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## **SIGURD HALL - SKI RACER & MOUNTAINEER Northwest Four-Way Ski Champion A Life Tragically Ended too Soon in the Silver Skis Race on Mt. Rainier in 1940**

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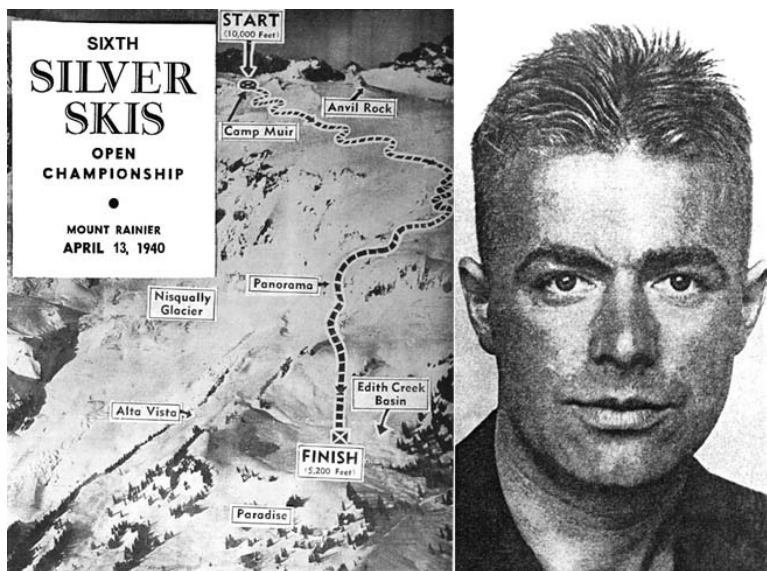
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## SIGURD HALL - SKI RACER & MOUNTAINEER

### Northwest Four-Way Ski Champion

A Life Tragically Ended too Soon in the Silver Skis Race on Mt. Rainier in 1940

1910 - 1940



Picture from Alpenglow.org

*By John W. Lundin ,*

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John is a lawyer and long time skier who has done extensive research and writing about early skiing in Washington in his work to help to start the Washington State Ski & Snowboard Museum that opened in October 2015 on Snoqualmie Pass. A number of his essays can be found on HistoryLink.org, the on-line encyclopedia of Washington history. John learned to ski on Snoqualmie Pass, was a member of Sahalie Ski Club, and has homes in Seattle and Sun Valley, Idaho.

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Sigurd Hall was one of the Northwest's best ski racers and mountaineers when he met his untimely death in the Silver Skis Race on Mount Rainier on April 13, 1940. Born in Norway in 1910 as Sigurd Hoel, Sigurd immigrated to the United States in 1929, to earn money to support his family, intending to stay for five years. However, stayed in this country, became a U.S. citizen in 1935, and made his skiing and mountaineering reputation in Washington State. He never went back to Norway, although he hoped to participate in the 1940 Olympics when they were scheduled to take place in Europe, so he could visit his family again. The 1940 Olympic Games were cancelled because of World War II.

Sigurd Hall was first mentioned as a ski racer in the Seattle Times in 1937. Hall was a member of the Mountaineers, and initially competed in cross-country. Later, Hall became the one of the best Four-Way skiers in the United States, competing for the Seattle Ski Club.

The high point of Hall's ski racing career came shortly before his death, when he finished third in the National Four-Way Championships held in the Northwest in March 1940, where the best skiers in the country compete in downhill, slalom, cross-country and ski jumping events. Hall finished behind Alf Engen and his brother Sverre Engen, internationally famous ski racers and jumpers, also originally from Norway. Sigurd learned to ski in Norway, but unlike many of his countrymen, he apparently did not learn to ski jump expertly. Hall had participated in previous ski jumping contests, but his jumping experience was limited, which hurt him in National Four-Way Championships. Hall won the downhill, finished third in the slalom, fifth in the cross-country, but finished fourteenth in the jumping, which dropped him to third in the combined title. Both Alf Engen and Torger Tokle, who fought against each other for the jumping championship, had won

National Jumping Championships, showing how difficult the competition was. This was still a significant result for Sigurd, competing against the country's best skiers.

Hall was also an accomplished mountaineer, and he did ski ascents of a number of Cascade peaks, including Mt. Rainier, Baker, St. Helens, Glacier Peak, and numerous others, and the first ski ascent of Mount Rainier. "As the top practitioner in both ski racing and ski mountaineering (simultaneously), Sigurd Hall occupied a place in Northwest skiing history that may never be filled again," according to Lowell Skoog.<sup>1</sup>

The information in this paper came from historical Archives of the Seattle Times collected by John W. Lundin, and Lowell Skoog's Alpenglow Ski Mountaineering History Project, [alpenglow.org](http://alpenglow.org).<sup>2</sup> Both Lundin and Skoog assisted in the formation of the Washington State Ski & Snowboard Museum that opened on Snoqualmie Pass in October 2015. See, [www.wsssm.org](http://www.wsssm.org). Materials in this paper relating to Sigurd's family came from Judith Earle of Seattle, Marit Hoel, and Kristen Rekdal and Odd Halls of Norway, cousins of Sigurd Hall.

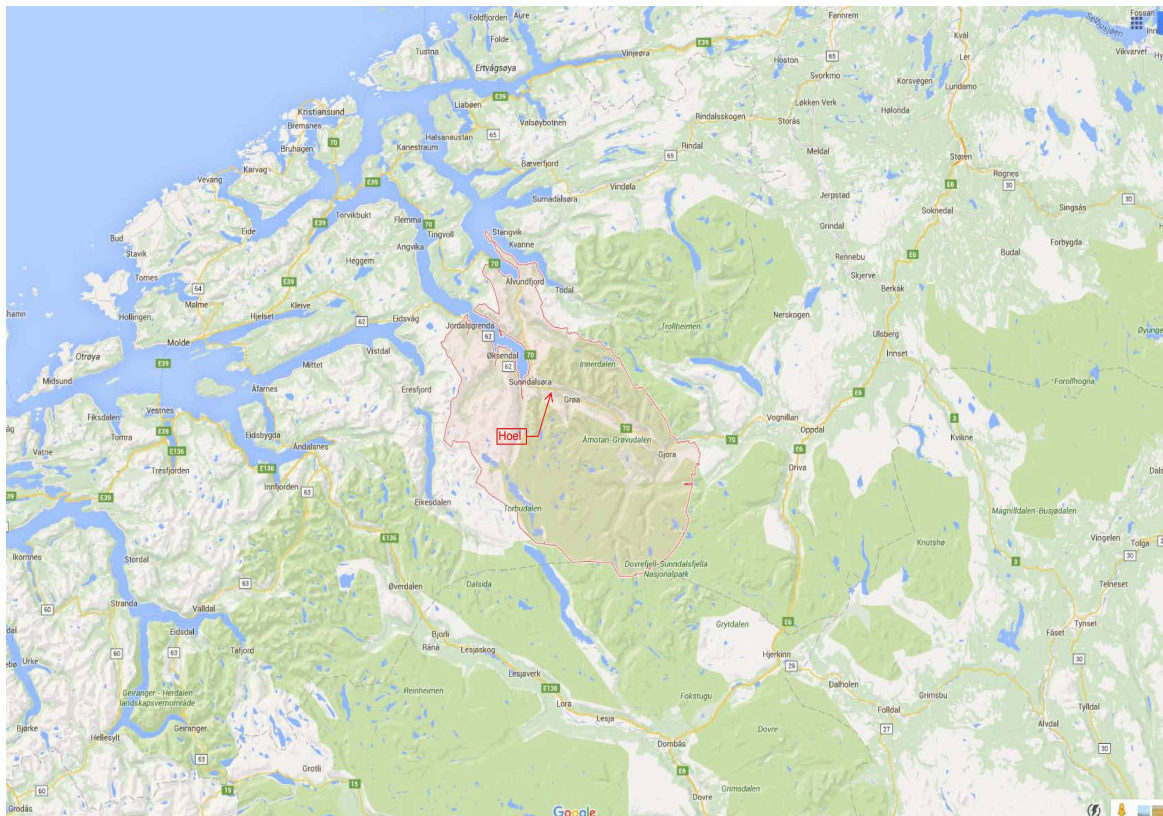
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<sup>1</sup> Skoog, Lowell, *The Legend of Sigurd Hall*, <http://alpenglow.org/climbing/sigurd-hall-2006/index.html>.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.alpenglow.org/climbing/sigurd-hall-2006/index.html>; <http://alpenglow.org/written-in-the-snows/ski-climbers5.html>

## II. SIGURD HALL'S NORWEGIAN BACKGROUND

Sigurd Hall was born Sigurd Hoel in Sunndal, Norway on January 29, 1910, to Gunnar Sivertsen Hoel and Mari Endresdatter Hoel, nee Sande. The family lived on the Hoel family farm in the Sunndal Valley on the Driva river, at the head of a long fjord leading in from the sea, surrounded by mountain peaks. The Hoel farm was one of the largest in the valley, extending from the Driva River up to a glacier in the mountains, and had been in the family “since the beginning of written records, at least 500 years,” according to Judy Earle (nee Furro), a cousin of Sigurd’s who lives in the Seattle area.<sup>3</sup> The location of the farm and Sigurd’s early family life can be seen in the following pictures provided by Kristen Rekdal, whose mother Elthie was one of Sigurd’s sisters.



<sup>3</sup> <http://alpenglow.org/ski-history/notes/comm/earle-judy.html>.



Sundalsøra is town at the lower end of the Sunndal valley, where the valley meets the fjord. Sundalsøra is also the 'capital' or administrative center of the Sunndal kommune (township), which has a current population of about 7200. <http://www.sunndal.kommune.no/>

The picture below shows Sigurd next to the sled holding two ski poles, his brother Endre (on the sled being held by his sister Astrid), and sisters Elthie, Magnhild Laura, and Magda on the Hoel family farm. The youngest sister Helga is not in the picture. The second picture shows the main building on the Hoel farm with Sigurd holding the reins of the horse Gammelsvarten (the Old Black). The third and fourth pictures show the farm as it looked in the early 1990s.



Hoel farm, Norway, 1922. Sigurd Hoel, age 12, is holding the reins of the horse Gammelsvarten (the Old Black) on the left. Photo from Kristen Rekdal.



Hoel farm, 1918. Sigurd Hoel (holding two ski poles) with his younger brother and sisters, Hoel farm, Norway. Photo from Kristen Rekdal.





Hoel farm, Norway, 1970. Photo from Kristen Rekdal.



Hoel farm, Norway, 2002. Photo from Kristen Rekdal.

Sigurd was an outstanding athlete in skiing and soccer, and was a free spirit and adventurer at a time when Norwegian society was conservative and married women still covered their hair.

He swam the Driva River in spring high water (both over and back) to the worry of his family. He and his young friends in the Sunndal Valley built a house for parties and gatherings, but one Constitution Day (May 17) the local fundamentalists tried to stop them from dancing. Sig said, "It's a damned thing when we can't dance in our own house!"<sup>4</sup>

Sigurd's family still remembers him for his athletic prowess as a child. Odd Hals, a nephew living in Norway, whose mother Helga was one of Sigurd's sisters, described his memories of the long lost uncle who is still an important figure in the family. Some of Sigurd's trophies are still displayed at the Hoel farmhouse.

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<sup>4</sup> Skoog, *Written in the Snows, The Ski Climbers*, Part 5, <http://alpenglow.org/written-in-the-snows/ski-climbers5.html>.

Sig was the eldest brother and a very brilliant sportsman in skiing and soccer...Sig was also an adventurer. He took some risks, my mother told me. For example, he swam the river Driva in spring high water, over and back. Under those conditions, the river is not small. When my mother told me about him when I was a boy it was with pride, but also with a warning to me that I should be careful. It was a little confusing to me, I remember. I heard when I was a boy that I was much like Sig from my mother and others who knew him.

Judy Earle relayed memories of Sigurd from Helga, his youngest sister, and other family members.

Helga and the rest of the family remember him as a great athlete. There was a division between the 'town boys' in Sunndalsøra and the boys from Hoel, but Sig was so good at sports, and spent so much time with the Sunndalsøra boys he played an important role helping them see that Hoel guys were OK, too.

He played on the Sunndalsøra soccer team. He would work all day on the farm, then run the 4 K to town (even though he probably had a bike), participate in practice or a game, then run back. If it was warm enough, he would then jump in the Driva River for a swim. The Driva is a dangerous river during flood stage, but they remember that Sig swam across it, and back again. All ashore were worried.

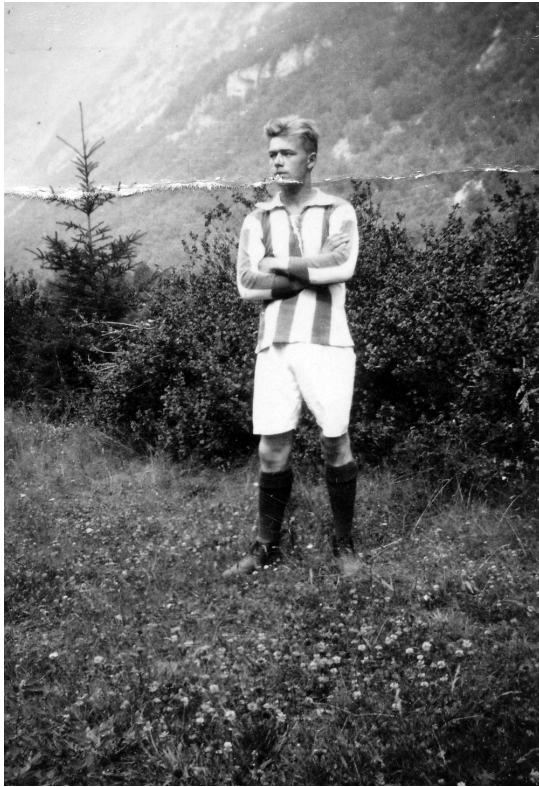
The kids at Hoel had to go to elementary school at Løykja, about 4 km up the valley from Hoel. The means of transportation was walking, and in winter time when conditions allowed, skiing. One day in winter when they were half way to school, Sigurd discovered that he had forgotten a schoolbook. So he raced back home as fast as he could to fetch it. And before the others arrived at school, Sigurd had returned and overtaken them.<sup>5</sup>

Sigurd's skiing abilities were apparent even at a young age in Norway.

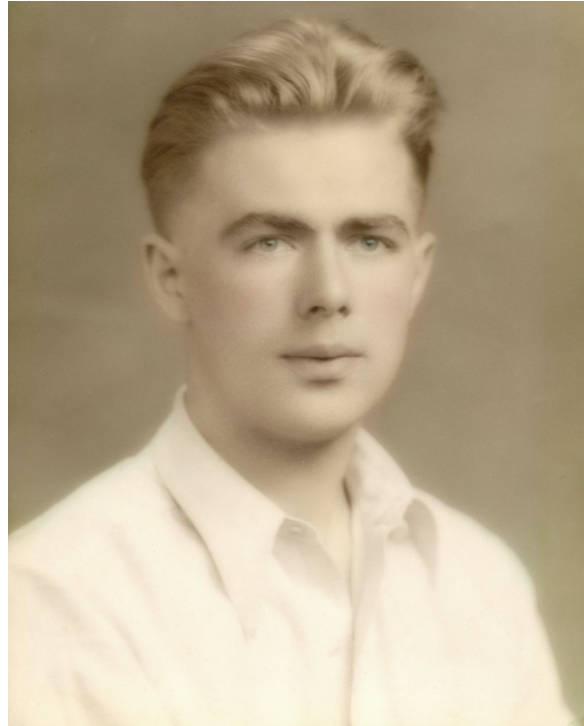
Times were hard, and he was a farm boy without a lot of equipment. He was known to show up at ski competitions with poles made out of Hoel's curtain rods. Also, once there was a competition he had signed to enter, but a few days prior to it, he broke a ski. There was no money to buy skis, certainly, and no time to make another. There was a pall over the whole farm, knowing he wouldn't be able to participate. Then, he came in with a piece of metal, and repaired his ski himself! On the day of the race, the Sunndalsøra boys teased him a lot about the junk he was skiing with... BUT he won, and then there was a big article in the paper about him. He was 12 years old. He entered many ski competitions locally, and often won them, becoming the subject of several articles in the local newspaper...

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<sup>5</sup> <http://alpenglow.org/ski-history/notes/comm/earle-judy.html>.



Sigurd Hoel, 1929, in uniform of the Sundalsøra soccer team.



Sigurd Hoel, 1929, shortly before he immigrated to the United States. Photo from Kristen Rekdal.



Sigurd Hall and family at Hoel farm, 1929. Sigurd's mother insisted that a family picture be taken before he immigrated to the United States. Photo from Kristen Rekdal.

### **III. 1929 - HALL IMMIGRATES TO THE UNITED STATES & WRITES HOME ABOUT HIS EXPERIENCES**

Sigurd Hoel immigrated to the United States in 1929, at age 19, leaving his parents, five sisters and a younger brother in Norway. Sigurd's youngest sister, Helga, remembers the whole family walking with him to the bus stop, and "all taking his hand in sadness." He was the oldest son so he was in line to inherit the family farm, which was one of the large ones in Sunndal. However, times were difficult for farmers in Norway in the 1920s.

Sigurd intended to stay in the United States for five years to earn money to help his family financially, and he sent money home from the U.S. on occasion. However, Sigurd arrived during difficult economic times, just at the start of the Great Depression, and he struggled to find employment that would allow him to support himself. He moved from the West Coast to the Midwest before he finally settled down in Seattle in 1934. These struggles to find permanent work are why his sports career did not blossom until later in the 1930s. Because of the hard times, he couldn't afford to return home. He stayed in the U.S. until his death in 1940, and never saw his family again.

Marit Hoel and her brother Kristen Rekdal located almost 100 letters and post cards that Sigurd wrote to his mother in Norway which describe his time in the United States, although some letters are missing and others are incomplete, and provided the following translations. Sigurd did not write a lot about what happened in the U.S. His letters were mainly devoted to his family back home, Hoel and Sunndal. As a result, "we have only occasional glimpses of his life in America."

#### **Sigurd Immigrates to the United States 1929 - Stays in the Northwest With Relatives**

Sigurd traveled from Sunndal to Kristiansund by boat on July 24, 1929, and to Bergen on

July 25 on the vessel Haakon VII, where he found a traveling companion who was also planning to travel to Vancouver, B.C. On July 27, 1929, Sigurd left Bergen on the liner Stavangerfjord of the Norwegian American Line. He arrived in Halifax, Canada on August 3, 1929, and took the train across Canada to Vancouver, B.C.

On August 9, 1927, Sigurd entered the United States at Blaine, Washington using his birth name, Sigurd Hoel, listing his destination as Eatonville, Washington near Tacoma, where he had relatives. Sigurd traveled to Tacoma, Washington where he stayed overnight. On August 10, he met Erick Haakon Furro (who changed his name from Erik Haakonsen Furu after he immigrated from Norway in 1886), his wife Marion Johnson Furro, and Erick's mother Dordi Furro, who took him to the Furro farm in Eatonville. Erick Haakonsen Furro's father and Sigurd Hall's grandfather Sivert were first cousins, the Furro and Hoel farms were neighboring farms in Sunndal, and the families remained close. Furro's granddaughter is Judy Earle, who provided information about Sigurd for this paper. Sigurd stayed at the Furro farm for several weeks, helping to harvest hay and with other chores.

Sometime after his arrival in the U.S., Sigurd Hoel changed his name to Sigurd Hall, perhaps because some of his relatives who lived in Wisconsin had changed their name from Hoel to Hall when they immigrated in the late 1890s.

Sigurd wrote his first letter home to his family on August 18, 1929, from the Furro farm in Eatonville, nine days after his arrival in the U.S., describing the simple life of farming that was not much different from Norway.

Sigurd and Erick had been haymaking, but it was not like they did it in Sunndal. They mow the hay, let it lie on the ground for 2-3 days since there was no danger of rain, then collect it with a

hayrake, pile it up in large stacks, and take it to the barn the next day. Erick had a large wagon twice as big as their four-wheel wagon in Norway, which needed two horses to pull it. They didn't work as hard in the U.S. as they did in Norway. They get up at 6:00, and Erick and his wife milk the cows while he did other things. They eat lunch at 8:00, then cut firewood, and go out into the field. He mentioned going with Erick on a drive to Tacoma (20-30 miles) on roads that were paved all the way. It was extremely dry in Eatonville, forest fires were burning, and they saw smoke from them every day. He missed the light evenings in Norway - here darkness fell around 7:00 p.m. Sigurd asked whether the weather was good for haymaking in Sunndal, and whether they had sold the rights to salmon fishing in the Driva river, saying they must exempt the right to build a salmon trap. He asked for his family to write him a letter.



Furro farm, Eatonville, Washington, with Mount Rainier in the background, ca 1930. Picture courtesy of Judy Earle.

Sigurd looked for work in Washington for several months after his arrival, but had a hard time finding any employment except for temporary jobs in farming and logging. The forests had been largely logged around Eatonville and Tacoma, and there was little or no industry. On August 25, 1929, Sigurd went to Sequim, Washington, where he worked on the farm of Marit and Knut Reinonn, relatives from Sunndal, assisting in haymaking. On September 9, Sigurd went to Hoquiam, Washington looking for work in the logging industry, but did not get a job, so he worked as a farmhand. On October 8, he found work as a logger in Quinault, Washington, where others from Sunndal were working. In a letter home, he marveled at the food at logging Camp 7, telling his family that it was like having a party every day where you could get anything you want to eat. There was always fresh meat, vegetables, fruit, doughnuts and cakes, although the cookies were not as good as those back home. The loggers ate so much that they get fat.

Sigurd's aunt, Olina Anderson, wrote him from Beloit, Wisconsin, urging him to move there to work in the motor factory. He was attracted by the opportunity to work in the area of mechanical engineering, and the pay was better. He wanted to go so he could go to evening school to learn English, and he found logging tedious, but Sigurd stayed at Camp 7 until Christmas of 1929. Working as a logger, he earned \$250, and saved \$200 after the cost of room and board were deducted. He left the logging camp on Christmas day 1929, and went to Seattle with his cousin Arne Furro.

### **Sigurd Moves to the Mid-West in January 1930**

Sigurd moved to Beloit, Wisconsin in January 1930, where he initially stayed with his aunt. However, he found it is difficult to get hired at the motor factory. After the stock market crash of October 1929, the recession had started and companies were firing rather than hiring. The factory

had not hired anyone during the new year, and Sigurd felt depressed by the inactivity. Sigurd worked at occasional odd jobs, encouraged by rumors that the factory would be hiring by March of 1930. He finally got a job on May 10, 1930, at the Fairbanks Morse & Company, where he worked 10 hours a day, and a half day on Saturday. He earned \$1 more a day than he did in Washington, saved his money, and sent \$50 to his family back home. On June 22, 1930, he told his family he would send them \$40 to \$50. He strongly suggested that they rent a car and take the family to Trondheim for a vacation at the end of July, when they could enjoy a concert by the St. Olav Choir that was visiting Norway to commemorate 900 years since the death of King St. Olav on July 29, 1030. In 1930, Sigurd Hall was listed in the Beloit, Wisconsin city directory as living at 937 Hackett.

On July 13, 1930, Sigurd told his family he worked overtime almost every day, he had become a member of the Sons of Norway, and bought a \$500 life and illness insurance policy. He assured his parents that he never spent his money uselessly, and saved as much as possible in the bank. By October 16, 1930, he enrolled in evening school to learn English, with classes twice a week, which he enjoyed. On December 16, 1930, he wrote his parents that Christmas was approaching but he felt no joyful expectation like at home. Christmas is just one day, a date on the calendar, and people in the U.S. were so busy they had no time for living. There were Christmas trees set up outside with electric lights on them, but they were not as beautiful as the ones at home.

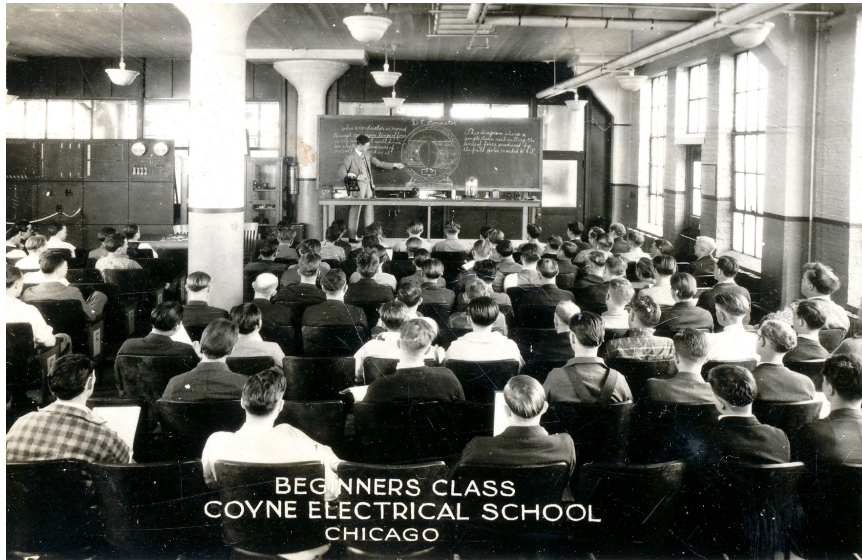
By March 1931, Sigurd seemed depressed by the lack of steady employment and his lack of job prospects. On March 31, 1931, Sigurd told his parents he was sorry that he had not written them for a long time but he had lost his job [probably around New Year]. Times were hard and beggars were a common sight in the streets “in the richest country on earth.” He had been luckier than most since he got a trainee job at a small factory making automatic water pumps, although the pay was



low, just enough to cover his room and board. The situation was terrible and humiliating. He immigrated with so many golden dreams, which had disappeared one by one, and only harsh reality remained. His family had faith in him when he left, and he felt the faith was justified, “but now...Is there a just God?” What wrong had he done when he cannot be allowed to work? He was determined to push forward and had not lost his spirit though he had lost his belief. He realized that America required a different approach. At home, modesty is considered a virtue, but not so here. Here you have to grit your teeth and use your elbows. He begged his family to have faith in him because he believed everything would soon improve. Even though he did not have a job during the winter, he used his time in the best possible way. During the day, he learned mechanical engineering in his trainee job, at night he studied English, and he had not wasted a single cent. He had not been to a single dance for almost two years, and had not been to the cinema for over one year. Optimistically, he said his employer talked about the possibility of Sigurd going to Norway to sell pumps. “Don’t let the hopelessness win but push forward!”

On May 10, 1931, Sigurd told his family that he worked as a farmhand on the farm of his uncle Stor-Ola (the older Ole Hall) in northern Wisconsin. He enjoyed the stay but the pay was low and he wanted to leave at the first opportunity.

In October 1931, Sigurd moved to Chicago where he enrolled at the Coyne Electrical School on November 12, and he sent pictures of the school to his family. He wrote on February 21, 1932, saying that he had three weeks to go for his course at Coyne Electrical, and was optimistic that he would get a job within one month.



By March 20, 1932, Sigurd had not yet obtained a job but expected to stay in Chicago until the middle of April, when he would start looking for a job. He saved some money so his family did not have to worry. He had done some sightseeing, and visited the Zoological Garden, the Field Museum, the Aquarium and the Planetarium. There were only two Planetariums in the world and

he marveled at the lifelike display there.

On May 21, 1932, Sigurd was still in Chicago because he wanted to participate in the 17<sup>th</sup> of May celebration. He had not spoken a word of Norwegian for over 7 months, so the temptation to stay won out. He had a job working 2 hours every morning, so he could afford the stay. There was a custom in Chicago that all Norwegian children had the day off from school on the 17<sup>th</sup>, and they say that on this day even Afro-Americans and Native-Americans become Norwegians. He joined the big parade going to Humboldt Park, where there was a statue of Leif Erickson and about 18,000 people gathered. The Norwegian Consul in Chicago gave the main address of the day in pure Norwegian. Sigurd planned to leave Chicago the following Monday and go to St. Louis. He applied for a job in South America where many U.S. companies had electric power plants and factories, and the wages were very high because it was difficult to get people to go there. On June 8, 1932, he apparently didn't get the job as he continued westward and was in Salt Lake City.

### **Sigurd Moves Back in Seattle in July 1932**

On July 28, 1932, Sigurd was back in Seattle. [Note - There is pause in the letter chain either because he didn't write or the letters are lost. The letters pick up one year later.]

On July 2, 1933, Sigurd said everything was OK. He has got a job (probably farm work) and would start working in the middle of July. Times were much better, logging jobs were plentiful but pay was low, and wheat prices had doubled the last two months. By July 23, he was working on a farm outside Seattle.

On October 16, 1933, Sigurd told his family that he tried ice skating at an indoor skating rink, fun but too many people and soft ice. Not like home. On December 24, 1933, Sigurd wrote that he was staying with the Knudsen family who are very kind. It is another Christmas Eve, but better this

year than last. They had a Christmas tree with the gifts placed under it like at home. He got a scarf, two ties, two pairs of socks, and two handkerchiefs. They had coffee with home baked Norwegian style cookies. “But there is no holiness/sacred air of Christmas here, in contrast to home.”

After being in this country for several years, Sigurd sent his family a special star for their Christmas tree which is still in use, brightly shining at the top of the tree, along with a telegram containing a poem that showed his regret about not being able to visit his family.

Treet står pyntet med stas og med stjerne.  
Snart kan jeg se det om enn fra det fjerne.  
Kunne jeg komme  
Kom jeg så gjerne.

The tree is decorated with finery and stars.  
I can almost see it, although from afar.  
If only I could come;  
I so long to come.<sup>6</sup>



Christmas tree star sent home by Sigurd Hall held by his niece Marit Hoel.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.alpenglow.org/ski-history/notes/comm/earle-judy.html>.

On March 22, 1934, Sigurd said he had a job, worked every day, and “time flies.” On April 4, it was Sunday but he had been working all day until 7 pm. The coming week he would have to work 1½ hours overtime every day, but he was happy to do so. [Note - this likely indicates that he got his long-term job at Cascade Machinery and Electricity Company in Seattle, although Sigurd never said so until one year later.] On June 28, 1934, Sigurd wrote that "Helga asks what I am doing, I thought I have told many times that I am an electrician." [Note- he never previously told his family this in any of the letters found.] [Hall was known to have worked as an electrician at Cascade Machinery and Electricity Company founded by Ira Springs' father in law. Springs is a well-known Seattle outdoors man who wrote a series of books about hiking in the local mountains.]

