

Interview with Don Hurst

November 12, 2001

Harvey, MI

Ishpeming Ski Club

Interviewer:

Transcribed: March 1, 2002

INT: I'm sorry to do an interview on such a short notice.

DH: No problem. I'm always happy to talk about skiing.

INT: Can you state your birthdate please?

DH: June 12, 1931. A long time ago.

INT: Your address up here is 100 Forest Road Marquette. Your birth day?

DH: I was born in St. Luke's Hospital in Marquette. The building is still there on Hubbard Court and College. The oldest part of the hospital, it's still there.

INT: Before we get to skiing, I'd like to ask you about your years at University of Michigan. Why did you pick that particular university and your major?

DH: I guess the main reason I went there is because I got an alumni scholarship to go to college and it was to the University of Michigan. Since then I've been very grateful that I went because I have tremendous admiration for the University of Michigan. It's evident by my ??? down there.

INT: What years did you go to the university?

DH: First I graduated from John D. Pierce High School here in Marquette in 1949. Then that fall I went to the University of Michigan. I got my first degree in 1953, 4 years later. That was in physical education. The reason I was interested in physical education is I grew up with sports my whole life. My dad was a coach at Northern Michigan University and John D. Pierce High School for 36 years. My mother did some coaching when she got out of college. My sister was a physical education major. She married a coach. I guess it was in my blood. My senior year I had enough credits to get my degree in physical education but changed my minor. I thought maybe I'd like to try dentistry because I always like doing things with my hands. Wood carving, soap carving, things like that as a kid. So I applied to dental school. Everything you took for physical education as far as courses didn't apply because it was anatomy and physiology and biochemistry and all that. Except English, chemistry, and physics. I took another year and got two courses of chemistry and two courses of physics. I still didn't go to dental school because I got drafted into the army at that time for two years. That was toward the end of the Korean War. After two years in the army I came back and they held my application to dental school for two years and let me go to dental school when I got back

in '56. From '56 to '60 I went to dental school at the University of Michigan. Then when I graduated I stayed another year as an instructor in dental school for one year. After which time I decided I couldn't afford to be a teacher. So I decided I better go out on my own and set up my own practice. I came back home to Marquette and set up my practice in 1961. I practiced until 1992. 33 years total in dentistry before I retired.

INT: You only practiced here?

DH: In Marquette.

INT: How did you get involved in the Ishpeming Ski Club, or even skiing in general?

DH: Well, at age 3 is when I started skiing. We lived on College Avenue, just a couple blocks from the campus of Northern. We lived very close to the hospital. It is no longer there. It was by the blood donor center, across from the parking lot, but they moved our house and our neighbor's house side by side out to the street and to north Marquette. The hospital bought the house, then somebody else bought the house and the hospital moved it. They picked them up and moved them by truck, down College Avenue and out Presque Isle, it was quite a thing. We lived at the end of the street. College Avenue ended at our house. In fact the snow plow turned around in our drive way. But we were almost out in the country. I just started skiing because we had all that open space beside us. Mom and Dad encouraged it. My dad was born and raised in Tennessee before he came up here. I just loved to be out skiing. It's a wonderful thing to do as a kid. In those days we found lots of things to do. We didn't need to have computers and television and all that stuff. We found things to do that were very enjoyable and healthy. By age 6 I was ski jumping. At age 6 I jumped in my first ski jumping tournament in South Marquette at a place called Chipmunk Bluff.

INT: Was that actually normal to start ski jumping at age 6?

DH: I was one of the youngest, but there were other kids between 6 and 10 jumping that day. In those days there were little ski jumps. Any neighborhood that had a hill of any kind had a ski jump on it. Chipmunk Bluff happened to be one of the popular ones. It was down close to an area called Superior Hills, which is now all houses. That was a very popular skiing area in Marquette in those days. We had ski areas and we would climb to the top of them. It was where the big water tower is by south Marquette, and ski down the other side of it. Of course there were no ski tows or ??? or anything. We were just skiing in deep snow all the time. Finally when my dad became City Recreational Director in addition to being a coach at Northern, while he was Recreation Director they put in a ski tow. We'd get down there and instead of taking two or three rides down the hill because it would take all afternoon to climb up the hill 3 times. We'd just get on the ski tow and ride up to the top and ride down the trail. It worked it's way into a track and down to the ski jump. We'd jump off and coast down to the bottom of the ski jump. You could get 25 rides in a day instead of 2 or 3. That was really a project. I took on ski jumping more and more actively as I got in high school. I continued to improve to the point that in my senior year I won the Junior Class at Suicide Hill, which was my first big

accomplishment in ski jumping. I won the Junior Class. I had a little bit of a complication because my dad was the basketball coach and I was on the basketball team at John D. Pierce. Ski jumping and basketball were in the same season. When it came down to the tournament, he didn't actually say I couldn't ski jump, but he said if I won anything I couldn't take any prizes. If I won I had to turn down what then I thought was a wonderful prize, an alligator skin portable radio.

INT: They put the skin on the radio?

