

CROSS COUNTRY SKIER



THE JOURNAL OF NORDIC SKIING
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VOL 31.1

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THE JOURNAL OF NORDIC SKIING

NOVEMBER 2011

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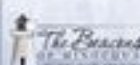


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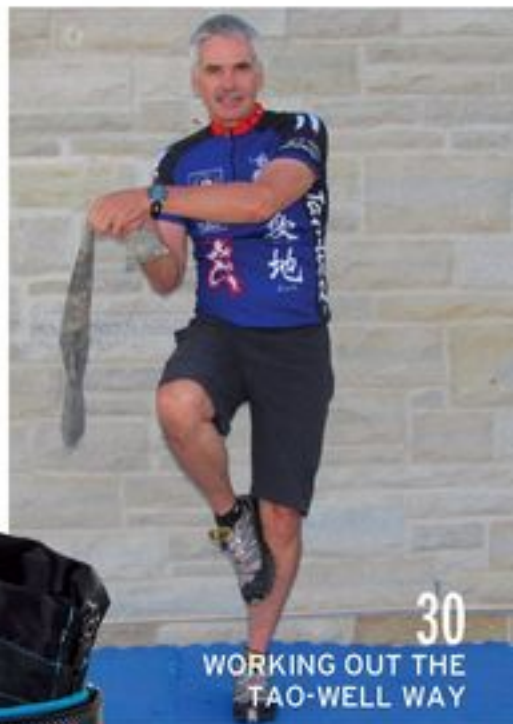
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All smiles at Silver Star Mountain Resort.
Photo by Tim Fitzgerald

FIRST TRACKS

BY RON BERGIN

A TIME FOR REFLECTION

This season starts on a rather somber note as our little Nordic community in northwest Wisconsin reels from a tragic incident. On August 8 we lost an iconic individual, Dave Landgraf, who was killed in a car-bicycle accident. Landgraf held the distinction of being only one of three individuals to have skied in every single American Birkebeiner ski marathon. And as if that alone was not distinction enough, he'd continued to do so at age 62 from the Birkebeiner's elite wave.

Landgraf was a retired physical education teacher from Bloomer, Wis. His roots, however, were in Hayward, Wis., home of the American Birkebeiner. It was while riding home from a weekend in the Hayward area that he was struck by a car, receiving life-threatening injuries to which he later succumbed.

Landgraf was revered and respected as a teacher and Nordic ski coach. This was underscored by a tremendous outpouring of nearly 2,000 people attending his memorial at the Bloomer Middle School. The Middle School principal was quoted as saying that he had literally moved every chair from the school to the gym for the occasion. During the memorial

it was requested that everyone in attendance who had been coached by Landgraf stand — 200 people rose to their feet.

With 38 Birkies under his belt and the youngest of the remaining Birkie Founders, it's realistic to expect that Landgraf could have skied the event well into his 70s, perhaps racking up as many as 50. Though "slowing" just a bit (2:43 in 2011 with temperatures at the start of -10F) Landgraf would have moved out of the elite wave next year, a fact he was thoroughly comfortable with. It would not have been surprising, however, for him to qualify again for the elite wave, which requires a top-200 finish.

The Founders were a group of 10 original Birkie skiers who were so designated by the event's creator and actual founder, Tony Wise, upon their completion of the first 10 consecutive Birkies. They would forever be known as the Founders, regardless if they continued skiing the event or not. Landgraf, John Kotar, and Ernie St. Germaine were the remaining three to have skied all Birkies to date. And now, sadly, there are only two.

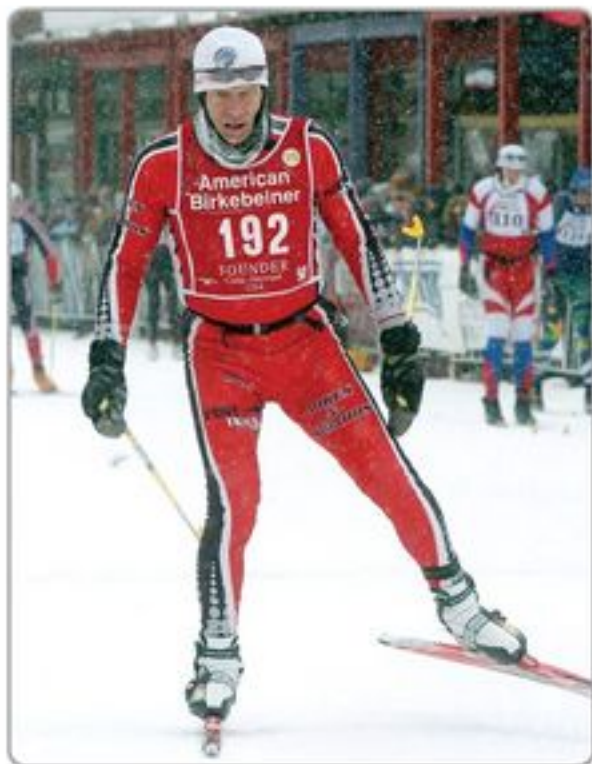
Kotar offered these thoughts at the loss of his long-time Birkie compadre' and aptly summarizes the feelings of those in the Nordic ski community who knew or knew of Dave.

