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John W. Lundin
john@johnwlundin.com

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ELLENSBURG SKI CLUB

April 23, 2018

By John W. Lundin

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John W. Lundin is a lawyer, historian and author with homes in Seattle and Sun Valley, and is a founding member of the Washington State Ski and Snowboard Museum. He has written extensively about Washington and Idaho history and is a frequent lecturer on history topics. His essays have appeared in *Skiing History*, *Nordic Kultur*, and *Historylink.org*, the on-line encyclopedia of Washington history. His first book, *Early Skiing on Snoqualmie Pass*, received an award as outstanding regional ski history book of 2018 by the International Ski History Association. His new books include *Sun Valley, Ketchum and the Wood River Valley*, (Arcadia Publishing, June 2020); *Skiing Sun Valley, a History from Union Pacific to the Holdings*, (History Press, November 9, 2020); and *Ski Jumping in Washington - A Nordic Tradition*, (History Press, January 2021). He learned to ski on Snoqualmie Pass in the 1950s, using wooden skis, leather boots, cable bindings, and riding rope tows, and was a member of Sahalie Ski Club that opened on Snoqualmie Pass in 1932.

HISTORY OF THE ELLENSBURG SKI CLUB

In 1921, the Cle Elum Ski Club was formed by local residents, led by John “Syke” Bresko, opening what has been called the first organized ski area west of Denver, “a skiers paradise,” that attracted between 100 - 400 locals every weekend. The Club sponsored ski races, jumping competitions, carnivals, and special contests from 1924 until 1933, attracting spectators and competitors from all over the Northwest. Northern Pacific trains provided access to Cle Elum from Seattle, Ellensburg and Yakima, and Norwegian jumpers dominated the events. Sports fans from Ellensburg attended the Cle Elum tournaments from its early years.¹

The Cle Elum club leased 40 acres of land on the ridge two miles north of town from the Northern Pacific Railroad at a nominal rate, built ski jumps and a shelter in 1923, and a two story lodge in 1928. In 1931, the club built a giant new \$5,000 ski jump advertised as one of the most hazardous in the world, 6% steeper than any in Norway which was the center of ski jumping. From 1924 to 1933, the club held annual jumping tournaments attracting competitors from all over the Northwest. The first several tournaments included a variety of skiing carnival events as well as jumping events. After the club built a new jump in the late 1920s, the club held traditional jumping tournaments. Spectators and competitors had to hike up a steep hill through the snow nearly two miles to reach the jump site on the top of a ridge north of town.²

The first annual Cle Elum Ski Club Ski Carnival, held on February 15, 1924, attracted 1,500 spectators from all sections of Kittitas County, and was a “huge success.” Roslyn, Easton and Ellensburg sent large delegations who witnessed a “grand exhibition.” The competitions were held on the Kiwanis ski course near the town. Four jumpers competed. John Holden, a professional jumper from Seattle, had the longest jump of 83 feet. Arthur Ronstad from Renton scored the most points, followed by Peter Blucher of Tacoma, Ivan Finsberg from Seattle, and John Holden. “Arthur Ronstad thrilled the spectators during one of his leaps when he struck the course sideways due to the wind and rode over a hundred feet on one foot, nearly straightening up, only to fall after a great effort. He was roundly applauded.”³

There were enthusiastic skiers from Ellensburg from at least the mid-1920s. Fifty skiers from Cle Elum’s Summit Ski Club took the Northern Pacific train to Martin on Stampede Pass on April 5, 1925, to enjoy spring skiing. They were joined by visiting skiers from Tacoma, Yakima and Ellensburg. Another trip was planned for the following Sunday, when a party of 75 skiers attended

¹ The club was originally called the Summit Ski Club, but it changed its name to the Cle Elum Ski Club in 1928. The complete story of the Club can be found in Lundin, *Cle Elum Ski Club, 1921 - 1933*, HistoryLink.org Essay 10169.

² The story of the Cle Elum Ski Club can be found in Lundin, *Cle Elum Ski Club, 1921 - 1933*, Essay 10169, http://www.historylink.org/index.cfm?DisplayPage=output.cfm&file_id=10169.

