

Are Norwegian Americans “Born with Skis?”

Exploring the role of skiing in Norwegian American ethnic identity in the 1930s through the skiing adventures of Sigmund and Birger Ruud

Kristoffer Moen Helgerud



A master thesis presented to the
Department for Literature, Area Studies and European
Languages
North American Area Studies
Faculty of Humanities
ENG4790 (Credits: 30)
Supervisor: Associate Professor David C. Mauk, Ph.D.

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

Spring 2013

Are Norwegian Americans “born with Skis?”

Exploring the role of skiing in Norwegian American ethnic identity in the 1930s through the skiing adventures of Sigmund and Birger Ruud



Fox River Grove, Illinois.

Picture: Norsk Bergverksmuseum

By Kristoffer Moen Helgerud
(Student at Lektorprogrammet)

© Kristoffer Moen Helgerud

2013

Are Norwegian Americans “Born with Skis?”

Kristoffer Moen Helgerud

<http://www.duo.uio.no/>

Trykk: Reprosentralen, Universitetet i Oslo

Abstract

One of the leading scholars on Norwegian American ethnic identity, Odd S. Lovoll, has argued that ski jumping was an “ethnic forte” for Norwegian immigrants in the U.S. This thesis tests and interprets Lovoll’s statement by analyzing the experience of two Norwegian ski jumping brothers who toured the United States in the winter of 1937/1938. One of them, Birger Ruud, was the reigning world and Olympic champion at the time when they arrived in New York City. The other brother, Sigmund Ruud, traveled as the reigning U.S. champion.

The thesis attempts to reconstruct the “Norwegian America” of the late 1930s, discusses the role of ski jumping as an ethnic activity for Norwegian Americans, and examines to what extent the Ruud brothers could be seen as ethnic heroes. It is organized as an argument which develops in two stages, in the two main chapters. At the first stage, theoretical approaches to ethnicity are applied to scholarly literature about Norwegian Americans, both primary and secondary, to discuss the role of ski jumping as an ethnic activity for the ethnic group. This chapter concludes that ski jumping should be mentioned along with, for example, The Sons of Norway fraternal order and the Lutheran Church when one deals with Norwegian American ethnicity in the late 1930s.

Elaborating from the first of the two main chapters, the second argues that the Ruud brothers should be counted as ethnic heroes for Norwegian Americans. This hypothesis is grounded in a textual analysis of Sigmund Ruud’s travel book *Skispor krysser verden* and a selection of Norwegian, Norwegian American and American newspaper articles which are concerned with the Ruud brothers’ presence in the U.S. The analysis has looked at the rhetoric that was used by the various newspapers to describe the brothers, and presents the most frequent rhetorical categories that appeared in the articles. Based on these rhetorical presentations, the thesis argues that the brothers should be added to the list of ethnic heroes in Norwegian America because their ski jumping skills and “smiling behavior” seem to have been greatly valued by the Norwegian American press in the areas that have been investigated in this research.

While the thesis departed from the assumption that Norwegian Americans generally had been accepted by the majority culture, the analysis has also produced evidence which reveals that Norwegian Americans still were preoccupied with their ethnic group’s reputation in America. Ski jumping seems to have been good advertisement for Norwegian heritage in the U.S. because it was brought to the country and developed by Norwegian immigrants, and gradually it had caught the attention of Americans as well. The Ruud brothers should be seen

as ethnic heroes because they were internationally acknowledged as the best ski jumpers in the world. As the thesis presents the situation, the Norwegian American press emphasized their skills and merits because of their symbolic value as champions of a Norwegian American ethnic activity.

To the memory of the ski jumping Ruud brothers, whose ski tracks left more prints than they possibly could have grasped. This thesis is dedicated to “Birger Ruud’s minnefond,” a fund which is established to promote sports in Kongsberg, and to maintain the city’s rich sports history and traditions.

Acknowledgements

The work with this thesis has been troublesome at times, but rewarding in the end. After years and years of jumping in the small hills, I was finally ready to face “Holmenkollen.” But even after a ski jumper completes the first great leap, there are a lot of elements which still may be improved. How to jump further? How do we make the landing match the take-off? And how do we keep an elegant and consistent style through the entire leap? Such improvements can only be achieved through good guidance by experienced coaches.

First, I would like to thank the head coach of this project, David Mauk, for the critical feedback that he has given me, and for the conferences we have had, always with learning and development in mind. While his knowledge on the topic of American immigrant studies is comparable to the Ruud brothers’ expertise in ski jumping, to say the least, he has challenged me to find and understand relevant information on my own. Being a teacher myself, that is a pedagogical approach which I truly appreciate. I would also like to thank Deborah Kitchen for the encouraging feedback she gave me when I started working on this project.

This thesis has demanded insight and access to sources which I could not have obtained without the help of Dina Tølforsby, curator at the National Library in Oslo, and from the skiing museum in Kongsberg, a department under Norsk Bergverksmuseum. Dina’s help with finding sources exceeded what anyone could have asked for, even after her retirement from her position at the library, and for that I am forever grateful. Dina’s successor, Jana S. Bentze, also deserves my appreciation as she proved just as willing to help, in a period which must have been very busy for her.

I am equally in debt to the staff at Norsk Bergverksmuseum in Kongsberg for good guidance, great hospitality and interesting conversations. A special thanks goes to curator Per Øyvind Østensen for traveling deep into the silver mines of Kongsberg to retrieve old scrapbooks which have proved indispensable to this thesis, for helpful correspondences and for a place to sit when I worked with the primary sources.

Finally I would like to thank my fellow students and good friends at the University in Oslo for sticking together through all of these years, and for sharing encouragements and concerns during the work with our different theses. Two good friends, Ørjan Døyle Brage and Njål Vagleik Johnsen, deserve my gratitude for proofreading and solid feedback in the final stages of this project.

Table of Contents

Abstract	v
Acknowledgements	ix
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Central Conceptions	2
Ethnic Identity	2
Other Definitions	9
Selected Method, Structure and Literature	10
Literature and Sources	15
Structure	17
The Ruud brothers' Tour of 1938	18
Chapter 2: Skiing in Norwegian American Ethnicity in the 1930s	21
Norwegian Ethnicity in the Early 1900s	21
American Patriotism	22
Modernism	23
The 1925 Centennial and Beyond	25
Nordic Skiing in America	27
Ski Jumping as an Ethnic Marker in 1938	32
The Ideal of "Idraet"	32
Ski Jumping with Attachments to Norway	34
How big was Ski Jumping?	35
Concluding Remarks	37
Chapter 3: The Ruud Brothers' Roles and Iconic Significance in Norwegian American Ethnicity	40
Man, Machine, or in Between? The Different Media Portrayals of the Ruud Brothers in Norwegian America	42
Great Athletes	43
Likable Personalities	46
Royalty	47
Super Humans	48

Responding to High Demands.....	50
Raising Expectations	50
The “Norge” Ski Club: An Ethnic Celebration.....	52
Soldiers Field: Americanization Reversed.....	54
Menomonie: Mutual Admiration	55
Somersaulting the Summit	56
Concluding Remarks	58
Chapter 4: Conclusion.....	60
Undiscovered Ski Tracks	63
Appendix	64
Bibliography.....	67
Primary Sources:	67
Secondary Sources:	67
Books.....	67
Articles	68
Web sites	69

Chapter 1: Introduction

All the contenders are present. We line up by the club house at the end of the outrun. With the American and the Norwegian flags side by side and with a band playing in front, we march in. Two ranks face each other inside the “horse shoe.” [The] “Star Spangled Banner” and “Ja, vi elsker” sound from the masses of spectators. The flags of the two nations are hoisted to the top. A ‘Norway competition’ is ready to take place.¹

When the ski jumping brothers Birger and Sigmund Ruud toured the U.S. in the winter of 1937/38, they were greeted by a well-established skiing milieu which had been significantly influenced by Norwegian immigrants like the famous John A. “Snowshoe” Thompson. But since the formation of the National Ski Association (NSA) in 1905, there had also been an emphasis on removing ethnic barriers from participation in ski sports, which allowed several ethnic groups to influence the sports and to take a part in them. By 1938, Norwegian Americans seemed to have been successfully integrated in the U.S., and as many as 47% lived their American lives in great American cities already in the late 1920s.² Still, as the quotation above suggests, the ski jumping competition that Sigmund reports from were popular among “masses” of spectators who were seemingly quite Norwegian or Norwegian American judging by the flags and the music. This indicates that skiing and ski events played a part in Norwegian American ethnicity in the late 1930s, but how significant it was is not that apparent, and thus it needs to be analyzed.

By using Birger and Sigmund Ruud’s trip to America in 1938 as a basis for the discussion, this thesis aims to explore the significance of skiing and ski stars in Norwegian American identity in the late 1930s by asking the following: *What role did ski jumping play as an activity that was iconic for Norwegian sports heritage in the U.S. in the late 1930s, especially in 1938, and to what extent may the Norwegian national ski jumpers Sigmund and Birger Ruud be said to have played a role as ethnic heroes in Norwegian America when they toured the U.S. that year?*

These questions demand an in-depth understanding of Norwegian American ethnicity in 1938. Some scholars have interpreted the 1925 Norwegian American centennial celebrations as the high peak of Norwegian America which marked the passing of an era.³ This implies that Norwegian Americans had been successfully acknowledged as Americans, a notion that is fueled by the presence of President Coolidge and the First Lady at the

¹ Ruud, Sigmund, “Skispor krysser verden,” in *Norges OL-helter. Sigmund Ruud*, (Oslo: ForlagETT Libri Arte, 1998), 25-26. Translated by the author of this thesis.

² Jenswold, John R., “Becoming American, Becoming Suburban,” *Norwegian-American Studies* 33 (1992): 5.

³ Lovoll, Odd S., *The Promise Fulfilled. A Portrait of Norwegian Americans Today*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 70.

celebrations, and so afterwards became less interested in their heritage. John R. Jenswold found that the only remaining arenas for maintenance of Norwegian culture following the transformation into accepted Americans were the Lutheran Church and the Sons of Norway fraternal order.⁴ This thesis argues that skiing, ski events, and supporting Norwegian ski stars served as a third arena for celebrations of “Norwegianess.”

Central Conceptions

Ethnic Identity

As this thesis attempts to map the ethnic significance of the Ruud brothers it is natural that it analyzes their appearance through a theoretical lens of ethnic identity. Thus the conceptions of *ethnic* and *identity* need to be clarified.

Ethnic awareness in the American context must be seen as a historical process which developed as the need to distinguish Americans from the others became necessary. We may assume that this occurred already in the aftermath of the American Revolution which brought forth a need to distinguish the dominant Anglo-American settlers from their former crown.⁵ But it is also likely that the widespread immigration in the nineteenth century created a demand to identify a distinctive Americaness.⁶ Orm Øverland points out that until the Second World War, all immigrants that were not of British ancestry were reckoned as foreigners in the United States.⁷ These immigrants were labeled by their ancestry, and they could receive recognition in America either by arguing that their heritage belonged there, or by rejecting their old country and becoming American. The latter is not productive in this context because Norwegian Americans have maintained some ethnic distinctiveness. Immigrants who wished to legitimize their group’s presence in America could do this, according to Øverland, by creating “homemaking myths.” These may be divided into three main categories: “myths of foundation” (“we were here first”), “myths of blood sacrifice” (“we gave our lives for our chosen homeland”), and “myths of ideological gifts or an ideological relationship” (“we brought with us the American ideas”). A fourth group of “ethnic heroes” could also be added; stories of inventors, politicians, military leaders, businesspeople, and all manners of successful immigrants, mainly men, are central to all filiopietistic and popular histories of

⁴ Jenswold, “Becoming American,” 19-20.

⁵ Conzen, Kathleen N., Gerber, David A., Morawska, Ewa, Pozzetta, George E. and Vecoli, Rudolph J., “The Invention of Ethnicity: A Perspective from the U.S.A.,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 12:1 (1992): 8.

⁶ Conzen *et al.*, “The Invention of Ethnicity.”

⁷ Øverland, Orm, *Immigrant Minds, American Identities. Making the United States Home, 1870-1930*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 1.

immigrants groups.⁸ Skiers, such as “Snowshoe” Thompson, could fit neatly into this fourth category, but what about visiting Norwegian nationals like Birger and Sigmund Ruud? Could they also be interpreted as ethnic heroes for Norwegian Americans? That is investigated in depth in chapter three.

Based on the ethnic labeling as described above it could be tempting to state that ethnicity is decided solely by a person’s ancestry, but that would not be sufficient. This definition could surely be applied to the majority of first and second generation immigrants who lived in societies where the concentration of Norwegian immigrants was high, or who were united by strong ethnic ties within their community, but it would be problematic when describing people with mixed ancestry or those who lived in heterogeneous environments where ethnic bonds were weaker. Max Weber defined an *ethnic group* as “those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration.”⁹ This definition opens for psychological and sociological aspects of ethnicity which allow people to identify themselves with a group with one certain geographically decided heritage, although they have not been brought up in that area themselves, or even have two parents with origins in the same country. Because this definition seems to cover all aspects of being, and even feeling, related to a certain heritage group, it is acceptable to this thesis.

Identity, when seen in relation to ethnicity, may refer to which ethnic group individuals identify with, and with which they are identified by others. Thus ethnic identity, seen in a broad sense, includes a psychological aspect, a sociological aspect, and also includes the physical and practical impact it has on the members of the group with which the identity is connected. The many possible aspects of ethnic identity, or “ethnicity,” make it a complex conception which scholars have interpreted differently.

In the 1960s and 1970s, traditional “melting pot” theories were challenged as ethnicity received popular attention among Americans. In the 1930s and 1940s, influential scholars like W. Lloyd Warner and Leo Srole interpreted the strong degree of assimilation and acculturation among the second generation immigrants as evidence that ethnicity would eventually disappear in what they considered an inevitable assimilation process.¹⁰ This belief was still supported in the 1960s by scholars such as Milton Gordon who found that “once the world of primary groups becomes ethnically heterogeneous [...] assimilation proceeds and the

⁸ Øverland, *Immigrant Minds*, 19.

⁹ Weber, Max, *Economy and society*, (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968), 389.

¹⁰ Gans, Herbert J., “Comment: Ethnic Invention and Acculturation, a Bumpy-Line Approach,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 12:1 (1992): 42-52, accessed May 27, 2013 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27501012>

ethnic groups begin to disappear.”¹¹ But in the 1960s and 1970s these views were challenged as ethnic groups in America became increasingly interested in ethnicity which forced theorists to accept that certain aspects of the different ethnic cultures had escaped the “melting pot.”¹² A debate on ethnicity developed between what Mary Waters identifies as “melting pot theorists” and “pluralists.”

An alternative to the inevitable decline of ethnic groups was supported in the “return to ethnicity thesis” which was strongly influenced by Marcus Hansen’s “principle of the third generation interest.”¹³ But as Gans points out this thesis fails to explain what will happen with ethnic identity in the fourth and later generations.¹⁴ Waters finds that even though the importance of ethnic identity and the vitality of ethnic groups decline “when the structural reasons for the maintenance of ethnic identity” decline, Americans with European ancestry have maintained some degree of their ethnic identity.¹⁵ So in order to explain the survival of ethnicity, sociologists and historians rather took on the task of redesigning the assimilationist belief in a “straight line” decline of ethnicity into theories that allowed ethnic identity to survive, even when immigrants had been successfully integrated in America.

Richard D. Alba identifies two alternative conceptions that attempt to explain what *ethnic identity* really is. The psychological approach, strongly influenced by the psychoanalytic theorist Erik Erikson, holds that an individual has a certain number of alternative “models of self” which he or she may choose from.¹⁶ These options are restricted by the social surroundings and thus for a person who is raised and lives within an ethnically homogenous environment the options are colored by that ethnical group’s distinctiveness. This psychological approach must be seen in relation to the essentialist belief that certain characteristics of an individual descends from birth and is needed to separate him or her from other groups of people. Also implied in this psychological approach to ethnic identity is the notion that ethnicity is deep rooted in a person’s sub-consciousness and will be a part of the person’s identity even if he or she rejects it. The latter point is also, in Alba’s view, the weakness of this thesis as he finds that ethnic solidarity only can be maintained if masses of

¹¹ Waters, Mary C., *Ethnic Options. Choosing Identities in America*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 4-5.

¹² Reasons for the revived interests in ethnicity will not be discussed here, but they are accounted for in Waters, *Ethnic Options*, Conzen *et al.*, “The Invention of Ethnicity” and Gans, “Comment: Ethnic Invention and Acculturation, a Bumpy-Line Approach”.

¹³ Hansen, Marcus Lee, *The Problem of the Third Generation Immigrant*, (Illinois: Augustana Historical Society, 1938).

¹⁴ Gans, “Comment: Ethnic Invention and Acculturation, a Bumpy-Line Approach.”

¹⁵ Waters, *Ethnic Options. Choosing Identities in America*, 3.

¹⁶ Alba, Richard D., *Ethnic Identity: The Transformation of the White America*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 22.

an ethnic group's members "*consciously* identify themselves in ethnic terms, are so identified by others, and who act, at least some of the time, in terms of these identities."¹⁷

This approach brings Alba closer to the social psychological conception of the self. In this view an individual's social identity is realized by the different social *categories* and *groups* which he or she identifies with, and in which he or she is defined by others. Belonging to groups involves that its members meet certain behavioral expectations which are significant for that group's distinctiveness. One person may be identified with several categories and groups depending on aspects like their heritage, occupation, gender, or participation in other social settings. When a person belongs to several groups we may assume that their significance is of varying importance to not only that individual, but also for the society. Alba adapts Sheldon Stryker's idea about *commitment* and *salience* as important dimensions of identities.¹⁸ While commitment, as the word suggest, is connected to the degree of effort that a person puts into a social relationship of some sort, salience involves how probable it is that a person will act accordingly to something that is connected with a certain identity of his or hers in different situation. To Alba salience is the most interesting conception in relation to ethnic identity because it allows ethnic identity to remain a part of a person's identity even if it has lost some significance to that person definition of him- or herself.

Even though Alba's theory is closer to the social psychological model than the psychological approach to ethnicity, he found that it too included some problematic aspects. In its original form it overformalizes the "degree of consensus about the ethnic names and labels with which people identify themselves and the expectations about behavior associated with ethnic identities."¹⁹ This consensus needs to be questioned as developments such as interethnic marriages have made the image more complex. Because a person might be of mixed heritage, exemplified with German-Irish-Italian by Alba, it becomes problematic to label his or her ethnicity because it might change with respect to identity and behavior. By taking such considerations into account, Alba seems to generally agree with the social psychological model, but he adjusts it to recognize "that ethnic identity may be a subtle matter for many whites, sometimes present but often not, and possibly quite variable in its form" and he departs "from a loose conception of ethnic identity, namely, a person's subjective orientation toward his or her ethnic origins."²⁰

¹⁷ Alba, *Ethnic Identity*, 24.

¹⁸ Alba, *Ethnic Identity*, 23.

¹⁹ Alba, *Ethnic Identity*, 24.

²⁰ Alba, *Ethnic Identity*, 25.

Alba's conception seems to have several strengths which make it preferable to this thesis. First, Alba's theory is based on several other conceptions from different points of view, but he has made a thorough analysis of these conceptions' weaknesses and adjusted them into a definition which seemingly responds to their flaws. Secondly, his conception takes the individual into account which makes it more applicable to each member of a group. Finally, his definition allows ethnicity to play a part in a person's identity even though it might not be the most salient piece of the puzzle. The latter aspect is stressed by Herbert Gans who found that it could be useful for ethnicity theorists to question what roles they play in ethnicity themselves.²¹ The word "ethnicity" is really a term that was coined by theorists in the twentieth century and may not necessarily be a part of every citizen's consciousness or vocabulary. Together, these strengths seem to make his conception more universally applicable to any citizen in any era or area. Put in other words, his theory allows the Ruud brothers to have played a part in Norwegian American ethnicity independent of how salient ethnicity was for each individual's identity. The identity was available for ethnic Norwegians, people with mixed heritage, and even people who simply wished to be associated with this heritage.

