

Interview with Coy Hill
Ishpeming, MI
December 18, 2001
Interviewer: Dr. Russell Magnaghi
Transcribed: April 8, 2002

RM: I'd like to start out with your birth date.

CH: I was born on April 27, 1927.

RM: Where did you get the nickname Coy?

CH: I grew up. My mother had 11 children. They started school a year early, and we were all slow growers. I was five feet tall when I graduated from high school. I guess it was coy is a word something like sly as a fox. It was a nickname I got, I think, from my brother Art. It was a wonderful life we had.

RM: Now you're originally from...

CH: I'm originally from Negaunee. Marquette County.

RM: What is your ethnic background?

CH: I'm Finnish. I started ski jumping when I was 4 years old. My cousins were the most famous family in America, the Bietalas. My mother and their mother were sisters. So I've had ski jumping on my mind since when I was 4 years old.

RM: What kind of equipment were you using at that time?

CH: At the time, it was on feet. I had different stories I could tell ya. I had the best skis in the area. The other guys had pine skis but mine were maple, but the tip was tacked with a tin can from a vegetable dish. We had rubber bands, but I also had horsehide back straps and toes. Then the area was coming in where the ski jumpers were, my brothers were all ski jumpers and the Bietalas. They had what they called the hog binding. It was a leather strap, and like a little ? that you kicked your toes into it. We never had much of a fancy ski boot. It was like a toed hiking boot in my era. Then we got the jumping boots started coming in different.

RM: So in the beginning you were kind of creating your own equipment?

CH: Well, we used to make our own. We never had much. You had to be a little bit creative. My father was in the logging business so we had horses. We had the old horse hide back straps from the reigns of the horses and we made our straps out of those.

RM: Where did you start ski jumping?

CH: Right in Negaunee. With my older brother George. I was watching the tournaments since I was four or five years old, and we used to walk there it was a few miles from the country road to the Suicide Bowl. My brothers and I all ski jumped. There were 7 of us. The Bietala brothers ski jumped. We were closely related families.

RM: So if a whole bunch of you went out there, you didn't need anyone else.

CH: Well, we had ski jumps in all the back yards. It was quite a tradition through my age. It's different now in the days of specialization. We played all sports and just used the base equipment we had. You never had fancy stuff. As you got older, you got better equipment. I remember one pair of skis my brother's bought me. I was ten. And I won my first tournament I entered with them in Marquette. I was really thrilled. I just loved to fly through the air on a pair of skis. I can't express it to anyone. Just that it's something thrilling. I'm still involved in the sport.

RM: Now you mention chipmunk Bluff...

CH: That's in south Marquette.

RM: Out by the...

CH: By Superior hills. Toboggan slide there, then they had the ski jump and there was trolling out further.

RM: I think I've seen pictures of that.

CH: And then I went out last summer and the areas all about with housing. It's close to Bothwell Middle School. Down in the hole from there. I forgot what street it was.

RW: So you got involved with skiing as a youngster, and as you got older, what were some of the tournaments you got involved in?

CH: I competed all over the states. Won my first tournament in Chicago when I was 16. My cousin Leonard Bietala retired from ski jumping. This was the war years, 1945, and he told the ski club to send down his cousin. I went down and I won first place in Junior class. I skied in Chicago for 25 years. I also skied at Soldier's Field at the football stadium there.

RM: What did they do, have special ...

CH: They had a special tower built with scaffolding in their stadium.

RM: I've seen those at various places around the country. Was that more difficult to ski off of?

CH: We jumped on crushed ice. It's tough, but it's smaller than some of the jumps we skied on. I think we jumped about 145-150 feet. 140 feet at Soldier Field. I also skied at the Los Angeles Fair. That was September 1951. We had a big ski jump at the Los Angeles Fair.

RM: Was this a common practice? Ski jumping was kind of exotic so the various places that don't have snow in the winter, like Los Angeles, they would put these on?

