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IDEAS

The moment I realized I was skiing for the last time

At this stage of my life, I'm getting good at quitting while I'm ahead.

By **Bob Regan** Updated March 27, 2026, 3:00 a.m.



The author at Lake Tahoe on the day he said farewell to the slopes. SUBMITTED PHOTO

Bob Regan is a songwriter in Nashville and the founder of [OperationSong.org](https://www.operation-song.org/).

It was a bluebird day, as skiers call it: a cerulean sky, two feet of fresh, packed powder, a no-lift-lines Monday. I rode the gondola up to the halfway point on the mountain, taking in the view of Lake Tahoe unfolding panoramically below. I stepped off the gondola and into my skis and started down an easy green-rated run to the next lift. I felt a little tentative on my slats, but that's not unexpected on a first day of the season, especially if, like me, you're 77 years old and in the early stages of Parkinson's. After a few more runs, muscle memory was kicking in and my old form and confidence had returned. Almost. Two runs later on more challenging terrain, I made my decision: This would be my last day skiing.

Why? I felt fully in control about 90 percent of the time, but that is not enough, not nearly. The other, unforgiving 10 percent is where peril lies. There were brief moments when I was slightly off balance, when my skis got ahead of me. I was able to catch myself and there were no “yard sale” falls, no sprains or broken bones, just the realization that it was time.

That realization is crucial. If your brain doesn’t tell you, your body will and your last trip down the mountain will be in a ski patrol basket. I’ve enjoyed doing this for 65 years. Is that not enough? Would one, two, or five more years be more fulfilling? I suspect not. I’m quitting while I’m ahead.

This is not the first time I’ve had to make the call, when an “I’m doing this!” exhilaration was supplanted by a “Can I still do this?” uncertainty: My last ride on a motorcycle, my last scramble up Horsetail Falls Trail in California, and my last live performance as a singer-songwriter. That was a tough one. It had been my livelihood for more than 50 years. But all those activities and accomplishments formed pillars of my identity, so I let go of them with some trepidation. What would hold up the structure of “me” if they were removed? Would I collapse like a tower of Jenga blocks?

It does not seem so. As for skiing, I am content knowing that I gave my all for as long as I could and that my love of the sport has been passed on to my children who, in turn, are passing it on to their children.

No doubt there will be more last times to come in this last quarter of life, a steady stream of them. My challenge will be to accept these finales not with defeat and despair but with a tip of the hat, “Thank you, old friend,” gratitude and grace.

Back at the bottom of the hill, I made my way over to the bunny slope where my 6-year-old granddaughter was finishing up a lesson. “Watch me, Grandpa,” she called out as she worked her skis into the “pizza” position and started down the hill,

delighting in her newfound ability to harness gravity's pull and make it do her bidding.
Can "french fries" be far behind?

Joys are, by their nature, transitory, but they can live on if passed on.

Thank you, skis. Thank you, snow and mountains. That's a wrap.

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