



SKI TRACKS

Newsletter of the Bitterroot Cross Country Ski Club

Box 431 • Corvallis, Montana 59828

April, 2003



March Meeting Highlights

March 13, 2003

By Kay Fulton

Vice President, Mel Mooers, called the meeting to order at 7:05 P.M. There were approximately 60 people in attendance. **The Treasurer's Report** for the month was: Income, \$1,711.38; Expenses, \$883.55; Net Income, \$827.83; Savings, \$4502.98.

Trails Report: Gordon Reese reported that now it is warming up. Last Friday there was 36 inches of new snow. The groomers groomed both Friday and Saturday but could not do all the trails or lay track. Some volunteers helped Mel snowshoe out a few of the trails Tuesday and Wednesday. They will groom on Friday. The crust skiing is reported to be very good. We currently have an 84-inch base. Hopefully there will be some more cold temperatures to maintain.

Upcoming Events: Darel Seibert, the new Outings Chairperson, will publish events on both the Web page and in the newsletter as they get scheduled. Katya Merrell announced that the Gash Creek Ski outing scheduled for this Saturday, 3/15, has been cancelled due to the warm temperatures. The "Moonbeam and Snowflakes" Moon light ski sponsored by the Bitterroot National Forest is still on for Saturday, 3/15, at 6:30 and 7:00 P.M. There will be the "annual" St. Patrick's PotLuck at the Warming Hut on Sunday, March 16th at noon.

Items of Interest: Mel announced that Annie and Tony competed in the Annual West Yellowstone Rendezvous and Annie came in 9th out of the women and 71st out of 300 skiers. Tony came in 82nd. Because of all the help Annie and Tony have given to the Club, the Board decided to give them lifetime memberships. Thanks, Annie and Tony.

Program: The Program this evening was presented by Francesca Marucco, who is completing her Masters Degree at the University of Montana. Her program was on the study she and others have been conducting on wolves in Italy, specifically in the Italian Alps. The program was entitled "Skiing and Wolves in the Italian Alps" and, in addition to her slides on tracing the wolves, Francesca included a video clip of one of the most grueling ski races in the world, which takes place in the Alps in June. The entire program was fascinating.

APRIL SKI TOURS

By Darel Seibert

As Spring has arrived and the snow conditions are variable, short notice only tours will be planned. Please call **Darel Seibert** @ 375-1999 (Seibert Chiropractic) by mid week if you are interested in skiing the next Saturday. Call Darel early

APRIL MEETING

Thursday, April 10, 2003, 7:00 p.m.

First Presbyterian Church

1220 West Main St. Hamilton

Program: Come and share in the glory of the 2002 Olympics. Jed Dennison will give an inspiring power point presentation on his experiences at the winter Olympics in Salt Lake City. Jed's talk will include exciting coverage of the competition between the world's best cross-country skiers at several events: the Mens' and Women's Biathlon Pursuit, which combines sharp-shooting and skiing; the Mens' 4 x 10 km race where teams of 4 skiers each ski a 10 km leg of the race; and the Mens' Nordic Combined which is an awesome mix of ski jumping and a 5 km skate ski race. Jed will share stories about the time he spent with some of these amazing athletes and personal insights about the competition.

in the week if you have an interest in leading a trip. Summer hikes will be planned as leaders are confirmed. Please contact Darel if you have a hike in mind and it will be included in upcoming newsletters and/or on the Club's website. Think about new areas to explore next winter when you are out in the woods this summer. Call me if you have any ideas that need to be investigated. I'm sure there are some new areas close that we can explore. Next year prospects are (1) Skiing from Chief Joe trails to "Sahara", then bushwacking down to the bottom of Banshee; (2) Anderson Mountain trail to Richardson, down to Highway 43, and then back Joseph Creek to Chief Joe trails at bottom of Banshee. There needs to be plenty of snow over Joseph Creek to make multiple crosses, so this probably will be late in the year. Maybe you can think of other areas. See you out there. Darel

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF THE GROOMING CREW

By Gordon Reese

The alarm is set for 5:15 a.m. Because of a strong personal aversion to alarms, I am awake before it sounds. Mary Ellen has informed me that she does not wish to welcome the new day at this time.