Alba is generally concerned with developments in ethnicity among white Americans with European ancestry in the post war period, but his theory is still applicable to this thesis for two reasons. First, he found that although interethnic marriages among white citizens of European ancestry increased in the post war period, he indicates that this development started before World War II, and that a little "fewer than a third of the whites born in 1920 or earlier had ethnically mixed ancestry."²² Secondly, if we make the assumption that many Norwegian Americans were successfully integrated and recognized as Americans by 1938, it still makes them "mixed," if not by ancestry, by ethnicity because they are both Norwegian and American.

Because this thesis develops from the assumption that ethnicity was of various importance to Norwegian Americans in 1938, it is also necessary to adapt theories developed by advocates for ethnicity as something that is optional. This is made possible with Alba's adopted idea of *salience*, and supported, if not taken even further, in Herbert Gans' conception of *symbolic ethnicity*. Gans defines identity as the "sociopsychological elements that accompany behavior" and is thus more charged with expectancy than with heritage. Writing in the late 1970s when there was a strong belief in an ethnic revival following the

²¹ Gans, "Comment: Ethnic Invention and Acculturation," 51.

²² Alba, *Ethnic Identity*, 15.

Civil Rights movement, Gans rejected the idea of a “return of ethnicity” and rather argued for an adjusted model of the straight line theory. Gans found that as acculturation and assimilation change the original culture of an ethnic group that persists through the first and second generations, ethnicity continues to persist also with the third and later generations, but in a more symbolic fashion. His hypothesis is that in the third generation “people are less and less interested in their ethnic cultures and organizations – both sacred and secular – and are instead more concerned with maintaining their ethnic identity, [...] and with finding ways of feeling and expressing that identity in suitable ways.”²³ What is essential here is that the importance lies in feeling ethnic rather than being ethnic, and that the ethnicity must be expressed in ways that do not conflict with American values.

Ethnic identity is different for the third and later generations in the sense that the first and second generations are more likely to live in areas where the ethnic concentrations are larger and because they carry their mother country’s culture and language with them. Thus they do not have to find ways to express their ethnicity as it is a natural part of everyday life. The later generations, who grow up “without assigned roles or groups that anchor ethnicity,”²⁴ have two options. Either they can give up their identity, or they can find ways of expressing it. If they choose the latter, that results in a more visible way of expressing their identity which is realized by “individual cultural practices which are taken from the older ethnic culture.”²⁵ Gans admits that we may not be certain that ethnicity persists in later generations, but he views the continuation of ethnicity of older immigrants groups, such as Scandinavians, as evidence that it does. If his hypothesis is solid, it should be applicable to Norwegian Americans of all generations in the 1930s as well.

Evolving from Gans’ work in the late 1970s, several scholars have adapted the idea of ethnicity as something that is secular and symbolic. Mary Waters reads Gans interpretation of ethnicity as a form of identity that survived in the later European American generations merely as symbolic identification which mostly was a leisure-time activity.²⁶ Yet this symbolic identification is very subjective in the sense that those who express it not necessarily know what this identity originally was, and thus it is expressed in the way that they have perceived it. It is important to remember that this “new” symbolic ethnicity applies to the third and later generation immigrants and may not be applied to the first and second

²³ Gans, Herbert J., “Symbolic ethnicity: The future of ethnic groups and cultures in America,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 2:1 (1979): 7.

²⁴ Gans, “Symbolic ethnicity,” 8.

²⁵ Gans, “Symbolic ethnicity,” 10.

²⁶ Waters, *Ethnic Options*, 7.

generations. For the first and second generation Norwegians, ski jumping events would be an arena to meet other Norwegians in familiar settings and thus it could be a platform to socialize, or to become integrated. A driving force for Waters' work is her observation that people tend to respond differently to questions about ethnicity at different times which indicates that people's ethnic identification changes with time and in different situations. She finds that although this inconsistency is strongest among people with mixed ancestry, "the relationship between *believed* ethnic origins and self-identification for people of single ancestry involves a series of choices"²⁷ as well. In this context we may imagine that a third generation Norwegian American with pure Norwegian ancestry might likely respond that his or her ethnicity was Norwegian if asked while attending the "Norge" Ski Club's competition, but that he or she just as likely could have responded "American" if asked in a less ethnically colored situation.

Waters found that the older the immigrant group is, the less likely it is to respond consistently. "Some proportion of whites whose ancestors came more than two generations ago changes their minds about what ethnic label to claim about as readily as they change their minds about presidential candidates or social issues."²⁸ This is in accordance with the idea that ethnicity becomes symbolic for the third and later generations. An explanation for why third and later generation ethnics still choose to identify with a certain ethnicity even when they do not have to is connected with the "American need to "be from somewhere."²⁹ Symbolic ethnicity is a particularly useful tool to stimulate this need because it allows Americans a sense of belonging and specialness in the context of a community while still being allowed contradictory American values such as "individuality, flexibility and openness to new ideas."³⁰

One final theoretical approach to ethnicity which is useful when we are treating the significance of ski jumping as an ethnic symbol is the idea that ethnicity is invented and reinvented by the ethnic groups as a tool to meet various demands by the majority culture. The conception of invention of ethnicity was advocated by Werner Sollors, and then later elaborated on by a group of historians headed by Kathleen N. Conzen. In Conzen *et al's* view, ethnicity is a "process of construction or invention which incorporates, adapts, and amplifies preexisting communal solidarities, cultural attributes, and historical memories" and which "is

²⁷ Waters, *Ethnic Options*, 19.

²⁸ Waters, *Ethnic Options*, 39.

²⁹ Waters, *Ethnic Options*, 150.

³⁰ Waters, *Ethnic Options*, 153.

grounded in real life context and social experience.”³¹ While this study emphasizes the relationship between different ethnocultures and how they affect each other, Conzen *et al.* recognize that the ethnic groups were not internally homogenous, but that the invented traditions serve to unify groups despite such internal differences in order to advance the groups’ resources, status and power. On an individual’s psychological level the invented ethnicity seeks to reconcile the foreignness and Americanness to allow an individual to be both. The idea of invention of ethnicity is particularly useful to explain the significance of ski jumping events because the ethnic leaders that were directing this process often encouraged performance arts such as dance, music, song, food and costume.³² Ski jumping events often encompassed several of these categories, and we may also argue the acrobatic nature of ski jumping is a performance art in itself.

Other Definitions

In addition to “ethnic identity,” there are three conceptions which are frequently used through this thesis that must be commented on. First, the outdated Norwegian word “Idraet,” which may be translated into “sports” in English and which is spelt “idrett” in modern Norwegian, are not translated because the word “Idraet” is charged with a slightly different meaning. While “sports” and “idrett” are used to describe activities, “Idraet” was a lifestyle ideal which held that a healthy body produced a healthy soul which in turn would benefit the nation.³³ As will be shown, “Idraet” was the word that Norwegian American elites used when they advocated ski related activities.

Because this thesis is preoccupied with ethnic heroes, it is also important to define what the conception of a “hero” encompasses. This word is easily conflated with similar conceptions like “stars,” or even “celebrities,” it is necessary to establish the differences between them. As argued in more depth in chapter three, a “hero” is a person who has achieved something great through his or her actions, while stardom could be earned through successful construction of a person’s image in the media.

Following the practice of contemporary American discourse on ethnic studies, the hyphen is not used for ethnic groups; neither for the noun “Norwegian America” nor the adjective “Norwegian American,” despite when the hyphen is used in the sources that are quoted. The use of the hyphen seems to be inconsistent among different scholars on ethnic identity. Like Ashis Sengupta points out, most modern style guides recommends that it is

³¹ Conzen *et al.*, “The Invention of Ethnicity,” 5.

³² Conzen *et al.*, “The Invention of Ethnicity,” 13.

³³ The conception of “Idraet” is discussed in more depth on page 41.

dropped, while some ethnic groups still prefer the hyphen because it reflects the hybridity of American culture.³⁴ The hyphenated form “Norwegian-America” may be interpreted as an expression that is charged with a political meaning, which has basis in the “hyphenated America” of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Because this thesis uses the adjective “Norwegian” to refer to the part of the American population with Norwegian heritage for convenient purposes only, the hyphen has been dropped in order to make the expression as politically neutral as possible.

Selected Method, Structure and Literature

This thesis makes use of qualitative methods to investigate the significance of the ski jumpers in Norwegian America. It applies the theories that are presented above to the Norwegian American context of the late 1930s to see if they are valid when compared to findings in contemporary sources, and thus if they can give an answer to the question asked by this thesis. Is Gans right? Were the Norwegian Americans of the late 1930s mainly ethnic through symbolic expression of their ethnicity? If that was the case, may a ski jumping event serve as such an expression? The best way to investigate this subject would arguably be to conduct interviews with a representative selection of the spectators who attended the events. But because it happened 75 years ago, and because of the limited time and resources granted to this project, it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to find enough people who were present at the events. Therefore, in the search for an answer to the significance of the brothers’ presence in America, a textual analysis of different written sources has been made.

The central primary sources in this analysis are the Ruud brothers’ travel book *Skispor krysser verden*, contemporary writings that are concerned with Norwegian heritage, and several contemporary newspaper articles which are concerned with their tour. In *Skispor krysser verden* the brothers describe the main events of their tour in their own words. The key events of this tour which will be analyzed in this thesis are accounted for in this first chapter. There are, however, both advantages and possible pitfalls one might encounter when using travel books as a basis for the analysis.

Writing in a time when autobiographies were generally seen as sources for literary history, Fritz Redlich promoted the usefulness of autobiographies as primary sources in social

³⁴ Sengupta, Ashis, “The Hyphenated Identity in Contemporary Multiethnic American Drama,” *Americana: E-journal of American Studies in Hungary* 4:1 (2008), accessed May 27, 2013 <http://americanajournal.hu/vol4no1/sengupta>.

history research.³⁵ Because Redlich includes “selective” self-testimonies which may only be concerned with specific events in a person’s life in his understanding of autobiographies,³⁶ the travel book is treated as an autobiography in this context. He found one of the main strengths of autobiographies to be that they include the lesser details that usually get left out of historical writing that is preoccupied with the larger picture. In other words, we may discover the nuances that we otherwise would miss in writings that aim at describing a more general tendency.

One other strength of biographies actually derive from one of its most obvious weaknesses. On the one hand, they must be used with care because of their obvious biased and subjective nature. We must assume that most authors of autobiographies attempt to communicate some kind of message which is subject to their own position and beliefs. Therefore, as Redlich highlights, historians who use these kinds of sources must be familiar with the factual history of the event they are concerned with³⁷, and the source used should be checked with other sources. On the other hand, if we just ask the right questions, the subjectivity of such a text could actually tell us a lot about the author’s point of view. And if a subjective opinion is reflected in several autobiographies that treat the same topic from the same area and era it might tell us something about a more general popular belief or concern.³⁸

Evolving from the latter argument, this thesis suggests that there might be a lot of valuable information to be found in an autobiography if we ask questions that are not intentionally addressed by its author. If we use the Ruud brothers’ book as an example, its intention seems to be to present their experiences, and perhaps also to communicate their opinions regarding the developments of the sport of ski jumping. Their intentions might exceed the ones that have been indicated here, but at no point do they indicate that they are concerned with ethnic identity. Still, probably without intending to do so, they have included valuable information about ethnicity in their reported encounters with Norwegian Americans. Because these descriptions are reports of their observations rather than a part of an argument, it seems likely that they are fairly reliable. Still, as with most sources, it would be naïve and unprofessional to use them without a critical analysis.

Redlich found that letters and diaries make good opponent sources to autobiographies as they often are written in the midst of the situation and are not affected by the authors’ later

³⁵ Redlich, Fritz, “Autobiographies as Sources for Social History: A Research Program”, *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 62:3 (1975).

³⁶ Redlich, Fritz, “Autobiographies,” 382.

³⁷ Redlich, Fritz, “Autobiographies,” 387.

³⁸ Redlich, Fritz, “Autobiographies,” 390.

reflections, like the autobiography necessarily will be. He also suggested that they often would have been subject to critical reviews close to the time of their release which may serve as good sources for a critical analysis. In the lack of good letters and diaries that comments on their tour, this thesis analyzes contemporary newspapers both to check the reliability of the main primary sources, and also as complementary sources. These sources will be further commented on in the section below.

The importance of skiing and ski stars in Norwegian American ethnicity in the 1930s may only be estimated, and cannot be measured in concrete numbers. As presented above, the word “ethnicity” had not been invented and no research had been made on people’s subjective orientation to their heritage. Thus this analysis has to rely on observations and interpretations of the written material that can reveal anything about ski jumping as an ethnic marker for Norwegian Americans, and the role of the Ruud brothers as ethnic heroes. This is done by asking the same set of questions for all sources that are analyzed: What does the source reveal about skiing as a Norwegian American ethnic symbol? What does the source say about the spectators? What does the source say about the Ruud brothers as heroes? The last question could be specified to ask about their role as ethnic heroes or symbols, but it is important to be open for the possibility that many people came to watch them jump because they were regarded as the best in the world, regardless of which country they came from. Thus they may be considered both as ethnic heroes and as internationally recognized stars.

Newspapers have a great potential of producing results when we are investigating the salience of Norwegian American ethnicity and the significance of the ethnic group’s symbols. In his book *Norsk i Amerika* (“Norwegian in America”) from 1938, Einar Haugen argued that the true members of Norwegian America were those who subscribed to Norwegian American newspapers.³⁹ We must assume that these newspapers depended on a substantial amount of subscribers and buyers in order to survive. Newspapers will only sell if they can convince people that they are worth the time and money, something that can be achieved by offering the kind of content that the readers would be interested in. When the Ruud brothers were given notable attention in the papers it cannot merely have been because the editors found them interesting, but perhaps more so because they had experienced that this was the sort of content that sold newspapers. In this sense, a newspaper’s focus may be seen as reflections of what their intended readers are interested in.

³⁹ Haugen, Einar, *Norsk i Amerika*, 2. ed., (Oslo: Cappelen, 1975), 26.

Paying attention to who the intended readers are, is of great importance when we use newspapers as sources. The Norwegian American newspapers that have been used to cover the selected competitions in this research are mainly written in Norwegian. Their subscribers would thus necessarily have to be able to read Norwegian. For a set of reasons this study has included American newspapers as well. First, if we limit the investigation to these newspapers we may get insight in how the Ruud brothers were presented to the Norwegian speaking part of the population, but we would exclude the third and later generation Norwegian Americans whose language were limited to English. Secondly, we may assume that it was interesting for Norwegian Americans when native Norwegians were given attention in the majority culture's press. Thirdly, analyses of American newspaper can reveal if the American speaking part of the population got to know a different set of Ruud brothers than those who knew Norwegian. Finally, American newspapers articles may also present us with an outside perspective of the Norwegian American ethnic communities. If the reports from American articles differ from the Norwegian American ones it could alarm us of irregularities or corruptions in either of them. The American articles give us the opportunity to compare and contrasts the ways the Ruud brothers were presented in the various newspapers, and we may discuss the possible effects each presentation could have had on the Norwegian American reader.

Newspapers may be analyzed on different levels, depending on what we are looking for. Terje Hillesund operates with two main levels of analysis; verbal and visual.⁴⁰ While the verbal level contains everything that can be read out loud (letters, sentences, paragraphs etc.), the visual level is realized by the parts that must be explained, which encompasses the layout, pictures, symbols, and the font and size used on letters.⁴¹ Both levels of analysis have been used in this study because they might reveal important information about the newspapers priority of the Ruud brothers. On the visual level we may analyze how the content is presented with respect to position, space granted, and use of pictures. In 1938 pictures were not used as frequently as in most modern newspapers. If a newspaper included a big picture of the Ruud brothers on the first page it could tell us a lot about the priority they were given. The Norwegian American newspapers that have been used here, *Skandinaven* and *Washington Posten*, were only issued a few times in a week. Thus they would necessarily be quite selective of what they prioritized.

⁴⁰ Hillesund, Terje, *Står det noe nytt? Innføring i analyse av aviser og nyheter* (Oslo: Institutt for Journalistikk, 1994).

⁴¹ Hillesund, *Står det noe nytt?*, 23

Analysis of the verbal level of a newspaper may also reveal information about priority of a subject. Like Hillesund states, if a topic is repeated frequently in a newspaper, it tells us a lot about the newspaper's areas of interest.⁴² The verbal level of analysis also includes an interpretation of what the article literally says about the brothers. At this level the research question that was introduced above is applied.

One could go as far as to say that media portrayal must be included when we are researching the significance of celebrities. Peter Dahlén argues that great athletes do not necessarily become stars even when they are the best in the field they compete. Stardom is first produced when the media creates a narrative that is published to the public.⁴³ In this sense it is very useful to analyze Norwegian American newspapers because they were responsible for the image that most people would develop of the Ruuds. While a few got the opportunity to speak with the brothers in person, most spectators' image of the brothers would be a combination of what they witnessed in the hill, what people said about them, and how they were portrayed in the media. Because stars are created in such narratives, Dahlén says, we need to study the texts of sport journalism in order to understand "mysterious attraction" ("dragningskraft") of star athletes.⁴⁴ In this sense it becomes extremely important to keep in mind that the Ruuds that are analyzed and presented here are the media created symbols and not the personalities that friends or family would have known. This textual analysis revealed some patterns in the ways the Ruud brothers got presented by the media. Based on these patterns, the thesis presents four rhetorical categories which are presented in chapter three.

Before the sources that are analyzed are commented on it is important to clarify the presumptions that existed before the analysis was done. Prior to this research the writer of the thesis assumed that the majority of Norwegian Americans had been successfully integrated by 1938, but that the Norwegian cultural traditions were accepted in America and that they remained to some extent. This presumption was fueled by observations of Norwegian cultural traditions which have survived to this day. With respect to skiing they include the American "Birkie" which is an adopted version of the traditional "Birkerbeiner" cross-country competition in Norway, the "Norge" ski jumping competition in Chicago, and several commemoration sites which celebrates Norwegian American skiers (Snowshoe Thompson statue, Sondre Nordheim's gravesite, the Engen Ski Museum). This indicates that skiing has remained as a part of Norwegian Americans collective memory of the old country. The period

⁴² Hillesund, *Står det noe nytt?*, 27

⁴³ Dahlén, Peter, *Sport och medier* (Kristiansand: IJ-forlaget, 2008), 388.

⁴⁴ Dahlén, *Sport och medier*, 388.

between 1925 and 1955 was to a great extent dominated by Kongsberg jumpers in international ski jumping, and the best known “Kongsbergers” would necessarily be the Ruud brothers as they had won most of the significant international competitions in the years prior to the 1938 tour.⁴⁵ Thus most of the ski jumping interested audience would know their names and connect them to the Norwegian city of Kongsberg. This leaves them in a fortunate position as ambassadors for Norway, and thus for exposure of Norwegian culture in America. Based on what has been described in this paragraph, this thesis departed from the presumption that the brothers had some significance as ethnic heroes for Norwegian Americans.

Literature and Sources

As indicated above, this thesis aims at estimating the Ruud brothers’ importance by connecting suitable theoretical approaches to ethnicity with the reports of the Ruud brothers and observations reported by contemporary newspapers. Thanks to digitalization of old newspapers, we may easily access reports from the same time and place that the ski jumping took place. Even better, this digitalization has made it possible to search for the specific words and phrases that we are interested in. A quick word search in <http://newspaperarchive.com/> on “Birger Ruud” limited to the year of 1938 yields no less than 232 results.⁴⁶ Because the articles included in this web page is photo copies of the original newspapers we do not have to worry about genuine concerns. It is, however, important to mind the various interests and positions the journalists may have had when writing the articles. This thesis is particularly careful in the distinction between reports made by Norwegian American newspapers and American newspapers.

