



# SKI TRACKS

Newsletter of the Bitterroot Cross Country Ski Club  
Box 431 • Corvallis, Montana 59828 APRIL, 2006



## EDITOR'S NOTES

**Coming events** – The May 11<sup>th</sup> meeting will be a pot luck. I will put out one more bulletin with the details, so be prepared! Also, looking forward to the beginning of next season, September 9<sup>th</sup> will be the big work day at the Hut. So keep that in mind as well. Gordon has suggested that a calendar of coming events would be helpful, so if you want something included, please let me know.

## MARCH, 2006 MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

**March 9, 2006**

By Kay Fulton

President, Sonny LaSalle, called the meeting to order at 7:05 P.M. There were approximately 41 in attendance.

**Membership:** Jack Losensky reported that he has been analyzing the demographics of the membership and has noted that the majority of members are from Ravalli County with only 4 from Salmon and a pretty good number from Missoula. He suggested that the club might want to focus some publicity in the Salmon area.

**Treasurer's Report** by Jeane Lippert: Income, \$1,059.00; Expenses, \$448.13; Net Income, \$610.87; Checking, \$5,880.48; Savings, \$305.86. We have finally received the grant money for the truck and most of that money will go into a CD for now.

**New Business:** Sonny informed the members that there are a few important changes with our volunteers that will take place soon: Mary Ellen Reese is stepping down from her many years as the person responsible for the Ski Area Maps and thus, the income this brought to the Club from local businesses. Ed Hastings is retiring from the grooming team after his 11 plus years of giving us such great trails. Katya Merrel, who has coordinated and provided the Extravaganza for many years, may be moving. All of these events raise the issue of how can we ever thank people such as these three and Leo Joron for the incredible contributions they have made. There was discussion about what the Club could do such as gift certificates and other ideas.

Another important issue is finding volunteers to take over the duties of these three. There may be someone for the grooming already. Mary Ellen has said that the major work for the maps begins in the Spring and she is more than willing to work with the new person. So please let Sonny know as soon as possible if you are willing to take on Mary Ellen's or Katya's jobs.

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## APRIL PROGRAM

**Thursday, April 13 at 7:00 p.m**

First Presbyterian Church

1220 West Main St. in Hamilton

The featured speaker will be noted Bitterroot National Forest wildlife biologist John Ormiston, who will talk about winter wildlife in the Bitterroot.

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hello Skiers.

We have had a great ski season haven't we? The groomers are getting a much deserved rest from their Fridays on the hill and we need to think about our Club and its future. We recognized some long time dedicated volunteers at our last meeting and talked about how to award them for their years of work. One of the volunteers and the spouse of another were present and when the suggestion was made to give them a gift certificate the volunteer and the spouse both said no to the idea. They said they did not feel that was needed and the money should go to the snowmobile replacement fund. That attitude is what makes our Club so great!!!

We do need some volunteers to help with a variety of jobs:

1. Mary Ellen Reese is retiring from the Trails Map job and we need a replacement. This has to be filled by May and Mary Ellen will train her replacement.
2. Volunteer appreciation team. We need about three creative people to develop a way to honor our long time volunteers. Many ideas were discussed at the March meeting but we need a group to make a proposal to the Club for approval.
3. Snowmobile replacement plan. The Groomers have volunteered to build a replacement plan for our two aging Alpines.
4. Grant writers. We have three volunteer grant writers Johanna Russell, Kathleen Meyer, and Mary Morris. Thanks to you three and we will incorporate you into the replacement plan.
5. Extravaganza Coordinator. Annie and Katya have worked on this in the past and we need someone to take this over in the future.
6. Club Historian. A suggestion was made to develop a written history of the Club. I talked with Kevin Maki, per suggestion by George Masnick, and Kevin is interested in doing a story about us on his radio show but he is not inter-

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On a slightly different note, Gordon made the suggestion that the Club consider getting something like mugs with the Club logo on them which could be given to anyone who is contributing to the Club or Ski area, such as those who shoveled the roof and dug out the path to the bathroom, etc. Any member could give the mugs to anyone. After discussion on the above two appreciation/recognition topics it was decided to have a small group evaluate the suggestions and make recommendations.

Trail Report: Gordon and Sonny discussed the need to develop a Snowmobile Replacement Plan since the Alpine machines are becoming more and more of a liability due to their age and the difficulty of finding replacement parts. Sonny stated that he would prefer to get local grants and use existing funds. It is possible that we could get up to \$2500 from the sale of the Alpines plus we could apply for a grant from the Rapp Family Foundation, which could be up to \$2500. There are some other local possibilities.

