

SNOWMASS

by Richard Rocque

Saturday, February 7th, was a beautiful day for a drive up to Snowmass from Denver. The weather was great with promise for some snow during our stay in Snowmass at the Top of Village Condominiums, a ski-in/ski-out resort less than two turns into the village. **Barbara Della Longa** and **Chuck Britton** must have had their sights on Aspen since they were dressed ready to hit the town. You know what they say when skiing, you've got to look good first.....and they did.

Approximately 45 minutes from our destination our driver decided that it was a good time for a potty break. . However, the bus didn't think so. Upon starting the engine, the bus let out the biggest billowing puff of black smoke ever seen. Two miles later limping along we finally agreed it was dead. While all the boys took turns guessing at what was wrong, the driver provided one of the fastest replacements known to skiers. Within no time, we were back on the road and soon were socializing at the condo clubhouse, picking up lift tickets, enjoying wine and very happy with the accommodations.

On Sunday, you could see most of the group lining up on the slope which was only a few steps from our units. The weather and snow conditions were great and one by one we made our first turns down to the lift to head up the mountain. We quickly scattered across the mountain as everyone worked on getting their ski legs. Our two newest ski club members, **Ben & Sarah Treadgold**, had joined the Big Dogs for some extreme skiing even though Sarah is a snowboarder!

With so much to ski and so little time, every other day offered an opportunity to try a new resort. On Day Two, **Keith Kirkman** led The Big Dogs which included **Thuy & Richard Rocque, David Novak, Barry Caspar, Frank Adams, and Charles Allen** to Aspen Mountain. We immediately scoped out the trees and found a few inches of fresh snow that had fallen overnight. Meanwhile back at Snowmass, a newly formed ski group called Robin's Renegades, aptly named for their leader, **Robin Novak**, enjoyed chasing each other down the mountain and occasionally through the trees. This group included **Ron & Roberta Rambin, Janet McKenzie, Roger Holzman, Ron Hayes, Judy Schiro, Pat Piech, Kamron Kirkconnell, LaDaune Ashley, and Derek Schoobridge**. It's amazing how they never lost each other with such a big group! On Coffee Pot, Ron Hayes found his way into a nice scenic nature trail with frequent stops along the way. Evidently, the stops accounted for a nice way for the rest of the group to close the gap, or pile up as story goes.

We ended Monday evening with our group dinner at Nardi's Italian restaurant. It was then that we learned of the first hard "nose-plant" into the hill. No worries, however, **Cheryl Hoffman** said the broken goggles actually protected **Dan Hoffman's** fall. Isn't that why we wear all that stuff on our head in the first place? Speaking of head equipment, Robin Novak finally broke down and purchased a helmet. What a great sport, I think that everyone had horror stories for her which she took in stride smiling before finally caving in. Even I was ready to give in and buy a helmet and I already own one.



What pressure!!!

Our number two helmet buyer on the trip needed a little more convincing. As Thuy & Richard Rocque, along with Sarah Treadgold watched Derek Schoobridge dive nose first into a tree at Snowmass, we could only pray for a soft landing. Yup, prayers answered. After Sarah grabbed his feet and pulled his head out of the snow we uncovered a good miss. The tree lucked out but sent another to the local ski shop for a helmet.

Day 3, we were getting snow, so what better time for The Cirque, Snowmass's highest point and double black diamond bowl that quickly heads into the trees. Like many runs with this group, the ladies go first and boys are forced to follow or walk around the rest of the group hanging onto their tails. As Sarah jumped on the tow-rope, Thuy, Richard, Ben, and David all quickly jumped in line. Once at the top all you had to do was jump in; no Sarah, not over the headwall. All got down safely, and without a doubt, it was one of the best runs of the day. Nothing broken, and all manly-hood still in tact.

