit Ears Pass and down to Steamboat Springs through the Yampa Valley seemed strangely familiar. I remembered much of the area from Dad's photo album; it was almost like coming home.

Many thoughts and emotions went through me when Merrill took us to Howelsen Hill, and later when we drove out to Strawberry Park and saw the ranch where Dad had lived for many years. Somehow I felt I had seen it all before.

The morning after our arrival, the international jumping tournament took place at Howelsen Hill. It was the last meet before the opening of the Olympic Games at Squaw Valley, California, and many of the best American and European jumpers were competing. Most of them leaped more than 300 feet.

ONE OF THE HIGHPOINTS of my three-day stay in Steamboat Springs was meeting the senior men and women who once were "the local small fry" Dad had trained between 1913 and 1921. One of the youngsters who did quite well

in jumping at that time, Carl Combs, came up to me and said, "Your Dad not only taught us skiing, he also taught us character."

I met the Withers and the Wrens, the Crawfords and the Goodings, and Ed and Hazel Werner — the very people who had developed the skiing tradition of Steamboat Springs and made the town known as "Ski Town USA."

I can never forget the legendary Miss Marjorie Perry and Leckenby family, owners of *Steamboat Pilot,* who had done so much to promote skiing in Steamboat Springs and the Rockies. They had endless stories to tell about "the Flying Norseman."

The few days in Steamboat Springs in 1960 made me feel at home. I knew one day I would return.

That winter, I sampled another morsel of past history. I was on Mackinac Island, Michigan, where the Great Lakes of the north merge. Indians used to call the place the "Island of Peace." Cedar Point Conference Center on the island then belonged to Moral Re-Armament, and a TV studio and film production center were being built. One day, a group of Hollywood film actors and producers came to the conference to look at the building and facilities. One of the actors who fascinated me was Monte Bleu.

Six feet two, and solidly built, Bleu seemed tough and rugged but inside of his impressive frame there was a big, warm heart. He was a man with an unusually wide range of human experience — soldier, miner, sailor, cowboy, railroader, and actor on stage and screen for over 50 years. He was best remembered for his performances in *Orphans of the Storm, The Marriage Circle* and *Intolerance.* I came to know him as a master story-teller.

One evening as we sat down with some friends for supper. It turned into one of those rare evenings when you lose the sense of time. We talked about show business. Monte told priceless stories about his good friend, Will Rogers, and about his years working for the great David Griffith and Cecil B. DeMille. At times, he would whisper to get us bending intently over the table to catch every word, then suddenly his voice would thunder and trumpet nearly shaking us out of our seats. He knew he had his audience. We also knew, and played along with him.

A friend suggested I tell Monte about Dad. I began my story, telling about Dad's adventures in Riverview Park in Chicago and how he joined the Barnum and Bailey's Greatest Show on Earth. Monte Bleu listened intently. He interrupted to ask, "How did your Dad spell his name?"

"H - o - w - e - l - s - e - n," I responded.

Bleu sat quiet for awhile, a distant look came over his face, then suddenly he waved his arms and raised his voice:

"La-dies and Gentul-men! I want to call your attention to the most astounding, colossal, stupendous, unsurpassed death-defying leap of Captain Carl Howelsen, champ-e-on ski-i-sailor of the wo-r-r-ld!" Then vividly gesticulating and beating a tam-tara-tam-tara-tam with his whole body, he demonstrated the drums of the circus band just before the big jump took place.

"The crowds," Bleu continued, pausing slightly for a breath, "fixed their eyes upon the high structure where Captain Carl Howelsen was to fly through the air. There was the 100-foot slide, set at an angle of 45 degrees and at the

end of it, the take-off. Then 60-feet away was the landing slope. Just before the moment of the sensational jump, the Captain was hauled up to the top of the structure. His long skis were hauled up after him. He slipped them on and as the drums started beating again — tam-tara-tam-tara-tam — Howelsen clapped his hands, waved to the crowds, flapped his elbows like wings, and seemingly indifferent to the risk of losing his neck, came swooping down like a bird."

Bleu paused again for breath and for dramatic effect.

"People screamed as he soared through the air. Then he landed safely on his skis 75 feet from where he had left the take-off. Finally, he sped on to the landing outrun where the ringmaster and two strong men stopped him with unconcealed admiration."

Looking at me with a twinkle in his eye, Monte Bleu said.

"Your Dad was the sensation of the year. He was a real thrill-maker. At times, he even had two elephants stand between the take-off and the landing slope and jumped clean over them."

I was spellbound. "But how can you remember all this?" I asked. "Did you really see Dad jump?"

"I knew your Dad well," he answered, "I was working with the Barnum and Bailey Circus at the same time as he, in 1907. I was one of the 'strong men' who caught him at the end of the landing!"

