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November 2024

The Midwest's Aerobic Recreation Magazine

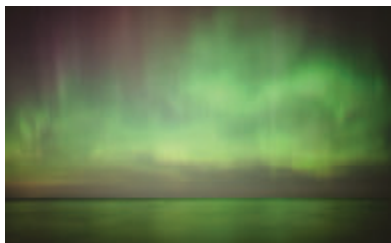
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A stunning view before her, Ishpeming Ski Club member **Kaija Copenhaver** is set to jump. To get the shot, **Photographer Monica Whitt** said, "I had a Canon R6 with a Canon RF 100-500 lens, and a Canon 28-70 f2 lens. About 7 pounds of gear. I wore a lot of layers and winter boots rated for minus-40 temps. I had to go all the way up the stairs; it's exhausting and intimidating! They actually built a new hut at the Hilltop Ski Area just in time for this competition. It's super-nice! The views were incredible and it made me appreciate the work these kids do even more. I have a lot of admiration and respect for these young, talented athletes competing in below-zero temps. It was brutally cold and windy. So impressed, I seriously don't know how they do it. They literally fly!" Monica Whitt Photography, [monicawhittphoto.com](http://monicawhittphoto.com).

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# The Front Page

## Dam Removal, Mother Nature & Those Pesky Citations

With Art Malm's compelling story on dam removal in this issue (P. 43), I had to put my own dam pet peeve on paper. A **June 27, 2024**, letter to the editor in the *Chicago Daily Herald* claimed that the positives being said about the benefits of dam removal along the Fox River were false: Improved Water Quality, Restored Wildlife, and No Local Costs. All false. Instead, her claimed dire warnings were as follows:

- *The impoundments behind the dams filter and biologically clean stormwater runoff and waste water treatment discharges from the entire watershed. Removal just sends pollution downstream.*
- *Removal of the impoundment will destroy acres of wetlands, home to a diverse and thriving habitat. Wetlands are crucial to the health of our ecosystem and per environmental requirements must be completely restored or re-created. The millions of plants in our shoreline wetlands absorb CO2 and reduce our carbon footprint.*
- *Removal will result in an estimated 25 — 50% reduction in river width, local communities will be responsible for moving storm system piping/drains to the new river boundaries; Moving/modifying the structures and components of water treatment facilities; miles of shoreline and wetland restoration; hazardous waste mitigation from decades of industrial waste dumping scoured up by the faster running river; and inspection/ reinforcement of structures that assumed common offsetting hydraulic balancing forces from river water levels in their analysis and design. [Editor's Note: As to costs, there is no known claim being made by dam-removal proponents that there would be no costs; rather, that steep and forever-ongoing costs for inspections, maintenance, repair, and liabilities for these 100-plus-year-old dams would be eliminated.]*

While God made rivers, do rivers thrive only when Man makes dams? And the citations offered for these dire dams done-in claims? **None.**

In my (former) 32-year lawyer career, any attorney making a claim without source citation got spanked by the judge (sometimes by a fine), the no-citation claim disregarded. That's a good rule for making claims, whether by an attorney, presidential candidate, social media poster, or letters to the editor.

Here's one of many possible citations for the cost claim I made: [dailyherald.com/20240223/news/heun-the-pros-and-cons-of-dam-removal-in-st-charles](https://www.dailyherald.com/20240223/news/heun-the-pros-and-cons-of-dam-removal-in-st-charles). Here's my citation for the letter to the editor: [dailyherald.com/20240627/letters-to-the-editor/get-involved-to-stop-removal-of-dams](https://www.dailyherald.com/20240627/letters-to-the-editor/get-involved-to-stop-removal-of-dams).

In the letter-writer's defense, she did offer up the following example: *Prior removals (check out Klamath River) have been disastrous and now they are coming for us.*



Dam notching set to begin 9/20/24 at the Fox River's (now former) C'Ville dam. Reporting on Sept. 29, Arthur Malm emailed: "I've been at the jobsite almost daily and no one has noticed any of the 'stink' promised by our detractors."

PHOTO BY ARTHUR MALM.

You want to make your offered example your best, especially when Chicken-Littling "they" are coming for "us," because people can check it out and then nod in your favor. As to the Klamath River, the first of four dam removals began in June 2023, with the final structures removed on **August 28, 2024**. Source: [american-rivers.org/dam-removal-on-the-klamath-river](https://american-rivers.org/dam-removal-on-the-klamath-river).

Why the letter-writer would come to dire conclusions well before dam removal was completed and Mother Nature had time to do her thing remains an example of one of the frustrations dam-removal proponents have to deal with when educating the public.

Mr. Malm estimated that in two-to-three weeks following dam removal, greening of the newly uncovered land will begin. In two to three years, Mother Nature will have done her thing, creating/ restoring fens, wetlands, and sandbars that will enhance water quality, wildlife habitat and recreation opportunities. Even as the C'Ville dam was being removed, Malm counted egrets at the dam removal site, every day increasing in numbers, from a half dozen at the start of the work to over three dozen just a week later as the impoundment drained.

In *Klamath River Restored, Dams Removed* ([youtube.com/watch?v=dFejOLgy5yA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dFejOLgy5yA)) you can see the Klamath Valley "mud flats" already covered with wildflowers and other native vegetation after only a couple of months. Only three weeks after the final dam structures were removed, ABC10 sent a camera crew for **Bartell's Backroads** (John Bartell) to report on river conditions. Check out [youtube.com/watch?v=yoCuuN27\\_S4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yoCuuN27_S4) to see the native Karuk people already reporting their best quality salmon run in years.

Dam removal naysayers will have to find another best-example disaster claim as the Klamath has already become a beautiful thing...

With citations.

*Bruce*



# Silent Sports Magazine QR Code-Connects Race Event Calendar

**H**elp plan your training and race schedules well in advance using these QR Code-Connects options. These links take you to the races' websites themselves where you can check with the ultimate source for each event to confirm race day changes, cancellations, race-entry-fee price increase dates, and up-to-date conditions. And you can take them with you on your phone! Please email [bruce.steinberg@mmclocal.com](mailto:bruce.steinberg@mmclocal.com) for any additions and corrections. Thank you!



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Cat 3 John Walbaum  
Cat 4-5 Charles Rodgers  
Master 30 Alex Kaupani  
Master 40 Grzegorz Monko  
Master 50 Terrence Gilbert  
Master 55 Jim Pirzyk  
Master 60 James Linn  
Master 65 Gary Rulo  
Master 70 Rich Kreutzfeldt  
Master 75 Paul Mehlenbeck  
Master 90 Gerald Beam  
Women Cat 3 Charlotte Schmitz  
Women Cat 4-5 Jill Rusek  
Women 40 Christy DeLair  
Women 55 Ania Laszcz  
Women 60 Charlotte Schmitz  
Women 65 PJ Stone

#### Overall Winners Road Bike

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Cat 4-5 Matt Rusek  
Master 65 Steve Smith  
Master 70 Brad Reid  
Master 75 Juan Gomez  
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Women 40 Christy Delair  
Women 60 Gail Kocher

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# Silent Alarm Success Against Those Who Would Change Our Lands & Waters!

## Powerful Proof that Our Silent Sports Voice Matters!

*Editor's Note: In the October issue of Silent Sports Magazine, Michael McFadzen's "Silent Alarm" column examined the influence of the Texas-based American Stewards of Liberty (ASL) on land use planning in Northern Wisconsin counties. ASL opposes conservation efforts, and advocates for reduced public land, including parks and recreation areas. Their agenda includes promoting mining, increased grazing, timber cutting, commercial and industrial development, and oil and gas drilling on public lands. ASL is working with state and federal politicians to sway local governments, including those in Oneida, Langlade, and Forest Counties, to adopt development-focused approaches, including mining, in their 10-year Land Use Plans. This article explores some of ASL's activities in Oneida County and its potential impacts on silent sports.*

### Mining in Lakes County- Sneaky Move Backfires on Oneida County Board Chairman

On August 16, 2024, just *one business day* before the scheduled Board meeting on Monday, August 20, Oneida County Board Chairman **Scott Holewinski** introduced an unexpected agenda item: "Entertain Any Unsolicited Inquiries for Exploration, Prospecting, Bulk Sampling, and Mining Operations on County-Owned Land Following Procedures Set Forth in Chapter 9.61 of the County Ordinance."

This addition, made with short notice, sparked a significant reaction.



A kayaker enjoys the solitude of Muskie Lake in Oneida County.

PHOTO BY MICHAEL MCFADZEN.

**Oneida Clean Water Action (OCCWA)** quickly caught wind of this new agenda item and issued an urgent action alert. Their call to action was supported by several other organizations, including the Oneida County Lakes and Rivers Association, the Mining Impact Coalition of Wisconsin, the *Wisconsin Examiner*, and others.

What Holewinski likely anticipated would be a low-profile discussion turned into a heated and boisterous board meeting. A full-capacity crowd attended, necessitating an overflow room, and the meeting garnered media attention from several sources, including Rhinelander's NBC affiliate WJFW, the *Northwoods Star Journal*, and radio station WXPB. Over 30 individuals signed up to provide testimony, with nearly all of them opposing the

mining resolution. (Full disclosure: I testified against the resolution.) Holewinski repeatedly admonished the audience to refrain from clapping for speakers.

### Willow Flowage and Town of Lynne Mineral Deposit

Greenlight Metals, a Canadian junior mining company, has set its sights on a mineral deposit located in the Town of Lynne, Oneida County. Greenlight touts Wisconsin as America's next mining district via information on its website. Despite their lack of successful mining ventures to date, Greenlight appears to be positioning itself for a potential sale to a larger firm. Their stated goal is to explore and develop mining opportunities within Wisconsin.

The Lynne Deposit, discovered by



Noranda Explorations in 1990, is estimated to contain an open-pit reserve of 5.6 million tons of ore, including copper, zinc, lead, gold, and silver. Developing this deposit would require a substantial mining effort.

A major concern is the deposit's **proximity to the Willow Flowage**. This scenic water area is characterized by limited development and access, featuring a large, island-dotted reservoir with 73 miles of shoreline—95% of which remains undeveloped—and 106 islands. The Willow Flowage is a popular destination for various silent sports and is highly valued for its natural beauty.

### Chairman Holewinski's Attempted Justification

Following the public comments, Holewinski attempted to justify his actions, which only fueled further controversy. He revealed that he had been contacted by a mining company as early as June 14, 2024, but had not responded. Made public during an open meeting request, Holewinski later traveled to Madison on August 12, where he and Board Member **Russ Fisher** met with representatives from Green Light Metals, the Wisconsin Counties Association, and their legal counsel. They discussed the history of the Lynne Deposit and other deposits in Northern Wisconsin, as well as the mining ordinance and the resolution being brought before the County Board in August. Holewinski stated that he wanted to gauge the County Board's opinion before engaging in formal discussions about the Lynne Deposit.

Most of this information may never have become public, but it came to light from an open meeting request by OCCWA contributor **Dan Butkus**. The 300-page trove included direct correspondence between **ASL Executive Director Margaret Byfield** and Holewinski.

Supervisor **Steven Schreier** criticized Holewinski's approach to transparency, stating, "I have to be honest; *I struggle with your version of what you think transparency is*. It appears that it took you almost two months to come to the conclusion that you needed to include others in your decision-making process, developing or creating policy after the fact, after you've already engaged in discussions with at least one mining company."



**A turtle poses on a remote lake in the Northern Highlands American Legion State Forest in Oneida County. Oneida County is considering shifting its Land Use Plans from conservation and recreation to being more development-minded, including mineral extraction.**

PHOTO BY MICHAEL MCFADZEN.

Ultimately, the County Board shot down the resolution, with a 13 to 6 vote result. **Eric Rempala** attributed the outcome to an *engaged citizenry passionate about protecting the Willow Flowage which is near the proposed mining site*. "We are building a strong coalition," Rempala said, "trying to educate the public and county board members. Credit our local folks for turning out."

### Public Testimony: Mining Among the Lakes?

Public testimony covered a range of concerns, emphasizing the importance of clean water and lakes to Oneida County's tourism-based economy. Critics argued that altering land use plans to permit mining would endanger the county's natural assets and economy. With over 192 miles of trout streams and numerous lakes, the Northwoods region's pristine environment is vital to its appeal as a vacation destination. Testimonies highlighted the severe

risks of mining-related environmental damage, such as tailings dam failures and groundwater contamination, which could devastate the tourism industry.

Frustration was evident among residents with several citing the 2018 referendum in which *62 percent of voters opposed leasing county lands for mining in the town of Lynne*, about 30 miles west of Rhinelander. Lynne Town Chair **Jeff Viegut** pointed out, "Not only did the township of Lynne not want this mine, the people in Oneida County did not want it."

**Jill Hunger** from Minocqua noted that the Lynne Deposit is adjacent to the Willow Flowage, a 6,000-acre lake rated as an outstanding water resource. She argued that there is no "social license" for mining companies to proceed.

By the time of the meeting, approximately 200 people sent emails to the County with *every email opposing mining*. Nine towns and the City of Rhinelander in Oneida County have passed resolutions calling for the repeal of ACT 134, which facilitates mining operations.

OCCWA contributor Dan Butkus has Board transparency concerns. Springing this on the constituents of Oneida County without proper vetting at the committee level is a feeble attempt to ram this through. It falls in line with Holewinski's desire to change the Land Use Plan relative to mining.

While Oneida County's Comprehensive Land Use Plan is not yet complete, Board members have been put on notice that the residents of Northern Wisconsin are not interested in a large mining operation in the heart of Lakes country.

### Oneida County Clean Water Action

OCCWA tracks legislative activities and county board actions, and advocates for responsible, non-partisan representation at both local and state levels to protect the Northwoods' pristine waters, wetlands, forests, and air. For more information on the organization and environmental issues affecting Northern Wisconsin, visit [occwa.org](https://occwa.org).

This shows that the Silent Sports community and those who care have a powerful voice. Staying educated and involved mattered, and it will matter again! ♡





Family gathered at Gwen's Colorado home, left to right: Joel Jorgensen (Gwen's father), Stanley Lemieux (son), George Lemieux (son), Gwen Jorgensen, Elizabeth Jorgensen (Gwen's sister), and Nancy Jorgensen (Gwen's mother).

PHOTO BY KENNY WITHROW.

# Gwen Jorgensen:

## Disappointments, Displaced Fractures, and Distractions

### A Week with the USA Olympic Triathlon Champion

#### *Elizabeth Jorgensen and Nancy Jorgensen*

*Editor's Note: Nancy, Elizabeth, and Gwen Jorgensen collaborated to write Gwen Jorgensen: USA's First Olympic Gold Medal Triathlete, (Meyer & Meyer Sport, 2022). They also wrote Go, Gwen, Go: A Family's Journey to Olympic Gold (Meyer & Meyer Sport, 2019). Follow Gwen on YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook @ GwenJorgensen.*

#### **The Champion**

Gwen Jorgensen is steeped in the Midwest: Born in Waukesha, WI, Gwen earned her master's in accounting at the University of Wisconsin, and became a CPA-certified accountant for Ernst & Young (now "EY") in Milwaukee. And on the world stage, by the numbers, Gwen Jorgensen is a record-breaking female triathlete:

- 25 World Triathlon gold medals.
- 37 World Triathlon podium finishes.
- First USA woman to win a World Triathlon Series race.
- 12-race World Triathlon winning streak.
- 17 World Triathlon Series wins.
- The only woman to win a world title after a perfect undefeated



- World Triathlon season, 2013 and 2014.
- USA Triathlon Triathlete of the Year.
- 2014 and 2015 USA Elite National Champion.
- 2014 and 2015 World Champion.
- 2016 Mixed Team Relay World Champion.
- 2016 Rio Olympic Gold Medalist.