DH: Probably. Like alligator shoes or hand bags or something. So I had to give that up, but I did get a medal at that show. That was 1949. By that fall I was in Ann Arbor at the University of Michigan because I had to make a big decision. Do I want to continue to be a ski jumper and stick to all my ski jumping friends, some of whom were on the Olympic Team, or a college education was more important to me at this time. I had a confrontation with my parents. Education was more important, you go to school. So I gave up ski jumping in 1949, although I did come back for Christmas vacation in 1950 and at that time we had the Marquette Ski Club that ran ski jumping tournaments on a hill in south Marquette on the way to Marquette Mountain called Kirlan Hill. So I got my skis out. I hadn't jumped for a year. The day before the tournament I was practicing and I was trying a new style, putting my hands back along my sides. One of the young ski jumpers was doing it very successfully at the time. The only problem is I went right between my skis and landed right on my face. I knocked myself unconscious. Beat up my face. All I remember is somebody walking me off the side of the landing, putting me in a car and driving me home, getting sick on the way home. I walked in the front door and looked at my mom and she said you're going to the hospital. So we went to the hospital and they kept me there overnight because I had a severe concussion and I dislocated a cervical vertebrae in my neck. My doctor had done a little ski jumping in the past and I convinced him that I was okay to get out the next day and jump in the tournament. So I did. I jumped in the tournament and had a couple good jumps. But I was so weak I couldn't even stand up after the landing. I went back to Ann Arbor to school. Looking for something to do I went to the gymnasium and decided I wanted to be a gymnast. My coach looked at me with my face all beat up and I had a severe headache for 6 weeks. He said alright either you're going to be a ski jumper or a gymnast. Which one is it. I said again I guess education is more important, I will be a gymnast. That started my gymnastics career at the University of Michigan under my beloved coach Duke Loken. I was a gymnast for 4 years. A varsity gymnast. For 3 years I lettered. My senior year I was the captain of the gymnastics team. I was also a cheerleader for 4 years. Head cheerleader my senior year. All this time I was in the major field of physical education. Everything fit right in really well. I told you about giving up ski jumping for 16 years because I went to school and I went to the army and then I went back to dental school. Then I taught a year and then I came home.

INT: That was in...

DH: 1961. I started practicing in July of 1961 in Marquette. I got my practice going pretty well and still didn't do any ski jumping. Then I had a break up in a marriage in

1965. So in 1966 I started ski jumping again. By then I was over 32 years old. That put me in Veterans Class. 32 and over was Veterans Class at that time. They have a C class, B class, when you get to a certain age you have to be in the B class. If you get really good in B class you go to A class. Those are the ones that end up going to the Olympics and things. Then there's Veterans. I went from C class, I skipped B and A and went right to Veterans with a 16 year hiatus. 1966 was my first year of jumping so I had to learn everything all over again. The equipment had changed, style had changed, coaching had changed. By I was still as eager to learn as when I was 18 years old when I quit. But I was much smarter. I knew how to listen. So I learned pretty fast. By 1967 the next year, I jumped in the National Championships at Pine Mountain in Iron Mountain. I had the longest jump but I lost out a little bit on style. Billy Olsen, a guy from Eau Claire, Wisconsin, was National Veterans Champion for several years in a row. I out jumped him, but he got me in style and I lost by .4 of a point.

INT: Was it a shock?

DH: It was a shock that I did that well. But I was disappointed that I lost by .4 of a point. If I had jumped 2 feet further I might have picked up more distance points and I'd have beaten him. I think really what it was is he had such a big name that he tended to be a favorite of the judges, which later on worked the same way for me. I was the favorite of the judges after I was winning a lot. They kind of expect you to be good and they hate to give you a bad score unless you fall or something. That was 1967. I got second place that year. 1968 the National Championships were in Westby, Wisconsin. I didn't jump very well and I ended up getting 3rd place. 1969 the National Championships were in Bradelborough, Vermont. I was skiing the best that I ever skied and I won the National Championships. I jumped very well that day. I stood in the parking lot waiting for them to announce the National Championship results and when they announced my name the tears just flowed down my cheeks. I was so thrilled to be a national champion.

INT: Were you involved with the Ishpeming Ski Club at this time?

DH: I was jumping as a member of the Ishpeming Ski Club. When I came back in Veterans Class, now it's called Masters Class...and they lowered the age so they can get more people in that class. But when I started jumping again is when I became active in the Ishpeming Ski Club. I was the secretary for a while. I was the tournament chairman for a while, and I was jumping for them at that time. 1970 the National Championships were at Eau Claire, Wisconsin, and 2 days before the National Championship I was practicing at Suicide Bowl and crashed and separated my shoulder. I wanted the National Championship so bad because I had been practicing for it. I went to Eau Claire anyway and took my number and went up and took a practice. I was on pain pills so heavy that I couldn't hardly function. I took one practice ride and it hurt so bad I knew I couldn't do it. I turned in my number. Chances are I could have one the National Championship that year too because of the way I was jumping compared to the other guys in the class. But that was alright because Coy Hill from Ishpeming won that year. Coy has always been a very good friend, good buddy. 1971 we went out to Durango, Colorado for the National Championship. I was fortunate enough to come home with my second National

Championship. That was an interesting tournament because the start was right next to a rock mountain wall and it was so warm that day everything was melting and rocks were falling off that wall when you were waiting for your turn. You were just happy to get on the trail and start down because then you wouldn't be hit by a rock. The landing was so soft that some guys took some awful falls. When they fell they just dug right in to that soft snow. But I was lucky. I managed to stay on my feet. So I won it. 1972 the National Championships were in Burlington, New Hampshire and we were jumping in a snow storm. One of my fellow competitors who was an Olympian from Canada beat me that day because he out jumped me on the second jump. So I took second that year.

INT: What was the distance you jumped that year?

