

BIG MOUNTAIN

by Steve Amy

WOW!! They say you can never go back and expect it to be the same. They (whoever they are) are probably right. You can however, go back and have a new set of experiences and fun. For those who had gone to The Big Mountain before, this held true. For those who had not yet experienced one of Montana's secrets, I'm sure we have many new converts.

Arrival at The Big Mountain resort was eagerly anticipated as the transit only served to whet the appetites of the skiers. A stop for groceries preceded a guided bus tour of Whitefish (approximately 3 minutes). A final stop for supplies was required to get the fixins for the traditional Big Mountain libation known as "Hot Nuts". A minor luggage snafu was remedied and the festivities soon began. Award for the "antsiest skier" went to **Chris Sheehan**. Chris managed to get his gear together, sneak onto the mountain and even participated in the evening's torchlight parade. The rest of the trip participants were left to their own devices and some chose to test their stamina. Even though there was an hour time difference, "Nite Owls" **Linda Licarione** and **Cheryl Houge** were up to the challenge. The employees of Mogul's bar had to beg these partiers to go home. This was just the first night.

Sunday was "Super Bowl Sunday". The late start allow the skiers to get a full day of skiing and then gather in ATC **Steve Amy's** condo for the game. With the ample help of condomates **Keith Kirkman**, **Ky Griffin** and **Chris Sheehan** and neighbors **Billie Nowak**, **Nancy Richard**, **Linda Licarione** and **Cheryl Houge**, snacks, drinks and dinner was served to compliment a "super" Super Bowl



(the wrong team won). Sunday saw the first of several "snow bear" attacks as **Keith Kirkman** had his face clawed and goggles damaged. **Gwen Bremer** tried to disallow **Keith's** "1st injury" award by claiming her foot should qualify. **Ron Koval** busted her story by admitting **Gwen** had brought the injury with her. Kudos to **Gwen** for skiing with a stress fracture of her foot anyway.

Monday saw the Houston skiers do their best trying to cope with tough conditions. With snow on the ground, fog in the air and clouds in the sky, white was the color of the day. **Walter** and **Lynn Hester** and **Barbara** and **Mike Carr** reverted to a childhood pool game called "Marco Polo". **Walter's** version gave him the "chill" before he could surprise the rest of his ski partners. **Susan Legg** used the fog to meet guys. After skiing off the course she was rescued and led to a recovery area, aka "watering hole", by a 72 year old retired Forest Service ranger. Nice pickup, **Susan**. It was worth it for **Susan** as she discovered a rival to the traditional "Hot Nuts". Tell us about those "Snowplows", **Susan**.

Monday night saw many of the adventurous climb into horse drawn sleighs for a moonlit ride through the woods to dinner. We were treated to "Cowboy Doug" and his tall tales and explanation of life as a cowboy. **Barb Ehrlich** got the full treatment and was quite fetching in full cowboy regalia. The others had to be content with out of season straw hats. We all loaded the sleighs for the return trip. Fortunately a head count revealed a straggler. **Patricia Synatschk** wasn't ready to leave and was hiding in the restroom. A final "roundup" was made and sleighs were loaded for the return.

A side trip to Fernie, a resort in Canada, was scheduled for Tuesday and most everyone chose to go along. Again fog was a problem as the upper portion of the mountain was shrouded in the stuff. **Mike Rothermund**, **Dave Whitehead**, **Robert Todd**, **Rod Hope** and **Ky Griffin** worked to perfect the "Ray Charles" skiing they had started at Big Mountain. This preceded a new game they developed in Canada. With a small assistance from **Ky**, **Robert Todd** introduced **Dave Whitehead** and about a dozen locals to snow bowling. Was that a strike, **Robert**? Later, many of us including **Derek Shoobridge**, **LaDaune Ashley**, **Jeri Hartman**, **Ty Smith**, **Janet McKenzie**, **Patricia Synatschk**, **Debbie Warren**, **Dave Stotz** and others swapped stories at the bar while **Ky Griffin** inconvenienced the rest of us by making an unscheduled trip into town to have his leg set.

