



UPSLOPE



Newsletter of the NORDIC Ski Touring Section of PATC

Visit Us On the WEB at <http://www.patc.net/chapters/ski/>

March 2008

UpComing Attractions In Fall UPSLOPE

- Planning meeting for 2008-09 season

Après Ski Party



Ode to Spring

Redbuds are red.

Bluebells are blue.

The snow has all melted,
but there's other stuff to do.

Anonymous (need we wonder why!)

When you stop dabbing your eyes after reading this pastoral, cheer up: The club's annual end-of-season party is just around the corner. Save this date: **Sunday May 4** (postponed from April 20).

Just as last year, we will be gathering at the home of club member Catherine Payne, from 4 -8 PM. Catherine has a lovely place overlooking the Potomac River, just off the Beltway on the Virginia side near the Rt. 193/GW Parkway exit, abutting Scott's Run Nature Preserve. A beautiful wooded setting, with access down to the river, birds, wildflowers, a sitting rock, maybe even some piano entertainment. So, start gathering your pictures and enthusi-

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APRES SKI PARTY NOW ON

Sunday May 4th

Please RSVP Peggy Alpert at mountainmama15@verizon.net

This is a POT LUCK PARTY: Everyone is to bring a dish or edible contribution that others will enjoy, either beatifically healthful or sinfully rich—Your choice

STS Officer Slate



Elected officers of the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, Ski Touring Section, include the Chairperson, Vice-Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer. Other appointed posts are the Trip Coordinator, Membership Coordinator, UPSLOPE editor, Web Master, and Mail Coordinator (see masthead on page 2). We will be holding the election for the coming year at the business meeting which will be held in conjunction with the party, beginning at 4:15 PM.

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ST\$ Officers

FROM BETWEEN THE POLES – Chair Notes

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We moved the clocks back too soon: that's why we didn't get our final White Grass snow dump this year. Well, it makes as much sense as any other reason. Needless to say we were all disappointed in the snow fall of areas where we travel for week-end cross country ski trips. Although Laurel Highlands, in PA, did provide us with enough ground cover to enjoy some good weekends of skiing.

Many successful snowy trips were made to areas that are beyond the weekend distance: Quebec, Vermont, New Hampshire, Utah, and the Tug Hill region in NY.

Want to be in on the exploration of new snowy areas for next season's trips? Lead a trip? Share stories about this year's trips and meet other ski trippers?

Come to our annual

APRES SKI SOCIAL Sunday, May 4, 2008 at 4:00 PM

There will be a hike, a general membership meeting and a pot luck dinner that everyone has prepared; also share trip pictures and ski stories (almost as unreliable as fish stories – the hills get longer and steeper and the surface slicker or if your lucky, more powdery). See the Apres Ski article on [page 1](#) for more details and directions.

Anyway, we are very enthusiastic about next season. We are determined to seek out and conquer all possible locations for reliable snow. Are you with us?!?!

And finally a grateful THANK YOU to all those who led trips – without whom there wouldn't be any trips.



See you at Apres Ski.

Yours in Snow
 Peggy

Sign up for the PATC-ST\$ List Serve

There is an email list server for announcements and discussions of interest to Potomac Appalachian Trail Club—Ski Touring Section members and friends. This unmoderated list can be used to announce activities which may be of interest to members and can be used during the snow season to organize ad-hoc outings. All mail sent to patc-sts@4gh.net will be automatically forwarded to everyone on the list as email. The list has an automated subscription. To subscribe, send a message to majordomo@4gh.net with the following in the body of your message:

subscribe patc-sts Your Name <[your_email@your.isp](#)>

In order to prevent misuse of this facility you will receive a confirmation message which you will need to respond to in order to confirm the subscription.

Far From Home, But Close to Snow



Trip leader Rob Swennes at the top of the steep driveway leading to the chalet. Vehicles had to have a running start on the road to make it the whole way up.

The pattern of warmer winters we have seen in recent years explains why many who love cross-country skiing are scheduling trips to northern climates or far western, elevated areas to enjoy their sport. The Ski Touring Section's trip to Quebec in early February illustrates this point.