DH: I think he beat me by 5 or 6 feet maybe. So that was kind of a disappointment, but that's the way it goes. Then in 1973, the National Championships were back here at Suicide Hill in Ishpeming. I didn't have any problems there. I won that. It was my third and last National Championship. The next weekend at Pine Mountain, I announced my retirement from ski jumping. I figured I had skied in 12 competitions that year. I had 9 first places, 2 seconds and a third, including a National Championship. I didn't think I could do any better so I might as well quit while I'm ahead. So that was my last competitive ski jumping on Suicide Hill. However 10 years later when I was 52 I was into cross country ski racing by then. Later in my ski jumping career I started cross country skiing to get into good physical condition for aerobic fitness so I could climb up the hill you're not out of breath and you have something left to jump with. I started cross country skiing and I was headed for Minneapolis for the Central Division Championship. That would have been 1983. I knew there was a ski jumping tournament over in St. Paul the same weekend. It wasn't a real big hill. I had jumped it before. So I thought I'd throw my ski jumping skis in there just for the fun of it. So I got down there on a Friday night. Went over to the hill with my skis. Some of my former ski jumping buddies were dressing the hill under the lights because they had just finished a junior tournament. Walt Cherry was there and I asked him if I could take a few jumps. He said no you can't because we're just finishing up getting ready for the North American Championships tomorrow. So, Walt can I jump on one of the little hills, because there were 3 or 4 different sized hills. He said yes go ahead. So I started for the first time in 10 years. They felt like railroad ties tied to my feet compared to my other skis because they were so heavy. But I started on the little jump and went 15 or 20 feet. I did that a half dozen times and then went to the next one and jumped 30 feet, then the next one 85 feet. I said well I guess I'm ready. The next morning I got up real early and went all the way across the city of Minneapolis from the cross country race trail, skied around that just to see what it looked like so I'd know for the next day. Then I drove all the way back to St. Paul, got my number and had a chance to take two practice jumps down the bigger hill. Each one got better than the one before. I got into the tournament competition and each one got better than the one before. I got second place in the 40 and over North American Championships that day. The next morning I got up and raced across the city of Minneapolis again. Raced in the cross country ski race in the rain, drove as fast as I could and I got there too late to take any practice run. I was just in time to put my number on and go up the scaffold. My next two jumps were better than any of the others.

I was North American Champion over 50. And I put my skis away and haven't jumped since.

INT: That was the top of the world.

DH: I said I was going to jump once every ten years. But I missed 1993 so I guess I'm not. I think I'm done.

INT: So do you continue cross country skiing?

DH: I've skied 3 times already this year. October 7th I was skiing when we had that first snowfall. Then I skied again at the end of October when we had a nice snowfall for two days. And now it's gone so I'm keeping my fingers crossed hoping in the next couple weeks we'll have some snow. Certainly by Thanksgiving I hope we do.

INT: What is your involvement in the Ishpeming Ski Club today?

DH: I don't have any involvement with them anymore. I got so involved with cross country skiing that there just wasn't enough time to do the cross country skiing things and the ski jumping things too. So I kind of backed away with my responsibilities and picked up more responsibilities with cross country skiing. I became real interested in racing cross country. So I skied 3,4 or 5 races every year competitively. I also was on the charter committee that started what is known as the Red Roof ??? Cross Country Ski Marathon. It started out going from Suicide Bowl in Ishpeming to Marquette at several different places over the years. Then it finally ended up at Blueberry Ridge out at the Crossroads. We'd take 1 or 2 laps around the 7 loops out there. I became the race director of that for about 7 or 8 years, and the sponsorship chairman for another 4 or 5 years. That kept me very busy. Doing that and skiing at the same time. Also, I became interested in Northern Michigan University's Ski Team. At that time they only had an Alpine Ski Team. They didn't have a Nordic Ski Team, which is cross country and jumping. So I talked to the athletic director and the alpine ski coach and convinced them that I should be a volunteer ski coach and start a Nordic ski team, the one that Sten Feldheim and is doing wonderfully well nation wide. That was my baby back in 1969 I started that. I became the assistant coach and then the co-head coach, and then the head coach for both Nordic and Alpine for about a year or so. So I'm very pleased that the program has done so well. There was a Nordic Ski Team way back in the 1950s because my wife Georgie was on it and she was a student at Northern. Then it dropped off and nothing came of the Nordic side for 15 or 20 years. It was time to get it started again because this location in upper Michigan is nice for cross country skiing. It's very popular with cross country skiers from all over the country. They know this area has the right kind of snow and the right kind of hills and so on. That now, no longer exists. We've turned it over to a group of younger people who are now the Superiorland Cross Country Ski Club. They're the ones responsible for the Noquemenon Ski Race, that has become so popular. It's in it's 4th year so far. They're expecting over 1200 skiers. The most we ever had in the Red Roof ??? is about 700, which is still a lot. We were a popular race, but now the Noquemenon group, the Superiorland Ski Club is a marvelous group of

people. Family oriented, youth oriented, and have all kinds of energy and doing all kinds of wonderful things for the skiing lifestyle. It's been a real great thing. I'm glad our Red Roof ??? philosophy, they've expanded on it exceedingly well.

INT: What is your happiest memory skiing in general that you cherish? Just one memory. I know there's several.

