

History of Skiing
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Interviewer

CL My name is Charlie Lord. I was born August 6, 1902 in the town of Groton, Vermont.

AG My name is Arthur Goodrich. I was born December 13, 1904 in Montpelier. At the age of 2 without knowledge and/or consent, my parents moved to Northfield, where I have lived ever since, up to this point.

AC My name is Abner Coleman, June 10, 1904. Born in Montpelier.

TD Let me recap a little bit. We talked generally. We started talking about the early development of skiing in Vermont generally, really and the role that these fellows had in it. It seems to me that it makes sense to continue to go on with that. Charlie and Abner laid out for example, all the original trails at Mansfield, and were telling me about, I mean we never got to what kind of skis you had and where you got them and all that kind of thing. I would be kind of interested in that, about what kind of equipment you were using when you went off on these weekend jaunts. If anybody wants to talk, don't let these things bother you.

CL We had rather rudimentary equipment. I remember the first ski boots I had were actually what they call river drivers boots. They originated in Maine. They were thick soled leather boots with about a 10 inch top. The bindings were of what you call toe strap variety, but they did have a heel spring or heel tightener, but they were all made of leather, except for the little fasteners. So we had quite a bit of freedom of movement in our heel. In other words, if we got into a tight situation, our heels could come up more like the cross country skiers do now. The skis were well the very first pair I had I think had two or three grooves and they were jumping skis. They were made of ash and they were probably about 7 1/2 feet long. They had that same crude binding. As I said before, there was a toe strap with a couple of guide irons on the inside of your foot, plus this throw in back which tightened up your foot on the ski. But other than that, we didn't have too what you would call ridged control of the ski.

TD Where did you get the bindings? Were they available generally in the 1930 - 1932, the area you ...?

CL Well I had a pair of crude bindings, but Abner gave me a pair of better bindings that he discarded I guess and he got a better pair of bindings. As I said before,

the very first were practically all leather except for a few metal throws and buckles.

AG Charlie was that not the Northland Binding?

CL They were the Northland Bindings.

AG Yes, I recall using those.

CL Then after a bit, they came out with cable bindings.

AG Gold K, it was a sweetheart of a binding. You could have down poles with security heels.

CL Two adjustments under your foot. You could either tighten them up so your heel would stay practically on the ski or you could loosen them up more for cross country skiing. We still had at the beginning I believe leather toe strap and metal guides on the front. The first improvement over the leather throws was a metal throw on the side. Then they very shortly came out with a so called Ken-har(?) binding which has a throw in front of the toe.

AG That was the Gold K.

CL We looked at those in a little bit of suspicion.

TD Where did you get your skis? What did the skis look like? Were they made around here?

CL The first pair of skis I guess were Northland Skis. They were bought in some store. I can't remember.

AG Hardware stores usually.

CL Yes a hardware store. Then I got a pair or two from this local ski manufacturer up in Craftsbury. Remember Ted Camera?

AG Yes.

CL He experimented with skis and Abner could tell you about the floating ??? he used to have. Remember those? There were no grooves in them at all. They were made of maple or birch with no edges either. Anyway we progressed from there on and on until it got to a point where we finally got into the bindings. You can't pick your foot up 1/4 inch.

TD How long were the skis then?

CL In the beginning they were at least 7 feet or 7 ft. 6 inches. But we sort of scaled with them down after a period of a year or two to 7 feet or 6 ft. 9 inches. In the beginning they were still wooden, either ash or birch and also without any edges. But very shortly, within two or three years edges appeared. They of course give you a little more bite into the trail surface. All these things improved your skiing technique, supposedly. But we learned only by the seat of your pants you might say, because there was no instruction. Remember the books we used to have Abner? One time we had one book that was written by Sir Arnold Lund. There was a chapter on the use of intoxicants.

Laugh

CL Well it said in this chapter that a bit of intoxicating just before the down run was helpful in relaxing the skier. So we tried it one day. The only trouble was that we took too many drinks.

Laugh

CL We certainly relaxed.

TS What time period are we talking about? Is this in the 1920's or 1930's?

CL We didn't start skiing until about the earliest about 1930 - 1931. Mansfield skiing came into being. We were committed to Mansfield mostly after 1933. We did occasionally go somewhere else. They began to cut trails here. Due to the fact either the Burt Lumber Company or the State of Vermont owned practically all the land on mountain, they were both interested in skiing.

TS What was the name of the paper company?

CL Burt Lumber Company.

TS Burt right?

CL Yes. They owned a lot of land in one place or another. Anyway, we were able to cut trails on private land as well as on state land. So that is how things got started. Of course there was quite a little local interest in skiing.

TS Where did that interest come from? I don't mean to interrupt, but I am interested in why did you guys, the three of you, become interested in skiing and why did it become sort of a rage in the 1930's.

CL Well as we said earlier, it was only for personal reasons that we went skiing. When labor became available, there was still a personal reason why and how we laid out the trails. We said that would be a good spot for a trail. We didn't know whether we made the trail to fit our capabilities. That was roughly how things grew. We didn't know anything about trail layout, anymore than the man in the moon. But to get back to local interest. They had previously some local carnival so called, where there was jumping and cross country, but there was no down run. That was from 1921 on, sporadically. Then a local high school used to go through the notch over to Jeffersonville one year. They had a little carnival over the weekend. Next year the Jeffersonville group came to Stowe. Then there was local rivalry between Moscow and Stowe. They did quite a bit of jumping. You know ??? many jumps you might say. And a bit of cross country skiing. Until they cut the Bruce Trail, there was no such thing as down mountain racing.

TD Now the Bruce Trail was the first cut trail?

CL Yes.

TD That's what the book said. I didn't realize that. That's 4 1/2 miles long, is it?

CL Well it depends upon, well the racing part is only about not more than 1 1/2 mile would you think?

AG From ranch camp

AC? Well if you went to the top of the tow road, it was about 4 1/2.

CL Yes that is true. That lower part was pretty flat.

