

Heroes of the Harnessed Hickory

Film Script by Donald Grant (March 3rd, 2010)

PART 1

On a clear day in the late Fall, snowshoers climb towards Hollyburn Peak. Along the way they ascend a steep hill called Romstads Run. During the 1920's, '30's and '40's, some of Vancouver's finest skiers sped down these same slopes.

A. The First Generation of Skiers – Hollyburn Mountain

In the years following World War I, it was not uncommon for hikers to reach the top of Hollyburn Ridge by following trails cut by loggers. Teenage boys were particularly interested in the logging flumes that had been used to carry shingle bolts to the sea. They used boards salvaged from these flumes to construct some of the first cabins on the Ridge.

A favourite stopping place was Nasmyth Mill, which had been abandoned in the early 1920's. Rudolph Verne, a Swedish immigrant and a skilled winter sportsman, saw possibilities in the empty mill buildings. Verne, along with Eilif Haxthow and other Scandinavians, spent the Fall of 1924 fixing up the former cookhouse and a bunkhouse at the mill. The new ski camp served its first customers in early January, 1925.



Nasmyth Mill, 1925 (Lois Enns Collection)

Recognizing that few native Vancouverites knew anything about skiing, Verne organized informal lessons. During the next two years, he introduced a number of young people to the fine art of skiing on the snow slopes of Hollyburn Mountain. In 1928, Daily Province writer Pollough Pogue described Verne, "as a ski-runner (who) is a model of style, a graceful figure on long thin blades. He is an enthusiastic ski sportsman who insists on the nice points of the game. He knows every punctilio of the art, and is an exacting judge of style."

After two years of relatively poor snow conditions, Verne decided to move the ski camp higher up the mountain. Oscar Pearson and his cousins, Ole Anderson and Anders Israel, were hired to dismantle the cookhouse at the mill site and rebuild it on the west side of First Lake, where it still stands today. In January, 1927, Verne, Oscar and his cousins, and Axel Sneis were ready to welcome visitors to the Hollyburn Ski Camp.



Oil painting of the Hollyburn Ski Camp by Eilif Haxthow, 1932 (Eilif Haxthow Collection)

B. The Hollyburn Pacific Ski Club

Anticipating that winter sports competitions would attract visitors to the new ski camp, Verne formed the Hollyburn Pacific Ski Club in March, 1927. A few weeks later, on April 15, CASA, the Canadian Amateur Ski Association, officially recognized Hollyburn Pacific as the first organized ski club with a mountain headquarters on the Pacific Coast of North America.

Chris Johnson, the Hollyburn Pacific captain, and Uno Hillstrom taught, club members how to ski and take leaps off a small jump at First Lake. In 1927, '28, and '29, a number of young men and women with varying degrees of skill and ability competed in cross-country races organized by the club executive. Races started in front of the ski camp lodge. From there, competitors followed unpacked snow trails to the snow post near Sixth Lake where they turned and made a quick descent to the ski camp.

Bill Hansen won the first race, in March, 1927. Axel Sneis won the races in '28 and '29. Finn Fladmark also placed well in these contests. In later races, skiers had to climb above the shoulder to Hollyburn Peak before making the return trip to First Lake.



Men's cross-country ski race, 1929 (Kay Park Collection)

The first cross-country race for women was held in April, 1928. The eleven competitors raced around a fairly difficult two-mile course. Doris Parkes won in a time of 22 minutes 43 seconds. Daisy Bourdon, who later won many ski races on the North Shore Mountains and around the province, was a close second. Buddy Barker, like some others in the race, was new to skiing in 1928. She finished ten minutes behind the winner. A month later, Buddy attended the Annual Banquet of the Hollyburn Pacific Ski Club, which was held in the dining room of David Spencer's Department Store. During the evening, Buddy collected many signatures from those attending the event, creating a unique record of Hollyburn Pacific's membership in the early days. During the next decade, the Hollyburn Pacific Ski Club continued to organize races for its members.

C. The Vancouver Ski Club

In 1930, another ski club with headquarters on Hollyburn Mountain was formed, a result of a rift between members in the Hollyburn Pacific club. The Vancouver Ski Club was soon drawing many new skiers to Hollyburn.