³ Wormington, *The Ski Race*, pages 312, 313.

the "annual Martin ski party."⁴

A ski club formed in Ellensburg in 1930. In January 1931, a representative of the club wrote the Cle Elum Ski Club, saying the past year, it had built a nice course located eight miles west of town, and "we have just begun to make people around here see that there is some fun out in the snow on skis & toboggans." The Ski Club was holding an open house on January 10, 1931, with a tournament designed not to compete with Cle Elum's, but to "create more fans that will want to come to Cle Elum." The Ellensburg Ski Club asked for help putting on the event. There would be six events: an A-jump (good for up to 175 feet), a B-jump, Rocky Run, Boy's Gliding (under 15), Ladies gliding, and a toboggan race with "suitable prizes in each event."

The three thousand people who attended the 1929 Cle Elum tournament had to hike two miles from town to the jumping site at the top of the ridge north of town, to witness the event from below the jump. They saw Olaf Locken set a distance record of 165 feet from the "gigantic runway" at the Ski Club hill. The largest out-of-town delegation was from Ellensburg, and ski fans from Enumclaw, near Mt Rainier, also attended. For the 1931 Cle Elum Tournament, the Northern Pacific's Ellensburg Special left Ellensburg at 8:00 am and arrived in Cle Elum at 10:00 a.m. Four Ellensburg jumpers entered the 1932 Cle Elum tournament as Class A competitors, joining "the best ski riders the Northwest has," including 18 Class A and 22 Class B jumpers. Ellensburg competitors included Dwight Bradshaw, Murl Pease, Edmund Letsche, and Roy Evans.⁵

The Ellensburg Ski Club hosted tournaments from 1932 to later in the 1930s. The results of the 1932 & 1933 tournaments are discussed in Wormington, *The Ski Race*, pages 330 - 332.

On January 15, 1932, the Ellensburg Ski Club held its First annual competitive jumping tournament, initiating its new course in Robinson Canyon, under the guidance of Carl Solberg. In 1928, Solberg was the featured attraction at the Cle Elum tournament, where he was identified as representing Easton, and was "a former national champion and famed in Europe." He was later called the "world champion skier in 1914."

It was a fine success, well attended, well managed and will undoubtedly be a great stimulant to the sport of skiing in Kittitas County. With Carl Solberg guiding them they are now ski minded and on their way to skiing success.

Their course is located in a small canyon about eight miles from the city but there is a good road to within a quarter mile of the slide and a passable road the balance of the way. There

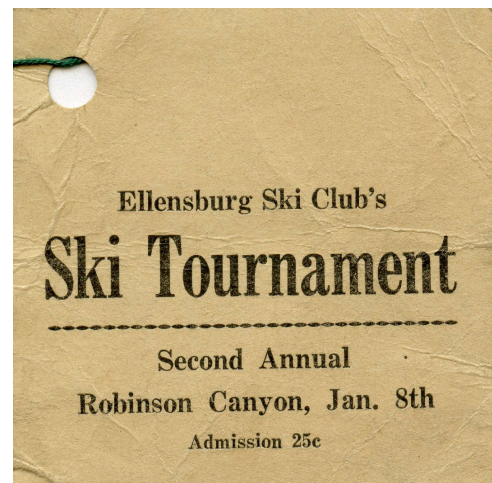
⁴ "Martin Ski Party Has Splendid Sport," *The Miner-Echo*, April 10, 1925; *Cle Elum Echo-Miner*, April 26, 1925.

⁵ "Three Thousand Attend Annual Ski Tournament," *Cle Elum Echo-Miner*, January 10, 1929; *Cle Elum Echo-Miner*, February 21, 1929; Wormington, *The Ski Race*, page 324; *The Miner-Echo*, February 6, 1931; "Leavenworth's Entries Ready," *Seattle Times*, February 6, 1932, page 8.

is a fine parking place at the very base of the hill and snow could be easily cleared away for parking a thousand cars they were ably assisted by a group of Boy Scouts.