AG I see.

TD According to Hagerman's book, that is grown over.

CL It has been brushed out spasmodically by the Stowe school boys. Not the public school, but the Stowe school right the foot of Harlow Hill. They do a lot of skiing. Then the people from Goose Hill, the Trapp

family, they do a lot of cross country skiing which they promote. They have miles of trails up around those hills and over in the Ranch Valley. So between them I think the Bruce Trail is skiable for cross country skiers because gives them a chance to get up on the mountain or they can get one way or another. But nowadays, a good cross country man can handle most of the trails on Mt. Mansfield. They have the technique to do it. But in the early days, it was kind of a real battle to cross country.

AG I wouldn't suggest cross country equipment for doing the elevator shaft on the Bruce.

CL What, yes well.

AG A steep pitch.

CL You remember the elevator shaft Abner. I always remember Abner coming. Fortunately the elevator shaft seems fairly calm until he got to the elevator shaft then he would let out a scream. I think most of it was nerves though. He made it just the same as the rest of us did.

TS What is the elevator shaft?

CL Well as you come along down the Bruce Trail, it is just medium skiing, not particularly steep, then all of a sudden there is a section, oh, it isn't very long, maybe 150 feet or something like that. It drops right down, about a 45 degree slope, then it flattens out. To us it was like going over Niagra Falls in the barrel. Anybody survived that, we thought was a real dare devil.

AG There was a real high compression factor at the transition.

TD Where you come down.

AG Most of us would end up way back here.

VL Sliding down.

CL We made it though. We didn't hit any trees.

TS Mr. Goodrich, how did you first get interested into skiing?

AG During my school days, we skied on ash skis with a toe strap, a heel cleet. We could cut a section out of an inner tube, lace that around our toes and back to the heel, so that if we fell, we would not lose the ski. Then probably around 1932, at which time I had not been skiing very much and was mostly into skating and jumper riding and snowshoeing. But I got a Boston Herald Sunday paper and on it was a picture of ??? picture of some boys from Dartmouth. This picture showed them making a turn. The thought occurred to me at that time. Golly you know if you could turn or stop at will on skis, what a lot of fun that could be. This is on a Sunday morning and I woke up the hardware store dealer, Neal Ordway, got him to go down to his store. He opened up and I bought a pair of Northland bindings at that time and a pair of wooden ski poles. I went home and put them on and that was my start of skiing. This was probably in 1932. I used to go up to Norwich where they had a chap from New Hampshire whose name I don't recall right at the moment, but he was a good skier at that time and he held classes there for the cadets. I would park my car up there, roll the window down and listen.

Laugh

Then I went home and our driveway was on a incline and I would practice turns. I got rather better on my lefts turns than I did my right and I guess that is maybe still true today, although to a lesser extent. Then I recall we had been up skiing in the Nose Dive area, a group of us from Northfield came back down, and we stopped at the lodge and leaning up against the outside of the lodge there was a pair of skis with Gold K bindings. That was the first cable binding we had ever seen and at that time we agreed they would never get us into those ankle breakers you know. But within a year, we all had Gold K bindings and shortly after that we all had steel edges.

TS They give you a lot more control?

AG Yes, yes.

TD Did you use the same skis for cross country, I assume you did?

AC Yes. I was going to comment that I skied in the Stowe Derby two or three times. I know in those races, I use my downhill skis with a loose heel. Then when I get to

the foot of Harlow Hill, then I would reach down and up to that point I would have them tight heel, then I would loosen them and go lang loffing into Stowe village.

TS What is lang loffing?

AG That is cross country. I like to distinguish between cross country and touring because to me cross country has a competitive connotation while touring is recreational.

CL That's true.

AG But the two are almost interchangeable today. If you go into a sporting goods store today and ask for a pair of touring skis, they say you mean cross country.

TD They have some new equipment now that they call mountain equipment which is more like...

AG Which is the best, the best for what we would use.

TD Just for the record, the Stowe Toll Derby was a 10 mile race starting at the top of the toll road and went all the way into Stowe village, sort of combining downhill and cross country.

CL I don't know if you ever witnessed recent Stowe derbys. There are about 500 entries in that race. I have seen it every year lately as a spectator. I was over by the golf course. Occasionally we are number 300 or 400 would be in the front 200 or 300 and the other way around. They accepted all classes of skiers. They might have been half of day finishing. The last few years there has been a tremendous entry list.

AG Charlie the last time you and I were on the starting point; we were helping with the starting procedure there. I found it amusing that we would kick off four runners at the same time. They would have to skate in order to get to the lead.

TD Right at the top of the toll road

CL/AG The Octagon

Yes

TS How did the ski trails happen to be built on the mountain? Was it the CCC labor or was it Highway Department?

- CL As I said before, most of the land was either owned by the Burt Company or the State of Vermont or hotel companies. They were all interested in developing for winter sports. But the labor of course at that time, winter was the low point in the depression. I don't know if any of you younger members can remember that. You couldn't buy a job. You were lucky if you had a job. Anyway, there was no money available to cut trail, other than through CCC labor. It was several years before any private funds were put on skiing.
- TD How did the CCC get into that I mean. Is that something that you fellows go to Perry Merrill and say I mean who approached the Federal government?
- CL Well Perry Merrill was the director of all CCC labor in the State of Vermont. At that time if you presented your case to him and he liked what you had that was it. And especially in the wintertime, it fit into their work program very nicely, because in the winter about the only work you could do back in those days was in the woods. You couldn't do much, some building, interior building, but mostly wood work, forest stand improvement and trail cutting, roughing out things. Of course nowadays, winter-time doesn't really stop construction if they really want to do it. But anyway he was, Perry Merrill, was to find the work for all these camps, 15 - 18 camps in the State of Vermont.
- TD Did they have a camp located right up by ...?
- CL They had what they call a site camp, out of the Waterbury camp. It was a smaller group, 30 - 40 boys at that site camp. Their work was confined right up in the mountain and the notch, because they saved all that travel time. Of course the trucks were governed. They couldn't go more than 30 mph if they tried. They all had governors on them. It would take 1/2 to 3/4 hour to get from Waterbury up to camp. Anyway they were able to put in a longer work day by having a camp up there. They had the same group every day to work with.
- TD You didn't supervise that did you?
- CL I eventually became a trail locator, truck trail locator, ski trail locator, building locator, stuff like that. I didn't spend all my time, occasionally I would be assigned to a camp just like any other foreman that had a crew of men that did some cutting or whatever. I have worked in the Marshfield camp, Plymouth camp.

