

Nordic American Voices
Nordic Museum

Interview of Hans Ulland
ID: 2018.096.001

October 20, 2018
Seattle, Washington

Interviewers: Affa Sigurdardottir; Gordon Strand; Jette Bunch

Affa Sigurdardottir: [0:00] This is an interview for the Nordic American Voices oral history project. Today is October 20, 2018, and we will be interviewing Hans Ulland. We are at the Nordic Museum in Seattle, Washington. My name is Arnfridur Sigurdardottir. With me is—

Gordon Stand: [0:18] Gordon Stand.

Jette Bunch: [0:19] And Jette Bunch.

Affa: [0:21] Welcome, Hans. If you would just start by telling us your name, your date of birth, and where you were born, and your parents' names, and where they were born, and where they came from, and then just start your story.

Hans Ulland: [0:35] All right. Sure will. Thanks again to all of you for allowing me to do this. My name is Hans Ulland. I was born, ironically, at Swedish Hospital in Seattle on July 15, 1958. My father, Olav Ulland, was born in Kongsberg, Norway, in November of 1910. My goal here is to tell the story of the Ulland family, and in particular my father, who came over here in 1937.

[1:14] As I said, he was born in Kongsberg, Norway, which is about an hour or so away from Oslo. He lived on a farm with ten brothers and sisters. In Norway, a big thing, and still today, is ski jumping. He started doing that at a very young age. Age three or four is when I was told he started. There were six brothers in the family, and most of them also got into jumping. As they grew older, they became known as the Flying Ullands, as they got better and better on the jumping hill in Kongsberg. Eventually, they jumped in very large competitions.

[2:05] The Kongsberg area was also known to produce other jumpers, such as Birger and Sigmund Ruud. Birger won two, possibly three Olympic medals, at one point. My father was in many competitions. He was credited with being the first man to ever jump over 100 meters in competition. That was in Italy in 1935. He kept jumping, and in 1937, he was given the opportunity to come to Seattle to coach the jumpers. At that time, ski jumping was actually a fairly popular thing, especially in the ski areas, such as Seattle; Duluth, Minnesota; even in California, the Squaw Valley area.

Gordon: [3:06] Montana hadn't become big yet?

Hans: [3:07] They hadn't been developed too much yet. There was a lot of interest around the country, but particularly the Northwest, in ski jumping. He started coaching, and still jumped in competitions in 1937, until his visa ran out. He had fallen in love with the area and didn't want to leave. He ended up having to go up to Vancouver, and sort of hid in the mountains in a little cabin for a few months until they could get his visa straightened out. Then he was able to come back and stay in the Seattle area.

Affa: [3:47] Did any of his brothers come with him?

Hans: [3:49] Not with him. Eventually, two or three brothers came over. Actually, Arne, one of his brothers, won quite a few major jumping competitions in the U.S. He didn't stay here. He ended up going back to his hometown, Kongsberg. He had two other brothers, Reidar and Sigmund, who came over and stayed. Reidar lived in the Seattle area as well. His son, Ragnar, was on the U.S. Olympic team in 1956. On that same team, my father Olav was the coach. So, he was coach of the U.S. team that year, and he coached the Italian team in 1936. He coached the U.S. team again in 1958. In 1960, the Olympics were in Squaw Valley, and he was so well thought of, he was named the head of the whole jumping competition at the Olympics. Gus Raaum was his assistant at those games.

[4:58] Going back a little bit again, in 1940-1941, he got together with a gentleman named Scott Osborn. They had been working at a sporting good store, trying to make enough money to keep their jumping going. They decided they wanted to start their own sporting goods store, and ended up borrowing \$1,000 each from Eddie Bauer. He is the one that helped them get started with the Osborn & Ulland Sporting Goods store. If you've lived in the Seattle area for very long, you're aware of it. It was a store that opened in 1940-1941, and finally closed its doors in 1995, which I was a part of, fortunately or unfortunately. I was sad to see it go, but—

Gordon: [5:59] Tell us where it was.

