

The PackRat



Newsletter of the Rocky Mountain Ramblers Association

February/March 2002



PHOTO CREDIT:DAVE LYDERS-REID

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The Packrat is published six times a year by the Rocky Mountain Ramblers Association. We welcome comments, articles, and ideas from our members and, if content is deemed suitable, will be used as space permits. Submissions can be e-mailed to the newsletter editor at packrat@ramblers.ab.ca or send contributions to RMRA c/o Calgary Area Outdoor Council, 1111 Memorial Drive NW, Calgary, AB T2N 3E4. Copyright 2002 by the Rocky Mountain Ramblers Association.

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President's Report...

By Ron Hunter

With winter seemingly taking a vacation this year, it is going to be hard to define the end of the hiking season. Judging by the hikes that continue to be called, we will probably just continue right into spring. We are also fortunate to have enough snow in the higher areas to keep the cross-country skiing going, certainly enough for John to call a Peter Loughheed Park trip every week!

Our last executive meeting in early January covered a few topics:

- ❖ Keith will be having a Safety Committee meeting, some areas of discussion will be accident reporting procedure and carrying of adequate clothing by trip participants. At a recent accident involving a broken ankle on a cold day, some participants chilled down quickly when they were no longer actively skiing. Call Keith if you would like to participate on the committee.
- ❖ Finances remain in good shape, largely because our 207 members include a lot of renewals compared to prior years—maybe hikers are renewing early to access the Member's area on the website or to receive the PackRat.
- ❖ Bob has updated the General Information Guide, on the website, to account for the By-law updates and a new map and compass section. Some updated paper copies will be printed and available to the members.
- ❖ Keith is arranging a website training session, if you would like to participate give him a call.
- ❖ A motion was passed that the PackRat be mailed out the first Wednesday that it is available.
- ❖ Calgary Area Outdoor Council is organizing a forum/panel to discuss insurance and liability issues in February. We expect to have some representation. If you have any topics that you think we should address, please call me and we can ask that they be put on the agenda. We will announce when the date is finalized so you can attend if you are interested.

Better get out and enjoy the winter, it may not last too long this year!



Program Director's Report...

By Carl Potter

David Finch on the Life and Times of R.M. Patterson

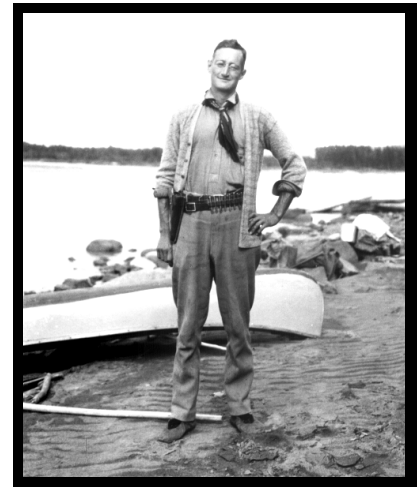
Chances are that if you have done much hiking in the Highwood River region, or enjoy books on the Canadian outdoors, you have heard of Raymond M. Patterson and the Buffalo Head Ranch.

Patterson was an English gentleman who graduated from Oxford University and came to Canada on a lark in 1924 and stayed to become a legend of romance and adventure as an explorer, rancher, fur trapper and writer of five books, including *The Buffalo Head* – a book about his adventures on his ranch on the Highwood River. Exotic place names like the Hill of the Flowers and Lake of the Horns were his legacy as he explored and hunted in the southern Alberta Rocky Mountains. He is also the first person to photograph the Falls of the Nahanni River, and author of the book, *The Dangerous River*. His books were among the first to publicize the wilderness of western Canada.

The Rocky Mountain Ramblers will be able to experience some of the stories of R.M. Patterson and view slides of his original photographs on Wednesday, February 20, as author, David Finch, gives his presentation on his new book, *The Life and Times of R.M. Patterson*, published by Rocky Mountain Books.

Born in pre-revolutionary Cuba, David Finch is the only son of Canadian missionaries. He earned a Master's Degree in post confederation Canadian history at the University of Calgary. He currently lives in Calgary, where he earns a living by writing, teaching, and researching the history of the Canadian West.

He is also an avid hiker and enjoys organizing hikes and backpacks in Patterson country. For instance, he is hoping this year to do a trip into Mt. Patterson in the Highwood Range immediately north of Mt. Head. This wild country at the head of Head Creek is even more interesting when enlivened by remem-



R.M. Patterson on the Nahanni
Summer of 1927

brance of Patterson's escapades.

You can preview a chapter on the publisher's website: www.rmbooks.com/books/finrmp.htm.

Neil Hartling, author of *Nahanni: River of Gold...River of Dreams*, writes: "Finch's biography of the great storyteller, R.M. Patterson, is destined to be a classic along with R.M.'s original works. Finch capitalizes on Patterson's eloquence, and keen powers of observation to create a 'must read' for northern explorers and armchair adventures alike."

Other Programs Coming Up

February 13

Slides of Mt. Logan Ascent

Bob St. John, Rick Collier, Arnold Westberg

February 20

David Finch on the Life & Times of R.M. Patterson

March 06

Saudi Arabia in the '70s by D. Mulligan

Activities
Hiking, Backpacking, Skiing, Cycling, Climbing, Scrambling, and Mountaineering, Education and Awareness Programs, Social Functions

Meetings
Every Wednesday evening at 7:30 p.m.

