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Wendall Broomhall

Born: ? December 1919

Information submitted in a nomination letter to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame
by Liz Carey

Wendall "Chummy" Broomhall, the man who has designed the X-C courses in Lake Placid for the Olympic Games, indeed has promoted the sport of skiing.

A native of Rumford, Maine, Chummy began skiing at the age of nine. His interscholastic competition began as a sophomore at Stevens High, and he won the state championship at the age of 15. Later, he won the Eastern, National and North American cross-country championships.

In order to enjoy more extensive competition, Chummy went to other countries to compete in 1939. His first trip was to Canada, then he proceeded to ski in many countries in the world that had snow – including Africa, the Atlas Mountains, Algeria, the Pyrenees Mountains and the Alps.

Chummy not only cross-country skied, but also competed in ski jumping and downhill racing. In 1937, he took up jumping in order to score nordic combined. About 1939-1940, he started downhill racing and competed as a four-event skier in local carnivals, but after WWII he went solely cross-country.

After Chummy's stint in the U.S. army, where he served in the mountain division, he trained for the 1948 Olympics at St. Moritz, Switzerland. Following the games he toured the Scandinavian countries where he entered as many competitions as he could. It was there that Chummy learned new training methods and skiing techniques. Prior to their skiing in Europe, the U.S. skiers did no summer training and were not exposed to various ski techniques. Chummy came back to the U.S. and tried to organize between-season training camps and initiated year 'round training.

In 1950, when lack of snow prevented the F.I.S. championships from being held in Lake Placid, it was decided to hold the events in Rumford, Maine. Although Chummy was to compete in the events, he ended up being the chief organizer of the entire event. He not only helped raise several thousand dollars, but prepared tracks for the cross-country event the night before the race and competed in the race the next morning. That would not be such a spectacular feat, but in 1950 there were no track sleds or snow machines to speak of. Chummy and townspeople had to snowshoe and set tracks with their cross-country skis.

Chummy again made the Olympic team in 1952 when they were held in Oslo, Norway. However, before he competed in these games, he won a district championship in Norway which was a tryout race for the Norwegian Olympic team. This victory labeled Chummy as the first American to ever win a cross-country race in Norway.

The 1952 Games were the autumn of Chummy's competitive career. Over the years he has been the director of tryouts for the F.I.S. and the Olympic teams. The F.I.S. also sent him to Squaw Valley to inspect the area as a possible site for the 1960 Olympics. Soon he was hired by the California Olympic Committee as the chief of the cross-country events and technical advisor. He was also active in the NCAA's. Chummy was the chief of course in 1967 at Sugarloaf, Maine, and again in 1970 at Franconia Notch, New Hampshire.

Despite Chummy's active national involvement in skiing, he always devoted time to his local ski club, Chisholm Ski Club of Rumford, Maine. For many years Chummy donated his time to the local junior skiers to promote the sport of skiing. He not only taught the youngsters how to ski, but maintained the cross-country courses throughout the winter. So whenever anyone wished to ski, they had access to tracks. Because of his dedication, the cross-country trails of the Chisholm Ski Club were named "Chummy-John" after Chummy Broomhall and John Roderrick. Chummy also aided the junior skiers in getting to Eastern meets. Often the young skiers ran into financial problems – how he did it we'll never know – but whenever local skiers made junior national teams or needed money to get to big meets, Chummy always came through. If he saw talent or a desire to ski, Chummy found a way. Chummy loved the sport of skiing. Some of his protégés include: Bill Ferguson, Gary Gibson, Frank Lutick, Avery Caldwell, Larry Gillis, Bruce Cunningham, Jim Miller, Pat Miller, Jack Luftkin, Diane Fornier, Bill Chenard, and Liz Carey. Chummy Broomhall inspired young skiers to take the challenge and reach their potentials.

Chummy practically shut down his logging business in order to design and construct the 1980 Olympic trails in Lake Placid. He commuted (6-7 hours) almost every week back and forth between Rumford and Lake Placid.

For his dedication to and promotion of the sport of skiing, Wendall "Chummy" Broomhall was elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1981.