The first clubhouse was a relatively small cabin located about 100 metres north of the ski camp. In 1938, the club moved into more luxurious headquarters located on the east side of First Lake. The main clubhouse was situated between the Women's Quarters and the Men's Dormitory. VISKI Lodge provided a comfortable place for members and their guests to mingle during cold winter evenings.

First Lake was also a popular place during the summer. From the verandah of VISKI Lodge, members could watch divers and swimmers enjoy the decidedly cool lake waters fed by mountain streams.



Vancouver Ski Club Cabins, First Lake, circa 1945 (Terry Connor Collection)

D. Inter-Club Competitions

Considering that they shared the same mountain terrain, it was only natural that the Vancouver Ski Club and the Hollyburn Pacific Ski Club organized ski races involving competitors from both organizations. Skiers from other clubs emerging on the North Shore mountains and elsewhere also competed in these races.

E. The First Generation of Skiers – Grouse Mountain

People have been climbing Grouse Mountain since the early 1900's, lured by its alpine trails and sweeping views of the Lower Mainland. Around 1910, the BC Mountaineering Club built a clubhouse on the lower slopes of Grouse. After spending Saturday night at the clubhouse, groups of like-minded friends would rise early and hike to Goat, Little Goat, or Crown Mountain. A striking rock formation known as the Camel adjacent to Crown Peak was a magnet for rock climbing enthusiasts.

During winter, Vancouverites would hike up Grouse Mountain to play in the snow and ride toboggans down the steep slopes immediately below the peak. After World War 1, skiers began to appear on Grouse. When the Grouse Mountain Highway and Chalet were opened in the Fall of 1926, growing numbers of novice skiers gathered on the Grouse Mountain plateau. More experienced skiers ventured as far as Dam Mountain and Thunderbird Ridge.

Motivated, perhaps, by the formation of the Hollyburn Pacific Ski Club on a neighbouring mountain, skiers with a preference for Grouse formed the Grouse Mountain Ski Club in November, 1927. A clubhouse was built on the east side of the Grouse Mountain plateau. On sunny days members could enjoy a comfortable picnic lunch in front of the clubhouse or an afternoon nap on the snow with friends.

During the Easter weekend in 1931, Grouse hosted the Vancouver City Ski Championships. Ski racers athletes large and not so large representing several ski clubs participated. Some competitors, like Hollyburn Pacific Ski Club member 'Irish' Beaumont, made the trip up the mountain by car. Before the race, athletes posed with their supporters. After assembling near the starting line, competitors began the race one at a time. In the mid-1930's, the Noseeum Kandahar became the most important downhill race on Grouse Mountain racing calendar.



Looking down Grouse Peak towards the Grouse Mountain Ski Club Cabin circa 1945
(Hollyburn Heritage Society Archives)

F. Hollyburn's Ski Racing Champions – Early 1930's

In the early 1930's, Axel Sneis and Finn Fladmark continued to do well in cross-country ski races. New champions were appearing in the top ranks during this time as well.

One of the new stars was Harald Smejda, who was the Canadian Combined champion in 1931, a competition that involved ski racing and ski jumping. In a photo taken by Hollyburn ski jumping judge, Ommund Ommundsen, Smejda seems somewhat bemused by Axel Sneis's questionable attire. Sneis's straw boater and underpants were certainly an exception and not the norm for skiers in those days. Daisy Bourdon and Bertha Haigh won many ski races during the '30's. Haigh's specialty was cross-country while Daisy did well in all ski racing disciplines; cross-country, downhill, and slalom. Peggy Harlin was another strong ski racer. The placement of the Vancouver Ski Club patch on Peggy's ski pants is interesting to say the least. Perhaps she was making a statement to those skiers who were trying to catch up to her during races.

In 1936, somebody managed to catch her. A newspaper reporting that Peggy Harlin had been crowned Canadian Women's Ski Queen also noted that someone named Tom Mobraaten had won the Sparling Trophy. To cop this trophy, Tom had raced from the peak of Hollyburn to the bottom of Romstad's in 45 seconds. The inclusion of the two articles on the same page in Brownie Morris' scrapbook was prophetic. Peggy and Tom were married later that year.