"Losing a friend under any circumstances is always difficult. However, when you have been sharing the Birkie experience with someone, yearly, through four decades, a special bond develops and the sadness and sense of loss reach much deeper than one could ever expect. The pain only deepens when I reflect on the loss to his family. Nevertheless, his memory will endure. He is sure to be

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remembered as the best Birkie skier this venerable event has produced. He will also be in the hearts and minds of multitudes who will gather at the starting line next year and far into the future."

Cross Country Skier magazine extends its deepest condolences to the family and friends of Dave Landgraf. The next time you're on the trail, please take a moment to remember Dave and all members of our Nordic community who have skied on to that great warming cabin in the sky.



Dave Landgraf

As we move into our publishing season, *Cross Country Skier* readers will notice the absence of our October issue. Last year we discontinued the print version of the October issue, instead publishing it online only. After considerable deliberation it has been decided to reduce our publishing schedule to three issues only during the core months of the season. While difficult, it was a necessary business decision. The economy, cost of printing and postage, and challenging times for advertisers have all contributed to the decision. This is something that has been under consideration for several years, but finally became a necessity. We regret having to take these steps, but will continue to provide great information on all things Nordic skiing in our November, December, and January/February issues.

It was again a fantastic ski season last year for most of the country. A few areas started late, but some were able to remain open to the beginning of May! With several good seasons in a row, the sport definitely feels to be on the rebound. Lots of people are trying cross country skiing for the first time, events are experiencing growth and great numbers, equipment sales are up, and those who look forward all year long to the next ski season can practice their passion without interruption.

Let's hope this season is just as great. Good skiing to you!

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NORDIC FAMILY

BY HEIDI HILL

LEASING EQUIPMENT FOR KIDS

My basement has a colorful array of skis that line the wall — Madshus, Rossignol, Atomic, Fischer. In recent years, since the kids have become skiers, we've added a kids' corner. First we had the Karhu K'Boom boot skis, then the 100-cm Fishers that the kids referred to as "dragon skis" due to their decorated tails. We then moved on to 110-cm, 120-cm waxable and fish scale skis, and now my seven-year-old is on a 140-cm waxable touring ski. Yes, the kids' corner is growing with the kids.

My husband has a knack for finding and acquiring good quality kids' skis whether they are tucked away in a ski shop or in a friend's basement. While this system works for parents who are knowledgeable about equipment and like the thrill of the ski hunt, it is not the most efficient method for outfitting a young skier. A practical alternative: ski leasing.

"I think it's a good option to consider," says Torrey Smith, who leased cross country ski equipment for her daughters, ages 9 and 7, last season. Smith explains that finding used equipment can be difficult if you don't know what to look for.

"The ski guys at the store basically do a lot of the homework for you that way," shares Smith. "In past years, we'd tried to get downhill equipment at ski swaps. By the time we were done scrambling for boots, skis, poles and then getting them tuned/fit for the actual kids, it didn't feel like we saved much—if any—money. Plus, all the equipment was pretty old."

Ski leasing programs offer new equipment or a combination of new and used equipment. The used equipment often goes quickly, since it is only a year or two old and is at a discounted price. Onion River Sports in Montpelier, Vermont — the store Smith leased through—offered their used package at \$90 and a new package at \$130 for the 2010 ski season. The package consists of waxless Fischer Sprint Crown Skis (for a skier's weight

range of 50 – 120 pounds), Fischer XJ Sprint boots (sizes 25 to 40), and Fischer junior poles.

The concept behind ski leasing is to get skiers on quality equipment affordably. Often when parents purchase equipment for kids, they tend to get equipment that is on the big side so the kids can grow it into, explains Andrew Brewer, owner of Onion River Sports. "Then it doesn't fit or work right from the get-go and kids don't enjoy it," he says.