Most of the articles that are included in the newspaper archive that is presented above are from American newspapers, but there exists a rich selection of Norwegian American newspapers which treats the ski jumping events as well. Sverre Stordahlen, a ski sport enthusiast from Kongsberg who were personally acquainted with the brothers, asked them to mail him all the media coverage that were concerned with Kongsberg skiers that they could come by while they were traveling. These newspaper articles was collected and organized in annual clip books which are available at the skiing museum in Kongsberg. They include American, Norwegian American and Norwegian material. Most of these clips are marked with source and date, something that made the gathering of material much easier. Even when they are not marked with the source they often reveal the date of the event with which they

⁴⁵ The achievements of the Kongsberg jumpers are collected at “Kongsberg skimuseum” (Kongsberg Ski Museum).

⁴⁶ <http://newspaperarchive.com/>, accessed May 27, 2013.

are concerned, and thus it is easier to look them up in microfilm copies of Norwegian American newspapers at the Norwegian National Library in Oslo.

The analysis included a broad selection of newspaper articles, and 37 articles are included in the thesis. Alternatively, a comparative study of a small selection of articles could have been made, but that would have given a strong voice to a small amount of authors. As this thesis seeks to give answer to what role ski jumping and ski jumpers had to Norwegian Americans, it seems necessary to investigate a broad selection of sources. The Norwegian American newspapers that are used in this study are *Skandinaven* and *Washington Posten* because they were distributed in the areas that this thesis is concerned with. *The Central Ski Sport* is used along with other American newspapers that cover these areas for the purposes that are explained above. Finally, the Norwegian newspapers *Fremtiden* and *Laagendalsposten*, both distributed in Kongsberg in 1938, have been used on a few occasions because they included some letters from Kongsberg immigrants. A list of all the articles is found in the appendix at the end of this document.

Other primary sources that are used in this thesis include contemporary writings that are concerned with Norwegian heritage. Because of the nationalistic revival that naturally surrounded the 1925 centennial, the hundredth year anniversary of the first Norwegian settlers who reached the U.S., some of these sources were written in that year. Central are the writings of Aksel H. Holter who were concerned with Norwegian influence on American sports.⁴⁷ Einar Haugen's *Norsk i Amerika* may serve as a great source for the situation of Norwegian Americans close to the year that this thesis is concerned with because it was released in 1937.⁴⁸ It is crucial to keep in mind that sources such as Holter's and Haugen's are written by Norwegian American leaders and that they not necessarily represented a consensus of Norwegian Americans' understanding of their heritage. They are, however, of great value because they tell us something about what ideals people who wished to be identified with Norwegian American identity were encouraged to live up to. One other concern which must be taken into consideration when using sources such as Holter's, is the time span between the centennial and the tour.

In order to place the appearance of the Ruud brothers within the context of both Norwegian America and of American ski sports in 1938 supplementary secondary sources are also used. Central to the Norwegian American identity is Odd S. Lovoll's *The Promise*

⁴⁷ Holter, Aksel H., "Nordmænds indflydelse i Amerikas sportsliv," *Nordmandsforbundet. 18de aargang* (1925): 199-204.

⁴⁸ Haugen, *Norsk i Amerika*

Fulfilled which is based on a thorough investigation of Norwegian American identity in the U.S. Lovoll's work includes a section devoted to winter sports as an ethnic identifier. The most significant sources used regarding ski sports in America is John B. Allen's *From Skisport to Skiing* which treats the development of skiing in America from 1840 to 1940, and Alan K. Engen's *For the Love of Skiing* which includes information about, and images of, the Ruud brothers.⁴⁹

Structure

Because it is difficult to give a definite answer to the questions raised by this thesis it is organized as an argument which develops through two steps, treated separately in the two chapters of the main part. Chapter two, *Skiing in Norwegian American Ethnicity in the 1930s*, discusses the role skiing played in Norwegian American identity in the late 1930s with basis in primary material such as statistics and newspapers, scholarly work on Norwegian American ethnicity and American ski history, and the selected theoretical approaches that are introduced above. The main concern of this chapter is to discuss the role of skiing as an ethnic identifier in Norwegian America, and the *potential* of ski jumpers as ethnic heroes. The chapter starts with a relatively open approach towards Norwegian America in this period, and gradually develops a more narrow focus on the role of Nordic skiing among Norwegian Americans. The Nordic disciplines includes cross country skiing and ski jumping. Ski jumping is the main concern of this thesis.

Elaborating from the framework created by the second chapter, the third chapter analyzes and discusses the role and significance of the Ruud brothers as athlete heroes who were iconic for Norwegian American ethnicity based on the discoveries that the research has produced. Central in this analysis is the Ruud brothers' travel book and the newspaper articles that are concerned with the events they participated in. Relevant pictures are also used to compliment the analysis. Because this thesis is concerned with Norwegian American ethnicity, the analysis is limited to the events that took place in the Midwest region where the Norwegian American presence was most concentrated. This naturally enforces some limitations to the findings of the research as we only get insight in the four areas that are studied. While the thesis operates with the generalizing term "Norwegian American" it recognizes that there might have been strong regional differences and that ski jumping could

⁴⁹ Allen, E. John B., *From Skisport to Skiing. One Hundred Years of an American Sport, 1840-1940* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1993) and Engen, Alan K., *For the Love of Skiing. A Visual History* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, Publisher, 1998).

have played a different role in other parts of “Norwegian America.” The reader must thus keep in mind that the finding’s applicability is limited to the areas that are studied.

The Ruud brothers’ Tour of 1938

Assuming that the brothers’ tour is unknown to most readers, a brief presentation of its purpose and content will be offered. This account is based on the brothers’ travel book. It should be added that both Birger and Sigmund were recognized as among the very best ski jumpers worldwide in 1938, something that was grounded in Olympic medals, world champion titles, and a great number of international top results, mainly in ski jumping but also in alpine skiing. During their stay in America, their younger brother Asbjørn became the third Ruud brother to win the world championship. The prestige of their family name on the international winter sport arena cannot be doubted. Further, their names were already known in the U.S. as both of them participated in the 1932 Olympics in Lake Placid which yielded gold for Birger and 7th place for Sigmund.⁵⁰ Sigmund also spent some time in the U.S. in the season prior to their tour.

When Birger and Sigmund Ruud, along with Birger’s wife, reached New York City around New Year’s, 1938, their main task was to promote skiing equipment on the increasingly interested American market. But perhaps even more important to the brothers personally was the opportunity to meet old friends who had emigrated and, above all, to stimulate their greatest passion; explore the American skiing opportunities. Their first encounter with the Americans were, however, not that encouraging as the first reporters who met them at the dock informed that, due to NSA rules, Birger was not reckoned as an amateur and would not be granted access to national competitions. This was later sorted out as the chairman of NSA, Roger Langley, informed that NSA had decided to run all the competitions in which the Ruuds wanted to participate in accordance with FIS

Date	Competitions
January 16	“Norge” Ski Club’s annual competition at Fox River Grove, Illinois.
January 23	Competition at Bush Lake, Minneapolis.
February 4	Winter Carnival in Menomonie, Wisconsin
February 14	“The Times Meet” at Soldiers Field, Chicago, Illinois.
February 20	Eastern Championship at Brattleboro, Vermont.
March 1	Competition at the Memorial Coliseum Stadium, Los Angeles, California.
March 6	Competition at “The Summit,” Snoqualmie Pass, Washington (State).
March 13	Competition in Sun Valley, Idaho.

Overview of the competition that the Ruud brothers participated in. The competitions at Soldiers Field and the Coliseum Stadium were postponed due to bad weather and the dates reported here are when they actually were held.

⁵⁰ Most results are documented by FIS’ official web site: International Ski Federation, *Biographies*, accessed February 2, 2013, <http://www.fis-ski.com/uk/competitorbiographies.html>.

(International Ski Federation) standards.⁵¹ Upon reaching Boston shortly after their arrival in the U.S., they report that they were greeted with a grandiose reception including recognition as the “Worldchampion”, a police escort, meeting prominent people like the Lord Mayor, and a lunch with the press corps. But despite the seemingly great American interest in the star athletes, all they could think about was snow.⁵²

And snow they did get. The rest of the trip consisted mostly of participation in competitions and events in the Midwest region, but they were also invited to do a show in the Coliseum Stadium in Los Angeles and get the opportunity to explore the Rocky Mountains. Perhaps most notably were the great shows at Coliseum Stadium in LA and at Soldier Field in Chicago, their visit to Ruud Mountain which were named after Sigmund as he helped pointing out its best suited location in 1937, getting presented by Sonja Henie to her audience at a show in Madison Square Garden, and last but not least, that Birger swept the table and won all eight competitions he participated in.

The four competitions are focused on in this thesis are the ones in Fox River Grove, Menomonie, Soldiers Field, and Snoqualmie. All but the championship at Soldiers Field have been selected because they were arranged by Norwegian American organizations or in areas where the Norwegian American concentrations were high. The “Norge” competition, which the introductory quote of this thesis is relating to, has been selected because it was arranged by “Norge” Ski Club which had strong ethnic traditions. Further, “Norge hill” was, and still is, located in the Fox River valley which was the location of the first Norwegian settlement in the Midwest.⁵³

The second competition in the “world’s smallest ski jumping hill” in the small town of Menomonie, 70 miles east of Minneapolis, is worth investigating because the brothers reported that the entire town, with its approximately 3000 residents and another 2000 students at the local college, was turned upside down during the annual ski jumping competition. The shops closed at 12 PM, the schools were closed, a parade was organized with a “snow queen” in front, and about 4000 people gathered around the miniature hill with a hill record of only 19 meters, a record which Sigmund adjusted to 22,5 meters. The audience came from all nearby areas, and the Norwegian language was frequently heard.⁵⁴

While the competition at the Summit, which is located approximately 50 miles from Seattle, is another example of a competition that was organized and visited by many

⁵¹ Ruud, “Skispor krysser verden,” 21.

⁵² Ruud, “Skispor krysser verden,” 18.

⁵³ Lovoll, *The Promise Fulfilled*, 8.

⁵⁴ Ruud, “Skispor krysser verden,” 41-42.

Norwegian Americans, the championship at Soldiers Field may give us an example of the effects the Ruud brothers had on an event that was taken out of a Norwegian framework because it was held in the midst of the city of Chicago. As will be shown, and despite the fact that nearly 63,000 Norwegians lived in the city in 1930,⁵⁵ reports that have been investigated in this analysis reveals that this event drew a very diverse crowd. By investigating the Times meet at Soldiers Field we may discover how the event was assessed by Norwegian Americans, and we may analyze how the participation of the Ruud brothers affected the event and vice versa.

⁵⁵ Lovoll, *The Promise Fulfilled*, 17.

Chapter 2: Skiing in Norwegian American Ethnicity in the 1930s

The twin cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, or in fact all of Minnesota and Wisconsin, are Norwegian [American] areas more than anywhere else. And they have brought ski sports with them. Earlier there were almost only Scandinavian contenders and spectators present when skiing competitions were held in these areas. But this situation has changed. To travel through the air with only a couple of planks attached to your feet proved appealing to Americans. Real Yankees started to show up in great numbers as the sport became familiar to them.⁵⁶

This chapter addresses the first part of the question asked by this thesis: What role did ski jumping play in Norwegian American ethnicity in 1937/38? In order to be able to map its significance, it is completely necessary to have a clear image of what Norwegian America really was as a basis for the interpretation. This needs to be accounted for because Norwegian American ethnicity just before the outbreak of World War 2 has generally received little scholarly attention. Scholars who are interested in Norwegian American ethnicity in the first half of the twentieth century generally seem to center their attention on the significance of the World Wars or the 1925 centennial. Some argue that the centennial marked a passing of an era and even the high peak of Norwegian America, while others see it as a landmark in which Norwegian American ethnicity adjusted into new forms to meet the demands of the day.⁵⁷

Norwegian Ethnicity in the Early 1900s

The quotation that introduces this chapter includes some interesting observations for students of Norwegian American ethnicity. Sigmund Ruud seems to make a distinction between “Scandinavians” and “real Yankees,” and there is something about Minnesota and Wisconsin which makes them more Norwegian than any other places in America. Sigmund was most probably not concerned with Norwegian ethnicity, but his observations are valuable. That many Norwegian immigrants settled in Minnesota and Wisconsin is not groundbreaking information, but in what ways was the Norwegian presence expressed in the late 1930s? Ruud clearly connects skiing to this heritage.

While discussing the state of Norwegian American ethnicity in the late 1930s, there are some major nineteenth and twentieth century developments which affected Norwegian Americans that must be accounted for. The developments that are treated here are the changes brought with the growing American patriotism that followed the U.S. entry into World War I, and the effects of, and the popular reactions to, the modernization that occurred around the

⁵⁶ Ruud, Sigmund, “Skispor krysser verden” (1938), in *Norges OL-helter. Sigmund Ruud*, (Oslo: Forlaget Libri Arte, 1998), 34, translation by this author

⁵⁷ Jenswold, John R., “Becoming American, Becoming Suburban,” *Norwegian-American Studies* 33 (1992): 4-5, Schultz, April R., *Ethnicity on Parade: Inventing the Norwegian American Through Celebration* (U.S: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1994), Lovoll, Odd S., *The Promise of America. A History of the Norwegian-American People*, revised edition, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 274.

turn of the century. These developments are selected because they are necessary to understand the ethnic role that skiing received in the period between the wars. Preoccupied with developments among the Norwegian immigrants in the 1920s, John Jenswold found that the Norwegian culture in America was threatened by “patriotic conformism, advances in the consumer economy, and the expansion of the suburbs.”⁵⁸ The first coincides with the rise of American patriotism, the two that follow must be seen in relation to the modernism of the early 1900s. The aim here is to discuss how these developments and threats were responded to, and how they affected Norwegian American ethnicity in the following two decades.

American Patriotism

American entry into World War I had in the words of Odd S. Lovoll “a chilling effect on the preservation of immigrant cultures.”⁵⁹ It produced an American patriotism that demanded patriotic conformity from the immigrants. The Norwegians were especially vulnerable as the patriots found their language, culture and religion too similar to the German enemy, and the neutral position of their mother country seemed suspicious to Americans.⁶⁰ Patriotic conformity naturally threatened immigrants’ ethnicity, but as Jenswold points out, rather than merging into an American whole, Norwegian American ethnic leaders struggled to redefine Norwegian American ethnicity into a form that was acceptable to the Americans.⁶¹ Norwegian America transformed in this period as a result of both the immigration restriction laws that followed the war itself, and because of the efforts of the ethnic leaders.

The War and the following Immigration Acts of 1921 and 1924 had significant effects on the composition of Norwegian America. Lovoll found that Norwegian mass migration to America was made possible by the transition from sail to steam transportation and that it occurred in three waves: 1866-1873, 1880-1893, and 1900-1914.⁶² These waves counted a total of 677,000 Norwegian immigrants. *The Thirteenth Population Census of the United States, 1910* reveals that the last massive wave made the first generation reach its peak that year, counting 403,858 people. The second generation Norwegian Americans had outgrown the first generation by 200,000 people, which made the complete amount of first and second

⁵⁸ Jenswold, “Becoming American,” 6.

⁵⁹ Lovoll, Odd S., “Better Than a Visit to the Old Country: The *Stevne* of the Sogalag in America,” in *Norwegian-American Essays* ed. Gulliksen, Øyvind T., Mauk, David C., and Toflsby, Dina, (Oslo: NAHA-Norway, 1996), 23.

⁶⁰ Jenswold, “Becoming American,” 6. Jenswold has based this on Chrislock, Carl H., *Ethnicity Challenged. The Upper Midwest Norwegian-American Experience in World War I* (Northfield: The Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1981).

⁶¹ Jenswold, “Becoming American,” 7.

⁶² Lovoll, Odd S., *The Promise Fulfilled. A Portrait of Norwegian Americans Today* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 10.

generation Norwegian Americans count approximately one million.⁶³ Even though there was another wave of immigration in the early 1920s, it never reached the same level as those described above. The 1930 census reveals that 1,100,098 people in the United States were either born in Norway, or had Norwegian parents.⁶⁴ Ten years later only 262,088 of the 11,419,128 foreign-born population in the U.S. came from Norway.⁶⁵ This suggests that the majority of Norwegian Americans in 1938 would be second- and third generation immigrants, but still with a significant proportion from the first generation.

The Norwegian language in America was also affected by World War I. Ethnic leaders encouraged Norwegian immigrants to apply for American citizenship to prove their loyalty to the new country, and newspapers, such as *Nordisk Tidende*, even encouraged Norwegians to become bilingual.⁶⁶ But, as shown in the next section, the developments that affected Norwegian American ethnicity are intertwined processes. The language was also affected by modernization.

Modernism

Around the turn of the nineteenth century, and increasingly after World War I, there was a widespread modernization in the American society which strongly affected the immigrant settlements. This modernization included an accelerated rise of big cities which increased the blending of people with different ethnic backgrounds together. The 1920 census reveals that over 50 percent of the U.S. citizens resided in the cities, and by the end of the 1920s some 47 percent of the Norwegian Americans lived in urban populations, about half of them settled in New York City, Chicago, Minneapolis and Seattle.⁶⁷ About 150,000 of the 262,088 Norwegian immigrants who arrived in 1940 settled in urban areas.⁶⁸ Jenswold explains that as the Norwegian “koloni” were increasingly washed out with other immigrant groups in the cities, and as the cities were depicted as dystopia by contemporary sociologists such as Harlan Paul Douglas, Norwegian ethnic leaders promoted a move of Norwegian immigrants into suburbs outside of the city centers.⁶⁹

But the efforts of Norwegian American school leaders and laymen were unsuccessful in creating Norwegian American suburbs. Home ownership became a symbol of individual

⁶³ Lovoll, *The Promise Fulfilled*, 29.

⁶⁴ Haugen, Einar, *Norsk i Amerika*, 2. utg. (Oslo: Cappelen, 1975), 56.

⁶⁵ Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940. Population*, 2:12, accessed February 26, 2013, <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/decennial/1940.html>.

⁶⁶ Jenswold, “Becoming American,” 9.

⁶⁷ Jenswold, “Becoming American,” 5.

⁶⁸ Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940. Population*, 2:42.

⁶⁹ Jenswold, “Becoming American,” 20-21.

success in the 1920s, and the suburban communities did not “contain ethnic concentrations large enough to sustain a well-defined community life.”⁷⁰ This increased exposure to other cultures threatened the salience of the Norwegian heritage of the emigrants who until this point had lived in the “koloni” or in settlements with large enough concentrations of Norwegian immigrants to uphold a Norwegian culture. Norwegian Americans who moved to the suburbs seem to have been less preoccupied with settling in ethnic concentrations, and they could no longer breathe life to ethnic organizations in their neighborhoods.

The lack of Norwegian American ethnic organizations in the suburbs did not, however, mean that all ethnic organizational life disappeared. Norwegian Americans developed distinctive ethnic organizations and institutions to preserve their heritage, and Jenswold especially points out the Sons of Norway.⁷¹ Lovoll finds that many Norwegian Americans responded to this threat by founding or joining the “bygdslag” that invited all immigrants who came from the same area in Norway to come together and celebrate their common heritage. He relates the emergence of the “bygdslag” to a more “general rise of antimodernism.”⁷² This development is crucial because it helped to preserve Norwegian heritage in a time when it was threatened, and as a part of the reaction towards modernism was an “enthusiasm for athletics and outdoor recreation.”⁷³ Skiing must be seen as a part of this revitalizing movement which is evident in the many ski clubs that was established around the turn of the century.

