

SKI

"I JUMPED 414 FEET"

Winter Driving Tips



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FEBRUARY • 1953 • • • 35 CENTS



Keith Wegeman gaining distance to touch down at the 400 foot marker

FLYING HICKORIES

Olympic Jumping Ace Describes Ski-Flying Technique Enabling Him To Jump 414 Feet For Longest American Leap on Oberstdorf Hill

by KEITH WEGEMAN

How does it feel to jump 400 feet through space, attaining a top speed of 85 miles per hour? This was the question confronting Art Devlin, Billy Olsen and me as we stood for the first time at the top of the world's biggest jumping hill in Oberstdorf, Germany.

"Donnerwetter, show me the elevator," you probably muse to yourself as the realization of your first unbelieving gaze down the lengthy inrun enhances your typical skier-like unconsciousness. "Doesn't look as bad as in the pictures, though. Humph, no doubt it's duck soup," you continue, waving away the butterflies with a mouldy piece of paraffin.

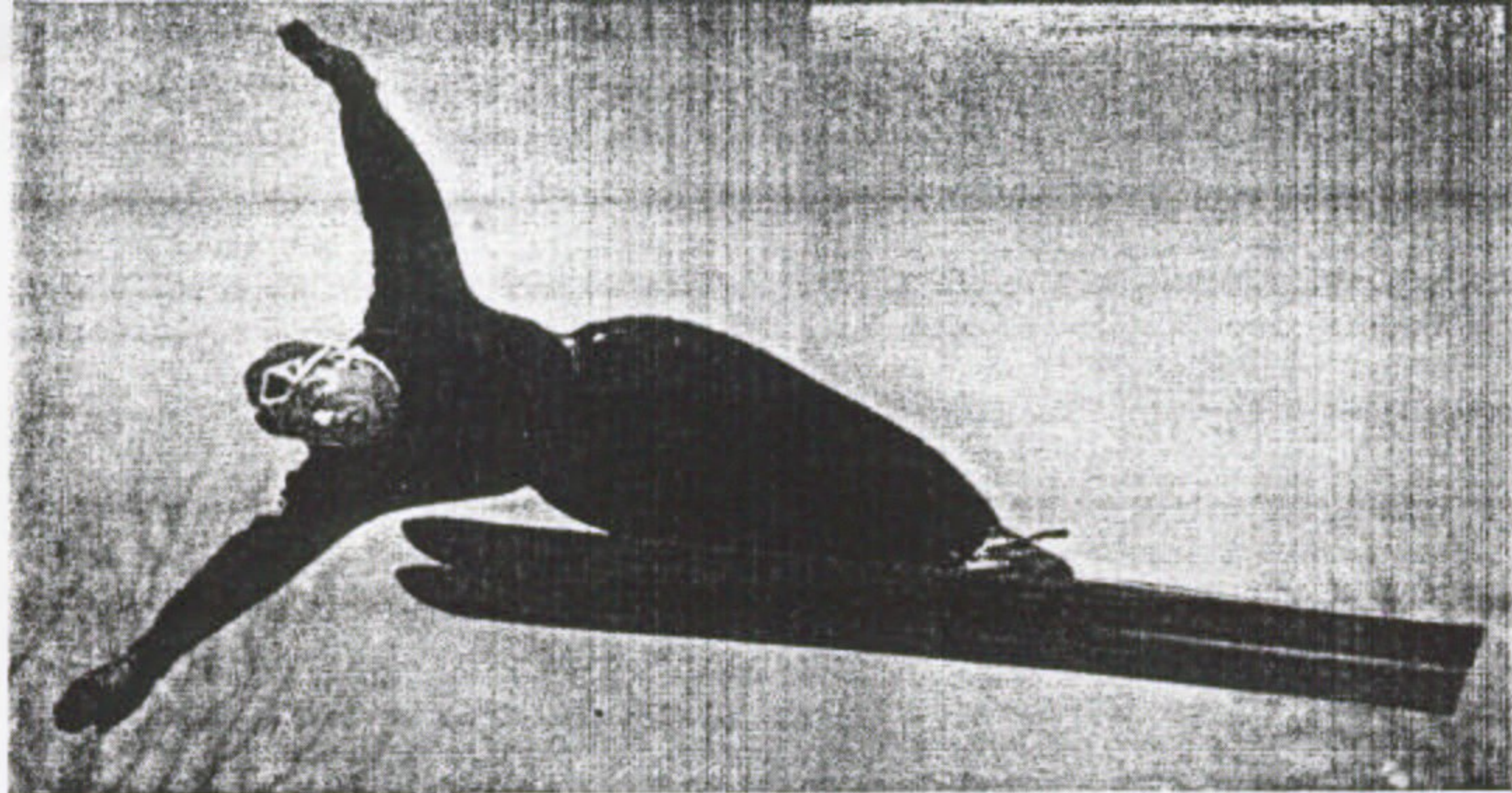
From where you stand, high atop the intricate scaffolding which rises almost vertically from its immense foundations to the comparatively minute platform you now occupy, you discern a feeling hitherto dormant in all your competitive skiing experience. You can't put your finger on it, though, because you're quite busy drinking in the spine-tingling view from a vantage point bettered only by



