

2021-2022 American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation Board Candidate Profile Information

Dear ABSF Board Candidate,

This is your opportunity to introduce yourself to the members of the ABSF. Your contact information and answer to the following questions will be shared with all eligible voting members prior to the election that runs from July 1 – 28, 2021. Please submit your profile electronically in Word format to board@birkie.com by 5:00 pm CST on June 23, 2021.

Candidate Name: RALPH S. BOVARD

City: MINNEAPOLIS State: MN Zip: 55409

Are you an ABSF Member: Y N Years of Membership in the ABSF: 10-15?

Occupation: physician (M.D.)

ABSF BOARD OF DIRECTORS CANDIDATE PROFILE

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?

You must be a current member of the ABSF to run for the Board. If not a current member, you may become a member by visiting www.birkie.com/membership/

ABSF BOARD OF DIRECTORS CANDIDATE PROFILE

Ralph S. Bovard

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?

I think all of us who participate in the American Birkebeiner share the sentiments of Fridtjof Nansen: *"You are one with your skis and nature. This is something that develops not only the body but the soul as well, and it has a deeper meaning for a people than most of us perceive."*

I skied my first Birke in 1981, am a member of the Birchleggings club, and a medical doctor in the Twin Cities. My interests are in optimal aging, body composition analysis, and cardiorespiratory fitness as they relate to population health and wellness. I served as the medical director for a medical device company that sold to a major orthopedic manufacturer and am on the advisory boards of three medical start-ups. I am a Fellow of the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM), American College of Preventive Medicine, and the American College of Occupational & Environmental Medicine. I was a medical trustee on the Board of ACSM 2005-2008. I have served as a team physician for USA Alpine skiing and figure skating. I have also worked as a missionary doctor in Papua New Guinea, an Everest expedition physician, ski clinic MD for 3-years in Aspen/Snowmass (CO), and a base physician in Antarctica. Next month, in July, I am stepping down as the HealthPartners Occupational Medicine residency program director which will offer some additional free time.

In 2015 I assisted my colleague and friend (& elite skier) Dr. Paul Anderson who was the lead author on two research articles looking at the lifestyle characteristics of cross-country skiers. You may remember the 2015 online survey that was the foundation for this work. Paul's study and peer-reviewed papers showed, among other things, that only 3% of ~5,000 Birkie xc-skiers were technically "obese" versus >30% of Americans in the general public. This is a staggering statistic from a public health intervention perspective. There is more research in the works & we are currently communicating with the Cardiac Exercise Research Group in Trondheim, Norway. We hope to create another online survey for Birke skiers, in collaboration with the ABSF research team, to predict biologic vs chronologic "fitness age" and VO2 max using their regression analysis metric.

There are many aspects of fitness and body composition that can be correlated with co-morbid medical conditions, medication use, and total health care costs. Cross-country skiers have the highest cardiorespiratory fitness (VO2 max) scores of all athletes thanks to Bjorn Daehlie at 94 ml/kg/min. However, VO2 is not just an exotic number for uber athletes; it is most importantly a "global measure of fitness" that has relevance for every individual who draws breath. Unfortunately, many Americans now face spending the last decade of life in a nursing home

due to the metabolic consequences of inactivity, obesity, disuse atrophy and invalidism. In 1980, a Stanford rheumatologist, Jim Fries MD, introduced the idea of “compressing the period of morbidity”, i.e. of “rectangularizing” the life curve, to the very end of life [see graph & links at the end of this discussion]. The legendary Herman “Jackrabbit” Johannsen lived this way, skiing until he was over 100.

