

New Mexico Cross Country Ski Club

February 2011

Photo by Dave Saylor

www.nmccskiclub.org

Note: New Place & Date for Program Meeting — held at REI

February's Program:

Gear Talk: The Light Side

Presenter:

Steele Lavail, REI

When: Thursday, February 17, 7 p.m.

Where: REI, 1550 Mercantile Ave. NE
Albuquerque

The program this month will be held at REI on February 17th from 7 – 8 p.m. This is a NMCCSC members only presentation and will not be open to the public. There will be no business meeting — you can view financial statements on the NMCCSC website.



Last month, you heard presenters espouse on the attributes of the new technology available with the beefy, some say “heavy”, side of backcountry skiing. This month, on February 17th, come to REI and hear Steele Lavail talk about the lighter gear for those who prefer the zen of kick and glide. If time allows, the equipment for skate skiing will also be discussed. ■

Weekend Ski to Chama

What: Class II Ski
Car trip to Chama

When: February 4-6, 2011

Motel: Chama Trails Inn, 800-289-1421

Contact: John Thomas, 298-5234 or
jt87111@comcast.net

Get Ready for the Next Bus Trip! By Angela Welford

The first bus trip of 2011 was a success! We had 54 members, including 9 first-timers and 3 more who drove up. We enjoyed 3 days of beautiful weather and fun skiing on groomed and ungroomed trails in areas mostly to the west of Wolf Creek pass. Some skiers also enjoyed great downhill skiing.



Jim and Alice Knapp and Erich Grotheer cross a creek adding to the adventure on the West Fork tour lead by Terri Elisberg in Pagosa.

Photo by I-Ching Boman

Having the Pagosa Hot Springs right across the road from the hotel allowed for muscle relaxing soaks after the long days — or just whenever, for the pleasure of the soak! Evening socials and group dinners allowed folks more opportunity to get to know each other and share good times.

The next trip is **February 10-13, to Crested Butte**. At this time the trip is full with 18 names on the reserve list. If you are registered for this trip and find you have to cancel, please contact me immediately at (awelford1017@gmail.com or 281-1198) to get the name(s) to sell your seat. Also please let me know if you need to be removed from the reserve list.

Thanks to everyone who went to Pagosa Springs, and for your support of Randy and me as we learn the ropes of being Bus Trip Chairpersons! ■

From the President

This winter is shaping up to be a less than average winter for us here in the Sandia Region. We had a large amount of snow activity around the holidays, but not much after that.



The northern part of the state and southern Colorado are having at least an average year. This is evidenced by the remarkable conditions we found on the recent bus trip to Pagosa Springs. Judging from the flourish of email trail reports being sent around the time of the last snows many in the Club were able to enjoy a

lot of skiing. I hope that we get another spate of snows and that we can all enjoy local skiing once again.

I am very pleased to note that our promotion of our scholarship program appears to have worked. At this point I believe we have awarded all 4 of them for activities such as avalanche training and Wilderness First Aid (WFA) training. John Stephens has organized an avalanche class this year with the Marc Beverly Mountaineering School. Please contact John at jrstephens_2000@yahoo.com for more information. For those who wish to take a WFA class, I encourage you to sign up for the class offered by the Wilderness Medicine Institute (WMI) at REI on February 12-13. For those who cannot make that class, there is another one offered on March 26-27 at the Academy School. The WMI class is excellent and you will see me at the Academy School class this year. One may obtain a list of all the WMI classes by going to <http://www.nols.edu/portal/wmi/courses/>.

Lastly, please watch your e-groups for upcoming day trips, as a lot of good day trips may be offered within a few days after a snowfall. And, think snow!

Chris Kramar



Chet Leach, Susan Harris, Bet Gendron and Chris Kramar take a break in Pagosa Springs, 1/15/11.

