

George Pera

– 1950 United States FIS Team –

Born March 23, 1930 in Kingsford, Michigan, George Pera was the youngest of six children (Mauno, William, Victor, Martha, Mila, George) of Finnish immigrants Konsta and Hilma Pera. All spoke Finnish as a first language.

George began skiing at age 7, using skis Konsta fashioned for him from crib slats. Soon George was jumping competitively with the Red Wing junior club. When he was 13, he made his first jump on giant Pine Mountain, and at age 15 began competing for the Kiwanis Ski Club.



George Pera 1948

The post-World War II years saw logarithmic growth of interest in skiing in the Midwest, both competitive jumping and recreational downhill. The Iron Mountain – Kingsford area was a hub of that activity. Charter buses and special winter trains would bring aficionados by the thousands. The incredible Buck Erickson of the Iron Mountain News got the publicity out nationwide, and brought in all of the media networks and wire services.

During ski tournament week, lodging was booked for every available space within a hundred miles. It was common to have over 120 entries and well over 25,000 spectators at the tournaments.

These were exciting times – the fans followed their local favorites in the inter-club rivalries throughout the winter. Earlier dominance by the Bietila brothers of Ishpeming was being challenged by a new crop of young jumpers, particularly ones from the Iron Mountain – Kingsford area, but also by large contingents from Ishpeming, Ironwood, Duluth, Minneapolis, St. Paul, Chicago, Madison, Westby, Eau Claire, Colerain, and numerous smaller clubs.

With so many strong competitors, achieving and sustaining excellence was difficult, yet Pera became the first Kiwanis skier to be chosen to represent the United States on an Olympic or FIS team, setting a precedent for many local jumpers.

1950 FIS Team



front row: Billy Olson (26th); George Pera; Joe Perrault (DNS – injury)
back row: Gordon Wren; Ralph Bietila (27th); Wilbert Rasmussen; Eugene Wilson
not pictured: Art Devlin (5th); Crosby Perry-Smith; Merrill Barber; Art Tokle

Following the 1950 season, George enlisted in the US Navy. He participated in limited competition in 1951. After discharge from the Navy in 1954 he joined the Kingsford Police Department, quickly rising to Chief. He married Eleanor, and they raised three daughters and a son. Upon his retirement from the police department, he worked for the United States Postal Service until retiring from there. For several more years he worked for UPCAP (Upper Peninsula Commission for Area Progress). He continues to be involved in a number of community service programs.

1946	02	10	Duluth MN	1 st Class C	longest jump of tournament – 201 feet
	03	06	Iron Mountain MI	1 st Class C	227, 202
1947	01	12	Beloit WI	1 st Class C	
	03	08	Iron Mountain MI	3 rd Class C	154, 161
1948	01	18	Fox River Grove IL	3 rd Class C	
	01	25	Eau Claire WI	3 rd Class C	
	02	01	Wisconsin Rapids WI	1 st Class C	
	02	08	Caspian MI	1 st Class C	
	02	22	Ishpeming MI	3 rd Class C	
	02	29	Iron Mountain MI	4 th Class C	245, 270
1949	01	16	Fox River Grove IL	1 st Class B	
	01	23	Alston MI	2 nd Class B	
	02	26	Iron Mountain MI	1 st Class B	267, 278; national Class B record
	03	01	Iron Mountain MI	DNS – injury	
1950	02	01	Lake Placid NY	USA Team	FIS World Championships
	02	12	Duluth MN	6 th Class B	National Championships
	02	18	Ishpeming MI	2 nd Class B	Central Championships
	02	26	Iron Mountain MI	3 rd Class B	202, 210
	02	27	Iron Mountain MI	1 st Class B	270, 243
	03	07	Hyak WA	DNS – injury	National Championships
	03	19	Iron Mountain MI	2 nd Class B	261, 274; Michigan State Championships
		US Navy		1950 – 1954	
1951	02	24	Iron Mountain MI	DNS – injury	Olympic tryouts
	02	25	Iron Mountain MI	DNS – injury	Olympic tryouts