TS Were you employed at that time by the State Highway Department or the CCC's?

CL No, when the depression came on most of the employees of the Highway Department, a lot of them got the axe, some of them got ...

AC? They didn't really fire them, they encouraged them to find other employ if possible.

CL Well they encouraged me to fire to the point where there wasn't any work.

AC? Those few of us who stayed, the lowest point was during the winter of 1933 I think where we were put on two week on, two weeks off, but it only lasted about two months. Some of us didn't suffer any inconvenience of the depression at all. We were more fortunate than many.

CL I had a chance to go back to work for the Highway Department, but I had already committed myself to working for Perry Merrill at a slightly higher salary. I think \$130.00 a month. Maybe I got \$135, I have forgotton. But if you are in the CCC's you got your board and room very cheap. I think we paid \$.33 a day in the beginning for board and room. \$.33 a day, but it got up to \$1.00, a whole \$1.00 a day.

AC? What you did Charlie, you were really the civil engineer for the CCC's in Vermont.

CL I was on what they call the technical staff. Each camp had a superintendent, then he had a staff of different foreman, which they called the technical staff. There were carpenters, construction men.

AC You were a civil engineer.

CL John Gleason and I were designated as truck locators, building locators and so forth.

TS What trails did you put in? Do you remember roughly? There was the Bruce Trail you mentioned a little while ago.

CL In the beginning up to approximately 1940, there was the Bruce, Nose Dive, Barrel, The Glades, The Midway, S53 and the Lord Trail.

AC All this stuff has been written with the dates, actual dates if you can find it.

TS Mr. Coleman, maybe you can tell us how you got interested in skiing first and how you got into it?

AC I went to school in Canada.

TS In Canada?

AC In Canada, Ontario. I remember reading some of the British Ski books and when it was snowfall, we might have a pair of skis available. It was very informal. I really didn't start until I got to the Highway Department in 1926. When you are here in Vermont in the wintertime and like to be outdoors, you either snowshoe or hike or ski. I don't think it was quite as primitive as has been made out though. The early skiing after all that film up in the New England Ski Museum gives more or less the history of how it developed. But you ask and people say how did it ever get to be so popular as it is today. That was 60 years, that is a long time. A lot of things can happen. It happened slowly. I think the original impetus in this country was more or less from the Boston area.

TS The reason I asked the question because I remember my Dad talking about how there was such a great interest in skiing in the 1930's. All of a sudden there was a real rage and everybody was doing it all at once.

AC There were quite a few skiers in the 1920's and most of them were from the Boston area. A Harvard group, Harvard College group. Alec Bright remember ???.

Yes.

AC They would come up into New Hampshire and I think the Vermont connection was more or less an off-shoot from that. You read about it in the papers. You read it in the Boston paper and you think it sounded like a good idea you know. You would go out and plow it around on skis. But the equipment wasn't all that primitive I don't think. You could buy wooden skis. You could buy leather bindings. You could buy ski boots.

CL You could, I know you could, but I didn't have those things.

AC B. F. Moore up in Newport, Vermont were making ski clothing back in the 1920's, because I have a parka I bought from them.

TS In what town?

AC Newport, Vermont. B. F. Moore. That's an old farm.

TD When did the Waterbury ski sport firm into being, remember?

AC In the early 1940's?

CL No, before that.

AC He was interested in skiing and they manufactured these size ??? and he thought it would be a good idea to make skis. They did quite a business too. When SEP came in 1936, he was sort of an advisor, so they must have been building skis before that.

AC Seth helped develop some of their later models.

CL When was the first time Bill ever showed up for skiing, do you remember?

AC Bill Mason?

CL Yes.

AC No, but I had in mind that he and some of the others probably entered the Mansfield scene about the same time I did which would be 1933 - 1934 - 1935 along in there somewhere.

I would say about 1935 anyway.

AG I had several pair of sport skis as they were called then. I remember that there was one Seth Bruce model. I was very proud of those skis.

CL They were the ultimate back in those days.

AC He was sort of a consultant to Derby & Ball.

AG That's right.

AC? That particular ski was a favorite with a lot of people. It was particular with me because it was so flexible. They were firm but flexible. A lot of people somewhat facetiously would refer to them as bacon strips.

TD Is that the one that the ski manual used to call animated laminated?

Yes, yes.

AC But I think all that old history is a slow development from the 1920's. Of course the Boston influence got their influence from people who had been in Europe skiing. A lot of those had some money and would go to Europe and would learn to ski.

CL The ski business would never have developed as fast or as extensive as it is today if hadn't been for the development of uphill facilities.

AG Wasn't the tramway on Cannon the first?

Yes.

AG 1938

CL Was that when it was?

CL 1938 - 1939 around there.

AG I think you were with the group of us. Went up with Seth, Milt Hutchinson, Merlin Wells.

CL Yes, I guess we did.

AG Because I was telling them before you know that some of them might get tired and Milt Hutchins and I picked up all of the extra tickets and we skied out the rest of the day on those. We probably took 20 rides apiece.

AC As I see this development I am trying to simplify it. What I think of as an amateur effort up through World War II.

TD Through the war? Even after the first ???

AC And the first few years afterwards perhaps. The people who were interested in doing more than just going out and skiing like Roland Palmato and Cook, they were interested not to make money, but as their interest in the sport.

TS Just to have fun.

