

NORTHFIELD MOUNTAIN NORDIC SKI PATROL



Volume 27

Issue 4

June 30, 2006

A NEVER-ENDING SEASON

by Jonathan Shefftz

This year's Northfield ski season ended early ...then again, did it ever really begin? But as my California brother has always said (especially when he had a 30+ month ski streak), "ski season never ends - the snow just gets farther away." So as the remaining snow in northwestern Massachusetts disappeared, I turned my attention farther north and farther west: to the west coast and to Mt. Washington.

An early April Sierra trip with my brother actually had too much snow, if that is possible: our hut trip to Tioga Pass (eastern edge of Yosemite) was cancelled, initially because of "Extreme" avalanche danger (the highest on the five-level public warning scale), and then the day after that danger subsided (slightly) the route was buried in too much avalanche debris to be passable. Fortunately we enjoyed lift-served powder skiing as consolation, albeit overshadowed by tragedy after the new snowfall led to the deaths of three Mammoth Mountain patrollers. (See our patrol website for the sad details.)

Upon returning to New England, I convinced three friends to join me on my annual suffer ski trip (i.e., high ratio of the former to the latter) for an overnight to the Randolph Mountain Club's Grey Knob hut, located at treeline on Mt. Adams, north of Mt. Washington (with Clay and Jefferson in between). Few people ever ski in the Northern Presidentials—for some good reasons! Fortunately, my friends are still talking to me (even if my partner for the first six suffer ski trips has now retired from our annual tradition). *You can check out the joy of "skiing" on "mixed" terrain and the biggest understatement of a steep and icy hiking trail at:*

<http://timefortuckerman.com/forums/showthread.php?t=6356>

Late April featured a business trip to Portland, followed by some Mt. Hood daytrips with a friend who lives out there. We lucked out with the weather, and enjoyed some great spring touring, along with dramatic scenery. *The slideshow at the following site gives you a hint of the beauty of the massive snowfields at Mt. Hood:*

<http://pg.photos.yahoo.com/ph/jonathanshefftz/detail?.dir=d108scd&.dnm=b82bre2.jpg&.src=ph>

I returned to New England to find decent skiing remaining on Mt. Washington: the first weekend in May I climbed to the summit, skied all the way down into the base of Tuckerman Ravine, then did another lap on Left Gully. Unfortunately, the weather after that weekend turned to rain, and more rain, and still more rain, and then ...snow? Some areas of the summit area had six-foot drifts! But then as if on cue, the weather cleared and the auto road finally opened to the summit. I enjoyed drive-by skiing on Memorial Day: parked the car as close to the summit snowfields as the Northfield parking lot is to the visitor center, skied down, skinned up, then repeated numerous times. *Check out:*

http://timefortuckerman.com/photopost/data/932/1606JS_4.JPG

Two days later I flew out for a Seattle *(continued on page two)*

DATES TO REMEMBER

AUGUST 4: Refresher Planning Meeting, Northfield Mountain, 6:30 pm
OCTOBER 14-15: Fall Refresher, Northfield Mountain

WIYAKA WEEKEND

FRIDAY THROUGH SUNDAY

SEPTEMBER 8TH – 10TH

Yes, we'll have Camp Wiyaka all to ourselves again for fun and relaxation. This YMCA camp is in Richmond, NH, about a half hour from Keene and Mt. Monadnock. Plan to bring friends and family to camp out for two nights, one night, or just come for a day or an evening—whatever fits your schedule.

Bring sleeping bags to stake out a claim on one of the eighty bunks in the ten canvas tent platforms. Bunks and bags are about as rough as it gets. The dining hall has a full kitchen and walk-in refrigerator, and just up the hill are toilets and showers in the bathhouse. A variety of boats will be available for frolicking in Sandy Pond, or enjoy a brisk swim out to the diving platform. *Camp Rule: Parents need to be in the water with their children. There will be no lifeguards!*

Directions from the intersection of Rt. 119 and Rt. 32: head north on Rt. 32 for about one and a half miles. Turn left onto Sandy Pond Road. The camp entrance is one mile on the left.

