

Whistler 2008

by Bruce Baird and Jill Nanney

Our adventure began early the morning of January 12 when our merry band of traveler's departed Houston on United Airlines bound for Vancouver via San Francisco. **David** and **Guri Pryce** met us at the Vancouver airport to complete our small but mighty group of 25. We boarded our roomy bus for a scenic drive along the "sea to sky" highway to Whistler Village. Our newest member, **David Novak**, showed his stripes early by suggesting a quick stop for a little "refreshment" along the way.

We arrived at the Hilton Resort and Spa in the early evening, just in time for folks to get settled in before our wine and cheese welcome party. Afterwards, many ventured out to see the Fire and Ice Show, a free ski jumping show by local instructors and ski patrol followed by fireworks.

The entire group was delighted with hotel and location - fabulous accommodations and literally steps from the gondolas. **Markus Bartl** was especially happy that he was on rental skis this week since he literally skied to the front door. Others raved about the hot tub, spa treatments, special banana French toast as well as the endless supply of homemade chocolate chip cookies at the front desk.

On Sunday, all skiers headed to Whistler. The resort had had tons of fresh snow and it was a sunny, gorgeous day. Trip leaders, **Bruce Baird** and **Jill Nanney**, decided to opt for the free mountain tour to learn the ins and outs of the ski area. **Keith Kirkman**, the human trailmap, said no tour for me and proceeded to lead the Big Dogs all over the mountain. In **Bill Bomberger's** case, his inability to follow directions earned him the nickname "Beer Fine Bill" or BFB. Eventually, most found their way to "The Peaks" to view awesome scenery including natural snow sculptures. Looking down, you almost felt you were on another planet.

After a fun first day, the group met in the hotel's Cinnamon Bear Bar to cel-



brate. **Mary Wollmann** told a story about a French colleague who when making a toast, got her American slang mixed up and yelled "UP YOURS" (instead of bottoms up!) - instantly becoming our trip motto!

On Monday, the group was supposed to ski Blackcomb. It was a bizarre weather day as a Pineapple Express had blown in. Snow was great on the mountain, but it rained in the Village. A few diehards, **Keith**, **Dennis Newell**, **Bob DeBell**, **Bill**, **David** and **Thuy Rocque**, **Yvonne McMahon**, **Don Macken**, **Mary**, **David**, **Markus** and **Bob Eberhardt** weathered the elements and enjoyed what they said was a fabulous snow day although they got a little "damp" heading home. "**Yellow Bob**" **Eberhardt** (his jacket color and so not to be confused with "**Tall Bob**" **DeBell**) met up with the Big Dogs at lunch. It was snowing so hard his glasses kept fogging up. His tendency to ski fast and stop abruptly (i.e. with head buried in the snow) earned him multiple fines but a great way to break in the new guy. In fact, "Yellow Bob" got so many ski fines the first day with the Big Dogs that he bought all the beer at Après ski that evening and said that was just a "down payment!"

Those who wimped out on skiing took the opportunity to visit the spa, tour the village, shop, view the galleries and take long lunches. Most everyone met up at the Irish Bar for happy hour and to trade tall tales.



Rather than assess a beer fine on **Nancy Schultz** for not skiing on the second day, "Tall Bob" decided she should be his Sherpa for the rest of the week.

On Tuesday, we arose to blue skies, no wind and lots of fresh snow! Skiers were scheduled to go back to Whistler as we were alternating days between these two fabulous mountains. After breaking off from skiing with the Big Dogs, Thuy and Richard reportedly skied 2 miles of moguls on Peak to Creek. Hearing that, the Big Dogs later skied the run, looking forward to the challenge. Unfortunately, what they found was 3 miles of groomed skiing. They are still waiting to hear from someone to corroborate Thuy's story.

Since they missed Blackcomb the day before, **Leslie** and **Don Caldwell** headed there and accidentally started their routine of skiing the opposite mountain - leading one skier to wonder if the only skiing they really did was *Après Ski*! At the end of a wonderful ski day, the group met up at Longhorn Saloon. The new guys, "Yellow Bob" and "Sister" David, had really caught onto this beer fine thing as they both kept trying to pay in advance.

Ladye Freitag and Yvonne had a wonderful dog sledding experience and Ladye said she was huffing and puffing as she drove the team up the mountain since she had to do lots of running to help the dogs up the hill. Yvonne and the musher got to ride in the sled.

Wednesday, skiers headed back to Blackcomb except of course for Don and Leslie who claimed they skied Whistler and viewed rainbows! Of course, no one ever saw them except at *Après ski* back at the Irish Pub. They were then dubbed the "*Après ski couple*". UP YOURS!

Thursday, we continued to enjoy the fabulous weather and snow and all,

except of course the "*Après ski couple*", headed out to Whistler. We saw Ladye with her snowshoe group at the Roundhouse Lodge over lunch. When we yelled "Hey Ladye" her whole table, in fact the whole female half of the room, turned around.

Friday at Blackcomb was our last ski day. "**Don Juan**" **Macken** had vowed to ski with "every" female skier on this trip and almost succeeded until Mary decided to join the mountain tour with **Johanna Kuang** instead! While Johanna was skiing, **Jing Kuang** stayed in - no better place to be than Whistler if you have to do a little work, he says.

Saturday, we moved up the bus time slightly and everyone seemed to get the word but **Mary** and **Elba Villarreal** who were last to hop on the bus. Naturally, upon their arrival, they were greeted with extensive jeers and teasing to which Elba yelled, UP YOURS!

The trip back to Vancouver airport was beautiful. Customs was so smooth that we had oodles of time to spend those last loonies. Then, naturally, our flight from Vancouver took off late. By the time we disembarked in Denver it was almost time for our flight to Houston and we had to beg United to let us board. Eventually the pilot agreed to wait for the rest of the group and even waited an hour longer to load all of our bags. We thought everybody made it until **Buzz Allen** noticed that his roommate, **Karl Ferenczy** was missing and not to be found. Apparently, Karl liked the Denver airport so much he decided to have United put him on a later Frontier flight.

From all the participants who enjoyed this wonderful trip, to those who couldn't make it, we just have two words for you...UP YOURS!!! :) And hope you make it to Whistler someday.