



# Snow Dance

A Quarterly Newsletter  
of the Maine Winter  
Sports Center

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## ALPINE SKIING IN AROOSTOOK COUNTY TAKES ON NEW LOOK WITH RECENT IMPROVEMENTS AT BIG ROCK

Last quarter I spoke about the projects underway at Big Rock Alpine Ski Area, and having seen the progress this fall, feel a need to let all of you in on a little secret – the skiing experience at Big Rock this season will be something you won't want to miss.

Our goals are to lengthen the skiing season by opening at Thanksgiving and to lengthen the day by significantly increasing the number of lit trails. To achieve these goals we have doubled the snowmaking and lighting on the mountain. You will also find improvements to the lodge, especially the kitchen, which will increase comfort and convenience. These projects are all easy to describe and to visualize as well.

It will be more difficult to do justice in describing the new trails that Big Rock Alpine Manager Tim Prather and his Team have designed and cut. There is a new cruiser run that goes top to bottom just south of the Comet Trail. It incorporates parts of old trails, but has been regraded to be more interesting to ski and provide an alternative to the popular Comet Trail. The most inspired work is a new gladed skiing section at the top of this trail that is truly breathtaking. For those of you unfamiliar with gladed skiing, it is essentially a sloped meadow with a stand of well-placed birch and pine trees that you ski through. Ski areas like Steamboat and Vail in Colorado are world famous for their gladed skiing but after hiking our new trails last week, it is clear that you don't have to travel to the Rockies to find that kind of world class ski experience.

In the two years since the Maine Winter Sports Center acquired Big Rock, it has undergone complete renovation of its trail system, lifts, snowmaking, lodge and, perhaps most importantly, its ticket prices. The past, current and future improvements to Big Rock follow a strategic vision of what we want community-based alpine skiing to be. That vision focuses on eliminating the barriers that often keep people off skis: high costs, overcrowded slopes and long drives to the mountain. This season's upgrades represent a major stride toward these goals.

Big Rock has also added telemark instruction to its ski school programs, is announcing a Ladies' Day program, and will be working with area schools to get students at all levels the chance to enjoy alpine skiing. The Big Rock staff will emphasize the quality of skiing experience, guest services, accessibility and value, and at \$10 - \$20 for lift tickets; Big Rock's value is unmistakable. We hope that folks from all over will come back to Big Rock this season. For more information about Big Rock and the rest of our facilities and programs, please visit our newly designed website at [www.mainewsc.org](http://www.mainewsc.org).

By Andy Shepard, MWSC President & CEO

## MOVING TO THE COUNTY!

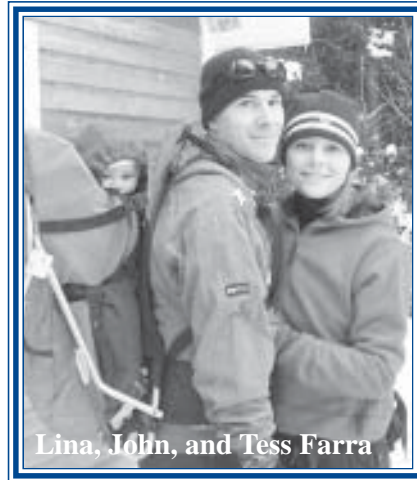
**M**y name is John Farra, one of the newest coaches to join the MWSC team. I have the pleasure of coaching the Youth Team, helping to develop community programs, and running the ski rental program to name a few things, but I wanted to tell the story of my journey, which has brought me to Aroostook County.

I started skiing at a young age, thanks to a family-run ski touring center located in my hometown of Saratoga Springs, NY. Every weekend and many afternoons, I had the opportunity to be on and around cross-country skis in the winter months. Of course when the lollipop races came around, I enjoyed a huge advantage since I was on skis more than most kids. After a few wins in the “lollipop” circuit, I moved on to the Bill Koch League races, which led to Junior Olympic Races, which led to National Championship races, which led to college racing, and then to international racing in the World Championships and Winter Olympics.

After retiring from competitive ski racing, I coached at the University of Utah for two years and then spent the past six years working in Lake Placid, NY at the National Sports Academy as an administrator. I was surrounded by athletes in winter sports, but I wanted to get back to working with cross country skiing programs.