Leasing makes sense for kids, as they typically outgrow equipment in a season or even mid-season. Frequently, there is an option to buy your equipment at the end of the season, which is appealing for families with younger or smaller skiers. The potential downside is that you can't predict what size your smaller skier will be next ski season.

As Smith explains, "we have two kids who are the same size, so there's no added value in the passing-down of



equipment — we pretty much need two of the same sized sets!”

Occasionally, a leasing program will exist separately from a retail ski shop, like the New England Nordic Ski Association's (NENSA) Skis for Kids. The program was launched a few years ago with \$40,000 from private donations and a donation from TD Bank. Supporters of the program wanted to get more kids on cross country skis. The program “continues with board-designated funds from NENSA's very successful 2010 and 2011 annual giving campaigns,” according to the NENSA website.

“It's been a huge program for us — perhaps not in terms of total numbers (about 300 per year), but definitely in terms of getting whole new clubs going that may have otherwise never started,” explains Patrick Cote, executive director of NENSA. “For example, we have a club that started from scratch two years ago. Their first year, they had about 50 kids — and I am quite sure that every single one of them leased skis.”

Cote's three children lease through the program. Though he and his wife Tracey (head Nordic coach at Colby College) are knowledgeable on equipment to pick for their kids, they know that the gear through NENSA fits well, performs well, and is a good value.

For only \$50, skiers lease a package of Fischer RCS Crown or Rossignol Max Universal skis, Rossignol boots (Xr Jr., Comp J or X-7 Combi), and the Diamond 600 Exit Jr pole by One Way. While the ski inventory is limited to waxable combi skis, the sizes range from 110 to 167 cm. Boot sizes are 26 to 43, and poles are 80 to 145 cm.

The Skis for Kids program is intended for skiers affiliated with Bill Koch youth ski clubs in the New England region, but individual families may order through the program, as well. For specifics on ordering and sizing charts, go to

www.nensa.net/skis/.

For any type of leasing program, the earlier you learn about what your child needs and how the program works, the better off you will be, in terms of availability. NENSA's leasing begins mid-November. Retail shops lease at about the same time, with pickings getting slim toward the end of December. Though you can switch sizes mid-season, you want to take the time to carefully read sizing instructions or to try on a boot, as selection is not guaranteed mid-season. Often clubs will place a big order before the season starts, so inventory drops quickly.

When the season is over — about late March for most of us — the equipment (hopefully well-maintained throughout the season) is returned and is either stored for another season or sold. If you don't

buy the equipment, you don't have to store it, so returning ski equipment is liberating for many families.

In the Northeast, we have great options when it comes to ski leasing. Similar programs may be trickier to find in other parts of the country. Talk to families in your local ski club to get connected with programs in your region. Some families may like a program like NENSA's for affordability, while others may be willing to pay more to see a shop for hands-on help with fitting. If leasing is not available in your area, consider joining together with other Nordic families to support the start-up of leasing through your local ski shop or follow NENSA's example. Getting more kids on good equipment at a good price benefits the entire Nordic family. **RCS**



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TECHNIQUE & TRAINING

BY STEVE HINDMAN

TO INFINITY
AND BEYOND!

I've taught a lot of skiers since I began teaching in the '80s. Many come just to check out the sport. They're happy to simply get out on snow. Others come for a tune-up or for an extra boost to keep them on track and headed in the right direction. It's the third group that keeps me up at night. These folks come back year after year to camps and lessons and clinics, but they don't show the improvement from year to year that I know is possible.

Part of the secret to continual improvement is learning how to learn. I share some insights on this in my book, **Cross Country Skiing: Skills for Fun and Fitness** (available from the online store at www.crosscountryskier.com). I also help students become better learners during each lesson or clinic, and it does help them get more out of the time we spend together. But there's still something missing that keeps members of that third group from continuing to improve on their own.

My skiing and training buddy Todd Eastman spends a lot of time pursuing his racing goals, but he's also taught and coached about as much as I have. I asked him to chime in on all of this, and he offered these insights:

"Ask your readers to consider taking a hard look at what parts of their ski game they need to work on," he suggested. "The crucial thing is to create an outlook on skiing that includes personal self-assessment of skills, a desire to look at things that need fixing, and setting achievable goals for making those technical improvements in a productive and personally fulfilling manner."