CH: At that time yes. That was 1951. It was the largest fair in the world at that time. They just decided...one of the directors, he was a Hollywood director ???, he's in the hall of fame here, he's the one that designed that hill. It was a fundraising for the '52 Olympic Team. We ski jumped there for 17 days. At 10:00 every night almost everything at the fair would stop. There was upwards of 50,000 people that would come watch us ski jump at night at 10:00. We had an exhibition jump in the afternoon. We'd take 2 competitive jumps at 10:00 at night. That would be the climax to the whole fair for the whole day. We were celebrities at the time. We toured Hollywood, it was a thrilling place to be. I was there with Joe Perrault and ??? from Ishpeming here.

RM: Did you ever run across the fellow, he was a skier, Marty Arige?

CH: Yes. I was at his home in Hollywood, CA at the fair. He married Norma Shear. He was a ski instructor at Sun Valley. He met Norma there and Norma Shear was a personal friend of Art Dublin. So Art Dublin, Keith Waginen, and I met Marty Arige at the fair and he flew us all around the Los Angeles area personally one day. We toured Hollywood with the people there. I met Marty myself. He was a ski instructor at Sun Valley and Norma Shear was famous movie actress at the time. Frank Ferguson was the President of the Far West Ski Association. He was also the head attorney for 20th Century Fox Studios. So we toured the whole movie studio at 20th Century Fox Studio. So we had the in with Frank Ferguson and I was one of the stars of ski jumping there.

RM: It sounds like you were quite the celebrities.

CH: It was a wonderful experience. It's an opportunity of ski jumping that you get. You get the opportunity to meet people. It was a great life. I really enjoyed myself. It was a really nice experience.

RM: Did you go to Sun Valley or to Steamboat Springs?

CH: I ski jumped at Steamboat Springs 13 different years.

RM: Did a lot of the guys from Ishpeming...

CH: Yes, we used to go there every year. Jimmy Lawson and I, and Ralph Bietela, ??? But I went there 13 different years.

RM: How long did you continue ski jumping?

CH: I started when I was 4 and I quit when I was 46. I skied in competition for 36 years.

RM: Did you ever get into any problems? Falls?

CH: Oh, I broke my ankle. I turned over a few times. Tore my shoulder apart another time. I've had 5 summersaults over 200 feet in my career. It would take you a week to tell you what went through my mind in the couple seconds it took. When you're going upside down through the air it's not a thrill.

RM: Was this at a time when the skis would release?

CH: I never wanted my skis to come off. They had the chance and safety binding come out at one time and I never used them. I saw them come off when they weren't supposed to. My skis were part of my feet. When you ski jump you want those skis to stay on. Release after a bad fall or something. They still come loose. They're really designed fancy now days. It's ergonomics. Ski jumping is like flying an airplane. They have jumpsuits and helmets. They're not better ski jumpers or better athletes but the equipment is so modern. It's aerodynamic. The jumpsuits help you fly through the air and it seems like they never stop.

RM: When you were learning and training, who were your trainers?

CH: We coached one another here in Ishpeming. At one time we had a nucleus of...I'm sure 15 Class A jumpers. At least 10 of us were top notch in America. If we could beat our buddies, we'd go and coach each other and try to beat each other right here in town. We had for many years the best ski team in America right in Ishpeming. If we knew we could beat each other, that's what we'd do. We'd go and beat the others. It was a wonderful competition. I thought I grew up in a hell of a good time. We still have coffee together every morning...5 or 6 of us. We're close knit friends.

RM: So this ended up being a lifelong friendship. At that time were there a lot of young fellows that got into skiing?

CH: Much more than now. Any sport right now, it's such a day of specialization. I played all sports. I couldn't wait to take my first swim in the summer time. But in the fall the sight of the first snowflake just drove me wacky. I couldn't wait to put on a pair of skis. I can't even explain the feeling. When I was 13 or 14 years old I couldn't wait to fly through the air. Nothing else mattered to me in life. I loved it. I was absolutely a fanatic. And to be good at something, even your job, if you don't like it you better learn to like it or you're not going to be a success.

