

NORTHFIELD MOUNTAIN NORDIC SKI PATROL



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MY SORDID TALE

by Tom Deam

"I could not understand a word you said!" Frank said, responding to our instructor's question.

Frank, a native of Quincy, MA, and as Irish as one can be, was never afraid to say what he meant. This time we would all suffer through guilt by association. We, being five US Navy SEALs, were vastly out-numbered by our UK Royal Marine SBS counterparts.

"If you bloody Yanks could understand the Queen's English you'd see that we are learning to ski over precipices!" said Muggger Morgan, a Welshman with the Royal Marines.

"Oh, not another lecture on the Queen's English," Frank said.

Frank, I, and three other US Navy Sailors were participating in a four-month Artic Warfare training exercise along with seven of our UK Royal Marine SBS counterparts. We had been in Norway, 200 miles north of the Artic Circle for the past four weeks. Our combined group was midway through basic winter movement and survival, with an emphasis on survival.

Prior to Frank's comment our instructor had been showing us how to ski over, under, through, and around various obstacles in our path. We started out with the "around" portion going around boulders, huts, and trees. At one point an improvised slalom course was hastily set up and sped through.

The difficulty increased as our skills progressed. Avoiding natural barriers, trees, rocks, and huts, was easy, but skiing under snow-laden branches presented a unique challenge. It is a given that snow will be knocked loose and fall down the back of ones neck when brushing a dipping branch. The key is not to let loose all the snow. The learning curve here was more a shallow arc. We just had to admit our magnetic personalities attracted low lying, snow covered branches.

Next up was skiing through natural barriers. Well, small evergreen shrubs/trees are barriers and ski through them we did. With a slight head of steam on, deftly avoiding small trees and thickets is not always feasible when loaded with an 80-pound pack and a 14-pound wood/metal pole is slung on ones back. Two choices: relearn lessons 1 and 2; how to fall and get back up, or ski right through them. Going through was usually less traumatic.

Finally skiing over "precipices" was reached. The instructor stood on the lip of a small cliff with a clear blue Artic sky as backdrop. That he had a Scots heritage was obvious from both his speech and appearance. Short and wiry, with a ruddy complexion and thick red hair, he fit the stereotype of a wee Scot to a golf tee. We had not yet learned how to decipher the broad range of British dialects and could barely understand what was being said by this man's thick Highland pronunciation of common English words. *(continued next page)*

GETTING TO KNOW YOU...

by Joannie Duris

You probably noticed several new faces last season out on the trails, skiing along with patrol packs, and at our meetings. And if you didn't get to meet any of our candidates, here's your chance to get to know one of them. Hopefully, I'll have more interviews from other candidates for the next issue.

Bonnie Welcome is a true native to the area. She was born and raised in Montague City, and now lives on the hill in Turners Falls. She has been coming to the mountain since she was a little girl, and has fond memories of her grandfather bringing her back in the days when the public was allowed to drive into the mountain!

Bonnie works as an office manager for a real estate company: bookkeeping and accounting, commercial property management and taking care of the company website. Her two children are her pride and joy. Her 25-year-old daughter, Danielle, lives in Norwood, and her 23-year-old son, Chris, just bought his first house in Turners Falls.

Bonnie loves being in the woods and on the trails at Northfield Mountain. She feels it's a great place to hike, bicycle, walk, snowshoe and ski. She joined the patrol to meet new people, make new friends, and help spread her love of exercise and skiing with everyone who comes to Northfield.

She sees herself as an average cross-country skier. Years ago she used to downhill ski, but a serious car accident in 2004 changed a lot of the activities she used to be able to do. She loves being outdoors and enjoys organic gardening, hiking, skydiving, and football. She's always looking for a hiking partner!

