An Interview by

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EVERETT L. COOLEY COLLECTION
Utah Outdoor Recreation Oral History Project

American West Center
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ES: First, let me ask you if it's okay to record you today.

DH: Sure.

ES: Okay. Let's just start off by talking about when and where you were born.

DH: In the beginning... [Both laugh.] I was born in 1941 in the state of Maine. I grew up in Rumford, Maine; in fact, under the tutelage of some pretty good cross-country skiers like Chummy Broomhall, who was an Olympic skier back in the late '40s early '50s.

ES: Tell me if you had any siblings, if at all.

DH: I didn't. I'm an only child, in fact.

ES: Okay. How about your parents? What did they do for a living?

DH: My dad was an attorney and the Municipal Court judge in Rumford, Maine, for many years. My mother was a housewife.

ES: Tell me if you could about the first time that you remember being introduced to the outdoors. Was it your parents that got you out there? Was it someone else that got you involved in outdoor recreation?

DH: I remember going skiing with my father when I was really young. I don't remember the first time, but my parents told me that they gave me a pair of skis when I was, I guess, two or three years old; very young. That I was skiing around in the backyard, "walking" around on the skis, I guess is the better way to say it, at a very early age. My father had an old pair of wooden skis with the leather bindings just around the back of the heel, and we would go to a friend's apple orchard and climb up the hill and slide down.
This was before there were any ski lifts around. That’s the first thing I remember directly about going skiing.

**ES:** And how long did you live there in Maine?

**DH:** I lived there all my life through high school until I went away to college.

**ES:** And where did you go to high school then?

**DH:** The local high school was Stephens High School in Rumford, Maine. They had a ski team, and I skied for the team when I was, you know, four years in high school.

**ES:** Was that the first time that you were involved with ski racing at all?

**DH:** No, actually I’m remembering that I was eight or nine years old, and they had a Boy Scout ski race every year that I used to participate in. That was just fun local racing. When I was in the eighth grade I joined the local junior team that competed against teams from other towns.

**ES:** Oh, okay.

**DH:** And then in ninth grade I was on the high school team.

**ES:** Was that really common, cross-country skiing, where you lived? Did you know a lot of people, have a lot of friends who skied?

**DH:** Yeah. Rumford, Maine, was a big Nordic town in the early ’50s, maybe it was 1950. So I would have been, you know, nine or ten. They had a big race there. I don’t remember exactly how it worked. It seemed like the World Championships had been scheduled for Lake Placid that year, and they didn’t have enough snow, so they moved some races to Rumford. In fact, the course went right by my house. They used to plow the snow banks down into the road, and they started the race at the high school, which is just a block from my house. Went by my house, and then off into the woods. In those
days racers would disappear into the woods, and you’d see them in an hour or two, and they’d show up again. But, they went right by the house, and that was just really exciting, you now, to see some of the best skiers in the world right out there. I didn’t even have to leave the front porch to watch these guys. That was probably the thing that piqued my interest first.

ES: Okay. Were there skiers touring that area that you really appreciated?

DH: Yeah, oh you asked me about other skiers. I mean, a lot of kids in town skied. It was a big sport in Rumford, at that point. I mentioned Chummy Broomhall. He and three or four other skiers were Olympic level skiers, and we used to have the Rumford Winter Carnival every year, and so a lot of really hot cross-country skiers—and they had a jump in town as well. It was really a Nordic town.

ES: I guess!

DH: They’d have a big ski jumping event every year, and we’d all go up. My father would drive the car up, and we’d park in the big parking lot down at the base of the jump and watch the local guys and other folks from around New England who came in to participate. I remember sitting in the car, and whenever somebody would jump a particularly long distance everybody would blow the horns in the cars. Cool!

ES: What was the equipment like for ski jumping in those days? I mean, I’m familiar with it now, but during those days I have no concept.

DH: Yeah, a little different. Much smaller skis, shorter and narrower, three grooves, wooden bottoms. Had to shellac the bottoms of your skis and then wax with paraffin.

ES: Pine tar usually?
DH: Nope, nope. Pine tar’s on cross-country skis but shellac on jumping skis, and you’d use paraffin wax—rub it in, and rub it in, and rub it in! Try to make your skis fast. People weren’t flying like they do today.

ES: Sure. How would they dress typically? I mean, they didn’t have those foam kind of suits that would catch air like they do today.

DH: No, wool sweaters and ski pants, you know, a stocking cap. No helmets. Nobody ever heard of wearing a ski helmet or a bike helmet, for that matter, back then.

ES: Now did you participate in jumping as well?

DH: Yeah.

ES: Oh you did?

DH: Yeah. I was a Nordic skier. When I got to, I guess, eighth grade is when I started competing on the junior team; I also was an alpine skier, but didn’t do as well. Did okay in downhill, but I never did figure out how to turn very quickly. I was mostly a Nordic skier.

ES: Now when you say Nordic that would include not just what we’d call, I guess, cross-country today, it also included jumping?

DH: Yeah. Nordic was cross-country and jumping; and, in fact, Nordic Combined was a scored event—

ES: Oh, sure.

DH: --in high school and college. People who could compete in both events and do reasonably well were doubly valuable on a team. So most of the people who competed in either of the Nordic events, you know, either discipline, would compete in both. You had to be really good at one or the other to not have to do both.
ES: Okay. Did you have a favorite between those? I mean, did you think you were equally good and equally [inaudible]?

DH: No, I never was as good as a jumper. I definitely was better as a cross-country skier. I did okay, but never really had what it took to be able to dive over my skis trying to go to the bottom of the hill.

ES: How would the instruction work for that? Would you start out on really small jumps, and then just have a coach working with you?

DH: We had a series of jumps at this little ski area. We had a rope tow which wasn’t used by the jumpers, by the way. That’s a relatively new phenomenon.

ES: So would you walk back up the hill?

DH: We had to walk, yeah. So we started on smaller jumps and worked up to larger ones.

ES: Do you remember what the area was called? Is it an area that’s still there?

DH: It’s not there any more. It was called Scotty’s Mountain, named after the farmer that owned the land. He ran his cows through the fields at the bottom in the summertime. It had a small jump that the juniors used; and then a larger jump, which was probably a thirty-five meter jump, for the high school teams; and then the largest one, which was a fifty, that the adults used.

ES: Okay. Tell me about the actual cross-country racing. How long were the races, and typically who did you race against, at least when you started out? You were on this junior team? That was in eighth grade?

DH: The junior team, I don’t really remember how far we raced actually, but I remember in high school it was on the order of five kilometers; so probably it was two or three
kilometers because we were younger. There were teams in surrounding towns. Farmington and Auburn are two of the better ones that we competed against. And the high schools in some of the same towns had high school teams, as well as some of the prep schools like Gould Academy in Bethel, Maine. They had a good ski team, and they used to compete with us.

ES: And all the skiing, I mean, since this is before Bill Koch, was what we would call classical, correct?

DH: Sure.

ES: Did you do the marathon skate? Was that a technique that was—

DH: No, that didn’t come in until, gosh, late eighties.

ES: Oh, okay. Oh, I thought that was even earlier.

DH: Well, I may not be remembering correctly, but certainly not when I was skiing. Our trails went through the woods between trees. There was no room to skate, and the way the track would be set would be people would go out with snowshoes. If you were lucky, you could get somebody with snowshoes to go first, and then people with skis who would pack down the track just by skiing it in. There were no snowmobiles. You know, it was very narrow, just two tracks in the snow and pole tracks beside it. So, no, there was no alternative for anything but classical skiing at that time.

ES: Tell me about that equipment! Did you have racing skis or training skis, or did you distinguish between the two?

DH: No, I just had one pair of skis, and they were wooden skis with pine tar on the bottom, so, again, the skis were so slow that skating would not have been an option—

ES: Right.
DH: --from that point of view either. The wooden skis were not double cambered skis. They had a camber to them, but there was no way to really get the bottom of the ski off the snow.

ES: Oh, so your kick pocket was always dragging?

DH: Yeah, dragged much more than when they figured out about putting the double camber in to keep the kick pocket off the snow unless you really pushed down hard.

ES: What about the preparation? Now these you would coat with pine tar?

DH: Right, so that periodically you’d have to put pine tar on your skis, and then heat it in with a blow torch, let it bubble in and really soak into the wood, and then you’d get it hot and wipe off the excess. So it was a very thin layer of pine tar, and then put wax over that. Then you’d wax tip to tail with—with what we use now as kick wax.

ES: Sure.

DH: With a little stickier wax typically under the foot and a harder wax on the tips and the tails.

ES: Do you remember any of the brands of the wax? Was it primarily Swix wax or was it—

DH: Yeah, Swix is the one I remember, but there were a number of them.

ES: Did you have a favorite?

DH: Yeah, I used to use Swix but it seemed like somebody was, as today, some company would always come up with some magic wax that was just better than everybody else’s.

ES: Yes, right. Makes it so you don’t have to train at all; just put it on.
DH: Not quite. [Laughing] But supposedly certain waxes would work better on really cold snow and really warm snow. We had Klister like we do now for warm snow or icy snow.

ES: Tell me about the training. What was a typical practice, like maybe when you were in high school? How far would you ski, and what was the philosophy behind some of this?

DH: You know, I think when I was in school we were mostly learning to ski. It didn’t seem like there was any, or much of any knowledge of training techniques. Like these days we do intervals or you do the long slow distance. We’d just go out and ski and try to ski ourselves into shape. The coach would try to help us with our techniques so that we were shifting our weight from one ski to the other and gliding on one ski, not sitting in the middle, and not having our kick so late that we were always dragging our skis, but no real training techniques. We’d go out most every afternoon and ski around the little course that we had.

ES: Was this a men-only ski team or was there a women’s ski team?

DH: No, it was just the men who had a ski team, Nordic. There were women skiing alpine at the time but not cross country.

ES: And you also were an alpine skier in high school? Did you also race?

DH: Yeah, I did. I skied four events in high school. Did better in Nordic than alpine. Went to Middlebury College thinking I was going to be a four-event skier, and the coach said, “Don’t even think about it. You’re a cross-county ape.” So I was a Nordic skier in college.
ES: So was that a pretty easy decision then? Did you debate where you were going to school, and did skiing really factor in as something you wanted to do?

DH: Oh yeah. I considered Dartmouth and Middlebury. I went to visit Middlebury. One of my neighbors, in fact, was on the ski team at Middlebury, so he gave me the royal treatment when I went to visit. I never even went to Dartmouth to visit. I knew they were a men only school.

ES: Oh, really!

DH: So between that and the fact that I’d gotten treated very well at Middlebury, and I knew that a really good friend from Auburn, John Bower, was going to go to Middlebury, I thought, “This is easy. I’ll go to Middlebury!” So I did.

ES: Did you figure out what you wanted to study right away when you were there, what you wanted to major in?

DH: When I started out I enjoyed science and math. When I started out I took calculus my freshman year and chemistry, among some other general classes, you know, English and history and stuff. I loved chemistry. I had a great chemistry professor. So after the first year I decided I was going to major in chemistry, so I took organic chemistry the second year and physics, and I hated organic chemistry. It was just memorizing. You know, I did fine in the class but I just was miserable; but physics was really fun, so I majored in physics. And then as I, when I got to my junior year I decided that I wanted to go into engineering, because engineering is applied physics, and decided electrical engineering would be the right thing. Ended up going to grad school in electrical engineering.
ES: Okay. Tell me what the ski team was like. Was it very competitive? Who did you race against? Maybe who your coaches were?

DH: John Bower was certainly the best. I don’t know if you know who John is, but he was on a number of Olympic teams.

ES: Actually, yeah. There might be another one. I know one that’s in Duluth, Minnesota.

DH: No, different John Bauer.

ES: That’s so funny it’s the same name.

DH: Spelled differently actually.

ES: Okay. How is his name spelled?

DH: B-O-W-E-R.

ES: Okay.

DH: But he’s from Auburn, Maine.

ES: Okay.

DH: He actually won the King’s Cup at the Holmenkollen, the Nordic combined event at the Holmenkollen in Norway. He was one of the best in the world for many years. John was on the team that I skied on, along with a number of other good skiers. Yeah, it was quite competitive to make the Middlebury team at the time.

ES: Oh, you actually had to make the team?

DH: Yeah. Well in the carnival team they only could have four or five, I think five people, in each event, so you had to be in the top five at the school in order to ski at the carnival.

ES: Now how large was the team’s roster. The team was much larger than that.
DH: Middlebury didn’t have a huge roster. The coach was Bobo Sheehan. Bobo actually coached the US Ski Team. He was an alpine guy. Coached the US Ski Team back in the early fifties; so, you know, he was a good coach, but his emphasis was on the alpine program, and the Nordic guys were pretty much on their own. So we kind of made up our own workouts.

ES: Really?

DH: It was a good group. I think we did okay. In retrospect we didn’t really know much at all about training. We spent a lot of time packing cross-country trails, for one thing.

ES: Well, in a way, that’s training.

DH: Yeah, it’s good strength exercise but not very good for skiing fast. But at that point that’s when we started doing a little bit of speed work, so we started doing some intervals at that point. But other guys that I skied against were like Jim Page from Dartmouth. He was in the same class. John was the Nordic program director for the US Ski Team for many years, and then Jim took over for him for a few years before he went on to the US Olympic Committee. In the meantime, John went back to Middlebury, coached the college team. That’s not true. He coached Middlebury College before he was Nordic program director for the US Ski Team. He went to another college and was athletic director for a while, and then he came back to the US Ski Team. Then he ran the Utah Olympic Park for a few years when they were getting set up for the Olympics. He’s since retired and is a full-time motorhome person, travels around the West. Yeah, pretty funny, but doesn’t ski. His son is Ricky Bower, who is one of the top snowboard half-pipers in recent years.

ES: Oh, is that right?
DH: So anyway, those are a couple of the guys I skied against in college. Don’t know of anybody else who has made a name for themselves on the Nordic side. A lot of good alpine skiers went on to ski on the Olympic teams: Gordy Eaton and John Clough were on the team when I was. So we were definitely competitive. We had the NCAA Championship at Middlebury when I was a sophomore, I think. Bauer won the jumping and the Nordic Combined. He was quite good.

ES: Now at that point you had discontinued your jumping, correct? You were just focusing—

DH: No, no, no. I had to jump, because Nordic Combined as an event.

ES: Oh, okay. You still jumped, okay.

DH: No, almost everybody skied both.

ES: Now was it similar to how it is today where the Nordic and the alpine scores are combined to determine who’s the champion, because I believe that is the way it is today? Was that different?

DH: I didn’t think that they did that today but, oh, oh I see what you mean. I’m talking about for individuals. I’m not talking about for the whole team.

ES: Sure.

DH: Today it’s a separate group of people that are skiing the alpine events and the Nordic events, and their scores are added up to give you a team score; and yes, that’s the way they did it; but instead of four events, it was six events. So the Nordic Combined event was the combination of the scores of individual racers in jumping and cross country. Let’s say that I skied the course in an hour, and my jumping points were a hundred twenty. They would combine those two and give me a Nordic combined score.
Then somebody who skied a different time, a little different number of points, you know, they were able to convert—I guess they converted the cross-country times to points, just like they do for Nordic combined in the Olympics; same deal.

**ES:** Okay, got it, sure.

**DH:** So I would be participating in two events physically but scoring wise three events. And the same with the alpine. We had downhill at the time in college and slalom, and they would combine the downhill and slalom times for individuals to give you a third event in alpine as well. A third scored event, but not a third physical event.

**ES:** Got it. How different did you feel like the racing in college was from high school?

**DH:** Oh, a lot more competitive. I don’t know. The whole philosophy was different. You started training in the fall. We did that to some extent in high school, but not very much. You mostly skied yourself into shape, unless you were running cross country on foot in the fall.

**ES:** Right.

**DH:** But in college it was more serious. The coach’s attitude was totally different. He wanted his team to beat Dartmouth, for example. Dartmouth was our chief rival. In fact, I hated everybody that went to Dartmouth for many years, even though I never knew anybody other than my skiing cohorts. It’s kind of sad, actually, because some of my best friends now are Darties. But he just imbued in everybody that you’ve got to hate these guys; you’ve got to go out there and beat these guys. [Both laugh.] It was pretty strange in retrospect, but yeah, I mean, it was more serious. We worked harder and trained a lot more.
ES: How about personally? Did you participate in other sports when you were both in high school and college besides cross country?

DH: Yeah, in high school I ran cross country in the fall, and skied in the winter, and track in the spring. When I went to college, the ski team was training together in the fall. I don’t know if we had a cross country running team then or not, but I didn’t do it anyway. But I went out for track in the spring when I was a freshman, and I didn’t last very long. I just decided I was burned out from training hard for six months—

ES: Sure. That’s a long time.

DH: So I just decided, ah, I didn’t want to do this, so I dropped out of the track team. Enjoyed my springs. Learned how to play golf.

ES: Oh yeah?

DH: One of my buddies, my chemistry partner actually, was a really good golfer. He was on the golf team, so he taught me how to play golf.

ES: Cool.

DH: Little more relaxing in the spring.

ES: Sounds like it. Now the training during the off season, was that something that you generated and felt like would be a good idea, or did you derive it from some other model, you know, like the European model that said, yeah, you’ve got to train in the summer.

DH: No. No European model. No training program handed out by the coach. You know, he would say “stay in shape” basically, and so I did a little bit of running. I didn’t like to run much at the time, but I did a lot of bicycling to and from the golf course, for one thing. I tried to keep in shape. Did a lot of hiking and some running; but then in the fall when the whole team was together we would mostly run, and we’d play soccer, and we’d
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go hiking. Not a lot of biking at that point. Yeah, I never knew anything about training models until long afterwards.

ES: Were there skiers in the country or outside the country that you emulated when you were in college? I mean, did you know of anyone who was really setting a bar that you wanted to achieve up to?

DH: Certainly not outside the country. I never had aspirations at that high a level, but we used to go to cross-country races and jumping meets where people from around the country would come. There were certainly guys that were better than I that I hoped to be able to at least get close to at some point. These were guys that were on the US Ski Team, which wasn’t anything like it is now. People would try out for the US Ski Team in the year of the World Championships and the Olympics, so every even numbered year they would put together a group of people to go to these championships. And so, you know, we’d all go to the meets and hope we did well enough to get chosen.

ES: So you had those aspirations?

DH: Well, I did later on in my college years, but not early. My junior year in college I had a really good year, and I thought, you know, if things go right for me I could make the Olympic team in ’64. This was in ’62, my junior year, which was a World Championship year. People like John Bower were off skiing in Poland at the World Championships that year, and those of us that were left didn’t have John around to compete against, but I did well against the rest of the field. I thought, if I have a really good year next year I can maybe make the US Ski Team and go to the Olympics in ’64. That was one of my goals in the last couple of years in college.
Then it turned out I didn’t do very well in my senior year; at some point had to decide if I was going to go to grad school or try out for the team the following year. I chose going to grad school and getting married. So I had to be a scholar instead of a skier.

ES: Was that a hard decision?

DH: It was, yeah. It was hard because I wasn’t doing as well that year, and I was kind of discouraged. It wasn’t hard from the point of view that I thought it was the wrong thing for me. I mean, it really did seem like the right thing at the time. In retrospect it certainly was, partly because an awful lot of my cohorts from back then, Bower being a good example, were serious competitors, and then they spent their lives working in the ski industry either coaching or working for a ski company or whatever. A lot of these guys have lost their enthusiasm for skiing because I think it was work for them instead of play. For me it’s always been an avocation, never a vocation, and it continues to be a lot of fun. Like I said, I think in retrospect it was a good decision.

ES: When you’re out skiing or racing, what do you feel, and why do you like to ski? What keep drawing you back into it?

DH: [Laughs] I don’t know. I guess, you know, I’m convinced that people tend to migrate toward what they do well. I’ve had success in skiing over the years, and so that’s probably part of it, but at this point certainly it’s not because I’m skiing very fast. But I’ve always loved just being out, still love being out in the woods in the fresh air, doing stuff outdoors year round. But skiing? It’s different from hiking and biking and running in that I just tend to feel totally free and unencumbered. I guess it’s a little bit like running on trails, which I have begun to enjoy almost as much as cross-country skiing in
recent years, but that is a recent phenomenon in my life. I just like to get out and glide around, enjoy the winter air.

**ES:** Sure. Could you tell me about a race or a day you were skiing that was particularly memorable?

**DH:** [Laughing] Is this from a positive point of view?

**ES:** Either way. I mean, there’s both if you wanted to.

**DH:** I remember a negative memorable one was when the NCAAs were at Middlebury in ’61, I think it was, and we were doing very well as a team. It was jumping day, and it was windy, and our coach was standing on the knoll of the jump. He was really good at figuring out when the wind was going to die down. There were some flags that he could see at the bottom that we couldn’t see at the top, and he would watch the flags. When he figured it was the right time, he would wave the next jumper on. So I was a little overexcited, I guess, and didn’t wait for him to wave. I don’t know if I misunderstood what he was doing or what, but anyway, I went too soon, and I got this big gust of wind that just pushed my skis right up against my face. So I leaned a little bit farther, and then all of a sudden the gust was gone, and I went over and landed on my head.

