



Snow Dance

A Quarterly Newsletter
of the Maine Winter
Sports Center

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REMEMBERING BUZZ

Seldom in our lives do we have the opportunity to meet a person who inspires us to want to change the world. Even more rare is the person who then offers us the clarity of purpose and unconditional support that make us feel like we can.

When you're around these people you want to slay dragons and move mountains to make them proud of you. Before long you realize that regardless of the motivation, the dragon has been slain - the mountain has been moved and maybe you *can* make a difference. You continue to look for new challenges until eventually the impossible becomes the inevitable.

Buzz Fitzgerald was such a man and I was blessed to have known him. When I first heard the news that he had passed away, it hit me hard. I had lost a friend, a truly remarkable man with a perspective of wisdom and honesty that always made things so clear to me. His loss was very personal and very painful. I had quickly grown to love him and there was so much I still wanted to learn from him.

That night on the news I heard the leaders of the State and our country; Governors, Senators, Supreme Court Justices and other great men, describe *my* relationship with Buzz and *my* pain. But I also heard ship builders at Bath Iron Works describe the same relationship, and the same pain, and the true nature of Buzz's gift became clear in a way that I hope he would have been proud. Buzz looked to make Maine a better place by inspiring the people of Maine - each of us - to make our own pieces of Maine better places.

How often do we get the chance to meet someone of Buzz's integrity, humility, selflessness and grace? If we have learned anything from Buzz, it's every time we meet a Mainer.

Buzz Fitzgerald was a trustee of the Libra Foundation whose support and vision has made the Maine Winter Sports Center possible.





Festival at Fort Kent

International Biathlon Championships



Peoples Bank, MWSC, and the USBA invite you to the biathlon Festival At Fort Kent March 5 – 10, 2002. The North American Biathlon Championships, the North American Junior World Cup and the Junior National Championships will be held over the five-day period.

150 athletes from Canada, and United States, and Russia will be participating in the Thursday, March 7th Individual race, Saturday's Pursuit, and Sunday's relay race. Besides competing for the championship or world cup titles they will also be eligible for prize money starting at \$1000 for first place finishers. The 10th Mountain Division Junior Pursuit Scholarship will also be given to the first junior man and woman from Maine to finish that race.

The coaches have been calling to register, make hotel reservations, and inquire about the weather. They are looking forward to their return to see the completed venue!

The organizing committee has been busy planning this event. The targets have been leveled and readjusted, trails groomed and marked, timing system tested, the stadium layout planned, maps printed, invitations sent, press notified, and volunteers are being called. If you are interested in volunteering please call Kelly Martin, Volunteer Coordinator, 834-3899. Kelly expects 125 volunteers to help during the event.



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.*

County Skate Race



February 2, 2002 - Fort Kent
 Matt Bard-3rd place, Blake Sherwood-2nd place and Jeff Alden-1st place

VERIZON NORDIC HERITAGE SPRINTS

By Eli Brown

By the time you read this, the first ever Olympic XC Ski Sprint has already taken place. Soon after you read this, you should be heading to Presque Isle for the Verizon Nordic Heritage Sprints, March 26th and 27th!

The fact that the Nordic Ski world will soon be discovering Aroostook County first hand really hit home today. Wendy Wagner of the US Ski Team called me from the Olympics to ask what it is like flying into Presque Isle...The first national event at the Nordic Heritage venue is going to be an eye opener, watching Olympic skiers sprint head to head for a big paycheck is going to be awesome, be there.

The following is an article I wrote in 1997 after one of the first big sprint races in the US; *Well...you may or may not know that I am extremely psyched about going fast on skis. Today was a great opportunity for this; the inaugural US ProAm Sprint Championship, at Mountain Meadows, Vermont. It was a 2.6km race – all-out effort. I made it through the first two heats without much trouble and was getting extremely worked up about the final heat. Already eliminated was Fischer Team member Trond Nystad, and Canadian National team member, Guido Visser. The final included my good friend and teammate from the US Olympic Training Center, Frosty*