My favorite part of the interview is when I find out three unique, fun, and little known facts about the candidate. The things Bonnie shared are definitely unique. She likes wheat beer, her favorite color is pink, *and* her friend Dave and her are the only two people to ever do a cross country skydive over the Narragansett Bay in Rhode Island! Having only observed skydivers from the ground, I had to ask Bonnie what a cross country dive was, and here's her explanation, "It's when you open your parachute at a high altitude (usually around 10,000 feet) and fly it all the way back to the airport. You have to file a flight plan with the FAA and get clearance to make the jump. It involves calculating the direction of wind, wind speed, the glide ration of the canopies, and a few other details. Lots of people make cross country skydives... but no one has ever flown over the Narragansett Bay...let alone the entire bay! We landed at the airport in Newport, RI."

Bonnie may not have moved far from her roots, but she has certainly packed a lot of interesting things into her life. And I just have to say it: we welcome Ms. Welcome to the patrol. Here's to many years of skiing adventures on and off the trails at Northfield Mountain.

CHOCOLATE POT CHAT

by Tom Deam

Enjoy the summer as patrolling will sneak up on us soon! Refresher is Saturday, October 18th (OEC/CPR) and Saturday December 6th (Nordic/On the Hill). Yes, the 18th will be a longer day but the 19th is all yours! Help will be needed for both events and a call out will be coming.

September 5th, 6th, and 7th is the Eastern Division AMN Instructors Meeting, once again at Northfield. Jonathan Shefftz is the Point of Contact, ably helped by Bill Schweikert and Bob Duris. ✨

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

MY SORDID TALE (continued from page one) With this handicap, observation, mimicking, and trial and error were our learning tools. Success came slowly, but it came. Ledges became higher and speed a bit faster. Now, as we stood at yet a higher "cliff", the wee Scot was giving us a few more hints to help us overcome this latest challenge. We tried to listen intently; really we did, as packs were to be worn for this final event.

After hearing Frank's response the Marine looked skyward for wisdom. Finding none, he turned to Frank, pointed, and said, "You're first!" ✨



HELP WANTED

The Eastern Division avalanche, mountain travel & rescue, and Nordic instructors and supervisors will be returning to Northfield Mountain for their annual fall meeting. On the weekend of September 5 – 7, about 50 patrollers are expected to camp at Barton Cove and participate in classroom and outdoors training refreshers at the mountain. Skills include GPS, avalanche beacon, and search and rescue.

The event web page is <http://amn08.nmnsp.org>.

Northfield patrollers are invited to help host the weekend, which would involve serving prepared meals and acting as gofers. We'd be grateful for a few hours of your time. Of course, helpers are more than welcome to observe the sessions. ✨

EXECUTIVE BOARD

2008 – 2009 Season

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Assistant Patrol Rep – Bob Duris

Patrol Secretary – Bill Schweikert

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Past Patrol Rep – Bill Osborn

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PATROL PARTY & COOK-OUT

Patrollers are all welcome to join Bob and Joannie for a day (or days) of fun at their place on Highland Lake in Washington, New Hampshire, just an hour and 15 minutes from Northfield Mountain. Plan to sit and relax, drop a fishing line in from our front lawn, explore local hiking trails, or paddle the 6-mile length of Highland Lake. We have 3 kayaks and a canoe, so you don't even need to bring a boat (but bring your own fishing poles).

We've reserved two Saturdays, July 12th and August 23rd, for patrol get-togethers when we'll plan to be up at the lake anyway. *Let us know when you'd like to come and we can email you detailed directions to get there (includes landmark details that you won't get with your GPS).* Each day will end with a group cook-out. If you want to stay the night, bring a sleeping bag: lots of floor space inside, or places to pitch a tent outdoors. You don't even need to rough it. We have electricity and a full kitchen and bath.

So far, we have 8 people signed up for July 12th, and 6 for August 23rd. Summer Fun Saturdays at Highland Lake will start at 10am, and go to whenever. The address for the Duris cottage: 1853 Valley Road, Washington, NH. Phone: 603-495-3974. You can RSVP to us at home in Massachusetts: jvduris@charter.net or 978-928-5587.

Below are photos of the view from the deck on the cottage, and from inside the living room of the cottage itself:



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 jvduris@charter.net.