On August 1, 1934, Sigurd said there had been a two months long strike among workers and sailors at the Seattle harbor. While he did not participate in the strike, he had been laid off for a week because nothing could be shipped out. The strike was over and he would start working again in a couple of days. He participated in a “march competition,” 52 miles, with about 600 starters, but only eight finished. Sigurd finished no. 4, taking 9 hours and 53 minutes. The three ahead of him were professionals, so he did not feel bad about being no. 4, but he will be around next year ... [Note - This event raises several puzzles. He calls this a "march competition", but doing 84 km in 10 hours means running most of the time, not walking. Furthermore, this distance is almost exactly a double Marathon, which is no child's play. Just finishing is a major achievement. In his letters this is the first time he mentions physical exercise at all. But one cannot (almost) win a double Marathon without being in good shape, and logging and haymaking, however hard, are not sufficient training for such a race. This shows he is a strong man to begin with, but he must also have been doing hard and regular physical exercise since his arrival in the U.S., indicating why he could do so well later

in his mountaineering and ski racing exploits.]

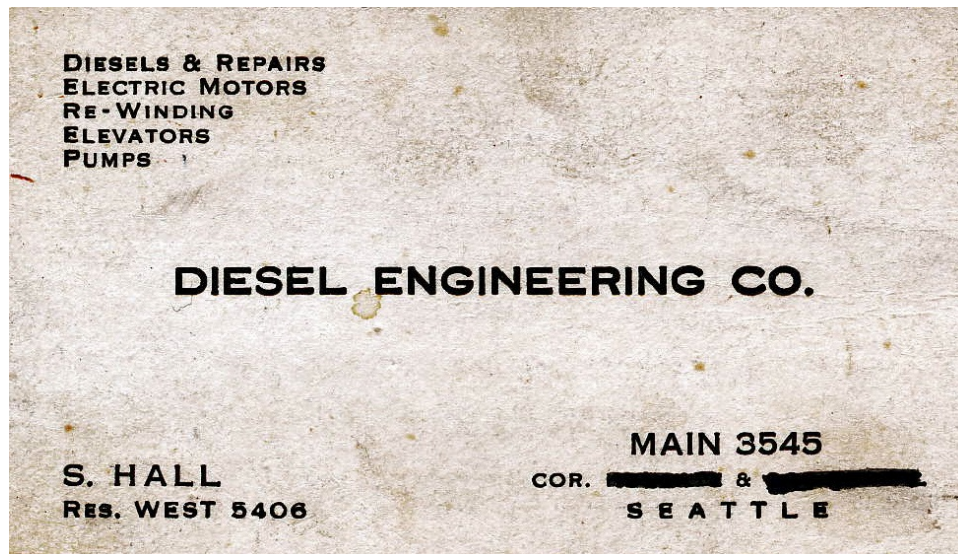
On April 12, 1935, Sigurd wrote that everything was OK, he was working full time and more. The spring was fine but not like the spring in Sunndal. He bought a camera and took some pictures to send home.

Sigurd became a U.S. citizen on May 8, 1935 in Seattle. His Declaration of Intent to become a U.S. citizen said his name was Sigurd Hoel, known as Sigurd Hall, he was an “electricians helper,” and was 5 foot 9 ½ inches tall and weighed 148 pounds. In the 1940 census, Hall’s occupation was listed as an electrician.

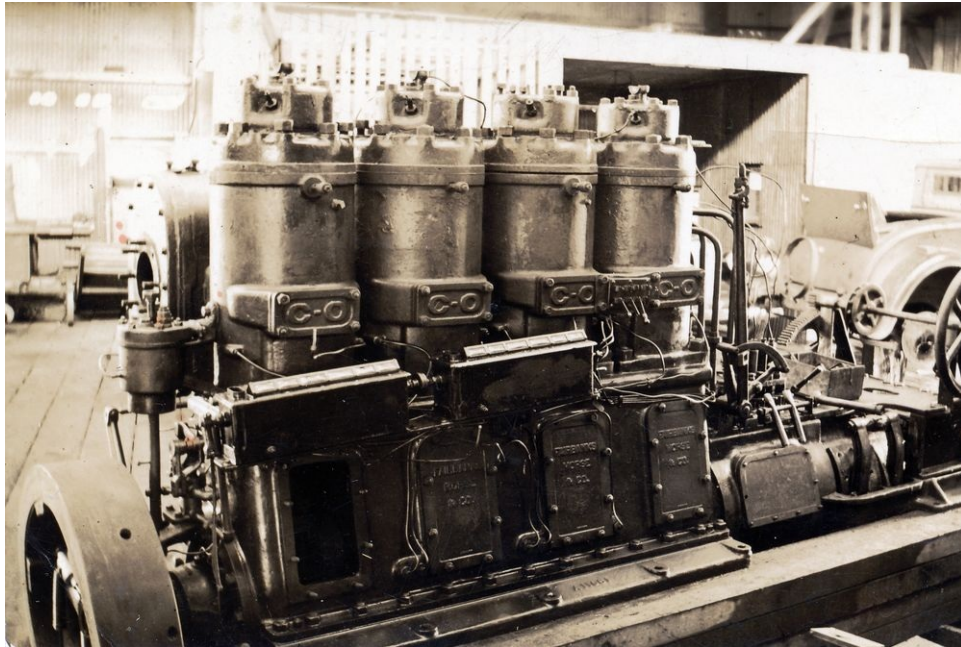
Life improved for Sigurd after he finally obtained regular employment. On May 19, 1935, Sigurd wrote that he attended the 17<sup>th</sup> of May celebration in Seattle where 5,000 people gathered and the famous Norwegian poet Herman Wildenvey gave an address and had composed a poem for the day. Sigurd joined the Trigamma lodge, a society for young people with interests in sports and all kinds of “decent enjoyment” including study circles. Sigurd signed up for the marching competition to be held on the 26<sup>th</sup> of July. Yesterday he walked 25 km (16 miles). He would send NOK 100 as birthday gift to his mother and father [which would be equivalent to about ½ of the average monthly wage in Norway].

### **Sigurd Starts His Own Company**

On July 7, 1935, Sigurd announced to his family that he and his colleague and roommate Harry Smith started their own company, called Diesel Engineering Co. Harry was the diesel expert and Sigurd the electric expert. Their business card says “Diesels & Repairs, Electric Motors, Re-winding, Elevators and Pumps.”



They both had worked for Cascade Machinery and Electric Company, but left a month before. They rented a building in Seattle where they established their workshop and had their machinery and equipment. They had plenty to do and the future looked bright, "even though Rome obviously was not built in one day." He will take some pictures with his Kodak camera to send home so they will know better what he is doing. The photo below from the Hoel family collection shows a Fairbanks Morse diesel engine, and a note on back says "this is down at the shop." It is impossible to know whether this refers to the Cascade Machinery and Electricity Company or his own company.



Fairbanks Morse diesel engine “down at the shop,” according to Sigurd.  
Photo from Hoel family collection.

In the same letter, Sigurd said it was 5 am Sunday morning and he planned to go for a long walk, because there was only three weeks to go until the marching competition for which he has signed up again this year.

On November 3, 1935, Sigurd wrote that he had been so busy the last three weeks that he seldom got home until 11.30 pm. To make matters worse, Smith went to Idaho on an engine installation two weeks ago. Sigurd attended evening school four times a week and he joined a Danish soccer team. On December 24, 1935, Christmas Eve, he worked until 3 pm, then went Christmas shopping, decorated a Christmas tree, and hung his stockings for Santa Claus. He got himself a typewriter and typed his Christmas letter.

### **Sigurd Gets Involved in Skiing & Mountaineering**

On January 12, 1936, Sigurd wrote that it was Sunday and he had intended to go skiing, but



when he woke up at 5 am, the weather was so bad he decided to stay in bed. He said that people are crazy about skiing. The biggest stores in downtown Seattle sold Norwegian skis, ski shoes, ski wax, Selbu mittens, ski bindings, etc., and the ski language is full of Norwegian terms like the Telemark turn, the Kristiania turn (the Kristy), etc.

On June 21, 1936, Sigurd wrote that he relaxed at the beach all day and has become “tanned like a Mexican.” Times were a little better. Wages were higher and it was not so difficult to get a job if you knew a skill or craft. During the spring, he had 3 or 4 different assignments, and he was very satisfied with his customer, “the company I am working for.” He is mostly his own boss and liked it. He bought a car, a 1931 Ford Coupe, since he needed it for his work even though it cost a lot of money. [Note - Owning a private car was unusual in Norway in 1936, something that ordinary people could not afford. It would have been seen as a high status thing to do, and Sigurd’s news would have been big news for the folks back home.]



1931 Ford Coupe, similar to the one purchased by Sigurd Hall.

In December 1936, Sigurd sent a Christmas greeting card where he first indicated that he became involved in mountaineering activities. He was going to the mountains for the holidays. On Christmas Eve he will take his sleeping bag, rucksack, and skis in his car and go away. He belonged to a club called MOUNTAINEERS, and they had three large lodges up in the mountains where the snow depth can be up to 3 - 4 meters. Everybody is crazy about skiing now.

In March 1937, Sigurd said he had been skiing in the mountains, and one Sunday he froze three of his right hand fingers so he could hardly write. On March 22, Sigurd said he was very busy down at the workshop. His fingers have recovered and "the hand is good as new". He mentioned the Mountaineers Patrol Race on March 7: "Was in a patrol race last Sunday, two others and I from the same club took THE NORTHWEST CHAMPIONSHIP IN CROSS COUNTRY of which we of course are very proud." [Note - this race is discussed later in the paper]. He sent home NOK 1400 on May 15th. [Note - This was a substantial amount of money, then around \$350, equivalent to ½ of an average annual income in Norway, and shows that Sigurd's business was prospering.]

May 22, 1937, Sigurd received a letter from his sister, Astrid, saying that their father was ill. It is Saturday evening and Monday was also a holiday, so he and friends planned to go skiing on Sunday and Monday.

July 30, 1937, Friday evening, Sigurd planned to go to the mountains for the weekend.

February 28, 1938, Sigurd's father, Gunnar Hoel, died. March 14, 1938, Sigurd wrote that he was shocked and in deep sorrow after learning of his father's death. He urged the family to stay united and push forward to rebuild the farm, their home.

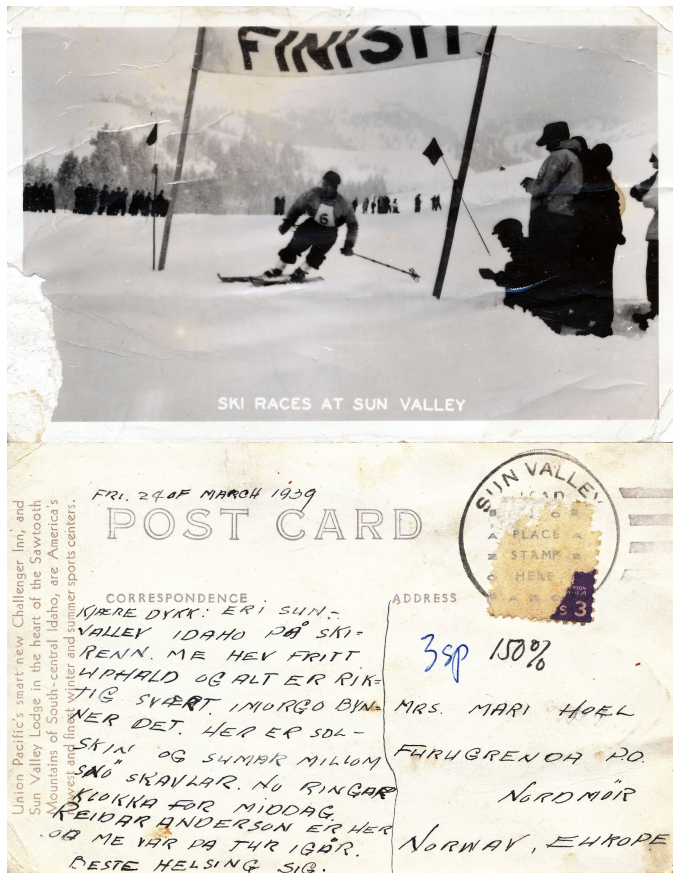
November 15, 1938, Sigurd will give a talk at the ski club on skiing equipment.

### **Sigurd Enters Ski Tournaments - 1939**

[Note - The year 1939, was when Sigurd began to make his mark in Alpine skiing events and competed in several national tournaments where he skied against some of the country's best skiers. It is interesting to see that he gave his family very little information about the races and how he did in them. The races are discussed in more detail later in this paper].

On January 19, 1939, Sigurd was in the mountains skiing. There was going to be a race on Sunday, January 22<sup>nd</sup>. [Note - This was the Yakima Ski Club Downhill Tournament where he finished 17th].

On March 24, 1939, Sigurd wrote a post card to his mother saying he was in Sun Valley, Idaho for a race, was in good shape, and Reidar Andersen was also there. "Races start tomorrow."



Postcard from Sigurd Hall to his mother saying he arrived and is in good shape, Sun Valley, Idaho, March 24, 1939.

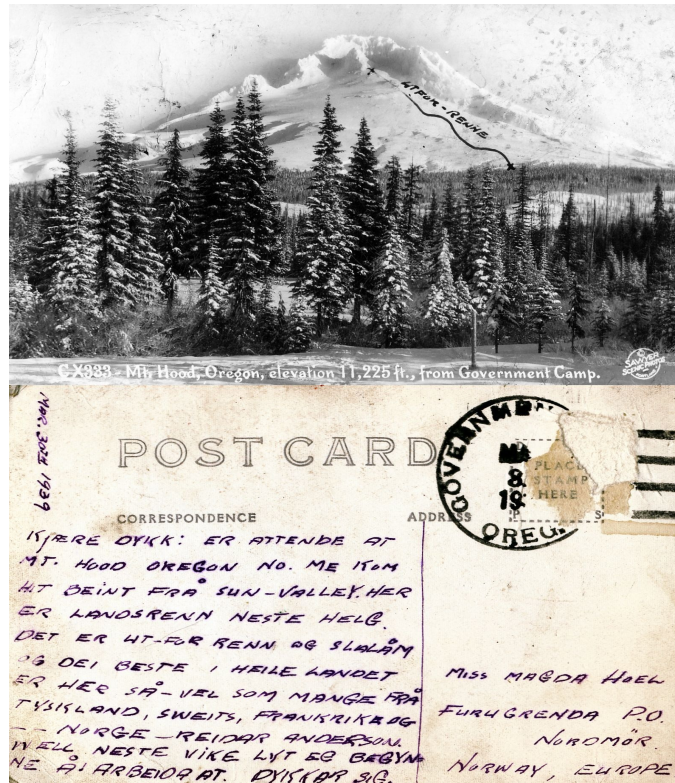
[Note - This was the National Four-Way Championship Tournament, one of the biggest events of the year, where the best skiers in the country competed in cross-country, downhill, slalom and jumping. Sigurd was one of 10 skiers selected by the Pacific Northwest Ski Association to compete. He finished 10<sup>th</sup>, the highest of the Northwest competitors. Reidar Andersen was a famous ski jumper from Norway who toured the United States in 1939, to promote skiing. Anderson won silver medals in the FIS Nordic Championships in 1930, 1935 and 1937; an Olympic Gold medal in ski jumping at Garmisch-Partenkirchen in 1936; and won the King's Cup competition at Holmenkollen in 1936, 1937, and 1938, the only person ever to win the event three years in a row. Anderson competed in many different tournaments in this country, including a number in the Northwest in which Sigurd participated. One cannot tell whether Reidar was a previous acquaintance of Sigurd's mention of him in his letters home, or whether Reidar was so famous in Norway that Sigurd thought his mother would be impressed that they competed at the same events.]<sup>7</sup>

March 30, 1939, Sigurd was at Mt. Hood, Oregon, where had come directly from Sun Valley. There was a nationwide competition in downhill and slalom the coming weekend. The best skiers from all over the country would be there, many from Germany, Switzerland, France, and Norway, as was Reidar Andersen. Next week he would have to start working again. [Note - This was the National Downhill and Slalom Championships, and most of the country's top competitors came to Mt. Hood from the Sun Valley tournament. Sigurd was one of 18 racers from the Northwest selected to compete at this tournament, and he finished 14<sup>th</sup>, the highest of any of them. Toni Matt of St. Anton, Austria won the national open downhill and slalom title, and Reidar Andersen of Norway

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<sup>7</sup> Reidar Anderson, SR/Olympic Sports,  
<https://www.sports-reference.com/olympics/athletes/an/reidar-andersen-1.html>.

missed control gates and was disqualified.]



Postcard from Sigurd Hall to his mother from Mt. Hood, March 30, 1939. He marked the downhill course where he will race the coming weekend. Reidar Andersen was also at the tournament.

June 6, 1939, Sigurd said it was a very busy spring that year. Ski races every weekend, and Reidar Andersen was visiting. Some new immigrants from Sunndal were visiting, which made him homesick. He longed for someone of his own blood that he could rely on. Therefore he could not remain in the U.S. for the rest of his life even if he now was a US citizen. He had done well in the ski races that winter and won a 1st prize. [Note - he won the slalom race in a two club tournament, as discussed later.] Sigurd told his mother that on May 17<sup>th</sup>, Norwegian Crown Prince Olav and Crown Princess Märtha had visited Seattle and went skiing on Mt. Rainier. This visit was a big

event for the Northwest's Norwegian community.<sup>8</sup>

### **Norway's Prince Olav & Princess Martha Visit Seattle and Ski on Mt. Rainier**

The Seattle Times had extensive coverage of the royal couple's visit to Mt. Rainier. They were accompanied by a group of their Norwegian-American hosts, officials, and local skiers. The party included Gretchen Kunigk, a local ski star from Tacoma who later won gold and silver medals in skiing at the 1948 Olympic Games in Switzerland, and Orville Borgersen, a Seattle skier and ski photographer.

The Prince and Princess "lost little time in trying the skiing facilities at Mt. Rainier." Immediately after a formal lunch at Paradise Lodge, they "donned skis" and started the hike up toward Alta Vista. The prince wore "an old, gray pair of knickers, a cap that had seen better days, and a slightly battered jacket." He was given "a pair of shiny, new, steel-edged skis," that were waxed for him by Orville Borgersen. The Times said there was a "certain horrible fascination about the idea of a Crown Prince landing on his neck in a snowbank at any speed over fifteen miles an hour," and there was collective concern when the prince put on his skis "to take his chances with gravity." For the Prince, who had skied since he was two years old, the trip "was a brisk workout and a chance for much needed exercise. He set a fast pace for his objective, demonstrating conclusively to all that he is as much a master of this sport as of sailing. The princess, no less adept, took a more leisurely pace to the scenic point on the mountain side."

The prince started off with the mile-eating Norwegian langlauf stride. The princess and the group accompanying her did not climb so fast, and pretty soon the prince and his group were a quarter mile ahead. Nobody talked at first. But the prince stopped on the first rise, peeled off his jacket, and mopped his brow, and said it felt pretty good to get some exercise again.

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<sup>8</sup> Lundin, John, *Norway's Crown Prince Olav Skis at Mount Rainier on May 24, 1939*, HistoryLink Essay 10974.

In five minutes he and everybody with him were huffing and puffing and talking like youngsters playing hooky from school.

Three National Park rangers trailed the prince up the mountain, “finding they had a demanding pacemaker.” When the party reached the summit at Alta Vista, the prince smoked a cigarette, answered questions, talked about everything from “ski wax to San Francisco bridges, and demonstrated his well known sense of humor. When he was asked if a war would begin in Europe, he replied “They needn’t start it for me.” The Seattle Times said, *Olav’s Democracy Wins Him American Title: Swell Guy*.

When the party returned to the lodge, the prince and princess “were enthused over the mountain, the surrounding scenery and the skiing. Prince Olav said it was all much different from Norway, but just as good.” A banquet was given at the lodge, where they were served crab cocktail, steak, asparagus, potatoes, hot rolls and fresh strawberry pie, with each guest getting one glass of beer. The couple left the next day for Seattle with the ninety pieces of luggage they brought with them. Princess Martha said she bought two additional trunks in Tacoma, made necessary by her shopping tour there. After a festival at the Seattle Civic Auditorium, the couple left for Vancouver, B.C. The Great Northern Railroad offered a special fare of \$3 for the “Royal Visit Trip,” for those wanting to accompany them to our neighbor to the north.

King Olav visited Seattle three more times. In 1942 trip, he described Norway’s position as an occupied country. In 1969, he visited the Norse Home, attended a ceremony at the Leif Erickson statue, and said it was fine that the community was able to keep the Norwegian traditions “as a living thing....and blend them as part of the American way of life.” In 1975, he visited Poulsbo, known as

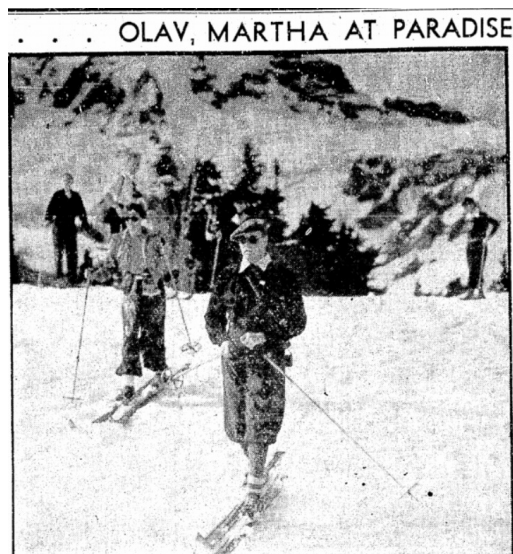
“Little Norway,” to celebrate the sesquicentennial of Norwegian immigration to America.<sup>9</sup>



Prince Olav & Princess Martha, courtesy of the Nordic Heritage Museum.



Prince Olav & Princess Martha at Paradise Lodge, May 1939. Tacoma Library, Photo D8365-4.



Royal Couple skiing. Seattle Times, May 25, 1939, page 9.

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<sup>9</sup> Lundin, John, *Norway's Crown Prince Olav Skis at Mount Rainier on May 24, 1939*, HistoryLink Essay 10974.





Sunshine softened the snow at Mount Rainier yesterday afternoon, but Norway's Crown Prince Olav and Crown Princess Martha had a happy, carefree time anyway, skiing above Paradise Valley, and taking in the mountain air and scenery. Upper left—Mrs. Ragni Ostgaard lady-in-waiting to the crown princess; C. Stang-Anderson, Norwegian vice consul in Seattle, and the royal couple. Right—The crown prince and crown princess start downhill ahead of others in their skiing party. Lower—Orville Borgersen of Seattle, skier and amateur photographer, waxes Prince Olav's skis before a run. In the background is Miss Gretchen Kunigh, noted Northwest skier.—Upper pictures by Orville Borgersen; lower picture by Times Staff Photographer.

Seattle Times May 25, 1939.

ROYAL SKIS CUT RAINIER SNOW



Lady-in-waiting Ostgaard, Norwegian Vice Counsel Anderson & the Royal Couple.

### 1940 - Sigurd's Best and Last Year

March 23, 1940, Sigurd was in Salt Lake City, Utah. There had been a national race at Mt. Baker combining cross country, jumping, slalom and downhill. Alf and Sverre Engen were no. 1 and 2 respectively. Sigurd was no. 3 overall, but won the downhill. The ski club gave him a free tour, first to Sun Valley, Idaho, and then to Salt Lake City where there were races on Saturday and Sunday. On the way home, he planned to stop for races at Mt. Hood, Oregon on the 7th and 8th April. Then home to Seattle where work was waiting.

[Note - The Mt. Baker event was the National Four-Way Championship Tournament, the biggest ski event of the year. The tournament was held between March 13 - 17, 1940, where the best

skiers in the country competed in downhill, slalom, cross-country and ski jumping at four different Northwest ski areas, including Mt. Baker. Sigurd won the downhill race and finished third in the combined competition, a remarkable finish against many of the best skiers in the world. As the Pacific Northwest Ski Association's number one skier, he was sent to Sun Valley to compete in the National Downhill and Slalom championships, where "he did not fare well." Sigurd then went to a tournament at Alta, Utah, then traveled to the Far-West Kandahar Tournament at Mt. Hood, before skiing in the Silver Skis race on Mt. Rainier where he met his tragic end. This was Sigurd's best ever ski racing year, yet he never told his mother how well he was doing,].

[Note - This was the final letter from Sigurd. We may conclude that he finally achieved success both in business and sport, and was at the top of his career when tragedy struck...]

Sigurd never returned to Norway to visit his family.

#### **IV. SIGURD HALL PARTICIPATES IN MOUNTAINEERS & CROSS-COUNTRY PATROL RACES, 1937 - 1939**

##### **Sigurd Joins The Mountaineers in late 1936**

After establishing his own business where he could support himself, Sigurd was finally able to pursue his love of mountaineering in the Northwest. He joined The Mountaineers by at least late 1936, an organization dedicated to outdoor activities, where he found others who shared his love of the mountains. Sigurd met Dwight Watson through The Mountaineers, who became his climbing partner on many ascents and good friend. “Watson’s knowledge of the local mountains and Hall’s passion for skiing led to an unusual yet complementary partnership for exploring the Cascade backcountry on skis,” according to Lowell Skoog.<sup>10</sup>

Sigurd was an enthusiastic member of The Mountaineers, participated in many of the club’s mountaineering activities and competed in its ski events. Sigurd made his first marks as a cross-country and back-country skier and mountaineer. He also was a member of the Seattle Ski Club, was one of the country’s best four-way skiers, and became one of the Northwest’s prominent ski racers and mountaineers at a time when Alpine skiing was just starting to become popular. Hall skied to or from virtually all of the volcanic peaks in the Cascade mountains, and completed the first successful ski-climb of Mt. Rainier, exploits described by Lowell Skoog.

##### **The Mountaineers Were Pioneers in Mountain Activities in the Northwest**

The Mountaineers, founded in 1906, began skiing at Paradise on Mount Rainier in the winter

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<sup>10</sup> According to its website, “The Mountaineers is an outdoor education nonprofit teaching you skills to explore our backyard playground. Formed in 1906, we've been getting people of all ages outside safely and responsibly for over 100 years. We are passionate about building a community of people who are knowledgeable and care about the outdoors. We work to preserve the wild backcountry for many generations to come. Our mission is to enrich the community by helping people explore, conserve, learn about and enjoy the lands and waters of the Pacific Northwest and beyond.”

of 1913-1914, and continued during its annual Winter Outings which were held in Rainier National Park for many years.

The Mountaineers built a lodge near Snoqualmie Pass in 1914, and a built a second one, Meany Ski Hut at Martin, near Stampede Pass, in 1928.

The Club maintains two ski lodges in the Cascades. Snoqualmie Lodge located near Snoqualmie Pass, is a year around lodge devoted to climbing in summer and skiing in winter. It was built in 1914, accommodates 70 people, and has a cook and caretaker always on duty. The Club was the first local organization to build a ski hut especially for skiers. In 1928 Meany Ski Hut was constructed at Martin. It is used solely for skiing, accommodating 52 people. The Hut is less than five minutes from the railroad station at Martin and about three miles by road from the Sunset Highway just below Lake Keechelus.

Meany Ski Hut was located five minutes from Northern Pacific Railroad's Martin stop near the eastern portal of its tunnel under Stampede Pass, and the railroad provided primary access to the facility. "Train schedules were convenient, allowing a full day of skiing plus time for dinner and cleanup. A special car was provided for parties of 15 or more and permitted all kinds of impromptu entertainment. Fares were high at first, around \$3.80 a round trip, but were negotiated downward from time to time to a low of \$1.80." It was also possible to ski into and out of Martin from the highway over Snoqualmie Pass, after it was kept open in the winter of 1931. Skiing the three miles from the Ski Hut to the Cascade Slide on the Sunset Highway just below Lake Kecheelus (11 miles east of the Summit), took about an hour, and was downhill or level all the way.<sup>11</sup>

According to its 1936 application to join the Pacific Northwestern Ski Association, The Mountaineers marked many miles of ski trails. The 20 mile trail between its Snoqualmie Lodge and Meany Ski Hut was marked with painted metal markers. A new trail to Silver Peak Basin was made

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<sup>11</sup> Lundin, John, *Mountaineers Patrol Races at Snoqualmie Pass: A Grand Tradition Revisited*, HistoryLink.org Essay 10755, and *Skiing at Martin, the Northern Pacific Stop at Stampede Pass*, HistoryLink.org Essay 10615.

and marked the prior year, and in 1936, the club was installing painted wooden signs (similar to AAA signs) for all trails and junctions near its Snoqualmie Lodge.



Our new ski cabin at Martin  
Volunteers began hauling  
supplies from the railroad  
tracks in early September, 1928.  
On November 11, 1928, the building  
was dedicated.

Mountaineers Meany lodge at Martin near Stampede Pass. Photo from the Steere family.



O. P. Dickert photo

Mountaineers' Snoqualmie Lodge, ca 1930s. Mountaineers' photo by O.P. Dickert on the Mountaineers website.

In 1929, The Mountaineers began hosting annual downhill and slalom races for club members, the first on Snoqualmie Pass, and began giving ski instruction and tests based on British Ski Tests at both its Snoqualmie Lodge and Meany Ski Hut. On March 10, 1929, the club held its first ski tournament at Meany Ski Hut, with Hans-Otto Giese and Ellen Willis winning the cross-country races. In the spring of 1930, the Mountaineers added club slalom and downhill races at Meany Ski Hut, starting a tradition of Alpine racing in the Northwest.



Mountaineers 1930 cross-country race. Photo by Bob Sperlin.