Thanks, **Ky**.

Watching the teenagers got to be too much for some of the crew so **Jeff Warren**, **Barb Ehrlich**, **Rod Hope**, **Steve Amy**, **Dave Whitehead** and **Mike Rothermund** chose Wednesday to try

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snowboarding. First reports were that it is a lotta work learning a new sport. Evidently all enjoyed it so much that Ty Smith was roped into trying it the next day. Look out Space City, a "if you can't beat them, join them" attitude is developing in the ranks. We all know this might make some of the traditionalists sigh, but hey dude, get over it!

The evening found **Barb Penkala**, **Elyse Turla**, **Jeri Hartman**, **Billie Nowak**, **Nancy Richard** and many others enjoying a marathon music set by Mogul's bar happy hour entertainer **John Dunnigan**. Four hours without a break tested his stamina. Having worn out one singer, the group moved to another bar called the "Stube" for karaoke. Noteworthy singers in this group were few but this did not stop the rest from trying. **John Rice** sang "When A Man Loves A Woman" to his future bride **Kayleen Kill**. With a little assistance from **Elyse Turla**, **Kayleen** came back with "Mama, He's Crazy". All the women joined in to "belt" out their version of "I Am Woman" and there was a reunion from a previous Big Mountain trip as **TC Jeff Warren**, **ATC Steve Amy**, **Rod Hope** and **Dave Whitehead** did their Righteous Brothers imitation. **Miles** and **Ann Merwin** were initiated into Space City fun as **Ann** shed her "novice" skier and partier status. **Steve Amy** had the most fun as he spent the evening pairing "singers" with songs. Thanks to all for their good natured participation.



The week also saw a crowd at the hot tub every night. Word quickly got around about **Barb Ehrlich**'s disposable swimsuit. There was probably some confusion with the words disposable and dissolvable. **Craig Liebergot** decided to forgo the hot tub one night opting for a romantic dinner at the Kandahar Lodge. Husband **Sy** finally agreed to bail her out and go with her. Despite words to the contrary, we're sure **Sy** was her first choice. Did anyone on the trip not have first hand experience with **Elyse Turla**'s "Couches Across America" tour? Others on the trip displayed rare talents which included drinking a beer while standing on your head. **Rod Hope**'s ability was not surprising considering his experience at both. **Diane Jamail** felt the women of the trip needed a champion so she tried it. Credit her with the attempt although most of the beer went up her nose or on the floor.

The trip finished Friday with the NASTAR races. **Chris Sheehan** had the distinction of actually beating the Big Mountain pacesetter. Way to go, **Chris!** **John Rice** had to slow down at the finish to keep from beating **Kayleen**'s time. We all know what that would have gotten you, **John**. **Kayleen** rationalized it was her slow time anyway so she was O.K. with it. We also got our first look at "Houge's Heroes". **Cheryl** and her followers, **Rod Hope** and **Dave Whitehead** ran the course on snowboards. The U.S. Olympic team is safe.

Many of the group made it to the tubing run on Friday night. Someone tell **Diane Jamail** the object is to go down the hill on the tube, not chase the tube down the hill. The run was very fast and "airborne rangers" **John Rice**, **Steve Amy** and **Rod Hope** got enough speed to bust through the braking zone and cleared the fence at the end of the run. The final blowout for the diehards Friday was at the "Stube". Space City Ski Club mingled with Topleess Mary's Ski Club and really warmed up the place. **Robert Todd**'s fresh air break proved particularly timely.

All in all Big Mountain proved to be a memorable trip. Thanks to all participants for making the trip coordinator's job easier. A special thanks to **Vicki Houff**, past and future ski club member, for playing nurse and assisting not only her husband, **Bruce**, but also **Ky Griffin** in their uncomfortable trip home.