New Details — Beginner Ski Class

By Guy Miller

Due to popular demand, there will be a second beginner cross country ski class at REI on **Tuesday, February 15, 2011** from **6:30 - 8:00 p.m.**

Beginners who took the classroom session on January 22 are advised that the on-the-snow session has been postponed due to poor snow conditions. It has been rescheduled for **Saturday, February 19**. Persons from both classroom sessions will be included in that on-the-snow event. If favorable snow conditions do not exist by the end of February, we will either cancel it or try mid-March. Let's keep our fingers crossed.

The class is free, but those wishing to ski must be NMCCSC members. Participants need to contact me at xcskiboy@aol.com or 294-7940 and you **must** pre-register with REI at 247-1191. ■

Hut Trip Update

By Guy Miller

The season's first hut trip to Polar Star Inn will be underway when you receive this newsletter.

The early March trip to Janet's Cabin, located near the Copper Mountain ski resort, is full with one person on the waiting list. The late March trip to Eiseman Hut is also full, with one person on the waiting list.

Interested skiers should review the January, 2011 newsletter for details about these hut adventures.



Rich Besser relaxes at the 10th Mountain Hut, 2/4/09.

Photo by Bill Heitz

It's already lottery time for the 2012 ski season! We will try to score Fowler-Hilliard Hut. This is the hut that was destroyed by fire in 2009. Our members and Club contributed \$1,000 toward the reconstruction, which was completed in late 2010. Since we have a stake in this effort, we hope to visit the new structure.

It may also be time for another beginner hut trip. Group input could be a deciding factor. So would you like to participate? Contact the *hut Guy*, who also welcomes suggestions for other hut trips. ■

Alberta Peak, Ridge and Beyond

Pat Cargill

An intrepid bunch, Ray Berg, Tom Broadbent, Jack Carangelo, Chris Kramer, Karen Leach and myself, under the auspices of leader Mike Martin, launched ourselves into the woods just west of Wolf Creek Pass. We slogged stalwartly upward through the trees at a lung-bursting pace until we emerged on one of the Alpine downhill slopes. There we were met by a surprised welcoming committee comprised of Chet Leach and Guy



Miller who serendipitously were just about to enjoy a downhill run. After brief exchanges, we, the explorers, headed up the downhill slope much to the comments, mostly friendly, of the flush-faced youth on the wide boards who seemed quite intrigued by our persistence in skiing against gravity.

Soldiering on, we eventually reached the ridge of the Continental Divide, and Alberta Peak loomed to the south. Well, I thought, Mike must be scouting out a pleasant way around this behemoth for us. Imagine my thrill when I realized that up and over was the chosen route Skis had to be abandoned on occasion due to the ruggedness of the terrain, but somehow we found ourselves on top and then on the other side of the peak.

The ridge stretched out before us. *“How much further?”*, I gasped as Mike’s sights scanned the horizon. *“Oh, just over there”*, was the reply. My oxygen-starved brain began to conjure up images of teetering on a knife-edge into the next county.



Mike Martin grabs a bite before climbing Alberta Peak in background.

Tom Broadbent and Jack Carangelo



Pat Cargill, Tom Broadbent and Jack Carangelo climb Alberta Peak just above Wolf Creek Ski Resort.

Photo by Chris Kramer

Perhaps there was a gentle downward descent, I persuaded myself, that Mike must be leading us to as we persevered further towards the ever illusive “over there” destination.



Chris Kramer telemarks down the slope with ease near Wolf Creek Ski Resort, 1/16/11.

Sensing a minor rebellion, Mike decided it was time to abandon the ridge and he sought out a do-able slope by which to return to the land of oxygen and normal mortals. Telemarkers came into their own as

steep slopes were tamed. I will not go into details of my, less graceful, descent except to say that it involved postholing and being on my belly! Lower ground safely encountered, we found ourselves on one of the downhill ski runs. From there it was pretty smooth sailing down to the downhill complex. Trudging over to the parking lot, I ran into Richard Simons,

who in true gentlemanly spirit, offered to carry my ski poles. I probably looked pretty wasted. I followed my poles faithfully back uphill until we were both deposited on a bench by the ticket booth to await the arrival of the bus.