During the 1934 Vancouver City Ski Championships held on Hollyburn, Tom Mobraaten, his future wife, Peggy Harlin, and Daisy Bourden, with her future husband, Gus Johnson, took time out of a busy race day schedule to pose for amateur photographer, Kayo Park. Tom, Peggy, Daisy and Tom were all ski racing champions. As we shall find out, Tom Mobraaten was better known as one of Canada's strongest ski jumpers.



L-R Tom Mobraaten, Peggy Harlin, Daisy Bourdon, Gus Johnson, 1934 (Kay Park Collection)

PART 2

A. Hollyburn Ski Jumps and Ski Jumpers – Late 1920's

Hollyburn pioneers remember Harry Burfield as, in their words, a beautiful skier. Like many of his generation, Harry was a very good ski jumper as well. When the Hollyburn Ski Camp opened in January, 1927, skiers were already taking practice leaps off a small jumping hill located on the east side of First Lake. To Rudolph Verne and his partners, ski jumping was an integral part of the sport of skiing. This jump was used for Hollyburn's first ski jumping tournament in March, 1927.

During the summer of 1928, a larger jump was built near the same site. From the top of the trestle, one could get a good view of the ski camp across the frozen lake below. HPSC Captain Chris Johnson coached club members as they prepared for the first tournament on the new hill. Amateur photographer Gord Park was one of 700 spectators who watched jumpers compete in the Hollyburn Pacific Ski Club tournament on March 17, 1929. The winner was Axel Sneis who had also come first in the cross-country race on Hollyburn held the previous weekend.

B. Hollyburn Ski Jumps and Ski Jumpers – Early 1930's

The Ski Camp owners, no doubt encouraged by the public response to the 1929 tournament, increased the height of the trestle during the following summer. The view from the top had changed considerably since the previous year. The Scandinavians had built several rental cabins for growing numbers of visitors who were seeking overnight accommodation. The impressive new hill stood for more than a decade and was the site of many memorable tournaments, including a major competition held during the Easter weekend in 1930.



First Lake Jump circa 1930 (Hollyburn Heritage Society Archives)

Daily Province writer Pollough Pogue, in his article "Wooden Wings," describes what spectators might have seen that day:

Several ski jumpers climb to the top of the tower with jumping skis on their shoulders. These are not ordinary skis. They are longer, wider, heavier. . . . The top of the tower is flat, with a railing around three sides. Half a dozen men are standing there. One of them bends to put on his skis. Give sharp attention now or you may miss something.

Having adjusted his bindings he stands erect, a tall Canadian. . . . In a moment he has started and with the velocity of a bullet swoops down the runway. He crouches slightly to minimize wind resistance.

At the take-off he snaps upright again. With long lean body tense but pliant, arms upraised and fluttering wing-like, he soars from the take-off.

For a second or two he appears to hover in the air. You hold your breath. The crowd stands rigid with tense interest.

"Beautiful style," observes a man near you. . . . The jumper has covered a considerable distance before he lands, his skis thudding heavily on the packed snow, though he appears to land lightly enough. With the speed of a rocket he rushes up the slight slope from the lake. and makes in a blur of spray-like snow a long, infinitely graceful Telemark turn.



Jack Seaton on the outrun of the novice jump circa 1930 (Druce Cooke Collection)

C. Hollyburn's Ski Jumping Champions - 1930's

Finn Fladmark, a strong cross-country racer and ski jumper, was the winner of the 1930 Easter tournament on Hollyburn in 1930. Harald Smejda, placed well in tournaments on Grouse and Hollyburn in 1931.

The same year, Nordal Kaldahl, a recent arrival from Kongsberg, Norway, joined the Hollyburn Pacific Ski Club and began winning a number of tournaments. Impressed by what he had seen and experienced in Vancouver, Kaldahl wrote to his Norwegian friends, Tom Mobraaten and Henry Sotvedt, and encouraged them to emigrate to Canada, which they soon did.

During one summer, Tom, Nordal, and Henry worked together at the Ocean Falls pulp mill, joined the local soccer team, and received attention from a number of spots. Inevitably, the trio became known as the "Three Musketeers". However, unlike Nordal, who wore Hollyburn Pacific Ski Club colours, Tom and Henry competed as members of the Vancouver Ski Club. During the 1930's, these three, exceptional athletes won many ski races and ski jumping tournaments.



