



SKI TRACKS

Newsletter of the Bitterroot Cross Country Ski Club

Box 431 • Corvallis, Montana 59828

April, 2002



Preface to "Beyond Our Imaginings" By Gordon Reese

"Beyond Our Imaginings" was written by Rebecca Cothran after she and her husband Jim had been here in early March. I took the photo of them that appears nearby at the top of Picnic Meadow. To fully appreciate her article, the reader should know that Rebecca had a role in the creation of the Chief Joseph nordic area. In 1989 I approached Gil Gale of the Wisdom Ranger District about the possibility of creating some groomed cross-country trails at Chief Joseph Pass. At the time, Rebecca (then Konsanke) was working at the Wisdom Ranger District, and when I received the go-ahead to show them how groomed nordic ski trails would be a worthwhile addition to the alpine, telemark and back-country touring that was available at the time, Rebecca was assigned to work with me. We spent time skiing the area and planning possible trail layouts. Keep in mind that there was no parking lot, toilet or any other infrastructure at the time. Needing to start small, we decided on about seven kilometers of beginner to intermediate level trails. This included Sunny Meadow, Continental Divide, Picnic Meadow, part of Timber Trail, and part of Lost Trail.

Rebecca organized a "show me" trip for agency folks in early March of 1990. About ten U.S. Forest Service personnel from Dillon, Wisdom, Sula, Hamilton, North Fork and Salmon took part. I snow-shoed a loop from the highway out to Sunny Meadow, then down to Timber Trail, north to Picnic Meadow, on to Continental Divide and back to the highway. George Corn joined me, with his great enthusiasm. That year we had a reasonably

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APRIL MEETING

Thursday, April 11, 2002 - 7:00 p.m.

Corvallis High School Lunchroom

Program: Mort Arkava, author of "Hiking the Bitterroots" on his new book and eleven new hiking trails.

March 14, 2002 Meeting Highlights

President **Sonny LaSalle** announced that the Club had BRXC patches still available for sale. He read a letter from **Mary Nousanen** regarding her experience at Chief Joe, her appreciation of the BRXC Club and enclosing a \$1,000 donation. He also mentioned that **Gordon Reese** had visited her and presented her a lifetime membership and Club mug.

Sonny announced that there are approximately 80 members signed up for e-mail newsletters. The e-mail allows about \$400/yr savings in not having to mail newsletters USPS. If members wish to receive the newsletter via internet contact **Toddy Perryman**. **Dan Driscoll** mentioned that newsletters could be received from the Club's new website. **Pat Patterson** gave an update on the website, noting there is now a link with the Missoula nordic web page. Also new to the website is a possibility for members to post ski items for sale or trade. Sonny gave big thank you to Pat Patterson for his efforts on the web page.

Mel Mooers asked that if hut hosts had to cancel, to please contact **Toddy Perryman** so that she could send an e-mail announcement of the newly available date, so that someone else could take advantage of the host experience.

Bill McCrum gave glowing reports of his Extravaganza gourmet experience, urging others to buy lots of lottery tickets next year for a chance at the experience.

Sonny LaSalle, **Mel Mooers** and **Ed Hastings** are to meet with Forest Service representatives to discuss summer rental management for the cabin. **Judy LaSalle** mentioned receiving a phone call from someone who was so impressed with the cabin they wanted blue prints so they could build one; she referred them to Rocky Mountain Log Homes.

Katya Merrell presented a styrofoam potty seat that she had brought back from Norway to **Gordon Reese**, asking him to install it at the May Creek cabin.

Sonny introduced **Chet Morris** who presented a slide show of his travels to Greenland, building and using a sea kayak; Norway, Switzerland, the Italian Alps and Chile.

EDITORIAL By Art Seifert

At the last meeting comments were made suggesting that some members feel that the metal roofed, log structure constructed at the northwest edge of Picnic Meadow should not be called a "hut." I surmise that they are influenced by the dictionary definition: "hut - *n.* 1. a small or humble dwelling, esp. one made of logs, grass, etc. 2. a simple roofed shelter, often with one or two sides left open." That's pretty basic, and the synonyms aren't very flattering either: hutch, hovel, dump, shanty, shack, shed. We all have the evidence of our own eyes to prove that the structure is not really any of these; that it is a much finer work, deserving of recognition and respect, and perhaps of a name such as chateau, edifice, caravan-sary, mansion, villa, chalet, lodge, pavilion, manor house, palazzo (you get the idea.)

But we live in a world beset with confusion and contradiction, and must learn that we cannot always rely on what is apparent, to be what is real. What is undeniably real, in this case, is the fact that the "official" name of the structure is, "The Gordon Reese Cabin." Thus, this usage has the imprimatur of the United States Forest Service, and as imprimaturs go ... well, those of you who want to take on the USFS, be my guest. What is also real is the historical background of the name, especially as it relates to the word "hut." It is clear that the Founding Builders' original intent was to bestow a name that was rigorously unpretentious. (Thus, "hut" would have been cool with them.) They didn't want skiers who had long anticipated and anxiously awaited the project's completion, to have their expectations disappointed when they finally saw it. This was a wise decision, for the management of expectations has proven to be an important tactic over many years, from Sun Tsu to Dubya Bush.