Thoroughly exhausted and mildly traumatized, I savored again the rewards of cross-country skiing. Those Alpine skiers who consider cross-country skiing for wusses, have obviously never postholed backward on their bellies from Alberta Peak. They don’t know what they’ve missed! ■

Editor’s note: Near the bottom we talked to a downhill skier who said he saw us on the ridge and asked how we got down on cross country skis. We pretended to be expert skiers and said we just closed our eyes and pointed our skis downhill! As always, skiing with **Mike Martin** is an adventure never to be forgotten!

Ski Tour Ratings

CLASS I: Tour with less than 1,000 feet of elevation gain and less than 5 miles in total length. Skiers should be able to execute stops and turns. Some, *but not all*, CLASS I tours are appropriate for novice skiers with minimal cross country experience. The pace will be slow (*1 to 1.5 miles per hour*). Persons with no cross country skiing experience **MUST** take the beginning lessons offered by the Club or must obtain the leader's permission **PRIOR** to joining a CLASS I tour.

CLASS II: Tour with less than 2,000 feet of elevation gain and less than 10 miles in total length. A CLASS II tour requires intermediate skills and ability to maintain control on moderate slopes with techniques such as snowplowing, turning and traversing. On a CLASS II tour a skier should have enough stamina for sustained kick and glide touring on near level ground at a pace of 2 miles per hour for several miles and should also be experienced at using climbing skins to climb trails with moderate slopes.

CLASS III:

Tour with greater than 2,000 feet of elevation gain and/or greater than 10 miles in total length, or otherwise characterized by technical challenges, or the potential for same. A

CLASS III tour usually requires advanced skills and ability to competently and confidently climb and descend steep, narrow trails. The skier should be experienced with using climbing skins for both climbing and safely descending steep slopes. On a CLASS III tour a skier should have the endurance for skiing ten miles or more within the time constraints of the tour.

Trail slopes are categorized as follows:

- 1) Gentle slopes have less than 5% grades.
- 2) Moderate slopes have grades greater than 5%, but less than 15% grades.
- 3) Steep slopes have grades greater than 15% grades.

Exploratory designation:

In addition to the CLASS rating, a tour may be designated exploratory (Exp). This means the leader has not skied on this route recently (*or ever*) or is unsure about some aspect of the proposed route. Participants should be experienced in backcountry

skiing. They should be prepared for any possible situation and should have emergency gear with them. ■

Thank you to our Leaders

A special **thank you** to our Bus Trip Chairs **Angela Welford** and **Randy Simons** who did a fabulous job with all of the details for our fun and well organized trip to Pagosa.



Angela Welford

Photo by Paul Eichel

Thanks also to our ski tour leaders in Pagosa Springs:
Ray Berg, Marlene Brown, Mickey Chirigos, Terri Elisberg, Mike Martin, Guy Miller, Lucy Miller, Don Mullen, Randy Simons and **Chris Standish**.

As a benefit, their names, along with others who lead ski tours during the season, will go into the hat when we select a winner for a free bus trip in 2012. To be eligible, leaders must have participants complete the *Release of Liability* form and turn it in to Bill Heitz, Day Trips Chair. The form can be obtain from our website. ■



Randy Simons

Photo by Angela Welford



New members Rich Rougeux and Karen Wallace on the East Fork tour.

Photo by Angela Welford

Where's Treasurer Mountain?

By Bet Gendron

One of the tours on the Pagosa Springs bus trip was a Class II+ trip billed as Treasure Mountain, led by Guy Miller. The plan was to start just west of the bottom of Wolf Creek Ski Area and climb to the top of the ski area from the back side.



Bet Gendron
Photo by Chris Kramar

Including the leader, participants were Jack Carangelo, Pat Cargill, Dianne Cress, Bill Davey, Susan Harris, Chris Kramar, Chet and Karen Leach, Rich Rougeux and myself.

