

Interview with Dale Fredette
November 8, 2001
Ishpeming, MI National Ski Hall of Fame
Interviewer:
Transcribed: March 25, 2002

INT: Mr. Fredette, can I call you Dale?

DF: Yes.

INT: Can you give us your birthdate?

DF: August 4, 1944

INT: How did you get involved with the ski club?

DF: When I was a little kid back in the '50s the Ishpeming Ski Club had the top jumpers in the nation. We'd listen to the ski tournament on the radio because we didn't have a tv. That was the 1949 tournament when Joe Perrault from Ishpeming beat the world champion and the Olympic champion and he was from Ishpeming. All you heard about was the Ishpeming people. They were the best in the world. If Ishpeming can do that in ski jumping I wanted to do it. I started when I was about 6. In the program, the first time I jumped at Suicide was at 11. Second youngest jumper. Ralph Bietala beat me out. I was riding Suicide 3 years before I competed in the juniors. I skied all my life. I just did it for fun. I stayed with the club and I was eventually president of the club. Skiers captain, president for I think 12 years. I coached kids all the while I was skiing. From 1969 up until last year. Now I'm also a delegate and a judge for the US Ski Association. Chief of the competition for all the international.

INT: Did you compete in a lot of tournaments when you were younger?

DF: Yes. I competed, my first year was the senior club for the first time in 1962. I was in the senior club for 3 years. The last time I jumped in a competition was '89 or '90. The last time I jumped at Suicide for competition was '82. I was out jumping the ski team every time. I got the gold medal so I said I can't beat them anymore. I skied on smaller hills. I won a Master's National Championship in 1986. After that...I still jump a little.

INT: Where have you traveled for skiing?

DF: Oh, I skied in Germany in '65, from the east coast to the west coast in the United States, mostly I stayed in the central. The smaller hills I wouldn't jump a lot of them. I mostly skied for fun. We competed against each other every weekend in different tournaments. We hung around together. Now it's gotten to be too much money for a competitive sport just like anything else. We helped each other. If I was skiing against a competitor, in fact I've done it, a competitor broke his skis and couldn't jump in the meet

so I gave him a pair of my skis. People say why did you do that? I couldn't beat him if he wasn't on the hill. If he's on the hill I have a chance to beat him. If he's walking around at the bottom I can't. That's probably why we got along so good. We liked each other and we helped each other to compete in the tournament. I've watched the sport change. It's changed drastically in the last 8 years, the style, you watch it on tv. It's totally destroyed all the old. Now days you use a lot less people. Have you ever seen Copper ??? ski flying? The first year they started ski in 1970 they started at the very top of the scaffold and the longest jump was 440 feet. Last year they ruined that hill. They jumped 525 feet starting down the scaffold 100 feet lower than we started in 1970. That's all because of the skis.

INT: So did any of your family ski as well?

DF: My Dad probably did when he was young. But nothing serious.

INT: Just your childhood friends.

DF: Probably one of the reasons I did start ski jumping when I was about 6, all my friends did it. When they quit I kept going. When I was in Ishpeming Junior Ski Club in '59 we had 152 in the club. Ishpeming Senior Club probably had about 45. The classification ??? (talking too fast) It was a period of time for the Ishpeming Ski Club. Class A was the top class. Ishpeming Ski Club had more Class A riders than the rest of the United States combined. That's the history of our club. Henry Hall has the world ski jumping record. He set it in 1919. I jumped in a ski tournament with Henry Hall in 1972. He was 75 years old at the time and he was still jumping. It's a sport you do your whole life. It's very aerobic. Now days you can ride up the hill. We had to walk up all the time. You could do 20-25 rides a day on Suicide Hill. We used to have to walk from bottom to top. In those days there were so many jumpers you either trained or on the weekend you stayed home. The kids that were training harder and skiing harder went on trips. Ishpeming Ski Club sent cars everywhere. One time they had 6 cars heading to different tournaments in one week. When you came back if you didn't win first place, next weekend you stayed home and trained. It was a real tough club to ski for. The numbers have gone down. It keeps fluctuating. It's happened before. Now we are in modern times. That's why we are moving our hills, putting in chair lifts or tow ropes. The kids today won't walk up. They want to ride up. Plus they can train harder. The biggest difference between us and Steamboat Springs, Colorado, is they have lifts. There's young skiers right now skiing 120 meters at the age of 11 or 12 because they'll probably have 1,000 to 2,000 jumps a year. Here walking up you might get 500. You can't compete without a ride. You need confidence. The first 15 rides on Suicide each year you're not confident. You're still a little nervous. It takes about 25 rides to get it out of your system. It's a safe sport. A lot of people don't realize that. They think it's so damned dangerous. Our injury rate for ski jumping is lower than for tennis players. It's psychological is all.