### **Mountaineers 20 Mile Long Patrol Races Are the Toughest in the Country**

Mountaineers Patrol Races had been an iconic club event since 1930, although the race was not run for several years in the early 1930s.<sup>12</sup>

Racers began at the at the club's lodge on Snoqualmie Pass, skied on a marked back-country trail along the rugged Cascade crest, and ended at Meany Lodge at Martin near Stampede Pass. The course was described both as an 18 mile and 20 mile course over the years. In 1935, the Seattle Times said the race was

an eighteen-mile grind along the crest of the Cascades between Snoqualmie Lodge and Meany Ski Hut at Stampede Pass...Patrols of three men, carrying ten-pound packs and specified equipment, compete in this unique event, which is patterned after European military patrol races. Proceeded by a trail-breaking crew which will have several hours start, the patrols will leave the lodge at 3,100 feet elevation to follow the permanently marked but newly broken trail over rugged country that will take them as high as 4,500 feet near

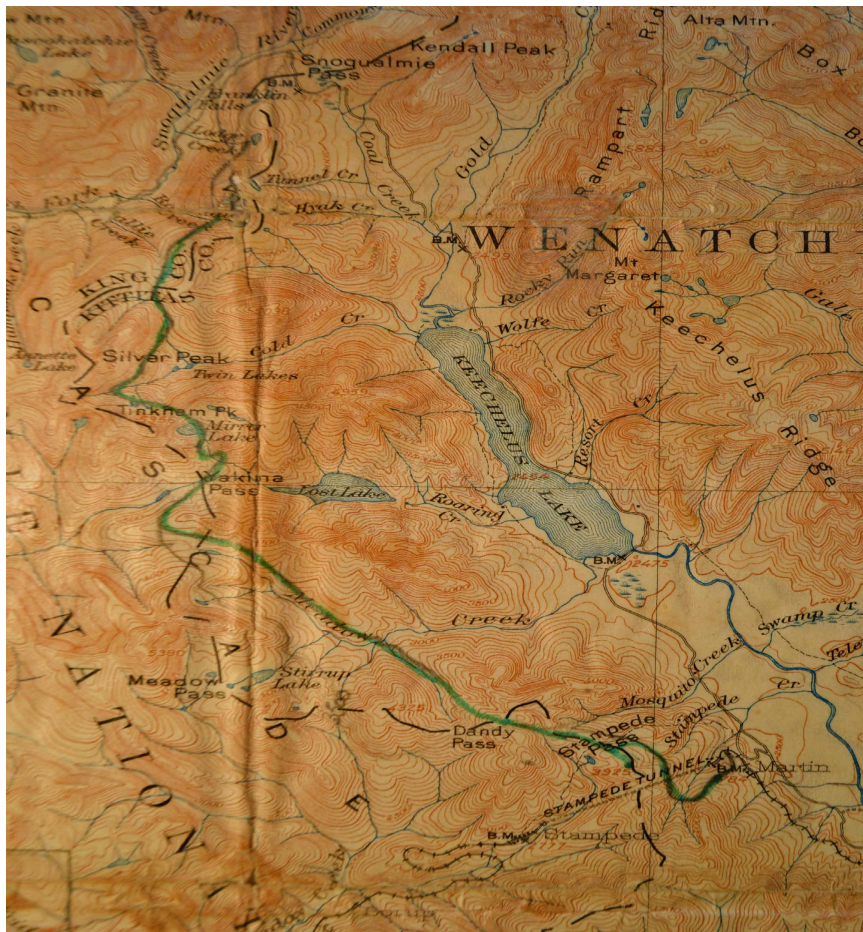
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<sup>12</sup> Lundin, John, *Mountaineers Patrol Races at Snoqualmie Pass: A Grand Tradition Revisited*, HistoryLink.org Essay 10755, and *Skiing at Martin, the Northern Pacific Stop at Stampede Pass*, HistoryLink.org Essay 10615.

Tinkham Peak and as low as 2,900 feet near Meadow Creek Crossing.<sup>13</sup>

The route was described in The Mountaineers' application to join the Pacific Northwest Ski Association in 1936, although it said the race went from Meany Ski Hut at Martin to Snoqualmie Pass, while in fact it was run from Snoqualmie Pass to Meany Ski Hut.

The course shall be along the high line route from the Mountaineers' Meany Ski Hut at Martin to Snoqualmie Pass Summit, via Stampede Pass, Baldy Pass, Dandy Creek, Meadow Creek, Yakima Pass, Mirror Lake, Mirror Lake Trail, Silver Peak Trail, the Mountaineers Snoqualmie Lodge and Beaver Lake Trail. The course is approximately 20 miles in length and ranges in elevation from 2,700 feet to nearly 5,000 feet.



Map of 1930 Patrol Race. Courtesy of the Steere family.

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<sup>13</sup> *Patrol Race Sunday*, Seattle Times, February 15, 1935 (page 14); *Patrol Race Successful*, Seattle Times, February 18, 1935 (page 15) .

The race was based on military patrol races which were common in Europe, but this was the only one in the Northwest and probably the only one in this country. Originally participation was restricted to members of The Mountaineers, but in 1936, the Patrol Races were opened to other ski clubs who were members of the Pacific Northwest Ski Association.

Each contestant had to carry a pack weighing not less than 12 pounds, to include emergency rations, compulsory and optional equipment. Emergency rations consisted of a package of raisins and a can of canned beef. Compulsory equipment consisted of a light axe, two compasses, one watch, three new plumber's candles, 50 feet of 1/4 " manila rope, a first aid kit, a map of the district, an electric flashlight, a waterproof container containing strike-anywhere matches, and snow glasses. Clothing was prescribed by the Club, which had to consist of shoes, sox, underwear, pants or knickers, shirt or jersey, jacket or parka, headgear and mitts. In addition, each contestant had to carry an extra sweater or jacket, mitts and wool sox. Any type of pack could be used, but packs would be inspected and weighted before and after finish of the race. Any kind of skis could be used but racing skis were not recommended.

Artificial aids to climbing other than wax are prohibited...The entire course must be covered on skis. A competitor can exchange broken sticks or bindings but cannot change more than one broken ski. Waxing skis or repairing skis or bindings during the race must be done without the aid of anyone other than members of contestant's patrol.

Starting order would be determined by lot, and starts would be at intervals determined by the Race Committee. The three skiers in each patrol had to start together, and the starting time was when the signal was given. Each patrol would be furnished with a map of the course, and would be checked at posts along the course, located at Blady Pass, Mirror Lake, and Snoqualmie Lodge. All three patrol members must be checked in at the posts within an interval of one minute of each other,



and all three members of a patrol had to finish within an interval of one minute, or the patrol would be disqualified. The patrol's finishing time would be the time when its last member finished.

A Ski Patrol Trophy would be won by the team with the shortest elapsed time. Names of the winning patrol would be engraved on the trophy, which would be held by the club sponsoring the team for the ensuing year. Medals would be given to the members of the winning patrol.

The first Patrol Race was held on March 23, 1930. Before the race was run, the Seattle Times ran an article, *Women Can Ski Expertly as Men*, featuring Mrs. Stewart Walsh, a Mountaineer who was "the first member of her sex to make the hazardous 20-mile trip on wooden runners." Mrs. Walsh was "a Seattle ski expert and firm believer in the future of Puget Sound as a national winter resort." She complained that in the past "women have neglected skiing terribly." Eight years previously, only five women showed up for a Mountaineers ski meet, although by 1930, women were skiing seriously, and could do everything that men could do - except ski jump, which they could do but it "isn't generally recommended." That year, there were 150 women who skied and could "do it well." Mrs. Walsh believed that Northwest women should be as expert on "wooden runners" as their Scandinavian and Swiss sisters. To prove her point, Mrs. Walsh "made the difficult twenty-mile between the Snoqualmie Lodge of the Mountaineers Club and the Meany Ski Hut at Martin - the first woman to perform a feat that has been equaled by only six men." This was preliminary to the Patrol Race to be held later in the month, where teams would compete for a cup offered by Andrew D. Anderson and Norval Grigg.

Men have always said women couldn't make this trip. I hope by doing it, I've proved their error. I was tired, yes. We were on the way eight hours. But scarcely more tired than I have often been after an unusually active day. I only wish I could have made the trip sooner. I should certainly have organized a woman's patrol to compete in this year's race. Next year, though, just watch us.

Cross-country skiing was her particular hobby, since it

is the only way to know and appreciate the Northwest scenery...You feel like an explorer. There are no tracks and none of the familiar summer landmarks. It's just like being a Viking adventurer." She said now that women are won over by the sport, children are next. Then roads that are open all winter and more hotels. And then - Seattle will be the center of a winter sports region. One that attracts tourists from California and the East. A veritable [sic] rival of St. Moritz and Lake Placid!<sup>14</sup>

In the first Patrol Race held on March 23, 1930, conditions were unfavorable due to several days of fresh snow. Four patrols entered, and the three man team of Hans-Otto Giese, Andy Anderson and Fred Ball set a record of 7 ½ hours. The second place team included Paul Shorrock, N. W. Griggs, and Robert Hayes. Third was the team of Allan Cox, George Tepley and Robert Sperlin. Fourth was the team of Ted Lewis, William A. Degenhardt, and James C. Martin.



Winners of the 1930 Patrol Race. Courtesy of the Steere family.

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<sup>14</sup> *Women Can Ski Expertly as Men, Milady Advised to Desert Tea Table for Snowy Slopes*, Seattle Times, March 12, 1930 (page 21).

In 1931, no Patrol Race was held. In 1932, the Ski Patrol trophy was won by the team of Norval W. Grigg, Fred W. Ball and Hans Otto Giese. The 1933 Patrol Race was won by “the hard-running team of Art Wilson, Herbert Standberg and Dan Blair,” in a record-breaking time of five hours and 32 minutes, “for a 20-mile trail breaking crusade.” Second was the team of Paul Shorrock, Fran LeSourd and Ted Lewis, which finished seven and one half minutes later. Third was the team of Hans Otto Giese, Norval Griggs and Fred Ball, who finished one minute and 20 seconds after the second place team.<sup>15</sup>

No Patrol Race was held in 1934. The 1935 race was won by the team of Art Wilson, Bill Degenhardt and Scott Edison, with a time of five hours, 35 minutes and 22 seconds, finishing six minutes ahead of the team of Wolf Bauer, Bob Higman and Chet Higman. Third place was taken by the team of Don Blair, Tom Hill and Scott Osborn. “Herb Strandberg, chief trailbreaker, and his assistants, Jim Bissell, Jim Martin and Art Winder, laid a perfect trail to follow.”<sup>16</sup>

In 1936, The Mountaineers held two Patrol Races, one a club only event, and the second an Open Patrol Race in which any club affiliated with the Pacific Northwest Ski Association could enter. In club event, the team of Wolf Bauer, Chet Higman and Bill Miller won, setting a new record of 4 hours, 37 minutes and 23 seconds. The team of Bill Degenhardt, Paul Shorrock and Scott Edson was second, and the team of Erick Larsen, C. Spute and Arnold Webster was third. “They had 18 miles of perfect powder snow.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Alpenglow Ski History, Mountaineer Annual 1931, page 76; Mountaineer Annual 1932, page 38; *Mountaineers Hold Races*, Seattle Times, February 6, 1933 (page 14).

<sup>16</sup> Alpenglow Ski History, Mountaineer Annual 1934, page 25; *Patrol Race Sunday*, Seattle Times, February 15, 1935 (page 14); *Patrol Race Successful*, Seattle Times, February 18, 1935 (page 15) .

<sup>17</sup> *New Record Set*, Seattle Times, February 17, 1936 (page 15).

The 1936 Open Patrol Race was described as the “nation’s longest and hardest ski race.” No one under 20 could enter, as the course was considered too severe for youngsters. The race was held in less than perfect conditions, with warm weather and 15 inches of new snow. “Hard slogging” was the lot of the three man teams, in the first ever open Patrol Race held in the United States. “That made the competition add up to the strongest, and heaven help the unfortunate trail-breakers, who must make an eighteen-mile trail.”

The Seattle Ski Club team consisting of Roy Nerland, Howard Dalsbo and Ole Tierdal won the event, finishing in four hours, 50 minutes and 37 seconds, beating the second place College of Puget Sound team by four hours. “The eighteen-mile cross-country race is a tough race, particularly in the heavy snow that marked yesterday’s event. The Scandianian racers still know a great deal more about cross-country than the hometown boys.” Tyverdal and Dalsbo wore racing skis. Dalsbo pulled a tendon in his knee ten miles from the finish but “gamely finished.” Their time did not equal the record time of four hours, 37 minutes set earlier in 1936, by Wolf Bauer, Bill Miller and Chet Higman. It was thought the CPS team turned back, but they arrived at Martin nine hours after leaving the Snoqualmie Lodge, and were the only other team that finished the race intact. The 18 mile race was “a grueling haul designed only for the best cross-country racers of each club,” given the wet heavy snow conditions the racers experienced. The Washington Ski Club team of Hans-Otto Giese, Pat Patterson and Alf Moystad was disqualified when a member broke a ski and borrowed an emergency ski tip from another team, since the rules specified that no patrol may accept assistance from another patrol. The Seattle Mountaineers team of Wolf Bauer, Bill Miller and Scott Edson was disqualified when Miller became ill and was convinced to return to Snoqualmie. The team went on, Miller got better and followed but finished well behind his other teammates. The rules specified that all members of a patrol must finish within one minute of each other. Had the team waited for Miller, they would have finished second. One

of the Everett Mountaineers team became ill and had to return to Snoqualmie.<sup>18</sup>

### **Hall Competes in Mountaineers' Races from 1937 - 1939**

The first mention in the Seattle Times of Sigurd Hall as a ski competitor was in January 1937, in the annual Mountaineer's 10 mile cross-country race at Meany Lodge at Martin, which was "made difficult by lack of sufficient snow to cover the creeks over which the trail ran." Hall finished third in the race, behind Bill Degenhardt and Scott Edson. Degenhardt's time was 2:16; Edson's was 2:22.30, and Sigurd's was 2:25. Sigurd later attended a wedding shower for Bill Degenhardt and his fiancé Adelaide in August 1937, at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Bruce Steere, attended by a number of Mountaineers.<sup>19</sup>

Sigurd Hall competed in The Mountaineers' Open Patrol Races in 1937, 1938 and 1939, with his teams winning all three years. The Ben C. Mooers trophy was awarded to the winning patrol team after the race was opened to all PNSA affiliated clubs between 1936 and 1942.

The Second Mountaineer's Open Patrol Race, held on March 7, 1937, was described as "a grueling haul, designed only for the best cross-country racers of each club." The teams started at five minute intervals beginning at 9:00 am, and because of the lateness that some teams finished the prior year, and all teams not past the half-way mark by 2:00 would be turned back. The 1937 Mountaineer's Patrol Race was won by the team of Sigurd Hall, Bill Degenhardt, and Scott Edson, in a time of five hours, 12 minutes, and 5 seconds. "Condition of the long Cascade Range course,

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<sup>18</sup> *Mountaineers' Marathon Ski Racers All Set*, Seattle Times, March 13, 1936; *Patrol Race to Test Skiers on 18-mile Course*, Seattle Times, March 15, 1936; *Teams Set Out on Heavy Trip*, Seattle Times, March 14, 1936 (page 5); *Seattle Club's Patrol Team in 18-Mile Victory*, Seattle Times, March 16, 1936 (page 15); *Alpenglow Ski History - Mountaineer Bulletin, 1930 - 1939*, *Ski Tips*, April 1936 (page 4).

<sup>19</sup> *Finest Powder Greets Skiers; Fraser Winner*, Seattle Times, January 11, 1937 (page 16); *Miscellaneous Shower Given at Steere Residence*, Seattle Times, August 13, 1937.

crusty.” The Seattle Ski Club team of Roy Nerland, Ole Tverdal and Martin Tverdall was second, finishing in a time of 5:54: 20. The College of Puget Sound team was third, and the Everett Mountaineers team was fourth.<sup>20</sup>

### 1938

In January 1938, Sigurd Hall won a Mountaineers cross-country race on Snoqualmie Pass, and Adelaide Degenhardt won the women’s cross-country race. Adelaide was the first wife of Bill Degenhardt, who was one of Sig’s Patrol race teammates in 1937, and a future Mountaineers president. The following picture was taken near Snoqualmie Pass on January 23, 1938, and has a caption saying that Sig and Adelaide were winners of the Mountaineers cross-country races.

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<sup>20</sup> *Snoqualmie Pass*, Seattle Times, March 8, 1937 (page 14).



Adelaide Degenhardt and Sigurd Hall, winners of the 1938 Mountaineers cross-country race on Snoqualmie Pass.

In February 1938, the Seattle Times described the difficulty and challenges of the upcoming Patrol Race.

No audience will watch them, for their course doesn't run past any grandstand; but a small group at the finish will cheer six three-man ski teams...at Martin, far up in the Cascades, when they cross the line in the third annual Northwest Patrol Race championships.

They'll have earned it. To reach Martin, twenty miles from their start at Snoqualmie Lodge

of the Mountaineers, they must climb several times, to heights of 1,000 to 3,000 feet. They'll be downhill trails, of course...eleven miles in all. But they come dearly, when the teams are slugging their way along as fast as wind and muscle will permit.

Seven ski patrol teams entered in "the Pacific Northwest patrol race championships," including teams from Seattle Ski Club, Sahalie Ski Club, Fjeld Ski Club of Conway, Mountaineers, two from the University of Washington, and the Washington Ski Club.<sup>21</sup>

*Ski Patrol Race Tough*, said the Seattle Times, twenty miles of ice lay back of the Mountaineers' three-man ski-patrol team (Scott Edson, Sigurd Hall and Art Wilson) when they tore into Martin yesterday afternoon, first in the Northwest partol race championships." Their time was 4 hours, 57 minutes and 45 seconds, "[i]t wasn't the record, or even close to it, but it was for the sort of skiing conditions encountered." The University of Washington team consisting of Tom Hill, Walt Page and Harold Stack was second, with a time of 5 hours, 51 minutes.<sup>22</sup>

## 1939

Both Seattle newspapers described the difficulty of the race before the 1939 Open Patrol race.

The Seattle Times said it was

slightly crazy to the lay skier, but maybe it's time to deliver a short and not too heavy sermon on its excellence - and the serious purpose behind it all. The Patrol Race breeds weather-wise and snow-wise skiers. They are required by the rules of the race to carry all the equipment necessary for any unexpected but enforced delay in their travel; an ax; food; rope and supplies; an extra array of clothing. But to simplify their crossing of the Cascades' rugged slope; they must also have snow-sense; how to wax for a twenty-mile journey; how to beat the dickens, but conserve enough strength for a stanch finish, in other words, how to conduct themselves in the mountains.

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<sup>21</sup> *Patrol Race on Program Today*, Seattle Times, February 7, 1938 (page 16).

<sup>22</sup> Sahalie was third finishing at 6 hours, 6 minutes, and the Seattle Independents were fourth with a time of 6 hours, 10 minutes, 30 seconds. Two teams failed to finish, Seattle Ski Club (Roy Nerland, Erik Bolstand and Victor Larden), and Fjeld Ski Club of Stanwood. *Patrols Ready*, Seattle Times, February 25, 1938 (page 24); *Patrol Race on Program Today*, *Patrol Race on Program Today*, Seattle Times, February 27, 1938 (page 16); *Ski Patrol Race Tough, Mountaineer Team Takes First Place*, Seattle Times, February 28, 1938 (page 14).



Mike Donahoe described the race's difficulties in the Seattle P.I.

Its an odds-on, mortal cinch that the most-tuckered out gang of ski racers in North America will huddle around a stove in Meany Ski Hut near Martin tomorrow at the close of the Mountaineers' fourth annual patrol race from Snoqualmie Pass. The Mountaineers' patrol race is an event unique in Northwest skiing. The patrol race is a copy of the annual free-for-all staged by the Alpine troops at the conclusion of winter maneuvers. It's a team affair. There is no such thing as an individual star in a patrol race. There may be..and often, too...a goat.

Seven three-man patrol teams entered the 1939 race, representing the Seattle Ski Club, Mountaineers, Washington Ski Club, University of Washington, Sahalie Ski Club, Fjeld Ski Club, Penguin Ski Club, and an Independent team. Some clubs entered two teams. The race was won by the Seattle Ski Club team of Sigurd Hall (who had changed his club allegiance), Bert Mortensen and Roy Nerland, in a time of 4:59:20. Cheers were given to the trail-breakers for the race, Art Winder, Johnny James and Paul Shorrocks, who had to precede the teams by an hour and a half breaking the trail for the following racers, and made the winners' speedy run possible.

A skier naturally travels faster on an already-broken trail; and by the time Winder's men had reached the summit of Dandy Pass and were on their way down, the racers were keening along, right back of them. It was a terrific battle. The trail-breakers punched along, fast as they could. But here came the Seattle Ski Club team, the eventual winner. They overtook the trail-breakers five minutes from Martin - and broke the rest of its trail in.<sup>23</sup>

The following picture taken by Lowell Skoog of the Mountaineers shows the permanent Patrol Race trophy with the names of the winning patrols from 1936 to 1941. Sigurd Hall's name is on the winning patrol team for 1937, 1938, and 1939. This trophy hangs in the Washington Alpine Club Lodge on Snoqualmie Pass - the WAC team was the last listed winner in 1941. The figure cross-country skiing on this trophy matches that on Sigurd Hall's medal from the 1937 race shown

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<sup>23</sup> *Ski Teams To Race, 20-Mile Jaunt in Instructive*, Seattle Times, February 18, 1939 (page 10); *The Timer Has the Last Word*, Seattle Times, February 21, 1939 (page 11); *Alpenglow Ski History - Mountaineer Bulletin*, 1930 - 1939, *Ski Tips*, April 1938 (page 4), & June 1939 (page 4)

later in this paper.



## V. HALL'S MOUNTAINEERING EXPLOITS

Sigurd Hall was a well known mountain climber, a member of The Mountaineers, and a competitive skier who pioneered a number of ski ascents of Washington mountains. His exploits are recorded in The Mountaineers archives and on Lowell Skoog's website, [Alpenglow.org](http://Alpenglow.org).

Lowell Skoog described Sigurd Hall's many skiing and mountaineering exploits in *The Legacy of Sigurd Hall*, concluding that Hall was the "top skier...and the most accomplished ski mountaineer in the region before World War II," who "occupied a place in Northwest skiing history that may never be filled again."

Thanks to Dee Molenaar's book, *The Challenge of Rainier*, the name of Sigurd Hall has lingered in the memory of Northwest skiers and mountaineers. Yet few appreciate his story. As a competitor, Hall was the top skier in the Northwest at the time of his death. He was also the most accomplished ski mountaineer in the region before World War II. Less than a year before his death in the Silver Skis race, Hall made the first ski ascent of Mount Rainier, completing his quest to ascend or descend on skis every Cascade volcano from Mount Baker to Mount Hood. He also made pioneering ski trips to Eldorado Peak, Ruth Mountain, North Star Mountain, Mount Daniel, the Goat Rocks and other remote Cascade peaks. As the top practitioner in both ski racing and ski mountaineering (simultaneously!), Sigurd Hall occupied a place in Northwest skiing history that may never be filled again.<sup>24</sup>

Skoog listed some of Hall's many ski ascents of Washington peaks in his [Alpenglow Mountaineering Project website](http://Alpenglow Mountaineering Project website).

Alpine Lakes: May 1937 - Mt. Stuart, ski-climb with Dwight Watson and Walt Hoffman, & Mt. Daniel, ski summit, with Dwight Watson.

North Cascades (White Mountain): June 1, 1937 - ski summit with Dwight Watson.

South Cascades (Goat Rocks): June 22, 1937 - ski scouting with Dwight Watson.

North Cascades (Eldorado Peak) : May 15, 1938 - ski scouting with Dwight Watson & two others.

Mt. Rainier: May 22, 1938 - ski summit with Dwight Watson & others.

North Cascades (North Star Mountain): May 29, 1938 - ski summit with Ralph Eskenazi, Dwight Watson & two others.

Mt. Baker area (Ruth Mountain): June 19, 1938 - ski summit with Dwight Watson and other.

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<sup>24</sup> <http://www.alpenglow.org/climbing/sigurd-hall-2006/index.html>.

North Cascades (Glacier Peak) : July 4, 1938 - ski summit with Dwight Watson.  
Mt. Rainier: July 2, 1939 - complete ski ascent and partial ski descent with Andy Hennig.<sup>25</sup>

On July 30, 1937, Sigurd sent his mother the post card below showing Mount Rainier. On the front of the card, he indicated with an arrow a place on the mountain above the trees, and says “Here we start when going up to ski downhill.” The second arrow pointing to the top of Rainier has a note saying, “two weeks ago we were on top of Columbia Crest.” On the back of the card, he said it was Friday evening and he planned to go to the mountains for the weekend.

[Note from Lowell Skoog - The post card reveals the limitations of Sigurd's familiarity with Mt Rainier in 1937. The card shows Mt Rainier and Lake Spanaway from the northwest. Lake Spanaway is just south of the city of Tacoma. The arrow to where Sigurd said "we start when going up to ski downhill," is actually pointing near the South Tahoma Glacier. That's not a place where people go skiing. There are no roads nearby and it is a difficult hike to get there. The normal place to begin skiing (then and now) is at Paradise on the southeast side of the mountain. Even today, most people who live in western Washington could not tell which side of the mountain you're looking at when you show them a picture of Mt Rainier.]

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<sup>25</sup> <http://alpenglow.org/ski-history/chronology>.



HER ER DET ME GAR 40 08  
 RENNER PA SKI  
 PA TOPP COLUMBIA CREST.

IN LAKE SPANAWAY, RAINIER NATIONAL PARK

July 30th 1937

Mount Rainier, three miles in height, is an isolated extinct glacial volcano. It was discovered in 1792 by Capt. George Vancouver and named by him for Rear Admiral Rainier. Tourists visit its blown out caverns, eternal snow banks, steam fissures, waterfalls and marvelous canyons, great forests, lakes and rivers that burst from gigantic glaciers upon its sides, proclaiming wonders surpassing the Alps.

MADE IN U.S.A. BY E. C. KROPP CO. MILWAUKEE, WIS.

POST CARD

8413N

KJØPERE DYKK: DET ER FRE-  
 DENS KVILL. ARBEIDE ER OVER  
 FOR DENNE VIKA ATT. I MURBO  
 TIDLES SKALLEG TILL FJELLS  
 ATT. DET ER MEST SOM Å REIS-  
 PA SETRAHEIME. HARDE I SISS-  
 TE ORETE DYKK HARVE ØYNT  
 SLUTTANNA DE ER VEL HART  
 NAR ENDE ER BENTE.  
 SKULDE LIRA Å IARE HIEME  
 A KJØRD SLAMASKINA FOR DYKK SAHEL CURTIS  
 LEV IEL DA ALE DYKKAR SKURT.

MR. G. S. HØEL  
 FURUGRENDA. P.O.  
 NORDMØR,  
 NORKWAY, EUROPE.



In his website, Skoog described Sigurd's ski-climb of Glacier Peak on May 13, 1938, with his partner Dwight Watson, highlighting his skiing skills, and Hall's completion of the first ski ascent of Mount Rainier later that summer.

Watson took 16mm movies during the climb, and the descent was especially memorable.

“I’ve got a beautiful shot of Sig,” he later told historian Harry Majors. “He must have been doing 60 miles an hour here. He went across, and made a turn, and went down there. It wasn’t exaggerated at all. The way he just scooted up the last bit, he was just going like... Oh, tremendous speed.”



Sigurd Hall traversing below seracs on Glacier Peak, July 4, 1938. Dwight Watson, The Collection, published in [Alpenglow.org](http://Alpenglow.org).



Sigurd Hall near summit of Glacier Peak, July 4, 1938. UW Libraries, Special Collections, Dwight Watson Collection, Box 4, Folder 3, published in [Alpenglow.org](http://Alpenglow.org).

After completing their climb of Glacier Peak, Hall and Watson set their sights on a bigger prize, reaching the summit of Mount Rainier on skis. A 1928 ski-climb of Mount Rainier by Hans Otto Giese, Otto Strizek and Walter Best had been a partial triumph, but “[s]kis had not yet reached the summit of Rainier, and they hoped to be the first to ski all the way to or from the top.” The Seattle Times reported on the first ski ascent of 14,408 foot Mount Rainier made by Hall and Andy Hennig. Hennig took off his skis at 12,500 feet, but Hall continued to the summit on his skis. Hall said the ascent “wasn’t much fun,” the snow grew icy, metal ski edges would barely hold, and sealskins not at all,” but the urge was there since “it had never been done before.”

But I can tell Bill Maxwell... that skiing in the crater isn’t worth the climb. Bill tried three times to get there on skis, and he told me he’d give anything to be able to ski in the crater on top of the mountain. But it was wash-boardy and hard as stone. We couldn’t ski down. It’s too precipitous, and even metal edges wouldn’t hold. I’m glad I made it, but I never want

to try it again.<sup>26</sup>

## **THE TIMER..** **... Has the Last Word**

After they left Steamboat Prow and started the more bitter ascent toward Rainier's summit, the snow grew icy. Metal ski edges would barely hold a man, and sealskins not at all.

The pain in Sigurd Hall's ankles grew intense, and making a ski ascent of 14,408-foot Mount Rainier wasn't much fun, save that the urge was there and it had never before been done.

Andy Hennig took his skis off at 12,500 feet, but Hall kept on. So they finally came to the crater, and the first ski ascent of Rainier had become a matter of record.

"But I can tell Bill Maxwell," said Sig, that "skiing in the crater isn't worth the climb. Bill tried three times to get there on skis, and he told me he'd give anything to be able to ski in the crater on top of the mountain. But it was wash-boardy and hard as stone.

"We couldn't ski down.

It's too precipitous, and even metal edges wouldn't hold.

"I'm glad I made it, but I never want to try it again."



**SIGURD HALL**

*Once was enough*

Seattle Times, July 17, 1939 (page 14)

Sigurd wrote an account of his adventures on Mt. Rainier that was published in The Mountaineer, Volume 32, Number 1, December 15, 1939, which appears below.

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<sup>26</sup> *The Timer had the Last Word*, Seattle Times, July 17, 1939 (page 14).

## Mount Rainier on Skis

SIGURD HALL

WHEN SPRING is near with its longer days and more dependable weather, a skier gets that hankering to see what is beyond the ridge. Ski trips, both cross country and climbing, have proved most interesting. Outstanding among a number of these were ascents of several of the major peaks of Washington. With this urge of the spring, it was almost inevitable that an attempt should be made on Mount Rainier.

The only routes worth considering for a ski ascent were the Tahoma Glacier on the west side, probably too steep to be practical, the Ingraham on the east, also probably too steep and hard to reach, and the Emmons on the northeast. The latter had been the scene of the previous attempts and it was only logical that this route should be attempted again. The failure of the previous parties had been due to bad weather and poor snow conditions.

We also had our troubles with the weather man. On several weekends in the fore part of the summer we had had a party ready for the assault, but Saturday would come with dark clouds and rain, calling off the trip. Finally, Saturday, July 1, 1939, dawned with a clear sky, but our party of skiers had dwindled to two, Andy Hennig and myself, so we joined forces with a crampon party led by Larry Penberthy. When we checked in at White River Ranger Station at 10:30 Saturday morning, the ranger looked with some distrust at our skis. However, as we also had crampons and ice axes, he checked us through.

Inter Glacier was reached in two hours. After giving our skis a good coat of Asthye Klister, we made our way up Inter Glacier in easy traverses,

Penberthy with his party had left. Scrambling down the ridge, skis on our backs, we were on the Emmons Glacier where our real ascent was to start.

The glacier from Steamboat Prow to about 11,500 was just a series of rain troughs with a crevasse cutting through occasionally. Climbing was slow but not especially tiresome. Andy had trouble with his binding and finally took off his skis, putting on crampons. Thus, I was the only skier. We crossed the ice fall in the middle of the Emmons at about 12,000 feet. Here Penberthy and his party were having lunch. We stopped also, had lunch, and watched a very beautiful sunrise. However, it was becoming more apparent that a change in weather was near. After giving our skis another coat of Skare, we pushed on. From this point we made a gradual uphill traverse toward the Winthrop Glacier and, zig-zagging, hit the saddle where the Emmons and Winthrop glaciers flow together.

