

# Sovereign Lake NORDIC CLUB



A history of cross-country skiing in the North Okanagan and at  
Silver Star Provincial Park 1930s to 2015

First Edition, 2015  
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## Introduction

A little over 40 years ago, a group of community-minded friends and cross country skiers got together and formed the North Okanagan Cross Country Ski Club, now known as Sovereign Lake Nordic Club. The club operates the Sovereign Lake Nordic Centre, widely known as a world-class cross-country skiing area located close to Sovereign Lake in Silver Star Provincial Park, 22 kilometres northeast of Vernon, British Columbia. The area is at an elevation of 1660 metres (5450 feet) and contains over 50 km of groomed trails which connect with another 55 km in the adjoining Silver Star Mountain Resort. There are also over 14 km of snowshoe trails, and 12 km of ungroomed but marked backcountry trails. Sovereign Lake has a full service day lodge, ski school, night skiing, biathlon range and other facilities. A volunteer board of directors oversees the ski club's activities, which are largely volunteer-based. Due to the size of the operation and the services offered by the club, Sovereign employs a number of individuals both seasonally and year-round to help deliver cross country skiing and related services to club members and the visiting public.

With its high elevation, lots of snow, and ideal temperatures Sovereign Lake enjoys a long season. Most years, there is enough snow to ski on for six months or more, with grooming taking place for a little more than five months. These conditions plus convenient access to the Kelowna International Airport and lodging close by at Silver Star and in Vernon have made the facility world renowned. Sovereign hosted a World Cup Cross Country Ski Race in 2005 and the Sparkling Hills Masters World Cup in 2011 with over 1100 competitors from 23 countries. Prior to the 2010 Winter Olympic Games, cross country and biathlon teams from eight countries trained at the Centre or at Silver Star Mountain Resort. Local skiers live here in part because of Sovereign, and visitors travel from far and wide to holiday here, ski the trails, and perhaps, dream of someday living close by. This is the story of how the cross-country (Nordic) ski club was formed, emerging from the Silver Star ski club (now Vernon ski club) as a distinct community of skiers in the early 70s. Presented largely as a chronological account, the history is appended with supplemental information including some selected biographies and vintage photos of the early days.

Skiing in Vernon and the North Okanagan has always been related to Silver Star Mountain, at 1800 metres the prominent feature of Silver Star Provincial Park. The mountain, first named Aberdeen Mountain in honour of Lord Aberdeen, owner of the Coldstream Ranch from 1891 to 1906 and Governor-general of Canada from 1893 to 1898, was renamed Silver Star Mountain in 1952, probably because its sparkling appearance and nearby silver mining claims. Between 1896 and 1926 more than a dozen claims were staked although few, if any, developed into mines. However, the watershed of BX Creek, because of its proximity to Vernon, was suitable for augmenting the City water supply, and in 1920 the City built a dam on Vernon Lake, later named Sovereign Lake<sup>1</sup>, about three kilometres west

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<sup>1</sup> Sovereign Lake is named after Bishop Sovereign (1881-1966), a bishop of the Anglican Church who served in Yukon and Athabasca Dioceses and retired in Vernon in 1950. He became Chairman of the Board of

of the top of the mountain. From the lake, channels were constructed connecting directly to BX Creek. Sovereign Lake is a small lake, not much bigger than a pond really, and about two acres or  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a hectare in area, with a seasonal outflow at its south end draining to BX Creek.

## Beginnings – 1930s

Carl Wylie (1916-2008), whose name is synonymous with skiing in Vernon and the North Okanagan (**Appendix II**), started the Silver Star Ski Club on 1938, serving as its first president. The next year, 1939, the City of Vernon donated an abandoned log cabin at Sovereign Lake to the club, which had been used to house workers constructing the ditches from the lake to BX Creek. The cabin had two rooms, one in the back for sleeping and the front for a kitchen and living quarters. With a wood stove and other improvements it provided good shelter and accommodation. Back in those days, skiing was what we would now call “backcountry” - with little in the way of improved trails, signage or lift-assisted ascent (however, the terrain was less forested than today owing to historic fires). Equipment was made of leather, wood, bamboo, and wool, and trail-breaking in deep snow was the norm.



Vernon (Sovereign) Lake Cabin work party, late 1930s

Having a cabin with sleeping accommodation allowed Silver Star to be used by the more adventurous ski club members, and on holidays and weekends they were frequently joined by skiers from Kelowna, Penticton and other parts of the valley, usually skiing up on late Friday and returning on Sunday. One could not drive a car up to Silver Star back in those days. A road of sorts leading to the forestry lookout at the top of Silver Star was built in

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Commissioners for Silver Star Park and was a leading proponent of greater utilization of the park for outdoor recreation.



August 1939, and although it was not maintained in the winter it was an improvement over the narrow trails. The road also became the course for an annual downhill race, about three miles long, from the cabin to the Tucker Farm, which was located at the lower of two prominent switchbacks on the present Silver Star Road. Sometimes, a jeep ride was available to Tucker's farm, but most often vehicles could only get as far as the old Kedleston school (now a pottery studio), located much further down the mountain.



Carl and Flora Wylie, near the summit of Silver Star, late 1930s

#### 1940s and 50s – Birnie Range Skiing and Silver Star Park Established

Despite the advantages of skiing at Silver Star, it was not easily accessible in the early 1940s given the lack of road maintenance and deep winter snows making for several km of ascent in trailbreaking mode to ski the open slopes up high. So, the ski club decided to hold its activities at the Birnie Range, an east facing hillside overlooking Kalamalka Lake on the west side of Highway 97. This hillside is between the Kalamalka Lake lookout and the Okanagan College campus. Here the terrain was easier and more accessible, and the club started its annual four-way championships, consisting of ski jumping, cross-country, downhill and slalom events. This was the essence of the sport of skiing back then – all the sub-disciplines together. Specialisation, and the development of facilities and equipment to cater to those specialties (e.g. ski tows, grooming, and so on) was still two decades away in the North Okanagan. At around this time (late 40s), Bill Attridge was club President with

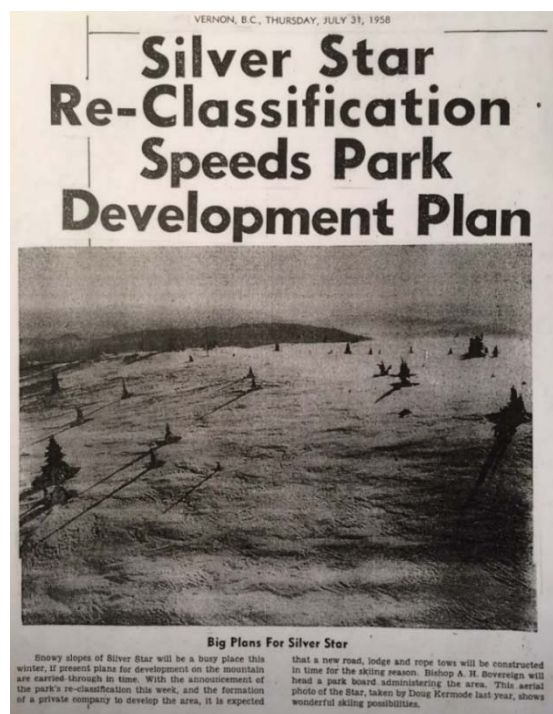
Carl Wylie sitting as Vice-president. A membership in the club cost \$2.50 for adults and between 75 cents and \$1.50 for youth and teens.

In 1948, lack of snow at Birnie Range led to the club moving its winter area to Keefer Gulch, on land owned by the Coldstream Ranch on the north side of the valley at Lavington. The overseas ranch management was concerned about liability, so the club was only there one season, and in 1949 moved a short distance east to Palmer Gulch, above School Road and the Freeman Farm, where they continued to operate until 1955 when no snow sent them back up the hill to Silver Star. During those years the club offered free lessons by qualified B-Class instructors sent by the Canadian Amateur Ski Association. And thanks to these free lessons ski development in the Vernon area increased. However, due to the inconsistent snow, the ski club kept casting its eyes back to the "Star" where snow was never a problem.

In 1940 Silver Star Provincial Park was established as a Class A Park, under which the land remained as Crown Land, with development regulated under the Park Act. Later (1958) it became a Class C Park, allowing commercial development, including a downhill skiing facility as well as housing and accommodation. In 1963, the road which originally led to the forestry outlook at the summit, was reconstructed to gravel surface, all weather standard, with ditches and culverts. Winter plowing began around 1960 which greatly improved access for skiing. Subsequent to 1963, an area of about 2700 hectares, containing the ski area, hotels and other commercial uses as well as the residential use, was removed from the easterly part, leaving the Park in two blocks, containing 5573 hectares. Parks subsequently transferred title of the ski resort to Lands who now administer it as a Controlled Recreation Area.

The upper part of the road, from the intersection of Sovereign Lake and Silver Star Roads, now led to the terminus at Silver Star Village, a kilometre south of the summit and 250 metres lower. This road section, about 2½ kilometres long, was completely new and although initially gravel, paved the way to increased development at the downhill ski area. Development by Silver Star Sports Ltd. initially included an A-Frame Chalet (which is now part of the Pinnacles Suites Hotel) and two rope

tows. In 1956-57, the rope tow was located at Christie Shoulder, about 1 km up from the present day Sovereign parking lot. The rope tow was moved above the present-day Silver Star village in 1958.



1958: Vernon News Article Announces Commercial Ski Venture at Silver Star

## 1960s – Emerging Popularity of Downhill Skiing

With road access, and the development of a ski chalet and downhill oriented trails and lifts at Silver Star in the late 1950s and early 60s, the Silver Star Ski Club started using these facilities and its focus became that of a downhill skiing and racing club. The rest of the history of downhill skiing in and around Vernon and Silver Star from about 1960 onward is another story, perhaps to be documented one day by a local historian or the present-day Vernon Ski Club.

By most accounts, it seems that the 1960s around Vernon were a period when cross-country skiing as a recreational sport lay somewhat dormant, but as the 1960s drew to a close, Vernon experienced the same growing interest in activities such as winter camping, backpacking and cross country skiing as the rest of North America. This was the perfect time to start cross country skiing in Vernon and the North Okanagan, as its popularity in Europe had moved across the Atlantic to Canada and the United States. Over the years, many skiers hailing from European countries with a strong Nordic skiing heritage had moved to the North Okanagan, and when these skiing enthusiasts made friends with local community-minded individuals with a shared interest in cross-country, the stage was set for cross country to chart its own path, and the following years would see continuous growth of the sport.

## 1970s - Cross Country Ski Club Forms and Stussi Farm Years

Heinz Stussi introduced his friend Keith Brewis to cross country skiing in the early 70s, and with Heinz as the instigator with ski connections in Europe, and Keith as the principal organizer, together they played a major role in starting the ski club (see **Appendix II** for their biographies). Keith was a Vernon resident with strong community interest and leadership in recreation. In January 1974 Keith approached the Silver Star Ski Club to see if it was receptive to introducing a cross country section. The club President, Al Goldie, told Brewis it was too late at that time of the ski season to make the change, but suggested he come back at the start of the next season.

In the fall of 1974 Brewis again approached the club and was told by President Goldie that while the club did not wish to include cross country skiing in its activities, it would give him \$300 to start a club of his own. So with that step the North Okanagan Cross Country Ski Club (NOCCSC) was conceived. The first meeting was held on October 30, 1974, at the former Fulton School at the north end of Polson Park. About twenty people showed up, including but not limited to Keith Brewis, Heinz Stussi, Carl and Flora Wylie, Svend Kristensen, Evelyn Tebo, Edith Bawtree and Ken and Kathleen May.

In those early years of the club, cross country skiing at Silver Star was available but still not easy to get to. However, local Nordic enthusiast Heinz Stussi owned a 122 acre farm on Cedar Hill Road off of Highway 97 near Falkland, on a north facing slope well suited for skiing with ample wooded and rolling terrain. In 1975 Heinz built a cabin there, installed an electric heater, started up a ski school, waxed skis and encouraged members to try a “new” type of skiing. The next year with the increased popularity, Heinz built a second cabin. The Stussi farm was used for many club activities until the early 80s. Heinz also built a cabin to accommodate guests dormitory style.

The following year, in 1976, the Club expanded its activities beyond the Stussi Farm, and started to go on day ski tours, as there were many attractive skiing areas easily accessible from Vernon. Postill Lake, Hydraulic Lake (south of Kelowna), Skimikin (near Tappen), Keefer Lake and the Monashee, Hunter’s Range and Revelstoke were all sites visited, usually for day tours, and sometimes for loppets. Club members would meet on a Saturday or Sunday morning at the parking lot at the northwest corner of 32<sup>nd</sup> Street (Highway 97) and 32<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, pool their cars and take off.

Despite the good skiing and facilities at the Stussi Farm, and the adventure of skiing in new and challenging out-of-town areas, the eventual home base that club members dreamt about was on Silver Star Mountain, with its excellent snow, long season, huge terrain and proximity to Vernon. There was excellent downhill skiing with driving accessibility, ski tows and a chalet-style day lodge at the commercial development of Silver Star Sports Ltd. at the end of Silver Star Road. Cross country skiers didn’t yet have these advantages, and from 1974 to 1978 had to leave their vehicles on Silver Star Road, and ski up the unmaintained Sovereign Lake (summit) road to the relatively level and attractive terrain around Sovereign Lake, before they could start tours. Snowmobilers also used this road, often hazardous because of the conflicting traffic and humps and dips.

### **Late 70s- First Loppet and Trail Development at Sovereign Begins in Earnest**

The first Loppet of the North Okanagan Cross Country Ski Club, advertised as the First Annual 30 Kilometre Marathon, was held at the Stussi Farm on Sunday, January 15, 1978. Participants skied one, two or three laps of the 10 km course. Uno Mutka from Burnaby won the first marathon men’s division, while Vernon’s Margo Wallenstein took home the top women’s trophy that first year (several photos from this event appear later). The 1979 and 1980 Marathons were also held at the farm, but in 1981 was moved to Sovereign Lake, and was held there on January 11. The Club also ran several other races and events at Stussi’s Falkland ski centre. While the Stussi Farm was well suited for these competitions with its long and extensive rolling and open terrain, the advantages of Sovereign Lake were greater, and as time went on more and more club activities were held there.





Commemorative crest from first marathon, given to all participants at Stussi farm



Start Line of the First North Okanagan Marathon 15 Jan 1978  
That's Eric Larsson on the right (bib #1), and Einar Field with the white toque  
(who else can you name?)