So I heard about this place in Maine that was building venues and was to host a sprint race in Presque Isle, Maine. I told my wife I wanted to go to this event, and we searched

for it on the map. “Wow, that’s a haul” was her initial response, but we wanted to see what was happening up there, so we piled ourselves, our infant daughter, and some ski equipment in the Subaru and headed northeast.



Lina, John, and Tess Farra

The journey was a long one across route 20 in Quebec mostly, but the most unique thing happened when we were driving towards the venue. We were still in Canada, and on the radio was a long discussion about the big race happening that evening under the lights at the Nordic Heritage Center in Presque Isle. I have been around skiing my whole life and hearing it discussed on the radio is a rare thing indeed, trust me.

So with the excitement building, we approached the venue and I could not stop saying to my wife, “this is amazing!” It seemed so unbelievable that I was in North America witnessing the birth of a world class Nordic skiing facility! As difficult it was to believe, it was the real deal, and the organizers pulled off a great event. It was a thrill to race that night at this incredible site, and as thrilling to be around so many young fast skiers again. The drive home was long, but it was filled with discussions of the nature of, “how great it would be to be apart of something

like that”. We talked about how hard it would be to leave our life in Lake Placid, but my wife told me to pursue it, since she could see how excited I was about the possibility of getting back into the Nordic skiing world in such a grand fashion. I did some more research about MWSC, read articles, cruised the website and became only more and more convinced that I wanted to be a part of the team. I sent a letter to the MWSC bosses and the rest is history.

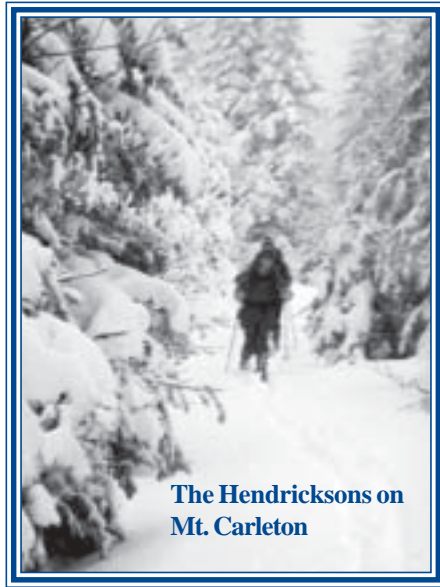
Why tell you this whole story? Well, if nothing else I hope you take from it that what we’re trying to do here is something **very** special. The venues are out of this world amazing! The programming is phenomenal! The mission is honorable and something I will always support. What is being done here is special enough for me and the other coaches to move our families hundreds of miles to get here. I am so glad we made that trip to the Verizon Sprint races last spring, and I’m pleased that we decided to join up with this great mission.

Tess, Lina and I love the County so far and already feel like we have a community of friends around us. Thank you for your warmth and hospitality, and we will see you on the trails!

*By John Farra, MWSC Community Development Coach from Limestone, Maine*



## BACKCOUNTRY SKIING ON MOUNT CARLETON



The Hendricks on Mt. Carleton

Located in the north-central highland of New Brunswick, a few easy hours drive from Aroostook County, is Mount Carleton Provincial Park. The crowning jewel of the New Brunswick wilderness. This small chain of mountain peaks is a treasure of natural wilderness that has seen only limited cutting. The mountains form a plateau with steep sides that sit 425 meters above the surrounding forests and lakes.

On the plateau there are three bald summits, Mount Sagamook and Mount Head both at 780 meters, and

the park's namesake, Mount Carleton, at 820 meters the highest peak in the Maritimes. The plateau itself offers rolling terrain through an open stunted birch forest that holds snow until the middle of May. This is an excellent location for spring tree skiing on the early morning crust.

The interconnecting slides on the west face of Mount Sagamook gives the skier more than 400 meters of vertical skiing with its best cover in late March to middle April. But the best skiing is found on the summit cone of Mount Carleton, offering a vertical drop of more than 100 meters of treeless terrain on all sides followed by an open birch forest most of the way to the base of the mountain. The east slope of the mountain has good skiing from late November until late April.

