



The Club That Could

Hickory Wing Ski Club

In the 1950's a number of factors combined to launch the cross country ski community in Prince George on a developmental path that would result in one of Canada's most remarkable ski stories.

The establishment of the Hickory Wing Ski Club in 1958, and the development of a cross country ski trail system at Tabor Mountain in 1960 combined with entrepreneurial leadership to introduce a period of initiative and development that would see Prince George become a centre of cross country ski activity in North America, and lead to events that would change cross country skiing in Canada forever.

During the 60's and 70's John Pettersen, Chair of Hickory Wing Ski Club, oversaw a program that included facility development (Tabor Mountain), top quality coaching, and ambitious event hosting - and led his club into a period of remarkable achievements (highlighted on page 8). The club's success pulled the entire provincial program with it. A good example of this is the Men's Relay event at the National Championships. Between 1975 and 1985, British Columbia won the Men's Relay seven times.* Twice the team was comprised entirely of skiers from the Hickory Wing Ski Club.

Even more significant than the achievements of the club, however, is the story of one Hickory Wing athlete, coach and club leader, Bjorger Pettersen (page 9). Out of the Hickory Wing program would come leadership that would influence the development of the sport of cross country skiing in British Columbia, Western Canada, Canada, and Internationally.

Today the Caledonia Nordic Ski Club is an 1100-member full service club that offers a wide range of programs for cross country skiers, and is well known for it's high standard of event hosting. The club's ski facility at Otway has 30 kilometers of groomed trails including 5k of lit trails; 5 k and 7.5 k race courses homologated to Canadian standards; a connector (Greenway) to the University of Northern BC; two large groomers (PB 170 & PB 70); a beautiful modern machine shed; a first class website; and a daylodge. In addition, in recent years the club has been a supportive partner in the establishment of Cross Country BC's Regional Centre and Provincial Training Centre programs in Prince George, and the newly established racing program at the University of Northern BC.

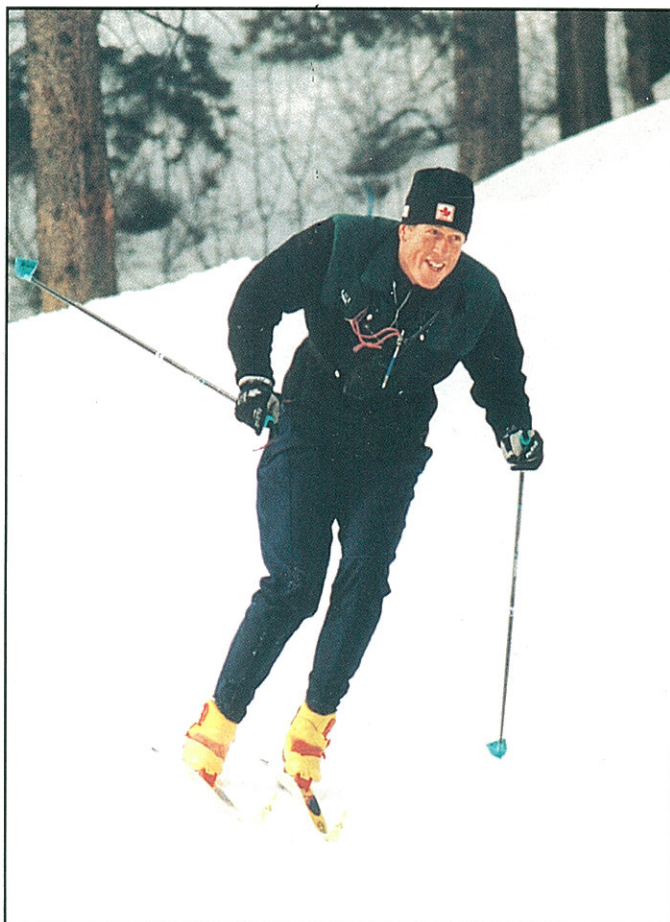
** To date, the Men's Relay at the National Championship has been held 45 times. BC has won the event eight times in total, of which seven were between 1975 and 1985.*

◀ **Opposite page: Skiers prepare for the start of the Greenway Loppet on the University of Northern BC Campus, in Prince George.**