Left Photo: (L-R) Tom Mobraaten, Nordal Kaldahl Henry Sotvedt, 1930's.
Right Photo: (L-R) Henry Sotvedt, Tom Mobraaten, Nordal Kaldahl, 1940's.
(Hollyburn Heritage Society Archives)

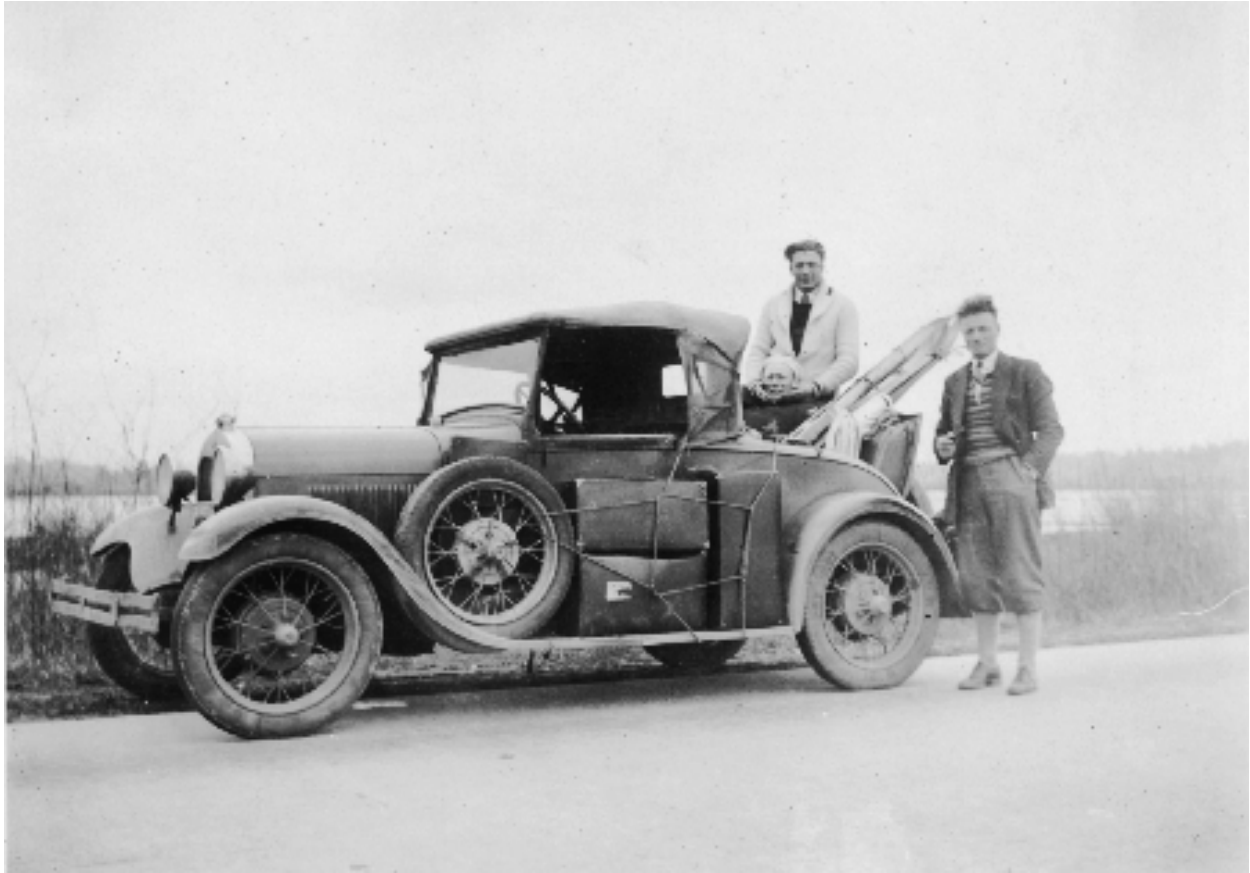


Bill "4 Story" Hansen, Druce Cooke, referred to as "Cookie" by his friends, and Noel 'Irish' Beaumont, were also strong competitors during this period.