The club had Class A and B jumps “well located and built, which should be good for safe jumps of 175 feet.” Jumpers can get sufficient speed on the hill back of the approach, with their speed being governed by how high the climbers want to climb. Jumpers from Ellensburg, Cle Elum, and Leavenworth competed in snow was wet and heavy and slow, preventing longer jumps from being made. In addition to the Class A and B jumping contests, there was a Ladies Glide, a Rocky Run race, and a Boy’s Glide. Helge Sather of Leavenworth won the Class A event with a long jump of 132 feet, with Carl Solberg of Ellensburg placing second.⁶

The Ellensburg Normal School newspaper (now Central Washington University), the *Campus Crier* said in January 1932, “Ski Tourney Opened Course.” That year’s Ellensburg Ski Club tournament marked the opening of the club’s new Robinson canyon course. Leavenworth’s Helge Sather set a new course record of 138 feet in the standing jump, and also won the Class A competition. The tournament established “the Ellensburg course as one of the most promising in this district.” More than 1,200 spectators watched the tournament. Representatives from the Leavenworth and Cle Elum Ski Clubs won the majority of the prizes which were donated by Ellensburg business men. Leavenworth’s Georgia Heitzog won the ladies gliding contest and D. Kjosness won the rocky run contest. The Ellensburg team won the toboggan race “which was one of the spectacular contests of the day.” The ski club planned to hold inter-club competitions later in the years. Roy Olds was president of the Ellensburg Ski Club, Russell Hearin was secretary-treasurer, and Ed Zetsche vice-president.



⁶ Wormington, *The Ski Race*, page 330.

The Ellensburg Ski Club was listed as a participating club in both the 1932 and 1933 Cle Elum tournaments indicating that its members competed.



Courtesy of the Maybo family & Central Washington University, Brooks Library.

The second Annual Ski Tournament of the Ellensburg Ski Club was held in Robinson Canyon in early January, 1933. The *Seattle Times* promoted the tournament, saying “Ski Tourney on at Ellensburg,” and “Seattle Skiers Go to Tourney, Ellensburg’s Meet Beckons.” Class A jumpers from the Seattle Ski Club, Ole Tverdal (who won the Class B championship at Lake Tahoe the prior year), Leif Flak (most brilliant of the younger jumping generation), and Erik Bolstad, were en route “to lend their aid to the Ellensburg’s first invitational tournament.” The tournament attracted a long list of entrants from Northwest clubs, with Leavenworth, Cle Elum and Yakima sending 30 competitors. Since this was the first tournament of the year, most of the region’s leading jumpers were expected to compete for “tournament conditioning.”

Ellensburg's new ski hill is but eight miles from the city's center - and it possessed this distinction. You may sit in your automobile if you wish, to watch the jumps.

The Ellensburg Ski Club had improved its hill by building a new Class A jump that would allow jumps up to 300 feet. The events were expanded for the tournament, and included Class A, B and C jumping, a cross country race, gliding contests for all ages, toboggan races, ladies and men's rock run and slalom race.

The 1933 tournament attracted 30 jumpers who competed on the big hill that was "considerably improved over last year," but they were "handicapped by warmth." A warm day and melting snow made the course sticky and shortened the jumps. Erik Bolstad of Seattle was originally declared the winner of the Class A event with a jump of 108 feet, due to an error in point tabulation, but he actually finished fourth. Ole Tverdal of Seattle won the Class A event with a jump of 117 feet. Helge Sather of Leavenworth was second. Seattle's Hermod Bakke had the longest jump of 122 feet, but had poor form so he did not place highly. The cross country event was won by Merle Pease of Ellensburg, with Eric Ulrich of Leavenworth second and Ed Zetsche of Ellensburg third. "The big hill was greatly improved over last year, the entrants said, but because of the sticky snow, the longest jump was 16 feet short of the longest leap made last year. Hundreds of spectators watched the jumpers from their cars parked at the foot of the hill." The club held a banquet held afterward in the Antlers hotel.⁷

