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A vested interest in mountains and the sea

New Zealand is a mountainous land, surrounded by the sea. Although Photographer George Silk left his home there 30 years ago, he has kept to this day, along with a hint of the twanging New Zealand accent, a perceptive eye for all the things that can be done on the flanks of a mountain or out on the sea. His delight in two such activities, skiing and sailing, is tightly woven into the two stories that Silk photographed for this issue.

The oil slick in Tampa Bay was to him a "particularly grotesque experience. I had planned to sail my Thistle in the midwinter championships on Tampa Bay only two weeks later. I'm still going, but if the oil hasn't dispersed we may have to find another place to race.

"The incredible thing is the indifference of so many people to this kind of thing. All over St. Petersburg I found people who refused to believe their little oil spill was any problem at all, even people with houses right on the shore. You have to rub their noses in it and force them to see the ugliness that we can bring to our world.

"But then there are those who do get involved, like the students I met from Florida Presbyterian College. They literally knocked themselves out, floundering through that gunk to bring in the sea birds, knowing all the time that the birds will have a less than one-in-10 chance of surviving even after they are cleaned up."

For his other story, in company with LIFE Staff Writer Richard Meryman, Silk followed America's finest skier, Billy Kidd, through the first races of this year's Alpine championships. "I've covered most of the Winter Olympics since the war," Silk says, "and that means I've known Kidd for six years—ever since he won his silver medal at Innsbruck.

"On this trip, we spent the best part of one afternoon just drinking tea and talking about the psychology of winning. Buddy Werner's name came up as a great skier, maybe the best, but one who never seemed able to achieve the big win. Kidd was down enough to really wonder if something on the same order hadn't kept him from collecting any more medals after Innsbruck.

"As a sailor I'm nowhere near Kidd's league, but I was struck by the number of times a similar feeling has caught up with me. In the nationals I've managed to get out ahead of a top sailor and found myself half hoping that he'd get ahead again. It's so damn lonely out in front alone. I remembered that a great sailor, Stuart H. Walker, had devoted two chapters to the psychology of winning and losing in his *The Tactics of Small Boat Racing*. After I got home I sent the book to Billy. I wonder if he read it."




GEORGE SILK

Ralph Graves
RALPH GRAVES
Managing Editor

LIFE

ON THE ICY EDGE OF WIN OR LOSE

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