Shave and shower and the first check of the "list" to make sure I leave home with the necessary items. (Prior to our Friday grooming day, a number of jobs need to be completed.) Five gallon water containers for the Hut need to be filled. Fuel containers need to be filled. Supplies for the Hut (cocoa, tea and paper products) need to be purchased. Tools that we anticipate we will use need to be gathered. Sometimes, repairs

to our machines and equipment need to be taken care of (certain groomers seemingly have an attraction for stumps and trees.)

Dressing for this robust activity (straddling a snow machine - or at least trying to) requires about 3 to 4 layers, depending on temperature and what one wants to protect.

Depending on our pre-arranged meeting time (and if I am not running late) I leave home with fuel and gear about 6:15 to 6:30.

I usually meet Ed in Victor and then we pick up Mel at Sheafman Creek Road. Then on to the Forest Supervisor's office where we transfer groomers, equipment and supplies to a green Agency pickup for the drive up the valley. We usually arrive at the Sula Store about 7:45. We exchange greetings with Nancy or Marge and the cook, who always provides us with a great breakfast courtesy of the Ski Club.

The drive up to the Sula Store and continuing through breakfast is when we have stimulating discussions concerning local, state, national and international happenings; our Governor; gripes about not enough or too much snow; the great job that MDOT's highway crew does on the road; and most importantly, Mel's latest joke.

When we leave the Sula Store we head for the Sula Ranger Station where we hook up our equipment trailer with our three snow machines and head for the pass. During this time we discuss the work plan for the day and have an in-depth safety meeting - and we may hear another of Mel's jokes.

We usually arrive at the Chief Joseph Pass parking lot about 8:45 a.m. Unload the machines; shovel the path to the toilet and the "ramp" to the trails; load water and supplies to take to the Hut; and head to our equipment shed and hook up the appropriate drags or levelers. We then make a run directly to the Hut to unload what needs to stay there, and "hob nob" with the Hut Hosts.

A bit of explanation is in order about ski trail grooming. Usually there is new snow on the trails and if there is less than about 12 inches, we can make our first pass with two machines pulling drags and one machine pulling a leveler that (1) cuts off the humps, (2) fills in the low spots and (3) moves some snow from the high side to the low side of the trail. This combination of equipment levels, smooths, widens and compacts the snow. We would also cut out any trees that may have come down. This first pass will cover about 18 to 20 miles of running and, depending greatly on the snow conditions, will take 2 to 3 hours. The amount of new snow, the air temperature and the amount of moisture in the snow will pretty much dictate whether this first pass goes smoothly, or otherwise. When it goes otherwise - it usually means that someone has gotten his machine stuck. Very, very simple to do - and not very easy to undo. Getting a 700 to 800 pound machine un-stuck requires shoveling, pushing, pulling - and quite often moving another machine into position to tow the embedded machine. It also requires a high volume of insult and sarcasm directed towards the driver.

We attempt to have the trails leveled, smoothed, compacted and as wide as we want, by lunch time. Because of this, Friday mornings is when we see some skate skiers. After lunch we may make a second pass on all or some of our trails and by 1:30 we generally start setting tracks. This final pass is made over all the trails with the first two machines using drags to widen and smooth and the third machine pulling a compaction sled followed by the track setter sled. The compaction sled

and the track setter sled, that actually forms the tracks in the snow, each weigh about 250 pounds. If the day has gone reasonably well, and if the snow (and the weather) have cooperated, we will have laid down 16 miles of good firm tracks, with a solid pole plant area on each side, and double tracks where appropriate. Each groomer will have covered about 45 miles on his machine.

When we leave Chief Joe - between 3 and 4 p.m. - we will have picked up empty water containers (and trash, if the Hut Hosts haven't) from the Hut; cleaned both toilets and re-stocked the TP; and refueled and reloaded the machines. On our drive home we drop off the trailer at the Sula Ranger Station; leave the Agency pickup at the Supervisor's office; and either stop off for a brew or head straight home.

