

On January 27th, 52 Space City members embarked on a Big Sky adventure. Most of the travelers flying from Houston were on our United flight into Bozeman. The flight encountered no problems and, in fact, landed early. After waiting a short time for the land package bunch on various flights, we met up with Jamie and Scott, our Ski White Diamond reps, and caught our nice bus into Big Sky. Our bus driver gave us tour-like commentary all the way to Big Sky and we had

a liquor/lunch stop along the way for our 1 hour scenic bus trip.

At the Huntley Lodge we were greeted by the cowboy bell

hops, who took care of our luggage. We all checked in as we admired the huge bear statue in the lobby and the roaring stone fireplaces. Next came the easiest delivery of lift tickets I have ever experienced. Jamie gave them out and there were no problems. We were informed it had just snowed and we were blessed with possibly the best snow in North America, in a year when Colorado missed almost all major snow storms. Everyone settled in and most hit our first of 7 organized happy hours of the trip at Chet's bar and restaurant in our hotel to eat dinner and partake of a few libations. One of the best things about Big Sky is the incredible skiing without the high altitude. We stayed at a very comfortable 7000 feet above sea level.

On Sunday, after the incredible Huntley daily breakfast buffet, most participants hooked up with ski buddies and hit the slopes while some took lessons. We figured out if you walk out one side of the Huntley you could ski right down to the Explorer lift to get started, which many did. Craig Moffitt and I did just that. The lift is a 2 seater, which always seems to give me trouble. Yep, at the top of my first lift up Big Sky I promptly fell. It was an any easy fall, only hurting my pride. After an apres' at Chet's we all gathered for a major welcome party in the Cheyenne room. We started with a wine and cheese party hosted by Big Sky and Ski White Diamond, which included a resort orientation and questions/answers. A club dinner followed. I finally got in line after most had gone through and discovered no salad had been brought out. I ordered the dinner, so I know I paid for salad. I brought

this to the attention of the Big Sky Banquet Manager and let him know that a little more wine for our group would ease the pain. He said, "One bottle?" I said, "How about 5 bottles?" Not only did some salad come out with the dessert, but 5 more complimentary bottles of wine came out as well. Jamie and I had a good chuckle over that and the entire club was quite "happy" when they finally stumbled up to their rooms. This photo of everyone was taken at the club welcome party.



Monday was another excellent ski day. Everyone was expecting super cold weather for Big Sky in January and February, however, the temp was in the upper 20's and lower 30's most of the time. Melinda Hughes and Beverly Roberts skied "grizzly runs" with Charlie Roberts, Keith Kirkman, Bill Bomberger, Jim Hodges, Dan LeMay, Leslie Hadjo and Ed Frieter, until the male "dogs" decided to wait 40 minutes for a tram ride to the top of the mountain. Wisely, the two females scouted out the path over to a lunch location. On Monday evening, 24 of our bunch including Steve & Jeanne Marie Ying, Cynthia Broom & Chris Bowley, Sandra & Sam Cornelius, Lee Joe and Wanda Callahan, embarked on a unique dinner journey via snow cats to a Yurt (think mini-circus tent) nestled in the Montana back country. The ride was magical through the snow covered mountain trails with a spectacular view of Lone Peak. It was very bright under the Super Blue Blood Moon that night which turned out to be a once in a 150 year event. The candle-lit Yurt was rustically elegant with a wood burning stove and live acoustic music. The exquisite five-course meal included filet mignon you could cut with a fork, huge succulent salmon and warm chocolate fondue for dessert. Perhaps the best part of the night was the exhilarating moonlight sled-riding outside of the Yurt which many participated in including John Burke, Linda Erdman, Angela Smitherman, Sandy Oballe and Jeff Purvis. Many people crashed but fortunately none went over the edge of the road. Charlie Roberts did end up smashing and cracking his sled in half.



Tuesday was the one very cold and windy day of the week. We were lucky we didn't pick Tuesday for our snowmobile excursion (our guide told us the wind wreaked havoc at Yellowstone that day!) A few lifts were closed, but most were still open. Many of our fearless bunch braved the cold Montana frontier to conquer the mountains. After the apres', Sandra and Sam Cornelius hosted a terrific group dinner at Andiamos Italian Grille with a great turnout. Let the bonding begin!