Hmmm – perhaps we're getting somewhere. To check out Todd's advice, ask yourself what you want to improve on this season and why. Get specific with your answers so you know when you reach your goals. Get real and choose something that matters to you so you have the motivation to follow through.

To make this work, you need to come up with more than a fuzzy answer that boils down to, "I want to become a better skier." It can be technique or fitness related. It can be as simple as getting around your local trail system or as ambitious as skiing the Grand Traverse from Crested Butte to Aspen. Perhaps you want to keep up with your spouse on the downhill, or to kick and stick up each and every hill. It doesn't matter what it is, the important thing is that you know what you want and how it will look, feel, sound, taste, and smell when you accomplish it. (OK, three out of those five will probably do.)

Once you know what you want, figure out what you need

to work on to get there. Do you need to learn how to V-2? Improve your endurance? Figure out how to climb hills on waxable skis? Break down your end results into the elements you need to create your desired outcome. With this in hand, you're ready to make your plan.

All this is basic goal-setting stuff. If that isn't your specialty, tap the resources available online and in print that can help you set goals, create a plan that works for you, and then work the plan. Do this and your skiing will progress, but this is just the beginning. To take your skiing to *Infinity and Beyond*, you need to work that plan like a Jedi, not a Storm Trooper.

As Todd says: "Any bonehead can get stronger and more aerobically fit, but it makes absolutely no sense to put in all those long hours and not develop the skills of self-critique and the kinesthetic sense to make what are usually basic adjustments to technique. Some folks can do this on their own, while others prefer to work with friends or organized groups. This doesn't matter. The essential



Pay attention to what feels good; that may be the best way to solve the movement puzzle you're engaged with at each moment in time and space.

need is to feel what is occurring and to make adjustments in movement patterns until it feels different. (It could feel better or worse). This is a common trait among good athletes and is probably the most important factor in moving beyond the prison of natural talent."

Here are three ways to break out of your own prison and move beyond the galaxy of what you thought were your limitations.

Feelings

The ability to feel what's going on, your kinesthetic sense, comes naturally to some, but can be developed by anyone. Start right now by feeling which butt cheek has more weight on it as you sit there reading this. When you stand up, feel which foot has more weight on it. Is there more pressure on the front, arch, or heel of your foot?

As you go about your daily tasks and activities, check in with your body. Where does your foot strike the ground when you walk or run? What do you feel as you move over and then off each foot? Where does the power come from when you pedal your bike? Does it make a difference if you tense your core before doing pull-ups?

See how you can make these and other movements feel different. Run barefoot, then run in hiking boots. How do changes in how things feel affect your movements and the outcomes of your movements? (Did it make you run or walk or bike slower or faster? Can you do more or fewer pull-ups?). Pay attention to what feels good; that may be the best way to

solve the movement puzzle you're engaged with at each moment in time and space.

If you spend a little time each day recognizing and evaluating how things feel, your ability to feel and sense what's going on will improve dramatically over time.

Get Technical

We're all guilty of hitting the trail or the road or the gym and just pounding out a workout. It's understandable, and it's a missed opportunity. To boost your skills and get more out of each workout, take the time to think about what you're doing, how you're doing it, and how you could do it better. Become aware of how you adjust (and if you adjust) when the road or the trail or the bike or the weight machine or the whatever is wet or muddy or chip-sealed or slippery or someone else's.

If you make a habit of spending even 10% of your workout time analyzing how you're doing whatever you're doing (i.e. your technique), you'll develop the ability to adjust your movement patterns in response to your environment. This is the essence of what Todd calls "touch." "Touch rather than power is the preferred way to make positive corrections in skiing," he says. "Developing the ability to choose when to shift gears while touring or racing is dependent on such small adjustments in movement patterns. Racers tend to place too much emphasis on power and prescriptive training rather than life-long continual development and evolution of technique that allows for aging, changes in fitness, improvements in gear, and choice of ski goals."

Know What You're Doing

This one is simple, but not easy: have a purpose for each and every training session, workout, and ski you do. Your purpose may be getting out and blowing out the stress and

cobwebs from the day. It may be going for a ski with your family or friends. The purpose doesn't matter as much as developing the habit of setting an intention each time you head out the door. Avoid training for training's sake and you'll start making leaps toward your goals.

These three tips can be applied to any athletic activity, and most of life for that matter. Work these tips as you work your plan and you can take your skiing "To Infinity and Beyond!"