Note from Gordon: Because we are a crew of three - and because we make a lot of decisions by voting - this sometimes results in 2 - 1 votes. And that is why this article was written by yours truly. We are able to accomplish the work that we do because I have very dedicated partners in the effort and because the membership of our Club and our commercial sponsors, and all who have helped us financially, have provided the equipment that allows us to do the job. Thanks to all.



Membership Renewals / DUES

Annual Memberships EXPIRE November 1!

Renew your membership now!

INDIVIDUAL - \$10 • FAMILY - \$20

SUPPORTING INDIVIDUAL - \$25

SUPPORTING FAMILY - \$35

LIFE MEMBER - \$100

Membership Dues

Nov. 1, 2002 - Oct. 31, 2003

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: _____

(Listed above)

Amount enclosed: \$ _____

Newsletter preference: (Check all that apply)

Send by USPS _____; Send by e-mail _____

TONY'S TIP'S

By Tony Neaves

A Little bit about Bindings

For a couple of thousand years bindings were a simple subject, consisting of a willow or leather strap over your toes. The theory then was, it was easy to kick off your skis to herd reindeer or hunt.

Around 1860, Sondre Nordheim from the Telemark region of Norway was experimenting with making skis with sidecut and needed more control. He modified the willow toe loop by adding a twisted willow heel loop, thereby increasing the ability to turn the ski. In the following 60 years, many versions of this were invented.

In the 1920's, the split between downhill / jumping bindings versus cross-country began. Downhill / jumping bindings became the beartrap style that was used until the '50's, and has since evolved into the cable telemark binding in use today! Around 1927 Bror With of Norway patented the first version of the "Rotefella" (Rat-trap) binding. It has evolved into the 3-pin 75mm binding of today. This design has been popular in many incarnations, and was standardized in the mid '70's as the 75mm norm.

A minor spin-off became the telemark norm with a longer

screw spacing and ability to use thicker soled boots with it. The design works o.k. and still is around, but has always had several drawbacks, the big one being the pin holes and front of the boot damage. Before cable bindings became more refined, it was common to need to get your telemark boots re-soled and rebuilt once or twice a year! The other drawback to 3-pins is that the sides of the binding drag on the side of set tracks - kind of like driving with your parking brake on.

In the mid '70's, Adidas and Salomon started working on a better system. Adidas made a long tongue on the toe of the boot that the binding clamped down on. Salomon came out with its SNS system which had a D shaped bar sticking out the front of the boot. The traditionalist Norwegians stuck with their version of a narrow 3-pin, the 50mm norm, until the early '80's when Rotefella came out with the "new nordic norm" or NNN. By 1989 Adidas had given up, along with a number of other - and now obsolete designs, and Salomon changed theirs to the current SNS profile system.

Rotefella then redesigned the NNN into the NNN II by moving the toe bar back under the boot by 10mm. Since then, both companies have come out with back-country versions (BC) that are bigger and beefier bindings.

The only disadvantage to all this binding development over the years is that all the different styles are not interchangeable. You cannot use a Salomon on a Rotefella or vice versa. Also, BC boots do not work on non BC bindings nor do NNN II boots work on BC bindings. Confused yet? Hang on, there's more! Old Salomon boots will not work with the new Salomon bindings, and while NNN boots kind of fit on NNN II bindings, NNN II boots will not fit on NNN bindings! So, before you borrow a friend's skis or boots, find out what bindings are on the skis and whether they are compatible with your boots. If you are unsure of boot / ski / binding compatibility, ask your friendly ski shop employee, who will be glad to help! Happy Trails!