INT: The Ishpeming Ski Club and the Iron Mountain Ski Club were quite close?

DF: You can start a debate there I'll tell you. Not really. Back in probably the '50s. It's personality conflicts. Iron Mountain looks out for Iron Mountain period. We worked with them for many international meets. We get along with them and do business things. Iron Mountain has their attitude and we don't really care for it. We try to help every club. Back in the '50s and '60s, all the clubs would pay all the expenses of all the skiers that came. If I went to Iron Mountain to ski they paid for my hotel room, my meals while I was there. When I started dropping off there were only 3 clubs that did that. Ishpeming, Eau Claire, Wisconsin, and Chicago would take care of our skiers. They all started cutting it back. If you don't want to pay for us, we don't want to pay for you. We get along with most of the clubs.

INT: So you said each ??? in the country would be Colorado?

DF: Colorado, Vermont, New York, all the mid-west.

INT: And those were tournaments?

DF: Yes.

INT: When you won a tournament, what did that mean?

DF: If you won a tournament it means you had the overall high score in your class. It was a combination of style points and jumping. At the time style counted up to 60 points and distance points counted up to 60 points. You could have a maximum of 120. They've changed that system now. You can get 60 points for style yet, but jumping, you can add extra points. They use a table point on the hill. You get 60 points, and if you go past that point, you get extra points. You can score up to 250 points now. It's in flux because they're trying to change it again. I just started judging this year. They're changing the system and want to get away from judging and more on distance. Ice dancing, figure skating...unless your name is known you don't get any points no matter how good you are. In fact I've heard judges say that. Jumping doesn't want that. In fact jumping is the number one spectator sport in Europe. They're trying to figure out a way to make it even better. The judges don't want to give up their jobs. This is what got us to this point. Some of the judges are arguing that it got us here, why do you want to change it? It boils down to the FIS Committee on what's going to happen. We all have to certify. They've tightened up certification for judging right now. What is half a point deviation...They have 5 judges in the international meet. They take out the high and low score and take the 3 judges. When you're becoming a judge, they take the 3 judges scores that were used, add them together and divide by 3. When you take your test you have to be within half a point of those 3 judges 90% of the time. Ski jumping has been one of the fairest in the Olympic Games. They've been changing over the years and probably will change back again.

INT: So did you ski with a lot of Japanese or Finnish skiers?

DF: Yes I skied with a lot of Japanese, German skiers. Back in the '50s and

'60s Ishpeming always used to bring over foreign skiers. They stayed in Ishpeming and skied all over the United States. They traveled with Ishpeming skiers to do it when they stayed in Ishpeming. In the '60s we started bringing over Japanese and Norwegian. At that time there wasn't really an international tournament. The '70s was the same thing and '80s. Then in the '90s we started holding Continental Cups, which is one for the World Cup. Skiers have to ski in the Continental Cup in order to ski in the World Cup. We were holding the Continental Cup and had about 30-40 skiers. Westby, Wisconsin got involved in about '95. So now there's 3 in North Central and they're sporadically in the east and west. Us three in the mid-west are the mainstay for the Continental Cup. It's better for our skiers because they can qualify for Steamboat and that competition is really stiff. It also helps our judges because in order to qualify in the World, the judges have to judge so many Continental Cups or FIS sanctioned tournaments. When Iron Mountain or Westby host Continental Cups they can judge at them so they qualify for the World.

INT: What is FIS?

DF: Federation International to Ski. They're the ruling body for all ski sports in the world. They set the criteria, all the regulations throughout the world. You have to meet certain certifications for the jumping hill. Measurements of the hill, speed, location... When they have a tournament they send a TD from Europe or Canada, it has to be a foreign country. He grades the club on how well they run the tournament. That grading is field preparation, hill design, quality in how we run the tournament, housing, medium, attendance crowd, hospitality...it's all graded and goes back to the FIS for a report every year. Ishpeming so far, other than a computer glitch one year, we have a score of excellent on everything. One year we got very good on the hill because we had a snow storm right before the tournament. But we've had excellent every other time we've had a tournament. We've had a lot of those TDs come back and visit afterward. The German TD came back 2 years ago and stayed here for 3 weeks. Now it's time for me to go over there.