For more cross country skiing specific training advice and tips, and links to other resources, visit www.crosscountryskier.com. 

Steve Hindman lives and skis in the Pacific Northwest. He is the author of Cross Country Skiing: Building Skills for Fun and Fitness published by The Mountaineers Books.



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NEWLY MARRIED AND JUST A LITTLE TOUR

.....by Ron Watters.....



They had been going all day — and it had been long, long day. Now it was dark and it was starting to snow. Two dim figures slowly and silently skied across the bleak landscape. The wind whipped the snow in swirls around them. Nothing blocked the wind: no trees, no shelter of any kind.

The first figure was a tall man, confident and strong in form, taking long strides forward and breaking a path through the new snow. Behind him, a woman followed, less assured, less agile on the long wooden skis. In fact, she had only been on skis

maybe five or six times before. When they had started, she wasn't even sure about how to use her poles, but she was gritty and determined. "I soon learned," she wrote later of the journey, "to use my ski poles enough to help shove myself along." She was learning fast — by the doing of it.

She had no idea how her husband in front of her was finding his way in the dark and wind and snow. How could anyone? Nonetheless, she trusted him. He was the sort of person that

inspired trust from women — and men. But, conversely, he was also a risk taker, a periodic gambler and he could be unpredictable. She knew that.

Yet there was so much she didn't know about him. At the time they undertook this journey on skis, they had been married only a few months. And even before that, she really hadn't spent much time with him. She had met him one day in November of 1932, and then in late December, he left. She heard nothing from him for

Photos:

Teton Pass is the low portion in the ridge. The mountains in the background surround Jackson Hole. When Paul and Bernice crossed the pass in 1935 it was completely snowed in.

Two skiers, circa 1920s-1930s.

a year-and-a-half. Out of the blue, she received a letter from him. Then more letters. Then six months later, in another letter, he asked her to marry him.

She continued following the dark rangy form in front of her. The wind and snow steadily increased. "By nine o'clock a blizzard raged," she wrote. "At times it took all of my strength just to stand against the wind."

It would take even more strength. It was only the beginning of a ski journey that would take the couple more than 75 miles across eastern Idaho and over the towering Teton Pass and into Wyoming. She could be rightfully permitted a little sarcasm if the thought had occurred to her, "This is what newly married couples do. They go on a little ski tour . . . in a blizzard."

She probably knew what she was getting into when she agreed to his marriage proposal, but this "little" tour was the wake-up call. Sometime during that long day, it must have been plain to her beyond all doubt that life with mountaineer Paul Petzoldt was never ever going to be ordinary.

Paul and Bernice Petzoldt first met one cold evening at the campus hangout at the University of Wyoming. She was near the stove, standing, soaking in the warmth. He smiled. She noticed right off that he was a big man, but what really stood out were his eyebrows: great, white and bushy that to her "stuck out like huge frosted plumes."

Soon his frosted plumes were rising and falling as they fell into a conversation. Bernice learned that Petzoldt was a mountain guide, getting his start almost accidentally. In the summer of 1924, when he was 16, he and his friend Ralph Herron hitchhiked to Jackson Hole. Paul immediately fell in love with the Tetons and he was determined to climb the tallest of them all, the Grand Teton. The Grand Teton had first been climbed in 1898 and had only been climbed two times after that. Petzoldt and Herron hiked into the



Paul Petzoldt at the time of his first ascent of the Grand Teton - Photo courtesy of Jackson Hole Historical Society and Museum (2003.0050.052)

mountains and came back out a few days later having successfully made the summit. It caused a stir in the town of Jackson, and suddenly the 16-year-old was in demand. That same summer, he started guiding others to the summit, including the aging William Owen who had been on the first ascent of the mountain back in 1898.

The next couple of summers, he guided more, and then when Teton National Park was established in 1929, Paul Petzoldt — at 21 years of age — became the park's first official sanctioned climbing guide. Two years later, Petzoldt met Bernice Patricia McGarrity.

Bernice, who also went by her middle name Patricia, had grown up in Riverton in north central Wyoming. She considered herself

an outdoorsy gal, and didn't think twice about saying yes to her husband's plan to ski to Jackson Hole. In her childhood, she swam, ice skated, and hunted. "I was always tall for my age," she wrote in *On Top of the World*, her account of life with Paul Petzoldt. "My skin was fair and usually sun burned. As a child my knees and elbows were chronically covered with large scabs I had received when I fell out of trees or off the top of the house where I played pirate."