D. Tournaments in Cascadia

Shortly after Canada's first ski-jumping championship in Rossland, BC, in 1898, Revelstoke became Canada's unofficial ski jumping capital and remained so until the 1950's. Tournaments on Revelstoke's infamous Suicide Hill, drew ski jumpers from around the world, including the three musketeers and their teammates on Hollyburn.

During the 1930's, it was a common sight to see skiers representing clubs from BC, Washington and Oregon driving to competitions in small towns like Princeton, Wells, Prince George and Leavenworth.



'Irish' Beaumont, Fred Finkenhagen & Henry Sotvedt 'on the road', 1932 (Kay Park Collection)

At Snoqualmie, even the bears came out to have a look. A crowd of 4000 came out to watch Tom Mobraaten win the ski jumping tournament. At Portland, Oregon, another large crowd watched Tom win again.

E. Grouse Mountain Ski Jump - 1930's

When winter sports enthusiasts arrived at the top of Grouse in January, 1927, to inspect the newly opened Grouse Mountain Chalet, an impressive ski jump trestle awaited them as well. Built on the same slopes as the popular toboggan runs, the new jump was to be the site of many local, provincial, and international tournaments during the next three decades

On Good Friday, April 14th, 1933, Grouse Mountain hosted the Northwest International Ski Tournament. Athletes from seventeen ski clubs were entered in the competition. Bob Lymbourne, who had established a world ski jumping on the Suicide Hill in Revelstoke a month before was favoured to win.

A large crowd gathered to watch the competition. Hollyburn participants in Class A Jumping included Bill Hansen, Nordal Kaldahl, Tom Mobraaten and Henry Sotvedt. Rudolph Verne was there to cheer them on. Lymbourne, who performed better on bigger hills, was a disappointing 5th. Kaldahl, who had the longest leap of the day, was fourth. Tom Mobraaten won the tournament because of his high style points.



View of the Grouse Mtn. plateau from the ski jump,
Easter 1933 (Alf Staley Collection)

F. West Lake Ski Jump – Hollyburn Ridge

In the Spring of 1933, a new ski camp opened on Hollyburn Ridge. West Lake Lodge was a brisk, twenty-minute hike from the Hollyburn Ski Camp and further down the mountain.

Encouraged by the lodge manager, R.D. Brewis, members of the Hollyburn Pacific Ski Club began planning the construction of a large ski jump on a hill near the north end of West Lake. Using a blueprint drawn by Finn Fladmark, "Irish" Beaumont and Mickey Pogue, seen here with Mickey's father, Pollough Pogue, built the jump trestle. Others cleared the slopes beneath the trestle to create a landing hill and outrun. By the time winter snows covered West Lake Lodge, the new jump was finished, awaiting only the ski jumpers.

After Mickey Pogue, Eric Twist, Irish Beaumont, and Ralph Morris took a few practice jumps, they gathered with friends and supporters at the bottom of the landing hill.

West Lake was the site of the ski jumping tournament during the 1934 Vancouver City Ski Championships. On Sunday, March 11, 1934, a crowd of 2000 gathered at West Lake to watch the athletes compete. Impressive jumps were made from the new trestle. Nordal Kaldahl won the Class A event with a leap of 138 feet, the longest of the day. Irish Beaumont won the B Class competition. It was a busy day for the jumpers as many of them also competed in the A Class cross-country race which was won by Gus Johnson.



Noel "Irish" Beaumont on the Westlake ski jump, March 1934 (Kay Park Collection)

Tournaments continued to be held on the 'big hill' at West Lake until the Spring of 1938, when the jump and the lodge were dismantled.

G. Mobraaten Ski Jump – Hollyburn Mountain

The Mobraaten Ski Jump was officially opened by the Vancouver Ski Club in 1936 to honor club member Tom Mobraaten who had competed in the 1936 Winter Olympics at Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany. Tom placed 14th in the competition on the big ski jump in spite of an ankle injury he had suffered in an earlier Nordic event. The Mobraaten Jump was used in April, 1939, for the Vancouver Ski Zone and City Ski Championships. Sometime during the next decade the jump was dismantled.