Hans: [6:01] At one point, they had seven stores. There was Southcenter; Tacoma. Downtown Seattle, which was the original store, at 2nd and Seneca, right above Warshal's Sporting Goods. I don't know if you knew that. They had a couple stores in Portland as well— one right in Portland at Lloyd Center, and one in Beaverton. At one point, that and Olympic Sports were probably the two go-to sporting goods stores in the whole area, especially for skiing, or tennis, or any outdoor sports in the area. What it's probably most known for is the "Sniagrab" ski sale, which is "bargains," spelled backwards.

[6:50] Hal Kilman was a late addition as a partner to my father and Scott Osborn, but didn't put his name in. He's the one who came up with that [sale] back in the late 1940s, early 1950s. It started as a small sale they had, and it grew to where people would camp out overnight to get these ski bargains. They usually had it around Labor Day weekend in September, to kind of kick off the ski season. They had great deals. It was amazing. I worked at it for several years, once I started going.

Affa: [7:30] Was there one on Western?

Hans: [7:33] No. I think that was Ski Bonkers. That was the Olympic Sports version. Ours actually

started across the street from the 2nd and Seneca location when they first ran it. Eventually, it moved to Seattle Center. They had it at the arena. It was a big, three, four-day weekend deal. They literally did almost a quarter of their business for the whole year in those four days. It was amazing, the level of skis and items they could sell in that weekend. It was a pretty crazy deal.

[8:13] Jumping around a little bit, in 1940, a young lady from Snohomish, Washington, Ruth Croxford and some of her friends would go up to the mountains, Snoqualmie Pass, to watch the jumpers. Like many at that time, she just loved jumping, and ended up running into my father somewhere along the line at one of the meets, and they ended up falling in love and getting married in 1940. She didn't really like him jumping, but of course, you couldn't get that out of his blood.

[8:56] One story... She never learned to drive, ever. She lived to be 91 years old, and never got her driver's license. One year, he was jumping in Montana in a tournament, and ended up breaking his ankle. And she ended up driving the car over the snow and everything, all the way back to Seattle. That was the only time she ever drove.

[9:23] They had my sister in 1943. They thought they were done having children. In fact, my mother was told she couldn't have more children. Lo and behold, in 1958, here I came. Everyone tells me it was a very pleasant surprise. My father always wanted a boy, and, here I was.

Affa: [9:59] So, it was just the two of you?

Hans: [10:00] Yeah. Just the two of us.

Affa: [10:02] There were eighteen years between you?

Hans: [10:04] Fifteen. Honestly, my sister was in college by the time I can really remember much. She went to Linfield down in Oregon. One of my earlier memories is going down to Linfield, and watching one of their football games. She was a cheerleader. I remember playing catch with my dad on the sidelines during the game. That was one of my fond memories from back then.

[10:38] After graduation, she got a teaching job in Portland, and taught there until she retired about ten years ago or so. She would come up in summers at stay at our place on Lake Sammamish in Bellevue. But mostly as visits. She was almost more like an aunt to me than a sister, because she was never really there when I was there. We still stay in touch pretty frequently. She still lives in Portland.

Affa: [11:19] Were you brought up in Seattle?

Hans: [11:23] Their first home in Seattle was in Magnolia. That is the home, in the 1950s, especially (I heard, but I wasn't quite around yet) that assorted Norwegians came through that house. My father would tell them how great it was here. They would stay with them for a while until they could get their footing and head out into whatever they were going to do in the Northwest. Gus Raaum—that's how he came over. Several prominent Norwegians came over through staying at my parents' house. I wouldn't say it was a party house, but they definitely had some good times with everyone there.

Affa: [12:19] Do you know how they found about your father, to bring them over here? Do you

know anything...

Hans: [12:26] Not too much, other than he had connections back in the Kongsberg area through his jumping. So, I think a lot of them were from that area. He went back to Norway several times. His brother Arne had a ski factory back in Kongsberg. Part of Osborn & Ulland was this thing called OU Sports, which was a wholesaler. They sold the Kongsberg skis through OU Sports. He would go back to the factories there to check it out quite often, and of course, [he would] visit family.