This was a week-long ski trip, from Sunday, February 3, to Sunday, February 10. Most of the dozen participants flew from BWI to Burlington, Vermont. One person flew directly to Montreal, and one couple drove the full distance, but stopped for several days of skiing in Vermont. We rented two mini-vans in Burlington that could be driven also in Quebec. Due to new border controls, all had to have American passports for crossing the U.S.-Canada border, but all skiers were well prepared.

The transition to French-speaking Canada is abrupt. It is like going from the U.S. to France, but without the long air flight across the Atlantic. There was snow on the ground when we arrived in Burlington, so it was clear that lack of snow would not be an issue. We made it through Montreal and onto Inter-

state 15 without any problems or even any maps. Brian O'Konski drove one van to the Montreal airport to pick up Bonnie Resnick, while our second van continued north into the beautiful Laurentians area to lay claim to our chalets for the week.

We had rented two. One was a large privately-owned chalet on Rue Monte Rosa in Ste.-Agathe-des-Monts that I had located on the internet and leased through the owner. It housed eight of our party and served as our headquarters for all evening meals. The second chalet was located only half a mile away and was part of a complex of vacation homes managed by a leasing group called Chalets Chanteclair. It lay at the edge of the hamlet Val-David on the banks of the frozen Lac a la Truite. Four of us stayed there. The nicest feature of that townhouse chalet (from my perspective) was the built-in four-person sauna in the main floor bathroom area. That sauna got nightly use during our stay.

The STS sponsored a week-long trip to the Laurentians three years ago. On that trip the group stayed in the fine Far Hills Hotel nearby in Val-Morin. That gave the participants a good grounding in some of the cross-country skiing options in this lovely area of Quebec. Those of us who had skied in the area before were excited about the prospect of returning to those wonderful trails.

On Monday morning, after making lunches to carry with us on the trail, we opted to ski the network of trails in Ste.-Agathe-des-Monts called Parc des Campeurs (Campers Park). The STS group had skied these trails twice on our earlier visit, we were impressed so much by them. They didn't disappoint us this time either. There had been new snow within the past few days, and all of the evergreens were laden with fresh powder. The group broke into smaller units based upon each skiers relative

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ST\$ Officer Slate (continued)

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Chair Peggy Alpert, Vice-Chair Bert Finkelstein, and Treasurer Rob Swennes are running for their current offices. Trip Coordinator Al Larsen is stepping down, and former Vice-Chair Steve Bergstrom and trip leader Kathy Brumberger have volunteered to be Co-Trip Coordinators. Secretary Izabella Zandberg is stepping down, and former Trips Coordinator Al Larsen has agreed to become Secretary. Whooo!! Like musical chairs around here!

Membership Coordinator Doug Lesar, UPSLOPE Editor Ralph Heimlich, Web Master Stephen Brickel and Mail Coordinator Randy Kerr continue to serve in their appointed offices.

STS must continually keep an eye out for an infusion of new folks into the leadership ranks, and needs to actively draft folks as trip leaders, co-leaders, helpers on the Ski Fair and other events, and for leadership posts. If you are interested in running for an office, please contact Peggy Alpert or one of the other officers prior to the April 20 Après Ski Party, even if you cannot attend.

Après Ski (continued)

(Continued from page 1)

asm and plan on being there. As has become our tradition, we'll have good food, the fun of re-living this year's trips, and a reunion with your trip participants. I want to personally urge the largest possible turnout for this year's event, even if you haven't gone to these in the past. We're going to continue something we started last year, which really resonated with the Club members. As part of the annual meeting portion of the party, we'll be having an open, wide-ranging discussion about the nature of next year's outings, and in reality the future direction of the club. Do we continue to concentrate primarily on mid-Atlantic trips? Do we schedule more exotic domestic and international trips? Do we do more with an impromptu trip system? We expect we'll have a really good discussion if people come armed with their opinions—and having been on our trips, I know you have opinions!

As usual, this will be a pot luck dinner—so bring a dish of your choosing. That, and your ski stories (truthfulness and accuracy not required) are your price of admission. The club will provide meat dishes. Peggy will be gathering wild hickory nuts, water cress, and other veggies.

At 4 PM, we'll begin the meeting portion, including election of officers, and then enjoy some food and drink while reliving this year's skiing and laying the groundwork for next year's. Please let us know if you're coming, with an e-mail to STS Chair Peggy Alpert at mountainmama15@verizon.net. Call any of the officers with questions.