RM: So this would be a horrible winter for you, the one we're having now.

CH: Right now, yes. You'd be doing a lot of dry land training. Running and thinking about ski jumping...which I did at one time all year long anyway. Playing all sports, but even in the summer I was just thinking about it. Ski jumping was my first love.

RM: So you did swimming and diving...

CH: Fancy diving, I played baseball, golf, I tried them all. But ski jumping, I love to fly through the air. That was thrilling.

RM: Did ski jumpers get into downhill skiing?

CH: Not much no. Not in this area. We are what you call flat landers. If you go out west Gordy Wren from Steamboat Springs was probably the best 4 event man. He was cross country, jumping, ??? and downhill. He did four. He was good at all of them.

RM: With that background then, how did you get involved with the Ishpeming Ski Club?

CH: Like I told you, my brothers all skied in the Ishpeming Ski Club and my cousins were part of the Flying Bietelas. So I moved to Marquette when I was 8 and moved back when I was 14. I already told you the story. Leonard Bietela told the ski club to send me to Chicago. So I went to Chicago and won first place. We all had our neighborhood jumps. There were lots of ski jumps. I would say 60% of the boys in Marquette County and other neighboring counties here ski jumped in the winter. They weren't all like the Bietelas and myself. We spent a lot of time at it. We worked every day and we trained every night. If we didn't train or work on Suicide every night we thought it was a sin. And we were in darn good condition. I played all sports and I was in shape all months of the year like you're supposed to be to be an athlete. Some may not be and they paid their price because I couldn't wait to beat them.

RM: Were there people in Marquette that were into ski jumping?

CH: Oh yes. I lived in Marquette for 6 years. My coach was probably the only non-skier there was. David Lund. He was a one-armed skier. He skied in the early days of the National Championship in Ishpeming on brass ????. He was my coach in Marquette. He was a fine gentleman. He only had one arm. He ski jumped with one arm. He was my coach. There were ski jumpers in Crystal Falls and Iron Mountain...

RM: So the ski club...you always hear of the Ishpeming Ski Club and the activities in Ishpeming, but the other towns had ski clubs and jumping...

CH: But Ishpeming was a major town. Iron Mountain was a major town that had the junior ski club. Then you went to the bigger ski club. I remember when ??? and I were in the Negaunee Ski Club. Then when my cousin Leonard recommended me to go to Chicago, I've been a member of the Ishpeming Ski Club ever since then.

RM: So that's when you entered into the adult club.

CH: Right.

RM: So since that time you don't have ski clubs in these various communities anymore.

CH: No, it's just Ishpeming now. But they're all welcome to join our club. They always were if they were good enough before.

RM: So you didn't just join, you had to be of a certain caliber?

CH: You could just join, but to send you on ski trips was another thing. They went on their own.

RM: So you could be part of the general membership.

CH: Yes. Anyone is welcome to join. They still are welcome to join. We have a small group that tries to keep this going.

RM: You became a member, then you were involved in jumping. That was your major contribution at that point. What has happened, after you got done jumping...

CH: I was the President of the ski club one year. Vice-president for 13 years. I've been hill captain and just about every position for the ski club there is. I've been involved in fundraising for the club all my life. It's something beautiful.

RM: Can you talk a little about the organization of the Ishpeming Ski Club and how it gets its funding.

CH: We have a booklet that we raise money on. We have contributions. I think more should be done, but people seem to take us for granted here. At one time the other towns used to pay me when I went there for my expenses because we were strict amateurs. It's always been a struggle here in Ishpeming to raise money. But it's an amateur sport. I think things could be done, but you almost need a professional organizer to do this. We've never had a professional in Ishpeming.