Gordon: [13:08] Did your grandparents ever come to visit you in Seattle?

Hans: [13:12] No. They had basically all passed away by the time I came around. On the Norwegian side, anyway, I don't think they ever came to the United States. My mother's parents lived in the Snohomish area. So, they obviously visited. [My parents] were born in the early 1900s, so it's kind of like they were almost grandparent-age for me. So, my [grandparents] were not around when I was.

Jette: [13:55] What was your mother's background?

Hans: [13:57] Education.

Jette: [13:58] What about nationality?

Hans: [15:01] English. Her father was an educator. Her sister was an educator. My sister was a teacher, like I explained, for several years. My wife is actually a principal in the Kent School District. And my son is actually now in his first year of teaching at Bonney Lake High School. Education is really in the family.

[14:35] One thing I'd like to go back to with my father— after his many years, he received several different awards. In 1966, I remember watching the induction ceremony for the Washington Sports Hall of Fame and the Northwest Ski Hall of Fame. In 1976, it was called the Sesquicentennial Awards. He and Scoop Jackson, the Senator, were given awards for being the two most influential Norwegians in the last 150 years. So, he obviously had much influence outside of just the ski industry.

Gordon: [15:23] What did he do? Do you know? Was he politically involved?

Hans: [15:27] No. I think it was just that he was so well-liked that his influence spread throughout the Norwegian community.

Gordon: [15:38] What is your strongest memory of him in your life?

Hans: [15:41] I had the advantage of him being later in life. He was still working at the stores, and helping, but he had pretty much passed that on a little bit when I was younger. So, we would do all sorts of things together. Usually it was sports-related. That just seems to be how it's been. We skied. I never really... I think my mother had an influence on this. I said before how she didn't even like my dad jumping. I think she made sure that I didn't get into ski jumping. Again, because they were [older], they were probably a little more protective than normal.

[16:34] So, I never really got into jumping. I tried it once, and it was okay, but I never really got into it. A lot of alpine skiing. But really, soccer and golf were the two things my dad coached me in for six or seven years when I was a youth. Even earlier than that, with skiing, he would take me up there and teach me the ropes for skiing. He got some awards for alpine skiing as well as jumping. Back in those days, they used to be a little more versatile. They weren't as specialized. So, he taught me how to ski that way.

Affa: [17:17] Was he involved in the ski place that the Norwegians use? What is it called?

Hans: [17:22] Kongsberger. Yeah. I actually skipped over that. In 1949, he was President of the Seattle Ski Club. And in 1954, they made that kind of a social club, instead of as much about skiing. So, my father and several other Norwegians in the area formed the Kongsberger Ski Club. That was actually where I did my one and only jump. It was about ten miles past Snoqualmie Pass on a little ski hill. They had one decent-sized jump, and a smaller one. Every weekend, it was quite packed up there. They'd have tournaments. In those days, there were a lot of jumpers in the area. As time went on, for whatever reason, the sport slowly fizzled away in this area. Maybe partly because of the influence of the Seattle Pilots and the Sonics. The athletic desires were elsewhere.

Affa: [18:38] Didn't they build a building up there?

Hans: [18:41] Yeah. They had a little cabin up there. Over the years, it has turned into a cross-country ski club more than anything. They have several miles of tracks, and they built a nice lodge. It's still called Kongsberger. I don't believe the jump is there anymore. But a lot of people go up there to cross-country ski.

Gordon: [19:12] Generally, does America not participate that much in ski-jumping?

Hans: [19:17] They really don't. It's really focused in certain areas— Duluth, Minnesota, Lake Placid (which is the only place that they really have much in the way of jumps anymore). That's one reason Americans have never done that well in jumping. They just don't get enough good athletes to participate, so the pool is smaller. Every four years, when the jumping is on TV because of the Olympics, you'll get a little bit of a spurt, but eventually it comes back to the same situation.