DH: There are individual personal incidents in my skiing career that have been outstanding like awards and things. But I think superceding all that is the fact that it epitomizes my philosophy of life, that people who are involved in cross country skiing and ski jumping, running, cross country running, are doing the kind of lifestyle that is absolutely the healthiest that it can be. So I'm a true believer in the benefits of exercise and I've always believed in it from the time I was a little kid. My Dad instilled that in me. If you want to be an athlete you can't drink, you can't smoke. You have to stay in shape. Never get out of shape. Those who believe in that basic philosophy turn out to be very healthy people. For the most part they're not self centered and egotistical. They're just out to have a good time and stay healthy. A healthy body breeds a healthy mind. Hopefully at age 70 I have 10 years to stay in competitive skiing. Now we ski in age groups so you don't have to ski against 30 year olds. You ski against other guys that are 70. That makes it fun. That's the beauty of cross country skiing, not so much ski jumping because there's not too many 70 year olds jumping, at least not in this country. In Europe some do. But in cross country skiing when I skied 58 race in Sweden a few years ago, I counted in the results at least 15 guys over 80 years old that skied 58 miles that day. So what I've been lately with my wife is going to Europe and skiing in a marathon race series called the World Loppit. So we ski in Sweden, Switzerland, Finland, Germany, Austria, those are wonderful experiences because there are thousands...15,000 people in that 58 mile, which is called a 90 kilometer race. 15,000 people started that race. So skiing over there is a different animal than it is here. People just love it. So that's why we go over there to ski. As long as we can keep doing that we'll keep doing it and hope for the best.

INT: I had a few other questions, but we've covered most of it during conversation.

DH: One thing I didn't talk about, when I was coaching the Nordic Ski Team at Northern, it's kind of a sad memory, but my wife and I were traveling in Norway in the summer of 1972 and stopped to visit a Norwegian ski jumper who used to come over here and jump in what was called the Foreign Skier Tour. So we stopped to visit him in Oslo. We had dinner there and he said would you like to go to a party. There was a party of ski jumpers and soccer players and so on. So we went to the party and sitting in a wheel chair was one of my American ski jumping friends, Randy Garrettson. He was a very good ski jumper, probably flirting with the Olympic Team at some time in his career. But he had some serious injuries. He injured his neck once and they told him never to ski jump again. So he was walking around doing okay. But I think it was at Levenworth, Washington when we were skiing in the National Championships he fell again and broke his neck again and ended up in a wheel chair. So I walk in to this party in Norway and there was Randy sitting there. I got talking to him and some of the other Norwegians and

I was coaching Northern's ski team at that time. We didn't have that many good cross country skiers and they said we know a kid that lives here in Norway that would like to go to the US for his education. His name is Bernn Ronstead. He stayed at my house here, ate at this table for a week before school started. He became my first foreign skier at Northern, the first of many over the next several years. Some from Norway and some from Finland. The same year I heard of a Finnish boy named Perrti Rehalla from Lati, Finland. He came over and started his career. He became an All American. He was a scholar. He got a special Master's Degree Study Scholarship. But Bernn was more of a ski jumper than a cross country skier. Perrti was a little of both. One day I had him down at the football field knowing he was a soccer player. I said you know what a football is. He said no so I went into the coach and asked to borrow a football. I got a Norwegian kid here that's an excellent soccer player. I want to introduce him to football. So I took him out and held the ball for him and he kicked it a mile through the goal post. He was kicking from 50 yards. The coach saw that and said I want him on our football team. So he got recruited and ended up setting some records on the football team here. He went to a National Championship and got beat out in the last minute or so. He came home and went to the North End Tavern with some of his buddies and got a little inebriated. He stepped out in front of a car and got killed. That was a sad day in my life. I still feel bad about it every time I think about it. But he was the beginning. Perrti followed along with several other Norwegians. I ran into Perrti last February. I went to Lati, Finland to ski in one of the world marathon races and to watch the world championships at the same time. I was watching the ski jumping and my friend that I was watching it with said did you see Perrti? I said no is he here? He said yes he's right down there, he left. Maybe he'll come back at night. They had postponed the ski jumping because it was too windy. So we went back to the same place at night and sure enough there he was. I hadn't seen Perrti in 30 years. It was so nice to see him again. You hang on to those relationships. That's one wonderful thing about skiing. You build such good and lasting friends. They're the same kind of people. They appreciate being healthy and able to keep the body moving.

INT: I like your interview. It's quite interesting. I learned a lot about skiing.

More
details
summary

Donald M. Hurst
100 Forest Rd.
Marquette, MI, 49855
Born: 6/12/31

Sports participation and promotion has always been a focal point in the life of Don M. Hurst. Since his early years as mascot and waterboy for the Northern State Teachers College athletic teams (now Northern Michigan University, in Marquette), where he learned many things that went into the formation of his basic philosophy of the importance of health and physical fitness, Don has been an outspoken supporter and visible example of an active lifestyle. He has always, and still does, serve as a role model for young and old for his active promotion and participation in healthy lifestyle activities and sports competitions.

Don's participation in sports has included many different activities, with a wide variety of awards. In high school it was primarily football, basketball, track and field, ski jumping, alpine skiing, plus many others. In college, at the University of Michigan, he lettered three years in gymnastics, and was a tumbling cheerleader for four years.

Don's passion for skiing started at age three, when family ski outings were commonplace, and by age six Don jumped in his first ski jumping tournament, jumping with his life-long friend, Coy Hill of Ishpeming. Almost every day, after school, in grade school and junior high school, he would head for a ski jump somewhere in the neighborhood to satisfy his hunger for the sport of skiing.