Despite the Norwegian American participation in urbanization, they were still the most rural of the immigrant groups. Lovoll suggests that Midwestern Norwegian Americans were “moored to a rural bond” as over half of them lived outside the cities as late as in 1940.⁷⁴ It seems reasonable to assume that the Norwegians who immigrated in the late 1930s were more accustomed to cities. While the immigrants who migrated in the nineteenth century to a great extent responded to the increased pressure on the available land in the rural areas, the immigrants in the 1930s and 1940s came from a more modernized Norway where the cities had increased in size and number. But the approximately hundred thousand who decided to settle in rural areas indicate that the “rural bonds” still were strong among many Norwegians immigrants in 1940.

⁷⁰ Jenswold, “Becoming American,” 19.

⁷¹ Jenswold, “Becoming American,” 20.

⁷² Lovoll, “Better Than a Visit to the Old Country,” 14.

⁷³ Lovoll, “Better Than a Visit to the Old Country,” 14.

⁷⁴ Lovoll, *The Promise Fulfilled*, 15.

But even for those who chose to reside in the more Norwegian-dominated rural areas in the Midwest, modernization threatened the Norwegian American ethnicity. Writing in the late 1930s, Einar Haugen reported that World War I had made consumer items like radios, phones and cars available to a greater share of the population which increased communication between larger areas and made isolation nearly impossible.⁷⁵ These developments must be seen as a part of the advances in the consumer economy which Jenswold considered to be one of the three threats to Norwegian American ethnicity. According to Jenswold, this economy advocated that the good citizen was the consumer, and advertising of consumer goods functioned as a guide for immigrants as to how they could become good Americans. These campaigns “homogenized Americans into stock characters” which threatened to remove regional differences and transform nuclear families from different ethnic backgrounds into an American middle class.⁷⁶

By taking the developments that are treated above into consideration, the central question then becomes how these processes were responded to, and where they left Norwegian American ethnicity by the time of the Ruud brothers’ visit.

The 1925 Centennial and Beyond

Lovoll views the 1925 centennial as “a part of a strong reaction against the Americanizing impact of the anti-hyphenism campaign of the previous years” which aimed at securing Norwegians an acceptable position in American history and society by shedding light on Norwegian achievements.⁷⁷ Jenswold interprets the centennial more as a celebration of the efforts that Norwegian leaders had laid down to cope with the challenges brought forth by both the War and also the modernization of American society. These efforts had produced a dual identity which was accepted by Americans. It was this Norwegian American identity that was celebrated in 1925.⁷⁸ Whether the centennial was a part of a reaction, or a celebration of a successful reaction, it marks a change. The main concern here is what this change resulted in.

In several ways the developments of the early twentieth century transformed Norwegian America. According to Jenswold, the transformation included a transition from celebrations of Norwegian history to a focus on Norwegian American history. Norwegian Americans were encouraged to celebrate the Norwegian American 1825 sloop arrival rather

⁷⁵ Haugen, *Norsk i Amerika*, 57.

⁷⁶ Jenswold, “Becoming American,” 13.

⁷⁷ Lovoll, *The Promise Fulfilled*, 23.

⁷⁸ Jenswold, “Becoming American,” 22.

than the Norwegian Constitutions of 1814. As a part of this process, the Norwegian American Historical Association (NAHA) was formed in 1925 to preserve the group's collective memory in the U.S.⁷⁹ Put in the language of Gans, the Norwegian Americans adjusted their ethnicity into expression that could coexist with American values.

As already indicated, the use of the Norwegian language suffered from the early twentieth century developments. Haugen estimates that about one million people understood Norwegian in 1930, but he views World War I as the turning point for the Norwegian language in America.⁸⁰ In 1975, Haugen added a final chapter to the original *Norsk i Amerika* from 1938 in which he identified a revived interest in teaching Norwegian and other foreign languages during World War II, but in the years between the Wars the language was in steady decline. Because 1938 is relatively close to the developments that produced the changes in Norwegian America, we may understand why as many as a million Americans still knew Norwegian. But the language had been altered from its original form. Haugen found that the rural regional Norwegian accents had mostly become history. The young Norwegian Americans who still knew how to speak Norwegian used it as a second language, and it was characterized by a modern city accent.⁸¹ Gradually, a Norwegian American language was shaped, just like the ethnic culture took on its own form.

More directly in terms of ethnicity, the first decades of the twentieth century represent a shift as well. Jenswold agrees with the advocates of ethnicity as optional when he states that "the suburban culture of privacy and individualism allowed for a more personal definition of Norwegianness."⁸² Increasingly after the 1920s, Norwegian Americans could voluntarily attend ethnic celebrations, organization or religious events as he or she pleased, and when it did not collide with other aspects of their lives. In this sense "ethnic identity became one element of self-definition, to be regulated at will with minimal interference from an ethnic community."⁸³

Based on the processes that have been accounted for above, we may create an image of what Norwegian America was when the Ruud brothers paid it a visit, but there is one more problem with the term "Norwegian America" which must be acknowledged. Haugen found that it is a dynamic concept which lacks any permanent foundation for its existence. In 1938 it was made out of all those who belonged to the Norwegian churches and associations, those

⁷⁹ Jenswold, "Becoming American," 10.

⁸⁰ Haugen, *Norsk i Amerika*, 56.

⁸¹ Haugen, *Norsk i Amerika*, 39.

⁸² Jenswold, "Becoming American," 20.

⁸³ Jenswold, "Becoming American," 20.

who subscribed to Norwegian newspapers, and those who mingled with other Norwegians. The characteristics of this society were expressed in different ways. In the cities there were mostly new immigrants who attempted to maintain their ethnic distinctiveness in heterogeneous colonies, or successful politicians or business people who had developed a somewhat blurry understanding of what Norway really was. Haugen argued that the true members of Norwegian America, those who subscribed to Norwegian American newspapers, were the Norwegian rural people who still lived in the “settlements.”⁸⁴ The “bygdelag” had become a vital organ for the survival of the Norwegian rural regional heritage because even in the settlements the homogeneity had been altered.⁸⁵

Lovoll finds that the period between 1895 and 1925 may best be described as “Norwegian-America” because of the success and growth of attempts to foster cultural values.⁸⁶ But if we accept Haugen’s definition of “Norwegian-America,” it will always exist to some degree as long as a few American citizens identify themselves with a Norwegian heritage, and find visible ways of expressing it. One way of giving this identity some substance in 1938 could be to bring the entire family to the ski hills and wave the Norwegian flags as Norwegians, Norwegian Americans and “real Yankees” competed for the longest jumps and the highest scores. In 1938 this must have been particularly appealing as most competitions were won by one certain Norwegian champion.

Nordic Skiing in America

Also included in Sigmund Ruud’s quotation which introduces this chapter is that Americans had an increased interest in the sport of ski jumping, which indicates that the audience was a mixture of at least Americans and Scandinavians. This section emphasizes how skiing went through changes in the 1930s which made the Norwegian dominance less prevalent, and discusses how this transition may have affected skiing as an ethnic symbol.

Norwegian immigrants’ familiarity with skiing could stretch from a natural part of their lives to no experience at all, depending on factors such as where in Norway they migrated from. An immigrant from the city of Bergen which seldom gets much snow during the winter months would necessarily not be as familiar with skiing as one from for instance Tinn in Telemark where the winter usually gets colder and more stable. This could change, however, as they merged with a different Norwegian culture that had developed on the other side of the Atlantic. Lovoll found that because winter sports were natural to Norwegians,

⁸⁴ Haugen, *Norsk i Amerika*, 26.

⁸⁵ Haugen, *Norsk i Amerika*, 33.

⁸⁶ Lovoll, Odd S., *The Promise of America*, 274.

“skiing, especially, became an ethnic forte,” and as late as in 1930 one could read in the newspaper *Norden* that Norwegians were referred to as “ski jumpers.”⁸⁷ Skiing was a quintessential ethnic activity because it was connected to “the most treasured mythologies of the group.”⁸⁸ This must be seen in relation to the Norwegian conception of ‘Idraet’ which is frequently commented on throughout this chapter. By analyzing the Norwegian influences on American ski sports this section argues that skiing should not only be understood as a neutral ethnic symbol which Norwegian Americans could cherish without conflicting with American values, but that it also could be seen as preferable to the Norwegian Americans as an ethnic group because it had ties to the fortunate ideals of “Idraet.”

Among the historians who are interested in skiing and ski sports in the United States, there seems to be little doubt that ski traditions were brought to the country by Norwegian pioneers. John B. Allen quotes Charles W. Hendel, a surveyor and mining engineer during the gold rush years, who used “Norway blades” and “Norwegian snow-shoes” to describe the boards that are now known as skis. Allen makes an important distinction between “utilitarian skiing” and “skisports”. Like in all places where snow makes it difficult to travel during the winter months, the mid-nineteenth century gold miners in the West made use of skis, or snow-shoes, as means of transportation. As Hendel suggested, these were often referred to as Norwegian inventions. It is not without reason that the example of Tinn in Telemark was used above. Perhaps the best known skier from this period was the mailman John A. “Snowshoe” Thompson who emigrated from a farm near Austbygdi in Tinn, Telemark. Thompson has become a symbol of early skiing in America and his memory is preserved in American folklore, statues and in museums,⁸⁹ but also in an annual ski race located close to his original Norwegian home during Easter. Thus early Norwegian involvement in American skiing is valued in both countries.

Utilitarian skiing lost its significance as the gold rush passed and modern technology replaced skis as transportation, and Allen argues that the early California skiing was isolated from the skiing that later spread out in the country. Thus it was not the foundation for the more widespread interest in “skisports” that developed during the latter half of the nineteenth century.⁹⁰ “Skisports” differed from the early California skiing in that it was strongly influenced by the Norwegian conception of “Idraet” which made it a lifestyle ideal for most

⁸⁷ Lovoll, *The Promise of America*, 293-294.

⁸⁸ Lovoll, *The Promise Fulfilled*, 239.

⁸⁹ Allen, E. John B., *From Skisport to Skiing. One Hundred Years of an American Sport, 1840-1940* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), 16-17.

⁹⁰ Allen, *From Skisport to Skiing*, 14.

people, whereas the California skiing had been a matter for a few experts who represented an entire mining community. But in terms of its origins, “skisports” resembled its utilitarian counterpart in that it was advocated and pioneered by Norwegians. Allen defines “skisport” as “the all-encompassing term for skiing as a recreation, sport, and business” which was a term that came from Scandinavia in the nineteenth century.⁹¹ Until the 1930s “skisports” mostly included ski jumping and racing. The Norwegian word for sport was “Idraet.” The conception of “Idraet” was not only a matter of physical capability in one given exercise, but it also included the ideal that a healthy body would produce a healthy soul which would benefit the entire nation. Hence “Idraet” would be a very useful conception for Norwegians to identify with when the early twentieth century nativism asked ethnic groups to legitimize their existence in America. When the writings of the famous explorer Fridtjof Nansen, which preached that ski running was the most national of all Norwegian sports, and that it was the “sport of sports,”⁹² were made available in America, it seems very likely that such ideals would appeal to the Norwegian Americans. This was an “international hero for Norwegians everywhere”⁹³ who preached that citizens could best serve their new country by becoming active participants in an “Idraet” they already championed.

That skiing became popular among Norwegian Americans is apparent in the formation of many ethnic ski clubs. Allen found that as the immigrant communities transformed into towns, skiing was organized as a part of American materialistic developments of the late nineteenth century.⁹⁴ This coincided with the peak of Norwegian migration to the U.S. At this point, Norwegians were among the very few who came from a country where skiing was prevalent, something that often resulted in ski clubs with nationalistic overtones.⁹⁵ Around the turn of the century there was, however, a new push towards Americanization of ski sports. When the National Ski Association (NSA) was formed in Ishpeming, Michigan, in 1905 to organize the sport of skiing in America, six of the seven founders were Norwegian, but they decided that all meetings should be conducted in English and men from any immigrant background should have the opportunity to join clubs and competitions.⁹⁶ Despite the seemingly generous attempt by Aksel H. Holter and the other Norwegian founders of the NSA to make skiing available to all Americans, we may benefit from questioning their motivation to do so.

⁹¹ Allen, *From Skisport to Skiing*, 10.

⁹² Allen, *From Skisport to Skiing*, 11.

⁹³ Lovoll, *The Promise Fulfilled*, 241.

⁹⁴ Allen, *From Skisport to Skiing*, 46.

⁹⁵ Allen, *From Skisport to Skiing*, 48.

⁹⁶ Allen, *From Skisport to Skiing*, 51.

One possible interpretation of the Americanization of ski sports could be that the founders really acted as ethnic leaders in what they believed to be in best interest of the Norwegian American ethnic group. By 1905 nativist sentiments had already started to develop among Americans. Despite the policies of Americanization, the “Idraet” ideals were kept.⁹⁷ If Holter and his colleges could convince the Americans that ski sport and the ideal of “Idraet” was worth adopting, it would leave the Norwegians in a fortunate position because they were the experts in the field. On the contrary, if ski sports were preserved as something inherently Norwegian, it could function as an alienating factor for those who participated in it. This interpretation must be seen in relation to Gans’ idea that an ethnic symbol should be something that does not conflict with accepted American values. Looking back at the first 25 years of the twentieth century, Holter observed with satisfaction that the Americans now shared the passion for the Norwegian national sport of skiing, and that they were ever grateful for the Norwegian efforts to promote and develop the sport in America.⁹⁸

A different interpretation of the Americanization of ski sports is that the founders of the NSA sought to strengthen their own positions. Conzen *et al.* found that the process of negotiating an ethnic group’s identity was often problematic and contested. “Ethnic leadership played a crucial, oftentimes decisive, role in these struggles. Offering scarce opportunities for power, wealth, and status, such positions were hotly contested.”⁹⁹ We may speak of such an opportunity in this context because the founders of NSA would become increasingly powerful if their organization became larger, but this research has not discovered any evidence which suggests that this was the case.

No matter what the motivation behind the Americanizing of ski sport was, the long term effect may be seen as somewhat ironic. While Norwegians continued to influence and dominate ski sports in the two first decades of the twentieth century, the NSA gradually lost control of the development of the sport and new forms of skiing challenged the hegemony of the traditional Nordic disciplines. As more and more clubs were founded, skiing became an increasingly popular activity among more than just Norwegians and the NSA lost control of the rule-making. This is evident in the observation made by the Ruud brothers as they found that skiing was about to become as popular among Americans in the winter months as golf

⁹⁷ Allen, *From Skisport to Skiing*, 52.

⁹⁸ Holter, Aksel H., “Nordmænds indflydelse i Amerikas sportsliv,” *Nordmandsforbundet. 18de aargang* (1925): 199-204.

⁹⁹ Conzen, Kathleen N., Gerber, David A., Morawska, Ewa, Pozzetta, George E. and Vecoli, Rudolph J., “The Invention of Ethnicity: A Perspective from the U.S.A.,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 12:1 (1992): 16.

was in the summer.¹⁰⁰ A new emphasis on record breaking developed among the American audience. This was in contradiction to the values that were treasured in Norway, and thus American ski jumping departed from Norwegian ski jumping.¹⁰¹ This is apparent in Sigmund Ruud's report from a radio interview which reflected the differences in Norwegian and American attitudes. The American interviewer was only interested in distance records, while Sigmund wanted to talk about style.¹⁰²

Increased interest among Americans in skiing as a recreational activity also threatened the dominant position of the Nordic disciplines. The 1932 Olympics in Lake Placid was the last to hold only Nordic events. During the roaring twenties, wealthy Americans traveled to Europe to go skiing, but not to Norway. Alpine skiing had replaced the Nordic disciplines, and thus "speed and devil-may-care attitudes replaced the *Idraet* ideal."¹⁰³ Sigmund found that alpine skiing instructors from the Alps had successfully sold this new form of skiing to Americans in the 1930s.¹⁰⁴

Despite the shift from Norwegian dominance in American skiing, this thesis offers the argument that this development did not necessarily weaken the salience of ski jumping in Norwegian American ethnicity. Perhaps it did just the opposite. We must not forget that we are concerned with a specific year that is very close to the Depression. Despite what one might assume, the skiing industry boomed in the early 1930s. This was the period when skiing was made accessible to Americans through active use of the Civilian Conservation Corps to clear forested mountains in the east for skiing trails. Trains were used to transport people from the cities to the ski areas, and some pioneers started developing rope tows to pull the skiers up the mountain sides.¹⁰⁵ Estimates suggest that the amount of American skiers in 1940 were no more than somewhere between one and three million.¹⁰⁶ We may assume that this relatively small proportion of the population is represented by those who were wealthy enough to survive the Depression without much struggle. Because the skiing industry still was in its "take-off phase," it was allowed to boom without reaching out to the lower classes. Here, "skiing" refers to the new recreational form of alpine skiing. The traditional Nordic disciplines, however, could be attended without spending a lot of money. Thus the less fortunate, "average" Norwegian American who resided close to an area were a ski jumping

¹⁰⁰ Ruud, "Skispor krysser verden," 97.

¹⁰¹ Allen, *From Skisport to Skiing*, 65-70.

¹⁰² Ruud, "Skispor krysser verden," 29.

¹⁰³ Allen, *From Skisport to Skiing*, 98.

¹⁰⁴ Ruud, "Skispor krysser verden," 19.

¹⁰⁵ Allen, *From Skisport to Skiing*, 107-108.

¹⁰⁶ Allen, *From Skisport to Skiing*, 114.

competitions were held could take his family on an outing and experience skiing without supplying all its members with ski equipment and rope tow fares. The competition at the Summit serves as a great example of this as the audience had to hike to get there, which was free, and the price for adults was only \$1.00 to get in (equal to about \$16 today)¹⁰⁷, 75c if they were bought in advance, and children in company with their parents could enter for free.¹⁰⁸

Finally, the new recreational form of skiing could hardly function as a Norwegian symbol. Just because alpine skiing was more connected with the Alps than with Norway, ski jumping and cross country skiing would still be the only forms of skiing that symbolized something distinctively Norwegian. The pictures and reports from the ski jumping competitions that the Ruud brothers participated in reveal that such events still were popular among the people despite the rise of the new forms of skiing.

Ski Jumping as an Ethnic Marker in 1938

If we take the newspaper articles that are concerned with the ski jumping events that have been selected in this thesis into consideration, we may find several aspects which make them symbolic of Norwegian American ethnicity. As will be highlighted through this section, they were still connected to the “Idraet” ideal, they had strong attachments to the mother country, and they were popular with respect to the amount of spectators, who often embodied many people with Norwegian ancestry.

The Ideal of “Idraet”

That the “Idraet” ideal was maintained in the sport of ski jumping in 1938 is evident in the ways some of the competitions were organized, and it is also emphasized in newspaper articles that comments on the events. The “Norge” competition could only be upheld because of its tradition with hard work and great enthusiasm among the members of the ski club. A week before the competition was held in January, 1938, *Skandinaven* reported that the “Norge boys” had already started buying snow which, exclusively for this particular event, got shipped between states by train, and then brought up to the hill by pure muscle power.¹⁰⁹ The “Idraet” ideal are very present in this tradition. Following the competition, *Skandinaven* concluded that the successfulness of the event had made it earn a chapter in the history books;

¹⁰⁷ <http://www.dollartimes.com/calculators/inflation.htm> , accessed April 18, 2013.

¹⁰⁸ “Det Skirenn Som Verdens Kresneste Publikum Helst Vilde Se Den 6. Mars!” *Washington Posten*, March 4, 1938.

¹⁰⁹ “Norge-dagen reddes med escabanasne,” *Skandinaven*, January 7, 1938.

a glorious chapter about the average Norwegian American's willingness to work for the things that he or she treasured the most.¹¹⁰ In this case it was ski jumping.