[19:59] Another thing I remember, when I was in junior high, I was called out of class so I would be able to watch my father, who was the commentator for Channel 5 at the time for the Sapporo Olympics in Japan. He was the commentator for King 5. The main jump in Washington is in Leavenworth. They still have a hill there. It's not used competitively anymore. Winning the Leavenworth event was one of the most prestigious in the U.S., back in the day. My dad jumped there and won several times.

[20:49] He actually jumped until he was 60 years old. They had a senior division off of a smaller hill. He and Fritz Petersen were kind of the last two to be jumping. My cousin Ragnar won that tournament several times. My dad was a judge there for many years. The Bakke family are the ones in Leavenworth that kind of help. In fact, it's called Bakke Hill.

Gordon: [21:18] Was Jan Kiaer one of the jumpers?

Hans: [21:20] Yeah. I remember in the 1970s, not too long before the Olympics in Sapporo, my father hosted some of the Japanese jumpers that came over. I think he helped inspire them a bit, as far as jumping in Japan. Now, they're one of the strongest nations in the world in jumping. I was ten, eleven years old, and I remember meeting the Japanese jumpers. I remember how kind they were. It was kind of a special deal, that Leavenworth trip.

Affa: [22:01] Do you know what your father's longest jump was, or the best jump?

Hans: [22:07] The one that everybody talks about was the one that was 105 meters in Italy. Nowadays, on some of the big hills, they're flying 600-plus feet (not meters). In the Olympic competitions, they've reduced that a bit because of the limitations of the hill. You can't jump too far, or it's actually dangerous. It's more in the style, than in the distance in the competitions.

Affa: [22:45] And the style has changed a lot.

Hans: [22:46] Oh, it has changed considerably. I have several old movies of the jumping, back in the 1950s and 1960s. They're all doing this. I think they think they're getting more air. Then it went to more of a streamlined body leaning over. Now it's gone a little bit back the other way. Now, they want to have kind of that "V" with the skis to create a little bit of lift on the air. It's really a different look.

Affa: [23:19] Do you know anything about your grandparents in Norway— what they did, and where they lived?

Hans: [23:24] They lived on a farm in Kongsberg, actually about seven miles from Kongsberg. I've been there a few times. It's a place called Fennerud Farm. I think farming is basically what they did. The eleven brothers and sisters were kept busy on the farm when they weren't out jumping.

Gordon: [23:50] Did your dad ever regret leaving? Did he ever say anything like that?

Hans: [23:53] Not that... I think he was able to go back enough to get a feel for that. My mom, being from around here, was a big pull as well. Holidays were very Norwegian. I remember on Christmas Eve, going over to Susie's— one of the sisters that came over. She would have Christmas Eve with the lefse, and all the Norwegian stuff. My cousins Ragnar and Reidar, and my uncle would all be there. My mother never spoke Norwegian, so I really didn't learn. But on holidays, that's what they would speak when they all got together. It was interesting, listening to that.

Affa: [24:54] How many of your father's siblings came over here?

Hans: [24:59] I believe two sisters and two brothers. One sister and one brother stayed here in this area. One sister went to Chicago, and one brother went down in the San Francisco area. Others visited periodically, but those are the ones who came and stayed. Ironically, for the most part, the ones that came over and stayed were the ones that lived the longest. My father was actually the last of the family to be around.

Affa: [25:41] How old was he?

Hans: [25:42] He was 92.

Affa: [25:46] So, both of your parents were in their nineties.

Hans: [25:48] Yeah. Both of them were. As it happens often, my mom passed away, and then it wasn't that long after that that he did. It was sad, but when you're with someone that long, once you don't have them anymore, it kind of takes away the fight, I think.

Affa: [26:13] Yeah. Are you in touch with any of the family in Norway?

Hans: [26:16] Thanks to Facebook, yes; quite a bit. It has been a little while since I've been there. I went there with my family a few years ago, and I stayed with family. It's mostly cousins now, again, because of the age of my parents. There are several there. My daughter, a couple years ago, went and stayed with one of my cousins for a while when she was traveling through Europe.