In his senior year of high school, 1949, he won Class C at Suicide Hill in Ishpeming, and a 2nd and 3rd at Pine Mountain in Iron Mountain. He then had to set aside his passion for jumping to complete his education, have a family, and get his dental practice established. In 1965, after a 16 year hiatus, with no jumping, he returned to the sport with the enthusiasm of a teenager, but the wisdom of an adult, and learned the new techniques. By 1966 results improved significantly, culminating in a 2nd place in the Veteran's Class National Championships at Pine Mountain, losing to perennial champion and Olympic competitor, Billy Olson, by 0.4 of a point, but won the Veteran's Class the next day.

In 1969 a long-awaited dream came true: he won the Veteran's National Championship, for the first time, at Brattleboro, Vermont. Later that same season, he tied the National Veteran's distance record of 261 feet at Pine Mountain (set by his good friend, Ralph Bietila, at Steamboat Springs, in 1963). That same day he jumped 264 feet in the long-standing jump, and 275 feet in practice.

In 1970, jumping better than ever, he separated his shoulder in practice, three days before the Nationals in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, and, after a couple of painful practice jumps, turned in his number, and withdrew from the competition.

The National in 1971 were at Durango, Colorado, and Don repeated his dominance in Veteran's Class by winning his 2nd National Championship. In 1972, at Berlin, New Hampshire, he was edged out of the Championship by Jacque Charland, former Olympian from Canada, whom he had defeated in Brattleboro in 1969.

In 1973 Don's goal was to win every event he entered, including the National Championships on Suicide Hill in Ishpeming, and the two tournaments on Pine Mountain, in Iron Mountain. At the end of the season he had competed in twelve events, won nine of them, place 2nd in the other three (in spite of a fall in each meet), won both meets on Suicide Hill, including his 3rd, and final, Veteran's National Championship, and won both meets at Pine Mountain the following weekend. It was then that he announced his retirement from competitive ski-jumping. During this period of Don's competition, he gained the respect and admiration of his peers for his jumping ability, his work ethic, and his good sportsmanship. He was commonly referred to as "Dr. Don, the flying Dentist".

In 1983, after ten years of no jumping, he came out of retirement for one weekend, and won the North American Championship for Veterans over 50 years of age, in St. Paul, Minnesota.

In the last few years of his ski-jumping, Don started cross-country skiing, to be in better aerobic condition for jumping. When he quit jumping, he took up cross-country skiing seriously. He is still, at age 74, competing regularly in ski marathons, including ten Worldloppet marathons. His best finishes in Worldloppet competition were a silver medal in 50 Km Classic and a gold medal in 28 Km Freestyle the next day, in the 2000 Keskinada Loppet, at age 68. He also placed 1st in his age group at the 2005 Transjurassienne, at age 73, and finished 4th to 39th in most of the remaining Worldloppet races. In local races in the Midwest he usually finishes first, or not worse than 3rd in his age group, and has done that for many years, now.

He claims the 1998 Swedish Vasaloppet 90 Km race, which he skied in 7 hours, at age 66, as one of his favorite marathon memories, along with skiing across Finland in 1999 in the 444 Km Rajalta Rajalle Hiihto, a seven-day excursion near the Arctic Circle, from the Russian border to the Swedish border.

Not only was skiing a passion for Don, so was volunteerism, leadership, and always trying to help others. It began in highschool, when he was the Class President for four years. He was also team captain in football, basketball, and track. In college, at the University of Michigan, he captained his gymnastics team and was also the Head Cheerleader his senior year, 1953. For his campus leadership roles, he was inducted into Sphinx (all-campus junior honorary fraternity) and Michigamua (all-campus senior honorary fraternity), his junior and senior years. During the same two years he was awarded the coveted Fielding H. Yost Award for scholarship and athletics.

Don's volunteerism carried over into the area of Skiing, and his affiliation with the United States Ski Association, serving in the following positions over many years:

- Member, National Jumping Technical Committee.
- Chairman, USSA-Central Division Ski Jumping Committee.
- Chairman, USSA-Central Division Skier Classification Committee.
- Member, Board of Directors, and Vice-president of National Ski Hall of Fame Committee.
- Chairman, USSA-Central Division NSHF Committee.
- Current member of NSHF Selection Committee (over 30 years).
- Vice-president, USSA-Central Division, and several years member of Board of Directors and Executive Committee.
- Nordic Vice-president, USSA-Central Division.
- 1980 Winter Olympics, Lake Placid, N.Y. -- Ass't Chief of Officials for Ski Jumping (same position at Pre-Olympics, 1979).
- Charter organizer, Marquette County Bill Koch Youth Ski League, and active involvement as Chairman for 20 years.
- Charter organizer, Red Earth Loppet (cross-country ski marathon, in Marquette), then Race Director, and Chief of Sponsorships, for 11 years.
- Creator and Director of Lake Superior Marathon Series, a series of 4 cross-country ski marathon races across the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and Canadian Soo.
- Former volunteer assistant ski coach, then Head Coach, Northern Michigan University Ski Team (Creator of modern NMU Nordic Ski Team, 1969, which has had great success in recent years under the outstanding coaching of Sten Fjeldheim, a national award-winning coach several times over).

Don served as Vice-president, then President, and Chairman of Events and Competition Committee, Great Lakes Training Center Association, and was a member of the Citizens Advisory committee from 1968-1985, which was ultimately responsible for Northern Michigan University being designated an Olympic Training Center, by the USOC's Site Selection Committee. Don was a member of the delegation to Colorado Springs, in February, 1985, for that designation.