Not so fast, new day, new leader. On Day 4 at Aspen Highlands, as Keith Kirkman, Richard Rocque, Barry Caspar, and Charles Allen stare at one of the steepest runs we've come across on the trip, admiring the beauty of Steeplechase's double black runs, yet still deciding whether or not to ski down, Thuy dives in. We heard Yes? No? Hell No! All were ready to ski down the other way but it was now too late. One by one, intimidated by our trip leader who took the plunge, we all fell in line.....and some continued to fall as we made our way to the bottom of this endless chute some 45 minutes later. After that, Ben and Sarah sought out the tightest of trees, but the "older Big Dogs" decided to head to the other side of the ridge.

But wait, not so fast, one is missing. While most managed to take a right turn at the bottom of the run, Charles decided that the run was too good to be over and continued on - right over the catwalk and into a nice 4 foot, 5 foot, no must have been a 6 foot snow bank. Snug as a bug in a rug. No kidding . . . he was stuck. Good thing that a member of Aspen Expedition was only a few minutes behind. It was deep and we would have all gone under as well (like quicksand) had we gone in after him. Which we were all prepared to do. I mean that's what Big Dogs do for one another. Right? Charles was fine once hoisted out of the little snow pit he created and by the end of the day we had a good laugh. Another good sport!

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Sarah & Ben took one more lap around the run and sure enough eventually came across the landmark that we now affectionately refer to as "Charles's Hole". Maybe we should ask Aspen Highlands to rename that run.

Did I say falls??? There were plenty, but not Roger Holzman. He skied 6 days, first on and last off the lifts and not one single fall. We also decided that **June Griffiths** and **Art McKnight** get the "Improve With Age" Award.....just like fine wine since they give us all hope that we can ski well into our 70's and likely beyond. **Larry Hord** fought the altitude long and hard before deciding it was time to drop a few thousand feet and return to sea level. We were sorry to see him go, but the best of trips in the future, Larry. Back at Snowmass, Ron Hayes and Judy Schiro had taken the day off to do a little shopping in Glenwood Springs where Judy got her Valentine's Day presents early! The Novaks took advantage of the economy and arranged for a nice massage back at the room. Two for one . . . and room service. What a deal.

Day 5 provided a chance to hit Buttermilk – a short bus ride away. Toward the end of the week, the short bus ride was harder to justify with the slopes just a short walk out the front door. However, Barbara and Chuck managed to make the trip and loved it. They had taken lessons earlier in the week and were ready to ski, leaving no run undone. **Steve Samuel** and **Donna Hathaway** decided a snowmobile tour might be a nice change of pace around mid-week. What a great idea, give the legs a break and find yet another way to cover the mountain side. And, just in the nick of time, for shortly afterwards poor Donna was raced to the emergency room due to a bad case of appendicitis. Better at the end of the week than the beginning. In the end, we were relieved to hear she was fine. Thursday evening, we traded our ski stories at the Pizza Party that our trip leader hosted in the condo club house. The pizzas were really good, but what everyone raved about was Merlyn Harger's Pronto Pralines.....surely they were low calories. We savored this sweet delicacy while watching the snow falling outside and praying that it keeps up so we would wake up to

lots of powder!

On the final day, most everybody skied at Snowmass since we got over 4" of fresh powder. It was EPIC! We were all playing in the trees with powder up to our calves and laughing the entire time saying that's the best skiing we've ever had. **Kamron Kirkconnell** decided on the very last day that the boots he had purchased were finally just right. 1000 adjustments later but isn't that Murphy's Law? I think that it's simply a matter of Kam's blazing speed. First down the mountain as everyone tried to catch up and then complaining that the group was wearing him out. Speaking of boots, **Merlyn Harger** finds that his new boots are like slippers. Rumor has it he slept with them on. **Bruce Baird**, Steve Samuel and Dan Hoffman all fell in love with Aspen Mountain and may have been the only 3 that made their way back to the challenging terrain on the last day.

All good things must come to an end, so after the last pizza slice was eaten and Merlyn's famous Pronto Pralines were consumed at Derek's and LaDaune's Leftover Party Friday night, we all headed back to our condos to be ready for the 6:30AM baggage call. The consensus on the bus ride was that this trip ranks pretty high on everybody's list of best ski trips. New friendships were made and old friendships were renewed, but one thing is for sure.....we all can't wait to get back on the slopes again next year!!!