It was late evening when I walked that night. In the light of the moon, I could see the Mackinac Bridge, spanning the straits between the north and south peninsulas of Michigan. It looked so near. The ice on the lake, the snow on the trees and the white wooden houses reminded me of Norway. My ears were tingling with the cold, but my heart was filled with song, a very happy song, yet with a note of sadness to it. How satisfying it would have been to write all this to Dad.

HOW MUCH I WOULD HAVE also loved to tell him about the 63rd Winter Sports Carnival in Steamboat Springs in 1975! Some of Dad's old Steamboat friends had heard I was going to be in Frisco, Summit County, around the time of the annual Carnival. Frisco is only a two-hour drive from Steamboat and they invited me to come over. As it turned out, I was made an honored guest along with the veteran of Howelsen Hill, 86-year-old Anders Haugen, winner of the first Olympic medal in ski jumping for the United States in 1924.

STEAMBOAT PILOT

Winter Carnival Parade, 1975. Anders Haugen and I are driven by Steamboat's Donald Wither who learned skiing from Dad!

It was quite an experience to drive through the streets of Steamboat Springs with Dad's old skiing friends sitting on the folding top of a Triumph sportscar in the Sunday noon parade — driven by Donald Wither, another of Dad's friends. The town was in a festive mood and crowds on both sides

of Lincoln Avenue waved and cheered. Embarrassment and joy went through me as I waved back to the people, smiling like a politician in an election campaign!

A week later Anders Haugen and I took part in another adventure, he as honored guest, I as a participant. Forty Norwegians, 20 of whom were blind, had came to Frisco to launch the first "Ski for Light Race" in the United States. Cross-country ski programs for the blind began in Norway in 1964, initiated by a blind musician, Erling Stordahl, and his wife, Anna. Aided by a guide, the blind skier soon managed to enjoy the thrilling feel of gliding along a prepared track on rolling and varied terrain.

The inspiration for the first Ski for Light Race in America came from the Norwegian ski-instructor and friend of Erling Stordahl, Olav Pedersen of Breckenridge. Pedersen had a strong belief that the Norwegian program could benefit American blind people. With the Lions Club International and the "Sons of Norway" as sponsors, and with the support of the Norwegian government and local citizens, a group of 35 blind men and women from across America joined the Norwegians for an exciting week of skiing in the Rockies, highlighted by the Ski for Light Race near Lake Dillon. First down the six-mile track was Colorado Governor Richard Lamm, guiding Erling Stordahl. The final pair, Anders Haugen and myself, represented the historic link between Norway and the tradition of skiing in Colorado.

EVER SINCE THE FIRST jumping events took place in Steamboat Springs in 1914, the Hill had been improved and reconstructed several times. In the late 1930's and early 1940's, a major rebuilding was undertaken, making the hill into a 90-meter jump.

In 1972, it was announced that Colorado would host the Winter Olympic Games in 1976, with Steamboat Springs the site for ski-jumping and cross-country events. Great plans were made by the people of Steamboat Springs to perfect the Hill for the Olympic tournaments. One terrible day in the spring of 1972, the wooden platform of the outrun at Howelsen Hill was full ablaze and burned to the ground. Anti-Olympic fanatics had been at work. A month later the people of Colorado in a statewide referendum voted against hosting the 1976 Winter Olympic Games. As a result, the Games were transferred to Innsbruck, Austria.

All the Federal grants which had been promised for the rebuilding of Howelsen Hill were abandoned. But the townspeople's spirit and will to rebuild their traditional hill was still alive.

In the 1982 Winter issue of *Steamboat Springs Magazine,* free-lance writer and photographer David Thiemann wrote a feature entitled: "Howelsen Hill — Steamboat's Remarkable Ski Jumping Complex. A Tradition of Champions." Tracing the history of the Hill up to the great rebuilding period between 1973 and 1978, Thiemann writes:

"Early in 1973, John Fetcher, Marvin Crawford, Marv Elkins, and Mayor Jim Golden formed the Steamboat Ski Jump Commission to raise the money for the redesigning and rebuilding of Howelsen Hill Ski Jump Complex.

"In a special town referendum held in 1974, the people of Steamboat voted to approve a city council bond issue for $100,000 to rebuild the facility.

DENVER POST

Governor Richard Lamm of Colorado and blind Erling Stordahl of Norway joking before they take off on the first Ski for Light Race at Frisco in 1975. Since then the International Ski for Light program has taught and enlisted 8,000 blind Americans into cross country skiing. Yearly events have taken place in Minnesota, Vermont, California, New York, South Dakota, Michigan and Wisconsin. The tenth anniversary of Ski for Light will take place in Colorado in 1985.

Matching funds were obtained from state and federal agencies. But it was the people of Steamboat who opened their hearts, purses and wallets, corporate and private alike.

"Howelsen Hill exists as a living testimony to what a community can accomplish when united behind a common goal. It is the result of tireless effort and unselfish contributions — time, machinery, labor, material, and money — from scores of individuals, businesses and local, state, and federal agencies . . . .