The last two thousand feet were the most difficult. The slope was too steep and the snow too hard to use the climbing surface of the ski. I had to jab in the steel edge two or three times, take a step and do it all over again. However, the edges proved their usability. Not once did they slip. Upon reaching the saddle it seemed we might still miss our goal. A large crevasse virtually cut the glacier from the summit snow field. We finally found a narrow bridge and entered the summit field. From there to Columbia Crest we climbed on verglass with a trace of new snow on top. Progress was very slow the last three hundred feet, but finally we arrived at the rim and looked over the crater. The mountain had been conquered on skis!

Upon signing the register we found our party to be the first of the year on Columbia Crest. While resting and eating lunch at a hot spot inside the crater we saw the cloud cap forming high above us. Heeding this warning, we donned our crampons (skiing was impossible) and hurried down to get over the crevassed area while visibility was good. As we went down over the saddle the cloud cap settled on the mountain, bringing snow driven by an icy wind. Andy and I had counted on the snow to soften below the saddle, but the thin clouds had taken the intensity out of the sun and the snow condition was unchanged from the morning, so we continued down on crampons to about 12,000 feet, where we put on our skis. By now visibility was practically zero. In slow traverses we ran down to base camp at Camp Curtis. As it was now raining hard, our packs were made ready in record time. In spite of the weather we had a fine run down Inter Glacier to Starbo. There we waited for the rest of the party and reached the cars at White River Camp at 7:45—tired but happy.



In an article that appeared in the 1941 Mountaineering Annual, *Mountaineering on Skis*, Walter Little described the first ascent by skis of Mt. Rainier made by Sigurd Hall and his climbing partner. He said that Hall "did not confine his efforts to Mount Rainier but rode his skis up to and down from the summits of Adams, Baker, St Helens and Glacier as well as numerous other peaks, accompanied at various times by Dwight Watson, Walt Hoffman, John James and others."<sup>27</sup>

Sigurd's close friend and ski mountaineering partner, Dwight Watson, wrote a highly personal letter after Sig's death to his mother in 1946, describing their relationship based on a shared love of outdoor adventure.

I met Sigurd first through the Seattle Mountaineers, a group of outdoor enthusiasts who hiked, and skied [sic]...Although not a member at that time, I knew so many wonderful places that had possibilities to ski that I had many fine times with good old Sig as we used to call him. Quite often we would go for two or even three days at a time into some part of our high Cascade Mountains mostly by spring to climb and ski and enjoy the views. We many times carried our sleeping bags, food and our other mountain equipment many miles, as much as ten, walking in on roads or trails or both to reach some never reached by winter place. Also took many photos and I have some nice movies of him skiing from the tops of some of our higher mountains, 10,000 feet and higher, where we have sea level right here at Seattle, like you no doubt have, and the mountains rise abruptly about forty miles east and west of us. We had fortunate weather in most cases and still I can recall many of these wonderful trips. Others of the boys went along on many of these trips which sometimes meant driving as much as 100 to 150 miles just to get to the end of a road.

One of our grandest thrills was a glissade or slide down a steep granite mountain in Eastern Washington. We had skied [sic] in and slept out, left early in morning on skis [sic] to reach the base of the mountain then climbed on packed snow to nearly 10,000 feet - the summit had a thrilling view - then we actually slid on the snow down over 4500 feet - sitting down and the snow sliding with us. I can see us yet. Did not get home until the next day as it was a long trip out.

Personally I never was a real good skier but could get along alright and we had some grand times. Then when summer came we had some nice climbs too. Imagine skiing to the top of tow peaks over 10,500 feet high in July when far below the meadows were in flower. Later as Sigurd was winning many races I was not able to get out so much with him be we kept in

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<sup>27</sup> <http://alpenglw.org/ski-history/notes/period/asa/asa-1940.html#asa-1940-p38>.

touch.

Lowell Skoog has located a number of photographs and films taken by Dwight Watson, Sigurd's climbing partner and good friend. Some movie footage of Sigurd Hall appears in the Washington State Ski and Snowboard Museum in the Ski Mountaineering exhibit, which Skoog designed. See [www.wsssm.org](http://www.wsssm.org). The ski mountaineering exhibit includes seven multimedia programs on a large monitor screen. The second of these, entitled "Wilderness Ski Scouting," includes footage from three old films by Dwight Watson. Skoog used scenes from the Eldorado Peak section of Watson film that appears on the Alpenglow website.

Skoog's website has a black and white film by Dwight Watson, *Northwest Mountain Skiing, B.C.*, (B.C. stands for Before Chairlifts), showing early ski ascents of Mt. Saint Helens (June 5, 1938), Glacier Peak (July 4, 1938), and Eldorado Peak (May 15, 1938). The Mt. Saint Helens segment shows Sigurd Hall, Ralph Eskenazi and John James skiing roped together near large crevasses. The Glacier Peak segment shows Hall climbing to the summit above the cloud level, and Hall skiing on glaciers and "zooming down snowfields at high speed." The Eldorado segment shows skiers traversing a ridge between Sibley Pass and the Eldorado Glacier, with views of nearby peaks. "There are some dramatic scenes on this ridge. I believe Sigurd Hall is the skier in shorts."

<http://www.alpenglow.org/mountaineers-history/notes/movie/dw-1938-nwsking.html>.

Dwight Watson worked as a semi-professional photographer in the winter of 1936, when he lived on Mount Rainier for two months and took pictures for the Rainier National Park Company. Watson had a wry sense of humor, and was likely the one who brought the parasols for the following picture, and the sign saying "no camp fires permitted here." Skoog points out that one pair of skis are jammed into the snow tips first, which is a strange thing to do.

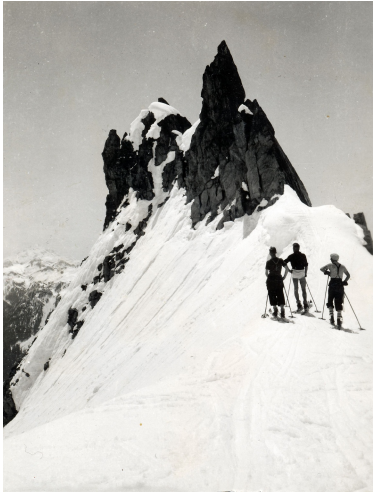


Sigurd Hall, Ralph Eskenazi & John James enjoying skiing on Mt. St. Helens, 1938. UW Libraries, Special Collections, Dwight Watson Collection, Box 7, Vol. 2. Photo published in [Alpenglow.org](http://Alpenglow.org).

The Hoel family located photographs taken by Dwight Watson that Sigurd sent home to his mother in Norway, along several post cards, showing various mountaineering exploits, which were provided by Kristen Rekdal. They show climbs on Glacier Peak, Mount Adams, Mount St. Helens, Mount Rainier and elsewhere. The writing on the photos is Dwight Watson's.



THIS MOUNTAIN IS 1 1/2 MILES ACROSS ON TOP!  
 Sigurd on top  
 Mt. Adams 12,300  
 feet looking down  
 on Mt. St. Helens  
 9,000 feet high  
 Mt. Adams has a <sup>2 1/2</sup> 100%  
 continuous ski run  
 of over 7,500 feet  
 to timberline  
 DWIGHT WATSON  
 15 WARD ST  
 SEATTLE, 9 U. S. A.



Looking south from  
 7,000 feet towards  
 Glacier Peak 10,600  
 feet high which we  
 skied to top once  
 by route visible  
 2SP 140%  
 DWIGHT WATSON  
 15 WARD ST  
 SEATTLE, 9 U. S. A.



Mt. St. Helens  
 over 9,600 feet  
 high which we  
 skied off of top  
 Spirit Lake in  
 foreground is at  
 elevation around  
 3,200 feet. Fire  
 highway right to lake  
 DWIGHT WATSON  
 15 WARD ST  
 SEATTLE, 9 U. S. A.



↑ MEG

Sigurd Hall (marked with arrow) and climbing friends.



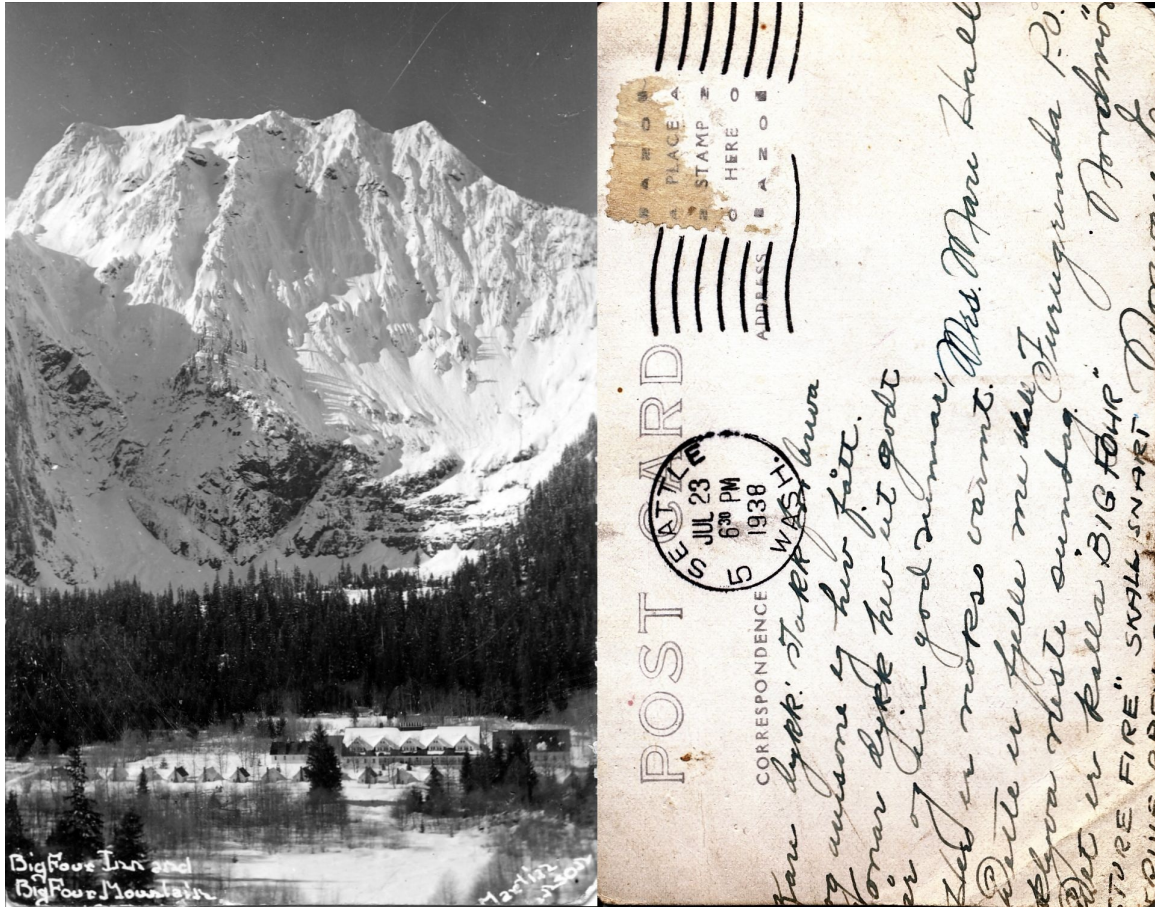
DA TOPPEN AV "CASTLE"

Sigurd Hall on top of "Castle."



Sigurd Hall's outdoor activities were not limited to skiing and mountaineering.

This post card is dated July 23, 1938, and Sigurd tells his mother "This is the mountain we are going to climb next Sunday. It is called BIG FOUR."



## VI. SKI SEASON OF 1938 - HALL BEGINS TO MAKE HIS MARK IN ALPINE SKIING

Sigurd Hall made his appearance in Alpine skiing events in 1938. There is no mention of him competing in Alpine races in 1937 - only in cross-country races. Sigurd also participated in his first jumping tournament, of which there is a record, the famous Seattle Ski Club Jumping Tournament at Snoqualmie Pass that featured some of the best ski jumpers in the world, where Hall competed in the Class C event. In late 1938, he competed as a Class C jumper in another tournament. This was a transition year for Sigurd. He had previously been an outstanding cross-country skier and ski mountaineer, but he began making the transition to being a competitive downhill ski racer in 1938. This may indicate that he had started training for the National Four-Way Championships which would be held in the Northwest in 1940, where he would need to excel in four skiing disciplines, downhill, slalom, cross-country and jumping.

On January 30, 1938, at the Yakima Winter Sports Association American River ski tournament, Don Amick scored a “double victory” winning the downhill and slalom titles. Skit Smith Babson, 1936 U.S. Olympic ski team member, won the women’s slalom, and her sister Ellis-Ayr Smith (also a 1936 U.S. Olympic ski team member) was second. Sigurd Hall finished last (12<sup>th</sup>) in the Class B Jumping event, and 12<sup>th</sup> in the downhill race. He was not mentioned as a finisher in the slalom event.<sup>28</sup>

In March 1938, Sigurd Hall was a member of a five man Mountaineers team that competed at the Olympic Ski Club champion ski meet at Deer Park in the Olympic Mountains, along with Bruce Steere, Dick Anderson, Albert Lubberts, Scott Edson and Edwin Anderson. “Popularity of

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<sup>28</sup> *Don Amick in Double Victory*, Seattle Times, January 31, 1938 (page 15).

this beautiful ski terrain is confirmed by many older members, who are returning again next weekend, and also by the enthusiasm of new members.” Hall was not listed as a finisher in either event as “spills were frequent.” Vincent Broz won the downhill, Dick Nelson won the slalom, and Kjell Qvale won the combined.<sup>29</sup>

The Washington Ski Club’s downhill and slalom tournament at Paradise Valley on Mt. Rainier was held on the first weekend of April 1938. It was “one of the important downhill-slalom tournaments of the year,” and 42 men and 10 women skiers entered. Bob Higman of the University of Washington ski team won the downhill, and Sigurd Hall of the Mountaineers finished 7<sup>th</sup>. Don Fraser of the Washington Ski Club won the slalom, and Sigurd Hall was 17<sup>th</sup>.<sup>30</sup>

### **1938 Seattle Ski Club Championships Tournament at Snoqualmie Pass**

The big event of 1938, was the Jumping Championship tournament in March at Snoqualmie Summit on the “Big Hill” at Beaver Lake, hosted by the Seattle Ski Club. Sigurd Hall entered as a Class C jumper, which gave him the opportunity to interact with many of the world’s best ski jumpers against whom he would compete in 1940. Many tournaments did not offer Class C competition, including the Leavenworth tournament held in early February 1938, so this was one of the few that gave Sigurd a chance to compete.

The tournament featured a “truly an amazing field of jumpers,” according to the Seattle Times, which included the Norwegian Ruud brothers, Birger and Sigmund. The Ruud brothers

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<sup>29</sup> *Ski Outing to be Held in Deer Park*, Seattle Times, March 5, 1938 (page 5): *Deer Park Races Run*, Seattle Times, March 14, 1938 (page 16).

<sup>30</sup> *Ski Racers Set for Meet at Paradise Tomorrow*, Seattle Times, April 2, 1938 (page 11). *Results at Last*, Seattle Times, April 5, 1938 (page 17).



were on a tour of the United States where they competed in a number of tournaments and performed jumping exhibitions. Just prior to their arrival in the Northwest, they performed in a ski jumping exhibition in front of 100,000 people in the Memorial Coliseum in Los Angeles.<sup>31</sup>

The Seattle Post Intelligencer said the Seattle Ski Club had attracted “mighty fine skybusters” to its earlier tournaments, but never had any “whose names were as great as the Ruud brothers.” The Seattle Times said that Seattle had been host to many great skiers, but the most distinguished of them all, Birger Ruud, two time Olympian champion and 1937 world’s champion, would compete at the Summit. Birger Ruud had won two successive Olympic Games Championships, and an F.I.S. world title. “He is a powerful jumper. His downhill ski ability is astounding.” Sigmund Ruud had lived in the United States and competed at a number of tournaments in 1937, including one at Snoqualmie Summit, and helped to design the jumping hill

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<sup>31</sup> The Ruud family from Kongsberg, Norway was famous in skiing circles. Birger and his brothers Sigmund and Asbjorn dominated ski jumping in the 1930s, winning world championships in 1931, 1935 and 1937. Birger won gold medals in jumping in the 1932 and 1936 Olympics. Sigmund won a silver medal in jumping in the 1928 Olympics, and was on the 1932 Norwegian Olympic jumping team, finishing seventh. The tour was so significant to the Norwegian-American community that it is the subject of a master thesis written for the University of Oslo, *Are Norwegian Americans “Born on Skis? Exploring the Role of Skiing in North America Ethnic Identity in the 1930s Through the Adventures of Sigmund and Birger Ruud.* by Kristofer Moen Helgrude. Helgrud described the prominent role that Norwegians played in this country, pointing out that by 1930, 1,100,098 people living in the United States were either born in Norway or had Norwegian parents, and 47% of them lived in New York, Chicago, Minneapolis or Seattle. The National Ski Association had been formed in Isheming, Michigan in 1905, to organize the sport of skiing, and six of seven of the founders were Norwegians.

As the Ruuds toured the country, they were welcomed all over the country by Norwegian organizations, and participated in the following tournaments:

- January 16, 1938 - Norge Ski Club annual tournament, at Fox Grove River, Ill.
- January 23, 1938 - Bush Lake, Minneapolis
- February 7, 1938 - Winter Carnival, Menomonie Wisc.
- February 14, 1938 - the “Times Meet” at Soldier’s Field, Chicago, Ill.
- February 20, 1938 - Eastern Championships, Brattleboro, Vt.
- March 1, 1938 - Memorial Coliseum, Los Angeles, Ca.
- March 6, 1938 - Seattle Ski Club’s tournament at Snoqualmie Summit, Washington
- March 15, 1938 - Sun Valley, Idaho.

At Fox River Grove, the Ruud brothers jumped in front of 30,000 spectators who arrived in 10,000 cars, and 10,000 attended the event at Chicago’s Soldier Field. The Seattle Ski Club’s tournament at Snoqualmie Summit was originally scheduled for February 27, but was changed to March 6 so the Ruud brothers could participate.

at Sun Valley, Idaho that was named Ruud Mountain in his honor. Birger was described as the world and Olympic jumping champion by many newspapers. The Salt Lake City Tribune said the Ruuds were “mighty little men...who had the precision of machines,” and if they became any better, they would no longer be classified as “genus homo.”

Showing the dominance of Norwegians, seven of the 16 jumpers in the contest were from Kongsberg, Norway and proudly displayed white “Ks” on their sweaters, a symbol of their home town - Birger and Sigmund Ruud, Olav and Sigurd Ulland, Rolf Syverrtsen, Tom Mobraaten, and Hjalmar Hvam. Several of them were raised within a block of each other in Norway. Asked about the success of the ski jumpers from Kongsberg, Birger Ruud said, “Those who cannot learn to be a good jumper must go to work. That is the law of Kongsberg.”<sup>32</sup> Sigurd Ulland from Lake Tahoe, California, had won the National Championship the prior week. His brother Olav Ulland had jumped 339 feet the prior year in Italy, becoming the first jumper to exceed the 100 meter mark. Nordal Kaldahl of Wells, B.C., a former Northwest Champion, came out of retirement to compete. Hjalmar Hvam of the Cascade Ski Club, former National combined champion and former Northwest downhill and slalom champion, also competed. Niles Eie, intercollegiate champion of Norway entered. The Milwaukee Road ran special trains to Hyak for the event, and buses convoyed passengers back to the foot of the Big Hill at Snoqualmie Summit, where a crowd of 10,000 could be handled. The Big Hill’s record of 210 feet had been set the prior year by Alf Engen.<sup>33</sup>

Birger Ruud won the 1938 jumping championship at Snoqualmie Summit, beating fellow

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<sup>32</sup> *THE TIMER Has The Last Word*, Seattle Times, February 22, 1939 (page 16)

<sup>33</sup> *Birger Ruud to Show Next Week*, Seattle Times, February 27, 1938 (page 16).

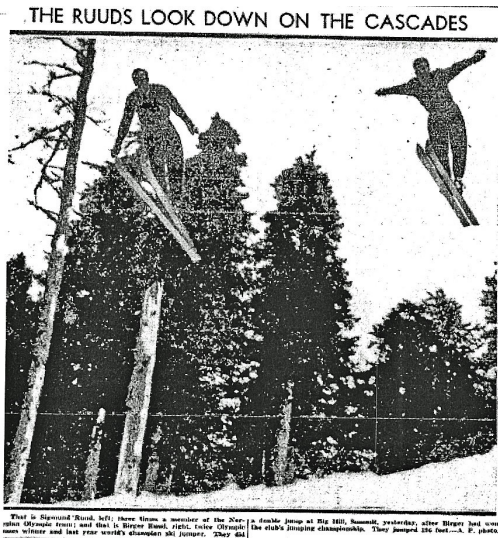
Norwegian Olav Ulland and Birger's brother Sigmund, with the Times announcing *Birger Ruud is Summit Ski King - Leaping Star Lives Up to All Notices*. Ruud won point scores of 19 and 19.5, out of a possible 20 points under very difficult conditions, which were more treacherous than the judges had seen in years. The Big Hill was "cold to the point where skis failed to break the crust on either the in-run to the take-off, or the out-run to the flat." At the end of his "meteoric" descents in front of 4,000 spectators, Birger "didn't come to a casual, christy stop. No. He somersaulted." The Seattle Times said Birger Ruud "is to skiing what Sonja Henie is to ice skating." Seattle's Olav Ulland won second place, with Sigmund Ruud taking third, barely beating Einar Fredbo, "Seattle Ski Club's great stylist."

Sigurd Hall placed fifth in the Class C jumping event, out of 23 competitors. Class C and D jumpers competed on the smaller Tverdal Hill, which had better conditions than the Big Jump (where the in-run was rutted to the takeoff), receiving "the full benefit of a brilliant sun, was in good condition."

After the tournament, the Ruud brothers "topped the greatest day in Seattle Ski Club history with a perfect double jump, both off the takeoff together, and landing in unison, 196 feet down the hill...where the brothers simultaneously somersaulted to a stop." The Times carried a picture of Birger and Sigmund doing their double jump, flying through the air side by side.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> *Birger Ruud in Ski Jump Today, Famed Star Tops Field at Summit*, Seattle Times, March 8, 1938 (page 21); *Birger Ruud is Summit Ski King, Leaping Star Lives Up to All Notices*, Seattle Times, March 7, 1938 (page 15).



This is Sigmund Ruud, left, some time a member of the 2000 ft. Summit, yesterday, after Birger had won (front) and that is Birger Ruud, left, before Olympic the first's principal champions. They jumped the first...A. P. photo.

Sigmund & Birger Ruud, Snoqualmie Summit, Seattle Times, March 7, 1938, page 15



Crowd at Beaver Lake tournament, 1938. Photograph from Matt Broz.

**Silver Skis Race on Mt. Rainier**

The Silver Skis race on Mount Rainier began 1934, and it became one of the iconic races in the Northwest. It began at Camp Muir at the 10,000 foot level, and finished at Edith Creek Basin near Paradise Lodge, at 5,400 feet elevation. The race was held from 1934 to 1942, and after the war from 1946 to 1948. The Seattle Post Intelligencer sponsored the race to help advance skiing in the Northwest, and avidly promoted it. P.I. reporter Royal Brougham described the race as the “Kandahar of the Northwest,” and the “Kentucky Derby of downhill racing.”<sup>35</sup>

The first race featured a mass start, a geschmozzel, with all the competitors starting at the same time, and the first to the finish line won. In later races, competitors started individually at

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<sup>35</sup> Galvin, Dave, *The “Silver Skis” Races on Mt. Rainier*, Sahalie Historical Note #11, Sahalie.org; *Silver Skis Race*, <http://www.alpenglow.org/ski-history/subjects/S.html>.

timed intervals five minutes apart.



Women's mass start in the 1934 Silver Skis Race. Seattle Times, April 23, 1934 (page 14).

Wolf Bauer, a long-time Northwest skier, described the start of the 1934 race in an interview by Lowell Skoog years later.

The first Silver Skis race had a mass start and just three control gates, at Anvil Rock, McClure Rock and Panorama Point. Loudspeakers were put up at Paradise and an announcer called the action. With the mass start, it was just like a horse race. After a fast schuss at the start, the racers hit washboards and all but few leaders fell. Wolf fell and broke a ski, which was held together by a homemade steel edge he had installed by a machinist. Don Fraser, a cross-country skier, won the race on a pair of jumping skis... Those were rip-roaring days.

A biography of Bauer described his race in 1934. "In the 1934 Silver Skis, a stampede of a race

down Mount Rainier, he had the lead when he did a high-speed somersault. He broke a ski and lost both poles and his goggles but still managed to finish fifth in a field of 60.”<sup>36</sup>

The race was nationally known, attracted many of the country’s best skiers, and was recognized for its challenges and difficulties.

The course, beginning below Muir cabin, at an altitude of close to 11,000 feet, affords probably the longest, also probably the most strenuous, down-mountain race in North America. It has height, distance, fall galore with rock exposure in varying degree along and through the run. Added to these, snow conditions may give the racer everything he ever heard of and a few new problems if this is his first experience on high Cascadian terrain. He may - and probably will - start on hummocky ice at the top, skim down into crust that becomes breakable, hit ice again, then corn snow and end up almost wading through soft stuff in the sun-bathed, sheltered Edith Creek basin at the finish.

From Camp Muir to Edith Creek valley, just above the Paradise settlement, the distance is about three and one-fourth miles, the vertical drop 4,800 feet - not quite a mile. This makes it a “super” downhill course indeed, as F.I.S. specifications of a straight race hold the drop shall be not less than 800 meters nor more than 1,000 meters for men; 600 to 800 meters for women. It is skiing realm reserved for the best and most courageous. And the best skiers of the skiing world have coursed it.<sup>37</sup>

The winner of the Silver Skis race got a permanent trophy that he could keep. The trophies were of the same design from year to year, and were described in the Seattle P.I. on April 20, 1946. "Designed by Carl Zapffe, a Seattle silversmith, the trophy consists of two skis, complete with downhill racing bindings, and done to scale in silver." The writer notes that "each winner of the classic keeps the trophy forever."<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Galvin, Dave, *Sahalie Historical Note #11, The “Silver Skis Races” on Mount Rainier.*

<sup>37</sup> McNeil, Fred H., *The Death of Sigurd Hall*, American Ski Annual, 1940 - 41, page 40, summarized at <http://alpenglow.org/ski-history/notes/period/asa/asa-1940.html#asa-1940-p38>.

<sup>38</sup> *N.W. Top Stars Seek Silver Skis Today*, by Mike Donohoe, Seattle P.I. on 20 April 1946.



Silver Skis Cup awarded to the winner of the race. This cup, from the 1942 race, was won by Matt Broze of the Seattle Ski Club. Photo from Matt Broze, Jr.

The 1934 race, the first year it was held, was won by local skier Don Fraser in his first of two victories in the event. *Fraser Wins Ski Race by Mere Inches*, wrote Royal Brougham in the Seattle Post Intelligencer of April 23, 1934, in 10 minutes, 49.6 seconds, finishing just ahead of Carlton Wiegel. The photo caption says that sixty-four skiers started and forty-three finished, while the article says that sixty started and forty-four finished. Marguerite Strizek won the women's event

and Paul Sceva Jr. won the junior race. One injury was reported, a fractured jaw sustained by Ben Thompson in a collision with another racer below Anvil Rock.<sup>39</sup>

The Silver Skis race attracted serious competitors from all over the country, and Norwegians competed in most of the races. Norwegians Ole Tverdal and Roy Nerland entered the 1934 race, finishing 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>. Hjalmar Hvam from Portland placed eighth in 1935, and won the race in 1936, a year when he was the best four-way skier in the U.S. and he won the Four-Way competition at Mt. Baker against stiff international competition. In 1935 and 1936, Hvam won 12 straight downhill races, and in 1971, he was inducted into the U.S. National Hall of Fame. Olav Ulland was fifth in the 1938 Silver Skis race, and Olaf Rodegard placed high in many silver skis races.<sup>40</sup>

There was great anticipation for the 1938 Silver Skis race scheduled in late March. Hans Schroll, the Austrian who won the race in 1935 setting a course record, would compete against Hjalmar Hvam, a Norwegian immigrant from Portland who won the race in 1936, Olav Ulland, and Ole Tverdal and others, although Ulland and Tverdal had not competed in downhill events the entire year, having focused on jumping. Sigurd Hall entered the Silver Skis race for the first time.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> <http://www.alpenglow.org/ski-history/notes/news/spi/spi-silver-skis.html>.

<sup>40</sup> Raaum, Gustav, *Scandinavian's Influence in the History of Ski Jumping in the Northwest*.

<sup>41</sup> Olav Ulland immigrated to Seattle from Norway in December 1937, "being loaned to Washington skiers by the Norwegian Ski Federation," and was hired by the Seattle Ski Club and Leavenworth Winter Sports Club to teach skiing and ski jumping. Ulland was a famous ski jumper from Kongsberg, Norway, then the ski-jumping capital of the world. Ulland began jumping by age 4. He competed for Norway from 1929 to 1936, placing high in a number of times in the Holmenkollen, and set a hill record of 50 ½ meters in 1930. He won a number of titles in the early 1930s, and was on the Norwegian Olympic team in 1932, although he was hurt and did not compete. Ulland was the first to break the 100-meter mark by jumping 103 meters at Ponte di Legno, Italy, in 1935. As a coach, Ulland took the Italian team to the 1936 Olympics in Germany. Ulland became a mainstay of ski jumping in the Northwest, competing and coaching for decades. Ulland later formed Osborn & Ulland, a sporting goods store in Seattle with Scott Osborn who had raced for the University of Washington. He coached the U.S. team at the 1956 Olympics in Italy and the 1958 World Championships in Finland. Ulland was chief of jumping competitions at the 1960 Olympics at Squaw Valley, Calif., and an International Ski Federation jumping judge. Ulland, who won his last



However, the race was cancelled because of high winds, disappointing a crowd of 8,400, the largest since 9,000 spectators attended the 1935 National Downhill and Slalom championships and Olympic tryouts on Mt. Rainier. One racer said the flying snow was like a wall, it was flying so hard “that it broke my glasses. When I tried to start down one of those steep rolls just below Anvil Rock (9,500 feet), the wind hit my stomach so hard I actually had to pole.” A single slalom race was held instead, which was won by Hjalmar Hvam of the Cascade Ski Club of Portland. After the race, Olav Ulland and Hjalmar Hvam entertained the crowd by doing a side by side flip on their skis.<sup>42</sup>



Olav Ulland & Hjalmar Hvam, Mt. Rainier, 1938. Picture courtesy of Tacoma Public Library, D7150.

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senior ski-jumping championship at age 52, continued to jump until he was 60. He was inducted into the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1981. *Seattle Ski Club*, American Ski Annual, 1946, <http://hyak.net/lost/seattleskiclub.html>.

