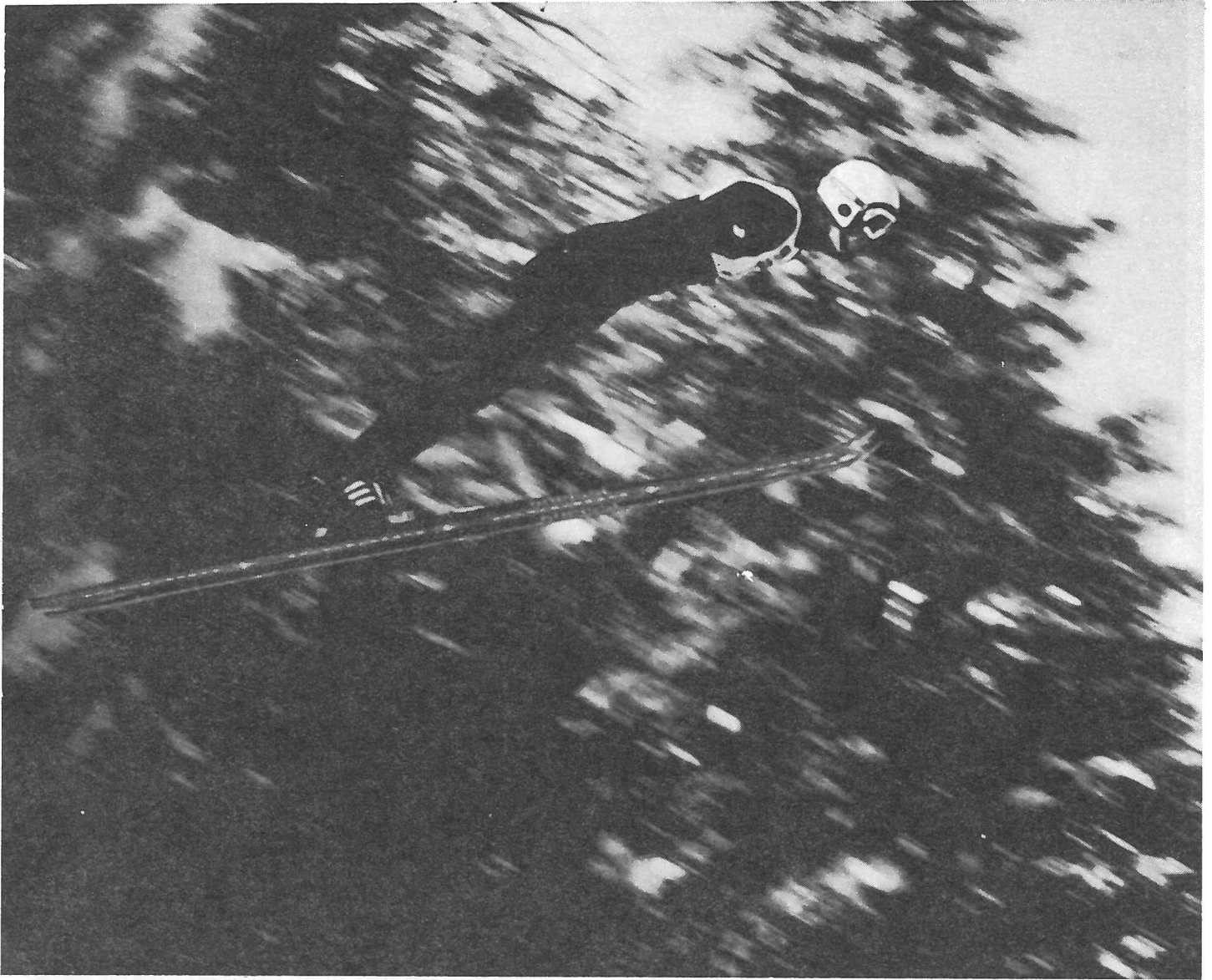


# THE SKY'S THE LIMIT



## By Joe Adamo & Cathy McGill

Last November, 1979, Cathy McGill, Vinny Grillo and Joe Adamo started a story on upcoming Olympic participants. Living in a ski town we felt that we might have potential Olympians right here. We went to talk to three U.S. Olympic Nordic jumpers who are Steamboat residents, Jeff Davis, Gary Crawford and Chris McNeil. Jeff and Chris are special jumping competitors, while Gary competes in the Nordic combined event. We talked to the competitors before and after their experience and let them tell their story.