**ES:** Oh!

**DH:** Actually landed on the tips of my skis and then my shoulder. Separated my shoulder and knocked me out. My poor mother was watching. But anyway, so that didn’t turn out too well. That was the last of my jumping for that year.

**ES:** Oh it was? Okay.

**DH:** So that’s a bad memory; but a good memory is, oh probably more recently, skiing at Yellowstone at the Rendezvous.
DH: Which is a fifty kilometer race. I don’t remember what year it was. I was over fifty, anyway, so it was probably early ’90s. Just one of those days when everything went right.

ES: Hit the wax.

DH: Yeah, I hit the wax. It was one of those days where it had thawed and frozen, so it was a really fast track. I had always wanted to break 2:30 at Yellowstone but never figured I ever would. I’d skied 2:45 or whatever, but on this particular day things went well and I ended up skiing about 2:25. So that was pretty exciting.

ES: That’s great!

DH: Earlier on, I guess one of the more exciting times is when I was a junior in college. Jim Page was my nemesis. This was the year that Bower was at the World Championship. I put it together that weekend for the Eastern Championships and managed to beat Jim in cross country. He beat me in jumping, but I beat him in the combined, so I won a couple of Eastern collegiate championships that year. That was a positive experience where I didn’t land on my head at the time.

ES: [Laughing] I guess not.

DH: In fact, I passed Jim on the cross country.

ES: How did that make you feel?

DH: That almost never happened. I was pretty excited.

ES: Now, besides Dartmouth, who else did you race, and did you have to travel around to race when you were in college?

DH: Yeah, we went to all the carnivals. I think the East still works the same way.

ES: Right.
DH: Each school has a carnival, and all the teams go to all the carnivals, so at the time it was Dartmouth, Middlebury, Williams, Norwich, New Hampshire. So there were five. This was before Vermont started their dynasty.

ES: Oh, they’re incredible, yeah.

DH: And Bates really didn’t have much of a team at that time. I’m not sure; I think Williams still has a team. Norwich I don’t think does, so things have changed a bit.

ES: I think Maine does now too, I think.

DH: Maine had a team at the time, too. They did, yeah, but we never went to the Maine carnival. I don’t remember why. I don’t think we ever traveled quite that far.

ES: Now with the NCAA Championships I think they switch between West and East yearly.

DH: Yeah, they did then.

ES: Did you race any Western schools or were the Western schools not as developed in Nordic?

DH: The Western schools were there. Denver, in fact, won the NCAAs the year they were at Middlebury.

ES: Okay.

DH: Denver, (DU) and CU were good. Washington had a really good program at that time. I don’t remember who else were good from the West, but yeah, it did alternate back and forth. Back when I was a junior the NCAAs were in the West and I qualified. That was the year that I skied well as an individual, but the team didn’t qualify for some reason.

ES: Oh, okay.
DH: I don’t remember what the deal was. Either they didn’t qualify or the school didn’t want to spend the money to send us. So anyway, I could have gone as an individual but decided not to do that because, you know, lot of time and expense. Actually that’s one thing I have regretted. I should have done that while I was skiing well. It would have been a good thing to have done. Oh well.

ES: Yeah. Okay. Were there any, I guess you’d call them citizen races or races outside of schools that you participated in at that point in high school and college?

DH: Yeah, there were a number of races around the East. The first race of the year was always in Lyndonville, Vermont. They had a cross country and a jumping meet the weekend between Christmas and New Year’s. So we’d all go to that. There were a few other ones here and there. I remember Jackson, New Hampshire, had a race and we’d go to that sometimes. There were the Hanover Relays that were run by the Dartmouth Outing Club. Typically we’d send a cross-country team to the relays or a couple of teams. That was just a one-day event. Putney used to have a cross-country race every year, and there were jumping meets at various places where there were ski jumps like Rumford, and occasionally we’d go to Rumford or Berlin, New Hampshire, had a big jump; Concord, New Hampshire; Brattleboro, Vermont; so there were a few meets around, typically either jumping or cross country with the exception of the Lyndonville event.

ES: What did it mean to you to be a skier during that period? Did you identify yourself, and were there a certain set of expectations, you know, and maybe things that you would do because you were a skier during that period?

DH: I definitely identified myself as a skier. I mean, I was really shy. I think I gained a lot of self-confidence from my successes as a skier. That’s continued to be part of my
identity is cross-country skiing. It’s been important in my life forever. In fact, you know, I’ve felt that since my days in Rumford where there were a bunch of guys who volunteered, older guys, that would coach the kids. The Chisholm Ski Club in Rumford, Maine, continues to be a real force in Nordic skiing in the East. I don’t think they’re doing any jumping any more. I think they’ve decommissioned their jumps, so it’s just cross country now. I had some role models there, and have tried to continue to donate my time to try to help out cross-country skiing since I’ve come to Utah.

ES: Now did you distinguish between and participate in cross-country skiing that was not racing? Would you call it ski touring or just—

DH: Not when I was younger. That didn’t happen until I came to Utah.

ES: Okay.

DH: I mean, I knew nothing about backcountry skiing when I lived in the East. I guess there is some now, but there certainly wasn’t at the time. In Utah it’s certainly a big sport.

ES: Right.

DH: And I very quickly got involved with the Wasatch Mountain Club when we moved to Utah in 1970. Started doing some ski touring with the folks in the Club.

ES: Okay, so this would have been after you went to graduate school.

DH: Right. I went to graduate school in Cleveland, which seems like an unlikely place for a skier, but I figured I needed to get away from skiing if I was going to study.

ES: Oh really? Okay.

DH: That worked for a few years. After a few years I got involved with a junior program, which was alpine skiing, at one of the local ski shops, and started teaching kids how to downhill ski.
ES: Really? Where did you go for that? Did you have to travel quite a ways?

DH: No, it’s amazing. There were half a dozen ski areas within an hour of Cleveland, and we would take the kids to a different place every Saturday. We had a bunch of instructors, and go on buses, split the kids up in groups and teach them how to ski. And also there was one of the local ski areas where they had Wednesday evening slalom races, so I started doing some alpine skiing again at that point, which was kind of fun because there wasn’t much competition. You know, you’d get Peppy Somebody, some Austrian guy that was living in the area, who was a really great skier—

ES: Probably the ski school director or somebody.

DH: Maybe, maybe not, but he would be able to ski really well, so there was some people there that really knew what they were doing, but the field wasn’t very deep, and we had a lot of fun. Those were good times; kept my sanity while I was in Cleveland for a few years.

ES: Yeah, that’s important.

DH: But it was great to get back to the mountains.

ES: And you’d actually taken a break from Nordic skiing during that period, correct?

DH: Actually there was a little bit of cross country skiing at that time. One of the local ski areas was run by an Austrian guy who decided he wanted to have a little cross-country trail at his ski area. It seemed like he even had a race. It was a really short course, you know. And when I’d go back home for Christmas and holidays I’d ski around in Rumford or wherever I happened to be. So I did some Nordic skiing. Then in the park when it would snow in Cleveland I’d go ski around the park on my cross-country skis. Tracks didn’t last very long.
ES: I’m sure.

DH: I did enough to remember how to do it.

ES: What brought you out to Utah?

DH: Well, one of my colleagues in grad school knew that I was a skier, and when I finished my last year of graduate work he asked me where I was going, and I said, “Well, I don’t have a job.” This was 1970, and the economy was really tight.

ES: And you had finished your graduate degree in...?

DH: I went to Case Western Reserve in Cleveland.

ES: Right.

DH: This was during my last year when I was working on my dissertation.

ES: And your degree was in...?

DH: Electrical engineering. He asked me where I was going to go, and I said I didn’t know. I was looking for a job. I thought maybe I’d like to go out West, and I was looking at maps and trying to find places that were near skiing. He said, “Well, I’m from Salt Lake City, and I think you’d really like it there. You ought to check out Salt Lake.” I said, “No, no, no. I want to go where there’s skiing. I don’t want to go to the desert.” And he said, “Nah, there’s skiing in Salt Lake! You really ought to check it out!” And so we chatted a little bit. It turned out that his brother-in-law was getting married in June, and we were going to be on our way West driving around looking for a job for me, and he said, “Look, you stop in Salt Lake, and we’ll find a place for you to stay, and I’ll show you around, and you can just see if you like it.” Needless to say, it didn’t take very long to figure out that there were indeed mountains and skiing in Utah. In fact, in June there was still a ton of snow at Alta. It was amazing.
ES: That would have been, say, 1970 or so?


ES: Okay.

DH: So I looked around for work and managed to find a job here. Had been to other places as well. Had a couple of other job possibilities, but this one was the one that I decided to take, so we ended up here. No regrets.

ES: Had you been to the West before?

DH: When I was a senior in high school I went to the Junior Nationals in Yakima, Washington. We got on an airplane in Boston and stopped in Chicago, and stopped in, I don’t know where, probably Seattle. I don’t remember where we flew to; must have been Seattle, and then drove up to Yakima. So that’s the only time I’d been west of Lake Placid, New York.

ES: Why did you feel like this was the place for you? Was it just the landscape?

DH: Well, I mean, it was a combination of everything: the mountains, the amount of snow that they had in June, the skiing I could tell was going to be phenomenal, and I found a good job that was a real good fit.

ES: So they hired you at the University pretty much right away?

DH: No, actually I worked for Univac for twelve years. Yeah, I went to work in industry for a while. I thought I might want to be a teacher, actually, but I had had a couple of professors who never had worked for a living; they went right into teaching (never worked in industry) and I thought that’s not fair to the students. These guys have no clue what it’s like outside of academia. They just know how to do research, and so I thought I’d work for five years, maybe, and then go to the University or try to get a University
job. But I ended up staying for twelve years. It was a great group of people that I worked with, so I stayed there for quite a while before coming here.

ES: And you feel that really benefited you in your position here?

DH: Oh yeah, absolutely! I think that’s the only way to go for somebody teaching students, most of who will end up working in industry. If you don’t have the industrial experience I think it’s hard to relate to what the kids are going to do. So, yeah, I think that was a good move.

ES: Now tell me a bit about how you became involved with skiing and the outdoors here. You’ve mentioned the Wasatch Mountain Club.

DH: Yeah, that really was the key. I started going on ski tours. There was no cross-country racing around here at the time. There was some alpine racing, actually, and I went to a couple of those races, but, you know, they were a little too competitive. It was a lot of college racers and people who were just out of college, and I was a duffer. I wasn’t having fun, so I didn’t do that much.

ES: Where were they racing? What areas?

DH: Brighton and Alta were the two places that I raced. There weren’t too many ski areas at the time—Solitude and Park City were open at the time. I think those were the only ones actually. Snowbasin may have, but that was too far away. I don’t know. But anyway, so I just started backcountry skiing with the Wasatch Mountain Club, and got to know a lot of people who were having a ball.

ES: Do you remember who some of the people you met who had an impact on you?

DH: Some of the key guys are people that you know like Alexis Kelner. I don’t know. You probably haven’t met Dennis Caldwell and his wife Karen.
ES: Not yet, no.

DH: But you’ve probably heard about them.

ES: Absolutely. They both taught here at the University.

DH: I believe they live in Sweden now. Yeah, Karen’s a Swede and Dennis is from here. Actually I don’t know where he’s originally from, but lived here at the time. The Swansons were very active cross-country skiers at the time. I’m trying to remember other people from back in those days. Oh, I know, Chauncey and Emily Hall who, amazingly—they’ve got to be in their eighties, and they still cross-country ski, live here in Utah.

ES: One of my professors is Mark Hall. I wonder if he’s their son. I know he’s from here.

DH: Ask him.

ES: He was a ski racer and his sister was a ski racer. I think that’s the same family.

DH: Could be. Father was a doc, orthopedic? I forget the orthopeds and the orthopods and the orthodons. He was a bone guy, how’s that?

ES: Okay.

DH: Orthopedic.

ES: Orthopedic surgeon, sure.

DH: Yeah, so ask Mark. I don’t know Mark, but very likely his parents were cross-country skiers. They were actively involved with the Wasatch Mountain Club. So yeah, those were some of the folks that I skied with quite a bit. Roly Pearson. Roly is a custom tailor here in town. You may be familiar with Roly Caps.

ES: Absolutely.

DH: Have you worked down at Wasatch Touring? You know that?
ES: Yes I do. Absolutely.

DH: You’ve met Roly?

ES: He’s quite the character. Interesting guy.

DH: He is, yes. He was my buddy. He and I probably put in more miles and hours together in the backcountry than anybody I’ve seen.

ES: Really?

DH: Yeah. When I was working on the first edition of Wasatch Tours, Roly and I would go out there every weekend and explore new places, thrash through the puckerbrush trying to find routes down the canyons where nobody—we didn’t know if anybody had skied before. I didn’t know if they had.

ES: What was it about him? That you just hit it off?

DH: Aw, he was just a free spirit. He had time. He was single and he could go out any time. I’d just call him up, and he’d say, “Yeah, sure, let’s go.” Yeah, we had fun. He was a great skier, is a great skier. He can really crank among the trees.

ES: Where do you remember going on the first tour or the first tours you did out here with the Wasatch Mountain Club?

DH: Boy, I don’t remember where I went for the first tours. I remember my son was born two weeks after we arrived in Salt Lake in July, and in that first winter I remember taking him in a backpack ski touring up above Brighton, toward Katherine Pass. My wife and I used to trade off on Sunday. She’d go to church in the morning, and I’d go up to Brighton and go skiing. You know, take the baby in the backpack; and then she’d come up after church and would ski, and I’d take the baby home.

ES: Cool.
DH: Sometimes I’d ski at the resort and not have the baby. She’d keep the baby and take the baby to church, and I’d just ski at the resort and we’d trade the ski pass for the baby. So anyway, to answer your question, I think Brighton. The Brighton area was probably the first ski tours that I did. That’s the first ones I remember. I remember in 1972 we were skiing during the Lake Blanche tour when we encountered an avalanche off of Cardiac Ridge, which Alexis probably told you about.

ES: I believe so, yeah.

DH: Where I happened to have my movie camera running.

ES: Is that right? Do you still have that film?

DH: Oh yeah, and have since made it into a video. In fact, I have aspirations of putting it on a CD, but I haven’t done that yet. Now that the technology is well understood.

ES: What kind of impact did seeing something like that have on you and your position of backcountry touring?

DH: I had been a little concerned before that about seeing tracks in places where I thought maybe there might be some avalanche danger, but never really had a true appreciation for what avalanches can do. There weren’t a lot of people in the backcountry at that point. I was always out with people who seemed to know what they were doing. You know, we did some hard stuff but we never got into any trouble. Occasionally, like I remember skiing down into upper Solitude Canyon from Brighton. There’s some steep slopes up above Lake Solitude, and skiing down and having the snow kind of slough down around me, and thinking, “Whoa, this is really neat. This is what an avalanche is all about. This is no problem.” You know, I was in the trees, and there wasn’t a lot of snow moving, and it wasn’t moving fast, and no big deal. But then seeing that Cardiac bowl go
with a couple of people in it was eye opener. At that point I realized that, you know, this is serious business, so I need to learn a little bit about what this is all about. So at that point I started studying about it, and I started teaching classes and getting involved with classes for the Mountain Club. Alexis had a whole bunch of slides. I put together the presentation to go with the slides. So he and I taught classes together or separately for quite a few years after that. That’s when, it was probably ’74, maybe ’75, when Mel Davis, who was also in the Mountain Club, got Alexis and I together one evening at his house and said, “You know, both of you guys have been talking about writing a book about cross-country skiing in the Wasatch, and I had wanted to put together a book about some of the beginning and intermediate tours to try to help people to find places where they could ski without getting into a lot of avalanche danger.” Alexis, on the other hand, wanted a way to show some of his photography, and to tell people about what he called the “super tours,” you know, these humungous before-dawn-till-after-dark cross-country ski outings. I don’t know if you’ve seen the first edition of our book—

ES: I have actually, yes.

DH: So you know about the super tours. That was Alexis’ idea. The first few chapters were my contribution to the book. So anyway, he sat us down and said, “How about if you guys just get together and do a book, and I’ll publish it.” He had a company called Wasatch Publishing, and they had published some hiking guides. So anyway, that was the beginning of Wasatch Tours. It took us a year or so to get it all together. Turned out to be a pretty good combination, I think, of the easy and the hard. Kind of gives people some choices as to how deep they wanted to get in. And then Larry Swanson, who’s a pilot,
flew us around, and Alexis would lean out the window of the plane with this big camera and take the aerial photographs that you see in the books.

ES: They’re beautiful. I mean, they’re so well done.

DH: I’d be sitting in the back with a bag trying to keep from losing all my inner organs.

[Both laugh.]

ES: Do you remember what kind of plane you were flying in? Was it just a little single engine?

DH: Oh, Piper.

ES: Three or four seater?

DH: Yeah, it was a four seater, but I always got the backseat because Alexis had to do the photographing in the front.

ES: Oh, of course. And were you in there trying to take notes?

DH: Yeah, and telling him—you know, Alexis only knew about the tough tours, so I was trying to get him to take photographs of some of the places that I wanted to include in the book, so I was directing traffic there. Larry was flying, and Alexis was photographing, but Larry would have to tip the plane enough sideways so that Alexis could get the shot that he wanted out the window. When a plane is tipped sideways it loses elevation and kind of slides down. And so, you know, my stomach would be up on the ceiling for a while, and then he’d pull out and my stomach would be down on the floor. Ohhh. [Laughing] It was pretty crazy.

ES: [Laughing] Did you ever have any close calls? I mean, there’s some updrafts that will come off some of those peaks.

DH: Larry is really good.
ES: So I've heard.

DH: He is amazing. No, we never had anything where I was concerned for my safety, only concerned for my stomach. Yeah, I remember one day I had a one o'clock meeting. I was working at Univac at the time, which is right next to the airport, and we were photographing Lone Peak, and we came down Bell's Canyon, and Larry got a little playful and started doing a slalom course down Bell’s Canyon while losing elevation—incredibly fast. And we landed at the airport, and I was so close to the edge of losing my lunch that I could hardly walk to get to my meeting, and I just sat there totally dazed. It took me all afternoon to recover. He never did that to me again. But even then I wasn’t worried about dying. He’s very safe and very knowledgeable.

ES: Yeah, incredibly well traveled and so modest.

DH: He is. He’s pretty amazing. Yeah, you probably heard about their King’s Peak tours.

ES: Absolutely. They’re still going on.

DH: Yeah, I did it last year.

ES: Did you?

DH: Yeah. Have you ever been up with them?

ES: You know, no. I’m thinking I’m going to have to do it this year.

DH: Oh yeah, it’s fun, I mean, if you get nice weather. We had perfect weather last year. It was just wonderful. You can get some uglies.

ES: He started those in ’75.

DH: Is that right? I don’t remember when it was.

ES: Do you remember when the first one that you took was?
DH: No. I’ve been on a half a dozen. Only made the summit a couple of times for reasons that were mostly my own fault, like not drinking enough once and getting dehydrated and nauseous. Only made it up to the Gunsight Pass one year. I don’t remember why I didn’t make the summit other years, but, anyway, have made it a couple of times, including last year, which was nice.

ES: Yeah, I guess last year the conditions were great.

DH: Oh, perfect. Yes, just wonderful, other than getting lost. Followed the wrong track in the morning. A couple of guys had come up the night before and gone up a side canyon. You know, we always leave in the dark. A bunch of us went up and followed the wrong track; didn’t realize it. I hadn’t done it for many years, and the people behind me who weren’t right with me but they happened to follow my tracks, had never done it before. They were people I knew, it turned out, and we finally got to where this guy was camping out, and we knew we were way off track.

So we traversed around, cut into some nasty rocks and trees, and finally got back to the trail. Because it had snowed quite a bit the week before, the main group had been going quite slowly because they were breaking trail, so we caught up to them before they got to the summit. Went up to the summit with the group. Anyway, it worked out well.

ES: Certainly sounds like it. Um, I’d like to revisit a little bit about before you started teaching these avalanche courses was there within the Wasatch Mountain Club a concern for safety and a discussion about safety while you were touring?

DH: Oh yeah, absolutely; and in fact, the day that we had the avalanche in ’72 the group that I was with was concerned that it might not be a safe tour to do. So we stopped at the guard station at Alta, and Ron Perla was working there at the time. Actually, it was Peter
Lev who was there that day, Peter Lev. And we talked to Pete, and he said, "Well, you know, obviously can’t guarantee anything," but he said, "I think you’ll probably be okay." He said, "Oh, I wish I could go with you guys, but I’ve got to work today." And so, you know, we kind of took that as being a recommendation that all was well.