<sup>42</sup> *Skiers Due for Practice Runs at Rainier Today, Schroll Here Tomorrow, He Races Sunday*, Seattle Times, March 23, 1938 (page 18); *Muir Race Hangs in Ai, Skiers Almost Blown off Mountain*, Seattle Times, March 28, 1938 (page 9).

The Silver Skis race was rescheduled for early May 1938, where Sigurd Hall was one of 33 skiers who participated. Hannes Schroll, “the brilliant Austrian ski-master who heads the instruction staff at Yosemite National park, and who in 1935 won the U.S. National championship,” was slated as the number 1 competitor in the race. The 1938 Silver Skis race began at Camp Muir, at the 10,000 foot level on Mt. Rainier, a starting point that had only been used twice before, reached by a strenuous hike 4,500 feet up the mountain with competitors using sealskins on the bottom of their skis. Going down, racers dropped at the rate of 1,424 feet in every mile they ski, one foot in five. The pitch gave racers maximum speed before they traveled 300 yards, and their maximum speed should be “something slightly better than sixty miles an hour.” The racers carefully inspected the race course before the event started, so

they know it by heart...They’ll recount, in their very clear mind’s eye, every pitch and rock garden; every shortcut to added speed; where to make their checks, and where to turn on heat. They’ll know what wax to use for speed, and speed will be their greatest asset in the Camp Muir classic. At least, they’ll hope they know what wax they want. They’ll take a lesson on high speed checking from their piano-legged friend, Schroll. “Point your downhill ski straight at the direction of the flags,” Hannes has already told them. “Check, when you have to, with your uphill ski - but don’t stem.”

According to the Seattle Times, “[t]he Muir race is 3.16 miles long, starts at 10,000 feet elevation, descends Muir glacier in a series of rolling whoops, and bores down the steep face of Panorama Point and down one last breath-taking schuss into Edith Creek Basin, where it comes to stop at 5,400 feet elevation. That’s 4,600 of lost elevation in about five minutes.” Hjalmar Hvam of Portland, another pre-race favorite, who broke his leg jumping a cornice at Mt. Rainier “would have been an even favorite with Schroll for the title,” but he dropped out of the race. 54 junior skiers

would compete, along with nine women.<sup>43</sup>

Hannes Schroll had a phenomenal run down the Silver Skis course in 1938, and thought he had won the race, saying, “I would give ten bottles of champagne, GOOD champagne, to the man who comes down faster than me. Why, I am flying!” However, Schroll owed Don Fraser the ten bottles of champagne, as Fraser “was riding a Buck Rogers rocket ship” over the “powder snow, rutted ice. Fraser - 6 minutes, 12.3 seconds; Schroll 6 minutes, 15.4 seconds.” Fraser had won the first Silver Skis race in 1934, but the field that year wasn’t as talented as in 1938. Carl Neu was third in the 1938 race, Hans Grage was fourth, Olaf Ulland of Kongsberg, Norway, “a great jumper but new to downhill racing,” was fifth. Sigurd Hall finished thirteenth.

The woman’s race was won by Gretchen Kunigk, of the Washington Ski Club, beating Virginia Bowden of the Washington Ski Club in a race that was initially postponed because of wet and cold weather. It was rescheduled at a lower warmer level, but began to snow again as soon as the race started and “all four had a tough time finding their way to the finish gate.” Gretchen later married Don Fraser and became one of the world’s best skiers, winning gold and silver medals in the 1948 Olympic Games in St. Moritz, Switzerland.<sup>44</sup>

### **Hall Enters a Ski Jumping Event as a Class B Competitor**

In December 1938, Sigurd competed in his second jumping event of which there is a record, the Seattle Ski Club’s pre-season jumping tournament at Snoqualmie Pass, on its new “small”

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<sup>43</sup> *Ski Racers Memorizing Muir Run for Tomorrow, 47 Men Taking Long Climb to Start of Trail*, Seattle Times, March 26, 1938 (page 10); *33 Men Entered in Muir Ski Run; Hvam out with Broken Leg, so List is Reduced*, Seattle Times, April 26, 1938 (page 18).

<sup>44</sup> *Fraser Speeds to Victory in Rainier Event*, Seattle Times, May 2, 1938 (page 15); Lundin, *Washington Skiers in the 1936 and 1948 Winter Olympics*, HistoryLink Essay 10786.

training hill “just off the crest of the highway at the crest of the divide...not 500 feet from the summit,” which was designed for one hundred foot jumps. This jump was smaller than the “Big Jump” at Beaver Lake on which Class A and B competitions were ordinarily held, so the jumping classes were revised. Hall competed as a Class C jumper on this hill the prior winter.<sup>45</sup>

Hermod Bakke of Leavenworth, former Class A champion, was a late addition to the tournament. Sigurd Hall entered the Class B event, the novice division, showing that his jumping experience was limited. Leif Flak won the tournament, jumping 80 and 85 feet, beating Hermod Bakke. Olaf Ulland, an F.I.S. instructor, meaning he was no longer an amateur, jumped “outside the competition,” and had distances of 82 and 87 feet, which would have won the Class A competition. Sigurd Hall placed fourth in the Class B competition.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> The Seattle Ski Club was formed in 1929, by Norwegian ski jumpers. The club constructed a ski jump at Beaver Lake off of Snoqualmie Pass, and built a lodge in 1931. The Beaver Lake jump was said to have the “sheerest pitch of any in America,” and was “so steep none but the best will attempt it.” Ken Binns, the Seattle Times ski writer, described the club’s ski jump which took advantage of the natural terrain. “The architects who packed the course with stiff banks of snow weren’t interested in degrees horizontal. They chose the most violent pitch on the mountain-side at Summit, built a log take-off, then began the more delicate process of anticipating where a good skier should land. Having discovered that point, a some-what crucial point if you please, they fooled him. They stepped back about ten paces and built another precipice.” When a jumper reached the point of “the trickery of the architects” while flying off the jump, “[r]ight where he begins to drop they have thoughtfully removed the earth. In the case of Snoqualmie, nature assisted materially by providing another hill. So the skier continues to drop. It is this drop which materially adds yards to the ultimate distance the jumper acquires in his medal-seeking.” *Pass Offers Skiers Skill Test Sunday*, Seattle Times, February 25, 1931 (page 20). Beaver Lake was the site of the Seattle Ski Club’s jumping tournaments from 1930 to 1939. Lundin, John, *Milwaukee Ski Bowl, 1938-1950: Revolution in Local Skiing*, HistoryLink.org, Essay 100601.

<sup>46</sup> *Ski Jumping Season on; Summit Meet Due Today*, Seattle Times, December 11, 1938 (page 36); *Flak Fits Hill, so Leif Captures Ski Jump*, Seattle Times, December 12, 1938 (page 14).

## **VII. SKI SEASON OF 1939 - HALL BECOMES A TOP COMPETITOR**

The ski year of 1938 - 1939 was a break-out one for Sigurd Hall. He participated in national ski races against some of the country's best skiers and did well. He entered jumping events as a novice, perhaps in recognition that he needed to work on his jumping skills to participate in the National Four-Way Championships which would take place in the Northwest in 1940.

Another event of significance in 1939, was that Reidar Andersen, a world-famous ski jumper from Norway, toured the United States, where he entered many tournaments and was welcomed by the skiing community. Reidar was one of a number of famous Norwegian ski jumpers who visited this country to participate in tournaments, such as Birger and Sigmund Ruud who toured the United States in 1938, or moved to this country to live where they dominated ski jumping, such as Alf and Sverre Engen, Olav and Sigurd Ulland, Torger Torkle, and many others. Sigurd mentioned Reidar in several of his communications home in 1939, saying they were at the same tournaments.

Reidar Andersen was an outstanding Nordic-combined skier who won the prestigious King's Cup at the Holmenkollen in Norway three times, making him Norwegian jumping champion in 1936, 1937, and 1938. He competed for Norway in two Olympic Games (1932 and 1936, where he won the bronze medal finishing behind Birger Ruud and Sven Ericksson from Sweden). Reidar set a new international ski jumping distance record in Europe of 344 feet in 1939. Reidar is remembered best in this country for his 1939 tour, where he won every jumping meet he entered. He won 18 ski jumping tournaments in the U.S. and Canada, including the International Championship Tournament at the San Francisco Worlds Fair, and the National Championship

Tournament in St. Paul, Minnesota, where he beat Alf Engen, Gene Wilson, Sverre Fredheim, Walter Bietila, and Sigmund Ulland (the 1938 National Champion). He won the jumping portion of a Nordic Combined competition on Ecker Hill in Utah, beating Olaf Ulland and Alf Engen. Reidar participated in a number of tournaments in the Northwest in 1939, including the National Four-Way Competition in Sun Valley, the National Downhill and Slalom Championships at Mount Hood, and a jumping tournament at Mount Baker in April 1939, where the Seattle Times said he “is recognized as the world’s greatest jumper. He has defeated Birger Ruud and Ashjorn Ruud repeatedly, and jumpers don’t get much better.” Reidar competed the Silver Skis Race on Mount Rainier later in April 1939, where he finished third and was one of nine skiers who broke the course record that had been set in 1936. Reidar spent World War II in Norway where he was a member of the famous “Snoballen” ski troops. In 1948, Reidar came to the U.S. as a Norwegian Olympic coach and top combined event specialist to compete and instructor in ski jumping and cross-country events in a seven week tour to promote Nordic skiing sponsored by the Eastern Ski Association. In 1971, he was elected to the National Ski Hall of Fame, and is also a member of the American Ski Jumping Hall of Fame. He died on December 15, 1991, in Norway.<sup>47</sup>

Reidar fell while racing in the downhill race in Sun Valley in March 1939, and dislocated his shoulder, an injury that limited him the rest of the season. When he was interviewed by the Seattle Times before the Fjeld tournament, Reidar made some comments that were eerily prescient of Sigurd Hall’s tragic death in the Silver Skis race of 1940.

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<sup>47</sup> [http://www.skihall.com/index.php? a=document&doc\\_id=11&id=17;](http://www.skihall.com/index.php? a=document&doc_id=11&id=17;)  
[http://www.americanskijumping.com.](http://www.americanskijumping.com.;); Anson, *Jumping Through Time*, pages 85, 108, 130. A film clip of Reider ski jumping in 1939 is part of a sports montage found at [http://www.efootage.com/stock-footage/63471/1939\\_Sports\\_Montage/](http://www.efootage.com/stock-footage/63471/1939_Sports_Montage/).

This downhill racing business is getting crazy...Look at Mount Hood. Look at Sun Valley. High speed courses, both of them. You might break your neck. I'll tell you the right competitions - jumping and slalom racing. Slalom gives you balance. Jumping gives you the true thrill of skiing.<sup>48</sup>



**REIDAR ANDERSEN**  
*He lauds Times Ski School*

Seattle Times, April 6, 1939  
(page 17).



Reidar Andersen 1936.

### **Northwest Tournaments**

At the Yakima Ski Club's tournament held in January 1939, Don Amick ("Bullet Don") of the Washington Ski Club won the downhill race on "a 45-degree, icy course" by a "wide margin." Sigurd Ulland of the Seattle Ski Club, called "a vastly improved racer" by the Seattle Times, took

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<sup>48</sup> *Ski Star Visits, Andersen Will Jump Sunday*, Seattle Times, April 6, 1939 (page 17).

second. Don Fraser won the slalom race, Don Amick was second, and Hall finished 17th.<sup>49</sup>

In February 1939, Roy Nerland and Sigurd Hall helped the Seattle Ski Club beat Sahalie Ski Club in a two club tournament, competing in downhill and slalom races, with Hall winning the slalom race. Later in the month, skiing for the Fjeld Ski Club of Conway, Sigurd finished sixth in the Skyliners cross-country tournament held in Bend, Oregon, an 11-mile course, in a “blinding snow-storm.” His Fjeld Ski Club teammate, Bertil Mortenson, won the event.<sup>50</sup>

In March 1939, Sigurd participated in the Mount Baker ski tournament, which would determine who would travel to Sun Valley, Idaho the following weekend to compete in the National Four -Way Open Championships, the big race of the year. Several new champions were selected for the trip: Carl Neu of the University of Washington, who won the slalom, was third in the downhill, and won the combined title; Paul H. Sceva, Jr. of the University of Washington, who won the downhill; Don Fraser, defending Northwest downhill champion, who took second in the downhill; Virginia Bowden of the Washington Ski Club, who won the women’s combined; and “Sigurd Hall, Seattle Ski Club youth, who has improved tremendously in the last year,” who placed second in the slalom.<sup>51</sup>

### **National Four-Way Open at Sun Valley**

The National Four-Way Open was held at Sun Valley the last weekend in March 1939. Ten

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<sup>49</sup> *Don Amick is Class of Yakima Ski Tournament, Icy Run Fails to Halt Star in Downhill Test*, Seattle Times, January 23, 1939 (page 15).

<sup>50</sup> *Nerland Helps Seattle Ski Club Beat Sahalie*, Seattle Times, February 9, 1939 (page 15); *Skyliners’ Ski Grind Won by B. Mortsensen*, Seattle Times, February 12, 1939 (page 31).

<sup>51</sup> *Baker Ski Winners Head for Sun Valley Tournament, Neu Takes Combined Championship; Sceva is Downhill Victor*, Seattle Times, March 20, 1939 (page 16).



Northwest skiers had been selected to compete in Sun Valley based on their results at the Mount Baker tournament, including Sigurd Hall.<sup>52</sup> Ski instructors were allowed to compete against the “amateurs” in the tournament, but separate prizes were awarded to the amateurs. Four-way competitions were tests of the entrants’ overall skiing ability and versatility, since they competed in downhill, slalom, cross-country and jumping events. The leading contenders for the title included Dick Durrance from Dartmouth College, Raidar Andersen from Norway, Alf Engen of Sun Valley, and Toni Matt and Friedl Pfeifer of Germany.

In Sun Valley’s “arduous 18-kilometer” cross-country course (the “langlauf”), ski instructors Walter Prager of Dartmouth finished first, Peter Radacher of Sun Valley second, and Heinz Von Allmen of Quebec third. They were followed by “amateurs,” Reidar Andersen from Norway and Dick Durrance of Dartmouth. Reidar won the amateur cross-country title, even though he had not done a cross-country race in five years and had to race on borrowed skis. Seattle’s Sigurd Hall finished tenth in the cross-country race. Sun Valley’s Alf Engen “dropped his bruised body into bed early yesterday after he fell through a bridge during the langlauf,” and finished fourth among the amateurs.

The “dangerous” downhill course started at the top of the 9,200 foot Bald Mountain, “and dropped 3,100 feet through thick timber in slightly more than two miles.” Spectators for the downhill race held the second day of competition included actors Gary Cooper and his wife Mary Pickford. The final day of the tournament included the slalom race and the jumping contest. Friedl

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<sup>52</sup> Those competing in the four-way events included Don Fraser, Don Amick and Paul Gilbreath from the Washington Ski Club. Sigurd Hall from the Seattle Ski Club; Ragnar Qvale from the University of Washington; Henry Seidelhuber from the Penguin Ski Club; and Olaf Rodegard of the Cascade Ski Club. The University of Washington’s Paul Sceve, Jr. and Seattle Ski Club’s Bert Mortensen competed in individual events.

Pfeifer, Sun Valley's coach, won the slalom. Alf Engen won the jumping event, followed by Gordon Wren of Steamboat Springs, Colorado. Ragnar Qvale of the University of Washington was the highest of the skiers from the Seattle area in the jumping competition, placing sixth. Reidar Andersen missed a gate in the "grueling downhill", dislocated his shoulder, was disqualified, and scratched from the slalom and jumping events. "No one questioned it; had he been able to compete in the jumping, he almost certainly would have won it."

"Little" Pete Radacher, a Sun Valley ski instructor, won the overall four-way title. He received "recognition as the best all-around skier in America," after competing in cross-country, downhill, slalom and jumping at the "strenuous" Sun Valley three-day tournament. Walter Prager, the Dartmouth ski coach, finished second in the four-way competition. Dick Durrance from Dartmouth won the amateur four-way competition, was third in the overall four-way competition, but yielded his title in the Harriman Cup International Open to Radacher. Alf Engen was fourth in the four-way event. Erna Steuri, "a slender Swiss miss," won the woman's competition. Sigurd Hall finished 11<sup>th</sup> in the four-way combined competition, was the highest finisher of the Northwest skiers, and did well in his first exposure to national competitors. Grace Carter Lindley, formerly of the Washington Ski Club and member of the 1936 U.S. Olympic team, finished tenth in the woman's slalom, and Dorothy Hoyt of the Washington Ski Club and member of the F.I.S. team the prior year, finished 15<sup>th</sup>.<sup>53</sup>

### **National Downhill & Slalom Championships at Mt. Hood**

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<sup>53</sup> *Dick Durrance, Andersen Lead at Sun Valley*, Seattle Times, March 25, 1939 (page 10). *Peter Radacher, Sun Valley Ski Teacher, Wins U.S. Open Crown, Dick Durrance, Dartmouth Ace, Tops Amateurs*, Seattle Times, March 27, 1939 (page 15).

The National Downhill and Slalom Championships, which were back in the Northwest for the third time in four years, were held at Mount Hood, Oregon, in early April 1939, sponsored by the Cascade Ski Club. The event would serve to select the International Ski Federation team that would compete in Europe the following year, in both F.I.S. sponsored races and the 1940 Olympic Games.<sup>54</sup>

The Pacific Northwestern Ski Association picked 18 skiers from Seattle area ski clubs to participate in the tournament, an “unprecedented” number according to the Seattle Times, some traveling from Sun Valley where they had raced in the national four-way ski championships, and others coming from Paradise Valley where they had been training. Seattle area racers included Don Fraser and Don Amick, and six others from the Washington Ski Club; three from the Penguin Ski Club; six from the University of Washington, and one from the Seattle Ski Club, Sigurd Hall. More than 125 men and women would compete, constituting “the greatest field of great skiers the West Coast ever saw.” “Women’s competition will reach the highest plane in history at the tournament.” The entry list had so many famous skiers, it was difficult trying to calculate who had the best chance of winning, according to the Seattle Times. America’s powerful women skiers would be there, along with the Swiss team arriving from the Sun Valley races. Sun Valley sent Friedl Pfeiffer and Peter Radacher, who were tops in world championship skiing in Europe. Freidl Pfeiffer, racing coach at Sun Valley, was one of the favorites, having won the “Gold K” in Europe’s famous Kandahar race twice. Dartmouth’s great ski team headed by Dick Durrance would be there, along

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<sup>54</sup> *Two National Competitions, Northwest Lot*, Seattle Times, November 18, 1938 (page 17).

with a “distinguished Swiss delegation of women.”<sup>55</sup>

European ski stars Friedl Pfeiffer and Erna Steuri won the men’s and women’s American Slalom Championships at Mt. Hood. Both were F.I.S. amateurs, meaning they taught skiing for a living. In the U.S., “F.I.S. amateurs” (as ski instructors are known in Europe) compete in the same race, but for different championship awards, against true “amateurs.” F.I.S. amateurs competed in open championships, while the others competed in amateur championships. Pfeiffer, a racing instructor from Austria who had been brought to America by Sun Valley, “proved conclusively” that he was one of the world’s greatest skiers. Dick Durrance became national amateur slalom champion, finishing five seconds behind Pfeiffer. Doris Friedrich of Switzerland became the amateur women’s slalom champion. Bob Barto of the University of Washington Ski team finished the highest of the Washington skiers in the slalom, placing tenth, and Don Fraser placed 17<sup>th</sup>. Grace Carter Lindley of Minneapolis, who was a 1936 U.S. Olympic team member from Seattle, finished tenth in the women’s slalom competition.

Toni Matt of St. Anton, Austria won the open title in the National Open downhill skiing championship, beating “the unpredictable Austrian from California,” Hannes Schroll, by 1/10 of a second. Dick Durrance took first in the amateur open combined division, by finishing second in the slalom and fourth in the downhill. Sigurd Hall of the Seattle Ski Club placed highest of the Washington skiers in the downhill, finishing 14<sup>th</sup>, another respectable finish against the best skiers

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<sup>55</sup> Washington Ski Club sent the largest number of skiers - Don Fraser, Don Amick, Paul Gilbreath, Bob Higman, Dorothy Hoyt, Virginia Bowden, Shirley McDonald, and Trudy Jahn. The University of Washington Ski team sent Paul Sceva, Jr., Bob Barto, Carl Neu, Otis Lamson and Ragnar Qvale. The Penguin Ski Club sent LeRoy Caverly, Henry Seidelhuber, Scott Osborne, and Margaret Schjuehle. The Seattle Ski Club sent Sigurd Hall. *Eighteen Seattle Skiers Picked for National Tournament*, Seattle Times, March 16, 1939 (page 27); *Big Meet Lures Seattle Skiers*, Seattle Times, March 25, 1939 (page 19); *National Championships Lure Skiers to Mt. Hood*, Seattle Times, March 31, 1939 (page 31).

in the country. Don Fraser of Seattle and Reidar Andersen of Norway missed control gates in the downhill and were disqualified. Carl Neu and Fredl Pfeiffer wrenched their knees in the downhill and did not finish. Elizabeth Woolsey of Connecticut, captain of the American Women's team, won the women's open and amateur downhill championships, keeping the national downhill championship in this country. Erna Steuri of Switzerland won the slalom and the combined as an F.I.S. amateur. Grace Carter Lindley was seventh in the women's downhill, and her Washington Ski Club teammates, Dorothy Hoyt was ninth, and Shirley McDonald was eleventh.<sup>56</sup>

### **Fjeld Ski Jumping Tournament**

The Fjeld Ski Club of Stanwood held its ski jumping tournament at Mount Baker in early April 1939, featuring Reidar Andersen from Norway, Olav Ulland, one time holder of the world's distance-jumping record, and Tom Mobraaten, the Canadian jumping champion.

Hall entered the Class B competition, showing that he was still a novice ski jumper. He was not in the list of those who scored points, however. The tournament was won by Reidar Andersen from Oslo "as everyone knew he would," as he had "defeated Birger Ruud and Ashjorn Ruud repeatedly and jumpers don't get much better."<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> *European Ski Stars Win American Championships*, Seattle Times, April 2, 1939 (page 18); *Matt Durrance Capture National Skiing Titles*, Seattle Times, April 3, 1939 (page 12).

<sup>57</sup> *Fjeld Ski Club Jumping Tournament Draws Stalwarts, Andersen Tops Entry List at Baker Sunday*, Seattle Times, April 7, 1939 (page 21); *Andersen Victor as Ski Jumping Season Winds Up*, Seattle Times, April 10, 1939 (page 13).

**SPORTS**  
HENRY V. MACLEOD  
EDITOR

## ANDERSEN VICTOR AS SKI JUMPING SEASON WINDS UP

REIDAR ANDERSEN RIDES SKIS TO VICTORY



### NORWAY ACE IN BRILLIANT FORM AT FJELD MEET

By **KEN BENNE**

"This being the time of year when ordinary citizens look at skiers with astonishment and inquire, "Say! When does your confounded season end?" it becomes necessary to tell all, briefly:

The ski jumping season ended yesterday at the Field Ski Club, two miles and a half below Mount Baker, with Reidar Andersen of Oslo, Norway, winning the Class A competition brilliantly, as everyone knew he would.

The downhill-slalom season ends next Saturday and Sunday at Mount Rainier with the running of the Silver Skis, sponsored by The Seattle Post-Intelligencer and conducted by the Washington Ski Club.

The ski-carnival season ends on Sunday later—April 23—with the running of the Hutton Handicap, a couple's race at Mount Baker conducted by the Hutton Sliding and Social Club.

Taken in concise order:

Field Ski Club and the Mount Baker Ski Club combined to present Andersen, Olav Ulland, Tom Mohrstedt, Ole Tverdal & Co., in jumps on the Field Club's big hill, and Andersen, with jumps of 173 and 184 feet and 212.6 points, ran away with the meet. Ulland, jumping 164 and 175 feet, scored 213.3 points. Mohrstedt, of Vancouver, jumped 152 and 176 feet for 208.45 points.

Olaf Lökken of Darrington won the senior event without competition . . . and John Shaw of the Vancouver Ski Club won in Class B, with a much-improved Henry Seifelsuber of the Penguin Ski Club, Seattle, second with 205.5.

The results:

Reidar Andersen of Oslo, Norway, clears the high takeoff on the Field Ski Club jumping hill—a hill over which, yesterday, he jumped 173 and 184 feet to win the Field Club championship. Andersen is recognized as the world's greatest jumper. He has defeated Birger Ruud and Ashjorn Ruud repeatedly, and jumpers don't get much better. Next Saturday he competes in the Silver Skis downhill race at Mount Rainier.

Seattle Times, April 10, 1939 (page 13)

### Silver Skis Race

In April 1939, the Silver Skis Race on Mt. Rainier was sponsored by the Washington Ski Club, and it attracted a top-flight group of competitors who had raced at Sun Valley and Mt. Hood earlier in the month. Norwegians Olav Ulland, Olav Rodegard, Bert Mortensen, Reidar Andersen and Sigurd Hall competed. Don Fraser was the defending champion, skiing in the No. 1 position, leading 29 "high-calibred [sic] men." Peter Radacher of Sun Valley had been training for more than a week on the course and was the favorite. "The little Austrian, one of the world's greatest skiers, has been memorizing every inch of the way, calculating the bumps he must clear, the cornices he

can cut, and the short-cuts he can make on the way down.” Sigurd Hall would ski in 8<sup>th</sup> position just behind Olav Ulland.

Peter Radacher, “the Sun Valley ace,” won the Silver Skis race on April 15, 1939, by “boiling down it in an unbelievably straight line” in a record pace of 4 minutes 51.8 seconds. Hannes Schroll had a faster time in 1935, although he was a ski instructor and the race was only for pure amateurs. Radacher “boiled down in a taut crouch over the ever-dropping rolls from Muir; straightened to rest aching legs as he sped at better than 40 miles an hour from McClure’s Rock to the ‘Pan’ descent; then went into another far-forward lean as he shot down Panorama’s steep slope and into Edith Creek Basin.” The time of the slowest finisher of the race in 1939, was faster than Don Fraser’s winning time in 1934.

Arthur Schluter of Sun Valley was second, and Reidar Andersen of Norway was third. Don Fraser of the Washington Ski Club finished seventh, Matt Broz of the Seattle Ski Club was eighth, and Sigurd Hall of the Seattle Ski Club was tenth. Olav Ulland, a Norwegian ski jumper, the first person to jump over 100 meters who immigrated to the U.S. in late 1938 to teach ski jumping, finished sixteenth, showing his versatility as an all around skier. Dorothy Hoyt of the Washington Ski Club “was far and away the most brilliant woman competitor,” and won the women’s downhill. At the end of the competition, Olaf Ulland and Reidar Andersen participated in a jumping exhibition for the spectators.<sup>58</sup>

### **Indoor Ski Jumping Tournament - Fall 1939**

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<sup>58</sup> *Title Defender to Lead Parade at Mt. Rainier*, Seattle Times, April 14, 1939 (page 25); *Radacher Wins Silver Skis Run, Sun Valley Ace Tops Fast Field in Record Time*, Seattle Times, April 16, 1939 (page 21).

Seattle skiers got a chance to get excited about the upcoming ski season by attending an Indoor Ski Tournament at the Civic Ice Arena in November 1939, offering matinee and evening shows on Saturday and Sunday, November 10 and 11: general admission \$ .42, children \$ .15. The tournament, sponsored by the Washington and Seattle Ski Clubs, offered ski jumping and slalom competitions. “Carpenters had erected, on the Stadium side of the Ice Arena, a spidery scaffold. It rose to the roof of the enormous building, and from its peak, cascading down toward a canvas-covered window, was the in-run of a ski jump.” “The hill is splendid,” according to Peter Hostmark, president of the Pacific Northwestern Ski Association. Over 11,000 attended the two day event. Olav Ulland of the Seattle Ski Club dominated the jumping competition, Nordal Kaldahl of Wells, B.C. was second, and Ole Tverson of the Seattle Ski Club was third. Friedl Pfeifer, Sun Valley’s racing coach, dominated the indoor slalom competition, giving “a brilliant slalom demonstration” in the first night’s competition, with Max Sarchett, director of the Times Free Ski School at the Milwaukee Ski Bowl and Carl Neu of the University of Washington tied for second. Pfeifer won aggregate slalom honors, but Sigurd Hall of Seattle came back strong, finishing second in the slalom, 1.3 seconds behind Pfeifer, which “on a hill that length was a tremendous margin.” Losing to Pfeifer was no disgrace, as he was one of the best slalom racers in the world.<sup>59</sup>

After the competition finished, Ulland did a somersault off the ski jump on jumping skis, saying “I’ll do a somersault if you’ll buy me a new pair of skis every time I break one.” Ulland

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<sup>59</sup> Freidl Pfeifer was born in St. Anton, Austria where he learned skiing under Hannes Schneider, the famous ski instructor. He taught for Hannes Schneider for 15 years, and won the famed Arlburg-Kandahar downhill and slalom championships in 1936. He moved to Sun Valley, Idaho in 1938, to direct its ski school. Alta Historical Society. *Ski-Jumpers “Nuts” Say Fans, Indoor Tourney Resumes Today; Ulland Winner*, Seattle Times, November 10, 1939 (page 26); *Ulland, Pfeifer Lead in Indoor Meet, 5,000 Applaud Performers at Ice Arena Show*, Seattle Times, November 11, 1939 (page 9); *The Timer Has the Last Word, & Ulland Leads Indoor Skiers*, Seattle Times, November 13, 1939 (page 19).



“performed veritable miracles” with his somersault off the high jump in front of a projecting girder 18 inches above his head, which his ski hit every time he jumped.



## **VIII. 1940 OLYMPIC GAMES ARE CANCELLED BECAUSE OF WW II, ENDING HALL'S PLANS TO VISIT HIS FAMILY IN NORWAY**

Sigurd Hall had not visited Norway or seen his family since he came to the United States in 1929. His plan was to try and make the 1940 U.S. Olympic skiing team that would compete in Europe, and arrange a trip home to Norway to visit relatives as part of the competition. However, world events interfered and the 1940 Winter Olympics were cancelled. Sigurd was not able to see his family again before his death in the spring of 1940.

Preparations began in 1939 to select the U.S. Olympic team for the 1940 winter games. The National Ski Association decided that American Olympic Team would be the team selected for the Federation Internationale de Ski (F.I.S.) Championships in Norway in February 1940. In April 1939, the National Ski Association announced the list of skiers who were eligible to compete for the F.I.S. team. There were six skiers with a Seattle connection on the list; Grace Lindley, Dorothy Hoyt, Shirley McDonald, Bob Barto, Peter Garrett and Bobby Blatt. Sigurd Hall had not yet made his reputation in downhill ski racing.<sup>60</sup>

Union Pacific Railroad's Ski Resort at Sun Valley would play a major role in preparing the F.I.S. team for the event in Norway and the 1940 Olympics. Dick Durrance, then working for the Sun Valley Resort, came to Seattle in August 1939, to discuss the ski resort's plans for the team, and to talk to two Seattle candidates for the American team, Don Fraser, who had been on the 1936 U.S. Olympic ski team, and Peter Garrett, a Garfield High School graduate who had enrolled in Yale University.