"The real credit for this marvelous ski jumping complex goes to the proud and unwavering spirit of the people of Steamboat Springs, inspired by men like John Fetcher and others, who literally built — and rebuilt — a dream . . . ."

IN OCTOBER 1977, I VISITED Steamboat Springs again. People were working hard on Howelsen Hill to get it ready for opening ceremonies in January 1978. Would they meet the deadline? The task seemed an impossible one and many doubted it could be done. In Steamboat Springs, however, one must always reckon with the indomitable spirit of the townspeople. There are always a few men and women who carry things through. When I returned for the North American Jumping Championship and International meet in January, everything was ready for a grand opening of the Hill.

Saturday, January 28, 1978, was a day of real festivity. The flags were flying. The school band was playing. The weather and snow conditions were ideal. Dignitaries from Washington, D.C., Denver, and surrounding counties and towns gathered for the dedication ceremonies.

In honor of my father, I was chosen to be the first speaker. These were my remarks:

"About 70 years ago, my Father came to this wonderful state of Colorado. He loved it and, as you know, made Steamboat Springs his home. Many of you knew him and together you laid the foundation that made Steamboat Springs known as 'Ski Town USA.' My father's generation did the best with the means they had available, and thus this Hill has served its purpose: Steamboat Springs and Colorado became known all over the world for the world records of jumping set here.

"Today the jumping hills have been brought up-to-date, meeting the needs of modern time, offering the very best that the young and daring can ask for. This is a day of joy and gratitude, and of commitment to make the future greater than the past.

"Our gratitude extends to the known and the unknown, to all people, organizations and institutions in this caring community of Steamboat Springs who made it possible.But one man especially has to be mentioned, the man who had the vision, the patience, and the fighting spirit to pull it through, and you all know him — the unconquerable John Fetcher. I believe that future generations will be as grateful to him as you and this town have been to my Father.

"One more name I want to mention: young Gordy Wren. When I was here in October last year, he worked early and late to complete the scaffolding at the top of the Hill. Two days ago, when all the snow came, he worked through the whole night until early morning, getting the Hill ready for the jumpers that day. I mention this because it is in the tradition of this Hill. It has been built by sacrifice, compassion, and the dedication of many.

"It is, therefore, a precious and challenging gift to you youngsters of Col-

ROD HANNA

JODY STROGOFF

Inauguration day of Howelsen Hill jumping complex — a great moment and feat for John Fetcher (at right in group photo, singularly pictured at left). In the group photo he is seen talking with Steamboat's Billy Kidd and Colorado Senator Floyd Haskell.

Howelsen Hill, 1978 — Jumpers "El Dorado."

orado and Steamboat Springs. Take care of it and keep this tradition high. And finally, to you young and daring of today who one day will become the world class jumpers of tomorrow, becoming the skiing ambassadors of Colorado and the United States, to you, good luck. Good luck to you."

Once the short and solemn official program was over the first jumper hit the take-off and a new page began in the history of Howelsen Hill. The day was a triumph for the builders of the new ski jumping complex. Jumpers from the United States, Canada, Norway, Finland and Austria praised the 90- and 70-meter hills as among the best in the world. They envied Steamboat's wide variety of jump facilities for 50 meter, 30 meter, and 15 meter, a total complex hard to match anywhere else in the world.

Among the international jumpers who competed at the Carnival was a group of very young Canadians. They made several daring leaps off the 70-meter course. They wanted to compete in the 90-meter jump as well and were allowed to do so. One of them, however, had a nasty fall and was taken to the hospital.

A few days later, I went into the Becket Drugstore to get a newspaper. I discovered the young Canadian who had fallen so hard was there. His face was bruised and his eyebrows were swollen, looking like two rainbow-hued sausages. I really felt sorry for him. I went up to the boy and introduced myself, and told him of a similar bad fall I experienced when I was 11 years old.

"I was a keen jumper like you," I said. "During a school vacation, I succeeded in getting some friends and relatives to come along to the hill and watch how well I could jump. The slide was a fairly steep one and the longest distance of the course was 125 feet. I had yet to jump that far. I was determined to make a long jump to strengthen my family's faith in me! While I climbed to the top, one of my relatives added more snow on the end of the takeoff to give my flight a heavenly kick! Unaware of this, I started on the downward run, fully determined to make a giant leap. The additional snow on the takeoff,

however, threw me upside down in the air and I landed 110 feet below on my arms and face with skis and legs above me. The skin on one side of my face was completely scraped off, and I looked like a skinned sausage.

"When I came home and my Mother saw me, she was horrified and exclaimed, 'I'm going to get Father to burn your skis!'

"A couple of hours later, Dad came home from work. As soon as he saw me, he put his arm around my shoulder and said, 'That's great, son, now you look like a real man.' Early the next morning he took me to the same hill to have me jump again."