The 30-40 degree boulder fields are covered with snow and have a uniform gradient, making it an excellent place to perfect the telemark turn on various snow conditions. In any given day, the skier may find wind blown crust, soft corn snow or fresh powder depending on the altitude and aspect of the slope.

This area is often over-looked because of its relatively low elevation; however, it does offer exceptionally fine backcountry skiing to those willing to take the time to explore the parks plateau. While this jewel may be small by some standards, it is an extremely precious one to the backcountry people of the northeast.

By Eric Hendrickson, Presque Isle High School Science Teacher.



Kelsey Bouchard of Fort Kent takes advantage of early snow at the 10th Mountain facility in her hometown.

## ADULT SKI PROGRAM



The snow has fallen and winter is upon us. We've had some great skiing so far and we're looking forward to many great days over the 02/03 season.

This year's full time free Adult Ski Program has been a huge success so far. All area adults are invited to attend and share in a fun skiing and fitness program. Each session will have a short information topic and a lot of skiing and exercise. The program is designed for anyone curious about cross-country skiing, never-evers to racers and everyone in between. Bring an out-of-town guest or an out-of-shape guest. Did I mention it's FREE?? We meet on Mondays between 6pm and 7pm at the Nordic Heritage Ski Center in Presque Isle, on Tuesday between 6pm and 7pm at the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Ski Center in Fort Kent, and on Wednesdays between 6pm and 7pm at the Caribou High School Ski Lodge.

We will have MWSC coaches visiting the local trails throughout the winter holding ski clinics; and we'll have a Demo Ski trailer with us soon with equipment to try out for never-ever skiers and haven't-skied-in-a-number-of-years skiers.

By Greg Rawlings, MWSC Adult Development Coach, Madawaska Lake, Maine.



## BILL KOCH LEAGUE SKI RACES AND FESTIVAL

The Bill Koch Youth Ski League (BKYSL) was established in New England to promote youth participation in cross-country ski racing. Named after Bill Koch, a Vermonter who is to date the only American Olympic medal winner in Nordic competition, the BKYSL sponsors events around New England for skiers aged 5-14. Many of our country's best racers today started as Bill Koch skiers twenty years ago.

Through the Maine Winter Sports Center, Northern Maine has been established as a separate BKYSL region. This means that Aroostook County youth who choose to participate will have their own start lane, relay team and coaches at the New England Bill Koch Festival in Putney, Vermont in early March. Aroostook County already boasts ski clubs and winter carnivals in almost every town. This infrastructure gives our kids a chance to develop into excellent ski racers. This year's New England BK Festival provides a perfect opportunity for us to meet young skiers from around the region and to test our mettle against them in friendly competition.

This season we will have 4 races in Aroostook County that will be designated as BKL Ski Races:

- Dec 31** MWSC Nordic Heritage Sprints/BKL Races at Nordic Heritage Lodge, Presque Isle
- Jan 19** New Years Ski Race/BKL Races in Caribou
- Feb 16** Hymie Towle Memorial/BKL Races at Nordic Heritage Lodge, Presque Isle
- Mar 2** Mars Hill Winterfest BKL Races in Mars Hill
- Mar 8-9** New England BK Festival in Putney, Vermont. All BKL racers are invited and the races range from a 400m sprint to 5km individual races and a 3 km relay. MWSC will send coaches to this event to support all local participants.

The goal is to participate and have fun on skis, so come join us for some great Bill Koch League Races this year!

For more information on joining the NENSA Bill Koch Ski League, or any other youth skiing questions, please contact: John Farra at 227-3843, or [john.mainewsc@ainop.com](mailto:john.mainewsc@ainop.com)

## BIKE MARATHON

On September 27th and 28th a few Caribou residents set off on a trek to commemorate the ski marathoners of the 1930's. The group consisting of Sam Collins, Neil Sleeper, Eli Brown and Stanley McCarther followed the route of one of the old ski races from Riviere du Loup, Quebec to Caribou, Maine covering 130 miles.

While the ski marathoners toughed it out on wooden skis and deep snow, we made the trek on mountain bikes. The route followed the multi-use trail past big lakes, through forests, farm fields, across the border into Madawaska, then down the east side of Long Lake, logging roads and finally the snowmobile trail from Stockholm into Caribou. By skis the trip took three long days, by mt. bike the trip was "only" 12 hours.

