



The Hovey, A Legacy

It's a simple question: Will you tell me about your dad?

For Tracey Hovey, it's more about what everyone else has been telling her about her dad for the past 60 years.

"Everything I know of him was told to me," she says.

People are always telling her she looks just like her father, that she has the same blue eyes, the same flyaway blonde hair, and the same love of skiing and the outdoors.

That she relishes these comparisons is obvious, but for Tracey, the swell of pride is always tempered by sadness.

She was five years old when her dad passed away.

"I have two fuzzy memories of him," she recalls. "One is of us skiing together."

The Man.

William A. Hovey, Jr. was a legend in his own time. He was friends with Warren Miller and collaborated on some filming with him at Mt. Whitney. He was also the Director of the U.S. Eastern Amateur Ski Association and a certified ski examiner who was integral in establishing guiding standards for ski instruction in the United States. Hovey, a World War II veteran who served in the Marine Air Force, and played football for Notre Dame, returned home to Lake Placid to raise his family.

He was 36 years old when his car went off the road after visiting his father in an Albany hospital. At the time he was President of the Lake Placid Chamber of Commerce, owned a motel, and was director of the Bill Hovey Ski School at the Lake Placid Club.

The Race.

The inaugural William A. Hovey Memorial Ski Race was held in 1963 at Mt. Whitney in Hovey's honor. It was organized by the Lake Placid Ski Club and Sno Birds.

The race is one of those magical occurrences that has taken on a significance that isn't easy to categorize. It's grown into a legendary event that looms large among the U10, U12, and U14 sets. Coming in first is a coveted honor, and for the many who never stand atop that podium, it's a lifelong regret that also reads a bit like pride.

"I love to hear from people who didn't win it but wanted to," Tracey says. "It's such a great community bonding experience because so many people grew up racing in it and wanting to race in it, and wanting to win it."

"I am still mad, as I had him by four-tenths on the first run, and he got me by 0.43 in the second run!" says NYSEF Board member Art Lussi on his second-place finish to Dan Stripp in 1975.

The Hovey, as it's affectionately known, is exactly what ski racing is all about. It gathers kids from across the state to compete and the desire to win is a defining moment in any young racer's career.



"When I won, it felt like a pretty big deal of course, but over the years it has made me feel quite fortunate to have skiing be part of my family's heritage and one that I've been able to contribute to in my own way,"

Haley Hovey Johnson
1996 Champion



First Hovey Race
Winners of the first Hovey Race in 1963 included, seated, at left, Carol Torrance (now Hoffman), current president of the Lake Placid Ski Club, and Janet Bites of Lake Placid.

"All of your friends from Gore Mountain would come up to compete, making it more than just your regular race series," says Jaden Klebba, a 2017 Hovey winner. "I've made my best friends through the program at NYSEF; those girls will be a highlight of my experience there for the rest of my life."

The Hovey is held annually, typically in January, and is renowned for its bad luck with the weather. But that doesn't seem to deter racers. "The race has a reputation of having really bad weather," Tracey asserts. "Everyone is freezing out there and they still come back year after year."

The sense of community around the race is special, she adds. "I really like on race day when I get to see Jimbo and the volunteers and coaches that have worked the race forever," Tracey says, referring to NYSEF U14 Coach James "Jimbo" Johnston. Johnston has been working the race every year for the past 30, and even though he can't quite define what makes this race so special, he has a theory.

"The Hovey is the beginning of many kids' dreams and aspirations to become great ski racers," Johnston says. "Many winners have gone on to become U.S. Ski Team and Olympians." Johnston credits the Hovey family with keeping the tradition alive. "It carries on through generations," he says. "It's pretty special."

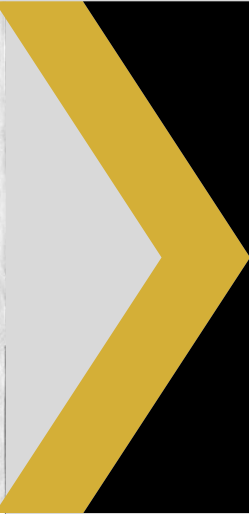
The year Andrew Weibrecht, two-time Olympic medalist and NYSEF alum, won stands out vividly for Johnston. "He won it as a second-year J3 and went on to win at the International Children's races in Italy and Whistler. I joke that his ski career finally started when he won the elusive Hovey." Another race that Johnston recalls is the 2012 Hovey where twins Patricia and William Mangan won. "They had different times for each run, but their overall time was the exact same," he says.

Tracey gives the awards out to the winners each year, and the honor of the occasion never dims for her. When her daughter Haley won the race in 1996, it was incredibly emotional, Hovey says.

"I came in second in 1999, and, it's kind of embarrassing that I still think about this, but I really wish I had won the Hovey three times. It meant so much to me that the race was on 'our hill' where we trained all year. It really was a day for local kids to shine."