"Gee," burst out the Canadian boy, "I wish I had a Dad like that."

THE STEAMBOAT SPRINGS WINTER SPORTS CLUB has been the nerve-center of all skiing activities in Routt County since 1914. It has taken on the task of training youngsters to master and enjoy the sport of skiing. It has also been the driving force in organizing the annual winter carnivals, keeping an old tradition alive. The 69th Carnival from February 11 to 14, 1982, was just another example.

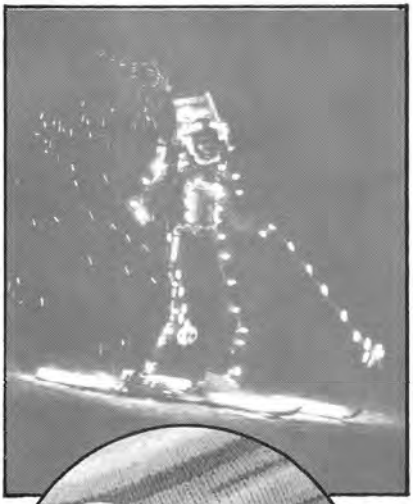
"Bigger and Better" proclaimed the *Steamboat Pilot* of February 18, 1982. The editor reported: "The Winter Carnival was bigger and better than ever. And each time that it is, I look on it as a miracle. It really is the big kick-off for the rest of the winter. It is a time when the whole community joins in to make many things happen. It is people volunteering their time so that each event will work . . . . Again the community should be proud of the Winter Carnival which is the oldest ski show in good old USA."

As a spectator and an insider, watching the Carnival and its many events and activities, I couldn't help but marvel at its diversity. So much happened at this five-ring circus that even P. T. Barnum wouldn't have been able to imagine it all. Howelsen Hill was like an anthill crawling with skiers. As I watched the jumping competition from the "judges' tower," I could also see downhill racers crossing the finish line at the end of the outrun. As I turned around, a dual slalom race between parents and children was taking place on another part of Howelsen Hill. Looking again at the same place an hour later, I saw a group of senior citizens competing in a dual slalom Telemark-race (downhill on cross-country skis using only the Telemark-turn).

On the straight-away beyond the outrun of the jumping hill, I could hear the shots of blunderbusses. A group of "mountain men," dressed in trappers' and pioneers' clothes, was competing in an old fashion muzzle-loading biathlon. Wherever I looked, something else was going on.

The Winter Sports Carnival is of such a unique character, I believe it can truly be said there is nothing like it anywhere else in the world. It is a festival where everyone participates. Sport and game and production are all challenges to be enjoyed. It is the time when the Sports Club, civic authorities, and townspeople, parents, children, old and young cooperate and merge as one joyous family in a rare show of community spirit.

For most people, the main attractions of this colorful Winter Carnival are the Night Show on Saturday evening, with the crowning of the Queen, and the Grand Parade on Sunday on Lincoln Avenue. Both events have a tradition. There lingers a sense of history that unites the past with the present.



Winter Carnival
at Steamboat Springs.

The first time a queen was crowned was at the Winter Carnival of 1916. On Feburary 9, 1916, the *Steamboat Pilot* headlined a story: "Thousands will witness Crowning of the Queen. Will Simulate Westminster Abbey With Pomp and Ceremony." The paper described the Queen's crown as "An honor that will be prized more than all the pianos and the automobiles ever offered in a contest."

On February 7, 1917, the *Steamboat Pilot* carried the following headlines: "Queen Contest Eclipses Everything in The Valley." "War, Politics, and Even Champion Jumpers Lose Importance in Rush of Fair Ones for Votes. Weekly Count Shows Enthusiasm."

The excitement of selecting a Queen has remained an important event for young and old, even up to the present generation. It engages everyone's interest. The Queen of the Winter Carnival is always elected by vote of the people of Routt County. Any young lady may be a candidate, and the criteria for choosing her is not beauty alone, but character and outstanding skiing performance.

Today the crowning of the Queen takes place at the Saturday Night Show. Preceding the crowning, about 100 school children with burning torches in their hands ski down the slalom slope, looking like an illuminated snake moving in a shining course through darkness. Then another group comes from the side of the slope, escorting the two Marshalls of the Carnival who are to crown the Queen. Finally, the Queen herself comes skiing down the slope with her attendants. They merge at the spot where the Marshalls put the glittering crown on her head.

After that, more spectacular events follow. The members of the Ski Patrol fly off the 70-meter ski jump and leap 100 to 150 feet through the air, guided only by lighted torches held in their hands. Other skiers on the 50-meter course jump through a burning hoop. Then the "Lighted Man" with 50 pounds of batteries on his back and brilliant lights outlining his body, skis and poles, and a tall helmet continually shooting off colored rockets, skis down the hill. Finally, this is climaxed by a great firework display. It is like a Fourth of July in mid-winter.