RM: How do you see...you've kind of talked about the young people today not getting involved.

CH: We have a program here. We have a coach from Slovenia, Martin Bayer. He coaches the juniors. We're trying to keep it going. It's not like it was. Everybody ski jumped a little bit. We had our backyard jumps. Now it's such a day of professionalism. When you're 10 or 11 years old it costs 3, 4,\$500 to outfit a boy with skis and equipment. Everybody doesn't have that. We try to help them out with our junior program too if they do get involved.

RM: In the old days you could ski in your back yard.

CH: Oh yes. We skied all over. We never had any fancy clothes at all. I had the best skis in the neighborhood with a piece of coffee can under my tip and then I got my jumping skis and won the tournament. That was the end of Coy Hill. Ski jumping was my life. I was thrilled.

RM: What was your regular occupation, your money occupation?

CH: I worked in a blacksmith shop for 10 years and I was a hot shot ski jumper. I thought I was a hot shot. Then I worked iron work for 35 years after.

RM: So when you were ski jumping you had to have your own free time to go to these tournaments.

CH: Well you missed a day or two once in a while, but you still worked. A lot of people were supporting families. It was tough. We trained after work. We worked every day.

RM: But when you went to Los Angeles...you were probably younger though...

CH: I was in the blacksmith shop.

RM: So you had to take quite a bit of time off.

CH: I took time off. We were there for 17 days. There was no pay there. Just our expenses.

RM: So you had the train trip back and forth.

CH: We flew by airplane from KI Sawyer.

RM: This was in what year?

CH: 1951, September.

RM: So the whole involvement with the Ishpeming Ski Club is a volunteer...

CH: Yes, it's all volunteer. I'm a proud member of the Ishpeming Ski Club. I think we have a great ski club and I'm trying to keep it going. I'm still the director. I tell them they don't need me anymore. But they say they do. I help the hall of fame a little bit. Ray Leverton and I do it once in a while. The hall of fame is here because of the Ishpeming Ski Club and Suicide Bowl.

RM: What do you think is going to happen? Can you tell me a little of your involvement in developing Suicide Bowl?

CH: I put two of the towers up. ??? and I tore two down. One time we tore one down and one corner didn't have any anchor bolts on it. Sometimes if you're not good it's nice

to be lucky. I spent a lot of time out there. I would venture to say I put \$200,000 in labor out there. I coached for 30 years out there. I supervised the erection of the towers. I influenced my iron worker's local to help me. Then the school kids, dentists, doctors, we made that first tower that we're going to lose now. In the future it's going to cost. We spent \$17,000 to build that tower at the time, not counting the dirt and free labor, which would probably cost...at least a million dollars from CCI in their donations. But we're going to have to have community support to do that. It's all on grant money now. I think it can be done if people think of the tourism and the economic impact of how things are in the UP anyway. I think it would be great for our community to keep ski jumping alive here, and the Bluff Street ski jumping and trails here. I'm trying to help in any little way I can.

RM: What time frame does all this have to be done?

CH: I'm not sure. There might be a timeframe with CCI, but I'm sure we can work something out. I don't see any way we can meet the timeframe they have set up for us. I think that is just a figure, or a tentative date. But we've got to get backing to do this. If we don't get public support, I don't think it can be done. We've got to get grants and work through the city and the city council has voted behind us 100%. Now I think they have a man in there by the name of John Cornin, I think if he wants to, he can do it for us. I mean together. He can spearhead the whole thing. I think some of the people didn't understand when the mining company was going to take our area over. I thought...and I still think CCI will help us some more on the jumping end of it. The cross country trails are being developed out at Al Quaal. There's a lot of money being spent there, grant money. I think the jumping end is a special entity. I think it's something that's got to be...maybe it's going to be conflicting with the Al Quaal trails now. There's so much there. I go to Lahti, Finland every year. Their city hall is right underneath the stadium. Their jumps are right in the heart of town. There's 80,000 people there. People around here didn't like this. They thought the ski jump was going to be a messy place. The ski jump and the soccer stadium, hockey rinks, right in town. They're all like a big conglomerate, a big arena. I should have taken some of the pictures I have there. I'm going there again this year. I've been going for 10 years. Last year I watched 12 different World Champion events, separate events. Cross country, team jumping, special jumping, 90 meter, 120 meter...I talked with 16 former world champion ski jumpers when I was there, that I personally knew in Lahti. We go there every year with my buddy Rudy Maki and Willey Ericson.