Affa: [26:45] Did any of them in Norway ski more than just for fun? Did any of them compete, or go to the Olympics?

Hans: [26:53] No, not really. One of the second cousins became a fairly well thought of decathlete. He came to the United States and went to college in San Francisco, and competed. But none of the second generation really got into the jumping thing either. It's still very popular [in Norway], but I think it has lost a bit of its steam there as well.

Affa: [27:30] Do you know anything about the other Norwegians that were here, who were skiers that competed with your father?

Hans: [27:38] Gus Raaum is the one that I probably know the best. He was a good family friend. He did very well for himself in the U.S., as far as skiing goes, but he also had a law practice. He lived in Jackson Hole for quite a few years as well, and then came back here and spent his last years here.

Gordon: [28:11] Your dad's partner, Osborn— what was his background, or connection?

Hans: [28:18] He was a local alpine skier. They got to know each other that way. The chemistry clicked, and they decided they wanted to do a sporting goods store. I never met him. He actually died in 1964. So, I may have met him, but I don't remember him. I was only six years old. It was really Hal Kilman and my father for the rest of the time after that.

Gordon: [28:46] What led to the decision to close in 1995?

Hans: [28:51] We had been getting smaller and smaller since the early 1990s. In 1990, I was running the Bellevue Square store, and they wanted to renew our lease. They jacked our rate up considerably. What it really boiled down to was they wanted a national store in there, rather than local. That kind of became what happened. Almost all of our stores were mall stores, so they were all slowly pushed out a little bit.

[29:29] The other side of it, we had the bank issues in the late 1980s, the savings & loans, and some

defaulted loans. So, the bankers were getting really a lot more tight as far as their lending practices. Every year, we would borrow a decent amount of money to buy all the merchandise for the Sniagrab sales, and then pay it back as soon as the Sniagrab sale was over. Finally, they said, “No, we won’t do that anymore,” without my father putting in his house and everything else to guarantee it. And we decided we didn’t want to do that. When we quit being able to do Sniagrab, that really constricted our ability to compete.

[30:16] At the same time, we were starting to get the Internet sales. People would go online to find the best prices. They would come in and talk to us and get all the information that our knowledgeable people knew, and then end up going and buying things online. It started to be like catalogs versus online, but eventually online [sales] made it tough. Also, we had national companies like Big 5 come in to be a little more competitive. It finally got to the point where we felt it wasn’t worth pursuing. By then, it was myself and a gentleman named Yosh Nakagawa, who was the President, and basically ran the stores from the early 1970s on, and his son. We just decided we couldn’t keep it going.

Gordon: [31:16] What year did your father pass?

Hans: [31:19] 2003.

Gordon: [31:21] Oh, okay. So, he was around.

Hans: [31:22] He was around, but he... The year I graduated from college, he was up on a ladder, pruning some things, like he always liked to do. Yard work was one of his favorite things. And being a world-class athlete, it’s kind of ironic, but he ended up falling off the ladder, and getting a head injury. Honestly, he wasn’t ever quite... It was pretty traumatic. He was in a coma for five days.

They honestly didn’t think he was going to get through that. They said basically he was in such good shape for a gentleman of 72 years old, that they said that’s what allowed him to keep going until he was able to wake up.

[32:13] Fortunately, he was able to have years where he saw his grandkids, and all that. But he wasn’t quite... At 72, he was more active than most of the younger parents of my friends. But he just instantly became less active. He still had a good time, and a good rest of his life, but it slowed him down. It changed him.

Affa: [32:42] Did he do cross-country skiing later?

Hans: [32:44] Yeah, he did cross-country quite a bit, especially after... Like I said, he jumped until he was 60 years old. I turned 60 this year, and I can’t imagine. I still play soccer, which my wife says I shouldn’t be doing. But I wouldn’t be jumping off any hills anytime soon.

