

Twice a month, during the winter season, Trollhaugen and the Erling Stordahl trails host "Ski for Light." This event gives blind skiers (and their guides) a chance to cross-country ski on trails built and groomed especially for blind skiers, with side-by-side double tracks as conditions allow. The following is a brief history of Ski for Light, its origins in Norway, and the founding of the Erling Stordahl Trails at Crystal Springs Sno-Park.

*Erling Stordahl, Olav Pedersen, and the Origins of Ski for Light in Voss, Norway:*

In 1995, Olav Pedersen wrote an account of how he met Erling Stordahl and was inspired to bring a program for blind skiers to the U.S. Olav recalls that, in 1952, a blind musician named Erling Stordahl, along with two other blind musicians, came to Olav's hometown of Voss, Norway. Erling asked Olav if he would M.C. at their performance that evening, and Olav agreed. After the performance, inspired both by the music and by Erling's life story, Olav interviewed Erling and wrote an article about him that was published in several national newspapers.

In 1955, Olav invited Erling to return to Voss, to entertain at the Norwegian Skiing Championships, which the King of Norway, H.M. King Olav V also attended. Here, Erling confided in Olav his dream of teaching cross-country skiing to blind people, a dream which received public and government support, as well as the support of King Olav and the Royal Family. Erling's dream resulted in the 1964 Ridderrenn, an event for blind skiers, and Beitostølen Healthsport Center, an institution for development of equal opportunities for disabled and able-bodied people.

Olav Pedersen immigrated to the U.S. where, in 1975, he built on Erling Stordahl's dream, bringing the first "Race for Light" event to Frisco, CO with the help of the Sons of Norway foundation. Erling Stordahl and his wife Anna were among the 40 blind Norwegian skiers and guides who travelled to the U.S. for the 1975 Race for Light, where 20 American and Canadian blind people got their first experience in cross-country skiing. The Norwegian military and a binational national guard prepared and maintained tracks. They also served as ski guides for some of the skiers.

"Race for Light" changed its name to "Ski for Light," to highlight the recreational focus of the organization, and an annual Ski for Light event has been held at various cross-country skiing venues throughout the United States almost every year (there were occasional cancellations due to impossible weather) since 1975.

*Trollhaugen, the Erling Stordahl Ski Trails, and Ski for Light at Crystal Springs Sno-Park*

Ski for Light first came to the newly completed Sons of Norway *Trollhaugen* Lodge in 1976. The forest around *Trollhaugen* was a massive clear cut. Skiers could ski anywhere they liked. Guides would break trail in front of the blind skiers. A sleigh was built and the sleigh runners would set a track as it was pulled by "Little Ole." After Little

Ole slid into a tree well and almost didn't make it out, Ski for Light decided that they could no longer set track with the sleigh.

By 1988, Ski for Light was sharing Stampede Pass Road with the snowmobilers. It was not good. So Ski for Light bought a used snowmobile and track setter from Kongsberger Ski Club. Roger Young would set tracks on Saturday morning before the Ski for Light bus arrived. By then a new forest was growing, along with tons of vine maple. By the end of the season, Roger was so beat up and pissed at vine maple that he came with brush and chainsaws the following fall to cut the vine maple. This made an improvement and the following fall an even larger group came up and cleared vine maple.

In the meantime, the old railroad had been converted to the Iron Horse State Park and the John Wayne Pioneer Trail and was being groomed by State Parks. One Saturday a Ski for Light guide flagged down the groomer and asked if he would groom some trails for blind skiers. The groomer was amazed at the hand-cleared trail system, and recommended that Ski for Light petition State Parks for funding so he could groom on a regular basis.

On January 12, 2002, the ski trails around Trollhaugen lodge were officially declared the Erling Stordahl Ski Trails. A ribbon cutting ceremony featured the Norwegian Consulate, Erick Balstad, State Parks, the grooming machine, and many representatives from Ski for Light.

For 2013-2014 the Erling Stordahl Ski Trails will be groomed three days a week, with Ski for Light (double-tracked) grooming on alternate weekends.