Wegeman, Art Devlin and Billy Olsen under the take-off tower



Oberstdorf's giant jumping hill where world's record was set



Sepp Weiler, one of those who conceived idea of jump at Oberstdorf, demonstrates his classic style

that of the glider pilot looping noiselessly overhead. Perhaps it is because you seem completely removed from reality so close to the heavens. Or is it because the inrun appears more like the east face of the Matterhorn than the engineering feat of these uncanny Germans?

Someone timed the last man from the moment he plummeted off the top until he flashed into view way down on the outrun—roughly twelve seconds, and nearly half that time being spent literally floating on speed-induced pressure and thermals rising from the sunlit snow. What would the little men in the flying saucers fancy if they could behold this sight?

"Wie schnell?" you casually query of another madman waiting on the level below. Being a true Bavarian, he coughs out an answer in kilometers and you, with eight and one-third years of grammar school behind you to substantiate your convictions, painfully deduce that it is plenty fast.

Could it be this exaggerated acceleration that has the wheels grinding? It may be that the 30,000 spectators far below in the snow-swept valley,

scurrying and crowding around the U-shaped outrun, register on your blurred vision as a swarm of ants at a picnic. But no! It's none of these, for they give rise to the one big thing as nostalgically prominent as wood smoke on a frosty morning: that here, within grasp, is the glorious opportunity to travel on a breeze for a phenomenal 400 feet or more, aided only by those three-grooved, eight foot planks under your number thirtens. What price glory?

You recheck your bindings as the distant roar of the crowd quickens your pulse. With the ovation for the last jumper vibrating heavily on your eardrums, you mentally prepare for your first flight into space. You find yourself tensely observing the yellow balloon wind indicator to the right of the knoll as it dances playfully on the end of its mooring. Aha, it's changing. It's tugging more steadily and leaning uphill. Looks good.

"Why don't they flag me off now?" you bravely question, covering up visible excitement with an undernourished sneeze. "Gesundheit!" your German comrades roar in chorus, and before you can remove tongue from cheek, your twitching ears detect a hollow announcement floating up from the loud speaker at the judges stand. "SCHANZE FREI!"

The little man wearing the cow-orange "lederhosen" on the take-off ceremoniously waves a scarlet flag and

(Continued on page 27.)



Scientific weather balloon prevents cross wind jumping risks



139 meter world's record set in '51 by Finnish Tauno Luirio

Keith Wegeman, who took twelfth place honors as America's highest scoring jumper in last year's Olympic Special Jump event on the Holmenkollen hill above Oslo, Norway, is now in the Army, stationed at Fort Riley, Kansas.

(Continued from page 13)

limbly jumps aside leaving you to your pleasure.

Breathing heavily now, you shuffle your skis several times, as is the habit of most jumpers, and pause for a long moment. Then, with a snarl for the cameras, you fling yourself over the brink.

Down, down you plummet gathering fantastic momentum. That snarl—it's gone. Your eyes water profusely as you knew they would on the first jump, but this is of minor concern as you contemplate the take-off looming ever dominant and closer ahead. Your palate beats furiously at your heart crowding into your mouth, but of no avail, for at this point you are frozen with anticipation of that key movement in a good leap, the take-off. "How can I judge it at this speed?" is your helpless cry.

But you had just as well wonder which end is the middle, for you've already begun to move automatically without evident prompting from the cerebellum. With arms drawn back in counter motion to the upward-outward lunge, your trained reflexes carry you through a smooth driving lift that sees you at the edge of the take-off in a good stretch and going away . . . aahhh . . . far, far away to another world of infinitely more peaceful dimensions, a fantasia of the senses. The tension is gone. It never existed.