Whitworth, top junior Kris Freeman, and University of Vermont racer, Bill McDonald. My strategy was to go like crazy from the start; none of that cat and mouse stuff for me...GO!!! I did what I set out to do, go as hard as humanly possible; after a few hundred meters I was starting to make a gap, at the halfway I had a 30 meter lead. I have this one in the bag. \$800 to the winner is a lot of money, and it was all mine...until...boom...the inevitable lactic acid shock hit me hard with 400 meters to go; Frosty and Freeman were gaining on me quick, it was now or never. I gave it all I had up the last hill, pushing hard over the top, around the corner and out into the open for the sprint, but Frosty was now by my side. I tried to concentrate on me not him, on just past the finish line rather than at it...the pressure was immense...I downshifted to the jump VI technique, a big mistake at the speed we were carrying. At the line I collapsed, I knew he nipped me, by about a foot...wow that was something! Seeing

Frosty smile while holding one of those big oversized checks at the awards ceremony really made me proud, as he and I go way back as teammates...but watch out – I took notes and I learned from my mistakes. I will try again in early January, sprint racing; intense as can be. Who can withstand the pain? How bad do you want it? How fast can you go, then go faster – This is racing, this is the life that I love!!!! Congrats Frosty, but don't get used to it...

Come be a part of the excitement, speed, and adrenaline at the Verizon Nordic Heritage Sprints. A head to head skating sprint race between top American,

Canadian, factory team members, and selected European racers competing for over \$8,000 in prize money. Tuesday, March 26th 4-7pm, and Wednesday, March 27th 9-11am at the Nordic Heritage Center in Presque Isle.



PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Bronze: Stand on right foot while holding left foot behind you with right hand; count to 10.

Silver: Stand on right foot while holding left foot behind you with right hand; do 10 squats.

Gold: Stand on right foot while holding left foot behind you with right hand; lower yourself down until left knee touches the ground, and stand up slowly.

Good luck!

FIRST ANNUAL HIMIE TOWLE MEMORIAL SKI FROLIC

By Himie Towle family

The First annual Himie Towle Memorial Ski Frolic was the inaugural citizen's ski race at the Nordic Heritage Center. Nearly 100 participants took part in the combination race format, featuring team relays followed by individual races.

This opening event is in memory of Hiram Towle, a life-long resident of Fort Fairfield. "Himie" was an accomplished cross-country skier and jumper in area winter carnivals during the 1930's and 40's. His recollections of these carnivals and the tri-town marathons were entertaining and inspiring; the hardy competitors, rustic equipment, truly wilderness trails and the genuine spirit of competi-

tion. In the years following, Himie remained very active in the skiing community. He was a life long advocate of family skiing and community ski clubs, always seeking new opportunities for the area youth.

During the May 2001 official groundbreaking ceremonies for the Nordic Heritage Center, Himie was constantly smiling..."This is a Nordic dream come true, we are so privileged to have this new opportunity available to us".

Race day February 10, 2002, the lodge is well under construction, the competition trails are nicely groomed, and that same spirit of competition and family fun is present. The youngest competitor was 4 year-old Morgann Towle (12th grandchild of Himie and Ruth), the most experienced was 78 year old Ralph Ostlund, (life long

friend and fellow ski competitor with Himie). The rest of the field was comprised of grade schoolers shuffling and scooting as best they could, middle schoolers a little truer to form, high school athletes developing a better sense of competition, masters still reminiscing the high school and collegiate rivalries and there were even a few elite skiers as a reminder of just how far you can go. The race results; lots of winners, no losers, and everyone had Fun!

Thank you Maine Winter Sports for helping to make the dream come true. Hope to see everybody (and their families) next year for the 2nd Annual Himie Towle Memorial Ski Frolic.

MWSC OPENS TEAM APPLICATIONS FOR 2002

The first season of the new team structure was fantastic. Biathlon and Cross Country athletes received year round coaching, and support. Continental team athlete Walt Shepard easily reached his seasons goal of placing top 20 at the Junior World Biathlon Championships with a 14th and 15th place finish! Other MWSC athletes competed at National and numerous regional competitions. Our hope for the coming season is to work with more athletes on a more full time basis.

The Maine Winter Sports Center coaching staff encourages interested cross-country and biathlon racers to apply for the J2 Team, County Team and Regional Team for next year. Applicants must have met appropriate performance standards, through racing or talent identification camp, be willing to commit to a year-round training schedule and intend to develop a strong working relationship with MWSC coaches.

The application process takes into account talent, commitment and ability to attend regular training sessions. Applications and performance standards are available from Per at per.mainewsc@ainop.com. All interested 14 and 15 year-old racers may apply for the Northern Aroostook and Southern Aroostook J2 Teams. Performance standards and testing inquiries for J2s may be addressed to Will at will.mainewsc@ainop.com. A talent identification camp for all interested applicants will be held at UMPI in late April. Please visit our website at www.mainewsc.org for details.