Gary Crawford was born August 30, 1957, in Denver Colorado. He began his jumping career in Winter Park, following in the footsteps of his dad who was also a jumper and cross country skier. Gary's father was an Olympian in 1956 in Cortina, Italy, thus he taught Gary many skills

that helped him get started skiing. Gary feels his father's interest has given him incentive towards his career.

"I started skiing cross country when I was nine, after I moved to Steamboat. My older brother got into it through my dad who was a cross country skier, too. While I was in school it was hard, but when I was skiing internationally it was impossible for me to be in school. My high school grades weren't too bad, but I had a lot of make-up work to do. I have had to travel a lot and that has made college hard. Last January I was in Germany for two tournaments and last spring I went to Norway, Sweden and Finland. Then last summer I was training in Switzerland and Finland.

"The first time I ever went to the Junior National competition was in Steamboat. Then we



## GARY WITH PRESIDENT CARTER

went to Michigan, and last year Nationals were in Terry Peak, South Dakota. There I placed second in the Junior Nationals and that's how I got picked for the Olympic team. That's how the Olympic team is usually picked. If there's somebody that's skiing well but isn't a Junior National or whatever, and if the coaches see a person, they'll let him travel with us for a while. If he keeps skiing well the coach will name him to a "B" team for the next winter. We have two guys that traveled with us last year from the "B" team and the Junior team. If they ski well they can get on the Olympic team.

"I ski combined which is jumping and cross country, so I do a lot of running. In the summer I have to train for jumping and cross country, so I do a lot of weight training. I trained with Jeff and my brother, Greg, and I do a lot of running on my own. During the winter I usually jump in the mornings, and then do a light work-out sometimes in the evenings, so it's a pretty hectic day. I've had two falls like the Wide World of Sports, 'The Agony of Defeat.' I didn't get hurt, but I broke one collar bone about four or five years ago. Usually we don't get hurt too badly when we fall.

"If the combined team skis well this winter in the Olympics they will continue the combined amateur program. If nobody does any good at all they might just drop the program altogether. So there's pressure there for all the combined skiers to do well, so we can continue with a good program. In the whole United States there's probably only 40 combined skiers at the most, so we really have to try hard.

"The Olympic competition is just as stiff as the special jumpers. There aren't as many com-

bined skiers, but the caliber of them is tough, so it just depends on who's skiing the best on a certain day. In jumping there's so many more people that we have to compete against that it makes it harder, but then again in combined we have to do two events, so that makes that much harder. I think we're going to do well in the Olympics. There are several people in all events. In special jumping there's, of course, Jeff Davis, Jim Denny and Chris McNeil. There are four or five guys that could do really well. In cross country there's Bill Koch, who's already won in one Olympics and two other guys, Stan Duncan and Tim Caldwell under him that can do well. So the Americans are going to surprise some people this year, plus it will help having them in home territory, instead of overseas.

Chris McNeil was born November 20, 1954, and started skiing about the time he started walking. His jumping career began at the age of six. He began on a little jump at the grade school and started working his way up to the bigger jumps at Howelsen Hill. With the jumping, alpine skiing and cross country skiing, Chris started concentrating strictly on jumping at the beginning of his junior year in high school.

Chris told us about some of the highlights of his jumping career. "Probably the biggest break in my career was when John Fetcher arranged for me to go to Switzerland and train with the National jumping team there. During that time I got to train with a really good coach and some of the best jumpers in the world. I had thought of going to college, but when this opportunity came to go to Europe that pretty much decided my future as far as sports."

The training for future Olympians is rigorous. Chris told us about some of his training. "Basically, we just jump. We will usually have 10-15 rides per session, twice a day. And on a really good day we will do dry land training after these sessions. Part of our training requires skiing on a plastic hill. This is about the same as snow only warmer."

