



SKI TRACKS

Newsletter of the Bitterroot Cross Country Ski Club

Box 431 • Corvallis, Montana 59828

January, 2003



December Potluck Meeting Highlights

December 12, 2002

By Judy LaSalle

Our ski club members started the evening with a delicious potluck. Thanks so much to everyone who brought such a great variety of dishes to share.

President **Sonny LaSalle** called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm. There were approximately 60 members present. The treasurer's report was: \$660 income, \$1239 expenses, \$88 in checking and \$4508 in savings.

Upcoming events and items of interest:

The ticket sales for the February 7th Extravaganza are going well. We will have one more chance to purchase tickets at our January meeting. If you are unable to attend and would like to participate contact **Annie Creighton** at **Valley Bike & Ski**.

The upcoming race on Saturday December 14th is a go. We are one of the few places that have enough snow to support this race at this time and we look forward to hosting the race. Thanks so much to **Tony Neaves**, **Annie Creighton** and the race volunteers.

Our membership is at 351 members

The Web page was discussed and it was moved and voted on to not continue with the Sale or Trade page. It has received no use in over a year.

On March 15th, at the Hut we will host a moonlight evening in conjunction with the Forest Service. It will be a partnership for education.

The Election of Officers was held. The officers for 2003 will be:

President: Sonny LaSalle

Vice-President: Mel Mooers

Secretary: Kay Fulton

Treasurer: Jeane Lippert

Our program was on Back Country Safety. **Steve Powell**, a member of the **Alpine & Nordic Ski Patrol** gave us some very useful information and we thank him for his expertise, knowledge and presentation.

RENDEZVOUS AT WEST YELLOWSTONE

By Linda Stoudt & Gordon Reese

While relaxing in the Warming Hut at Chief Joe last season, **Mary Ellen Reese** suggested we consider spending Thanksgiving of 2002 at West Yellowstone. Much to Mary Ellen's credit, she pursued finding and booking a reasonable hotel for us. So, Tuesday, November 26, at the crack of dawn, Mary Ellen, **Gordon Reese**, **Bill McCrum** & **Bill &**

JANUARY MEETING

Thursday, January 9, 2003

First Presbyterian Church

1220 West Main St. Hamilton

7:00 p.m.

Program: Danny Heineman, of Yellowstone Expeditions, with a stimulating slide show on back-country skiing, yurt adventures, geothermal features, wildlife, and the majesty of winter in Yellowstone National Park.

Linda Stoudt began a memorable journey. But first, we had to endure the traffic of Missoula and the Lincoln Tunnel! When the *ski-mobile* arrived at our motel, we had plenty of time to ski and explore before nightfall, whining about the early departure was a joke. Driving into West Yellowstone, we immediately noticed people running and cycling on the snow packed streets. Everyone was in motion; this set the tone for the rest of our stay. **Grey Wolf Inn**, (250 S. Canyon St., 800.852.8602), was close to the trailhead, friendly, clean, economical and it boasted heated underground parking! The **Grey Wolf Inn** also had several items to select for breakfast and a large lobby to enjoy and relax. When we arrived on Tuesday, the only other people in the motel were a busload of high school teams from Michigan and Minnesota. It was a joy to see such camaraderie among young athletes; they made the pillages of Attila the Hun seem polite as they swept through the breakfast line. Our lodging also offered a pool and sauna. The wolves at the Grizzly & Wolf Recovery Center across the street serenaded whoever would listen at sunrise and sunset.

The **Rendezvous Ski West Fest** was held in West Yellowstone November 26- November 30, at the Rendezvous Ski Trails. We had heard a great deal about the event from **Annie Creighton** and **Tony Neaves**; but nothing could describe our delight and amazement when we saw Olympic athletes bound up hills and school teams race circles around us. The ski trails were a sea of brightly colored, patterned spandex-covered bodies speeding from one point to another. Children with legs half the length of mine were zooming past and disappearing into the distance! This gathering of athletes and ski enthusiasts is an annual event; there are ski clinics & races (biathlon, classic & skate) during the day, plus major ski manufacturers have new equipment available for demos. We were able to try new models of racing skis, poles and boots; in addition, the company reps wax your skis for the daily conditions. Trail passes are \$7 a day or \$45 for 7+ days. The trail system also serves as a bicycle path in warmer months.

