



## BITTERROOT CROSS-COUNTRY SKI CLUB

FEBRUARY 2012 NEWSLETTER



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### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The groomers really had it rough the last few weeks. In less than a month the trails at Chief Joseph Pass received two gigantic dumps of snow. The first was at the end of December when there were over 2 feet of wet heavy snow to deal with. And just when that seemed under control and things were beginning to return to normal, a 30"+ snowfall occurred a few days before

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### AVALANCHE AWARENESS PROGRAM

February, 9, 2012 at 7 pm.

First Presbyterian Church

1220 West Main Street, Hamilton, MT

This looks like a big year for avalanches, so to be prepared while adventuring in the backcountry, Steve Karkanen, director of the West Central Montana Avalanche Center, will speak to us about this season's snowpack and recent local avalanches. Please attend this informative and entertaining program.

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our Club's annual Lessons Day. As usual, our team of groomers just gritted their teeth and went to work. Laboring over two and a half days, they got everything under control in time for Lessons Day. The trails were in good shape and received praise from all those in attendance.

The Club's annual "Lessons Day" went well and was appreciated by each of the students who attended. We made a few changes to the format this year in an attempt to attract more families with children. Our changes were successful--we did attract families--but the weather in the Bitterroot Valley played havoc with the turnout. Pouring-down rain in the Valley on the morning of the lessons put a damper on people's spirits and kept the attendance to a several-year low. However, those who did attend had a great time and received expert instruction from more than a dozen instructors.

The free prizes given to both kids and adults were a hit. Jim Greenfield deserves high praise for his inspiration to suggest the changes, do the legwork to track down the prizes, and oversee the publicity efforts.

Again this year I'd like to put together a slide show of members' pictures that will be shown during our

## **BXCSC Newsletter Tips**

The Newsletter has taken on a new look and we hope that you all enjoy the additions and changes. We welcome articles from all active club members. Please send the articles to [toddypat@wildblue.net](mailto:toddypat@wildblue.net) by the end of the month to be included in the next months newsletter.

A simple click of your computer mouse allows you to print the Newsletter from your email screen or from the club website. There is a "forward this email" button at the bottom of the newsletter that allows you to share this information with friends and family.

## **THE MOUNTAINS ARE MY PLAYGROUND**

### **Honorary Skier BOB BROPHY**

Growing up on the Rocky Mountain Front just east of Glacier National Park it seemed only natural for me to ski, hike and climb all over the Park. The Park became my playground where I managed to climb almost all of the named peaks in the park and hike or ski every trail. Of course that took me over 40 years! Christmas of 1947 I received my 1st pair of skies with only a leather toe strap for a binding. I have been a free-heel skier ever since, never missing a season.

In 1980 I joined the National Ski Patrol, patrolling actively for 20 years, and now have Alumni status. I am an instructor in four disciplines, Avalanche, Mountaineering, Outdoor Emergency Care and Nordic Ski & Toboggan. I was honored to receive Patroller of the Year and received my National Appointment in 1993. Ski patrolling has been my 2nd vocation both Downhill and Nordic. I am a Charter and Life member of the Bitterroot Cross-Country Ski Club. I've spent many happy days skiing and ski-mountaineering in the Bitterroot, especially in the Chief Joseph and Saddle Mountain areas.

Early companions on ski trips included Walt Smith, Steve Powell, George Corn, Gary Hall, Linda Ambelang, Jim Kautz and Pete Lethenstrom, using mostly hickory skis with lignostone edges and Jackrabbit Wax. It has

May meeting. The best pictures will result from having your camera set to save pictures in both the highest resolution and the largest size (yes, many cameras have settings for both). I prefer pictures saved in the JPG format- just about every digital camera has this setting as an option. You can email your shots to me (up to 5 at a time) at Michael.Hoyt@gmail.com. If you have a large number of shots, giving me a DVD or CD which contains your pictures is probably a better option than email. If you need help getting your pictures to me, just let me know.

Remember: We now have a Facebook Page. For those so inclined, it can be found by searching Facebook for the "Bitterroot Cross-Country Ski Club" or by clicking on this link [Bitterroot Cross-Country Ski Club](#). This is a no-cost experiment to discover if it helps us communicate with each other and possibly attract new members. We don't expect everyone to use Facebook, but it's worth a try.