Something clicked during that first meeting at the University of Wyoming, and they spent considerable time together in the late fall. But when Christmas came, Petzoldt left and Bernice had no further contact. She learned later that he had gone to the University of Utah, worked at his guide business in the summer, and afterwards taken nearly a year to travel to England and then bicycle the continent. He climaxed his European trip by undertaking a remarkable double traverse of the Matterhorn, climbing from the Switzerland side to the summit, descending to Italian side, then reversing the route, climbing back to the summit a second time and returning to the Swiss side. Petzoldt's achievement on the Matterhorn cemented him

in the national and the international mountaineering community as a climber of unusual ability.

At some point on his European tour, Petzoldt's interest in Bernice was re-kindled, he started writing to her, and eventually he proposed. Raye Ringholz writes in *On Belay*, her biography of Paul Petzoldt, that Bernice wanted a Catholic wedding in Riverton. Petzoldt, who wasn't particularly religious, agreed — until he discovered what that would entail. Upon meeting with the priest, Petzoldt learned that he would have to be in good standing with the church by attending services, accepting the church's teachings and raising children in the Catholic faith. That was too much for the independent Petzoldt, who wasn't about to be corralled into one way of thinking. Instead they were married in the early summer of 1935 by a justice of the peace.

That summer, they set up a teepee beside Jenny Lake in Teton National Park. It was a combination living quarters and office for his guiding business headquarters. Bernice took care of booking and business matters while Paul made trips into the mountains with clients.

After the season was over, Petzoldt and Bernice worked out an arrangement with a wealthy eastern businessman to manage a dude ranch in Jackson Hole. It was in a perfect location, just east of the park with views of the Gros Ventre Mountains and the majestic Tetons a hop away. (The ranch eventually became known as the Ramshorn Ranch and is the current location of the Teton Science School). It was also the perfect arrangement for the newlyweds. In addition to using it as a base for the guiding business, he and Bernice would have additional income from managing the ranch, and moreover, their summer accommodations would be much improved.

They left Wyoming and spent the rest of the fall and early winter in

Biographer Ringholz described the skis that Petzoldt used in the early 1930s as made from pine wood with bindings fashioned from old machine belts. Petzoldt and Bernice joined friends for several ski outings which gave Bernice a short introduction to skiing — an introduction that would come in handy.

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Salt Lake. When Petzoldt was last in Salt Lake, attending the university, he had spent time skiing in the Wasatch Mountains.

Biographer Ringholz described the skis that Petzoldt used in the early 1930s as made from pine wood with bindings fashioned from old machine belts. Petzoldt and Bernice joined friends for several ski outings which gave Bernice a short introduction to skiing — an introduction that would come in handy.

As the new year approached, the young couple decided to head to Jackson Hole and spend Christmas at the Ramshorn Ranch. But it wasn't exactly easy to get there. "By that time," wrote Bernice in *On Top*, "Jackson's Hole was almost completely snowed in. Every two or three days a sleigh drawn by horses came over Teton Pass into Victor [Idaho] and picked up the mail. Otherwise the area was cut off from the outside world."

Their plan was to take the train from Salt Lake to the small town of Victor, which lies on the Idaho side of the Tetons. In Victor, they would catch a ride on the mail sleigh over the Teton Pass and into Jackson Hole. Along with their warm clothing and other possessions, they brought along their skis. Notwithstanding fun and recreation, the skis would come in handy to get around at the ranch.

They took a train north out of Utah called the West Yellowstone Express, which in those days was the way that many people reached Yellowstone Park. But instead of traveling all the way to Yellowstone, they got off at the town of Ashton, Idaho, 230 miles north of Salt Lake. Here they intended to take another train that ran on a spur line to Victor, 37 miles away. At Ashton, however, they were stopped.

Everyone was stopped.

The spur line was blocked by snow. "A fierce storm raged over that section of Idaho," wrote Bernice, "and the train to Victor had been stalled for two days." They gathered up their luggage, walked out in the streets of the small town, and were immediately buffeted by wind-driven snow. It became obvious why the train was held up. It was one doozy of a snowstorm. "We picked our way from the train to Ashton's one hotel, barely able to see a dozen yards ahead."

What they found at the hotel was utter chaos. It was crowded and completely full. The night clerk, in a generous gesture, let Petzoldt and Bernice have his room while he stayed with relatives. To top off the crowded conditions of the hotel, there were dogs everywhere. "When we stepped out of our rooms we had to bypass great huskies who were prowling and sniffing about. At regular intervals there were dog fights in the lobby."

