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Arthur G. Knudsen

Born: 1912 Died: 2001

Born May 8, 1912, Art Knudsen spent fifty years in organized skiing.

With a star-spangled red, white, and blue fund-raising program in support of the United States Ski Teams, Art Knudsen, a one-time Central Division ski jumper captured what may be more than fleeting fame and became internationally recognized in the process.

A honorary lifetime member of the Racine Ski Club, Art's colorful work in support of the nation's ski teams was recognized divisionally, nationally, and internationally. He also held lifetime memberships in the Snowflake Ski Club of Westby,

Wisconsin; the Kiwanis Ski Club of Iron Mountain, Michigan; the Norge Ski Club of Chicago; the Snowmads of Racine and the Ski Club of Eau Claire, Wisconsin. From the USSA in 1971 came an Award of Merit, while from around the world have come pins and patches to wear on a justly-famous jacket.

A native of Racine, WI, Knudsen used professional painting skills to create three-color ski-team-sales booths proclaiming "Support Your Ski Teams." The flag-bedecked booths were erected at his own expense. Art also decorated ski jump outruns and ski race finish lines with flags, and his ski team pin sales averaged \$4,000 a season.

Much of Knudsen's adult life was devoted to promotion of skisport, first as a competitor, next as a club and divisional officer, and lastly as a volunteer ski-team-pins-sales fund raiser. A man of gregarious nature, Art was a well-liked and appreciated person who has added his interest and artistic ability to many phases of endeavor in the winter sports world.

Knudsen's ski jumping career began at 14 years of age with rides on a hill good for 50 meters. This was in Racine, where the ski club two years later constructed a 70-meter trajectory and young Art moved onto the larger ski slide along with other youngsters. He and the other boys used "Goodyear Bindings" and "High Cuts." Such ski gear translates into rubber inner tubes and knee-high laced boots. Ski selection included Northland, Strand and Lund hickories.

Young Knudsen did not join the Racine Ski Club until 1934 at 22 years of age. The club's president was Arthur Barth, who later headed the National Ski Association and instilled organizational ski work in many young competitors, Knudsen included. Even so, Art continued his jumping career through the 1948 season, which included a third place in the annual tourney at Racine. Next he took up recreational skiing, with one unsuccessful fling at downhill racing, and then moved to "work for the sport of skiing." He retained a competitor's card issued in 1941 when Earl Minkin was president and Barth secretary of the Central Division.

Art regretted abandonment of "big hills" at Iola, Rosholt, Rockford, Madison, and others throughout the Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan regions. He believed, nevertheless, that ski jumping was "coming back" and someday Americans can become as famous as their foreign counterparts. On the other hand, he divided his ski team fundraising efforts between the alpine and nordic events.

Knudsen's service record stands out. He held the presidency of the Racine Ski Club on 22 occasions during his 41 of membership. As an officer of the Central Division for 39 years he held a perfect attendance record at conventions. Art was a divisional director for 14 years and in 1970 was elected Director Emeritus, the first such honor bestowed. He served the Olympic movement twice in Squaw Valley – first during the North American Championships of 1959 during tryouts of Olympic Facilities and again in 1960 for the real thing. Always a volunteer, Art also attended the F.I.S. World Championships Ski Jumping in 1970. He also served as an official in 1980 Olympics at Lake Placid.

Art and his gracious wife, Helen, were among the nation's most beloved ski personalities-ski sport builders who reached for the top from a big-hill-riding competitive background.

Arthur Knudsen was elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1973.