**Keith Brewis (4), Peter Tassie (21) and William Sokol (63)  
ski in an early club event at Stussi Farm, around 1980**

Silver Star Provincial Park was designated a Provincial Recreation Area in 1978 allowing, with the cooperation of BC Parks, the development of cross country skiing. Planning began in earnest with a cordial relationship between NOCCSC and B.C. Parks in Kamloops and their planner Derek Thompson, all of whom had the objective of establishing first class cross country skiing. Planning was a joint effort, and every fall club volunteers cleared existing trails and constructed new ones under the supervision of Parks. The home base was around the log cabin near Sovereign Lake, about three kilometres west of the top of Silver Star Mountain, and to the north was an ample area for all types of cross country skiing ranging from level to steep and challenging slopes. With this base a comprehensive trail system was developed over the years. Between 1975 and 1978, planning and construction of trails north of Sovereign Lake was started, being the first step in the extensive trail system of over 50 km. The first trails, simply known as Loops 1 and 2, later became Mystery and Black Prince<sup>2</sup> and in the decade that followed the club opened up Sovereign, Woodland Bell (1980), Wylie's Loop, Prince of Wales (1981-2), Silver Queen (1982), Maid of Vernon (1983), the "view trail" later officially named Aberdeen (1984), Montezuma (1986), Gold Mountain (1987), Centre Star / Lars Taylor (1987 & 1988), Montezuma's Revenge (1987 & 1988), and several more. 1979 saw separate parking lots created for snowmobiles and cross country skiers. These can be seen in the 1981 map on page 12 below.

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<sup>2</sup> BC Parks initiated the commendable practice of naming ski trails after mining claims staked on Silver Star Mountain.

Trail development was headed by Carl Wylie, who had skied to the top of Silver Star in 1934, founder and first president of the Silver Star Ski Club who had also been active in the newly formed NOCCSC since its inception. With a thorough knowledge of the skiing terrain at Silver Star, Carl was the logical trails chairperson, and served in that position from the start in 1974 until at least 1990.

The early ski trails of the time were not as they are today, but were rough, ungraded and narrow, often with steep grades. Tracks were made in fresh snow by skiers as there was no grooming. (This type of ski experience is still available today on Sovereign's marked network of "backcountry" trails; a few other ski clubs also maintain similar trails available for club members and visitors to explore).

Back in the 1970s, Park regulations restricted tree cutting to widen trails, and so the clearing crew could only limb trees and work around obstructions as best they could to create a trail through the forest that could link naturally open meadows and seasonally wet areas having fewer trees. With these restrictions the location and construction of trails required skill in order to provide first class trails for moderate to experienced skiers, and the outings were pleasant and productive. The groups would usually work until lunch time, often making a fire, especially if Carl were there. By the time he and his helpers had collected all the wood, most everyone else had finished eating, were getting cold and wanting to move on, leaving the wood collectors to stay and eat and enjoy the fruits of their wood gathering labours.

About 1979 the Summit Road from Silver Star Road to Sovereign Lake (now Sovereign Lake Road) was reconstructed and maintained by BC Parks (the upper part of this road is the "repeater" road). In 1979 two areas were cleared and levelled by Parks for vehicle parking. The first, near the present day lodge, was designated for cross country skiers, while the second, to the east, was intended for snowmobilers. The snowmobilers used that part of the park east of the cross country skiing area (in between the ski resort and the cross country trails), going north to the park boundary, and beyond.

In April 1979 the North Okanagan Cross Country Ski Club, which had been going since 1974, was formally incorporated as a Society under the B.C. Society Act. In this exercise which required submitting an application and approval by the province, the work was done gratuitously by Vince Dantzer, the club president in 1978-79. Vince, a one-time mayor of Edmonton, became the Member of Parliament (Progressive-Conservative) for Okanagan North in the 1980 federal election.

In 1979 the club sponsored a trail-clearing funded by grants from the federal and provincial governments. This was the first of several similar projects sponsored by the club and funded by the two senior governments between 1980 and 1983. Over the summer of 1980 the Woodland Bell Trail was completed and by the summer of 1981 Wylie's Loop and Half Sovereign were finished, as well as a return trail from the Black Prince Meadow featuring a challenging hill climb.

Starting about 1979 the club fortunately had the services of John Kuly, who had been employed by BC Parks to maintain the cross country facilities at Sovereign Lake. While the position was new to him, and as Parks had little experience in administering cross country ski facilities, John was pretty well “on his own”, but quickly adapted to the responsibilities. At the start he had only a snowmobile and basic equipment but soon understood the needs of the skiers and the most effective way of providing them. He set the trail from Silver Star Road to the base at the top, and put markers on the trails as they were completed, indicating their name and degree of proficiency required. In the fall of 1980 a track setter was acquired at a cost of \$1800, of which \$700 was raised by the club and \$1100 contributed by BC Parks. This year marked the first machine-made classic tracks at Sovereign.



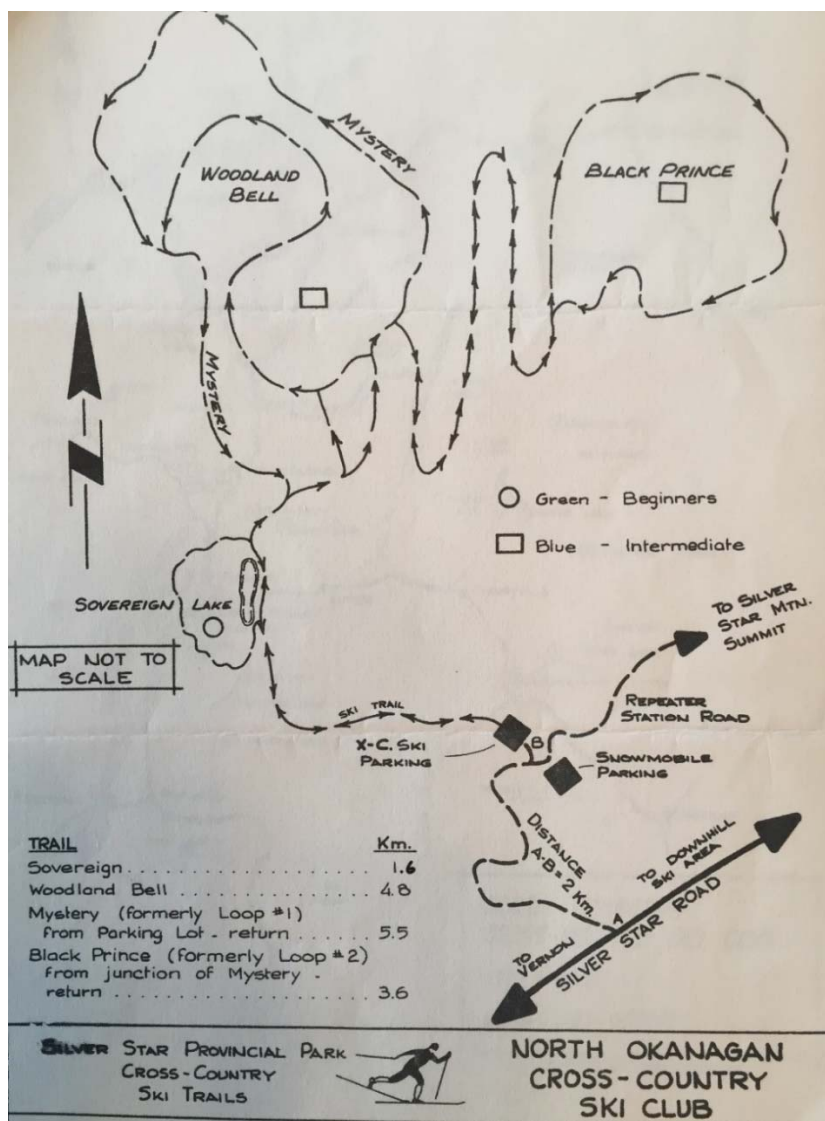
John Kuly (left) and Keith Brewis at Sovereign in the 1980s

### 1980s – Era of Trail and Cabin-building

By the end of 1980 there were 240 members in the North Okanagan Cross Country Ski Club, with the membership fee \$5.00 for individuals and \$10.00 for families and no trail fees. Membership would double by the middle of the decade. A small but enthusiastic core



group had been with the club since its inception or shortly after, and this group had provided the direction and initiative to guide the club, so critical in its formative years. In these days, the club was truly a group of friends who skied and socialized with each other, bound by the common love of the outdoors and of cross country skiing. We have already listed the many trails built during this time period, and the two maps seen on the following pages show just how extensive the expansion was that took place between 1980 and 1990. This decade saw 25 km of trail opened and two cabins built, virtually all of which are still in use today.



**Sovereign Lake map circa 1981 (about 15 km of trails)**

Note that the parking area is near the present-day gate and that a ski trail passed through where the main parking area and lodge now are located. Wylie's Loop and Silver Queen would soon be added. Drawing by Leigh Pearson.

Social events were a significant part of club culture in these earlier days. There was almost always an annual “snow dance” in late fall just prior to the opening of the trails. Sizeable groups traveled to the Cariboo Marathon and other events regularly (sometimes chartering a bus), and those traveling with Rita Haaheim (see **Appendix II** for her biography) were usually at the centre of the fun!

During the summer of 1983 BC Parks built a warming hut at the base near Sovereign Lake, while the club supplied the stove and furnishings, with support provided a Recreation Council of B.C. government grant. This building still stands and sometimes called the “old” day lodge and sees regular use by a number of informal groups. The next year, 1984, the 5km long Aberdeen Trail linking the base at Sovereign Lake with the top of Silver Star, was completed. Shannon Wylie, daughter of Carl and Flora, designed the NOCCSC logo that season (see next page). By the winter of 1984-85 there were 450 club members. The Western Canadian Masters competition was held at Sovereign in March 1985. Among those participating was Fred Taylor pictured below, who skied well into his 90s.



Still Youthful in his mid 70s, Fred Taylor skis in the Western Canadian Masters, 1985

The Montezuma Trail, with a lot of up and down and a good training trail for racers, was completed in 1986 with Ted Hoyte leading the effort. The next year, 1987, Gold Mountain, a trail linking Sovereign Lake and Silver Star Village, was completed. Also completed in 1987 and 1988 was Lars Taylor Way, connecting the upper end of Aberdeen with Black Prince, providing a long and strenuous but very attractive 12 km trail circuit. In those same years the club opened Montezuma's Revenge, with similar features to Montezuma. Club membership was steadily increasing and by 1987 there were 750 members. Around these years, the Silver Queen trail was not groomed, and Parks personnel regularly groomed the remaining 35 km of trails. The club started the jackrabbit ski league for kids in the early to mid 1980s with Peter Tassie among those first involved in organizing this program. Bill and Pat Maloney were among the parents and volunteer coaches who were involved in the early years.

In 1988 BC Parks built the Black Prince cabin on Black Prince Trail at the start of Silver Queen and near the bottom of the Centre Star (now Lars Taylor) trail. In the same year White Elephant Trail was completed in the Montezuma network, while in the following year a woodshed was built for the Black Prince cabin making it a true warming hut situated at a strategic spot a few kilometres from the parking lot and day lodge. The following map shows what the trail network looked like in the 1989-1990 season. There was no charge to ski the trails in those days, but as the decade ended, it also meant an end to the trail grooming being done by B.C. Parks using taxpayer funds.



North Okanagan XC Ski Club Logo 1985









**Top: Newly built Black Prince Cabin, late 1980s**  
 (pictured left to right are club secretary Nancy Pritchard, Flora Wylie, Carl Wylie, and Mike Smith)

**Bottom: Circa 2012, Black Prince Cabin Cloaked in Mid-Winter Snows**

## 1990s – NOCCSC Assumes Operation of Nordic Centre and builds New Day Lodge

In the fall of 1989, BC parks informed NOCCSC of the intent to cease operating the Nordic centre at Sovereign Lake. Several months of negotiation and preparation followed. In 1990 the North Okanagan Cross Country Ski Club reached an agreement with BC Parks whereby the club would take over and manage the Sovereign Lake cross country ski area. A management committee of Ed Devlin, Heinz Stussi, Carl Wylie, and Paul Jones was set up and became responsible to the club for administering the agreement. The new management setup entailed the preparation of a financial plan covering the fee schedule needed to support grooming and other operations, employment, equipment purchase and upkeep, and grooming and trail maintenance. Day-to-day operations were carried out by the manager, John Kuly. He started on November 17 and three other employees were hired to help run the operation. Volunteers built a ticket office (now the wax room). The annual operating budget was about \$90,000.

A twin track Alpine Snowmobile was acquired for tracking, but major grooming was done by Silver Star Mountain Resort. Clearing and maintenance of Sovereign Lake Road and the parking lot was done by Provincial Highways who also looked after Silver Star Road. By that time there were 800 club members and 120 youth and children in the Jackrabbits program that had been started a few years earlier. The club began holding its Tips Up Cup race annually around this time along with three other regional clubs, the Tips Up was a race series. The 1990 marathon was the first time the club ran a sponsored event, with relays held the day after. Pierre Harvey won the 30 km event, finishing in about 1 hr 30 min.

In 1991 the parking lots were expanded by 40% and two outhouses were built. A Pistenbully groomer was purchased, and in 1995 a Bombardier BR400 groomer was acquired in order to accommodate the additional trails. The club assumed grooming, which had been done by Silver Star until about 1991-92. During this same general period, efforts were made to increase the participation of school-age kids in cross country skiing building on the Jackrabbit programs started in the 1980s. As well, organized visits to Sovereign Lake by area school groups began, which continue to be popular at the centre, now known as the S'kool Ski program. Lars Taylor, member of the Canadian National team and son of active club members Fred and Joyce Taylor was seriously injured in a bicycling accident in 1991, and not long afterwards, the club renamed the Centre Star trail in his honour. Meanwhile, Fred Taylor (pictured page 13 above) kept skiing strong well into his 90s and passed away at the age of 101 in 2012.

The club co-hosted the 1991 World Cup, with the races being held on Silver Star trails. By about the mid-1990s, connections between Silver Star and the NOCCSC trails began to be established. It did not take too long after assuming responsibility for operations that the club realized the 1983 warming hut would soon be overwhelmed by the growing numbers of skiers. The present day lodge was built in 1993 under the direction of Ken Solheim, a building contractor, but also a long-time club member and former president. Ken used his



experience and ability and generously donated much of his time to provide an efficient and durable building at an economical price that would serve the club for more than two decades. The layout was developed by member and former president Leigh Pearson (who was also highly active in Vernon Search and Rescue) after consultation with club members, and was adapted to the site overlooking the stadium area. The lodge was two-storeys, 3600 sq. feet in area, and contained a lunch area, meeting rooms and ticket office, heated with donated wood stoves on each floor. To build the lodge the club used money from trail fees, the Legacy Fund of BC Winter Games, and donations in kind or money from members and supporters. In 1994 through the assistance of Einar Field, electrical power and telephone service was brought in. In the mid 90s, a 100+ metre deep well was constructed north of the lodge to overcome the difficulty of an assured water supply from surface sources, and concurrently on-site sewage disposal was provided. In 1995, the club hosted the Jeep Eagle Canadian Nationals at Sovereign Lake, grooming the trails with a new BR-400 machine. Prior to this event, a few connector trails were added in the Zumas to facilitate the required race courses. The old Parks office was also moved to the Montezumas around this time, now called the “Hall of Montezuma” but rarely used. In the early to mid 1990s, an annual adult pass cost \$50, a “superpass” (including Silver Star) was \$75.