The parade dates back almost as far as the tradition of crowning a queen. Apparently, the concept was transplanted from the Midwest. Quoting from the *Steamboat Pilot* of February 14, 1917: "The report of Samuel M. Coleman, who, as a representative of the Sports Club attended the Winter Carnival at St. Paul, Minn., was received and many suggestions were offered by him for the Carnival at Steamboat.

"The feature of the Carnival at St. Paul was the big parade, in which marched representatives of clubs from all the towns of the northwest where skiing is the winter attraction. The plan will be worked out on a smaller scale at Steamboat Carnival to be held at Steamboat on March 1 and 2."

The *Pilot* also reported that "the communal parade, in which the people of all the towns of the valley will join, is going to be a feature and a good one of the Carnival. In order to make it possible for the people from all towns to take part without trouble and expense, it is planned to urge everyone to bring with them a pennant of their own home town. The parade will be led by the floats and they will be followed by the ski riders of the entire valley."

A week later the *Pilot* carried another headline, "Committee Plan Procession Headed by Queen and Her Consorts As Opening Attraction of Big Sports Carnival and the Championship Tournament."

Today, approximately one-third of the people of Steamboat Springs participate in the sports event, another third enter in the parade, and the rest come to watch. It was, and is, a magnificent show. The Marshalls and the Queen head up the parade, driven in two horse sleighs. They are followed by the only skiing band in the world, the Steamboat Springs High School Band, playing marches as they ski along Lincoln Avenue. Floats follow the band, each one more imaginative than the last. The majority of those riding in the floats are children in pre-school.

The races and jumping at Howelsen Hill are not the whole show anymore. Nor are the street events on Lincoln Avenue. A few hundred yards east on Highway 40 is the Steamboat Springs Health and Recreation Olympic Swimming Pool. There, jumpers of acrobatic skill perform daring flip-flops and double-back somersaults on skis, landing with a splash in the pool.

TOM ROSS

Another mile or two further east, is the Ski Touring Center where cross-country races take place. Girls and boys from ten to sixteen years old compete in a three to ten kilometer race, the juniors in a ten to fifteen kilometer race, and the top racers in a hard fifteen kilometer course. There is also the ten kilometer Citizens' Cross-Country Race where everyone can compete from the youngest grandchild to the oldest grandparent. Finally, there is the two-kilometer cross-country relay race for family members and any three-person team. About 200 people compete in these events.

Still another mile east is an equally busy anthill of skiers at the Mount Werner Alpine Center. Another 200 kids from five to eleven years old race in the popular "Soda Pop Slalom." Besides that, there is the Freestyle Mogul Event, a competition among grownups, and a demonstration of ballet skiing.

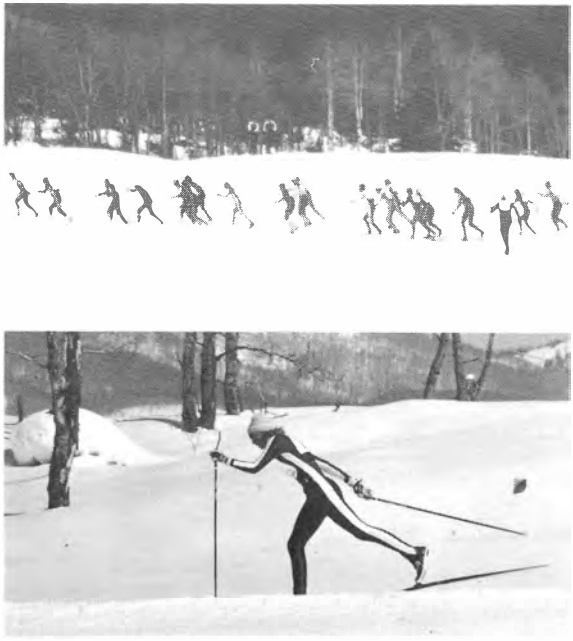
MOUNT WERNER, ONCE THE Storm Mountain that Carl Howelsen used to dream about as a downhill area, is now one of the favorite alpine areas in Colorado, boasting skiing opportunities for beginners as well as top races. Olympic and World Champion skiers Billy Kidd, Hank Kashiwa, and Ski-School Director Loris Werner have helped make Mount Werner a popular ski resort, and they themselves are on the slopes at times to assist visiting skiers.

Still further east on U.S. Highway 40 is Rabbit Ears Pass, the vast rolling high mountain plateau where Carl Howelsen and Lars Haugen once made the first skiing tracks ever. Today it is a busy cross-country and ski-touring area. The annual 50-kilometer Rabbits Ears Pass Race in the first week of April has become a welcome challenge to cross-country racers from everywhere.

More than any other person, veteran Swedish racer and ski coach Sven Wiik has taken on the challenge started by Carl Howelsen to get America to love ski

RON DAHLQUIST

Mount Werner Alpine area with 1,000 skiable acres and 78 runs. The uphill capacity of lifts is 22,200 skiers per hour.