Gordon: [33:05] Your mother enjoyed going to see the jumpers, but yet she didn’t want...
[Laughter]

Hans: [33:10] No. Exactly. She snagged the jumping hunk, but didn’t want him getting himself hurt. Yeah. She wouldn’t let me play football, so I got into soccer and golf and baseball and all the other

stuff.

Affa: [33:30] Did she ski?

Hans: [33:32] Yes, she did. We went to Sun Valley almost every year for a lot of years, until she finally... Ironically, a chairlift came around and hit her in the back when she was trying to get off, and she never really recovered from that to ski anymore. But that point, she was probably pushing 65. Tennis was her specialty. She was a good tennis player.

Jette: [34:05] You mentioned you lived in Magnolia, and then you moved from there?

Hans: [34:09] Yeah. We moved in 1964, so I kind of remember [living in] Magnolia. In fact, I remember the house. They had also bought some land at Lake Sammamish, and we had a little cabin there we would go to in the summers. Right about that same time is when they began building a house there. So eventually, we moved there. Midway through my first grade year, we moved to Bellevue, and sold the house in Magnolia.

Jette: [34:44] Do you live there now?

Hans: [34:46] No. Unfortunately, we had to sell the house back in the late 1990s. They needed to move to a smaller place. At the time, I didn't see that as being a good place for them. The road there is crazy. Anyway, we ended up selling it. We live in the Kent area, near the Green Valley Country Club. We like it there. They actually moved to a place right by there for their last few years, which was nice. I could go see them quite often.

Affa: [35:19] So, what about you, your life?

Hans: [35:22] What about me? Well, I worked for the store. I started when I was about 16, and worked there until it folded, back in 1995. I went to the University of Puget Sound, and I got a master's in accounting. I was doing the books for the store at the end. I was unemployed for probably three months, and then a childhood friend of mine said his brother had this company that was looking for a controller, and would I be interested? So, I said sure. My wife was not happy with me sitting at home. [Laughter]

[36:06] So, I said, "Okay, I'll give that a shot." I went to interview. At the time, this place was called Aim Aviation. They manufactured composite air ducting for Boeing. I got the job, and worked there for 22 years until this past January, when I retired. The original owners got purchased by a private equity, so eventually they bring their own people in, and the senior management ends up going somewhere else.

[36:48] I have two kids. Ryer is 29 now. He is a first-year teacher at Bonney Lake High School. My daughter, Kailey, will be coming back from Peru in December after working for two years with the Peace Corps. So, we're excited to get her.

Affa: [37:08] How old is she?

Hans: [37:09] She's 25. I don't imagine she'll be around this area too long. She's a traveler.

Gordon: [37:26] Yeah. What was the draw to the Peace Corps?

Hans: [37:28] She went to the University of San Francisco and studied international economics. She's always been a person that was very conscious of world issues. That led to checking out the Peace Corps. She was originally going to go to El Salvador, but they stopped having anyone go there. Then this Peru situation came up. Latin American Studies was her other major in college. So, she was semi-fluent in Spanish, and now I'm sure she is very fluent. That's where that came from. We'll see where it goes after that.

Affa: [38:17] Is your wife of Nordic background?

Hans: [38:20] Her mother is half-Norwegian. It's not quite the same level as mine, but she does have some. She's Norwegian and German. Her father is German. I actually met her through her father, who worked for Osborn & Ulland. I remember at the time, they said, "We've got this gal we want you to meet. Her dad works for us." I remember meeting her and thinking, "Wow, she wouldn't have anything to do with me." [Laughter] But eventually we worked together at Sniagrab, and that's where we kind of had our first date.

Gordon: [39:05] So, your dad was the one that started it?

Hans: [39:07] No, it wasn't my dad; it was her dad. Yeah. So, we actually had our first date after one of the Sniagrab sales. She worked the sales as well, and actually worked at the store for a while, during the holidays, and that type of thing. So, it brought us together. And we've been married for 31 years.

Affa: [39:29] And she is a teacher?