Podium scene from the 1995 Nationals at Sovereign.  
That's future Olympic medalist Beckie Scott on the left

With the upgraded water, sewer and hydro services the day lodge became a comfortable and efficient facility, compatible with the objective of providing first class facilities in a renowned cross country skiing area. Dianne Strimbold, Chair of Cross Country BC noted: "The new day lodge is a tremendous addition to the excellent ski facilities at Sovereign Lake. This is another example of the North Okanagan Cross Country Ski Club's contribution to the growth and development of cross country skiing in the area."



**The Sovereign Day Lodge – Circa 2013**

Club membership had increased to about 1,500 during the early to mid 1990s. During most of the decade, the club ran the operation with four seasonal staff including John Kuly, Bill Pfifer (groomer) and two lodge staff. In the late 1990s, lodge staff included Fraser Blundell (who had come up through the club's ski programs) and club co-founder Keith Brewis. The years from the late 1990s to the early 2000s, proved to be a period of transition for the club. Approximately in the mid 1990s, there had been a motion to change the name of the club to the North Okanagan Nordics, which did not move forward. Still, changes continued as the influence of the earlier club members inevitably decreased with the passage of time, while others with energy and time stepped forward. As the years went by, and the size and scope of the operation expanded, some of the changes would not be universally popular with some of the club members who fondly recalled the early days. By the turn of the new millennium, the club had grown to be one of the larger Nordic operations in western Canada, and its leadership was pursuing ever larger events (that led to the World Cup) and making staff changes to facilitate this vision, while de-emphasizing some of the traditional club activities in favour of focusing energies on the larger events. At the close of the decade, the club replaced longtime employee John Kuly with Mike Edwards, who served as the club Manager from 2000 until 2007.

## 2000s – A Busy Decade Indeed

In 2000 the club name was changed from the North Okanagan Cross Country Ski Club to the Sovereign Lake Nordic Club, with the change recorded with the Province. As with some of the other changes, this decision was not universally popular as the original name advertised the geographic area in which the club operated and from which it drew its members, while the new name centred around Sovereign Lake, a small water body little known outside the immediate area. Gradually this name change has been accepted, and even embraced and along with it the desire to preserve all of the club's history. With the growth of nearby Larch Hills Nordics south of Salmon Arm from the 1980s to the present, there are now two large ski clubs within striking distance of the North Okanagan and so in this way, it is probably fitting that the region's Nordic ski clubs are named after a local geographic feature as opposed to a particular city or regional district.

In 2001, Nordic centre service expansion continued from the previous year when skis and equipment were first rented out, and a new rental room was completed, and food service was improved in the day lodge. On the internet the club web site was redesigned and expanded to incorporate daily weather and trail conditions.

In 2002 the stadium area (which had also been called the schoolyard) was graded and smoothed, but was still smaller than it is today, and had an area of moist rough ground closer to the lodge. The new Passmore Trail was completed, largely through the sale of timber, and improvements were made to Aberdeen, Montezuma and Sovereign trails, and snowshoe trails were cleared and opened, and snowshoe rentals began. Snowshoeing has boomed in popularity ever since. Some of the snowshoe trails follow routes established in the early days of skiing around Sovereign Lake. As a result of off-season trail grooming efforts, skiing opened much earlier than in the previous years. Meanwhile, Silver Star had been hosting early season cross country ski camps put on by Marty Hall and others. At the Sovereign Lake day lodge, a wax room was added (later to be moved), and carpeting was provided in the children's area located in the lower level. Outside a race timing building (the "technical" building) was constructed at a site overlooking the stadium in the mid 2000s, a new Jaca Track Setter was acquired and a shuttle bus service provided to and from Silver Star Village (no longer in operation).

In 2003 SLNC first considered hosting one of the 2005 races of the FIS world Cup cross country ski races held throughout the ski world. These races were under the aegis of the Fédération Internationale de Ski (FIS) or International Ski Federation, the governing body for cross country ski racing, with 110 national ski associations, including Cross Country Canada. Four groups in Canada, including Sovereign Lake, had expressed interest. In order to further its interest the club formed a race committee to prepare a bid to be submitted by October 2003. If the club bid were successful the event would provide a significant boost to cross country in the North Okanagan by helping to develop a significant Nordic legacy, improving the athletic development programs, developing a core of proficient officials, and



increasing the infrastructure. However several improvements would be required, including upgrading of some trails, construction of the above referenced technical building and expansion of the parking area. Moreover, widespread community support would be required in view of the large number of competitors, and the events in Vernon, outside of Sovereign Lake and Silver Star.

Since 2001 SLNC had considered lighting a loop of the trails close to the day lodge, in order to permit late skiing and increase participation for those skiers who worked during the week. A fund raising committee was formed with a goal of \$200,000 and secured that amount by March 2004. Construction started in the summer and on December 22, 2004 a lit circuit 3.2 kilometres long was opened on portions of the Passmore and Wylie loops and including the stadium area. The four Rotary Clubs in Vernon, Vernon, Kalamalka, Tri-Lakes and Silver Star, contributed \$35,000.

In 2004 the club bought a reconditioned Bombardier 400+ Snow Cat, a Super Wide Track Ski Doo and a six foot roller. This equipment facilitated grooming the trails to high standards, now expected by the membership and visitors. Mike Edwards served as club manager during this period. Club membership reached approximately 1,700 in the mid 2000s and has hovered around that level ever since. Day passes as a source of revenue were growing. The cost of a Sovereign Day pass during this period was about \$10; night skiing about half that. At some point in the early 2000s, after the aforementioned name change, Shannon Wylie designed a new logo, to which words were later added. The new logo designs seen below have emphasized the growing popularity of skate skiing. The one on the left appears on the large sign at the bottom of Sovereign Road and in other places including the club's race medals. The one on the right was initially used in marketing the World Cup in 2005 and is currently used in a variety of forms with "Centre" and "Club" being used.



Sovereign Logos 2000s

The Sovereign Lake Nordic Club succeeded in its bid to host the FIS World Cup Races in 2005, and the races were held on December 10 & 11. Two weeks prior the opening ceremonies were held, including the Downtown Vernon Light Up and the Haywood North

American Ski Races. One hundred and sixty of the world's best cross country skiers were at the races, and between two and three thousand fans watched. The event was broadcast to many overseas countries, and over \$10 million was put in the local economy in the two weeks. Beckie Scott, who would become Canada's Gold Medal winner at the 2010 Olympics told reporters that the event far surpassed what she expected, and many other athletes also praised the event calling the conditions, organization and hospitality "astonishing" and "amazing." World Cup photos of Beckie and the race bibs of Beckie and fellow Olympian Sara Renner now grace the Sovereign Day Lodge walls.



Women's Start, FIS World Cup, December 2005



**Sara Renner (left) with Beckie Scott celebrate at the Sovereign FIS World Cup, December 2005**

To make the World Cup event happen, the B.C. government helped with trails, two biathlon ranges and night skiing. Great credit must be given to the World Cup volunteers, of whom there were 685 from within and outside the club. They put in an estimated 50,000 hours, and made the event a success. World Cup Chief of Competition Rob Bernhardt (also Club President at that time) and Project Manager Brian Lees estimated that they had put in more than 6000 hours in the two and a half years leading up to the event. The estimated value of volunteer labour was close to one million dollars. Even with all of the financial and in-kind contributions, in the aftermath of the event, the club found itself with some World Cup debt to retire in the aftermath, which was accomplished within a few years.

An ongoing project of the Downtown Vernon Association has been to paint murals in prominent downtown locations, to portray significant people or events that have contributed to the growth and culture of the City or District. One of these murals is near the intersection of Highway 97 (32<sup>nd</sup> Street) and 32<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and portrays the development of cross country skiing here. Carl and Flora Wylie are pictured on the left, instrumental in getting the sport established here, outside the original cabin at Sovereign Lake, and then Bishop Sovereign, a Chairman of the Silver Star Park Board of Commissioners and advocate of outdoor recreation there. The mural (by Tyler Toews and Steven Skolka) also depicts a skier enjoying the Aberdeen trail on a sunny day, and World Cup racer in competition at Sovereign Lake.





**Cross – Country Skiing Mural in Downtown Vernon**

The ski club's competitive ski racing team virtually dominated the B.C. Championships during the 2000s, bringing home the team trophy from 2000 to 2005 and 2007-2009. Both the retired trophy (below) and the current one are kept at Cross County BC's offices in Vernon. During this period, the racing program operated independent of the club's other programs as XC Okanagan.



**B.C. Championships (old) trophy**

During the early part of the 2000s, club ski host Fraser Blundell of Vernon wrote regular columns appearing in the Vernon Morning Star titled "Sovereign Lake Nordic Notes." These articles helped publicize the attraction of cross-country skiing in Silver Star Provincial Park and helped generate excitement in the community about the club's various activities and events, including the establishment of night skiing and the kid's ski programs. Over the years, there have been 100s of articles in local news media, and an impressive number of

articles in other publications such as the Globe & Mail, Vancouver Sun, and New York Times about Nordic skiing in the North Okanagan, as well as regular spots in ski industry publications.

Against the backdrop of all the progress being made in the 2000s, relations between the Nordic club and adjacent Silver Star resort (then under new ownership) grew rather strained. There were divisions within the Nordic club as well, on issues such as skier development and growing emphasis on major racing programs. The inter-area relations were such that in the mid 2000s, it was not possible to purchase a dual area cross country ski pass at Silver Star or at Sovereign Lake for a couple of seasons, and skiers were forced to choose, or simply were confused. Many in the cross country ski community were perplexed and saddened by this state of affairs. Unthinkable in the early years, cross-country skiing – once the domain of a close knit group of friends – had become political, much to the detriment of the sport and to the long term success of both facilities. Fortunately, common sense and the shared love of winter sport prevailed, and history has proven that this era of strained relations was a temporary bump in a now impeccably groomed 105 km trail network.

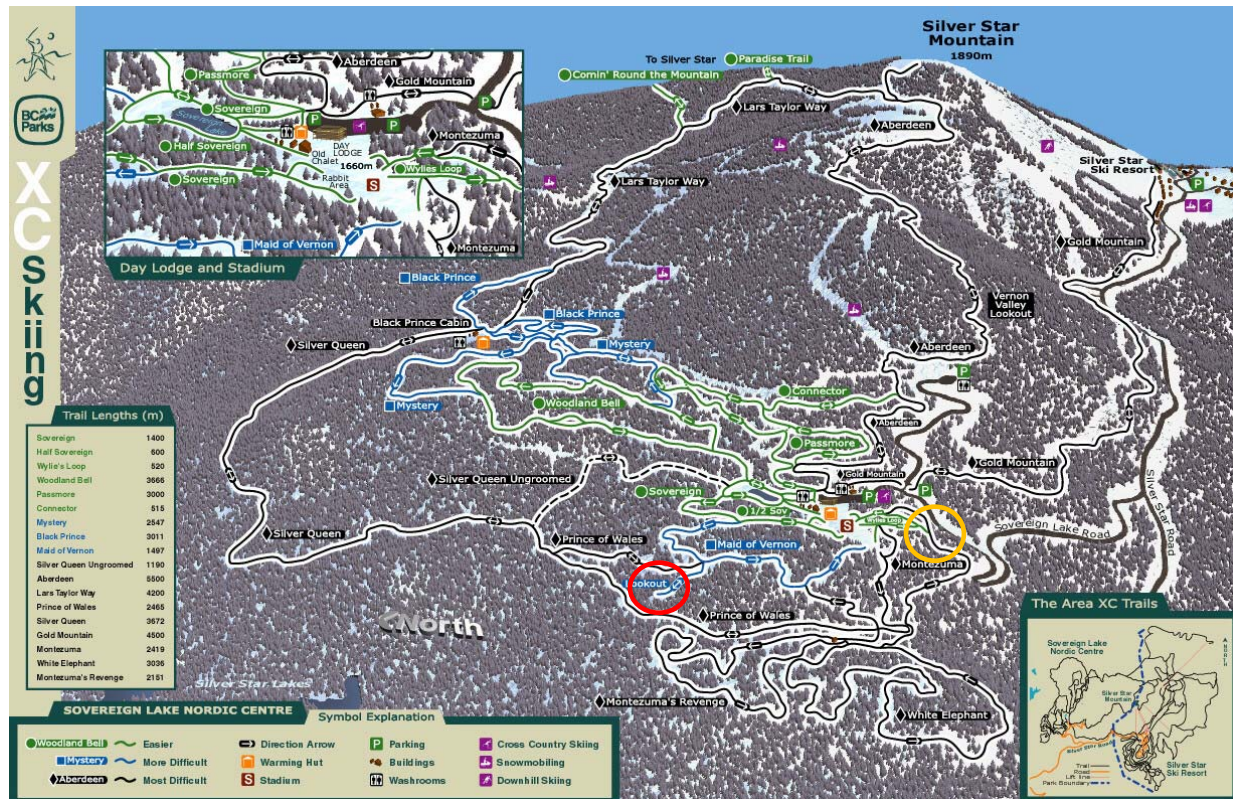
Sovereign Lake's Board of Directors hired Scott Lemon for the 2007-2008 season to take over for departing manager Mike Edwards. In the ensuing years, the club began to rebuild relations with Silver Star and before long, dual area passes would become available again, and the path was paved for the development of the partnership agreement that exists today between Silver Star and Sovereign (see 2010s for more on that partnership). Scott Lemon's time as general manager spanned six seasons, until 2014.

In 2008 a volunteer ski patrol was instituted at Sovereign Lake, as a result of the cooperation between Tom Tull of Silver Star Mountain's ski patrol and Brad Clements of SLNC. There were over 60,000 skier visits at Sovereign throughout the season, and it was necessary to have a patrol to keep track of them, especially in view of the large number of senior skiers. Tull proposed a plan whereby Sovereign Lake would partner with Silver Star's volunteer program, and have a dozen or so volunteers take first aid courses and toboggan and snowmobile training. Around this time, waxing benches were moved from the lodge to the old ticket office, which now serves the dual purpose of wax room and ski patrol base. The wax room has four benches, plenty of outlets for irons, lights and a wood stove for heat.