These numbers, as impressive as they are, show only part of the person Gwen is. What follows is a behind-the-scenes look at Gwen Jorgensen and her warmth and strength that emerge when obstacles arise. Most of all: her determination.

## The Questions

At first, people asked, *What's it like to have an Olympic triathlete in the family?*

Now, people ask, *What's it like to have the Rio 2016 Olympic champion, who gave up triathlon for track and field, birthed two boys, and staged a triathlon comeback, in the family?*

## The Answers

It's not often our entire family gathers for a week together. But for eight days this past July, we stayed in Gwen's Colorado home: Mom, Nancy, and Dad, Joel; sister, Elizabeth, and her partner, Josh; Gwen, her husband, Patrick, six-year-old son, Stanley, and 21-month-old son, George. With Laura—Stanley and George's au pair from Colombia—there were nine of us.

We coordinated our visit to coincide with the 2024 Olympic Games. Gwen missed qualification and, although an alternate, wouldn't travel to Paris. No one, not even Gwen, could predict how she would feel watching from home. We planned to offer distraction, emotional support, and family fun.

For over fifteen years in competitive triathlon, despite DNFs, crashes, fractures, and, this year, an Olympic disappointment, life and sport always continue for Gwen. She texted: *I will likely be busy Saturday but free mostly Sunday (just a long run) and Monday... you guys okay if I'm a bit busy with training Saturday?* Two days before we arrived, Gwen texted again: *Hi, so I'm fine but just letting you know I broke my collarbone. Checking for surgery tomorrow.*

Below the text, a shadowy black-and-white image showed three breaks.



**Putting it all together beautifully! Gwen on trainer watching her dad, Joel, read to her son, George.**

PHOTO COURTESY OF NANCY AND ELIZABETH JORGENSEN.

## The Crash

With a UW-Madison career in swimming and running, but with much less cycling experience, Gwen still plays catch-up on the bike. Patrick, a former professional cyclist, encourages her to participate in cyclocross, mountain biking, and crits. Wheel time should speed development, improve confidence, and increase comfort. So, once a week they race local events.

Midway through a Tuesday evening race, Gwen rode in a pack on the straightaway when an unmanned bike flew across the road. In the millisecond she had to respond, she tried to veer. But she ran over the bicycle and then — multiple riders ran over her.

Gwen never discusses the risks of cycling and we know the perils. Collarbone breaks are common injuries and it was obvious Gwen had broken hers. She went home and bandaged the bloody scrapes on her shoulder, hip, arms, and legs, made a doctor's appointment for Wednesday, had surgery on Thursday, and waited for us to arrive on Friday.

## The Recovery

Gwen's cycling, even without a crash, makes Mom anxious. Medical information, even without graphic x-rays, makes Elizabeth squeamish. At 9 a.m. the day after Gwen's surgery, we arrived at her house, anxious and squeamish.

Gwen looked tired, hadn't washed her hair in a few days, and her right arm hung in a sling. She struggled to use a fork or pencil left-handed, couldn't drive a car or change George's diapers, and wanted to check emails; but sitting at a keyboard was too uncomfortable.

Gwen seemed frustrated with her persistent fatigue, so Mom, Dad, and Elizabeth took Stanley to Taekwondo while Gwen napped; they entertained George with books and Hot Wheels so he wouldn't climb into Gwen's lap and jostle her shoulder.

Although exhausted and hobbled, Gwen tagged along to Top Golf, then said, "Let's go to Costco," where she bought a television so we could watch Olympic coverage.

On day two, most of our group, including Gwen, visited the Shelby American Collection to look at cars. Later, Mom and Gwen took George for a walk. "I'll push the stroller one-handed," Gwen said as they headed to the grocery store and coffee shop. "I can't just sit here and do nothing." That evening, as we piled in the car for ice cream, Gwen said, "You guys go ahead. I'll walk." Anything to be outside, go somewhere, move.

In a similar situation, the rest of us might take a day, a week, a month, to recover. Gwen instead asked a million questions: *When can I bike again? When can I run again? When can I swim again? When*



her doctor, her physical therapist, or her sports psychologist answered, she fired more questions. *How? Why?*

"I need the reasons. I need to understand," she said, "or I won't follow orders."

## Most Days

Usually when we visit, our time revolves around Gwen's training, and soon the days began to feel familiar. Within 48 hours, she started each day with a ride. At first, doctors allowed a slow, one-armed, twenty-minute turn on the trainer. Gwen hoped activity would alleviate swelling in her ankles and arm. By week's end, with both hands on the handlebar, she clocked trainer time — not in minutes but hours.

When Gwen is healthy, she runs every day. Although doctors initially restricted her to walking, she gradually abandoned her arm sling, and, by day seven ran (with bodyweight support) on a treadmill in her garage, dripping sweat in the 90-degree heat.

Instead of her usual daily swim, Gwen worked on shoulder mobility. Beginning with minimal movements, by day five she laid on a massage table, holding a dowel overhead, then extended her arms straight behind her. By day ten, she stroked imaginary water in her garage on a borrowed swim trainer.

Most aspects of Gwen's life, although modified, remained routine. She organized a family trip to ride go-karts and play minigolf. She asked Elizabeth and Mom to dye her hair. A videographer recorded her biking and running, and then took family photos on the patio. A physical therapist

worked her muscles on a massage table in the front room. A sports psychologist talked to her on Zoom.

## Olympic Games

Gwen and Patrick kept no TV in their living area. They only watched kids' movies at bedtime, and maybe Netflix after the boys fell asleep. But with the new television visible from both kitchen and family room, Olympic coverage dominated our days, airing continuously, either replays from overnight or live during the early hours. Elizabeth positioned Gwen's bike trainer in front of the TV. The rest of us scattered on the floor or sectional couch.

As the women's triathlon approached, Gwen said the universe must be sending her a message. *First, her failure to qualify; then her broken collarbone.* Paris 2024 wasn't meant to be. She seemed resigned and accepting. The women's race unfolded as we slept.

The next morning, Gwen checked the results, then watched the replay with us. Conditions were rainy, and Mom winced each time one of a half dozen riders crashed. She said how grateful she was not to worry about Gwen on the slick Paris streets.

None of us asked how Gwen felt, missing the second Olympics in a row — she had failed to qualify for Tokyo 2020 in marathon and track and field. There were no *If onlys*. No *What ifs*. Instead, we groaned each time a rider went down, made bets on the medal winners, and predicted the effects of swimming in the polluted Seine.

If Gwen was disappointed (devastated?)

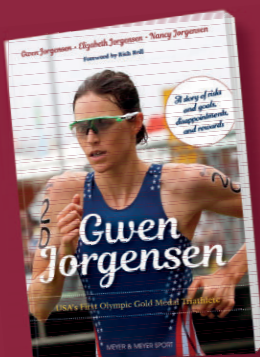
about missing the team, regrets didn't dampen her enthusiasm for the Games. Confined to indoor activity, the competitions entertained her on the trainer and treadmill. She followed famous personalities such as Katie Ledecky and Simone Biles, and personal friends such as cyclist Taylor Knibb in individual time trial, who suffered mechanical issues and several crashes. She watched swimming, beach volleyball, water polo, fencing, diving, BMX, and basketball.

## What's Next?

Gwen's Heart Rate Variability (HRV) scored unusually high during the week. Gwen said, "My therapist thinks I'm living in the moment, not worrying about what's next." And our conversations never moved to the future. Gwen did say she wouldn't recover in time for a Chicago race this August. Still, she hoped to finish the WTCS (World Triathlon Championship Series) with a September race in Weihai, China, and the October Grand Final in Torremolinos-Andalucia, Spain. Left unsaid: *How amazing would it be to cheer Gwen on in the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles?*

Will she do triathlon for four more years? In 2028, George will be five and Stanley ten. Will she also have more little ones to care for? Laura Bennett, at 37, was the oldest female triathlete in London 2012. Ainhua Murúa, at 38, was the oldest female triathlete in Rio 2016. Nicola Spirig, at 39, was the oldest female triathlete in Tokyo 2020. Gwen will be 42 in 2028.

Is it too much to think she might break another record in her record-breaking career? 💰



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# What an Elite Triathlete Eats!

## Food Highlights from a Week with Gwen

**P**eople ask about Gwen's diet: *How much? How often? What about protein? Restrictions?*

The answer is: As a triathlete, she has demanding nutritional requirements, which means she burns a lot of energy and needs large quantities of food. She eats when hungry, doesn't count calories, snacks between meals, and eats what she likes. When something upsets her digestion, she avoids it. When something satisfies a craving, she indulges. And when given a choice, she says, "More vegetables."

Most days during our stay, Patrick prepared meals. Self-taught through research, trial and error, and time with experts such as Dr. Allen Lim of **Skratch Labs** ([skratchlabs.com](http://skratchlabs.com); one of Gwen's sponsors) and Michelin-star performance chef **Alan Murchison**, Patrick has learned from the best.

### Breakfast

Gwen's breakfast looked the same every day. The night before, she set oats to soak in water. In the morning, she added bananas and almond butter before cooking in the microwave. Her bowl was filled to the top. Some days, she finished the entire serving; other days, George ate the last of it.



Patrick Lemieux (Gwen's husband) making grilled steak dinner. Protein!

### Lunch

Most days, we were on our own for lunch. Gwen's choice was often leftovers—some kind of protein, rice or pasta, and vegetables. When there were no leftovers, she made scrambled eggs with toast, plus avocado or fruit, or an improvised stir-fry.

### Dinner

Protein starred in most evening meals. Patrick made pulled pork one night, grilled steak another. Nancy took over one evening and used fish from Gwen's sponsor **Wild Alaskan Company** ([wildalaskacompany.com](http://wildalaskacompany.com)) to make baked chipotle salmon and turmeric white fish. Gwen always requested vegetables from their store of broccoli, asparagus, carrots, onions, zucchini, celery, mushrooms, and multi-colored peppers. She usually wanted rice too. Sauces added protein or antioxidants (Patrick's ginger-lemon-cashew blend), greens (Chimichurri), or simply extra flavor.

*It was the portion size that distinguished Gwen's plate.*

First, she filled a small dish for Stanley and arranged food on the highchair tray for George. Then, she chose a deep 8-inch bowl or plate for herself and heaped it with a cup or two of rice, as many vegetables as she could pile on, a generous portion of meat or fish, and a sauce.

### Dining Out

Known for "eat-cations" in her pre-parent-hood days, Gwen still enjoys dining out to explore new flavors, dishes, and venues. We ordered from a dumpling house Gwen recently discovered. Takeout boxes fought for space on the dining room table because she wanted to try *everything*: noodles, rice, dumplings, steamed buns, and a custard bun, her favorite being a steamed vegetable bun.

Later in the week, we braved restaurant dining. Gwen drove the van, herding us to the address on her GPS, requested Crayons for the boys, and charged Patrick with ordering six pizzas and four appetizers for family-style dining. That we ordered more than one pizza per adult tells a lot



Check it all out! Gwen snapping a shot of food for posting on social media.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF NANCY AND ELIZABETH JORGENSEN.

about how much we ate.

### Snacks

Gwen's snacks were random and on demand.

The first few days, as she adjusted to her broken collarbone, she complained about her diminished appetite. As the week progressed and her activity level returned, she frequently ate snacks throughout the day. Her regular go-to's were: eggs and avocado toast, dinner leftovers, fresh or dried fruit (apple, banana, orange, pear, mango), fresh berries (blueberries, raspberries, blackberries), Cheerios with nondairy milk, gluten-free bread with nut butter, and rice cakes.

### Sweets

Gwen ends every meal, even breakfast, with a small piece of dark chocolate. Her preferred bar is the Lindt 90% cocoa. She orders them by the dozen and keeps a supply in her kitchen drawer. Regardless of the season, Stanley likes to make pumpkin pie when we visit. When it was baked and cooled, Gwen requested a small slice but skipped the whipped cream. We're pretty sure we saw her slice off another sliver later on.

Gwen explores dynamic flavors and exciting menus, but also likes her own avocado toast with eggs and everything-bagel-seasoning. Just like the rest of us—but more of it! 🍷



Ironwood,  
Michigan



Eric Anderson and Angela Santini are all smiles while welcoming you into the ski shop at the ABR trailhead.

PHOTO COURTESY OF  
FRIENDS OF THE ABR TRAILS.

# The Gift of a Lifetime — For You & Forever!

## The Unique Hearts of ABR's Eric Anderson & Angela Santini

### Clay Diggins

**N**ot long ago, I got a call from my daughter **Jessie** who told me that she had been contacted by the owners of **ABR Ski Touring Center** in Ironwood, Michigan. The owners, **Eric Anderson** and **Angela Santini**, explained their dream for the future of a newly formed non-profit Foundation, The Anderson Bluffs and River Trails Foundation, and wanted to know if she could lend her support.

Eric and Angela laid out their plan to donate their land, equipment, and buildings to a newly formed nonprofit Foundation. In other words, the plan is to *gift their entire life's work and ask nothing in return*. Their plan intends to preserve ABR as a ski touring center for generations to come.

Jessie's immediate answer of course was, "Absolutely. How can I help?" Her reaction was consistent with that of just about everyone who had heard this story.

### Who Does That?

First of all, who would give away a thriving business without asking for a penny in return?



Friends sharing a day on the trail. These are the days we will never forget. Left to right: Gay Ghellerand, Andrea Bergman, and Mary Ahnen.

PHOTO BY  
RANDY AHNEN.



The answer to that question lies in the history and development of ABR and the culture that has formed around it. Eric was born and raised on the family land where the trailhead sits and his connection to the land is strong. His great-great grandparents were Finnish immigrants homesteading in the area. After graduating with an engineering degree from Michigan Tech in Houghton, Michigan, Eric spent a decade working in the corporate environment, but his heart was not in it. He longed to be back on the land. So, in 1995, he took his savings and 401k and plowed them into forming a business on the family property with his father, Dave. They called the venture exactly what they intended: the experience to be for their customers:

**Active Backwoods Retreat.** ABR, for short.

The first trails were built literally by hand, with axes and saws, and the trails were groomed by snowshoe, but Eric's engineering background led him on a quest to master the art of trail design and grooming. Over the decades, Eric has become known as one of the top trail groomers in the country and his grooming clinics are attended by groomers from across North America.

## Magic Everywhere

From humble beginnings, ABR has grown into a special place. Eric married Angela Santini in 1998 and together they grew the facilities as time and money allowed. Today, ABR is ranked as one of the top touring centers in the country, with 100K of perfectly groomed trails on 1,100 acres along the beautiful Montreal River.

Rustic trailside cabins have been a hit along with the woodfired sauna. The trailhead building has a full-service ski shop with ski and snowshoe rentals. The ski experience has always been the priority. Two PistenBully groomers and a fleet of snowmobiles are out in the wee hours every morning to ensure the tracks and corduroy are ready for when skiers arrive.

ABR sits in the snowbelt just south of Lake Superior and receives nearly 200 inches of snow annually. The snow comes early and stays late, making for a long season. It's common for ABR to report firm, deep tracks when many trail systems to the south are still brown. This has made ABR the go-to place for early and late-season skiing. The trail system is extensive



**An uncommonly gorgeous scene you'll commonly experience at ABR: A skier stopped to appreciate the winter magic of well-groomed tracks amid a frosted forest within personal-feeling trails.**

PHOTO COURTESY OF FRIENDS OF THE ABR TRAILS.

and has something for everyone. Novice skiers and elite racers alike will find terrain that suits their skill level. Anyone who has skied at ABR will tell you that the trails have a unique flow.

