

# Solitude

as published in the March/April 2009 *Lifeline*

by Lesa Scott and Pat Hobitz

We were off to a great start when everyone was checked in early for the Saturday, January 10th flight to Solitude. We immediately learned who would deserve 'special attention,' (aka troublemakers) when both Bob Coorsen and Rod Taylor were chastised by the flight attendant for being out of their seats before we had reached altitude.

Our flight danced through Atlanta to arrive in Salt Lake City where Nora & Lawrence Robinson joined us. We convinced the bus driver to stop for a booze and food before heading up the Canyon. He even loaned us his Albertson's savings card. Lesa Scott also had hers from past trips. Everyone was able to benefit from the discounts. Our bus driver, Roland, loved us so much, he volunteered for our departure trip from Solitude to the airport! Oops, let's not get ahead of ourselves.

We kicked off the first evening with a chili party in the trip leader's condo. Thankfully, Nora Robinson and Jean Schedler prepped the food while seven of us went to rent skis for the week.

The first day Rod and the word trouble were re-associated. Rod's condo had regular and de-caf coffee drinkers but only one pot. Everyone knows not to mess with coffee drinkers in the morning! Gayl Taylor came to the rescue. She got a second pot from the management. All was well for the rest of the week; well, until the last night when a serious party broke out. Again, I get ahead of myself.

Sunday started out with freezing rain. Everyone gathered at the Moonbeam Lodge to thaw out for lunch. Nora Robinson conferred with a local and ordered the "Swedish meatballs". She reported it was great. Most of us ordered them later in the week and can confirm they are delicious. Meanwhile, the football buffs kept checking the scores of the NFL games. In the afternoon the sun popped out. The run from the summit was stupendous! Rod and Bob Cates hit the powdery blacks the first day out while others tried to capture the moment in photos. Following the skiing, we

returned to the condos and propped open the doors to yell at the traitors across the hall that were cheering for the wrong NFL teams. Lesa was pouting because San Diego lost, but recovered after a scalding in the hot tub. Jean, Nora, Lawrence, Pat and Lesa ate a fabulous dinner at Creekside Restaurant. Our waiter, Keizer, despite a marked British accent, insisted that he originated from Brooklyn, then Boston (Pat quickly laid her Boston accent on him), whereby, we backed tracked to his most likely point of origin—Cape Town, South Africa. By the end of dinner, we had Keizer convinced that Lawrence had a harem. Keizer was willing to take two of us, admitting that three were just too much! However, all of us could help him row his boat back to Capetown in April.

Gayl, Rod and Mary Regan arrived after we had begun eating and chose a different table whereupon they engaged in a serious discussion (on a ski trip? Sacrilege!). They also had a great meal but without our waiter, Keizer, and the accompanying hilarity.

Every ski winter, Nora introduces her condo mates to a new, hot, après-ski beverage. This year's beverage involved hot chocolate, Jameson's and Bailey's. While at the Creekside Restaurant, she found several inspirations for the 2010 ski season. Mmm! Glad she's willing to condo with me. Yet again, I get ahead of myself!

Monday, everyone was out by 8:30 AM to catch the yellow cat ride to Moonbeam base lodge, then the UTA bus to ski Brighton. Gayl opted for the Nordic Center. Conditions were similar to Sunday. This meant the trees were outstanding and everyone was seeking fresh powder. Once again, Rod went wild and dragged Bob Coorsen and Louise Campbell-Blair with him to the double blacks off Milky lift. Meantime, Bob Cates led the only slightly more reserved group of Veronica Cates, Marge Alia, Pat Hobitz and Lynn Allison to seek the infamous SolBright trail. They intended to scope out the return to Solitude via the skis. Long story short and many versions later, the trail was supposed to be a cat track. Due to lack of snow and later avalanche dangers, it wasn't even open! Undeterred, they tried it not once, but twice before aborting. Knowing Lesa and Lawrence were planning to follow this group; Lynn used his cell phone to call Lesa to say, "Don't go!" However, Lynn had the wrong number on his cell phone. He only called the unlucky lady 3 times before she responded we had the wrong number! The rest of the skiers: Bill

Weigand, Mary, and Jean had gone with Lesa to cruise small mogul wonderland runs, to cavort down twists and turns; everyone found runs to pique their curiosity about what was around the next turn or over the next drop. In fact, at one point, Lesa topped a rise, screeched out, "Go left" and keep everyone out of the half-pipe of snowboard heaven.

That evening everyone gathered at the condo of Bob & Veronica Cates, Lynn Allison and Bill Weigand for an absolutely scrumptious spaghetti dinner. The stories and adventures were shared by all with only a little wine for lubrication (we didn't need much!), which brings us to our only injury report—a serious one at that! There was a yell, then a rush of hands followed by "Oh no's"! Sadly, we report the fatality of a bottle of chardonnay belonging to the Taylor's. It leapt from the refrigerator to the floor to die in a gazillion pieces!