Hans: [39:30] She is. She started off as a teacher, and now she is a principal at Northwood Middle School in Kent. It's actually in Renton, but it's in the Kent School District.

Gordon: [39:41] Do you maintain any of the Norwegian traditions from your childhood? Lefse, for instance?

Hans: [39:47] Not as much as I'd like. We'll make krumkake during the holidays. We'll make lefse and hardtack, and that type of thing, during the holidays. But not as much as I'd like. We try and get to the May 17th celebration when we can. I almost think my kids are more interested in keeping some of this stuff going than maybe we ended up being. So, I think it will start up again.

Affa: [40:23] That would be nice. You know the Sons of Norway are having their bazaar today, so you can go and have some Norwegian food.

Hans: [40:28] Oh, maybe I'll head down there. I want to take a look at the Viking exhibit they have here today.

Gordon: [40:34] It's really something. Yeah.

Hans: [40:38] I was actually supposed to go to the Husky game today, but I decided I didn't want to be pushing getting there at this point. They finally had an early game.

Gordon: [40:47] Yeah. It's usually seven o'clock at night, which I don't go to.

Hans: [40:52] Yeah, those are tough.

Affa: [40:55] You had said earlier when the skiing was really popular here, we didn't really have other organized sports. Could you—

Hans: [41:07] Organized in attendance-type stuff. Like pro baseball or pro football. There were no Seahawks or Mariners, Sonics, any of those things. I think the ski jumping became a little bit a part of that. I have a *Seattle Times* headline from the late 1950s/early 1960s, front page, "Ski Jumpers in Town For Big Event." One of the unique things, they did an indoor jump in the Seattle Center Arena. They had a little hole cut in the roof. My father skied down and did a somersault.

Gordon: [41:54] What year was that?

Hans: [41:57] Gosh, I don't remember the exact year.

Gordon: [41:59] For the World's Fair?

Hans: [42:01] Yeah, I think maybe it was around that time. So, it was considered a fairly big deal at that time.

Affa: [42:13] Did they get ski jumpers from other places, also, to compete?

Hans: [42:19] Yeah. The events at Leavenworth, they were from all over the United States, and actually all over the world. We'd get jumpers from Norway and Japan. Mostly European countries. Austria and Germany would always send jumpers. It was an international event, unless it was the U.S. championships, and then of course it was just U.S. jumpers. There were a reasonable amount of jumpers from Squaw Valley and that area in California— there, Seattle, Duluth, and Lake Placid were probably the largest contributors of jumpers.

Affa: [43:02] You also talked about your father serving in Alaska. Was that during the war?

Hans: [43:08] Yeah. He had become a U.S. citizen, and from 1943-1945 he was in the U.S. Army during World War II. He was a communications person up in Sitka, Alaska. So, for two years he was up there. One of the things he did while he was up there, he actually trained some of the others up there in cross-country skiing. I have stacks of letters that he wrote back to my mother. That was right about the same time that my sister was born, so it was quite a time. He was done in 1945.

Gordon: [43:51] Did he ever talk about what his family went through during the occupation in Norway?

Hans: [43:55] Not so much. Maybe he did with my sister rather than myself, because that was closer to that time.

Affa: [44:06] Did you ever hear about packages sent over after the war or during the war, helping them? I know you weren't born then.

Hans: [44:17] No, I wasn't around. But I know my father would have sent whatever he could. One of the other things I always hear about him, anytime anyone needed a pair of skis or whatever, he would be giving things out. He was a very generous man. That's another reason I think he was so popular and highly-regarded. I'm not sure if I mentioned this yet, but he is in the U.S. Ski Hall of Fame in Ishpeming, Michigan. He was inducted in 1982. That's the National Ski Hall of Fame. That was the same year Phil Mahre was inducted, actually. It was quite an honor. He also received a Jules Julius Blegen Award, which is a United States award for contributions to skiing.

Affa: [45:14] In the old museum, the Nordic Heritage Museum, they had—

Hans: [45:20] They had some things. It wasn't nearly as—

Affa: [45:22] Did they have some of his things there?