In the case of the Norge competition the "Idraet" was only performed by the contenders and the "Norge boys" who prepared the hill. The competition at the Summit, however, incorporated exercise even for the spectators because one could only get to the hill by foot. Just how long this distance was is unclear in the various sources that have been used here, but it seems to have been about 10 kilometers. The Ruud brothers were impressed by the size of the crowd as they had to walk for an hour, mostly uphill.¹¹¹ *Washington Posten* informed its readers that they would have to bring suitable footwear because they would have to walk for one "mil."¹¹² The combination of exercise and ski jumping would thus allow the spectators to feel that they had taken a part in the healthy aspect of "ski Idraet" which, according to one of its greatest advocates, Nansen, made them into good citizens. Nansen's words were not forgotten in Norwegian America in 1938, something that is apparent in a *Skandinaven* article which considered it universally acknowledged that ski sports were the "Idraet of all Idraets."¹¹³

Another image of "ski Idraet" could be read in a letter to *Skandinaven* written by no other than Aksel Holter on March 11, 1938.¹¹⁴ On the occasion of his 65th birthday he had enjoyed a long ski trip somewhere in Wisconsin. He recalled that he was a ski runner when he left Norway as a boy of fifteen, just like he was a ski runner now. He then goes on to praise ski running in Wisconsin because it allows the individual to get in touch with one of God's greatest masterpieces; a nature which were strikingly similar to the fields in "Maridalen" and "Nordmarka," in Oslo. Holter quoted Nansen as he praised his own efforts to create a "healthy soul in a healthy body," which, he reminded the reader, had been the fundamental philosophy behind the creation of the NSA. This letter could just as well be included in the next section because of its Norwegian nationalistic sentiments. It tells the reader that a visit to Norway not necessarily would demand that much of an effort as a piece of it existed just a few hours into the American snow covered wilderness, where beautiful nature and a rich wildlife could be enjoyed in peace and harmony.

¹¹⁰ "En Rekorddag for "Norge" Skiklub," *Skandinaven*, January 18, 1938.

¹¹¹ Ruud, "Skispor krysser verden", 98.

¹¹² "Det Skirenn Som Verdens Kresneste Publikum Helst Vilde Se Den 6. Mars!" *Washington Posten*, March 4, 1938.

¹¹³ "Omkring Skiløbets Saga i Hjemlandet," *Skandinaven*, February 8, 1938.

¹¹⁴ Holter, Aksel, "Prægtig Skitur," *Skandinaven*, March 11, 1938.

Ski Jumping with Attachments to Norway

Ski jumping events and the Norwegian American newspaper articles that are concerned with ski jumping may also be seen as bridges between Norwegian America and Norway.

Skandinaven found that the “Norge” day had been nicknamed “America’s Holmenkollen Day” because of the grandiose accomplishment of the event and the great number of spectators that showed up every year.¹¹⁵ Two days prior to the competition, the newspaper informed its readers that a band was to play music, just like on the Holmenkollen day.¹¹⁶ This comparison with the traditional Holmenkollen Day in Norway confirms Gans’ idea that ethnicity often is expressed in ways that are loosely affiliated with the old country’s culture. The conception is taken from the mother country and reshaped to fit a different hill at a different location. As *Skandinaven* advocated two days after the 1938 competition, the “Norge day” was such a beautiful expression “because it is only “Norge” in Chicago who has it!”¹¹⁷ The following issue cemented the bridge between the “Norge” competition and Norway with the headliner “A Brilliant Ski Day for “Norge,” Chicago, and Norway last Sunday.”¹¹⁸

Before we leave the ties to Holmenkollen the letter by Aksel Holter from the section above should yet again be investigated. In a part of this letter he condemned the decision of the Central Ski Association to hold a national championship at Soldiers Field. This was, in his mind, distanced from the true purpose of ski jumping because it could only serve as a good ambassador for the healthy “Idraet” ideal if it was arranged in natural environments and in the true spirit of Mother Nature. There was, he said, “more than enough grand ski jumping hills in the North West where natural environments creates the true spirit of Holmenkollen, and thus where Holmenkollen competitions should be held.”¹¹⁹ This complaint by Holter is valuable because it reflects the dissatisfaction of a Norwegian American leader once a ski jumping competition was taken out of its original Norwegian framework. The Soldiers Field competition is the only competition highlighted in this thesis which was not arranged by a Norwegian American dominated organization. It also stands out because it was arranged in the core of a metropolitan American city.

The newspapers also seemed quite eager at reporting ski jumping news from Norway. On December 17, 1938, *Washington Posten* informed its readers that the season’s ski jumping preparations had begun in Norway as the small ski jumping hill of “Persløkka” in Kongsberg

¹¹⁵ “Norge-dagen reddes med escabanasne,” *Skandinaven*, January 7, 1938.

¹¹⁶ “Holmenkol-Dagen i ‘Norge’-Bakken Søndag,” *Skandinaven*, January 14, 1938.

¹¹⁷ “En Rekorddag for ‘Norge’ Skiklub,” *Skandinaven*, January 18, 1938. Translated by the author of this thesis.

¹¹⁸ “En strålende Ski-Dag for ‘Norge’, Chicago, og Norge sidste Søndag,” *Skandinaven*, January 21, 1938. Title translated by the author of this thesis.

¹¹⁹ “Prægtig Skitur,” *Skandinaven*, March 11, 1938. Translated by the author of this thesis.

had been opened. This information might seem trivial as it was just commenting on a training session in a very small hill, but the article argues that it is notable because this was where the foundation for the season's greatest achievements was created.¹²⁰ One might argue that this information still was trivial, but that would only strengthen the assumption that ski jumping held a special place in Norwegian American's interests. Because even the most trivial information about ski jumping was given attention in the newspaper, it seems likely that they were directed at a particularly interested audience. Such reports would thus serve a twofold purpose. First, it would secure the position of ski jumping in the readers' consciousness. Secondly, they built bridges between Norwegian America and Norway.

One other article which strongly reflected the interest in ski jumping among Norwegian Americans in the State of Washington could be read in *Washington Posten* two days before the competition at the Summit in Snoqualmie Pass. It raised the bar in terms of expectancy as it stated that to present the expected quality of the competition in Snoqualmie in 1938 to the people who first held ski competitions in Seattle twenty years earlier would be like introducing cars to Harald Haarfagre. The competition at the Summit were expected to be so great that it would be the best possible experience for the ski interested Western, and for the Norwegian American population in general.¹²¹ This article includes two important aspects. First, it connects ski jumping with an ancient Norse Viking symbol which confirms the notion that Norwegian American identity often was based on nationalistic images of the mother country. Secondly, it leaves the reader with the impression that all Norwegians naturally would be interested in the ski jumping event just because they were Norwegians. Put in other words, it basically told people who wished to be associated with Norwegian heritage that this event would be in their best interest. The message was not directed at the ski jumping interested part of the Norwegian population but at "Norwegian Americans in general."

How big was Ski Jumping?

An analysis of the importance of ski jumping to Norwegian American ethnicity has to include a discussion on its popularity among the Norwegian Americans. The analysis of Norwegian American newspapers has produced evidence which holds that such events were popular with respect to the size of the crowds, which seems to have been represented in large parts by Norwegian Americans.

¹²⁰ "Full Norsk Vinter. Perslökka Aapnet!" *Washington Posten*, December 17, 1937.

¹²¹ "Det Skirenn Som Verdens Kresneste Publikum Helst Vilde Se Den 6. Mars!" *Washington Posten*, March 4, 1938.

Skandinaven suggested that the “Norge Day” had become Chicago’s number one winter sport event. When the Times annual ice skating competition had been arranged on the same day as the “Norge Day” a few years before the 1938 competition, only a few hundred people had showed up while about 20.000 spectators had set out for Fox River Grove.¹²² Following the competition in 1938, *Skandinaven* estimated that 30.000 spectators had attended the “Norge Day.”¹²³ As the quotations that introduces the two first chapters of this thesis suggests, there were many “Americans,” or “Yankees” at the competitions, but it seems reasonable to assume that a big part of the audience were Norwegian American. Sigmund could not even imagine how much time he would spend on traveling around in Norway if he had to deliver all the greetings to the “old country” (“gamlelandet”) that he was asked to deliver.¹²⁴ It is also likely that a large part of “Norge’s” spectators were Norwegian because during the first 50 years of the club’s history all of its members were Norwegians, and the programs were published in Norwegian. They did, however, also publish a periodical called “Snofoyka” with some of its articles written in English just to allow the Americans some insight in “their” ski sport.¹²⁵

The Menomonie Winter Carnival could naturally not measure up with “Norge” in terms of the size of the crowd as it took place in a less populous area, but the proportion of Norwegians seems to have been equally significant. Sigmund reported that the small town only had 3000 residents, but with another 2000 students at the University of Wisconsin – Stout. For the special jumping competition on the first day of the Carnival, approximately 4000 spectators came from Menomonie and nearby areas. These were largely represented by emigrated Norwegians, and he observed that the Norwegian language in different forms was frequently heard, even among those who were born in America.¹²⁶ *The Central Ski Sport* presented Menomonie as a “Scandinavian community.”¹²⁷

A final remark on the popularity of ski jumping should be made on the interest in skiing in the Norwegian American community in Snoqualmie. The amount of spectators on the competition at the Summit varies from 4000 to 8000 in different sources, but a remarkable observation can be made in *Washington Posten* on February 4. A reader, Ginken Gjølme, had observed that many people, especially among the young, skipped church on Sundays because

¹²² “Holmenkol-Dagen i ‘Norge’-Bakken Søndag,” *Skandinaven*, January 14, 1938.

¹²³ “En strålende Ski-Dag for ‘Norge’, Chicago, og Norge sidste Søndag,” *Skandinaven*, January 21, 1938.

¹²⁴ Ruud, “Skispor krysser verden”, 25.

¹²⁵ Vaage, Jacob, “The Crazy Norwegians,” *Ski-sport* 7 (1985): 78-79.

¹²⁶ Ruud, “Skispor krysser verden”, 41.

¹²⁷ “Menomonie W.S.C. Sponsors Winter Frolic. February 4th and 6th. Ruuds to Appear,” *The Central Ski Sport*, February 1, 1938.

they would rather spend the day in the snow covered mountains near the Summit. Groups are also brought there by a clergyman nicknamed “Snow Priest Ness.” Gjølme argued that a “Ski Church” (“Ski-Kirke”) should be built on the Summit just like the sport chapels in Norway, as the young people should be taught to live in harmony with the nature, and there is no better way of attending church than in this fashion.¹²⁸ The “Snow Priest” made an impression on Sigmund as well, who included a description of a short ceremony held by “the Norwegian-American pastor Næss” on a pulpit made in snow next to the hill.¹²⁹ This is remarkable because the Lutheran Church, which by scholars such as Jenswold is considered to be one of the most important arenas for maintenance of Norwegian culture in America, have been adjusted to meet the demands of the ski “Idraet”. The idea of a sport chapel at the Summit seems to have met support in the Norwegian American community that Gjølme addressed. On March 4, *Washington Posten* announced that the project was due to start already in the summer that same year.¹³⁰

Concluding Remarks

Ski jumping seems to have had a good potential as an ethnic activity which brought Norwegian Americans together in the late 1930s because it could respond to the threats to Norwegian American ethnicity that are identified by Jenswold. First, it was connected to the fortunate ideal of “Idraet” which could be a useful conception to strengthen the majority culture’s esteem of Norwegian Americans in the competition with other immigrant groups. While the American nativism might have been less threatening to immigrant group’s ethnic identity in the late 1930s than it had been earlier in the century, this research has found reason to believe that Norwegian Americans still were concerned with the reputation of their ethnic group. A Norwegian newspaper posted a part of a letter from a Kongsberg American who found it convenient to come from Norway in the U.S. in 1938. This was, he wrote, because the Americans to a great extent had noticed Norway. Norwegian contributions in sports had rewarded the group a special place in American hearts, and he highlighted the effort of the ski jumpers especially.¹³¹ Building on the “homemaking myths” of Øverland, one could say that ski jumping could serve the same purpose as the “myths of foundation” in the sense that Norwegians had brought the tradition to America, and it was valuable because the Americans

¹²⁸ Gjølme, Ginken, “Forslag Om En Ski-Kirke Paa Summit!” *Washington Posten*, February 4, 1938.

¹²⁹ Ruud, “Skispor krysser verden”, 41.

¹³⁰ “Ski-Kapell Skal Bygges På Summit Alt I Sommer,” *Washington Posten*, March 4, 1938.

¹³¹ “Det er den norske ungdom som gjør Norges navn kjent i U.S.A.,” *Fremtiden*, January 14, 1938.

seemed to like it. One significant difference, which makes it even more potent, is that it was not a myth. It was a “homemaking truth.”

Further, ski jumping offered an arena where Norwegian Americans could participate in a Norse activity which did neither collide with a romanticized image of the “old country,” nor with American values. In this sense it meets Gans’ criteria of a visible and symbolic way of expressing ethnicity; one that had nationalistic overtones but which also was accepted by the majority culture. Ski jumping events may thus be seen as a great instrument to maintain Norwegian American ethnicity when it was threatened by nativism. The fact that Norge Ski Club’s name survived the Americanism of the early 1900s confirms the success of ski jumping as an “ethnic forte,” something that seems to have remained until this day.¹³²

Secondly, “ski Idraet” responded well to the threats to ethnicity caused by modernism. With the “Idraet” ideal’s emphasis on being in harmony with the nature, as reflected in the Holter’s letter to *Skandinaven*, and because ski jumping generally were conducted in rural areas where the nature allowed hills to be built, “ski Idraet” offered a pleasant alternative to the pressure in the big cities, and which appealed to the national romantic image of the rural Norwegian. Ski jumping could also be seen as a convenient ethnic activity because it did not collide with the individualism among the middle class that emerged with the rise of cities and suburbs. Norwegian Americans could attend competitions at will, and because the activity was open for anyone who could spare a dollar for a ticket, they did not even have to be members of an organization to be granted access. At the same time, Norwegian American ski clubs were available for people who sought contact with other ethnics. In this sense it would allow for a highly optional ethnicity. Paradoxically, while outdoor recreational activities like “ski Idraet” might have held a part in a reaction towards modernism in the mid war period, Allen found that the increased interest for alpine skiing among Americans allowed the ski industry to reach its take-off phase in the mid-1930s.¹³³ Thus the ski industry became subject to the modernism itself as it became a big business.

If we use “Norge” as an example, there is, however, one element in Jenswold which seems to be in contradiction with the findings of this thesis. While Jenswold finds that the Sons of Norway thrived in the suburbs in the 1920s, he also found that the suburbs lacked the ethnic organizations, such as athletic clubs, which formerly had identified “norskheten” (“Norwegianess”) in the American cities.¹³⁴ This can hardly be said to be true if we consider

¹³² Lovoll, *The Promise Fulfilled*, 242.

¹³³ Allen, *From Skisport to Skiing*, 167

¹³⁴ Jenswold, “Becoming American,” 19-20.

the ski clubs. As we recall, “Norge” Ski Club’s membership body was entirely Norwegian during the first 50 years of its existence. While ski clubs, such as “Norge,” were spatially distanced from the suburbs, we must take into consideration that modernization allowed people to become more mobile than they had been in the nineteenth century. Seen in this sense, ethnic organizations would not necessarily have to be that numerous because people could reach them from longer distances. Because people in the 1920s and 1930s to a greater extent could get around, either in private cars or by public transportation, the existence of ethnic organizations, like ski clubs, was allowed to be preserved.

As a result of the change in the immigration pattern in the first decade of the twentieth century, Norwegian American ethnicity seems to have gone through a change. The majority of Norwegian America in 1938 was second or third generation immigrants, and as Mary Waters’ study reveals, later generation immigrants respond less consistently when asked about their ethnic background. Like Alba points out, marriages started to cross ethnic boundaries before World War 2, and the result would be that an increasing amount of Norwegian Americans would have to add another label to their ethnicity. Together with the rise of an American middle class following the consumer economy, these developments are likely to have made the salience of ethnic identity weaker. Ethnicity became optional both in the sense that many immigrants could choose between different ethnic identities, and because they could choose to identify themselves in other terms than by ethnicity. Still, as Waters also points out, Americans have a need to be from somewhere, but it must be expressed in ways that does not collide with American values. Attending ski jumping events offered such an expression because it did not demand much ethnic devotion.

What remains to be analyzed is what roles the Norwegian stars of the ski jumping hills may have had in this ethnicity. Frank Elkins, one of U.S.’ most eager commentators on ski sports in the late 1940s, found that “to the average American” the Norwegian American ski jumper Torger Tokle “was a symbol of everything Norwegian.” His many achievements as a ski jumper brought “glory to his native and adopted land.”¹³⁵ The Ruud brothers were superior to Tokle in terms of international achievements, but they were not Norwegian Americans. Did their nationality put restrictions on their role as ethnic heroes in America, or may they also be seen as “symbols of everything Norwegian” in America?

¹³⁵ Elkins, Frank, “Norwegian Influence on American Skiing,” *The American-Scandinavian Review* 35 (1947): 339-340.

Chapter 3: The Ruud Brothers' Roles and Iconic Significance in Norwegian American Ethnicity

As chapter two presented, the findings of this thesis are in accordance with Odd Lovoll's assertion that skiing was, and to some extent still is, an "ethnic forte" for Norwegian Americans. Further, Lovoll also found that ski jumping created celebrated ethnic heroes. It was well suited for hero worship because "the daring competitive flight from takeoff to landing affirmed the Viking spirit and masculinity of the participants."¹³⁶ The (above) letter to *Fremtiden* is a good example of such hero worship as the writer praises the ski jumpers' achievements as ambassadors which had produced a comfortable situation for Norwegian Americans. The young athletes provided Norwegian publicity of the best sort, something he found evident in the stardom of the Ruud brothers or Sonja Henie. While this letter provides us with evidence confirming the hero status of the Ruud brothers we cannot overlook the fact that this letter was written by a man who came from Kongsberg and who naturally would be familiar with the Ruuds. Thus the analysis will benefit from a broader study of less subjective sources.

This chapter responds to the second part of the thesis question as it analyzes the role of the Ruud brothers as ethnic heroes. The analysis of the presentation, reception and evaluation of the Ruud brothers in the various newspapers that are concerned with the selected events indicates that they were celebrated as heroes. In the first part of the chapter, these findings are categorized according to the most frequent kinds of portrayals by which they were described in the media. The second part of the chapter analyses the assessment that the Ruud brothers received in the aftermath of the events to see if they fulfilled their expectations, and it discusses the effects that their performances had on their roles as ethnic heroes in the different communities.

In order to interpret the Ruud brothers' roles as ethnic heroes we need to understand the conception of sport heroes in general. Peter Dahlén adopts David L. Andrews and Steven J. Jackson's three aspects which separates athletic stars from other stars, like musicians or actors. First, sports are meritocratic which involves that the athletes can only get far through a combination of talent and hard work.¹³⁷ To a greater extent than in the entertainment industry, athletes come from all socioeconomic classes. On the one hand this argument seems to undermine the importance of talent and hard work in the entertainment industry to such an

¹³⁶ Lovoll, Odd S., *The Promise Fulfilled. A Portrait of Norwegian Americans Today* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 241.

¹³⁷ Dahlén, Peter, *Sport och medier* (Kristiansand: IJ-forlaget, 2008), 389.

extent that it cannot be accepted blindly, especially when we are concerned with the late 1930s. While this research have not included an analysis of the American entertainment industry, it seems reasonable to assume that the amount of Hollywood actors and famous musicians would count for a much smaller number in this period than they do today. Success in the media industry would thus demand talent and hard work just as much as it would of athletes. It should be noted that Andrews and Jackson probably aims at describing the situation in the early 2000s which is a completely different scenario than it was in the 1930s. On the other hand, if we look past their effort to separate athletic stars from other stars, their criteria for stardom is useful to this thesis because it provides us with a definition of what a star is. A star, whether it is a politician, athlete or artist of some sort, have obtained stardom through a combination of hard work and talent. This “market individualistic ideology,”¹³⁸ as Dahlén puts it, seems to go hand in hand with the individualism that was connected with the rising American middle class which was highlighted in the second chapter.