As Chris improved in jumping, so did the equipment he used. The boots changed from a low cut soft type boot to a stiffer high back boot. The suits the jumpers wore were baggy pants, sweaters and stocking caps. Today the suit is elasticized and similar to that of the downhill racer, very snug and tight fitting. The tight fit and the faster material allows a more stable air flight. A mandatory helmet must also be worn. Most of the equipment is European made, and many American skiers feel like they get the left-over equipment.

"At the end of May and beginning of June we started this year's first training in Larrouse, France. We skied there for three weeks, on a plastic hill, then came home for the summer. In

August the whole team went over to France and Switzerland for another three weeks. Then in November we went to Finland. We were supposed to ski on snow, but ended up on the plastic again.

"I have a lot of confidence in the hills at Lake Placid. I've skied them before and skied them pretty well. It really helps to be familiar with the area and have the benefit of background training. If we can get there soon and get a lot of jumps in, so that we really know those hills in every condition, and we know the wax to use, we will know how to ski in each condition and that'll be to our advantage.

"I'm a special jumper on the "A" team. There are two of us on the "A" team, and one on the "B". The people on the "A" team automatically make it to the Olympics. There are two events, and they bring seven guys to the Olympics, but only four get to ski in each event. They pick the four that are skiing the best, and it's the coach's decision at that point who he wants to ski. So even though I'm on the team, if for some reason I'm not skiing well, and the coaches don't want me to ski at Lake Placid, they have the choice.

"What you have to do is not compare yourself to other guys on the team, because those aren't the guys you have to beat. The guys you have to beat are skiing someplace else, training, and you know that they're skiing well. The East Germans and the Austrians you know are good, so you have to just keep trying to be better. To be the best, and maybe even exaggerate how good the Europeans are, keeps your interest and determination going.

"We have the best team we maybe ever had right now. Last year we had some results that don't especially put us as the favorites, but people know that we can do good. We're the underdogs but still people know we're not to be taken lightly."

We asked Chris about his best and worst days. "I guess last year probably in the pre-Olympics in Lake Placid was my best day. I had two pretty good days. I was twelfth on the seventy-meter jump the first day and the second day on the ninety-meter I was ninth which was even better. I've had so many bad days that I don't know which one was the worst, probably the world ski flying championships, I had four really bad days there. I was at the bottom of the pack. I wasn't last, but I was much closer to last than I was to first."

Chris never got to jump in the Olympics which I believe was probably his worst day. I'm sure we all would have liked to see him jump. We did not get the chance to interview Chris after the Olympics because he is now a resident of Dillon, Colorado. When Chris returns to Steamboat we shall try to do a follow-up story on his post Olympic thoughts.

Steamboat has had many Olympic skiers who have brought fame and traditional good skiing styles to the Rocky Mountains. Jeff Davis made Steamboat recognizable even if only for a brief moment on the tapes in the annals of Olympic records. His sports-minded ambitions as an Olympic jumper and his excelling jumps made the Olympic judges reconsider the course laid for jumpers. His easy manner and natural acceptance of competition made viewers understand his courage and fortitude in this Olympic jumping competition.

We spoke with him as he was preparing to leave for the Olympics. "I was 18 when I got on the United States ski team, and I've been on it for three years now. I feel privileged to be on the team since they only allow eight guys. The guys that are on the U.S. Ski Team right now aren't guaranteed a spot on the Olympic team because there are tryouts in December and January, and they take the top seven guys that are skiing the best. Any one that wants to can try out for the Olympic team, but the best jumpers are taken. If someone is not on the U.S. Ski team and they jump better, then they'll be on the Olympic team. Usually it's the U.S. Ski Team guys that make it. After the coaches choose which seven will be on the Olympic team they have to choose four that will compete in the Olympics. We have training days before the competition to decide who will jump. It's hard to tell who'll be competing. You can be skiing really well for awhile and then get in a slump, so we just have to wait and see how we're skiing.