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<sup>60</sup> *U.S. Eligibles Named*, Seattle Times, April 3, 1939 (page 12).

Sun Valley, the Union Pacific's Idaho resort, wants to employ the eighteen first-string American skiers next winter - legitimate employment too - and at the same time give them training under Friedl Pfeiffer and Peter Radacher, two great European racers, for the more strenuous skiing they'll get in the F.I.S. meet.

Durrance, along with five Northwest skiers had been on the 1936 U.S. Olympic ski team (Tacoma sisters Ethlynn "Skit" Smith and Ellis-Ayr Smith; Grace Carter; Darroch Crookes; and Don Fraser). Durrance said when the 1936 U.S. Olympic team went to Germany, they learned that

a hastily-recruited ski team had no chance against the Europeans....They were training for a year. We had only a few weeks. If the team can go to Sun Valley, however, and work on the Bald Mountain downhill course, which needs a lot of work, it can get in condition before the first big snow..and then we can dig in and really learn some skiing before going to Norway.<sup>61</sup>

Northwest skiers Gretchen Kunigk and Don Fraser were married in October 1939, uniting two of the most successful Northwest ski racers. Both Gretchen and Don were invited to be members of the American F.I.S. teams to race in Norway. However, international events intervened which led to the cancellation of the 1940 F.I.S. event and Olympic games after a series of twists and turns.<sup>62</sup>

In 1936, both the 1940 winter and summer Olympic games were awarded to Tokyo, Japan. Japan forfeited the Olympic games on July 16, 1938, after the second Sino-Japanese War broke out. The 1940 Summer Games were then awarded to Helsinki, Finland, and the 1940 Winter Games were awarded to St. Moritz, Switzerland.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> *Durrance is Visitor, U.S. Ski Team Invited to Sun Valley*, Seattle Times, August 30, 1939 (page 19).

<sup>62</sup> *Miss Kunigk to be Bride of Don Fraser*, Seattle Times, August 30, 1939 (page 15); *Don Fraser Sun Valley Sports Boss*, Seattle Times, December 9, 1939 (page 9).

<sup>63</sup> *1949 & 1944 Olympics*, [www.tsn.ca/olympics/feature/?fid=10267](http://www.tsn.ca/olympics/feature/?fid=10267); *1940 Summer Olympics*, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1940\_Summer\_Olympics.

However, a dispute arose over the eligibility of professional ski instructors to participate in the Winter Games. The International Olympic Committee ruled that ski teachers were professionals and could not participate in the Olympics, which allowed only true amateurs to enter. The International Ski Federation insisted that its ski instructors were amateurs, and in Europe they could enter competitions with amateur status. In the United States, ski instructors were “considered as bordering on the professional class,” and in competitions, they entered as Federation International de Ski ( F.I.S.) amateurs, while others were “pure” amateurs. There were separate awards given for amateur championships, while instructors competed for open championships.<sup>64</sup> As a result, skiing was eliminated as a competitive sport at the 1940 Olympics, and it became an exhibition sport. When Switzerland refused to host the Winter Games unless skiing was changed back to a regular competitive event, the Winter Games were transferred to Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany, the site of the 1936 Winter Olympics, in spite of Germany’s earlier protests that it might not participate since “the importance of the Winter Games as Olympic competition had been reduced greatly through elimination of skiing.” Germany agreed to host the Winter Olympics, but after the I.O.C. ruled that a belligerent country could not hold the Olympic games, the German Olympic Committee cancelled the games in November 1939, saying “Germany’s proposals for bringing about world peace were declined by the English and French governments and therefore the war must continue. Germany returns the commission to conduct the games to the International Olympic Committee.” The Seattle Times lamented the loss of the Olympic Games because of war in Europe.

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<sup>64</sup> Gretchen Kunigk Fraser experienced this problem after she was hired to double for Sonja Henie in skiing scenes when *Sun Valley Serenade* was filmed in Sun Valley in 1941. She had also doubled for Henie in the film *Thin Ice* in 1940. Her motion picture work changed her status as a racer - she “will be a professional, eligible only as an F.I.S. amateur.” To address this issue, Northwest delegates to the National Ski Association were instructed to propose that all U.S. tournaments be open events under F.I.S. rules. *Sitzmarks: and Remarks*, by Chick Garrett, Seattle Times, October 14, 1940 (page 23), and February 15, 1941 (page 8).

The Olympic Games, carrying the highest ideals of sports and dedicated to creating better understanding among the peoples of earth, have been knocked from pillar to post by the very thing they seek to prevent - war. Germany, the site of the 1936 Games, has become the center of war preparations. Tokyo, to which was entrusted the 1940 Olympiad, tossed aside the Olympic torch because Japan is at war with China. The Games, shunted like an unwanted orphan, were transferred to Finland, with the Winter Olympics to be held in Germany. Now war in Europe, so stiflingly near, probably would mean cancellation of the Games. The fine young men who represented the European nations in the Games in Berlin now are carrying rifles, awaiting the word to shoot one another. Muscles trained for sports will be turned into slaughter. And the cloud of war threatens to snuff out the flame of the Olympic torch, symbol of the brotherhood of man. The day soon may come when we will be confronted by these unbelievable words: "No games: war."<sup>65</sup>

The Summer Olympic Games in Helsinki were also cancelled in April 1940, because of WW II. In the middle of this conflict, the 1944 Summer Olympics were awarded to London, and the 1944 Winter Olympics to Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy. Those too were cancelled because of the war.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> *Germans May not Enter Winter Olympic Games, Elimination of Skiing Lessens Nazi Interest*, Seattle Times, May 11, 1939 (page 32); *Matt, Durrance Capture National Skiing Titles*, Seattle Times, April 3, 1939 (page 12); *Germans May Not Enter Winter Olympic Games*, Seattle Times, May 11, 1939 (page 32); *London is Given 1944 Olympic Games*, Seattle Times, June 9, 1939 (page 25); *Reich Orders Games Return to Committee*, Seattle Times, November 24, 1939 (page 19); *No Games; War!*, by Henry MacLeod, Sports Editor, Seattle Times, August 27, 1939 (page 14).

<sup>66</sup> Finland continued to plan for the 1940 Summer Olympic Games through the winter of 1940. In March 1940, the International Olympic Committee said a final decision on the question of staging the Olympic Games in Helsinki was "being given serious consideration." There were technical difficulties but "the main question was whether enough people would attend to justify the heavy expenditures." The decision was for the Finnish Olympic Committee who had information about the "extent of foreign participation," since Europe's belligerents might not be included in the games. In the end, Finland had to cancel the Games. On April 4, 1939, "Finland, battered by war but unswerving in her fixed purposes, finally had been compelled, against her desires, to decide it cannot hold the Olympic Games next year." The postponement became necessary "because of the abnormal situation prevailing between the great powers." Ex-President Herbert Hoover suggested that American colleges contribute to the Finnish Relief Fund to reimburse that country for the \$8 million it had spent preparing for the Games. There was great disappointment in the United States, and consideration was given to holding this country's Olympic tryouts to "reward hundreds of star performers who have been aiming for three years at Olympic championships." The Seattle Times agreed, saying "no war going on should force this country to give up its athletes' chance to show the world how good they would have been in the 1940 Olympics if there had been any 1940 Olympics." *Finns Consider Olympic Games; To Decide Soon, Belligerents May be Excluded*, Seattle Times, March 15, 1940 (page 26); *Europe's War, Hour by Hour*, Seattle Times, April 4, 1940 (page 6) *Olympic Games Trials Will be Held After All*, Seattle Times, April 15, 1940 (page 21); *The World of Sports*, Seattle Times, April 5, 1940 (page 25).

Sigurd Hall's chance to visit his family in Norway was lost as a result of all these international events. Since Germany invaded Norway in the spring of 1940, any visit home he planned for the winter of 1940, would have been cancelled or cut short.

## IX. SKI SEASON OF 1940

### A. PRELUDE TO FOUR-WAY CHAMPIONSHIPS

#### Summary of Sigurd's 1940 Racing Season Written After his Death

In article written after Hall's accident in the Silver Skis Race of 1940, *The Death of Sigurd Hall* by Fred H. McNeil, published in the American Ski Annual for 1940 - 1941, the author said Sigurd decided to make a move in 1940, to show that he was one of the best competitors in the country. For Hall, "skiing was close to a passion." For a number of years he had been "gaining prestige in competitive circles, notably as a skilled and fearless downhill racer," and his friends believed that 1940 was to be his "year of destiny in skiing." McNeil reported that Hall quit his job in the winter of 1940, to concentrate on training and competition, with a goal of placing high in the National Four-Way Championship competition held in the Northwest in March 1940. However, this is inconsistent with one of Sigurd's letters to his mother where he said he was leaving Sun Valley for a race at Mount Hood the weekend before the Silver Skis Race of 1940, "then home to Seattle where work in waiting." It is more likely that Sigurd took the winter of 1940 off from work, but planned on returning at the end of the racing season.<sup>67</sup>

Hall had a busy racing schedule leading up to the national event. On January 2, 1940, Hall finished tied for second in a giant slalom race sponsored by the Penguin Ski Club at the Milwaukee Ski Bowl; he was second in the Pacific Northwestern Ski Association championship slalom at Yakima in February, falling in the downhill, and finishing sixth in the combined; and he won the

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<sup>67</sup> McNeil's article was summarized by Lowell Skoog in his Alpenglow Ski Mountaineering History Project, <http://www.alpenglow.org/climbing/sigurd-hall-2006/index.html>

combined title at Olympic Peninsula's Deer Park competition in February, taking first in the downhill. At a four-way tournament at Snoqualmie the week before the Nationals, Hall took second in the slalom and jumping competitions, won the cross-country race, and finished sixth in the downhill.

McNeil said "shining in his speciality," Hall led the National Four-Way Championships after winning the downhill ("driving through a snow squall when visibility was almost zero"), and finishing third in the slalom. Hall finished third in the overall competition, after ending up 13<sup>th</sup> in jumping on the Ski Bowl's "huge new A hill," the first time that Hall had ever competed in the Class A jumping category. Hall had always competed in the Class B events as he was relatively inexperienced in ski jumping. Hall was the Pacific Northwestern Ski Association's number one skier based on his finish, and was eligible to go to Sun Valley that spring to compete in the National Downhill and Slalom championships, where McNeil said "he did not fare well. At Sun Valley, Hall suffered a let-down after many weeks of strenuous activity, and he placed 24<sup>th</sup> in the downhill, ninth in the slalom," and he finished 16<sup>th</sup> in the combined. A week later, at Alta, Utah, he won either sixth or seventh in the downhill, depending on which report one believes.

McNeil said the week before the Silver Skis race, Hall finished fifth in a downhill race at Timberline Lodge on Mount Hood, the Far-West Kandahar Tournament, where the weather was worse than the Silver Skis race run on Mt. Rainier, although it was an easier course. Racers faced "bitter cold, snow, driving sleet and rolling fog." Several racers missed a final control gate, "plunged over a 25-foot cornice and thudded near the feet of the timers like thrown sacks of grain," but by "some miracle none was injured seriously." However, the news accounts do not list Sigurd



Hall as having raced in this tournament.<sup>68</sup>

### **Newspaper Reports About the Early Season Tournaments in 1940**

In the Penguin Ski Club's first sanctioned ski tournament, a giant slalom race at the Milwaukee Ski Bowl at Hyak, Sigurd Hall drew the number 1 position and was given the honor of opening the race, which ran from "the top of Rocky Butte and drops to the bottom in a whale of a hurry." However, Harold Smith won the tournament, racing down the mile-long course with a 1,600 foot drop and 25 gates, leading the Penguin Ski Club to a victory in the tournament, beating the University of Washington and Seattle Ski Club. Sigurd Hall of the Seattle Ski Club finished second. 1,360 spectators rode Milwaukee Road special ski trains to the tournament.<sup>69</sup>

In late January 1940, Sigurd Hall of the Seattle Ski Club hurt his leg in a slalom race at the Tacoma Day Winter Sports tournament at Paradise on Mt. Rainier, suffering "a possibly fractured leg," but finished the race to finish 17<sup>th</sup>. The race was won by the University of Washington's Carl Neu, the National Collegiate Slalom Champion.<sup>70</sup>

In late February 1940, Sigurd Hall of the Seattle Ski Club won the combined championship at the Olympic Peninsula ski tournament at Deer Park, finishing first in the downhill and third in the slalom. Bill Redlin of the Washington Ski Club was second. On the same weekend, Alf Engen,

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<sup>68</sup> McNeil, *The Death of Sigurd Hall*, pages 41, 42, 46. The well known skiers who participated in the tournament included Sigfried Engl, Sun Valley; Fridl Pfeiffer, national slalom champion; Fred Iselin, Sun Valley; Toni Matt, Sun Valley; Bill Redlin of the Washington Ski Club; and Hans Grage, Seattle. *Kandahar Ski Drawings Set*, Seattle Times April 5, 1940 (page 30); *Newlywed Ski Ace Beats Matt, Engl in Mt. Hood Meet*, Seattle Times April 8, 1940 (page 15); *Canadian Skier Wins Kandahar*, Seattle Times April 8, 1940 (page 15).

<sup>69</sup> *Hall to Start Giant Slalom*, Seattle Times, January 17, 1940 (page 19); *Harold Smith Victorious in Giant Slalom*, Seattle Times, January 22, 1940 (page 143).

<sup>70</sup> *Sigurd Hall is Hurt in Slalom*, Seattle Times, January 29, 1940 (page 14).

“the 31-year old jumping star from Sun Valley, Idaho,” won the national jumping championships in Berlin, New Hampshire, beating his rival Torger Tokle, who came in fourth, showing he was the best ski jumper in the country. Hall would compete against both Engen and Tokle in the National Four-Way Championships held in the Northwest later in the year.<sup>71</sup> [Note - Torger Tokle was born in Trondheim, Norway on July 3, 1919, and grew up in Løkken Verk, a small mining community south of Trondheim where he learned ski jumping. The area still produces good ski jumpers.

Løkken is only 75 km (47 mi) from Hoel where Sigurd was born].

## **B. 1940 NATIONAL FOUR-WAY CHAMPIONSHIPS**

The National Four-Way Championship Tournament was the big story of the year, which dominated skiing news. The tournament was held in the Pacific Northwest between March 13 - 17, 1940, where the best skiers in the country competed in downhill, slalom, cross-country and ski jumping. The events were split between three different ski areas. Downhill and slalom races were held at Mount Baker; the cross-country race was held on Snoqualmie Pass on an 11-mile course; and the tournament concluded with a jumping competition held at the Milwaukee Ski Bowl at Hyak, on a “giant new jump” that had been specially constructed for the event.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> *Sigurd Hall Takes Deer Park Honors, Seattle Racer Wins Combined Championship, U Alf Engen Jumps to U.S. Title*, Seattle Times, February 26, 1940 (page 16).

<sup>72</sup> In the winter of 1938, the Milwaukee Railroad opened the Milwaukee Ski Bowl at Hyak, the eastern portal of its tunnel under Snoqualmie Pass. It had a state-of-the-art ski lodge, an over-head cable ski lift (a J-bar), and was accessible by train in two hours from Seattle. It was the first modern ski area in Washington and it revolutionized local skiing. The Seattle Times provided free ski lessons at the Ski Bowl for Seattle high school students. The jumping hill at the Ski Bowl was designed in fall 1939, by one of the most accomplished jumping hill designers, Peter Hostmark, a product of Norway’s Institute of Technology who immigrated to Seattle in 1927, a national authority on ski jumping, and President of the Pacific Northwestern Ski Association. It contained a Class A jump capable of sustaining leaps of 285 feet, a Class B jump permitting jumps of 195 feet, and a lift was built to carry skiers to the top of Rocky Point, the big hill behind the Bowl. “The big jump has already been pronounced one of the finest in the world.” Lundin, John, *Milwaukee Ski Bowl, 1938-1950: Revolution in Local Skiing*, HistoryLink.org, Essay 100601.

There were two main stories at this tournament. First, the competition in the jumping event between two of the best ski jumpers in the world, Alf Engen, a Norwegian ski instructor at Sun Valley, and Torger Tokle, a Norwegian living in New York. Tokle was looking for revenge, after Engen beat him earlier that year in the National Jumping Championships at Berlin, N.H. Both had been National Jumping Champions and had set multiple national distance records. Engen skied in all four events, a major test of his overall skiing ability, but Tokle participated only in jumping, which was the last contest in the tournament. The second story was the emergence of Sigurd Hall on the national stage, showing that he was one of the best Four-Way skiers in the country. This tournament was the high point in Sigurd Hall's career, that was tragically brought to an end one month later.

The New York Times of March 13, 1940, described the level of competition in this nationally important tournament, mentioning Sigurd Hall as one of the skiers who would compete there, showing that he already was a nationally known ski racer. The meet would feature "the country's foremost all-around skiers, including Alf Engen, Sigurd Hall, Olaf Rodegard, and Hjalmar Hvam," who would compete "in the most difficult of all national championships."

With most of America's premier skiers in the West for the "Spring Circuit," and the numbers increased by reason of the fact that the European war has kept Americans home this season, the competition should be exceptionally keen.<sup>73</sup>

Dick Durrance, who the New York Times called "America's most versatile skier," and one of the favorites to win the competition, withdrew just before the start because of a conflict with his job at the Sun Valley Ski resort, disappointing local crowds. This left Alf Engen as the favorite to

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<sup>73</sup> *Nation's Ski Stars Launch Quest of 4-Event Title in West Today, Downhill Race Will be First Event of Meet in Washington - Durrance Will Defend Crown*, New York Times, March 13, 1940.

win the combined title.<sup>74</sup>

Sigurd Hall of the Seattle Ski Club won the first event, a mile and a quarter downhill race at Mount Baker on March 13, with some assistance from the weather.

Sigurd Hall of the Seattle Ski Club prepared to have the ski book tossed at him here today as twenty-nine snow riders went into the second quarter of the national four-way ski championship tournament. Hall, who turned in the fastest time for the downhill race here yesterday, was ready to throw the book right back at them...

Hall got something of a break yesterday. He was the twenty-seventh to run and the weather gods that provide snow and blizzards and wind had decided by then to knock off for the day. Earlier it was no picnic.

Skiers who started the downhill earlier than Hall “couldn’t see their hands in front of their faces if they want to put ‘em there, and were lucky to see their ski tips when they crossed the finish line.”

Sverre Engen of the Utah Ski Club was second, and Sverre’s older brother, Alf Engen of Sun Valley, one of the pre-race favorites, was third, finishing just six tenths of a second behind Sverre.

Hjalmar Hvam of Portland’s Cascade Ski Club was fifth in the downhill.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> *National 4-Way Skiing Starts, Downhill Race Opens Tourney at at Baker Today*, Seattle Times March 13, 1940 (page 23).

<sup>75</sup> *Slalom Race at Mt. Baker Today*, Seattle Times March 14, 1940 (page 29).

## 4-Way Leader



**Sigurd Hall, Seattle Ski Club member, who took the lead in the National Four-Way Championship meet by winning the downhill race at Mount Baker yesterday in 1:36.6.**

Seattle Times, March 14, 1940  
(page 29)

Alf Engen got his revenge the next day, when “the talented Sun Valley skier” won the “wicked slalom course at Mt. Baker,” beating two dozen racers in the 2,000 vertical foot race, having the best time for two runs. The course was set by Dr. Otto Strizek, “who likes to make ‘em tough,” which was made more difficult when half a foot of sticky snow fell on it the night before, and there was “a skyful of cold, biting rain” for the second slalom run. “Spills were plentiful,” but the skiers “rated the course as one of the best - and trickiest- they had ever run.” Don Amick of the Washington Ski Club finished second in the slalom, and Sigurd Hall finished third. Sigurd had a lead in the total point standings, and was slightly ahead of Engen, as the skiers left Mount Baker for Snoqualmie Pass where the cross-country and jumping events would be held on the weekend. Experts expected Engen to win the Four-Way Championship, since he was a favorite in the jumping

competition and was an outstanding cross-country skier. Torger Tokle was scheduled to arrive in Seattle that day to compete in the jumping contest on Sunday.<sup>76</sup>

The 11-mile cross-country event at Snoqualmie Pass, set by Hans Otto Giese, began and ended at the same spot, and consisted of one-third downhill, one-third uphill, and one-third on the flat.

Perhaps the flat portion will be just a mite more than one-third. Perhaps the downhill section will be a bit more. But the boys who laid it out got as close as they could at Snoqualmie Summit, and no matter what the ratio, it's tough. It's an eleven mile course, starting and ending at the same point, and if the winner isn't close to the dish-rag stage when he's all through he can take a place alongside Superman, the new hero of the Times comic scripts."

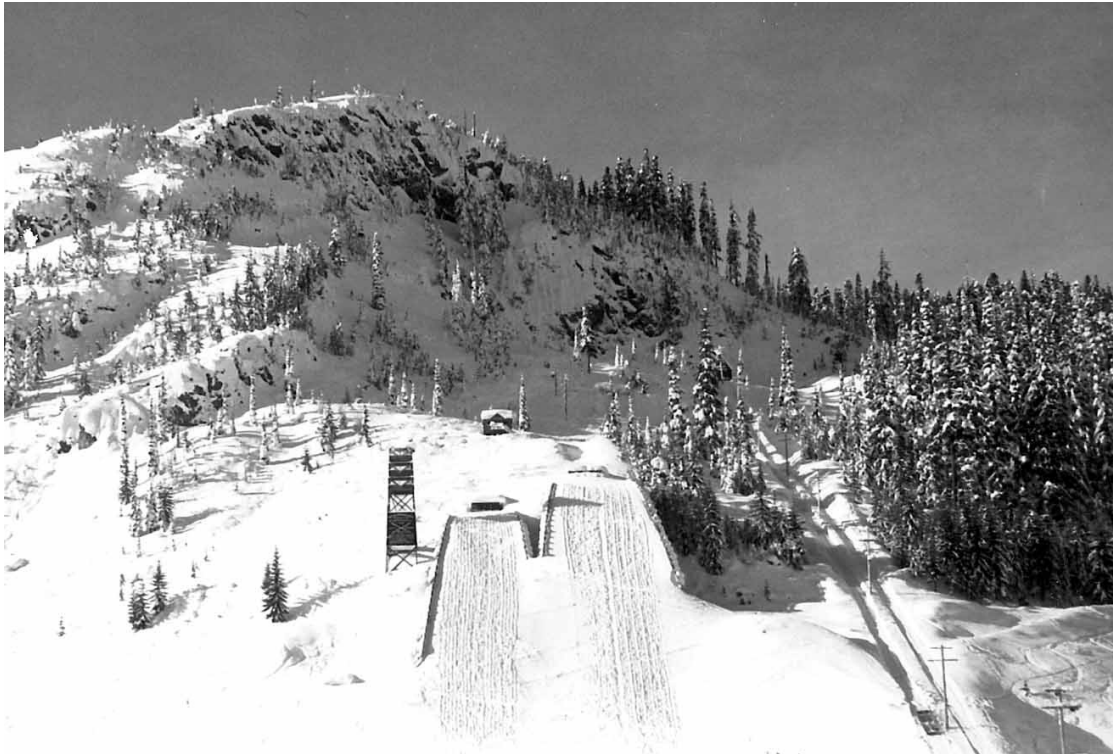
Sigurd Hall "held a slight lead over Alf Engen in the total point standing...Hall is a good cross-country man, but so is Engen, and tomorrow's jumping at Snoqualmie Bowl probably will decide it. And Alf Engen is the national jumping champion," according to the Seattle Times. That prediction was correct. The two leaders finished one place apart in the cross-country race, Engen was fourth and Hall was fifth, almost two minutes behind Engen, and the jumping competition determined the overall Four-Way winner. Jack Pratt of the Hollyburn B.C. Ski Club, a dark horse, won the cross-country race, Alf Johansen of Kimberley, B.C. was second, and Harry Brown of Princeton, B.C. was third. Hjalmar Hvam from Portland finished sixth, behind Hall.

The jumping event took place on a "giant" ski jump, one of two that were built in the fall of 1939, at a cost of \$15,000, by the Milwaukee Railroad at its Ski Bowl for the tournament. One was capable of sustaining leaps of 285 feet, and a smaller one permitting jumps of 195 feet. "The big jump has already been pronounced one of the finest in the world." They were designed by Peter

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<sup>76</sup> *Engen Wins Slalom, Eyes 4-Way Title, Jumping Champ Heavy Favorite for Bowl Leaps*, March 15, 1940 (page 28).

Hostmark, President of the Pacific Northwest Ski Association, a product of Norway's Institute of Technology, President of the Pacific Northwestern Ski Association, and a national authority on ski jumping and the design of jumping hills.<sup>77</sup>



Class A & B ski jumps, and Judge's tower, Milwaukee Ski Bowl. Picture from Milwaukee Road Historical Association.

The jumping event at the Ski Bowl got most of publicity, since it featured a contest between two of the best jumpers in the world, Alf Engen and Torgle Tokle. The headline in the Seattle Times of March 17, said *Engen, Tokle to Head Up Special Event*, and the story said "They'll shoot the works at the Ski Bowl Today, and girls and boys, we do mean shoot." The Seattle Times published a picture of Tokle getting off the airplane from New York being greeted by Seattle skiers,

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<sup>77</sup> Lundin, John, *Milwaukee Ski Bowl, 1938-1950: Revolution in Local Skiing*, HistoryLink.org, Essay 100601; *Ski Bowl Gets a Pair of Wings*, The Milwaukee Magazine, December 1939 (page 2).

saying Torger Tokle, “snow star from the Norway Ski Club of New York,” entered the tournament, seeking another chance to jump against Alf Engen, who had beaten him at the National Jumping Championships at Berlin, N.H. earlier in the year, “a defeat which had broken a long victory string.”



Alf Engen



Torger Tokle

**TORGER TOKLE ARRIVES**



Seeking revenge over Alf Engen of Sun Valley, Torger Tokle of the Norway Ski Club, New York, arrived here last night to compete in the special jumping event at Snoqualmie Bowl tomorrow. Engen recently defeated Tokle to win the national jumping championship at Berlin, N. H. Greeting the New Yorker are W. F. (Trader) Horne (left), referee of the National Four-Way ski meet now in progress, and Peter Hosiemark, president of the Pacific Northwestern Ski Association.

Seattle Times March 16, 1940 (page 9).



The jumping contest also featured Sigurd Ulland of Leavenworth (the 1939 national champion), Ole Tverdal of Seattle, Tom Mobraaten of Kamloops, B.C., and other experienced competitors. Expectations were high that one of the jumpers would beat the national jumping record of 257 feet, which had been set that year at a meet in Wisconsin. Twenty jumpers would compete on the Class A jump on the Ski Bowl's Olympian Hill, which had not been tested before in competition, and others on the Class B jump. The Milwaukee Railroad ran special trains to take spectators up to the Pass on the weekend, leaving every ½ hour, beginning at 8:30 am. Milwaukee officials promised that the jumping hills would be in perfect condition, as work had been done on in-runs, landing hills and out-runs. Thousands of spectators were expected to line the course. Because of the expected heavy attendance, special outdoor eating facilities were set up.<sup>78</sup>

In Sunday's jumping competition, Torger Tokle had the longest jumps but Alf Engen won the event on form, on a day when the weather was perfect and the snow fast. The Seattle Times published a picture of Tokle flying high off the jump over the Ski Bowl, saying *Torger Tokle Rides out of the World*, "the young skier seems to be sailing away into the Cascades as he made a ride of 238 feet, longest of the day." Tokle jumped 238 and 235 feet, while Engen jumped 224 and 235 feet, but Tokle "failed to display the form" shown by Engen. *Form Scored Over Distance*, said the Seattle Times. In ski jumping tournaments, points are awarded for form as well as distance. Tokle was disappointed with the result, saying he had practiced distance jumping and had not worked hard enough on form.

Sigurd Hall finished 13<sup>th</sup> in the jumping competition, behind Alf and Sverre Engen, Tom

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<sup>78</sup> *Cross-Country Today; Jumping Due Tomorrow*, Seattle Times, March 16, 1940 (page 9); *Engen, Tokle to Hook up on Special Event*, Seattle Times, March 17, 1940 (page 26).

Mobraaten, Hjalmar Hvam, and others who had been competing as Class A jumpers for many years. This was a major accomplishment for Sigurd, since this was one of the first times he had jumped in a Class A event - he had previously competed in the Class B novice category. Fans had hoped to see a new national record set, but the best jump of the day fell 19 feet short of the record of 257 feet set in Wisconsin. The “newsreel boys” expressed disappointment that they only had one spill to film in the jumping event, as only the first jumper fell, and the rest “rode out their leaps.”

Engen, “the stocky skiman from Sun Valley went off with the works,” winning the overall title in the Four-Way competition, sealed by his first place finish in the jumping competition.” He finished third in the downhill, first in slalom, fourth in cross-country, and won the jumping event, finishing with 391.43 points. *4-way Champion Superb in Leaps of 224, 235 Feet*, said the Seattle Times. Engen’s younger brother Sverre was second in the Four-Way competition, based on his second place finish in the downhill, sixth place in the slalom, fourth place in cross-country, and second in jumping, finishing with 373.18 points. Sigurd Hall of the Seattle Ski Club was third, based on his first place finish in the downhill, third in slalom, fifth in cross-country, and 13<sup>th</sup> in jumping, finishing with 364.75 points. Hall had “been right behind Alf in the point standing going into yesterday’s jumping, but he failed to do better than thirteenth in the final event, so had to be satisfied with third place in the tournament,” according to the Seattle Times. Hjalmar Hvam of Portland’s Cascade Ski Club was fourth in the Four-Way Final Standing. Only sixteen of the twenty-eight entrants completed the Four-Way tournament.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> *Engen Beats Tokle on Form, 4-Way Champion Superb in Leaps of 224, 235 Feet*, March 18, 1940 (page 19); *The Timer Has the Last Word*, Seattle Times March 20 1940 (page 21).

MONDAY, MARCH 18, 1940. THE SEATTLE DAILY TIMES

**SPORTS** RICHARD L. WILLIAMS EDITOR

# ENGEN BEATS TOKLE ON FORM

## TORGER TOKLE RIDES OUT OF WORLD

### 4-WAY CHAMPION SUPERB IN LEAPS OF 224, 235 FEET




**By JACK FRASER**

Form scored over distance at Snoqualmie Ski Bowl yesterday and Alf Engen, the flying skian from Sun Valley, Idaho, riding off over the course.