Driving directions: Capital Beltway to Exit 44, Georgetown Pike, Rt. 193. Turn onto Georgetown Pike inside the Beltway, toward Langley, not outside toward Great Falls. Almost immediately, turn north onto Balls Hill Rd (toward the River, not south toward McLean). Take the first left off Balls Hill Rd, which is Live Oak Road, a bridge going over the Beltway, and then paralleling the Beltway. Take first left, onto Green Oak Drive. Follow to end of cul de sac, and take the driveway to the left of the large eagle statue/sculpture. Catherine Payne's house has the green roof, number 7035 Green Oak Drive. Her phone is 703-827-0370.

Skiing New Hampshire's White Mountains



Rob heading to the covered bridge over the Ellis River on his way back to the Jackson ski center.

Nine STS skiers traveled to the White Mountains region of New Hampshire in mid January for what has become an annual pilgrimage to this beautiful and snow-abundant corner of New England. I have led groups of skiers to this area half a dozen times now. Twice in the last few years our trips have been arranged at the last-minute to substitute for a scheduled January trip to the Tug Hill region of New York when that area was snowless. This year we opted to schedule the White Mountains area from the very first since, at least in January, it seems to have a greater likelihood of skiable snow.

In the New England region, this winter has provided us with an abundance of snow, reminiscent of years before the cries of "global warming" became all too common. The majority of the group flew from BWI to Manchester, NH on Thursday morning, January 17th. Sight of the snow-covered ground as we prepared to land in Manchester was evidence that this would be a great skiing weekend. Two of our group, Jim Norton and Alan Kurzweil, opted to drive up from the Washington area,

while a third person, Carolina Petty, drove over from Connecticut. Joe Bachman took the train to Boston and then rented a minivan and met us at the Manchester airport. We rented a second van there to ensure enough local transportation for us and our skis.

Despite the various modes of transport up to NH that day, we all arrived at our principal lodging within an hour of each other. I had rented for the group a large home listed on the internet as being adjacent to the town of Jackson. Jackson in Nordic skiing circles is famous for its Jackson Ski Touring Foundation organization (<http://www.jacksonxc.org/>) and the many miles of groomed trails that it maintains throughout the winter around the town. Based on the addition of several additional skiers about two weeks before the trip dates, I also rented a townhouse in the Top Notch at Attitash complex several miles away. One advantage of the second rental was to give the group access to the Attitash recreational facility, which included a large outdoor hot tub. One of our first stops was at Grants Market in the village of Glen to buy food for us. We bought breakfast fixings for both the residences but kept the lunch and dinner food at the larger house since it would be our base of operations. Successful division of a group between two lodgings is always a bit tricky on these trips. But we came up with a plan that worked. Keith Chanon was the sole male in the larger house with Mariamalia Araya, his girlfriend, and also with Ellen Bachman, Caroline Petti, and Mollie Casey. The separate townhouse housed Joe Bachman, Jim Norton, Alan Kurzweil, and me.

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Skiing New Hampshire's White Mountains (continued)

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The first night we opted for pizza carryout from Kringle's, a well-known local establishment. Thursday evening after dinner, several of us adjourned to the Attitash center hot tub for about 40 minutes of relaxation, letting all the cares of the D.C. area and the turmoil of traveling north drain from our bodies.

Friday morning the group agreed that we should begin our skiing close to home at the Jackson ski touring center (STC). It was a quick hop over to the center—once we unburied our vehicles which had received several inches of new snow Thursday night. The number of skiers at the center was light that day since it was not yet the weekend. The Ellis River trail is normally the first route we take whenever visiting Jackson, and it proved to be a good choice this time also. It is a beautifully groomed trail with many moderate rises and downslopes that follows the Ellis River northward toward Pinkham Notch for several miles. However, the temperatures over the course of the day rose above freezing, and many people began experiencing snow sticking to the bottoms of their skis. The best solution to this was the application of Toko or Swix hard wax to the full lengths of the skis, including carefully to the scaled area. That seemed to keep the melting snow from adhering to the bottoms. I had to make several stops to “rescue” people with snow caked to the bottoms of their skis. I suspect the Jackson STC sold a lot of hard wax to skiers that day.

