



UPSLOPE



Newsletter of the NORDIC Ski Touring Section of PATC

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April 2006

UpComing Attractions In May UPSLOPE

- More Ski Reports
- Report on Apres' Ski Party
- More destinations...near and far

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Ski Reports From All Over

White Mountains, New Hampshire

By Rob Swennes

The snow goddess Ulla has been a real tease this winter season, enticing skiers to sign up for ski trips and then leaving them with little or nothing to ski upon when the trip occurs. That could have been the result for STS's trip to New Hampshire's White Mountains over the Presidents Day holiday weekend. But through a bit of luck, some flexibility on the part of the trip participants, and knowledge of the skiing resources in New Hampshire, the group was able to enjoy a good winter holiday weekend of ice and snow.



Jeff Anspacher getting ready to ski on a side road off the Kancamagus Highway

STS has been running a New Hampshire ski trip for several years. People fly (or drive) to Manchester, NH, on Thursday morning and then drive to the White Mountain communities of Jackson, North Conway, and Glen. We stay in one or more townhouses rented through a local vacation realty company. The STS trip cost includes all in-house food, so we rely on favorite recipes executed by competent cooks among the skiers—plus some delicious fare from favorite area take-out restaurants.

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May is Apres' Ski Party Time!

When: Sunday, May 7, 2006—5:00 p.m. for Annual Election Meeting, 6:00 – 9:00 p.m. for Apres' Ski Party

Where: Overlee Community Association clubhouse, 6030 Lee Highway, Arlington, Virginia

Directions: The Overlee swim club is located a convenient few blocks off of I-66 in Arlington and within walking distance of Metro. The directions with a map are available on the club's web site (<http://www.overlee.org/direct.htm>) and also at the end of this article.



Food to bring: The STS officers will be grilling burgers and hot dogs. You need to provide all the wonderful side dishes that make this party such fun each year. Please bring an item that serves 6-8 people. Bring something really healthy — or irresistibly caloric — as

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There is no President's Column this month. Bert encountered some big changes after the France trip. Ask him about them at the Apres' Ski Party.

Tug Hill Hostess Dies

Katherine Margaret Umland, 50, died Thursday, March 9, 2006. PATC-STSerS know her as the daughter of Rose Driscoll, who owned and operated the All Season's Lodge, where many of the STS'ers stayed while at Tug Hill.

Born June 12, 1955, in Syracuse, N.Y., she lived in Valley Center and Escondido, NY. Mrs. Umland is survived by her husband of 26 years, Bruce Umland of Valley Center; daughters Naomi Umland and Sarah Umland, both of Valley Center; son and daughter-in-law Jamey and Sheri Umland of Pennsylvania; parents Thomas and Rose Driscoll of Pulaski, N.Y.; brothers Tom Driscoll of Ohio, and Daniel Driscoll of New York; sister Diane Wagner of North Carolina; and three grandchildren.

Peggy Alpert sent a card on behalf of PATC-STSerS.

Link to Membership Listing

In order to conserve space and paper, the membership listing is available for download in an Adobe Acrobat portable document file at the following link <http://www.patc.net/chapters/ski/Kojo693/jk8959U.pdf> This format allows you to search for names, addresses, phone numbers on your computer, can be magnified to be read more easily, and can be printed out.

Sign up for the PATC-STSerS 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>

Ski Reports From All Over (continued)

The large mid-February snow storm that dumped 8 inches of snow in DC and over two feet in New York City unfortunately brought less than an inch of snow to the White Mountains. Both of the ski touring centers (STCs) that we normally rely upon for this trip—those at Jackson and Bretton Woods—were in sad shape, with little more than hard ice on their trails. However, we had noticed when driving to our townhouses in Jackson that there was some residual snow cover up on the Kancamagus Highway—the scenic forested byway that connects Lincoln and Conway, NH. So on Friday morning, we checked out the skiing on the side roads and trails off the highway. The National Park Service ranger at the Conway end of the highway recommended that we try an area off Bear Notch Road. We started skiing that morning in a light rain, but as the day progressed, the winds became stronger, the rain abated, and the temperatures dropped. By late afternoon the snow had gotten decidedly crusty. Ellen Bachman, Barbara Mandula and I were the last ones out and probably got about 10 kilometers of ski trekking in that day. We knew that the temperatures were due to drop from above freezing to the low single digits for several days, so we wanted a chance to use the remaining soft snow before it all hardened up.

