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Walter Bietila

Born: 1916 Died: 1996

Walter Bietila began competitive jumping at age ten. He was only thirteen when he won the Junior Class at Wausau, Wisconsin – the first of many wins. In 1952, Walter was appointed a USSA Ski Jumping Judge and served in that capacity for many years. He was on the Selection Committee for the 1960 Olympic Ski Team at Squaw Valley, California, where he chaired the team and acted as team coach and manager. In 1964, Walter was appointed a F.I.S. Ski Jumping Judge.

Walter Bietila was born in Ishpeming, Michigan, on February 12, 1916. He graduated from Ishpeming High School, attended the University of Michigan for his first two college years, then moved on to the University of Wisconsin, where he captained the ski team. Walt continued to serve skiing, first as an excellent competitor, and then as a race official and well-respected jumping judge.

A member of the famous Bietila family of Ishpeming, Walter was perhaps, the premier jumper of the family. He represented his country in Garmisch, Germany, as a member of the 1936 United States Olympic Ski Team. The same year, after the Winter Games, he competed at two major events in Europe – the

large jump at Obersdorf, where he placed a respectable third, and the Holmenhollen in Norway (every jumper's dream), where he placed 36th in a field of top European jumpers. He was also a member of the mythical 1940 United States Olympic Ski Team which was unable to participate because of the fast developing war in Europe.

Walter enlisted in the Naval Air Force during World War II, where he continued to jump when he was able. While he came close to winning a U.S. national title in 1941, 1946, and 1948, he remained an outstanding competitor and fine athlete. In 1948, Walter again made the United State Olympic Team and team captain at the Games in St. Moritz, Switzerland.

In 1948, he became treasurer of the Central United States Ski Association - a post he held until 1951. In 1952, he was appointed a ski official in the Central Officers Association in 1952.

In 1956, Walter served as a member of the United States Olympic Committee. In 1960, he was Chairman of the Jumping Committee for the selection of the Olympic Ski Jumping Team and also a coach and manager of the team. Walter was Chief of Take-off at the Squaw Valley Olympics, as well as a member of the International Competitions Committee. In 1962, he was coach of the F.I.S. Jumping Team at Zakopane, Poland.

In 1964, Walter was appointed a F.I.S. judge, and was one of the two American judges at the F .I.S. Championships in Norway in 1966.

Walter served the Central United States Ski Association as a director for fifteen years, vice president for four years, National Convention Delegate on several occasions.

Walter settled in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan community of Iron Mountain, Michigan, where he was an insurance salesman and member of the Iron Mountain-Kingsford Kiwanis Club.

Walter Bietila was elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1965.