We made it up to the Ellis River crossing where in periods of bitterly cold weather skiers can ski across the river and continue on to the Dana Place lodging. Though this part of the river was fully snow covered, we did not trust the thin ice to bear our weight and thus turned around. Besides, we had been told in the Jackson ski headquarters that Dana Place no longer offers lunch to skiers or residents there. I will miss their famous French onion soup heated with a layer of cheese on top. Most of us made it back to the STC as the sun was setting. Steve Bergman and Ellen Bauman had an adventurous time out on the Hall trail and wound up skiing in the dark and getting back home to us an hour or two late. That evening I made hamburgers, which we served with rice and a large green salad. Beer and wine proved popular, especially the small keg of beer that the guys had insisted buying at Grants on Thursday night. We kept it out on the balcony of the house off the dining room for easy access, though it did freeze solid the night following.

Saturday cold temperatures returned and we opted to return to the Jackson STC for a day on a different set of trails. The parking lot and center were far more crowded when we arrived, so we got our trail passes as soon as possible so we could get out and ski. This time we headed more directly north from Jackson village in the direction of Black Mountain. The challenging climb up the Yodel trail and later the Betty Whitney trail complex convinced a couple of folks that they would feel more comfortable skiing closer to Jackson. The rest of us eventually arrived at the Black Mountain downhill ski area. Twice in the past on earlier visits I had taken a ski lift ride half way up the mountain and then disembarked to ski eastward into the East Pasture network of trails maintained by the Jackson STC. Those of the group still with me opted to try this, and after some bartering with the downhill ski staff we were able to purchase single-ride lift tickets to do this.



Steve, Jim & Alan on the lift at Black Mountain Ski Area. We had to purchase one-ride lift passes in order get to the great East Pasture trail network.

The ride up on the chair lift was uneventful, but a couple of folks fell when dismounting at the top. I think that I caused Ellen Bauman to fall, but she forgave me. We headed off laterally to find the Sugarbush connector trail over to East Pasture. I led the way at what I thought was the connector point, but fortunately wiser heads among us argued (correctly) that the true route was a bit further down the mountainside. The connector route was a lot of fun and mercifully away from the downhill ski slopes. We were doing backcountry skiing here, since the connector trail is never groomed.

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When we reached the first trail intersection, I boldly headed off the the left declaring that this was the route to the East Pastures loop. It was—though in point of fact this was the longer, black diamond route to that loop. We herringboned up what we later learned was the Windy Hill trail for most of an hour, dodging open water and occasionally sapling-covered terrain. I'm sure that a couple of people in the group were ready to kill me—if they could only catch up with me. I was sure we would reach the East Pastures trail in time—which we did—but it was quite a bit of time, and people were pretty tired when they arrived on that lovely groomed loop trail. We ate our packed lunches at that point. Alan and Jim

opted to ski back down the short section of the loop trail, given the fact that it was already approaching 3 p.m. The rest of us (now a much diminished group of 5) opted to ski the whole loop around, reasoning that it had to be mostly downhill given all the climbing we had done.

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Skiing New Hampshire's White Mountains (continued)

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In the end both groups' reasoning proved correct. The clockwise loop around East Pasture was beautifully groomed and overall downhill and had some really sweet runs. But by the time we finished it, the sun had set behind the hills, and the sky was darkening. We still needed to retrace our route back over the connector trail and then down the downhill ski slopes in order to reach the Black Mountain ski center again. And the skiing from there back to Jackson would be much quicker than the way up, but very challenging, especially the steep and twisty Yodel trail. When we reached the downhill slopes, it was every man for himself. Steve Bergstrom with his steel-edged backcountry skis made it down most successfully and most quickly. Sections of the trail were icy, which made the route challenging in the failing twilight. When I made it down to within site of the center below, I reasoned that it would be safer and less trouble to ski over into the ungroomed pasture area to the left and then angle back toward the center and thus have less steep downhill to contend with. Bad choice. Had that area been powdery, I might have had a good trip down. But as it was, that smooth surface was ice crust covered (remember the above freezing temperatures the day previous?), and I found myself repeatedly falling down forward as I erratically skied on top of and then broke through the surface ice crust.