Tuesday was rest day. Ha! This crowd rests in a very different way! Nearly everyone joined Gayl on snowshoes around Silver Lake down to Solitude along the Cabin or Redmond trails past the yurt. Marge had so much fun; she took the bus back to the Nordic area to do it again. The Cates decided to take a lesson and Rod decided he needed to ski in the sunshine for the afternoon for more rest! Lawrence led Nora, Pat, and Jean back up a different trail. Nora was finished and turned back declaring she needed a nap. Now that is how to rest!

At 8 AM Wednesday, a dozen of us rode two vans down Big Cottonwood Canyon and back up Little Cottonwood Canyon to ski Alta. Being early; we basked in the morning sun until the lift opened at 9:15. Alta was stupendous, although many of us were very surprised at the lack of footrests and even safety bars, for that matter! Bob Coorsen took Rod, Pat, Louise and Lynn into this very steep chute. It started with a tight "must make" turn. Louise chose the safe method and slipped through on her bum. Pat, being the beautiful form skier that she is, threw caution and form to the wind; she also slipped through on her bum! No photos were allowed; therefore no record exists of this event. At the end of this remarkable run, Bob's already cracked boot gave up the ghost. The mid-mountain ski demo shop taped up his boot with ubiquitous bright blue duct tape (Lynn has pix!). This fix got Bob down to the base where he rented boots with not a modicum of sympathy or discount for a fellow PSI-er. Ouch to the wallet. Back at

Solitude, the shop lent him boots for the remaining two days—no charge. Being a very wise man, Bob returned the professional courtesy with some six packs. Yikes, again, I jump to the end.

Our intrepid adventure skiers, Bob Coorsen and Rod emerged at the base of a big rock cliff just in time to discover Bob Cates stuck at the top. He was having no luck finding a path out of his predicament. Not being able to go forward or backwards due to the rocks and the drop off; he was decidedly stuck. Bob/Rod guided Bob to a tiny straight down slit in the rock face. Bob took the plunge, flew down safe and sound. Another adventure skier is revealed even though Bob will only admit to being in the spot as a terrible mistake. What is clear is he had the skill and guts to follow Bob/Rod's directions. Without them coming alone, Bob admits it wouldn't have been pretty. Although, a happy ending, I meant to ask, "Are there any photos?"

As the week passed, the group divided into the early skiers who were out when the lifts started and the late skiers who were not to be rushed! Of course, both groups closed the mountain nearly every day.

Louise, with no trouble, was skiing some tough slopes with Rod on Friday morning. She calmly and unconcernedly mentioned she'd misplaced Bob. What a great demeanor, she just takes it as it comes: lost husband, steep slopes, broken boots, whatever...Rod did crack her calm when they emerged from some trees off the Summit lift on a double black diamond. Louise looked down the lower half of the slope; then, in her impeccable British accent she says "My, this is steep"—which translates in American as "Holy cow! You're crazy if you think I'm going down that!" Both Rod and Louise schussed down just fine. (Plus, Louise found Bob at lunch.)

While others of us called Rod a Cowboy, a Wildman, and various other questionable appellations, Louise outdid everyone by presenting him with a "Rodeo Rod" medal. Louise was a witness to one of Rod's more spectacular ski moments. For those that don't know Rod skis in the trees (he does ski elsewhere but only when pressed!). Back to the story, Rod suddenly came upon an enormous gully. He tried to jump. He missed the landing and instead dug his skis into the bank up to his front binding. Luckily, the skis came off and he still has all his body parts intact. As an added bonus, Lynn has pix!

Lynn was a trooper following some of us crazy skiers all day long down stuff he normally wouldn't even think about skiing, especially the tree skiing. (After skiing Jackson Hole with Lynn, Lesa amends this with "stuff he wouldn't admit to skiing"). Rod think he's got Lynn hooked on tree skiing now. It is where the better snow seemed to be located this week. If you wanted to ski a groomed run top to bottom without stopping, Lynn is your man—he said that was his favorite skiing. Lynn and Rod finished most days by doing just that—thigh burners for sure—but great fun way to finish the day.

Friday evening, we didn't have sufficient leftovers for a 'garbage' party. But, at least, one condo took it upon themselves to consume any remaining wine, beer, etc. They outlasted your authors and we wished them the best! We felt sure someone would tell us if there were any great stories resulting from their alcohol recycling research.

Upon arriving in DC at 9:30 PM Saturday evening, along with the rest of the world attending the Inaugural festivities, twothirds of us waited for baggage that didn't arrive. While waiting, Mary was interviewed by a San Diego journalist. Mary remarked that in the 30 years she's lived in DC, this was the most crowded she'd ever seen the airport. Mary's other claim to fame is the lightest packer—one bag that could have fit in the overhead. Wonder if she'll offer classes? Being without skis, Mary, Marge, and Lesa received their bags and headed home. Undaunted and still in high spirits everyone else waited in line to report lost baggage. We all hugged farewell with promises to link up again. In fact, a day trip to Whitetail is in the works for February 20th!

###