They had arrived in Ashton at the same time as the annual dog sled races. There were dogs and racers and spectators, and everyone was held up waiting for the storm to end. Yet, the storm continued unabated, day after day. Even if the storm cleared, it still could be days before the railroad tracks — or roads — could be cleared. For a week, they were held up in the crowded and noisy hotel.

Finally, Paul convinced Bernice that if a break came in the storm, they should finish the rest of their journey to the ranch on skis. It was either that or head back to Salt Lake City and that option had little attraction when the cozy ranch beneath the Tetons was waiting for them.

The next day, they got their wish.

The day started clear. "We checked out of the hotel and left instructions for our bags to be sent on when the roads opened," Bernice wrote. After a breakfast, they skied off into the white terrain.

Victor, their destination, lies 37 miles to the southeast of Ashton, and between the two towns, the country is rolling and wide open, susceptible to wind, with the only trees fringing watercourses. Even today, the roads from the south and east of Ashton will often close during blizzards.

In the 1930s, there were widely spaced ranches and farms, and according to Ringholz, the couple stayed at a ranch that first night. Petzoldt knew people here and there on both the Idaho and Wyoming sides of the Tetons, and was certain that they could find places to stay along the way. The next day, it dawned clear again, but gradually as they skied on and the day progressed, the weather deteriorated. Clouds swept in and covered the sky, the light dimmed, and as the landscape lost definition, the colors drained away and the world around them turned to shades of gray.

Then it was dark. Then the blizzard set in. It became a struggle: Petzoldt in front, laboring through the newly fallen snow, trying to stay on course, with Bernice doggedly skiing in her husband's tracks, barely, at times, holding her own against the wind.

"It's only a little further, dear," Paul would say as the exhausted Bernice fought her way forward. They had been going all day, with the last five-and-a-half hours in the dark, when finally the two exhausted figures skied into Victor.

It was 11 p.m. "At that time Victor was a town of perhaps a hundred people," Bernice recalled. "There was a garage, a filling station, a café, and couple of other frame buildings." They looked around. Not a light could be seen anywhere.

"The wind and snow blinded us," Bernice continued, "making it

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impossible to see more than a few yards ahead, but after feeling our way around the corners of a building, we thought we saw a sign saying "Rooms."

Petzoldt knocked, and then pounded and then pounded vigorously on the door. They needed to get out of the weather. "Finally it opened," Bernice remembered with relief, "and we stumbled in. We were exhausted and half frozen."

The owner, surprised by the late-night knocking, and wearing only his long underwear, peered at the two snow-covered forms before him. He wasn't open for business, but how could he turn them away? He escorted them to a room and, since the room didn't have heat, he advised them to keep their door open to get what heat they could from the stove down the hall.

"Our room was bitterly cold; evidently it hadn't been used for some time," Bernice wrote recalling that the night. "The windows were stuffed with various kinds of debris." The "debris" didn't help much. Wind blew through openings in the windowsill and torn curtains flapped about.

When Bernice pulled the covers she discovered to her mortification that they would be sleeping between damp gray sheets overlaid by a ragged army blanket and a faded pink spread.

Nonetheless, she was too tired to worry about the sleeping arrangements. "I took off my ski boots, pulled the cap snugly down on my head, wound my scarf about my throat, put on my mittens, and crawled into bed. In an instant I was asleep."

There would be no sleeping in — and considering the bedding situation, Bernice probably had no desire to linger. Moreover, upon waking in the morning, she felt rested and amazingly well after the long day before. Rising before light, they were able to catch breakfast in the cafe. And then

they slipped into their skis and started off. The next leg of the journey took them over the 8,400-foot Teton Pass. They followed a narrow, winding snowbound road, leaving the open flat country, and climbing steadily in a pine and spruce forest.

Bernice was feeling more secure on her skis, and was looking forward to reaching the top and the long downhill run to the base of the pass, where Paul planned to stay with a friend. Bernice was elated when at "at six o'clock that night, after approximately 12 hours of continuous climbing, with Paul breaking trails in four or five feet of snow, we reached the top of the Teton Pass."

They started off, following the snowbound road, but Bernice hadn't really mastered the technique of skiing downhill yet. With the light gone, and with weak legs, she fell time and time again.