Almost all of these assignments occurred simultaneously, while Don was jumping competitively, and at the same time maintaining a full-time dental practice.

Don's summer activities included 14 marathon road races, clocking his best time, 3 hrs, 26 minutes at age 52. Now he has also become actively involved in road bike and mountainbike racing with the same youthful enthusiasm, winning most races where there are other competitors over 70 years of age.

Notable Awards received by Don M. Hurst for his leadership roles, and athletic accomplishments:

1982 - Michigan Heart Association Helwig Award, for efforts in the promotion of heart healthy lifestyle in workplace and home.

1986 - Honored as Michigan "Dentist Citizen of the Year" by the Board of Trustees of the Michigan Dental Association.

1988 - Inducted into the Upper Peninsula Sports Hall of Fame (second father-son inductee combination; father inducted in 1977).

1993 - Designated "Citizen of the Year" by the Marquette Chamber of Commerce.

Written by
Carol Fulcher
for ski club
newsletter?

Skier Spotlight - Dr. Don Hurst

In the Tour de France world, we have a role model who proves what determination, hard physical work, and a positive attitude can overcome. Lance Armstrong fought off cancer and hundreds of opponents to win five Tour de France titles. Closer to home, we have another fighter, Dr. Don Hurst of Marquette. As a skier who enters races in the 70+ age category, Dr. Hurst has fought off prostate cancer in the past year, but classic-skied the 51 K Subaru Noqueamanon just four months after finishing radiation treatments, which followed his surgery three months earlier! He also raced the North American VASA in Traverse City in February, and took on the Great Bear Chase in Calumet in March. He then competed in the Superior Bike Fest road bike and mountainbike races in June, and fat-tired the Subaru Ore to Shore Mountain Bike Epic in August. He's truly a testament to how a physically-active lifestyle brings more "life" to living.

While Don is not climbing the Alps like Lance, he's out there every day doing something for physical fitness with a goal in mind. As a skier who has skied in seven races in the Worldloppet Series, his passion for skiing is extraordinary. His best Worldloppet results were at the Keskinada 50, in Canada, where he was 2nd in the 50K Classic, and the next day was 1st in the 28K Freestyle.

But Dr. Don didn't start out being a cross-country skier. He excelled as a ski jumper first, before making the switch. At the toddling age of 3 he started skiing and entered his first ski jump meet at age 6. In high school he won the Class C Title on Suicide Hill. He also was an active member of the Marquette Slalom Club, where he ventured into some alpine racing in his early years.

Then off Don went to the University of Michigan for an education and a stint in gymnastics. But gymnastics didn't feed the adrenaline high of ski jumping, that complete feeling of high-flying freedom, so Don did what a "jumper junkie" does: he ski jumped on his very first Christmas break back in Marquette. It was a tournament and Don wanted to win, but during a practice session he took a nasty fall and dislocated his cervical vertebrae and suffered a brain concussion. Somehow, through sheer determination and a bit of fast talking, he not only conjoled his doctor (a former ski jumper) into letting him out of the hospital to compete, but he had the longest jumps of the day. Don was happy . . . but his gymnastics coach was not . . . so he was given an ultimatum: jumping or gymnastics? He wisely chose gymnastics, as it was related to the furthering of his education.

For 16 years Don didn't jump. Life . . . an education, a career in dentistry, a family, and volunteer efforts . . . didn't allow time. However, when he did return, life rewarded him. As Don says, "After 16 years I had the enthusiasm of a teenager, but the wisdom to listen to my coaches". He went on to win three U.S. National Veterans Titles as a member of the Ishpeming Ski Club. His foray into cross-country skiing was only to develop the aerobic capacity to do better in jumping. "If I could have my breath at the top of the

climb up the scaffold and my competitors didn't, then I had an advantage". He "retired" from ski jumping in 1973, at age 42, after winning his third National Veteran's Title, at Suicide Hill, and tying the National Veteran's distance record, jumping 261 feet at Pine Mountain. Without any jumping for another 10 years, he competed just one weekend at the age of 52, winning the North American Championship over 50!

But even though jumping was Don's passion, it isn't a sport for a lifetime like cross-country skiing. Don maintained his gusto for jumping and applied it to striding. Several seasons he competed in 7 or 8 marathons, in what was then called the "Central Marathon Series". With seven Worldloppet races behind him, he still has designs on three others . . . in Estonia, Italy, France, or Norway. In 1999 he and his wife, Georgie, became the first U.S. residents to ski across Finland in the Rajalta Rajalle Hiihto, a seven-day, 444K trek from the Finnish/Russian border to the Finnish/Swedish border. But that was "just a tour", averaging 63 K per day! However, skiing the 90K Swedish Vasaloppet in 7:02 will remain one of the highlights of his cross-country racing career.

In May, 2002, Don got the news that could have taken his life in another direction. After a PSA test came back looking suspicious, then a follow-up biopsy and a week of tests, Don was told he had prostate cancer. It was Thursday when Don got the news. The following Wednesday he was in surgery having his prostate removed. For some people, news of cancer could disrupt their lives. But for Don, it was more of a challenge, a reason to continue his physical lifestyle. For six weeks following the surgery, he walked every day, then started rollerblading. In September he started radiation treatments, five days a week for seven weeks. Nearly every day after his treatment he would play 18 holes of golf, walking and carrying his bag. After lunch he would go to the YMCA for an hour of lifting weights, then put on his rollerblades and skate for about ten miles. He would do, in one day's time, what most people don't do in a week. He often says: "Exercise can cure anything", and he seems to be trying to prove it. He says he plans to go "as hard as he can as long as he can".