INT: What is a TD?

DF: Technical delegate.

INT: You got involved in the ski club in 1950?

DF: '59 in the Junior Club, '62 in the Senior Club.

INT: The ski club started in?

DF: 1887. We are the oldest active ski club in the United States. That's why the hall of fame is here. The hall of fame came in 1954. They started working on it in 1948 and they built it in 1954. It's what we call the 8th edition. I think Ray said yesterday he opened this place in 1952. It's a nice little building. There's probably been about 5 or 6,000 ski jumpers that have gone through the Ishpeming Ski Club. A lot of juniors don't make it to Suicide Hill. That's the big step. When you get to Suicide Hill...I stop here.

In fact I know guys that have walked up and then just threw their skis down and walked back down rather than ride it.

INT: And there isn't a graduated hill system.

DF: We have a more graduated system now. The time when I rode it, we went from 2 jumps out here at the Winter Sports Club. You could jump 85 feet on it. At that time the record on Suicide was 253 feet. That was 1953. They tore that hill down and put a new one up for 1955. At that time it was a big hill. Ishpeming and Iron Mountain were two of the biggest hills in the country. But we had to go from a hill where you could jump 120 to a hill you could jump a 250 feet, which was a big jump. We lost a lot of kids. In fact we have a better average of skiers that make it to Suicide now. The hill has changed. We don't use as much speed as we used to. We don't fly as high as the guys did in the '40s and '50s. Hill design ??? and Suicide, the highest point you will be off the ground is 9 feet. ??? (talking too fast) It's a sport totally contradictory to what your senses tell you to do, which you have to overcome, like jumping off that takeoff and diving this direction when your body is telling you to go this way. And when you land instead of stepping backward, you have to step forward. It takes a lot of years. I've been scared of heights. I have been all my life. The first time I rode Suicide I walked up the scaffold between my brother-in-law and his brother. That was the first time I went up. I was the first to go down. They didn't want to put a track in it. I had to. My uncles says after you have that first ride, run up for your second. He was right. That first ride, I'll never forget it as long as I live. I ran up for the second ride. I took 5 rides that day. I jumped out by Teal Lake where the other kids my age were skiing. I took 10 rides out there and landed on the flats every jump. I totally outjumped the hill. I was so hyped up. It's like that for every skier. A lot of parents are scared. It's not dangerous. That hill has to be perfectly prepared. A ski jump landing is harder than this table top. It has to be because a fall will hurt you. You slide down, brush yourself off, swear a few times and go back up.

INT: Did you have any major injuries at all?

DF: Nothing I ever went to the hospital for. I broke ribs, ruptured my diaphragm, broke my ankle all in one ride. I couldn't ski for about 3 weeks. Mostly bruises. If the hill is prepared right, you won't get impact injuries. A bruise on your shoulder. If it's soft your arm or leg or a ski could stick in. Those are impact injuries. Nothing you can't live with. Most of those are under hill conditions that weren't set up the way they should have been, which is why the FIS set up all these regulations. I'm the Chief of Competition so I have to check everything. We make sure the landing is hard as a rock and the right width. It has to be a specific width for the size hill you're skiing on. He checks the take off that it's set properly. We watch the speeds of the skiers so they don't out jump the hill. It's all for safety. Back in the '70s we didn't have those regulations. One skier got killed in Vermont because the hill was too soft. He stuck his head in and broke his neck. One was killed at Iron Mountain, in fact 2 were. The hill was not the way it should be. A skier in the early '90s came off the first part of the pike at Iron Mountain and he was so high and he couldn't land right. He came down past the landing and it was solid ice. He landed right on his face and his brain went. I tell the skiers that, I tell my juniors that, if you

