

## How I created the Nordic walking

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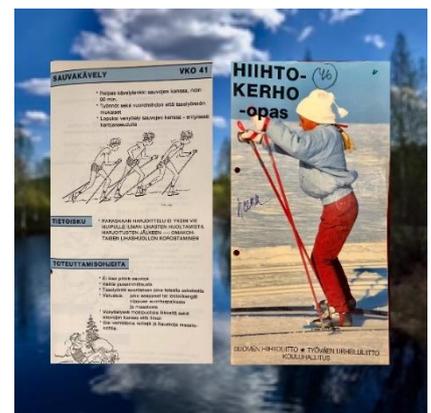


I did uphill training during my cross-country career in 1956-64. That training method is still used among the cross-country skiers during summer. I noticed how effective it was compared to running. At that time I thought, would this kind of training be suitable also for other people.

After graduating my PE teacher qualifications at the Helsinki University I got a job at a secondary school. Already then I took 'sauvakävely' later to be internationally named Nordic walking into the curriculum. (The name Nordic Walking was not yet used). The main reason for it was to take classes outdoors because the gymnasium was too small for 4 PE teachers working there at the same time. After that job at the secondary school I became a professor at the Faculty of PE and (HE) Health Education in Jyväskylä. There I had the opportunity to teach Nordic walking for the PE students.



The best platform to spread Nordic walking was my position at the National Board of General Education in 1973-1991. I was the senior advisor (chief inspector) for girls' PE and HE in all the schools in Finland. During that time I co-worked with many national sport associations. In 1967 we published with two of the skiing associations a guide book for after school clubs. On one page of the guidebook we taught technics and teaching methods for Nordic walking (the left side of the photo on right). As you can notice the skipoles of the girl in the photo are too long, but in the written text our instructions of the length were up to armpits, because there were only normal skipoles available. Poles for Nordic Walking were not yet invented.



In 1967 I was on our national TV (YLE) to introduce Nordic walking. Here are some pictures from that TV broadcast. We had with us students from high school, who had never tried Nordic walking before. But because they have skied during winter, Nordic walking was easy to them. The pictures below are moderated from the TV broadcast.



My first public appearance for Nordic walking was in Tampere in 1967, where Suomen Latu Association organized the first ever "Finland Walking" event. I was the only one among 3000 participants who used ski poles. You can imagine the faces of other participants staring at me. Some participants were joking and ask me:"Did you forget your skies?" I walked that 36 km route with the managing director of Suomen Latu and with the president of the Orienteering Association. Without ski poles I could not have been able to keep up with them both. During the event I gave them the poles to try how different it is to walk with the poles.



During that event it was clear to me that it would have been too slow to use our school system to spread Nordic Walking to the general public. That's why I recommended it to Tuomo Jantunen, the managing director of Suomen Latu to take the Nordic walking into their programme. Suomen Latu also started to develop the poles for Nordic walking first with Excel company. After that Nordic walking came very popular first in Finland and little by little also abroad where it got the international name by two Finnish PE teachers.

Some years ago I tested the bungypump poles and found them very efficient in summer circumstances. The technique is nearly the same as with normal Nordic Walking poles. The best place to use them is on paths where the base is flexible but not too hard. It is easy to use them going uphill, but downhill can be difficult if the slopes are steep.

Just one week ago our board of Rovaniemi seniors had a meeting while doing Nordic walking.