RM: So what they've done there is focused on winter sports and the whole town is...

CH: Lahti even has a tax on the gasoline for the people. They get like half a penny or something. To raise money for the world championships they did that. They probably had to have about 50 or 60 million dollars to put the world championships on. They had special trains that came in from Helsinki. The population of the town for about a month was probably 120,000 people. You couldn't find a place or talk to her from Marquette and I think he was living 35 miles out of town. He was in a big cross country race at the time when I saw him there.

RM: Oh he was racing.

CH: He was in a big race. He was just thrilled. He's a personal friend of mine.

RM: That's kind of interesting that they focus on that ski complex right in town.

CH: It's right in the heart of town. For 5 or 10 miles you can see the Lahti trails in Finland. When you come in here from the west on 41 you're going to be able to see those towers at the Bluff Street trails. It will be a sight to behold. I think if it's done right they could put a speed skating oval at the bottom and everything. They should work on a sports complex. I think they should redesign the Bluff Street Road and work with the mining company and also for the parking lot for convenience around there. I think they could put different things there.

RM: Does anyone, except for yourself and your friends, does anyone from Ishpeming travel to these places in Finland to see what other places are doing to get some ideas? Like members of city government or something?

CH: I don't think so.

RM: I ask that because a lot of that happens around Marquette and Marquette County. A lot of these people will go on a vacation, but they don't spend much time looking at what could benefit their community, like this ski complex. And then bring the ideas back.

CH: I may be biased in my opinion, but I've seen it. I've been to Lahti many times. I've been an official in two Olympic Games, one in Lake Placid and one at Squaw Valley California.

RM: How did you get involved in that?

CH: Well I was a former ski jumper, so I was a trainer and worked around the hills. I coached and raised ski jumpers. I brought up champions. I didn't just ski jump myself. That's why I'm still involved.

RM: How did you get into the coaching? Did it just blend?

CH: We coached each other. Then I got to be the central coach. I've got a lifetime coaching card for America now in coaching. I'm recognized as a lifetime coach. I almost stayed home. I could have been involved in other ways, but my friend Rudy Maki is the world class Federal International Judge. That's part of the connections we have going to Finland because he knew all the people. We competed with world champions from Finland and Norway. We're like a college fraternity, like the old ????. I talked to 16 different world champions last winter when I was Lahti alone. Former ski jumpers. I've been involved in the sport for 70 years, since I could walk. I've competed for 36 years

and I'm still working because I love the sport. I'm trying to keep it alive. It's something beautiful.

RM: So how long did you actively coach?

CH: 30 years. Never got paid a penny. I just loved it. I coached and built the ski hill. I'm the chief of the takeoff again this year. I supervised the erection of these towers.

RM: You said you got support from the union, from the iron workers...

CH: Yes. I was a member of the Local.

RM: What happens with the...today...

CH: We'll have to take the towers down. I don't know how they plan on doing that.

RM: Now when they have to move.

CH: I don't know what they plan to do. I don't know if they can be reused. But I think it's going to be...the elevations are going to be different. The engineer, Don Liliquist and Tom Flaggerant, who was in here before me, we work together on different projects out there. Don's a great cracker jack engineer. You should interview him. He could tell you more on the Bluff Street...

RM: So you're right in the middle of things even now, with the moving....

CH: I'm trying to stay involved because I want to see this continue.

