

NORTHFIELD MOUNTAIN NORDIC SKI PATROL



Volume 30

Issue 2

March 31, 2009

PATROL BANQUET

Sunday, May 3rd

Johnson's Farm

Social Hour 5pm – Dinner 6pm

Patrollers have been busy behind the scenes searching for a new location for our annual spring banquet. We were all sad to hear Jillian's On The 2 has been torn down to make way for a gas station, but this gives us an opportunity to sample the fine fare offered elsewhere in the area.

Johnson's Farm promises generous portions of home style cooking, plus we'll have the banquet room to ourselves. Patrollers, candidates, friends, family and significant others are all invited. Johnson's Farm is located at 210 Wheeler Avenue in Orange, MA. Wheeler Ave is off of Rt. 2A, just east of the center of Orange, and the farm stand is about 1.8 miles north of 2A. You can check them out at:

www.massfarmstands.com/johnsonsfarm.htm

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 and family as well as a brief speech or two. Service awards will be presented next fall at our Refresher.

Our banquet menu includes the following:

Appetizers:

Cheese & crackers

Veggie/fruit platter with dip

Choice of entrée:

Yankee Pot Roast (house specialty)

Maple Chicken

(pounded, broiled chicken breast topped with chopped apples, walnuts and maple sauce)

Baked Haddock

Choice of dessert:

cheesecake with strawberries

apple crisp with ice cream

The entrée selections include salad, two vegetables, and coffee. Johnson's Farm doesn't have an alcohol license, so we won't have the cash bar we've had in past years. Note we have a choice of desserts this year! So if you're coming with friends or family, plan to order both desserts so you can share and get a taste of each (assuming you've left room for dessert).

All checks and reservations should be mailed to Tom Deam by Friday, April 24th. If you have questions, contact Tom at 978-544-5420, or tcdeam@verizon.net. *

BIATHLON

by Tom Deam

Speed, that's what I sensed, pure unadulterated speed. The evergreens which lined the track flashed by: waxed, wood skis locked onto my feet slid merrily down the packed powder tracks asking only for direction. Finally, no cumbersome Bergen Rucksack anchored my progress! Deftly navigating a slight rise into a sweeping left downhill turn, I lowered my body into that "eggshell" position for more speed. I rose as I flattened a small mogul and then thump, all motion halted. A view of the clear blue sky now graced my sight.

A second thump and snow from that low-hanging evergreen branch covered my face. My UK issued SLR had caught an unnoticed branch giving me another physics lesson. No sense of speed now—just cold, dry snow.

The event was a Biathlon at the end of Arctic Survival/Winter Warfare Training in Northern Norway: three circuits of a 2.5 km track used by the local Norwegians for both competition and general community skiing. A path at one end of the circuit led to a small ski jump and an adjacent firing range. The Brits had used the track and range for competitions in previous years and the local authorities enjoyed extra income from facility rental and tavern visits after. We five sailors, far from water, were about to enter our first cross country ski race and biathlon.

A friend of mine was on the 1972 US Olympic Biathlon Team. In Sapporo, while playing an (*continued next page*)

BANQUET RESERVATIONS

Name _____	# Guests _____
Number/Selection	Cost
____ Pot Roast	at \$10/meal= _____
____ Chicken	at \$10/meal= _____
____ Haddock	at \$10/meal= _____
Dessert: _____ Cheesecake	_____ Apple Crisp
TOTAL AMOUNT DUE: _____	

Make checks payable to: Northfield Mountain Nordic Ski Patrol (NMNSP)
Mail to: Tom Deam, 83 Sandrah Drive, Orange, MA 01364

CHOCOLATE POT CHAT

by Tom Deam

The ski season is over. It was a good year with plenty of opportunity to patrol on the 21 weekend days the area was open. Just to refresh all, we are obligated for six days patrolling *at Northfield* per the Patrol's ruling document. One can visit other areas and enjoy meeting and working with other Patrols. However, if you are registered with the Northfield Mountain Nordic Ski Patrol, that is where your effort has to be focused. You have several options to meet this obligation: ski, cover the First Aid Room, or man the Chocolate Pot. On two Saturdays \$72.00 was earned for the Patrol at the Chocolate Pot.

