



CCBC's 1975 Canada Games Team - Coaches John Pettersen (left) and Mary Anderson (right). Back row l/r - Albert Wheele, Grant Paulson, Rolf Pettersen, Lauri Karjaluoto; front row l/r - Pat Day, Beth Tuggle, Anita Pettersen, Becky Tuggle.

## Pioneer Coach

Mary Anderson began coaching at Decker Lake (near Burns Lake, BC) in 1968. A member of the Omineca Ski Club, she started her program with a group of four children.

For a number of years Mary's athletes made up the majority of the BC Ski Team. Outstanding athletes from her program include Esther Miller (who was named to the National Ski Team and went on to represent Canada at two Olympic Winter Games and a World Championships), Chris Paulson (National Ski Team), Marvin Strimbold (Shell Cup winner at the Canadian Junior Championships\*\*) and Lana Lindaas (Shell Cup winner at the Canadian Junior Championships\*\*).

It is difficult to imagine now, but cross country ski equipment was not readily available in Canada at that time, and it was necessary to use various methods to acquire it - for example, the company Euro-Can\* helped the club by importing equipment from Finland. Also, in those days there were no formal skill development programs for children such as the Bunnyrabbit or Jackrabbit Programs. In addition, the Coaching Association of Canada had not yet launched the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP), so Mary travelled to Norway to take coaching courses (1974).

Mary had help from many volunteers, but it was due to her dedication to the sport and the success of her athletes that the first lit cross country ski trail in BC was established at Decker Lake in 1973.

In 1983, in Saguenay-Lac-St-Jean, Quebec, she became the first female provincial coach for the BC Ski Team at a Canada Winter Games (to date she remains the only one).

She continued coaching until the late 1980's.

In addition to coaching, Mary played an important role mentoring BC officials before Cross Country Canada had a formal Officials Certification Program in place. She was also a strong influence behind the Omineca Ski Club's decision to host the National Championships in 1975, 1977, 1989 and 1996.

In 1989 Cross Country Canada recognized her accomplishments by establishing the 'Mary Anderson Award', which is presented annually to the winner of the Women's long distance event at the National Championships.

In 1992 she was awarded the Governor General's Commemorative Medal for her contribution to cross country skiing in Canada. It was noted that at that time she was the only Canadian female coach to ever have an athlete compete in two Olympics and a World Championships.

\* Euro-Can: Pulp and Paper Mill, Kitimat

\*\* Shell Cup winner: overall best male athlete and overall best female athlete at the Canadian Junior Championships

### Tips on Coaching

Lakes District News, 1975

By Coach Mary Anderson

It is six years since I started working with skiers. When I started I knew nothing about cross country skiing except what I had picked up as a kid. My knowledge is still pretty

incomplete, but I have learned a lot in the last six years. The time spent has been enjoyable to me – I think the best part is just getting to know all the boys and girls. Also there is a great deal of satisfaction in the feeling that you have accomplished something when one of the skiers does well in competition, or when you can see that skiing has helped someone to become stronger and better coordinated than they would otherwise ever have been. I am not a great authority on either skiing or coaching, but I have found ways of working that function well for me in our local situation, and that have been successful in developing some pretty good young skiers.

My first aim is always to create interest in and enjoyment of skiing. This is an aim easily overlooked, and which I am often guilty of overlooking, because it is so easily submerged by the necessity of improving skills and endurance to give people a chance to win races. But if you do not have interest and enjoyment of the sport you will never have good skiers. Work alone will never do it. Only the youngsters who ski longer than anyone else because they enjoy it, and want to, are ever going to be really good skiers. Those who ski as a chore and a duty, and to get medals, will never make it.

After the creation of joy in the sport comes training. This begins with dryland training – running, hiking and exercises during the summer and fall. For the older skiers this begins right after the ski season ends and continues right through summer and fall until snow comes again. For the younger skiers it starts in the fall, and the intensity and training must be carefully gauged in order not to discourage them. Work them hard enough to challenge them, but not so hard that they begin to feel defeated. The most important thing for the beginners is to get them used to the idea that dryland training is an important part of their ski training.

When snow comes everyone is excited to be using their skis again, and you are into the swirl of snow training. The race season's excitement is just ahead to keep everyone going. Snow training begins with lots of distance skied, with emphasis on good technique; try to give each one hints that might help them to improve. At the races try to get the team to work together, and pull for each other as a group, and to be sportsmanlike towards the other teams entered. We are lucky to have a very good spirit between the different clubs that have cross country teams in the races and this is very valuable and should be preserved. I hope we never reach the win at all cost attitude prevalent in some larger sports.

Lastly as your racers get older, you will either lose them or they will develop into very serious skiers. If they become serious racers, try to help them become independent in their training. Cross country is an individual sport, and every skier, unless he / she vaults right onto the National Team, will become his / her own coach as he /she becomes older. And always encourage the older skiers to start helping the younger ones; you will be sowing the seeds of a future coaching program that will keep the sport growing and vigorous in the future.

**get the**

**CROSS COUNTRY BC**

# BC PUNCH PASS

*Explore BC on skis this season for as low as \$49.*

BC PUNCH PASS →

Explore More 001

Explore More 001

Ski at seven different clubs once (\$49), twice (\$89), or twice at all participating clubs (\$199). Full details on your club's membership registration on [zone4.ca](http://zone4.ca).