"I've been looking forward to the Olympics for a long time. I've never wanted to quit. I like ski jumping too much. There's a lot of different things I'd like to do, but I want to finish jumping first because I get a thrill out of it that I can't compare to anything else. It's like flying like a bird without any motor. It's just all by yourself."

During the winter Jeff and his teammates have a heavy training schedule. "I usually jump in the morning and in the afternoon. Sometimes during the day when we have a break we do some dryland training. Then after dinner we work on our skis or watch movies of ourselves jumping that day to see what we did wrong and did right. It's tiring. It doesn't seem like it would take much energy, but it does. I get tired of skiing in one place. After about four or five days here we're ready for a rest of a day or two, then we're ready to start skiing again."

Traveling around the country is also very tiring. "We're always busy. We never really know what our schedule is until they, our coaches, say we're going here or there. Sometimes we have an idea, but it depends on snow and how everyone's skiing and feeling. Some guys may be going over to Germany and

Austria, while others may be going to Japan. It's kind of exciting because we never know where we're going, but we're always traveling.

"I'd always thought I'd travel around jumping, but I didn't know if I'd ever get the chance. I just kept skiing and working hard and hoping I'd make the United States Ski Team. I knew if I could get on the team I could travel for sure. It's fun and I enjoy it. I've been to Canada, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Germany, Austria, Switzerland and France. I think that's all. Finland's probably my favorite, and Switzerland's pretty close to being my favorite."

Traveling also brings learning and experiencing the different cultures of people as well as places. "The first time I went over to Europe, I went to Switzerland and then Germany and then Austria. I was over there for about a month and after about three days I wanted to come home. It wasn't what I expected. It was kind of crummy, and the food wasn't very good. Finally, I came home for three weeks and then went back over for a month and a half. I had a great time. This trip I knew what to expect. The first time everything was so new, and I wasn't ready for the situations.

"I've never gone to Europe when the whole team went together. We've always been split up and usually changed around. The coaches decide where they're going to send the guys and to which competition depending on how we're skiing. Some competitions are tougher than others so the guys that are skiing better go to those and the guys that aren't skiing quite as well may go to a competition with other jumpers that aren't skiing quite as well also."

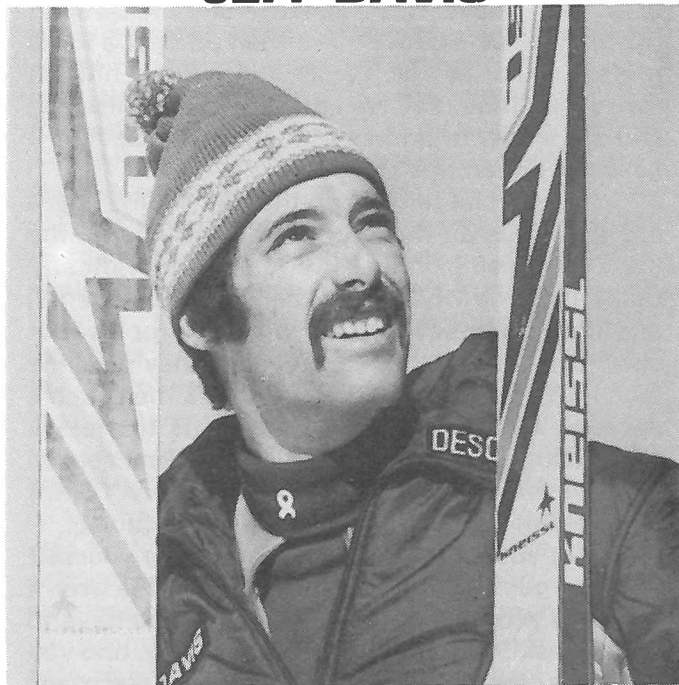
Competition can be quite challenging for the well traveled skier competing with other nationalities. "I think the Americans will do really well in the Olympics compared to other countries. I think we have guys that can win. When we go over to Europe to compete the guys on the team are just thinking about winning. They're competing against everyone that's there, not against each other. No one's different, we go there to win. We don't think about who we're beating. We just go out there to jump our best and that's it.