Notwithstanding my strategic error, I was still the second person down. I found Steve observing me with a glass of beer in hand from what was clearly the restaurant of the downhill ski center. I made a beeline to join him and from that observation point to look for the other three members of our group—Keith, Maria and Ellen. They ultimately appeared walking down the edge of the final slope with skis in hand. Duh—removing my skis had never occurred to me as an option. But it showed that I was back into a skiing mode of thinking. By the time our group of five reassembled, even the most adventurous among us reasoned that skiing the rest of the way downhill in the dark to Jackson would be disastrous. Ellen and I volunteered to walk back to Jackson and bring back the van to pick up the others and our ski equipment. On the way back into the village I got a call a call from Joe Bachman (who had spent part of the day snowshoeing on other trails at Jackson). Joe kindly drove and picked us up and delivered us to the van in the Jackson STC parking lot. Once the five of us returned to our main house, we learned that Jim Norton had taken a bad spill coming back down the Yodel trail and had sustained some facial lacerations. Seeing him convinced us even more that we had made the right decision not to ski the final section of trail.

Sunday morning Caroline and Joe opted to ski at the Bretton Woods STC that day, while the rest of us decided we would like to try a Nordic center that we had never tried before. The Bear Notch STC (<http://www.BearNotchSki.com>) is located in Bartlett village on the road toward Bretton Woods. Its headquarters center is rustic and lightly staffed (with an outside portable toilet for the public). But its 65 kilometers of groomed trails were marvelous. We met a number of skiers on the Bear Notch network of trails who said they had skied there many times before and were drawn back again and again. Trail maintenance was excellent, and the trails were well marked, though you needed to refer often to the trail maps given out to all skiers at the center. We began with a climb up a hillside near Albany Brook. It ultimately yielded us a sweet, challenging downhill run. Later we skied over a pedestrian bridge across Bartlett Brook and into a network of trails east of the center. These ultimately led us into the town of Bartlett. Since we were then hungry, we reasoned that we could find a good restaurant or pub in the town and buy lunch rather than simply eating our cold food out on the trail. We ultimately did locate a good sit-down tavern that was offering an excellent home-made New England-style clam chowder—and beer. After that welcomed break, most of us skied on the north side of Route 302 along trails bordering the Saco River. The scenery along the river was very compelling and a joy to observe. All judged Bear Notch STC to be a trail network we will want to visit again.

This was a wonderful trip and one that we will likely repeat next January. The packed snow was about 18" deep in the valleys and up to 28" deep at the higher elevations during our time there. As I am writing this trip report in mid February, the snow depths reported on the Jackson STC web site are now 38" at the ski center and 68" at the upper elevations. And we have found from earlier visits to Jackson that if, per chance, there is not good skiing in this area of New Hampshire when we are scheduled to visit, there is likely good skiable snow an extra 1.5 hours further north at The Balsams Hotel in Dixville Notch.

Thanks to all the participants and their willingness to step in to help to make this a successful trip!

Rob Swennes

(for pictures of this trip, click on <http://www.kodakgallery.com/l.jsp?c=qvist5q.4ccvkc0a&x=0&y=-z7k6iy>)

Far From Home, But Close to Snow (continued)

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speed and skill. I chose to ski with Brian O'Konski and Carl Modig. We opted for the intermediate-level Grignon and Belvoir trail loops which guaranteed us at least 10 kilometers of skiing. Brian and I also opted for the extra Mont Ste. Agathe trail which took us to the highest point in the system. From there we could look out over the town of Ste.-Agathe-des-Monts laid out below us with the snow-covered, rolling hills of the Laurentians stretching on for many miles beyond.

How much snow was on the ground? About 2.5 feet. What was the temperature? The low 20s Fahrenheit. Of course, Canada, like most of the rest of the world, reads temperature on the Celsius scale, so almost all of our time in Quebec the temperatures were in the minus range, though not uncomfortably so.

Everyone had a great time at Parc des Campeurs. We consciously did not overtax ourselves since we knew we had five additional days of skiing to follow. But we made one daunting discovery at this ski center. I was personally aware of about 5 places in the Laurentian region where one could cross-country ski. But we picked up a current brochure at the ski center that identified 23 cross-country centers within the Laurentians. Twenty-three! The mind reels at the thought, given the slender options for groomed trails in the lower 48 states, especially south of New England. We realized that we would have to stay in the Laurentians almost a full winter month in order to visit all of these ski centers. And that did not factor in the many backcountry trail networks throughout the region.