AC Now it is a purely commercial big business and centers. And even C. V. Star who was the first big money man to take an interest in Mansfield, wasn't he Charlie?

CL He was.

AC His wife was interested in skiing and C. V. Star became interested in skiing, this is the way I look at it because of his wife.

CL That's right.

AC When his wife left him, that was the end of the amateur as I see it.

CL Star didn't care about money or not, ...

AC Because that must have been around 1950, maybe later.

CL Just before 1950 when Star sunk some money in the area.

AC He had the money and I don't think the lift, the Mansfield Company ever paid dividends, did they?

CL No, no.

AC The interest wasn't to make money as I understand it. Remember he brought over these European racers and it was an amateur effort in a sense it was his interest in the sport. From then on, it's now, you go to Mansfield today and it is swarming with people and you never saw anyone you ever saw before.

CL But the snow is the same.

AC Beautiful skiing.

AG I like to think back in the days when Neil Star and Seth Bruce and Charlie Lord were running the Mansfield Company those were indeed the Good Days.

TS What kind of years were those?

AG 1940's, 1950's, 1960's. Every development or ??? goes through a transition period whereby it is a small effort but eventually if it is successful it gets to the point where like people here said, you go up to the mountain today and you are lucky if you see half a dozen people you know, unless you are with a crowd that goes every weekend or so.

AC Remember when Roland Palmetto and Cook installed the lift here. It wasn't long after that that they went to Mad River. I think they got the idea they thought they would rather have a more intimate amateur type area and Mansfield was getting more commercialized.

- CL In going into ancient history, because it has no real bearing on skiing itself.
- TD Speaking of intimacy, I can remember they used to have a man that climbed up and greased each of the...
- CL Yes, Freddy White.
- TD Freddy White. Everybody who skied knew Freddy White. I did and he would be up there with a grease gun, greasing ??? down on snowshoes from the top of the mountain with one pole to the other and there was an intimacy. He knew the ticket taker. You knew the guy who sold them. You knew the guy in the parking area. Yes.
- AC You might not have known everybody, but you had seen them before and you spoke to them.
- CL But you still, even though you don't know the people who ski, you still can get a lot of enjoyment out of skiing if you forget about what happened in the early days and you just concentrate on your skiing. You can have a lot of fun.
- AC Skiing is so much easier now. The maintenance of the trails. The grooming. The equipment. It is easier than it was thrashing through untracked snow the way it used to be.
- CL That's true. With the development of uphill facilities and the trail conditions, the technique, the ski equipment, it is all for the better in making skiing easier for the masses. Now a lot of people if suddenly there was no trail on the mountain, I would safely say at least 50% of the skiers would disappear to somewhere else. Because for one thing, they couldn't handle it. It would be too much for them. You know the trails nowadays, practically, well I know the novice and intermediate trails after every storm are flattened out and rolled, done up brown you might say before anybody gets on them in the morning. The only ski conditions that are natural are the very steepest sections of say Star Trail or Lift Line or the Goat.
- AC They are not natural in that they have had enough skiing on them. It is not snow as nature left it.
- CL Well those trails are not even subject to snow making. The Goat Trail particularly. Of course the Lift Line has artificial snow. You know that gets a lot of

traffic. That and the Nose Dive. As you go down toward the T-Bar area, that gets a lot of traffic too. So I would say, the Nose Dive, the Lift Line and T-Bar area split the traffic pretty near equally.

TD When all this was going on, was there anybody that was discouraging this developing in terms of cutting the trails. Were there environmental issues of any kind or was there anybody who did not want to change things?

AC A few probably.

CL There was always a few "agin" any new development, but generally speaking there was no great oposition to my knowledge. Do you know where if a thing is done in an orderly way and money is involved, of course most people would agree with that. Of course if a certain gentleman has gone up on the mountain and slashed the trails down, knocked trees down right and left and left a hell of a scar on the mountain, and maybe not made good trails, it could have been some critisim of the whole thing. But for some reason or another, things developed pretty good on the mountain.

TD It is true, you can't hardly see the trails ???, you couldn't originally anyway.

CL You can see them, but they don't stand out like they do. Of course Killington, I don't even bother compare to anything, because that is a Coney Island. That and Mt. Snow is a Coney Island of skiing as far as I am concerned. It is good skiing alright, but...

AC Mansfield is getting that way.

CL No No. Mansfield is in a world all by itself. Sure there is a big crowd Abner, I know, I know what you mean. Figure the crowds they get here in Stowe are minuscule compared to Killington or Mt. Snow. They get three or four times as many skiers down in those two areas I imagine. For one reason, they are little nearer the market. I mean the source of skiers and they got good trails. Some people are attracted by the crowd. They just go where the crowd goes.

AG You know one of things that I remember almost with tears in my eyes is back in the late 1930's on a weekend in which there was going to be races. The Nose Dive would be side stepped all the way to the top and under those conditions it was very easy to run those seven turns

inside, inside, inside. I have done it.

TD Yes I remember.

AG You will never see that again.

CL I always remember, we were getting ready for an international race and the Nose Dive was smoothed out. Remember Dark McGill and myself, we thought we would go down officially. We did alright except this lady in the party fell and sprained her ankle and we had to call the ski patrol. What to hell are you doing on that trail?

We told them we were officially inspecting it. But we were kind of embarrassed.

The trail was absolutely perfect, smooth from side to side, it was wonderful.

TS I gather that two or three of you have something to do with designing the early trails, what was your criteria for a good trail. How did you decide where to put it?

AC I think the standard, of course a ski trail was intended to approximate through a wooded slope and open slope where a skier could pick his own path. The early ski trail before the advent of the chain saw had to follow somewhat the natural slopes of the mountain side. It had to avoid the big trees and the ledges, so it was a matter of designing to fit in with the slope of the mountain. The CCC boys when you think of it would walk up the dam mountain and cut trees by hand and throw them into the hollows, right Charlie?

CL Some of the hollows were filled with...