Don't forget the Extravaganza, our Club's main fund raiser. The drawing for prizes will be held during our meeting on February 9th. Tickets are still available from all the retailers who are selling tickets. Please support them (and the Club) by

been said that the sense of smell recalls to us our most pleasant memories - for me those smells still include wet wool, Sno-Seal, pine tar and Copenhagen. Summer times, I hiked all of the Bitterroot canyons and ridges. In the 70's and 80's, in addition to skiing and climbing I ran marathons and took long bicycle tours.



A high point in my ski "career" occurred when I was fortunate enough to ski the Haute Route in Switzerland from Chamonix to Zermatt, skiing the glaciers and peaks all day, and staying in the Swiss high mountain huts (hotels, really) at night. I managed to make a couple of unauthorized solo climbs of major mountains and descended by ski.

My most strenuous ski day was in March sometime in the '90's when I strapped my skis to my mountain bike and rode from my home in Hamilton to Chief Joseph Pass where I skied all the trails in 2 hours and rode back home. Madness!

On Feb. 12, 2000 I was injured skiing off area near Lost Trail. I skied over what I thought was a snow "pillow" in poor visibility and it turned out to be a cornice. I landed on my head, compressing my spine, and resulting in what are called burst fractures of T-9 and T-10. My spinal cord was torn longitudinally. Lower body paralysis and shock were almost immediate, as were periods of apnea and unconsciousness. My companions used my patrol radio to alert the Lost Trail patrol, and I was evacuated on a backboard and O2 to a helicopter landing site from where Life Flight took me to St. Patrick Hospital. I underwent over 14 hours of spinal surgery

purchasing tickets. And, of course, tickets will be available at the meeting until just before the drawing. With such a great selection of prizes, be sure to buy "early and often."

*Mike Hoyt*

that evening. The rest, as they say is history. The accident left me a partial paraplegic with poor motor control of my legs, and poor sensation, still I continue to improve, but with the speed of a glacier. However, recovery is not a timed event. I learned to ski again in the prepared tracks, but try as I might; all of my attempts at downhill skiing have been failures. I learned to ride a bike again, and that is how I spend time now, riding over 7000 miles a year, every day, all year long.



In January, 2001, 11 months after my accident, I carried the Olympic Torch from the entrance to Yellowstone Park into the town of West Yellowstone. The torch had just returned from Old Faithful via dogsled. This was an exciting and emotional time for me, (just being able to walk) and the route was lined with my children, grandchildren, many friends and fellow Ski Patrollers.

For the past 45 years I have been a practicing veterinarian. You may see me on my lunch hour, regardless of weather, biking up Skalkaho or Sleeping Child Roads. When asked what keeps me moving onward...it is a famous quote by Winston Churchill: "Neavh Neavh Neavh Give Up."

*Bob Brophy*



## **YOUTH SKI ACTIVITIES**

We are looking for volunteers to help kids learn to cross-country ski. Currently, the kids come from the Hamilton Middle School after school program. Ages are fourth through eighth grade. Tentatively there would be one activity each week through March. Most are only for a couple of hours after school, but there are a couple of full day (4 hours) trips planned for the youth. We had a lot of fun with this last year.

We would like to accumulate a list of people who might like to work on this program with us. We will need 2 - 4 volunteers per event. If you are interested please let me know, at 642-9648 or [rcstone1@msn.com](mailto:rcstone1@msn.com) and I will put your name on the list. As specific dates become available, I will publish them.

Also, we are looking for organizations who work with disadvantaged kids in the valley. If anybody has any suggestions, please let me know and I will work with them to encourage them to get the kids out in the snow!

Thanks!  
*Richard Stone*  
Youth Activities  
Coordinator

## **EXTRAVAGANZA Drawing Feb. 9th... Be one of our 5 Winners!**

We are all members of the Bitterroot Cross-Country Ski Club because of our love for the outdoors and for cross-country skiing. How lucky are we to have one of Montana's best cross-country ski areas right in our backyard!