We returned to our chalets and met for dinner already planning what skiing challenges we would try for the following days. For the first several days we bought great amounts of groceries at a large, modern supermarket complex about 5 miles from the chalets. The U.S. and Canadian dollars were at roughly 1:1 parity, but food in the stores generally seemed to cost about 30 – 40% more than in the U.S. But the quality was very high. Most nights one or more of our skiing party took the lead in making the evening meal, and others pitched in to help with the clean up. I made a black bean soup (with sherry). Carl made a pork and red sauerkraut & potatoes meal. Julie Nash made a great spaghetti sauce. One evening we ordered pizza from a local establishment that came well recommended. There was plenty of wine and beer every evening, and each morning there were fresh croissants in addition to all the normal breakfast fare. We fared very well, gastronomically.

Tuesday brought our only above-freezing temperatures of the week. We originally planned to ski father north at the vast Mont Tremblant national park. But when our first vehicle arrived there after an hour's drive, we were informed that the trails were closed for the day due to the rising temperatures. Thus we opted to spend the day on the snow-covered rail trail that runs for at least 40 km. through the heart of the Laurentians. We parked in Val-David and skied northwards towards Ste.-Agathe. However, we reached an area where the trail had not been groomed at all except by skiers passing through. Although there were good tracks, the 2.5 feet of loose snow around them gave little support for the ski poles. For those who fell, it was a challenge to get back up in the deep snow. We crossed local roads several times, and the climb down from the snow bank and then back up on the other side of the road gave us a graphic sense of how much snow was around us. Several of the group gathered late in the afternoon in a local bar/bistro (Café de Plein Air) in the heart of Val-David, just adjacent to the rail trail. It was a good opportunity to try the local Canadian draft beer selections.

By Wednesday morning the temperatures had sunk well below freezing again. We had decided to ski at the Far Hills Hotel where we had lodged three years before. But when we arrived there, we learned that they had not yet groomed the trails for the day, and they were too icy from the warmer temperatures of the previous day to allow people on them till they were. Dave Collins (who loves the thrill of downhill runs) did not want to spend another day on the Le P'tit Train du Nord rail trail. So he, his wife, Cathy, and Bozena Sarnecka-Crouch opted to try the trail network at the nearby Parc regionale Dufresne, though few trails were reported groomed there either. The rest of us opted to try the rail trail in the opposite direction from Val-Morin—a direction I had never skied. Both groups made wise decisions.

Dave, Cathy and Bozena found that the Dufresne trail network was being groomed faster than they could ski it, so they had no problem finding good rolling trails with freshly set track. Those of us skiing south toward Ste.-Adele on the rail trail found a much more beautiful and isolated landscape than the more suburban one northward toward Val-David. The rail bed paralleled a rushing stream that poured water from the chain of connected lakes running throughout the Laurentians and down to the St. Lawrence River. At one point the rail bed cut sharply through a mountainside where signs warned of the risk of cascading rocks from the steep sides. We paid our daily trail fees at a small manned kiosk at the side of the trail just inside the boundary of Ste.-Adele. Most of the group found a nice warming hut along the way that offered a good place to enjoy the packed-in lunches. The trail was somewhat uphill on the return, and most people arrived back at the vehicles somewhat later than the originally agreed-upon meeting time. But all had enjoyed a fine ski in lightly falling snow.

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Far From Home, But Close to Snow (continued)

(Continued from page 7)

Dave told such good tales about the trail system at Dufresne that all opted to return to that ski center on Thursday. It offered the additional benefit of linking in with the trail network at Far Hills, so we in essence were able to ski two trail systems on the same day. Many of the trails at Dufresne and at Far Hills are one way—which reduces the risk of conflicts with skiers coming in the other direction. All the ski systems are somewhat different in how they manage their trails. One got a good sense of that by visiting a new one each day. The Far Hills trails were, for example, generally broader than those in the adjacent regional park. But both sets were beautifully groomed, and many of the trails permitted skate skiing. Each also had a network of snowshoe pathways. Brian and I opted to ski for a bit on two frozen lakes near Far Hills, but we found the wind to be bitterly cold and strong on those open expanses. Brian's skis iced up badly in crossing the first lake, and I took a tumble in deep snow when transiting the ungroomed downhill area between the two lakes. I had to “nest” a bit to make the deep snow firm enough to get onto my feet again.