AC Actually as I recall it, the Nose Dive was cut. It was hard to walk up it, because it was all full of hollows and stumps and logs and you had to walk up the sides of the trail. That was a ski trail. It had about three or four feet of snow before we could even touch it.

CL I remember when they were finishing up the Lord Trail, we had to do some dynamiting through stumps up near the top. Do you know how we got the dynamite up there? Of course we had a crew of 20 - 25 men and in the previous days they had made a path up and down the mountain, so as to carry the dynamite up to the top,

there was no other way, you had to carry it. The first man would take that case of dynamite, the second man, whatever cases there were. The first two or three men had the dynamite. They'd struggle up the mountain a reasonable distance and then they would pass it to the next three guys that would come along. These first three guys would go to the tail end of the line. That way the cases of dynamite progressed up the mountain at the same pace as the hikers did, I mean the employees.

AC Of course, nowadays, a ski trail, they can build them anywhere. It is moved as a carpet, stones and the rocks. It is a different proposition entirely. It more now approximates an open slope.

CL When they built the gondola trails, especially the Chin Cliff, they encountered quite a bit of ledge which in the old days, they couldn't have done anything with it. But the employees of rock drills were mounted on little, you probably have seen them in highway work, mounted on treds that move from one location to another. They literally blasted out of the side of the hill rock the section of that trail. That's what you can do nowadays. The bulldozer came and spread the snow around, then after that quantities of hay was spread all over the rock, so when they finished they had a trail that was dam smooth and the appropriate width too.

TD Is the Chin Cliff...?

CL The old Chin Cliff is no longer in existence. When they put the gondola in, they put the trail on the north side of the gondola which they renamed and called it the Chin Cliff, but it is not the original one. The original Chin Cliff came down onto the road further north, up where the picnic area is.

TD In the notch.

CL But as Abner said in the beginning, all they had for construction was an axe and a saw and a little bit of dynamite and a few ???. When it come to locating a trail, we avoided all ledges, rock wherever possible. Even large trees like you said. So it kind of wound the thing around.

AC It is a wonder that some of them turned out as well as they did. But Charles Proctor who was the innovator of trail design back in the late 1920's and 1930's. He was on the first U.S. Olympic Team. Charles Proctor.

1932 Winter Olympic. The first Winter Olympics, I think.

AG Later on Sell Hanna came into that era. He was a good trail designer.

AC A lot of those olds trails have been abandoned and grown up as the modern concept is...

For instance, Mansfield, it used to be a trail had a name. It was a designated path down through the woods. Nowadays they cut so many cross cuts and intersecting trails that you can't name them. Mansfield there that new construction they have done off the Ski Miester is a maze of wide smooth trails.

CL Well connected trails through. They probably aren't named. But the main trails still got their names. The Nose Dive, the Merrill, the S53 and all those Standard, Tyrol,...

TD The S53 is gone isn't it?

AG Yes, it has disappeared.

CL Well it is now superseded by the Star Trail.

AG Yes.

CL The Cross trail for sure is kind of confusing at times.

TD In the book I was looking at, there is a mention of the Stowe Ski Club, which later became the Mt. Mansfield Ski Club. Are you fellows involved in that?

CL Did you go to that meeting, the very first meeting in December, 1933 down at the town hall. Anyway, the Stowe Ski Club was in existence maybe a year or two before. It is made up entirely of local skiers and people who are interested in skiing. But when the advent of the CCC's in 1933, new surge of development, the Stowe Ski Club was renamed the Mt. Mansfield Ski Club. Between December 1933 and January 1934, the name was officially changed.

AC There were people from everywhere, Morrisville, St. Albans, Burlington, Barre, Montpelier, Waterbury, Northfield, a few people in each area that were interested copped together.

TD Did the Club have any purpose that related to the development of the area or was it simply focused on the skiers.

AC As I recall the original purpose was to encourage an interest in skiing and the development of facilities for skiing. That was it.

Which meant trails or...

That was it. Of course there were always some people that wanted to have races. A few of us that weren't interested in racing hated like hell to have to officiate at these races.

CL But you did Abner.

AC So this Mt. Mansfield merry-go-round was one attempt to surfeit the racing interest for once and for all with four races at ...

CL We thought we would kill them all off at one...

Laughter

AC It was a downhill race to end all downhill races.

TD That race is really a story in itself. It is the only one of that type ???, the merry-go-round ???. I know all about it, because I was on the winning team, the last time they held it in 1947.

AC Howard Prestwitch was the man who conceived that.

TD Who was that?

AC Howard Prestwitch. He was one of the early people involved. He was from Burlington. He worked in a bank did he Johnny? In Burlington, was there a famous Howe?

CL He married one of the Howe girls that's all I know.

AC Yes, he married a Howe daughter. Sally Howe. Didn't last too long, but...

CL Where is he now, do you know?

AC No I don't.

AC That's Prestwich, Howard.

TS What was the idea of that race? How did it work, the merry-go-round?

AC Oh there were four...It was in one day wasn't it.

TD Two days.

AC Four downhill races on four different trails in two days.
There was the Nose Dive, the Chin Clip.

TD They did the Nose Dive and the Lord Trail.

CL The very first time was the Nose Dive and Chin Clip.

AC Was it the Lord and the Steeple?

AC The Steeple is gone, long long gone.

CL The Steeple is gone, yes.

AC There were four trails.

TD In 1947, I don't know what it was in 1947 the Nose Dive and
the Lord. The Bruce and the Steeple.

CL The only difference was instead of on the...anyway the
Lord was in existence in 1947. It took the place
of the other one there.

TD Chin Clip

AC Now they would never dream of having a race on trails like
that today would they. It's dangerous.

CL Well nobody would be interested anyway.

TS Why

AC Well there was this trail with no grooming or anything. People
would just plow down through.

TS It was just a vertical expanse of snow

AC It was an untracked

TS Untracked

AC Untracked, conditions as you found them wasn't it.

TD Well yes.

AC Nobody side stepped the trails.

TD No it was not groomed.