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Yellowstone Rendezvous—continued

In the evening, one can attend the wax clinics (I was hoping to eliminate some facial hair, but it was not that kind of wax!) or listen to Olympians speak about training and their experiences. We found interesting people wherever we turned. By Wednesday, the “Bitterroot Contingent” had increased with the addition of **Annie & Tony** plus **Diane Boyd and Jonathan Roe** from Helena.

Kelli Sanders and **Melissa Buller**, the owners of **Free Heel and Wheel** (40 Yellowstone Ave., 406.646.7744), hosted the wax clinics and were most helpful and attentive to any questions we had about the clothing and ski equipment in their store. The coffee bar in the front of the store invites customers to relax, enjoy the menu and the sunlight streaming through the window.

In spite of the meager snow, the trails were in excellent condition and exploring was great fun. The storm, which passed through the previous weekend, helped the situation a great deal; the temperatures remained cool, so the snow did not disappear. **Doug Edgerton, Yellowstone Tracksetting Systems**, grooms trails for classic and skate. Doug is truly an artist as he drives his Piston-Reilly around the tracks. He was *Chief of Course* at Soldier Hollow venue for Nordic events at the 2002 Winter Olympics. A bit of history, Doug & **Maureen Edgerton** helped our club’s grooming effort with a new tracksetting and compaction drag. Trail maps explain the routes and degree of difficulty. The trails become more challenging the farther one skis. As a beginner, I found Rendezvous Loop a great deal of fun and aced Cabin Hill 2 out of 3. The trails also have long “flat” areas, which allow practice of kick and glide. Gordon Reese had the following comments about the trails he blazed: “Deja-Vu Trail, a 5K loop, offers a steady diet of ups and downs, thus the name! Some are short and steep, others longer and not so steep, but it is a challenge to stay in the track! Dead Dog Loop is 5.5K and as the name implies, if you ski it aggressively, your body takes on that kind of feeling. Be prepared for some curves at the bottom of hills that are not only difficult to run in the tracks, but from all the ski tracks in the woods, staying on the trail is tough! And if your herring-bone technique is not in good form when you start, it will certainly be more efficient when you finish.”

With all the exercise, our bodies had to refuel frequently. **Bullwinkle’s** (19 Madison Ave., 406.646.7974) had an excellent menu and was very popular. Since most businesses are closed in West Yellowstone at that time, we bought provisions at the local supermarket and had snacks & cocktails in the hotel lobby evenings. Thanksgiving Day we took the advice of regulars at this ski fest and enjoyed a dinner at **Canyon Street Grill** (22 Canyon St., 406.646.7548). This was an excellent repast, which is gratis. Donations are accepted to help the local food bank. This restaurant also offers an excellent menu of burgers and soups. The food and service warm both body & soul.

In an effort to stretch sore, aching muscles, we walked everywhere. Wandering the streets one afternoon after lunch, Mary Ellen and I discovered the only *Moving Comfort* outlet in the U.S. **GO! Active Wear Outlet** (121 Madison Ave., 406.646.4850) opened recently and had a good

selection of cross-country ski clothes for women. My motto, “you have to spend money to save money!”

Driving home on Saturday, we agreed we should make this annual event a part of our Thanksgiving celebration. We had skied morning and afternoon, our muscles passed the point of soreness; we were ready to tackle Chief Joe Pass. It was a great way to begin the ski season and work the body and mind, just don’t forget to pack the ibuprofen! For more information contact: Rendezvouskitrails.com West Yellowstone Chamber of Commerce (406.646.7701)

Report from the 2nd Annual Continental Divide Classic

By Annie Creighton

An extraordinary time was had by all who attended, raced in, and helped with the event. Once again we had the cooperation of Mother Nature and were able to put together a wonderful early season race. There were 46 energetic, brightly clad and smiling competitors in the 10K and 20 K. Our oldest competitor was 71 (Karl Newman from Anaconda), and our youngest was 11 (Marsh Opel from Missoula)! It was a nice, diverse group, and it shows you one thing: You can XC Ski, and even compete if you’d like, at any age! The course this year utilized an outer lap of all the upper trails, including the new stretch of road from the bottom of Sentinel Meadow to the bottom of the Vista View climb.

The post-race feed, social hour, and raffle was fun and made for a raucous time in the hut. There was hot soup, bread, hot drinks, cookies, and more for the hungry racers and volunteers. Many competitors took advantage of the great snow conditions and skied around after the race. There were lots of positive comments floating through the crowd as many had never been to Chief Joe before. Maybe next year there will be even a few more competitors as word gets out that we have the best snow and trail conditions this time of year.

