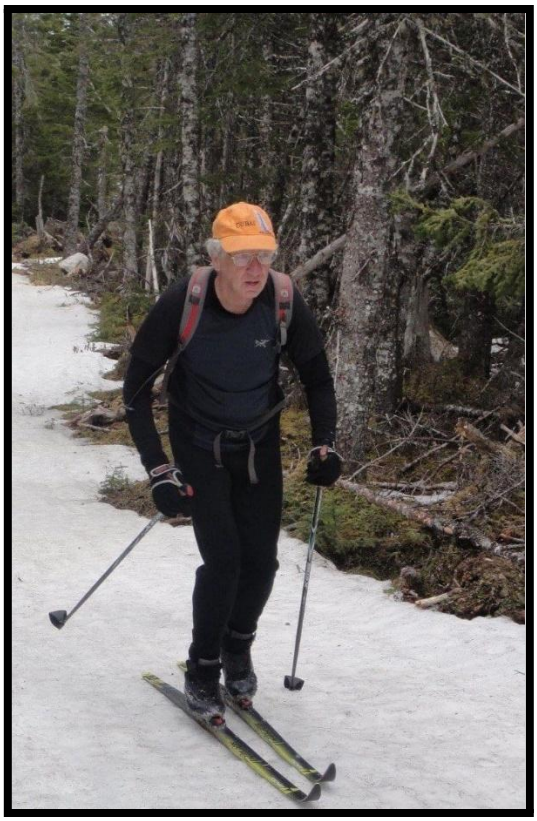
Dr. Peter Cleary – Builder (Posthumously) CCNL Hall of Fame 2022



In 1972, Dr. Peter Cleary moved to Come By Chance, NL as a family physician in the Cottage Hospital System. His love for the outdoors was fostered from an early age through activities like biking, hiking and snowshoeing. When Peter was introduced to cross country skiing, it quickly became his life's passion for the next 49 years. Peter chose to take an instructor course at the Clarenville's cross country ski club. He was always willing to teach the sport to others. Peter helped with work hikes, coaching racers, time trials and ski races. He would often mark and pack the trails down with snowshoes to make them more skiable. His volunteer efforts were always geared towards sharing his passion for skiing and encouraging others to get involved.

In the early 1980s, Peter decided to form a cross country ski club in Come By Chance for the surrounding communities. The club was named The Glenwood Nordic Ski Club (GNSC). On his own, Peter marked and developed 12 km of trails. He used his own funds to purchase a snowmobile that would pull a track setter. Eventually, Peter secured a grant from the NL Government to build a chalet. From there, GNSC established a Junior Development Ski Program, a race club and a touring group. Peter led these groups, did all the trail maintenance and track setting by himself. His skiers competed in local and provincial races. He was also successful in getting schools involved in racing activities.

When Peter moved to the White Hills area, he joined The Clarenville Nordic Ski Club (CNSC). For many years during springtime, he would be out on the trails marking and working on water spots. As a result, these areas would properly drain in the Fall and allow earlier skiing. From September to November, Peter would take a chainsaw and a container of gas in his backpack as he walked the trails. On these hikes, he would mark areas for maintenance. If possible, Peter would undertake the repair work by himself. After every windstorm, he would venture out onto the trails in search of tree blowdowns which he would cut up for firewood.

Peter continued to teach ski lessons and offer encouragement throughout the years. He always felt that the CNSC's trails were too difficult for novice skiers. To offer an easier option, Peter marked, cut, and developed a trail which came to be known as Pete's Trail. It became very popular for beginners and more experienced skiers who enjoyed skiing out of the wind. Peter also felt there was a need to create a shorter way up to the summit of the White Hills so more people could enjoy the beauty of the back-country. He was instrumental in the creation of a trail called Logger's Way. This trail with a scenic view at the top, lots of switchbacks and is currently the most popular of CNSC's trail system.

Throughout his life, Peter was recognized as someone who devoted much of his time to trail development and maintenance, coaching youth and traveling with racers to other parts of the province, teaching adult ski lessons and participating as a technical delegate for CNSC's races including the Winter Games. Peter contributed at the local and provincial levels in various leadership roles. He was on the GNSC and CNSC executives as well as the Provincial Cross Country Ski Association. Peter was a stellar volunteer and cross country skiing advocate who is dearly missed by those people who had the opportunity of knowing him.