

# NORTHFIELD MOUNTAIN NORDIC SKI PATROL



Volume 29

Issue 3

March 28, 2008

## PATROL BANQUET

Saturday, April 26<sup>th</sup>

Jillian's On The 2

Cocktails 6pm – Dinner 7pm

Come celebrate a fantastic season of skiing at Northfield Mountain. It's been quite a few years since we've seen so much packed powder! Patrollers, candidates, friends, family and significant others are all invited. We'll be gathering in the banquet room at Jillian's On The 2 (formerly known as the Countree Living restaurant), just down from Northfield Mountain on Route 2 in Erving, next to the bowling alley. The patrol has reduced the cost of the banquet to \$10/meal for both patrollers and guests.

Plan for a quiet evening: socializing with friends, enjoying great food, and being awed by a ski-related movie. All service awards and awards you may not want (that infamous Flounder) will be presented at our Fall Refresher instead of the spring banquet.

Our banquet menu includes the following:

*Hot hors d'oeuvres*

*Fruit cup with sherbet*

*Fresh garden salad with chef's house dressing*

*Choice of entrée:*

*8 oz. Filet Mignon*

*Island Chicken, herb & lime grilled, topped with fruit salsa*

*Sesame Crusted Ahi Tuna, finished with a ginger soy sauce drizzle*

*Vegetable stir fry over lo-mien noodles*

The hors d'oeuvres will include baked stuffed mushroom caps, mini crab cakes, and beef/chicken teriyaki skewers. The feast will be topped off with brownie ala mode for dessert.

**All checks and reservations should be mailed to Bob Perry by Friday, April 14<sup>th</sup>.** If you have questions, call Bob at 413-863-2658 (home) or 413-659-4468 (work), or email: [rperry@firstlightpower.com](mailto:rperry@firstlightpower.com)\*

### BANQUET RESERVATIONS

Name	# Guests	Cost
<u>Number/Selection</u>		
___ Beef	at \$10/meal=	_____
___ Chicken	at \$10/meal=	_____
___ Tuna	at \$10/meal=	_____
___ Vegetarian	at \$10/meal=	_____
<b>TOTAL AMOUNT DUE:</b>		_____

Make checks payable to: Northfield Mountain Nordic Ski Patrol  
Mail to: Bob Perry, 42 West Gill Road, Gill, MA 01376

## WARM AND COZY

by Tom Deam

Off the truck and unload the gear. We were heading into the hills. This might seem like a nice way to spend four or five days, but it was cold out! Some say that for our location it was rather mild, only minus 15 degrees Celsius. Ok, for Northern Norway in late February it *was* mild.

There were twelve of us: seven Royal Marine SBS Troopers and five US Navy SEALs. We Sailors were participating in a NATO Exercise for over three months in Norway, working 200 miles above the Arctic Circle with our British counterparts.

This week we would be skiing across a frozen and snow-covered lake to spend two days on an island practicing small unit patrols on skis. After the encampment we would break into four-man groups and move for three more days to a pick-up point. During the trek no tents would be packed but we had shovels and would construct snow caves. Yes, plural!

Our gear was sorted, skis waxed, and the packs donned. Starting out, our packs were relatively light at seventy-five pounds. In 1975, lightweight cold weather clothing had not yet been bought by NATO. Wool was the fabric of choice. When dry it was fine, but just let it get damp and the weight doubled. Upon return to our base, the packs had gained twenty-five to thirty pounds.

The trucks drove off, a comfortable silence descended into the woods. The sound of ski sliding along untracked dry snow and occasional labored breathing was all that would accompany us. The route took us through an evergreen forest. We had learned to avoid skiing under the snow covered branches. Any snow knocked off invariably ended up down our necks. Despite the best efforts, our eleven pound, 3.25-foot NATO SLR weapons still managed to hit any snow covered branch within reach and provided a wake up jolt any coffee would be jealous of.

Skiing while carrying a loaded pack and a heavy, long piece of wood and metal requires constant attention and skill. This being our first foray into the Arctic, we Sailors still lacked finesse in our skiing skills. Striding, herringboning and general control were fine, but the ability to successfully confront certain terrain features still stymied us.

On one section of the route, we took a descent through a gully in a semi-Tele fashion to better avoid trees and prominent rocks. At the transition, the gully was steeper on the other side and had a quick bank to go over. We had learned, and practiced, how to navigate such obstacles, but apparently not practiced enough.

The bottom loomed, our skis became more parallel. One ski should have been forward with the binding in line with the other ski tip. We suddenly pitched forward onto our chest, burying torso, face, and arms into the soft snow. A classic face plant, aided by the almost ninety-five pounds on our upper backs. It must have been something to watch. *(continued on page two)*

# CHOCOLATE POT CHAT

by Tom Deam

This was a banner season with plenty of snow and opportunity to patrol. I thank all of you who were able to patrol and kudos to those who stayed for sweep. Sweep is the time we are most needed! It would be great if all who came in the afternoon actually stayed until the trails and parking lot have been cleared.

Congratulations to Ralph Rossi for passing the Nordic Senior Evaluation, which took plenty of time and effort on his part. Hopefully, he will pass on next season all he has learned during the "workup" and event.