As the dedicated race organizers, Tony and I wanted to express how much we appreciated all the help we got from club members who contributed in so many ways to the success of this event. One of the biggest factors for us was that there was so much competent help that we both jumped into the race without even a worry! Thank you so much. Here’s the list of all who helped (and I’ll apologize ahead of time if I forget anyone):

Gordon, Ed, Mel - for putting in extra effort grooming and shuttling materials to and from the parking lot.

Gordon, Ed, Pat, Bill, and Linda - for carrying heavy nippers and shovels around to help “pre-groom” the course the week prior to the race.

Bill & Linda Stoudt - for making the carpeted platforms for our timers to stand on, and donating 15 bagettes and homemade cookies. Bill also worked timing, cut bread, took down the start / finish area, and who knows what else!

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RACE RESULTS from the 2002 Continental Divide Classic

<u>10K</u>			<u>20K</u>		
<u>Name</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Time</u>
Mike Bestwick	16	31:18	Keifer Hahn	29	63:31
Andy Erikson	16	32:28	Per Sandstrom	44	67:11
Matt Shryock	16	32:55	Craig Krueger	40	67:25
Fraser Opel	16	35:16	Ian Bailey	48	67:28
Kelly Ruffatto	17	37:18	Gordon Opel	49	67:30
Tony Neaves	44	37:58	Don Bauder	50	67:48
Steve Beals	32	38:10	Charlie Wellenstein	42	68:01
Marsh Opel	11	38:55	John Weyrich	43	69:08
Aaryn Manning	16	38:58	Jesse Opel	51	73:22
Jeff Kern	36	39:09	Annie Creighton	39	77:38
Danny Heineman	31	39:50	Glenn Govertsen	58	80:59
Joe Griffin	52	40:26	Nathan Basford	25	84:17
Bret Price	33	41:30	Scott Anderson	38	85:22
Jonathan Roe	47	42:41	Sherry Vogel	51	86:26
Diane Boyd	47	44:58	Ted Etter	49	89:03
Amelia Amish	42	46:21	Joe Kippbut	50	89:33
Karl Newman	71	51:55	Steve German	59	91:48
Nigel Neaves	14	59:06	George Corn	55	97:14
Tim Jones	53	59:06	Shane Harris	24	105:55
Grainger Brown	53	60:59	Tom Vineyard	28	118:46
Mary Ellen Reese	61	64:42	Pam Naugle	50	124:48
Linda Stoudt	54	65:28	Theresa Mooney	49	138:46

A big thanks goes out to all these businesses, organizations, and individuals who made this race possible! Bitterroot XC Ski Club Volunteer Grooming Crew (Gordon Reese, Ed Hastings, and Mel Mooers). All the BRXCSC Volunteers (several of whom brought donations of food!). Trailhead; Valley Bike & Ski; Wisdom Ranger District; Volunteer Nordic Ski Patrol; Authentic Computer Tutoring, Marlin & Jeanette Neaves; IGA; Super 1 Foods; Bob Ward & Son; Absolute Vision Inc.; John Weyrich; Missoula Nordic Club; Five Valley Velo

Race Report—continued

Bill McCrum - sign p.u., and helped take down the start / finish area.

Bob Brophy - for handling the most important job of announcing and TIMING!

Bob & Jan Curry, and Barb Allen - for running the registration AND working hard to put together results.

Steve Powell, Diane Glass, Bob Shumaker - Nordic Ski Patrol - for standing guard and being there... in case! Bob also helped p.u. signs and was out there giving his digital camera a work out!

John Weyrich - who came up with the original idea to put a race on, and brought the race bibs and cooler.

Maire Estar - timing help and cookie donation.

Jayne Brindle & Marsha Reed - collection of race bibs and food donation.

Jan Driscoll - Chief food marshal! (also donated some food / beverage items).

Dusty - course marshal and stood guard at the trailhead to warn other trail users of the race.

Marlin & Jeanette Neaves - race flyers and waivers. All others who were there to help answer questions, direct traffic, etc.

TONY'S TIPS

By Tony Neaves

Behind the Scenes - Race Wax Planning for the Continental Divide Classic

Ever wonder what all goes into preparing skis for a classic race (or for a day of skiing)? Since we just held the Continental Divide Classic at Chief Joe last month, I thought I'd share some waxing chronicles with you.

