



Jill with one of her watercolors outside her studio at her home in Bishop.

#51
Jill Kinmont
Born: 1936

Jill Kinmont put on skis for the first time during the winter of 1948 and progressed fast enough to race downhill and slalom. With hard work and dedication, Jill began a year-round training schedule to improve her stamina and technique so she could qualify for the 1956 Olympics. However, a terrible accident at the Snow Cup in Alta, Utah, ended this dream and left Jill a quadriplegic.

Beverly Jill Kinmont was born in Los Angeles, California, on February 16, 1936. A member of the Mammoth Ski Club, Mammoth Lakes, California, she was always affiliated with the Far West Ski Association.

Moving to Bishop, California, in 1948, she put skis on for the first time during the winter of 1948-49. In 1951, she raced (slalom and downhill) for Bishop High School and began winning some Far West races in 1952. To improve her ability, she worked hard and began to train during the summer as well as during the winter, working constantly on technique and stamina. In 1952, when Andrea Mead Lawrence won her Olympic Gold Medals, Jill decided to go for broke and to make the U.S. Olympic Squad.

In 1953, at the American Legion Juniors in Sun Valley, the other 72 competitors voted Jill the Sportsmanship Trophy. She graduated from Bishop High School in 1953 and thereafter skied for the Mammoth Ski Club, coached by Dave McCoy of Mammoth Mountain. In 1954, at the Junior Nationals in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, she won the slalom and was second in downhill. The very next week, at the Nationals in Aspen, Jill placed first in both amateur and open slalom, second in combined, and third in downhill, thus taking home six medals. She later won both downhill and slalom at the American Legion Juniors in Sun Valley, and placed fourth in the National Giant Slalom in Reno. Late in January, 1955, competing in the Snow Cup Giant Slalom at Alta, Utah, Jill crashed. Her neck was broken and she became a quadriplegic with no feeling and no motor control below the shoulders. She had no use of her fingers, and in her arms had only shoulder muscles, minimal biceps, and one wrist muscle in each arm, and almost no sensation in hands or arms. She spent six months in hospitals in Salt Lake City and Los Angeles, and then went to California Rehabilitation Center in Santa Monica.

Immediately after her accident and ever since, Jill has been an ardent supporter of competitive skiing. She attended the 1956 Olympics in her wheelchair as a guest and the 1960 Olympics as a hostess and correspondent for a Los Angeles newspaper. The same determination and standards of excellence that made her the most likely young contender for a berth on the 1956 Olympic squad was applied after her accident to the almost overpowering physical, intellectual and psychological problems which faced her. She decided to accept none of the relatively easy paths offered to her, but instead made a new life for herself, starting at the bottom in a totally new field and eventually developing a high degree of self sufficiency. She learned again to write, using a typewriter, and paint and feed herself. She enrolled in UCLA in 1956, graduated in 1961. She was told that she would not be accepted in any college of education in the state because she was too severely handicapped to teach. Nevertheless, she persisted and was eventually accepted in the state of Washington earning her teaching credentials, which qualified her to teach in both elementary schools and high schools.

She taught school, first in Washington, then Beverly Hills, California, finally moving back to Bishop in 1975 when she married John Boothe. She taught Special Education in Bishop Union Elementary School until her retirement in 1996. She is presently teaching three mornings a week as a youth tutor at the Jill Kinmont Boothe School, located in West Bishop.

After her accident her occupational therapist at the rehabilitation center encourage her to continue with her painting a love she had before she was hurt. She was fitted with a brace that holds her pencil, pen or brushes by means of a magnet which enabled her to write and paint again. Since retirement she devotes much of her time to drawing and watercolor painting in her studio at her home in Bishop.

Jill is experiencing a great deal of success with her watercolor painting exhibiting and selling in local art shows. She loves to paint watercolor landscapes striving to capture the subtle colors of high desert valleys and ever changing light of the Eastern Sierra Range. Her pen and link drawings are often of old cabins, barns, corrals, and other historic structures of the valley. All of Jill's paintings and drawings are matted and framed by her husband, John. Every spring Jill and a friend enjoy a very successful art show and sale at Jill and John's home in Bishop.

Jill Kinmont was elected into the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1967.