Its was a neat feeling to be out there, experiencing what it was like back then. Neil Sleeper said; "you experience emotional highs and lows and everything in between on a ride like this". The highlight of our trip was reaching the border in Edmonston after six hours of straight biking. Once we reached the border it felt like we had accomplished something, we knew we could make it. From then on, it was easy to find the energy to press on towards Caribou.

We are planning on making the Riviere du Loup to Caribou Bike Marathon an annual event during the fall foliage of late september. Join us next year!

By Eli Brown, MWSC Cross Country Coach from Caribou, Maine.



Mt. Bike Marathoners



## THREE GENERATIONS LEARN TO SKI AT QUOGGY JO

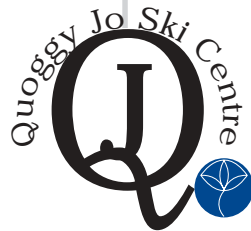


Quoggy Jo has been a part of my life for the past 28 years.

It all began when I was four years old and my mother signed me up for ski lessons. I remember side stepping up the hill and snowplowing back down. We had to learn the basics before we could tackle the rope tow. Oh, how heavy that rope tow was for a four year old child. That's why we used to wait at the bottom of the lift for a big kid to come along and tuck us between their legs to get us up the hill. It wasn't just myself who used this tactic to get up the hill, there were lots of us. By "us", I mean, the new generation of skiers (usually under 8 years old) who would go from the top of the hill to the bottom without the use of ski poles in a tuck position just barely avoiding collisions along the way. We were good skiers or so we thought! I still remember my ski instructor, John Millhouse, an incredible skier and teacher who would later play a part in my high school alpine racing years. I continued taking ski lessons for several more years at Quoggy Jo and spending an entire weekend there with my friends was not uncommon. It was and still is a place where mothers and fathers are comfortable dropping their children off for an afternoon of safe, fun, enjoyable activities. This I know first hand, because I am one of those mothers who has complete confidence in the staff and environment.

I remember my mother being very involved with Quoggy Jo for many years. She also learned to ski at the same time that my sister and I were taking lessons. It was great fun to zip past my mother on the mountain and give her a little snow spray on the way by...what were we thinking? My mom was the President of

Quoggy Jo in the early 1980s. I remember her spending hours on the phone for the membership drive. If you bought a family or individual season pass, then you had an index card in the Membership Box with your name on it. There used to be a ton of index cards in the box! I loved getting a sneak peek at whom I would be skiing with during the upcoming season!



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The "lodge" that I grew up in at Quoggy Jo was not much more than a shack with heat, 2 bathrooms, and a snackbar. It had all that we needed. On the nights that we would go night skiing, I would guess that more than half of our skiing time was spent in the warm lodge eating steamed red hotdogs and Mallow Cups or KitKats.

Now, the lodge is a much larger, beautiful building that holds many families and all of their stuff. There is a large kitchen that is constantly putting out fresh baked cookies and brownies which happen to be my kids' favorites. There is a high quality rental shop in the basement that rents skis and snowboards.

Today, my husband and I, along with our three children, are frequent skiers at Quoggy Jo. All five of us began our lifelong journey of skiing at Quoggy Jo. My oldest son is 8 and likes to ski, but prefers to snowboard. He thinks it's easier than skiing...I think he's crazy after having taken a lesson myself and spent more time on the snow than standing. He loves the trails through the woods and the jumps! He also said that the food is excellent! My daughter is relieved and very appreciative of the new T-bar lift. She learned to ski while the rope tow was still in use and quickly learned the trick to wait for a ride up the hill between someone's

legs. We all are appreciative of the new lift!!! Our three year old was introduced to skiing last year. We started with a harness apparatus to help him get used to the skis and get down the hill, but he quickly tired of it. Quoggy Jo's slope was just perfect for us to let him explore by himself. This will be his year; he will become an independent skier like the others. We are looking forward to the upcoming skiing/snowboarding season and to all the fun that is to be had at Quoggy Jo. Thanks for the opportunity to reminisce about a time and place which is very dear to my heart. I'll bet there are many other three-generation families in Aroostook County who have learned to ski at Quoggy Jo.