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We need to be mindful of the contradictions in our reality, though we need not be undone by them. The most obvious contradiction is that, notwithstanding the official name of the Gordon Reese Cabin, the trails are replete with arrows pointing to "The Hut." Why is that? I don't know for sure, but have decided I can live with it. I figure that if the IRS has Paperwork Reduction Act Notices, the Forest Service probably has a Sign Shortening Regulation.

It might be a mistake, however, to laugh off this name business as unimportant and inconsequential. It may not be. Someone needs to ask whether the murmurings we have heard are merely a reflection of kudos for the builders from the vox populi or the beginnings of an organized effort by subversive elements in the Club to make a grab for money and power that would rend the social fabric of our association. Start from the proposition that the GRC is a fine piece of work and a recreation and sporting mecca for many individuals and families in the area. Proceed to the knowledge that enterprises and entrepreneurs are willing to spend millions to have their names associated with architectural ikons (think: Enron Field; Trump Tower.) Could it be that there are elements among us who would wrest the name "Gordon Reese Cabin" from the humble and deserving Mr. Reese in order to sell the naming rights to the highest bidder in the megalomania market?

Until there is some reason to modify the policy, this Newsletter will continue to refer to the GRC as the "Cabin" or the "Hut" and will be monitoring developments in the Club very, very carefully.

Membership Renewals

Annual memberships EXPIRED on **MAY 31, 2001.**

Renew your membership now!

INDIVIDUAL - \$10 • FAMILY - \$20

SUPPORTING INDIVIDUAL - \$25

SUPPORTING FAMILY - \$35

LIFE MEMBER - \$100

Membership Dues

June 1, 2001 - May 31, 2002

MAIL TO: Bitterroot Cross-Country Ski Club

P.O. Box 431, Corvallis, MT 59828

Name(s) _____

Address: _____

City _____ ST _____ Zip _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Type of Membership: _____

Amount enclosed: \$ _____ (Listed above)

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good snow season, and on the “show me” day it was clear and sunny and the natural beauty and potential of the area for nordic skiing was very evident. After skiing we all went to Lost Trail and ate our sack lunches in the day lodge and talked about the possibilities. Looking back, that was a significant day in the development of our Chief Joseph ski trails.

Later that spring Rebecca moved to the North Fork District of the Salmon National Forest to work on recreation projects on the Salmon River. About a year and a half later she moved to the Bitterroot National Forest where she continued to work in recreation. Somewhere about 1991 Rebecca and Jim got married. I believe they first met at Clemson University. Jim is a pharmacist. When they lived in the Valley he worked at Marcus Daly Hospital Pharmacy. In 1995, with their daughter Madison they moved to North Carolina, near where Jim grew up. Since then they have added two boys to the family. It was very special for me to have them return to visit and spend time at Chief Joe.

Beyond Our Imaginings By Rebecca Cothran

It was with great anticipation that my husband, Jim, and I headed up to Chief Joseph Pass early on a March morning. Seven years had passed since either of us had skied up there. Since our move to North Carolina, we had been back to Montana only once and that was a summer trip. This time we had two nights reserved at the Gordon Reese Cabin and three glorious days of skiing.

The Gordon Reese Cabin... my mind drifted back to the first time I had met Gordon. It was in the late 1980's and I was a Forest Service employee at the Wisdom Ranger District. Mr. Reese had invited some of us up to Chief Joseph to look at the potential it held for cross country skiing. He had prepacked a loop for us with his snowshoes and took us on a ski-tour of our own Beaverhead National Forest. Already a fan of nordic skiing, I was sold on the idea immediately. How much had changed in that span of time, I wondered.

At the trailhead, we snapped on our skis, loaded our borrowed sled and followed the signs to the “hut.” It wasn't long before we saw a bright green roof which covered a gorgeous - “hut??” More like a palace than a hut! For the next twenty minutes we said little other than “Wow!” “Did you see this?” “Can you believe how nice this is?” This was way beyond our imaginings. We were feeling incredibly blessed.

We spent about three hours of that day skiing as many trails as possible, basking in the beauty of a snowy winter and waking muscles that had been slumbering far too long. There is something about cross-country skiing that no other sport has touched for me. Maybe it's the smooth glide as you sail over the snow; or the stark contrast of pure white covering firs draped with witches broom; or the knowledge that the majority of your muscles are working in concert to propel you down the trail. At the

end of the day my entire body was aching, especially my face. I had an ear to ear grin that just wouldn't quit.

The following day we were delighted by the variety of age and ability that visited the cabin. The nearness to the trailhead and the ease of the terrain make it a very reasonable ski even for the novice. Next time, we decided, we're bringing our kids. Our day was topped with more trails skied with special friends, elk stroganoff delivered to our door, and a night ski in the freshly falling snow.

We awoke on our last day at Chief Joe with six inches of fresh snow and more falling. It was hard to leave such a uniquely special place, but one thing is as sure as the setting sun: God willing, we'll be back.