In February 1933, 80 students participated in the first interscholastic meet between high schools in Ellensburg, Yakima and Cle Elum in the Menastash canyon, "for the purpose of developing friendship; among students of the schools." Three students from Ellensburg participated. Events included boy's gliding, girl's gliding, a couples race, cross country and a toboggan race. Carl Solberg of the Ellensburg Ski Club (and world's champion in skiing in 1914) was a judge of the event and talked to the students about skiing, including suggestions for the improvement of skiing, and appropriate dress for the sport." Solberg gave a demonstration glides and jumps.⁸

The *Seattle Times* announced in December 1933, "Ellensburg to Hold Ski Meet." The tournament season was almost on hand, and apparently forgetting its article the prior January, the paper said there was "a brand new entrant into the field - Ellensburg," which had a 300-foot capacity hill. The Ellensburg tournament was followed by the Spokane tournament at the Wandermere Golf Course (that attracted more than 20,000 spectators the prior year in its inauguration), the Cascade Ski Club tournament on Mount Hood, the Seattle Ski Club tournament on Snoqualmie Summit, and the Northwest Ski Association championships at Leavenworth. The Ellensburg Ski Club had

⁷ "Seattle Skiers Go to Tourney, Ellensburg's Meet Beckons," *Seattle Times*, January 7, 1933 (page 7); "Ski Tourney on at Ellensburg," *Seattle Times*, January 8, 1933 (page 21); "Seattle Skiers Finish One, Two in Jump Event," *Seattle Times*, January 9, 1933 (page 12); Wormington, *The Ski Race*, pages 331 - 332.

⁸ "Valley School Ski Tourney is Held Here Sat.," *Ellensburg Daily Record*, February 13, 1933.

enlarged and revamped its jumping hill, and the Seattle Ski Club, Leavenworth Winter Sports Club and the Cascade Ski Club of Portland were sending Class A and B jumpers. On January 7, 1934, the *Seattle Times* said Ellensburg skiers were packing in snow to the landing slope that was covered in six inches of snow. A Chinook wind missed the hill the prior day, ending worries about its melting. Jumpers had entered from Seattle Ski Club, Leavenworth, Cle Elum, Yakima and Ione.

Hermod Bakke of Leavenworth won the 1933 Ellensburg tournament on a crusty hill with a leap of 138 feet, Ole Tverdal from the Seattle Ski Club was second, Helge Sather from Leavenworth was third, and Haakon Albinson from Ellensburg was fourth. Harry Larson, a new Seattle Ski Club member, was hurt when after a “magnificent jump,” he tried to avoid straw bales at the end of the jumping slope to protect the competitors, by a skidding Telemark turn. He broke his ankle and a piece of straw hit him in the eye, which nearly blinded him. The event was not sanctioned by the Pacific Northwest Ski Association so no points were scored.

The *Ellensburg Capital* of February 1, 1934, said “Ski Tournament Handicapped by Poor Weather.” Because of three years of weather vagaries that handicapped the Ellensburg Ski Club’s annual ski tournament held in Robinson canyon, plans were being formulated to build a course in the Swauk.⁹

In 1935, nearly 200 students and faculty participated in the annual ski tournament in Robinson canyon hosted by the Ellensburg Chamber of Commerce and Ski Club. Events included ladies gliding, men’s gliding, tandem gliding, men’s cross-country, ladies’ cross-country, men’s downhill, ladies’ downhill and toboggan race. Ellensburg’s Fred Zetzsche won the men’s jumping event. Prizes for the tournament were donated by J.C. Penny Col, Real Silk Hosiery Co., Strom’s, City Tailors and Cleaners, Ledbetters and the Ellensburg Ski Club. *Ellensburg Capital*, December 27, 1935.

No record of jumping tournaments sponsored by the Ellensburg Ski Club could be found after 1935. However, club skiers continued to participate in tournaments sponsored by other clubs.