don't like the way the hill is, make them fix it. I did that all my life. I was never the first skier up there. I watch somebody else do it. We'd say there was a problem, they'd fix it, then we'd all ski. We had Reese ??? was on the US Ski Team in Marquette and he was injured because his coach didn't know how good he was. That's the reason he's not skiing right now. Eric had never had a jumper with capabilities to reach that. They sent them to hills and had them jump at the same speed the other American skiers were skiing and he totally out jumped the hill and landed on the flat. He got injured. ??? was the king of ski jumping. All the world cup jumpers were skiing and flying in between the wind screens. Reese went up and bumped the wind screen because he was so high. Then when he came down between the wind screen he lost all the air pressure and rolled. He'll never ski again. You have to be careful. You have to watch. I tell the kids the same thing. You judge for yourself. Don't listen to the coach, don't listen to anybody else. You judge for yourself. You know what you're capable of doing. You watch the skiers. If you think they're going too far, go slower. If you don't think the hill is safe don't go. I have a sports magazine at home I did an article on ski jumping back in the '80s. I told them there are no old cautious ski jumpers. There's old aggressive ski jumpers. Old cautious ski jumpers don't make it to old age because they quit while they're young because the injuries hurt too much. It's a safe sport. It's a going sport. Last year the top jumper in the world won \$330,000 cash. How much he made in sponsorships I don't know. The year before, a lot of people don't know, the top jumper in the world made \$27 million. A lot was prize money but a lot was advertising. Bart Schmidt. He had a candy bar company in Germany. Back in the '50s and '60s we never wore helmets. The skiers just put a cap on. There was no rule that you had to have the jumpsuits that you see on tv now. You just jumped in regular ski pants and a sweater. That's why you needed all the extra speed there. You didn't pick up much from the scaffolding. They come out with the rule of the helmet, it's not a protective device, but a device for airflow so the air will flow over you. It's required now. It does give you some protection, but not much. It's a safe sport. The club here, the history goes back so far. So many tournaments. You heard from all the older people how they ran their meets. You try to do your job. Hometown pride. When I was little I became a ski jumper because Ishpeming was ski jumping. I didn't want to be a baseball player. There was nobody famous playing baseball. We had world champion skiers. They skied all over the world. They brought home more medals and more trophies than any other ski club in the United States, in it's history. We've put more people on Olympic teams and World Championship teams than any other ski club in the nation. That's the history of the club. I'm 57. I'm getting old. But it's hometown pride. I look back at what we had and what we have now and we need to keep it alive. If we can build the system we want here with mechanical lifts and stuff the kids would like, we'd increase skiers by a long shot. A lot of that bunch could be world champion. It's only a matter of hope. Right now in the US there's two training centers, one in the East and one in the West. The third one will be here at our facility. I can tell you lots of funny stories. Ski trips where we'd break down or something would happen. One time we were taking a trip to Wisconsin Rapids for a tournament. We got as far as ??? Wisconsin and ??? car broke down. So I called home. I called a friend of mine. Take my car and come down to pick us up. Then we'll take my car. So he did. My mother was playing cribbage that night and when she came home my car was gone. So she called the State Police and reported it stolen. It was a good thing Danny made it to