"I didn't start competing seriously until I was on the U.S. Ski Team. I competed quite a bit before then, but I was never that serious about it. As far as training I never even came close to training as hard as I train now."

It helps to always have someone there behind you pushing and telling you what you're doing wrong. This is usually left up to the coaches. Jeff's head coach, Glen Potlark, is from Duluth, Minnesota, and the assistant coach, Pentti Ranta, is from Helsinki, Finland. "Glen Potlark is just into the administrative part of the program, taking care of money and stuff. Pentti Ranta has

been coaching us for three years now. He has helped me to learn what kind of training I need during the summer. He's showed me how to build my legs. When I'm jumping Pentti can pick out the problems I have when I can't figure out what I'm doing wrong. He really has helped me, and he knows what he's talking about."

## JEFF DAVIS



## SPECIAL JUMPING

Now that you've read Jeff's opinions before the Olympics we followed up with questions on his post Olympic views. We felt that much could be gained from his experiences so we asked him how he felt about his overall performance.

"I was pretty happy on how I skied on the 70m. I wasn't happy with my skiing on the 90m. There were a lot of problems that day. On my second jump after I jumped 91m, I think I could have jumped just as far, but I pushed through in the air, so that was my fault."

Jeff's first jump of the 90m was called back because the officials believed that the following jumpers may have jumped further and this would put them in a dangerous part of the hill called the transition. Therefore the starting position had to be lowered so other people would not jump that far.

"That's the rules. I had another chance, and I just didn't jump as far. My last jump was good, it was the third longest of that round. I was happy with that. If I could have had two 84 meter jumps like that I would have made it. I don't think anybody could have jumped further. Tony Inauer won the competition, and he said no one could have jumped further.

"After my jump it seemed like everyone watched me a lot more closely because they knew me. I've received tons of letters from people all over the U.S. encouraging me to

continue my jumping career. On the other hand the publicity got to be a hassle because the press people are a bunch of hounds. They'll bug you 24 hrs. a day if they get a chance. They were always calling. I'd come back from practice and my whole door would be covered with messages, to call such and such at ABC or someone from the New York Times. Most of the time I didn't call them back because if I called everyone back and went to all their interviews I'd never have a chance to ski. That's what's good about the security. It keeps the press away. Those guys can drive you nuts.

"The security was really tight. We had to have our I.D. all the time. We had to have it to get out and to get in, and to go eat or go to a show or anything. That wasn't any problem if we just kept the pass around our necks. If we needed to go anywhere we'd just hop on a bus.

"I didn't think the buses were bad at all. I think many people would get ready to go to an event ten minutes before and expect to get there on time. They should know better. You should expect to leave at least two hours before the event you're going to see. The bus system as far as taking people the distances that they took people was really good. In most European countries the people will walk ten miles or take half a day to go see an event. Here people were bused right to where they needed to go and they were all griping about it. Most of the people who were griping were people that weren't athletic anyway. They just had money and expected to be chauffeured everywhere and be on time. They got a little upset. The people that didn't mind walking and being outside in the cold, they enjoyed it. A lot of people enjoyed walking around and seeing the events. I think as usual the media blew the busing out of proportion. They showed that on T.V. more than they showed the events."

Competition in any sport is evident. The pressure of Olympic competition must be almost unbearable. Jeff talked with us a lot about his feeling of competing with other excellent jumpers. "Within the next four years I have a lot of major competitions, but the only thing that is recognized as much as the Olympics is the World Championships. The Olympics occur and two years later the World Championships and two years later the Olympics again. World Championships is probably a tougher competition than the Olympics because each country can send six people. In the Olympics only four can go. All the competitions between now and the next Olympics will be good training for me.