PART 3

A. Hollyburn's Historic Ski Run – First Lake to Hollyburn Peak

By 1930, Hollyburn's premiere ski run was well established. It would remain essentially unchanged for the next forty years and was used by cross-country skiers, downhill racers, and slalom enthusiasts.

Skiers leaving the Hollyburn Ski Camp for Hollyburn Peak would cross First Lake and then climb the Popfly hill. Turning left near the ski jump, they would make a brief descent and then head up a long section called Wells Gray, so named because of efforts of the Honourable Arthur Wellsley Gray, Minister of Lands for British Columbia from 1933 to 1941, to protect the forests on Hollyburn Mountain.

Near Fourth Lake the gradient eased and then steepened again. After a series of bumps and turns, skiers reached the Hollyburn plateau.



Hollyburn Plateau circa 1945 (Denise Fiala Collection)

After a relatively long, flat section followed by a rising slope, they arrived at the bottom of Romstad's Run. Romstad's was where many skiers spent most of their time on the slopes. In those days there were no machine-groomed runs and no rope tows or chairlifts so skiers had to climb up Romstad's before making a run down the hill. Above Romstad's the gradient eased and then increased again. Those heading for the peak would continue up the slope to the Hollyburn shoulder, a perfect place to stop for a lunch break. After a tour of the undulating terrain on the shoulder, skiers headed up the final steep slopes to Hollyburn Peak.

B. The Viski Classic

During what many ski pioneers consider the 'golden age' on Hollyburn, the 'Viski Classic' was the most important downhill race. Competitors would start at the peak and make a steep descent to the shoulder. They would then continue down Romstad's, cross the Hollyburn Plateau and make a final run down Wells Gray to First Lake.

On race day, spectators held their breath as their favourite competitors careened down the mountain.



"Downhill race from the shoulder, 1934 (Kay Park Collection)"

In the early 1930's, Romstads was also used as a slalom course. As we shall see, by the end of the decade, competitors were descending a steeper, more challenging slalom run on the southeast side of the shoulder.

C. Dominion Championships – Banff, 1937

Ten years after Bill Hansen won the first organized ski race on Hollyburn in April, 1927, a sizeable contingent of competitors and supporters from several North Shore ski clubs mingled at the train station in Field, BC. They were heading for Banff, Alberta, to take part in the first Dominion Ski Championships. The downhill, ski jumping, and slalom events were held on Mount Norquay. Athletes from around BC, including Tom and Peggy Mobraaten, Daisy Bourden, Nordal Kaldahl, Henry Sotvedt, and Irish Beaumont faced stiff competition from Eastern Canadian, American, and European champions.

Extreme, icy conditions throughout the four-day competition resulted in a number of mishaps for Vancouver skiers. Peggy Mobraaten injured her shoulder in a practice run and was unable to compete. Daisy Bourden and Gertie Wepsala fell in the early going of the women's downhill and were unable to make up the lost time. In the women's slalom, Daisy took a bad spill in her second run and Gertie Wepsala lost a ski. In the men's downhill, Irish Beaumont lost a pole and later crashed into trees a short distance from the finish line.

Vancouver ski jumpers also had mishaps. Veteran jumper Fred Finkenhagen cracked up after a leap of 174 feet. Chris Engh, another veteran from Vancouver, suffered severe abrasions to his face when he tumbled upon landing. Tom Mobraaten fared the best among the Canadians, coming in a very respectable third. Sverre Kolterud, from Norway, came second.

The Swiss men's team dominated the slalom and downhill races. Pierre Francioli, described by Vancouver Sun sports writer Pat Slattery as "the daredevil skier from the Alps of Switzerland" walked off with the combined downhill and slalom championship of Canada. Fellow countryman Walter Prager was right behind Francioli in the same events. The skiers from Vancouver had performed courageously in Banff under difficult conditions but did not yet have the skills or experience to beat the European and American champions.