Hans: [45:24] Yeah, they did. Some of it came back to me. Some of it went to... there's a ski museum in Kongsberg, a jumping museum. There is a whole little section devoted to my father's stuff. Back in 1987 is when it was opened. That also happened to be the year I got married. As part of our honeymoon, we went to Norway. We were there for the opening ceremony for that. At the time, my father couldn't really travel. So, I went in his place, and met the King of Norway. It was quite a nice—

Gordon: [46:09] 1987, you said?

Hans: [46:10] 1987. Yeah. I went and saw where he used to jump, and all that.

Affa: [46:21] You said some of his things are over there?

Hans: [46:24] Yes. A lot of his trophies and memorabilia, that type of thing. There is a whole little section on his stuff with pictures, and articles, and awards, and things like that. I still have a few of his things at home. But a lot of it went to that museum.

Jette: [46:45] How about the family farm? Is it still in the family?

Hans: [46:49] You know, I don't believe so. I know the last one to have it was his brother Thorbjorn. Actually, I believe it is, now that I think about it. When we were last there, we were up there, and visited. One of the cousins still owned it. I think it's a lot smaller than it used to be. It's beautiful, right on the hillside. It's called Fennerud.

Gordon: [47:21] They rebuilt or improved Holmenkollen in Norway, didn't they?

Hans: [47:25] Yes.

Gordon: [47:26] That's still an active—

Hans: [47:28] Yes. I've been to the top— not to jump, but I've been to the top of that with my family. It's right in the middle of Oslo, it seems like. It's outside a little bit, but you still feel like you're in the middle of Oslo, looking down. How anyone can go speeding down that ramp is beyond me. It's certainly a beautiful area.

Affa: [47:57] The Norwegians are still good jumpers.

Hans: [47:59] Very good. They did very well at these last Olympics. I believe one of the team members was from Kongsberg. He wasn't part of the family, but he was one of the jumpers that did very well.

Affa: [48:20] What about Japan? Did your father ever train there?

Hans: [48:26] No, he didn't. He did go there one time and talked to them, but he didn't really train there or coach their team like he did the Italians, and of course the U.S. team.

Affa: [48:42] And he had the Japanese staying with you when they were competing here?

Hans: [48:48] Yes. It was in the early 1970s, they came and stayed with us. I remember going to Leavenworth. They were there. They won the tournament that year. They were very impressive. They learned quickly.

Affa: [49:09] Can you think of anything—

Gordon: [49:12] We can put it on pause if you want.

[TAPE BREAK]

Hans: [49:21] One of the jumpers that came over and eventually went into something different when he came over here was a jumper named Jan Stenerud. He ended up being a place kicker for the Kansas City Chiefs. I think he might even be in the Hall of Fame now. He came over thanks to my father. I think he started kicking when he went to Montana State, I believe. He was another one of those that my father had an influence over, and he did very well once he got here.

Gordon: [50:01] Okay. Yeah.

Affa: [50:03] I heard of someone... I think they were able to stay on a scholarship. They went to Colorado State, or something like that. A jumping scholarship.

Hans: [50:12] Oh, I'm sure. Colorado Springs, that area, is probably also... I think they have a hill there.

Affa: [50:23] Probably a lot of them overstayed their visas. [Laughter]

Hans: [50:26] Yeah. They liked it so much over here. Who wouldn't, right?

Affa: [50:30] Yeah.

Gordon: [50:32] Okay. We appreciate you coming. It's been a great time. Great to hear your story.

Hans: [50:43] Well, thank you for allowing me to do this.

Affa: [50:46] Hopefully the museum will add something about these skiers and jumpers and some of these things.

Hans: [50:54] Being retired, I'd be glad to help them in any way. I probably have some memorabilia and old articles and things. Whatever they would need, I'd be more than happy to help out with that.

Gordon: [51:10] Thank you so much.

END OF RECORDING.

Transcription by Alison DeRiemer.