After our day-long ski off the highway, we stopped at the Eastern Mountain Sports store in North Conway on the way back to the townhouses. Ellen Bachman and I each bought a pair of Tubbs snowshoes on sale—the kind with built-in crampons. We knew that with the bitterly cold conditions that would prevail on Saturday, the only recreational option open to us would be snowshoeing.

Saturday, the STS group went snowshoeing at the Jackson STC. It would be more accurate to call our activity that day “iceshoeing”, since those were the conditions. The new snowshoes worked beautifully. This was my first experience with snowshoeing, and I was really pleased for the opportunity to try it out. The Jackson STC rents out snowshoes, so we had no problem outfitting everyone in our group. After over an hour out on the trails, we opted for a nice, hot lunch in a diner in Jackson—in part in order to escape from the strong, bitterly cold winds that assailed anyone not deep in the woods.

Marion Story of our group opted to return to our lodgings in the Nordic Village at Jackson in order to warm up in the club's heated pool and jacuzzi. The rest of us decided to do some more snowshoeing—this time at Pinkham Notch near the base of Mt. Washington. We checked with a ranger at the AMC store at Pinkham Notch, and he recommended a local trail that we could snowshoe with the remaining hours of daylight. We did over an hour of snowshoe trekking on the Lost Pond Trail, which is actually a segment of the AT in New Hampshire. The snow and ice walking was quite enjoyable—but we suffered from the bitter cold wind whenever we stepped out of the trees. The temperature was in the low single digits.

That evening most of us retired, as became our custom, to the Nordic Village recreation club to warm up in the outside heated jacuzzi and pool and the steam room. Joe Bachman was kind enough to make us *Boeuf Bourignon*, and we feasted on that—with plenty of other good food and drink—in the evening.

Sunday morning I called The Balsams, further north at Dixville Notch, to check on the ski conditions there. They claimed to have good x-country skiing at the higher elevations of their ski center. So we drove an hour and a half to that location and found the conditions remarkably good. We spent much of the day skiing in this section of the Great North Woods of New Hampshire at an elevation of about 2,200 feet. The wind was much weaker Sunday than it had been the days before, and we had a light snowfall much of the time we were out on the groomed trails. Absolutely beautiful! When we returned to the Grand Hotel at 5 p.m., we each ordered a hot drink and enjoyed some finger food before undertaking the drive back to Jackson. Everyone thought the round trip up to The Balsams was well worth the effort to get in some good skiing. After all, that's why we had all signed up for the trip in the first place. On the upper plateau at The Balsams, most of the trails had about 2 feet of hard pack, with some light snow on top. The machine tracks had been set recently. Everyone we met at the warming hut claimed that The Balsams had the only skiable snow (for cross country) in New England. One guy had driven down from Maine to get his ski “fix”.

Monday morning—the Presidents Day holiday—the group drove in the rental van through Crawford Notch and over to the Bretton Woods x-country ski facility on our way back to Manchester. The ski conditions were very poor at that center, but everyone could see how wonderful a location it would be when snow was actually there.

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Marion Story, Jeff Anspacher, Barbara Mandula and Ellen Bachman ascending the Sanguinary Ridge Trail at The Balsams STC at Dixville Notch, NH

Ski Reports From All Over (continued)

All in all, the group was pleased with the trip and the varied winter recreation that it provided. As is said, necessity is the mother of invention. Had it not been for the sketchy skiing conditions at Jackson and Bretton Woods, we would probably have never tried skiing the Kancamagus Highway or snowshoeing near Pinkham Notch. The challenging conditions actually provided us with a better opportunity to explore what recreation options northern New Hampshire has to offer in the wintertime. Several members of the STS group are already looking forward to a return to the White Mountains region next year!

Bryce Canyon, Utah

By Rob Swennes

One truth about the West that is quickly learned when traveling there to ski, is that everything is dictated by elevation. When my wife and I visited Bryce Canyon in late March last year, there were three feet of snow on the ground. We had four inches of new snow overnight the one night we stayed just outside the park. It seemed like a skiers' paradise. Thus the 2006 Ski Touring Section trip to Bryce was set three weeks earlier in the season (February 28 – March 5) to ensure an ample snowfall in the park.