Photo - Chris Paulson, UNBC Ski Club



John Pettersen



Dave Wood

Highlights from the Club's history



- 1957** Sons of Norway Ski Club founded (all ski disciplines)
- 1958** Hickory Wing Ski Club established (cross country and alpine disciplines)
- 1960** Tabor Mtn. identified for development of cross country trail system (previously the Anderson Farm on the road to Vanderhoof was used for this purpose)
- 1964** Olympic Winter Games, Innsbruck, Austria. Canadian cross country ski team is coached by Niilo Itkonen
- 1966** Canadian Championships (Tabor Mtn.) Chief of Competition: Bjorger Pettersen
- 1966** John Pettersen, Chair of Hickory Wing Ski Club becomes Chairman of Western Division (before there was a BC Division called Cross Country BC). Chair of Western Division for 9 years and Vice Chair of Cross Country Canada for a number of years.
- 1967** BC Centennial Races. Canada's first FIS (international) cross country ski competition. Skiers from Sweden, Norway, Finland, Canada and the USA participate. Chief of Competition: John Pettersen
- 1967** Bjorger Petterson is hired by Canadian Government to coach TEST program in NWT.
- 1968** Rolf Petterson represents Canada at the Olympic Winter Games in Grenoble, France. Rolf is Canadian champion on 7 occasions, winning a total of 16 medals at National Championships including 5 gold in individual competition.
- 1971** Canadian Championships (Tabor Mtn.) Chief of Competition: John Pettersen
- 1972** Lauri Karjaluoto earns a bronze medal in individual competition at National Championships - the first of 6 medals.
- 1973** Canadian Championships (Tabor Mtn.) Chief of Competition: John Pettersen
- 1976** Ed Day and Hans Skinstead represent Canada at the Olympic Winter Games in Innsbruck, Austria. Both athletes are multiple medal winners at National Championships. Ed Day (2 gold in individual competition and 8 medals overall). Hans Skinstead (4 gold in individual competition and 22 medals overall)
- 1979** Doug Gudwar is 7th in World Cup at Vysoke Tatry, Czechoslovakia. Multiple medal winner at National Championships (22 medals), including 5 gold in individual competition.
- 1981** Canadian Championships are held at Bell Mtn., McBride when poor snow conditions forced relocation from Tabor Mtn. Chief of Competition: Rolf Pettersen
- 1985** Otway Cross Country Ski Centre opens with approximately 4 km of trails
- 1987** Hickory Wing Ski Club splits into two clubs. Caledonia Nordic Ski Club established (cross country discipline only)
- 1990** Club purchases first large grooming machine, a PB 70
- 1991** Canadian Junior Championships (Otway) Chief of Competition: Mike Reid
- 1997** Dave Wood is named National Ski Team Head Coach. Previously Dave was BC Ski Team Head Coach, National Team Waxing Technician and National Junior Team Coach
- 1998** Eric de Nys, former national junior medalist is hired as Regional Coach for CCBC. Eric receives Petro Canada Olympic Legacy Sports Scholarship to attend National Coaching Institute at University of Calgary.
- 1999** Jacqui Benson, twice Canadian aggregate junior champion is named to National Junior Team
- 1999** Club membership reaches 1236

◀ Photos: Top - Rolf Pettersen; Middle - Jacquie Benson; Bottom - Hans Skinstead

Bjorger Pettersen

Bjorger Pettersen was born in Norway during the war and immigrated with his family to Canada (1953) when he was 11. He grew up in Prince George where his family became very involved with cross country skiing.

Bjorger was a successful athlete until a serious injury ended his ski career in 1963. He was involved in starting up the Hickory Wing Ski Club in 1958 and in locating a site for the Tabor Mtn Ski Area. He was also club coach from 1963 to 1966. In the fall of 1963 he was named coach of Canada's Western Division (BC, Yukon and NWT) and within three years he significantly increased the number of Western Division members on the National Training Squad. Between 1963 and 1966 he was Chair of the Western Division (ie. Cross Country BC) and Chief of Competition for the Western Canadian and Canadian Championships. *He was coach, administrator and official all at the same time.*