Megan Papineau
2000 & 2001 Champion





"It was a big deal to win it! People came from all over the state to race and it was highly competitive. It's a really wonderful thing that such a tradition has been carried out for so many years."

Janet Hurley Bliss
1965 & 1966 Champion



"I wanted to throw up," she adds, laughing. "The call came over the radio that she had the winning run and man, she was smoking!" Time has offered Haley some perspective on her win. "When I won, it felt like a pretty big deal of course, but over the years it has made me feel quite fortunate to have skiing be part of my family's heritage and one that I've been able to contribute to in my own way," Haley says.

Haley is carrying on her family's tradition of teaching skiing and sharing her love of the sport with her family, especially her two young kids, Oscar and Lina.

"The more I've learned about my grandfather as I've gotten older, the more I appreciate his devotion to sharing the love of skiing through coaching, and glad I can do that, too," she adds. Haley went on to compete in nordic skiing and biathlon, representing U.S. Biathlon at the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver, and coaching for the U.S. Paralympic Biathlon Team.

Tracey's other kids went on to earn accolades in their own right as athletes. Kara raced the Hovey as a J5 until she made the switch to freestyle skiing. She moved to Colorado in 2002 to further pursue mogul skiing and continued to ski on the Nor-Am circuit until 2009. Both she and her brother Lars skied their last ski competition together at U.S. Nationals in Squaw Valley in 2009. Kara guest coached at the Steamboat Springs Winter Sports Club during holiday camps during college and then coached between undergraduate and graduate school.

"To me, coaching was a great way to stay a part of the ski community and give back to the sport from which I gained so much," Kara says. "Although we never met our grandfather he sure had quite an impact on our ski careers."



Hovey Trivia Facts:

Courtney Straight is the only 3-time winner

Mary Damp won in 1974 and her daughter Megan Bagg won in 2004 & 2005

Twins Tricia and William Mangan both won in 2012 and finished with the exact same combined time

2022 was the first and only tie for the win between Michael Mezzetti and Hudson Montgomery



"As athletes come into the program, it's one of the things we aspire to. It felt amazing to win The Hovey; because I know the history of the race and the Hovey family."

Cole Van Etten
2021 Champion



"I remember the Hovey as a really special event for several reasons. The prize was more than just a gold medal or standing on the tallest part of the podium. Your name was put on a list next to the past winners of the Hovey. Three of those people that I can name were on the U.S. Ski team or still are. That's what was really cool."

Jaden Klebba
2017 Champion

Lars is the youngest of Tracey's kids, and he grew up following in Kara's footsteps as a mogul skier. Lars never raced the Hovey, but he did forerun it. His forerun was quickly disqualified as he failed to go around any gates and only went straight down the hill.

Lars's pursuit of competitive mogul skiing moved him out west to Steamboat Springs. After college, Lars began coaching for the Steamboat Springs Winter Sports Club and found his true passion.

"I always knew my grandfather as a coach and mentor on the hill through stories, but it wasn't until I started to coach myself that I felt a deep connection and bond to my grandfather," Lars says. "Coaching has sculpted my adult life, and I believe my love for coaching is because of him."

Lars was the Head FIS coach at the SSWSC where he traveled the world coaching and skiing. He's helped seven athletes qualify for World Cup competitions, and three make the U.S. Ski Team. In 2021, Lars was named the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Freestyle Domestic Coach of the Year.

2023 marks the 60th anniversary of the Hovey, and one thing Tracey is most excited about is that her family is coming back for the race.

Due to the World University Games, the William A. Hovey Memorial Ski Race will be held on February 12, 2023, at Whiteface Mountain.





Multiple-Win Hovey Champions

Janet Hurley '65, '66
 Patricia Fregoe '71, '72
 Ted C. Prime '76, '77
 Sandra Stripp '77, '78
 Chris Jobson '88, '89

Courtney Strait '93, '94, '95
 Megan Papineau '00, '01
 Megan Bagg '04, '05
 Annie King '08, '09

Sibling Champions

Jim McLusky '67 & Robbie McLusky '70
 Mark Stripp '73, Dan Stripp '75 & Sandra Stripp '77, '78
 Chris Fletcher '78 & Tina Fletcher '79
 Patricia Mangan '12, William Mangan '12 & Mary Catherine
 Mangan '19
 Hunter Montgomery '16 & Hudson Montgomery '21
 Rowen Norfolk '18 & Lincoln Norfolk '20

Hovey Champions to Olympians

Dan Stripp '75
 Haley Hovey Johnson '96
 Andrew Weibrecht '01
 Tommy Biesemeyer '04
 Patricia Mangan '12



"When I recall my experience of winning the Hovey, I remember standing on the podium in front of the NYSEF building, the golden winter sun in my eyes, with the support of all of my friends around me."

Jaden Klebba
 2017 Champion