You also don't need to leave your dog at home. There is an entire network of dog-friendly trails for skijoring. And after a day of great skiing, you can choose to grab your snowshoes and head out on the bluffs to watch the sunset from one of the many snowshoe trails.

The classic singletrack trails draw raves. Some say there is magic involved in the experience of winding your way through the woods along these narrow corridors beside the bluffs and under the hemlocks.

## But Why Give It Away?

After three decades of building ABR into one of the premier ski touring centers in



**Eric Anderson in his happy place, the cab of the PistenBully.**

PHOTO COURTESY OF FRIENDS OF THE ABR TRAILS.

the country, Eric and Angela faced the question of what the future of their life's work should be. There were no family members in a position to continue the operation. Meanwhile, Eric's health was forcing the couple to plan for a transition. In his early twenties, Eric was successfully treated for cancer, but his heart was left in a weakened condition. He managed this condition throughout his life, but a cardiac event in 2018 eventually led to major



surgery in 2023 to rebuild his heart. The good news is that Eric is doing well in his recovery and is looking forward to the upcoming ski season. He will be staying on with the Foundation as chief groomer, enjoying time in his happy place, the cab of the PistenBully.

Eric told me, "It was an easy decision to put ABR into the Foundation. Someone else might change the direction and that is not what we intended."

What was an easy decision for Eric and Angela certainly flew in the face of the usual model of building up a business and then cashing out. But to Eric and Angela, the value of the ABR legacy is priceless; no amount of cash could compare with that.

The community surrounding ABR has called the move *The Gift of a Lifetime*. It's certainly more than generous. This amazing gesture cements the future of ABR's legacy for generations to come.

### New Name / New Exec. Director

The name of the new organization is **Anderson Bluffs and River Trails Foundation**, ABR Trails Foundation for short. The Foundation recently hired its first Executive Director, **Jay Sween**. Check out Jay's bio in the Foundation's September newsletter. (Go to **anderson-bluffsrivertrailsfoundation.org** and click on "Newsletters.")

This season, Jay will be on the trails most days to greet and get to know ABR skiers. Eric and Angela are enthusiastic about helping Jay learn the nuances of running the business. You'll find Angela in the trailhead and ski shop while Eric will be in either the PistenBully or the ticket booth.

Eric and Angela shared this about Jay joining as the Executive Director:

*We are really excited to have Jay Sween join our team this fall to get ready for ski season and we look forward to working with Jay this winter and helping him learn the ski business. It is a big relief for us to see that the Foundation has found a great director to carry on after our 30-year run. We have both known Jay for many years from being a season pass holder and skiing at ABR.*

### Ground Floor Opportunity — For You!

As people have learned about the new Foundation and its vision of sustaining ABR's legacy, there has been an



**Among well-set cake-frosting skate lanes and rail-defined classic tracks, Eric Anderson and Angela Santini, The Founders, trailblazing together.**

PHOTO BY LINDA SLINING.

outpouring of support. Transitions like this don't happen often within the ski community and many are asking how they can get involved.

The Founder's Circle fundraising campaign has been initiated to give skiers the opportunity to show their support and get in on the ground floor of the Foundation. For a limited time, donors who meet the Founder's Circle criteria will have their name etched permanently on the Founder's Circle wall displayed prominently at the trailhead. They will also be given a limited-edition gift with the exclusive Founder's Circle logo.

What it means is this: In my experience, the ski community comes together to support organizations that align with their values and offer meaningful experiences. Organizations that support the silent sports lifestyle are worth being a part of. Related organizations that have flourished and become secure as nonprofits include the **American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation** in Hayward, the **Loppet Foundation** in Minneapolis, and the **Minnesota Youth Ski League**. These organizations are highly admired for the role they play within the ski community. My sincere hope is to see ABR Trails Foundation become part of this continuum and be admired for staying true to its roots. Operating under the nonprofit umbrella lays the groundwork for a bright future and sustained legacy of ABR.

When Jessie was young, the ABR experience played a key role in developing her passion for cross-country skiing. Wonderful memories have been made while cruising the ABR trails with family and friends. Jessie is eager to support the new Foundation knowing she will be able to bring her kids there one day.

The Diggins family has been a huge fan of ABR for decades and I am thrilled to know that the Foundation is in place to preserve the trails and culture into the future. You'll see our name on the Founder's Circle Wall. Please consider joining us on the Founder's Circle Wall, and on the trails!

💚



Check out this **QR Code** to learn more about the Founder's Circle campaign. (Or [andersonbluffsrivertrailsfoundation.org/donate-new](https://andersonbluffsrivertrailsfoundation.org/donate-new)). This is a ground floor opportunity to support the new ABR Trails Foundation. You can email your questions about donating treasure / money, volunteering your talents (or in kind), or time to the Foundation; and discuss your own win-win ground floor solution with the Foundation, please email [AndersonFoundation13@gmail.com](mailto:AndersonFoundation13@gmail.com). 💚





# ANNOUNCED:

## Gravel Nationals Hosted by La Crescent, MN, in 2025 & 2026!

### Communities come together to make it happen

La Crescent,  
Minnesota



Local gravel cyclist James Longhurst descends Hillside Road near Brownsville; 15 miles south of the future start line of the 2025 Gravel Nationals in La Crescent, Minnesota. While the official routes have not yet been announced, the region around La Crescent is criss-crossed with gravel roads like Hillside, climbing and descending the bluffs and ridges of the Driftless. Hillside Road drops nearly 600 feet of elevation in two miles in its descent to the banks of the Mississippi River. The Driftless region, filled with tight river valleys, ridges and bluffs, makes for bike routes with many repeated climbs and descents with elevation changes between 400 and 700 feet.

PHOTO BY DAN NOVAK, DRIFTLESSCYCLING.COM.

### *Kierstin Kloeckner*

**G**ravel racing and events have changed so much since the start in the early 2000s. Granted, you could say gravel racing began with events like the Paris-Roubaix, but “gravel” as we know it today was born and bred in the Midwest. Events such as Trans Iowa, Almanzo, and Barry Roubaix “unpaved” the way for what is now to come in La Crescent, MN, for 2025/26.

For years, USA Cycling, the national governing body for the sport of cycling in road, mountain bike, cyclocross, and BMX, didn’t quite know what to do with grassroots unsanctioned gravel races. There was a time not long ago when, as a USAC coach, I was told I could not train racers for unsanctioned gravel races under my coaching license. As the popularity of these events grew, and many racers from other disciplines started entering the gravel scene, USAC could no longer deny the events and chose to become a part of them instead—sanctioning some of them by having rules and regulations that were across the board and not up to the organizers; as examples: think feed zone etiquette and gear requirements.

#### **Engaging Reactions**

On September 7, 2024, in Gering Nebraska, the second-ever Gravel Nationals took place. (The Gravel Nationals are currently held in the same location for two years in a row.) When earlier



**A group of strong gravel cyclists pushing their limits on the endless hills near La Crescent.**

PHOTO COURTESY OF EXPLORE LA CROSSE.



For those who think MN and WI are flat, hill after hill with gradients of 12 to 18% will tell you differently. And, by the way: Stunning! PHOTO BY EXPLORE LA CROSSE.



this summer it was announced that La Crescent, MN, would host gravel nationals for the 2025 and 2026 races, I heard a lot of mixed reactions from racers and organizers. Some were quite angry and sad because they worried that this could be the death of grassroots gravel events in the Midwest. Others were ecstatic because they saw that they might be able to be recognized nationally for placing well in a sanctioned gravel race, as well as getting paid out, with \$40,000 split among the elite racers. This is, for many, a step into regulating professional gravel racing.

Despite feeling frustrated when I was a coach and held a license with USAC—this was a time when I was doing gravel events almost every weekend in the spring and fall—I have changed my feelings to the following: that there will always be a grassroots gravel scene in the Midwest if riders show up and ask for it. But times change. And we must be flexible and change with them.

If there wasn't a demand for sanctioned gravel races, no one would show up and they would fail. But people *are* showing up and we should be supporting those athletes who do so.

"You are responsible for you" is a term that has been used in the gravel community for ages. It can also apply to this scenario in the sense that you are able to choose your own adventure and should focus on that, versus tearing apart others for wanting to participate in something different from what you do.

### Noting the Notables

I recently had the pleasure of talking with some of the people who got the Nationals to La Crescent. Be assured that there is a lot of buzz and excitement surrounding this in the cycling community there, as well as in the neighboring city of La Crosse, WI, and with local businesses. To say it takes a village is an understatement in hosting an event like this. Everyone from the chamber of commerce to the Chief of Police needs to be on board. From what I've seen and heard, they are.

La Crescent Chief of Police **Luke Ahlschlager** painted a wonderful picture, saying, "The Driftless area, where La Crescent is located, is known for its unique topography. Unlike much of the Midwest, this region escaped glaciation during the last Ice Age,



The sign welcoming you into the beautiful community of La Crescent. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CITY OF LA CRESCENT.

leaving behind a landscape of rolling hills, deep valleys, and stunning vistas. The varied terrain offers challenging and diverse courses that appeal to cyclists looking for both technical and scenic routes. The combination of gravel roads, elevation changes, and picturesque surroundings provides a quintessential backdrop for a Gravel Nationals event. Ultimately, La Crescent's successful bid reflects the city's commitment to promoting active lifestyles, leveraging its natural assets, and fostering community engagement. The region's unique blend of natural beauty, supportive infrastructure, and strategic location made it a compelling choice for the USA Cycling Gravel Nationals."

**Brian Meeter**, the executive director of the La Crescent area Chamber of Commerce and Tourism, said, "Visitors should be prepared to be mind-blown by the stunning and varied landscapes of Southeast Minnesota! Who knew Minnesota could be so hilly and boast such breathtaking blufftop panoramas? Welcome to the Driftless region, where the absence of glacier deposits during the ice age crafted dramatic hills, lush forests, winding river valleys, and picture-perfect views. Fortunately, Southeast Minnesota still has gravel-covered roads, offering a challenging journey along our scenic byways."

And it isn't just La Crescent that's heavily involved. The City of Houston (MN) co-sponsored the bid due to the community's close proximity to many miles of interconnected gravel roadway





Dan and Jim Novak at the start of the Gates Coulee Drive climb near Money Creek and about 17 miles west of the future start line of the 2025 Gravel Nationals in La Crescent, Minnesota. The Driftless region is filled with small farms and dairy operations. Since the many nested valleys and ridges of the Driftless make it difficult or impossible to have large, square fields, the resulting farms are small and the fields often terraced or tilted, following the topography. Traffic on these gravel farming roads is rare.

PHOTO BY JAMES LONGHURST, DRIFTLESSCYCLING.COM.

offering picturesque views and varied topography. Also, **Michelle Quinn**, who works with the city, mentioned that for several years, Houston was home to the grassroots gravel event called the Winston Cup, and she is excited to shine a light on her community during nationals.

### Plans in Place

As with any event of this nature, the safety of the athletes, spectators, and members of the community is extremely important. This is where Chief Ahlschlager, **Bill Waller**, the city administrator, and **Tyler Benish** at public works come into play. Coordinating law enforcement, obtaining permits, and ensuring that the roads and event site are in top-notch condition is no easy task. I'm not sure whether anyone who hasn't put on an event can grasp the length of the to-do lists—especially for a sanctioned event. As a former event organizer, I'm exhausted at just the thought of this!

As Ahlschlager made clear: "Hosting the Gravel Nationals is not

just about the race; it's an opportunity to showcase La Crescent and the broader region to a national audience. The event brings in tourism dollars, supports local businesses, and highlights the area as a destination for outdoor recreation. The long-term benefits of increased visibility and recognition are significant, positioning La Crescent as a key player in the national cycling community."

**Dan Novak** and **Jim Longhurst** highlight this region by bike non-stop. They volunteer their time mapping routes and love introducing other cyclists to the region as well as highlighting businesses that support those who choose to ride in the area. All of their maps are free to download at [driftlesscycling.com](https://driftlesscycling.com) and you can find several routes of the roads that will be used at Nationals if you just want to experience what these athletes are in for. Their input, along with suggestions from other local gravel riders, helped form the routes racers will use during the event.

**Chris Stindt**, local gravel racer and WI Bicycle Federation staff member, emphasized, "Having Nationals come to the region is really exciting because it's going to put us on the national scene. La Crosse is one of the best places to ride bikes and it's a hidden gem, at least outside of the area, so I'm stoked that folks are going to realize how great it is."

The other people who have played an enormous role in bringing what will also be an economic boost for the entire region include: **Mayor Mike Poellinger**, whose leadership and vision were crucial in securing the event for La Crescent; **Larry Kirch**, community development director, who played a pivotal role by being instrumental in discussions and negotiations with the USAC; and the officials of USAC, who helped those involved meet national standards and ensured a seamless event.

As the weeks pass, you can check on race calendar scheduling and updates at: [nationalevents@usacycling.org](mailto:nationalevents@usacycling.org).

Without this entire group of hardworking folks, nationals could have easily gone to another community. For me, a gravel rider, it's so nice to see communities as a whole get on board and support silent sporting events. I hope this event leads to a long-term appreciation for the area and attracts more of those who choose to explore it on two wheels. \$



## January 18, 2025

Ski Races for All Ages: (Classic & Skate)

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Isaac in summer flight at the 2024 Springer Tournee in Park City, UT, in July. Summer jumping uses all the same equipment as winter jumping: suit, boots, skis, helmets, goggles, etc. A steel or porcelain track with water running down it lets the skier glide down in a way similar to a winter ice track. Plastic matting lines the landing hill which is also periodically wet down with sprinklers.

PHOTO BY SETH ROTHCHILD.

# HIGH-FLYING YOUNG JUMPERS OF THE ISHPEMING SKI CLUB

*Pamela Christensen*

For the past nine years, **Richard (Dick) Ziegler** has served as the cross-country and Nordic combined ski coach for the Ishpeming Ski Club's (ISC) Youth Cross Country Ski Program ([ishskiclub.com](https://ishskiclub.com)). Ziegler, a former NCAA Division I skier, wears multiple hats, as he is also President of the ISC.

Since the ISC was founded in 1887:

- Ski jumpers from the club have won 20 national championships.
- The ISC boasts 13 former Olympic team members and six former FIS World Championship team members.
- The ISC also has 13 inductees in the U.S. National Ski and Snowboard Hall of Fame located in Ishpeming.

It seems fitting that more honorees come from the ISC than any other ski club. [skihall.com](https://skihall.com).

## Recent Transformations

In 2007, the ISC president at the time, **Tom Peterson**, took a hard look at the club and refocused the ISC mission. The ISC has long been known for the Ishpeming Ski Club Annual Ski Jumping Tournament held annually in January or February. The annual ski jumping tournament was established in 1887 and continues to this day. The 2025 tournament will be held on January 17 through 19. Part of the refocused mission included directing additional attention and resources toward the youth of **Marquette County** by providing them with the opportunity to participate in healthy outdoor sporting activities.



ISC has teams competing in ski jumping, Nordic combined, and cross-country skiing. The club sponsors several training opportunities throughout the year for young athletes ages 5 to 19 years of age. A typical season begins with a summer ski jumping camp held in early June. Athletes of all ages work on the basics of ski jumping. Ski jumpers begin developing technique and are introduced to the smaller ski-jumping hills outfitted with an artificial year-around use surface. Cross-country skiers work on building endurance and strength by running, rollerskiing, biking, and canoeing.