Wisconsin or he'd have been in jail. Little things like that. One night I had the junior kids at a tournament in Minneapolis. At 12:00 midnight on Friday night these two juniors come knocking at my door, let's go to Minneapolis. So we did. We drove all night and got to Minneapolis at 6:00 in the morning. We slept for a couple hours then went to the hill to train. Other trips, we drove through all kinds of weather, blinding snow storms. Went to Minneapolis my first year home from the Service in 1967. It took us 14 hours because we couldn't see. We almost ran into a grater in Iron Wood. If I hadn't seen the top of it we would have hit it. We went slow all the way through. When you compete you do that. Steamboat Springs, we'd drive all the way out there non-stop. East coast same thing. Stop for gas. We'd change drivers. One time I went to ??? for the National Championships. I had to get back to work right after Nationals. I started driving back and got as far as Buffalo, New York. I wanted to go to sleep and then drive some more. I slept 5 hours and when I woke up we were still in Buffalo, New York. They got lost and wouldn't wake me up. They thought I'd get mad. Stuff like that. We had a lot of fun. Most clubs had a banquet. We have good banquets. Young guys that are in good shape, working hard when the ski hill opens, you burn a lot of calories. You would not believe the amount of food they can eat. I've seen skiers in Minneapolis eat a platter of ham and a platter of beef the same size with baked potatoes eat it all by himself. He weighed 165 pounds. I was the same way. I was a big eater. When you're walking in the wintertime you burn so many calories. I ??? in 1968. I was 217 pounds. Probably as much as I weigh now. Three weeks into the ski season I was back to 185 pounds. That was from walking up the hill. That's the kind of calories you can burn. Cross country skiers think they can lose weight fast, we can beat them. It also gives you extremely strong legs. I watched Coy pack Suicide landing 4 times in one day. That's 350 feet of landing. Coy smoked. He just quit a couple years ago. I still smoke. I stopped when I ??? for all the years I walked up the hill, you wouldn't be able to do what you're doing now. So exercise, if you want to do it right. You have to walk up to the top. We were all in good shape. They've skied all their life. Many of these people still get around better than people younger than them. It's from walking up the hill. There's no other way to get exercise as tough as walking up that steep hill. We've had in 1948 Ishpeming had Pete ???, Walt Bietala, and Ralph Bietala all on the Olympic Team. In 1952 it was Joe Pearl, Ralph Bietala, Wilbur Raspensen. In 1957 it was Rudy Maki. The 1960 Olympic Team was Jack Bietala, Rudy Maki, Wilbur Raspensen, and John St. Andrew. That's the history of our club. In 1940 there was no Olympics because of the war. If there had been an Olympics it would have been Paul Bietala, Ralph Bietala, and Roy Bietala. In '36 Walt Bietala was on the Olympic Team. Henry Hall was a professional ski jumper. He couldn't ski in the Olympic games. He was the best flyer, the best ski jumper in the world at the time. He would have been on the '24 or '28 Olympics. The history of the ski place. The last time we put a skier on the Olympic Team was 1980. That was Jim ???. He was going to Northern. Jim came to me and asked the Ishpeming Ski Club to sponsor him. He didn't have any money and Northern wouldn't give him anything to go. So I told the ski club Jim will make the team. He had to go to the try outs and we decided to back him. He tried out the skis, boots, jump suits and went out and made the team. I know of no other ski club in the country that would do what we did for the skiers. We smile because we love skiing. You come to the tournament and it's not that expensive. It's all volunteer. It takes over a 100 people to

put on a ski tournament. I went to a council meeting once and told them, the ski club was Ishpeming. There would be no Ishpeming without Suicide Hill. We furnish the money. That's what's going to keep us warm, we can have it over the years. Joe Perault came back in 1962 and they gave Joe a brand new Pontac. Joe was probably one of the best jumpers. We were skiing in the '60s and '70s and you never realize how people still watch the sport. I didn't until I won the tournament that year. Every place I went to that day people talked to me. These people do pay attention. They know what's going on. That's what I always tell the kids too. If you want to win any tournament, it won't mean nothing unless you win here. You'll be surprised at the people that know. And they'll let you know. I was really surprised. People were watching and paying attention. Channel 10 has a poll the night before. I didn't see it. If I knew about it I would have called in about moving Suicide. 95% were in favor of moving it. I found out the next day that people still feel that way. It's been 115 years and this will be the last year jumping at that location. (talking too fast) They got stories, those guys, some of the stuff they would pull. Ride rails...the railroad cars used to have a cradle underneath them and they'd throw their skis on them and lay down on the skis. They did that from Green Bay to Ishpeming in the middle of winter. They have all kinds of funny stories of traveling. We had a few, most of the time we had good luck. We were very lucky in all the years of traveling we never had a serious accident. Thousands of miles a year. There were 16 tournaments in the Central, Minneapolis, Chicago, Westby. Driving 800 miles a weekend, 2 or 3 cars. We sent cars to Steamboat Springs, Leavenwood, Washington, Lake Placid, New York, New Hampshire, Vermont, never had a serious accident in all those years of traveling. Most of our drivers were speed demons. You had to drive fast especially on Sunday night because you had to get back to work on Monday. We never had a serious accident. I don't know if it was due to the drivers or just luck. Little things like that. We started cross country skiing in Ishpeming, the jumpers did. Built a cross country course in 1970 or '71. We ran it up til this past year. Ishpeming Ski Club had full control over it until SunTrack took over in the mid '90s. That was all done by jumpers. It didn't survive. The cross country skiers didn't want to work. They wanted the jumpers to work for them. We told them no. This was a competitive course you take care of it. You get all the money for it. Why should we do all the work on it and give you the money. The jumpers are workers and we had to work on our own hill. Why should we work on theirs. If you want to ski, fix it yourself. Ishpeming cross country died at that time. I wish somebody up here would have kept it going. Now the city made a new one out here. I don't know what their course is like, but they have a really fancy parking lot. We've never taken money from the city. We've done it all on our own. 1971, after a tournament we tore down the old Suicide scaffold and put the present one that's out there now, by ourselves. We got volunteers, welders, carpenters, everything for free. The lowest bid to put that scaffold up was over a quarter million dollars. We built that whole hill for \$54,000 all donated labor. In fact I was there at 1:00 in the morning loading steel off trucks to be ready to go the next day. I used to drive by coming back from Marquette, I would drive by Suicide hill and see a lantern on top of Suicide Hill at 2:00 in the morning. It was Coy at the top of that scaffold. Sub zero temperatures working to get that hill finished. We finished it one week before the tournament. In fact the weekend before the tournament we took our first rides on it. It wasn't completed yet because it had no side boards or hand railings. That's the kind of dedication the old