It was a good plan. Too bad the weather did not cooperate. Southwest Utah had a dry winter this year, as opposed to the more "normal" snowfall of last winter. Unfortunately, too many of the winters over the past decade or so have been light on snow. This lack of moisture in the colder months translates into very dry conditions in the warmer months. The high incidence of wildfires throughout the Southwest in recent years is evidence of this. This is not to say that the Section's trip out west for this winter was snow free, like so many of our scheduled trips this year. Quite the contrary. But I'm getting ahead of the story.



Rob Swennes at the Cedar Breaks canyon overlook

Eight STSers (Barbara Mandula, Pat Sanders, Bonnie Resnick, Bozena Sarnecka-Crouch, Bruce & Peggy Parker, Brian Okonski, and yours truly as trip leader) signed up for the Bryce Canyon trip. Unfortunately Bozena developed a fever just before the trip and had to cancel, so seven flew to Las Vegas on the evening of Tuesday, February 28th.

Tuesday night was spent in a motel in north Las Vegas, about 5 miles from the airport. We had rented a minivan and a sedan to transport the group. All skis were transported in the minivan quite easily. After a nice breakfast Wednesday morning, we drove convoy fashion from the gambling capital of the Americas northward on I-15 through part of Nevada, a 20-mile corner of Arizona, and into Utah. The drive climbs from an elevation of about 1,000 feet to 5,000 feet or more on the Colorado Plateau. Vegetation-wise, the climb is from the desert to grassy plains.

Bruce had suggested that we drive to Bryce via Cedar Breaks National Monument, since the monument was roughly on the way to our main lodging for the trip. We hoped to have good skiing there, and were not disappointed. Cedar Breaks is adjacent to the Brian Head ski resort. The altitude is 10,000 feet or more. By the time we drove up to Brian Head, the landscape had shifted from dry land to patchy snow to a fully snow-covered terrain. In contrast, the year before, my wife and I could not even reach Brian Head without a four-wheel drive vehicle or snow chains. We jokingly referred to it as the Shangri-La of Utah since it was so difficult to reach that it seemed only a myth. Not so this year.

Our Wednesday afternoon was spent skiing on a gentle landscape with several inches of snow covering an icy (but not impenetrable) base. Bright orange plastic poles in the snow acted like cairns to guide the skiers around the monument acreage. There were beautiful vantage points for looking out over the natural amphitheater of erosion-carved stone. One could see clearly for many more miles than is customary back here in the East.

After a full afternoon of exploring some of the wonders of Cedar Breaks, we drove on to our final destination for the trip—Ruby's Inn, just outside the national park. Ruby's is far more than a motel and restaurant. It has all the size and variety of a large church cathedral in operation since it is essentially a little community within itself, with many staff members and even more things to do. It seems astounding that no major competitor to Ruby's has shown up to contest its virtual monopoly of lodging and related services located just outside the perimeter of the national park, but such is the case. The dining room every night overflowed with tourists from Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, France and a host of other countries. Most had arrived by tour bus and only spent a few daylight hours in the park before heading on to Zion National Park or the Grand Canyon.

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Ski Reports From All Over (continued)

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Our second full day out West, we spent in a fruitless effort to locate good, skiable conditions at higher elevations within 20 miles of Bryce. We were using as our "bible" a recent book on cross-country skiing in southwest Utah written by a fellow well versed in the geology and plate tectonics of the region. Unfortunately his descriptions of some skiable locations and how to reach them proved to be overly optimistic. Having selected a trip up Forest Highway 017 to snow-covered Griffin Pass as our day's goal, we had great trouble in finding the gravel forest road. Our search for it took us miles out of our way to Antimony, Utah—a little one gas pump town in the middle of nowhere, but with some astounding landscape. A couple of rugged cowboys gave us directions to find the road, but they clearly thought we were crazy to try driving up to the pass until late spring. Once we told them that we were in fact looking for the snow in the pass, they were convinced we were loony Easterners.



A group photo on the floor of Bryce Canyon.