OFFICERS - BITTERROOT XC CLUB

President	Sonny LaSalle	375-0871
	lasalmom@montana.com	
Vice-President	Mel Mooers	961-3163
	m.mooersmt@juno.com	
Treasurer	Jeane Lippert	642-3390
	jeaneenaej@juno.com	
Secretary	Kay Fulton	642-3794
	kayinmt@cybernet1.com	
Hiking	Ed Curran	961-5446
	edann@cybernet1.com	
Income	Mary Ellen Reese	642-3007
Instruction	Bob Brophy	363-2381
Membership	Leo Joron	961-8359
	lpj@bitterroot.net	
Newsletter		
Editorial	Art & Kerstin Seifert	961-4411
	ajseifert@earthlink.net	
Production	Peg Hampton	(Msg.) 363-1866
		(H) 363-1887
Mailing	Leo Joron	961-8359
E-mail	Toddy Perryman	961-4959
	brxcski@logonfrog.net	
Outings	Darel Seibert	375-1999
	drdarel@yahoo.com	
Programs	Diane Boyd	961-4058
	director@tellerwildlife.org	
Publicity	Diane Williford	363-6290
Races	Tony Neaves & Annie Creighton	375-0852
	montannie2@yahoo.com	
Trails	Gordon Reese	642-3007
Webmaster	Pat Patterson	363-4192
	CLP@bitterroot.com	
Website	http://www.bitterrootxcskiclub.net	
Warming Hut Reservations (USFS Wisdom)		689-3371

ORIGIN OF "CHIEF JOE LINES" DISCOVERED Mystery Explained By Art Seifert

As promised in the last issue, Newsletter investigation has revealed the true source of the Nazsca-type lines that appear in the snow at Chief Joseph each winter. They are, indeed, magical, but not mysterious. It turns out that the lines are created each winter by the efforts of a few good men - all of them members of the Club. Following are profiles of these men, and elsewhere in this newsletter is an account of their typical schedule and variety of activities as they go about their work. For **twelve years**, since the formation of the BRXC Ski Club, this team has devoted a full day each week during the ski season to grooming trails and providing incidental maintenance at the Chief Joseph nordic area. It's a great story of dedication and dependability.

LET'S HEAR IT FOR THE GROOMERS !!!

Continued on back

ED HASTINGS

Ed's hometown is Bethel, Maine. He and his wife Pat (who is well known to Club members not only as an avid skier but as an author of Montana - related history) retired to the Bitterroot after 34 plus years of varied experience.

Ed served two years (1957-59) in the Army, mostly in Germany, and was recalled to active duty for ten months in 1961. After graduating with a BS in Forest Management from the University of Montana, Ed served ten years with the Forest Service as a Forester at Bonita Ranger District on the Lolo National Forest, as Forester (Recreation) at the Gallatin National Forest in Bozeman, and as Head Snow Ranger at Alta, Utah.

Ed spent a few years in Alaska (1969-1974) in a private trucking venture, worked for the U.S. Air Force and in 1970 went to work with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) on the Alaska Pipeline Project prior to actual construction. Ed retired from the BLM in 1992, having served as Recreation Planner at Dillon, MT, Planning / Environmental Coordinator at Lewistown, MT, and as Program Analyst and Safety Manager in the State Office in Billings, MT.

Ed's knowledge of snow and winter sports comes from experience as a National Ski Patrolman (#2716), U.S. Forest Service Snow Ranger, and work on the Club's trail grooming crew from 1994 to the present. He served for six years as President of the Club - 1994 to 2000.

Ed also enjoys hiking, canoeing, and building carpentry; his skills in the last category were much in evidence during construction of the Warming Hut.

LOU LIPPERT

Lou was born, raised and educated in Jamestown, North Dakota. Lou saw military service during the Korean War Era, and his duty stations included the unlikely combination of Okinawa and Paris. In Paris he was a member of General Eisenhower's Honor Guard and personal Military Police detail. After the service Lou worked for the Northern Pacific Railroad and its



successor, the Burlington Northern Railroad, where he was a Regional Manager of Stations. He took early retirement from the BN and subsequently served as Vice-President of the Washington Central Railroad, until he retired again from railroading.

Lou joined the Ski Club in 1990 and his post-retirement trail grooming career started almost immediately, as he and Gordon Reese got the job done. It sounds like it was a real pioneering experience, as Lou says they did the grooming "...even though we had only the old FWP snowmobile." Subsequently they acquired a second machine (the Yamaha) and Lou continued with the crew until this season, when he retired again, this time from trail grooming.

Lou served as President of the Club for two years, from 1992 - 1994. During his tenure as President the parking lot and trailhead toilet were built, together with all of the lower trails, Vista View, portions of Lost Trail Loop and some of the cut-through trails. In that same period the Club acquired the Yamaha machine and rebuilt the May Creek Cabin.