## A TRIBUTE, A THANKS, AND A BRIGHT FUTURE

by Gordon Reese

The sixteenth season for our Bitterroot Cross-Country Ski Club is about over. It is easy to summarize -lots of good quality snow and it came early and will probably stay on into late May; lots of skiers, lots of new faces, lots of families

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ested in doing a written history. This would be a one time effort involving interviews and documentation.

I think that's about all we need for volunteers before summer. Our last meeting is usually a potluck at Jeanne Lippert's house and we will decide at the April meeting if we will do the same thing this year. Dennis Havig from Wisdom has promised to be at the April meeting to cover any Forest Service related topics you want to discuss.

This has really been a great ski year with more skier days, more non member skiers and more use by families than any of us can remember. We truly are providing the owners of the National Forests a quality winter recreational experience. Thanks to all of you for your help in making this possible.

— Sonny



## Membership Renewals / DUES

Annual Memberships EXPIRE November 1!

Renew your membership now!

INDIVIDUAL - \$15 • FAMILY - \$25

SUPPORTING INDIVIDUAL - \$30

SUPPORTING FAMILY - \$40

LIFE MEMBER - \$500

## Membership Dues

Nov. 1, 2005 - Oct. 31, 2006

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)

Newsletter preference: (Check all that apply)

Send by USPS \_\_\_\_\_; Send by e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

## A Tribute - continued from page 2

with children, lots of people just having fun.

I once read a short reminder to Nordic skiers that basically said, "the trails you are enjoying and the tracks you are making do not fall from the sky each time it snows!" I will enlarge on this by reminding everyone of the snow shoveling (and this season there was lots) at the hut and at the trail head; the clean toilets; the well-cared for warming hut; the ski map and new junction maps; our club meeting programs; our newsletter; our website; and our dedicated Club officers. Well, none of this "stuff" just falls out of the sky. Very simply, our Club thrives because Club members and others perform random acts of helping out; stepping forward; taking over; and just getting it done. So we need to say "thank you" for jobs well done.

Which brings me to the other reason for writing this article. Four of our members who have contributed their time, their skills and their passion to our Club's agenda are stepping aside. I want to honor them and thank them for their accomplishments and contribution. In any new organization such as we were back in the early 90s, people who got involved not only do the work, they literally write their job descriptions, Leo Joron, retired from the U.S. Army and from a career in the U.S. Postal Service, became a member early in our formative years. Leo skied with a group of folks who met almost every Sunday during the ski season to car pool somewhere and enjoy a day on the snow. When we started having work days and potlucks, Leo was almost always present. Leo single handedly dug the hole for the outhouse at May Creek Cabin in 1994. The Club and the U.S. Forest Service embarked on an effort to rehab the old cabin and a lot of people contributed. He asked if he could have a project that he could tackle and when I suggested that we needed a hole dug, Leo took off. At the end of the second day of his digging, we had to put a ladder in the hole to get him out!

The newsletter, editing, printing and mailing has been part of Leo's contribution from our early days. Our Club By-Laws and statement of purpose contain some of Leo's thinking and writing skills. When the Club's membership increased to two, three and four hundred, Leo volunteered to take over (create) the membership coordinator's job and he virtually handled all the paper-work each year associated with memberships and dues. All of this time he continued to be part of the crew that handled the mailing of our newsletter, helping on the hut and bringing his baked beans to our potlucks!

Maybe he should best be honored as our Club ambassador. When Leo skis, he never fails to visit with people about the mission of the Club and encourages folks to become members. He actually skis with membership forms and envelopes in his pack.

When you are skiing on our trails or enjoying a rest at the Hut, let me remind you that the quality of your experience would not be what it is if it were not for Ed Hastings. Pure and simple. Ed (and his wife, Pat) got involved in the Club

about 1994. He was ideally suited for our Club because of his background from Maine (think Tuckerman Ravine on Mt. Washington); his education at the University of Montana's School of Forestry, his early days on the ski patrol at Snow Bowl and his snow ranger days with the U.S. Forest Service at Bridger Bowl and Alta, Utah. Add to this his carpenter skills, his level-headed approach to problems; and his willingness to say "yes" virtually anytime there was something to be done.

In December of '94 Ed was elected president of the Club and as the use of our trails grew rapidly, our membership grew, equipment was upgraded, and as the Hut took off, Ed was "moving and shaking" and getting it done. And all this from a guy who actually admits to drinking Bud Lite!

This past season after being a vital member of the grooming crew for eleven seasons, Ed said he wanted to step aside. There really are not adequate words that describe his efforts and accomplishments on behalf of the Ski Club or the Chief Joseph trails. I can just say "Thank You."

When the groomed trail project was in the planning stages in 1989 and 1990, and when the hurdles and hoops associated with getting things moving seemed to be growing weekly, and when I got to a point where I expressed reservations about ever seeing any real chance of success, Mary Ellen (my wife and partner for many, many years) said, "Oh, please just try one more time!" So, really the trails at Chief Joe trace directly to her. She is responsible!

