

ABSF Applicant:

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**Please respond to the following question (feel free to use additional space).**

*Why are you interested in being a member of the ABSF Board of Directors and what knowledge and skills do you possess that can benefit the organization?*

WHY THE ABSF?

*Short answer:* I love skiing and the "silent sports" & think that I may be able to contribute to the strategic leadership of the Birkie Foundation.

*Long answer:* I skied my first Birke 37 years ago in 1981 while a grad student at Duluth. My buddy and I slept in his VW microbus overnight at the start line in Hayward. The delectable church pancakes in the morning provided rejuvenation from an otherwise cool, restless night. We were of course hooked! I skied my 10<sup>th</sup> Birkie in 1992 and completed my Birchleggings (I am a life member) 20<sup>th</sup> race in 2013? I missed some races over the years while working in Arizona, Antarctica, Papua New Guinea, and Nepal. I completed an additional Birke in the race shortened year (?) when my race chip finished the race ahead of me in my gear bag. I have competed in the Korteloppet the last few years due to a knee injury in rugby 40 years ago. I am reluctant-proud? to admit that I have 19 pairs of skis; my wife uses this against me when she goes shopping. I have been a persistent skier and seem to keep ahead of the wolf-pack. I finished (classic) in the top 100 at the Birkie and was 5<sup>th</sup> at the Mora Vasaloppet in 1984. I skied the Birke with my dad (who is now 91 years old) in 1993 and we did the north rim of the Grand Canyon in 1996. His motto, which I endorse, is: "It's better to wear out than to rust!" I did US military ski training in Alaska in 1977 as part of my military service. I was the ski clinic doc at the Snowmass/Aspen ski clinic 1990-93 and did 8 international trips with the US downhill ski team & the US Figure Skating team between 1992-2005. I skied in Antarctica on the Anvers Island glacier while serving at Palmer Station in 1996-7. I have enjoyed the camaraderie of friends doing the Chamonix to Zermatt Haute Route in 2012 and the Ortler Route in the northern Italian alps in 2018.

## KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS:

*Short answer:* After 34 years of medical practice and work as a clinician, department head, national medical board trustee, residency program director, medical entrepreneur, and corporate medical director, I think I may be able to offer some useful guidance regarding health issues and administrative leadership.

*Long answer:* I am a medical doctor and an advocate for 'exercise as medicine', the importance of population health metrics, and the vitality of the masters' athlete. I am board certified in both General Preventive Medicine and Occupational Medicine. I am a Fellow of the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM), the American College of Preventive Medicine (ACPM), and the American College of Occupational & Environmental Medicine (ACOEM). I have an MPH degree. I was a member of the Exercise is Medicine (EIM) initiative in 2007 led by ACSM. I was the lead for non-operative orthopedic sports medicine at HealthPartners from 2005-2010. I was a co-founder of Exos, a company making thermoplastic casting materials, that sold to Donjoy in 2012. I am currently the program director for the HP Occupational & Environmental Medicine Residency Program in the Twin Cities. I am the corporate medical director for Xcel Energy. My special interest is in body composition analysis, cardiorespiratory fitness, and general exercise physiology as it relates to wellness metrics. My colleague & friend, Dr. Paul Anderson, was the lead author on two recent research articles looking at the lifestyle characteristics of cross-country skiers. Paul's work showed that a mere 3% of ~5,000 Birkie xc skiers were "obese" by BMI versus >30% of Americans in the general public. This is a staggering vital statistic. I was privileged to serve as a co-author in these studies led by Dr. Anderson. I am currently involved in a research project with colleagues looking at the use of DXA scans to analyze body fat % as it relates to VO2 max in firefighters. There are many aspects of fitness and body composition that can be correlated with co-morbid medical conditions, medications used, and total health care costs. Cross-country skiers have the highest VO2 max scores of all athletes. VO2 is not an esoteric number for uber athletes; it is a global measure of fitness and wellness for every individual that has relevance across our health care systems. What we do individually, and what the American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation (ABSF) symbolizes collectively, is vitally important to the health of the American people. Advocacy for the "silent sports" of Nordic skiing, running, cycling, snowshoeing, canoeing, blading, speed skating, etc. provides an important challenge to our struggling health care system. We can lead by example. This is the age of communication and the age of information yet so many Americans spend >20 hours/wk in front of the TV but can't find 5 hours for physical activity. Near my medical clinic, on Harriet Island in St. Paul, is a memorial to the 1899 Ramsey County Commissioner of Health, Justice Ohage MD, who said: "In the health of the people, lies the wealth of a nation." This was never more true than it is today. XC skiers get it and live it. The ABSF is a champion for this cause. I would be privileged to serve on the board.

Ralph S. Bovard  
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