AC Of course, people didn't run straight down.

- TD There were no flags to tell you where to go, no helmets of course. What was unique about, if I may, what I thought was unique about that was the fact that they never gave out individual time. You ran as a team and so it was the aggregate time of three racers, which was I presumably a built-in safety factor so that...
- AC I don't think safety was even considered.
It was an idea and somebody had
- TD It discontinued because it wasn't considered safe and the funny part of it was the only injury the year I raced it was Gail Shaw, who was probably one of the two or three best skiers in the race.
- CL She got hurt.
- TS What happened to her?
- TD It was a he. He fell and dislocated an ankle.
- TS I am sorry.
- AC I remember Kir Sparks, he was one of Seth's instructors then 1947. He was disgusted that we would do such a thing to have races.
- CL He was what?
- AC Disgusted. He thought it was a terrible thing.
- VL To have races?
- AC Under those conditions.
- AG Well, somebody could have gotten killed I suppose.
- AC But of course they didn't ski ??? like they do now.
- TD The big debate that day, as I remember, the first day was when you got to the top of the North Slope, did you check or did you go straight.
- AC Nowadays a downhill race is a strictly a speed race. And checking there is no such thing. Strictly speed on a prepared course.
- AG The merry-go-round had about the same degree of longevity as the Inferno. That only ran for a few years.
- TS That was the Mt. Washington Run?

History of Skiing

Page 22

AG Yes, short lived.

TS In the same kind of deal, they didn't ???

CL In other words, if they had the race on a good day when the trail conditions were good and everybody had a good time, but I can imagine when it was drifted, crusty, it could be pretty ???

TS You mean at Tuckerman's?

CL Anywhere

AC The first time remember you and I went up Mt. Washington, Charlie.

AC Today, we wouldn't have been...have been

CL Yes, run over.

AC It must have been 1932?

CL It wasn't 1932, no it was 1934 or 1935.

AC We went up, skied up, the headwall was so steep that we got, we went over and climbed the rocks on the side because of the steepness. But to think of two guys with no more experience.

CL Dam fools

AC We were so frightened that we came down the road as I recall.

CL We decided it was better skiing over there.

Laughter

AG Galen Wells and I did the same thing. We climbed way to the top. We skied the cone. It was beautiful. When we got to the lift, we were scared, we didn't dare go down over the headwall. So we kept going around the rim. Eventually we were left with only one trail to come down, Hildons Highway. We finally came down that and I remember at that time, I had just had steel edges put on. Merlin Wells didn't have them yet and we went down like this, jump turn all the way down, Hildon's Highway.

CL The first time I ever saw Tucker's Ravine was the only time I ever got sunburn on the roof over my mouth.

Laugh

History of Skiing

Page 23

- CL My mouth popped open. We arrived a Saturday afternoon around noon time and we hurried or scurried up the trail and got up to where we could see the head wall and we just stood there and looked in awe. I mean awe. Did anyone ever come down through there and live?
- AG That was the highlight of my skiing. I came over the lip and did it all the way.
- CL I never did.
- AC No stops, no falls
- ?? You never
- AG That's true, I didn't. There were only four of us that went over that morning. There was Peter Garrett who was captain of the Yale ski team. Bill Heldsey was captain of the Harvard ski team. Maylin Wells and myself. Peter Garrett was a better skier of the four of us. He went over and went out of sight and then Bill Heldsey went and on his second or third turn he caught an edge and ass over Band Box all the way to the bottom. Maylin said I can't stand this anymore and he kicked off, left Goodrich up there scared to death, all alone.

Laughter

- CL There you were.
- AG I will never never forget that.
- AC There is a book recently published, who was the photographer who did so much over there, Winston Folk. He wrote it. Photographs around Tuckerman and Washington in 1920's. It gives a lot of the history of that area and there were quite a few skiers that roamed over those northern peaks on skis. In 1920's. Alec Bright and some of the others. Again the Boston Group. The Harvard group.
- AG I have the tape of Tony Knapps description of his famous run down there. I got this from the New England Museum and it is a beautiful description of that run. Of course Tony emphasises the fact that all the publicity that he got from that race you know is what made him. Although he says people just didn't realize. I have been winning races for years before that and after that. But all they remember is that one run down the head wall - schused it.
- CL Jesus

TS He must have been drunk.

CL Psyched up anyway.

AC I wrote an article on "Ski Annual" or "Appalachia" called the snow corner of New England. It was somewhat historical of Mansfield and Mad River. As I recall, the contrast was that Mansfield was strictly amateur growth whereas Mad River was a planned development. One of the first of the planned developments. There is all kinds of stuff written around different places.

AG You know strangely enough Mad River is not changed a great deal over the years. They are still are very compared to Sugarbush, Mansfield.

AC That is a rough place to ski.

AG It is very old fashioned. There is very very limited snow making.

AC It is a rough place to ski, I think.

TD Very little grooming.

AG The lady who owns it, wants it to stay that way. I guess as long as she owns it, it will.

CL On thing, they are limited by parking. You can't, there are too damn many people in that area to find places for them to park. If they come by bus, it is one thing, but. There is some damned good skiing down in Mad River.

AC Oh yes.

TS Art just told us the highlight and perhaps the most terrifying experience of his skiing career, do you Abner and Charlie do you have something that you regard as most intense or most exhilarating skiing experience.

CL We decided that after we got over the head wall, east of the head wall, it was a hell of a lot better coming down the automobile road, wasn't it? We didn't even get to the ??, anyway.

TS Did any of you ever see Lowell Thomas up there?

All Oh yes

AC He used to broadcast from the lodge.

TS Really.

CL Yes, Lowell appeared quite often up there.

AC He was one of the financially interested in the original. I guess Roland, Palmeto and Cook wind up all the famous people that were interested in skiing.

CL Rowell was a real man you might say. He had a common touch. He wasn't high faluting, nobody would get in his way. If he saw you he would speak to you. He was very democratic. Nice guy to know.