After our first season, Mary Ellen (MER) with the help of Bill Terrell, a U.S. Forest Service employee who had recently transferred from the Methow Valley to Darby, and the help of Mike West, owner of General Surplus, a Hamilton clothing and sporting goods store, put together the idea of a ski trail map with small commercial ads on the back. For fifteen seasons, that has been her main focus in our Club, along with helping, work days, firewood, potlucks and putting up with me.

Mary Ellen understands money. She is a bookkeeper by profession. This is her 20th year at Willow Mountain Veterinary Clinic. She very quickly determined that if the grooming effort was to be successful, the Club needed income. Income, that going into each season we could count on. She expanded the size of the map twice so she could include more commercial sponsors! She developed and cultivated a strong relationship with individuals and businesses in our Valley, in Missoula, in the Big Hole, and in the Lemhi Valley who believed that the success of our trail grooming efforts would enhance their business or they simply wanted to be supportive of our mission.

In the summer of 1999, MER connected with Peg Hampton, owner of IBID Northwest, a local graphic arts and design business. Eve Meng works for Peg and she took over the design and layout of both sides of the map. The joint effort of MER, Peg and Eve has resulted in a trail map that continues

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## A Tribute - continued from page 3

to receive very positive comments. It is an easy map to use and read and the back side of the map, with the small ads, has been a vital source of income to the Club.

Our Club's income comes from only four sources: membership dues, donations, our commercial sponsors, and grants. Right from the beginning, income from the map became a very reliable part of the equation. She usually prints about 3,500 copies and distributes them to our sponsors and businesses in the Valley, the Forest Service, and the Chamber of Commerce and they are always at the trail head and at the Hut.

I can personally attest that the financial benefit to the Club from our ski map has been, and will continue to be very significant. This past season, after paying for the costs associated with design and printing, the Club netted about \$2,700. Going back over the past 15 seasons, the total would be over \$20,000. Thanks to MER for developing this part of our Club's project and getting it done.

When you think of members of our Club that you know, who fits the stereo type of a Nordic Skier better than Katya Merrill? Norwegian (with the great accent), blonde and beautiful, and a picture-book skier. You really have missed out if you have not observed Katya on her wooden skis schussing down the steep, narrow hill coming off the high point on the Shoofly touring trail. Beautiful and with such ease!

Katya has been active since 1991. Every club should be so fortunate to have someone who can tell stories like Katya. Every trip into May Creek cabin is an epic! Her story about coming onto a fresh pile of entrails on our ski trails in November and not knowing if it was hunter or prey! Her story about growing up in Norway and having an out house with three holes -well only Katya can do justice to that story!

Work days, potlucks, working on the Hut, and ski outings, Katya would usually be involved. When we used to have our May meeting and potluck at the Hikers Cabin on Lake Como, Katya would bring her swimming suit and take a dip -in May!

Katya provided dollars for oxygen tanks for the Nordic Ski Patrol and she was the instigator and contributed most of the

money to have the cushions made for the benches in the Hut. She has been a big supporter, organizer and worker (chef) of our annual Extravaganza event. If Katya moves to Santa Fe or New York as she has indicated, we will truly miss her but never forget her.

So, a 16 year old organization -where all the work is done by volunteers- is experiencing the stepping aside of four of our pillars, with a total involvement of about 50 years. What are we going to do? I believe we honor them and pay tribute to their accomplishments and their contributions by continuing their work.

Two prime examples would indicate this is already happening. Jack and Barb Losensky have taken over the membership work and heading up the newsletter mailing. Jim Aronson will take Ed's place on the grooming crews. Thank you, Thank you, Thank you!

Along these same lines, two other volunteer efforts need to be highlighted and commended.

Pat Hastings has agreed to take over the job of supply coordinator. The Hut is stocked with paper products, tea, cocoa and cider mix, and cleaning supplies. Pat will inventory, purchase and stock these items. This frees up the groomers from another task. Thank you, Pat!

Kay Fulton started the BCCSE Sanitation Engineering Service!! Toilet cleaning of outdoor toilets is almost a lost art! Kay's efforts to get members to help out frees up the grooming crew from yet another job that takes a half hour of their day. Thanks to Kay and hats off to everyone who grabs a scrubber brush! Many thanks.

Over the years, I have observed and heard numerous comments from others about the wide assortment of talent and skills possessed by our members, and by their willingness to help out. It is because of this rich resource that the Club's future looks incredibly bright to me. I believe individuals will help out, step forward, get it done and take over when there is a need. Thank you in advance and thanks to those who have blazed the trails.

— Gordon Reese