I was excited to try my new backcountry equipment; I wanted to experience being able to turn in this type of terrain. It was obvious right away that backcountry skis and climbing skins were necessary. One group member had to turn back early on due to lack of skins. Fortunately this person was able to join with others at the ski area.

The group moved up through the beautiful white, picturesque terrain in trees, coming into a bowl about 1/2 mile square. We made a steep climb through the fluffy powder to the top. One could see the difference between using the short 'kicker' skins and the full skins. Those with kickers used energy to herringbone up some steep sections; with full skins one could climb straight up, making sure each step was 'set' before the next.

At the top of this bowl, we were encouraged to play a little in the nice powder. 'Playing' consisted of



Guy Miller, Jack Carangelo, Diane Cress and Pat Cargill look for a way down. Treasure Mountain is in the background.

removing our skins, tucking them somewhere on our person, attempting to 'tele' turn or otherwise arrive about 1/2 mile at the bottom! Then, putting our skins back

on, we climbed back up and did it over again. Right away I could see that my equipment was turning nicely. As for my abilities — *"now, how did my right ski turn completely backward with my foot attached?"*

We then climbed further to the top near a chairlift with downhill skiers going by. There was an obvious variation of routes with which we could go down and over to Treasure Mountain. It was here that people with GPSs and experience in the area came to play. I wondered how they would come to consensus, but I felt a sense of confidence when I saw them working together. I had a little input . . . *"I know I don't have a GPS, but that looks like a cliff over there!"*

The best route down held some challenges, as it was narrow, through the trees in deep snow. Another wide bowl opened up, in which I did a 'run', ending in a snow-puff, skis up! Good thing Chris' camera didn't have audio. We had a nice lunch in the sun at the bottom, while others 'played' on yet another slope at the base of Treasure Mountain.

At times it was hard to find the forest road under 5' of snow. More routes were addressed, and enjoyed, as there were good stretches to pick up speed. At one point there was a long, steep drop-off to the right, which could eventually get us to the end of the trail. One by one, a few skiers peeled off, doing deep telemark turns. I stood there weighing: *road—abyss, road—abyss*. Then a voice from the distance far below called, *"Come on, Bet, you won't find snow like this again soon!"* So, OK! Over and into a beautiful run of rolling inclines and a fast ride down.



Chris Kramar and Bet Gendron discuss the benefits of climbing skins.

Then we all arrived at the pick-up point from different routes at the same time, and we even had a couple of minutes to gather ourselves before the bus arrived. No one was on the bus to see how rested we looked, but then it was a straight shot to the chips and beverages!

I loved this day: having extra time and feeling security in the leader and cohorts working together. I love my full length skins: working hard, feeling them grip. I love my new equipment and the challenge of learning their potential. I loved the snow, the beauty, the camaraderie with good people. I was tired, but happy; it was a good day! ■

Some Things We Never Knew Before By Paul Eichel

Cathy and I have lived, worked, and played in New Mexico for 25 years now. We learned cross-country skiing on the gentle slopes of an Ann Arbor, MI golf course in the early eighties and continued with the sport after we moved here. We have long enjoyed spending a morning climbing and descending



Cathy and Paul Eichel

through the snow-flocked trees on top of Sandia Mountain in the winter months. In all of that time, however, we never knew there was an Albuquerque-based cross country skiing club. Boy, have we been missing something great!

We just returned from our first bus trip with the Club to Pagosa Springs, Colorado. In years past, we have skied a few X-C trails in the Pagosa area as well as numerous trips to the downhill area. More often than not, these have been fun but frenzied affairs characterized by lots of preparations, reservations, cooking, carting people around, and seeing after myriad details. We never knew there was another way to do this.



This other way involves, well, showing up. That's about it: you pack some clothes and show up. There is a bus that not only takes you to and from Pagosa, but delivers you daily to the trailheads. It then picks you up again and deposits you at a restaurant for dinner. Someone has already made the dinner reservations for the group, and someone has worked out the bus schedule. Several different choices of trails, tailored for various tastes and abilities, are offered up each day. On this trip, those busy somebodies turned out to be **Angela** and **Randy**. Hey, I think I like this.