You soar loftily and dreamily, buoyantly upheld by imaginary wings—wings of pressure that smoothly and powerfully reduce your air speed, allowing you to float seemingly motionless far out above the whitered knoll below, arching over gradually like a giant rainbow pointing the way to the pot o' gold. But no such earthly treasure for you as you strive for a little more float, a little more stretch. All too soon it has to end so you bid your wings adieu and drop into a telemark landing with the weight too far back. But why get technical? This is great fun.

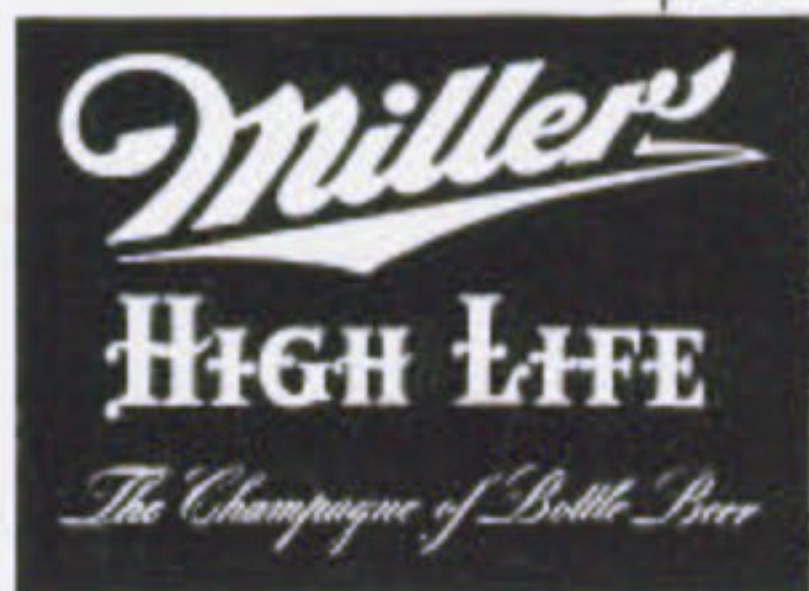
Zooming through the transition and over the outrun you are greeted with a resounding roar that reverberates between the mountain peaks. "Cat's pajamas, a Bavarian snow slide!" you murmur, coming to an open christie stop. But scanning the scenery for current alterations you only see and hear 30,000 sets of tonsils proclaiming your first jump on the granddaddy of

(Continued on next page)

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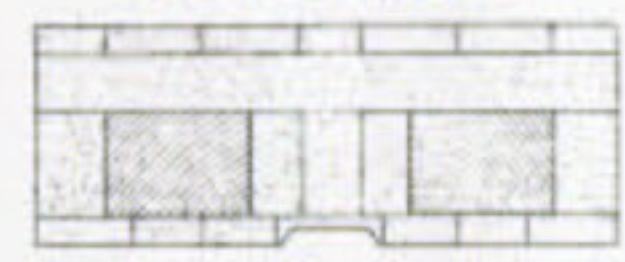


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Flying Hickories

(Continued from page 27)

them all. Not quite 400 feet but, after all, this is only the beginning. You like these friendly German people and they like you, an American skier. Smiling at the world you kick off your skis into the waiting hands of the jabbering ski caddies who will eagerly return them to the top of the hill for your second jump. You autograph innumerable programs, then begin the long hike to the top, glancing fondly at the 400 foot marker.

By proxy, dear reader, you have just completed your first thrilling jump on the world famous ski flying hill nestled deep in the Bavarian Alps, close to picturesque Oberstdorf, Germany.

After the smoke cleared from war-torn Europe and the world seemed destined once again to effect peaceful living through cooperation, a young German architect and ski jumping enthusiast, Heini Klopfer, aided by Sepp Weiler and Toni Brucher (Germany's leading jumpers) formulated a plan to instigate interest and subsequently finance their long silent dream, a giant ski jump. Even prior to the war these three Oberstdorf lads had created the idea of this hill, but it was then that the Nazi war machine began smoldering under its power until its flame belched forth, consuming human individuality, perspective, liberty and life, thus arresting countless creative plans such as this.

But now the Oberstdorf trio, as the boys have affectionately been dubbed, having returned to their beloved Alps, were setting responsive Oberstdorf afire with their fascinating scheme of ski flying. Before long they realized whole-hearted support from the sport-minded citizens of their village and also procured some aid with machinery and labor from the U. S. Army in that area.

The winter of 1950 brought realistic proportions to Heini Klopfer's blueprints. The hill stood finished, triumphantly matching its grandeur with the surrounding Alpine beauty.

Since that year the International Ski-Flying Week has become a well established event in the world of sports and is eagerly anticipated by skiers and spectators alike.