Wednesday brought warmer weather just in time for our big Yellowstone adventure. Almost everyone on the trip opted for this day, and none of them regretted it. Several, including Debbie Steplock, said it was the best part of the trip. It was definitely the highlight of the trip for our Austin Skier Vernon Oliver! Half rode the snowcoach and half rode/drove snowmobiles. We made frequent stops to get up close to the many colorful pools and amazing natural wonder of the geysers. We also got up close and personal to many herds of bison, Canada geese, a coyote, elk, ducks and trumpet swans. But the most amazing encounter was the bald eagle we saw towards the end of the ride. We first spotted him in a tree and then as one of our snowmobile trains took off, it flew over them, for quite some time as if it was leading us out of the park. Thank you Steve and Jeanne Marie Ying for organizing this unforgettable side trip as well as the Montana Dinner Yurt.



It was back to skiing on Thursday. Speaking of eagles, ask Tami Kawasugi about her spread eagle face plant. Tami, Ron Rambin, Janet McKenzie, Paul and Sandy Stalnacke, and Rick and Jane Adams loved skiing the Madison area.

Thursday evening brought the much anticipated dinner night out at Buck T-4 expertly organized by Cynthia Broom and Chris Bowley. Although it was not super close I think everyone agreed it was worth the trip! We were served Montana cuisine at its best with many local wild life dishes that you would never see in Houston! That was a night to remember!

Friday was our last day of skiing. Ask Melinda about her dying cockroach imitation. The big dogs had to change the rules for beer fines from double release to single release because of fewer spectacular wipe outs. With the new rules, Beverly, Charles, Stan Kuper, Melinda, Juel Hill, and Bill bought enough happy hour beers to keep everyone happy. Wanda Callahan misjudged her speed and skied right across the back of Bill's skis. He was fine but Wanda wiped out. She never paid her double beer fine.

I think the most challenging aspect of this trip was to get everyone down to our big final dinner party at Chopper's Grub and Pub in Big Sky on Friday evening. We had a large group and there was limited bus and shuttle transportation. Linda Erdman was my knight in shining armor! While a big group (including a lot of non-SCSCers) was waiting for the Skyline bus to take one load of us down, the driver had left the bus and locked it. Linda stationed herself at the door. As soon as the bus driver unlocked the door Linda called for SCSC members first, then Uvalde (a liftee from Texas) then the Dallas group. Everyone was quite amused, except for maybe the driver! Also a big thank you to John Burk who chauffeured several van loads to the party and back. Eventually the whole group got down to Choppers, where we enjoyed brisket, chicken, mashed potatoes, honey glazed carrots and cherry cobbler. Oh yes, there was a bit of alcohol consumed there too in true SCSC fashion! A live band was slated to start at around 10:00 p.m. but as I waited around in anticipation, dance shoes in hand.....everyone else in our group swarmed out to head home. Party poopers! Alas, I wasn't going to stay by myself, so I gave up. If you can't beat 'em, join 'em!

We woke up to the realization it was Saturday...our last fabulous breakfast buffet in Big Sky this year. Everyone began to ask the same question, "Who is going to cook me my omelet made to order with anything I want this next week?????" Depression was setting in as we loaded the bus to head back to Houston. We passed out cards (where I got some of the snippets above) and most of the cards were not little stories but instead were raving about what a fantastic time they had on this trip, what great, wide, cruising, challenging blues they found in Big Sky, what an accommodating resort it was, how they loved the ski valets and boot



drying racks, how they loved all of the extra events and side trips which created much group interaction and new friend formations. Ed said he only had one bad fall and one black eye....really Ed? How do you get a black eye from a ski fall? I want to hear the real story! But this is my favorite, "Great trip meticulously planned from beginning to end, including the trip to Yellowstone and dinners. This was my very first time at Big Sky and I definitely want to come back. Big thanks to our great trip leads, Cindy and Steve, and to Cynthia and Sandra for organizing the dinners." I am not sure who wrote that, but thanks! Leslie Hadjo wrote, "Great

mountain with tremendous variety. Excellent ski-in/ski out. Great local village with many places to eat and drink. Met new nice people. Although I prefer the usual condo arrangement the meal organization almost compensated and they were all good. Flawless organization and execution by Cindy and Steve. Loved skiing with the Big Dogs." Awe shucks. Thanks.

In closing, I again owe much of the success of this trip to Steve Ying who is listed as my ATC, but who was in actuality more of a "Co-TC." I could have never pulled off half of the fun events if it was not for Steve and his wife Jeanne Marie, who helped tremendously. The success of this trip was truly a group effort and is a testimony to how fantastic a trip can be when other participants volunteer to help lead group dinners, help arrange side trips, help with group transportation, etc. Don't forget that previous sentence the next time the club, or your TC, asks for volunteers. Without volunteers, trips like this won't happen!