On March 13, 1936, the *Seattle Times* announced “Cle Elum Club in Ski Tourney, Stampede Pass.” After two years of comparative inactivity, the Cle Elum Ski Club was coming back, this time with a downhill and slalom team. Its six-man team would meet six-man squads from the Ellensburg Ski Club and the Penguin Ski Club of Seattle at Stampede Pass.

In 1937, Fred Zetzsche of the Ellensburg Ski Club entered the Seattle Ski Club tournament at Snoqualmie Pass as a Class A jumper. The tournament renewed a feud between two jumpers “who would be tops in any competition, be they Olympic games or Holmenkollen.” Sigmund Ruud

⁹ “Ellensburg to Hold Ski Meet,” *Seattle Times*, December 24, 1933 (page 21); “Slalom Racing Set for Sunday,” *Seattle Times*, January 4, 1934 (page 16); “Two Slaloms, One Ski Meet Ready,” *Seattle Times*, January 7, 1934 (page 25); “Collins Takes Slalom Event at Mt. Rainier,” *Seattle Times*, January 8, 1934 (page 10); “Ski Tournament Handicapped by Poor Weather,” *Ellensburg Capital*, February 1, 1934.

(“one of the greatest ski jumpers ever born in Norway”) and Alf Engen (“the North American champion”) will have a private rivalry of their own. They first competed against each other as boys at Kongsberg, Norway, and met at the National Jumping championships in Salt Lake earlier in the year. Ruud defeated Ruud by “two tiny points,” by jumping to a new North American amateur record of 245 feet, breaking the 242 foot record set by John Elvrum of Portland in 1934 at Big Pines, California. The margin between Ruud and Engen was in distance, and distance alone, as Ruud outscored Engen on form. Sverre Kolderud of Norway (“one of the world’s great skiers) also competed. Entries into the tournament was sharply limited by the Pacific Northwest Ski Association, and included only the best competitors.

The Seattle Ski Club’s tournament held in late March 1937, on its jump at Beaver Lake near Snoqualmie Summit, promised to be the greatest ski jumping event the club had ever had hosted. It attracted national competitors, the best of whom came from Kongsberg, a small town in Norway. “It’s a gathering of skiing greats,” who would “wage such a duel as Norway would enjoy,” according to the *Seattle Times*. Entrants included Alf Engen, national ski jumping champion; Sigmund Ruud, “one of Norway’s ski immortals;” Tom Mobraaten from Vancouver; Hjalmar Kvam and Corey Gustafsson from Portland; and Nordal Kaldahl from Wells, B.C. “The Ruud-Engen rivalry is epic...The Ruud-Engen-Hvam-Kalahjl-Svere-Kolterud rivalry will live long,” since all of the great skiers came from Kongsberg.

The Kongsberg jumping style - grand form plus great distance - had been made famous through two generations. It is particularly distinctive. It calls for pronounced forward lean, a distinctive arching of the body from the hips...aerodynamic jumping, the technicians call it...something like a glider leaving a hill, to soar.

At the tournament, Engen had the longest jumps, and set a new record for the Big Hill of 210 feet, but Ruud won the competition, beating Engen on form points and earning “a measure of revenge” for his loss at Salt Lake. Sverre Kolterud of Norway finished second, followed by Engen, Ole Tverdal of Seattle, Hiege Sather of Lynwood, Arni Ofstad of Spokane, Hjalmar Hvam of Portland, A. Granstrom of Seattle, John Ring of Spokane, Tom Mobraaten of Vancouver, B.C., and Leif Flak of Seattle. The tournament was watched by 3,000 spectators.

