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[Olympian and Coach John Bower Passes Away](#)

release by USSA

Tweet June 08, 2017 (Park City, UT) – Olympic skier John Bower, the first American to win the prestigious nordic combined King’s Cup, as well as a formative coach and leader of the U.S. Nordic Ski Team, passed away June 6 in Park City. Bower, who was 76, played a pivotal role in the development of the Utah Olympic Park and establishment of its Olympic legacy facilities.



JohnBower © USSA

Bower grew up in Auburn, ME where he won an unprecedented four interscholastic state titles in 1959 at Edward Little High School. He went on to ski at Middlebury College, winning an NCAA nordic combined title in 1961, the first ever for a Middlebury Panther, as well as taking four U.S. titles in his career. He was a two-time Olympian finishing 15th in 1964 at Innsbruck and 13th at Grenoble in 1968 – the best finishes ever by an American nordic combined skier at the time.

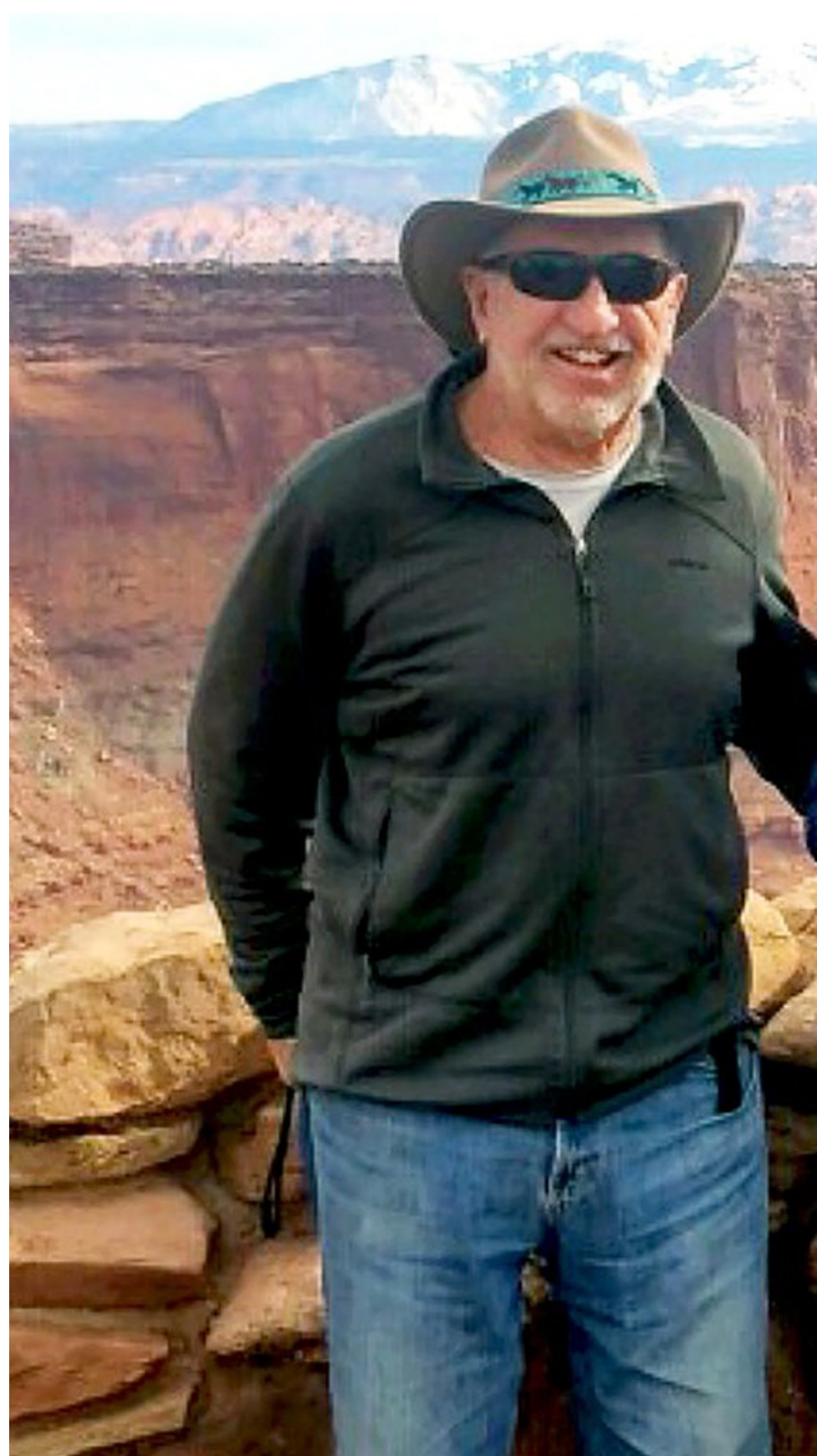
His milestone accomplishment came at Norway's Holmenkollen Ski Festival in 1968 where he became the first American to win the prestigious King's Cup. His win at Holmenkollen set the standard for other Americans who followed him including Kerry Lynch (1983), Todd Lodwick (1998), Bill Demong (2009) and Bryan Fletcher (2012). The victory earned him an audience with the king of Norway in Oslo, as well as an invitation to a White House dinner in the king's honor later that year.