D. A New Generation of Skiers

During the winter of 1938, a number of the skiers who had competed in Banff gathered on top of Mount Strachan. In the group were some of Hollyburn's rising stars, including Bud MacInnes and his future wife, Naomi Wilson. By the end of the decade, Ruth Larson and Les May were also attracting attention in competitions, as were Einar Ellingrud, Harry Burfield, Jack Pratt and Bud James. Harry, Jack, and Bud were on hand to greet Olav Ulland when he visited the mountain in November, 1938. Three years earlier, Ulland had been the first to break the 100-meter ski jumping barrier.

E. Hollyburn Mountain's 'New' Slalom Run

In 1939, a competition was held on the new slalom hill located on southeast side of Hollyburn. From the top of the run, skiers had a good view of the Capilano Valley, which would be flooded a decade later. New skiers and seasoned skiers, the talented and the determined were seen on the steep hill that day, each one trying to focus on the next gate. Within a year, many of them would be in the armed services, preparing to fight in another world war.



New slalom run below the Hollyburn shoulder, 1939
(Gerry Hardman Collection)

PART 4

A. The War Years: 1939 -1945

By the early 1940's, a number of Hollyburners were in uniform, including Naomi and Bud MacInnes, Hugh "Torchy" Aikens, and Herb Woods, who, apparently, was reluctant to take off his skis during training back east. Back home, the Hollyburn Rangers patrolled the mountain slopes overlooking Yew Lake. Vic Wills, Jack Pratt, Les 'Mildew' Mays, 'Olive' Johansen, and Bud James appeared in stylish women's clothing during Red Cross fund-raising tournament at First Lake. Hollyburners traveled by train to Revelstoke to take part in wartime competitions. on January 20th, 1942, many of Hollyburn's old guard enjoyed an evening out at the Cave Supper Club. Among those attending were Henry and Anne Sotvedt, Peggy and Tom Sotvedt, Les and Leila May, and several members of the Larsen clan.

Brian Creer won several races on Hollyburn including the Viski Classic. before he joined the armed services and headed east. Jack Pratt was the 1940 North American Four-way Champion which involved competitions in downhill, slalom, cross-country, and jumping. Jack was to win the Viski Classic more times than anyone else. Jack Wood was a strong competitor during the 1940's and early '50's.

Around 1942, the First Lake ski jump trestle collapsed. A smaller trestle was built and used for a short time. By December, 1943, another section had been added to increase the height of the trestle and create an upper and lower starting point for ski jumpers. Jack Roocroft and Paddy Wing were two people who used the improved jump on January 9, 1944. Other skiers competing that day included Henry Sotvedt, Jack Wood, Ole Johannsen, and Otto Brandvold. This jump was used until the end of the war.



Paddy Wing and his trophies, late 1940's (Paddy Wing Collection)

In late 1945, long-awaited telegrams were being sent by soldiers, sailors and air force personnel to let loved ones know they would soon be arriving back home.

B. Post – War Years on Hollyburn Mountain: 1945 - 1949

The new First Lake jump, which was been built on top of the Popfly hill around 1946, stood for ten years before it was dismantled to make room for a post-war generation of skiers who had little interest in or appreciation of the fine sport of ski jumping. Before its day was done, the First Lake jump was the site of a number of exciting tournaments that attracted sizeable crowds.



First Lake ski jump circa 1950 (JC Walker postcard, HHS Archives)

Brownie Morris, as she had been many times in the past, was in the crowd to record the distance and style marks for competitors like Jack Pratt and Jack Roocroft.

Roocroft was major force in ski jumping circles during the 1940's and early fifties. He won tournaments on ski jumps around BC, including the Suicide Hill in Revelstoke. It was only natural to include Jack Roocroft in the same group as Tom Mobraaten, Jack Pratt, and Henry Sotvedt.

Gar Robinson, arguably the strongest skier on the UBC ski team after the war, was featured in an April, 1945 Vancouver Sun article along with Daisy Bourdon, Henry Sotvedt, Jack Roocroft, Bob Stevens, Dot Gladstone, Nan Roberts, and Marg Lewis, names that were to appear many times on the local sports pages.

The Burfield family purchased the Hollyburn Ski Camp from the Swedish owners in 1946. A year later, Norm Deacon installed ropes tows on the Popfly and Mobraaten runs, at West Lake, and on the Suicide and Graveyard runs near Westlake Lodge, the first of many changes to come in recreational skiing.