Did you know that this is one of the few areas in the state that has trails that are groomed on a weekly basis throughout the ski season? Of course, grooming the 25 km of trails every single week requires a lot of volunteer hours and money to purchase and maintain the equipment required to get the job done. The six men who do the grooming are volunteering their time for this work-talk about commitment.

We each need to do our part by helping raise the money needed to purchase fuel and maintain the snow mobiles. I'm asking each member to help us reach our fundraising goal again in 2012. We didn't sell as many tickets at our January club meeting or during the Lesson Day event this year so the pressure is on.

And the prizes aren't just for cross-country skiers:

- Night at the Gordon Reese Cabin with a gourmet dinner for four catered and served to you and your guests-the hut at Chief Joseph Ski Area is transformed into a dinner venue that you and your friends will talk about for years
- Night at Triple Creek Ranch for two including a gourmet dinner, house wine and spirits and breakfast- member of the prestigious Relais & Châteaux, Triple Creek Ranch offers rustic elegance in a mountain retreat
- Complete set of cross-country ski equipment from Bob Ward-with new skis, bindings, boots and poles, you'll be ready when our La Nina winter really kicks in
- Night for two at either Darby Bed & Breakfast or The Jackson House- relax in the hot tub after a day of skiing and start the next morning out with a B&B style breakfast before you head back up
- Gift certificate for dinner at The Wild Mare restaurant in Corvallis-here is your chance to try one of the valleys newest restaurants.

Winners have their pick of prize in the order drawn. We're counting on your help. One hundred percent of the proceeds go to Bitterroot Cross-Country Ski Club grooming expenses at Chief Joseph Ski Area. Let's continue to make this Montana's premier ski area.

Tickets will be sold at the Feb 9th meeting and are available at-Hamilton: Valley Bicycle & Ski, Bob Ward & Sons, Western Flies & Guides, Chapter One Books, Rainbow's End. Florence: Caffé Firenze. Missoula: The Trailhead, Open Road Bicycle & Nordic, Play It Again Sports, Loose Caboose. Darby: The Naughty Moose, The Silver Spoon. Sula: Sula Country Store. Stevensville: Blacksmith Brewery, Stevi Ranger Station. Victor: Cowboy Troy's, Victor Steakhouse. Corvallis: The Wild Mare restaurant. Salmon: Odd Fellows Bakery, Salmon Chamber of Commerce.

Contact Deb at 821-2276 if you would like tickets to sell to your friends.

## **Skier of the Month**

**Barbara Schumaker**



I have been downhill and cross-country skiing since 1968, and started skiing in the Chief Joe area in the 70's, long before it was an official area. Because of the logging roads, clear cuts, and great

snow, it was a fun place to ski. When I first came to the area, picnic meadows was just that: a big meadow (well okay, a clear cut), with only a few trees poking up. It sure looks different now, but then that was 40 years ago!

I usually ski at Chief Joe once or twice a week and I guess my favorite trails are Banshee and Middle Fork for thrills and spills. But for just beauty and views, I have to put Sentinel Meadow way up there on the list, too. Other areas I enjoy are Skalkaho, Anderson Mountain, and the Shoofly trail into Hogan's Cabin.

Although I do enjoy the speed of downhill skiing, there is something about cross-country that feeds my soul like nothing else. It is so beautiful and peaceful and even if the parking lot is full, you quickly get away from the crowds and seldom run into anyone on the trails. Skiing by the light of a full moon on a clear night is about as magical as you can get.

And of course, there is the "Hut"! It is so much fun to stop in for lunch, warm up, see old friends and make some new ones. Bob and I had our reception and honeymoon (with 7 of our closest relatives and friends!) at the cabin, so it will always be very special to us.

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## Quick Links

[Bitterroot XC Ski Club](#)

[Como Trails](#)

[NOAA WEATHER](#)

## GROOMING & TRAILS

### My Day as a Groomer

"Groomer", I say with tongue in cheek, because I AM NOT!

It all began during the third week of December last, when I foolishly said to Mel Holloway, "If you can't find a third groomer some time, let me know. I'll be happy to give it a try." Little did I know...

