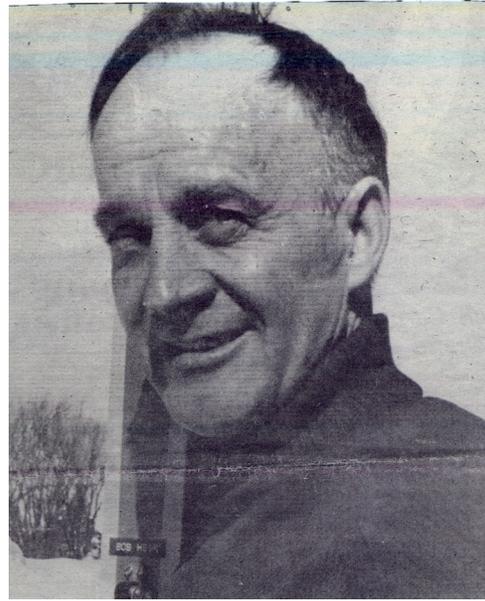


Robert Hein

The year 1922 found the city of Iron Mountain, Michigan to be not only the Mecca of ski jumping in the United States, but the birthplace, that year, of Robert Hein. Although much of the world was unaware of it at the time, Bob Hein was destined to carry the torch of promoting Ski Jumping around the World for the next 80 years.

Bob's pioneering efforts virtually became his career beginning with early jumps on small hills in and around Iron Mountain. By the time he was nine years old his competitive life began, with his first win in the Boys Class at Quarry Hill at Aurora, Michigan. His jumps of 50 and 55 feet won him a tassel hat. With years of continuous practice he improved until in 1937 when he won the Boys Class A Central Division Championship, at the Hoofer Ski Club Facility in Madison, Wisconsin.



During the next 60 years he made jumps and competed across the U.S. and much of the rest of the world. In 1997 he returned to Madison and won the gold medal for his age class at the Blackhawk Hill Meet.

In 1938 Bob competed on a jump built on Soldiers Field in Chicago that was the height of a 19-story building. Bob's best jump was in 1942 when he jumped 267 feet at Iron Mountain, Michigan. When there was a jump available he jumped every day of his young life except, during the period 1942-1946, when he served with the Marines in WWII. His service took him to Guadalcanal, Guam, Tarawa and Saigon. Being accustomed to jumping from heights, it is said that he was always first into the waiting landing crafts.

After the war Bob settled in Drexel Hill, Pennsylvania, the hometown of his wife Toni, whom he met and married while on station in Philadelphia with the Marines. Bob soon learned about the weekly jumping competitions held at Bear Mountain, New York, where he competed 10 weekends each year from 1955 through 1985. The United States Eastern Amateur Ski Association (USEASA) sanctioned most of these meets. He also competed at numerous jumping meets in the western U.S.

Eventually Bob became a member of the International Masters Competitors Association (IMC) where he earned his place in history. His first Masters Championship was won in 1982 at St. Paul, Minnesota and his last one was won in 2001 at Wespy, Wisconsin, at age 79 years. His coveted medals won on the IMC Annual Championships Circuit are three gold's, won at Swenston, Sweden in 1992 - 40 meters & 70 meters & the Nordic Combined; and an additional three gold's, won in Finland in 1994.

Bob competed in every IMC Championship from age (35-40 class) through (75-80 class). His last International IMC foreign win was in 2002. His life time dream was fulfilled when he jumped his 70 years age in meters on the 70 meter hill at Colorain, Minnesota in 1992.

Some of his most coveted and cherished awards are three Franklin D. Roosevelt Trophies that he won during the 1950's. He has won numerous New Jersey and New York State Trophies. He has continued to collect trophies from his Junior Days through his Class "A" days and through his veterans status. In all he has garnered more than 400 trophies and awards making his home appear to be a Hall of Fame of his own. Why so few World Class or Olympic Champions from the U.S.? Bob admits that most start their landing too soon. "If they held their jump another one or two seconds they would gain another 20 to 50 feet before landing. A combination of mental preparation and physical strength are essential factors in this demanding sport," he says.

Although Bob officially retired in 2003 he still runs nightly and plays golf. He is now well known to the local police for who he is and what he has done, but it was a different story until they became convinced that he was not running from a robbery. Bob has taught his four grandchildren to ski, but regrets the lack of jumping hills which has kept them from following in their grandfather's ski tracks. Robert Hein was named to the Master's Hall of Fame at St Paul, Minnesota in 1992. May he always fly long and ignore the icy landing.