ES: Now were there sources that you could go to. I mean, could you ask the Forest Service at guard stations?

DH: Yeah, well that was the alternative. You know, if there wasn’t a recording.

ES: Oh, absolutely not.

DH: No webpage on the Avalanche Center.

ES: No Utah Avalanche Center.

DH: Correct. So you’d talk to people that you knew. And probably the people that you knew hadn’t been out since last weekend, and so they really didn’t know about current conditions.

ES: Right.

DH: But, you know, Pete was pretty much in touch with things, more than anybody else, so that was the kind of person that we tried to connect with when we were concerned about a tour.

ES: Sure.

DH: But anyway, we got up to the big bowl in upper Cardiff. We knew that that was the place that was going to be a problem if any place was, so we spread way out, one person at a time going across the bowl. You know, did things the way one should do when you go out with a group on questionable terrain. Actually, I was first across the bowl, and I had gotten all the way to ridge and taken my skis off and was having lunch. I had my
camera, this little 8 mm camera, and I took a picture of the guys coming across, set the camera down, and was eating.

A couple of other people had gotten almost to where I was, and then somebody hollered, “There’s an avalanche!” Fortunately nobody was caught, but I grabbed my camera and took a picture of just the tail end of this avalanche going down. The fracture line continued along the track. It fractured right at the track, and the fracture line continued right between the skis of one of the other guys, so we figured maybe there was something else that could happen. After some debate he took his skis off and tried to climb straight up to get out of the avalanche area. It was too deep. He just couldn’t move. We decided, “Put your skis on and just get out of there as fast as you can,” which is what he did, but he hadn’t taken three steps before--this time it fractured above the track, and so he got flushed.

ES: Ooh, wow.

DH: He and one other person. But fortunately both were high in the avalanche debris; and when he came to a stop, he stuck his hand up. He was right at the top, at the surface of the snow so we could see where he was, and he was able to clear snow out of his mouth. The other person, actually, just went down part way and got pushed out to the side.

ES: Wow! What was going through your mind when that happened?

DH: Actually I grabbed my camera and photographed it, which people say, “How could you do that? Your friend was caught in an avalanche!” Well I don’t think I realized the significance. You know, I was thinking, well, so he rides down the mountain, and he’ll climb back up, and we’ll go skiing, and we’ll be where we were headed over at Lake
Blanche. But he lost his skis and poles and pack, as did the other person. He was pretty shaken up at the time. It began to sink in at that point that maybe this is not something to play with. You need to be a little more careful.

Anyway, it turned out, because we had talked to the ranger--he was skiing at Alta at the time, one of the ski patrolman noticed that a fracture line—

**ES:** Is that right?

**DH:** You can look over Cardiff Pass and see the big bowl up there below Cardiac Ridge, and so he contacted Pete, and Pete said, “Oh my God! I know what’s going on over there.” So they grabbed the helicopter and came over to check up on us. By that time we were skiing down. One of the guys that lost his skis and poles, was riding behind another guy on his skis, you know, hanging on, just trying to get down the canyon. One other person had given one ski to the second person who lost his equipment, so they were each skiing down with one ski. They both took a helicopter ride back to Alta. The rest of us came down through Big Cottonwood. Pretty crazy.

**ES:** Gosh! Did that change any way that the Club operated on tours? Did it make any official policy after that, or change the way it did tours?

**DH:** I don’t think so. No, I think everybody realized when you go cross-country skiing you take chances. I think maybe other people came to the realization as I did that it was a little riskier than they had thought. Stayed away from the big open bowls a little more.

**ES:** Sure.

**DH:** I certainly didn’t ski too much out of the trees after that, but I’ve seen a lot of avalanches over the years, where they had occurred, and I’ve skied in places where there have been avalanches when I felt it was safe. I remember one day Roly and I were skiing
Reynolds Peak in Big Cottonwood, and we traversed across the bottom of the big bowl below the peak, into the trees, and went up on the ridge, and started hiking up the ridge. When we got beyond the trees up near the peak we looked back down, and where we had walked across a half hour before a big avalanche had come off the peak and our tracks were covered with refrigerator-size blocks of snow.

ES: Yeah?!

DH: So, once in a while, something wakes you up to the fact that you’re not being as careful as you really should be, but I think in general the Club is pretty careful. But, I mean, if you’re going to ski some of the fun slopes, there’s risk.

ES: Sure. What did risk mean to you then, and do you feel that that’s changed over the years for you?

DH: Yeah, I’ve become more conservative over the years. You know, I don’t think I felt that my life was in danger any place that I went, even before that. I mean, I didn’t feel that way that day, but I’ve become increasingly conservative over the years. My feeling about risk is it’s not worth losing my life to enjoy some powder skiing. So the question is, what can you do without putting yourself in that kind of danger? Like I say, I’ve been more and more conservative as the years have gone by as to what I feel I’m willing to do, and not put myself, put my life, in danger.

ES: Let’s talk a bit about the equipment that you were skiing on in the backcountry during this period. How was that different from what you had been racing on, if it was at all?
DH: It wasn’t, actually. It was pretty amazing. I showed up on the scene in 1971 or 2, or whatever year it was, with my old racing skis, a pair of Bonna wooden racing skis. They were pretty sturdy skis.

ES: Yeah, beautiful ski.

DH: Cross-country skiing to me was to go out on my old wooden Bonnas and ski around in the snow. Some of the guys that I started skiing with were skiing on some slopes where you had to ski down the hill, and I eventually learned how to turn. I learned that at the alpine ski areas on my downhill skis—

ES: Right.

DH: ---but was quickly able to translate that to cross-country skis, because the racing skis were fairly soft in the tip and they were narrow, and so you’d sink down in, but still if you made the right motions they were great in powder, and they really turned well. They weren’t good in snow that was at all hard packed, windblown snow, or crusty snow. You couldn’t do a thing. They were terrible, but in good powder they were fine. So I’d show up on Mountain Club tours with my, you know—I’d put wax on the skis and go climb up the mountain, and I could climb up reasonably steep slopes. It was so much easier to ski on those then what the other guys were skiing on, which were just downhill skis with cable bindings and skins, which were a lot heavier.

ES: Yeah. These would have been the seal skins or mole hair skins, right?

DH: Yeah. They couldn’t go as fast as I could, so I ended up breaking trail all the time. Because I was breaking trail I could set a track that wasn’t too steep for me to go with my wax.

ES: Sure.
DH: Whereas, if the people with skins were setting the track, you know, I wouldn’t be able to go up the tracks that were that steep. But anyway, it worked out well, and I was able to ski down a hill as long as the snow was good. If we’d get into windblown stuff, I’d be doing traverses and kick-turns when everybody else was skiing, making good tracks. It worked out fine. I had the bamboo poles with the big baskets, which other people did as well. My boots were lighter weight. Actually, what I toured with were a pair of old jumping boots that came up a little higher, so they came up around my ankles. Whereas, the touring boots were below the ankle, you know; they were cut lower. I actually did ski with those for the first year or so, and then I started skiing with my jumping boots instead. I put a piece of rubber on the bottom of the toe so I could clamp the boots into the regular three-pin bindings.

ES: Gotcha.

DH: Actually had some four-pin bindings at the time, and they would hold the boots in very nicely. Worked well. Kept my feet a little warmer.

ES: Would the extra height of the jumping boot, would that just give you more leverage, make it easier to turn?

DH: I don’t think that made a difference. I’ve never been a telemarker, by the way. I always parallel. So I skied on my cross-country skis just like I skied on downhill skis.

ES: Huh? You just try to keep your weight on your heels?

DH: I’m not very good at telemarking, although I can if I have to, if you keep your weight flat on your feet. If you think about the technique you use when you parallel ski in powder, you’re not leaning forward.

ES: Right.
DH: You’re leaning, not real far back, but you’re fairly square over your skis, and a little bit back, if anything. So it worked.


DH: Whether you [inaudible]

ES: That’s not the problem.

DH: Right, exactly, exactly.

ES: What about other people? Did other people telemark, or were they doing a similar parallel style that you were?

DH: They were parallel skiing, but they had their heels hooked down.

ES: Sure, oh, okay.

DH: Because they had the, they call it AT gear these days, but they’d get some old soft alpine boots, you know, the leather boots that wouldn’t wear their ankles off climbing up the hills. They work great. A little different these days with plastic boots.

ES: Yeah, I think it’s a lot different.

DH: Fancy bindings and fat skis, which I must confess is what I use today, because as I’ve gotten older I’ve found it more and more difficult to turn the old skis; especially in the trees I’m not as quick as I used to be, and I get nervous. And when you’re nervous you’re even worse. So I got some fat skis and plastic boots, and I can ski just like I always have.

ES: Yeah? What are your feelings on that? Do you feel that that’s made it easier and that it’s a good thing, or does that just make it so more people can do it, and make the backcountry too crowded?
DH: That’s exactly what I was going to say. You know it’s a good thing for us old guys. It’s a good thing to help beginners learn. It’s such a crutch that anybody can do it now. It’s no challenge to ski the backcountry any more, and so it’s way too crowded. I can’t really blame the equipment, because I wrote the guidebook, right? So I’m probably at least as much to blame for all the crowds in the backcountry. What can I say?

ES: That’s an interesting thing, yeah. When you wrote the guidebook your initial inclination was what exactly? I mean, you wanted to tell people about it. Was that—

DH: Yeah, I wanted to keep people safe, and have people learn to do something that I really enjoyed, but there were no crowds at the time, especially in the harder tours. People were skiing Mill D up to Dog Lake or Desolation Lake.

ES: That’s a great tour.

DH: Or skiing up above in Albion Basin before there were any lifts up there.

ES: How about Snowbird? Were people skiing into where Snowbird is now?

DH: Yeah. Those were some of the harder ones, though. That was not the beginner kind of tour that I was envisioning or in fact a lot of the people that were getting into the sport were skiing. Yeah, we had a couple of years. I had a couple of years of skiing Gad Valley and Peruvian Gulch before Snowbird ruined it.

ES: So with the backcountry skiing what was your rationale for getting into it? What did you enjoy about going in the backcountry?

DH: Well, I was skiing. You know, I just love to ski. I’ve always enjoyed downhill skiing. For many years I did some of each, and when my kids started skiing they started at the ski areas, and I’d go skiing with them all the time. I used to love to go out and just
cruise, you know; put on a lot of vertical feet on a Sunday morning when there was nobody at the ski areas.

END OF INTERVIEW
DAVID HANSCOM
Salt Lake City, Utah

An Interview by
Erik Solberg
3 October 2007

EVERETT L. COOLEY COLLECTION
Utah Outdoor Recreation Oral History Project

American West Center
and
Marriott Library
Special Collections Department
University of Utah
TODAY IS THE 3RD OF OCTOBER, 2007, AND I'M MEETING FOR A FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW FOR THE MARRIOTT LIBRARY MOUNTAINEERING AND SKI TOURING COLLECTIONS WITH DAVE HANSCOM. ACCOMPANYING ME TODAY IS ROB DEBIRK.

ES: I'd like to get going just by asking you a little more about these guidebooks. If you could tell me what the rationale behind writing was, who your intended audience was, and then how it was received by the community.

DH: Okay. I guess, from my point of view, the guidebook idea started back in about 1971. I came to Utah in 1970; started skiing with the Wasatch Mountain Club in the winter of '71. We did some pretty interesting backcountry tours, and I really had no inkling of the amount of risk that was involved. Then in 1972, I went on a ski tour with the Mountain Club, and we had an avalanche incident. This was in February, and we were skiing up from Alta, went over Cardiff Pass, and then paralleled the ridge on the Cardiff side. We were headed for Cardiac Bowl, and were going to ski over into Lake Blanche, but as we were crossing the bowl an avalanche occurred. A couple of our party were caught in the avalanche. One was buried, but we were able to get him out okay. That's a long story in itself, but we can talk about that some other time.

ES: Actually, yeah, I think that we described a little bit of that last time. That was your trying to reach Lake Blanche. Was Rolly with you that day?

DH: No, Rolly was not with me that day, but there were, I think, eight or nine of us that were there. Anyway, so at that point I realized that there was some pretty significant risk. Then throughout the winter I was observing ski tracks in places that really made me nervous, and I thought, there are so many people out here who are as naïve as I, who
really need to know what the risks are, and what to watch out for, and where they can go
to be safe and still enjoy some backcountry skiing.

Over the next year or so I was talking to friends about how a ski touring guide
really was needed, and I wrote a few things for the Wasatch Mountain Club Rambler. In
that period, I became ski touring director for a while. Also during that period of time, and
probably quite a while preceding, Alexis Kelner had been talking about writing a cross-
country skiing guide to the Wasatch. His goal was to write about all the really, he called
them “super tours,” tough tours that take more than a day. You have to leave before dawn
and seldom get home before dark. He was taking these amazing photographs of the
Wasatch. His black and white photographs are pretty incredible, and he wanted to write a
guide that would allow him to tell about these great tours and show some of his
photographs.

In about 1975, I believe, a mutual friend, who was also in the Mountain Club
board of directors, got us together one evening and said, “Okay you guys. You’re both
talking about writing ski touring guides for the Wasatch.” He said, “And I don’t think
either one of you’s ever going to get around to doing it, so how about if I publish the
book and you guys get together and write it!” He had published Wasatch Trails, and a
couple of other hiking guides to various areas in Utah, like the Uintas, for example. And
so he had a clientele, you know, and he was delivering books to some of the outdoor
stores.

ES: Do you remember what his name was?

DH: Yeah, Mel Davis is his name. He’s since passed away, within a couple of years
actually. So Mel said he’d publish it if we’d write it. That kind of inspired us to actually
get it done. So we did. We started working on it, and Alexis worked on the chapters that
described some of the more advanced tours, and I worked on the chapters that described
the easy tours, and avalanche safety, and various other aspects of cross-country skiing
that beginners would like to know about. I guess it was for Christmas of ’76 that the thing
actually got published and in the stores. Yeah, it was Christmas, because REI bought like
two thousand copies. I mean, it was amazing. They bought just boxes and boxes of
books.

ES: How many did you have printed up in the first run, do you know?

DH: Oh, we had several thousand. I don’t remember exactly how many. I could look
that up. I do have those records at home.

ES: So what other shops were interested in purchasing this book, or did you approach
other shops and say, “I have this book. Would you be interested in it?”

DH: Oh sure, yeah. We went to the outdoor stores that sold skiing equipment. They were
our first line of sales. At the time it was Wasatch Touring down here on 700 East, which I
don’t remember if they had moved to the 700 East store, or if they were still on 800 East.
I think they were still on Eighth and Third South. Anyways, so they sold a bunch.

Kirkham’s has been a good outlet. White Pine in Park City. All the stores that sold
equipment were interested in selling the guidebooks. Then we went to the bookstores.
Had a little less success with them. They sold some, but not a lot, so University
Bookstore, King’s English, I remember. Zions Bookstore. Who else? What was the
bookstore just over here on 1300 East? They’ve gone out of business.

RD: Waking Owl?
DH: Waking Owl bookstore, right. Yep. We sold some at bookstores, but the market definitely was a lot bigger at the outdoor stores, and REI has always sold more than anybody else put together.

ES: Tell me about other sources for safety instruction and risk management, in addition to your guidebook. Where would you go if you wanted to learn about avalanche safety when the guidebook came out?

DH: There were some really good sources. Alexis illustrated the Forest Service’s—I can’t remember what they called it, but it was a book about avalanches and avalanche safety. He had a lot of illustrations that we were able to make use of in our first edition. Then Ed LaChapelle had written *The ABCs of Avalanche Safety*, which was a small paperback that had just covered that topic. I guess those were the primary sources at that point in time.

The Wasatch Mountain Club has conducted an annual clinic for avalanche safety. I taught that a few times back when I was touring director and afterwards. We would have a classroom session in the morning, and we’d go through essentially what’s in chapter two of the original volume of *Wasatch Tours*, which includes all the important things like planning a tour, and then once you get there, route finding; and when you’re out touring, how do you behave when you’re in avalanche terrain, and what do you do if you get caught in an avalanche.

Alexis had put together a set of slides that helped us to illustrate those talks, so that is something that still goes on, in fact; but it was started actually before I started teaching the class.
ES: Now I believe it was Bill Conra(?), I might be getting the name wrong, but one of the people who was instrumental in climbing and skiing around here, actually worked just below the Albion Basin road at Alta, and you could stop in and ask him about the conditions. Can you tell me if there were other people that did similar things?

DH: The Alta guard station has been manned by at least one person for years and years. Bill Conra was one of the people that was there, and there have been a lot of others, a lot of people whose names are still well known in the avalanche safety field. You know, Pete Lev was one. I’m thinking Ron Perla. Maybe he wasn’t at the station. Brad ---?--- was there for a while. He’s been dead for the last—but anyway, yeah. Before the Avalanche Forecast Center became available, there were people who were hired by the Forest Service to study snow safety, basically, and then be able to provide information to the ski areas and to the highway department to help them know when it was safe to have the road or the ski area open, and when some shooting could be done before that would happen.

I don’t remember when the Avalanche Forecast Center started, but it certainly wasn’t as long ago as that. Maybe they’ve been going for twenty years. Maybe you know better than I exactly when they started. That’s been a great source of information. They had the recording on the phone for a few years, and then they started a website. They are doing just an amazing job!

ES: Tell me about the type of safety gear you were carrying with you. Did you have different transceivers in this day?

DH: No.

ES: Did you have probes?
DH: When I first started backcountry skiing, the only thing that we did was we would tie a long piece of red perlon cord around our waist or to our belts and let it stream out behind us when we skied down the mountain, and the hope was that if you were buried that at least some part of that cord would be on the surface. At some point we realized that just because we knew that somebody was buried under there didn’t mean we were going to be able to get them out, and so we started carrying shovels, which certainly improved the probability of having a successful recovery, but they didn’t have the real lightweight small shovels that fit into your pack.

Actually, Alexis was the one that found these grain shovels, which were pretty good size shovels, not huge, but something you might use for shoveling your walk back at that time, not the scoop-type shovel, but pretty compact. Then he cut off the handle so that it was really short, and drilled a hole in the handle and a hole in the top of the blade, and had a bolt that went through with a wing nut to hold it on so you could store the two pieces in your pack separately. Then if you had to dig somebody out you’d screw the pieces together and be able to dig. That was the first for that sort of thing.

The next thing that we thought about was probes. At the time the only probes that existed that I knew about were at a ski area if somebody got buried. They just had these long pieces of pipe that they would use. You know, they’d pull them out of their storage and haul them up on a snowcat or whatever to where somebody might be buried, and line people up and probe for the victim. But, anyway, it seemed like we ought to be able to do better than that. I was working at Univac at the time, and I had a bunch of mechanical engineering colleagues, so I spent some time talking to them about materials and how could we design something like this. Eventually they figured out a way to design a probe
and we experimented for a while, and finally got a design that sort of worked. Certainly nothing compared to today’s probes, but it was aluminum tubing.

I used the lathe to put, to build a little plug that goes in one end, and the plug had a hole in it so we could put some steel cable through it. The cable threaded through, I don’t know, six or eight sections of this aluminum tubing that was cut off short enough so we could stick it in a pack. Also, we had a spring in series with the cable, and then the cable came out of the top end of this series of short tubes. I put a little ring on it, like a key ring. You could stick your finger in it. So basically what you’d do would was you’d fold it up and stick it in your pack, and then if you needed to use it you’d take it out you’d put the sections together, and you’d pull on the little ring, and it would stretch out the spring and attach to the cable. It had a hook so that it would hook over the end of the top piece on the tubing and hold all the pieces together. You know, there was a little more to it than that, but that generally is how it worked.

I made about fifty of those, and sold them to people in the Wasatch Mountain Club, particularly my friends who I might be out with to make sure somebody in the party other than me had a probe. I just sold them for whatever it cost me for materials, which wasn’t very much. Still have a couple of those actually.

ES: I’d like to see one; maybe take a picture of it.

DH: Yeah, sure. I just took a renewal avalanche class last winter, in fact, maybe the winter before, because I hadn’t been doing much backcountry skiing, and the transceivers are all new now, work a little differently. So just for the heck of it I brought my old probe just to show the guys that were teaching the class. The new ones have kind of a parachute cord that goes down through. The problem, I mean, there were many problems with mine,
but one was the cable tended to kink if you left the pieces folded up for very long, because the cable of was going back and forth through all of the sections. Then you’d straighten it out and the kink would have a bend in it, and the cable wouldn’t slide through very well. But anyway, the one that I pulled out for this class a couple of years ago, the cable broke when I tried to put it together [laughing] to show everybody how it worked, but it served its purpose for many years.