By the late 2000s, the trail network at Sovereign Lake offered a multitude of loop opportunities of varying lengths for skiers of different abilities, and were all well laid out, well-marked and well groomed, features favoured by almost all skiers. Nevertheless there has always been a more adventurous and distinctive group who liked to explore the large part of the Park not well known but ideal for exploration. In keeping with their distinctiveness and spirit of adventure a number of ungroomed trails were opened up in 2009 and mapped. Previously, this type of trail had included the so-called Silver Queen ungroomed that connected Sovereign with Silver Queen, which is now partly used for snowshoeing. There are now five backcountry (ungroomed) trails, totaling about 12 kilometres, marked but rough and unpatrolled. The trailheads are now well-signed, and the



club offers backcountry tours every few weeks through the season. Some trails were set by early members in the 1980's, but most were established twenty years later by long time club members Don Wylie and David Kennedy. In addition, the club provided a couple of narrow trails through the trees near the stadium for kids to explore, such as the Jungle Trail off of the end of Sovereign / Carl Wylie.



Oblique view looking north showing ~ 2009 map of the Sovereign Lake trail system (~ 50 km), not including snowshoe and backcountry trails.

Map notes: Note the former Silver Queen ungroomed trail and the Mystery Trail, the latter now part of the Carl Wylie trail. The former lookout (red circle) near the Prince of Wales / Maid of Vernon junction lost its view to growing trees and is no longer used. A new lookout (yellow circle) can be found near the end of the Montezuma trail as it approaches the day lodge. There is also a lookout about 1.5 km up the Aberdeen trail, which is labeled on the map.

By the late 2000s, typical recurring ski club events and offerings through the season included lantern ski evenings on Woodland Bell, the Poker Ski (first started around 2000), family days, kids Christmas camps, XC ski camps (Supercamp), Yoga and ski, Jackrabbit and skier development oriented programs and events such as kids pizza night and kids ski tournament, the Tips Up Cup recreational/fun race in February (known as the club championships), and the late season annual Loppet held in March, with the Loppet carrying on the tradition that began in January 1978 at the Stussi Farm, and with most seasons



capped off by an end of season barbecue in April. Work parties held every fall focused on preparing the lodge for the upcoming season, painting, repairs, and firewood splitting and stacking at the lodge and at Black Prince, carrying on a tradition that dated back to the beginnings. Groups of skiers from other Okanagan regional ski clubs such as Telemark, Larch Hills as well as those from further away (e.g. Hollyburn, Methow Nordics, and Ontario/Quebec) had by this time become perennial visitors to Sovereign Lake, especially for some of the club events such as Loppet but also during the early and late parts of the season when other areas had insufficient snow. To balance the interests of members, in general, it was decided to target three races / competitions per season. These typically have included the early season Nor-Am races in December, the Tips up in February and the March Loppet, with an occasional regional (e.g. B.C. Cup) national or world level event every few years or so. Nor-Ams attract national and provincial ski team interest and give the club a needed financial boost at the start of the season. The Loppet has become the season-closing event of a five (now six) event Interior Loppet regional series with high profile corporate sponsorship (currently, Kal-West).

During the 2000s, at neighbouring Silver Star, the resort continued former national coach Marty Hall's xc ski camp idea (first started in the late 1980s by Hall with Silver Star's Norm Crerar), and was bringing skiers to the mountain for early season ski camps with the oversight of then Silver Star Nordic manager Glenn Bond. In ever increasing numbers, cross country skiers began to notice that Silver Star and Sovereign Lake not only offered over 100 km of groomed trails, but was also blessed with high quality and generally reliable snowpacks, moderate temperatures, and a dedication to high quality trail grooming for both skate and classic skiing.

Also in 2008-2009, former National Team skier, and 1992 Olympian Darren Derochie was hired as the club's head coach. The head coach is assigned to work with a Board-appointed programs committee (which includes parents), and volunteer coaches to deliver the club's athlete development program for skiers aged 4 to 17, as well as over-30 master's skiers.



Longtime club member Jacquie Friesen in the stadium with a group of happy Jackrabbits, and a likeness of the rabbit himself, around 2000 (1983 warming hut in background)

## 2010s and beyond – the world comes to Sovereign

The 2010 Nordic events at the Winter Olympics were held at Callaghan Valley, close to Whistler, British Columbia, where the elevation of 900 metres was about half of that at Silver Star. The high altitude at Silver Star and Sovereign Lake provided the ideal training ground for the Olympic teams and cross country teams from Norway, Switzerland, Finland, Russia, Peru, the Czech Republic, Australia and New Zealand. The visiting athletes loved the high altitude and consistently good snow, and their presence gave local skiers an unexpected opportunity to see first-hand how the world's best train. The athletes also enjoyed the nearby accommodation and dining opportunities at Silver Star. Word was continuing to spread that the North Okanagan had one of the best Nordic destinations on the planet.

The North Okanagan Cross Country Ski Club had awarded Carl and Flora Wylie lifetime memberships in the late 1980s for their outstanding contributions. More than 20 years later, Sovereign Lake Nordic Club awarded the next lifetime membership to Carl and Flora's son Don Wylie in 2010. While both his parents Carl and Flora were instrumental in starting and maintaining cross country skiing in the North Okanagan, Don was equally deserving of recognition and never rested on the laurels of his parents. He had been an active member of the club for more than 20 years, involved in all aspects of the club, with perhaps his main energies going to trails and also in the support of all manner of race events, for which

Don and his wife Kathy were tireless volunteers. There is little that Don has not done, and his knowledge of the terrain at Sovereign is likely unsurpassed. He coached in the 1990s and also served a couple terms on the Board of Directors. In more recent times, Don put in a couple of stints as interim General Manager and also been employed as one of the club's regular groomers. (See Appendix I for some of Don's personal recollections).

Spearheaded by Don, a new trail was laid out in 2009, and named in honour of Don's father, Carl Wylie, and provided an easier return to the lodge from Black Prince, and was well used from the day it opened in 2009 as a single-track, becoming wider and smoother in time for the 2010-2011 season and forming part of the Master's World Cup Course, the Sovereign Loppet course and also the "early season" loop that also includes parts of Passmore, Woodland Bell and Sovereign trails. As a result of the opening of the 3.5 km Carl Wylie trail, the new grooming pattern meant that part of the old Mystery trail, where it climbs up the steep hill back to Woodland Bell would no longer be groomed. Many skiers who applauded the Carl Wylie trail opening were also sad to see "misery hill" go, while others don't miss it at all! At about this same time, the one-way ski direction on Woodland Bell and Passmore were reversed, to facilitate the requirements of the Masters World Cup. A short connection trail was also built in the Woodland Bell loop and at Montezuma's Revenge to keep the race course as easy as possible for the older skiers participating in the event. These connectors are now part of the regular grooming as they avoid some challenging hills for the average skier. The other major addition prior to the MWC was the construction of an overpass in the stadium to facilitate flow of skiers during the event. This structure has proven popular with recreational skiers as well as the junior athletes participating in the skier development programs.

In March 2011 the Sovereign Lake Nordic Club hosted the World Masters Cross Country Ski Races in conjunction with main sponsor Sparkling Hills Resort in Vernon – known as the Masters World Cup (MWC). The event was a series of mostly distance oriented (5 to 45 km) races for skiers over 30 years old, under the umbrella of the Canadian Masters Cross Country Ski Association and the World Masters Cross-country Ski Association. While the FIS World Cup Races of 2005 was large and attracted much publicity, the 2011 event was even larger but did not receive the proportionate publicity. It was held early in March and attracted about 1130 skiers from 23 countries, exclusive of the support staff, family and media. To sponsor the 2011 World Masters required strong local support and funding. Neither the federal or provincial governments contributed a great deal, but fortunately local government, the Regional District of North Okanagan, provided \$25,000. Importantly, the club emerged from the event without accumulating any debt through the disciplined budget controls advocated by the board and key volunteers. A group of approximately 20 dedicated Master's skiers based at Sovereign trained for and participated in the races with the women skiers bringing home 14 medals and men 4. The club volunteers and staff outdid themselves in 2011 by hosting the annual Loppet on Sunday March 12, the day after the week-long MWC ended, with near record numbers of skiers participating in the junior, recreational and 30 km categories in near perfect weather and snow conditions. Czech master's skier Petr Pavol won the Loppet, staying an extra day after the MWC a few fellow athletes including former Olympians Laura McCabe and Leslie Hall. Pavol beat out



Sovereign's own Dave Harbocian in what was to be the last Loppet to use Silver Queen. The "new" Loppet loop now includes two laps of the MWC 15 km course, comprised of two circuits of Woodland Bell-Passmore-Carl Wylie and a 5 km section of the Montezumas.



**Petr Pavol skis at the 2011 Sovereign Lake Loppet 12 March 2011**

For the MWC event all the major hotels in Silver Star and Vernon were booked, and the event coincided with the opening of title sponsor Sparkling Hill resort located in Vernon. To avoid congestion and relieve parking all competitors were bused from Vernon or Silver Star to Sovereign Lake. The courses were from 5 to 15 kilometres long, with no trail being used twice. To accommodate these needs the new Carl Wylie Trail had been opened up from the Black Prince Cabin to the stadium, a bridge was erected at the stadium to eliminate cross traffic, and a Bombardier 275 Groomer was acquired to provide faster grooming.



**The Masters World Cup Logo**

All in all the 2011 Masters Race was a great success. Bruce Cummings, the event chairperson, said: "It's just amazing. We knew we'd have a world-quality event at a world-quality facility, and to have it acknowledged by people who have been in the event for so long is really gratifying. The Germans said it was the best event in 24 years, the Russians said it was the best in the last 20, and so on. I'm just overwhelmed by their reaction." Once again it demonstrated that the snow conditions and terrain at Silver Star and Sovereign Lake were well suited for races, its accessibility and accommodation were completely adequate, and the core of race officials and volunteers within or available to the club showed that it was capable of sponsoring international, world-class cross country events.

At the end of the 2011 season, the club awarded its fourth lifetime service award to Einar Field, a fitting tribute to a great skier and an equally great volunteer and leader for the club in many areas. For more on Einar, see the biography in **Appendix II**.

In 2012 Western Snow Sports Magazine named Sovereign Lake Nordic Centre as one of the top five Nordic ski areas in North America. The citation noted that it has one of longest ski seasons stretching from Halloween to June. In addition the centre has hosted a number of professional events, has several world-renowned trails and has the perfect 5450 foot (1660 metre) elevation. Robert Carcelen, who represented Peru in the 2010 Winter Olympics said Sovereign "is generally considered by professionals as the best ski area on the planet". On the trails, new signs went in, with some indicating which way to go to the lodge or Black Prince cabin, and the distances of the most popular loops were measured and indicated on maps. Also in 2012, the BC Winter Games came to Vernon with Nordic events taking place at Sovereign Lake.

The club lost a popular staff member to a tragic accident in March 2012. Jessica Eaman worked as a seasonal employee in the lodge and with the school ski program. She especially loved working with the kids who visited Sovereign Lake. In her memory, a "Jess for Kids" fund was established and money was raised under the guidance of board member Jeff Bassett. Through a series of club sponsored and volunteer powered events, more than \$10,000 was raised and earmarked to promote and enable cross country skiing experiences for youth in the region who might otherwise not have the opportunity to be exposed to the sport. In 2013-14, the Jessica Trail was added near the stadium, intended to add to the existing "Jungle" kid-oriented adventure ski trails near the stadium. A new service award has also been instituted, the Jess Eaman volunteer coach of the year. The first recipient was Jaki Meeks (in 2012) for her work with the bunnies. Other service or participation awards typically include: club volunteer of year, staff above and beyond, skier/athlete of year, and 1000 km club pin.

In 2013, the Board of Directors awarded the fifth lifetime membership to Miriam Ryan, another long-time volunteer in a variety of club and Nordic centre activities, including race timing at the Loppet and other events; and an acknowledged expert in working with the sometimes befuddling Zone4 system. The club also responded to member feedback about skiing with dogs and initiated a trial dog loop on the Montezuma system with new signage;

which has been followed up with in 2014 by implementing dog trail passes and a clarified policy. Discontinuing use of Gold Mountain as a dog trail coincided with this change.

At the end of 2014, following some major turnover at the board of directors and a special election, the club hired Troy Hudson as the new General Manager. Troy came to the club from the Golden Nordic Ski Club where he had served as Vice-President and had played a major role in growing the sport in the Golden area. Most of the seasonal staff and key volunteers returned for the new ski season in the fall 2014 opening as well, which began uncharacteristically late on the 22 of November but still before virtually all other regional Nordic centres had snow. Meanwhile, Silver Star and Sovereign Lake were cooperating on a variety of programs, events, and dual area pass options with the goal being to attract more Silver Star oriented skiers to purchase upgrade passes for Sovereign, and vice-versa. This led to the dual-area Nordic Superpass, as well, for Nordic only skiers. The two ski areas signed annual agreements around operations, grooming, passes and importantly, the Supercamp program, which as of this writing is nearing completion of its third season under the new partnership agreement. There have been changes at Silver Star as well in recent years, with long-time management having moved on and a new General Manager, Ken Derpak taking over in 2014 and Guy Paulsen continuing in his role as Nordic manager, which he started in 2011.

During the first four weeks of the 2014-15 season, the club hosted the Sovereign Open races in early December, and then the Nor-Am races held two weeks later, the latter having been moved from Whistler (Callaghan) to Vernon due to lack of coastal snow, which had happened previously in 2008. After a challenging time for the club with changes at the board and management level, things seem poised for stability moving forward. At the end of the 2014-2015 season, founding club members Heinz and Liz Stussi donated their family's starting bell, used to start the first 30 km marathon in 1978, to the club. At the same meeting, in a heartwarming ceremony, the club awarded lifetime memberships to the Stussis for their long-term dedication and commitment to the club.

### The Future of SLNC - Strategic Plan...New Day Lodge, and More

In 2011, under the leadership of the Board of Directors and its Chair Pat Pearce, the club embarked on a strategic planning process led by a volunteer committee headed up by Patrick Tobin, with committee member Bruce Sandilands coordinating. This process involved many meetings and considerable consultation with club members, culminating in the publication of the "Sovereign Futures" Plan for 2012-2017 (2012), which identified a vision for the ski club and the Nordic Centre. The strategic plan recognized the many facets of the ski club and its operations that had expanded over the years to one of the busiest cross country ski clubs in Canada. The plan identified the need for a new day lodge, improved parking, the realignment of the Gold Mountain trail to create an easier connection between the Day Lodge and Silver Star village, and a balancing of the need to maintain the



informal ski club ambience with the ever-expanding reputation of “world class” skiing and the emergence of Silver Star and Sovereign Lake a major Nordic ski destination in North America.