After the 1937 tournament was over, “exhibition double jumps gave the crowd more of a thrill than it wished,” said the *Seattle Times* which published a picture of Sigmund Ruud and Sverre Kolterud of Norway doing a spectacular double exhibition jump of 217 feet. However, Ruud was hurt when he ran into a woman spectator on the runoff. Ruud’s speed “was tremendous,” and he was thrown toward the crowd when he landed, in which case he would injure someone. Ruud “threw himself flat on the snow, skidding, ski-first into a woman spectator. She had the wind knocked out of her, but recovered.” X-rays showed that Ruud did not break his ankle but had only torn ligaments. Hjalmar Hvam was also hurt doing a double jump with Tom Mobraaten, when he “fell hard, hit his

face with his ski and suffered cuts on his forehead and nose.”¹⁰

In 1938, two Ellensburg Ski Club jumpers entered the Leavenworth Jumping Tournament - Fred Zetzshe and Bob Opdengaard. They would compete against “several lads who constitute the best ski jumping talent in the world,” including the newly arrived Olav Ulland (one of Norway’s greatest who held the world’s distance record of 339 feet), his brother Sigurd Ulland (that year’s National Champion), and two members of the 1936 Olympic team, Casper Oimoen (five time national jumping champion) and Jimmy Hendrickson. More than 5,000 spectators watched Sigurd Ulland win the event with a long jump of 233 feet, beating Birger Ruud, the world champion, and Sigurd’s “famed brother Olav.” Three special Great Northern trains had taken 1,500 spectators from Seattle and Everett to the tournament. Ken Binns, the Seattle Times Ski writer, wrote that Leavenworth was crammed so full of people for the tournament that “when you try to eat, you may be taking someone else’s ham sandwich.”¹¹

In late January 1938, Sahalie Ski Club, Ellensburg Ski Club and the Enumclaw Ski Club held a slalom competition at Cayuse Pass. In March 1939, Yakima skiers won the Ellensburg annual open tournament on Blewett Pass, where 70 skiers representing nine Central Washington ski clubs competed. This is the first reference to an annual Alpine tournament held by the Ellensburg Ski Club that could be found. In February 1940, Benton Buchanan of the Ellensburg Ski Club won “the tricky slalom course at Lake Keechelus,” beating Bill Easton of Easton.¹²

In March 1940, the National-Four-Way Tournament was held in Washington to determine who was the best skier in the United States. The giant slalom and slalom races were held at Mount Baker, the cross-country race at Snoqualmie Pass, and the jumping competition at the Milwaukee Ski Bowl at Hyak. This was the premier ski race of 1940. In the giant slalom race, in which 28 “hot shots” entered, Sig Ulland was listed as representing the Ellensburg Ski Club, and he was the first to start. In 1938, Ulland, “one of the all-time jumpers and current world title holder,” won national champion jumping championship as a member of the Lake Tahoe Ski Club, by beating “a sparkling international field.” In 1939, for the second year in a row, the Leavenworth tournament was won by Sigurd Ulland of Lake Tahoe California, with a long jump of 249 feet in front of 4,000 spectators, a mark that was a new American distance record in competition. Ulland’s new national record was

¹⁰ “Great Skiers Will Vie at Snoqualmie,” *Seattle Times*, March 27, 1937 (page 4); “Smashup Marks Snoqualmie Ski Meet, Ruud Suffers Ankle Injury Defeats Engen,” *Seattle Times*, March 29, 1937 (page 14).

¹¹ “60 Skiers Booked for Sunday’s Jump, Leavenworth Tourney List Ready,” *Seattle Times*, February 4, 1938 (page 22); “Jumpers Gather at Leavenworth,” *Seattle Times*, February 5, 1938 (page 9); “Night Train Goes to Bowl Tonight; First Meet, Jan. 23,” *Seattle Times*, January 17, 1938 (page 23); “Ulland Wins Leavenworth Tournament,” *Seattle Times*, February 7, 1938 (page 15); Roe, JoAn, *Stevens Pass: the Story of Railroad and Recreation in the North Cascades*, page 132.