The probes were the next thing that came along and then transceivers. I remember the first transceivers came from Europe, and they were really expensive. There was a lot of debate as to whether it was worth it to spend all the money to carry the transceivers. Eventually the price came down a bit and more and more people started using them. I don’t remember the exact years when all of this happened, but certainly these days anybody with any smarts has got a transceiver. Some of the newer ones are pretty amazing with microprocessors in them to help you quickly locate a victim. With the old ones you just had the sound in your ear. It was the only way that you could figure out where somebody was, and as you got closer the sound got louder. So you walked a grid pattern and listened to the beep. As the beep got louder you cranked down the volume, and got closer and closer. Hopefully we’d come fairly close, and then you’d probe to try to find the victim. Fortunately I’ve never had to do that for real.

**ES:** Tell me about the practice. I’m assuming you would practice this occasionally.

**DH:** Yeah.

**ES:** What was that like?

**DH:** Well, interesting. Early on when I taught the classes for the Mountain Club all we had were the probes that I’d put together, so, you know, we’d set up a probe line. I guess
to start at the beginning—what we’d do for the classes is the instructors would go up the night before, and we’d build a simulated avalanche. We usually went to the mouth of Days Fork. There’s an old ski jump up there. This you may know in your studying of the history of skiing in Utah. So just above the campground in Days Fork is where the old ski jump was, and the landing hill was pretty steep. We’d go up there and we’d shovel, and shovel, and shovel, and we’d shovel snow down off the landing hill into a big pile at the bottom, and we’d bury a pack in the debris the night before so it would freeze up, and you know, you could walk on the surface. It was a pretty good simulation of an avalanche.

For the class we’d go someplace, usually Zion Lutheran Church, for the morning and talk about all the important things that people needed to think about; and then in the afternoon we’d go up and we’d look for the victim. As I say, early on all we had was the probe, so you’d leave a few clues so people would have some idea of where to start looking, and then set up the probe line. You know, you’d practice. Sooner or later somebody’s probe would hit the pack that was buried.

Nowadays it’s a lot easier to do training sessions. Really all you need is a big flat area with a foot or so of snow. You run around and make a bunch of tracks and bury a transceiver some place; send people off to look for it. It’s a little easier to do things these days effectively.

**ES:** Tell me about how the new technology and this increasing interest in safety affected (1) kind of your mental, kind of your thinking about skiing and safety; and (2) what would you would actually do when you were out there. Did you feel like you did tours you ordinarily wouldn’t, or you took more risks because of it, or less risk?
DH: You know, I like to think that I am still as safety conscience as I ever was. I know I am now, but that I continued to be safety conscience and would not or did not ski places that I wouldn’t have even if I didn’t have all of the equipment. I don’t know if that’s really true, but I like to think it is. But at this point, Bruce Tremper has me convinced that if you look at the statistics, if you’re using a transceiver to find somebody, you’re very likely looking for a body; you’re not looking for somebody that’s alive. So having a transceiver just basically helps you find the body before spring, whereas without the transceiver it would take longer to find somebody. But the chances of finding somebody alive are pretty slim. Now there are certainly exceptions to that, and thank goodness there are exceptions to that. But if you’re a skier, and you’re out there going places that you wouldn’t go without a transceiver, you’re thinking is not good, but I think a lot of people do that. I think they’re a lot of people, whether it’s conscious or unconscious, that do go places that they wouldn’t if they didn’t have a transceiver.

ES: Okay. I’d like to just go back a little bit, return to maybe having you talk about how the guidebook was received among people that you knew, and then what you heard about it being sold in these retail stores. Basically, if you could talk a little bit--did people from other places appreciate it? Did it seem to grow and promote skiing in the Wasatch?

DH: I’m afraid it did promote backcountry skiing in the Wasatch to some extent. That’s the curse of being the guidebook writer. You have to live with the knowledge that probably you’ve increased the problem that you were trying to solve because there are more people doing these things.

But to answer your question, the book was very well received. The first edition sold a lot of copies the first years, and I have the statistics. I didn’t think to bring those,
but I can show you a graph that illustrates how many copies were sold in each of the years that the books were available. I mentioned earlier that REI bought two thousand copies. I was exaggerating. I think they actually did buy five hundred copies the first year. So the first year that the book came out there was such a demand for it that I’m sure we sold a thousand copies the first year, and then continued to sell a lot of copies as the years went by. Volume Two, in particular, from the second edition, has been a big seller because it covers the areas that are close to Salt Lake City.

But anyway, the book was well received. We got a lot of great publicity, mostly locally. A few copies were sold elsewhere. I think people liked the avalanche safety chapter, and also we had a chapter on equipment, you know, what to buy when you want to go backcountry skiing, and what are the tradeoffs of different kinds of equipment. But it pretty much was a local interest, because the first book just covered the four canyons close to Salt Lake City. What we found in addition was that hikers were buying the book. The book has a lot of aerial photographs. I don’t know if I mentioned the last time, but Larry Swanson was the pilot that flew us around—

ES: Oh yes, right, he was flying you in that--

DH: Yeah, he flew us around, and Alexis would take photographs. Those photographs were great for people who wanted to go hiking up, you know, along the ridges and upper bowls where there weren’t any trails, because they could look at photos. The routes that we marked on the photos pretty much followed the hiking routes, so people could see how to get up into the upper bowls, and then they could see if they wanted to do a ridge from some place, how to get from place to place. So anyway, it did sell quite a bit among
the hikers, as well as the cross-country skiers. We did get a lot of publicity from the local newspapers and the TV outlets.

ES: Was there ever a scenario—I'm thinking about a Michael Kelsey's guidebooks. I don't know if you're familiar with his book. I don't know if you're familiar with his work--

DH: Yeah.

ES: --but he's a local author. He was actually blamed for the death of I know at least one woman or a group of hikers that were in a canyon where a flash flood had gone through. Was there any concern or any pointing of fingers if there was an accident, and people coming to you and asking you about, well, you know, "Why did you write this guidebook, 'cause it's only going to promote ends?"

DH: That certainly is an issue that has come up, fortunately never in a negative way for us. In other words, I don't know any situation where somebody has been killed because of bad information that we've put in the book. It was something we were really aware of, and we tried to error on the side of telling people to be very cautious in certain areas. We just kept telling people in the guidebook, "This isn't a good place to go unless the snow is totally stable." You know, we said that over and over so many times that our friends would hassle us for telling them they shouldn't go any place at all!

We also avoided telling people how long it would take to get some place because we know that's such a personal thing. We would say "it has this many vertical feet and it's this many miles" and let them figure out what the time factors would be. And, of course, snow conditions and whether or not somebody has been out there ahead of you—there are so many different parameters that would influence how long it would take to get
in and out of places—so, anyway, we tried to avoid the sort of thing that some guidebook writers have gotten themselves into. We did classify tours as being intermediate or difficult, or the super tours, as Alexis used to call them, to let people know that their skiing ability was something that they should be aware of relative to the terrain we were describing.

Yeah, you know, I mentioned earlier it’s been a concern of ours that as guidebook writers we’re encouraging more people to get out there and be in the backcountry, and it’s getting crowded out there now. I don’t know how much of that is a result of what we’ve done. It’s easy to rationalize and say to yourself, “Well, if we don’t do it, somebody else will do it, and they won’t do as good a job. They won’t be so careful as to warn people about all the dangers.” Anyway, it’s a point well taken, and something we’ve talked about, been concerned about.

**ES:** Tell me about maybe specific concerns that you would have. Is it just the sheer number of people, or is it the lack of education, or something else?

**DH:** Well, the sheer number of people, I think, is the result that—and we didn’t really foresee what was going to happen. I don’t think anyone could have foreseen how many people would be in the backcountry skiing as there are today. But my concern all along was to try to educate people, to help them go out and enjoy the backcountry without endangering themselves and endangering other people that were out there. Hopefully we succeeded in instilling in people some degree of understanding and therefore caution.

**ES:** Tell me about the type of sources or maybe models that you would base the guidebook on. Where did you get your information, or was this just all through you and
Alexis going out and taking tours, and researching with maps, and with photographs that you had?

**DH:** As far as the specific tours are concerned that was us. I spent many, many hours, enjoyable hours I might add, checking out terrain, trying to find new places to ski. Upper Millcreek, for example. I don’t know if people had skied all those side canyons, but I never heard of anybody doing it. In fact Rolly and I were the ones that did a lot of the exploration of those. I hardly ever have been out skiing with Kelner, by the way. We definitely went our own separate ways, for the most part, in backcountry skiing, and I’ve stayed more with the intermediate kinds of tours, and those are the areas that I explored. Alexis, as I mentioned earlier, likes the big open bowls and the super tours, going from Alta to Bell’s Canyon, or whatever. So Rolly and I did a lot of exploring of some of the newer areas, and Alexis wrote up tours that he was familiar with his past many years, from his teenage years, actually.

But as far as the chapter on avalanche safety, a lot of that came from Alexis having illustrated the Forest Service avalanche safety book, and I did a lot of studying of different references, and a lot of thinking about what would be a good way to lay out the material for that kind of a chapter when I was teaching the classes for the Wasatch Mountain Club. So my approach was different. You know, I organized things differently from what I had seen elsewhere, but there certainly were some good references at the time. *Snowy Torrents* was another good reference. That’s the Forest Service series of books that describes different avalanche incidents, so plenty of good references there.

The other chapter that I wrote was equipment and first aid, that sort of thing, and again, lots of good references there. The equipment I just went to all the shops and talked
to the guys who know about that sort of thing. First aid, you know, there were articles and there were magazines. I took a first aid class. So, a lot of good sources for that sort of thing. But the tours, themselves, we did research personally, checked out all the locations that we wrote about.

ES: Tell me about the content of the second and third volumes. The second you said was primarily the four canyon area, and the third is farther south, correct?

DH: Yeah, so the first edition—let’s talk editions and volumes. First edition was one volume, and the first edition had a chapter on equipment and first aid and all that kind of stuff, you know, hyperthermia and frostbite, and so forth. And it had a chapter on avalanche safety, and it had, of course, an environmental chapter since Kelner was the co-author. And then a chapter on Millcreek, and Big Cottonwood, Little Cottonwood, and Timpanogos areas. That’s all that was covered in that first edition.

The second edition, which we did in the mid-nineties, was a three-volume set, and I might add that I disagreed with doing it that way. I thought it should be a one-volume, a bigger volume, but not hugely bigger, but Alexis won that argument. We almost got a divorce over that one [both laugh], as Alexis is fond of saying. So anyway, the first volume of the three-volume set was beginner tours and avalanche safety and equipment. The beginner tours included just cross-country ski areas. We extended up into the Uinta Mountains, some of the places where they groom for snowmobiles and adjacent side canyons that were good for cross country skiing. We went all the way north to the Ogden area. I don’t remember the farthest south we went in the first volume, but certainly went south of Provo. That was the first volume.
And then the second and third volumes were intermediate and advanced tours, and we split that into two halves geographically. The first half went from Ogden down to Little Cottonwood Canyon. Then is volume three, second half, went from American Fork Canyon, Timpanogos area, all the way south to Mt. Nebo, and also included the Wasatch backs, so we talked about Daniel Summit, Park City/Midway area. We definitely expanded the terrain, and also expanded the coverage of the terrain we had covered before, so more options, in other words, for all levels of cross-country skiers.

**ES:** Tell me about your distinguishing between the intermediate versus advanced. Was this just a straight mileage and vertical feet or was it remoteness and other factors that might come into play?

**DH:** That’s a good question. I don’t remember how we—I don’t know if there was any numerical way of deciding which was which. I think we just kind of figured if an area was suitable for someone who didn’t have expert advanced skiing skills, that we’d classify it as intermediate. Most of the really long tours also involved some really involved terrain, so distance wasn’t so much an issue. You know, any of these tours you don’t have to go any farther then you feel comfortable. You can turn around and come back before you get to the top of a bowl or top of a ridge, whatever, so I think distance is less an issue than the difficulty of the skiing, which basically is steepness of the terrain.

**ES:** So since you said you preferred the intermediate tours, how would you describe those, and why do you think that you preferred those as opposed to the super tours.

**DH:** I don’t want to imply that I don’t enjoy getting out and skiing the steep slopes, but I’ve always been a little more cautious in backcountry skiing in general, and so I avoid the really steep slopes unless I’m convinced that the snow is really stable and I’ve felt
that way all along. I love to get out and ski the powder, and I feel more secure in the trees than I do out in a big open bowl just because of the uncertainty, maybe because I had little kids or something, back in that day. You know, it’s a matter of how much risk you want to take. I’ve done most of the big ski tours that are described in the book, although not all.

ES: Tell me the places you would go to buy equipment. What were those like during that period? Would you go there to hang out with people and talk about the new gear and compare routes, or was it more go in, go get your stuff, and get out?

DH: If you talk to any retailer, you’ll find that I don’t go in and buy a lot of stuff. [Laughing] Charlie ---?--- calls me a retailer’s nightmare. I’m more likely to buy used stuff than new stuff. So if I go into a store it’s probably more likely to hang out and talk about what’s going on and what’s new, where people have been skiing, where there’s good snow. When I was doing research for the various volumes of the book I’d go in and try to find out what’s new with equipment, in particular avalanche safety. I’ve subscribed to the American Avalanche Association newsletter for years and years, which is a great source of information, but it doesn’t necessarily tell you what you can go to the store and buy, and that’s what we really wanted to tell people about in the books and various articles that I’ve written as well. So yeah, I have spent a fair amount of time talking to the people that sell this kind of stuff.

ES: If you wanted something, let’s say a transceiver or something that you knew was only available in Europe, did you have a mechanism to acquire that?

DH: No, we waited until they were here and they were selling them in the stores, which took a while. You know the ski patrol people had them first, the guys doing avalanche
safety or avalanche control work, early morning and getting out, throwing bombs and stuff. They were the first ones to have transceivers. They started selling them here. I don’t remember who had them first, which store, but that’s when the ski tours started to buy them.

**ES:** Let’s talk a little bit about—I’m curious to hear if you or Alexis would enjoy backcountry skiing with your wives or if any women would participate on these ski trips? Maybe have you talk a bit about that.

**DH:** I don’t think Alexis’ wife has ski toured much at all. She’s had some health problems. My wife and I still go ski touring most every week actually. She’s interested in less and less difficult terrain, so at this point we ski along the Beaver Creek highway or places where it’s pretty flat. She doesn’t like to do any serious downhills at all anymore. But over the years we’ve skied various places up the [inaudible] canyons. When I skied with Mary it was mostly with other families, friends, you know, another couple or a couple of other couples. But for any kind of serious backcountry skiing, it was almost exclusively males.

Karen Caldwell, I remember, used to go on all the really tough tours. She was a Swedish gal that went to graduate school here at the University and stuck around and became a professor here. Married Dennis Caldwell; I think he was from here. He’s certainly has lived here as long as I’ve known him or about him. Another chemist, and they used to do all the tough tours. Karen is the only woman I can think of that was doing those early tours. Over the years there have been women that have come on tours that I’ve been on, on the Mountain Club tours. It’s been years since I’ve been out with the
Mountain Club. Mostly I just go out with a couple of friends, but typically not very many women along.

There were a couple of sisters back, this would have been in the late eighties, probably early nineties—I’m trying to remember their names—that came out with the group doing the advanced tours. Oh, the avalanche that we had back in ’72 that was kind of my awakening, Marge Yerbury was her name. She was on that—

ES: Do you know how that’s spelled?

DH: I would say Y-E-R-B-U-R-Y. She was on that tour, and was in fact one of the people, I believe, that was caught in that avalanche. She was right on the edge and got pulled down the hill. It was either her or the guy that was with her, but whoever it was lost skis and poles and pack, just like the person who was totally buried. So there’s another example, but there really weren’t very many.

ES: So what would you say was the average member of the Wasatch Mountain Club? Was it just a younger white male?

DH: Yeah, and younger relative to what? You know not terribly young—thirties. So, you know, not somebody in college or just out of college. Typically it was older, older than that. Young enough to be active and interested taking some risks, I guess, getting out and enjoying the powder.

ES: Now for you, what was your relationship with the Club? Did you participate in the Club to meet like-minded people and then break away to ski with them, or did you participate in just as many Club-sponsored trips and activities?

DH: Early on I participated in quite a few Club-sponsored activities. I went to grad school in Cleveland, and when we were driving West we stopped in Rocky Mountain
National Park and went hiking, my wife and I. We ran into somebody who was from Salt Lake, and we told them we were going to Salt Lake, and they said, “Oh, you’ve got to sign up for the Wasatch Mountain Club! It’s a great club! All kinds of good trips.” So we did, and it turned out to be excellent advice. We met a lot of people that were similarly minded, and people who liked to get out. They had trips scheduled every weekend, so I went on these hikes and ski tours and participated in the social activities. It was great.

The Wasatch Mountain Club was a really good way to get to know people and get started; but after a few years, I didn’t go out with the Club on club activities too often. The groups were a little too large; pace was a little too slow. I got kind of bored with going out with people that didn’t know what they were doing, so you’d spend a lot of time instructing, which was okay, but my time was fairly limited with two young boys, so I just wanted to get out and go for a half a day and then come back. So I started going more with just people that I knew or like-minded and interested in doing that particular tour, and going at the pace that I like to go.

ES: Okay. Actually, you know, now I think I’d like to begin talking about Nordic skiing. I know that you’ve done extensive competitions in the eastern United States—

DH: Right.

ES: --you were still very interested in it, it sounds like. When you arrived in Utah, describe for me, maybe, what the Nordic racing scene would have been like. Were there races?

DH: No.

ES: Were there people that were doing the same things as you at the time?
DH: No, there really was nothing going on. I’m sure the University of Utah had cross-country races. You know, obviously they did, but it wasn’t something that was open to anybody else. Not too long after I got here, there were people that were starting up ski touring centers. There was one at Brighton. The guys up in Park City started up White Pine in the mid-seventies. I remember Jacques Glidden(?) from up in Ogden used to have a race every year up at Snowbasin. That started somewhere in the mid-seventies. I don’t remember going up there to participate very early on after we arrived in Utah. I was mostly downhill skiing and backcountry skiing at the time. And I know that the guys at White Pine had a race every year, but, again, I don’t remember participating in that fairly early on. But it was pretty informal, you know, just a few basically backcountry skiers that had raced when they were in college or something. You know, they’d go up. There was no packing of the trails at that point in time. You’d just go out and ski in the trails and then have a race on them the same day or the next day.

ES: So then did you take the next step, or did you find some like-minded people who decided that you were going to try to promote Nordic skiing out here, and try to get together some sort of a body that would race and advocate for the sport?

DH: Actually, no. I wasn’t the person who initiated that. Jacques had his race up in Ogden, and the White Pine guys, I would say, were probably the first to do more promotion of cross-country ski racing. They started out having a touring center, actually in the mouth of White Pine Canyon, which is now a colony up by Canyons. Then they moved over to the golf course at Park City. They would pack their trail initially just with skis, and then snowmobiles came along, and they started riding around their track with a snowmobile. They would have races periodically, one or two a year.
I think it was the late seventies when Jacques and the two guys that ran White Pine, who were Steve Erickson and Jim Miller, decided that it would be fun if they kind of connected their races in a way that would encourage people to participate more in the race that wasn’t quite so close to home. So they started what they called the Wasatch Citizen Series. They would combine the results of the race in Park City and the race up in Ogden in Snowbasin, and declare a winner of the series. So that was around ’78-’79 timeframe.

So the Wasatch Citizen Series was pretty loosely organized for quite a while. There were a couple of people that stepped in and made a bigger deal of it—more races. By that time Brighton Touring Center was packing a track and they had a race up there. I can’t remember where else back in the early eighties. But anyway, so there were three or four races that were part of this series in the early eighties. Different people tried to make a go of it, but it wasn’t all that successful in that it was, you know, people would come and go, and some years it would be organized and some years it wouldn’t.

So somewhere about 1982 or 3 a group of us got together. Incidentally, there was also a Wasatch Telemark Series back at that time, basically down slalom, but there wasn’t ski areas.

ES: I’ve seen the memorabilia from it, but I’ve never really actually seen that anywhere.

DH: So it’s just a dual slalom. I don’t remember if they did dual slaloms at the beginning or not. I think they did. I wasn’t involved in the early eighties. So the Telemark series was, again, kind of loosely organized, and, you know, different people would have a go at it and then it would fade away. Anyway, a group of people who were telemark racers and track racers got together and discussed how we might be able to make this a
little more organized situation. What we ended up doing is forming the Utah Nordic Ski Association. The goal of the Utah Nordic Ski Association was basically to promote Nordic skiing in Utah, and included track racing, Telemark racing, backcountry skiing, and any other issues that related, be that interacting with the Forest Service, if they had issues. Where they wanted inputs from cross-country skiers we could be the focal point for that. At some point there was an Olympic feasibility committee set up somewhere in the mid-eighties, and they wanted inputs from cross-country skiers, so we were involved in that. The idea was just to have an organization that represented cross-country skiers, and in addition provide the consistency in organizing both Telemark and track races from one year to the next. As you might guess, there was quite a variety of people involved that included, in addition to the people I just mentioned, people that ran the ski shops and the ski touring centers, so the guys from Wasatch Touring, and White Pine, and Brighton, and so forth.