The application deadline for all teams is Friday, April 5. MWSC coaches will review applications for the J2, County and Regional Teams throughout the month of April. Teams will be named on Wednesday, May 1. Racers selected to MWSC Teams will receive free coaching, training logs, travel support and uniforms.

Team members will be expected to attend regularly scheduled training and meetings throughout the training and racing seasons. Summer training will be conducted four days a week. Most of our training sessions will be at the MWSC venues: the 10th Mountain Ski Center in Fort Kent and the Nordic Heritage Ski Center located between Fort Fairfield and Presque Isle. A weekend camp will be held once each month during the summer. Dream big and live your dream!



TRIP TO SLOVENIA

By Ray Hews

On December 10th, 9 volunteers (myself included) joined Max Saenger and Andy Shephard from the Maine Winter Sports Center on a week long trip to observe a World Cup Biathlon race in Slovenia. Our trip came at the invitation of Janez Vodcar, from Slovenia, who is credited with making biathlon the number one televised winter sports event in Europe. Our group that included Nancy Thibodeau, Kelly Martin, Tim Doak, Ken Roy, Tim Roix, Kirk Paradis, Jerry Nadeau, and Jim Desrosier left Presque Isle at 6:30 AM and arrived in Ljubljana, Slovenia at noon the next day. During the following six days, we observed biathlon races and learned how to host such events. While each of us had a specific task to research while at the race, the most beneficial part was that we proved to the biathlon community that Northern Maine was serious about hosting a World Cup biathlon event. It was an amazing experience to talk with people at this event who knew about Fort Kent and Northern Maine and were anxious to come and see our part of the world. As a result of this trip, we expect to see World Class racers compete in events at the 10th Mountain Lodge in Fort Kent and the Nordic Heritage Venue in Presque Isle this year. I am particularly excited about the long term economic benefits these events will bring to Northern Maine.



MINNESOTA BIATHLON TRIP

By Blakelin Sherwood



On the second week of December we were on our way to Minnesota for the World Junior Biathlon Trials. Jeff Alden, Kelsy Bouchard, our coach Per Nilsson and I all had one of the same things on our mind, getting all ourselves and our baggage safely to Minnesota. At Logan airport in Boston we met with one of our fellow biathletes, Walt Shepard. Walt was previously racing at Olympic Trials. Not making it to the Olympics just psyched him up for Jr. World Championships Trials. From Boston we went to Pittsburgh, and then on to Minneapolis. We were all relieved that the bulk of the trip was over and that we all made it safely thus far to our final destination. Little did we know that our bags were not so fortunate. Jeff and Walt got their stuff and we all got our rifles, the problem was that Per lost his ski bag, containing the rest of our skies, poles, and boots. Per and Kelsy also lost their clothing. Later we found out that the luggage was sent to Philadelphia. For the moment we had to forget about it and pick up the rental van. Unfortunately it didn't have a ski rack on the top. So instead, we took a mean looking vehicle, the 2002 Dodge Ram Sport Addition. It looked extremely nice but only got 10 miles to the gallon. Three and half-hours later we made it to Grand Rapids, our final destination. We went to check in at the AmericInn but of course the reservations for our five night's stay had been made for a town named Crane Rapids. (The right hotel but the wrong location) While that got straightened out, we slept in another hotel for the night. We all got our beauty sleep and in the morning mooched equipment off of the other nice teams. Mt. Itasca, a new facility, was very well prepared. We practiced for two hours and went back to the AmericInn. We relaxed the rest of the evening, received our own equipment from the airport and focused on the race to come. The morning came and we ate our continental breakfast. Zeroing came and we all felt fairly confident. Even though the course was extremely tough, the snow was very sparse. After the first day of races, all we could say was that we gave it our all. We went to an unofficial biathlon gathering, watched a movie and took some well-deserved shuteye. We practiced the next day then relaxed, recovered, and re-focused for another even longer race. The next day went well except that Jeff broke a pole. In this race, we always knew how we were doing because it was a mass start. That night again we recovered and focused on the next day's individual race. The relay was a shorter race and we had three extra rounds we could use for each shooting if necessary. This race is always fun. We all completed it with good attitudes and high spirits. We cheered Walt Sheperd on at the awards ceremony along with the other winners. These athletes all would be leaving for Italy so they had a meeting about the uniforms and the trip. The rest of us returned to our hotels and packed up for the great haul back to our miscellaneous destinations around the United States. We all left Minnesota with a deep down sense of self-completion and happiness looking forward to seeing our families. A few days after arriving back home, our skis finally made it!