As of this writing, plans are in the works for the next phase of improvements to the ski facilities at Sovereign Lake and this is occurring while Silver Star makes its own strong commitment to the sport as well, having just constructed a beautiful warming hut “Chaptik cabin” strategically located in a sunny area at the junction of the Lars Taylor, Alder Point, and Comin’ Round the Mountain Trails, very close to the Sovereign Lake / Silver Star Park / Silver Star Resort boundary. Emblematic of the spirit of cooperation between the two entities is the presence of historic ski photos gracing the walls of the beautiful new cabin, donated by SLNC. As of this writing (spring 2015) plans continue for a new Sovereign Day Lodge to be built around the exiting technical building as well as improvements in parking and in a realignment to the Gold Mountain trail connecting Sovereign to Silver Star village.

Club committees active over the years have evolved as the needs of the club and its operations have changed. In the early years, the focus was on trails, facilities, and club events. This expanded to operations in 1990 when the club assumed responsibility for the Nordic centre. In recognition of an ever expanding and more complex operation, the Board of Directors instituted a number of committees to oversee and contribute to club and Nordic centre activities. The current volunteer driven and usually board-led committees cover such topics as Finance, Policy, Bylaws, Lodge and Facility Planning, Programs, Human Resources, Sponsorship, Competitions, Communications, and History. The need for volunteers is continuous and so there is also a Volunteers committee. Of particular importance is continuous recruitment and development of volunteer ski coaches and volunteers to help the club host various races. The races, ranging from the Tips Up and Loppet to larger scale events, all require technical expertise with timing, course design, and event-specific grooming, and are also events and require organization of a large number of volunteers.

In addition to committees, the board uses task forces to address specific issues, along with surveys to regularly check in with membership about progress on important issues, as well as on implementing the strategic plan. Maintaining healthy and productive relationships with B.C. Parks, Silver Star, club sponsors, members, visitors, and other key partners (e.g. Cross Country B.C.) is an ongoing responsibility shared by the Board and the General Manager. The next few years of the club should be an exciting time. With more and more skiers choosing to come to Silver Star Provincial Park and with snow becoming less reliable at other locales, we can expect Sovereign Lake to remain one of Canada’s busiest ski clubs for many years to come.



National and Olympic-Level Skiers Compete in a Nor-Am race at Sovereign Lake, December 2014  
That's American Olympian and National Ski Team Member Kris Freeman in the lead.





Here's to another 40 years of great skiing to come!!

## APPENDIX I

### Recollections, Acknowledgements and Sources of information

As the account was being compiled skiers recalled incidents or experiences that added a personal touch, but did not fit anywhere, but needed to be included. Here are some of them:

- “I do so as a member who can recall when the Club was much smaller, when our finances were limited, when our activities were very much different, and when our resources consisted almost entirely of our members. It was this group that had the foresight to see not only the great potential skiing area in our back yard at Silver Star, but also the attractiveness of the Okanagan and the increased demand for cross-country skiing.” Peter Tassie, in a presentation to Fred Taylor, April 6th, 1995
- “The government said it would never be a ski area because it’s facing the sun, but look at it now.” Flora Wylie, August 26, 2005
- “Making campfires with my Dad when the Club would go on the tours was one of the fondest memories.” Don Wylie, 2013
- “When I was building the backcountry trails I was by myself and always wet due to hitting the trees with an axe and all the snow dumping on me. So when I started to come back, I would go backwards on the trails trying to find the shortest way back. The neatest sight is when it’s a clear day, and when the sun is just going over the horizon, and it’s as gold as gold could get and all the tips of the trees are absolutely golden. It’s not the big sunsets - it’s the gold. That is what I will remember - being cold and wet, but being rejuvenated.” Don Wylie, 2013
- “Going out for a ski at sunset, when it is just starting to get dark and the sun is setting. We always hoped to see the moon, but never did and there would be a potluck dinner waiting for us when we got back.” Kathleen Wilson
- The people I met”. LaVerne Kinney
- “It was all about community when the NOCCSC first started. We did it for the club not for ourselves.” Heinz Stussi



# Acknowledgements and Sources of Information

**“All of this I have seen. Part of it I am” – Aeneas, from The Aeneid, by Virgil**

The reader who has reached this point will have surely realized that within these pages dwell the spirits of a great many individuals who love the sport of cross-country skiing. Like the building of the ski club itself, the compilation of this history is the work of many individuals, some years in the making, with the key contributors acknowledged here, without diminishing the significance of others who contributed by actually creating the history in the first place. Earlier efforts to start recording the club history included a brief summary written by Carl and Flora Wylie in the late 1980s, followed by Ted Hoyte’s 1990s summary. Nicole Gobeil jump started the effort that culminated in this detailed history booklet by conducting research and several interviews to create a written history as a Thompson Rivers University term project in 2012-2013. This is available on the Province of B.C. Ecological Reports Catalogue “Ecocat”.

Upon completion, Nicole turned her work over to the club to develop further. At this point, Doug Geller convened a small committee of individuals with knowledge about the club’s earlier years. Club member from the early days Peter Tassie provided significant contributions to the history of the club in its formative years during the 1970s and 80s. He coordinated a series of interviews with several club members from this era in March 2014, and along with Kathy Wylie, provided an edited document in December 2014. From December 2014 to April 2015, Doug Geller made a series of edits, written contributions to history from 2000 to present, conducted some additional interviews with Heinz Stussi, and the Wylies, and also collected, scanned and inserted most of the photos included here, and created the format for the document. Club member and professional photographer Jeff Bassett kindly submitted a few of his photos from the recent years to complement the vintage (scanned) photos included. The final manuscript benefited from proofreading and suggested edits provided by anonymous reviewers. The photos herein are being organized into a slide show that can be given at club events.

Photo credits: from club archives, Heinz and Liz Stussi collection, open web sources, submitted photos by Doug Geller (various), and Jeff Bassett (photo on front cover page, photos on page 34 (bottom), page 35 and page 65)

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A Brief History of the North Okanagan Cross Country Ski Club, written by Carl and Flora Wylie, approximately in 1988, from club archives

A History of Sovereign Lake Ski Area Development, compiled by Ted Hoyte, approximately in 1995, from club archives

## Sources of Information and Acknowledgements

### For Peter Tassie, December 2014

Keith Brewis, Vernon  
Paul Jones, Vernon  
John Kuly, Vernon  
Lloyd Mitchell, Vernon  
Heinz Stussi, Vernon  
Kathy Wylie, Vernon  
Derek Thompson, Victoria

## APPENDIX II

### Short Biographies of Five Selected Club Members

In this section, we profile five club members who individually and collectively embodied the community spirit and love of the sport that have made Sovereign Lake what it is today: **the late Carl Wylie, Heinz Stussi, the late Einar Field, the late Rita Haaheim, and Keith Brewis.** When we consider the sum of their contributions to our club and to the sport, these five were truly trailblazers in every sense of the word, combining their energies and skills to create what became one of the great ski clubs in Canada.

A special thank-you to Susan Spiller, who spoke for many long-time club members by encouraging that these stories to be recorded here, and to Eleanor Marshall (Carl Wylie's life story) Peter Tassie (Rita Haaheim tribute), Bjorn Meyer (Einar Field story) Lloyd Mitchell (Keith Brewis story), Heinz, and Keith, and the families of all our great club members for allowing us to tell their stories. For those who knew / know any of these individuals, few would argue with their inclusion here. The risk in calling special attention to a few is that others may feel slighted. The editor wishes for the reader to understand that inclusion of these biographical sketches is not in any way intended to discount the contributions made by the large number of dedicated club members who are not profiled. Perhaps a future edition of the club history could include stories about others as well, for there is no shortage of people who have made (and continue to make) significant contributions to the club and the sport of cross country skiing in the North Okanagan.



#### Carl Wylie (1916-2008)

As we have already seen, any story about the beginnings of skiing around Vernon must include Carl Wylie. It is fitting that one of Sovereign's most popular trails now bears his name.

Founder of the Silver Star Ski Club and long-time member of the Sovereign Lake Nordic Club, Carl Wylie was 91 when he passed away on January 13, 2008 surrounded by family. He was a grandchild of early pioneers on both sides of the family. His grandparents Mary Jane and Joseph Wylie arrived in 1905 from



their homestead in Saskatchewan and his mother Pearl's family (Glover) came in 1884 also from Saskatchewan. He was also a descendent of United Empire Loyalists. Carl was born in 1916 to Pearl and Charlie Wylie and spent his entire life in Vernon. He lost his mother in 1931 and his father raised four children on his own during the Depression. Carl slept outside in a tiny shed year round and remembered catching fish with his bare hands in the irrigation ditches on the Tennant Farm adjacent to the family home on 30th Avenue now owned by daughter Shannon. Brought up in a strict Methodist family, Carl was not allowed to play games on Sundays. He helped on his grandparent's farm and regularly scaled the cliffs behind the house without his father's knowledge. He attended Park Elementary School from 1922-1930 and Vernon Senior High from 1931-34 and saw his first movie in 1926 with Charlie Chaplin. He sang in the Church choir, played the violin in the Symphony and acted in drama productions. Carl took up skiing at the age of 13 and continued until his early 80's.

Skiing fever was ignited in Vernon in 1929 when a major demonstration-jumping event featuring World Champion Nels Nelson was staged on the hill near Kin Race Track. During the following years it was commonplace for Carl to be seen skiing on the hills around Vernon. Visible in the background were the snowy slopes of Silver Star first skied on in 1921 by Bert Thorburn and Tini Ryan. In 1930 Bill Osborn, David Ricardo and Mike Freeman skied to the summit of Silver Star and stayed overnight in the Forestry Lookout. They were followed at Easter in 1934 by 18- year old Carl Wylie and three others who spent four days skiing in the same area. At that time the upper slopes were completely open as a result of a huge forest fire at the turn of the century. Carl came home from this outing full of enthusiasm about the possibilities of future skiing on Silver Star. Many trips followed.

The Silver Star Ski Club was formed in 1938 with Carl its first president. The City of Vernon donated an old cabin located near Sovereign Lake and renovations started immediately. With the cabin located three miles beyond the road, work parties hiked in, backpacking boards, windows, shakes and stoves up the rugged trail. The cabin became a weekend home for skiers from all over the Okanagan. Carl and his wife Flora remember staging races down the narrow trail on the way home with skiers from all over the Valley competing for the Vernon News Trophy. Carl and his friends used homemade skis made from spruce boards shaped on a backyard steam box. Leather toe straps served as bindings. Car gas was 35 cents a gallon (that's about 10 cents a litre) and bread five to ten cents a loaf. Carl loved to tell the story of the weekend when the cabin was so full that one fellow decided to sleep outside in the snow. When he woke up in the morning there were cougar tracks around him.

The difficult access to the Star kept many skiers away so the Club developed a mid-winter ski area on Birnie Range above Okanagan College. The club was the third in British Columbia to have a rope tow, which was 900 feet long and powered by a Ford V8 engine. A small jump and cabin were also erected. The Club organized the first annual Okanagan Valley Championship on Birnie Range February 19, 1939. It was a four-part event consisting of cross-country skiing, slalom, downhill and jumping and was a great success with 1500 spectators and 75 competitors. Diminishing snowfalls meant a move to Keefer Gulch on Coldstream Ranch property but it was forced to move again to the nearby Palmer property in Lavington in 1949 at the request of the Ranch owners in England. Members skied at Lavington on a 1200 foot tow until 1955 when two years of no snow sent them to Silver Star, this time with a completed all weather road which Carl's father Charles had been involved in as member of the Board of Trade. The club moved their rope tow to Christie Shoulder on the western ridge of Silver Star and for two years the Club operated its rope tow and small shelter on the ridge. In 1958 Silver Star was designated a Class C Park and for the first time private capital was used for the development of winter facilities. Silver Star Sports Ltd. was formed and many of the members of the original Club became directors of the company. Carl did not have the funds to become a director but continued to enjoy many more years of downhill skiing.

Carl remembered the Depression as a time of hard work and little money. After graduating from high school in 1934 he joined his father's contracting business working for 25 cents an hour. He recalled

hoboes begging for food or work. After attending business school, Carl worked for a local realty company for forty-five dollars per month before joining the Beatty Bros. Washing Machine Company in Vernon where he noticed a gorgeous young lady newly arrived from Kamloops, Flora Blackburn. He introduced Flora to skiing and soon she was trail clearing and skiing with the ski club. In April 1941 they were married. They spent their honeymoon skiing on Mt. Revelstoke for a week, staying in Heather Lodge, which was on the summit. As the road was not kept open during the winter it was necessary to ski there from the bottom of the mountain.

With the outbreak of World War 2 in 1939, Carl joined the Royal Canadian Artillery in 1942, but being anxious to serve overseas transferred to the infantry, which brought him back to Camp Vernon for further training. While stationed at the Battle Drill School in Coldstream he took part in battle drill exercises using live ammunition and mock battles, leaving many unexploded shells still found today. He was transferred to Georgia, USA in preparation for a move to the battlegrounds but the dropping of the atomic bombs on Japan in 1945 ended his military career. After three years of service and with the rank of Lieutenant, Carl returned to Vernon and his family, which now included two young daughters who were very suspicious of the stranger who had come to live with them. He took up skiing again and to feed his family would go hunting on his bicycle in the Tillicum area on BX Creek, as he had no car. Once bagging a deer, he flagged down a car and asked them to take it to his house. Not knowing the fellow, Carl raced as fast as he could on his bike in order to keep the car in sight.

After returning to Vernon, Carl found employment with the Okanagan Telephone Company in 1945 where he stayed for thirty-five years until his retirement in 1980 as Customer Service Manager for B.C. Telephone. He remembers the 1950's as a time of low-income and steady advancement, obtaining his CGA designation, and skiing and camping. He bought his first car, a Chevy Bel Air, in 1954 for \$600. Two more children were born, Don and Eleanor. By this time Flora was tired of dragging four kids on camping and fishing trips and so they bought their lakeshore property on Eagle Bay of Shuswap Lake in 1959. On weekends Carl worked on a beautiful cabin, which was ambitious for the times, digging the basement and mixing concrete by hand without the benefit of electricity. Carl had fond memories of wonderful family summers at the lake, which by this time included a fifth child, Shannon. Carl's brother Doug bought adjoining property in the 60's with combined family fondly calling the place Wylie-ville. "The Cabin" has been a gathering point for four generations of Wylie's, which Carl and Flora oversaw with great pleasure.

In 1974 Keith Brewis started the North Okanagan Cross Country Ski Club and encouraged Carl to take up the sport. Park regulations prevented them from cutting wide trails for skiing so instead they would make their trails with their skis, throwing off a few bushes when they would go unnoticed. Carl became the Trails Chairman, a position he held for the next 20 years, putting in thousands of hours of volunteer time. As the Club continued to grow, Carl was instrumental in designing and building the first 40 kilometers of ski trails at Sovereign this time with Parks approval. He also enjoyed many hunting and fishing trips to Bella Coola, the Thompson River and elsewhere.