¹² “Cayuse Pass,” *Seattle Times*, January 23, 1938 (page 16); “Yakima Skiers Win Ellensburg Tournament,” *Seattle Times*, March 13, 1939 (page 16); “Buchanan Winner of Keechelus Race,” *Seattle Times*, February 6, 1940 (page 18).

broken by Alf Engen, who jumped 251 feet the same day. In 1940, the *Seattle Times* said that Sigurd Ulland had moved to Leavenworth in 1940, and was in charge of maintenance of its “great jumping hill.” It is not clear why he was listed as competing for the Ellensburg Ski Club in 1940.¹³

In the jumping competition, Norwegian jumper Torger Tokle living in New York had longer jumps than Alf Engen, but Engen won the tournament as Tokle “failed to display the form” shown by Engen, on a day when the weather was perfect and the snow fast. “Form Scored Over Distance,” said the *Seattle Times*. Tokle jumped 238 and 235 feet, while Engen jumped 224 and 235 feet. Engen, “the stocky skiman from Sun Valley went off with the works,” winning the overall title in the Four-Way Competition. Engen’s brother Sverre was second, Sig Hall of the Seattle Ski Club (who won the downhill) placed third, and Hjalmar Hvan of the Cascade Ski Club fourth. Sigurd Ulland placed fourth in the special jumping event, one place ahead of his brother Olav.¹⁴

In February 1940, residents of Kittitas County got good news. The Washington Motor Coach Company began offering trips to the Milwaukee Ski Bowl from Ellensburg on Saturdays and Sundays. The Ski Bowl did not permit private cars to access the ski area, since “to do so would have opened the bowl to those who came from sections which we served by special ski trains.” Access by bus allowed eastern Washington residents to come to the Ski Bowl for the first time.¹⁵

In January 1941, a number of Ellensburg Ski Club members entered the Giant Slalom competition at the Milwaukee Ski Bowl, the first major Pacific Northwest Ski Association tournament of the year, in which “every headline snow flier from Oregon and Washington is in the fold.” The event featured 73 racers, and was packed with talent. Ellensburg Ski Club racers included Robert Case, Walter Bell, and Breton Buchanan, with start numbers 65, 67, and 71. Fred Zetsche, who previously raced for Ellensburg, was skiing for the Timberliners this year, indicating he may have moved to Portland.¹⁶

In the Washington State Ski & Snowboard museum’s Lost Ski Areas Exhibit, ski historian Kirby Gilbert discussed the role of the Ellensburg Ski Club in operating the Blewett Pass Ski area

¹³ “Ulland Wins Title, Ruud Captures Open Crown,” *Seattle Times*, February 21, 1938 (page 15); “Leavenworth Winner in Training for U. S. Meet, Ulland Soars 249 Feet but Loses Record, & Engen Boosts Ski Jump Mark,” *Seattle Times*, January 30, 1939 (page 15); “Sigurd Ulland Will Jump for Leavenworth,” *Seattle Times*, January 9, 1940 (page 15).

¹⁴ “Engen Beats Tokle on Form, 4-Way Champion Superb in Leaps of 224, 235 Feet,” *Seattle Times*, March 18, 1940 (page 19).

¹⁵ *Ellensburg Daily Record*, February 2, 1940, quoted on Milwaukee Ski Bowl website.

¹⁶ “Huge Field to Compete Sunday at Snoqualmie,” *Seattle Times*, January 7, 1941 (page 18).

before WW II, and the Swauk Ski Bowl after the war.¹⁷

The Ellensburg Ski Club installed a Swedish portable rope tow at the old Blewett Pass, west of U.S. Highway 97, in the late 1930s. A rope tow was installed downhill from the summit along the northerly slopes, starting at the parking lot of the old Top-O-Hill tavern. Bruce Kehr (who started the Stevens Pass Ski Area) helped to install the tow for the ski club. The tow was operated until the early 1940s, when skiers moved to bigger slopes, and the club discontinued the operation. The Washington Trails Association website says the old Blewett Pass highway had a rope tow ski lift in the 1930s, and the website, Lost Ski Areas of Washington indicates the Blewett Pass ski area, located 34 miles north of Ellensburg and 27 miles from Cle Elum, had a rope tow and warming hut, but gives no date for the services.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Ellensburg Ski Club operated another small ski area, Swauk Ski Bowl, along the Blewett Pass Highway. It was a short hike on skis from the highway. There was a small hamburger hut (canteen) and rope tow hung on wooden poles and large trees. The Forest Service helped to erect a small overnight lodge along the highway, which in 1945, was used by the Boy Scouts. It was later moved four miles down the road to its present location, serving as the restaurant for the Mineral Springs Resort.