On Friday the group headed back to the extensive Nordic skiing network at the Mont Tremblant national park. There are two trail centers in the park, at least 10 miles apart from one another. The STS groups have only skied at the larger of the two, the Diable system that has its ski center (accueil) adjacent to Lac Raynaud. Actually, there are four different trail areas based at this center. Most of us skied in the Domaine Saint-Bernard system which is where the group skied three years ago. But Bonnie Resnick and perhaps some others of us chose the Tremblant sector instead. Bozena called the Mont Tremblant network “boring”, and it is true that most of the trails are so broadly set and groomed that it seems harder to relate to the beautiful natural surroundings in which they are set. But the snow is marvelous, in part because this area is so far removed from civilization—or so we thought. This ski center has a number of large warming huts several kilometers in each direction away from the starting point. They are good places to have lunch and view the birds that flock to the huts (refuges) to eat the seed that is spread out for them. Dave and Cathy Collins did find some challenging downhill climbs and runs to their liking on the outer edge of the sector. On our return, we took a couple of photos of the large, modernistic totem poles near the ski center.

I wanted to show the folks in our van the contrast between this quiet Nordic skiing area and the bustle and commercialism of the Mont Tremblant Alpine skiing scene. It took us some time to find it (the other van gave up more easily). It was not in the town of Mont Tremblant. We did notice some big signs in red and white saying TREMBLANT with the A stylized to resemble a downhill ski slope. That had to be the place. We drove another several miles till we reached a spectacularly beautiful area with large lake and almost every large hotel chain you have ever heard of. We nosed around a bit and finally came upon what I wanted to show the group—the gondola lift that rises from the middle of this Disney-like “town” up to the top of the ski slopes on Mont Tremblant. It is quite an impressive sight—but it is not of our world. Having seen it, we were ready to head home to our far more modest chalets. However, in writing this article this evening I have suddenly noticed that at the top of the cross-country ski map we were using that day is the same TREMBLANT logo next to a body of water called Lac Tremblant. Thus apparently we could have cross-country skied north from the ski center to this land of Club Intrawest and the like (probably about 8 km. in each direction) rather than drive 20 miles to reach the same point!

For our final day of skiing we chose to visit a ski venue that none of us had ever seen before. It lies in the town of Morin-Heights about 15 miles from where we were staying. This turned out to be a much more English-speaking part of Quebec (or so it appeared), since the ski trail map and other posted signs seemed to be more consciously done in both French and English. It was good that we visited Morin-Heights on our final day of skiing since it proved to be more challenging than many of the centers we had visited earlier. It was recommended that we take a roughly triangular intermediate route on the Triangle-Salzburg-Triangle routes (numbers 2-4-2). We were warned that one section of the Triangle route was rated black diamond and was known as “the bobsled”. Dave Collins could hardly wait! That was the point where the fainter of heart switched over to the Salzburg trail (4). By the time we reached that point, it was clear to all of us that this center underrated its trails. Much of the 2-4-2 loop could be viewed as advanced intermediate. The main contrast between it and earlier centers we had visited during the week was that the trails through the woods were narrow, albeit groomed. They were much more reminiscent of back-



The trail combo 2-4-2 (Triangle-Salzburg-Triangle) was recommended to us. The black diamond section of Triangle to the left was called the Bobsled Run. We wisely avoided it.

(Continued on page 9)

Far From Home, But Close to Snow (continued)

(Continued from page 8)

country trails, which made the downhill runs with their turns and occasional small moguls all the more challenging. There was a shelter with seating where the 2 and 4 trails intersected again, and most of the skiers on the trail took a breather there before continuing on around the loop.

We had many more skiers this day than earlier in the week—because it was the weekend. The center's large parking lot was totally filled up shortly after we arrived. Most of those skiing had driven up from Montreal for the day or the weekend. We met Dave and Cathy eating lunch by the side of the trail a bit further on. Dave admitted that even he had to do some snow plowing when coming down the steep and narrow “bobsled” section of the Triangle trail. The second half of the loop included a beautiful downhill run through the Balmoral Golf Club in Morin-Heights. We passed some summer chalets near the golf course, closed up for the winter, that were grand enough to arguably be called chateaux.