Following a break in training when school starts up in late summer, the ISC offers a fall ski jumping session from mid-September through mid-October, with conditioning and strength training. After the fall session ends, the ski jumpers and cross-country skiers wait until snow accumulates on the trails and ski jumps.

The ISC provides all equipment, facilities, and coaching to any ISC member. Membership includes access to ISC programs and coaches, as well as the use of club-owned equipment. The reasonable membership dues (\$50 for an individual; \$75 for a family) are waived for any youth who holds a United States Ski and Snowboard Association (USSA) competition card and who competes under the ISC name.

## Naming Names & Flying Stars

**Logan Gundry** is the ISC Junior Development ski jumping coach. A product of Eau Claire, Wisconsin's Flying Eagles, he is attending Northern Michigan University. Gundry is a former member of the U.S. Junior Nationals and World Junior National Teams. He also represented the U.S. at the World University Games in Lake Placid, NY. "The kids all love him too, which is a big plus," Ziegler said.

Ziegler and assistant coach **Josh Eide**, a skier from Alaska and former collegiate coach, are both certified level 200 cross-country skiing coaches. Assistant coach, **Elliott Prusi**, former ISC Nordic combined skier, also works with the cross-country skiers.

The ISC has two young competitors who are making waves in the ski jumping and Nordic combined world. **Kaija Copenhaver (15)** competes for the ISC in Nordic combined. "She has probably

accomplished the most in terms of producing top results of our current group of skiers," Ziegler said. "She placed second in ski jumping at the Junior Nationals Championships in Alaska last year. We are also watching ski jumper **Isaac Larson (16)** who has been having real success over the past several years. He is a natural who is dedicated to the sport."

Kaija, a Marquette Senior High School sophomore, credits ski jumping with opening up a variety of opportunities. Like Isaac Larson, she has traveled the world following the sport. "Ski jumping has built my confidence and let me experience so many things," she said. "It has really changed my perspective on life. I have made so many friendships and been able to experience so much because of ski jumping." This, of course, includes the jumping itself.

"You start small on the outrun," Kaija said, "the flat ending of the hill, to get the feeling of skiing. When you get bigger and stronger, you can start jumping on the smaller hills. It's a progression and you can start jumping bigger hills as you progress." As to going airborne, "I imagine it's what a bird feels. You are floating and gliding. You can't see people or objects on the ground very well until you start the landing. People look pretty tiny."

Kaija's favorite part of jumping is when she is sailing through the air, feeling the air pushing against her skis and chest. She knows that air is holding her up and helping her fly. To those who have never ski jumped, the sport looks fraught with danger. Kaija says she doesn't worry about getting hurt anymore. "Injuries are a part of ski jumping," she said, "just as in any other sport. Once in a while you get hurt, but falling means you are learning."

Training and competitions do interfere with school life and activities, but Kaija feels the tradeoff is worthwhile. "I would not rather do anything else but ski jump," but she does enjoy other hobbies, such as running, sailing, and playing the violin. Ski jumping does not keep her from taking advantage of other sports, but she has dedicated herself to ski jumping.

Kaija and Isaac have traveled extensively to take advantage of competitions, including the Championships in Anchorage, Alaska, the Springer Tournee in Park City, Utah, and tournaments in Steamboat



**Wowza! Isaac Larson of Ishpeming jumps on open training day at the Marshfield Dickinson Pine Mountain Continental Cup competition Thursday, February 22, 2024, at the Pine Mountain ski jump in Iron Mountain, Michigan. This was his first time at the hill.**

PHOTO BY DAVE KALLMAN.



**Kim and Isaac Larson pose while Isaac takes a break from ski jumping competition in Brattleboro, VT, winter of 2024.**

PHOTO COURTESY OF KIM LARSON.





A tournament at the Ishpeming Ski Club's Suicide Ski Bowl from 1930s/1940s, from the Ishpeming Ski & Snowboard Hall of Fame.

Springs, Colorado, and Lake Placid, New York. Isaac set a new Hill Record in Eau Claire in August 2024 during the Junior National Qualifier on Mount Washington Nordic Ski Center's K50 hill. The Hill Record was previously set by **Stewart Gundry** in 2022. Stewart is Coach Logan Gundry's brother.

### High-Flying History

Anyone who knows about ski jumping knows of the **Flying Bietila Brothers** from Ishpeming. The ISC ski jumping tournament was christened the **Paul Bietila Tournament** in 1953. Paul, the fourth of seven Bietila children, was called the best ski jumper in America at the time of his death at the age of 20. Competing in the American Nationals on February 5, 1939, in St. Paul, Minnesota, he hit ice during a practice jump and skidded into a restraining post. His life ended due to the injuries

he suffered in the accident on February 26, 1939.

Paul had been slated to be a member of the 1940 Olympic ski jumping team along with his brother Roy. Unfortunately, those Olympics were canceled when war broke out between Russia and Finland. His brothers and nephew were all members of Olympic teams. Walter (1929), Roy (1940), Ralph (1948 and 1952), and nephew Jack (1960) join Paul as former Olympians and legendary ski jumpers.

### Current Events

The Ishpeming Ski Club hosts a weekend of quality events at their **UP Nordic Ski Complex** in Marquette, Michigan. Friday events include the U.S. Cup event for jumpers under the age of 20. This is part of the **U.S. Cup Domestic Series** falling under the USA Nordic umbrella and is one of the competitions allowing jumpers to

qualify for USA Nordic points. The overall winner of the USA Nordic series is determined by points awarded at each of the events held during the season. Check out [usnordic.org](https://usnordic.org). The event takes place on **Suicide Hill** — the ISC's K90 hill.

Saturday morning starts with a U.S. Cup Nordic combined in which ski racers compete on the **Norman Juhola Trail System** ski trails. Mid-day, the K60 jump is used for the under-20 and under-16 athletes who are competing for a chance to qualify for the Central Division.

Saturday evening jumpers take to Suicide Hill under the lights to compete in the Paul Bietila Tournament. This event is sanctioned by both the USA Nordic and U.S. Ski and Snowboard Association ([usskiandsnowboard.org](https://usskiandsnowboard.org)).

Following the Bietila Tournament, an exciting target jump is held. This event





Circa 1930s image of Paul Beitel from the Ishpeming Ski & Snowboard Hall of Fame. "On February 22, 1931, at age twelve, Paul hurtled into historical prominence by setting the junior boys' jumping record of 185 feet. Over the years he continued to set a series of hill records. One of his greatest accomplishments may have been placing immediately behind the great Birger and Sigmund Ruud of Norway in the 1938 national jumping tournament. He also won first place the same year while representing Wisconsin at the International Intercollegiate Ski Meet in Brattleboro, Vermont.

is unsanctioned and gives jumpers the chance to **jump to hit the target**. The jumper who comes closest to the target is awarded a cash prize generated by volunteers collecting donations from the crowd. The jump is based on accuracy, not distance. Competitors can choose where to start and each takes two jumps. "The crowd really loves this competition and it's lots of fun," Ziegler said. "It also gives jumpers who may not have placed an opportunity to shine."

Sunday's focus is on younger athletes. The K13, K25, and K40 hills are open for jumping competitions, and young Nordic combined athletes compete later on the cross-country ski trails.

A party atmosphere surrounds the entire weekend. Admission is by spectator button. Each year, the button features a notable ski jumper from the club's past. The buttons are collectors' items. They are sold at outlets in Ishpeming, Negaunee, and Marquette. Virtual buttons are available online. Advanced sales end on Friday at noon and the admission price increases at that time. Buttons are also available at the gate. Fireworks conclude the Saturday competition. There are bonfires and food trucks on both evenings too. Due to the limited parking at the site, there is a shuttle that moves spectators from parking to the UP Nordic Ski Complex.

### Family Affair

**Kim Larson** serves as treasurer for the ISC and she is also the mother of Isaac Larson, who began ski jumping at the age of 9. Isaac credits his school bus driver, ISC member, and former ski jumping coach **Gary Rasmussen** for developing his interest in ski jumping.

"Isaac's brother Max was actually the first of our three boys to try ski jumping," Kim said. "He liked it, but he likes basketball more. Isaac started jumping and really liked it. He has stuck with it and it has given him so many opportunities. It has also developed his confidence and independence. I can't believe he has been all over the world because of ski jumping."

Isaac's success has also provided some

highlights for Kim. "I got to meet **Vinko Bogataj**," she said, "who is best known as the *Wild World of Sports* 'Agony of defeat' ski jumper who crashed in 1970. He is very nice and a talented painter. He often donates paintings to raise funds for ski jumping clubs and programs."

Isaac loses track when listing off the places he has visited over the last few years. He competed at the Junior Nationals in Anchorage in February. This past summer was busy for the teen. In the U.S., Isaac visited Lake Placid and Park City. He also traveled to Slovenia, Austria, Germany, and Estonia to take advantage of international training. The trip to Estonia was memorable because it was his first international competition.

### Getting Airborne

Isaac pointed out that, statistically, ski jumping is safer than alpine skiing, even though he broke his leg during a ski jumping accident in Minnesota and lost one season of competition.

To start ski jumping, "You don't start jumping right away," Isaac said. "The biggest thing is staying on your skis and being able to ski straight. Once you can get to that point, you start on smaller hills and on plastic. That develops your confidence and helps you overcome your fears."

Even after getting off the ground, there's more to do. "There is a lot of training that isn't jumping," Isaac said. "You have to



Members of the Ishpeming Ski Club with their float at the 2024 Ishpeming 4th of July parade.

PHOTO BY SUSY ZIEGLER.





**Isaac Larson and Kaija Copenhaver from the Ishpeming Ski Club represent Michigan at the Norge Ski Club's Winter Tournament in Fox River Grove, IL.**  
PHOTO COURTESY OF KIM LARSON.

develop a trust in your coaches and listen to them. You have to work on all of the aspects of jumping. You have to work on the mental and physical. We also work on flexibility and biometrics before we even get onto the hill."

Kim added, "It's also interesting to note that ski jumping is the only winter sport that holds their U.S. Nationals tournament in the summer!"

Isaac's training and talent allowed him to place eleventh out of 43 jumpers at the U.S. Nationals in Lake Placid in 2023. His longest jump was recorded in Lillehammer, Norway, where he jumped 130 meters (about 430 feet), while his record at Suicide Hill is over 90 meters (about 295 feet). The largest hill he has jumped is the K125 hill at Innsbruck, Austria; but his favorite hill is located in Kranj, Slovenia. Along with his jumping success, Isaac has also enjoyed getting to meet people who have made their mark on the sport, and he works out with Olympians and coaches while making friends all over the U.S. and internationally.

## Aiming International & Staying Local

The FIS, or International Ski Federation, is the international body for skiing. Formed in 1924 during the first Winter Olympic Games in Chamonix, France, the body is recognized by the International Olympic Committee as the official governing body for alpine skiing, cross-country skiing, ski jumping, Nordic combined, freestyle skiing, and snowboarding. They sponsor over 7,000 FIS-sanctioned competitions around the world and represent over 30,000 athletes.

FIS points are used to seed competitors internationally. One of Isaac's goals in the coming years is to gain at least one FIS point, which would open up his avenues for competition. His long-term goal is to make the U.S. Olympic team following the legendary Ishpeming jumpers who came before him.

"Results are great, but we strive for much more with our club and training programs," Ziegler said. "In addition to technique and skills, we try to develop confidence and a sense of community with our youth. We volunteer for the Noquemanon Ski Marathon, Marquette Ultra Marathon, and Shore Run. Not only do these events give us a chance to serve the community and build a team spirit, but they also help us keep the ISC and our program alive." ❄️

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# PROFILE:

## Kaija Copenhaver, Ishpeming Ski Club Jumper

### So many great things in this small package!



At the Alaska Junior National competition in winter 2024, Kaija competing during the Nordic Combined, Team Relay. PHOTO BY MONICA WHITT, MONICAWHITTPHOTO.COM.

## Frida Waara

**H**eroes come in many shapes and sizes. Mine is 5 feet tall and weighs 85 pounds.

We met last spring at the **U.S. Ski and Snowboard Hall of Fame** in Ishpeming, Michigan ([skihall.com](http://skihall.com)). She's a member of the Ishpeming Ski Club and has been since kindergarten. Now a high school sophomore, with ten years of ski jumping under her feet, you can tell **Kaija Copenhaver** is on fire to fly.

"I was five and looking for a sport when my dad took me to the Ishpeming ski jump," Kaija recalled. "From the beginning, I liked the adrenalin and the speed, but honestly," she added with a grin, "it was my dad's promise we could get ice cream on the way home that kept me coming back."

Today, she admits she doesn't have to be bribed. Her passion has fueled progression from Ishpeming's 13-meter beginner hill to Park City, Utah's, Olympic-sized 120 meters. At just 15, she has jumped every month of the year—sometimes on plastic grass that has to be hosed with water between jumps—and toured seven states and four countries. This past summer, she jumped at world-renowned venues in Austria, Slovenia, and Germany. Next season, she hopes to experience Finland.

### Sport Builds Character

Traveling, especially alone and between

continents when you're not even old enough to drive, and then competing with jumpers who don't speak your language adds greatly to a young athlete's confidence and self-awareness. With Kaija, you can tell. She's beyond her years.



Kaija at Park City at the Utah Olympic Park during the K120 target jump competition, which was an event during the 2024 Springer Tournee in July. The skis in the photo are Slatnar, 210cm jumping skis made in Slovenia. Kaija is wearing a custom tailored Meininger jumpsuit that is manufactured in Germany. Jump boots are custom made by Rass in Germany.

PHOTO BY MELISSA COPENHAVER.

While many kids her age are focused on a cell phone, she makes eye contact. And she won't shy away from what it takes to succeed.

Anyone who has been to a ski jump knows it's nothing like a basketball court, pool, or even the groomed surface of a lifted ski hill. It can be work just to climb to the top.

"Every ski jump is different," Kaija said. "Some jumps, like in Innsbruck, Austria, have an elevator to the top. My favorite jump in Stams, Austria, has a chairlift. But often we have to use stairs. I've counted scaffolds with as many as 423 stairs," she said with wide eyes. "It can take us ten minutes between jumps just to get back to the top."

If the average practice includes six jumps, that amounts to an hour of climbing, not to mention that the trip is made more difficult by shouldering skis all the way up.

### Jumping's Rules & Mathematics

Jumping skis are not heavy, but they are long and wide; designed to be aerodynamic. Length and weight are regulated by a skier's height and weight. They can only be 145 percent of a skier's height, and if their body mass index (BMI) is below 21, they have to be shortened to a ratio of 100 centimeters to 1 kilogram of body weight.

"Because of the regulations and my light weight, I'm going to have to get shorter skis this season," Kaija said. She will be ordering custom skis, between 192 and 195





Kaija in flight during the 2024 Junior National competition in Anchorage, Alaska.

PHOTOS BY MONICA WHITT, MONICAWHITTPHOTOGRAPHY.COM.

centimeters. In the past, she's used skis that measure 210 centimeters, or almost seven feet. Even on her toes, this pixie can't touch the tips. But that doesn't matter. What really counts is how she steers those skis from top to bottom. It's a lesson that capitalizes on courage and mental focus.

Every jump starts at the bar, the bench at the top where competitors sit and wait for permission to go. From there, geometry and physics take over as they lock skis into the tracks and shove off—gaining as much speed as cars can travel—down an in-run pitched to a take-off that launches them airborne to hold a pose, head and body forward, skis in a “V,” arms at their sides, defying gravity and hovering like a bird for as long as possible. Touchdown is critical. Not only must it be at the right spot on the slope, but in a telemark balance, ensuring a safe slide to stop.

