



## Just the facts

**Blueberry Lake  
Cross Country Center**  
Plunkton Road  
East Warren

From Warren Village, go east on Brook Road for about two miles. Turn right onto Plunkton Road for one-third mile. The ski center is on your right, and parking is on your left. Daily rate: \$11 per person. Ski and snowshoe rentals: \$11 per person. Single and double-passenger pulks are available for towing young children. Call (802) 496-6687 or go to [www.blueberylakeski.com](http://www.blueberylakeski.com).

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knew it was just an excuse for them to ski against each other. The rest of us were just spectators," she says.

The good times were short-lived, however, because a different kind of hardship struck Robinson in the form of a fierce legal battle. Lenord won't talk about how he lost that 600-acre property years ago, only that "I do things with a handshake and I guess that wasn't good enough." The fact is, he was forced into bankruptcy when he lost a court case and the Blueberry Lake property to the out-of-state partner he had acquired years earlier to develop the project. The land was eventually purchased by the Trust for Public Land, a nonprofit conservation organization, to protect it from development. In 2001, the Trust sold it to the U.S. Forest Service for almost two million dollars; it is now part of the Green Mountain National Forest.

Despite losing the dam and waterfront he spent five years creating, Lenord gets a real sense of satisfaction when he drives up to the lake and sees the enjoyment people get by using it. "It makes me feel good—folks are out there picking berries and swimming in the lake. It was something I always wanted to do and I did it. I call it the '60-Acre Lake' and

there's not many people who can say they built something like that," he says.

After the court case, a lesser man might have given up the dream. But Robinson packed up what little excavating equipment he had left, and in 1990 moved his Nordic center to land he still owned on Plunkton Road. He built new trails and started over. Around that time, Lenord began coaching his granddaughter, Jen Watkins, who was just two years old. She later skied for the Harwood team. At 16, under her grandfather's tutelage, she qualified in the biathlon for the U.S. Junior World team, a feeder program for the Winter Olympics. Jen went on to compete for several years on the European circuit, racing in places like Switzerland and Finland.

Today the ski center is based in an unassuming cabin built by Lenord and George out of white pine they harvested and milled on the property. George helps his dad part-time during the winter.

Over the years, Lenord has won more than his share of race trophies, but today they gather dust and cobwebs, surrounded by racks full of snowshoes and cross-country equipment waiting to be rented. It's a minimalist operation—don't expect a fancy deli or snack bar. Lenord gives away the energy bars that

he gets as promotional items and sells bottled water and Gatorade. "I don't understand the retail business and I don't want to," he says.

Skiers at Blueberry Lake are rewarded with a choice of 11 trails, designed for all ability levels and covering more than 30 kilometers. The trails wind through the kind of serene and breathtaking pine forests and meadows that you would expect in Vermont, and that's what takes up most of Lenord's time and effort. He purposely laid the trails through the woods to avoid snow loss from wind, and devised a method of piling up snow in central areas so he can later distribute it using an adapted manure spreader.

At 81 years old, Lenord still skis up to 10 kilometers every day. His favorite trail? That would be Number 9. "It's long, interesting, and easy. If I can do it, anyone can," he says.

That may be partly true, but not many people could do what Lenord has done in his lifetime. He has been married for six decades to the love of his life; he has endured the illness of his best friend and the betrayal of a business deal gone wrong; and he had the courage to keep his dream alive—the dream of a path in the woods covered with snow and a lake surrounded by blueberries. ▽