The competitive spirit is still there, for sure. Just try to pass him in a ski race or bike race! Lance Armstrong may be a household name throughout the country, but Dr. Don Hurst serves as an excellent role model for us folks trying to find time for work, family, volunteer efforts, and sports.

DON M. HURST AS A SKISPORT BUILDER

1969 -- Creator and first Coach of modern Northern Michigan University Nordic Ski Team, which has produced NCAA and USSA National Champions, under the outstanding coaching of Sten Fjeldheim.

Charter organizer of Red Earth Loppet (now the Noquemanon) cross-country ski marathon in Marquette, then Race Director, and Chief of Sponsorships, for 11 years.

Charter organizer, Marquette County Bill Koch Youth Ski League, and active involvement as Director for 20 years.

Creator and Director of Lake Superior Marathon Series, a series of 4 races across the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and Canada.

USSA ASSIGNMENTS:

Member, National Jumping Technical Committee.

Chairman, USSA-Central Division Ski Jumping Committee.

Chairman, USSA-Central Division Skier Classification Committee.

Member, Board of Directors and Vice-President of National Ski Hall of Fame Committee.

Chairman, USSA-Central Division NSHF Committee.

Member, NSHF Selection Committee (since 1969).

Vice-President, USSA-Central Division, member of Board of Directors and Executive Committee.

Nordic Vice-President, USSA-Central Division.

1980 Winter Olympics, Lake Placid, N.Y. -- Ass-t Chief of Officials for Ski Jumping (same assignment at Pre-Olympics, 1979).

Don was a member of the Citizens Advisory Committee from 1968-1985, which was ultimately responsible for Northern Michigan University being designated an Olympic Training Center (now U.S. Olympic Education Center) by the USOC's Site Selection Committee. He was a member of the delegation to Colorado Springs in February, 1985, for that designation.

Almost all of these assignments occurred simultaneously, while Don was jumping competitively, and at the same time maintaining a full-time dental practice.

DON M. HURST AS A SKI ATHLETE

Short
Summary

SKI JUMPING:

- 1938 -- 1st ski jumping competition at age 6 years.
1939 -- Started competition in slalom and downhill races, locally, at age 7 years.
1949 -- Concentrated on ski jumping in high school, winning Class C on Suicide Hill, Ishpeming, and 2nd and 3rd on Pine Mountain, Iron Mountain.
1949-1965 -- Took next 16 years off for education, family, and establishing his dental practice.
1965 -- Resumed jumping competition, learned new technique, and had little competitive success.
1966 -- placed well in several meets, won a few, and placed 2nd (by 0.4 pts) in the *National Championships on Pine Mountain, Iron Mountain*. He won Veteran's Class the next day, jumping his best thus far.
1967 -- 3rd in *National Championships at Leavenworth, Washington*, with a fall on one jump, but had longest jumps.
1968 -- 4th in *National championships, Westby, Wisconsin*.
1969 -- Won his 1st *VETERAN'S NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP, Brattleboro, VT*, on the best jumps of his career. Later, on Pine Mountain, tied the National Veteran's distance record of 261 feet, but jumped 264 feet on the long-standing jump, and 275 feet in practice. All this at age 37.
1970 -- Missed the National Championships in Eau Claire, even though he was jumping better than ever, due to shoulder separation 3 days before the meet.
1971 -- Won his 2nd *VETERAN'S NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP, Durango, Colorado*.
1972 -- 2nd in *National Championships, Berlin, N.H.*
1973 -- Set goals for the year: to win all competitions he entered, including the National Championships. Results: competed in 12 meets, won nine, placed 2nd in three, in spite of a fall in each meet, and went on to win his 3rd, and final, *VETERAN'S NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP on his home hill, Suicide Hill, Ishpeming, MI*. He followed that up the next weekend by winning both meets at Pine Mountain, and announced his retirement from competition at that time.
1966-1973 -- He was considered the "man to beat" in all Veteran's Class competitions during that period of time, and respected by his peers for his ability, work ethic, leadership, and good sportsmanship.

CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING:

1971-2005 - He was, and still is, at age 74 (2005), an active competitor in cross-country marathon races, including ten Worldloppet races, plus several American Birkebeiners. His best finishes were:

- 2000 -- Keskinada Loppet, at age 68 - 2nd 50 Km Classic, and 1st 28 Km Freestyle the next day.
2005 Transjurassienne, 1st at age 73.
Finishes in all the others was from 4th to 39th, with a 6th in American Birkebeiner.

Usually finishes first (or top three) in age group in races in the Midwest.

Skied 1998 Swedish Vasaloppet, 90 Km, in 7 hours, at age 66.

Skied the 1999 Rajalta Rajalle Hiihto, 7 days, 444 Km, across Finland, from the Russian border to the Swedish border, near the Arctic Circle, at close to 5 minutes per kilometer., at age 67.

2002 -- 1st place, 70 and over, Tour of Anchorage.

National Master's Championships, Ishpeming, MI, 2004 -- two gold medals, 70 and over, in Duathlon and 10 Km Classic. Named to 2004 U.S. Masters Cross-Country Ski Team, 70+.

Competed in 2004 World Masters Championships in Lillehammer, Norway.

A more
personalized
summary

DON M. HURST ("DR. DON")

"Hi There" Having been asked to do so, I will try to give you folks an idea of why I am still interested in the sport of skiing, even at my advanced age! So . . . here goes . . . if it starts to get boring, just throw it aside . . . my feelings won't be hurt!