Contact Tom Deam by September 1st if you'd like to come. We'll probably plan for another group meal or potluck dinner on Saturday. Tom: (978) 544-5420 or tedeam@verizon.net.

BANQUET HIGHLIGHTS

by Joannie Duris

Fourteen patrollers and their guests enjoyed the usual fantastic feed at Countree Living Restaurant on April 8th. With the mini winter and ski season we had, this was a great chance for many of us to catch up on each others' news.

Tom Deam noted that in spite of the slow snow we were kept busy with other activities such as the OEC course (thank you Bo, Sue, and Bill S.). Seven candidates were able to complete all their skills this year. Tom presented Dave Brown with his new patroller card.

Service awards were noted for: 5 years – Tom Deam and Charlene Deam; 20 years – Bob Presutti. Thank you to each of you for all your skiing dedication even through the thin years.

Tom Deam presented the Bill Hawley Outstanding Patroller of the Year Award to Sue Menick. There were a few patrollers who did a lot of work this year, but Sue went one step further with all her work on the OEC course, especially coordinating the final exam. Thank you, Sue. (And anytime you need another screaming, "injured" skier, I'm there for you.)

Since Sue was now our Outstanding Patroller, she was eager to pass on the Flaming Flounder Award she had earned the year before. As Sue put it, "This year's Flounder has something to do with a snowmobile." She went on to tell the story of one of our few snow days when Tom Deam had volunteered to work the Chocolate Pot. Bill Gabriel volunteered to take up supplies on the snowmobile. Bill gunned the controls and—oops!—the snowmobile shot *backwards!* Sue presented the Flaming Flounder Award to Bill Gabriel for his "skilled" driving.

Bill Gabriel updated us on Mountain happenings, and noted that he expects activities to be much the same next year, even after the sale of Northfield Mountain at the end of 2006. He also *(continued on page two)*

CHOCOLATE POT CHAT

by Tom Deam

First of all I hope all are having a good summer. Wish some, not all, of the rain had arrived during ski season as snow because then we'd have better memories. As it is, the Patrol has two more qualified Patrollers, Marianne Jakus and Jonathan Shefftz. Bo did a great job getting them through the Nordic skills portion with imagination, skill, and patience for the weather.

Refresher is arriving, soon. A planning meeting is being held August 4th, 6:30 pm, at the Mountain. We need help to make it what you want and need. A letter is being sent to all asking for ideas and participation.

Camp Wiyaka is also coming up, September 8th -10th. It is a quiet, bucolic setting for relaxing.

That's about it for the moment, time to sit by the fire and warm the toes. Ok it's a dream but next season.....

WHAT IS A WEMT?

by Jonathan Shefftz

Wilderness EMT training takes the OEC outdoor and non-urban setting another step further away from the urban EMT curriculum and into the wilderness context. The emphasis is on longer-term "nursing" care of injuries along with improvising (i.e., transport and specialized equipment are no longer a quick sled ride away). A full WEMT course normally entails about an entire month and thousands of dollars, but ski patrollers can take a WEMT module in only five days for several hundred dollars. (Note that although our training qualifies us to take the course, it does not earn us official WEMT certification.) WEMT training should be of interest to ski patrollers who recreate in backcountry settings where assistance is potentially far away and long in coming. A schedule is available at:

<http://www.soloschools.com/schedule.html#wemtm0d>

If interested in the possibility of carpooling, contact Jonathan Shefftz at jshefftz@alumni.amherst.edu.

BANQUET HIGHLIGHTS *(continued from page one)*

thanked everyone for the hours of training put despite the lack of snow.

Lots of other thanks made the rounds, with Sharon Long noting, "You guys are awesome," as she was very impressed with the OEC course. Bob Duris pointed out that he sees a lot of staying power with the new candidates (actually, new *patrollers* now), and noted it was great to have such "involved, dedicated and enthusiastic people in the class."

The evening wrapped up with unique door prizes; and leftover seed packets flew through the air to the first person calling, "I'll take them!"

RATTLEBONE GOES ELECTRONIC

Starting with the fall issue, the *Rattlebone* will be emailed (in pdf format) to everyone on our mailing list as well as posted on our website. If we don't have an email address for you, we will continue to snail mail your copy until we hear otherwise. Feel free to send your name and email address to Joannie if you aren't a member of our patrol, would like to continue receiving the *Rattlebone*, and don't think we have your address. Please note 'Rattlebone' in the subject line.