Scoring a jump of 80 meters, roughly 40 feet shy of a football field, for a competitor as petite as Kaija can mean as long as five seconds in the air. Imagine, your body suspended for *One-Minnesota, Two-Minnesota, Three-Minnesota* ... all with no safety net, rope, or parachute.

“I have to block out anything else going on in the world,” Kaija confessed.

After all, it's ski jumping. The margin between flying and falling is slim. If you don't get it right, consequences can hurt.

### Some Painful Examples

That margin-of-error lesson hit home for Kaija when she was 12 years old and broke her hip on a 70-meter jump in Coleraine, Minnesota. Crashes and concussions come with the learning curve. Kaija has

the mental toughness to lock fear in its place. And for an athlete, nothing teaches resilience like recovering from injury.

But she has been smart about what hurts. In addition to jumping, Kaija has competed at the national level in Nordic combined. Lately, she's been plagued with tendonitis in her ankles.

“Until we can figure out what's causing the pain, I'm going to put racing on hold,” Kaija said. Instead, this season she will concentrate on jumping and earning a

spot at the **Junior Nationals** in Park City.

Knowing the fortitude and vision of this young and determined athlete, there's no doubt she will not only be heading to Utah next February, but she will be representing her sport again in 2034 when Salt Lake hosts the next Winter Olympics on U.S. snow. And check out Luke Bodensteiner's excellent October 2024 issue story, *How the 2034 Winter Olympics in the USA was Won*. We'll be looking for you there, Kaija, our eyes skyward! ☁



Our cover photo image: Kaija Copenhaver getting ready to take off the ramp at the Ski Jumping and Nordic Combined competition at Hilltop Ski Area in Anchorage, Alaska, in February 2024.

PHOTO BY MONICA WHITT, MONICA WHITT PHOTOGRAPHY, WWW.MONICAWHITTPHOTO.COM.



# Wilderness Inquiry's "Canoemobile" Program

Bringing the silent sports  
experience to kids in their  
own backyards

*Jim Force*

**D**rive along Midwestern highways in the summertime and you're likely to see numerous vehicles trailering boats, kayaks, and canoes to the area's lakes, streams, and rivers. But you might be taken aback a bit if you encounter a van towing a rack-full of 24-foot-long canoes.

More than likely, the rig is part of Canoemobile operated by Wilderness Inquiry, a Minnesota-based national nonprofit devoted to bringing outdoor experiences to people of all ages, abilities, cultural backgrounds, and identities. Canoemobile is a floating classroom designed to connect youth and families to their local waterways and outdoor experiences in their communities.

"Canoemobile meets kids where they're at, in their own neighborhoods and backyards," explained **Willy Tully**, Director of External Relations for Wilderness Inquiry. "It's a single-day event, but it helps build a lifelong engagement with the outdoors. It's a crucial first step, planting seeds that nature is accessible and that you can be safe outdoors."

## The Fleet

The organization has over 50 of the long canoes, the older ones of cedar strip construction built by local boat builders and maintained by Wilderness Inquiry staff. The newer ones are fiberglass, provided by **Wenonah Canoe** using a mold designed by Wilderness Inquiry. Tully says the program continues to grow and requires a

Students from Harding High School in  
St. Paul paddle on the St. Croix River.

PHOTO CREDIT: SINTHANG HAS FOR WILDERNESS  
INQUIRY.







**Students from Lakeville area schools get ready to canoe on Lake Marion in Lakeville.** PHOTO BY CALLIANNE JONES FOR WILDERNESS INQUIRY.

more rapid production of canoes than before.

The canoes are sent out with seven or eight staffers on multi-week tours to schools and communities not only in Minnesota, but also coast to coast. "In the spring, we tend to go west," Tully said,

"conducting events in California, New Mexico, Colorado, and elsewhere. In the fall, we go east into Wisconsin, Michigan, and all the way to the east coast."

Wilderness Inquiry conducts as many as 450 Canoemobile events a year, involving some 30,000 kids and families. In many

cases, Canoemobile is a real eye-opener. Tully recalled an event on the Harlem River in the Bronx, New York. "For years, the river was hard to access," he said, "and opportunities to recreate or explore this incredible waterway were limited to people who live in the nearby neighborhoods and community." But the community has invested in developing public parkland and community spaces on the waterway, and when Canoemobile arrived, the kids were able to walk from school, board the boats, and discover the river they lived right next to.

Closer to home, Canoemobile trips to Chicago enable kids to explore the Chicago River, and in Milwaukee to paddle on Lake Michigan.

### Supporting Partners

The Milwaukee event is typical of the partnerships Wilderness Inquiry is able to build with local organizations. Co-sponsors included the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the Bureau of Land Management, Lakeshore State Park, the U.S. Forest Service, and many local organizations. Canoemobile brings these groups together, Tully explained, forming a local support network that helps kids and schools build an appreciation for the outdoors.

In Minnesota, Wilderness Inquiry conducts Canoemobile in urban, suburban, and rural areas around the state. The organization has a special relationship with **Harding High School**, located in east St. Paul, using Canoemobile to initiate a comprehensive outdoor program for its students.

"We work with the Earth Club at the school," Tully said. "We go into the classroom, then take the kids to our headquarters to help them learn how to set up tents and pack backpacks." Next, the students experience a Canoemobile day on the Mississippi River; then, working with the National Park Service, Wilderness Inquiry takes them on an overnight camping trip along the St. Croix River. That's followed

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**Students from Bloomington area schools conduct water-quality testing at Phalen Regional Park in St. Paul.** PHOTO CREDIT: JULIA BINTZ FOR WILDERNESS INQUIRY.



**Students from Milwaukee area schools paddle on the Milwaukee River.** PHOTO CREDIT: CARLY RHODES FOR WILDERNESS INQUIRY.

by a **four-day winter venture** into the Boundary Waters, and finally a camping trip to Yellowstone National Park.

The sequence helps students build skills as well as confidence that they can be in the outdoors safely and successfully. "If we took them from the classroom to Yellowstone, that might be daunting," Tully said.

### Great Reviews

The program works, according to statistics compiled by Wilderness Inquiry. Over 90 percent of the teachers interviewed said that the outdoor experience supports academic learning and that their students learned new skills from their day on the water. A large majority of students agreed that they learned how to work together with others as a team.

Participants applaud the program. In a response typical of what Wilderness Inquiry hears about Canoemobile, a teacher from Rochester, Minnesota, said, "Our students had an amazing experience. The lessons learned go far beyond anything we could teach in a classroom." And one of the kids wrote, "I felt the tensions and worries in my head float away like the river" while another said, "I never knew how much I loved nature until I felt the breeze and heard the wind on the canoe."

To learn more about Wilderness Inquiry, including how to get involved, please go to: [wildernessinquiry.org](http://wildernessinquiry.org). Whether a teacher, school administrator, student, or parent, you'll be glad you did! ☘



**Students from Hopkins area schools paddle on Wirth Lake at Theodore Wirth Park in Minneapolis.** PHOTO CREDIT: NORA WEST



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Hanging out by  
a river while on  
a day hike. (Near  
Copper Harbor.)  
ALL PHOTOS BY  
SPENCER LACEY.



# Getting Started in and Advancing Your Hiking

*Austin Gongos*

*Editor's Note: In addition to Austin's background noted in his previous article, for this story, he draws from his experience hiking thousands of miles on trails, from the 2,650-milelong Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) to his time on Isle Royale, and many trails in between.*

**W**hether you're lacing up your hiking shoes for the first time or looking to replace your well-worn pair, this article is for you. Advances in technology, clothing, and the standard for hiking have shifted over the years, leading to new norms in what shoes to buy, which bag to bring, and how to manage the elements.

## Finding Your Hike

My favorite method of finding a hike has not changed with technology. I believe that nothing beats experience, so when I'm in a new area and looking for a nice place to walk among the trees, rivers, and lakes *I always try to ask a local*. They tend to have great advice on what sort of hike to expect and how to get there.

These hikes are often underrated and may not be online. The experienced locals may also have suggestions for where along the trail to eat your packed lunch or guide you to a little-known spur trail to a great view.

When you can't find a local with some knowledge of the nearby trails, the app **AllTrails** is a great resource. AllTrails offers a free and paid version of the app, but the free version is all you need. You can search AllTrails by having your phone's location show local recommendations or, if you're planning ahead for a trip, you can search a specific location to find local hikes. Once you've searched the desired hiking area, you can sort the hikes by the length of the hike, hike features such as summit views and waterfalls, difficulty of hike, and overall trail rating as rated by other hikers who use AllTrails. These reviews are helpful to read before leaving for your hike, as fellow hikers may discuss overgrown or flooded areas on the trail, how populated the trail was, or cool wildlife sightings you may be lucky to see yourself!

## Lacing up Your Boots?

For years, everyone has known that a good pair of hiking boots is essential to any hiker's kit. Are they wrong? Yes and no.

As shoe technology advances, people are finding it more





Hiking can mean many things, such as wading through waters with freshly picked flowers along the Lake Superior coastline near Copper Harbor.



Day hikes through a Keweenaw Forest capturing the natural beauty and staying hydrated.

comfortable to hike in **trail runners** rather than boots. A trail runner is a shoe made for running trails as it is durable and still lightweight, and has an aggressive, boot-like tread.

The first question most people have about trail runners for hiking is, "What about ankle support?" Trail runner fans answer with: *As you hike without high-ankle boots, your ankles will become stronger. If you always keep your ankles tight, then the muscles may not grow and become the stabilizers you want them to be.*

When you first change from boots to trail runners, it is important to be more careful with your foot placements on the first few hikes to allow your ankles to adapt to their new challenge.

Another concern is that trail runners aren't waterproof or don't allow you to walk through a stream without getting socks and feet soaked. While this is generally true, the great thing about trail runners is that they dry out quickly which allows your socks and feet to do the same. And when you think about it, a stream of 1 to 6 inches deep may get water into your boots anyway. Unless you're wearing muck boots, your feet will get wet anyway and dry out faster in shoes rather than in boots.

*The biggest reason for the change from boots to runners is all about weight.* It's often said about hiking that a pound on the foot is like adding four to the pack; ergo, the heavier your shoe, the more energy you'll be exerting during your hike. This may not seem obvious on a one or two-mile hike, but when you start upping your mileage, you'll start to notice the difference!

As with everything, it comes down to personal preference and nothing sums this up better than the adage: HYOH — Hike Your Own Hike!

## Packing Food and Water

Fueling for a hike is very personal. I know people who can run 10 miles without food or water while others won't hike a mile without taking a liter of water and a few snack bars. I tend to overpack

because of my desire to be prepared for the unexpected as well as my physiology, which requires more food and water than your average hiker. Again: HYOH!

However, there are nutrition guidelines you can follow such as a liter (32 oz Nalgene) for every two hours and 300 to 400 calories for every hour of hiking. You can find the time for a hike by assuming a 2 to 3-mph pace and dividing it by the total mileage (5 miles / 2.5 miles per hour = 2 hour hike). It's always better to overestimate than underestimate, and it's always nice when we're able to help out our friend who may have miscalculated and is on the verge of being "hangry" on a hike.

Everything builds on what came before. With every hike you go on, take the time to reflect on what you brought and what you used, how long it was, and how you felt. This will help you better plan for the next hike as you take on more and more challenging terrain.

## How to Carry All This

Some age-old questions: *Which backpack should I take? Will I look uncool in a fanny pack? Should I use one of those bladder and tube systems?*

When I gear up for a hike or consider purchasing new gear, I always think about what all I could use it for. When embarking on any trek under 6 miles, I'm likely going to just carry my fanny pack with a water bottle sleeve attached to it and maybe a sweatshirt wrapped around my waist in case the weather changes. These gear items aren't the cheapest, but they're built to last and are multi-use in that I would use them for day hikes along with multi-day backpacking trips.

If you aren't into fanny packs, you can't go wrong with a good day pack. Anything from 7 to 15 liters will do. If you aren't familiar with the term "day pack," backpack companies tend to describe the volume/capacity of their offerings in liters.



Any hike over 6 miles warrants a day pack with a sweatshirt in it alongside my fanny pack, now being used as a pack organizer. I'll still have my water bottle sleeve, only now it's on the shoulder strap of my backpack instead of on my fanny pack strap. I generally carry a small first aid kit along with rain gear if there's a chance of rain and the temperature isn't high enough to go without.

### Water Bottle Sleeve?

The CTUG Water Bottle Sleeve holds a water bottle on the shoulder strap of any hiking backpack using a universal attachment system. This means that instead of contorting your arm into a chicken wing to reach your side pocket, your water is within reach at all times. It makes hydrating easier and top of mind since the bottle sits in your peripheral vision. The bottle doesn't sway or overly weigh down your pack either.

It's true that the bladder system works similarly, but there are two main differences. The first is that it's harder to tell at a glance how much water you have drunk or how much you have left and the second is that a bladder and hose require more upkeep/cleaning than your bottles do; also, there's the risk of a puncture, tube disconnection, or mold buildup. This of course falls under HYOH, but I hope you'll give water sleeves a shot!

### About Those Phones

Unless you're bringing along a satellite device such as a Garmin InReach, it's generally a better choice to bring your phone along. You'll have the option of downloading your maps offline and turning the phone on airplane mode to avoid being beckoned back into the real world if you want. But with your phone, at least you'll have it as a safety backup if you need to call for help or navigate your way back to the trail you lost track of.

The brilliant thing about phones these days is that they don't need service to use their GPS feature. As long as *the map is downloaded offline*, your little blue dot will move along with you to help find your way home.

Along with being a safety resource, a phone doubles as a camera. Many people still lug heavy camera equipment into the backcountry, but as long as you're not looking for professional-grade photos, the average smartphone can take photos at similar levels as many entry-level cameras.

One concern many have about their phone is that it's uncomfortable in their pockets as they hike but they don't want to put it in their packs. One solution is of course a fanny pack and another is a phone pocket. CTUG carries such an item and it works much the same as the water bottle sleeve.

Even with your phone, as a rule you should always let someone know about your hiking plans. This includes not only your destination, but also when you'll leave and when you expect to return — for hikes of any length. That way, the people you've informed can alert Search & Rescue (SAR) if you don't get in touch after the hike. Be sure to let them know a realistic length of time if you end up stopping for a longer-than-expected lunch so as not to waste SAR's time.

### Plan for the Weather

Don't just look at the temperature. Also, check for rain and how strong the wind and UV index will be on the day of your hike. Many people still swear by sunscreen and bug spray, but I prefer to mitigate the harsh sun and buggy pests using my clothing. I



Austin's day hike setup and other CTUG gear available at [chickentrampergear.com](https://chickentrampergear.com).

PHOTO BY SASCHA CHESLER.

generally hike in a sun hoodie, like my Jolly Gear or Patagonia R0 lightweight pants, and always carry a bug net just in case. I'll bring along some DEET or Picaridin and might even treat my clothes with Permethrin if I think the bugs will be extra bad.

If rain is expected, ensure you're prepared with a rain jacket, maybe rain pants (or just a poncho), a water-resistant pack/gear, and some dry bags for your electronics in your pack. Remember, water "proof" is a rare term for a backpack; unless it's designed for water sports, it's likely only water resistant.

### Time to Get Hiking

Now that you've read this article, you're definitely more prepared than the average person. Whether you're just getting into hiking or have been a dedicated hiker for years, safety should always be your first priority when going on any outdoor adventure.

Be sure to bring the essentials: a first aid kit, extra water, knowledge of the area, and, of course, a smile. Remember to always do your research about the trail, double-check your gear, and, for safety reasons, always let someone know where you're going, especially if hiking alone.