Top 10 Girls in County Classic Race



**SECOND ANNUAL GASPE
PENINSULA
APRIL ADVENTURE**

MWSC will again offer a three day trip to the Gaspé Peninsula this April 12-14. This trip was a fabulous success last year, don't miss the fun this season!

The Gaspé Peninsula of Quebec, just four hours to the east, features the finest backcountry skiing Eastern North America. Fantastic mountain views. 1500 feet of above tree line skiing. Quiet, scenic tours alongside rivers and waterfalls. And, best of all, very little skier traffic.

This year's adventure will depart from the Stockholm School at 9 a.m., Friday, April 12. We will arrive in the Parc de la Gaspésie by mid afternoon, leaving enough time to enjoy a short ski tour. Accommodations at the Auberge Internationale L'Echouerie, in Sainte Anne des Monts, are just 30 minutes north of the Parc, along the south shore of the St. Lawrence seaway. The Auberge offers bunkroom accommodations and three meals per day (they pack a great lunch bag each day!) at a fabulous price.

Ski tours will depart from the Auberge each morning and will return in the afternoon. Different touring options will be offered each day. Transportation will be provided.

Three days of fabulous ski touring and scenery for \$75 U.S. per person. MWSC has reserved 15 spaces at the Auberge. Sign up deadline for the trip is Friday, March 15. Don't miss this one! Contact Will Sweetser at will.mainewsc@ainop.com for information and registration.



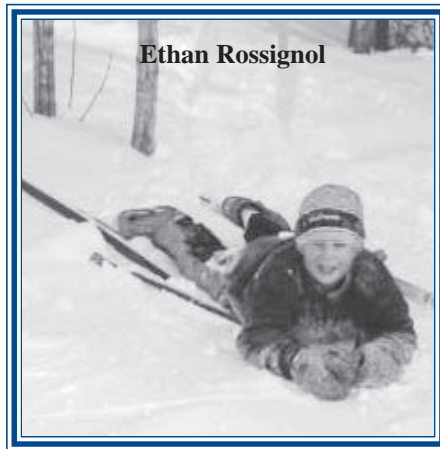
THE NENSA RACE EXPERIENCE

By Erin Hews ❄️❄️❄️❄️❄️❄️

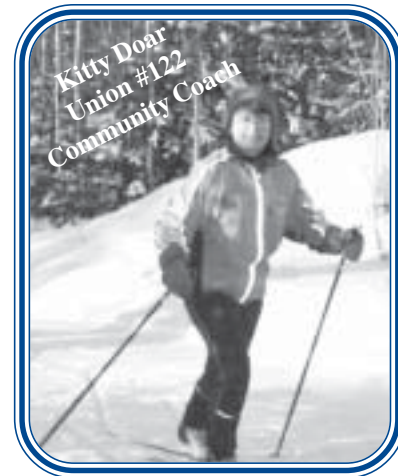
My feelings about nordic ski racing has been taken to a whole new level after competing in only four NENSA (New England Nordic Ski Association) races this season. To go from an atmosphere of comfort, and a crowd of encouraging fans from across the County (I mean, how many other places hand out honey water and tissues when you cross the finish line?) to an event featuring top New England athletes with fans and coaches who don't even know your name, is quite shocking! Though the atmosphere is slightly more intense, the importance of the races puts the countless hours of training I (and many other athletes in the county) have dedicated to skiing into perspective. After a terribly difficult 5k and a short (yet tiring) 500 meter sprint the following day at Sugarloaf in mid-December, I still found my coaches (Per and Eli) reminding me to stop looking around at all the athletes and to worry about my race, not theirs, when we were in New Hampshire for more races in late January. But more than the sightseeing, these races also remind me though I train hard and achieve acceptable results when I'm in the County, there is a long way to go to reach the top in New England. And, though I seem to find my name pretty far down the results sheet, I find much comfort in knowing that my time with Maine Winter Sports Center is (hopefully) only beginning. With top coaches who are more than willing to dedicate their time and efforts to transforming me (and others on the County team) into more well-rounded skiers, I hope to increase the gap between my name and the top of the results sheet. But until then, it's back to the trails!



