

Lake Placid 1980

by Ronald M. MacKenzie,
President of the Organizing Committee

As this issue was going to press, we learned that Reverend Bernard Fell, formerly Executive Director of the Organizing Committee, had just been elected its President. Our hearty congratulations.

All who know about winter sports recognize that Lake Placid is first and foremost a winter sports town. Melvil Dewey started it all in the winter of 1904-5 when he became the first person in the United States to organize a winter sports resort. People in other parts of the country considered his idea mere folly, and it is unlikely that Melvil Dewey himself conceived of the proportions to which his idea would expand. But expand it did.

In 1921, the ski jump at Intervale was built. A crowd of 3,000 watched a competition on 21st February of that year. In 1932, of course, we hosted the IIIrd Winter Games, thanks mainly to the efforts of Melvil Dewey's son, Godfrey. And it has continued in that vein ever since, with the most recent examples being the Kennedy Memorial Games in 1968, 1969 and 1970, and the World University Games in 1972.

These spectacles were big, but nothing really prepares us for the immense task of staging the XIIIth Winter Games in 1980. Rev. J. Bernard Fell, our Executive Director, myself, and the others who were with us all the way, are sportsmen. Some of us have gained experience in administration over the years, but administration is big business. And, again, we are sports oriented.

This is why we decided to acquire the services of an operations general manager. Petr L. Spurney came highly recommended to help us with this part of our program.

We are not a huge corporation with branches in foreign countries and a constantly increasing profit margin. We are a group of local organizers interested in hosting the greatest winter sports event of all times. To manage our funds and balance our budget we needed a professional. And as a professional, Petr Spurney's credentials are impeccable.

Petr Spurney was the chief executive officer and general manager of the Expo '74

World's Fair in Spokane, Washington and he headed the American Freedom Train, the major bicentennial event of the United States. Under his guidance, Expo attracted, one million more visitors than the 4.2 million originally anticipated, and the Freedom Train traveled over 25,000 miles, visited 138 cities, and hosted almost seven million visitors.

The Lake Placid Olympic Organizing Committee (as all Olympic Organizing Committees do) is going through in three or four years what a normal corporation goes through in 50 years. It is an enormous task to stage the Olympic Games, even when the Organizing Committee (as ours did) makes it its express purpose to keep things in perspective.

Games organization in Lake Placid is still in perspective. Our original plan was to bring the Games in at a cost of under \$100 million. It looks now as if we will come in around \$120 million. Considering rising costs and inflation, we do not consider this an unreasonable overrun. Petr Spurney has the knowledge and capabilities of a professional manager, and we feel he will help in keeping costs down.

We are confident that with the management of our support services in such good hands and with our sports organization also capably directed the XIIIth Winter Games will be an outstanding spectacle of athletic competition.

R. MacK