Just a few days later on Wednesday, December 28th, Mel called me up and asked, "Kelly can't make it. Do you want to groom this Friday?"

I knew it was already snowing at the pass, a lot more was forecast, and the temperatures were hovering in the

## **NORDIC LESSONS A HUGE SUCCESS DESPITE WEATHER**

Rain in the valley, overwhelming snow on the pass and uncertain weather forecasts did not dampen the spirits and enthusiasm obvious on Saturday morning January 21st at the annual Nordic Ski Lessons Day held at the Chief Joseph Pass Ski Area. Double-whammy storms brought Bitterroot Basin snowpack from 74% to 95% and left Chief Joe with over 30"+ of snow for groomers to deal with by Friday night. Exhausted but triumphant, Mel Holloway, Jim Aronson, and Kelly Zeiler spent over two days battling heavy snow and continuous accumulations before laying yet another final set of tracks and disappearing mid-morning Saturday to recuperate. Speaking with any one of them on Saturday revealed faces muted by energy spent yet with relief and pride that the tradition of Lessons Day would be on schedule. Several additional student grouping areas had been compacted and early arrivals found excellent snow conditions and perfect tracks with up to

upper 20s. But what could I say? I'd already put my foot in it. And I'm a Club officer who is supposed to serve as an example for "volunteerism." So, with a bit of trepidation, I replied, "Sure."

Before I proceed, there is something you should know. Previous to Friday, December 30th-the big day-I'd never driven a snowmobile. In fact, I'd only ridden along on a snow-machine one time a few weeks earlier when Jim Greenfield and I helped the "real" groomers shovel snow into low spots on the lower trails.

Before we began, Mel and Jim Aronson gave me a "quick" lesson on driving. "This is the thumb throttle, this is the brake. Here's the secondary throttle. Keep the snow off of the running board so you don't slip. Use your weight to turn."

Right...

And we were off.

Things went rather well. At first. Even though I was hesitant with the throttle and never did go as fast as the other guys, I still managed to keep up and didn't get stuck. On the flat, easy trails-Broadway, CD, Timber.

Okay, okay, I admit it. I DID get stuck once. But I have an excuse. I took one hand off of the handlebars and waved to a group of the Backcountry Women when we approached them near Sentinel Meadow. BIG mistake! Beginners, don't try that at home.

And then... "You want me to follow you WHERE?" Oh sh\*\*!

Let me tell you. When you weigh slightly less than 140 pounds and maybe 150 pounds wearing big boots and multiple layers of snow-dampened clothes, it's impossible to turn a snowmobile in two feet of heavy wet snow while following a trail which traverses a hillside. I tried. Hard! It doesn't work.

What happens? I partially fell off (once). And the snowmobile continues in a straight line toward trees, even deeper snow, or whatever happens to be in its path. "Look out, Jim!" I couldn't make it turn. No way, no how!

I got stuck, more than once. I had to dig. I got hot. I



four lanes on some trails. The groomers certainly went above and beyond the call of duty this year and are to be commended for the part they played in what turned out to be a milestone year for the Club.

Although the prior week's weather and Lessons Day forecasts left many potential students opting for other choices, our own instructors turned out in force. George Corn, Instructor Extraordinaire, rallied 13 volunteer instructors to meet, greet and sign up arriving students in the parking lot. From sage veteran counselors to newly-minted wannabes, instructors in new official-looking yellow fleece hats were ubiquitous and primed for some serious lessoning. This year, Nancy and Brad Pollman, Bill Sweet, Richard Stone, Pat Hastings, Sonny LaSalle, Diane Hipp, Bill Stoudt, Bob and Barb Schumaker, Kay Fulton, Mike Hoyt, and Diana Pernsteiner all shared the satisfaction of coaxing cross-country skiers to their next skill level. Secondary to the Club's acknowledgement of the much-appreciated time and effort these key people play in this event is hearing a student's heart-felt 'thank-you' for a job well done. And well-

DIDN'T LIKE IT! Not even a little.

So, a few hours later when Mel asked me, "Have you had enough?" I wanted to yell, "YES."

Instead I calmly asked him, "Why are you asking?"