And to emphasize again: Hike Your Own Hike! You don't need fancy gear, fancy shoes, or a satellite messenger to enjoy a hike in the wilderness. As long as you're safe and comfortable carrying a phone in your pocket, snack bar in one hand and water in the other, that will get you through many a day hike. Happy trails! 🐔



# UFF-DAH!

## ASTHMA & EXERCISE-INDUCED ASTHMA!

### WHAT TO KNOW AND HOW TO COPE THIS WINTER



**M.J. Hessert,  
DO, MPH**

**W**heezing, cough, mucus production, chest tightness, and shortness of breath. These are symptoms of airway inflammation and airflow limitation due to swelling and muscle contraction in the airways. Asthma sufferers know these symptoms all too well. Yet many people think these complaints are normal effects of exercise. There is a high level of undiagnosed asthma in the athletics community because people attribute their symptoms to exertion, allergies, viral infections, or because they are “toughing it out.” Unsurprisingly, athletes are especially prone to toughing it out.

Asthma is exceedingly common, affecting up to 20% of Americans. However, that percentage is *much* higher among endurance athletes and winter sports athletes. Winter endurance athletes, such as cross-country skiers, four-season runners, mountain climbers, and fat-tire cyclists have an asthma prevalence as *high as 50% or more* due to cold, dry air. Also, asthma is more likely with longer-duration exercise.

Asthma is often diagnosed clinically based on history, physical exams, and pulmonary function tests (PFTs). Notably, one can have normal PFTs and still have asthma, especially if exercise-induced. As



**While cross-country skiing has the highest asthma rate of any sport (>50%), in general, winter air is cold and dry, which can exacerbate asthma, especially when combined with exercise. High altitude decreases temperature and humidity, as mountain climbers can attest to.**

PHOTO BY STEFFEN GRAUPNER.

a result, exercise testing may be used to aid in these diagnostic challenges.

Although asthma onset in endurance athletes is usually seen in teenagers, adults can also be newly diagnosed with asthma, especially in the setting of risk factors. For the purposes of this article, I am going to use the term “asthma” as a catchall to include different types of asthma as well as exercise-induced bronchospasm (formerly called exercise-induced asthma).

#### **Exercise**

Exercise can trigger asthma symptoms due to increased respiratory rate. Some people who suffer from asthma shy away from physical activity as a result. *This avoidance perpetuates worsening cardio-respiratory function due to deconditioning.* Even though exercise can and does elicit exacerbations in asthma patients, exercise actually helps in the long run by improving lung function, reducing overall ventilation through better breathing



efficiency, reducing small airway sensitivity, and improving quality of life.

Asthma is not a barrier to elite competitive sports participation. In fact, asthmatics compete — and win — at the highest levels in many sports.

### Cold Weather

For competition, the International Ski Federation's lower temperature limit is negative four degrees Fahrenheit, due to risks of frostbite, hypothermia, and asthma exacerbations. Repetitive exposure to cold, dry air can actually lead to the development of asthma as well as exacerbations in known asthmatics. Air at high altitudes tends to be even colder and drier.

A potential solution for cold and/or exercise-induced bronchospasm is a **heat-and-moisture-exchange breathing device**. These breathing devices are available in the form of inexpensive masks and mouthpieces. As advertised, they warm and humidify inspired air. However, they can be uncomfortable/sloppy as moisture builds inside the mask and require increased inspiratory and expiratory force. Still, the designs do try to limit this added force when compared to other types of masks and it's worth a try on especially cold days and by people who don't mind a device over their mouths.

There is little downside to experimenting with these devices and your ability to adjust your workout knowing that you are now better able to safely enjoy the colder outdoors. Individuals who benefit from them may benefit a great deal.

Alternatively, the nose itself is a heat-and-moisture exchange breathing device, so use nasal breathing when the activity level permits. A neck gaiter pulled over the mouth serves to warm and humidify the air somewhat, even if less so than a purpose-built device.

### Other Triggers and Mitigation Strategies

Try to recognize what your triggers are, even if it requires a **symptom log** to find a pattern. Do symptoms occur inside or outside? What season of the year and what time of day are the worst? At what temperature, humidity level, and altitude do symptoms occur? Do pets or pollen seem to have an effect? Is an upper respiratory infection exacerbating your asthma?

*Identifying triggers is the first step.*



**Peter Hessert glacier hiking in the Canadian high arctic. A 10 to 15-minute warmup with intervals at 50-60% max heart rate has been shown to reduce bronchospasm during the subsequent workout.**

PHOTO BY MJ HESSERT.

In the case of asthma, trigger avoidance and trigger modification can make a significant difference. Many triggers are specific to the individual; however, others are more universal.

### To Mitigate Triggers:

- Avoid training outside on days when the air quality index (AQI) is poor.
- Vary training venues so that not all winter training is done in cold, dry air.
- If exercising indoors at home, use a HEPA filter.
- Maintain pet-free areas in the home, especially the bedroom and exercise areas.

- Minimize the use of candles and air fresheners/scents in the home.
- Get vaccinated for flu and COVID to prevent viral asthma exacerbations.

### Other Non-Pharmacological Tips:

- A 10 to 15-minute warmup with intervals at 50-60% max heart rate has been shown to reduce bronchospasm during the subsequent workout.
- A diet that is rich in omega-3 fatty acids, high in vitamin C, and low in sodium is thought to be helpful.
- Caffeine helps reduce bronchospasms, as does optimum hydration.
- Activities of longer duration and higher



respiratory rates — endurance sports — tend to exacerbate asthma more than low ventilation sports (for example: cross-country skiing vs. ski jumping; swimming vs. diving).

Switching to less-asthmogenic (lower risk of causing asthma attacks) activities is possible but not necessarily encouraged. Some asthmatics take up swimming, which largely occurs in warm, moist environments, which is helpful; however, chlorine can be an asthma trigger too. With swimming, open water or a saltwater pool are best.

### Pharmacologic Treatment

Treatment for asthma is important and *should be discussed with your doctor*. Dr. Rachel Lee, an allergist at the University of California San Diego, generally recommends that asthmatics who only have symptoms during exercise try a short-acting beta-agonist such as albuterol, with or without leukotriene inhibitors. (Leukotrienes, produced by the immune system, cause bronchoconstriction, mucus secretion, and inflammation. Leukotriene inhibitors block their production or bind to their receptors.)

For people who have asthma symptoms outside of physical exertion, a more comprehensive plan is beneficial and may include daily inhaled corticosteroids. Inhalers should generally be used with a spacer to ensure delivery of the drug to the lower airways, rather than the mouth.

There are *many* asthma medications on the market. A couple of tedious months of trial and error may be necessary to find the best medication, but given the breadth of available treatments, a helpful prescription is out there for every asthmatic athlete. Athletes should not expect total cessation of symptoms, but rather manageable symptoms and ability to perform rigorous physical activity.

Again: *All* of the above should go through your medical provider!

### Asthma Treatment Vs Performance-Enhancing Substances

Some asthma medications are considered to be enhancing substances, especially when used by athletes without a formal diagnosis of asthma, or in excessive amounts. It is hard for physicians to justify “therapeutic use” without objective data



The Vapro Airtrim is an example of a heat-and-moisture-exchange breathing device worn to warm and humidify inspired air during exercise on the colder of cold winter days. The front piece is an interchangeable filter that comes in Filters 1, 2, and 3 for easier breathing as intensity increases.

PHOTO BY BRUCE STEINBERG.

of asthma (i.e., PFTs discussed above), as imperfect as these tests can be.

Interestingly, among Olympic athletes, *asthmatics win more medals than their prevalence would predict*. This is known as the “asthma advantage” and is not fully understood. Elite athletes subject to drug testing should discuss treatment with their physicians and coaches.

### Other Conditions

Asthma and allergies are closely intertwined. Controlling allergies with medications and avoidance of allergens will also help alleviate asthma symptoms. In addition to allergies, many other conditions may mimic asthma. These afflictions include heartburn, vocal cord dysfunction, heart problems, neuromuscular diseases, other lung problems, overtraining syndrome, depression and anxiety, and lifestyle factors such as sleep quality and substance use.

A visit to your physician will help parse out the correct diagnosis and management.

### A Final Word

Dr. Rachel Lee recommends talking to your doctor if you have seasonal or exercise-induced symptoms. Asthma can be fatal, or lead to long-term complications, such as Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and reduced lung function. Athletes may feel invincible or be stubborn, but they should not avoid evaluation and treatment, especially given the health and quality of life implications.

Dr. Lee says, “The biggest goal is to help the patient exercise as much as they want to. We do not want them to curtail their activities.”

In other words, modify the asthma (and its triggers) to fit the exercise rather than modifying the exercise to fit the asthma. \$

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# Why Tri?

## Transitioning to Triathlon

Swim leg of a combined Sprint and Olympic race. Sprint is the first triangle buoy from the left. Combine pool practice with OWS to enhance your Tri skills.

ALL PHOTOS BY JOE BAINBRIDGE.

### Joe Bainbridge

**F**all is the time for transitioning. We switch our focus from warm-weather activities to winter. Cyclists mount their bikes on trainers, runners get the stuff stored on the treadmill cleared off, and swimmers get ready for chilly trips to the pool. Unfavorable weather in recent winters may have us thinking this winter is a time to consider something new. What about a transition to triathlon?

#### Why Try a Tri?

Many of us have been doing fine putting in miles on bike trainers each winter. Runners can get out most winter days depending on their tolerance for cold and icy roads and trails. Swimmers can enjoy 80-degree water at the local pool all winter. So why

not keep up the same old same old?

Adding additional fitness activities helps to avoid and aid recovery from an injury. Pick your season, but most of us need time each year to work on strength and stability issues caused by too much of a good thing. Cross training in the off-season has always been a “thing” — so why not do it year-round and make it a sport in its own right?

A quick poll of the **OnPace Triathlon Training Club** ([onpacetriclub.org](https://onpacetriclub.org)) members identified the reasons to try a tri as follows: better overall fitness, serenity over a traumatic situation, a lifelong sport starting to feel stale, FOMO (fear of missing out), and Why Not?

#### Now Tri What?

Once you have a compelling reason, or at

least compelling enough to try a tri, where do you go from there? For simplicity, I'll focus on the common swim, bike, and run format.

Many active people who are considering a triathlon will likely have a background in at least one of the three disciplines. However, it's not unusual to be unfamiliar with all three before giving it a go. As such, consider talking to your doctor before starting something new. Starting out may even require the help of a trainer to strengthen and stabilize underdeveloped areas. Whole body fitness will help progress and avoid injury long term. And late fall/winter is a great time to work on this and learn activities. Now, consider the following:

- **Start With the End in Mind:** Wandering aimlessly into anything is a recipe for



disaster so let's start with a goal in mind. For many, a *sprint distance triathlon* is the starting point for a lifetime enjoyment of triathlons; let's start there. While this is a shorter event, it still requires some aptitude in all five disciplines. *Five disciplines? TRI-athlon seems to imply only three — what am I missing?* There are 3 "legs": swim, bike, and run. But don't forget Transition 1 (swim to bike) and Transition 2 (bike to run), T1 & T2, respectively.

- **The Basics:** There are volumes written on triathlon, so let's keep it simple. A Sprint Tri includes a 750M swim, 20K bike, and 5K run, and transitions in between. That's it. Till next time... oh, do you need more?

- **Here's More:** Long ago, people asked if you needed to be a good swimmer, biker, or runner to be a good triathlete. At the elite level, the answer is: *You need to be exceptional at all three.* But importantly, the corollary concept for the rest of us is: *You don't have to be that good at any of the three, just don't drown, crash your bike, or forget how to move forward on your feet.*

## Tri These

Joining a triathlon training club or a local group that does triathlons is a great option. This will get you involved with folks who actively participate, and who can introduce you to everything you need to know. Many of these groups may have coaches available, but it is worth getting



**Approach to T1 (Transition 1) after the swim. This and T2 make triathlons not 3, but 5-discipline race events. Practicing the swim-to-bike transition will save you time and add variety to your training.**

involved just to immerse yourself. Costs vary depending on benefits such as coaching and events. You can find "Learn to Triathlon" groups through health-focused community groups as well as recreational centers, and the YMCA. An example is OnPace discussed above.

Training videos are plentiful for specific training. Start with videos that are "For Beginners" such as how to swim the Front Crawl (Freestyle) technique or "Training for Your First 5K Run." We are looking for the basics; once you find that you enjoy multi-sport, you will have the rest of your life to work on details.

*Already a runner, cyclist, or swimmer?* Start by doing one workout in each new

sport weekly. Use your main sport for fitness while learning. This will remove the need to "work out" in the new activity and instead you can focus on learning technique and improving skills.

## Tri the Swim

Equipment: Swim goggles, cap, and swimsuit. Recreationally, the swim cap is optional. But get used to it since all events make you wear one!

You will be surprised at how fast you can progress from swimming 50 yards needing rest stops, to a continuous 200 to 400-meter swim. Regardless of your fitness, the first few swims can be challenging. I've had runners who are sub-3:30

**Editor's Note:** When sending the photos for his Transition to Triathlon story to me, Joe Bainbridge emailed:

*It was a bit tough getting photos when I was doing the race but I hope these work.*

Joe raced the Carlyle Lake Tri, Aquabike edition, so no running. Even though he paused to snap photos for the story, he won not just his age group, but also the overall Aquabike title! Humbly making the situation clear, Joe added:

*Bruce, let's just say it was a very small category; the fast guys were elsewhere. No fast guys showed up so I podiumed! I had such a slow time that I wouldn't have even waited for the awards assuming I didn't place, but I was taking photos for you and they called my name. Joe.*

Above and beyond, Joe — thank you! — and a podium is a podium so: Congratulations! 🏆

**Joe Bainbridge all alone on the Aquabike division overall winners podium. Sometimes in racing, it's better to be smart, meaning knowing where the fast guys aren't, than fast!**

PHOTO BY DOUG PETERSON.







Transition space at T1 is limited, especially when adding a cold water swim and wet suit into the mix.



Ah - T2? Riders after swimming, transitioning to the bike, and now finishing the bike leg, are about to transition to - RUN!

marathoners tell me: "I Just don't have the cardio for swimming."

This, you have to know, is rubbish.

Here's the big takeaway: Swimming is probably one of the only sports in which if you only focus on developing good technique, you will progress quickly. Pool swimming is the ticket to learning the fundamentals. Although some sprint

triathlons use laned, outdoor pools, come warm weather, getting to the local lakes to swim is necessary if you plan to do an outdoor event with an open water swim; and be aware that there will be lots of other swimmers in the water with you.

### Tri the Bike

Equipment: Bike, helmet, and glasses. Helmets and glasses are required safety

equipment in events so always use them. Bike or tri shorts are great, especially if you start riding longer distances. Shorts need to be tight so they stay with your skin and slide on the saddle. This will help keep irritation at bay, especially if combined with a saddle and bike set up to fit you.

The first part of the bike leg can be congested so you need to have a feel for being near others while riding. Consider doing some group rides with other triathletes as part of your preparation to get used to riding in proximity to others. The local bike shop ride may be too focused on riding very closely since drafting is the primary concept to understand in bike racing. This is not the case in triathlon as *drafting is against triathlon rules*. As such, learn to ride five bike lengths or so away from others and see what happens as you ride through corners or come to a stop.

Learn to ride close to the right side of the road in a straight line. In triathlon events, riders can only pass on the left, and staying right is a rule until you choose to pass someone. Like the swim — you're not alone out there — so being mindful of others can be the difference between a fun experience and a crash.

The bike leg is typically the longest leg so developing a relaxed hold on the



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handlebars, stable core, and high pedal cadence of 90 to 100 RPMs is key in getting through the bike portion with energy left to run.