JohnBower © USSA

After retirement, Bower went on to coach at his alma mater of Middlebury from 1968 to 1975. He then served as nordic director of the U.S. Ski Team from 1975 to 1980 – a highly successful period for the American team, before leaving to become athletic director at Principia College in western Illinois. He returned as the U.S. Ski Team’s nordic director from 1988-90.

“John Bower is a great example of a highly accomplished skier who dedicated his entire life to helping other athletes,” said U.S. Ski & Snowboard President and CEO Tiger Shaw. “In particular, his work in developing the Utah Olympic Park leading up to the 2002 Olympics was a key part of the legacy that is still positively impacting athletes today.”



John Bower © USSA

Bower played a key role in that lead-up to the 2002 Olympics, serving as the first director for the Utah Winter Sports Park (now the Utah Olympic Park), overseeing development of venues and implementation of programs from 1990 to 1999.

“John was uniquely qualified and extremely effective in being the first to lead the team running the Utah Winter Sports Park,” said Utah Olympic Legacy Foundation President and CEO Colin Hilton. “He had a passion to see that athletes could train and develop at the newly created Sports Park. That passion and committed effort planted the seeds that helped shape the successful Olympic legacy we enjoy today.”



John Bower © USSA

Since his retirement in 1999, Bower and his wife Bonnie have enjoyed an active lifestyle in both Moab and Park City. Bonnie played a leadership role in the start of the Park City Winter School. His son, Rick, was the 1999 halfpipe snowboarding world champion and is a highly-renowned halfpipe coach for the U.S. Snowboard Team.

Bower was named to the U.S. Ski Hall of Fame in 1969. He is one of Maine’s most recognized sport stars and a member of the Maine Ski Hall of Fame and Lewiston Auburn Sports Hall of Fame. He joined the Middlebury College Hall of Fame in 2014. Bower is also an honorary member of the Alf Engen Ski Museum Foundation board.

He received a BA degree in economics from Middlebury in 1963, earning a Masters Education specializing in

recreation and resort management from Springfield College in 1967.



John Bower © USSA

John was the son of Robert and Elizabeth Bower of Auburn, ME. He is survived by a sister, Sandra Colvard; his wife Bonnie; daughter Abbi and husband Shane Combs; as well as his son Rick and wife Gillian, and two grandchildren. John and Bonnie were devoted to their faith through the Christian Science Church.

No public memorial service is planned. Those who wish to acknowledge their friendship with John and his contribution to the community are asked to consider a donation in his name to the Alf Engen Ski Museum Foundation [here](#) in Park City, where he was a founding board member.

Most of all, his family has asked that friends celebrate life and remember him with a smile, a joke and a Starbucks in hand.

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