So the organization was formed. It was very successful, I think, in doing the things that we wanted to do, maybe with the exception of the Telemark Series. The people that were running the Telemark Series really didn’t have an oversight organization, I guess is the best way to say it. They also had a little different interest. You know, they were mostly people who skied at the ski areas, and they liked to ski fast and ski in gates. In general, they weren’t the same people that were backcountry skiing and track skiing, not interested in getting into any political issues. They just wanted to go out there and have their series, so they kind of went their own way. But otherwise, the group hung together pretty well for quite a few years, through the eighties, at least.
ES: Now these were the same people, Steve Erickson and Jim Miller, who were involved initially. Who else? You were on the committee and who else?

DH: Dwight and Charlie [Butler] from Wasatch Touring. Actually, I did bring my information from the Utah Nordic Ski Association, because we’re just in the process of dissolving this corporation.

ES: So, yeah, tell me about that. How did you organize? You were actually a corporation, and how did you get your funds that you were using?

DH: We didn’t have any funds for a long time. It was volunteers who were doing everything. I mean, I’m looking at an application to transact business under an assumed name for the Wasatch Telemark Series, and it’s got my name on it and Chris Larson’s name. Chris was a telly skier. I was representing the Utah Nordic Ski Association, and he was representing the Wasatch Telemark Series. When Chris resigned as director of the Wasatch Telemark Series, I think things kind of went downhill a little bit. I was just looking for a list of names from early on. I can’t put my hands on it, but Chris Larson was involved. Dean Hannibal. Remember, there was a store down on Highland Drive that sold camping gear and cross-country skiing gear, and they went out of business when REI came along.

ES: I believe it was called Timberline, wasn’t it?

DH: Timberline. I kept wanting to say Timberland, but I knew that was wrong, yeah. So Dean Hannibal with Timberline. Holubar was another store that was selling gear at that point in time. I’m not remembering the name of the guy that was there. I should get a list.

ES: Well Holubar I know that Dave Smith was involved in their Colorado operations, but I don’t know if he was—
DH: Dave Smith was involved in Timberline as well.

ES: Right.

DH: Now he’s involved at REI, works for REI. Holubar, there it is. This is interesting. In '82 and '83 the Wasatch Citizens Series included both track races and telemark races. So the Wasatch Telemark Series wasn’t formed until 1984. Stores like Sid’s(?), which still exists, Jans, and Timberhaus were involved in sponsoring races. And what the sponsors had to do was provide a few bucks to pay for the prizes. The first corporate sponsor that we had for the Wasatch Citizens Series would have been '84-'85, and that was Blue Cross Blue Shield. They were our overall sponsor, and they gave us a few thousand dollars to pay for race bibs and posters, flyers, and various supplies and awards, and so forth, and we’ve been successful over the years of getting various insurance companies and other companies to sponsor the Wasatch Citizens Series and provide us with some cash.

Wasatch Telemark Series I have not been involved in organizing, so I don’t know where they got their cash to operate, but typically what we have done is we would get a title sponsor that would give us a few thousand dollars, you know, somewhere between two and five thousand dollars per year, and that pays for our expenses. Otherwise, we would get as sponsors people who were willing to donate prizes that we could give away in drawings with the races. Our expenses are pretty minimal. It’s been totally a volunteer operation for the Citizen Series since back in the early eighties. Some of those early organizers were actually paying themselves. They were doing it for a small profit. Weren’t making very much, which I think is why there was inconsistency on people who were doing it. It would change hands from person to person and things didn’t work out
very well. We’ve had very few people actually that have been directors of the Wasatch Citizen Series over the years. It’s been a pretty consistent group of people that have kept that going for several years at a time. So that’s worked out really well. And a lot of sponsors have been with us for fifteen or twenty years.

I’m finding minutes from the meetings that I was looking for to tell you who was involved back then. Chris O’Lare(?) from Brighton. Chris O’Lare ran the Brighton Touring Center for a long time. Lincoln Clark from REI was involved way back. McKay Edwards, who actually started the Mountain Dell Ski Touring Center many years ago. Howie Garver, backcountry skier, photographer. You’ve seen some of his stuff. Dan Gibson, who was a track skier. RJ Guiney of Park City, who was a telly skier and a track skier. Bob Irvine from Ogden, who was mostly a track skier. I mentioned Chris Larson. Pat Miller, the University Ski Team coach way back in the eighties. Bob Meyers was involved. He was a Wasatch Mountain Club guy and very active in leading ski tours for the Mountain Club back then. I’m not sure when Sundance started up, but those folks have been supportive over the years. Jerry Richardson from Kirkham’s was involved early on. I guess those were the key people early on. Somewhere in this pile of stuff I have minutes from meetings and lists of attendees, but I think those are the key people that were involved early on in setting up the Utah Nordic Ski Association.

ES: Tell me about those early races. You mentioned you had four or five races a year, and also telemark races.

DH: Still do actually. Citizen Series still has five races. We went up to six for a while but decided five was better. Telly series, I’m not sure how many races they have. Incidentally, there was a time when we had a Ski Meister category, where they would
keep track of points from both the telly races and the track races, and then they’d give an award at the end of the year for whoever had the most points, however those were classified, but that kind of went away in the mid-eighties.

ES: I’d like to hear, I’m familiar with the system now, but the breakdown, this would have been after Bill Koch basically invented skate skiing—

DH: Well no, it was before that actually.

ES: Oh, it was, right.

DH: Yeah. We started out it was just, you know, a snowmobile at most to pack a track around here, and so it was classical only. So all of our races were classical races until somewhere in the mid to late-eighties, and then Kochy came up with his skating technique, and that was about the time we were packing tracks a little wider, two snowmobiles wide instead of one, and small snowcats, so you could do what’s called the marathon skate where you would keep one ski in the track and the other you would be off to get a little more speed.

Then the game was to see how little kick wax you could put on and still get up the hills. You know, it was just exhausting when we first started to learn how to skate up the hills. But pretty soon we figured out how to do it, and it was easier to skate up the hills then it was to kick and glide up the hill, so we stopped using kick wax all together, but that was quite a while after the Citizen Series started, because it took some pretty good equipment to be able to pack a track wide enough so you could truly skate. You know, it was mostly marathon skating, where you had one ski in a track, for quite a while.

Then pretty soon they started separating the skating lane from the kick-and-glide lane, and so people would just totally skate. It would be V1, V2 skating techniques.
Actually it was the V1 technique for a while, and then people figured out how to make
that faster by doing variations.

ES: So how did you learn to skate ski? Who taught you or how did you figure it out?

DH: Just, you know, you just do it. You try it and figure out how to make it happen.

Nobody was teaching that sort of thing back when we first started. We’d hear about Koch
and how he’d gone out and won some races. The scuttlebutt was that everybody was
trying to keep him from skating, so they’d put these little windrows of snow along the
side of the classical track to keep him from skating. For a long time the rule was that you
couldn’t do the marathon skate; you just had the classical, but then they started easing up
on the rules at the top level, and so we started doing the same thing. But, you know, we
had to figure it out ourselves. There wasn’t anybody who could tell us how to do it.

It turned out that there was some days, depending on the speed of the track, when
it was faster to stay in the track and do the marathon skate; and some days it was faster to
get out of the track, or maybe some parts of the course, even, it was faster to be out
versus in/in versus out, and so you kind of figured that out, where you could make the
best time. It’s still true, incidentally. Sometimes the track is real fast, gets a little new
snow or something, the flat part of the track is slower. So we figured it out, and then by
the early nineties there were people who were teaching that sort of thing. You’d get a
John Alberg who’d appear on the scene and would be willing to take people out and give
them some lessons. Mostly he gave us lessons at the races when he’d go flying by and
you’d wonder how the heck did he do that? How can he go so fast?

I remember one day; it was spring. We were at White Pine, and it was just total
slush. I mean, it was so soft that we were sinking in halfway to our knees. We had to ski
on a short loop because it was limited snow cover. But we were on a three kilometer loop at White Pine, and Alberg was in the first group that started out, and he lapped everybody. He went by us so fast. He was planing on the surface of the slush, and we were all down in and going so slow and working so hard. It was just amazing how somebody that has the right technique and enough strength and endurance can make it look so easy. Anyway, it was the nineties before there was a lot of literature that you could read or people out there who could teach you how to do it better.

**ES:** What role do you think the equipment had? It seemed like the popularity of skating increased—

**DH:** That was huge. The first skating was done on classical skis. They were really stiff, and then they had a wax pocket that wouldn’t be on the ground unless you really pushed down hard. They just weren’t designed to be skated on because they had the big tips on them. But then as skating equipment became, or I should say as cross-country skis designed just for skating became available, you know, they had little shorter skis with the shorter tips and flat on the ground, and designed to go straight and to be waxed from tip to tail with glide wax. It just made all the difference in the world.

The fastest I ever skied at West Yellowstone in their fifty kilometer course, the only time I ever broke two and a half hours, was after I was fifty years old. I was fifty-two or something, and it was an incredible time to be racing, because every year you’d ski faster, even though you were getting older. You’d figured, "Well, geez, I should be slowing down," but you’re actually going faster. It was the wax. They came out with the flora waxes that were really nice. I mean, just incredible speed, especially on wet snow when normally you’d think you’d be slogging around out there, and those things would
just fly. So yeah, the equipment, hand wax just made a huge difference in the way people were skiing and the speed at which people were skiing, to the point where a skating race became more like a bike race.

You know, people would ski in lines drafting one another because they could ski so much faster if somebody was ahead of them, just like biking. It would come down to sprints at the finish, whereas, you know, in the old days, people were so spread out that you’d get close finishes, but in general people were pretty much out there skiing at their ability level. Wax was certainly an issue, but your physical strength and endurance were the big factors. Nowadays tactics is huge. If you can stay at the back of a pack like bike racers, have enough left to sprint by the guy who’s been breaking the wind for fifty kilometers, you can win a race, even though you may not be the best skier in the group, which I really don’t like, but [inaudible].

**ES:** Why do you think that is?

**DH:** Well, I prefer to have the best skier win. That doesn’t necessarily happen. Somebody can just hang in the back until the end and go for it, which I don’t think that’s right. But the bike racers love it. That’s what they’ve been doing for years. Strategy is everything.

**ES:** So I’d like to hear a little bit more about these early Nordic races. Did you have age classes broken down as you do now, or was it a little less stratified?

**DH:** Well, it was less stratified, but for as long as I can remember had age groups. Started out with ten year age groups, but then as the numbers got larger and larger we split it up into smaller age groups, and so now we have five-year age groups, and now we have kids age groups. It used to be under sixteen or under eighteen or something, you
know. We’d just get a few kids, typically the kids of adult racers would come out, and mostly they were teenagers, so we’d group them all together. Then we’d have an over fifty or something category, so all the people that were over a certain age would ski in the same group. But now kids are two-year age groups, and all the adults are five-year age groups, as far up as anybody goes up. So if you’re an eighty-five year old, and there’s a seventy-five year old, you’re not in the same group. I mean, it just seems so much fairer to do it that way.

At the time dollars were somewhat of an issue. You’d have to give out medals or whatever you were using for prizes for each age group. If there were two people in an age group, it didn’t seem cost effective to give out awards; but these days, I mean, for example, a forty to forty-five year age group we might have thirty-five people, whereas we used to have maybe fifty to seventy people, let’s say, total showing up for a race.

**ES:** That’s what I was wondering about, how that had broken down the demographics and the numbers.

**DH:** Probably get half as many women as we do men, but interestingly in recent years about one-third of the Citizen Series racers are under eighteen, so the kids are becoming a bigger and bigger percentage of the numbers that we have. And it used to be that kids were just children of racers, and now the kids are bringing their friends, and the friends are bringing their parents, and so it might be parents of racers as opposed to kids of racers who are participating. It’s really been fun to see all of that evolve over the years. And the junior programs have gotten huge. The TUNA junior program, which is held at Mountain Dell, they have about a hundred fifty kids in their recreation program, plus they have a racing program, competition program with, I don’t know, fifty, twenty kids. And then
Park City has similar numbers, a huge program. Park City is totally separate from the TUNA program. There’s a program in Ogden, as well. Soldier Hollow has a program. Sundance used to, but I don’t know if they do now. But kids coming from all over; it’s great.

ES: In the earliest days of the Utah Nordic Ski Association though, (I know that TUNA now has those extensive children’s programs that you’re talking about) was there a program for children at the time?

DH: No, no.

ES: How did that come about?

DH: Oh, gosh. First let me just take one step at a time historically. In the late eighties there was the Park City Nordic Ski Club, and that was the White Pine guys. They had a group of people up there who were skiing together, and I believe they had a kid program that started about in the very late eighties, but it was very successful. They had a lot of people getting involved. The Utah Nordic Ski Association as an entity was kind of dying out. The Wasatch Citizen Series kind of was doing its own thing, and, you know, those of us who were organizing it knew that the Utah Nordic Ski Association was the parent organization. That was the 501C3 Corporation that allowed us to be non-profit and not have to deal with income taxes and all of that. But it was just an oversight organization. There were a group of people who got together who decided why don’t we combine the Park City Nordic Ski Club, which is mostly Park City people, with the Utah Nordic Ski Association, which is mostly Salt Lake people, and let’s form an alliance of those two groups.
So they got together, and I was not involved in this by intent, because I was kind of disappointed that the Utah Nordic Ski Association hadn’t really taken off. You know, we wanted to do a lot of things, some of which were political, in addition to the racing.

**ES:** Such as?

**DH:** Lobby for the interests of cross-country skiers in a lot of different forums, and we did quite a bit of that with the Forest Service, with the Legislature. We tried to get a snow park program set up in Utah, which is a program that they have in many states near us in the Northwest, where cross-country skiers can buy a parking pass and snowmobilers get one free with their snowmobile registration, and that allows them to park in the parking areas that are plowed at snowmobile trailheads. So in order to park there you’d have to have a pass. If you were a skier you could buy one of those passes, and that, in affect, would help to pay for the plowing on the trailheads. That seemed very fair to us. It seemed like a great idea. You have reciprocity among different states, so if you go to Idaho or Oregon or Washington you can park in their trailhead parking lots and go cross-country skiing.

So we got Francis Farley and Dick Carling in the Legislature to bring it to the—one Democrat, one Republican. Hard to believe but snowmobiles killed it because they thought it was more regulation, I guess. We offered to help pay for plowing and they turned us down. But anyway, those are the kinds of things that we wanted to do. Master plans for the national forests where certainly cross-country skiers have an interest. We wanted to be the focal point for inputs by cross-country skiers, but fewer and fewer people were interested in the organization, the Utah Nordic Ski Association, which disappointed me. So I decided, you know, the Park City Ski Club is doing really well. I’m
going to just back off and see what happens, and TUNA just took off. I mean, it’s been amazing.

ES: So that was the name that you gave—

DH: TUNA is The Utah Nordic Alliance was the name—

ES: [inaudible]

DH: Yeah, I think that one came from Chris Erickson. He’s a very clever guy. He’s a Park City guy, but he was involved in the early telly series and Citizen Series, and Utah Nordic Ski Association. TUNA really took off, partly from what had been started by the Park City Nordic Ski Club folks, and partly what they added when the junior programs came in. The junior program was just in Park City for many years. Only in recent years has it expanded to include a Salt Lake component being held at Mountain Dell, probably six or eight years at most, so maybe 2000. We can go back and look at TUNA News if you want to get exact dates for those sorts of things.

The program, especially in the last three or four years, has just been crazy. Kids have been having so much fun. They’ve been bringing their friends who come from non-cross-country skiing families, and parents see that their kids are having fun. They go up to watch their kids ski, and they buy cross-country skis so they walk around and see what their kids are doing, and pretty soon they’re getting out there on their own and getting a little workout, and saying, “Oh, hey, this is nice. I can get some exercise in the wintertime and not choke myself to death on Salt Lake smog.” So I think, you know, we’ve gained a lot of interest in that way among adults. We’ve also gained a lot of interest from runners and bikers who’ve observed the same thing, that it’s a great way to
train in the wintertime and still be up out of the Salt Lake air and get some great workouts.

I’ve always been a competitive runner as well as a skier, and long ago observed that I do better running, I run faster in the spring and early summer, than I do in the fall, and that’s because I’m in better shape from skiing. My cardiovascular system is in better shape than the runners, because they haven’t been able to run as much in the winter, and I’ve given my legs, ankles, and knees, you know, running muscles a rest in the winter so they’re ready to go when spring rolls around. I think a lot of people have gotten into it for that reason.

Your question was about juniors and I digressed, but I think basically that it was the early nineties when things started picking up. Just the last five or six years we’re looking about a third of our skiers being kids. The other thing that happened is about 2003, I think it was, per the advice of Tom Kendall, who was chief of timing at the Olympics, who’s from Maine, suggested that we start having events for little kids. Not having them race around a course, but some kind of an obstacle course or, you know, just something that was fun, where the kids would get a lollipop if they skied around this little course. You’d have them climbing over things and crawling under things; just a fun kind of event. So ever since then we’ve had younger and younger kids come out. We’ve got two year olds that go through the obstacle course and get a lollipop, and then go back and want to do it again.

When they get to be five or six they’re seeing their older siblings skiing around a one kilometer loop and they think that looks like fun, so they’ll jump in and try that. So
younger and younger kids are wanting to ski the one kilometer course as well. It’s been
great to see all of them.

ES: Okay. You know, if it’s okay with you, I think we’ll stop there for the day.

DH: Sounds good. Whatever works. I haven’t been watching my watch.

END OF INTERVIEW
DAVID HANSCOM
Salt Lake City, Utah

An Interview by
Erik Solberg
24 October 2007

EVERETT L. COOLEY COLLECTION
Utah Outdoor Recreation Oral History Project

American West Center
and
Marriott Library
Special Collections Department
University of Utah
ES: Alright! Before we started today, we were discussing the Olympic preparations, and kind of the chronology of the Olympic bids. Let’s just dive right into that and have you talk about, I believe it was 1984 you said, when they started a feasibility study to determine if it was possible to have the Winter Games here.

DH: Yes. Actually before that Salt Lake had put in a bid, and I don’t know if it was, I think it was with the US Olympic Committee, so there had been a history that preceded my involvement. But in 1984 a feasibility committee was set up, and that committee consisted of people from the skiing community, representatives of various governmental agencies from the governor’s office to the mayor of Salt Lake’s office, to various counties up and down the Wasatch Front; and there were a couple of environmental groups that were represented.

I was representing the Utah Nordic Ski Association, which was the organization that I was involved in setting up just preceding that, which I think we talked a bit about the last time. This feasibility committee was intended to decide whether or not it would be appropriate for Salt Lake to bid on the '92 Winter Games, or if not '92 maybe '96. It turned out that the summer of '85 was when bids would be due or proposals would be due to the US Olympic Committee to be the site that would represent the United States. So starting in about the spring of 1984, which was a year ahead, this group got together to talk about the possibility of Salt Lake putting together a proposal.
This committee met for about a year. It was quite controversial from several points of view. One of the major issues was whether or not this was a feasibility committee or whether it really was a group of people that were getting together to really put together a bid. I would say the majority of members were definitely there to put together a bid, you know. That was their goal. There were other members of the committee who really, I think, were honest in their intention to look at feasibility, feasibility from many points of view: economic feasibility, obviously the skiing—there were plenty of opportunities for alpine skiing in Utah, but other sports, you know, there really weren't venues for any other sports, including Nordic skiing. So financial was a big issue because a lot of venues would have to be built. There were people on the committee concerned with environmental issues. Certainly there would be some impacts, but I think not too many people were worrying about that.

So it was an interesting year. It was about fifteen months from March of '84 through June of '85 that we were meeting. One of the things that came out of that was when the public was brought into the picture in early '85 there was a lot of concern about impacts upon the Wasatch canyons, the watershed canyons, Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons where venues potentially might be located. Proposals were asked for, with ideas about how to make it feasible to hold an Olympic event in the canyons. One of the proposals, that was put forth by a local company, was to build a tunnel between Big and Little Cottonwood Canyon, and another was to build snowsheds over about a mile or mile and a half of the road up Little Cottonwood Canyon.
ES: Was that, would you say, the actual first discussion of that, because those plans seem to come up now, and I'm curious as if you can put a date as to when that was. Was that the first time?

DH: Yeah. I don't know of the tunnel having been brought up previous to this effort. It would have been in late 1984. Snow sheds in the canyon, I'm sure, have been discussed ever since there were ski areas in the canyon. It's pretty obvious that there are days when you can't drive up the canyon. It's just not safe, and so the thought was that snow sheds covering the critical areas where the avalanche paths come down was one possible solution to that. And, of course, Alta and Snowbird thought it was a great idea 'cause they don't lose skier days, but the public was a little less enthusiastic to drive through a mile of tunnels on their way up to Alta, you know, which year round would block the view. They have been built elsewhere, and they do work for pushing the avalanches over the top so they don't close the road, but the tunnel thing was new in my knowledge.