RM: What is your outlook, in looking to the future and ski jumping in the Ishpeming area?

CH: This is what the ski club is trying to do with Martin Bayer here, the Slovenian. I think he's working on getting permanent residence in the US. We're trying to get a youth program going. At one time they used to have sports, you could ski jump in college and get a college education for ski jumping if you were good enough. They stopped that. They used to have 4 events in the college. I wish that could be reinstated. Northern had a ski team. Dr. Hurst was a coach there. Rajala Pertti, I saw him in Finland. He lives in Crystal Falls, he went to Northern. Dr. Don and I coached Pertti while he was at Northern for 4 years. He was a national champion when he went to Northern. Bernt Ronsted from Norway was his partner. He got killed in a car wreck. He was their place kicker at Northern and all set to go pros. Then he got killed in a car wreck.

RM: That was in...

CH: The early '70s.

RM: I remember that. So when Northern had ski jumping on campus, did that help your program here?

CH: Sure. Certainly it does. You broaden your scope. It's tough. Kids don't seem to do it like they used to. I don't know the answers, but we're trying here in Ishpeming.

RM: But if you had the college kids and college champions and role models

CH: There would be more exposure. When Ralph Bietela and I quit it seemed to go downhill. I ski jumped in '46 when my back was bad. I've had a summersault over 200 feet. It would take me a week to tell you. Ralph skied until he was 51, I started praying for him. He finally quit. We had more people and more jumpers and we were around. We would coach together, Ralph and I would. Help ski jumpers coming up.

RM: I suppose you could hand pick people you see. If a person looks good...

CH: Oh sure. We had ski jumpers from Republic, we had a cracker jack ski jumper from Republic one time, Wess Hendrickson. I remember when he was 16 he would come there with a fancy sport car to Negaunee. He said do you think I can join the ski club? I said do you think you can take orders? Could you follow instructions? Do you like ski jumping? He said I love it. I said we meet every Monday night at the Ski Hall of Fame in Ishpeming. So he joined the ski club and turned out to be a cracker jack Class A jumper. He skied with Rudy Maki and Dr. Bietela. I could go on for hours about all the jumpers we had here in town.

RM: Could you mention some of them?

CH: All the Beitala's. Walt, Roy, Anslem, Leonard...Walt Bietala and I were cousins. Just like brothers, we ski jumped so long together. Wilbur Rasperson, Rudy Maki, Ray Gothier, National Class C and Class B Champions. Rudy was a former national champ. I was national champ. I'm very proud of it. It was a great honor.

RM: What happened with their children? Did they continue in skiing?

CH: Not any of them. I have two grandchildren that are starting I hope. They're 8 and 11. But they didn't.

RM: So they're the right age and they have you to coach.

CH: Well we've got a better coach now. They have their system. We just coached them on the hill, but now they have a rigorous training schedule. They have to have special exercises to develop speed and reflexes, timing... Myself, it was natural for me. I was thinking about ski jumping all the time. So I don't know.

RM: With the young people, they would have you as encouragement to keep them going.

CH: They look up to Martin. He was a ski jumper, cross country combined.

RM: But it's sort of interesting, the children, like your children and the Bietela's and so on, didn't get into it.

CH: Jack Bietela was a son. Dr. Jack Bietela was great. He was the son of the oldest Bietela, of Anslem. He was quite good, but as he grew, he sacrificed. He went to Michigan for dentistry. He still got to be a Class A jumper. He was a terrific jumper. He was a son of the eldest. He had two sons that ski jumped and they were pretty good. But Jack was a top notch Class A jumper.

RM: So some of them did continue.

CH: Some.

RM: I guess it's one of those things where times change and people's interests change and what not. Is there anything I didn't ask you or left out? Something you want to add as a finishing statement or something?