The group eventually snow shod or hiked up the forest road to Griffin Pass. It was a great day of exercise and grand views but pretty exhausting as well. The highpoint of the trek turned out to be our encounter with a stranded British couple who had run their Jeep into a deep ditch when trying to ascend the road to the pass. We were unable to free their vehicle but were eventually able to contact a tow truck to come and give them assistance.

The third day was spent in Bryce Canyon itself. We expected to spend only a half day there, but once we descended into the labyrinth of caves and strange colored sculptures carved by wind and rain, it was too marvelous to leave. The interplay between rock, vegetation and sky was infinitely varied. The open vistas extended for thirty miles and more under a clear sky.

Though fully satisfied with our day spent in Bryce, we wanted to spend the final full day skiing again. So we decided to return to the Cedar Breaks area for some skiing near an unplowed state road. The road was used by snowmobiles as well, but we found that there was ample width for us to avoid one another. Our arrival at the selected parking area was delayed for some time since snow plow crews were out removing snow that had blown over the one open road. Soon after beginning our ski on the unplowed road, we deviated away from it and into the open fields, following our noses wherever we chose to go. The landscape was gently rolling with large, open areas bounded in by woods with well-spaced trees. Thus the skiing was remarkably easy.



Barbara, Bonnie, Bruce, Peggy, Pat & Brian on the open plateau near Cedar Breaks

There are two distinctive aspects of skiing at 10,000 feet that one must always keep in mind. Both are consequences of the thin atmosphere. The first is that it is easy to get winded when skiing at that elevation, and catching your breath once you have done so is a very unpleasant task. There simply is not the oxygen at that level to let you quickly return to normal breathing, so you learn to pace yourself. The second problem arising from the elevation is heightened risk of sunburn. The group wore lots of sun block during the day. But on the second day (the fateful trip up forest road 017) my SPF 30 sun block suddenly failed. By the end of the day I was quite red on face and neck. I had to buy an aloe jell to reduce the stinging, and new sun block as well.

The group skied over hill and dale near Cedar Breaks. We had a great mid-trek lunch on the snow-free deck of a new house that we had come upon in our random skiing. It gave us wind protection and offered a wonderful view over the surrounding meadows. We saw our only other pair of skiers while having lunch. They were

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Ski Reports From All Over (continued)

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some distance from us and out trekking with their two dogs. We never met the people, but we came across their tracks later. We spent much of the afternoon following the ski tracks of “the dog people” (as we came to call them).

Saturday night the group had its final dinner at Ruby’s Inn. The food there was very good, but after four nights we had hoped to locate another restaurant in the area as something else to try. Nothing appeared to yet be open, so Ruby’s got our business once again.

The drive back to Las Vegas was uneventful—except to remind us how quickly one can shift from snow-covered roads to palm trees with a few hours of driving and the loss of 7,000 feet in elevation. Bryce and southwest Utah in general offer skiers a reliable place to trek in the winter regardless whether the season is precipitation heavy or not. In years of generous rain, one can ski in deep snow around Bryce Canyon. In dryer winters, one can travel up to Cedar Breaks National Monument for plenty of skiing on powder. It is a win-win situation for skiers.

Canaan Valley

by Elliot and Kathy Brumberger

The weather was iffy for the President’s Day weekend in Canaan Valley. Everyone...there were 9 in our group...brought hiking boots just in case! But, Saturday morning we awoke to SNOW falling! After breakfast at our chalet, Renate suggested that we hike to Pace Point at Blackwater Falls State Park. What a wonderful walk and view from the point with snow in the canyon. We decided that a nice hot lunch was in order after walking in the snow for several hours. Donna Periera heated up the vegetarian chili that she brought for the potluck that night. We couldn’t wait for dinner. It really hit the spot!

Some of the group decided to go to White Grass and ski after lunch. The others went on another hike in Canaan Valley State Park. Both groups had decided earlier to meet at 5:30 at the downhill/tubing area of Canaan Valley but after watching the tubers we decided not to partake since it was COLD! COLD!! COLD!!!



The guys, cleaning up



STSers at Canaan Valley

Saturday night we had a pot luck feast of appetizers, salad, curried chicken with rice, and apple pie and cheesecake

along with lots of wine. See the attached photo of the men cleaning up after dinner...wine bottles everywhere! That night, Tim serenaded us with some wonderful guitar playing and vocals!