To the Bitterroot Cross-Country Ski Club:

Hats off to you, who groom the trail
Through rain, snow, sleet or hail.
Hats off to you , who cut and stack
The wood to warm our fronts and back.
Hats off to you who worked so hard
To build a “hut” in a great back-yard.
Hats off to you who hauled the stuff
To supply the hut, bet that was tough!
Hats off to you who put in the cup
The money that keeps the club going up and up.
Hats off to you who planned this thing
That makes many a joyful heart to sing.
Hats off to you our God above
For creating this place that we sure love.

Richardson Creek - Scooter/Shoofly Loop Ski Trip By Kim and Bill Birck

Gordon Reese suggested that we write up an account of one of our favorite Chief Joe area ski outings for inclusion in the BRXC newsletter, so here it is! BTW, we want to express our great appreciation for the new Gordon Reese Warming Hut and the volunteer effort that went into its creation. What a wonderful addition to an already great place to ski!

If you're looking for a ski outing of about 4 - 6 hours that encompasses both back country skiing on Forest Service trails and the Chief Joseph trail system, this is the trip for you. And you won't even need a shuttle or hitch-hike to get back to your car! But you may want to bring climbing skins for your skis. There's plenty of solitude on the ungroomed portions of this route, but we're hoping that as more people become aware of the loop possibilities in combining the FS trails with the Chief Joe network, that we'll be breaking trail less often!

Park at the Richardson Creek plowed parking area on the right just past MM4 on Highway 43 east of Chief Joe and ski up the Richardson Creek Trail. The trail soon crosses the creek and veers off up the hillside to the right,

marked with blue diamonds. (Don't be fooled by ski tracks that might continue up the creek.) This is where you'll probably appreciate having climbing skins, as the trail climbs rather steeply for the next mile and a half. With skins, it takes around an hour to reach the ridge top, where you can shed the climbing skins and connect with the Anderson Mountain Road, which follows the Continental Divide to come out on Highway 43 directly across from the Chief Joe Parking Lot. Another option is to ski the Ander-Rich trail from the Richardson Creek Trail which ends up at the same place. Cross the highway and ski the EZ Trail to the warming hut for a lunch break. If you leave your car by 10:00 a.m. you'll probably arrive at the hut around noon.

After lunch, head for the Scooter Creek Touring Trail, which is accessed off the NE corner of Sentinel Meadow. Though ungroomed, this well-marked trail is mostly downhill and is usually skied-in. Instead of turning toward Hogan Cabin hang right on the Shoofly Trail. There is one fairly steep downhill stretch on the Shoofly, but a well-marked bypass trail avoids the steepest section. Continue out Shoofly Creek toward the highway. The trail mostly hugs the left side of the valley, but as you near the highway - if the snow isn't too deep - you can head off across open terrain to your right and come out closer to where your car is parked. You finish up with a 1/3 mile walk back up the highway to the parking lot. The entire loop trip takes a minimum of four hours of skiing: two hours before the hut break and two hours afterwards. Total distance is approximately 10 miles. A similar, but longer, loop can be done starting with the Cabinet Creek Trail.

SUMMER AND FALL ACTIVITY SCHEDULE, 2002

There will be a meeting of the Hiking committee on Tuesday 4-16-02 at 10:00 am in the basement meeting room of the Bitterroot Public Library on State Street at Fourth Street. Anyone who wishes to participate will constitute the committee. We will discuss all activities including hiking, biking, river running, and extended trips. A proposed schedule will be discussed and prepared for publication in the May club newsletter. Call Ed Curran, 961-5446 if you are able to participate.

TONY'S TIP'S - WELCOME TO SPRING By Tony Neaves

It's time for lots more interesting skiing and possibly some multi-sport days! By that I mean you can get a good ski in early while the snow is still firm, and then in the afternoon go for a bike ride or hike down at the lower elevations. As we've all probably experienced, it is not as enjoyable (or fast) to ski mid-day, when the snow has the consistency of wet cement. The conditions are better either early or later in the day. This is, however, the perfect time of year to participate in some "CRUST CRUISING"! For those who don't know what I'm talking about, it is some of the funnest skiing you'll do all season. The conditions have to be such that it is heating up considerably during the day, and freezing significantly at night. To catch the "CRUST", you need to be out skiing early, before the sun has a chance to heat things up too much. When it is good crust cruising conditions, you can go ANYWHERE! It is a blast to just follow whatever terrain looks like fun and to ski somewhere different.

Spring (and summer) skiing also brings us the highly acclaimed CORN snow. There is nothing like pulling off turns down a slope that has "corned up". Here again, the conditions have to be just right, with respect to time of day and temperature. Although enjoying good corn snow is more for the down-hill / back-country types, it can be fun on touring skis as well.

One of the things I really like about skiing this time of year is it gives you the chance to strip off all that heavy winter clothing. It's like a spring weight loss program! There is something wonderful about skiing in just a T-shirt and a light weight pair of pants. Remember to bring along a rimmed hat, lots of sunscreen, and some Maxi-glide for your skis. If you are out skiing and the snow gets too sloppy and wet, it may be time to head for a nearby log (or to the cabin deck!) for some picnicking or sunbathing!! So enjoy this sensational time of year - see you out there.



Enjoy the outdoors!