Those two things were probably the things that really got the public's interest. Before that they thought, well sure, it would be nice to have the Olympics, but then they started realizing that there would be impacts, various kinds of impacts. Other things that were brought out were that Salt Lake City Corporation as the host city would be economically liable for any losses that were occurred by the Olympics, so one of the issues discussed was how do we spread that liability out to the state level, and would the Legislature be willing to commit making up for any financial losses. Needless to say, that was a bit controversial as well.

ES: What kind of losses were they concerned about?
DH: Previous Winter Olympics had not made money; many Summer Olympics as well. There were a couple of exceptions. One was Los Angeles, which made out quite well, but most other Olympics had not. In fact, Montreal was still paying for their debts for the Olympics; and Lake Placid, in order to cover their expenses, had to—even up through ’84 (the Lake Placid Games were in ’80) the state was still subsidizing the facilities in Lake Placid. In fact, if I’m correct about this, they still are to this date. They’re still paying to maintain the bobsled facility in Lake Placid so it can be used, so there’s a fairly significant state appropriation for that even now.

Other issues were they had no real idea where they would hold the Nordic skiing events. They were talking about a couple of places, you know, one being up by Ogden up by Snowbasin. I can’t remember where the other one was, but, you know, they would just totally speculate as to where the Nordic skiing events would be, and that includes the jump as well as the cross country. There was no skating venue. They just really had nothing, and this was going to involve a lot of money. It was pretty controversial, but among that committee it wasn’t controversial at all because they were there to make sure that we put in a bid for the Olympics, with the exception of maybe three or four of us that were a little more concerned about environmental issues.

ES: Could you distinguish for me just a bit the difference between bid committee and feasibility committee?

DH: We tried to make that distinction on a fairly regular basis as this committee was operating, as a matter of fact. It was labeled the Utah Winter Games Feasibility Committee, and if you look at the stated purpose of that committee it was to decide whether it would be feasible to put together a bid committee to actually make a proposal.
to the US Olympic Committee. Theoretically those should have been two totally separate issues. However, as I say, I think they got mixed together, and sometime in early 1985 there actually was a bid committee that was put together, separate bid committee, and that group was working on being prepared to get a bid together by summer of 1985. The thought was that they would go forward if the feasibility committee decided that this would be a good idea from all aspects--technical aspects, the financial aspects, the environmental aspects. They are two separate things, but, as I say, they did get a little mixed together. In fact, as we got down closer and closer to the deadline, you know, the spring of 1985, it was about May or June of '85, when the feasibility committee finally did take a vote, and all but four of us voted that it was feasible, that this was a good idea. As I say, in the meantime, there already was a bid committee doing their thing. In fact, the bid was presented to the USOC in June of '85.

Then in August of '85, much to the total amazement of the Salt Lake Bid Committee, the US Olympic Committee selected Anchorage instead of Salt Lake City, and nobody saw that coming. They were totally blindsided. And I don’t know the politics, but some of us were greatly relieved that that had actually happened. Others were discouraged that it didn’t happen, but felt that this wasn’t something they were going to give up. They would hang in there and see what happened. As we know, Anchorage was not selected by the IOC for the '92 games, nor were they selected for the '96 games. I think the whole Olympic thing kind of died out for a while at that point.

The next time it raised its head was about 1994, and I was not involved in the process at that point. At that point it was truly a bid committee. They had decided they had proven that it was feasible, and they were going to go forward with it. But there were
other things that had taken place in the meantime. This group had decided that if they
wanted to have a better chance of getting the US bid, you know, being the US city, they
had to build some facilities, that there was too much that was just totally nebulous in their
1985 bid.

What they did was they built the jump. Remember there was a site selection
committee for that which I participated in. We looked at a few locations and ended up
with the Bear Hollow site, so they did get money together. They got some money from
the state to build the jump and also the speed skating arena, the idea being that that
money was put forth by the Legislature but that it would be repaid out of Olympic
revenues.

Then another thing that happened at about the same time frame was the Utah
Winter Games. Oh, I know, one other thing that I should mention is Park City Ski Resort,
under the tutelage of Craig Badami, whose father owned the resort, started putting on the
World Cups. Typically they had the first World Cup of the season, so it was around
Thanksgiving every year, and they did just a superb job, just amazing! But another thing
that started about in that same time frame back in around 1990 was the Utah Winter
Games. I think it came out of the same group that was working on the World Cup. I know
Jack Turner was involved, and Jack worked for Craig Badami to put on the World Cup
events, but Jack also was instrumental in getting the Utah Winter Games started, which
has been going for quite a few years, like I say since about 1990.

Again, the Utah Winter Games blossomed over the time period between when it
was started, and in about 1995, when Salt Lake put together its bid for the 2002 games, it
was really doing well, bringing several thousand athletes out for different events. Many
of the Olympic events were represented, and I think that in conjunction with the World Cup events that were being held, and then in addition to that we had a cross-country World Cup race, which Jack Turner, again, was instrumental in putting on, I think that showed the world that we really did have plans for venues.

ES: Where was that one held?

DH: Mountain Dell, on the golf course.

ES: Really?

DH: Yeah.

ES: That would have been about ’95?

DH: No, that was ’89.

ES: ’89. Okay.

DH: So here’s another thing that came into this picture. Jeremy Ranch cross-country ski area was started up back in the late ’80s. One of the principles there was Jack Turner. Another was Alan Ashley, who went on to the US Ski Team. Those guys operated this cross-country ski area at Jeremy Ranch, and they, again with Jack’s influence, were trying to make Salt Lake look more favorable for a future Olympics, decided that they should get a cross-country World Cup race, and indeed they did.

They knew they couldn’t hold it at Jeremy Ranch, because the elevation is too high for world cup competitions; and they knew also that Mountain Dell had been a cross-country ski area in previous years, and they thought that with some work that maybe they could hold the race at Mountain Dell, and indeed that was what happened. They cut some trails, which you can find these days if you know where they are. On the other side of the golf course from the freeway, up on the hillsides, they’ve made some
loops so that they could get some pretty good hills, up and downs, and then the golf
course is where they were going to have the start and the finish, set up all their big tents
and all the other stuff that goes along with putting on a big event. So that's a whole other
story. I don't know if you want to get into that one.

**ES:** I'm curious, yeah!

**DH:** So, you know that the weather in Utah is kind of variable. A couple of years before
this event we had a winter when there was no snow at Mountain Dell. The grass was
green in December. It was just unbelievable. The cross-country ski area that was there,
you know, it was there some years and it wasn't there other years. It was kind of off and
on, and different people were trying to make a go of it. But anyway, there was great
questioning going on as to whether you could hold a cross-country World Cup at that
elevation in Utah, because Mountain Dell is dependent on lake-effect storms. If you get
them, great; if you don't, too bad.

Okay, so 1989 rolls around. Thanksgiving Day I was roller-skiing in shorts and a
t-shirt around Jeremy Ranch, right? I mean, it was just really warm. Let's see, so that was
Thursday. I guess Saturday a front rolled in, and on Sunday of Thanksgiving weekend
they got a foot-and-a-half of snow at Mountain Dell, you know, one of those big lake-
effect storms. I mean, what more could we ask for? Perfect base. So they got the
snowmobiles out, and they went around and packed it down, and the race was scheduled
for December 9th, I think it was, so we had three weeks. The weather cleared. Never had
another storm. So what do you do? They went forward. They brought in all the big tents
and set up the flagging. The courses were melting off any place where it was in the sun at
all, so we got herds of volunteers. My job there was volunteer coordinator, by the way.
So I had to line people up to go and shovel snow, and we shoveled and shoveled and shoveled. Hauled snow. We’d lay out these great big tarps, and we’d shovel snow onto the tarps, and then we’d drag them over and dump them onto places that were getting melted off.

Then they got some guy with a snowgun, and they hooked into the pipes of the Mountain Dell golf course, and they made a whole big pile of snow down in the gully. You’ve skied at Mountain Dell, right, so you know the golf course had a big gully on the north side, and then a couple of golf holes on the other side. So we had to get through that gully in order to get to the golf holes on the other side, which led us to the trails up on the hillside, which were up on the other side. So this guy made this huge pile of snow, and they got some local guy that owned a snowcat to come in and smooth out the snow, and this guy didn’t know what he was doing, and he ended up scraping most of the snow off.

They couldn’t recover from that. They couldn’t get the snow that he had pushed off back on and smoothed out enough so that it was skiable. So all they had was just what we normally ski on on the Mountain Dell golf course, just that loop that goes up to, you know, Washington Park and the next golf hole beyond, and then down to the highway.

ES: How long was that at the time? Was that about five kilometers?

DH: Yeah, it was about a five kilometer loop, right, and that’s all it had. The World Cup people agreed to go through with it, even though it was pretty ridiculous. It’s totally flat for those guys. Because of the fact that the snow had not cooperated, and they felt that we had made an honest effort, the World Cup went on. That was Belmondo’s first victory. Belmondo--and who was the guy that was such a hot skier in the early nineties? It was his first win.
ES: In what capacity did you spectate this race? Were you assisting, volunteering—

DH: Yeah, I was lining up the volunteers. I don’t know if I actually worked at the race other than just organizing volunteers. I don’t think I actually had a particular job of my own, so I watched the race. It was great. Yeah, here’s my file. I still have that. Yeah, that was pretty exciting to have all the best skiers in the world here. I’ll come up with a winner here. Who was the most famous skier? Bjørn Dæhlie.

ES: Okay, sure.

DH: Bjørn Erlend Dæhlie and Belmondo, the Italian girl, who went on to win many, many, many World Cup events and Olympic medals and all of that.

ES: As did Dæhlie.

DH: Yeah, both of them. In fact, Belmondo, her last medal was at Soldier Hollow 2002. So they fondly speak of Mountain Dell as the interesting, let’s say, venue for a World Cup cross-country race. But anyway, all of that added up to giving the world a more favorable impression of Utah as a possibility for an Olympic site.

ES: What would you say it was like prior to that?

DH: Well, I think they were skeptical that Utah could really put on an Olympics. Even the US Olympic Committee was so skeptical in ’85 that they chose Anchorage over Salt Lake City.

ES: Do you know any of the major concerns that jumped out?

DH: Well, I mean, who knows. All these meetings are held behind closed doors, but it seemed pretty obvious that lack of venues and any previous experience of putting on big races had to be a big issue with those guys. That was before the US Ski Team moved to Park City. Those guys were headquartered over in Colorado. I think Utah seemed like an
outpost in the wilderness, you know, with no track record at all. So I think rightfully the folks that were wanting to get the Olympics here put in a lot of effort over the next five, six, seven years to really build up the reputation of Utah, and were successful.

As I say, I wasn’t involved in the bid for the 2000 Olympics, but in, I guess it was June of 1995, is when the IOC met in Europe, and Utah was selected. Remember they had live TV down at the City & County Building and thousands of people were there waiting to hear the results. When Samaranch actually made the announcement, cheers went up and fireworks, and all of that. They were pretty excited. Wow! So anyway, spring of ’95 is when the bid was accepted for Salt Lake.

My interest in that was that they still had Mountain Dell down as the site for the cross-country and biathlon. Mountain Dell golf course was going to be the site of the cross-country with the trails that had been built up on the side of the hill. The biathlon was going to be held underneath the dam. The Little Dell dam, there’s kind of a valley area there, and they were going to build a biathlon facility there. That was, in my mind, totally ludicrous. There’s no way that either of those was going to work.

The golf course trail system was an embarrassment, and I really don’t think it would ever get homologated by the FIS anyway. I didn’t know much about biathlon, but I knew they had to have a shooting range and a bunch of trails for that, and they have to be separate from the cross country. The proposal was to have it around the corner there and up the other branch of the canyon. It didn’t seem like a feasible thing, and I could see handwriting on the wall that pretty soon the FIS was going to come in and say, “Okay you guys, where are you really going to have the cross-country events?”
But nobody was saying anything. Nobody was doing anything about it. So in August of 1995, so this was a couple of months after we had been selected, I wrote a letter to the Salt Lake Organizing Committee and copied the mayor of Salt Lake, who was Deedee Corradini, and I got the president of the Utah Nordic Alliance to sign it. What it said was that we have a lot of people with a lot of talent here in Utah. By that time the US Ski Team was headquartered here, and some of the coaches were living here in Salt Lake. We also had people with a lot of biathlon experience, as well as cross country experience. Bill Spencer had participated in every Olympics since I don’t know when, 1964 maybe, in Squaw Valley. No, Squaw Valley was ’60. I don’t mean as competitor but as a volunteer. He was very active in the US Biathlon Association. But, you know, a lot of talent here, and people who had knowledge, and who are willing to help, and who were interested in making sure that we had a good facility for the Olympics, and at least as important a good legacy facility for the US Ski Team who are headquartered here, for the University of Utah who are winning national championships on a regular basis (Pat Miller was the coach), and for the local folks who like to cross-country ski; and that Mountain Dell really wasn’t a reasonable site, and we needed to figure out what we were going to do.

So that letter was actually mailed, I think, early August of 1985. We did get a response from Deedee Corradini, the mayor, thanking us for our interest, and saying that she had contacted the Salt Lake Organizing people to let them know or to indicate that she was aware, and then nothing! So as far as we were concerned, they were either ignoring us, or weren’t interested, or who knows what.

ES: The head of SLOC at that time was Tom Welch, correct?
DH: Yes, that's correct. Yeah, Tom Welch was head of SLOC, and in fact, Tom Welch, if I remember correctly, was the head of that bid committee that was put together back in 1985.

ES: Okay, the one that emerged out of the feasibility study.

DH: It actually emerged before the feasibility study was over, but yes. So anyway, it was October when we heard back from Deedee acknowledging our letter. We heard nothing from SLOC. So what we did was put together an ad hoc committee of cross-country skiers and biathlon people, and we started talking about what were good options. Bill Spencer, the biathlon guy, had already been up and looked at the Little Dell area above the Little Dell dam, just not too far from Mountain Dell. He said he thought this would be a pretty good place to do it because they got quite a bit more snow up that canyon, and the snow that falls up there stays a little better, good terrain up there, it's away from the golf course.

He could see handwriting on the wall. The golf course wasn't going to allow us to rip up the golf course and not allow them to use it for at least a year, maybe two, for golf- that is, if it was going to be set up as a cross-country biathlon area. Anyway, so we set up this committee. We started looking at what would be a good place? How can we convince the Olympic Committee that they need to start thinking about his right now?

It occurred to me that I knew Jim Page, who used to be the Nordic program director for the US Ski Team and had moved on to the US Olympic Committee. He was a competitor of mine in college. I knew him really well. He lived in Salt Lake and worked in Park City for a long time, and so I called him, and I said, “Do you realize what's going on, Jim?” He didn’t, but he said, “I'm going to be out there shortly, and let's sit down and
talk about it. But in the meantime, I'm going talk to Dave Johnson, [who was Tom Welch's assistant at the time] and tell him about your concerns, and let's see what happens.”

So indeed he did. It didn't take too long after that before I got a phone call from Dave Johnson saying, “Can you come down and talk to me.” So I did, and told him everything about what we were all concerned about. Dave set up a meeting with a SLOC representative, Bob Hunter was his name; with a guy from the Mountain Dell golf course, Mark Ruff, the superintendent; and a guy from Salt Lake City Water Department, Russ Hone. We sat around and talked about some of the alternatives and concerns about the golf course, et cetera, et cetera. So that was November of '95.

Then in December of '95 Jim Page came out and he met with our ad hoc group, along with some members of the US Ski Team hierarchy. Again, we talked about our concerns and what alternatives we could see at that point in time. Then I met again with Dave Johnson, and he asked if I would be a cross-country consultant. He had been talking to Bill Spencer and asked him to be a biathlon consultant, to see if this Little Dell area would be feasible. “But,” he said, “I have to swear you two to secrecy.” He said, “We can't let the public or the IOC know that we're considering the change in the venue from Mountain Dell unless (a) we're sure that it's a possibility that is really going to work, and (b) that it's going to get the support of all of the people involved. So he said, “Let's just proceed as if we're studying the Little Dell site for feasibility, and do everything that we have to do, and then let's see what we come up with. But, again, we can't get the press involved or goodness knows what will happen.”
So we did that. In the winter of ’96 we measured snow. I would go up there once a week, and I’d measure the snow depths at various places around Mountain Dell and the Little Dell area. I made this chart that showed what it all looked like and where the best spots would be. Then in the spring in May of ’96 the International Biathlon Union sent a delegation out and they looked around at Little Dell. The FIS sent a delegation out. Oh, before that, they hired this Norwegian guy to come out and look at the terrain and see if he could propose areas where we might actually put trails in, so when we talked to the IBU and FIS honchos, you know, we had some specific things that we could show them and tell them.

ES: Oh, so did you kind of bypass the IOC then, and you went to the FIS and IBU? Oh, okay.

DH: Yeah, yeah. I don’t know how much the IOC knew about this, but the conversations that we had were directly with the international governing bodies for biathlon and cross-country skiing.

ES: How did you get in touch with them? Was that just—

DH: Through SLOC.

ES: Okay.

DH: Yeah, they were the ones that really set up all these meetings. So anyway, the Norwegian guy, Hermod Bjoerkestol of Hermod’s Hill fame—if you’ve skied Hermod’s Hill—

ES: Oh, sure.

DH: You know he laid out the trails at Soldier Hollow, eventually. So he laid out the trails, laid out some pretty detailed trails, and that was in June of ’96. So all of this was
still being kept pretty quiet. The press wasn’t aware; environmental groups weren’t aware. But word was kind of filtering out, and there were other locations in Utah that were interested in getting the venue for the Olympics other than just those around Salt Lake City. It was pretty obvious to anybody who had any smarts about cross-country or biathlon that Mountain Dell wasn’t going to work.

There was a group down in Provo that put together a proposal to SLOC and said, “You know, we really think that we’ve got a better site than Mountain Dell, and we think you ought to consider it.” That was the Squaw Peak area, just as you start up Provo Canyon, which has really low elevation and was questionable as to whether it would even have any snow. Then a group up in Ogden, I think it was the Snowbasin folks actually, suggested a Trappers Loop location up on Trappers Loop pass where you go over from Weber Canyon to Ogden Canyon. So other people in the meantime were kind probing to see if maybe they had a better place than Mountain Dell. We really wanted to get this going and quell rumors that Mountain Dell wasn’t going to work or that something else was being considered.

Finally in the fall of ’96, a public announcement was made that SLOC was planning to switch from Mountain Dell, and that they were studying Little Dell, and they put together, they called it a Mountain Dell Working Group, implying that there wasn’t any final decision. As far as we were all concerned there had been a final decision, but they wanted the public to become involved and get some input. They wanted more serious input from all of the parties involved, in particular Salt Lake City, because it’s watershed, and get some serious input from those guys rather than just, “oh, yeah, that
sounds good” but not really know, not having any good feel for what the impact was going to be. All of that was going on in late 1996.

Then in early ’97 they put out an RFP (“they” being SLOC) for detailed proposals as to how the Little Dell area would be developed for an Olympic venue. Also, I think it was, I don’t remember the date, but there were a group of people that went up to Canmore, and that included a guy from the watershed, Russ Hone, and Bill Spencer as the biathlon guy, and I was the cross-country guy, and a couple of SLOC people, to look at the Canmore facility, just to see what’s this going to look like.

You know, in Canmore, I don’t know if you’ve ever been up there, but I mean they’ve got this big stadium and bridges going over the tracks so they can have people coming in and out, the skiers in and out of the stadium, big building at the finish for the timing people. Then they had another building that was down the road a little ways where they had an exercise facility and showers and lockers; and then the biathlon range was a totally separate facility and a separate trail system. I mean, this is a really nice facility. And snow making. Well, the guy from the Salt Lake watershed just had his mouth open the whole time. He couldn’t believe it. And we assured him that we weren’t pushing for any permanent facility at Mountain Dell. All we wanted was a trail system that the locals could use after this was over.

But about the time, it was late ’96 or early ’97 when we were getting about this RFP—

ES: What does that stand for?

DH: Request For Proposals.

ES: Okay.
DH: About that time the US Ski Team came in with a set of wishes. I called it a wish list, but I think it was worded more in terms of requirements. So this is what they needed as the US Ski Team, and they needed essentially everything I just listed that Canmore has. Permanent facilities. Well, that was the dagger—that, and the environmental groups immediately started chiming in and saying you’re going to ruin Little Dell. You know, it’s pristine up there, and there’s a cutthroat trout (I don’t know what you call it) fishery up there, and it’s endangered, and on and on and on. So the combination of those two things, and Little Dell was gone. I mean, it just disappeared before my very eyes, much to the disappointment of the local cross-country community. And in retrospect, I don’t think we ever would have been able to do what we needed to do to run an Olympics up there. I don’t think the watershed people would have let us do it, so it was probably good that it happened when it did.