Brian and Barbara in front of the three tall and abstract totem poles near the ski center.

Brian and I were skiing together. Once we completed the 2-4-2 loop and had eaten lunch, we opted to ski part of the Morin-Heights rail trail with the time remaining to us that afternoon. It was nicknamed the “Corridor Aerobique” and did climb gradually for several kilometers from its start near the ski center. Bonnie and Julie Nash had headed out on this route earlier. There was a wealth of derivative ski and snowshoe trails that diverted off from the Corridor Aerobique, but we lacked the time to explore them. We arrived back at the ski center a bit after 5 p.m. Barbara Mandula called to report that she was coming back on the Bellevue route but suspected that she was up to an hour away. She was ultimately reunited with the rest of our party, and we headed back to the chalets tired but satisfied that we really had done as much hard skiing as we could on this final day on the trails.

Saturday night was leftovers night since we needed to pack all of our gear for a prompt departure the next morning. But we had plenty of leftovers to choose among. Marie Louise (Malo) Bernal was recognized as the most “improved” skier on the trip. She had resumed the sport only the previous winter after a gap of many years. Saturday morning the residents of each chalet had fixed French toast (pain perdu) to use up all of the no-longer fresh French baguette bread we had collected during the week. It is so easy to adopt the gracious lifestyle of Quebec!

It was snowing (of course) when we left the Laurentians on Sunday morning. The trip met all of our expectations and more. We were pleased with having skied in six different venues in our six full days in the region and wondered what Nordic ski adventures might await us in the 17 other centers that we could not visit. That is reason enough for another week-long trip back to this snowy wonderland in the near future. À bientôt.

Rob Swennes

Reminder: The pictures (with subtitles) from this trip are available for viewing on KodakGallery.com at <http://www.kodakgallery.com/l.jsp?c=gyist5q.536ah8u2&x=0&y=-jzmxii>

PATC-Ski Touring Section

**c/o Doug Lesar
2507 Campbell Place
Kensington, MD 20895**

March 2008



Mollie, Keith, Maria and Joe act up just outside the center of the Jackson Ski Touring Foundation (<http://www.jacksonxc.org/>)

To:

PATC Ski Touring Section Membership Form

The PATC/STS provides quality services and benefits to its cross-country skiing members while promoting and supporting the PATC and cross country skiing in general. Whether a novice, recreational, citizen racer or telemark skier, STS has something for every XC skier. Imagine yourself floating on the snow, climbing across hill and dale in the quiet of winter, stopping for lunch in brilliant sunshine on a vista with a view of snow-covered ridges and valleys stretching to the horizon, and then making a descent back to home. Our membership enjoys ski touring in the hills with the comradeship and safety of a group. When you become a member, you receive all issues of the club's newsletter UPSLOPE and other useful information. UPSLOPE is published six times a year by PATC/Ski Touring Section, a non-profit, educational and recreational group of cross-country skiing enthusiasts based in the Maryland, DC, Virginia, PA and West Virginia areas. UPSLOPE provides information about STS trips and events (e.g., Learn-To-XC-Ski weekends, Telemark instructional clinics, and mini-week ski trips). One year membership runs from October 1st through September 30th of the next year. If you join in April or later, your one year membership will run through September of the next year. To insure uninterrupted membership for more than one year, you may provide advance dues for up to three years. To join, select your desired membership category and term from the table below, complete this Form legibly, and send it with a check appropriate to your membership choice (payable to PATC Ski Touring Section) to:

PATC-Ski Touring Section, c/o Doug Lesar, 2507 Campbell Place, Kensington, MD 20895

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| <u>Membership Categories</u> | <u>1 Year Only</u> | <u>2 Years</u> | <u>3 Years</u> |
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- If checked, add me to STS LISTServ so I can get infrequent, adhoc announcements of local XC Ski activities: ___
- If checked, add me to STS Bulk Email list so I get official club announcements important to all STS members: ___
- NEW: If checked, send my UPSLOPE only electronically (no paper copy) to save the club copying and postage: ___

STS is an all-volunteer organization. We cannot function without the assistance of our members. If you are interested in volunteering to help STS in any of the following areas, please check the box and you will be contacted:

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