The next issue of the Rattlebone will be published in September. Please get all articles, information, dates, etc. to Joannie Duris by September 15th.

36 Lombard Road, Hubbardston, MA 01452
(978) 928-5587 or jyuris@charter.net

WWW.NMNSP.ORG

Don't forget to check our website for the latest patrol news and dates of upcoming courses and events.

If you don't remember the user name and password for entering the 'patrol room', contact Bill Schweikert at: webmaster@nmnsp.org

A NEVER-ENDING SEASON *(continued from page one)*

business trip, followed by three days on Rainier. I skied three laps on the popular Muir Snowfield over the first two days since I was by myself, but then for the third day I hooked up with three friends from www.turns-all-year.com, a website devoted to those who, well, you can probably guess! This was especially fun, because not only did we seek out some very interesting terrain, but also because I had first met two of my partners (now with 142 consecutive months of skiing) in a rainy Rainier parking lot on a late-August morning in 1999. I had flown out to Seattle the previous morning for a business trip during the upcoming week, and my gear was a mix of borrowed, newly acquired, and marginally adequate. My main strength in the backcountry was that I was well aware of my numerous weaknesses. (Ski patrol training this season with Tom, Bo, and Bill furthered my awareness of remaining weaknesses!) With the vis near zero, and the route unfamiliar, I was starting to resign myself to very short laps above the visitor center when I noticed two people unloading ski gear from the adjacent vehicle. Maybe, just maybe, I thought, if I ask in a polite friendly manner, these two skiers might be nice enough to let a clueless guy from Massachusetts tag along with them on whatever trip they were planning ...and that ended up being my first ever real backcountry ski tour! *The following link will give you the stunning view of the Nisqually Moraine, and additional links to views of the Muir Snowfield:*

http://www.turns-all-year.com/skiing_snowboarding/trip_reports/index.php?topic=4864.0

I had begun my ski season on October 18th via the Mt. Washington auto road, so it seemed appropriate to conclude my eastern ski season with the June 17th Mt. Washington quadrathlon, which starts with a "running" (loosely construed) race up the auto road. I had an extra ski/hike/ski/hike transition this year since the summit snowfield was still hanging in there. After skiing and hiking down Tuckerman Ravine, I hiked all the way down to Pinkham Notch. Much of the trail was steep, rocky, and arduous. Fortunately the bike ride for the final leg was all downhill on the highway from the hiking trailhead to the auto road base, so the 15-mile circuit was completed in a pleasant manner. If you haven't heard of this event before, that could be because although hundreds of runners enter the first leg, somehow I always end up being the only entrant in all four legs. *Photos from this event can be found at:*

http://www.turns-all-year.com/skiing_snowboarding/trip_reports/index.php?topic=4951.0

Four days later, on the first day of "summer," Mt. Shasta featured a grand convergence: I flew from the east, my brother drove from the south, our Portland friend drove from the north, and we invited the entire Lemurian and Yaktavian races to join us from whatever dimension they reside in. (Mt. Shasta is believed to harbor various aliens - the town at the base of the mountain has only one climbing shop, yet numerous crystal stores, spiritual healers, etc.) After four days of seemingly unlimited snow, terrain, skinning, climbing, skiing, and sun, I felt odd ending my ski season when Shasta was still seemingly at its peak. But the reality of Massachusetts residency has to set in eventually. *Photos from Jonathan, as well as from his ski partners who seem to spend more time taking pictures than actually skiing, are at:*

<http://tinyurl.com/s5cxs>

<http://rustysammon.smugmug.com/gallery/1603550>

<http://www.telemarktalk.com/phpBB/viewtopic.php?p=300688#300688>

The inevitably harsh return to reality occurred the very next day while taking care of some work matters in San Francisco ...although a client I was meeting mentioned that I might need to fly out to Portland, Oregon, in early October—now if that meeting does occur (along with the predictable "side trip"), would that be an early start for the 2006-07 season or a delayed conclusion for the 2005-06 season?