*By Melanie Stewart, Big Rock Board member from Presque Isle, Maine.*



### MWSC MISSION STATEMENT

- \* *To re-establish skiing as a lifestyle in Maine.*
- \* *To leverage that lifestyle to create a new economic model for rural, isolated communities of Maine.*
- \* *To further leverage that lifestyle to create opportunity for the youth of Maine.*

## A CHALLENGE, A TEST

I have been tested in many ways since coming to Sweden; physically, academically and ordeals that I have had to overcome just to live. I'm very happy to be here in Sollefteå Sweden. This is an experience that I know I will carry with me throughout my life.

I'm training harder than I ever have in my life; everything is perfect for me to put the majority of my time into improving as a skier and biathlete. I know that I'm improving my fitness, my technique, and my shooting. I have shown great gains when I have compared fitness tests like biathlon time trails, and the Halsta Test (a hill climb up the mountain). I appreciate being able to work with world class coaches like former MWSC coach Per Nilsson and training with world class athletes everyday.

Despite the fact the Swedish teens from throughout Sweden come to Sollefteå to ski, the coaches and teachers will not let you forget that you are there to get an education. School is a challenge, especially with the language barrier, however I'm enjoying it. I've managed to pass tests in History, Chemistry and Physics. The most important class, Swedish, is the hardest. I'm making progress but it's a constant struggle.

The tests that I've faced in School and on the ski course have been hard, but the hardest tests come everyday, in tasks that would normally be extremely easy. I've moved to a new continent, where they speak a strange new language,

I'm living with a new family and meeting new friends.

I hope that after these challenges I've faced, I can bring back many things to my family, Maine Winter Sports Center, and Aroostook County. I want to share with everyone what I have learned about skiing, living in a foreign land, and to reveal aspects of the Swedish culture to all.

*By Jeff Alden, MWSC Regional team member from Caribou, Maine.*



## AROOSTOOK CUP

This year we will be including all of the local races that are open to the public in the 1<sup>st</sup> annual AROOSTOOK CUP. Skiers will acquire points at all the races throughout the season to determine the CUP winners. At the end of the ski season we will have a big awards banquet and award the AROOSTOOK CUPS to the top Female and Male skiers. Friendly competition is encouraged through a system of score keeping, but mainly this is a good excuse to play on snow. We'll get to know each other better through battling the courses and our own bodies.

*By Greg Rawlings, MWSC Adult Development Coach from Madawaska Lake, Maine.*

## NORDIC HERITAGE EVENTS

The Nordic Heritage Center has announced the addition of two major events on the North American Cross Country calendar; the Nordic Heritage Sprints, and the NENSA Spring Series. The Sprints, on December 30th and 31st will be the last major tune up races before the U.S. National Cross Country Ski Championships in Rumford, Maine the following week. This will be a great chance to see MWSC athletes compete with some of the top skiers in North America.

Some of the skiers competing for the top spots will be; Canadian National team skiers, Milaine Theriault, and Robin McKeever, U.S. Olympians, Wendy Wagner, Aelin Peterson, Torin Koos, Carl Swenson, and Kris Freeman.

The NENSA Spring Series promised to be another exciting week of racing. Four races will take place between March 20th and 25th with top athletes vying for prize money in each race.

*By Eli Brown, MWSC Cross Country Coach from Caribou, Maine.*



## SKIING UNDER THE STARS

One of the challenges we face in our northern Maine winters is fighting the pull of the hearth during the cold, dark days of December. As the daylight draws ever shorter and the days grow from cold to frigid, the urge to head inside becomes all but irresistible. Not without good reason! Inside it is warm. Bright! The fire crackles. The lights glow. Hot chocolate steams in a ready mug.

Outside the wind scours the barren fields; the dark night looms above. The birches stand stark and bare in the moonlight. The spruces hold the dark captive. The cold bites with a ferocity unimaginable during the short hours of daylight.