It begins with checking the weather forecast for the week before an event. For the week of the CD Classic it called for some new snow, temperatures in the mid 20's, and high humidity. Starting with that info (and a "time out" to go see if there was a cold one in the fridge), I used a TOKO hydro-carbon red as a base coat glide wax which was then scraped and brushed out. Next, a TOKO low fluoro-moly wax, then scraped and brushed. Think of these layers as your primer coats.

You should check the weather again, mid-week before the event. For this event it seemed to be warming some, indicating a wetter snow-pack. My next wax was a mixture of the low fluoro TOKO Red and Yellow, scraped and brushed. I

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Race Report—continued

topped that off with a layer of a high fluoro TOKO Red and Yellow mix that was again scraped and brushed out thoroughly. Finally, after checking the weather the night before the event, I decide whether or not to use the PURE fluorocarbon. In the case of the CD Classic, the humidity was way up there, so I put on a layer of TOKO Jetstream for new snow. Now I am done with the glide portion of the skis!

Next is the kick or grip zone. I started with ironing in a layer of cold green in the area from the front of the heel to about 12" in front of the toe. The race course was more of a glider's course, so I made the kick zone shorter. After that I went with a layer of Blue and corked it out very smooth. This is all the waxing I'll do until right before the race when you have to check the current conditions. On the morning of the race it is quite warm (29-30 degrees), and the tracks are glazing as the race start draws near. I enlist **George Corn** to be my wax tester and send him out on TOKO purple - 3 thin layers corked in smooth. He comes back right away and reports that the skis are way too slick/no grip at all! Next, I try TOKO Red and extend the grip zone 3" farther up the ski. George comes back with the report that he's still slipping!

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Hmm....I think, is it really that warm? I even give George a hard time about how it must be his technique. Annie and I hop on our skis which have all the above listed waxes on them and quickly realize we have no grip either (and that it is not just George's technique!) With little time left 'til the race starts, I slam on some yellow which is really quite sticky. One more test drive up Outhouse Hill proves that even this wax is giving marginal grip, we have run out of time to try anything else. Time to race!

As it turned out the grip was somewhat marginal, but the glide was awesome - the skis felt like rockets on the down-hills. In hindsight, I had a RODE Red for 30-36 degrees that probably would have gripped better, but that's part of the game you play when trying to wax for a race (or for a day of skiing).

Thank you George for suffering through all that experimenting! I'd also like to thank everyone again for helping out in so many ways in making the 2nd Annual CD Classic a success. See you on the trails.



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: _____

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2002 BACKCOUNTRY SKIING SUMMARY

By George Corn

The spring of 2002 was a banner season for backcountry skiing in the Bitterroot Valley. The year, although only average for snow, seemed prodigious being the first average year in five years. After the drought and fires of the summer of 2000 when 350,000 acres burned in the county, the snow proved a healing balm to skiers and the mountains alike. The moist, warm but cloudy weather in late March and early April extended from the valley floor to peak top resulting in a bombproof snow pack on most aspects by early to mid - April. Below is a winter count as an aid to memory. The companionship, humor, philosophy and the spirit and vision of the peaks is to be retold, remembered and relived through the memory of the count.

April 21 started the spring season for many of us. **Skip Horner, Jim Wood, Jeremy Lurgio** and I skinned up the prominent east snowfield of Gash Peak. The warm weather allowed us to drive to around 5,000 feet. We could skin after only an hour of hiking. Three and one-half hours saw us on top in wind and clouds. Skiing hardpack that just, just held an edge we tore down the 1400 vertical feet of the main bowl. A scary tree-hugging run down to snow line ended the day. A short hike to the car followed where we toasted Jeremy's birthday and the start of the season.

April 28 saw us atop Downing Mountain directly west of Hamilton. **Mario Locatelli**, the 70 year old guru of the Bitterroots, paced a large group to the top of the east peak skinning the entire way from the Grubstake restaurant. We descended through the skeletons of white bark pine and healthy larch to the prominent avalanche run facing Hamilton. Conditions were sunny, the snow excellent by the time the descent started and most of the group skied halfway down and climbed the south ridge for more turns. **Mark Berhman, Steve Powell, Jim Wood, Jim Kasabeer, Diane Boyd, Jonathoan Roe and Kent Myers** were among the crew. The snow was great all the way down to the narrowest part of the funnel. We started in powder and ended up in corn so creamy that even the lower end of the willow-choked gully was skied. The run was so far down the mountain that we only had a 20-minute traverse back to the cars.