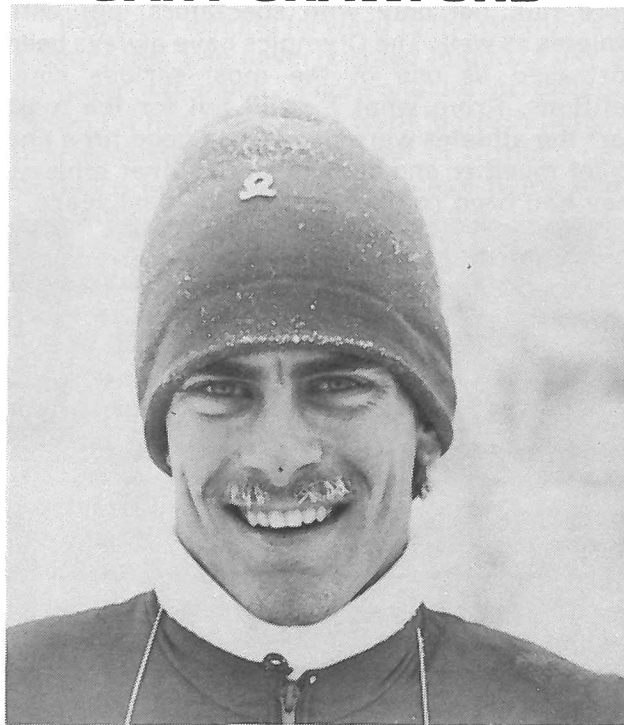
"Training is a very important aspect of ski jumping. For the next four years I'll probably train harder. Last summer was the first I had really trained. Before, I'd lay off all summer and let my coordination drop and then start skiing as soon as the season began. Now that I've had the

experience and know that my training paid off I think I'll train for the next four years for the 1984 Olympics. If I train straight through I'll gain a lot of strength and be able to work with my body a little better.

"That bothers me about the Moscow Olympics boycott. I don't think it's fair to the athletes, because for a lot of them this will be their last chance. They've trained hard for four years, then a person says they're not going, and it ruins everything for them. I don't think our government should have much to say since they don't support us with money. If we were at war with someone or there was a serious problem, then I could see us not going. I don't think it's going to bother the Russians that much, unless a lot of countries don't show up at the games, then it might cause some problems. The Americans are the first ones to say don't bring politics into sports, and now they are. If a decision could have been made on an alternate place to have the Olympics, then it would be fine, but there hasn't been. They're going to have them in Moscow, so our athletes just don't get to go. It's just not fair to them."

Gary and Jeff shared feelings about participating in the Winter Olympics. Gary wishes to attend the 1984 Olympics in Yugoslavia. "I believe that in 1984 there will be only a few of the same Olympians that competed in the 1980 Winter Olympics. The next Olympic combined team will probably have mostly new members.

## **GARY CRAWFORD**



## **NORDIC COMBINED**

"Hopefully I will be there to compete again for the U.S. team in 1984. I didn't compete to the best of my ability because I was ill with bronchitis,

but I think I did the best that I could with my handicap.

"I placed twenty-eighth overall in the Olympics, and the rest of the team did well too; therefore, I think that the combined amateur program will be continued. Although the special jumping coaches were fired and new coaches were employed, the combined coaches are still doing their job the best that they can."

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#### Reflections on 1980 Winter Olympics

By Cathy McGill

I never imagined going to the Olympics, but since they were being held in my home country I went to see them. It was hard taking two weeks off from school, yet I feel that I gained many experiences that I wouldn't have in academic classes.

Everyone was willing to get to know and help each other; one way of doing this was to trade pins. I brought along with me five Steamboat pins and once those were gone I had five others to trade. It was kind of a contest to see who could get the most. One of the most popular among the Americans was the ABC network pin. At the beginning every ABC employee was supposed to have five pins to trade, but after a while some disappeared and only a few got their share. At first I could get an ABC pin at a one-for-one trade, then the trade increased to four-for-one. Toward the end of the two weeks the pins sold for as much as 100 dollars.