CH: I'm a lifetime member of the Ishpeming Ski Club. I contribute in any way I possibly can to help the sport, and also with the hall of fame. We have a great hall of fame, and I think that ski jumping and the hall of fame should work to continue in Ishpeming. Not just Ishpeming, Marquette County. Marquette benefits when we have something here. The Olympic Training Center is at Northern Michigan University. I can remember meeting with Professor Heath. He wanted our name on our ski hill. At that time we didn't need it. Maybe we should have put Northern's name on our lease and gone with the city. That was for insurance purposes. Then the city more or less took over with Sun Track. The money that was supposed to go to the development at Suicide went to Al Quaal. We were going to develop the trails there with the mining company. We had to go hand in hand with the mining company. The complex alone out there is worth 2,3,4 million dollars. Now the trails are all gone and they're going to have to take the tower down. But the site alone is worth a million dollars. The Suicide Bowl site. The site alone. In foreign countries they pick a site where it should be. In Lahti it's right in town. In Ishpeming it could be right in town. Hopefully it can be there. But they have to go through with the grants. I hope people realize that. We have to get the public behind it. Without public support you can't do anything.

RM: Do you think part of the problem is that they don't...the people in Ishpeming don't advertise and promote it enough to involve the whole county? A county effort is going to bring prosperity to the whole county, not just the one town.

CH: I don't think the businessmen are behind us enough. At one time business people in Ishpeming ran the ski club. It was very elite. If you were a member of the ski club, it was a member of the golf club is. It was like a social step for the businessmen. They were paid members to be part of the Ishpeming Ski Club. We weren't even members of the Ishpeming Ski Club. We were members of the Ishpeming Ski Jumping Club. Then

all that changed. The businessmen turned the ski club over to us. We were \$13,000 in the hole. That would be like \$100,000 today. In 2 years we erased that deficit and kept on going. We're still going. I think that was back in 1953 when the city fathers turned it over. That's when the ski jumpers took that whole club over. Then Norman Juhola made the cross country trails. He never gets credit. He is the one that really started cross country skiing in the UP. You should interview him if you want to know the backbone to the cross country trails. I'll bet you he put \$25-30,000 of his own money with David Holly in a trail that he developed. He developed the trails through Al ??? Cross Country. He was the head of cross country for at least 20 years in America. He was a college man from Princeton, Harvard, Yale, something like that. I knew Al personally. He was the one who advised Norman. He told Norman that he had better cross country racing trails at Suicide Bowl than they had at Lake Placid, New York for the Olympics. He did it all. He groomed the trails alone and everything. Then he got planning it and even a tire wears out after so many miles. It would probably interest you if you talked to Norman.

RM: About what year was he doing that?

CH: Around 1970 I think. Dave Hyde might even be able to give you information.

RM: I'm supposed to be interviewing him later on today. .

CH: Ask him what he done. Tell him Coy Hill wants him to say it. He done a lot. I was a winner. The world loves a winner. I was lucky. Fortunate that I had a good life with ski jumping. But there's so many unsung heroes. I remember, we were talking about how we do this and that...Pinky Mitchell. He was a great ski jumper. He coached those boys for at least 20 years. He took the junior club. I took the ski jumpers at random and would watch them grow up. I would watch for them like a scout. It was just wonderful to watch them grow up. It was something I loved. There was my cousin Ralph and I, Wilbur Rasperon...I remember when Rudy Maki and Dr. Jack Bietala were growing up. Ralph and I and Wilbur Rasperon were in Negaunee training. We took them with us. They were both 10 years old. Their first jumps. We took a few jumps and then said it's time for you boys to try. Up they went. You could hear their little squeaky voices. We'd holler back and forth. Rudy made a beautiful run. He went up again. We said how come Jack don't come? It's not that he's afraid, but he's afraid he's not going to go good. They were afraid we were critical already. I was coaching them. That's a true story. Jack is 57 now. That was 47 years ago. I still remember that in my mind, the times and fun we had together. We were like a big family.

