

Joseph Janci



Joe Janci, who started as a speed skater and a bicycle rider in the 1930s and 1940s, continues in these sports today, but not in competition.

Born in Norwalk, Joe started skating as a youth with Ralph Anderson and Fred Fullin and began taking part in races in 1932 at Kellogg's Pond, and eventually entered the Middle Atlantic events followed by his brother, Fred.

A group of speed skaters including Earl Bloom, Mickey Stetz, Phil Bilek, Abe Fullin, and the Janci brothers gained experience when Crystal Rink was in the open before the roof was installed.

Joe took part in speed races at Bear Mt. in the Catskills and in other New York rinks. He was one of the early members of the Connecticut Speed Skaters Association as the Nutmeg State group broke away from the New England Association.

Janci played some baseball growing up with the Rabhor Robes, West Norwalks, and Blue Ribbon Jrs., and also took part in basketball with a group from the Spring Hill section known as the Hill team. He took part in Junior League football with Robins in games played at Dunbar Field.

An ice speed skating club was formed from members of the Aberdeen AC of Stamford and from Norwalkers. The club was called the Nordeens. This team skated chiefly on ponds in this area as the circular Crystal Rink curtailed speed due to the curves. Speed skating was great for the winter, but the members looked for summer activities to keep physically fit. Most of the skaters turned to cycling and for many years in the evenings they covered the streets in Norwalk and vicinity.

Joe served with the U.S. Army during World War II and was stationed in England where he was able to do a lot of bicycle riding, but no skating. Now Joe skates in the winter and does a lot of bicycle riding during the outdoor season. Often he will take off on a ride up Route 7 to Danbury and even further to New Milford. In his younger days he competed in bicycle races in and around New York City with other cyclists from Fairfield County. He competed for 42 years in speed skating and even as he grew older he entered the Veterans class for those 35 years of age or older. He has a vast collection of trophies won in skating and cycling.

Joe is retired, after a quarter of a century in the postal service, and lives at 112 Connecticut Avenue.