Carl retired from BC Tel in 1980 and was busier than ever developing trails, renovating his home, gardening and racing the ski circuit. He and Flora travelled the world for competitions and enjoyment. In 1985 they competed in World Masters in Hirschau, Germany (see photo below of Flora and Rita Haaheim at this event) where he was 19<sup>th</sup> in the 30 km and 22<sup>nd</sup> in the 15 km event, in the 65 to 69 age group, although the officials missed his finish, and his time was not officially recorded. This was one of his big regrets. Carl and Flora entered competitions all over B.C. and were regulars at the Cariboo Marathon at 100 Mile House, in the days it was almost 60 kilometres long. Carl and Flora accumulated an amazing collection of medals as they raced into their late 70's. While in her sixties, Flora (1918-2012) was a regular competitor in other races including the 50 km Cariboo Marathon, and was a seven time Masters World Cup medalist. Through the years, Carl continued his many family fishing trips to Bamfield, Spences Bridge and Bridge River where he caught his largest salmon at 42 pounds. Carl

stressed the importance of continuing physical activity into later years of life and often stated, “There is no reason why you can’t stay fit in your old age”. He and Flora proved that could be done, and he always looked at least ten years younger than his actual age. His children remember trying to ski with him and being left in the snow. Not surprisingly, all of Carl and Flora’s five children and nine grandchildren are avid cross-country skiers. Two grandchildren, Matt Wylie and Alysson Marshall share their love of racing and are among the top juniors in Canada. Carl was immensely proud of all his grandchildren who excel in a variety of areas. His one young great-grandchild Ethan also enjoys skiing. Carl reluctantly gave up skiing in his early 80’s but loved to watch his grandchildren race. In August 2005 Carl and Flora were deeply honoured when a photo of them from 1938 in front of the old ski cabin at Sovereign Lake was used in the mural project (mentioned earlier) honouring Vernon’s skiing history as part of the World Cup celebrations. It is an excellent likeness. Carl was a committed community volunteer in multiple other areas including holding executive positions in the Lions Club, Telephone Pioneers, Winter and Summer Games Committees, Vernon and District Chamber of Commerce, Scouts Canada, North Okanagan Cross-Country Ski Club and Board of Variance for the City of Vernon. He loved music and enjoyed the Okanagan Symphony and Community Concerts. He embodied a work ethic second to none and a sense of adventure. He had a wonderful productive life and said, “As I look back on growing up in Vernon, I feel we had the very best of times, despite the Depression, wars and other problems. I can’t think of a better place in which to live.”

## Heinz Stussi

“Recollections of Cross Country Skiing coming to the North Okanagan”



**Heinz and Liz Stussi, pictured at left in their Vernon home in early 2015,  
holding the cow bell used by the club in early races**

**Pictured to the right is Heinz, at the Stussi Farm in the late 1970s with the bell**

(In yet another of his numerous contributions to the club, Heinz recently donated the bell to the club to preserve this symbol of club heritage)

One of the key founding members of the ski club, Heinz grew up in Riedern, Switzerland in the 1950s outside the main city of Glarus. At an early age he learned to ski when he could walk like most Swiss people at the time and this eventually led to ski racing. He skied both cross-country and downhill. At the

age of 15 he had taken an apprenticeship as a sheet metal mechanic and plumber. At 19 he had to enlist in the Swiss Army, where he served in the cavalry.

Shortly after his 20<sup>th</sup> birthday he and a close friend immigrated to Canada and arrived in Vancouver on May 1<sup>st</sup> 1967 where he started working as a roofer. Then in 1968 Heinz took a trip to Mexico for the Olympic Games. After four months in Mexico he returned to Vancouver.

In March of 1969 Heinz landed a job in Seattle as a sheet metal mechanic at a shipyard for 13 months. On weekends he worked as a guide at a ranch in Maple Valley, a community about 50 kilometres southeast of Seattle, taking people out on horseback. On the weekends in winter he was a ski instructor at Alpentel near Snoqualmie Pass in Washington State.

In the spring of 1970 the shipyard job ended and Heinz returned to Vancouver, where he got the desire to buy a piece of property so that he could build his own log cabin. That was when he bought 122 acres on Cedar Hill Road, near Falkland, on June 1, 1970. That summer he built the log cabin using cedar logs that he cut down by hand on his own property.

In the fall of 1970 Heinz started to work for Karl's Sport Haus in Vernon. This is where he met Keith Brewis, a community minded sports leader interested in cross country skiing. That meeting turned into a friendship that would last a lifetime, and not just for the benefit of Heinz and Keith, but from the leadership that arose from their success in initiating cross country skiing in the North Okanagan and giving it a proper start.

It was also while working at Karl's that Heinz was approached by Everard Clarke, who asked him to accompany and direct him to well-known and successful ski resorts in Europe. Mr. Clarke was a prominent Vernon businessman and community leader interested in developing Silver Star into a going concern as a ski resort. Early in 1973 the two spent a month in Europe, in a successful and informative tour starting in Switzerland then to Italy, Yugoslavia and back to Switzerland. On the way back Heinz picked up two pairs of cross-country skis, one of which was old racing skis, to this day hanging in Stussi Sports.

In November of 1973 Heinz introduced Keith to the sport of cross country skiing. After that introduction to the wonderful sport, Keith and his wife Joan and Heinz decided to start a cross country ski club. In January 1974 Keith went to the Vernon Ski Club to see if they would be interested in introducing a cross-country branch to the club. The President, Al Goldie, said it was too late for the season but to come back in the fall. So in the fall of 1974 Keith went back to the Vernon Ski Club, which didn't want to get involved, but gave Keith \$300 to start up a club on its own. (That sum would be over \$1,500 in today's dollars).

Shortly after that, in the fall of 1974, the group interested in cross-country skiing had their first meeting in the old Fulton School, at the north end of Polson Park, and now demolished, and about 20 people showed up. There were Keith and Joan Brewis, Heinz Stussi and Elisabeth Brand (whom Heinz had met earlier in Davos), Al Melland, Carl and Flora Wylie, Svend Kristensen, Ken and Kathleen May, Evelyn Tebo, Edith Bawtree along with a few more. Later on Keith came up with the name North Okanagan Cross Country Ski Club, because we had members from all over the North Okanagan.

The attractive young lady that Heinz met in Davos, Switzerland in January 1974, while working there as a downhill ski instructor, was Elisabeth Brand, and she and Heinz married in the spring of 1975. Heinz also realized the increasing popularity of cross-country skiing, and knew that at that time one could not buy any cross-country ski equipment in the Okanagan. This is when he decided to ship into Vernon from Switzerland 70 pairs of cross country skis, 100 pairs of boots, 70 pairs of bindings and 70 pairs of poles. On October 1, 1974 Heinz and Elisabeth started Stussi Sport in downtown Vernon as the first cross



country specialty store in the Okanagan. Some years later they moved the business to its current and highly convenient location at the base of Silver Star Road.

The first winter they had 12 pairs of rental equipment available for people to try out. By the end of the first season almost all of the equipment brought in from Switzerland was sold. Stussi Sport also became the information centre for the newly formed cross country ski club, later on selling season passes and Jack Rabbit registrations. Both of Heinz and Elisabeth's children, Sarah and Steven, went through the Jack Rabbit program as well.

Living at their Cedar Hill farm, the Stussi's decided in 1975 to build a small cabin and make their 122 acre farm a cross country ski centre. In the summer of 1976 an 1800 sq. ft. lodge was built on the property with overnight accommodation. The building was used for the Ski School and the first annual North Okanagan Cross Country Ski Club Marathon was held on January 15, 1978. In 1982 the Stussi's closed the Cedar Hill Cross Ski Centre down and moved the Ski Centre to Sovereign Lake. At that point Heinz worked his way up to Level 4 Instructor-Examiner for the Canadian Association of Nordic Ski Instructors.

After 30 years in the business, Heinz and Elisabeth sold Stussi Sport in 2004 to Theresa Korobanik and Ron Metza. Theresa and Ronnie are also very supportive and involved with the ski club and do an excellent job with Stussi Sport. They regularly hold wax clinics and demo days, and at times the Stussi parking lot at the base of Silver Star Road is a meeting place for parents dropping their kids off or picking them up from programs. After more than 40 years, the Stussi name remains synonymous with cross country skiing around Vernon.

Looking back, it is with the fondest of memories that Heinz and Elisabeth recollect their association with the North Okanagan and cross country skiing, from the very beginnings of starting the North Okanagan Cross Country Ski Club, bringing in the first cross country ski equipment from Switzerland and starting Stussi Sport, and nowadays enjoying the trails, particularly, says Liz, the Carl Wylie trail. After a lot of hard work, with many challenges, it was very satisfying and gratifying but most of all it was fun! We have met so many wonderful people over our years of involvement with the Club. The formerly named North Okanagan Cross Country Ski Club, now the renamed Sovereign Lake Nordic Club, is part of our family, and we look forward to many more years of skiing enjoyment. Heinz appreciates that the Board of Directors and club management must navigate through many complexities and obstacles in order to keep the club viable.

**GREAT JOB EVERYONE! – “HAPPY SKIING”**

Heinz and Elisabeth Stussi



**Einar and Grethe Field**

## **Einar Field (1935-2013)**

(contributions by Bjorn Meyer)

To Sovereign Lake Nordic Club Members: "A giant tree in our forest has fallen. Left behind is a large empty space, which will be very hard to fill."

Einar Field was born on May 2, 1935 at Raufoss, Norway, the eldest son of Oscar and Anna Fjeld, and grew up on a beautiful farm that overlooked the valley below. He received his first pair of skis at the age of two and that first day he started making laps around the house. True to form, he would not stop to come in and eat, so his mother had to take food out to him.

After graduating from high school and business school, Einar was accepted into the Norwegian Army's Training School for infantry officers, a rigorous 12 months physical and academic training program, followed by compulsory service of minimum six months length as sergeant-instructor in an infantry unit. In the following years Einar was also called out as platoon commander (lieutenant) in a large winter manoeuvre involving thousands of troops.

Einar would often say to me that the military training he received was the best thing in his life, teaching him leadership, decision making, team work, self-reliance, physical and mental skills and endurance, toughness, discipline, communication skills, etc. His friends will recognize many of these skills in the Einar that we all cherished.

Like many young Europeans, Einar came to Canada in the years after World War II. He came in 1957 and after only two weeks found employment with B.C. Hydro. He did not know it then but it turned out to be a great match for both parties. Speaking of matches, Einar had known for several years one of several pretty daughters in a nearby family, Grethe. I suspect that by the time he left Norway she had promised to await his return. In 1961 he travelled to Norway from Fort St. John and returned there where they were married.

Einar's career in B.C. Hydro blossomed and resulted in many transfers throughout the province, while steadily being promoted up the corporate ladder. Along the way they were blessed with two healthy children, Mariann in 1962 and son Dag in 1963. All the moves made Einar, Grethe, Mariann and Dag very adaptable to new conditions and the children soon had to get used to new schools and friends. As Einar was so often busy, Grethe often had the heavy task of being the decision maker and choosing where to live. In his career he was made Vice-President of Human Resources and later Vice-President Customer Service. He created a fitness program for workers and management that spread throughout B.C. Hydro and has been copied in many other large organizations. Even though he was management's

man, his reputation for fairness and knowledge made even some of the labour unions seek his advice on several matters.

In 1992, when faced with even great opportunities with the company, Einar decided to retire at age 57 when still in good health. Throughout his life he had always kept himself in excellent physical condition. When in Vancouver he would often go for his morning run at 5:00 AM before being at the office at 7:00.

After retiring Einar and Grethe had more time for family and friends, as well as the outdoors. In the summer they were able to return to Norway to live on the family farm, which they had retained, and visit family and friends.

The Sovereign Lake Nordic Club benefited from Einar's time and energies in a multitude of ways. He became a member in 1976 and was Vice-President or President from 1984 to 1988, and a director in the following years, most recently in the mid 2000s. Most of his contributions are in the many areas he has mentored new people in the various duties and tasks that need to be done. Countless are the cases within or outside the club where a fair person was needed to resolve an issue or problem between two parties. Einar was such a person and often the only one who had the knowledge and trust of both parties. His presence is sorely missed.

Einar was also a mentor to people outside the club. He has a close working relationship with Cross Country BC in administrative matters, programs and racers. He also worked with Cross Country Canada and had often been consulted by the national body. He was awarded the Dave Rees Award in 2010 for his long time contribution to cross country skiing in Canada. The following year Einar received the lifetime service award from Sovereign Lake Nordic Club, one of only three such awards given to date.

As a volunteer in the club there was hardly a job that Einar did not do, both the menial ones and the chiefs of the different tasks, including chief of race. He headed up task forces of various kinds over the years to solve some problem or another.

Einar's physical strength and toughness were tested and demonstrated through:

- A ski and sled expedition of 200 km across seven glaciers from Atlin, B.C. to tidewater at Juneau, Alaska
- Competing in the Cariboo Marathon for 32 years
- Competing in the Reino Keski-Salmo Race at Salmon Arm's Larch Hills for 30 years
- Skiing during the season at Sovereign Lake almost every day – normally 20 km in all weather
- Competing in the original Birkebeiner Race of 56 km for 10 years
- Competing twice in the Troll Marathon of 95 km
- Competing several times in the Vasa Loppet in Sweden
- Competing several times in the Skarve Race in Norway – 40 km of skating, much uphill

Einar died on October 16, 2013 at the Vernon, B.C. Hospice and was survived by his loving wife Grethe, children Mariann and Dag, and four grandchildren. His influence on cross country skiing and the Sovereign Lake Nordic Club was passed on through his decisiveness, leadership, fairness, knowledge, modesty, toughness and friendship. While not everyone in the Sovereign Nordic Club knew him, they should be aware of his contribution and how he helped to make it a better club.

"If you live your life right,  
Once around is enough!" — Einar Field

# Rita Haaheim

December 1, 1932 to March 29, 2005

The following is taken from a tribute for Rita given by club member Peter Tassie at the Celebration of Life for Rita at the Bethel Funeral Chapel in Vernon, B.C. on April 4th, 2005.

I met Rita through cross country skiing in 1975, when a small but enthusiastic group, which became the North Okanagan Cross Country Ski Club, met in the basement of the Vernon High School in Polson Park. The school has now been demolished, but the memories and associations with the group remain, and many of that time are here today.

In those days Sovereign Lake was not easily accessible and the club outings were usually to other places – Postill Lake, Skimikin (near Salmon Arm), Keefer Lake, Revelstoke and often to the Stussi farm near Falkland. However it soon became apparent that the ultimate site was Silver Star Mountain, where some members had skied in the 1930's, and it was there that we really got started. The small but dedicated group put their heart and soul into Sovereign Lake, and created what is now the best cross country skiing in the Province, if not in Canada. That group that became the North Okanagan Cross Country Ski Club worked hard, with little recognition or publicity, with minimal outside assistance. At the same time there was tremendous satisfaction derived from doing something not just for their benefit, but for a broader community.

