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## Tony Wise

Born: 1921 Died: 1995

*Tony Wise was a man of vision. In February of 1947 he could see a modern resort hotel complex where only the silent North woods stood. No one but Tony could see it. With \$750, he purchased "the hill" which is now Mount Telemark and began to realize his dream.*

Born in Hayward, Wisconsin, March 15, 1921, Tony Wise spent his early years in the area that he was later to make a standard word in the skier's vocabulary. Growing up with the usual white man's attitude toward Native Americans, he later became interested in their heritage. In

1954, he set up Historyland, an exciting tourist attraction.

Receiving a B.A. degree in Business from Ohio State, in 1942, and a M.B.A. from Harvard, in 1947, Tony had a firm foundation for his dream. However, it was during the war, as Division Captain of the 14<sup>th</sup> Armored Reserve when he was stationed at Garmish-Partenkirchen, that the dream began to take shape. Wise's Norwegian heritage played a part in the grand design. Could a more appropriate name for one of the first ski resorts in the Midwest be found – the Telemark? It was named after a province in Norway which was the birth place of skiing.

Since opening day, December 13, 1947, Telemark has seen steady progress and expansion. Since the first T-bar in 1947 and the chair lift in 1964, land development and a townhouse complex in 1968 and 1970, it's been one big boom after another.

The most striking addition is the Telemark Lodge, a 6 million dollar masterpiece reflecting the rustic flavor of the North woods. Having seen the results of the economic boom and bust period of the timber and mining area, Wise became inspired to get his hometown back on the road to prosperity.

Perhaps no other program exemplifies this more clearly than his master plan for cross-country skiing. He envisioned the finest cross-country skiing program in the United States and indeed, he developed exactly that. The 93-kilometer network of cross-country trails is considered one of the best in North America.

With establishment as a U.S. Ski Team Regional Training Center and the annual American Birkebeiner citizens cross-country race, Telemark has become a major destination both nationally and internationally. After several years of unofficial World Cup races, the first official F.I.S. World Cup race was held in 1978.

The "man of vision" had many heroes that inspired and guided his dreams. From them he learned that of the many things one does in life it is the spinoffs that come unexpectedly. One of these was the phenomenal success with the rapidly expanding cross-country program.

Telemark is the home of a multi-million dollar Sports and Convention Center. Tony felt that the Sports Medicine Complex was a reflection of the 1960s emphasis of physical fitness. "

Tony believed that first class was the way to go. The amount of time and energy needed to run a small operation is roughly equivalent to that of a larger operation. As his dream continued to unfold, millions of people, skiers, spectators, and most importantly his hometown benefited from his foresight.

Tony Wise was elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1988.



1984 Cross-country American Birkebeiner, Cable, WI (Telemark)  
L to R: Tony Wise, Jackrabbit Smith-Johannsen, and Jan Stenerud