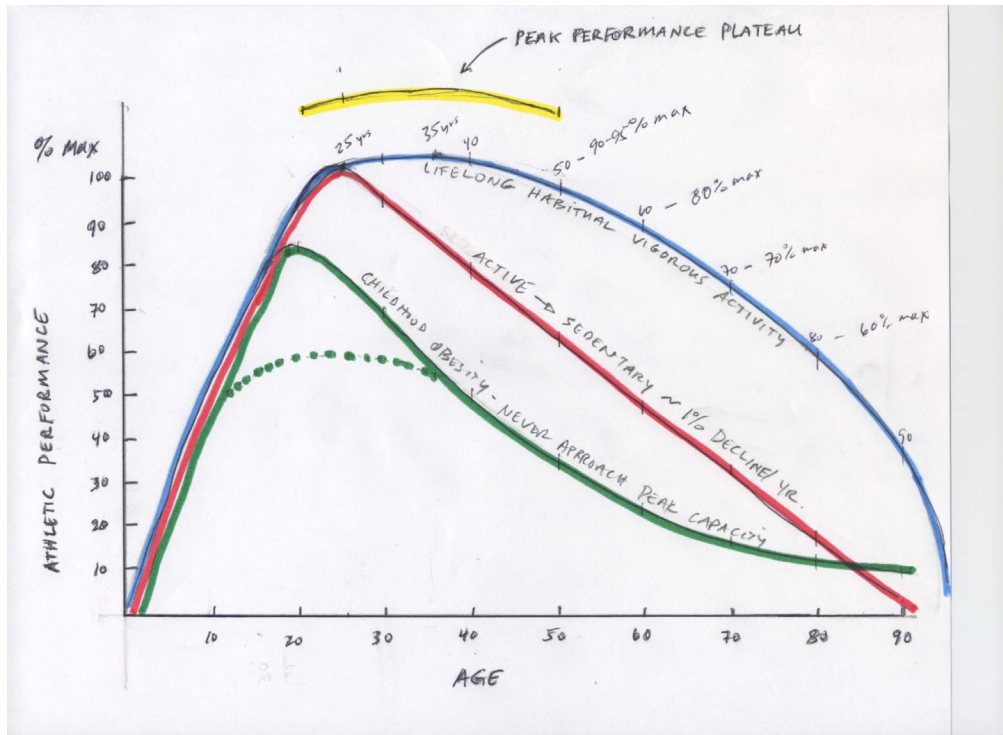
What we do *individually*, when we play on skis, bikes & afoot, and what the American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation (ABSF) symbolizes *collectively*, are of vital importance to the health of the American people. Advocacy for the “silent sports” of Nordic skiing, running, cycling, snowshoeing, canoeing, rowing, swimming, blading, roller-skiing, speed skating, etc. provides a legitimate solution to our national health dilemma. This is the age of communication & the age of information yet most Americans spend > 20 hours per week (out of 168) in front of the TV yet struggle to 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 truer than it is today. XC skiers lead by example. The ABSF is a champion for this cause. I would be privileged to serve on the ABSF board.

My goals as a board member would be to advocate for the ABSF mission, increase membership, work to raise money for the Foundation, raise the visibility of the “silent sports”, champion the value of the “Ski-Run-Bike” ethic & lifestyle, pursue research that continues to validate participation in citizen recreational activities as a “health intervention”, and offer my medical insight/experience as appropriate.

Szent-Gyorgyi said, “Living systems are worn out by inactivity and developed by use.” This belief in “exercise as medicine” is an exemplary model that we can share with society.

Sincerely,
Ralph S. Bovard

Diagram & Links:



The “optimal aging” goal is to follow the trajectory of the blue line!-RSB

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4932297/pdf/bmjopen-2015-010259.pdf>

A Survey of Social Support for Exercise and Its Relationship to Health Behaviors and Health Status Among Endurance Nordic Skiers. Paul J Anderson¹, Ralph S Bovard², Zhen Wang³, Timothy J Beebe³, Mohammad Hassan Murad¹. *BMJ Open*. 2016; 6(6): e010259. Published online 2016 Jun 23. doi: [10.1136/bmjopen-2015-010259](https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2015-010259) PMID: [27388884](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27388884/). Free PMC article

https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5525345/pdf/13104_2017_Article_2619.pdf

Health status and health behaviors among citizen endurance Nordic skiers in the United States. Paul J. Anderson^{1,2,5}, Ralph S. Bovard,² Mohammad Hassan Murad,¹ Timothy J. Beebe^{3,4} and Zhen Wang^{3,4}. *BMC Res Notes*. 2017; 10: 305. Published online 2017 Jul 24. doi: [10.1186/s13104-017-2619-4](https://doi.org/10.1186/s13104-017-2619-4); PMID: [28738884](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28738884/)

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2567746/pdf/11984612.pdf> (Fries-1980)

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2424092/> (re:Fries-2008)