AC Of course in the development of Mansfield over the years there was a lot of fighting and bickering and bitterness connected with it. Fortunately history is sort of glossed over and never. You could write a whole book on Morell couldn't you.

CL Yes.

AC They were some characters. There were a lot of people that didn't like other people.

CL It was a lot of jocking back and forth, but

TS Was that over money?

CL No, position and development of the whole thing. Well money. They were all scrabbling. At one time, this whole house, the Mt. Company, the Mt. Mansfield Hotel Company, with the toll house was one unit. The Lodge was another unit. Then the Life Company. The three different units. They were all aiming toward the development of Mansfield, but they were still separate units. The man that got things together was Star, because he bought out all the convenient outfits. He arrived on the scene maybe 1948 or something like that.

AC Seth was involved in one of the biggest struggles in the mountain's history. Seth and Frank Griffin.

CL Oh yes. Well Frank was a hard man. When it come to money matters, he was out for Frank. I suppose, I am not blaming anybody for that little squabble, but Frank Griffin first opened up the original building at the Stowe house.

AC He was the first commercially minded influence.

History of Skiing

Page 26

- CL After a year or two, he got in a fight with Craig Burt. Old Craig was at that time, the Mt. Mansfield Hotel Company owned the toll house and the toll road that slope right there had a rope tow in it. Frank got into a disagreement with Craig Burt who was head of the Mt. Mansfield Hotel Company. Anyway Frank moved up to the, at that time, the Lodge that was being developed. Remember that little temporary shack at the we used to have at the state lodge.
- AG Yes
- CL Well Frank moved into that and established his own ski school and put in a rope tow. When the war came on he divested.
- AG This must have been about the time when Joe Lance was running the lodge.
- CL Joe Lance developed the lodge business about 1935
- AG Before George and Bunny got in there.
- CL Bob ran it for about 10 years.
- AC Bob hated Griffin.
- CL Not 10 years. George Rowell came in 1940.
- AG The year the lift was put in.
- CL Yes.
- CL He bought the lodge away from. I mean Patrick who owned the Lodge at that time I guess his wife had died or something was the matter with her. She wasn't interested particularly in the lodge. So he sold it. George Rowell got his clutches on it through devious process. George maintained the lodge until about pretty near 1950 when Mrs. Star came in.
- TD This is the lodge at the base of the mountain.
- CL The lodge, not the base lodge, up at the parking area, but George was there for about 8 or 10 years. By 1950, Star had accumulated all the little odds and ends, uphill soldiers and hotels. He got them all about under one organization called the Mt. Mansfield Lift Company. That is what it is still today.

History of Skiing

Page 27

TD Now the Mt. Mansfield Hotel we haven't talked about that much. I am talking about the hotel that ups on top. Did you fellows know much about that. Did you ever go there?

CL I went there several times just as a paying guest. I guess a couple times an invited guest. No I didn't have much to do. It only operated in the summertime anyway and their main thrust was summer operation and the toll road

TD Do you mean the toll road, maintain it

CL Of course as I said, Craig Burt and Mrs. Davis down in Waterbury who is owner of Waterbury Inn at that time, they were sort of the prime movers in the Hotel company. The Mt. Mansfield Hotel Company. Eventually Star arrived on the scene. It wasn't until about as I said just before 1950. Star's first investment was the Mt. Mansfield T-Bar. That was put in following the end of World War II. In other words, the season of 1945 - 1946, they were able to put that up. But in the spring of 1946, when the cable came off and tangled up, boy, remember and pulled that tower right out. They had to revise that. It didn't bother Star or anything, hell

AG A tax write off.

CL A few thousand dollars didn't mean anything to him.

TS Whose idea was it to put the first arial chair lift up?

CL Well it probably was Rowell and Cooks' idea.

TS Who was that?

CL J. N. Cook

AC J. N. Cook, did you know him from Burlington. Jay Negley Cook.

AG Great guy. Good fellow.

AC His wife was the famous Nose Dive Annie. Have you heard of her?

TD Yes.

AC She was a great enthusiast.

CL She took a lot of lessons from Seth and became a pretty good skier.

AC She would run the Nose Dive twice a day.

CL Yes, climb up and...

AC Before the lift

CL She went up...

AC She is a nice looking woman too, pretty.

CL She was determined. During the war she became a pilot through training and sticking to it. She became a pilot. I don't know what branch of the service, but not in the regular service, but...

AC She and Jay Negley were divorced some time along in there.

AG He later married Nancy Reynolds.

CL I don't know the details of that.

AC I remember we had, we the Mt. Mansfield Ski Club, had a historical committee, remember? We were in it.

CL I got all the...

AC When was that, in the 1960's?

CL Somewhere around there.

AC We would meet every couple of weeks and Waterbury Tavern, Clements Tavern and drink beer and reminisce. But out of it came, we were suppose to produce a written history of the Mt. Mansfield development written by those who had participated. In other words, we would look up the people who had done these things and it didn't last more than three years or so, as I recall.

TS Did the history ever get produced?

AC Well parts of it. He must have them.

AG Just in the Mansfield Ski Bulletin.

AC No they were printed in a separate insert in the Mt. Mansfield Ski Club Newsletter

CL Different episodes.

AC Remember, there was the early pioneers, history of the different. It is all there somewhere.

TD Is that some of the material that you gave me?

AC No. He's got that in an awful mess, it looks to me.

CL Who has. What are you talking about?

AC Somebody has to go through to get anything out of that stuff and put it in order, I can see that.

TS While you look through it, maybe you could answer another question. Were there rope tows or smaller lifts or tows on the mountain before the chair lift in 1940?

AG Yes, one rope tow.

CL There was two.

AG Two I guess.

CL Frank Griffin put up one didn't he?

...in the fall of 1936. Wesley Pope who just died recently had a ski tow over in Jeffersonville. Anyway that was dragged over here and set up. They had a rope tow there until oh, I don't know, I have forgotten now,...

TS Is that when the T-Bar went in?