Ski clubs, which had been so popular in the 1930's, were losing members. In 1945, the Hollyburn Pacific and Vancouver Ski Clubs amalgamated and became the Cypress Ski Club. Within a couple of years, and after much debate, the group became the Vancouver Ski Club. once again. Former Hollyburn Pacific members continued to be part of this group. Viski supporters promoted their club by entering a float in the PNE parade.



Vancouver Ski Club float, PNE parade circa 1950 (Doug Toller Collection)

C. Mount Seymour: 1935 - 1949

By the time Vancouver's battered group of skiers returned home from the 1937 Dominion Championships in Banff, Alberta, Harold Enquist had opened the Seymour Ski Camp. Since the early 1930's, skiers had been climbing the long trail to Mount Seymour to enjoy the varied terrain characteristic of the ski grounds there.

After road and trail access were improved in the 1940's, more and more skiers were drawn to the mountain. Enquist Lodge was opened after the war to provide services for the growing number of visitors.

In his 1946 article, "A Look-See at Mt. Seymour", Sam Taylor noted that six organized clubs had played a large part in the development of the mountain. The most prominent of these clubs was the Mount Seymour Ski Club. Under the leadership of Jim Berranson, the club sponsored a variety of social and sports events including the Northland Downhill. Competitors started at Mystery Lake and followed a mile and a quarter course to the alpine meadows, five hundred feet below. Walt MacMillan was one of many skiers who, over the years, captured top honours in the annual race.

The Mount Seymour Ski Club also sponsored the annual Bernard Open Jump. In the 1940's. Ole Johannsen was Seymour's top ski jumper.

There was a dramatic turn-of-events in January, 1951, when a 16 year old Norwegian junior named Halvar Sellesback won the New Year's tournament on Mount Seymour. Representing the Vancouver Ski Club, Sellesback was to win many tournaments during the next four years.

D. End of an Era: 1950 - 1967

At the beginning of the 1950's, young ski jumpers on the Vancouver Ski Club team celebrated the success of one of its members.



Vancouver Ski Club ski jumping team circa 1950 (Hollyburn Heritage Society Archives)

In October, 1950, Nordal Kaldal was coaching ski jumpers at the Templeton Junior High School. Al Menzies, Ted Hunt, Don Shore, Jack Gawthorne, George Jackson, Jerry Thompson, Johnnie Halstead, Len Rawluk, Len Thompson, Al Barry and Bob Clark had already logged time on the First Lake jump.

The previous March, volunteers had prepared the landing hill for the Vancouver City Championships that were held on Hollyburn. Those who were high in the standings that day included Harry Burfield, Jack Wood, Al Menzies, Jim Hennigar, and Ron Glover. Veteran Henry Sotvedt won the A class jumping tournament, although Vancouver Ski Club's sensational young jumper, Halvar Sellesback, competing as a junior, was awarded a total of 213 points, .2 points ahead of Sotvedt. Al Menzies won the 15th annual running of the Viski Classic.

During the first half of the 1950's, more tournaments were held on Grouse, Hollyburn and Seymour, but the era of ski jumping in BC was coming to a close. People raising the 'baby boomer' generation did not have the time or the inclination to attend ski club meetings. When the clubs faded away, there were not enough volunteers to run officially sanctioned tournaments and races. Funds that had been collected by the clubs to help pay the expenses of their champions were no longer available. Shortly after Harry Burfield took that leap off the First lake hill in the mid-1950's, the jump was gone, and so was an era.

More poignantly, two of Hollyburn's best known ski champions passed away during the 1950's. Daisy Bourdon Johnson had died on March 17, 1951 after a hard battle with cancer. In 1957, cancer also took Jack Pratt. To honour him, the Vancouver Ski Club built the Jack Pratt Memorial Ski Jump, but only one tournament was ever held on the jump. Typhoon Frieda, in 1962, and heavy snowloads in subsequent years weakened the trestle. It finally collapsed in 1967, a relic of a bygone age. Today, snowshoers slide down Romstad's Run. Few of them know about the 'heroes of the harnessed hickory'.



Romstads run, February 2007 (Donald Grant Collection)