In those formative years, Rita was always there, helping out in one way or another, but was at her best with social events, receptions, food and drink at the end of the loppets, cheering on the competitors, and often skiing herself. She was one of the Directors when the club became a Society in 1979. When the club used to charter a bus to the Cariboo Marathon she was in the marathon, placing at or close to the top of her class. She regularly skied the Cariboo Marathon, events at Larch Hills and in the North Okanagan Ski Marathon. And then going to the party in the pub at 114 Mile House or somewhere else. Never mind – there would always be a party, and Rita would always be there.

As time went on, Rita and others of her time became less involved with the club, now Sovereign Lake Nordic Club. As might be expected the facilities were expanded to accommodate the increased popularity and growing numbers. And included in the facilities was a lighted track illuminated with poles and lights largely provided by donation. Rita gave one of the poles, located on the Passmore Trail, and it was gratifying to Rita and some of her friends to be able to see the pole, with her name attached to it, in January of 2005, not long before her passing on March 29, 2005.





**Rita (left) pictured here with Flora Wylie, at the World Masters in Germany 1985**

One of Rita's favourite tours was up Aberdeen, then down Lars Taylor Way to the Black Prince Cabin, and then back to the day lodge at Sovereign Lake. After all the hard work up Aberdeen, the delightful run down Lars Taylor Way and the pause at Black Prince cabin were especially enjoyable. It was these moments that I think she treasured and how I would like to think of her. More importantly I remember Rita and others of her time for their unstinting efforts in establishing the basis for the unsurpassed facilities we now have at Sovereign Lake and the opportunities that are now available to so many people to enjoy the wonderful sport of cross country skiing. A few of the many items donated to the club in Rita's memory are shown on the following page.





## Keith Brewis

(contributions by Lloyd Mitchell)

We close our tribute to five of our most influential ski club members with none other than Keith Brewis. Not only did Keith form the North Okanagan Cross Country Ski Club, he was also instrumental in the original development of the Kokanee Swim Club and the Vernon District Slow-Pitch League. Fittingly, in 2012 he was inducted into the Okanagan Sports Hall of Fame (see picture on following page).

Keith was ever a visionary and one who acted on his insights. In January 1974 Keith took the first step in NOCCSC's development when he spoke to the Silver Star Ski Club inquiring as to their interest in promoting a cross country skiing branch. He had been encouraged in this initiative by Heinz Stussi who had introduced Keith to cross country skiing, as well as by Joan, Keith's ever-supporting wife. The club told him to return in the fall as it was too late to consider in their current year plans. Keith did as requested and in the fall meeting the ski club said it wasn't interested in a cross country skiing branch, but would give him \$300 to start a club of its own. Keith did just that! Twenty or so enthusiastic persons turned out in the fall of 1974 for the foundational meeting that led to the establishment of the North Okanagan Cross Country Ski Club. For the next three years the NOCCSC functioned as a group of skiers keen on enjoying the rise of a new skiing experience by outings at Postill Lake, Hunter's Range, the Monashee Mountains, Revelstoke and other North Okanagan sites. In 1977 a Board of Directors was formed and Keith was elected its first president. As we have already learned, the club used the Stussi Farm on the Vernon side of Falkland as their main ski area for more than five years. In 1982 the club moved from the farm to Sovereign Lake. During the early formative years Keith worked tirelessly in coordinating the many branches of club activities – all the way from trail clearing to social events – so that it became a cohesive group and a very successful club.

Keith's interest in cross country skiing went beyond working at the ski area, for he was not only a great organizer but also a formidable skier. In the 1977 Cariboo Marathon Keith together with Al Melland, Ken May and Peter Tassie entered a team in the Veteran category and won their class. In 1983 Keith organized a

group of five skiers<sup>3</sup> to participate in the World Masters Cross Country Ski Races and the American Birkebeiner at Telemark, Wisconsin. At those events the group was meeting and racing with the world's best, and while none of them were amongst the top winners, the interaction and social events were treasured and became valuable as the club moved forward. Keith's keen interest in the Master's Division of cross country skiing continued and in 1984-85 he was elected president of the Canadian Masters Cross Country Ski Association. Joan served as the secretary of this group of over 800 members. The club hosted the western Canadian Master's at Sovereign Lake in 1985.

Keith's primary goal for all members of the NOCCSC was to have a good time enjoying themselves. Appropriately he took on the function of social coordinator where he used his organizational talent to the best – ensuring food was delivered to the bus, and providing fun, games, prizes and timetables of events. Amongst the many activities he organized were at least five bus trips to the Cariboo Marathon at 100 Mile House, two to Fairmont Hot Springs and one to Nakusp Hot Springs. One of the trips to Fairmont was marred by a bus breakdown on the return trip, but what might have been an unhappy experience turned into one of enjoyable memories, recounted for years by those who were there and showed that they were able to make the best of it.

Keith was at Sovereign Lake in the early days where he served a multitude of jobs from providing advice and assistance to novices to making members and new skiers welcome. As the club became more formalized and an emphasis on training and larger scale racing began to emerge as a major focus of many in the club, Keith withdrew his involvement but his legacy remains. We owe a great deal to him for establishing the North Okanagan Cross Country Ski Club and assisting it to become the club it is today.



**Keith Brewis (right), pictured with Kevin Mitchell, who presented Keith with his Okanagan Sports Hall of Fame membership in 2012**

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<sup>3</sup> The four from the club were, in addition to Keith: Al Melland, Bob Platt and Peter Tassie. The fifth was Hugh Goodman from Quesnel.



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Perhaps a future edition of the Sovereign Lake history will profile more of the club's prominent members, and tell more stories than we have had time to track down. There certainly is no shortage of skiers who have contributed to the club over the years.

## Appendix III

### Partial List of Former Board of Directors

This section lists the board members during all but a few years in the 2000s. Perhaps a future edition of the club history will find the remaining records and confirm director's positions. Some years may be incomplete as researchers relied on club newsletters and recollections of individuals who served on various boards. From about 2000 onwards, the positions of the directors (e.g. Chair, Treasurer, etc) are not always listed. Read from left to right across each row of the table in order to see chronological order.

#### North Okanagan Cross Country Ski Club and Sovereign Lake Nordic Club

<b>1977-1978</b>  President – Keith Brewis Secretary – Peggy Pitman Treasurer – Kenna Smith Trails Chair – Carl Wylie Racing – Lloyd Beattie Publicity – Ken May Social – Rita Haaheim Librarian – Evelyn Jebo	<b>1978-1979</b>  President – Vince Dantzer Vice President – Miriam Townsend Secretary – Edith Bawtree Treasurer – Eula Hubscher Trails Chair – Carl Wylie Publicity – Bob Platt Social – Rita Haaheim Librarian – Enid Nelson Sunday Tours – Ken Cunningham and Svend Kristensen Membership – Heidi Muff	<b>1979-1980</b>  President – Al Melland Vice President – Lloyd Beattie Secretary – Larry Peters Treasurer – Eula Hubscher Trails Chair – Carl Wylie Publicity – Bob Platt Social – Rita Haaheim Librarian – Enid Nelson Sunday Tours – Ken Cunningham and Svend Kristensen Membership – Heidi Muff Special Ski Events Coordinator – Keith Brewis
<b>1980-1981</b>  President – Al Melland Vice President – Don Wylie Secretary – Kathy Usher (Wylie) Treasurer – Jake Sorba Trails Chair – Carl Wylie Publicity – Bob Platt Librarian – Connie Abrahamson Tours Chair – Peter Tassie & Leigh Pearson	<b>1981-1982</b>  President – Peter Tassie Vice President – Tom Collins Secretary – Kathy Usher (Wylie) Treasurer – Ken Lane Trails Chair – Carl Wylie Special Events – Keith Brewis Publicity – Bob Platt Social – Heidi Collins Librarian – Edith Bawtree Tours – Ted Hoyte and Leigh Pearson Membership – Julia Townsend	<b>1982-1983</b>  President – Leigh Pearson Vice President – Ray Vinten Secretary – Kathy Usher (Wylie) Treasurer – Ken Lane Trails Chair – Carl Wylie Publicity – Bob Platt Social Governor – Art Wheatley Librarian – Edith Bawtree Tours Chairman – Ted Hoyte Membership – Joann Nilson
<b>1983-1984</b>  President – Ray Vinten Secretary – Joyce Taylor Treasurer – Peter Tassie Trails Chair – Carl Wylie Publicity – Bob Platt	<b>1984-1985</b>  President – Ray Vinten Vice President – Einar Field Secretary – Joyce Taylor Treasurer – Vic Harwood Trails Chair – Carl Wylie	<b>1985-1986</b>  President – Einar Field Vice President – Bill Leach Secretary – Pat Maloney Treasurer – Jack Coupe Trails Chair – Carl Wylie

<p>Social – Art Wheatley  Librarian – Edith Bawtree  Tours – Ted Hoyte  Membership – Al Melland  Cariboo Trip – Leigh Pearson  Newsletter – Ken Lane  Jack Rabbits – Bill Maloney</p>	<p>Public Relations – Bill Leach  Social Committee – Rene Arrotta  Librarian – Edith Bawtree  Tours – Don Fear  Memberships – Merry Ross  Racing and Marathon – Ted Hoyte</p>	<p>Publicity Director – Sharon Shaw  Social Governor – Rene Arrotta  Librarian – Edith Bawtree  Membership – Joyce Taylor  Newsletter – Enid Nelson  Jackrabbit Chairman – Ken Green  Racing – Ted Hoyte  Junior Development Chairman – Bill Maloney  Telephoning – Paul Jones</p>
<p>1986-1987</p> <p>President – Einar Field  Vice President – Bill Leach  Secretary – Rita Weston  Treasurer – Jack Coupe  Trails Chair – Carl Wylie  Publicity – Don Gardiner  Archivist – Edith Bawtree  Membership – Joyce Taylor  Newsletter – Enid Nelson  Jack Rabbits – Ken Green  Competition – Ted Hoyte  Junior Development – Bill Maloney  Telephoning – Pat Maloney</p>	<p>1987-1988</p> <p>President – Einar Field  Secretary – Rita Weston  Treasurer – Jack Coupe  Trails Chair – Carl Wylie  Publicity – Ted Hoyte  Social Chairman – Bert van Der Rorst  Archivist – Enid Bawtree  Membership – Ray Arlt  Jack Rabbits – Ken Green  Junior Development – Bill Maloney  Phoning – Pat Maloney  Race Secretary – Joyce Taylor  Marathon Chairman – Paul Jones</p>	<p>1988-1989</p> <p>President – Mike Moore  Vice President – Ed Devlin  Secretary – Nancy Pritchard  Treasurer – Leslie Keith  Trails Chair – Carl Wylie  Publicity – John Pritchard  Social Convenor – Inra Hembling  Archivist – Enid Nelson  Membership – Ray Arlt  Jack Rabbits – Dave Marshall &amp; Ken Green  Junior Development – Ted Hoyte  Phoning Committee – Don Fear  Race Secretary – Joyce Taylor  Marathon – Paul Jones  Past President – Einar Field</p>
<p>1989-1990</p> <p>President – Ed Devlin  Vice President – Gary Giampa  Secretary – Kathy Giampa  Treasurer – Leslie Keith  Trails Chair – Carl Wylie  Publicity – Brad and Marianne Thorlakson  Jack Rabbits – Dave Marshall  Junior Development – Ted Hoyte  Telephoning – Don Fear  Race Secretary – Joyce Taylor  Marathon – Brian Monteith</p>	<p>1990-1991</p> <p>President – Ed Devlin  Vice President – Ken Solheim  Treasurer – Kathy Wilson  Trails Chair – Carl Wylie  Publicity – Mike Carlson  Archivist – Rose Wilson  Membership – Jack Van Dyk  Newsletter – Rob Piggot  Jack Rabbits – Don and Thane Weston  Club Coach &amp; Junior Development – Ted Hoyte  Telephoning – Don Fear  Race Secretary – Joyce Taylor  Marathon – Brian Monteith  Challenge Programs – Geoff Maille</p>	<p>1991-1992</p> <p>Brian Monteith  Ken Solheim  Bob Parkes  Jane Ohashi  Don Fear  Carl Wylie  Pete Saar  Don Weston  Thane Weston  Rob Piggot</p>

1992-1993 Brian Monteith Ken Solheim George Resch Jane Ohashi Don Fear Carl Wylie Ed Devlin Rob Pigott Mike Vanderbeck Jim Smith Gord Wilson	1993-1994 Ken Solheim Myrna Robinson George Resch Eleanor Hatten Don Fear Ed Devlin Rob Pigott Mike Vanderbeck Jim Smith Gord Wilson Hayley Kelly Brian Monteith	1994-1995 Ken Solheim Mike Vanderbeck Myrna Robinson George Resch Eleanor Hatten Ed Devlin Alan Plummer Neva Low Jim Smith Brian Monteith Gord Wilson
1995-1996 George Resch Mike Vanderbeck Marlene Everett Ray Wagner Ken Solheim Mike Smith Alan Plummer Eleanor Hatten Ed Devlin Neva Low Gord Wilson	1996-1997 George Resch Mike Vanderbeck Ray Wagner Marlene Everett Ed Devlin Eleanor Hatten Brian Monteith Jim McGorman Don Wylie Debbie Peach	1997-1998 George Resch Stan Eaman Ray Wagner Marlene Everett Ed Devlin June Hawkins Theresa Korobanik Don Wylie Keith Brewis
1998-1999 Stan Eaman, President Garry Mitchell Olaf Plummer Rob Bernhardt June Hawkins Theresa Korobanik Don Wylie Gord Wilson	1999-2000 (incomplete) Stan Eaman, President Olaf Plummer Rob Bernhardt Doug Ross Doug Egan Shirley Pommier	2000-2001 Stan Eaman Olaf Plummer Alison Gilbert Rob Bernhardt Susan Wells Doug Egan Doug Ross Einar Field Shirley Pommier Nike Neary
2001-2002 (missing)	2002-2003 (missing)	2003-2004 (missing)
2004-2005 (missing)	2005-2006 (partial) Rob Bernhardt Steve Russell Brian Guy	
2006-2007 Brad Clements, President Bjorn Meyer, Vice President Dave Adams, Treasurer Jerry Wearing, Secretary Bruce Cummings Howard Joynt, Membership	2007-2008 (missing)	2008-2009 Bruce Cummings Neva Low Phil Carruthers Sharon Clarke Einar Field