Gerd von der Lippe goes even further in separating “heroes” from other “celebrities.” While a celebrity is a person who has become famous because of his or her image or trademark, the hero is one who has received recognition through achievements. The hero is a self-made “big man”; the celebrity is a “big name” created by the media.¹³⁹ The hero eventually also becomes a celebrity with an image controlled by the media, but there is a difference between their ways to stardom. While this argument, just like the one presented above, probably also is intended for a modern context, Lippe’s distinction is very useful to this research because it allows us to operate with a more specific conception of a hero. To qualify as an athlete hero, a person first needs to achieve something important, like winning a world championship or an Olympic gold medal, and then receive recognition for it in the media. Building on this, an athlete becomes a hero when the media presents the person’s achievements to the public, and thus the stardom is relative to the size of the public that has recognized the athlete’s achievements.

The second aspect in Andrews and Jackson analysis of sports stars asserts that sports are unique in the sense that they may, on occasions like Olympic Games or world championships, make large parts of the world’s media concentrate their attention on the same event.¹⁴⁰ This will in turn create more awareness among the readers in different countries, who will come together and cheer for the same athletes or teams. Although the entertainment

¹³⁸ Dahlén, *Sport och medier*, 389.

¹³⁹ von der Lippe, Gerd, *Et kritisk blick på sportsjournalistikk : medier og idrett i en globalisert verden* (Kristiansand: IJ-forlaget, 2010), 236.

¹⁴⁰ Dahlén, *Sport och medier*, 390.

industry has a competitive element in the sense that musicians or actors compete for publicity or awards, it seems stronger in sports as the competition is foregrounded. Thus this argument seems to be more applicable to this thesis in its original form if we are to make a distinction between athletes and entertainers.

Finally, Andrews and Jackson found that athletes appear more authentic than musicians and actors.¹⁴¹ The latter two groups would more often take on constructed identities in situations where the outcome is decided prior to the event. While some athletes create characters, they do not have to do it in order to succeed, and the outcomes of the competitions are not predefined. Hence they become more authentic, which makes it easier for people to identify with the athletes. It is important to add that Andrews and Jackson are talking about actors in the movie industry, and media portrayals of performance arts are not considered in their theory. Performance arts might be unscripted, and thus they could appear just as authentic as athletes. Further, Dahlén adds that this aspect might be for better or worse, because people’s esteem for an athlete might decline with disappointing results or controversial behavior. This is, however, a pitfall which we do not need to be concerned with regarding the Ruud brothers tour of 1938 as neither of them came out as controversial figures, and their results could hardly have been any better.

Man, Machine, or in Between? The Different Media Portrayals of the Ruud Brothers in Norwegian America

If we analyze the presentations and evaluations of the Ruud brother’s presence in the U.S. in 1938, we may identify some patterns in the ways that they got presented. Based on these patterns, this thesis offers a presentation of the

Frequency of the rhetorical categories	
Great athletes	25
Likable personalities	3
Royalties	8
Super Humans	10

most frequent rhetorical categories that were used to describe the brothers by the press. These presentations functioned in two stages. In the first stage the brothers were elevated to stardom through frequent attention in the media where different achievements or expectations were highlighted in order to describe their qualities or to indicate what they were capable of. In the second stage this stardom was used, either as commodification with the purpose of selling tickets to the different events, or as ethnic symbols of Norwegian achievements. Thus the different forms of rhetoric may be used to interpret the different roles that the Ruuds had in America, which is treated in the second part of this chapter.

¹⁴¹ Dahlén, *Sport och medier*, 390.

The rhetorical categories that are emphasized in this study are “great athletes,” “likable personalities,” “royalties,” and “super humans.”¹⁴² While this is a qualitative study of the content in several newspapers more than a quantitative analysis of the frequency of rhetorical categories used in the press, the table above has been added to underline that these categories were repeated. As the table shows, the newspapers most frequently emphasized their athletic skills, but we must be cautious with the distinction between American and Norwegian American when we are interpreting these results. As “Appendix A” shows in more detail, the American newspapers only emphasized the brothers athletic abilities, and sometimes described them as birds or planes which may be placed in the “super humans” category. The Norwegian American newspapers included all of the categories that are emphasized here, and they were exclusive in the use of royal labels. It seems likely that the frequent use of such labels in Norwegian American press may be explained by their familiarity with the Norwegian monarchy, something which would appear strange to most Americans.

Great Athletes

As Dahlén pointed out, one of the most important features of sports heroes is that they have earned prestigious awards which are well-known to the public, and that these achievements have been earned through a combination of hard work and talent. Most frequent in the various descriptions of the Ruud brothers are their roles as the best ski jumpers in the world. On the one hand we would naturally have to separate between the brothers as they had different merits. On the other, we could treat the Ruud name as one single symbol of successful ski jumping.

Birger, being the one with most Olympic medals and world championship titles, was often presented as “the world champion.” When they arrived in New York, *The Salt Lake Tribune* announced that the “small but mighty ski champ” had arrived.¹⁴³ The reporter was clearly surprised by Birger’s modest size, but he was none the less recognized as the “world famous Norwegian skier (*sic*),” the “idol of the world’s snow fields and the greatest skier ever, come to show America how it’s done,” and as “one of the world’s great sport champions.” The reporter then went on to present some of Birger’s finest achievements, how he was worshiped in Europe, and argued that he was “worth climbing a mountain to see.” While this article was written in English and distributed to the citizens of Salt Lake City, it

¹⁴² For more details see “Appendix A”.

¹⁴³ Talbot, Gayle, “Birger Ruud reaches U.S.; Regarded as World’s Best,” *The Salt Lake Tribune*, January 13, 1938.

had a great potential of evoking ethnic pride in the Norwegian American readers because it connects Norwegian nationalistic symbols like “Norwegian,” “mountain” and “skiing” with one of the “world’s great sport champions.” Who would not want to be associated with such an image?

The picture of Birger Ruud has been added because it encompasses several of the aspects that are discussed in this chapter. While it reveals Birger’s modest size which seems to have surprised several journalists, like reflected in the (above) article from *Salt Lake Tribune*, it ensures the reader of Birger’s greatness by pointing out his achievements in terms of being both “world and Olympic champ.” Further, he is portrayed as a smiling athlete who is mingling with the



Picture 1: Birger Ruud at the “Norge” Ski club annual competition at Fox River Grove. Source: *Daily Times*, Chicago, January 21, 1938.

spectators, which could strengthen people’s impression of Birger as an easily likable person.

This is discussed in more depth in the section below. Finally, the look that the little boy to left gives Birger reflects admiration, something which underlines the notion that Birger was received as a hero in the competition. The only aspect that seems to be missing in this picture, despite the top of the Kongsberg “K” on the left side of Birger’s chest, is something visibly Norwegian. The article which was connected to this picture did, however, secure the Norwegian aspect by informing the reader that the Ruud brothers were “Norway’s famous champions of ski jumping.”¹⁴⁴

Sigmund, who had been in the USA in the preceding winter as well, was occasionally referred to as the reigning National Champion. Before the originally intended date for the competition at Soldiers Field, the Chicago *Daily Times* wrote that the “world and Olympic champion Birger and the U.S. title holder Sigmund” had returned to Chicago.¹⁴⁵ On the one hand this seems to undermine the fact that Sigmund also had won the world championship title some years earlier. On the other hand this also reflects the diversity of their total success, and it gives a contemporary image of what they were capable of just then. If the Ruud brothers had toured as retired ski jumpers it would be useful to highlight their greatest all time

¹⁴⁴McCarthy, Marvin, “Ruud Enter TIMES Ski Meet,” *Daily Times*, Chicago, January 21, 1938.

¹⁴⁵McCarthy, Marvin, “Home Guards Rally For ‘Ruud’ Welcome!” *Daily Times*, Chicago, February 24, 1938.

achievements in order to make people come and see them, but since they traveled to participate it was more profitable to make people aware of what they could expect. The world can only hold one residing world champion at a time. While Sigmund seems to have been overshadowed by Birger to a certain degree in terms of media coverage, the emphasis on his position as the current U.S. title holder may have served to give him a name on his own.

It is, however, also useful to investigate the symbolism of the Ruud's family name in general. As if the reputation of the visiting Ruud brothers was not enough, more fame and glory was brought to their family name as their younger brother Asbjørn won the 1938 world championship in Finland just a few days prior to the Summit event. This was reported in *Skandinaven* on March 1. In the aftermath of the brother's tour, *Washington Posten* found that their names had become so well known "here in the West," that the readers would surely be interested in a comment from the Ruud brothers' father.¹⁴⁶ In the interview that is reported in this article the boys' father was asked if he could list all the world championship titles held by their family. He struggled.

In several instances, the success of the Ruud brothers' skiing prowess is explained as a result of devoted and goal oriented training. In the Chicago *Sunday Times* article "Ceiling Unlimited," Herbert Simons wrote that the brothers' success as ski jumpers was a result of passionate practice from when they were very young. As they came of age, he further explained, "scarcely a day during Norway's four month skiing season [...] passed that the Ruuds [...] didn't strap on skis." During the remaining eight months of the year they "indulged in other athletics, always with development of ski muscles in mind."¹⁴⁷ Simons' source of information was an interview with Sigmund, and he included several images to accompany the article some of which displayed ski jumping, one with Birger practicing gymnastics, and even a picture of their mother on skis with the caption "an old Ruud heritage is skiing."

This article gives the image of a hardworking and passionate athletic family, and it is very tempting to interpret the article as a contextualization of the "Idraet" ideal. As we recall, this ideal preaches that a healthy body results in a healthy soul, which in turn benefits the nation. The Ruud family's passion for winter sports had given several of its members the opportunity to specialize in ski jumping. In turn, this had resulted in Norwegian gold medals in the world most prestigious ski jumping arenas which had brought glory and fame to Norway as a nation. Included in Jenswold's discussion on patriotic conformism is the notion

¹⁴⁶ "Hvad Kemner Ruud På Kongsberg Sa!" *Washington Posten*, March 18, 1938.

¹⁴⁷ Simons, Herbert, "Ceiling Unlimited," *Sunday Times*, Chicago, January 30, 1938.

that the majority culture's esteem of an immigrant group is closely related to their impression of their mother country.¹⁴⁸ In this sense, Norwegian Americans could benefit from a widespread American knowledge of the Ruud brothers success, and especially if they could convince the majority culture that all Norwegians were "born with skis."

In recent scholarly work on the role of skiing in Norway, the myth that all Norwegians are born with skis has been questioned.¹⁴⁹ But whether this myth has any substance or not is irrelevant when we are concerned with Norwegian American ethnicity. As we saw in the first chapter, Conzen *et al.* find that ethnicity is a dynamic conception which is invented and reinvented to meet the current demands of the majority culture. This construction of ethnicity departs from "preexisting communal solidarities, cultural attributes, and historical memories,"¹⁵⁰ all of which may be grounded in myths of the group's heritage rather than authentic reflections of the mother country's culture. There seems to be little doubt that Norwegians are recognized as the original pioneers of skiing in the U.S. Hence we may understand why Odd Lovoll finds skiing to be one of the Norwegian American ethnic groups' most quintessential ethnic activities. The skills of the Ruud brothers may in this sense be interpreted as an image of more than personal achievements. It was a display of what Norwegian culture was capable of producing.

Likable Personalities

As Dahlén also stressed, sports heroes need not only be especially talented, but they also benefit from being personalities with which people can identify with. On several occasions, the Ruud brothers were presented as easily likable personalities. During the work with this thesis Birger Ruud's son was contacted, primarily as a gesture to notify him that his father was being written about. This notification did, however, lead to an informal talk during which information about Birger and Sigmund was exchanged. This conversation revealed that Birger never liked to talk about his achievements, and thus his son did not possess much specific information regarding the 1938 tour.¹⁵¹ This "lack" of information is still valuable to this research because it tells us something about what kind of man Birger Ruud was.

¹⁴⁸ Jenswold, John R., "Becoming American, Becoming Suburban," *Norwegian-American Studies* 33 (1992): 6-8.

¹⁴⁹ Klepp, Asbjørn, "Myter i norsk skikultur : alle nordmenn er ikke født med ski på beina, og Sondre Nordheim "oppfant" ikke hælbandet av vidje!"; *Idrett og fritid i kulturbildet : Humanioradagene 1993*, ed. Klepp, Ingun G and Svarverud, Rune (Oslo : Det historisk-filosofiske fakultet, Universitetet i Oslo, 1993).

¹⁵⁰ Conzen, Kathleen N., Gerber, David A., Morawska, Ewa, Pozzetta, George E. and Vecoli, Rudolph J., "The Invention of Ethnicity: A Perspective from the U.S.A.," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 12:1, 3-41 (University of Illinois Press, 1992), 5

¹⁵¹ Informal interview with Vebjørn Ruud, April 11, 2013 in Kongsberg, Norway. The informant allowed for this information to be used in the thesis.

Regardless of his significant success in the air, he kept his feet firmly on the ground. This image of Birger is in accordance with the Birger that the Norwegian Americans got to know through the Norwegian American press. The article reporting from his wedding in *Washington Posten* found that one of Birger's greatest qualities as a human was his ability to balance his stardom with humility.¹⁵²

Another image, which treated both of the brothers' personalities, could be read in *Washington Posten* on March 4, 1938. One of the writers, Inga Frodesen, found no reason to write about the sport of ski jumping as it was already well-known among her readers. She found it more productive to inform her readers of other qualities that the brothers possessed, something which she had personally experienced during a visit to Kongsberg. The visiting Norwegian Americans had been overwhelmed by the brothers' skills in writing and holding speeches. They had sent their best wishes to the Norwegian Americans who promoted Norwegian culture ("norskdom" is used in the article) in America, and in return she wanted to thank them for the glory they brought to Norwegian ski sports.¹⁵³ Here we see a clear connection between skiing and promotion of Norwegian values in America. Frodesen basically thanks the brothers for their ethnic value, and it is especially notable that she considers promotion of Norwegian ski sports to be a virtue for Norwegian Americans as well. This strengthens the assumption that Norwegian America still was cautious of the Norwegian culture's reputation in America. Finally it encourages its readers to appreciate the value of the Ruud brothers as good ambassadors for their heritage in America, not only because they could jump far, but also because of their social qualities.

Royalty

While many articles drew heroic images of the Ruud brothers by pointing to their achievements, others went a bit further in the use of rhetoric. The most frequent use of rhetoric was comparisons with royalties. On January 4, *Skandinaven* exhausted the Norwegian word for king ("kong") when they announced the Ruuds' tour. A big picture had been added of Birger in the air with the subtitle: "Birger Ruud fra Kongsberg, Skisportens Kongestad, svæver kongelig høit over Grantrærnes Kongler i et kongelig flot Hop. Kong Birger skal delta i "Norge"-Løbet den 16de Januar."¹⁵⁴ ("King Birger Ruud of Kongsberg, which is the kingdom of ski sports, soars kingly high over the fir trees' cones in a royal ski

¹⁵² "Birger Fikk Vanskeligheter Med Aa Holde Bryllup Bare Som Familiefest," *Washington Posten*, January 14, 1938.

¹⁵³ "Sølvstaden Og Skistaden Kongsberg," *Washington Posten*, March 4, 1938.

¹⁵⁴ Picture without a topic, *Skandinaven*, January 4, 1938

jump. King Birger is competing in the “Norge” competition January 16.”)¹⁵⁵ *Washington Posten*, too, started to present the Ruuds as royalties as soon as their participation was announced. On February 18, the newspaper informed its readers that the royal house of the ski world, that of the Ruuds, were officially expected at the Summit, and thus the citizens of Seattle had the opportunity to witness the greatest experience that skiing could offer.¹⁵⁶ Two days prior to the competition it boasted that among the royal family of the ski world, the Ruuds, only Crown Prince Asbjørn was not expected at Snoqualmie Pass. Sigmund and Birger would arrive with a great number of “ski chiefs” as their royal entourage.¹⁵⁷

At certain occasions, they even competed with the true royals. On January 14, *Washington Posten* reported that Birger Ruud had wed, and that no wedding since the marriage of the Norwegian prince had received that much attention from the public.¹⁵⁸ Regardless if this was true or not, this was the information that the Norwegian American readers were presented with. Further, if we accept that the physical space and positioning given to a topic in a newspaper is an indicator of how important that topic is considered,¹⁵⁹ we may make another interesting discovery in *Washington Posten* on March 4. A large picture of Sigmund was printed on the first page. To the left of the image is an article which reveals that the world had received a new ski king, but that his name was still Ruud, referring to Asbjørn’s victory in Finland. Underneath the picture is a small note which informs the readers that the Norwegian Prince Harald was expected to pay a visit to the U.S.¹⁶⁰

Super Humans

In the most extreme uses of rhetoric, the brothers are presented as so skillful that they better be interpreted as birds, planes or even on the verge of becoming superior to humanity. One example is found in the (above) *Chicago Sunday Times* article by Simons. Here they were presented as something beyond humanity as they got nicknamed the “Birdmen Ruud.” They are a mixture of bird and men who since they were “Kongsberg kids” at the age of three had soared “higher and farther than any two men” and who had been “speaking the language of the Norse Hills at an age when some toddlers find it difficult to say more than a deliberate

¹⁵⁵ Translated by the author of this thesis.

¹⁵⁶ “Ski-Kongehuset Ruud Kommer Til Seattle Rennet,” *Washington Posten*, February 18, 1938.

¹⁵⁷ “Det Skirenn Som Verdens Kresneste Publikum Helst Vilde Se Den 6. Mars!” *Washington Posten*, March 4, 1938.

¹⁵⁸ “Birger Fikk Vanskeligheter Med Aa Holde Bryllup Bare Som Familiefest,” *Washington Posten*, January 14, 1938.

¹⁵⁹ Hillesund, Terje, *Står det noe nytt? Innføring i analyse av aviser og nyheter* (Oslo: Institutt for Journalistikk, 1994), 29.

¹⁶⁰ *Washington Posten*, March 4, 1938.

“Ma-ma.”” Even though they have won every competition of any significance they are still hungry for new records and achievements.¹⁶¹ Such rhetorical presentations may best be compared with fictional super heroes who often possess extraordinary skills and qualities. While super heroes are fictional, they are often designed to be healthy role models who are carriers of some moral message. The “Birdmen Ruud” seem to tell people not to let success get the better of them, or come in the way of working towards new goals.

Yet another article which gave the brothers flying abilities was found in the *Seattle Star* following the event at the Summit where the ski jumper Olav Ulland was reported to bid the “Human Airplanes ‘Farvel’.”¹⁶² This article’s title is of particular interest to this study because even though it was published in an American newspaper, it addressed a Norwegian audience. The use of the Norwegian word for “good bye” addressed those who were familiar with that language, and it left the reader with the impression that the mixture of men and machines were Norwegians.

Perhaps the one who stretched the hero status of the Ruud brothers to the most extreme was an American journalist. Mike Donohoe, the sports commentator of the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, found that the “mighty little Norwegian men” had the “precision of machines” and if they became any better they would no longer be classified as “genus homo.”¹⁶³ All though he admitted that these were strong words he found evidence in the records they had set all around the world. Finally, Donohoe gave the impression that he was not the only one who was amazed by the brothers as many adjectives had “been exhausted during the past ten days praising the ski jumping ability of the Ruud brothers.” On the one hand this must be read as a praising of the Ruud brothers as great athletes, and not as great Norwegians, as Donohoe clearly praised their “ski jumping ability.” On the other hand, he also highlighted that the brothers came from Kongsberg and Norway, information that is optional and not really necessary if his only aim was to highlight their skills to the American audience. This indicates that although he wrote for an American newspaper, the article had the potential of evoking ethnic sentiments in the Norwegian American reader, and to make the American reader aware of the Norwegian achievements. We may assume that the Donohoe

¹⁶¹ Simons, Herbert, “Ceiling Unlimited,” *Sunday Times*, Chicago, January 30, 1938.