DAVID THIEMANN, TOM ROSS

Steamboat Springs Ski Touring Center with trails of 5-, 10-, 15- and 20-K for beginners and professional racers. The ski-clinic, providing every facility, is directed by former Olympic Ski Coach Sven Wiik (left).

RICHARD E. FOUSHEE

Rabbit Ears Pass, the peaceful majesty of ski touring fans.

touring, cross-country racing, and winter outdoor life. Thousands of Americans have been trained by Wiik and his Scandinavian Lodge staff over the last decades since he and his family made Steamboat Springs their home.

As an honored guest at the 69th Winter Sports Carnival, I had the joy of watching as many events as was humanly possible. Naturally, part of the time I watched jumping events on Howelsen Hill, but I spent most of a day at the cross-country Touring Center.

What touched me more than anything else was seeing the youngsters skiing. Watching the local "small fry" competing in 15- and 30-meter jumping events, witnessing some daring boys of only ten or eleven who performed on the 50-meter hill, I was also moved to see the determination and dedication of teenagers who glided along the 15-kilometer cross-country course. What stirred me most was to stand at the bottom of Howelsen Hill and study the four to six-year-old youngsters as they raced down the slope at full speed. Their sheer enthusiasm, the twinkle in their eyes, the impressive way they mastered the hill and the speed, touched me deeply. I couldn't help but think of the vision so often expressed by my father: "I want to see American boys and girls take to the healthful and meaningful sport of skiing."

They certainly have. The Steamboat Springs Winter Sports Club has found a way of training and passing on the joy of skiing to youth from everywhere.

During my visit, Howelsen Hill struck me as a living monument to the "Flying Norseman," to his dedication to skiing and to his affection for the people of Steamboat Springs and Colorado. My thoughts turned for a moment to those skiing pioneers from Norway who emigrated to the United States two generations ago. They came to this country almost empty handed, but they were welcomed anyway. In a strange way, just by being themselves, and faithfully sharing the joy of the sport they had learned to love in their native land, they passed on the wonderful "skiing bug" to the American continent. They contributed something of lasting value.

The story I set out to write about "The Flying Norseman" has no ending, simply because the adventure and enthusiasm continues. Steamboat Springs of the Yampa Valley and the skiing life of Colorado are witnesses to it. Fortunate are the young people who live in "Ski Town USA" today because they have roots, a heritage and a future.

One thing still amazes me, though. It is now 62 years since Carl Howelsen left Steamboat Springs, but the townspeople have not forgotten him. His presence is evident throughout Routt County. He has somehow become an integral part of the life in this community as much as the hills and the mountains around.

This outpouring of affection and gratitude to the stonemason and skier who lived in Strawberry Park two generations ago both touches and challenges me. I, too, have been given such a welcome, such respect, and such honor by the people of Steamboat Springs that I, at times, have found it difficult to accept because I do not feel I deserve it. An old truth is expressed in a Norwegian proverb: "When it rains on the vicar, some drops will fall on the parish clerk as well!"

According to ancient Indian legend, the Yampa Valley holds a spell. If you are afflicted by that spell, you will lose your heart to the valley and never be able to stay away.

Carl Howelsen somehow had two hearts. He managed to live with both. One was forever to remain in Steamboat Springs and Yampa Valley. The other stayed with him in the land from where he had sprung.

When I was born, I, too, was given two hearts! One forever is lost to my father in Steamboat Springs and the Yampa Valley. The other I carry with me wherever I go, as my father did.

The spell of the Yampa Valley — can it be defined or only experienced? Is it the natural beauty, the richness of the land and the rivers and the wildlife which overwhelms and captures you? Or is there something more to it?

Besides the "heavenly surroundings" of the Yampa Valley, there is a larger dimension: the people. One senses there the unique co-existence of man and nature, the genuine spirit of freedom that lives in the people of the Rockies, that soars to the mountain top, sings in the rivers, that is seen in the cowboys and ranchers, even in the cattle and the horses as they roam the wide open countryside. It is like the flight of the eagle as it hovers over mountain and plain.

However special the spell of the Yampa Valley is, I believe one can find that spell throughout Colorado. Abraham Lincoln even sensed it long ago. He said once, "Men hang out their signs indicative of their respective trades: shoemakers hang out a gigantic shoe; jewelers a monster watch; and the dentist hangs out a gold tooth; but in the mountains of Colorado, God Almighty has hung out a sign to show that there He makes men."

It takes men to both cherish and hand down the flame of liberty. It takes men of freedom to give, to dare, to risk, to explore, to create and to build, to pioneer and to bring their visionary dreams to fruition.

It was this very heart beat of freedom and opportunity that welcomed and embraced my Dad and many immigrants when they came to this land.

It is the same spell that has touched and rekindled my heart.