WOODLAND SCHOOL PROGRAM



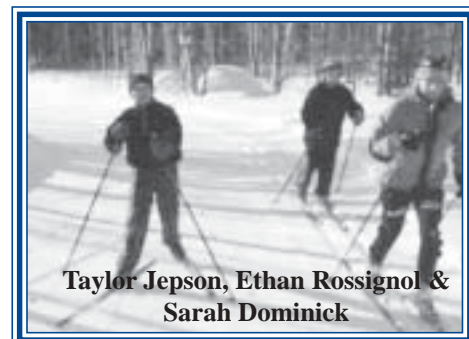
Ethan Rossignol



**Kitty Doar
Union #122
Community Coach**



Sam Sheehan



**Taylor Jepson, Ethan Rossignol &
Sarah Dominick**

FRENCHMAN OVERTHROWS SPANISH KING AT THE OLYMPICS

There is a common thread running through the Soldier Hollow Biathlon volunteers. We are all here to provide an arena for each athlete's peak performance. Whether we work in the logistics, competition office, services or field of play, we share a feeling of pride. Each of us has accomplished our small piece of this incredibly complex sport to the highest Olympic standard. The pride that bound us after the first day of competition strengthens with each subsequent competition. Long after my Olympic uniform is tattered and faded, I will remember Salt Lake 2002 for the long hours of preparation, the excitement of the Games and the camaraderie of the volunteers.

Occasionally, however, there are unexpected rewards. George Dumond and Paul Grant, two of our volunteers from Fort Kent, filed this report earlier from Soldier Hollow where the Olympic Cross Country and Biathlon Competitions are taking place.

Somehow Paul and I finagled our way into the Cross Country stands on the day of the Men's 30km freestyle competition. Johann Muehlepp from Spain had just captured the gold medal, when a cloud of cologne wafts up from several rows below catching my attention. I look down and spy a very smartly dressed man waving the Spanish flag and gesticulating to the officials. I realize that he is trying to get the flag down to Muehlepp for the flower ceremony so I rush down to his aid. Just as I arrive, he begins to climb over the 4ft railing, which separates the crowd from the stadium. I grab him by the coat and begin to hoist him over the railing when he turns to me and says, "I am the King of Spain". The King climbs over the next barrier, while Muehlepp bolts from the flower ceremony parade, runs across the stadium, jumps over the moving camera track to greet the King and receive his country's flag. I shake my head and walk back up to Paul thinking, "Paul ain't going to believe this." The flower ceremony is conducted with all the decorum and excitement befitting to Olympics. While Muehlepp and his entourage are posing for pictures and giving interviews to the media, Paul and I walk down into the "mix area". I turn to Paul and say, "Let's wait here. This the perfect spot; I shook Stephania Belmondo's hand right here after she won the gold medal for the 15km freestyle this morning." No sooner had I uttered those words than Johann Muehlepp begins to head our way. I smile and extend my hand. Muehlepp pauses with a huge grin and I give him a generous handshake and say, "Congratulations!" He looks to Paul and Paul also shakes his hand and offers him his congratulations. I'm just beaming thinking "Now that's my Olympic experience" when silver medallist, Christian Hoffmann stops to shake my hand too! And the excitement doesn't end there.... My next encounters include Jean Claude Killy, Mitt Romney, and the President of the International Olympic Committee.

George Dumond



Top 10 Boys in County Classic Race



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NEW TRAINING SYSTEM MAKES THE MWSC BIATHLETES INTO BETTER SHOOTERS

The athletes in the MWSC programs now have the opportunity to practice shooting indoors with an EKO rifle. The EKO rifle is safe for both the human being and the environment. You can shoot anywhere if you just have electric power that you connect to the rifle, target, and the computer. You shoot from ten meters distance. This is a very good compliment to regular shooting. The rifle has the same sight, weight and mechanism like a normal biathlon rifle.

While aiming, you can see your holding pattern on the screen, where you hit and how the rifle moves just before and after the shot. The rifle is built so you easily can adjust it to fit each individual. You can choose if you want to shoot on a

precision target or a biathlon target. The biathlon target gives you immediate feedback if you have a hit or miss with a green or red light.

The program has a database so you can save each shooter under a personal file.

You can also see your shoots in replay to analyze your aim and triggering.

This system is very good for shooters on all levels from the new beginner to the top athlete. As a coach you can analyze much better and faster what the

shooter is doing, and give feedback for faster improvement.



Matt Michaud training with the EKO Rifle