¹⁶² “Bids Human Airplanes ‘Farvel’”, *Seattle Star*, March 8, 1938.

¹⁶³ Donohoe, Mike, “Norwegian Will Fete Leapers On Monday,” *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, March 6, 1938.

along with other journalists wrote to many Norwegian Americans as they were the largest ethnic group in Seattle as late as in 1940.¹⁶⁴

Responding to High Demands

No matter how far-fetched some of the rhetoric that was applied to the Ruud brothers might seem, the different presentations above are representative examples of how they were portrayed in the media. Whether they were described as great athletes, likable human beings, royalties, or as supernatural, these portrayals seem to have had either of two purposes, and sometimes both at the same time. Their most visible role, as it comes out in the newspapers, was the commodification of their names in order to draw big crowds, but a thorough analysis also reveals how they were celebrated by Norwegian American organizations and communities. Towards the end of Donohoe's article that was quoted in the paragraph above, he has included a small section where he informs the reader of a banquet that the Norwegian community had planned on the Monday following the competition. "The public is invited. The charge is \$1.25 per plate." This banquet had been arranged "under the auspices of the Seattle Ski Club, Norwegian Commercial Club and the Norwegian Male Chorus" to honor the Norwegian ski jumpers, something which suggests that the Norwegian American community valued their presence.

The remaining part of this chapter thoroughly analyzes each of the selected events in separate sections. The emphasis is on the expectancies that were raised in advance of the events, and on what effects the results had on Norwegian American ethnicity.

Raising Expectations

As we already have seen, the participation of "King Birger" at the "Norge" hill was announced in *Skandinaven* as soon as it was known that the Ruud brothers would visit the U.S. that season. The same newspaper also raised the bar in terms of expectations in advance of the Soldiers Field championship as it presented the Ruud brothers as the most likely champions. The slogan among their contenders before the championship was "Beat the Ruud boys." The competition itself received a fairly large advertisement where it was presented as the world's greatest winter sport happening, and the Ruuds were named first on the list of the world famous contenders who would jump.¹⁶⁵ *Washington Posten* seems to have exaggerated

¹⁶⁴ Lovoll, Odd S., *The Promise of America. A History of the Norwegian-American People*, revised edition, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 236.

¹⁶⁵ "'Beat the Ruud Boys,' er Slagordet," *Skandinaven*, February 4, 1938.

a bit when they wrote that the Soldiers Field championship was arranged on the occasion of the visit of the “kings of skiing.”¹⁶⁶

The Winter Carnival in Menomonie and the competition at the Summit in Snoqualmie are both good examples of how high the Norwegian American communities valued the Ruud brothers. Three days prior to the special jumping competition in Menomonie, *The Central Ski Sport* notified its readers of the appearance of the Ruud brothers. Just to make sure that every member of “that Scandinavian community” would get the opportunity to take part in the Carnival a holiday had been declared on the day of the competition. The Mayor, Colonel Albert Nathness, had promised a holiday “in honor of the Ruud brothers and to aid the Winter Sport Carnival,” and the school leaders had promised to close the school on that Friday afternoon “as to allow the students to see the famous world champion Ruud brothers in action.”¹⁶⁷

The Norwegian American community in Snoqualmie went even further in their efforts to secure the participation of the brothers. On February 11, *Washington Posten* released news that was considered a watershed (translated from “epokegjørende nyhet”) in the history of skiing in Seattle. Birger and Sigmund Ruud had agreed to participate in the ski jumping competition at the Summit if it could be postponed from February 27 to March 6. Bad weather had delayed the competition at Soldiers Field which forced the Ruuds to stay in Chicago for the second attempt to hold it. There was no doubt that the event would be rescheduled!¹⁶⁸

More bad weather did, however, jeopardize their arrival in Seattle, and *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, “an American paper for the American people,” offered a great image of the Norwegian communities’ reception of the Ruud brothers from an outside perspective. The article is introduced by a description of the nervous mood among the committee members of the Seattle Ski Club as they awaited news from the Ruud brothers who were stuck at the airport in Los Angeles due to bad weather. As the weather conditions improved and the Ruud brothers were heading for Seattle, committee members “breathed deep sighs of relief.” They were to be honored by the local Norwegian colony as they were “held high in esteem of the sons of Norway.” Next to Sonja Henie they were the most popular athletes among the sports-minded public. The competition itself was considered to be close to a “Kongsberg reunion” as

¹⁶⁶ “Ski-Nytt,” *Washington Posten*, February 18, 1938.

¹⁶⁷ “Menomonie W.S.C. Sponsors Winter Frolic. February 4th and 6th. Ruuds to Appear,” *The Central Ski Sport*, February 1, 1938.

¹⁶⁸ “Både Birger Ruud Og Sigmund Ruud Til Seattle-Rennet,” *Washington Posten*, February 11, 1938.

several of the greatest jumpers originated from that city. The headliners were, “of course,” Sigmund and Birger Ruud.¹⁶⁹

In a different article in the same issue of *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, the sports journalist Mike Donohoe found that even though the Seattle Ski Club had attracted “some mighty fine sky busters” to their annual competition before, they had never had any “whose name was as great in skiing as the Ruud brothers.”¹⁷⁰ Even though Donohoe must have forgotten that Sigmund participated in the 1937 competition as well, it sure reflects a great excitement of their presence.

In terms of media coverage, *Washington Posten* signaled that something out of the ordinary was coming. On March 4, two days prior to the competition, no less than five of the newspaper’s articles were concerned with skiing. Two of the articles were directly concerned with the Ruud brothers, one of which included a picture that covered a quarter of a page, and an additional add for the event made sure to welcome the “world famous ski jumpers” who were expected.

Of all the articles that have been analyzed in this study which were printed prior to the events, regardless of whether they are Norwegian American or American, they all seem to have one purpose in common. They all emphasize the participation of the Ruud brothers, and they significantly raise the expectations of their ski jumping skills. The remaining questions which need answers then become: Did they live up to these expectations? In terms of being ethnic symbols, how useful did the brothers prove to be?

The “Norge” Ski Club: An Ethnic Celebration

On January 18, two days after the competition at Fox River Grove, *Skandinaven* offered a thorough report from the event which covered large parts of the two first pages and with a picture of Birger on the front page. According to this report, 30.000 spectators arrived in approximately 10.000 cars, both which counted for new records at Fox River Grove. The masses of spectators had been up for a show which consisted of ski jumpers from “Wisconsin, Minnesota, North Dakota, Michigan, California, New York, Vermont, Connecticut, and from Norway. And Kongsberg!”¹⁷¹ Before the competition started the United States of America and the Kingdom of Norway were equally celebrated with each of their national anthems accompanying the hoisting of their flags.

¹⁶⁹ Donohoe, Mike, “Ruud Brothers Compete Here Sunday; Crack Field Set,” *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, March 4, 1938.

¹⁷⁰ Donohoe, Mike, “Ski Jumping Event Draw Big Stars,” *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, March 4, 1938.

¹⁷¹ “En Rekorddag for “Norge” ved Skiløbet sidste Søndag,” *Skandinaven*, January 18, 1938. The quotation is translated by the author of this thesis.

The Ruud brothers cannot be credited for the Norwegian framework of this contest as the “Norge” Ski Club had a long tradition of ethnic celebrations, as was argued in chapter two, but they seem to have contributed to make the one in 1938 stand out. Birger was announced as the best ski jumper in the world. As he got ready, the article reports that an inaudible quiet spread across the audience. “Is this guy as good as they say?” As he reached for 172 feet the silence was broken by resounding cheers from the spectators. Following this jump a local Norwegian American business man was reported to have thanked his friends for a perfect day and left the site. Not because it was Birger who had jumped, but because he valued the jump itself as a greeting from Norway which the Americans had truly appreciated. Such reports are too valuable to be overseen by students of Norwegian American ethnicity. To this Norwegian American, Birger was more than a ski jumper, or perhaps his jump was more than just a ski jump. His skillful ski jumping was transformed into a symbol of Norwegian achievement. His jump was given the role as a symbol of Norwegian culture that Americans could appreciate.

In the second jump Birger cemented his position as “the best that ski jumping had to offer” with a leap of 181 feet. While Birger became the main attraction of the day, Sigmund strengthened the reputation of their family name by securing the second best score in the competition, and by pulling off the longest standing jump of 197 feet in an exhibition jump that followed the competition. Birger reached 205 feet but he fell. In the summary of the article the author portrayed Birger as the one in a million who had the skills and finesse to jump those extra feet that it took to win competition after competition. If, however, Birger should fail, his family name would be backed up by his brother who, despite being a senior, was capable of picking up those feet which Birger had missed.

After the competition the event seems to have been turned into a Norwegian celebration as the winners were honored at the “Norge” club house. Several speeches were held and Birger was rewarded with prizes in many categories. The chairman of the club, Fred Bruun, thanked all the contenders for their participation in what had turned out to be the “most successful ski event that had ever been held” on at that side of the Atlantic. In one of Birger’s speeches he responded with gratitude towards “Norge” Ski Club for upholding the sport of ski jumping in a Norwegian fashion.

While this report was written by a Norwegian American journalist who might have had strong relations to the “Norge” Ski Club, it seems to be in accordance with Sigmund Ruud’s experience. He explained that the weather conditions had been perfect with respect to drawing a large crowd, and the spectators had eventually become so pleased with what they

had seen that they had stormed the hill, and the jumpers had been forced to evacuate into the club house.¹⁷² While we may never be completely sure, all the reports that have been investigated here points in the direction of a successful event where Norwegian sentiments had been strongly advocated by the presence of the Ruud brothers.

Soldiers Field: Americanization Reversed

The tournament at Soldiers Field stands out in this study because it was held in an arena which was easier to access for a more homogenous crowd, as it was arranged in the center of Chicago. *The Daily Times* in Chicago encouraged anyone and everyone to attend as they informed that one would not “need to do a gelandesprung, pal; all you need to do is step a few doors down the street and they’ll be there.”¹⁷³ This offers an interesting perspective in this analysis as we may get insight in how the Ruuds were presented in a less “Norwegian” context. The audience, *Skandinaven* reported, was a mixture of “ordinary whites” and “ski interested” blacks.¹⁷⁴ If we look beyond the apparent segregation in this observation, it also reveals that, on the contrary to the other events treated in this thesis, ski jumping is not presented as ordinary to Scandinavians in particular, but as “ordinary” for whites in general. In this sense, the Soldiers Field competition may be said to have been more of an American celebration than a Norwegian one. This is strengthened if we also consider the arena itself. The artificial ski jumping hill, raised in the middle of a big city, is more typically American than it is Norwegian, where the hills were raised in places where Mother Nature allowed it. As we recall from chapter two, this Americanization of a Nordic discipline was what Aksel Holter complained about in his letter to *Skandinaven*.

There is, however, also strong evidence which suggests that the presence of the Ruuds, along with their efforts in the competition, reversed the Americanization of ski jumping in this event and made it seem more Norwegian. *Skandinaven* reported that while the competition was initiated by the American national anthem, the arena was surrounded with a Norwegian flag for every American to honor the Norwegian ski jumpers, who were the main attractions of the show.¹⁷⁵ This must have contributed to make the Norwegian presence more visible.

And if we are to believe the newspapers, be it a Norwegian American or an American, the brothers did become the main attraction. *The Central Ski Sport* found that despite the

¹⁷² Ruud, Sigmund, “Skispor krysser verden,” in *Norges OL-helter. Sigmund Ruud*, (Oslo: ForlagETT Libri Arte, 1998), 23-28.

¹⁷³ McCarthy, Marvin, “Ruuds Enter TIMES Ski Meet,” *Daily Times*, Chicago. January 21, 1938.

¹⁷⁴ “Nye Ruud-Seire i Soldier Field,” *Skandinaven*, February 15, 1938.

¹⁷⁵ “Nye Ruud-Seire i Soldier Field,” *Skandinaven*, February 15, 1938.

“very slim Soldier Field crowd” of 10.000 spectators, which was caused by first postponement and then unfortunate weather conditions on the day of the competition, the competition proved to be the best ever held by the Central U.S. Ski Association.

“Demonstrating conclusively the art of superior ski jumping Birger Ruud had things much his own way in the finals of the meet.”¹⁷⁶ *Washington Posten* reported that, despite the difficult conditions that the weather resulted in, Birger jumped longer than most other ski jumpers would in good conditions in Holmenkollen.¹⁷⁷ Both of these newspapers presented Birger as the main attraction of the day, but there is one important difference. While the American newspaper was careful to point out the glory that Birger’s jumps brought to the Central U.S. Ski Association, *Washington Posten* gave the report a Norwegian touch by contrasting the event to Holmenkollen.

Menomonie: Mutual Admiration

As we have seen, the little town of Menomonie was turned upside down as such big names as the Ruud brothers were expected at the annual Winter Carnival. Based on both newspaper reports and Sigmund Ruud’s assessment of the Carnival, the community leaders’ efforts to create a great celebration were successful. A few days after the events *The Central Ski Sport* reported that “one of the largest crowds that ever attended an event of the kind in this territory attended the open jumping tournament.”¹⁷⁸ *Skandinaven* informed its readers that the hosts in Menomonie had enjoyed an exceptionally large number of both spectators and contenders in a competition which Birger Ruud won without any difficulty.¹⁷⁹ Based on Sigmund’s reports from the event it seems like this competition, although the smallest in terms of the hill size, was the one that made the greatest impression on the brothers. In *Skispor krysser verden* he wrote the following:

In a place like this I personally get the notion of being considered more as an artist than as a competing ski jumper. How much better is it not to participate in a ski competition in a small town or village where the audience truly knows how to appreciate the efforts that lay behind a good jump? Such conditions give joy to every ski jumper, and he will try harder to please the crowd. That was how we felt when we visited the little prairie town; an outpost for the civilization, but with a fair-minded population who have remained unaffected by the decays of the greater society. The competition at this tiny hill, which might have been the least significant we participated in, will certainly not be easily forgotten.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁶ “Birger Ruud Takes Central Open Title at Soldier Field,” *The Central Ski Sport*, February 15, 1938.

¹⁷⁷ “Ski-Nytt,” *Washington Posten*, February 18, 1938.

¹⁷⁸ “Menomonie Winter Sports Carnival Draws Large Crowds,” *The Central Ski Sport*, February 8, 1938.

¹⁷⁹ “Skiløb,” *Skandinaven*, February 11, 1938.

¹⁸⁰ Ruud, *Skispor krysser verden*, 42. The passage has been translated by the author of this thesis.

These impressions become very important to this thesis when we recall that the 4000 spectators were in a large part represented by Norwegians, something which may suggest that this might have been close to a Norwegian ethnic celebration. The Norwegian American Peter Everson, originally from Kongsberg, attended the carnival in Menomonie along with a friend of his who also originated from the same area. He reported that he had never in his life heard “Kongsberg” mentioned as frequently as he did during the carnival, where thousands of people had showed up to see the Ruuds in action. He found that the brothers had more than anyone else contributed to make the ski sports popular among Norwegian Americans who descended from Kongsberg and its nearby areas. Through their presence in America they had not only become worshiped as good ski jumpers, but their victorious performances and smiling behavior had also rewarded them a position as well-liked personalities. They had directed people’s attention towards the ski sports and had been great ambassadors for Kongsberg and Norway. To sum up he found that the brothers had contributed to glorify the name of Kongsberg to a greater extent than any of the Kongsberg people who had settled in America.¹⁸¹

There are several aspects in this letter which are valuable to this thesis. First, Everson leaves us with the impression that the Ruud brothers were ambassadors for ski jumping within the community. In this sense their presence participated to give ski jumping a more salient part in the Norwegian population’s orientation towards their heritage. Secondly, Everson stressed their roles as ambassadors for Norway. Through not only their skills as ski jumpers, but also as nice personalities they had made both Kongsberg and Norway well-known in America. This is valuable information to students of Norwegian American ethnicity because it reveals that Everson were preoccupied with the reputation of Kongsberg within the larger American society that he lived in. The Norwegian Americans may have been accepted by the majority culture, but they were still concerned with the reputation of their mother country. In this sense, the Ruud brothers were not simply great athletes, but they were also useful tools for promotion of Norwegian American ethnicity, despite the fact that they were Norwegian.

Somersaulting the Summit

The Seattle Daily Times literally confirmed that Birger had fulfilled the expectations as the “leaping star” had lived “up to all notices.” In an article on Monday, March 7, Birger’s victory is portrayed as one of a kind. While several class A and B jumpers had been alarmed by the hard crust that was a result of cold weather, Birger had seemed fearless. “While 4,000

¹⁸¹ Everson, Peter, “Amerikabrev om skisport,” *Laagendalsposten*, April 25, 1938.

spectators shook the Cascades and sent snow tumbling from the trees with their roar, he didn't come to a casual, christyng stop. No. He somersaulted."¹⁸² With a large picture of Birger on the front page of its Monday issue, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* reported that "the little fellow from Kongsberg, who is strictly the tops in ski jumping, rode the breeze 202 feet and when he landed, brethren, he was slapping his hickories on nothing less than unbreakable crust."¹⁸³ If we combine von der Lippe's criteria for what it takes to become a hero to this information, we may conclude that Birger's achievements at the Summit made him qualify as one. Sigmund should probably also be included as he jumped nearly as far, and he did the somersault as well. They confirmed their "royal" greatness within ski jumping as their performances made them seem fearless compared with many of their opponents.

Washington Posten, which had great expectations of the Ruud brothers prior to the event, showed no signs of being displeased in its summary of the competition. The reports from the event was considered so important by the newspaper that a thorough article, stretching over two pages and with two large pictures of both Birger and Sigmund, was prioritized to such an extent that the news of the election victory of Seattle's new mayor, Arthur B. Langley, drowned at the bottom of the first page. Both of Birger's two jumps in the competition were so "super elegant" that the big dream came through, not for Birger himself, but for the thousands of the spectators. When the brothers voluntarily took a couple of extra jumps each, one pair jump and one more single, and completed both jumps with somersaults in the end, the crowd's excitement knew no boundaries. The conclusion of the event could only be compared to that of a grandiose symphony.¹⁸⁴

The Seattle Daily Times article further includes great information about the Ruud brothers' significance to Norwegian American identity. First, the audience was presented with proud symbols of Norwegian success. The white "K" on the traditional Kongsberg ski jumping sweater was carried by no less than five of the top ten jumpers. They were found on the chests of Birger (who placed 1st), Olaf Ulland (2nd), Sigmund (3rd), Tom Mobraaten (7th) and Hjalmar Hvam (8th). Because of the world wide success of the Kongsberg jumpers during this period of ski jumping, the "K" must have been well-known to most people who followed winter sports. But did the symbol work? An observation by the articles author indicates so. "A grizzled Norwegian fishing boat captain just about described the Norwegian sentiment, as the Ruuds topped the greatest day in Seattle Ski Clubs history with a perfect double jump, both

¹⁸² "Birger Ruud is Summit Ski King," *The Seattle Daily Times*, March 7, 1938.

¹⁸³ Donohoe, Mike, "Birger Ruud wins Summit Jumping Title," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, March 7, 1938.

¹⁸⁴ "Hopprennet Paa Summit Søndag Blev En Straalende Norsk Fest," *Washington Posten*, March 11, 1938.

off the takeoff together, and landing, in unison, 196 feet down the hill. "I think," he said, as the brothers simultaneously somersaulted to a stop. "I am proud to be a Norski. Does anyone want to disagree?" No one would dream of it."