Not anyone who would choose to do so, however, can jump at Oberstdorf. Each man must first prove himself capable by displaying his

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merits to a committee of judges on a smaller yet similar 230 foot hill. A day prior to the main tournament is set aside for this. Perhaps the thoroughness of the Germans, rather than the dangerous appearance of the giant hill, prompts this action because the danger factor actually is nonexistent beyond that of any other of the lesser ski jumps.

To begin with, the jump is dimensionally perfect and maintains matchless conformity of ratio and contour throughout. It is expertly groomed in preparation for the annual event, the only occasion it is used.

Scientific devices are employed for the purpose of determining the actions of the atmosphere. Unsafe conditions, though rare, can be immediately detected and validate a delay if necessary for safety's sake. For instance, cross winds or intermittent gusts could be perilous to a jumper because of the extreme velocity he attains. Unnoticeable from any position on the hill, however, these dangers are exposed by means of a meteorometer, smoke drifts and/or meteorological balloons. No wonder it's safe.

Because the days of jumping are strenuously trying, everything possible is done in giving the utmost consideration to the jumpers. Upon our arrival (the American contingent was composed of Art Devlin, Billy Olsen and myself) we were sent hiking to the competitors' lodge, adequately removed from the lures of night life in the village. This assured abundant rest for all. Between rounds of jumping there were constantly available energy tablets, hot tea, sugar, oranges and "Wurst und Brotchen" (wieners and buns).

In addition to these accommodations, and not seen elsewhere, were the ski caddies who relieved each man of his skis for the extended trek to the top. This distance can be judged by the fact that within the allotted jumping time from noon to four or four-thirty, each man was able to make only four jumps. No one was allowed more.

Aerodynamics is a term generally connected with the field of aviation, but aviation must relinquish its exclusive option on the word, for ski jumpers have long been relying on its principles and theory, if not name. Aerodynamics has to do with the flight-inducing shape of an object travelling in the atmosphere. So it is with a jumper. Through a feeling that comes from long experience, a jumper fly-

(Continued on next page)



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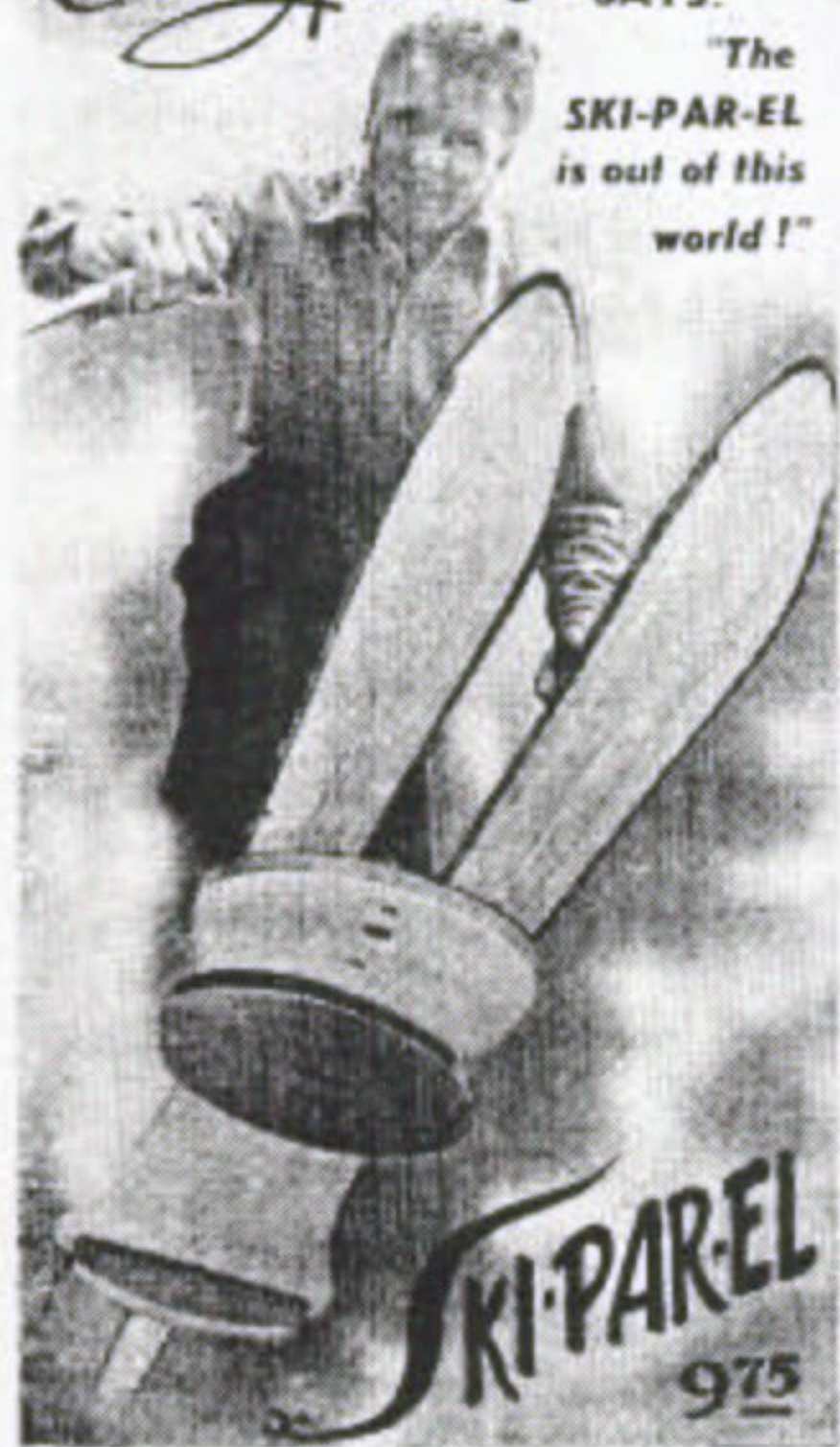
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You can practice parallel turns on the SKI-PAR-EL at home as Emile Allais demonstrates here!

