John Anker Pettersen

John Pettersen was always known as Prince George's Mr. Cross-Country, pioneering the sport of cross-country skiing not only in Prince George, but in B.C. and Canada.

It's quite the accomplishment considering Pettersen was born in Norway, immigrated to Canada in 1953, before settling in Prince George in 1957.

Pettersen and his family quickly adopted their new community, and beginning in the early 1960s, became very active in Nordic skiing, and he wasn't involved in just one aspect of the sport, he was involved in every aspect at the club, provincial and national level for almost 30 years, thanks to his colourful character and generosity.

Pettersen was instrumental in building the first ski lodge and trails at Tabor Mountain. He worked tirelessly at the club level, at meetings and at maintaining the trails at Tabor. Under the club name of Hickory Wing Ski Club, he served as president for three years. He became a race official too, scoring the highest mark in the province on his first officiating exam in 1962, and chaired the Western Canadian Nordic Championships in Prince George the same year.

As well, Pettersen served as manager/coach at the 1963 Canadian Junior Ski Championships in Banff, where he witnessed his son, Rolf, win the first national title for Prince George.

Pettersen extended his efforts to biathlon as well. In 1964, he built the first biathlon shooting range outside of an armed forces base in Canada. The new range was the site of the 1964 Western Canadian championships. The U.S. team competed in Prince George when Pettersen and his committee hosted the North American Cross-Country and Biathlon championships in 1965 at Tabor. He served as manager for the Western Division team at the 1965 Canadian Junior Ski Championships in Kimberley and took on the role of event chair at the 1965 Canadian championships in Prince George.

In 1967, Pettersen served as co-Chief of Race and event chair for the Centennial Cross-Country Ski Championships in Prince George. The event was truly international, as top teams from Canada, the

U.S., Norway, Sweden and Finland competed. He was the Chief of Race at the 1969 Western Canadian championships at Tabor and the 1970 Canadian Nordic Ski Championships.

In 1969, Pettersen was one of four committee members to submit a proposal to the city for 100 Steps Ski Hill and the Otway Nordic Centre. The dream finally became reality in 1983. He was an active member at Otway too, which has become one of the best Nordic ski centres in Canada.

Through it all, Pettersen and his wife Randi adopted the athletes of the Prince George cross country ski team into their home and every weekend travelled to competitions. He was the chair of B.C. Cross Country for a 10-year span and was the national vice-chair for Cross Country Canada between 1967 and 1975. In 1976, Pettersen served as manager/coach for Team B.C. at the Canada Winter Games in Pincher Creek, Alta., where his B.C. and Prince George athletes won gold medals.

Pettersen was born in Sarpborg, Norway, on Aug. 26, 1915, and his upbringing included soccer, Greco-roman wrestling and cross-country skiing. He landed at Pier 21 in Halifax on April 4, 1953, and moved to Prince George in 1957. He died in July of 2001.

Pettersen's generosity and passion for cross-country skiing paved the trail for generations to come. He is a deserving inductee as a coach and builder into the Prince George Sports Hall of Fame.