### Tri the Run

Equipment: Running shoes. A hat/visor is great for keeping sweat and sun out of your eyes.

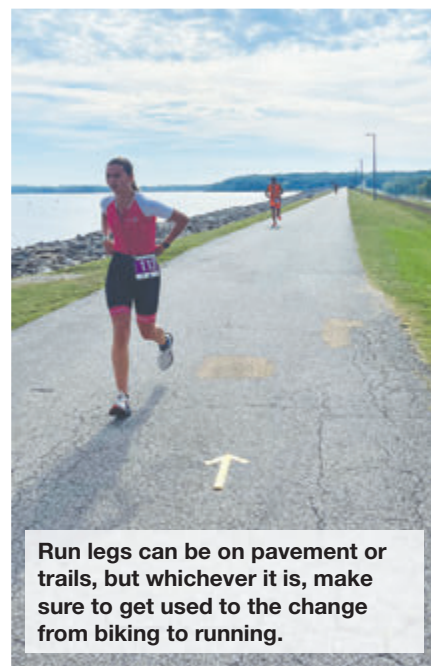
Running after riding is not easy at first so *incorporate a short run after training rides*. This can be a short run. The goal is to run long enough to get into a normal stride. The time to attain your normal stride will decrease as your legs get trained to run after riding.

Ideally, run enough to enjoy it without having sore legs. The larger muscle mass of a cyclist's legs can take a while to get comfortable, so running after a ride provides nicely warmed-up legs. Run-walking is also an option, with some people walking faster than some runners.

### Tri the Transitions

Not only can it feel odd switching between sports, but you will also need to organize your equipment in a Transition Area. Transitioning is where you execute T1 & T2. All your equipment will need to be organized for a fast and complete transition. At events, space will be limited to a foot or so between your bike and the next so plan accordingly. Practice transitions before event day to experience the organizational and physical challenges.

This short guide identifies basic elements for preparing to try the tri. These first steps will provide insight into what is required if you decide to explore multisport further. The tri community is welcoming, with many events catering to families by providing events for kids and parents alike. Enjoy the journey and we'll hope to see you at a triathlon next season.



Run legs can be on pavement or trails, but whichever it is, make sure to get used to the change from biking to running.

A well-deserved finish. Is it worth it? Yes - you're a triathlete!







The first groomed trails laid parallel tracks but did not pack the trail down beside them. Big pole baskets were in order. ALL PHOTOS BY DAVE FOLEY.

# Cross-Country Skiing When I was a Younger Lad

**Think it's tough now? Well then ... *Get off my lawn!***

*Dave Foley*

**A**bout the only place you see wooden skis these days is hanging over fireplace mantles. But when I first tried cross-country skiing in 1975, my only ski choice option was wood. My wife, Cyndy, bought a pair of Skiloms, skinny wooden blades with painted red lines running the length of the ski. I didn't want to invest much in equipment so I purchased a pair of used rental skis with the brand name of "Tur Ski" and a pair of lace-up boots.

Back then, everyone wore lace-up ski

boots capped with an extended rubber or leather toe perforated by holes that fit into pins on the ski. A hinged bar snapped over the toe, securing the boot to the ski. Connecting the ski to the extension on your boot sole allowed your heel to lift as you slid your ski forward. That end piece would inevitably wear out and split, disconnecting boot and ski. Many veteran skiers have woeful tales about being stranded deep in the woods with a broken ski boot. When clip-on ski bindings appeared in the 1980s, we couldn't wait to ditch our three-pin bindings.

**Waxing is Tough Now?**

***Well, Let Me Tell You!***

Fifty years ago, waxing was, at best, much dicier than today. Before every first outing of the year, you would have to apply a layer of gooey pine tar to the bottoms of the skis using a small propane torch. The trick was to melt the pine tar on the ski base without incinerating the wood or your work area.

Once the ski bottom cooled down, kick wax was corked into the kick zone, which was easy compared to selecting the right kick wax. Guess wrong and the



starting-over process, which could not be easily performed at the trailhead, might drive you to snowshoes! Waxing skis became the Waterloo for many would-be cross-country enthusiasts.

The introduction of waxless Fiberglas skis with fish-scale kick-zone patterns meant waxing was now an option rather than a mandate and may have saved cross-country skiing from the abyss of newbies and recreationalists giving up. While the purists could still wax, the masses just clipped on their boards and went.

### **Don't Like Today's Trail Grooming? Bah!**

During our first years of skiing, trail grooming wasn't much more than a rumor. Most of us never saw a groomed trail until the 1980s. For our ski outings, we would drive to national or state forest land and look for two-track roads or places with enough open areas between the trees for skiing.

Following hiking trails seemed like a good idea, except whoever designed those trails made no attempt to create the sweeping arcs skiers need for turning. These pathways, with right-angle turns and slanting surfaces, were not a problem for walkers, but not conducive to skiing.

Stepping over deadfall, traversing hill-sides, stumbling through ditches, and waiting for each other to move past obstacles, our skiing was more herky-jerky than kick-and-glide. We did most of our skiing on untracked snow so the lead skier got the most exercise out in front by breaking trail for the rest of us. We rotated to allow everyone a chance to knock down the untracked snow.

Most of our ski junkets were out-and-back routes so we could have packed trail for the return trip. Rarely did we take the same route twice. With a county map in hand, we'd strike out into the woods hoping to find long level stretches free of obstacles and perhaps a cleared slope to try some downhill. Wood skis weren't as durable as the Fiberglas and carbon fiber skis. Years ago, while out for an all-day ski in the forest, Cyndy snapped off the end of her wood ski. Being several miles away from our car, it would have been a tough trek back through the deep snow. Fortunately, a skier in our group had duct tape with him. Using the tape and a stick to splint the broken ends together, he was able to make the repair work well enough

so that Cyndy was able to finish the ski trip.

When groomed trails became more common, this effectively ended our back-country ski trips as the VASA, MacKenzie Trail, Big M, Muncie Lakes, and trails near what is now the Cadillac Pathway became our cross-country ski destinations. We enjoyed an easier stride by dropping our skis within the grooved tracks cut by a snowmobile hauling a weighted sled with skis attached to the bottom. The sides of these narrow trails were piled with deep snow so the wide baskets on the ends of bamboo ski poles were more practical than the small ones found on modern-day poles.

During breaks, we'd drink wine from

deerskin pouches and eat granola or trail mix that we made ourselves; this was a time before Nalgene bottles, commercially-made trail mixes, and energy bars.

### **And the Clothes? When I Was a Boy ...**

Cross-country wasn't on the radar screen of the ski clothing industry yet. The first polypro garments were just appearing and, while these early versions wicked moisture away from your skin, after being worn for a while, they smelled like wet dogs. Wool sweaters and flannel shirts were common and if you had a ski jacket, you might wear that. Not realizing how much exertion it took to cross-country ski,



**When on untracked snow, skiers often went in groups so there would be more skis packing down tracks into the trail.**



we often overdressed and sweated mightily. Usually by the end of the trek, we had hats in our pockets and garments tied around our waists. Taking a fashion cue from the Scandinavians, some of us wore knickers above our boots. Most of us just wore blue jeans.

### New Technique, Kid?

#### **Thank the 1970s!**

In 1976, Bill Koch won an Olympic silver medal in cross-country skiing using what was known as the marathon skate. Instead

of classic skiing, with both skis kept in the grooved tracks, Koch put one foot on the packed trail and pushed off like a skater.

Inspired by Koch, within a few years, many skiers were using this technique. Soon, the marathon skate was modified to allow the skier to move out of the groomed parallel tracks altogether and do a skating-style ski stroke on the packed snow. This was much faster than classic, leading to skating becoming the dominant racing technique.

By the mid-1980s, skis were longer and skinnier and made with lightweight high-tech plastics and composites. To better facilitate freestyle skiing, poles were longer and the packed trail was better suited for poles with small baskets.

### All Dogs Can Learn New Tricks

I put away my wood Tur Skis and bamboo poles, and invested in newer equipment and made an effort to learn to skate ski. Today, virtually all of my skiing is done on groomed trails. I still rub on kick wax when I ski classic, but if I can't find the right wax, I can always clip on my waxless skis and go.

And sometimes, after fresh snow falls, I take out my wide skis and head for the backcountry. I find there's still magic to be had, making my way on cross-country skis meant to take you through unbroken snow — just like we used to do. ❄



Skiing in untracked snow was hard work so skiers took turns breaking trail.



In the 1970s, cross-country skiers dressed in layers, wearing wool sweaters, quilted vests, down jackets, and jeans. Some put on gaiters to keep snow off their legs. Note that Cyndy is wearing a pack. We used to do some winter camping when we were young.

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The Fox River leaving Algonquin, cutting through the valley. Removal of the Carpentersville dam will soon create a 10-mile stretch of river that can be navigated without portage.

PHOTO COURTESY OF FRIENDS OF THE FOX RIVER

*Going, Going - Gone!*

## Illinois Fox River dam removal, an easy paddle through a long history

*Arthur Malm*

*Editor's Note: Contributor Art Malm takes us on an exploration of the Fox River and the upcoming removal of one such dam that may very well settle the issue of removal for most of the rest of the dams on the Fox. Malm is a retired professional civil and environmental engineer whose fifty-year career in the fields of water pollution control and public water supply includes the construction, commissioning, and successful operation of Elgin's Fox River water supply and much later as a trustee of the Fox River Water Reclamation District and Friend of the Fox River. And — his home is on the Fox River.*

**T**here are no nationwide battles over river dam removal, only local. In the context of many dam removal controversies, slogans proclaiming "Save Our River, Save Our Dams" can mean "Save Our Powerboating."

A prime example is the Illinois Fox River Dam-removal opponents' yard signs that make the "Save Our River, Save our Dams" claims that play into public concerns about wildlife loss. These claims are contrary to experience and the consensus of scientists and environmental engineers who are informing this and other Army Corps projects. Nature time and again has demonstrated its ability to quickly turn so-called mudflats into greenery as wildlife diversity soars when dams are removed.

Paddlers have a must-see opportunity all next year to witness a section of the Illinois Fox River coming back to life. The Carpentersville dam on the Fox in northeastern Illinois is being removed, opening a 10-mile stretch of river that can be navigated



without portage. The receded shoreline together with the ebb and flow of the river will provide improved public access to a naturally cleaned sand-and-stone shoreline above the old dam site. Fishing and birding will improve as the natural riverine habitat returns.

Until then, the Carpentersville dam stands as a nine-foot-tall concrete wall across the Fox River. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) wants it removed because of its harm to the aquatic environment. The Illinois DNR wants it removed because it is a safety hazard and liability. The local Fox River Study Group wants it removed because it creates significant water quality impairments.

### Costs of Non-Removal

The Carpentersville dam is the first demolition target in a program where the USACE is recommending removal of the nine dams on the Fox River, from Carpentersville to Montgomery. Detailed design for each removal will follow soon thereafter. Dam removals as part of this project will be funded 65% by the Corps and 35% by the IDNR, and are expected to be completed by 2030.

Any community may keep its dam — provided they take full ownership responsibility, including liability. Liability may extend to cases where injuries and deaths are caused by the dam's powerful hydraulic forces that can trap and drown people. Ownership also includes the costs of mandated safety inspections as well as the maintenance and repair of structures that are, in most cases, over 100 years old. The Illinois DNR estimates the annualized cost of ownership, not including liability exposure, to be \$125,000 per year for each of its dams.

In brief eulogy, the Carpentersville dam was first built as a brush pile dam in 1838. The land had just been opened for settlement by the Federal government following the end of the Blackhawk War. The dam's first jobs were to mill flour and cut lumber. Later, the dam provided waterpower to a foundry and drove a hydroelectric plant. Both purposes ceased operations long ago.

The Carpentersville dam is the first of nine such dams on the Fox River currently recommended for removal by the Army Corps of Engineers and Illinois DNR before



**An original anti-dam-removal protest sign displaying true motive. Perhaps realizing this wouldn't play well with non-motorboaters, replacement signs touting "Save Our River, Save Our Dams" sprang up. The pro-dam group's environmental/wildlife claims are contrary to experience and the consensus of scientists and environmental engineers ... [n]ature time and again has demonstrated its ability to quickly turn so-called mudflats into greenery as wildlife diversity soars when dams are removed.** PHOTO BY BRUCE STEINBERG.



**The Fox River dam in St. Charles, IL. Beautiful and historic. Old (over a century), dangerous, costly to maintain and inspect, and environmentally unsound. After removal of the Carpentersville dam, the dire warnings of those opposed to further dam removals will be put to the factual test.**

PHOTO BY BRUCE STEINBERG.

2030. The success of the Carpentersville dam removal should help local officials accept the 100 percent State and Federal funding that has been offered to remove any or all the remaining eight dams on the Fox, from Elgin to Montgomery, a potential rewilding of the Fox without portage for nearly forty-five miles of river and floodplain.

### Fox Rocks History

The Fox River is largely the work of glaciers over the past 100,000 years. Above and throughout the rolling valleys of limestone bedrock underlying the Fox River Valley is a mix of soils bulldozed from Wisconsin by glacial ice and meltwaters. The material left behind is known as "glacial till." As the glaciers melted, the till eroded. Light materials, silts and clays, were swept downstream and out of the watershed. Heavier materials became the river bottom in the bedrock crevices, often sorted into lenses of sand, gravel, and rock. This glacial cycle repeated itself at least three times over the past 100,000 years, giving the Fox its natural sand and rock bottom.

The Fox River pathway south from





**Carpentersville impoundment looking north above the dam. In the slow-current impoundment, notice the algae formations. As dams are removed, much of the sediment now in the impoundments behind the dams will drain and become grassland.**

Wisconsin is defined by two principal moraines of till left by the great Wisconsinian glacier that parallel the Lake Michigan shoreline. The Marengo Moraine became the western boundary of the Fox watershed about 25,000 years ago. The Valparaiso Moraine, the eastern, left when the last glacier melted 10,000 years ago.

To better appreciate the uniqueness of the Fox River and its valley, hosting 153 State threatened or endangered species, you need to go back nearly 450 million years, when the Fox River Valley was beneath a warm shallow sea.

For tens of millions of years, great coral reefs grew at the bottom of that sea. The ocean floor rose and became land. The land split, forming the great continents with the Atlantic Ocean in between. With aging and pressure over those hundreds of millions of years, the calcium-rich corals would compress to become the thick calcium-rich limestone bedrock that today underlies the Fox River Valley and its tributaries.

On an average day at its midpoint, the Fox River will carry away in its waters over

a million pounds of dissolved limestone rock, giving the Fox a hardwater chemistry that has provided nutrition to a large and diverse population of the Valley's inhabitants. That included the calcium needed to build the shells of the Fox's once-abundant native mussel communities and the calcium needed by its cows to produce milk in quantities that made Elgin the largest milk town in the Midwest between 1880 and 1910.

With its ancient underlying limestone base, as well as its confinement between two north/south-oriented glacial moraines, this young river offers a unique character to be explored and treasured.

### **Paddling Downriver**

From southeastern Wisconsin to the Chain O' Lakes, the Fox is a sleepy river passing through what was naturally marshland. Wisconsin boaters look at the Illinois Fox and see a small river with two nice lakes that meanders south across the state line into the Illinois Chain O'Lakes. The natural river bottom from Stratton drops 10 feet in the next 15 miles to Algonquin. This stretch carries heavy, high-horsepower

boat traffic and as a result can be treacherous water for paddlesports.