skiers had. I said at the City Council Meeting last night the skiers from 1980, one day before our tournament there was not one drop of snow on Suicide Hill anywhere. We put an ad in the paper, on the radio, everywhere. After the ski meeting Monday night, Tuesday morning we had 150 volunteers from the City of Ishpeming and we re-snowed that whole hill by Thursday it was ready to ride. It was all people from town, volunteers. That's the kind of support base you got. You often wonder if it's still there or not. 1987 the same thing happened. The same thing happened, we called the volunteers and they came. That's how this club keeps going. It surprises me, how many years that I've been in it. Now to continue from here, we got a Kellogg Grant this past year and we bought jumping equipment for juniors. The kids join the junior club now and we furnish the equipment. Jumping skis, jumping boots, jumping suits, are all getting expensive. So we furnish, skis, boots, suits, and helmets, everything for a kid to ski with. For a parent to buy 5 or \$600 of equipment and take the kid out to ski and takes 5 rides and says I don't like this. That would be ridiculous. Once you get them started, we want to keep them flying and keep the sport going. I'm getting old. Somebody has to replace me.

INT: And the tournaments must benefit the community as well.

DF: Yes it does. We spend on the average of \$45,000 a year. We pay for skiers motels and airfare. \$15-\$20,000 in local costs. That's not counting the people that come in. What has happened, because American skiers have to qualify to be in the Continental Cup, all the skiers throughout the United States that are capable or want to, come here to ski. Otherwise they wouldn't come. They pay their own expenses. Plus the crowd that comes to the hill gets people out of their houses. We figure we have probably a few hundred thousand dollars we move that weekend. With the businesses and gas stations, restaurants, stores. The skiers come here and do a lot of shopping. We take them by bus and take them to Wal-Mart in Marquette and they shop there. It has an impact on the city. Where we're located right now the crowd is down, the biggest reason is because there's no parking left out here. It's all culverts. It used to be covered all the way across. We could park a thousand cars there. Now we can't. We couldn't get half that because of the culverts and the swamp. We can't fill it because of the DEQ. We have to get out of there because each year the parking lot gets smaller and smaller because we get more and more water. Also what I tell people is if you want a big crowd we don't need foreign skiers. If you put 15 local skiers in the tournament, you'll double the crowd. The parents, aunts and uncles, sisters and brothers, friends are all going to be there. This happened with Reese. Reese brought probably 50 people with him. His mother and brother and all his friends from Marquette High School that came over to watch him jump. Do that and you'll get crowds. Back in the '50s Ishpeming would get 7,000 people at a ski tournament. The reason they did is because all the skiers were from Ishpeming. You had 25 jumpers from Ishpeming on the hill. Everybody came to watch the tournament. Plus they were the top jumpers in the world. I would go to tournaments as a kid and Joe, Wilbur, Roy, Rudy, Mike...we had 20 good jumpers at that time. We came out to watch them because they would win. There were tournaments back in the '50s, they had different classes, junior, B class, A class, Veteran's or Master's Class. Sometimes we would have first and second place in all 4 classes. We were like that when we traveled too. The first time I went, the very first tournament I ever skied was at the