But anyway, this working group that had been formed quickly turned into a site selection committee. In the spring of ’97 the request for proposals turned into not proposals for how we’d develop Little Dell, but proposals as to who would like to host the cross-country and biathlon events, and how would they develop their site. This group met for a few months, and we looked at sites just all over up and down the Wasatch Front, and a lot of groups put in proposals. I was surprised. There was one group over on the shores of the Jordenell Reservoir, up above Heber. They have some great terrain over there, but nothing, you know, it’s just sagebrush. Sherwood Hills—that’s a golf course as you go over Sardine Canyon from Brigham City into Logan. They had had a cross-country skiing facility there. That was another one, North Fork Park, which is up in the Ogden Valley, north of Snowbasin, up near Powder Mountain. There was a group over in
Morgan that put in a proposal. The Squaw Peak people down in Provo, again. East Canyon Resort put together a proposal. And then, finally, Wasatch Mountain State Park put in a proposal for Soldier Hollow.

Now at some point along the way I had looked up and down the Wasatch Front for any areas that were at the right elevation, and whether the snow was good, and transportation, you know, potential for developing an Olympic site. I had found all the areas except this one at Soldier Hollow, all the areas that eventually we considered, I should say. I hadn’t realized that Wasatch Mountain State Park extends all the way down. It’s not just up there where the old golf course was, but it’s all the way down to the Deer Creek Reservoir, and that hillside where they eventually built the trails is north facing. I mean, it’s just perfect for cross-country skiing, and the elevation was just right. The rest of the State Park is up too high.

It was actually Courtland Nelson who was the director of the Utah State Parks at the time who lived over in Midway, was a cross-country skier, who realized that this might be a good site. So he talked to a guy over in the valley who’s been involved in environmental issues, George Hansen, and asked George to call me because he knew I was on this committee. Without telling me anything, he just asked if we’d considered that area. The way he put it was, “Yeah, I’ve got a friend who’s a land owner over here, and he’s wondering if maybe this would be a possibility,” and he told me about this site. And I said, “Oh, that sounds good. I’d be happy to go look at it.” Eventually it turned out his friend was the State of Utah. But anyway, all that went on, the study. Throughout the year of 1997 the site selection committee was meeting and traveling around, and the site selection was actually made in October of ’97.
Then in January of '98 they put together a team to decide on how they would develop the site. We had the Soldier Hollow Design Team Selection Committee, I think is what they called it, and again put out requests for proposals, and chose a firm to do the designing for Soldier Hollow. They did that. That committee actually evolved into a Soldier Hollow Legacy Committee to decide “how are we going to ensure that Soldier Hollow doesn’t just disappear after the Olympics, that it really does become a legacy,” even though I must admit I was totally skeptical that it could ever be economically viable being so far from Salt Lake. I said, “Nobody is going to drive all the way over there to go cross-country skiing.” You know, “Mountain Dell is really close, and White Pine is not too much farther away, and Solitude is pretty close. Nobody’s going to go to Soldier Hollow.”

In the course of those meetings, Howard Peterson was involved in that committee, and Howard was the former director of the US Ski Team, and had been the director of the US Ski Team way back in the early days when we were talking about Little Dell. Howard knew Little Dell wasn’t going to be a good legacy, so he was one of the people that was actively opposing Little Dell from the US Ski Team point of view. By then Howard had retired from the US Ski Team and was living over in Kamas, but they talked Howard into being on this legacy committee because they knew that he had a lot of connections, a lot of good ideas, very creative guy; and in the course of the meetings, I remember having a conversation with Howard saying, “Howard, there’s just no way this can work.” I said, “You’ve been pushing this all along.” I said, “You need to step up to the plate and help to make this a financial success because I think you’re the only person, at least that we are working with, who has the experience. You used to run a cross-country ski area in New
Hampshire—who has the experience, who has the contacts,” you know. He really was, I think, the only person who could have made it work, and he agreed to do that, and the rest is history.

Soldier Hollow has been an incredible success. I’ve got to say it’s only a financial success because of the tubing, but the revenues from tubing are keeping cross-country going. [Laughs] And that was the genius of Howard Peterson to think about expanding the scope of activities at Soldier Hollow. It’s not just winter activities, it’s summer activities as well. He’s just doing an amazing job at making it a success. More and more people are skiing over there now. They’re finding that it’s worth the drive to get the challenging terrain, so they’re getting a lot of skiers in there; bringing in a lot of kids, which is developing the nucleus of juniors who are learning how to ski and spending more time on the snow. So anyway, Soldier Hollow’s doing great.

Another thing that happened. Again, Howard Peterson’s influence. He was good friends with David Ure over in Kamas who’s a legislator, who is, I think, Speaker of the House. Is that the right title? Anyway, he was a honcho in the House of Representatives, and he and Howard and John Aalberg, I believe, made a pitch to a legislative committee in 1999 for providing some extra funding for this cross-country facility. The Legislature had paid, I think, seventy-four million dollars. Wasn’t that the magic number that had to be paid back for the jump and the speed skating? And that left nothing for cross-country skiing, and so cross-country skiing was the orphan in all of this Olympic planning process. Not only did they not even have a plan for a facility, but they had no plan for financing it either. That’s a little bit of an exaggeration. They had no plan for financing the legacy aspect of it.
So Howard and John went to the Legislature, and they persuaded them to put in several hundred thousand dollars to build the day lodge over there. They did get some support from the Legislature, some acknowledgement that this was important for the future. So that was another element of why Soldier Hollow became such a success. It was in the 2000 Legislature, I believe, that they actually appropriated money to build the lodge. By that time this whole legacy committee had turned into an Olympic planning committee and things were going strong to get things ready. So that’s everything I know about the pre-Olympic cross-country.

ES: Now, once Soldier Hollow had been selected, what was your involvement like?

DH: You know, I was on all of these committees that I’ve just listed, but as far as the Olympics were concerned I was assistant chief of timing for cross-country. Also, I continued to volunteer as a cross-country advisor, I guess is what you might call me. I spent a lot of time pre-Olympics. I was a volunteer coordinator for the cross-country timing people, so I spent a lot of time—actually, I got a sabbatical from the University for the spring of 2002 so that I could work full-time up there in helping them get organized and doing whatever jobs they needed done, but most importantly getting set up, getting the timing volunteers set up. We had about fifty people that worked at various races.

It takes a lot of people to do the Olympics because of television. People think the Olympics is all about sport, but it’s not; it’s all about television and dollars. It’s incredible all the wiring. My background as an electrical engineer came in handy in testing wiring, making sure all the points out on the course were wired in properly, and that we could get the inputs into our timing systems, and so forth. So I was working with
the Norwegian timing company that they hired to do the biathlon and cross-country timing.

Then I was also the chief of timing for the Paralympics, which happened two weeks after the Olympics were over. So I was pretty heavily involved there for about three months, and then previous to that just, you know, as a volunteer part time.

**ES:** How would you say the end result was received among not only the competitors but people who designed and people who appreciate the course now?

**DH:** Oh, I think people love the courses over there. Competitors, I think the spectators. It’s perfect for spectators. You know, they set up the bleachers on the north side of the cross-country stadium, and from there you could not only see the stadium, but you could look up on the hillside and you could see the entire race unfolding. It was amazing, especially for a mass start race where you knew exactly who was where relative to the field, and watching all of the jockeying for position, you know, some of the breakaways on the steep hills. It was just an incredible place to watch an event, and I think the racers found the trails to be really good. They were very challenging. It was so different from any other cross-country venue in the world because everything is so visible. It’s in such a small area. The traditional cross-country courses go off in the woods and the racers are gone, and then they all of sudden they come back into the stadium. But I think the racers loved it. They could hear the announcers. They could see all the fans in the stadium, as well as lining the courses all over the place. I think it was a great experience for them.

For biathlon it wasn’t quite as good because the biathlon stadium was on the other side of the bleachers facing north. They didn’t get sunburned faces, and they could see the stadium and the range, which I guess is what biathlon spectators come to see, but they
couldn’t see the trails because the trails went around behind them. They were all over on the other side of the hillside. It wasn’t as good, I think, for biathlon spectators. I really don’t know how the competitors felt about it, but, you know, I think for biathlon most of the action’s in the stadium, so I can’t imagine that they had a problem with it.

**ES:** Drawing on your experience not only with your volunteering and involvement at the games, and maybe kind of being in and around the area when they were going on, how would you describe the concern for the environment, for some of the policies that were addressing environmental issues at the time?

**DH:** I think they were somewhat lacking. At some point along the way SLOC did hire an environmental coordinator, and she was doing her best to make sure that those issues were being considered. I think a lot of things that she did were just great. If you think about recycling as an example of an environmental issue, they did a superb job. They had those recycle bins everywhere. They tried to make sure that the vendors were using recyclable materials, and they had ways that recycling could take place. So in some areas they did a great job.

In some areas like development of sites they were maybe a little less careful than they might have been, but, you know, as I think about it, if you remember back in ’84, one of the big issues was how do you get racers and officials and spectators up and down Little and Big Cottonwood Canyon, because Snowbird, which was very overly represented on that 1984-85 committee—they had three members of the committee, and I should qualify that—one member was representing the Utah Arts Council, but he was really Snowbird’s architect, so I would call him a Snowbird representative; there was one other person who had a connection with Snowbird, I don’t remember who it was; plus
Snowbird's own representative. Snowbird was really big on the Olympics because they wanted to get some of the events up there. There was a question as to where could you hold a downhill other than Snowbird. And it turned out the answer was Snowbasin, although in 1984 you couldn't do it there. But bottomline, a decision was made, and I really think it came out of that 1984-85 feasibility committee, that no Olympic events would be held in the Cottonwood Canyons, and they stuck with that. I think that was really an environmental decision.

**ES:** Do you recall what their reason or reasons were for that?

**DH:** Well, you know, it's watershed. They would have had to have built—I mean, transportation up and down was—how do you do it? They were talking about building tunnels between Big and Little Cottonwood, and then another one over to Park City, or rebuilding the Guardsman Pass Road to keep it open in the winter. It was interesting that the priorities that they gave for transportation were: first, you have to be able to get the Olympic dignitaries to the events, to and from; second, you have to be able to get the athletes and officials to and from the events, this tells you where the priorities are with the Olympics; and third, you had to get the spectators. I actually have that in writing in a document.

**ES:** [Laughing] How about the media? Where do the media fall?

**DH:** They were in there somewhere. I think they were with the spectators. They may have been with the athletes, I don’t know. They were not in the top group. It was only the dignitaries. It was amazing. They all had their own special facilities so they didn’t have to mingle with other spectators. I went to Nagano. One of the things that they did as part of
the study committee was they sent a bunch of us to Nagano in 1998 to observe the
Olympics there.

ES: And this was which organization specifically?

DH: This was SLOC.

ES: Okay, and SLOC actually paid for it through—what kind of revenue did they use?

DH: Who knows? They had donations. They get money from sponsors, TV, and all the
other corporate sponsors, so they had big bucks at that time. I’m going to tell you the end
of this story. So if you got into this—it was a big tent at the cross-country area—if you
were able to get in, and I was able to just by subterfuge, which was set up for the
dignitaries, they had toilets in there that had heated seats. I mean, toilets in Japan are an
issue for us Americans who are used to a place to sit, right? So they were heated for the
dignitaries, but the rest of the spectators were outside where the seats were cold.

ES: With a porta-potty type setup?

DH: With the porta-potties, right. But if you go into town, then it’s just a hole in the
ground.

ES: Right.

DH: Little different experience. Anyway, I’m sorry I digress. Where were we? You had
asked me something.

ES: I was curious. I don’t recall the departure of Tom Welch and the entrance of Mitt
Romney. Was that about ’97 or so?

DH: I don’t remember the dates, but yeah, Tom Welch had a lot of problems, and then
Frank Joklik took over, and then they brought Mitt Romney in as the savior.
ES: I was wondering what policies he started, and what is was like working with him versus what it was like working for Tom Welch.

DH: By that time I wasn’t working with anybody at that level.

ES: Okay.

DH: Actually John Aalberg had been hired by the Olympic Committee to be in charge of the cross-country, and so by that time I was working with John, and he had the pleasure of dealing with—

ES: Oh, I didn’t recall that he was hired to deal with the whole thing. I thought he was brought in just to design trails.

DH: He was, actually, brought in to help with the trail design, but he was hired, let’s see, I’m trying to remember the time frame. It would have been ’97-’98 time frame, and Dave Johnson asked me if I wanted to go to work for SLOC and be in charge of the cross-country stuff, and I said, “No thank you. I already have a job. I’m very happy with what I’m doing.” And he asked me for ideas, and one of the people that I suggested was Aalberg. John graduated from the Computer Science Department.

ES: Oh, no kidding.

DH: In fact, that’s a picture of John right there on that poster when he was on the, I guess it was after he graduated. But anyway, he was a computer science guy, and he was working out at Unisys but volunteering. He was president of TUNA for quite a while back about that time. He decided that this was something that he really wanted to do, so he quit his programming job and went to work for SLOC to be in charge of the cross-country. But that was later, you know, after the trail design had gone on, all that
Mountain Dell stuff. He had been involved in that, but only as a volunteer and as a TUNA person.

He was one of the people that I mentioned in 1995 in my letter as a local person with a lot of talent and would be a good person to have on board. By then he had been on the US Cross-Country Team and gone to the Olympics. He became a US citizen back in the early nineties. He graduated from here around 1990, became a US citizen, and went to work for Unisys; and even as a full-time programmer he was able to train enough to make two US Olympic teams, perform as well or better than any other American. He was amazing. And a good runner, too. He placed very well in the NCAA cross-country running championships. He was an all-American in cross-country running, as well as cross-country skiing. Pretty busy guy.

And he’s working for Vancouver right now. He’s in charge of the cross-country; actually, he’s got a bigger job up there than he had down here. I don’t remember what in addition to cross-country, but, yeah, that’s become his career.

ES: I wanted to go back to the Nagano Games very briefly. If you could talk about any other experiences or lessons you learned there and drew upon coming back here looking at the cross-country or just the organization of the Olympics themselves.

DH: What I had access to there was timing areas for cross-country and biathlon, so I could get behind the scenes and see how all of that worked. I think the thing that impressed me the most was the volunteers, how many volunteers they had, and how enthusiastic they were. I realized that volunteers really are the keys to success to the events in many ways, not the least of which is interacting with spectators. Of course, volunteers are there primarily to make the race work well for the racers. You want to
make sure that trails are in good shape and the timing is accurate, and you know, all the
stuff that needs to happen for a ski race; but with so many people up there, just managing
these thousands of spectators is just an incredible job. You’ve got to keep them off the
course; you’ve got to deal with coaches that don’t want to be kept off the course; people
that want to jump over the fence and slap their favorite competitor on the back or take a
photograph. I mean, it’s just unbelievable! So it just takes a huge number of volunteers to
make it work, and a huge village at every venue.

You’ve got to have all the security; you’ve got to have food available; you’ve got
to have porta-potties for thousands. You’ve got to be able to deal with the TV and other
press people in addition to the race itself. TV, as I say, is really what it’s all about. It’s
amazing how they control almost everything that happens, from start times of races to
where the courses go. They have to be able to put their cameras up so they can watch the
racers come up. It’s crazy. Priorities are a little bit nuts, but I guess that’s what keeps it
all going. So, anyway, I learned what a horrendous undertaking it is, and how important
volunteers are, and the attitude of the volunteers, how important that is.

We watched the timing people and the procedures that they used, and I learned
that, you know, it’s a little more complicated at that level than it is at local races where
you’ve got somebody with a stopwatch. They have three levels of timing. The “A” timing
is all electronic, the “B” timing is a backup that’s partially electronic and partially
manual, and then the “C” level is people out there with stopwatches, just in case
everything fails you can always go back to very crude, not very accurate timing. So,
Yeah, it was definitely a learning experience.
I mean, just going to Japan! I’d never been out of the US, nor have I been out of the US since, for that matter. Had to get a passport for the first time. Actually, I shouldn’t say the US; I’ve been to Canada, but it was quite an experience. Japan is such a totally different culture. It’s quite amazing.

ES: Were there other things that you picked up on, like how they were addressing environmental protection or environmental concerns versus what Salt Lake did?

DH: I think they were a little more careful. For example, the biathlon. They don’t allow guns in Japan, so the biathlon range was set up in a very temporary manner. The range was going to be moved out, and it was going to become, the whole stadium range area, was going to become a soccer complex for kids after the Olympics were gone, so they weren’t doing anything that would damage it. I don’t think that I noticed anything really significantly different, but I don’t know what was going on behind the scenes, either. It’s hard to know.

ES: Okay. One thing I’m really curious about is maybe if you had to pick a few technologies, a few advances in equipment over the years, what would you say are some of the really notable things that have changed skiing for you, or changed skiing for racing or backcountry skiers.

DH: It’s been interesting. Ski racing and backcountry skiing technologies are obviously totally different, but from a backcountry skiing point of view the evolution of technology has really paralleled the evolution of downhill technology. It’s just been twenty years behind. When I first came to Utah in 1970, we were skiing on skinny wooden skis with just our toes held down; and then at some point along the way people started putting cable bindings on, and the skis were a little wider; and then they evolved into plastic and
metal skis. Then the boots evolved from the very thin leather boots to thicker leather boots, to buckled leather boots, to plastic boots, and all designed for telemarking as opposed to downhill skiing.

But, you know, downhill skiing had gone through that same evolution about twenty or thirty years before, and so now backcountry skiers are using pretty heavy duty boots, some of which don’t even have real flexible soles, but the bindings are hinged so that you can lift your heel when you’re climbing up the hill. And the skis are essentially the same as downhill skis, a little bit lighter. Actually, they’re a whole lot lighter. The backcountry skiing and alpine skiing are getting closer and closer together these days.

As far as track skiing is concerned, when I started skiing it was pin bindings and wooden skis with wooden bases. You’d put pine tar on. You’d heat in the pine tar with a blow torch so it would soak into the wood, and use that to protect the wood from the wetness and also to hold the wax on. It was all classical skiing, so you’d wax your whole ski with some kind of really hard wax so it would be fairly fast, and put a stickier wax under the foot for a kick. So that evolved, again, wooden skis with wooden bases evolved to wooden skis with plastic bases; and then the bindings, instead of being three-pin bindings evolved into a lightweight typically non-metal, typically plastic binding that the toe of your boot would attach to, so that required special boots. That allowed lightweight boots to be built that looked almost like running shoes.

The boots got really light and small, plastic, but with special toes that hooked into the lightweight special bindings, and those were on—it started on wooden skis with plastic bases with, you know, really much faster plastic bases. So you’d wax the tips and the tails of your skis for speed, and you’d put the kick wax underneath. Then the skis
evolved into plastic and sometimes with metal layer skis that had what you they call a
double camber, so the middle of the ski was cambered a little more than the tips and the
tails so that the middle of the ski wouldn’t touch the snow when you’re gliding, but when
you kicked down hard it would be on the snow. So you glide much faster, but you still
can get the kick by using a sticky wax underneath your feet.

About that time Bill Koch showed everybody that you could really ski quite fast if
you didn’t keep both skis in the track, but if you pushed one ski out to the side and used it
to propel yourself in a skating motion—we called it the marathon skate, when you had
one ski in the track and one ski out to the side pushing—so skating kind of came along.
People that learned how to skate early were winning, so they did everything they could to
prevent people from skating for a while, but finally decided they’d have separate skate
races and classical skiing races, so then separate skis, of course.

The classical skis stayed about the same, but the skating skis were just a non-
cambered, very flat bottom with a little bit of side cut as opposed to the classical skis
which had no side cuts, and just designed to put fast speed wax on, not kick wax. Once
skating caught on and people learned how to do it, the technique evolved, you know;
different techniques for uphill and downhill and so forth. People have been able to ski an
awful lot faster. And, in fact, a mass-start skate race these days is more like a bike race,
because if you’re not drafting somebody, you’re working a lot harder than the person that
is drafting somebody. People tend to ski in packs and rotate the leader and all of that, just
like in a bike race, which I think is too bad, but that’s the way it is.

Bottom line, when I was over fifty I skied my fastest race at Yellowstone, which
is a fifty kilometer race. I broke two and a half hours for the first time in my life, last time
too actually, you know, at the age of fifty-two or three. So the fact that technology had been improving so fast enabled me to continue to ski faster year after year, even though I was way over my peak physical years, which probably had been ten years before. So that was a pretty exciting time to be cross-country skiing, to see the new techniques, new equipment, new waxes.

I mean, waxing became such a huge issue, I guess ten years ago, when the Fluor waxes came out. You know, if you went to a race, the temperature was thirty degrees, thirty-two degrees; if you didn’t have Fluor waxes you might as well have stayed home. These days waxes for all temperatures have Fluor wax in them, and it is definitely faster than hydrocarbon waxes. So, yeah, the technology has changed tremendously.