The skiing around Pagosa was just fantastic. We never knew that the rugged continental divide could simultaneously serve up such warm sunny days, crisp nights, calm winds, and nearly perfect snow. The trails we skied, East Fork Road, Alberta

reservoir, and Fall Creek Road, were both different and similar. They offered a variety of terrain and scenery, yet had both excellent snow conditions and delightful ambiance.



Jon McCorkell enjoys the view.

Photo by Angela Welford

Each day we shared the experience with fellow club members who offered helpful advice, conversation, and tasty treats. We never knew we could make so many new friends in the span of a weekend.

Some of the things we learned on this trip were rather unexpected. We never knew a 45 ft long, three axle motor coach could perform a 3-point K turn in the width of the road up to Wolf Creek Pass. Or back up the length of the East Fork Rd. from the highway to the trailhead, uphill and on ice, no less. We never knew that, having soaked in the baths at Pagosa Springs, the peculiar Ode-du-Pagosa stays with you through all manner of washing.

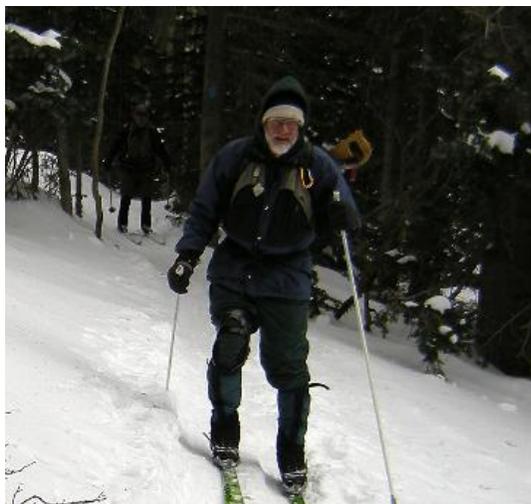
I guess we never knew a lot of good things before our first bus trip with the NMCCSC. But we do now! ■



Marilynn Szydowski, Ann Schultz and Lucy Miller on the West Fort trail in Pagosa Springs.

Welcome New Members

Kim Feldman
 Richard Hills
 Christopher & Sharon Iriarte
 Robert & Sherri Jackson
 Rebecca Kiss
 Lee Lockie
 Scott Moulton
 Norma Perez
 Linda Riddle
 Frank Stephens
 Matthew Stoebner
 Cara Wilson



Sam Beard skis along the Crest Trail in the Sandia Mountains with his pruning saw sticking out of his pack – *he never leaves home without it!*

Thanks Sam and his wonderful crew of volunteers for their weekly efforts in maintaining our ski trails.
Photo by Carl Smith



Bill Davey with Treasurer Mountain in the background, Pagosa Springs, 1/16/11.



= Monthly deadline for newsletter inclusion

February 2011							
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	
		1	2	3	4	5	
		Polar Star Hut				Chama	
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
				Crested Butte			
13	14	15 REI Class	16	17 Club Meet at REI	18	19 Snow train	
20	21	22	23	24 Board Meets	25	26	
27	28						
March 2011							
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	
		1	2	3	4	5	
6	7	8	9	10 Club Meet	11	12	
		Janet's Hut					
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	
27	28	29	30	31	Apr 1	2	
		Ben Eiseman Hut					



E-Groups

To send a message to all members:
nmccsc@yahoogroups.com



Avalanche Training

Classroom session held on **February 18-19** and on-the-snow, **February 20** at Santa Fe Ski Resort. Cost: \$350. Contact John Stephens, Club member, at 505-983-3237 or jrstephens_2000@yahoo.com.



Program Ideas?

Do you have ideas for future Ski Club topics or presenters? We need your input. Please contact Sherry Fitzmaurice, Program Chair, at 798-4818 or sherry.fitzmaurice@xilinx.com.

2010-11 Officers and Board

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Laura Scholfield with her vintage wooden skis made in Norway.

Photo by I-Ching Bowman