Lou may be retired, but is far from inactive. His hobbies are hunting, fishing, camping and hiking, and he likes to square dance.

MEL MOOERS

Mel was born in Seattle - on a rainy day!!! He graduated from High School there, worked in Alaska for a time and later was an MP in the Army. For a time he was attached to the Presidential Helicopter Security detail, and traveled to a number of places that President Eisenhower visited. He had been with the Washington State Patrol prior to



"Before"



"After"

entering the service and returned to the Patrol as a career after the military service. He held a number of positions with the WSP including Traffic Trooper, Sergeant, Academy Instructor, Governor Security, Criminal Investigation Division Commander and District Commander. When he retired from the WSP he joined the National Automobile Theft Bureau. Montana was part of his territory, along with Washington, northern Idaho and Alaska, and at times Oregon and the remainder of Idaho. That is how he came to

discover, as he says, “this incredible country” and in 1995 he retired again - to the Bitterroot. Soon afterwards he met Lou Lippert and volunteered to help groom the Chief Joe trails, thinking that he had some snowmobile experience and it sounded like fun. Today, Mel is older, and wiser, but not sadder. He says, “Well, it’s not all fun! It’s work, and very strenuous at times, but the camaraderie is great. The main reason that I continue to help is that I feel we are accomplishing a worthwhile purpose, something that you can actually see, and the efforts are recognized and appreciated. What better motivation can you possibly have?”

Mel is currently Vice President of the Club and until recently Co-Chaired the Outing Committee with Jane Brindle.

GORDON REESE

Gordon was born in North Dakota in the spring, and “snirt” (snow mixed with dirt) was blowing across the landscape. When he was 12 the family moved to Big Fork, Montana. Living on the shore of Flathead Lake, fishing in the Swan River, and hiking in the Swan and Mission mountains was the perfect environment to develop a life-long love of the mountains.

After graduating from Big Fork high school, he attended Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota, where he studied Physical Education and Biology. Great college, but more “snirt.” While in college, Gordon joined the Marine Corps Reserve, and completed his duty in 1964. Upon graduation he received an assistantship at Washington State University to work on a master’s degree. While at WSU he met a very pretty blonde co-ed; Gordon and Mary Ellen were married in 1961.



In 1962 they moved to Anchorage, Alaska, where Gordon taught physical education in the public schools. His major teaching interest was in working with young people to develop lifetime recreation skills and interests. He taught cross-country skiing and coached a cross-country ski team. During his last 15 years of teaching he worked primarily with aquatic activities, physical conditioning classes, and lifetime sports. He also taught summer backpacking, winter camping, and cross-country skiing for elementary teachers who were working to get youngsters on skis - all through the community college. Hunting, fishing, skiing, kayaking, traveling and building projects occupied his spare time. In 1982 Gordon retired and in 1983, along with Mary Ellen and their son Scott, moved to the Bitterroot where they began building their home and developing the property they had purchased in 1977.

In 1985 he made his first overture to the Forest Service to secure permission to mark and groom ski trails at Chief Joseph Pass. On December 19th of 1990, using a 12 year old snow machine with a home made track setter, he groomed (in very crude fashion) about 5 kilometers of trail at Chief Joseph Pass. This snow machine was obtained on loan from the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks. (When received, it had to be lifted on to a trailer with a front end loader because it did not run - but it did come with two boxes of parts and pieces.)

Also in the fall of 1990 Gordon and Mary Ellen, along with Mary and Monte Schoenrock, Nancy and Ron Osborn, Ellen Marsh, George Corn and Scott Lyng formed the Bitterroot Cross - Country Ski Club. Gordon served as the first President of the Club, from 1990 to 1992. He is obviously proud of the Ski Club, but typically gives much credit to others. He says, “Organizations such as our ski club, which are built on the efforts, skills, enthusiasm, hard work, ingenuity, determination, generosity and camaraderie of volunteers play a significant role in making an area a better (more fun) place to live. I thank everyone, literally hundreds of people, who have played a part in the accomplishments of the Bitterroot Cross-Country Ski Club.”



Enjoy the outdoors!