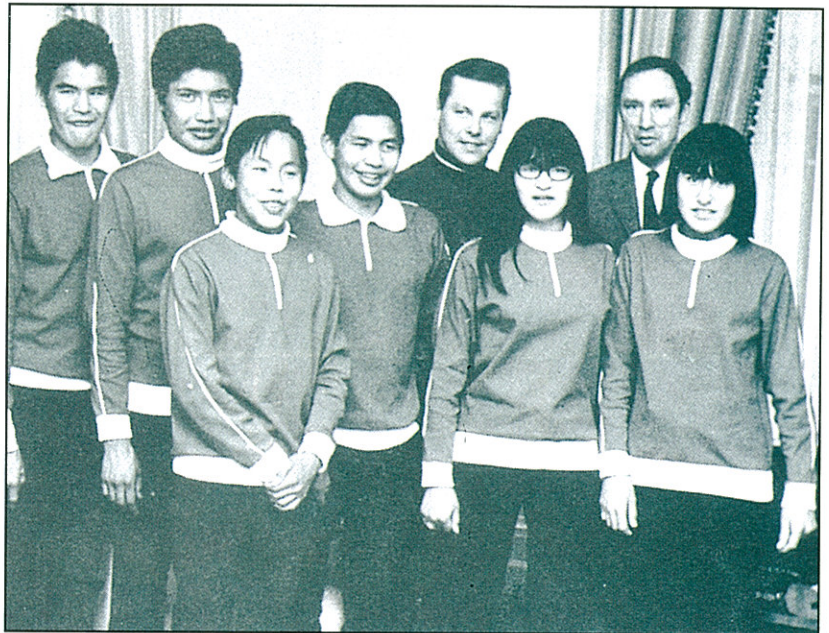
In 1967 he was hired by the Canadian government to coach for the Northwest Territories Experimental Test Program (TEST) in northern Canada. He founded Inuvik Ski Club, and the TEST program quickly became a North American leader in developing young talent. Three years in succession, Bjorger's skiers from Inuvik competed in the US Junior Nationals winning all of the individual events. The team he built would dominate at the Canadian Junior and Senior Championships for eight years, and eight of ten skiers on the 1972 Olympic Team were from his program, including the Firth sisters who went on to ski in four Olympics. *CBC recently featured their story on a special program about the most remarkable Olympians of the 20th century. (if you missed this on TV, you can borrow the video from the CCBC Office).*

Bjorger was considered an excellent motivator, team builder, and technical coach, and as a result of these successes he started working with the national team program. He coached the Canadian team at the 1970 World Championships (where Canadian women competed for the first time), and he coached the junior team at World Junior Championships from 1970 to 1975, during which time Canada had it's best ever men's result - a 4th place by Bert Bullock (from the TEST program) in 1974. In 1971 he became the first *full-time* coach for our National Ski Team, a position he held until 1975. During that period he led the Canadian team at the 1972 Winter Olympics in Sapporo, Japan.

In 1970 he was appointed Canadian delegate to the FIS (International Ski Federation), an appointment he retained for 27 years.



1994 Winter Olympic Games, Lillehammer, Norway



TEST Program: (l to r) Roger Allen, Fred Kelly, John Turo, David Cook, Bjorger Pettersen, Roseanne Allen, Prime Minister Trudeau, Shirley Firth



1988 Winter Olympic Games, Calgary. Photo - AR Bachler

It was during his lengthy tenure as delegate to the FIS that Bjorger made his greatest contribution to cross country skiing.

Here he truly excelled! His most significant contribution to the Olympic movement is considered to have been his influence on the cross country events as an FIS Technical Delegate, particularly his contribution to modern course design - but also in facilitating the best possible media coverage of those events. (He was involved in laying out the trail networks for the 1980, 1984, and 1988 Olympics). Bjorger is credited with encouraging the committee to try new formats such as mass starts, pursuit races and the controversial wave starts to make the sport more exciting and marketable. He was one of the few supporters of the skating technique when it was introduced, and in 1985 he was named to a four-person commission charged with introducing it into the sport and integrating the demands of TV-age marketing into FIS operations. He sat on many World Cup, World Championship and Olympic juries. He was Technical Delegate (TD) at three World Junior Championships, six World Cups, two Olympics (Lillehammer and Lake Placid) and Assistant TD at Albertville. He is the only individual in the history of cross

country skiing to be TD or Assistant TD at three Winter Olympics. During this period he founded the Yellowhead Ski Club in McBride where his ranch was located (1972), and he was BC Ski Team coach (1976 to 1982), Chair of Cross Country BC (a second time - from 1976 to 1982), Chief of Competition for the Calgary Winter Olympics (1988), and Chief of Competition for two World Cups (Canmore, 1987 and 1989).

Bjorger, a diplomat to the core, was 'past master' of working the corridors at FIS congresses in his attempts to have North American views and concerns heard at the International level. Besides sitting on the FIS Executive Committee, he served at various times on the FIS Non-European Committee, the Rules and Controls Committee, and the World Cup Committee.

In summary, Bjorger has been coach, jury member, Chief of Competition and Technical Delegate or assistant Technical Delegate at eight Winter Olympics. In April, 2000 the Canadian Ski Council recognized a small number of individuals who have had the greatest impact on the sport of skiing in Canada in the past century. Bjorger Petterson, along with Nancy Greene-Raine, was one of the recipients.

Its all about fun!



Photo: Tim Whillans, Strathcona Nordic Ski Club