Epilogue

It is with great pleasure that the **National Ski Hall of Fame** has published *The Flying Norseman,* the story of skiing pioneer Carl Howelsen (known as Karl Hovelsen in his native Norway). He has set his mark forever on the skiing history of America.

Howelsen was inducted to the National Ski Hall of Fame in 1969 and has been honored throughout the State of Colorado.

The Flying Norseman comes as the second book in the Mather Monograph Series of publications by the National Ski Hall of Fame.

The National Ski Hall of Fame was established in 1954. It is located in Ishpeming, Michigan, where the National Ski Association (now United States Ski Association) was founded in 1904.

The Hall of Fame honors more than 240 men and women whose contributions and achievements have enriched the sport of skiing — from early pioneers like John "Snow-Shoe" Thompson. . .Sondre Norheim. . .Carl Howelsen. . .Birger and Sigmund Ruud. . .Sir Arnold Lunn. . .ski historian Jakob Vaage. . . Gordy Wren. . .Andrea Mead Lawrence. . .Buddy Werner. . .John Bowers. . .Stein Eriksen. . .Billy Kidd to modern Olympic medalists Cindy Nelson, Bill Koch and Phil Mahre.

In the Hall's History of Skiing section, you can examine a replica of a 4000 year old ski and pole, or follow the men of the 10th Mountain Division as they fought for control of the Italian Alps during World War II.

A visit to the National Ski Hall of Fame is both a trip through skiing's past and a glimpse of its future.

The Hall of Fame is wholly owned and administered by the United States Ski Educational Foundation, and maintains an extensive archival and publication program, including the Roland Palmedo National Ski Library, where books, periodicals, and films are housed for research purposes.

The first Mather Monograph book, *Nine Thousand Years of Skis,* appearing in 1980, was made possible by grants from the Elizabeth Ring Mather and William Gwinn Mather Fund.

William Gwinn Mather, the late President of Cleveland-Cliff's Iron Company, showed a keen interest in the skiing sport. The annual ski meet of the Ishpeming Ski Club was one of his favorite tournaments. He instituted the annual Mather Medals of gold, silver and bronze which were given to the top three competitors from 1905 to 1933.

In the Mather tradition, his stepson, President James D. Ireland, has supported the Mather Monograph series of publications sponsored by the National Ski Hall of Fame.

IN THE STATE OF Colorado, Carl Howelsen has been honored at several places. Among them are:

The Colorado Ski Museum, Ski Hall of Fame at Vail. The Museum is nestled in the center of Vail Village and its internationally known skiing area. The educational and historical museum and Hall of Fame displays over 500

artifacts and photographs, tracing the fascinating history of skiing in Colorado for the past 100 years and the influence it had on the economic, cultural, and social development of the State of Colorado.

Steve Knowlton's Cafe Kandahar and Ski Museum, Littleton, pays homage to the sport of competitive skiing. It displays a gallery of international alpine and nordic skiing stars of the 20th century. A variety of ski equipment, winter clothing and old photos link the heroes of the present to the skiing pioneers of the past.

Grand County Museum, Hot Sulphur Springs, features artifacts and buildings from the time of the first settlers. A Grand County Winter Section gives an extensive display of the beginning of competitive skiing in Hot Sulphur Springs and Colorado.

Tread of Pioneers Museum, Steamboat Springs, is housed in one of the oldest residences in town. It pays homage to the first settlers in the Yampa Valley and the pioneering life of the 1880s. There is a section displaying the winter activities of the skiers who made Steamboat Springs known in the world as "Ski Town USA."

— Burt Boyum
Chairman, **National Ski Hall of Fame**

References and Acknowledgements

This book is based not only on materials found in numerous historical societies, libraries and museums, but also on interviews with many people who knew Carl Howelsen personally. The text itself clearly indicates the sources upon which I have drawn and I did not deem it necessary to burden this volume with formal footnotes and bibliographs.

I am particularly grateful to the staffs of: Universitets biblioteket, Oslo, Norway; Chicago Historical Society and Chicago Public Library, Chicago, Illinois; New York Public Library, New York; the National Ski Hall of Fame, Ishpeming, Michigan; Colorado State Historical Society, Denver, Colorado; Grand County Museum, Hot Sulphur Springs, Colorado; the Colorado Ski Museum, Ski Hall of Fame, Vail, Colorado; Steve Knowlton's Cafe Kandahar and Ski Museum, Littleton, Colorado; Tread of Pioneers Museum and Historical Society of Steamboat Springs, Colorado; Buddy Werner Memorial Library, Steamboat Springs, and the archive and photo collection of the *Steamboat Pilot* because without their assistance in making the sources available, this book would have remained unwritten.

The printing of *The Flying Norseman* has been made possible through grants and individual contributions. A deepfelt thanks to the Gates Foundation, Denver, Colorado; the Mather Foundation, Cleveland, Ohio; and the Sons of Norway Foundation, Minneapolis, Minnesota, for their welcomed grants.