National Championships in Chicago in 1962. I took 6th place. I stayed home for 2 weekends because I didn't get 1st. My buddy was 5th and he stayed home with me. He didn't ski good enough. Had to stay home and train. The system we had was a lot easier. We used to have junior national teams, now it's the junior Olympics. You had to qualify for those. Qualify in the regional championships. From there you go to the central championships. If you qualify at central, you skied at nationals. They only took so many jumpers. Now just about anybody that skis central can get on the JO team because the qualification is so low. You worked through the system. You go in as a junior. If you won the junior national championships, you could go right from juniors to A class. In the early '50s you had to go to B class first. If you went to B class then you had to qualify to ski A class. I was in A class until I was 38 years old. I went from junior, then I went into the Service. When I got back from the Service I had to ski in the B class. You couldn't ride a hill bigger than 150 feet. I had to ski B but I was allowed to ski Suicide Tournament because it was my own hill. After one jump I walked away and they said, you better be in A class next year. I qualified for A. One year I had the Master National Championship here. I really skied good. I was in Veteran Class because I was 35. The morning of the tournament I broke my leg and tore my knee up. I was having the longest jumps on the hill by far. I was skiing in top A class. I went down town to the drug store, got an Ace bandage and wrapped it around my knee and skied B and took 3rd place in Nationals. Monday I went to Dr. Lexman, they e-rayed my knee and thought the cartilage was torn. I went back to work and a week later I was back in the doctor's office because my leg looked like this. I told the doctor this was the tournament we've been waiting for all year long. We worked all year. We don't quit until we can't possibly ski. If my leg was broken I probably wouldn't have skied. Because of the scar tissue about 3 years ago they told me I probably did tear the cartilage. I didn't want him to cut it. Minor injury. In the last 6 years or so I think I've only seen 2 skiers fall in a tournament. Last year Iron Mountain had a bad wind up there. There was too much height at the pike. Last year I think they had 4 skiers with broken arms or collar bones, one broke his leg. That's very unusual in this day and age. In most tournaments if they see anybody fall they review the way the hills are fixed. B style is a lot steadier equipment. The speed is a lot lower. It's really getting safe. (talking too fast) Roy Bietala, you could talk to him he'd be funny. He skied in the tournaments in Iron Mountain in 1947. He said when you went up for your second jump you knew you going to fall. On your way up you knew you were going to fall because the landing hill was nothing but holes. It's where everybody fell in the first round. When you come off you wonder whose hole you're going into this time. Everybody in the second round fell. I might have second thoughts about that. That was a different day and age. Different jumping skis, bindings. The bindings didn't change much at all. The new binding they have now looks almost like a cross country binding. The only thing that's locked in is your toe. On the back they have a heel block with a strap that attaches to your boot. They have to have them for the B. The straps on the back so your skis can only come up so high and then they'll stop. If you didn't have them your skis would bypass you. At Iron Mountain last year, one of the German skiers (talking too fast) it was beautiful. Then all of a sudden he turned over this way. Couldn't figure out what happened. I seen the ski go like this. The strap on the back busted. One ski got so much more air and it went like this. Some guys still jump with the old binding or cable. Now they have straps they tighten to the ski too. Jump

suits, helmets, the skis are wider, that's basically the change. When I first started jumping... probably 3 ¾ inches wide. New jumping skis are 4 ½ inches wide at the tips and tail and about ½ inch narrower in the middle. They catch a lot more air. Ski jumpers today compared to when I jumped...I skied...my jumping weight was 175 or 185 pounds. I would never jump at that weight today. They don't want anybody over 130 pounds skiing. The German team won't even put you on a team unless you're under 130. The jumpers from the '60s quit because we were strong. We wouldn't have a prayer in modern jumping. It's become a small man's sport. I skied with stocky big guys. They're lighter and quick as a cat. That's what it takes at the World Cup level. If you're skiing for the US, a kid who jumps, not the strongest but technically the most perfect, will win. He'll beat the stronger one every time. In the World Cup you not only have to be technically perfect, but you have to be strong to take out the competition at that level. They're super athletes for what they do. Ski jumping...at 55-59 mph you have to be able to hit a take off and jump a distance. If you go before your skis will stick like this and you'll tip over. If you jump late you won't have any height. That's the difficult area. The timing. The take off in that short distance. In ski flying they go 63 mph. The reporters are hard too. They have to ask you a question. I've done a lot of interviews with reporters.