He answered, "We're getting ready to head up Vista View then back on Lost Trail."

Not being a total fool, I stated quite plainly, "Yes. I've had enough"

Now to be fair (to myself), everyone got stuck that day, even the long-time groomers. Mel later said they were the worst conditions he'd ever worked in-I want to believe he wasn't just saying that for my benefit.

Two hours after I'd returned to the truck, the others finally arrived. It turns out they'd gotten stuck several times, each in a very spectacular fashion. See, I wasn't the only one!

After dark, during the ride back to the Valley, I told Mel I would only be willing to help again if there was less than 6" of snow, and it had to be nice, dry powder. I never want to be on a snowmobile in those conditions again.

Mel looked at Jim, then replied, "Tell you what. I'll pay you \$50 if you promise not to volunteer to groom. Ever!"

With a straight face, Jim added, "I'll double that!"

*Mike Hoyt*

## **MEETING HIGHLIGHTS** January 12, 2012

If you missed our January meeting, here are things we covered:

- Current Membership report from Earl Phillips
- Treasurer's Report from Reine Hilton
- Trail Report from Mel Holloway with feedback from members on Middle Fork and Banshee grooming and the double tracks being set on Solitude and Sentinel Meadows

done it was from the energy one could feel in the Gordon Reese Warming Hut where a full-house gathered for the closing ceremonies.

Staged to encourage and promote the participation of grade-school kids and their parents, a celebration fever was unleashed by none other than George Corn, Master of Ceremonies Extraordinaire. (Again?) Saturated with hot chocolate, power bars and helium balloons, young skiers and their begetters were mesmerized as George worked the crowd to heighten the anticipation of the drawing for many prizes. Along with the able assistance of Diane Hipp and Barb Schumaker, winners emerged for the first prize of skis, boots and poles from Valley Bike and Ski, two autographed children's books donated by author/member Diane Hipp, several cinch packs bearing the Club logo, and for the parents: \$25+ family meal gift certificates from the Silver Spoon Restaurant, Lost Trail Hot Springs Resort, Sula Country Store and Naps Grill. Finally, five family Club memberships were awarded. Throughout the day, Debbie Hamilton of Picturesque Photography, assisted by member Jean

- Richard Stone requested help for upcoming ski outing with middle school students from Hamilton
- Hospitality report from Kay Fulton
- Extravaganza and Lesson Day reports from Deb Duffy, George Corn and Jim Greenfield
- Mike Hoyt talked about the two week work plan for September, focusing on the lower trails this year-more will be coming out on this. For now, reserve some time during the first two weeks of September as we'll need lots of help.

The highlight of the evening was the presentation from Valley Bike and Ski. Randy and Kerri Leavell, Tony Neaves and Annie Creighton were all there to share their expertise on cross-country skis. We learned about the latest in ski technology and the advantages and disadvantages of the different designs. We all learned valuable tips on the care of our skis from best waxing practices, ski storage, do's and don'ts in the parking lot (oops, I was personally busted recently for standing my skis up in an icy snow mount), how to prolong the life of your skis and the latest in accessories for skiing. They wrapped their presentation up with new developments in bike technology.

I know that several of us were wishing we could get out and demo some of the new things they were showing us in their presentation. Our club is lucky to have knowledgeable and caring resources like Randy, Kerri, Tony and Annie.

We hope you'll be able to attend our next meeting on February 9th. We'll be drawing the extravaganza winners and we have another great program planned for the evening. See you then and hopefully up skiing at Chief Joseph!

### **Board Meeting Earlier that Evening**

Do you ever wonder what the board is talking about when you see everyone huddled around a conference table? Here is a very brief recap of what was on our agenda. There were fourteen people in attendance for the January 12th board meeting. We discussed the Extravaganza and Lesson Day for 2012. A lot of volunteer time and work goes into these two events and both play an important role for the club in increasing membership and raising money to help offset the expenses related to grooming.

Mathews, took photographs to provide a free photo for kids and for adding to our own photo archive. Steve Slocumb of Looking Glass Films, assisted by Erin Belmont, videographed events from parking lot arrival to Hut festivities for creating a 6-minute version of the best highlights for the kids to link with online or have their own DVD. Go to [PicturesqueMt.com](http://PicturesqueMt.com) to view photographs.