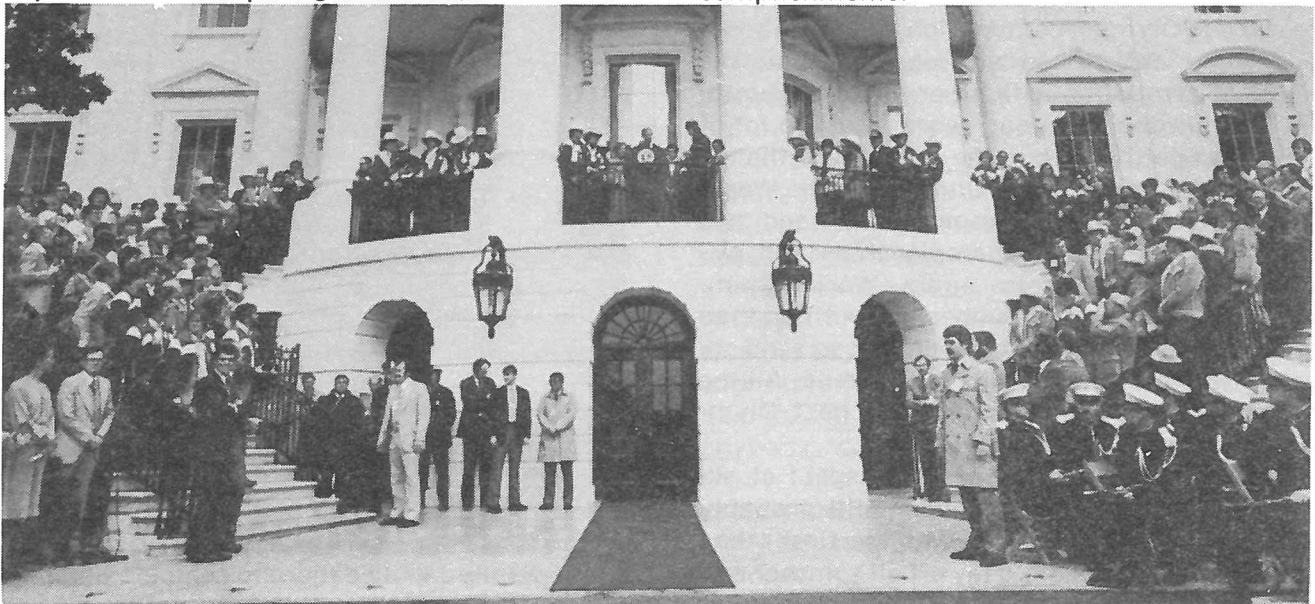
Since Lake Placid was packed with people the night life was crazy. All the bars and restaurants were full, not only with spectators, but with athletes as well. The Olympics have always been portrayed as one of the most serious competitions. From what I could tell for the most part the athletes were there for a good time and to get together and be with all the other athletes they had been competing with the past years.

The most exciting part about my vacation was being able to attend the Nordic jumping and the ice hockey games. At the 90 meter jumping there were 27,000 people and at the 70 meter jumping there were 25,000. Even though I was only one of so many I felt like I was part of the whole ordeal. When one of the Steamboat jumpers would come up to jump, I, and the rest of the Steamboat crowd, would go crazy. It was so much fun knowing some of the competitors and even some of the people working at the Olympics. It was a neat feeling to walk up to downhill coach, Jim Barrows and say "Hi!" Then he would turn to us and introduce us to other athletes. It gave me a slightly superior feeling.

I had never seen a hockey game before going to the Olympics. I liked them so much that I would go watch even if it didn't matter who was playing. I wasn't fortunate enough to see the USSR vs. US game in person, but I cheered for joy while watching it on television. It was then that so many people were scalping for tickets.

I also learned about ticket scalping. On opening day my friend and I went to sell our extra tickets for whatever price we could get. It was wet and cold, and there was lots of competition with other scalpers. We had a hassle with one couple who left to get more money while we promised the tickets to a German couple, only to have the original couple return with the money. We tried to explain to the German couple, but the man just grabbed the tickets and ran while my friend and I screamed and cried. After the whole ordeal and the mix-up we decided that we would never scalp tickets again.

Almost a year later as I reflect back on my Olympic experiences I still believe that it was one of the greatest times of my life. It showed me that people care about achieving, and many are anxious to support athletes and their accomplishments.



**THE OLYMPIANS LINE UP OUTSIDE THE WHITE HOUSE**