CL Now, there is a chair lift there now. At the toll house.

TD That rope tow, is that the one that sets at the base of the toll road.

CL Yes, that was Seths. That was put in 1936 - '37 in there. The one thats at the State Shelter was '37 - '38.

AC What was at the state shelter? Was the rope tow there?

CL Where?

AC State shelter?

CL Yes.

TS That's not where the T-Bar is.

AG Frank Griffin had a restaurant there, before the state shelter went up.

CL A temporary shelter.

AG That's right.

AC Then it was a T-Bar, now its a chair lift.

TS Did most people ski on those rope tows or did the brave and daring and mighty climb the mountain and ski down?

AG Both

TS Skied both?

AC Both, most people that went to the mountain, skied to the top.

CL Yes, a lot of them did.

TS How did they get up, up the tow road or?

AC On the Nose Dive mostly.

AG It depends, this is back in the 1930's.

TS That was a day of exercise, hike the mountain and ski down.

AG Yes. Some of us from Northfield, I know, would come over on a Saturday and get in one run, climb back up and stay overnight in the stone hut and then in the next morning, they had a sort of earsets telephone line running from the stone hut down to Frank Griffin's restaurant at the foot of the Nose Dive where the state lodge is now. We would call him up on the phone and say Frank we will be down in five minutes, have breakfast all ready for us. It would take us about five minutes to run the Nose Dive. Then we would climb the Nose Dive maybe twice more that day. That would wind up our weekend skiing. If you climbed that Nose Dive three times in one day, you would have had a lot of exercise.

CL You are doing dam well.

MG What was it that attracted each of you to doing this in the first place? What was the real excitement about it.

AG It was the alternative to sitting at home and reading newspapers and books.

AC It's like going out hiking, climbing or...

CL In 1932 - 1933, they didn't have T.V. or they had the beginning of radio, but people weren't so vulnerable as they are now. So each group sort of maintained or tried to maintain their own recreation and somehow or other, we drifted, some of us drifted into skiing. I don't say we went every weekend, but we got to the point where we were thinking about it more often. Is that right Abner?

AC Yes. My wife reminds me that we had to go to Mt. Mansfield every weekend regardless of what the weather was.

CL Well one time, I have it recorded in my, I kept a record of all my skiing trips. One time we, I have forgotton, maybe you Abner, we drove up toward the mountain but it got so horrible the road did, I mean the conditions, that we couldn't even get to the foot of Harlow Hill, so we turned around and went back to Waterbury and up as far as we could go on the Bolton Road and went skiing up in Bolton. The Waterbury-Burlington road was in better shape. The plowing was ify back in those days, to say the least.

AG There was one other thing that I will never forget in addition to running the head wall. One Saturday afternoon, four of us from Northfield, Waylon Wells Merton Dickinson, somebody else and myself. There were four of us. We drove up to the foot of Harlow Hill. Hiked into the ranch camp. Had dinner there. A beautiful dinner. George Campbell was the cook then I think.

CL Yes.

AC After dinner, we separated into two groups. Mary Weinstein and Dickenson went back to the foot of Harlow Hill, climbed into his teraplain and drove to the foot of the Nose Dive and started climbing the Nose Dive. Merlin and I started from the Ranch Camp up the Bruce and strangly enough when Merlin and I got to a point on the Bruce Trail very near the intersection of the toll road, we could hear these other guys coming up the Nose Dive. We got into the stone hut, George Porter is the hut master at the time and we discovered that we did not have enough blankets. We all had headlights you know and we skied down the seven turns to Station 13 where there was a cash of blankets. We lugged them back up and we stayed there overnight. The next morning we took the

blankets back and folded them neatly and put them back in the first aid kit and continued on down to Frank Griffin's restaurant for breakfast.

CL You were tough and rugged.

AG That was fool hearty because this was at night.

CL Yes I know it. If you had broken a leg you probably would have been still kicking around up there. That's right.

AG I will never forget that trip. You wrote it up for the Stowe Reporter once I think.

CL George Porter and George Campbell were both great story tellers and they would tell the damnest yarns about Burton and I. Old George came up with one yarn about when he was up in Canada up in the northern end where they had dog teams, he said that one time he was driving a dog team or riding on a dog team, that they had so dam many dogs on that team that the lead dog had earphones on and ...

Laugh

CL That's a story he told. George Campbell. They would tell the damnest yarns about skiing, I don't think either one of them have either been on ski slope.

TD We have gone on for about 1 1/2 hours. We do not want to over stay our welcome here.

CL You can stay as long as you want.

AC I don't see what you got out of this kind of

TD We don't know yet. I think what I might suggest is that we take a look at what we got and we'll caucus and maybe come back in a little while.

CL Sure, anytime.

TD Maybe in a couple weeks or something like that.

AC Maybe I will look up some of this written stuff if I can find it.

- AC That's more authentic than this kind of conversation I would think.
- TS I like the anecdotes and I like the experiences of each of you guys of had. I think those are real important. We need both.
- AC People did these things because people enjoyed it. If you worked here in the wintertime and enjoyed being out, it was a natural thing to do.
- AG Tom I think yours was a good suggestion that at some point we should level off and then meet again.
- TD I have to tell my Abner Coleman story first. The first time I met Abner Coleman, I was in the blue print room at the Highway Department. I don't know if you remember that. I worked in the blue print room with Harry Jerome and Buzzell. I was just 15 years old I guess. There was this guy that used to come in. He was old too, because he was bald headed. He always ran up the stairs. Three flights of stairs and I remember saying to Harry Jerome, who is that guy that runs up the stairs all the time. He is going to have a heart attack. Oh that's that guy Coleman. He is a skier and that's how he keeps his legs in shape. Do you still run up the stairs like that Abner?
- MG There is one other thing that I need to do and that is if we all can be quiet for a minute...
- CL Impossible!
- MG I need to record just the sound of the rooms and the traffic going by for my own editing purposes for the tape so, level it out with a minute of silence, that would be good. Thanks.