It’s interesting, though. I was mentioning boots. The classical boots kept getting smaller and lighter, but now classical boots are a little bigger. They come up around the ankles. They’re pretty lightweight, but in order to give more support and more downhill control—skating boots have always been up fairly high—but even classical boots are more substantial than they were for a while. So that’s gone the other direction from the trends in the early nineties.

**ES:** How about training and ideas about how to ski fast, and what techniques work. Roller-skis? Maybe when did those come about, because I’m curious to see how those developed, and what your experience with those was like?

**DH:** Well training techniques, I think there’s more interval training being done now than there used to be. When I was competitive, you know, back in college, we’d just go out and ski around the track. We’d train every other day or whenever we could get away from studies. We did a little bit of speed work, but mostly it was just go out there and ski
three times around the track. That was it! I was raised in Rumford, Maine, and it was a
big cross-country ski town, and there was this guy that had this theory that the way you
get good is you put in a lot of hours. He found out that the Norwegians used to ski a lot of
hours, so he decided he had to get out there and ski hour and after hour after hour.
ES: How long would this be?
DH: Long, slow distance. I don’t remember how far he would ski, but it was many hours
a week. So some people had theories like that, but I don’t recall too much interval
training going on back then, although there was some. These days it seems like people
are really careful about paying attention to heart rate and training at certain levels of heart
rate relative to their max heart rate, and doing regular intervals, not doing as much long-
distance skiing, because you want to develop your fast twitch muscles more than your
slow twitch muscles. So, yeah, I think training from that point of view has changed quite
a lot. Also, the number of hours. The good skiers are skiing a couple a thousand hours a
year, but they’re pretty careful about how they distribute those hours. You know, at the
end of the ski season in the spring they’re putting in long hours, but in the fall when
racing is right around the corner, they’re doing almost all speed work and almost no
distance, endurance training.

As far as how you train, you know, roller-skis probably didn’t come into the
picture (I’m guessing here) until about 1990 maybe?
ES: Really!
DH: Would you have thought before that or after that?
ES: Oh, yeah, I thought much earlier.
DH: Much earlier. That could be. I don’t remember having any roller-skis until pretty
close to that time, although I did tell you in 1989 I was roller-skiing before the, yeah, so it
had to be long before that. I was roller-skiing before the World Cup event on
Thanksgiving Day in my shorts and t-shirt, and that was ’89, so yeah, it must have been
considerably before that. I think you’re right.

But anyway, roller-skiing was kind of a novelty for a long time. You know, you’d
do some roller-skiing, but the emphasis was more on running, I think. They called it hill
bounding, still do, when you go out and you run up hills with ski poles, taking the long
strides and imitating the classical technique. A lot of hiking with poles. We were doing
that way back in the sixties. We’d do a lot of hiking and take our ski poles along.
Anyway, roller-skiing, as I say, was done, but it wasn’t a big part of people’s training.
When we were doing this site selection—okay, so I’m putting all this in perspective now.
Back in ’84 when we were working on Mountain Dell as a possible site, the biathlon guys
were really into roller-skiing in ’84. That was a huge part of their training, and they
insisted that any legacy site had to have a paved loop for roller-skiing.

ES: Even back in ’84.

DH: That was in ’84, yeah. However, the cross-country guys didn’t think roller-skiing
was all that important. And I remember talking to some of the US Ski Team guys and
saying, “You know, these biathlon guys are going to kill this Mountain Dell thing. They
want a paved loop, and the city and the environmentalists are going to go nuts when they
hear that. They’re not going to want that.” I said, “If you guys don’t think it’s important
to your training, you should tell the city people that you don’t think it’s all that important;
this is just a biathlon thing.” I don’t think they ever really said anything to the city. I think
that was another nail in the coffin for Little Dell. So anyway, that says we were roller-skiing long before that, so maybe it was as early as 1980. I don’t know, do you?

ES: No. I just kind of assumed maybe around that, between late seventies early eighties would have been about right.

DH: Yeah, that’s probably true.

ES: I’m curious now. I would like to actually go and research it.

DH: I remember the first rollerblades, and I can’t remember the year, but Jim Page was Nordic program director of the US Ski Team up in Park City, and Jim had gotten a pair of rollerblades that the company had given him. They wanted him to have his athletes try them out. And he had indeed done that, and they’d done some skating around, and they decided, well, this isn’t really very relevant to cross-country skiing. This was before skating. Of course, this was still classical. So Jim said, “I got a pair of these. You want them?” He said, “You can try them out, and tell me what you think.”

This is back when they had just built the roads up in the Deer Valley and I lived in Park City, and so I would rollerblade up to Deer Valley using my poles as if I were roller-skiing, only I was skating up the hills, and then I’d just cruise down the hills. There was no traffic up there, no development yet, so that the Royal Street that comes down from Stein’s Lodge down into town, it was just a blast! You could go so fast down there. I’d make big giant slalom turns, you know, and just cruise, and it was a great workout going up, but it wasn’t really cross-country skiing other than you use your upper body. You know, anything to get the upper body in shape in the summer was a plus because most of the other training we did, other than hiking with poles, was running or biking.
Actually the other thing I had was a rollerboard. That came in somewhere back about that time. We’d have this big flat board that was maybe ten feet long. You’d tie a couple of ropes to the top and you’d lean it up against the fence. You had a little board that you would lie on that had wheels on it, and it would roll up and down this big long plank, and you’d pull yourself up and let yourself down so you imitated the cross-country skiing motion to strengthen your upper body. Probably still have that somewhere.

ES: Those are coming back into popularity, actually, for skiing.

DH: Oh yeah, definitely for skiing.

ES: Absolutely.

DH: Yeah. And there was another gadget. What did they call it? It had a variable resistance, and it was a single rope that had handles on each end that looked like ski pole handles, and the rope went up through a pulley. The pulley was a variable resistant device, and so you could pull down on one and the other one would go up, and you’d just alternate back and forth as you’d pull. I was doing that back when I was in college, except not with quite as simple a device, but they had a similar device in the weight room in college we used to work out on. Just pulling down on the rope and lifting up weights.

ES: So was strength training a part of ski training for you early on?

DH: Yeah, upper body. In fact, one summer I really got into weight lifting and tried to build up my upper body because I was such a skinny kid. I got so I could bench press quite a lot, but I don’t know if it helped my skiing. Mostly upper body strength training; not a lot of leg strength training. Just get out there and hike up the mountains; take your poles along.
ES: Okay. Let me ask you if you could talk about the perception from the ski community here and then maybe outside the state, if they began to associate cross-country skiing with Utah, or is it still, as some would argue, more of a downhill oriented town.

DH: I think the Olympics certainly turned that around. Before the Olympics there really wasn’t very much for cross-country skiing in Utah. You know, there were a few little areas around. White Pines on a golf course. Who’s going to fly in from, you know, New England to ski around a golf course? Solitude certainly has got some ups and downs, and it’s pretty up there, but it’s at eighty-five hundred feet, and people coming in from the Coasts that are into cross-country skiing, Coasts or the Midwest, probably aren’t going to come out just for that. So I think until the Olympics and all the visibility, and Soldier Hollow got built, this wasn’t a destination area for cross-country skiing. I think now, maybe, people do come out here for that.

I think what has been true all along, and increasingly so, is that families will come out, or individuals will come out to downhill ski, and they won’t want to downhill ski every day. They’ll want to do something different, and so it’s important for each resort to have a cross-country alternative, at least nearby. So a place like White Pine in Park City is ideal. You know, they’ve got some nice up and downs at the farm, and they’ve got the golf course, which is pretty much flat, and so people of all abilities can go out and enjoy a day of cross-country skiing, even though their prime motive is downhill skiing.

Also, it seems that in any group of people that come out, or maybe even a family, one member of the family won’t be into downhill skiing so much. They’d rather just go out and make a round of the golf course, and White Pine actually has a touring
concession. They’ll take people out to the Uintas to ski in fairly flat terrain just to enjoy the out of doors.

So I think more and more people are coming for both, as opposed to just alpine skiing, and some even for cross-country skiing. Primarily those in the latter group are going to be at Soldier Hollow where they’ve heard about the Olympic venues. Soldier Hollow has done a great job of adding trails. Every year they’ve added more trails for the beginner and intermediate skiers, so people who do come, regardless of their ability, will find trails that they can enjoy, not be in fear of killing themselves. So, yeah, I think more and more.

As far as the backcountry is concerned, you know it used to be that you could find all the powder you wanted at the ski areas, even a week after a storm, if you knew where to go find some powder in the trees. But at this point it’s noon on the day after the storm when the powder is all gone. More people are getting into the backcountry, a lot by helicopter, of course, but a lot of people are coming here to ski in the backcountry as well as at the ski resorts. So if you count helicopter skiing, you think, yes, we’re definitely on the map for backcountry skiing. Even without helicopter skiing there are more and more people going.

ES: All right. I think I’d like to close with just asking you if you could talk about if or how being a skier (backcountry or racing) has really affected anything that you think about day to day, or anything you do on a day to day basis.

DH: That’s an interesting question. It certainly has affected my life. I mean, I think we talked about this once before that one tends to spend more time doing things that one is successful at. Certainly that’s been true with me. I’ve enjoyed skiing and cross-country
skiing since I was kid, and have enjoyed it more and more through the years, although
differently as the years have progressed. At this point in my life I’m doing more race
organizing than I am anything else, including backcountry skiing. Because I organize the
Wasatch Citizen Series, which has become pretty big, I do spend quite a lot of time
dealing with issues that relate to that throughout the year. So that’s one way in which it
affects my day-to-day life.

Another way is, you know, I’ve always felt if I wanted to be able to ski the way I
like to ski that I couldn’t just start exercising when the snow fell and quit exercising when
the snow melts; and increasingly so, as I get older, I find that I just have to keep at it all
the time. If I go more than a couple of days without exercise I regret it. It just takes a little
while to get going again. If I go a couple of weeks without exercise it takes me a month
to get back to where I was before. So I guess probably the biggest way that it’s affected
my life is I’ve become a very regular exerciser, and have been since I was, I don’t know,
fifteen, I guess. A lot of years. Fifty years. And I try to do workouts that are relevant to
cross-country skiing on a fairly regular basis. I do a lot of hiking, and I’ll usually take ski
poles with me just to use my upper body. When summer rolls around, typically about
August, I’ll start roller-skiing once a week. I try to do stuff that’s going to help keep me
prepared for the ski season.

And most of my friends are skiers. People I hang out with or exercise with are
almost all cross-country skiers, so I guess it affects my life in that way, too. My wife and
I go cross-country skiing every week in the wintertime, once or twice. She’s not what I’d
call an athlete. She just likes to get out and enjoy the sunshine and snow, nature, so we
just go walk summer or winter, but in the winter it’s on skis. And I have pictures of my
grandkids skiing, on my office door.

ES: Did you introduce them to it, or is it their parents that—

DH: No, their parents, right. I got my kids out skiing when they were that age, just
walking around on skis. Started out on a golf course in Park City, actually. Then when
my older son got to be about five, I took him up to Gorgoza and we took the lift up and
skied down a few times. He thought that was pretty boring, so we started skiing at
Brighton. Maybe he wasn’t five—he was six or seven, actually; and a year or two later
my younger son, seeing my older son having a good time downhill skiing, decided it was
time for him to do it, so he started at about five. They did a lot of downhill skiing, but
also cross-country skiing as well.

They both were in the Learn-to-Race program at Park City, and at some point my
older son got bored with that. He wanted to try taking his cross-country skis up the
mountain, because he’d seen people telemarking. We had this pair of waxless cross-
country skis for him that didn’t have any edges, and he slid around and flailed, and he
thought it was fun, so a year later we bought him some edged telly skis. That’s all he’s
done ever since. My younger son got into telly skiing in high school. In fact, my older
son and I participated in a bunch of the telly races, the Wasatch Telemark series for a few
years, but he goes as fast on telly skis now as I do on downhill skis. I had to go back to
downhills to keep up with my kids.

ES: You know, actually, I did just recall that I wanted to ask you if you were ever a
participant ever involved in the Wasatch Overland Race.

DH: Oh yes!
ES: I know that the Butlers from Wasatch Touring were really involved with that.

DH: Yeah. In fact, I have the full record here of the Wasatch Overland. First time I participated was 1978, which I believe was the first one.

ES: Describe that course for me.

DH: It started at Brighton at the General Store, and it was a “Le Mans start,” right, where you run on foot in your ski boots down the road to where the Guardsman Pass Road turns off, and then you run up the Guardsman Pass Road to where they stop plowing, and you ski up, depending on how you do it, ski up one switchback, then you come to where the road cuts off to go up to Scott’s Pass. So you follow that up into Scott’s Pass, and you just drop straight down Thayne’s Canyon. At the bottom of Thayne’s Canyon you have to go across the road to get to the golf course, and you go across the golf course to White Pine’s touring center.

ES: That’s a fair amount of running then if you’re running all the way up to that first switchback where they stop plowing.

DH: Well actually it’s farther than that. It’s beyond the first switchback.

ES: It’s almost a mile.

DH: It’s partway up the second switchback. So in 1978 my time was fifty-eight minutes! Then I didn’t do it, for some reason, until ’84, and I don’t remember the details why I did and didn’t do it. From ’84 to the last time they did it, you know, on that route from Brighton to Park City, I did it almost every year. Somewhere back in the mid-eighties I asked the guys who were organizing the race, do you have to follow any particular route? And they said, no. Just get over the pass and down to Park City. So I went out there the day before, or the week before, and I checked out various alternatives, and I realized that
when you get to that first switchback that if you climbed over the snowbank and just cut off the switchback, that you could get up to the Scott’s Pass road that turned off the Guardsman Pass Road. So without telling anybody I packed a track up that way. You know, this was back in the wooden ski days, so just kick wax on your skis. So we got to that switchback, and I jumped over the snowbank, and cut off a whole bunch of time. Not enough to beat Ken McCarthy, who was way faster than anybody else.

ES: Didn’t he win the thing about ten years in a row or something?

DH: Not in a row.

ES: But he won several times.

DH: I’m sure he’s won it ten times, very close to that. So after that everybody took the cutoff. You know, they realized that it was the fastest way, and they called it the Hanscom Cutoff. So I’m part of the Wasatch Overland lore having taken the Hanscom Cutoff. I noticed my younger son did it in 1984. He and I did it together. Actually, no, I did do it in between. I see that. I just don’t have any records of it, but I did it in ’79 and ’81, because in one of those, either ’79 or ’81, we went over Guardsman Pass, and again I scouted it out the day before and I found a cutoff. So if you go over Guardsman’s, you take the first switchback, and then instead of hanging a sharp left on the second switchback and then having another long switchback to the right, you can cut off that second one.

There were a couple of guys ahead of me who were definitely faster skiers than I, Steve Erickson, in particular, the guy that ran White Pine, and Jacques Glidden was another. Those two guys were ahead of me, and they didn’t see me take the cutoff, so I went over the top just as they were coming up the road. Unfortunately, they saw me as I
went over the top. I was hoping to be at the finish line when they got there without them having any clue as to how I got there. So their skis were faster than mine. I had waxed to go up this really steep cutoff, and Steve got ahead of me, but not Jack. We got down to Bonanza Flat and there’s another switchback, and I was going to take that one, and Steve was getting farther and farther ahead. Unfortunately, I turned off the road too soon, and he turned around and saw me, and so he took the same cutoff, so he beat me.

But anyway, that was back in, I don’t remember if it was ’79 or ’81, but those two years we went over Guardsman Pass because for some reason there wasn’t enough snow down at the golf course, I guess, so we couldn’t finish that low. We had to finish up higher on the Guardsman Pass Road. Yeah, I did it for many years. Best time in 1990 with a time of 39:10.

ES: Oh!

DH: But the best time of anybody was Ken McCarthy in 32:53.

ES: Wow!

DH: Unbelievable! But about that time the good guys started using little skins that they’d tie to the bottom of their skis, and they’d run up the Hanscom Cutoff and all the way to the Pass. They’d rip the skins off, and then they’d have downhill wax on their skis and just fly down. I always used wax. I have used skins, actually, but just in the last couple of times I did it.

The race died, a couple of times, actually; ’02 or ’03 it died, and then it came back to life, and then in ’04 it finally died for the last time.

ES: Is there a boundary dispute? I think that’s what I heard.
DH: Yes, the guy who owns the property at the bottom of the canyon. Well these days there’s a big condo development, so you couldn’t have it through there now, but in ’04 the farmer, I guess he’s not really a farmer, gentleman farmer who has a few cows there, owns the property. He was objecting to people going through his backyard. He was getting tired of people coming through there, and also he claimed that because the race was going through there, people were seeing racers coming through and were coming up there after the race, you know, skiing up through there all winter. So he was getting a lot of traffic, increasing traffic through his backyard, and people were being nasty to him. He’d ask them nicely not to ski up there. He’d tell them, you know, “I’m okay with the race. That’s one time, but I’d appreciate it if you not ski across my backyard.” And some of them were flipping him off, just giving him a hassle, and so finally he said no, can’t do it any more.

I think it was Charlie Sturgis that went up and smoothed things over a little bit. He finally agreed to let them do it again. And one year he forgot to unlock his gate, and so one of the guys, “Have you met Ziggy Peacock?” Probably not.

ES: Someone’s mentioned him, yeah.

DH: Used to work at Wasatch Touring. So Ziggy was there, and the only thing he could do was cut the fence next to the gate so the skiers could get through. This was the morning of the race. Skiers were on their way over, so he got some cutters and he cut the fence. Well, the farmer just went totally nuts, and he found Ziggy. “What’s your name?” And Ziggy thought, if I tell him my name he’ll think I’m making fun of him. He won’t believe me, and so he said, “My name is Dwight Butler,” or Charlie Butler, I don’t know which. And so the farmer went after Charlie or Dwight. That was one of the times that it
died, and then again they talked him into letting them do it again after that. Ziggy Peacock did not volunteer to help out. [Both laugh.]

So yeah, I did it many, many years. Probably the high point of the race for me was in 1997. My two boys and I were in the top seven. My older son actually had gotten second the year before, and he got a third that year. My younger son was sixth and I was seventh. I almost caught him at the finish. I was three seconds behind him; just almost caught him.

But in '95 I got to the road, and my older son was there, and he was taking his skis off, and I decided there’s no way I’m going to take my skis off. If I leave my skis on and run across the road, I can beat this kid. So I did it. So this was the famous picture. I ran across the road with my skis on. There was another guy running across the road with his skis in his hand, Greg Funseth and Greg was going in the wrong direction. They had a little bridge across the stream when you got across the road, and I knew where the bridge was. He was going too far to the left, and I was on his left, so I was kind of pushing him to go farther right. There was a newspaper reporter there that got this photograph of me, and it looks like I was elbowing him, right? And I’m skiing across the road, and this other guy has got his skis in his hand, so the picture actually got put in the Park City paper, how I was trying to knock down my competition.

Anyway, I got third that year and I beat my son who only got fifth. Then the next year he was second and I was only sixth. That was the end of my skiing very fast in that race. That was the last time I broke fifty minutes, actually. Yeah, I’ve really had a good time with that race. It’s a perfect race for me because I can ski downhill pretty well, and a
lot of cross-country skiers can’t. So if I’m within a couple of minutes and somebody’s at the top, you know, I could usually catch up to them on the way down.

ES: Sure.

DH: So I was able to pass a lot of people going downhill. Also, as a backcountry skier, I could deal with the deep snow and figure out ways to get up the hill as quickly as possible. Sometimes I’d take my skis off. I’d go up the night before and pack a climbing track, and be able to know where I could take my skis off and run up the climbing track or walk up the climbing track.

ES: So it was always just a no grooming, except until you groomed—

DH: No grooming, no. Unless you spent a little time the day before or a couple of days before checking out the conditions. In recent years finding out where the snowmobiles tracks were. Figure out which tracks to follow to be able to get up there the quickest, and whether or not you should take your skis off. If nobody’d been up there, you could pack a track, so I’d climb up and down and up and down a couple of times with snowshoes, maybe, to get a pole track, and track to try to make sure that it was at the right steepness for me to get up there with my skis with no skins, because the skin guys wanted to go up a steep track, and I didn’t. I wanted a flatter track, so I’d set a track that worked for me.

So anyway, yeah, I spent a bit of reconnoitering to make it. Oh yeah, that was fun. Lot of good times. That’s a great race because you really do it for fun. Nobody gets very serious about it. And another good thing is that you get these Norwegians out there, you know like the University Ski Team guys that were so fast and they’d clean house on the track, but they’d get in this deep snow and they didn’t know what to do, or they’d stay on the road because they’d be so far ahead of everybody. They didn’t know about the cutoff, or
they were not very good at downhill, even though they were strong at uphill, so they’d get beat. They didn’t usually come back a second time. So yeah, Overland has a lot of good memories for me.

ES: Great! Yeah, I think we’ll call it good there.

DH: Sounds good!

END OF INTERVIEW