Flying Hickories

(Continued from page 29)

ing through space can regulate to a degree his lifting and floating power by changing the forward bend in his body or the angle of his skis or both. Of course, style and ability limit a jumper to the fruits of his particular talents.

Have you ever extended your hand from the window of a moving car? If the hand is tilted slightly upward, the wind causes it to rise. If the hand is tilted slightly downward, it will be forced down. The wind has the same effect on the skis and body of a jumper in flight. The desired ski angle for maximum float and resulting distance is with the tips slightly above the horizontal level of the tails, permitting them to climb through the air as the wing of an airplane. The angle and bend of the body should be comparable to the position you would assume if you were to walk in a 90 mile gale. Depending on the speed of the jump, there are different degrees of this position. At Oberstdorf the speed is so great (about 85 miles per hour) that a jumper almost lies on his skis to counteract the astounding pressure.

A study was made several years ago at Oberstdorf concerning aerodynamics in ski flying. Photos were taken of many of the jumpers and then studied in light of their distance records. Conclusively enough it was found that those jumpers had the greater distances who held a position with ski tips just above parallel to the curve of the hill and with bodies curved forward enough to obtain the full lifting effect of the pressure under the chest and abdomen. Those who lacked the proper amount of lean had no climbing ability, just as a kite would not rise if towed in a vertical position.

Heretofore the ski-flying event has been based on distance alone, forsaking judgment of style in the belief that one must necessarily have good style to attain good distance. The German FIS representative, A. Henkel, recently announced that next February's meet shall see an injection of style points in conjunction with distance points, as is the approved order of jumping competitions.

Ski-flying at Oberstdorf was not only a great subjective experience to all of us who were allowed to make the trip last winter, but also a most valuable lesson in competing against

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Ski Driving Tips

(Continued from page 14)



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good winter drivers first, or you won't live long enough to become good skiers.

"To make winter driving safer and more enjoyable, you need two things: the right equipment and the right driving technique.

"The right equipment includes, first of all, your car and its condition. Everyone knows that cold weather demands lighter oil and winter lubrication, but don't forget to mention your winter driving plans to your garage, particularly if you come up from a warm climate.

"Anti-freeze, generally the permanent type, is another obvious need, unless you enjoy crawling under the car and draining your radiator at the most inopportune moments. Famous last
(Continued on page 32)

Flying Hickories

(Continued from page 30)

some of the great jumpers on the greatest hill in the world. Nor was this the only lesson of our European trip. We learned just as much competing on the smaller, but sometimes more difficult, Norwegian hills, against the world's greatest stylists. And also we learned that, if given a chance, our jumpers could better themselves by such international training just as much as our downhill and slalom specialists, bringing home their new learning to benefit all American jumping.

It is to be hoped, therefore, that when plans are again being made to send promising American skiers overseas for constructive training and international exchange of experiences and techniques, our jumpers will be given their fair share of the financial and moral support which they need and deserve.

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