Speaking of the season, the snow was great for a significant portion. Superb early season snow lasted for a while. A few icy, *oops*, fast days followed by wet spring conditions made for a memorable time. The Mountain staff kept the trails well groomed on weekends!

Refresher(s) this coming season, 2009-2010 will be December 5th and 6th. Yes, that is right, Dec 5th (OEC) and 6th (Nordic). The season's calendar will be available to schedule your patrol days and time. We will put a call out for help in planning both refreshers later this year.

Northfield Mountain provided the Patrol with two donations this past year: First Aid Room supplies and new uniforms. Thank you!!! *

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

BIATHLON (*continued from page one*) impromptu soccer game with a wad of athletic tape, he broke a toe and became a spectator. He was one UDT/B (Underwater Demolition Team/Basic) training class ahead of me, and we ended up renting the same house with two others after a deployment in 1970. Before I went to EOD (Explosive Ordnance Disposal) School in September of '71, he would describe the Biathlon Team's training. Along with the regular Command's PT and training, he had an additional regime to accomplish before rejoining the "other Team". I tagged along on a few of the dry land events and for me it was mainly "dry heaving" as his pace was much quicker than mine. Over the next 16 years we sporadically ran into each other and would catch up on events. He died in a training accident in '87.

Back to the biathlon. The only skis available were the same items used during the Winter Warfare Training: wide NATO Standard skis with cable bindings. Footwear was either the heavy, warm, and solid Greenlander leather boot, or a lighter ski boot. As luck would have it, the light version did not fit my size twelve feet.

Waxing, as was patiently explained to us five sailors, is an art. During our forays into the back country it was an easy choice: green and blue hard waxes, or universal klister. Now bubbling pots of wax cooked secret (*continued next column*)

BIATHLON (*continued from column one*) recipes of *this'n that* inside the Waxing Hut. Closely guarded application procedures, kick zone determination, voodoo, magic, Tarot Card reading, and testing were in process by "serious racers". To be honest, I still don't get it.

My ideal method of wax application was developed then and still works for me today. Cold fresh snow and it's blue, though Blue Extra is now my favorite, applied the entire length of the ski. No need to worry about any kick zone using my method. Sometimes the wax is corked on, and other times the snow does the work. At this event the first three layers were corked on and two more thick layers applied for the snow to smooth.

Biathlon has two components, skiing and shooting. Our weapon was the heavy, long, UK issue 7.62 mm, SLR (Self Loading Rifle). Nothing fancy about this rifle. It was solid, stood up to abuse, and when sighted in was fairly accurate. The sighting in portion had not yet been done and there was no time for it. Fifteen rounds were provided and could be carried in one or three magazines. One had to pay attention and count shots if using one mag. I chose the single magazine as I felt comfortable counting rounds.

Skiers would be sent off at 60-second intervals. Seeding order was done by those who had conducted training, with the more accomplished going first. We land-locked five sailors and our ten UK counterparts dominated the top of the order. I was number ten of twenty-five.

There were three timed shooting periods of five rounds each with a 30-second time limit after the command to fire. Each shoot was at the same location. The first stop to fire would be off hand, the next prone, and the final stop our choice. Skis had to be removed before approaching the firing line. No mats were to be used at the prone site, a definite chill down! Time was to be taken both entering and exiting the shooting sites and noted on a weather proof notepad we carried on the weapon's sling.

Magazines would be in the weapon when skiing with no round chambered and the weapon on safe. A check was made when arriving and departing the shooting ranges. Rounds were chambered at the firing line, permission to fire given, and then five rounds fired. Before leaving the firing line, the weapon had to be cleared of any live or misfired ammo and put on safe. This was where the other two magazines would have been a time saver. After firing five rounds a sixth is automatically chambered and must be ejected, found in the snow, cleaned off, and reloaded into the magazine. A time waster!