On Sunday morning the pipes froze in our chalet and we had no water. The management said that it was minus 30 (Maybe he meant the wind chill...it was cold but not THAT cold.) We made do with the slight trickle of water that was available and by using the facilities in the main area of the Village Inn. After a breakfast of omelets with red peppers, onions, and mushrooms (Kathy makes the BEST), we went to Blackwater Falls SP to ski. The road from the sled hill to Lindy Point was great! We then left our skis at the trailhead and

walked to Lindy Point for a wonderful view. After some hot chocolate or spiced cider in the warming hut, everyone hiked up the sled hill and skied down. Some went up a second time as well.

We were quite tired after a very busy day and rewarded ourselves with dinner at Mutley’s in Davis. On Monday morning most folks left for home. Renata, Rainer, Kathy and Elliot went for a hike in Canaan Valley SP before leaving for home. Tom did some downhill skiing before heading for home.

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More Ski Trip Reports

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you choose. See list of foods to bring....

- Salads—green, fruit
- Appetizers—cheese and crackers, chips and salsa
- Pasta/Vegetarian dishes—e.g., pasta salad, baked beans
- Desserts—Your specialty!
- Drinks: STS will provide sodas, juice, beer & wine.

Presentations: Please provide to Bert well in advance of the party a burned CD with the ski trip photos that you'd like to present. Bert will provide a computer and PowerPoint projector. We'll have a good screen for viewing your best and worst moments on skis this winter. His address: 2349 Horseferry Court, Reston, VA 20191.

The party and election meeting are also when Section trip leaders begin proposing ideas for next winter's trips. If you have an idea for a trip, please be prepared with the details. You don't want to miss out!

Driving Directions:

From Fairfax, Virginia

- Take I-66 East to Lee Highway (Exit 69).
- Left onto Lee Highway into Arlington.
- Right at John Marshall Drive (at bottom of hill), then quick left into parking lot.

From Washington, DC

- Take I-66 West to Sycamore Street (Exit 70).
- Right onto Sycamore Street.
- Right onto Lee Highway.
- Right at John Marshall Drive (at bottom of hill), then quick left into parking lot.

Metro Directions:

- Take Orange Line to East Falls Church station.
- Turn left out of station, walk 3 blocks to Lee Highway.
- Turn right and walk approx. 1/2 mile to John Marshall Drive.
- Turn right into Overlee the first driveway after John Marshall.

Ski Reports From All Over (continued)

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Ski Dance 2006

by Elliot Applestein

I really enjoyed dancing, singing and skiing with everyone—including the cows! I always find Ski-Dance a special time to connect with a great group of people. For

the old-timers (I mean that as previous participants—I really look forward to seeing you. It's amazing how much both stays the same and yet changes in a year's time. I commented to Marta that we hadn't seen Julie (our caller) pregnant and all of a sudden here was baby Sam—I didn't know females could do that! To our new participants, we hope you join us again next year. I really feel that next year will be the big one. We're due for another blizzard! A few of us did go to Laurel Ridge on Monday and while conditions were not great, it was ski-able and my family stayed out for about an hour.



Ski dancers in dance mode



Skiing with the cows

[Editor's note: We didn't REALLY ski with the cows—it was too cold for the Holsteins.]

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



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

| <u>Membership Categories</u> | <u>Membership Classes</u> | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| | <u>1 Year Only</u> | <u>2 Years</u> | <u>3 Years</u> |
| Individual | \$ 9 | \$17 | \$25 |
| Family | \$13 | \$24 | \$35 |

PLEASE PRINT or TYPE THE INFORMATION BELOW !!!

Name(s): _____ Request is for: _____ - NEW Membership: _____

Address: _____ Today's Date: _____ - New Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ - Renewal: _____

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____ Email Address: _____

- Add me to Annual member directory but do not list my: Home Ph.: __ ; Work Ph: __ ; Email: __;Postal Address: __
- 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:

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> STS Officer | <input type="checkbox"/> Publicity | <input type="checkbox"/> XC Ski Instructor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Web Content Assistant | <input type="checkbox"/> Ski Trip Leader | <input type="checkbox"/> Special Events Coordinator |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |