

Old enough to Drink!



by Jen Zurick

This year we celebrate the 21st anniversary of Richard Hodges' service on the Board of The Utah Nordic Alliance. In raising our glasses to toast Richard, we celebrate one of the richest and most generous contributions to the sport of Nordic skiing in the history of Utah.

Not only is Richard the longest-serving member of the Board of TUNA, he has also served on the Race crew of the Wasatch Citizens Series for over 30 years and currently serves as Race Director. He has served as an official or volunteer for over 2,000 local Nordic ski races. Richard is in his 6th season serving as the Director of White Pine Nordic Center.

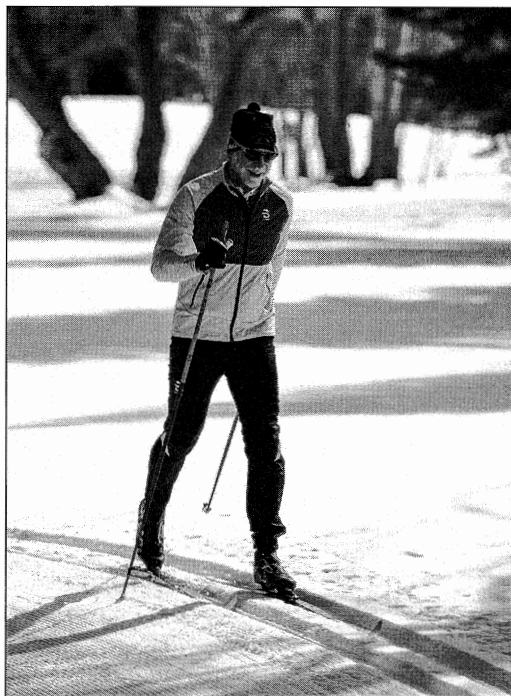
Richard served on the Soldier Hollow Legacy Foundation Board and later as the Executive Director of Soldier Hollow and has been on the board of the North American Cross Ski Areas Association, an industry non-profit, since 2013. He currently serves as President.

Richard is Vice Chairman of the Ski and Snowboard Archives Advisory Committee at the University of Utah Marriot Library, one of the most extensive ski archives in the US, the repository of winter sport history in the Intermountain West and the official archive of 2002 Olympic memorabilia. This museum curates and stores all films, photos, and documents for Intermountain West. He is one of the people who decides who gets into the Intermountain Ski Hall of Fame — and there were no Nordic skiers inducted into the Hall of Fame prior to his tenure.

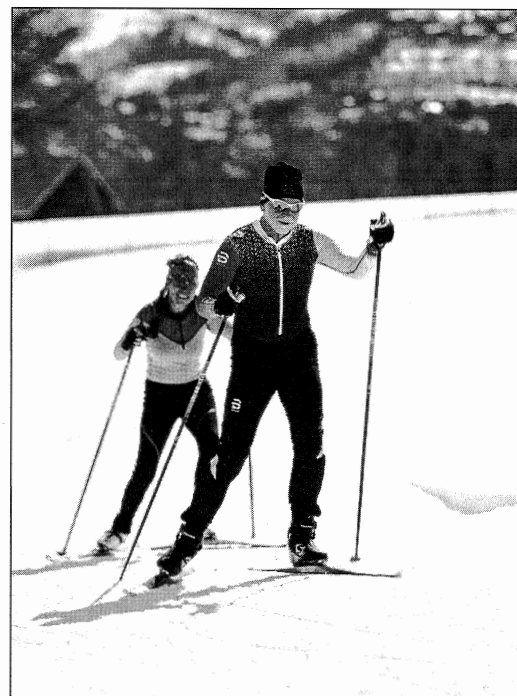
Richard has made a particular effort to empower people of all abilities to cross-country ski. In 2018, Richard started serving as a regional development coach for the US Paralympic Nordic ski team and has organized many opportunities for people of all abilities to ski.

Before his focus on Nordic Skiing began, Richard was instrumental in raising the public financing for UTA to build TRAX from 1989-2006.