At Algonquin, the powerboats disappear and the underlying geology of the river begins to change. *This is the stretch above the Carpentersville dam that will be returning to its natural channel and shorelines.* The newer, harder bedrock underlying the river to the north starts to disappear along this reach, exposing an older, softer, and more erodible bedrock. The riverbed slightly steepens.

The Fox is a shallow, normally slow-moving warm-water river. In the 4.4 miles from Algonquin to Carpentersville, the river drops 8.1 feet, not quite two feet per mile. This can be compared to the average 8-feet-per-mile slope of the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon, or whitewater rafting the Yellowstone River with riverbed slopes above 20 feet per mile.

This relatively small slope doesn't mean the Fox is naturally stagnant by any means. At its midpoint, the Fox River on average carries enough water to fill an empty Olympic-sized swimming pool every minute of the day.



Before the dams, *when allowed to flow naturally*, the Fox River had been a series of riffles, runs, and shallow pools with a natural sand-and-rock bottom, not mud as many believe. As dams are removed, much of the sediment now in the impoundments behind the dams will drain and become grassland. With narrower banks and higher velocities, the river will be able to scour-clean much of its bottom and shoreline.

Some of the sand and small stones that accumulated behind the dam over the decades will be released. These sediments will become natural sandbars as they move slowly downstream, providing a new habitat for fish, mussels, and boaters.

### Paddling Onward

As you finish your 10-mile paddle south from Algonquin to the Elgin Dam, the slope of the river remains at about 2 feet per mile, with an average depth of about three feet and maybe some excitement where the river drops past the old dam site. Beyond Elgin, the Fox begins to expose its underlying limestone for the first time as the river runs through what is known as the St. Charles Valley. Still farther south



on its path to confluence with the Illinois River in Ottawa, the Fox passes sandstone outcroppings, part of a complex geologic puzzle with a history of its own.

No one knows exactly what the restored riverbed will look like after the 378-foot-long concrete monolith in Carpentersville is removed. The best data suggests that the river

will have primary and secondary channels upstream, much like what is seen downstream today.

In any event, paddlers enjoying the river will see the progressive wilding of the river throughout the next year and beyond. Whether there will be new whitewater for kayakers to hang out and play or a long, broad riffle at or near the dam site is a matter of speculation. Time will tell. Tomorrow, with the Carpentersville dam's removal, the memory of the river's blockage will fade as the Fox returns to the channel it spent the last 25,000 years creating.

For more information about paddling the Fox River, go to the **Fabulous Fox! Water Trail** website at [fabulousfoxwater-trail.org](http://fabulousfoxwater-trail.org), where maps, including current access sites, can be downloaded. ♡



**Map: Fabulous Fox Water Trail!**

IMAGE COURTESY OF KAREN MILLER, PLANNER WITH THE KANE COUNTY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT.



Gary Swick at peace the morning of the Carpentersville dam's first day of demolition. The community's costly liabilities for this old dam's inspection, repair, and dangers to human life will soon be gone, while Mother Nature will beautify the shoreline.

PHOTO COURTESY OF FRIENDS OF THE FOX RIVER.



September 20, 2024, work begins on the removal of the Carpentersville dam, scraping/chiseling off one foot of the approximately 4 to 6-foot thick, 8-foot high aging structure one day at a time. Notice the vibrancy of the water, the sandy shores and bottom, downstream from the dam versus the silt-trapping, low-oxygen "dead zone" stillness of water behind the dam.

PHOTO COURTESY OF FRIENDS OF THE FOX RIVER.



# What They Don't Tell You About Competitive Swimming

**Kim Fairley**

*Editor's Note: Kim Fairley is a former elite swimmer from Cincinnati, Ohio, who writes about wrestling with secrets, healing from grief, and her experience as a competitive swimmer during the early years of Title IX. She has written three books. Her latest, *Swimming for My Life*, was an International Book Award Finalist, a National Indie Book Award Finalist, and a Chanticleer International Book Award Finalist. Kim has had articles featured in Huffington Post, Salon, MSN, International Alliance for Youth Sports, SwimSwam, and Ann Arbor Family, among others.*



***"Swimming for My Life is a memoir of a childhood riddled with events most would never speak of. Fairley's pure, raw honesty keeps you wanting to read, page after page, as she starts to question whether she is living her dream or someone else's." Dara Torres, twelve-time Olympic medalist in Swimming.***

Competitive swimming for children has long been considered a positive activity. What parent can't relate to the joy of discovering the shift in behavior when a young child succeeds in a fun sport? It improves motor and cognitive skills and can instill a lifelong healthy approach to physical exercise. Swimming teaches kids to interact with other kids and helps them develop an understanding of teamwork.

*But what happens when a swimmer reaches the elite level, competing against the top 1% of swimmers around the world?*

As kids advance to compete against stronger and more successful competitors, there is the satisfaction of the sacrifice and effort paying off, and the thrill in moments of great accomplishment. There also is the toughness and self-discipline—skills that can be utilized in many other areas of life. However, reaching the elite level presents a host of new challenges which for some can have a long-term impact.

As a former elite swimmer, I've seen the best and worst of how swimming can alter

a young person's life and continue to play a part in adulthood. Here are seven characteristics that stand out to me as both helping and hurting:

## **The Fill-In Family**

Many parents are surprised to hear that swimmers in their teens can spend six or more hours a day working out at the pool. Weekend meets can last from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., swallowing up twelve to twenty weekends per year. Coaches easily become replacement parents.

By the time I began to compete at the

national level, my authoritarian coach decided what strokes I would swim, events I would enter, and meets I would attend. His rigid approach provided a structure I needed; his attention made me think he cared. I wanted to please him and sometimes that was difficult. When any of us didn't perform as well as he expected, he threw kickboards or pull buoys, which I assumed was meant to scare us into swimming faster. He would shout and deliver insults, creating feelings of isolation and shame.

*And most parents said nothing about it because they liked seeing us win.*

It feels good to be a member of a winning team and patted on the back by parents in the broader community. But the abusive behavior, which in many sports is excused as a part of the culture, can leave deep scars.

## **Following the rules**

Elite swimmers give up a helluva lot. I swam through the holidays and missed family vacations. When I had the opportunity to attend a sleepover, party, or fun school event, I almost always had to decline the invitation—"I'd love to, but I have swimming practice."

This extreme focus builds emotional strength. I learned how to psyche up for events, cope with angry adults, and survive extreme physical stress on my body in pressured situations. I also developed a hypervigilance to cope with a tyrannical coach. I learned how to be sharply aware of my surroundings and to fake confidence to protect myself. By keeping quiet, I avoided conflict.

*But I also became an actor in my own life.*

The emotional strength required of swimmers can leave gaps in their functioning in the real world. To this day, whenever I arrive at a new place, I scan the area for threats. *Is there anything here that*



can get me? I remind myself to walk with a sense of purpose, to fake that I know where I'm going. I rarely speak out or voice my opinion except to close friends. This level of anxiety and insecurity can take years of therapy to overcome and often lasts a lifetime.

### Focus on the Body

Building physical strength can add weight and bulk, positively transforming a swimmer's physical appearance. But in a sport such as swimming, where the body is exposed and every change is scrutinized by others, the impact can be devastating.

Beginning at age eleven, both girls and boys were forced by my coach to stand

before him with his clipboard, and weigh in every day in our bathing suits. If several of us had gained weight, the coach would punish the entire team with a deadly workout.

*I became so focused on my weight that, in my early teens, I found myself counting calories, spitting up my meals, and developing a bad case of bulimia.*

When teams allow room for this kind of abuse, they veer dangerously close to treating swimmers as products. It is common for swimmers to struggle forty or fifty years later with body dysmorphia or an obsession with weight due to an environment that focused on their appearance.

### Health Demands

Although I no longer consider myself an athlete, I feel grateful to swimming for my physical strength. I can carry half my weight, and I can easily run, swim, or bike long distances without any trouble. Swimming provided a springboard that set me up for a lifetime of good health.

But overtraining young swimmers also can be detrimental. As an elite swimmer matures, the stress on the body increases exponentially. With arduous daily workouts that include anywhere from eight to eleven miles of strenuous swimming, and a rigorous program of weightlifting or dry-land exercises, it is sometimes difficult for



Photo by Peter Dernier, Kim Fairley (shown partially) seated farthest left on the bleachers, excerpted from *Swimming For My Life*, P. 104: *Several mothers knitted at the edge of the balcony, monitoring practice, fully aware of what was going on. Some had the guts to complain to Paul Bergen about his bullying and obsessive focus on our weight, but most seemed reticent. "If you don't approve of my coaching style," he said, "quit!" There was no negotiation, no compromise. Even the Keating girls, whose father had contributed the most financially to the Marlins, were made the objects of his seething temper. Decades later I would come to realize that his brand of equal-opportunity abuse was dangerous, and would scar many of us for life. But at the time it didn't seem personal, and for that reason somehow more tolerable. As to the parents, I imagine it was difficult to criticize too much when we were breaking more records and swimming faster than we'd ever imagined possible.*



swimmers to consume enough of the vitamins and minerals their bodies need.

With limited sleep and extreme dieting, I experienced times at school when I staggered from class to class barely able to function. For female athletes, one unfortunate side effect of overtraining can be the development of amenorrhea (absence of menstrual periods).

*Many of my female teammates and I suffered with the condition from age twelve to eighteen. Research has shown that amenorrhea can result in a higher risk for cardiovascular disease and can seriously threaten bone health.*

Swimmers also experience torn ligaments, tendons, or cartilage, especially in their shoulders and knees that can lead to lifelong battles with osteoarthritis and other problems. When I was seventeen and the team was timed in a mile of hard breaststroke, I pushed off the wall and felt a pop in my knee. The damage to my knee resulted in surgery that still causes me occasional pain. Concussions are another problem. I lost count of how many times I crashed into other swimmers head on. The increased risk of concussion can lead to permanent sleep and memory problems, as well as diseases such as Parkinson's or Alzheimer's.

## Missing Moments

By winning races and setting records, athletes are able to show others—and themselves—that something in their life is working. The supportive cheers and recognition during and after events, as well as team camaraderie, provide tangible evidence that people care, which builds self-esteem. Swimming also provides opportunities for travel, to experience other people and places.

In many cases, though, the narrow focus of swimming can weaken a swimmer's readiness to navigate the rest of the world. I entered college never having held a job, purchased clothing for myself, or learned how to handle a tip in a restaurant.

*With little time for social interaction, I entered adulthood lacking maturity and significantly unprepared for simple daily tasks.*

Even today, friends will mention a popular film or television program that aired during my swimming years and I cringe as I realize the missing pieces of my

childhood.

## College Opportunity

Swimming gives young men and women opportunities to make money and earn college scholarships. Coming from Ohio, I never could have imagined an opportunity to attend the University of Southern California. For me, swimming led to a scholarship, which led to job opportunities, which led to my ability to overcome my parents' financial difficulties.

For scholarship athletes, there may be additional expectations to attend fundraisers or perform swimming exhibition events to raise money.

*Most athletes feel pressure to maintain a high GPA and complete the athletic season without injury in order to keep the scholarship and stay in school.*

In my case, I needed to choose courses that were easy and less time-consuming if I wanted to complete my graduation requirements.

## Setting Boundaries

I discovered as a swimmer that if I gave my greatest effort in every workout, by the end of the season, at Nationals, when it counted the most, all the hard work would pay off. This core belief in hard work has carried me through the pain of losing my husband before I was thirty. Years later, it helped me get through the loss of my parents and has helped me through the ups and downs of my relationships with other people.

Yet, I am periodically shocked by my own obsessive and compulsive behavior, my narrow focus, and inability to push away from my desk or switch gears at the end of a day.

*When I think of this struggle, I can draw a direct line back to my years as an elite competitive swimmer.*

On my best days, I remind myself to stop, to listen to my body, and to not ask too much of myself. I try to remember that there are endless important and interesting opportunities to feed and nourish me beyond the narrow activity of the moment. I don't have to go "all out" with the gardening. Or the house renovation. Or the family. I believe a balanced life is a happier life, and striving for that balance is something I must work at each and every day.

**Editor's Note:** To address whether abuses in competitive swimming have become addressed-and-repaired issues of the past, Kim Fairley urges you to read noted investigative sports journalist Irvin Muchnick's article, **Perspective: Drowning in Abuse**, published August 11, 2024, in The Denver Gazette. You can do so by Google-searching the article's title and author's name. \$

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# The Genuine Greatness of Jerry Wright

*Editor's Note: Gerald "Jerry" L. Wright died far too young on August 22, 2024. You can read about Jerry's amazing life by going to [olsonfuneralhomebloomer.com](https://olsonfuneralhomebloomer.com). Like so many, Mike Gibbs, who is part of CAMBA's staff, was deeply impacted, and from his heart, Mike wishes to share the following ...*

**W**hen I first met Jerry Wright a little over a year ago, it took about five seconds for me to realize that Jerry was "The Guy."

You know The Guy — the guy who shows up for everyone else and does all the work no one else wants to do. The guy who can laugh at anything and get others to join in, no matter how grim the situation may be. The guy who always spots the outsiders and makes them feel welcome. The guy who grins and tells you it's gonna be okay and you believe him because it is. The guy who somehow always seems to have a cold IPA in his hand no matter where he is or what he's doing.

The guy you look at and say, "I wish I was more like that guy."

In the short time I knew Jerry, we probably chatted for a total of less than 30 minutes. And yet I knew that if I called him in the middle of the night and asked him to come help me move a king-size mattress, he would be there. Probably with a beer in his hand.

Shortly after I met Jerry, I was hiking in Rock Lake with my girlfriend, Haley, and our two dachshunds, Auto Pilot and Sonny. We were in the middle of the trail system when suddenly Haley told me in a wild panic that Auto was missing. He was there one second, the next he was gone,



**Jerry, early morning before the Cheq 100 bike race. Although he was never a formal employee, he wears a CAMBA staff shirt because we adopted him. Or, more correctly, he adopted us.**

PHOTO COURTESY OF JOSH KOWALESKI @  
POINTED NORTH PHOTOGRAPHY.

and Haley had no idea which direction he went. Incredibly, despite Haley's clear upset and near-hysteria, I reacted with utter calm because the first thought that went through my head was that we'll call Jerry.

Seriously. That was the solution that popped into my pea-brain. I didn't even have Jerry's phone number — which didn't matter because we were probably away from any cell service to begin with. We had no idea where Auto was, no real idea of where we were, and no fully formed thoughts on exactly what Jerry might do

should we somehow miraculously reach him. Yet, at that moment, Jerry was with me.

Just like he's been with so many hundreds of others over his lifetime. Smiling wisely, offering assurance, and getting down to doing the hard work necessary to solve whatever problems lay before him — and most importantly: those around him who didn't know how to or even have the gumption to solve it themselves.

When I look back at that moment, I realize calling Jerry may not have been the best plan because chances were pretty good he was out in the woods somewhere helping someone else. Being The Guy isn't some kind of part-time job or passing hobby.

Jerry chose a life of service to others and then showed us all that service to others is the very purpose of life. He knew the secret to a happy life was simply doing things for other people. He knew that great opportunities to help others are rare, but the small ones surround us daily. He knew the foundation for contentment lay in setting selfishness and self-serving pursuits aside.

I think Jerry knew what love is, how to show it to others, and that when your dog is lost in the woods and night seems to be coming on fast, that there is nothing else. There is only love.

If I didn't know that before, I sure as hell know it now.

By the way, Auto had wandered directly back to the car, safe and sound.

And Jerry, if you can take a break from telling God how to build the mountain bike trails in heaven (a job you are especially suited for) and listen to me for a second, I have something to say:

Thank you for teaching us how to live. ☘





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