Likewise my heartfelt thanks go to numerous individuals in America and Norway who helped make the publishing of *The Flying Norseman* possible. **In America:** Jan and Priscilla Brekke, Seattle; Tor and Liv Dahl, St. Paul; Julie Hamilton, Seattle; Louis W. Hill Jr., Minneapolis; Carl and Ragnhild Krafft, Orlando; James and Ellie Newton, Fort Meyers Beach; Garrett and Nan Stearly, Carmel Valley. **In Norway:** Skarphedinn Arnason and Icelandair, Oslo; Jens Johan Baer, Oslo; Leif and Sonja Bryde, Sandefjord; Arne and Liv Johansen, Oslo; Jens and Astrid Magnus, Stavanger; Konrad and Dora Magnus, Jar; Christen and Reidun Nielsen, Drammen; Steinar and Aslaug Oftedal, Jondal; Bernt and Ebba Reinhardt, Kristiansand; Gunhild Skard, Jar; Sigrid Skard, Oslo; Vemund and Else Marie Skard, Oslo; Victor and Aase Marie Sparre, Asker; Lasse and Kristin Traedal, Ski; Odd and Vibeke Oestmo, Jar.

The royalties and the earnings of *The Flying Norseman* go to the Steamboat Springs Winter Sports Club to benefit the club my father started in 1914. In addition to a gift of 1000 copies of *The Flying Norseman* to Steamboat Springs, 500 copies of the book have been given to the National Ski Hall of Fame for the benefit of its Publication Fund and 500 copies have also been given to the International Ski for Light Program, Minneapolis, Minnesota, to benefit the work the Sons of Norway are doing to teach blind Americans to enjoy cross country skiing.

The remaining 1000 copies of the edition will be sold to the general public to cover the last upcoming publishing bills as the fund raising for it has been insufficient.

The other day a European friend asked me: "Why do you dedicate *The Flying Norseman* to the American people? Isn't that a bit presumptuous?" "And why, Leif," he added, "why won't you make any money on the book? You certainly could use it!"

These questions of my friend touched on deep water in my life and a reality as true as it is difficult to explain.

Let's imagine that a very poor man against all odds suddenly is granted a gift of $1 million! He naturally would be wild with joy and gratitude. What I have been granted, however, is worth more than $1 million. I was granted life and freedom. God gave me the privilege to live. Britain and America gave me and my generation in Europe freedom.

When I went to the United States for the inaugurattion of Howelsen Hill about six years ago, I spent the time crossing the Atlantic reviewing what Dad had written about Steamboat Springs and Colorado. Thus, reading through all kinds of papers, I came across a letter from one of his close friends, Edgar Cook, former Mayor and President of the Steamboat Springs Winter Sports Club.

The letter, dated April 10, 1947, was apparently the first one Dad had received since World War II had kept these friends apart. Mr. Cook gave a lot of the local news which would interest Dad, then towards the end of the letter there was a passage about the Cook family. He wrote:

"We lost our two boys in the War. The older one, Edgar, Jr., was taken prisoner by the Japanese when the Philippine Islands surrendered in 1941 and died in Japan February 2, 1945. They starved him to death. Our youngest son, Leonard, was killed May 11, 1943. He was an airplane pilot. One engine failed at low altitude. He ordered all men to bail out, which they did while he kept the plane righted so they could jump. Then when they were all out it was too late for him to get out so he steered the plane into an open field, no doubt trying to crash land the plane but it tipped on its nose and exploded. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for saving the crew as not one of the six were injured in the least."

Those lines hit me like a ton of bricks. Thinking about the parents who had lost the most precious gift bestowed upon them, their only sons, and multiplying this sacrifice of one family from one small town in Colorado to many small towns and communities across the United States, it suddenly dawned on me what World War II had cost the American people.

I, like most of us in the Resistance, took it for granted that America would join the War and help us in Europe to regain our freedom. But it was when I read the letter of Edgar Cook that I first grasped in a deeper sense the real

sacrifices in human lives and material resources which America paid to us from the evil of Nazi occupation and domination.

The letter had a shaking effect on me. I am not ashamed to say that I wept as my heart embraced the sacrifice of so many human beings who cared about us in those agonizing War years.

Edgar Cook's letter did something more. It refocused the reality so easy to forget but so essential to remember and keep alive — that freedom and peace requires commitment and vigilance.

The letter will forever remind me about the need for Europe and America, however diversified and different we are, to stand together as dedicated allies in the cause of liberty and fundamental human rights.

It was in this frame of mind that I came to Steamboat Springs six years ago. There I met many people who asked to know more about my Dad. That gave me the idea to write the book about him. I also then caught the vision that *The Flying Norseman* could express my gratitude to the people of America, to the ordinary men and women across this vast continent, who made it possible for us Europeans to regain our cherished freedom.

— Leif Hovelsen