Input is needed regarding the Chocolate Pot. The Patrol has a chance to man and operate it next season. Yes, manning the Pot will count as a Patrol Day. The location gives us visibility, affords an opportunity to interact more with the skiing public, and is a good Aid Station. A firm schedule and commitment is needed. Those of us, who through structural issues find skiing painful at best, are good candidates for manning the Pot. It affords an excellent way in which to stay active with the Patrol and get outside. Let me know your thoughts, please!

A proposal was presented for having an On-the-Hill Refresher at the beginning of the season next year. I think it is a great idea and look forward to planning and participating in the event. Ideas and help are required to make this happen. A call will go out for aid.

The Banquet this year is in a new place, Jillian's On The 2, but in the same location. A change this year is the cost: \$10.00, non-refundable, for all members and guests. This was decided at the February and March meetings. A new twist is that the Banquet will be a social gathering with no awards presented. During Refresher all awards will be announced, including the prestigious Flounder.

At the March Meeting the same officers were elected once again. It either means we are doing ok or that interest is waning. I hope this to be my final stint as Patrol Rep as I know there are plenty of patrollers with talent, energy, and fresh ideas out there.

Finally the Patrol has five new candidates. All have been attending the Nordic Candidate Training and doing excellent. They each bring strengths, energy, and varying levels of experience to our Patrol. All have attended the meetings and show keen interest in keeping the Patrol's standards high. Welcome and encourage them! ❁

[WWW.NMNSP.ORG](http://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](mailto:webmaster@nmnsp.org)**

**WARM AND COZY** (continued from page one) Our island was reached without further incident and damage to our pride. Camp was set up, and the first night's patrol was planned. A three hour circuit around the lake, to a hill and return was mapped out. Night skiing was one of the most intense experiences ever. What made it that way? The environment, plain and simple!

The cloud free sky was brilliant. Stars seemed closer and more numerous without the backlighting of cities and towns. Snow contrasted sharply with all it covered. Trees could easily be seen, though the color was muted. Noise appeared to be magnified. It was just past a full moon, and the light was more plentiful than any spotlight would provide as snow aided the moon glow.

The objective was reached and all military reasoning was tossed aside. We simply bathed in moonlight and gazed in wonderment at the Northern Lights Show. We actually became somewhat immune to the natural beauty after a few days as that was our nightly view.

The encamping ended and we took off in our four-man groups. Each afternoon for the next three days we would meet up with the other two groups to ensure all were hale and hearty, and to share any rations which might have run short. We Sailors tended to carry more than needed and the Brits counted (continued next column)

The next issue of the Rattlebone will be published in June. Please get all articles, information, dates, etc.

to Joannie Duris by June 15<sup>th</sup>.

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(continued from column one) on that. Rollos, peanuts, oatmeal, and hot chocolate were our emergency rations.

Our first snow cave construction went well. A small hillock with a good steep bank and lots of snow was chosen. We tromped on the peak to check the snow consistency. It was nice and firm. Fluffy "stuff" was not good snow cave material.

Good teamwork ensured a good snow cave. Shifts of thirty minutes on, and thirty off, were held to until the cave was nearly complete: two work, and two keep a supply of hot liquid for the two working. When not digging, snow dispersion was added to the task list. This ensured all stayed hydrated and productive.

Initially an "L" shaped wall was built up to block the prevailing wind from blowing into the cave. If the wind shifted, oh well! The entrance hole itself was started by going down. This further helped block the cold wind.

With the entrance depth settled, diggers stripped down to long johns and rain wear. Digging inside the snow bank was wet, warm work. Long johns covered in rain gear kept us dry and warm enough when outside layers were quickly added and a hot beverage was consumed. We never became cold following this method.

We dug about two feet upward into the snow bank. Then cave digging and shaping started in earnest. We wanted a good dome-shaped interior with sleeping shelves on either side of a trench or passageway. Snow was scraped and shoveled out and passed to the outside team.

As the cave expanded to the back, up, and sideways, it took shape. The group I was in contained all six-footers and we wanted a bit of elbow room. One of the other groups was Smurf-sized and was able to shovel out standing head room for themselves.

Smoothing the interior walls with knife blades and shovels minimized the potential for irritating drips. A candle was lit then passed over the walls to glaze it a bit. I don't know if this helped or not as we always glazed. Pockets for two candles were hollowed out. A ski pole was poked up through the dome to provide an escape for stale air and as a safety measure. The last thing we wanted was to have someone come crashing through our roof while relieving themselves. It also gave a marker should the cave collapse with us snug and warm inside.

Each of us had a sleeping shelf eighteen inches above the bottom of the cave and wide enough to move about a bit. The trench between the two sleeping areas was two feet wide, with small cooking areas at each end, giving us plenty of room for pack stowage and movement. We slept like logs after all that work!

What was it like inside? Much warmer than outside! One candle kept the temperature at 32 degrees Fahrenheit, and provided plenty of light. Four of us fit snugly in the cave; two could move about just fine. Cooking was done in shifts, two at a time. Since rations needed water, the first pair boiled enough water for everyone. Second shift boiled water for everyone's thermos.

We did get to view everyone's snow cave. There was not a lot of difference save for the size. During our initial Artic Survival course, one snow cave slumped during the night. The occupants had no head room in the morning and had to crawl out. Their inside ceiling was flat instead of domed. We learned from that!

During next day two days of travel we did not find suitable snow cave sites so hasty shelters were made from available materials, trees and snow. ❁