"The thing that keeps me going is the people that I work



Richard kicks and glides through the aspens



Not just a classic skier

with and meet. Nobody gets in and nobody stays in Nordic unless they love it. I've had the opportunity over the years to interact with some of the most famous and infamous characters in the Nordic ski world. I've watched little kids learn and grow and become champion skiers in all aspects of competition and life. My current "family" at White Pine is remarkable. If I could get everyone in the same room at the same time, we would have nearly

300 years of combined Nordic skiing experience. It is cool that there are so many people who are so passionate about what is primarily a recreational sport. More than 30 thousand skiers visited White Pine Touring last year, and there were only maybe 4 who I wished had stayed home (laugh.) The other 29,996 came, played and had fun in the snow, and I was glad they were there. It is such a unique community we share. This sport attracts people who are worth hanging out with."

Richard has two kids. Daniel started xc skiing when he was 2, and his daughter Erin started when she was 18 months old. Now they are both responsible young adults, who grew up in a supportive ski community. Daniel serves as the Manager of White Pine Touring on Bonanza in Park City and Erin is a busy chemist in Denver, but they both inherited Richard's life-long love of the sport. *



21 years of TUNA

Many people had things to say about Richard:

What do I appreciate about Richard Hodges... Too much for one TUNA News article, that's for sure!

Although Richard has been on the TUNA Board for 21 years now, he's been a Wasatch Citizens Series volunteer for more than 25 — likely 30. He also worked at the 2002 Olympics and Paralympics, for which I was tasked with finding volunteers. And when I retired from the WCS 3 years ago, he stepped up to take over that responsibility.

When David Susong retired as TUNA President in 2006, I was skeptical that we'd find anyone to replace him who was even close to being as capable and dedicated. How wrong I was! Richard jumped into the job with great enthusiasm, dealing with a broad range of issues that affected the club over the following 8 years.

But Richard didn't retire in 2014 from being a key part of TUNA's success. For the past decade, he's continued as Vice President and contributor to the President, the Board, and many club activities. If TUNA had a Hall of Fame, I'd recommend him as the first inductee.

— *Longtime WCS Collaborator and Race Director Emeritus, Dave Hanscom*

Richard has always been willing to go the extra mile to share his enthusiasm for skiing. Our daughters were in the TUNA Rec program (now Devo) together, and around 5th or 6th grade, Richard initiated a Friday afternoon outing he designated something like "Young Ladies Ski and Tea Society" where he gathered up a carload of girls and went for a ski outing. They would typically drive to Mountain Dell and ski a bit, but more importantly, they would usually return to the Hodges residence and have an afternoon social with treats and occupy themselves with whatever fun 11 and 12-year-old girls might fancy.

It was brilliant as this age was a common inflection point where many kids not involved in racing programs would lose interest in Nordic skiing and drop out in favor of other activities. The Ski and Tea Society showed them there were other aspects of the sport they could engage in.

— *Former Board member, current advisor, and owner of Wild Rose, Tim Metos*



Three wise men at the WCS

Richard's ability to provide ideas and solutions has benefited every aspect of TUNA and the Utah Nordic community. His roles over the decades are numerous: longtime TUNA Board member (including a long stint as president), Wasatch Citizens Series crew and then WCS lead, general manager of the former Olympic Nordic venue, manager of the state's busiest Nordic center, on the board of the Cross-Country Ski Areas Association. I am no doubt missing a few. His breadth of experiences as a skier and as a manager provides a massive background of scenarios when faced with a challenge. His sharp mind and thoughtful problem-solving have repeatedly produced innovative solutions that have helped keep us all on snow. If you are a Nordic skier in Utah, Richard Hodges has touched your life.

— *Head of TUNA Grooming Ops Chris Magerl*

Richard has been a member of the Utah Nordic community for decades. I had only brief interactions with him until he took over as the Nordic Center director at White Pine Touring in Park City in 2019. I worked there for the 6 previous winters and had 3 bosses that all lasted 2 years each. Richard is entering his 6th year and is still going strong. He has brought consistency and a sense of community to the Nordic Center. Thanks for being the Nordic Center's rock, Richard. We all appreciate your expertise, commitment and sense of humor.