Time to get started. Skis on, weapon slung, and muscles warmed up...for the moment. A radio check revealed a stopwatch malfunction at a shooting site. Back to the waxing hut while a replacement was sent out. And yes, a warm drink of hot chocolate was enjoyed.

Once more, twenty-five eager athletes gathered at the starting line. Some hoped to best last year's time, some imagined a strong finish, and others just wanted a Bushmills and pint sooner rather than later. Plenty of space between athletes allowed for final a wax set. Dozens of skis cycled back and forth to set the wax kept (*continued next page*)

BIATHALON (continued from page two) muscles warm. The starting gun cracked and the first skier charged off.

Finally I leave, strongly I might add. One circuit, with a shoot at the 2k mark, to be repeated twice more. It felt different to ski without the anchor, or rucksack. The eighty pounds normally perched on the upper back necessitated a slower, more deliberate shuffle style of movement and a constant, but subtle, rebalancing on the skis. The sudden weight loss led to a longer and quicker stride rate. Now, the skis were the same—long, heavy, and wide, so that any “high performance” sensation was never acquired.

The range came quickly into view and the distance to the preceding skier had closed, I had gained a bit of ground! Into the range: my notepad was signed and skis doffed. With cable bindings it was not a quick snip, pop and natty little step. The Range Master motioned me to a firing position where I stood waiting for permission to take position and fire. My heart rate was fast from the uphill approach and my breathing was a bit heavy and ragged, but not gasping.

After thirty seconds, permission to aim and fire was given. A sight picture obtained, breath control, trigger pressure applied and *oops* the safety was still on. Once again: sight, to heck with breath control, pressure, and finally fire. All five rounds hit the target, but my grouping left a bit to be desired. An assistant came over to ensure the weapon was clear and on safe. The ejected live round was put back in the magazine and I was permitted to leave the firing line.

To get back into cable bindings with big, heavy boots takes more time than the easy *step, snap, pop* of the current crop. Notepad annotated again and roar back onto the track. Two more times around and through the same procedure and then half a click to the finish line.

How I ever missed that branch the first two times is beyond me, it was just never seen. As I gazed up at the sky, more snow fell when the lightened limb rebounded and jostled the branches above it. A skier was bearing down on me so I had to move, fast!

As he skied past I heard a “Thanks, Mate for taking care of that limb.”

The Bushmills and beer were good! ❄

EXECUTIVE BOARD

2009 – 2010 Season

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Past Patrol Rep – Bill Osborn

Patrol Liaison – Bill Gabriel

For those folks wondering why they never received the December 2008 issue of the Rattlebone—sorry, there wasn't one. We were still in recovery mode from the big ice storm. The next issue of the Rattlebone will be published in June. Please get all articles, information, dates, etc. to Joannie Duris by June 15th.
36 Lombard Road, Hubbardston, MA 01452
(978) 928-5587 or jvduris@charter.net.

BILL SCHWEIKERT'S WORDS OF WISDOM

You might be a serious cross-country skier if...

- You can't pass a power line without stopping to check whether it may be skiable.
- You find any excuse to test the wax.
- Kitchen towels keep disappearing, to be used for cleaning skis.

You're an old cross-country skier if...

- You have a pair of Asnes Tur-Langrenn. ❄

CARTOON CORNER

Ralph Rossi may not have joined us on the patrol this season, but skiing is still on his mind, as evidenced by his passing on this cartoon to share with everyone.



And now to tax our own creative funny bones. Think outside the box and send us your best (or puniest) ideas for a patrol-related caption to go with the picture below. Email captions to Joannie at jvduris@charter.net by June 15th. The best and worst will be published in the next Rattlebone. ❄