And so you turn inside: to the television, the tub, the ten pounds you hoped not to gain over the holidays! But December doesn't have to pass like this. The darkest month offers some of the best skiing of the season. Rescue your skis from the corner or closet. Dig out that headlamp. Head to one of the lit trails in your area. Discover the joys of skiing through the dark.

Tuck into the trees; the wind can howl across the fields, while you ski smoothly through the sheltered woods. The stars shine above you, smiling down through the clear winter sky. If you're lucky, the northern lights will hover above as you glide through corners, huff uphill and speed along at the edge of your headlamp's reach. You may startle a partridge nestled into the trailside snow. The quiet swish of your skis and pock of your poles provide the only interruption of the dark night's slumber.

Night skiing offers an almost meditative peace. Cold on your face, your frosty breath rising. The quiet of night, the focus of the small swath of snow illuminated before you. December's cold, dry snow gives you perfect classic kick. You focus on easy technique, the joy of simply gliding on snow. The problems of the day seem to dissipate with every smooth stride. Before you know it you've been out a half an hour, an hour, an hour and a half. You glow from the effort, but until you stopped, you hadn't even realized you had been working.

Ah, and what about the pull of the hearth? What could be finer than that late supper, that steaming mug of hot chocolate when you pull up near the stove after your ski under the stars? A fitting finish to a fine evening.

*By Will Sweetser, MWSC County Team Coach from Stockholm, Maine.*

## PEOPLES FESTIVAL AT FORT KENT

Peoples bank, MWSC and the 10th Mountain Ski Club are excited to host the Peoples Festival at Fort Kent 2003 Biathlon North American Cup January 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>. The event will bring top athletes from Canada and the US for the two day event.

On Saturday, January 18<sup>th</sup> 10:00 A.M, the exciting quick paced Sprint race will start at the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain venue, located one mile south of Fort Kent, on Route 11.

A pursuit race will follow on Sunday, January 19<sup>th</sup> also commencing at 10:00 A.M.

Volunteers will be needed on Thursday and Friday, as well as, on the competition dates. It is not too late to get involved. The race organizers are also planning for the 2004 World Cup race with new volunteer positions to be filled. See you at the races!

*By Nancy Thibodeau, 10th Mountain Ski Club Steering Committee member, from Fort Kent.*





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## *MARK YOUR CALENDERS!!!*



Here is a list of races and events for the 2002-2003 season;

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| Dec. 7 <sup>th</sup>                    | County time trial, Caribou High School                          |
| Dec. 21 <sup>st</sup>                   | National Skiathlon Day, Local Trails                            |
| Dec. 30 <sup>th</sup> /31 <sup>st</sup> | Nordic Heritage Sprints, Nordic Heritage Center                 |
| Jan. 18 <sup>th</sup> /19 <sup>th</sup> | Peoples Festival at Fort Kent, 10 <sup>th</sup> Mountain Center |
| Jan. 19 <sup>th</sup>                   | Caribou New Years Race, Caribou Country Club                    |
| Feb. 9 <sup>th</sup>                    | Hymie Towle Memorial Race, Nordic Heritage Center               |
| Feb 15 <sup>th</sup> /16 <sup>th</sup>  | Sam Ouellett Ski Marathon, Ashland                              |
| Feb. 17-19 <sup>th</sup>                | Class C State Ski Meet. Big Rock/Nordic Heritage Center         |
| Feb. 23 <sup>rd</sup>                   | Henry Anderson Ski Day, Caribou Country Club                    |
| Mar. 1 <sup>st</sup>                    | C-Me-Ski Race, Page Farm, Limestone                             |
| Mar. 2 <sup>nd</sup>                    | Mars Hill Winterfest, Big Rock                                  |
| Mar. 16 <sup>th</sup>                   | Fort Kent Citizens Race, 10 <sup>th</sup> Mountain Center       |
| Mar. 20-25 <sup>th</sup>                | Nordic Heritage Spring Series                                   |
| Apr. 14-19 <sup>th</sup>                | MWSC Gaspé Camp, Quebec   |

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THE LATEST NEWS AND  
EVENTS!!!*



[WWW.MAINEWSC.ORG](http://WWW.MAINEWSC.ORG)



MWSC athletes, Jason Lemieux and Dave Stewart chasing down the US Ski team during a time trial in Fairbanks, Alaska