Engen, national jumping champion, won the national four-way championship by finishing off his effort in fourth place, with a score of 230 and 220 feet on the two courses. Alf and Sverre, brother and partner form, behind the victor.

Engen had scored in a near perfect form at the first event yesterday, but the loss of the first fall was his first of the 11-foot peak established last year by Jack Henshaw of Duluth in a Wisconsin race.

Engen made his effort, jumping 224 feet on his first jump.

Engen, who finished the first event with a score of 224 and 235 on his second jump, had a score of 224 and 235. Alf listed a distance form comparable to Sun Valley's Engen was awarded 225 points, while 220-20.

**Tokle Disappointed**

The result was a disappointment to Tokle, for the Snoqualmie Four-way Ski Club, after his long career, he had never won a national title. He had won a long victory over the last year.

Engen's score of 224 and 235 on his second jump, and 235 on his second jump, was a record for the club.

The weather was perfect and the wind was just the way it was to be. The boys and girls who had come to see the race, they were all in the stands.

Alf Engen, brother of the champion, was in the first place in the first event, but after that every one of his jumps, he was in the first place and special prize was his own.

Alf's victory over his brother, Sverre, in his first jump of the four-way competition. Engen, scored only a few feet more to reach the top, but he did not come close to the national record. He scored 224 and 235 on his first jump, and 235 on his second.

**Sverre Shows Good**

Alf's younger brother, Sverre, of the Utah Ski Club, came in with scores of 224 and 220 feet in his first jump, and 224 and 220 in the second. He was in the first place in the first event, but he was in the second place in the second event.

The Hall of the Seattle Ski Club, which is still in operation, held its annual meeting at the club, and the boys and girls who had come to see the race, they were all in the stands.

Engen's score of 224 and 235 on his second jump, and 235 on his second jump, was a record for the club.

Alf Engen, brother of the champion, was in the first place in the first event, but after that every one of his jumps, he was in the first place and special prize was his own.

Alf's victory over his brother, Sverre, in his first jump of the four-way competition. Engen, scored only a few feet more to reach the top, but he did not come close to the national record. He scored 224 and 235 on his first jump, and 235 on his second.

**Sverre Shows Good**

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The top picture show Torger Tokle making the longest jump of the day at the Milwaukee Ski Bowl. Below, Sverre Engen congratulating his brother Alf on winning the Four-Way Championship. Seattle Times, March 18, 1940 (page 19).

An article in the New York Times about the event on March 3 1940 (page 22), said *Alf Engen Takes 4-Way Ski Title - Clinches Honors at Seattle in Jumping Test - Brother Sverre is Runner-up*. The event featured some of the nation's leading skiers who competed in front of 8,000 spectators. Alf Engen of Sun Valley took the final event, the jumping contest at the Snoqualmie Ski Bowl, although his rival, Torger Tokle of New York, made the longest jump of the tournament.

### C. SIGURD HALL'S FINISH IN THE FOUR-WAY TOURNAMENT WAS IMPRESSIVE

The magnitude of Sigurd Hall's third place finish in the National Four-Way Championship can best be understood by looking at the quality of his competition.

Alf Engen and Torger Tokle were far more experienced in ski jumping than was Hall, and that was the difference in the tournament. Alf and Sverre Engen and Hjalmar Hvam from Portland (the fourth place finisher) were far more experienced in four-way competitions than was Sigurd.

Alf Engen immigrated to the U.S. from Norway in 1929, already an accomplished ski jumper, and "had a huge impact on the growth and development of skiing in the West," according to his bio in the U.S. National Ski and Snowboard Hall of fame into which he was induced in 1959. Engen was national jumping champion eight times in three different categories: he won the professional title five times (1931 - 1935); the amateur title three times (including 1940); and the open title once (1946). He competed as a professional through 1935, but in 1937, the U.S. Ski Association determined that he had never competed for money, and his amateur status was reinstated. Engen also won eight titles in combined disciplines, set multiple U.S. national jumping records, and several world jumping records. He was the Canadian jumping champion in 1937. He made the 1940 U.S. Olympic team in jumping and downhill-slalom combined, although the games were cancelled because of the outbreak of W.W. II. In 1940, Alf was awarded the National Ski Association's American Ski Trophy signifying that he was the country's outstanding skier. He was coach of the U.S. Olympic ski team in 1948, and was elected to the National Skiing Hall of Fame in 1959.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> *Alf Engen, 88, Skiing Champion and Designer of Ski Resorts*, New York Times, July 22 1997; Anson, *Jumping Through Time*, page 130. Alf Engen Museum, <https://www.engenmuseum.org/hall-of-fame/alf-engen-0>; U.S. Ski and Snowboard Hall of Fame, [http://skihall.com/index.php?\\_a=document&doc\\_id=11&id=100](http://skihall.com/index.php?_a=document&doc_id=11&id=100).

Torger Tokle immigrated from Norway to New York in 1938, and was an immediate success in ski jumping competitions. Between 1939 and 1942, Tokle won 42 out of the 48 tournaments he entered, set 24 jumping records and several national jumping records. In 1941, Tokle set a new national distance record of 273 feet at Leavenworth, which he broke the following week at the National Jumping Championships held at the Milwaukee Ski Bowl, when he jumped 288 feet. He set also distance records at Iron Mountain, Michigan; Sun Valley, Idaho; Bear Mountain, New York; Laconia-Gilford, New York; and Lake Placid, New York. Tokle was known as the “Babe Ruth” of ski jumping. During W.W. II, Torkle was a member of the Tenth Mountain Division, and on May 3, 1945, he was killed fighting in Italy. According to his obituary in the Milwaukee Journal of March 17, 1945, “[h]e was a daring performer, who featured a terrific spring from the jumping platform. Because he jumped so high and so far, he usually kept his skis wider apart than most jumpers to ease his landing. Others had better form, but none had his power and daring.” After the war, the Norway Ski Club of New York created the Torger Tokle Memorial Trophy housed at the National Ski Museum. In 1959, Tokle was elected to the National Ski Hall of Fame.<sup>81</sup>

Hjalmar Hvam, from Kongsberg, Norway, immigrated to the U.S. and settled in Portland, Oregon, where he helped to form the Cascade Ski Club in 1928. Hvam was the best four event skier in the Northwest during the 1930s. He won three national titles in 1932. During the 1936-37 season he won twelve consecutive Alpine races including the "Silver Skis" race on Mt. Rainier, and at an international meet at Mount Baker, he won all four events. During his career he won over 150 trophies. Hvam invented and manufactured the first iron toe release binding in 1939, the Safr-ski,

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<sup>81</sup> *Torger Tokle Killed in Italy*, Seattle Times, March 17, 1945 (page 5); *Tokle Dies Hero's Death, Says Comrade*, Seattle Times, May 21, 1945 (page 13); *Tokle Given Sports Award*, Seattle Times, August 7, 1945 (page 14); *Strolling Around the Town*, Seattle Times, September 16, 1945 (page 18)..

which he sold until 1970. In 1971, when he was inducted into the U.S. National Hall of Fame, his bio said he "was the outstanding skier during the 1930's."<sup>82</sup>

Sigurd Hall's 13<sup>th</sup> place finish in the ski jumping event dropped him to third place in the overall four-way competition, but this was an outstanding result. In 1939, Hall was a Class B jumper, while in 1940, both Engen and Tokle were two of the most accomplished ski jumpers in the world. Hall's third place finish against this level of competition was impressive, and showed that he was one of the best four-way competitors in the country.

An article published after Sigurd's death described the banquet held at the end the National Four-Way Championships in 1940, and shows the respect that Sigurd Hall's competitors had for him.

At the awards banquet, Alf and Sverre Engen, who finished first and second overall, hosted third place finisher Sigurd Hall on their shoulders to the tune of "He's A Jolly Good Fellow." The author writes: "It is a memory that will live long in the minds of his fellow racers, those who knew and liked him best. For just one month later Hall's meteoric and successful ski career came to an abrupt close when he lost his life while participating in the sport he loved."<sup>83</sup>

#### **D. NATIONAL F.I.S. DOWNHILL & SLALOM CHAMPIONSHIPS**

The National F.I.S. Combined Downhill and Slalom Championships were held on the last weekend of March 1940, at Alta, Utah, featuring "a field of top-flight American and Swiss racers." Bill Redlin of the Washington Ski Club won the downhill race "down the treacherous Peruvian Gulch course" that dropped 2,000 feet in altitude. Walter Prager of Dartmouth was second, and the favorite, Dick Durrance, "piled into a snowbank" and did not finish. Sigurd Hall of Seattle finished

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<sup>82</sup> Raaum, Gustav, *Scandinavian's Influence in the History of Ski Jumping in the Northwest*.

<sup>83</sup> Hume, Rita Marrah, *Four-Event National Championships*, American Ski Annual, 1940 - 41, <http://alpenglow.org/ski-history/notes/period/asa/asa-1940.html#asa-1940-p38>.

sixth in the downhill.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> *Redlin, Seattle, Wins Ski Race*, Seattle Times, March 31, 1940 (page 21).

## IX. SIGURD HALL IS KILLED IN THE 1940 SILVER SKIS RACE

The ski year of 1940 ended on a tragic note, as Sigurd Hall was killed in the Silver Skis Race on Mount Rainier on April 13, 1940, skiing on icy slopes and in foggy weather.

Sigurd was counted twice in the 1940 federal census, in Seattle on April 7, and on Mt. Rainier on April 8, where he was training for the race. Who would have thought that a census taker would be on the mountain? There is some irony in the fact that Sigurd established his ski-climbing reputation by doing the first ski ascent of Mount Rainier, the same peak where he was later killed. The following is a picture of Mount Rainier taken by Sigurd's climbing partner, Dwight Watson, sent home to his mother in Norway after his well known ski ascent, and recently discovered by his relatives.



*MOUNT RAINIER. 14408 FT.*



Fifty men and fifteen women entered the Silver Skis Race in 1940. Matt Broze of the Seattle Ski Club was the lead-off for the men, and Nancy Reynolds of Sun Valley was lead-off for the women. Sigurd Hall was skier 16. Everyone was keeping their eyes on the weather, remembering 1937, when “a blizzard blew the race right off the mountain.” As the competitors practiced for the event, “they found the going both fast and slow, as they ran the 3.16-mile course...High up on the steep course the snow was good for high speed efforts, but lower down it was slushy.” The talent on the mountain was good enough to be able to beat the course record set by Pete Radacher, of 4 minutes, 51.4 seconds, “if the weather gods part their storms elsewhere for the week-end.”

The course from Camp Muir to Edith Creek Basin, will carry the racers over 3.16 miles of downhill going. It will be approximately a half mile wide at spots, giving the competitors leeway in picking their own route. But it’s all downhill, and if someone covers the 3.16 miles in less than 4:51.4 he will not have paused to pluck spring posies en route.<sup>85</sup>

To the horror of all those involved in the race, Sigurd Hall was killed when, skiing in a dense fog, he veered off course a half a mile from the top and hit a rock, becoming the what was said to be first death in ski competition in the U.S.<sup>86</sup> Here is how the Seattle Times described the accident.

Sigurd Hall, of the Seattle Ski Club, one of the Northwest’s outstanding downhill ski racers, was killed on Mount Rainier yesterday during the running of the annual Silver Skis race. Hall, who last month had captured third place in the downhill portion of the national Four-Way tournament on Mount Rainier, crashed into some rocks approximately three-quarters of a mile from the start of the 3.16 mile race.

The 25-year-old skier was placed on a toboggan to be carried to Paradise Inn, but died en route to the lodge. Dr. S.F. Herrmann of Tacoma said it was apparent that head injuries were the cause of Hall’s death. Witnesses suggested that fog, which at times covered the upper

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<sup>85</sup> *Skiers Seeking Clear Skies for Week-End Meet*, Seattle Times April 11, 1940 (page 32); *Snow Varies as Ski Meet Nears*, Seattle Times April 12, 1940 (page 28).

<sup>86</sup> However, a Hood River ski jumper, Victor Howell, was killed in 1936, competing at Cooper Spur Ski Area on Mount Hood, Oregon. After landing, he veered off into a stump, then bounced off into another stump, crushing his chest and dying instantly. Aston, *Jumping Through Time*, page 143.

portion of the course, probably was the cause for Hall's loss of control. Snow on that portion was crusty, icy in spots, and terrifically fast. Contestants attained speeds of close to fifty miles an hour soon after starting.

Hall, as he approached the rocks just below Anvil Rock, lost his balance and fell headlong. Two other contestants were injured in this race. Vince Broz, Seattle, suffered a fractured leg, and Paul Sceva, Jr., also of Seattle, sprained a knee...

Hall's death marked the second accident of major importance to be recorded on Mount Rainier this year. William Bigelow, 28, and Duane Truesdale, 20, both University of Washington students, were injured critically March 24, when they collided head-on on the steep slope of Alta Vista above Paradise Valley.<sup>87</sup>



Sigurd Hall, Seattle skier, who was killed in a skiing accident at Paradise Valley, Mount Rainier, yesterday afternoon. Hall, competing in the annual Silver Skis downhill race, swerved from the course and crashed into rocks, receiving fatal injuries.

Seattle Times, April 14, 1940 (page 1)

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<sup>87</sup> *Hall, Ski Star, Meets Death on Mount Rainier*, Seattle Times, April 14, 1940 (page 1).

Paul Gilbreath of the Washington Ski Club raced to victory in the Silver Skis race, “but there was no elation over the win. Death took Sigurd Hall, Seattle Ski Club downhill star, during the running.” Tony Matt of North Conway, The New Hampshire, finished second by two seconds. Nancy Reynolds of Sun Valley, Idaho, won the women’s race, beating Shirley McDonald of the Washington Ski Club.<sup>88</sup>

The Seattle Post Intelligencer had been the sponsor of the Silver Skis Race since its inception in 1934, and was an enthusiastic booster of the race. The P.I.’s article about the race includes a photo of Paul Gilbreath in action, and another of him receiving the Silver Skis trophy from Baroness Zina De Rosen, visiting from Sweden. This article makes no mention of the accident or Hall’s death until the end, when Gilbreath is quoted as saying: "I think we should dedicate the Silver Skis to Sigurd Hall."<sup>89</sup> Dwight Watson criticized the P.I’s coverage of the accident later in his letter to Sigurd’s mother, accusing the paper of trying to not make things look bad for the race organizers.

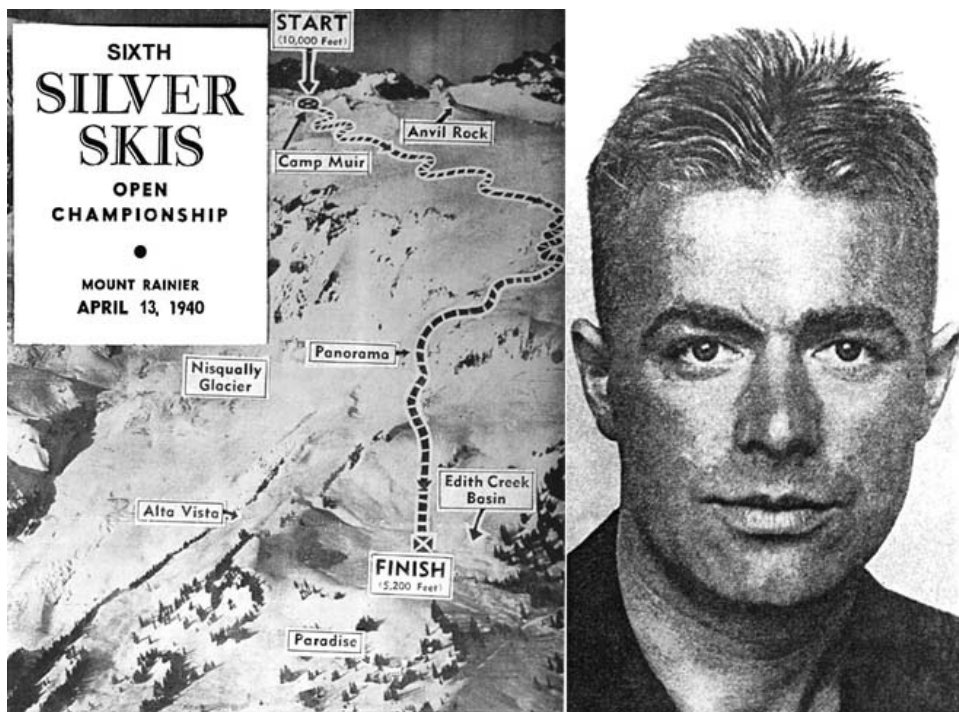
The New York Times’ article about the race said Sigurd Hall “was killed instantly on the slopes of Mount Rainier today during the annual Silver Skis tournament. He became lost in a dense fog, fell and struck a rock head first, while traveling at high speed...Hall apparently lost the trail because of the fog and hit a projecting rock. Paul Sceva, Jr. of the University of Washington went end over end just before the finish, righted himself to a sitting position and coasted across the line,

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<sup>88</sup> The other top ten finishers of the 1940 Silver Skis men’s race include, in their finishing order: Hans Grage, Penguin Ski Club; Fred Islin, Sun Valley; Art Coles, Vancouver, B.C.; Richard Werle, Sun Valley; Bill Redlin, Wash. Ski Club; Seigfried Engl, Sun Valley; Harold Coddling, Woodstock, Vt.; Wayne Paulsen, Reno, Nev. The rest of the women’s finishers included Marty Butler, Longmire, Wash.; M. Hill, Cascade Ski Club; Gertrude Harby, U. of W.; *Doris Edson, Seattle; S. Fleetwood, Seattle Ski Club; and Pat Wilson, U. Of W. Gilbreath Wins Silver Skis Race, Seattle Times, April 14, 1940 (page 17).*

<sup>89</sup> *Seattle Ace Upset Victor, Seattle Post Intelligencer, April 11, 1940, <http://alpenglow.org/ski-history/notes/news/spi/spi-silver-skis.html>.*

unconscious. His knee was sprained.”<sup>90</sup>



Sigurd Hall and 1940 Silver Skis course, from Alpenglow.org.

This tragic accident was eerily predicted by Reidar Andersen in 1939, after he fell while racing in the downhill race in Sun Valley and dislocated his shoulder, an injury that limited him the rest of the season. When he was interviewed by the Seattle Times before the Fjeld tournament, Reidar said the following:

This downhill racing business is getting crazy...Look at Mount Hood. Look at Sun Valley. High speed courses, both of them. You might break your neck. I'll tell you the right competitions - jumping and slalom racing. Slalom gives you balance. Jumping gives you the true thrill of skiing.<sup>91</sup>

Sigurd's obituary in the Seattle Times said it was believed that he had no relatives living in

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<sup>90</sup> *Skier is Killed in Race, Seattle Man, Lost in Fog, Strikes Rock on Mount Rainier Slope*, New York Times, April 14, 1940.

<sup>91</sup> *Ski Star Visits, Andersen Will Jump Sunday*, Seattle Times, April 6, 1939 (page 17).

the United States. His mother, who lived in Norway, was sent a message about her son by the men with whom Sigurd lived in Seattle at 935 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Bert Mortenson, Knut Jensen and Kolbien Kaltver. However, “weeks may pass for the young skier’s mother in Norway will learn of her son’s death because of interference with communications in Norway. Her second son is serving with Norwegian troops against German invaders.” Roy Nerland, president of the Seattle Ski Club, the Immigration Bureau, and the Norwegian consulate were trying to locate other relatives of Hall, a task made difficult as Germany invaded Norway on April 9, 1940, and communications were cut off with the outside world.<sup>92</sup>

The edition of the Seattle Times that announced Hall’s death also carried stories about Germany’s invasion of Norway: *Reich Invasion of Norway, Denmark Condemned by F.R., Attack ‘Unlawful,’ Civilization Cannot Survive Unless Small Nations are Guaranteed Against Aggression From their Neighbors, Says President, in Statement on War; Norway’s Bewildered King Fears Civilization’s Death; and Allies to Fight for Norway, King George Tells Haakon.*<sup>93</sup>

A copy of a poem by Wilfred Grindle Conary, *The Clock of Life*, was found in Sigurd Hall's address book, which seems to articulate his life philosophy. The original was recently located by the Hoel family in Norway among Sigurd’s mother’s possessions.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> *Obituaries, Sigurd Hall*, Seattle Times, April 15, 1940 (page 23); *Germany Invades Norway and Denmark*, <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/germany-invades-norway-and-denmark>.

<sup>93</sup> Seattle Times, April 14, 1940, page 1.

<sup>94</sup> *Death of Skier to Be Probed*, Unknown newspaper (Seattle Star?), Apr 15, 1940, <http://alpenglow.org/ski-history/notes/ms/mvb-clippings.html>.

The Clock of Life.

The clock of life is wound but once and  
no man has the power,  
To tell us when the hands will stop at  
late or early hour.

Now is the only time you own  
Live, Love, toil with a will.  
Place no faith in tomorrow  
For the clock may then be still.

*Sygurds sidste ferd*

A committee of the Northwestern Ski Association subsequently held a hearing into Hall's death at the Silver Skis Race. Committee members heard testimony about race and course conditions, and other facts pertinent to the event. Committee members consisted of Earl Morrison of the Spokane Ski Club, Fred McNeil of the Cascade Ski Club; Chester Wilcox of the University of Washington Ski Club, and Herb Lonseth of the Seattle Ski Club.<sup>95</sup>

The public probe into the death of Sigurd Hall during the running of the Silver Skis race at Paradise Valley would be held in Seattle, according to Peter Hostmark, president of the Pacific Northwest Ski Association. Contestants said Hall had told them before the race started that he intended to "win or crack up." Hostmark said the purpose of the hearing would be to determine whether or not the course was too tough and should be modified. Also injured in the race were Vince Broze and Paul Sceva, Jr. Both suffered leg injuries.

Hall's family in Norway finally heard the news of his death, but it was delayed, and they did not get many details, as described by Lowell Skoog.

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<sup>95</sup> *Skiers to Meet in Hall Hearing*, Seattle Times, April 17, 1940 (page 26).

War engulfed Norway within days of Hall's death in the Silver Skis race. Mail to the Hoel farm in the Sunndal Valley was disrupted. News of Sigurd's death reached the family, but the details were sketchy. As the oldest son, Sigurd would have inherited the farm if he had returned to Norway. The property went to his younger brother instead, and the memory of Sigurd Hoel passed into family legend.<sup>96</sup>

News of Sigurd's death did not reach Hoel until the summer of 1940, likely in June. Sigurd's family in Norway recounted how his mother learned of his accident. Odd Hals and his cousin Marit Hoel recall that their mothers Helga and Elthie (both sisters of Sigurd) said news of his death was brought to the Hoel farm by Gunnar Furu.

Gunnar Furu came walking into the yard with a gloomy look on his face. Helga and Endre were there, and maybe others. Gunnar had a letter in his hand and he explained to them what was written there. After a pause, Endre said: "Now the worst thing will be to tell mother."

Gunnar Furu was the owner of the Oppigard Furu farm. He was Sigurd's first cousin and a second cousin of Judy Earle's father Irving Furro, who was in contact with his family's ancestral farm, and was the one who relayed the news to Gunnar. The family did not learn the whole story of Sigurd's death until Judy Earle contacted Skoog in 2002.

In his 1946 letter to Sigurd's mother, Dwight Watson described his reaction to the news of Sig's death in the Silver Skis race.

When the big annual race at Mt. Rainier (14408 feet high) was run in the spring from 10,000 feet down to 5500 feet I thought sure he would win and was overjoyed first to see his photo in the paper thinking he won but soon I learned the actuality - he met his death in his skiing. It was a shock to us all and although there were many discussions about his desire to win the race I still feel in fairness that it was not his fault. Many other skiers were hurt in that race and the Newspaper that sponsored the race did not mention THAT as it would look bad for the folks in charge of things for the race. As it was there was a thick foggy cloud between the start and the finish of the race and they decided to have the race anyway and so all the boys started.

As you no doubt heard, he struck a small rock in the fog that stuck up in the snow on a high

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<sup>96</sup> Skoog, Lowell, *The Legend of Sigurd Hall*, <http://alpenglow.org/climbing/sigurd-hall-2006/index.html>.

ridge and was knocked unconscious breaking his skis [sic] and throwing him into a somersault. My very good German doctor friend here attended Sigurd at the end and did all he could for him. He died as they were taking him down the mountain. I was not present at the race but talked to many who were there, including racers themselves. There [were] quite a few broken legs due to the weather that day.

In an interview of Dwight Watson done years later, Watson told of a discussion he had with Matt Broze, another competitor in the 1940 Silver Skis Race. "Matt told me over the phone," continued Dwight. "We had a long chat about it. He was up there in that race. He said to Sig when the fog rolled in. 'Are you going to take it wide open?' And Sig said, 'Well, why not?' So he raced like that. Well, Matt didn't. He was cautious about it."<sup>97</sup>

#### **Articles about Hall in the American Ski Annual, 1940 - 41**

Sigurd Hall's tragic death had a significant impact on the nation's skiing community. The American Ski Annual for 1940 - 1941, published several articles about Hall's death in the Silver Skis Race, which are summarized by Lowell Skoog in his Alpenglow Ski Mountaineering History Project. Fred H. McNeil's ten page article, *The Death of Sigurd Hall*, is the most detailed description of the race and Hall's death.

McNeil said "in his passing, skiing of the region lost its number one man of the 1939 - 40 season in down-mountain racing. Among the amateurs of the nation in this same season, Hall must be rated as fifth or sixth." For Hall, "skiing was close to a passion," and for a number of years he had been "gaining prestige in competitive circles, notably as a skilled and fearless downhill racer. McNeil said that Hall had quit his job in the winter of 1940, to concentrate on training and competition, (although it appears that Sigurd only took a leave of absence from work and intended

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<sup>97</sup> Harry Majors interview of Dwight Watson as part of the North Cascades history project sponsored by U.W. and The Mountaineers, <http://www.alpenglow.org/ski-history/notes/comm/watson-dwight.html>.



to return after racing season was over), and his friends believed that 1940 was to be his “year of destiny in skiing.”

McNeil described the conditions of the Silver Skis race of 1940. Fog was always an issue for the Cascade mountains because of the proximity of the ocean, and there was layering of fog on race day, but “parts of the course were always clear, and the weather was described as average.” Several of the competitors ahead of Hall declined to start the race, given the conditions they faced, but at the start, Hall was “fine-strung and tense, keyed up, raring to go.”



Sigurd Hall (no. 16) at the start of the 1940 Silver Skis race. Toni Matt (no. 14) also appears in the picture. Picture from University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, Bob & Ira Spring Photographs, negative 8735A, published in [Alpenglow.org](http://Alpenglow.org).

McNeil said that prior Silver Skis races had been run under “much worse meteorological conditions.” At no time did the officials consider postponing the race because of the conditions. The

race course was clear for a considerable distance from the top, before racers entered mist,

which became progressively denser, then thinned out again as the course descended through its last one third of distance. The fog formed over Nisqually glacier, to the left of the course as one looked up at the mountain. As the sun warmed the air, ascending currents lifted it while westerly winds disbursed it across a portion of the course. The fog volume varied during the day. In the cooler morning, as the large race party ascended, there was little of it to be seen. It became more abundant as the sun's heat generated the condition.

The course was described as being hard, icy and exceedingly fast in the opening stretches and tremendous speed was possible. Gradually, in the first mile the surface softened and in the glades the icy conditions disappeared. This was where the racers entered the fog belt.<sup>98</sup>

McNeil failed to mention that the Silver Skis Race of 1937, was cancelled because of fog, and the 1938 race was postponed because of high winds, showing that weather conditions had previously caused a change in the race.

The race was sanctioned by the Pacific Northwestern Ski Association. Hall had skied the course during practice runs for three days before the race. The course was marked with 100 red flags, 17 yellow flags, and three control gates, but there were no control gates above the scene of Hall's accident. Two other competitors had skied to the left of the red flags on the same line that Hall took, but recovered and missed the rocks. Paul Gilbreath, who won the race, skied to the left of the red flags near the accident scene, but "soon recovered the track." Toni Matt, a ski instructor from New England, was skiing under control and not as fast as Hall. As he skied near the accident scene, Matt was further off course to the left than Hall had been, but "with magnificent skill checked and swerved sharply to his right, back into the course."

The fog thickened as Hall came along, and he was skiing "wide open." Three witnesses saw him drive into the rocks and described the accident.

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<sup>98</sup> McNeil, *The Death of Sigurd Hall*, page 43.

Hall's speed was so high, it was related, that he had no chance to turn when he saw the danger. That he did see it was apparent for, just before the impact, he made an effort to veer.

On the upper side of the wedge were several smaller rocks protruding through the snow; just a few inches, perhaps. Hall's skis hit these and shattered. A few feet further he hurtled, head first, into the hump, his body striking with a glancing blow two of the spectators. Such was his speed that he was thrown entirely across this wedge, possibly ten feet wide, and into the snow beyond, stopping 40 feet below. From the point where his skis were shattered to the point where his body stopped, it was nearly 60 feet. One of the spectators who had been trained in first aid hurried to him, but apparently he died instantly.

A national park ranger testified that measurement had shown the distance from the spot where Hall struck to the nearest point of the race "groove" was 45 feet.

Speculation over occurrences like this is endless and the main inconclusive. Was Hall, in an overpowering determination to win this race, running faster through the fog than good judgment would dictate? Perhaps so, but history abounds with the records of men who have cast caution aside in order to gain victory...<sup>99</sup>

McNeil said the race officials were not lax in their flagging of the course - the course was well marked. "The fog, be it remembered, thickened rather suddenly and at times it lifted. Those who went to the top but did not start desisted, they said, because of the condition of the snow, not due to the fog." McNeil concluded that "[t]he sober judgment of people experienced in such races, both as participants and officials, can only be that it simply was a case of the percentage catching up in a hazardous business."<sup>100</sup>

The commission that examined the Silver Skis race in which Hall died made a number of recommendations for future races, none of which were new, according to McNeil. Since downhill was purely a speed event, "there should be a minimum of restraint" for speed for such races. New rules should be drawn up which recognize that inclement weather conditions are common in the

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<sup>99</sup> McNeil, *The Death of Sigurd Hall*, pages 45, 46.

<sup>100</sup> McNeil, *The Death of Sigurd Hall*, page 46.