May 5 saw a large group heading back to east snowfield on Gash. The weather was cloudy but warm, the temperatures between 40-50 on the summit. **Steve Powell, Pat Tucker, Bruce Weide, Mike Schackette, Jonathon Roe, Diane, Jeremy, Nels, Jessica and Jeff.** The powder pitch to the northeast was skied several times before the drop into the bowl, which was pure butter. The tree run out was carveable until snowline.

May 12 saw almost the same group up Camas Peak under sunny skies. Fantastic views greeted us on the summit after a four-hour hike and skin. The Como Peaks and El Capitan dominated the southern skyline while in the west, the Lost Horse drainage presented a fantastic drama of snow-covered ridges, walls and large peaks. Truly one of the most alpine views in the 'Root.' On the 1500 vertical of the east face, the new snow was soft, tricky, but carveable. With Jeremy taking pictures and knowing our tracks would be visible from Highway 93, everyone's technique improved. Nels ruled all.

May 19 saw four demented souls roasting as we slogged up little Saint Joe on a hot, sunny day. The alpine faces of the Bass Creek Spires distracted us for awhile from the steep climb. Napping for an hour on the sun-warmed ridge surrounded with shimmering views of the Bitterroots with the immense northeast bowl of Big St. Joe as a centerpiece was magical. Water skiing

ability was a definite plus on the slushy decent. Jeremy was rudely instructed to leave off the pictures as even Nels flailed. The rest of us made divots at regular intervals.

May 25 found a large group skinning Trapper Peak via the standard trail. **Mario, Kathy Erickson, Mike, Jeremy, Jim and Jim** and others. The snow was crisp going up as **Cal Williams**, Hamilton High, '99, paced us. Peaking at least 45 minutes before the duffers, we were dismayed as Cal skied down and joined us for a second trip to the summit. After pictures and a leisurely lunch we dropped down into a perfect run of 1000 vertical feet. Grinning because we knew we had another 3000 vertical feet of perfect corn, we suddenly hit a slush zone extending all the way down to the trailhead. Even ski diva Kathy lost her form occasionally while the rest of us struggled, cursed and whimpered our way down.

May 27 saw **Mike Schactte** and myself ski Camus again. Another beautiful sunny day with fine snow down the east face followed by perfect corn all the way down to the bridge on the standard trail. It was lots and lots of perfect turns on great snow. I was given a gift seeing a yearling goat that came to visit Mike and me on the summit. A first for me in the Bitterroots after 20 years.

Regrettably, I missed the next two weekends. **Lynda**, for some unfathomable reason, insisted I attend our son **Judson's** high school graduation and the state soccer tournament the following week. But as all the world knows, it rained and snowed like crazy all over western Montana that second weekend of June 8-9. So even though a soccer ball skipped on a sloppy field, allowing Helena Arsenal to edge out the Ravalli United 18's, I was plotting next week's ski as I consoled the boys. (Jud revenged the Uniteds on Helena a month later at the state all-star game, but that's another story)

June 15 saw **Jim Wood** and me on the summit of Lolo Peak in good weather. The ladybugs were starting to swarm. Jim's mountaineering skills came in handy on the skin up when a snappy self-arrest quickly stopped a slip in a bad spot. After a short nap and a last look at the ladybugs, Jim and I skied a traditional line which includes drops followed by upward traverses for lots of turns. The new snow from the week before was grand, covering the entire north side. The snow came off in small, shallow slabs when carved on the steeps, but slow enough to stay in front of so long as turns were quick and tight. Lolo has lots of steep lines with good runouts. The good snow let us push it right to the edge of our abilities. The line we skied, with the traverses, was around 2000 vertical feet ending at Carlton Lake. A short hike up Carleton Ridge led to lots more turns down through the white-barked pines back to the Mormon Ridge trailhead.

June 22 saw Jim and me end the season skiing the peaklet on the south ridge of St. Mary's. We hiked to the top of St. Mary's arriving just in time for a 30-minute rainstorm. We then hiked down the south ridge with a side trip out the desert-like spur ridge to the west that forms the prominent and enticing bowl just west of St. Mary's. Time didn't permit more than a look and a promise down the bowl. The rain had polished the snow and the sun returned just as we started our run of perfect corn. With the green valley open before us, we took advantage of the moderate slope and hero snow to milk every turn of its tension, release and fall as we carved down to summer through larch trees just starting to bud. So my season ended. No one hurt, no one left out, regrets only 'till next season.

Enjoy the outdoors!