

Willy Hischmann



Willy Hischmann was an all-around athlete in his native country, Germany. He participated in track and was part of the German National Field Hockey Team. He also won many Nordic skiing competitions. Willy enjoyed the newly flourishing sport of gliding, as skiing was called at that time. Skiing became one of his favorite sports. Slalom and Downhill Racing had not come into existence. Willy settled in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1927.

Eventually, he became homesick because he had left his skis in Germany. Every time he saw a snowflake he dreamed of a ski club the one he was familiar with in Germany. But there was no ski gear to be found. In 1934, the year of a lot of snow, he obtained a pair of boards. Those boards did not have steel edges. Steel edges had not been invented.

One weekend equipped with a pair of skis and a pair of Sears boots, he and a friend ventured to the Poconos. Willy and his friend found the hill that looked like it would be a good place to ski. They packed the snow down on one part of the slope, but were rudely interrupted and arrested for trespassing. Unfortunately for Willy and his friend, the place where they had chosen to ski with the Skytop Lodge. The Justice of the Peace fined each of them \$10 plus costs. They paid their fines and avoided going to jail.

Two years later Willy decided that, in Philadelphia, there should be enough people who would like to learn to ski. In the winter of 1936, the former Smellenburg store brought a young instructor from Austria. His job was to teach skiing on a borax slide, in the store's third floor sporting goods department. Willy and the instructor, Walter Von Neudegg, became acquainted. They discussed and agreed on Willy's plans to start a club. They obtained radio time, and with Willy doing all the talking, they announced their plans on the air. Their first meeting was held at Hotel Bartram in Philadelphia. The late Martin Wilburger was among the twelve people who attended. The Ski Club of Philadelphia was the name chosen for this club. That name changed, twelve years later, to the Philadelphia Ski Club, the oldest ski club in Pennsylvania.

As time went on, Willy got into the ski business. He was first employed at Mitchell & Ness. He later opened his own shop, Alpenhaus, initially at Elk Mountain. Subsequently, he relocated Alpenhaus to Willow Grove. It was there that Willy was instrumental in founding the present Huntington Valley Ski Club with a membership of 225 people.

Willy retired after 23 years in the ski business. He had acquired many fond memories and wonderful friends. He died in 1974 while skiing at the Matterhorn in Zermatt, Switzerland.