Cascade Mountains, such as setting minimums on the number of flags required for certain courses. More preparation should be made for last minute flagging, and more information on last minute conditions should be made available to contestants. Spots of exceptional hazard shall be “funneled” with blue flags in a highly visible control gate. Last minute inspections of the courses should be made by a special committee, racers should be consulted, and the prevailing opinion relayed to the race officials. Course policing should be more adequate, with plans to postpone the races if necessary. More first-aid stations should be available on courses, with services placed high on the hill so they could go to accident scenes quickly. McNeil hoped that Hall’s death would lead to these suggestions being translated into a special code at the next meeting of the ski association.<sup>101</sup>

The Mountaineers’ Collection in the University of Washington Special Collections contains a number of materials from Dwight Watson. Included therein is a photocopy of McNeil’s article with a note from Watson giving his personal opinion about Sig’s death:

The FACTS of his death are not doubted but the truth of the situation was not well reported. No doubt of the movement of fog that contributed to the danger, BUT the FACT that a number of the skiers involved were injured including broken leg etc. suggests that the Officials were not alert with such a situation. They were all interested in winning. Sig Hall should not be singled out as desperate to win, that resulted in his tragic death. --D.W.<sup>102</sup>

Roger Langley’s article, *The Downhill Race*, also appeared in the American Ski Annual, which Skoog summarized.

Following the death of Sigurd Hall, there was considerable discussion by the press, skiers, ski officials and others regarding the downhill race. Three viewpoints emerged: 1) that the downhill race be abolished, 2) that the downhill and slalom be combined into a giant slalom race, resulting in one event instead of two, and 3) that the present downhill and slalom races are satisfactory and that no change is desired. The article includes comments from Don

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<sup>101</sup> McNeil, *The Death of Sigurd Hall*, pages 47, 48.

<sup>102</sup> <http://www.alpenglow.org/ski-history/notes/ms/dw-scrapbook.html#dw-scrapbook-p51.1>

Brooks, Hannes Schroll, Dave Bradley, John R. Peterson, Dick Durrance, G. Bartlett Hendricks, Prof. Harold M. Gore, Don Amick, Hannes Schneider, Douglas M. Burckett, Alexander H. Bright, Roland Palmedo, Dick Tompkins, Charles N. Proctor, Robert Livermore, Jr., and Don Fraser.

Don Brooks writes that two other skiers were injured in the race in which Sigurd Hall died. One fractured his leg. Another, unable to control himself, took a bad spill and slid across the finish line--unconscious. Charles Proctor, who skied with Hall the week before at Mt Hood, said Hall was one of the best sportsmen and one of the best liked among the racers in the Northwest. "Knowing Sig as I did, I feel that he would be the last person to want the downhill race eliminated because of his unfortunate accident."<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> American Ski Annual, 1940 - 41,  
<http://alpenglow.org/ski-history/notes/period/asa/asa-1940.html#asa-1940-p38>.

## **X. FINAL STORIES IN THE SAGA OF SIGURD HALL**

### **A. DWIGHT WATSON WRITES SIGURD'S MOTHER IN 1946**

Dwight Watson, Sigurd's mountaineering partner and close friend, wrote a personal and moving letter to Sigurd's mother on September 21, 1946, describing his relationship with her son, their adventures in the mountains of Washington, and what he knew about his death in the 1940 Silver Skis race. Lowell Skoog located a carbon copy of the letter in the University of Washington archives, which he discusses in his Alpenglow website, saying "[t]he letter provides some nice glimpses of the experiences that Sig and Dwight Watson had together. Watson was not a ski racer. He was a mountain Rambler and backcountry ski touring enthusiast. Through his friendship with Watson, Sig was exposed to the wilderness mountains of Washington, where he did several pioneering ski trips."<sup>104</sup>

The original letter was recently located in Norway by Sigurd's relatives, and appears below as it was written in 1946 by Dwight Watson. A translation of part of the letter into Norwegian prepared for Sigurd's mother was also located, and appears below after the English version.

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<sup>104</sup> This letter is in the Dwight Watson scrapbook at the University of Washington Special Collections Library, and was copied by Lowell Skoog. <http://alpenglow.org/ski-history/notes/ms/dw-scrapbook.html#dw-scrapbook-p487>.

**RAINIER**

**ELECTRIC OVEN & ENGINEERING CORP.**

TELEPHONE Prospect 4114

CABLE ADDRESS: RAINIER

1419 JACKSON STREET • SEATTLE 44, WASHINGTON

September 21, 1946

Mrs. Marie Hoel:  
Nordmore, Norway

Dear Friend:

May I introduce myself by saying that I was a fairly close friend of your son, Sigurd. Have often times thought of his family and wondered how they were specially during the terrible war times. It had been my intention to write before this. However, last week while in the northern part of the state I met a lady when purchasing gasoline who was from your vicinity. She did not <sup>know</sup> you folks but did tell me a lot about the land. I often think too of Sigurd's mention of home and its beautiful surroundings as well as the hard work.

I met Sigurd first through the Seattle Mountaineers, a group of outdoor enthusiasts who hiked, and skied. It has a membership of about 1300 here at present. Although not a member at that time, I knew so many wonderful places that had possibilities to ski that I had many fine times with good old Sig as we used to call him. Quite often we would go for two or even three days at a time into some part of our high Cascade Mountains mostly by spring to climb and ski and enjoy the views. We many times carried out sleeping bags, food and our other mountain equipment many miles, as much as ten walking in on roads or trails or both to reach some never reached by winter place. Also took many photos and I have some nice movies of him skiing from the tops of some of our higher mountains, 10,000 feet and higher, where we have sea level right here at Seattle, like you no doubt have and the mountain rise abruptly about forty miles east and west of us. We had fortunate weather in most cases and still I can recall many of these wonderful trips. Others of the boys went along on many of these trips which sometimes meant driving as much as 100 to 150 miles just to get to the end of a road. One of our grandest thrills was a glissade or slide down a steep granite mountain in Eastern Washington. We had skied in and slept out, left early in morning on skis to reach the base of the mountain then climbed on packed snow to nearly 10,000 feet - the summit had a thrilling view-then we actually slid on the snow down over 4500 feet - sitting down and the snow sliding with us. I can see us yet. Did not get home until the next day as it was a long trip out.

Personally I never was a real good skier but could get along alright and we had some grand times. Then when summer came we had some nice climbs too. Imagine skiing to the top of two peaks over 10,500 feet high in July when far below the meadows were in flower. Later as Sigurd was winning many races I was not able to get out so much with him but we kept in touch.

When the big annual race at Mt. Rainier (14408 feet high) was run in the spring from 10,000 feet down to 5500 feet I thought sure he would win and was overjoyed first to see his photo in the paper thinking he had won but soon I learned the actuality-he had met his death in his skiing. It was a shock to us all and although there were many discussions about his desire to win the race I still feel in fairness to him that it was not his fault. Many other skiers were hurt in that race and the Newspaper that sponsored the race

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did not mention THAT as it would look bad for the folks in charge of things for the race. As it was there was a thick foggy cloud between the start and the finish of the race and they decided to have the race anyway and so all the boys started. As you no doubt heard, he struck a small rock in the fog that stuck up in the snow on a high ridge and was knocked unconscious breaking his skis and throwing him into a somersault. My very good German doctor friend here attended Sigurd at the end and did all he could for him. He died as they were taking him down the mountain. I was not present at the race but talked to many who were there, including racers themselves. There quite a few broken legs due to the weather that day.

The funeral was simple and beautiful and Sigurd actually looked his own self, just like he was resting, or asleep. I did not know the minister but he was well liked here and spoke well and sincerely. Mentioned some interesting things about Sigurd and his work and his enthusiasm. The family of his friends where he lived were very nice and I know them all and they missed Sigurd as we all still do. However, there is a day, sometime when we all must depart all this and he went on a little earlier.

82.57.4  
I enjoyed Sig especially because of his quiet friendliness and his language was in keeping with his life. So many these days are full of profanity and smoke and all the rest that it was his plain simplicity that I liked. But best of all I think he had a heart for our dear Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. That is where true friendship and brotherhood comes from and not that which is worked up in business or social ways. And after all, with the world still at unrest, the eternal reason is that "there is no rest for the wicked saith the Lord". The REST is in Christ-but then the world and its system has never considered nor come to this humble way of life. I do hope that all you folks over there know what that joy and rest means- that it is only "the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ that cleanses from all sin" and that in Him is our hope and our peace and our righteousness too.

Here in America we have a strange paradox, a country that names the name of God, but lives fast and reckless. A land that is the land of blessing and opportunity but fast becoming a place of selfishness and money graspers. We need humbling here and we need to get back to the old foundations- and we need more thankful appreciation for all the blessings that have been ours- at least we never have known that real hunger and distress that so many lands had overseas. So when you pray, and I hope that you do-pray for America -that it might be the true blessing to the world that it can and ought to be- and that evil men might be overruled and righteousness exalted.

And now farewell, and I hope that all of your family are well and recovering from the shock of the days gone by. We will never know what you have been through. We hope that the scars heal quickly and completely.

Sincerely,

*Dwight Watson*  
Dwight Watson

Home: 15 Ward Street  
Seattle, Washington  
U.S.A.



den norske  
ad en dame fra Dere s distrikt, hun kjente ikke Dere, men fortalte meg en hel del om landet. Jeg minnes ogsaa svært ofte Sigurds omtale av sin vakre heim, de storslagne omgivelser og det harde arbeid.

Jeg møtte Sigurd først i Seattle Mountainers, en forening av friluftsselskere som drev med slede og skisport. Den har et medlems tall paa omkring 1300 fortiden. Jeg var ikke medlem dengangen, men kjente mange vakre steder med godt skiterrang og kom slik til ofte aa bli med paa turer smammen med gode, gamle Sig, som vi kalte ham. Vi gikk noksaa ofte to, ja tilog med tre dager, innover de høge Cascada Mountains, mest om vaaren, for aa klatre og gaa paa ski og nyte utsikten. Ofte bar vi med oss sovepose, mat og annet utstyr mange mil. vi tok mange vakre billeder paa turene vaare, og jeg har noengode av han fra skiløping paa toppen av vaare høgste fjell, 10 000 fot høg, ja enda høger. Vi hadde sjøflaten her ved saakla Seattle, slik som dere uten tvil har, og fjella reiser seg bratt omlag 40 miles i øst og vest for oss. vi var heldig med været som regel, og jeg kan ennu huske mange av disse straalende turene. Mange andre av guttene var ogsaa med paa disse turene. Det var lange turer, vi maatte kjøre 100 - 150 mil for aa na fram dit veien slutta. En av de største opplevelser var aa renne ned et bratt fjell i den østlige del av staten Washington. vi gjorde istand skiene og sov godt ut, og tidlig om morgenen tok vi ut paa ski for aa naa foten av fjellet, og gikk saa opp til 10 000 fot. Det var et straalende da vi rente nedover lia igjensaa snøspruten stod omkring oss. Jeg kan se det ennu. Dette var en langtur og vi kom ikke heim igjen før neste dag.

Da det store aarlig rennet paa Mount Rainier (14 000 fot) blei holdt om vaaren trodde jeg sikkert han vilde vinne og blei saa begeistret med det samme jeg fikk se bildet hans i avisen, men fikk snart erfare det sørgelige faktumet han hadde møtt sin død. i troskap til han føler jeg ennu at det ikke skyldes noe mistak fra hans side. Mange andre skiløpere blei skadet i samme rennet. Avisen som hadde garantert løpet tok ikke hensyn til forholdene, de var redd det skulde ga ut over dem som hadde arrangert løpet. Det var nemlig delvis tykk taake mellem stråtsedet og maalt, mende beslutet aa avvikle løpet likevel, og alle guttene startet. Som du utentvill har hørt stråfifet hand taakenen berghammer som stakk opp paa en rabbe, slo seg bevistløs bröt begge skiene og gikk i saltmortale.

En tysk lege, en meget god venn av meg tok seg straks av han, var hos han til det var slutt, og kjørte alt han kunde for han. Han död under transporten nedover fjellet. Jeg var ikke tilstede paa rennet, men snakket med flere som var der, deriblandt flere av deltakerne. Det var mange som blev skadet paa grunn av været den dagen.

Begeavelsen var enkel og vakker. Sigurd var lik seg, det var som han sov eller hvilte. Jeg kjente ikke presten, men han snakket godt og inderlig. Han nevnte forskjellige interessante ting om Sigurds liv, arbeide og friluftslags sports glede.

Hans venners familie og de han bodde hos var tilstede, jeg kjenner dem alle, de var meget sympatiske mennesker. Jeg savner Sigurd alle sammen. Jeg likte han saa godt for hans godhet og fødi han alltid var aa stole paa. Det er saa mange som er full av egoisme, smisking og mye annet. Han sa som han gjorde og gjorde som han sa. Jeg tror ogsaa han hadde et hjerte for vår kjære gud og frelser Jesus Kristus. Det er derfra alt virkelig sandt og godt vennskap og brorskap kommer, ikke fra det som er arbeidet opp gjennom forretninger eller paa sosialt maate.

Her i Amerika har vi en merkelig motsetning, et land som bærer Guds navn, men lever lettsindig og likegyldig. Et land med velsignelser og muligheter men et land som er blitt et land for egoisme og utbyttere. Vi trenger en forandring, vi trenger aa gaa tilbake til det gamle fundament, vi trenegr aa bli mer takknemlig for all de velsignelser som er gitt oss. Vi har all dri visst hvad hunger og nød er, slik som mange oversjøiske land. Saa dersom du ber, og jeg haaper dugjør det, saa be for Amerika.

Saa forjeg si farvell. Jeg haaper dere er kommet over det sjokket fra de dager som er paasert. Vi vill all dri forstaa hvad dere har gaatt igjennem. Men vi haaper at saarene leges fort og leges helt.

Hilsen

Dwight Watson.

## **B. SIGURD'S REMAINS ARE REPATRIATED TO NORWAY - 1949**

Sigurd Hall was buried on April 20, 1940, in the Seattle area after his funeral, which was attended by his skiing and mountaineering companions. Dwight Watson, Sigurd's mountaineering partner, described the funeral in a letter he wrote to Sigurd's mother on September 21, 1946.

The funeral was simple and beautiful and Sigurd actually looked his own self, just like he was resting, or asleep. I did not know the minister but he was well liked here and spoke well and sincerely. The family of his friends where he lived were very nice and I knew them all and they missed Sigurd as we all still do. However, there is a day, sometime when we all must depart all this and he went on a little earlier.<sup>105</sup>

It appears that some of the floral arrangements at the funeral were sent by the Sahalie Ski Club, the Penguin Ski Club, and perhaps the Enumclaw Ski Club.

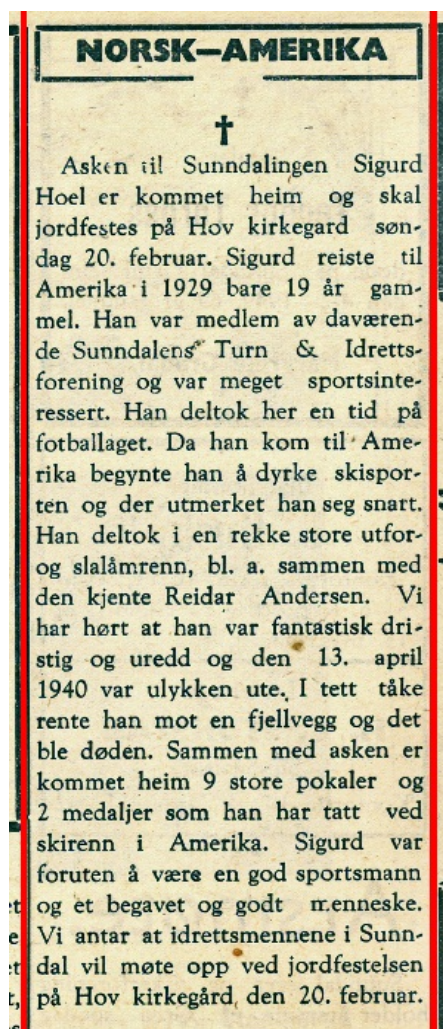


Casket at Sigurd Hall's funeral in Seattle April 20, 1940

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<sup>105</sup> This letter is in the Dwight Watson scrapbook at the University of Washington Special Collections Library, and was copied by Lowell Skoog. <http://alpenglow.org/ski-history/notes/ms/dw-scrapbook.html#dw-scrapbook-p487>.

In 1949, Sigurd's ashes were sent to Norway along with his belongings and a number of his skiing trophies, and a second funeral service was held at Hov Church in Sunndalsøra. The above picture of Sigurd's casket at his funeral in Seattle was included in these materials sent home to Norway. The repatriation of Sigurd's ashes was accomplished through the efforts of Judy Earle's grandfather Erick Furro and the Norwegian Consul in Seattle. Judy Earle's great-grandparents were married in the Hov church, where second Sigurd's memorial service was held. Judy has been there, and says it is a beautiful church and site located near a steep cliff face.



This is Sigurd Hall's obituary printed in the local newspaper, Aura Avis, on February 13, 1949, and its English translation.

The ashes of Sigurd Hoel from Sunndal have come home and will be buried at Hov churchyard Sunday 20th February. Sigurd went to Amerika in 1929 only 19 years old. He was a member of the Sunndal Athletics and Sports Association and he was very interested in sports. He participated in the soccer team. When he came to America he started with skiing where he soon distinguished himself. He participated in a series of great downhill and slalom races, among others together with the well known Reidar Andersen. We have heard that he was extremely bold and fearless and on 13th April 1940 the tragedy struck. In heavy fog he ran into a cliff and was killed. Together with his ashes were sent 9 large trophies and 2 medals that he had won at ski races in America. In addition to being a good sportsman Sigurd was an intelligent and good man. We assume that the sports people of Sunndal will attend the burial at Hov churchyard on 20th February.

On Sunday February 20, 1949, there was a second funeral for Sigurd at Hov church at Sundalsøra, with a full service in the church conducted by the parish minister Rev. Johan Hofslie. The church was full of Sunndal people wanting to say farewell to Sigurd. The urn was displayed on a pedestal in a sea of flowers in the main aisle up towards the altar. After the service, the urn was carried on a small stretcher by four people to the churchyard where the burial ceremony was performed. In the afternoon a memorial gathering was held at the home farm of Hoel attended by the family, relatives and neighbors. Below is a picture of Hov church showing the spectacular scenery in Sunndal Valley, and a picture of Sigurd's tombstone in the Hov churchyard where he was laid to rest along side his parents in 1949.



Hov Church after it was restored to its original colors in 1992, showing the spectacular scenery in Sunndal Valley. Picture from Kristen Rekdal taken in 2016.



Hoel family gravestone at Hov church, Sunndalsøra, Norway, where Sigurd Hall was buried along side his parents in 1949. The inscription on the bottom reads, “The Lord gave, The Lord took, The name of the Lord be praised.”

Below is a picture of Sigurd's trophies which were sent to Hoel in 1949, taken by Mr. Sjur Fedje a professional museum photographer in Norway. From left to right: 1937 Mountaineers Open Patrol Race, first place medal; April 1-2, 1939, National Amateur Championships, Mt. Hood Oregon, Men's Downhill, 9<sup>th</sup> place medal; 1939 Indoor Open Slalom, 2<sup>nd</sup> place trophy; 1939 P.N.S.A. Ski Championships, Mt. Baker, Men's Slalom, 2<sup>nd</sup> place trophy; 1940 Deer Park Downhill, 1<sup>st</sup> place trophy; January 21, 1940, P.N.S.A. Penguin Giant Slalom, Milwaukee Bowl, 2<sup>nd</sup> place trophy; National Four Way Championships, Seattle and Washington Ski Clubs, March 13 - 17, 1940, 3<sup>rd</sup> Place Combined trophy; National Four Way Championships, Seattle and Washington Ski Clubs, March 13 - 17, 1940, 1<sup>st</sup> Place Downhill trophy; 1939 Yakima Ski Club Tournament, Men's Downhill, 2<sup>nd</sup> Place trophy; 1940 P.N.S.A. Yakima Championship, Men's Slalom, 2<sup>nd</sup> place trophy; 1940 Deer Park Combined, 1<sup>st</sup> place trophy.



These medals and trophies represent two years of serious competition, 1939 and 1940, which culminated with his first place finish in the Downhill race in the National Four Way Competition, and his third place finish in the Combined in the event, against the best ski racers in the country.

Sigurd's sister Astrid arranged to have a trophy case with a glass window made for the trophies at the Hoel farm, which are still proudly displayed there. The cupboard is prominently placed in the farm's formal living room called 'Nøstu', meaning 'the new living room'. Farms in Norway traditionally have two living rooms, one for daily use and another used only for special occasions like weddings and funerals, which is nicely decorated and has the best furniture. When Kristen was young, the children were never allowed to enter the new living room unless permitted by grownups.



Sigurd Hall's trophies in the formal living room at Hoel farm. Photo from Kristen Rekdal.

### C.     **LOWELL SKOOG'S CONTACT WITH HALL'S RELATIVES IN 2002 & 2006**

In *The Legend of Sigurd Hall*, Lowell Skoog describes contact he had with Hall's family in 2002, and later in 2006, initiated through Judy Earle, a cousin of Sigurd's who lives in the Seattle area. In 2002, Judy Earle and her husband Dick traveled to Norway to revisit her Scandinavian heritage. She met her Norwegian relatives and learned "about the legendary Sigurd Hall," who was still a well-known family figure in spite of the passing of so much time. Some of Sigurd's ski trophies were still on display on the Hoel farm. When Judy returned to Seattle, she discovered Lowell's Alpenglow Ski Mountaineering History Project and contacted him. Lowell later included their exchanges and new information she provided about Sigurd in Alpenglow.<sup>106</sup>

Sigurd's family in Norway had not learned the details of his death, due to the war - Germany invaded Norway on April 9, 1940, just four days before his accident on Mt. Rainier.

War engulfed Norway within days of Hall's death in the Silver Skis race. Mail to the Hoel farm in the Sunndal Valley was disrupted. News of Sigurd's death reached the family, but the details were sketchy. As the oldest son, Sigurd would have inherited the farm if he had returned to Norway. The property went to his younger brother instead, and the memory of Sigurd Hoel passed into family legend.

Born in Norway shortly after World War II, Odd Hals grew up with the legend of his uncle Sigurd Hall. [Odd's mother Helga was one of Sig's sisters.] An outstanding athlete himself, Odd was puzzled by some aspects of the story. For over 50 years, the Hoel family legend said that Sigurd had won the Silver Skis. The accident, it was said, took place after the race, during a "lap of honor." This never made sense to Odd, and his curiosity about the circumstances of his uncle's death grew over the years. Odd's cousin Gunnar Rekdal shared his curiosity. Gunnar had inherited the family farm and in keeping with tradition had changed his last name to Hoel. Together with Gunnar's brother Kristen, they nursed the idea of coming to America and visiting Mount Rainier.

Lowell, who had done quite a bit of research about Sigurd for his Alpenglow project, provided Judy

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<sup>106</sup> Skoog, Lowell, *The Legend of Sigurd Hall*, <http://alpenglow.org/climbing/sigurd-hall-2006/index.html>; <http://alpenglow.org/ski-history/notes/comm/earle-judy.html>.



with materials about him that she sent to Sigurd's family in Norway, where it had a significant impact. Lowell gave her

photos, articles, and 16-mm movies of Sigurd Hall, which she immediately forwarded to the family in Norway. Just two months after our first contact, Judy told me that one of Sigurd's sisters (Gunnar's mother) had passed away in Norway at age 90. A month before her death, Gunnar showed her the films of her brother skiing in the Cascades in the 1930s. She said that it was like bringing Sigurd back to life again, after more than 60 years.

Sigurd's family in Norway organized a trip to the Northwest in July 2006, where Gunnar Rekdal Hoel, Odd Hals, and Odd's son Endre, and Gunnar's nephew Jon Rekdal planned to climb Mt. Rainier, along with Judy Earle's sons Jeff and Doug. When Doug Earle was forced to withdraw from the climb, Lowell arranged to join the party which he described in [Alpenglow.org](http://Alpenglow.org).

On Sunday, July 23, Gunnar, Odd, Endre, Jon, Jeff and I began the hike from Paradise to Camp Muir with RMI guides Mike Horst, Corey Raivio, Andreas Marin and two other clients. We made a special stop near Anvil Rock, at the formation now known as Moon Rocks. Based on written accounts and information provided by Karl Stingl, a former Silver Skis racer who knew Sigurd Hall, we concluded that this was the approximate location of Hall's death... It was impossible to exactly match the terrain described in Fred McNeil's 1940 American Ski Annual article, but we figured this was probably due to melting of the Muir Snowfield. It is likely that more rock is exposed today than in April 1940. We felt satisfied that we'd found the right area even if we couldn't pinpoint the accident location precisely...

The party held a special ceremony on the mountain to honor Sigrid Hall.

Odd produced a small banner bearing the Norwegian colors, which we signed in Sigurd Hall's memory. I scattered the last of the ashes I had been keeping since the funerals of my brother Carl and my mother, Ingrid, the previous winter. With photos and memories secured, we made our way back down the mountain, down to Camp Muir, down to Paradise. We were greeted near Alta Vista by Judy Earle and her sister, Odd's sister Gunvor and her family, and more members of the extended Hoel family clan.

Sigurd's niece Olaug Rekdal and her grandchildren Vayu and Yuvia Maini Rekdal, Jon Rekdal's children, were other other family member who greeted the climbers. The family group and Lowell concluded their emotionally moving day with a dinner near Ashford, located outside of Rainier

National Park.

We eventually gathered for dinner at Alexander's Inn near Ashford--all seventeen of us, including Gunnar's sister Oluaf from Sweden. I asked Judy whether the family often gathered like this, and she said it had never happened before. She passed out lyrics of a song she wrote for the occasion, and we joined together to sing about Sigurd Hall and his home in Norway. So ended one of the most memorable climbs of my life.<sup>107</sup>



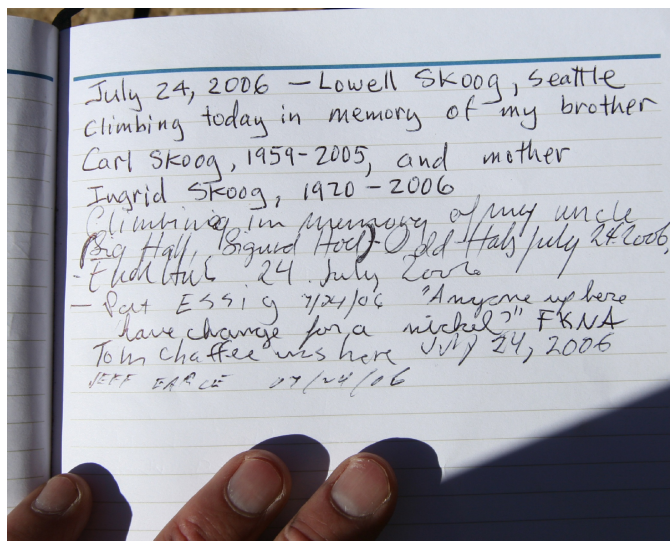
Sigurd Hall's relatives on Mt. Rainier at Moon Rocks, the approximate site of Sigurd's 1940 crash. Gunnar Hoel, Jon Rekdal, Odd Hals, Endre Hals and Jeff Earle. Photo taken in 2006 by Lowell Skoog, Alpenglow.org.

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<sup>107</sup> Skoog, Lowell, *The Legend of Sigurd Hall*, <http://alpenglow.org/climbing/sigurd-hall-2006/index.html>.



Sigurd Hall's nephew, Odd Hals, on Mt. Rainier. Photo taken in 2006 by Lowell Skoog, Alpenglow.org.



Mt. Rainier summit register signed by Lowell Skoog and Sigurd Hall's relatives, July 24, 2006.



Banner from Mt. Rainier signed by Sigurd Hall's relatives,  
from Judy Earle.

Judy Earle's song and a picture of the orchard at the Hoel farm in Norway were printed on a card for the dinner appear below. Judy said, "it was a very moving event all around."

**The Orchard Blooms at Hoel**  
(to the tune of "Springtime in the Rockies",  
"Når det blomster i Hardanger")

When the orchard blooms at Hoel, Well, it's like a sea of foam.  
And if fate were not so cruel, It could light Sig Hall's way home.

But the Mountain was capricious On that day he went to Muir.  
And she sent the fog to claim him, But his spirit's still up there.

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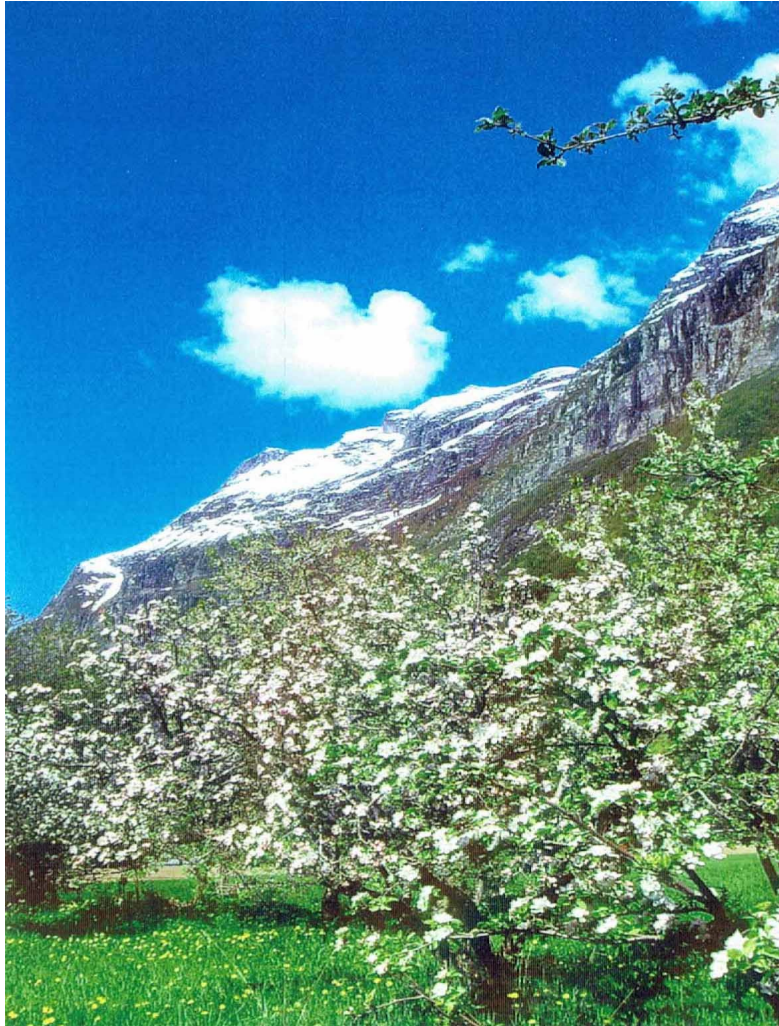
They've been training in the mountains, They've been training on the sea;  
And they've come across the ocean; All for Sig Hall's memory.

So we've all been brought together. And whenever we're apart  
We'll remember Sigurd Hoel And the places that held his heart.

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When the orchard blooms at Hoel, And the snow's on mountain domes  
In America and in Norway, Sig Hall's mem'ry's safely home.

--Judy Earle, July '06,  
commemorating the Sig Hall Memorial Climb



Picture of the Hoel farm in Norway that was on the card created for Sigurd Hall's memorial dinner. Photo by Judy Earle.