I was born and raised in Marquette, and have never had the desire to live anywhere else because, as I am often heard to say, "when you live in Paradise, why leave?" I grew up as the son of Victor Hurst, professor of Health and Physical Education and coach of many sports at what is now known as Northern Michigan University. At the same time he was the gym teacher at John D. Pierce grade school, and the coach of all sports and Athletic Director at John D. Pierce High School, all of this covering a span of 36 years retiring in 1961 with a State of Michigan Class D basketball championship, the same year that J.D. Pierce closed for good.

Skiing began for me at age three, and my interest in it has never dwindled, although it has been interrupted occasionally to accomplish other things of interest to me, primarily in the area of sports activity, but also marriage, family, and, oh yes, I almost forgot, 33 + years as a general dentist in Marquette, having retired at the end of 1993! In both my vocation (dentistry) and my avocations (everything else), I am known quite universally as "Dr. Don", which I accept as a measure of both respect, and friendship.

Attempting to keep things short enough to be interesting, I will capsulize my sports activities through the college level as primarily football, basketball, track and field (in high school), and gymnastics and cheerleading in college (at the University of Michigan, where I was a cheerleader for four years, and a gymnast for three years . . . trampoline and tumbling). Other activities, when the competitive mood seized me, were tennis, swimming and diving, archery, volleyball, and horseshoes. Also, I have 14 marathon races under my belt, but the onset of my chronic asthma condition at age 55 put an end to that interest.

All phases of my life are intertwined with fibers of skiing, though, as I have been recreationally, competitively, administratively, and organizationally involved with one or more of them at all times, from early childhood to the present. I competed in "Slalom and Downhill" races, locally (U.P.) as a youth; jumped in my first ski jumping meet at age six on "Chipmunk Bluff" in South Marquette, and ended my jumping career 36 years later, at age 42, by winning my third U.S. National Veteran's Championship, on Suicide Hill, in 1973. To be totally accurate, I must note that I took a 16-yr leave of absence from the sport while I was getting my education, etc. Also, I jumped competitively on one weekend in 1983 (after a 10-yr layoff) and won the North American Championship over age 50. I don't plan to come out of retirement again, honest!

I am now interested in staying closer to the ground by skiing cross-country, and began that serious interest late in my jumping career, as a means of developing some aerobic capacity for climbing to the top of those big scaffolds! I continue to compete in XC, mostly always at the marathon or 1/2 marathon distances, and am still somewhat competitive in my age group, since most guys my age don't take competition too seriously.

Administratively, in the sport of skiing, I had several assignments at the USSA level, among them Nordic Vice-President of the Central Division, member of the Board of Directors, Chairman of the Ski Jumping Committee, member of National Selection Committee for the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame (still am), and served as Assistant Chief of Officials for Ski Jumping at the 1980 Olympics (and 1979 Pre-Olympics) at Lake Placid.

I take credit for resurrecting the modern Nordic Ski Team at NMU (it existed as a varsity sport back in the early 50's, believe it or not), from 1969-72, when I served as Nordic Assistant, then Head Ski Coach, with lots of the credit going to then Athletic Director and Head Football Coach, Rollie Dotsch, for his wisdom and understanding of the appropriateness of skiing at the college level, especially here in "God's Country".

Being Race Director of the Red Earth Loppet for 8 years, and now serving as Chief of Sponsorships, has kept me pretty busy year-round, as well as being a charter organizer and still active with the Marquette Noon Kiwanis Club's Bill Koch Youth Ski League for the past 18 years, where the number of kids, ages 6-13, this year reached 47, and we continue to try to improve the level of coaching talent each year, such that it is a natural feeder program for the Superiorland XC Ski Club's Blockbuster Youth Ski League Program, which should serve as an incentive for U.P. high schools to get interested and motivated to develop XC programs, which in turn could become a stepping-stone for competition at the college level.

My past includes serving as Vice-president, President, and Chairman of the Events and Competition Committee of the Great Lakes Training Center Association (GLTCA), was active with State Games and U.P. Summer Sports Festivals, sponsored by this very worthwhile USOEC support group. I was a member of the original Citizens Advisory Committee, and a member of the party that went to the U.S. Olympic Committee's Site Selection Committee in 1985, and convinced them to name Northern Michigan University as an official U.S. Olympic Training Center.

I have received so much more pleasure, satisfaction, and the thrill of accomplishment from my involvement in community activities, than I have contributed, but receiving several treasured awards has made it even sweeter! These include Michigan Heart Association's Helwig Award, 1982, for my interest in the promotion of a heart healthy lifestyle in the workplace and at home; Honored as State of Michigan's "Dentist Citizen

of the Year", 1986, mostly for my work on the Olympic Training Center; Induction into the Upper Peninsula Sports Hall of Fame, 1987, joining my father, who was inducted in 1977; awarded Kiwanis Distinguished Service Award, 1993, for active community involvement over a number of years; and most recently, selected as 1993 "Citizen of the Year" by the Marquette Area Chamber of Commerce.

In closing, I strongly feel that anyone who lives in a community for a reasonable length of time, and takes advantage of all of the good things that his/her community has to offer, has an obligation to "give something back" to that community by giving on one's self in the form of community volunteerism. One does not go through life looking for "awards", but rather should be striving for "rewards" that come from a philosophy of "giving". I have had more than my share. Thanks for listening!