She hardly remembered arriving at the ranch that night, but Petzoldt's friend quickly ushered them into his warm ranch house, poured them steaming cups of coffee, and prepared a meal of elk steak. Bernice was hammered. "After a second bite of steak, I fell asleep at the table."

They still had 25 miles to go, but Gib's hospitality was too hard to pass up, and they both welcomed the rest. They stayed at the ranch for a couple of more days. Refreshed, they strapped into their skis for the last part of the journey. They took a more leisurely pace, breaking this last segment into two days, staying at one more ranch along the way. Petzoldt didn't know the owner, but the caretaker, who had been snowed in for weeks, was anxious for company and welcomed them "like old friends." That night he broke open



Patricia Petzoldt

Patricia Petzoldt reports that the Wyoming blizzard of 1949 was responsible for *On Top of the World*. This was the toughest thing had endured in sixty-five years, and, snowed in with her thirty in their homestead shack for six weeks with temperatures in the forties below zero, Pat decided to light the story together on paper the completion of the book. To celebrate the Petzoldts rushed off to Riverside, Calif., a few weeks later, sent the writer and, a few weeks later, sent the publisher. This exciting account of their world over is the result.

a bottle of Scotch whiskey and the three sat and talked into the night.

On the last day of their trip, they skied by a cabin in a patch of aspen. The cabin was occupied by a "pretty and cheerful" woman, according to Bernice. She turned out to be an author and apparently wanted a quiet and undisturbed place to write. She certainly had found it that winter. While she was doing just fine on her own, she did have one problem. She had been invaded by a gaggle of cats that had collected around her cabin. She was feeding them canned milk, but the milk was quickly running out. She pleaded with Paul and Bernice to take at least one of the cats off her hands.

Before they could say much more, the woman grabbed one of the cats, stuffed it into a gunnysack and gave Paul the wriggling creature. Paul reluctantly accepted, slinging the gunnysack over his shoulder, and the couple skied off for the remainder of the way. Amazingly, the cat stayed calm — for a while. After they had skied about a mile, it suddenly came to life. Screeching and clawing, it erupted out of the bag and stood in the snow hissing. Paul was for leaving it there in the snow, but Bernice would not have it. Eventually, Paul delicately picked it up — this time forgoing the bag. Bernice carried his poles while Paul shuffled along holding the cat at arms length.

Then, at last, the newlyweds (plus one cat) reached the ranch. Their journey was complete. There they spent the next few weeks fixing up the cabins. In the afternoons, they would slip on their skis and take off to the hills above the ranch, watching game and enjoying the mountain scenery.

Regularly, they skied to the Kelly post office, five miles from the ranch, to pick up mail and tidbits of news. They had no way of knowing that, in a few short years, the country would become embroiled in World War II.

But that was in the future. For them, their stay at the ranch was an idyllic interlude, a quiet time, tucked away in the snowbound valley and removed from the cares of the rest of the world.

RESOURCES

Patricia Petzoldt, *My Adventures with My Mountain-Climbing Husband* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1953). Bernice (Patricia) Petzoldt's book is an engaging story of her life with Paul Petzoldt. It's not a "tell-it-all" book, so common these days, and Bernice Petzoldt was not a professional writer, but she is very readable, every so often surprising with an insightful gem. The 1953 book is long out of print but may be obtained through interlibrary loan.

Raye C. Ringholz, *On Belay: The Life of Legendary Mountaineer Paul Petzoldt* (Seattle: The Mountaineers,

1997). Ringholz, who knew Petzoldt for 30 years, exhibits a full-face portrait of the man from his mountaineering achievements to his involvement in the outdoor education field, starting both the National Outdoor Leadership School and Wilderness Education Association. No longer in print, used copies of the book are easily obtained through Internet bookstores.

Jackson Hole Historical Society and Museum. If you are visiting Teton National Park, stop in the newly opened Jackson Hole Museum located at 225 North Cache — or visit their website from your own home. They graciously provided the photograph (used in this article) of 16-year old Paul Petzoldt taken at the time of his first ascent of the Grand Teton. 

Ron Watters couldn't be happier when it's cold and snowy. He is the author of eight books including Winter Tales and Trails and Ski Camping. Working to recognize good outdoor writing by others, he is the founder and chairman of the national Outdoor Book Awards, the largest book award program in the outdoor world. He and his wife, and cross country ski companion, Kathy live in Pocatello, Idaho with Lizzy, and Australian Shepherd, and Scrapper and Annie, their two geriatric cats.

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