RM: So you're looking forward to the tournament this year.

CH: Oh yes.

RM: After you ended jumping, you've never tried it again.

CH: No. I cross country skied. I still dream about it. It's a wonderful experience.

RM: So it's still in your blood.

CH: Yes. It's part of me, it really is. There's something there that I love.

RM: Okay, thank you. We're going to add this to the collection. It's important to have the personal reminiscence. You have all the statistics and information, newspaper clippings, but we actually have the words of the participants. I've heard a great deal about you. Coy Hill this and this and this. I wanted to get you on tape. Then hunting season came. It was almost... you being out there to be interviewed was one reason I wanted to set this up today.

CH: I'm still with Ralph Bietala hunting at the Bietala camp. Leonard's camp. I can tell you other stories of when I came home from the Navy. I didn't want to go into the service. World War II was getting toward the end and I enlisted 2 days before I was 18 because I didn't want to go into the Army. So I enlisted in the Navy and spent 3 months in Great Lakes Training in boot camp. Then I was sent to Norman, Oklahoma and I was a mail man for the supply department. I got to know my two bosses pretty good. I started bragging I was a ski jumper and talking about it. I was down there and it was about 90 degrees every day in the shade. I was thinking about our tournament coming up. Ishpeming and Iron Mountain tournament. So I talked to ??? and asked to go home for the ski tournament. It was coming up in about 2 weeks. He said, call me Roy and I'll call you Coy. Don't call me sir. He was a division officer. The commander's name was Roy also. He asked the commander if we could set it up. I said I sure would be pleased. He came back and called me into his office and said I was all set. I said thank you sir. I hadn't had any practice but I went to jump Suicide and Iron Mountain. I hadn't had any training. I was just in the Navy there in the warm climate. I didn't do well, but I participated. That was a great honor to come home.

RM: That was what 19...

CH: 1945. The tournament was always on Washington's birthday even if it was a Tuesday. Years ago.

RM: Do you have any other stories?

CH: I remember going on ski trips. I thought I was the king. I was in control around here. Four of us were going in the winter of 1954 to Steamboat Springs, CO for training camp. I was the oldest. Dr. Jack, Ray Gauthier, Rudy Maki, and I. We stopped for coffee in St. Paul. We were going west in the Great Plains. We passed this couple. Then they passed us. Then we stopped for coffee. Nobody wanted to sit in the back seat when they traveled with me. The four of us sat in the front seat for 1750 miles. We stopped for coffee and that older couple saw us in there. They said they couldn't believe nobody was sitting in the back seat. I asked them why and they said no. Four of us were in the front seat of my 1952 Ford. We had fun. It's a true story.

RM: Everybody wanted to be the navigator.

CH: We were happy people. We had lots of fun.

RM: You said you went to Steamboat Springs. Were there any other places that were ski jumping...

CH: Oh yes. Squaw Valley and Leavenworth, Washington.

RM: That's obviously in the mountains, in the Cascades.

CH: Yes. We skied at Mount Hood. Beaver Baseball Stadium. We would lead the parade.

RM: Again, it was your celebrity status?

CH: I don't know if we were celebrities. We just liked to fly through the air.

RM: That's where all the ??? (both are talking at one time)

CH: Yes. I had to privilege...I was ski flying and a member of the World Championship Ski Flying. I was the central champion in 1953. They sent me over as the central representative to ski fly in the World Championships in Austria. At that time there was only...the flying hills are the bigger ones. They jump 200 meters now. At that time 100 meters was a long jump in 1953. When I went over there, we were met by the government. We had lunch with the government officials of Austria while I was there. I had the privilege of having lunch with the government officials of Austria in 1953. That was some of the privileges of being a ski jumper and being a member of America's team. We were a very proud group. I remember sipping Champaign out of a glass and I was looking around ??? (laughing). They had a big parade there. It was an honor to represent Ishpeming all around the world.