Only one reference to the Ellensburg Ski Club was found in the *Seattle Times* after WW II. In January 1963, the paper reported that the Ellensburg School District would offer skiing as an exclusive school-sanctioned activity. It was inspired by the program operated by the Bellevue School District and PTA. The program “is for the masses,” available to all youngsters beginning in the seventh grade. Although no gym credits were be given but the program would supplement the district’s physical education program and augment its intramural activities. “We are not promoting inerscholastic skiing. There will be no varsity ski team.” The school district took up the program “when it grew too large for the Ellensburg Ski Club.” About 150 students were expected to participate in the eight weekly ski lessons on Snoqualmie Pass. Junior high students will take

¹⁷ *Old Blewett Pass Highway*, WTA.org; *Lost Ski Areas of Washington*, Hyak.net/lost/lostski.html. Lowell Skoog’s website, Alpenglow Ski History, has several references to the Swauk Ski Bowl. Ski Areas Lost, lists Swauk Ski Bowl (near Blewett Pass 1940s - 50s). *The Ski Guide for Washington*, published in 1950 by Shell Oil Co., says Swauk Ski Bowl was six miles west of Blewett Pass. *Skiing’s Great in Washington State, 1950 -51*, published by the Washington State Advertising Commission, says Swauk Ski Area was 20 miles south of Peshastin. An undated newspaper photo by Gene Prater, probably from the 1950s, of skiers and a rope tow has a caption reading, “Swauk Ski Bowl near Ellensburg offers protected areas plus three rope tows and warming hut to Kittitas Valley winter sports enthusiasts.” Alpenglow Ski History, Ski Areas Lost, Tacoma Public Library - Clippings, Ellensburg Public Library - Clippings, Alpenglow.org.

An article in the *Ellensburg Daily Record* from October 8, 1953, “Relocation of Blewett Pass Road Pushed,” said the new road being built which would bypass the old Blewett Pass and go over Swauk Pass, would not interfere with the Swauk Ski Bowl, but would improve access to it, showing that the Swauk Ski Bowl was still operating in the early 1950s.

Kirby Gilbert has been to the site of Swauk Ski Bowl, between the old and new Blewett Passes. He found the old tow lines, some sheaves up high in trees, remnants of a hamburger hut, and a few other things from its days of operations. He said the Ski Bowl, which had one rope tow and was mostly volunteer run, had nice terrain.

lessons at Ski Acres and high school students at Snoqualmie Summit.

The Ellensburg XC still exists, although one cannot determine whether it is related to the Ellensburg Ski Club. See <http://ellensburgskiclub.yolasite.com>.

Ellensburg is located in central Washington State, on the east slopes of the Cascade Range. Our club members are primarily interested in various forms and degrees of "back-country" skiing. We are not a track-skiing or racing club. We have hundreds of miles of logging roads, trails and off-trail ridges and valleys just "out the back door". Although the Cascades are famous for "Cascade Concrete", here on the drier, colder east slopes we usually have no trouble finding great snow both during mid-winter and in spring. Good skiing can extend into May or even June. At present, the club has suspended meetings (as well as dues).

The following pictures of Ellensburg Ski Club tournaments from the Hogue and Krueger collections are from the Brooks Library of the Central Washington University. No information is available about them but they were likely taken in Robinson Canyon before 1933, since they do not show the large jump the club built for that year's competition.



Courtesy of Central Washington University, Brooks Library, Hogue collection.



Courtesy of Central Washington University, Brooks Library, Krueger collection.



Courtesy of Central Washington University, Brooks Library, Hogue collection.



Courtesy of Central Washington University, Brooks Library, Hogue collection. Note the two jumps.



Courtesy of Central Washington University, Brooks Library, Krueger collection.



Courtesy of Central Washington University, Brooks Library, Krueger collection.



Courtesy of Central Washington University, Brooks Library, Krueger collection.



Courtesy of Central Washington University, Brooks Library, Krueger collection.



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