Concluding Remarks

As this chapter addresses the importance of the Ruud brothers as Norwegian American ethnic symbols, and as Einar Haugen gives us reason to believe that the subscribers of the Norwegian American newspapers were the true members of Norwegian America, we may benefit from an analysis of such newspapers when we set out to interpret the brothers' roles. In each of the events which were held in areas with a high concentration of Norwegian American citizens, the newspapers conducted interviews with Norwegian Americans who highlight the ethnic significance of the Ruud brothers. At "Norge" and in Menomonie, the two immigrants from Kongsberg are seemingly concerned with the reputation of their mother country within the larger American society, and they both value the Ruud brothers as Norwegian ambassadors. The fishing boat captain at the Summit seems to have been less concerned with Norwegian ethnicity prior to the competition, but the brothers' impressive display evoked Norwegian sentiments within him. Thus the Ruuds usefulness as ethnic symbols may be said to be twofold. They participated to make the majority culture accept Norwegian culture in America, and they promoted the salience of ethnicity in Norwegian Americans' subjective orientation towards their ethnic identity.

If we consider the different ways that the brothers were presented to both America and to Norwegian America, they fulfill von der Lippe's requirements for a hero, but they may also fit well into Øverland's additional category of homemaking myths; that of the ethnic hero. All though they were not immigrants themselves, they were used to display Norwegian success in the U.S. On several occasion did the newspapers carefully highlight Sigmund Ruud's fluency in English, something which would have made him into a good ambassador, not only for Norway, but for Norwegian America as well.

That they were valued by Norwegian America is apparent in the many reports that have been presented and discussed throughout this chapter. It is also apparent in a discussion which took place both in Norway and in Norwegian America prior to the winter of 1937/38. A hall of fame of significant Norwegian personalities was to be drafted on the occasion of an exhibition in New York. Both *Aftenposten* in Norway and *Nordisk Tidende* arranged polls so the readers could vote for the candidates who should represent Norway. In both cases, Birger were listed along with other big Norwegian names such as Nansen, Amundsen, Bjørnson,

Ibsen, Hamsun and Grieg.¹⁸⁵ While it seems likely that this was a result of Birger's stardom at the time when the polls were held, it reveals that he was considered to be among the greatest Norwegian names both in Norway and in Norwegian America in the later 1930s.

¹⁸⁵ *Aftenposten*, November 22, 1937.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, it is difficult, if at all possible, to measure the role and salience of ethnic symbols in solid numbers. This is closely related to Mary Waters' assumption that Americans change their orientation towards their ethnic background as frequently as they change their minds about which presidential candidate to vote for. Even if we had definite numbers of how many Americans who had Norwegian ancestry in 1938, which we lack if we count all generations, we could still not be certain that all of them would consistently define themselves in ethnic terms. Despite this uncertainty, the thesis holds that ski jumping, ski clubs and ski jumping stars should be mentioned when we are concerned with Norwegian American ethnicity in the late 1930s, something which is in accordance with Odd Lovoll's assertion that skiing was an "ethnic forte" for Norwegian Americans.

The significant position of ski jumping in Norwegian American ethnicity in the late 1930s was grounded in traditions brought from the mother country, and also in Norwegian immigrants' efforts to promote skiing in America. As we have seen, there seems to be little doubt that Norwegian immigrants brought skiing to America in the first half of the nineteenth century, and the Norwegian American domination of the developments of American ski sports was almost unchallenged until the rise of alpine skiing in the 1920s and 1930s. This seems to have contributed to give ski jumping a salient position in the Norwegian American heritage.

When Norwegian American ethnicity was challenged by the threats of nativism and modernization, ski jumping seems to have been a potent response to such threats. Because the Nordic disciplines were connected with the ideals of "Idraet," a conception which was advocated by the famous explorer Fridtjof Nansen, Norwegian Americans could score recognition from the majority culture by promoting these activities. The founders of the National Ski Association seem to have embraced this opportunity, as they attempted to remove the ethnic barriers that had surrounded the ski sports up until the early 1900s. Further, ski jumping seems to have been a helpful activity as Norwegian Americans attempted to maintain their ethnic distinctiveness when it was threatened by modernization. In the late 1930s, ski jumping was performed in its traditional form, and the expansion of collective transportation as well as the increased amount of cars made it easier for people to access the ski jumping hills. Because ski jumping events could be attended without membership or ties to any organizations, they could be attended without putting much strains on the individual. It

could thus continue to be an ethnic activity even if Norwegian Americans generally had become ethnic in a symbolic fashion.

Because ski jumping is an activity which might be dangerous, and which demands much practice, the average immigrant would not have been able to participate in the competitions personally. They could, however, cheer for a professional jumper, just like football fans cheer for their teams. In the concluding remarks of chapter two we saw that Frank Elkins valued the successful Norwegian American ski jumper Torger Tokle as “a symbol of everything that was Norwegian,” and the question of whether the same could be said about the Ruud brothers, despite the fact that they were Norwegian nationals, was raised. It has been the aim of this thesis to respond to that question, and thus it is highly relevant to shed some light on what Elkins had to say about the matter. “The thrilling and dashing exploits of the Norwegian skiers during the 1932 Winter Olympics in this country,” he said, and “principally those of the world-renowned brothers, Sig and Birger Ruud, [...] have left their indelible tracks on the snow hills from the lofty heights of Mount Washington to the rugged peaks of the Sierras.”¹⁸⁶

Based on all the reports that have been investigated in this research, the Ruud brothers have not been described as anything but remarkable in their chosen form of athletics. Several accounts have also revealed that they were held high in esteem by Norwegian Americans because they were seen as ambassadors for Norwegian culture. Such information is valuable in at least three ways to this thesis. First, it tells us that ski jumping was considered to be a central element in Norwegian culture. Secondly, it strengthens the notion that the Ruud brothers were ethnic heroes in Norwegian America; heroes in the sense that they promoted recognition of Norwegian American culture by the majority culture through hard work and talent. Finally, closely connected with the latter statement, it can tell us that despite the notion that Norwegian American culture generally was accepted by Americans, they were still concerned with the reputation of their ethnic group within the larger American society. This has been the most significant finding of this thesis, which departed from the assumption that Norwegian Americans were confident in the majority culture’s level of recognition of their heritage.

It is critical to point out that this thesis does not mean to say that Norwegian American heritage were unacceptable to Americans in 1938. The findings of this thesis are in accordance with the advocates of optional and symbolic ethnicity among Norwegian

¹⁸⁶ Elkins, Frank, “Norwegian Influence on American Skiing,” *The American-Scandinavian Review* 35 (1947): 339.

immigrants. Despite the efforts of NSA to Americanize ski sports, ski jumping remained Norwegian-dominated in the late 1930s and the continuance of Norwegian names in ski clubs, like the “Norge” Ski Club, indicates that Americans accepted the Norwegian dominance of the Nordic disciplines. Still, it did not contribute to alienate the Norwegian American heritage as Americans showed interest in the sport as well. Ski jumping was well-suited as a symbolic ethnic activity because it did not demand too much devotion. Such events made ethnicity optional because people could choose to be a “Norski,” just like the fishing boat captain at the Summit did. The expressed concern with the reputation of Norwegian heritage in the U.S. could just as likely be interpreted as a concern that Norwegian cultural heritage would disappear because Norwegian Americans were becoming less ethnic as a result of immigration restrictions and modernization. In this sense, ski jumping and ski jumping stars may have been important to the preservation of Norwegian cultural heritage because they could be attended and watched without conflicting with American values.

To sum up, this thesis holds that Birger and Sigmund Ruud must be regarded as Norwegian American ethnic heroes when they toured the U.S. in the winter of 1938 because they successfully, in terms of results, spectators and media coverage, promoted an activity that held a salient position in Norwegian American ethnicity. Still, we must be cautious not to exaggerate their symbolic importance to individual Norwegian Americans. Because there is reason to believe that ethnicity had become optional and symbolic to Norwegian Americans by the late 1930s, the Ruud brothers could have been important to Norwegian American ethnicity, but ethnicity itself was not necessarily that salient for each individual’s identity. While they seem to have been important pieces in one game of chess, chess was only one of the games played by Norwegian Americans in 1938.

Undiscovered Ski Tracks

This study has by no means been exhaustive. By combining modern theoretical approaches to ethnicity with evidence found in both primary and secondary material that is concerned with Norwegian American ethnicity and with ski jumping in the U.S., the thesis has sought to build a solid argument based on the level of correspondence between these sources. While this research has produced evidence which makes it seem reasonable to assume that ski jumping played a salient part in Norwegian American ethnic identity in the late 1930s in the areas that have been studied, and that the Ruud brothers' expertise in ski jumping and positive behavior made them function as ethnic heroes for this particular ethnic group, it would be interesting to investigate more personal accounts in depth. One way to do this could be to make a thorough investigation of one of the events that is treated in this study, and seek information in personal reports, such as diaries and letters, from a selection of Norwegian American spectators. This study also has its limitations in the sense that it is geographically, and thus demographically, bound to the four areas that have been investigated. These are all locations with a relatively high concentration of Norwegian Americans. It could be interesting to investigate the role of ski jumping in the ethnic identity of Norwegian Americans who lived in areas with a smaller Norwegian American population. It could, for instance, be interesting to investigate to what extent the competition in Coliseum Stadium evoked nationalistic sentiments in Norwegian Americans in California.

Appendix

These tables list all the articles that are used in the thesis. They are organized in four different tables: *Washington Posten*, *Skandinaven*, “American Newspapers,” and “Norwegian newspapers.” Within each table the articles are sorted by newspaper and date because it makes it easier to identify the instances when a lot of attention was given to the Brothers in one issue of a newspaper (the articles that are marked with “-“ are not concerned with the Ruud brothers). For the articles which describe the Brothers in terms of one or several of the four rhetorical articles that are emphasized in this study, information is added in the column to the right. The four rhetorical categories are:

Great athletes: When the article emphasizes their athletic skills or achievements in ski jumping.

Likable personalities: When the article focuses on their social skills.

Royalties: When royal labels are added to their names.

Super humans: When they are given super natural qualities (e.g. the ability to fly).

Washington Posten:

Article ID	Source	Rhetorical Category
1.1	“Full Norsk Vinter. Persløkka Aapnet!”, <i>Washington Posten</i> , December 17, 1937.	-
1.2	“Birger Fikk Vanskeligheter Med Aa Holde Bryllup Bare Som Familiefest”, <i>Washington Posten</i> , January 14, 1938.	Likeable personalities, royalties
1.3	Gjølme, Ginken, “Forslag Om En Ski-Kirke Paa Summit!”, <i>Washington Posten</i> , February 4, 1938.	-
1.4	”Både Birger Ruud Og Sigmund Ruud Til Seattle-Rennet”, <i>Washington Posten</i> , February 11, 1938.	Great athletes
1.5	“Ski-Kongehuset Ruud Kommer Til Seattle Rennet”, <i>Washington Posten</i> , February 18, 1938.	Great athletes, royalties
1.6	“Ski-Nytt”, <i>Washington Posten</i> , February 18, 1938.	Great athletes, royalties
1.7	“Ski-Kapell Skal Bygges På Summit Alt I Sommer“, <i>Washington Posten</i> , March 4, 1938.	-
1.8	“Det Skirenn Som Verdens Kresneste Publikum Helst Vilde Se Den 6. Mars!”, <i>Washington Posten</i> , March 4, 1938.	Royalties
1.9	“Sölvstaden Og Skistaden Kongsberg”, <i>Washington Posten</i> , March 4, 1938.	Great athletes, likable personalities
1.10	“Hopprennet Paa Summit Søndag Blev En Straalende Norsk Fest”, <i>Washington Posten</i> , March 11, 1938.	Great athletes, royalties, super humans
1.11	“Hvad Kemner Ruud På Kongsberg Sa!”, <i>Washington Posten</i> , March 18, 1938.	Great athletes,

Skandinaven:

Article ID	Source	Rhetorical Category
2.1	Picture without a topic, <i>Skandinaven</i> , January 4, 1938, 2	Royalties
2.2	“Norge-dagen reddes med escabanasne”, <i>Skandinaven</i> , January 7, 1938.	-
2.3	“Holmenkol-Dagen i ”Norge”-Bakken Søndag”, <i>Skandinaven</i> , January 14, 1938.	-
2.4	“En Rekorddag for “Norge” ved Skiløbet sidste Søndag”, <i>Skandinaven</i> , January 18, 1938.	Great athletes, royalties, super human,
2.5	“En strålende Ski-Dag for “Norge”, Chicago, og Norge sidste Søndag”, <i>Skandinaven</i> , January 21, 1938.	Great athletes, royalties, super humans
2.6	“Beat the Ruud Boys,” er Slagordet”, <i>Skandinaven</i> , February 4, 1938.	Great athletes
2.7	“Omkring Skiløbets Saga i Hjemlandet,” <i>Skandinaven</i> , February 8, 1938.	-
2.8	“Skiløb”, <i>Skandinaven</i> , February 11, 1938.	Great athletes
2.9	“Nye Ruud-Seire i Soldier Field”, <i>Skandinaven</i> , February 15, 1938.	Great athletes
2.10	“Prægtig Skitur”, <i>Skandinaven</i> , March 11, 1938.	-

American newspapers:

Article ID	Source	Rhetorical Category
3.1	“Menomonie W.S.C. Sponsors Winter Frolic. February 4th and 6th. Ruuds to Appear,” <i>The Central Ski Sport</i> , February 1, 1938.	Great athletes
3.2	“Menomonie Winter Sports Carnival Draws Large Crowds”, <i>The Central Ski Sport</i> , February 8, 1938.	Great athletes
3.3	“Birger Ruud Takes Central Open Title at Soldier Field”, <i>The Central Ski Sport</i> , February 15, 1938.	Great athletes
3.4	Talbot, Gayle, “Birger Ruud reaches U.S.; Regarded as World’s Best”, <i>The Salt Lake Tribune</i> , January 13, 1938.	Great athletes
3.5	Simons, Herbert, “Ceiling Unlimited”, <i>Sunday Times</i> , Chicago, January 30, 1938.	Great athletes, super humans
3.6	McCarthy, Marvin, “Ruud Enter TIMES Ski Meet,” <i>Daily Times</i> , Chicago, January 21, 1938.	Great athletes, super humans
3.7	McCarthy, Marvin, “Home Guards Rally For ‘Ruud’ Welcome!,” <i>Daily Times</i> , Chicago, February 24, 1938.	Great athletes, super humans
3.8	“Birger Ruud is Summit Ski King”, <i>The Seattle Daily Times</i> , March 7, 1938.	Great athletes
3.9	“Bids Human Airplanes “Farvel””, <i>Seattle Star</i> , March 8, 1938.	Super humans
3.10	Donohoe, Mike, “Ruud Brothers Compete Here Sunday; Crack Field Set”, <i>Seattle Post-Intelligencer</i> , March 4, 1938.	Great athletes
3.11	Donohoe, Mike, “Ski Jumping Event Draw Big Stars,” <i>Seattle Post-Intelligencer</i> , March 4, 1938.	Great athletes
3.12	Donohoe, Mike, “Norwegian Will Fete Leapers On Monday,” <i>Seattle Post-Intelligencer</i> , March 6, 1938.	Great athletes, super humans
3.13	Donohoe, Mike, “Birger Ruud wins Summit Jumping Title,” <i>Seattle Post-Intelligencer</i> , March 7, 1938.	Great athletes

Norwegian Newspapers:

Article ID	Source	Rhetorical Category
4.1	“Det er den norske ungdom som gjør Norges navn kjent i U.S.A.“, <i>Fremtiden</i> , January 14, 1938.	Great athletes
4.2	Everson, Peter, “Amerikabrev om skisport”, <i>Laagendalsposten</i> , April 25, 1938.	Great athletes, likable personalities

Bibliography

Primary Sources:

Bureau of the Census. "Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940. Population, 2:12." Accessed February 26, 2013. <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/decennial/1940.html>

Haugen, Einar. *Norsk i Amerika*, 2. utg. Oslo: Cappelen, 1975.

Holter, Aksel H. "Nordmænds indflydelse i Amerikas sportsliv." In *Nordmandsforbundet. 18de aargang*. 199-204. Oslo: Steenske Boktrykkeri Johannes Bjørnstad, 1925.

Ruud, Sigmund. "Skispor krysser verden" (1938). In *Norges OL-helter. Sigmund Ruud*, 9-111. Oslo: ForlagETT Libri Arte, 1998.

Secondary Sources:

Books

Alba, Richard D. *Ethnic Identity: The Transformation of the White America*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990.

Allen, E. John B. *From Skisport to Skiing. One Hundred Years of an American Sport, 1840-1940*. Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1993.

Chrislock, Carl H. *Ethnicity Challenged. The Upper Midwest Norwegian-American Experience in World War I*. Northfield: The Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1981.

Dahlén, Peter. *Sport och medier*. Kristiansand: IJ-forlaget, 2008.

Hansen, Marcus Lee. *The Problem of the Third Generation Immigrant*. Illinois: Augustana Historical Society, 1938.

Hillesund, Terje. *Står det noe nytt? Innføring i analyse av aviser og nyheter*. Oslo: Institutt for Journalistikk, 1994.

Lovoll, Odd S. *The Promise Fulfilled. A Portrait of Norwegian Americans Today*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998.

Lovoll, Odd S. *The Promise of America. A History of the Norwegian-American People*. Revised edition. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

Waters, Mary C. *Ethnic Options. Choosing Identities in America*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.

Weber, Max. *Economy and society*. New York: Bedminster Press, 1968.

Øverland, Orm. *Immigrant Minds, American Identities. Making the United States Home, 1870-1930*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000.

Articles

Conzen, Kathleen N., Gerber, David A., Morawska, Ewa, Pozzetta, George E. and Vecoli, Rudolph J. "The Invention of Ethnicity: A Perspective from the U.S.A." *Journal of American Ethnic History* 12:1 (1992): 3-41. Accessed February 27, 2013.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/27501011>.

Elkins, Frank, "Norwegian Influence on American Skiing." In *The American-Scandinavian Review* Vol XXXV, 335-341. NY: Norwegian-Scandinavian Foundation, 1947.

Gans, Herbert J. "Comment: Ethnic Invention and Acculturation, a Bumpy-Line Approach." *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 12:1 (1992): 42-52. Accessed May 27, 2013.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/27501012>.

Gans, Herbert J. "Symbolic ethnicity: The future of ethnic groups and cultures in America." *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 2:1 (1979): 1-20. Accessed May 27, 2013.

http://faculty.washington.edu/charles/562_f2011/Week%2010/Gans%201979.pdf.

Jenswold, John R., "Becoming American, Becoming Suburban." *Norwegian-American Studies* Vol. 33 (1992): 3-26.

Klepp, Asbjørn, "Myter i norsk skikultur : alle nordmenn er ikke født med ski på beina, og Sondre Nordheim "oppfant" ikke hælbandet av vidje!" In *Idrett og fritid i kulturbildet : Humanioradagene 1993*, edited by Klepp, Ingun G and Svarverud, Rune, 159-186. Oslo: Det historisk-filosofiske fakultet, University of Oslo, 1993.

Lovoll, Odd S., "Better Than a Visit to the Old Country: The *Stevne* of the Sognalag in America." In *Norwegian-American Essays*, edited by Gulliksen, Øyvind T., Mauk, David C., and Tolsby, Dina, 3-29. Oslo: NAHA-Norway, 1996.

Redlich, Fritz, "Autobiographies as Sources for Social History: A Research Program." *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 62:3 (1975): 380-390.

Sengupta, Ashis, "The Hyphenated Identity in Contemporary Multiethnic American Drama." *Americana: E-journal of American Studies in Hungary* 4:1 (2008). Accessed May 27, 2013. <http://americanajournal.hu/vol4no1/sengupta>.

Web sites

Dollar Times. *Inflation Calculator*. Accessed April 18, 2013. <http://www.dollartimes.com/calculators/inflation.htm>

International Ski Federation. *Biographies*. Accessed February 2, 2013. <http://www.fis-ski.com/uk/competitorbiographies.html>.

Newspaper Archive. <http://newspaperarchive.com/>.