Theresa Korobanik, Athlete development Dominik Dlouhy Joan Reid Steve Russell Neva Low Jeff Curtis Einar Field Heinz Stussi Jim Cookson Sharon Clarke, Competitions		Greg O'Neill Ed Devlin Donna Smedley Chuck Austin Jim Cookson
2009-2010  Bruce Cummings Chuck Austin Sharon Clarke Ed Devlin Donna Smedley Bob Advent Jeff Bassett Hugh Hamilton Pat Pearce	2010-2011  Pat Pearce, Chair Hugh Hamilton Chuck Austin Jeff Bassett Bob Advent, Vice Chair Alex Lane Therese Roberts Gerry Brenemen Sharon Clarke	2011-2012  Pat Pearce, Chair Gerry Brenemen Chuck Austin, Treasurer Hugh Hamilton, Vice-Chair Bob Advent Patrick Tobin Jonathan Oliphant* Don Reimar Sharon Clarke Alex Lane, Secretary
2012-2013  Pat Pearce, Chair Sharon Clarke Patrick Tobin Gerry Brenemen Hugh Hamilton, Vice Chair Doug Geller, Secretary Ron Roy, Treasurer Theresa Korobanik Jeff Bassett	2013-2014  Pat Pearce, Chair Doug Geller, Vice-Chair Rick Latta* Eric Wikjord Sharon Clarke Jeff Bassett Ron Roy, Treasurer Theresa Korobanik Gerry Brenemen Sandra Ecclestone, Secretary	2014 (April to Sept)  Chuck Austin Brad Clements Jim Cookson * Bruce Cummings Danny Kermode, Vice-Chair, then Chair Ron Roy, Treasurer Eric Wikjord* Chair Sharon Clarke* Shirley Pommier* Sandra Ecclestone* Felicia O'Gorman* Bert Mueller*
2014-2015 (Sept to April)  Brian Wills, Chair Pat Pearce, Vice-Chair Gerry Brenemen Sharon Clarke Bruce Sandilands Chuck Austin Doug Geller Sandra Ecclestone, Treasurer Jeff Curtis, Secretary Shirley Pommier	2015-2016  Sharon Clarke, Secretary Sandra Ecclestone, Treasurer Liz Ariano Shane Pearce Doug Geller, Chair Brian Wills, Vice-Chair Bruce Sandilands Pat Pearce Rob Madden Shirley Pommier	

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\* served part of term

## Appendix IV

### Potential Additions to a Future Edition of this History

The editors must note that the compilation of this history, like any history, is incomplete and from the outset was not intended to be exhaustive (although some might argue it is). There are many other stories that could be told given sufficient time and energy spent in recording them. Below we've listed a few ideas for additional club history research to help round out what is provided here.

1. Find the complete records of club board of directors.
2. Scan more photos from the club's collections, identify the people in them and either include more photos in a future edition or create a slide-show with captions that could be used at club events.
3. Research and write more biographies of noteworthy club members.
4. Research, compile and list past participants and winners of the Sovereign Loppet and former NOXC marathon going back to its 1978 beginnings at the Stussi farm. (This information reportedly exists, at least for about the first 25 marathons/loppet)
5. Find old board of directors meeting minutes and review these for more detailed information about the period from the late 70s to early 2000s and include some of that information in a future edition.

## Appendix V

### Major Events Timeline

1934 – Carl Wylie and others ski to the top of Silver Star Mountain

1938 - Carl Wylie starts the Silver Star Ski Club.

1939 - City of Vernon donates a log cabin to the club on Silver Star Mountain at Vernon Lake, now Sovereign Lake. Silver Star was used by the more adventurous members of the Club with sleeping accommodation at the Sovereign Lake cabin. Skiers from Kelowna, Summerland and Penticton also joined them on many weekends and holidays.

1940s - Since Silver Star is not easily accessible, the Club decides to move to Birnie Range, south and west of Okanagan College in Vernon, and west of Highway 97, where the terrain is easier and more accessible. Here they hold their First Annual Four-Way Championships; this included ski jumping, cross-country, downhill and slalom.

1958 - Silver Star becomes a Class 'C' Park allowing the formation of a public company - Silver Star Sports Ltd. The mountain is developed next to the current Silver Star Resort area and continues to grow using the facilities at Silver Star Sports.

1973-1974 – In 1960s, cross country skiing is largely dormant around Vernon until revived as the North Okanagan Cross Country Ski Club. Keith Brewis organized the club, originally thinking of it as a branch of the Silver Star Ski Club (the downhill racing club) but eventually emerging as a distinct club.

1978 - The first loppet (ski marathon) of the NOCCSC is held at the Stussi farm on Cedar Hill Road near Falkland. Two more loppets and other club events are held at the farm over the next few years.

1981 - the marathon is moved to Sovereign Lake.

1983 - The Warming Hut ("old day lodge") is constructed by B.C. Parks and the North Okanagan Cross Country Ski Club donated the woodstove.

1988 - Black Prince cabin built at the junction of Black Prince and Silver Queen trails. Georgia Manhard begins long tenure as manager of Cross-Country BC, the Provincial governing body for cross country ski clubs.

1974-1988 A total of 14 trails are created, mainly through volunteer labour. The first trails include Mystery and Black Prince created between 1974 and 1978, then Woodland Bell, Wylie's Loop, Half Sovereign and Sovereign, Silver Queen, Maid of Vernon, Prince of Wales, Aberdeen, Montezuma, Gold Mountain, Lars Taylor Way, Montezuma and Montezuma's Revenge, and White Elephant were created.

1989 - BC Parks crews clear brush on existing trails. Club volunteers build a woodshed at the Black Prince cabin.

1990 - North Okanagan Cross Country Ski Club reaches an agreement with BC Parks to take over the operation of Sovereign Lake Ski Area. User pay is now in effect. Club builds a ticket office.

1991 - The North Okanagan Cross Country Ski Club hosts a Federation International Ski (FIS) World Cup at Silver Star Mountain Resort.

1993 - The current day lodge is built with water and sewer improvements following shortly thereafter.

1995 - The Club purchases a BR 400 groomer. Grooming with large equipment begins. Club hosts Jeep Nationals.

1999 - Day fees increase for the first time since the Club took over in 1990.

2000 - Official name change from North Okanagan Cross Country Ski Club to Sovereign Lake Nordic Club. First club website developed.

2003 - night skiing begins on a 3.5 km "northern lights" loop using Passmore, stadium and Wylie's loop.

2005- The Sovereign Lake Nordic Club hosts a FIS World Cup. Trail improvements are made to facilitate these events.

2007 - Sovereign hosts a spring camp, opening for about 9 days in the middle of May. This continues for several years. Scott Lemon starts as General Manager.

2010 -Some Olympic cross country and biathlon teams train at Sovereign Lake and Silver Star leading up to the 2010 Winter Olympic Games. These teams would include Norway, Switzerland, Finland, Russia, Czech Republic, Australia, and New Zealand. Carl Wylie trail opens. First lifetime service award given to Don Wylie.

2011 - The Sovereign Lake Nordic Club hosts the Sparkling Hills Masters World Cup with 23 nations and 1134 participants. Carl Wylie trail opens, and a pass-over bridge is constructed in the stadium. Einar



Field receives lifetime service award. New partnership with Silver Star Mountain Resort begins. Dual area passes and XC ski camps begin, co-hosted by Sovereign and Silver Star. Strategic planning begins.

2013 - Excellent snow and poor snow elsewhere contribute to Sovereign having a record setting season in terms of day users. Membership is around 1,600. Jess trail for kids opens. Miriam Ryan receives club's lifetime service award.

2014 - Telus cellular phone and wireless internet services become fully functional at the day lodge. Club purchases a state-of-the-art timing clock for events using proceeds from competitions held at the centre. Season starts unusually late on November 22. Club holds nearly back-to-back race events, the first Sovereign Open in early December and the relocated Norams on Dec 19-20. Membership is close to 1,700.

2015 - Heinz and Liz Stussi receive club's lifetime service award. Stussis donate their Swiss starting bell to club (used at first North Okanagan marathon). Warm winter saw creeks flowing under Silver Queen and other trails in February. SLNC still had more than 140 days of groomed skiing. Troy Hudson hired as new General Manager.

★ NORTH OKANAGAN CROSS COUNTRY SKI CLUB ★

# X-COUNTRY SKIING

## 2ND ANNUAL 30 KM MARATHON

**Sunday, Jan. 14, 1979**

**Stussi Cross Country Centre  
Cedar Hill Road, Falkland, B.C.**

(Cedar Hill Road is 5 miles East of Falkland, B.C., 22 miles West of Vernon, B.C. on Highway 97 West. Watch for Signs)

● **9:30 A.M. SHARP** ●

### COURSE

The course is 10 km in length. Entrants may set their own pace and complete 10, 20, or 30 km. Medals and Trophies for Class 1 and 2 are for completing 10 km. Medals and Trophies for Class 3 to 14 are for completing 30 km.

BY MAIL TO: **REGISTRATION** OR BRING IN TO:  
**KEITH BREWIS** **STUSSI SPORT CENTRE**  
**2500-18 Street, Vernon, B.C. V1T 4A2** **3108-30 Avenue, Vernon, B.C.**

### CLASSES

- |                     |                   |                    |                     |
|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| 1. GIRLS 12 & UNDER | 5. WOMEN 20 TO 29 | 9. WOMEN 40 TO 49  | 13. WOMEN 60 & OVER |
| 2. BOYS 12 & UNDER  | 6. MEN 20 TO 29   | 10. MEN 40 TO 49   | 14. MEN 60 & OVER   |
| 3. GIRLS 13 TO 19   | 7. WOMEN 30 TO 39 | 11. WOMEN 50 TO 59 |                     |
| 4. BOYS 13 TO 19    | 8. MEN 30 TO 39   | 12. MEN 50 TO 59   |                     |

**ENTRY FEE: Classes 1 & 2 - \$3.00 ★ Classes 3 to 14 - \$5.00**

★ **REFRESHMENTS AVAILABLE AT THE LODGE** ★

### AWARDS

COMMEMORATIVE CRESTS FOR ALL ENTRANTS. GOLD, SILVER AND BRONZE MEDALS FOR CLASS WINNERS.

### TROPHIES

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| Boutique Canadiana Trophy — Best time for a man — 30 km.<br>1978 Winner — Uno Mutka, Burnaby, B.C.        | Sun Life Trophy — Youngest boy to complete 10 km<br>1978 Winner — Richard Mondon, Vernon, B.C.   |
| Stussi Sport Ltd. Trophy — Best time for a woman — 30 km<br>1978 Winner — Margo Wallenstein, Vernon, B.C. | Karhu Canada Trophy — Oldest women to complete 30 km<br>1978 Winner — Kathleen May, Vernon, B.C. |
| Bonnie Ski Trophy — Youngest girl to complete 10 km<br>1978 Winner — Samara Staff, Kamloops, B.C.         | Knaiss Ski Trophy — Oldest man to complete 30 km<br>1978 Winner — Fred Taylor, Vernon, B.C.      |

### ACCOMMODATION

LIMITED DORMITORY BUNKS AT THE LODGE  
MOTEL AND HOTEL ACCOMMODATION AVAILABLE IN VERNON AND FALKLAND.

WAYRIDE PRISM LTD., VERNON, B.C.

Race Notice for the second North Okanagan Marathon.  
Top finishers from the First Marathon are Listed

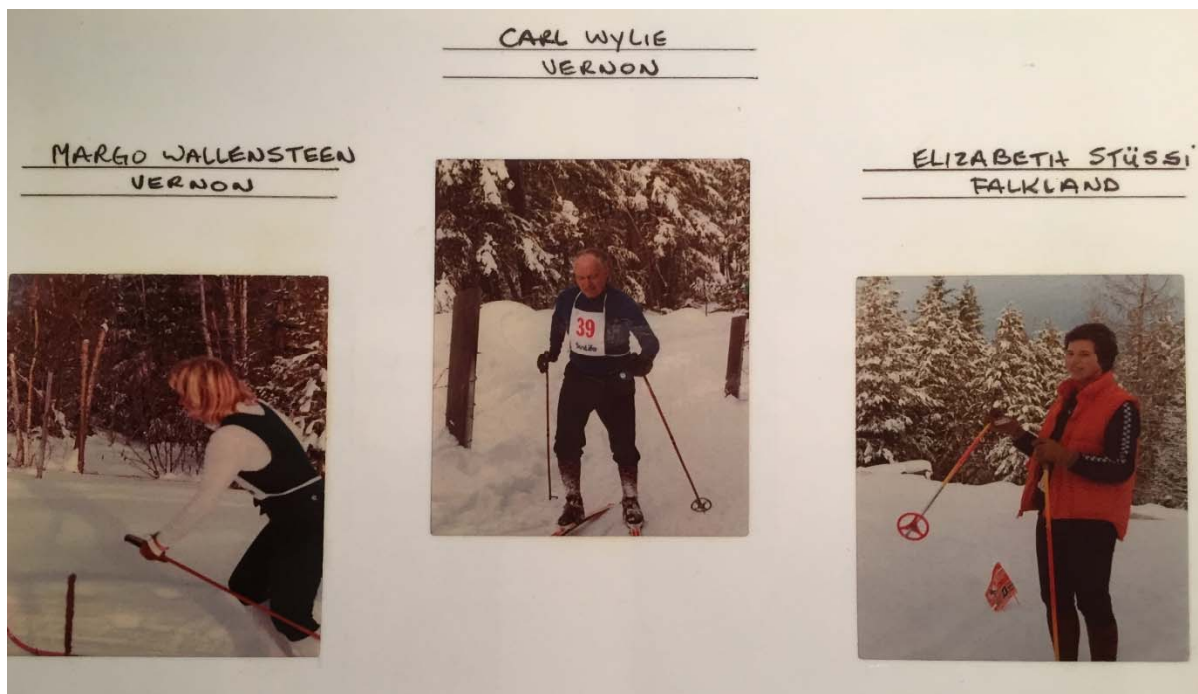


Heinz Stussi presents Kathleen May with the Karhu Canada Trophy  
(oldest female finisher, First North Okanagan Marathon, January 1978)



Uno Mudka leads the field in the early NOCCSC Marathons at Stussi Farm  
The winning time was 2 hr 13 min





Pictures from the first North Okanagan Marathon



20th Anniversary of The First N.O.C.S.C. 30 km Marathon  
- Sovereign Lake Day Lodge - Jan. 15, 1998 -

FRONT L to R  
Peter Tassie, Kathleen Wilson, Flora Wylie, Rita Haaheim, Joan Brewis, Elizabeth Stüssi, Kathleen May, Keith Brewis

BACK L to R  
Marko Nikmo, Stig Keskinen, Einer Field, Fred Taylor, Carl Wylie, Heinz Stüssi, Ken May

MARATHON Reunion



**Aberdeen Dreams**

**HOPE YOU ENJOYED THE STORIES!**