Truly enough good things can't be said of the way Club members came together as a team to carry off another successful year of sharing not only the way we ski but the way we have so much fun together. Thanks to everyone involved.

*Jim Greenfield*

We also talked about updating the look of the newsletter and website--you'll see changes coming to both over the course of the next several months. Other items that made the January agenda included--our new ski club brochure and trail map, club financials, club membership, the recent transition to new groomers and techniques they are using to groom the trails this year. Lastly, we had a brief discussion of other fund raising ideas for the future.

Later in the week, three club officers--Mike Hoyt, Diane Hipp and Deborah Duffy--met up at the Gordon Reese Cabin with two representatives from the U.S. Forest Service office in Wisdom. We talked about the trails, maintenance, beetle kill trees in the Chief Joseph area, clean-up efforts and the goals of our ski club.

## **BITTERROOT XC SKI CLUB OFFICERS**

### **President**

Michael Hoyt  
[michael.hoyt@gmail.com](mailto:michael.hoyt@gmail.com)  
406-360-3803

### **Vice President & Newsletter Layout**

Diane Hipp  
[fit4fun@montana.com](mailto:fit4fun@montana.com)  
406-546-3848

### **Treasurer**

Reine Hilton  
[hilton@mcn.net](mailto:hilton@mcn.net)  
406-375-1952

### **Secretary**

Deb Duffy  
[darbydeb1@gmail.com](mailto:darbydeb1@gmail.com)  
406-821-2276

### **Membership**

Earl Phillips  
[phillips@montana.com](mailto:phillips@montana.com)  
406-369-0073

### **Newsletter Editor**

Pat Leonard  
[toddypat@wildblue.net](mailto:toddypat@wildblue.net)  
406-961-4959

### **Programs**

Ginny Deck  
[gindeck@cybernet1.com](mailto:gindeck@cybernet1.com)  
406-961-4829

**Trails & Grooming**

Mel Holloway

[tromper@bitterroot.com](mailto:tromper@bitterroot.com)

406-381-1334

**Publicity & Trail Map**

Jim Greenfield

[jkgreenfield@q.com](mailto:jkgreenfield@q.com)

406-363-2110

**Webmaster**

Toddy Perryman

[toddypat@wildblue.net](mailto:toddypat@wildblue.net)

406-961-4959

**Warming Hut****Reservations (USFS Wisdom)**

406-689-3371

**Membership Data**

After many years of doing an excellent job of coordinating the membership of BXCSC, Jack Losensky decided it was time to spend more time skiing and less time maintaining records. Mike Hoyt asked me to try and fill Jack's shoes, even though he knew that his shoes were a size or two larger. Jack has provided me with his data and I have moved it into a database, but there is always the opportunity for mistakes to pop up during a transition of this nature. If you find errors in mailing addresses or e-mail addresses, please contact me so that I can correct them as soon as possible. My contact information is listed below. If you get the opportunity, express your appreciation to Jack for a job well done and bear with me as I assume the reins as membership chair.

Earl Philips

725 Mihara Lane

Corvallis, MT 59828

Home Phone: 406-961-0101

Cell Phone: 406-369-0073

E-mail Address: [skihut@montana.com](mailto:skihut@montana.com)

## Membership Renewals / Dues

**Annual Memberships EXPIRE November 1st**

**Renew Your Membership Now!** \*Individual \$15

\*Family \$25

\*Supporting Individual \$30

\*Supporting Family \$40

\*Life Member \$500

### MEMBERSHIP DUES

**Nov. 1, 2011 - Oct. 31, 2012**

**Mail To:** Bitterroot Cross-Country Ski Club

PO Box 431, Corvallis, MT 59828

**NAME(S):** \_\_\_\_\_

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**ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**CITY:** \_\_\_\_\_ **STATE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **ZIP** \_\_\_\_\_

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**E-**

**MAIL:** \_\_\_\_\_

**TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP:**(see above) \_\_\_\_\_

**AMOUNT**

**ENCLOSED:\$** \_\_\_\_\_