— *White Pine coach and TUNA Member Jeff Minnema*

In my first year of skiing in TUNA programs, my mom took me to Solitude Nordic Center to an event Richard organized for kids with physical disabilities. Richard called me a Junior Ambassador for TUNA and let me help coach the kids. He made me feel like I mattered. This event inspired me to become a junior coach for DEVO. I love helping kids get moving on skis, and Richard was a big part of why I feel inspired to do that.

— *TUNA Devo Skier and Junior Coach Izabella Witte*



Richard leads a group of new skiers at Solitude during a Shriner's event

Richard Hodges has been a stalwart of the Utah Nordic community for a great many years — more than most can even remember. Among other roles, Richard has been President of The Utah Nordic Alliance (TUNA), Executive Director of Soldier Hollow, manager of the White Pine Touring center, organizer of the Wasatch Citizen's Series, and president of the Cross-Country Ski Areas Association (CSSAA). In and out of these roles, Richard has put in countless hours and devoted tremendous selfless effort accruing to the benefit of cross-country skiers both in Utah and across the nation. Richard remains a tremendous asset to TUNA and countless cross-country skiers and we all owe him our deep and heartfelt gratitude.

— TUNA President and lifetime skier
Tom Bonacci

Richard is one of the most exceptional human beings I've been privileged to know. His endeavors to support the sport of Nordic Skiing are remarkable, but more importantly, Richard is a truly kind human being. While collaborating with him on the TUNA board and working at White Pine, I have seen Richard put people first EVERY time. He is equally pragmatic and idealistic. He is a champion for the underdog.

Whether engaged in the Sisyphean tasks of keeping the Nordic center and the race series going for another season with increasingly challenging bureaucracy and diminishing snow or delighting in facilitating the youngest skier's first time gliding on snow, Richard retains his patience, perspective, and sense of humor whilst handling challenges that would send many people over the edge of their tolerance. And, for those who haven't had the opportunity to experience Richard's crusty sense of humor firsthand, his wit is as legendary as his contributions to our community.

— TUNA Devo Enrichment Coordinator and White Pine Coach Jen Zurick

I picture the start of each WCS race with none other than Richard Hodges at the start with his start gun. I get pre-race nerves (so silly at my age) and seeing Richard there is a bit of a relief. He always has something witty and funny to say which keeps us all calm and remembering why we are there....to have fun! His patience and kindness show through in all my encounters with him as well. I am grateful for Richard's many years of service to TUNA and WCS.

— Longtime TUNA Member and WCS racer Carolyn Sterrett

For 6 seasons we have been lucky enough to have Richard as the director of White Pine Touring Nordic Center. His dedication is unmatched. Every day he gets to deal with all the craziness both inside and out. His enthusiasm and love of the sport is contagious. I am lucky to have him as a friend. "Go play in the Snow!"

— Friend Susan Spencer

Richard is the ultimate can do, willing to take on anything man. I am so impressed with his ability to volunteer for so many tasks at once and do them all with unflappable ease and grace. I have never seen him angry or flustered and I know that he really cares about people and their experiences. He is extremely dependable. The entire XC skiing community is so lucky to have him on our team. And he is so handsome! People like Richard, who are so willing to volunteer their time and expertise, are a rare breed. If you have enjoyed XC skiing in Utah, I am sure, that in some direct or indirect way, Richard Hodges has helped create or improve your skiing experience. Thank you, Richard! -

— Former board member, TUNA Coach and Masters World Champion Barry Makarewicz

Nordic skiing in Utah has been blessed to have a guy like Richard in its corner. It takes a solid backbone, patience, a sense of humor, and an abundance of love for Nordic skiing to have made such a lifelong commitment to supporting Nordic skiing in Utah. If there was a Nordic Hall of Fame, Richard should be inducted today! Thank you, Richard, for all your contributions to Nordic skiing!

— Mountain Trails guru and friend Charlie Sturgis



White Pine's community hub