Mail
Rocky Mountain Ramblers Association
c/o Calgary Area Outdoor Council (CAOC)
1111 Memorial Drive NW
Calgary, AB T2N 3E4

Trip Info
282-6308 Information Line and at Meetings

Website
The Packrat is also available on the RMRA website at <http://www.ramblers.ab.ca>. If we have your email address, you will be automatically notified that an electronic copy of the Packrat is available on the website.

From the Membership Director

By Diane Lyders-Reid



WHAT TO DO

If renewing by mail:

Please send a completed application form as well as a cheque.

If renewing at the trailhead:

Please pay by cheque only and make sure that the coordinator is willing to take your payment and your application form.

If your personal information changed:

You can update your personal information yourself (address, phone number and e-mail) on the web site in the member's area www.ramblers.ab.ca.

If you wish to make your email address known to other members:

You can click on the {Yes} box on your membership application that is available on the website.

Is the Correct Term Hiking, Sniking or Snalking?

By Diane Lyders-Reid

Most Ramblers prefer to ski or snowshoe during the winter season.

Some members however, like to continue hiking. In the interests of accuracy the trip guide should describe these activities as one of the two listed below.

Sniking (Snow Hiking)

Definition: A winter activity with no equipment strapped to the feet other than hiking boots; snow will be encountered, but never more than 50% of the time.

Snow will usually be no deeper than to the tops of the boots. Gaiters may be desirable but

not mandatory. Most of the snow will be encountered in the trees or sheltered areas.

People engaging in this activity are not certifiable, but have some difficulty in distinguishing reality. They usually demonstrate a reluctance to believe it really is winter.

The exception to this is, if there has been a month-long Chinook, normal people can also take part in this activity without being classified as **Sniking Kooks**.

Snalking (Snow Walking)

Definition: a winter activity with no equipment on the feet

other than hiking boots; snow will be encountered more than 50% of the time. Snow will usually be well above the tops of the boot.

Participants are likely to fall through the crust into holes which may be groin deep. Gaiters are mandatory, snowshoes preferable. Snow is encountered not just in sheltered areas but south facing slopes as well.

People engaging in this activity are usually delusional, and unable to accept the fact that it is not summer.

People (**known as snalking idgets**) engaging in this activity usually have a certificate from their psychiatrists confirming their condition.

It is mandatory for the trip coordinator to have this certificate.

Coordinators running these trips usually want the other participants to be certifiable as well.

***Note:** Photo unavailable., photographer and camera disappeared down a large hole. It is expected they will be recovered in the spring.*



Columbia River Kayak

By Bob St. John



Chris and Al on Columbia Lake

Dates: July 14 - 30, 2001
Where: Canal Flats to Revelstoke, BC
Participants: Al Dunham, Bob St. John, and Chris Beers (for first two days)
Statistics: 550 km, buckets of rain, 6 fish

Al had planned this trip three months prior, and I joined on two weeks before the start after it seemed my frost-bitten thumb was ready for the real world again. Originally, we had planned to end at Castlegar, but rainy weather dampened our enthusiasm after 550 km or so of paddling. We counted 3 days out of 16 where it did not rain, and the remaining 13 had a mix of showers or full-on rain accompanied by head winds. Actually rain does not matter much once in the kayak, but day after day of setting up and breaking camp in the rain was a drag.

The trip can be broken into three sections: Canal Flats to Golden (wetlands), Golden to Kinbasket Lake (rapids), and the lakes (Kinbasket and

Revelstoke). Although one could call this a 'river' trip, it was basically 80% lake paddling with 20% interconnecting river. We both had Nimbus Telkwa ocean kayaks. I rented mine from the U of C, which was a good deal. For \$260 I had the boat for 4 weeks, and I got \$100 back for an early return! One can easily pack about 3 backpacks worth of stuff in the fore and aft storage compartments. This made camping somewhat more luxurious with without worrying about weight (outback cooking oven, fishing gear, hiking boots, etc).

Canal Flats to Golden

Three of us paddled across Columbia Lake in sunny warm weather. The interconnecting river to Windermere Lake was

quite similar to the lower stretches of the Elbow with some frisky ripples thrown in. We made it to Windermere Lake, and camped on the eastern shore. Chris left us at Invermere, and also took the good weather with her.

From here on, we only had one more great day weather-wise. From Invermere to Golden, the river follows a lazy serpentine route through the Columbia wetlands. We were fooled a couple of times with the many channels leading in and out of swamps.

Finding dry campsites became a problem. We found the best ones where a branch of the river came to the west side of the valley. A bug shirt is highly recommended in this portion of the trip.

There is a lot of wildlife here as well (eagles, osprey, beavers, a bear or two). This stretch may be better in the early Fall with the trees turning colour, and the bugs down a bit. Several options for day trips exist as well along this stretch

Golden to Kinbasket

This had a fun 10 km stretch with a series of three class 2 rapids followed by a class 3. They are mainly rollers and standing waves. We did not see or hit any rocks, but in lower water levels rocks may be a hazard. The Telkwa boats were very stable in the rapids - their length (18 feet) and low center of gravity helped.

Typically, the bow would slice

through a wave and be in the next trough as you get drenched. Some waves came up head high (6 feet trough to crest). A few holes also proved to be exciting. The class 3 can be portaged along the old CPR rail bed, but we felt lucky, and made it through just fine. After the rapids, the river flows into Kinbasket Lake near where the Beaver River enters.

Kinbasket and Revelstoke Lakes

The Telkwas were ideal for these lakes, almost mini-oceans. The main hazard is wind that can quickly turn a glassy surface into three foot chop. We found the early morning to be most calm, so we subsequently were on the water before 7 am. Generally we paddled 25 to 35 km over 5 or 6 hours. With a good tailwind (one day only) we made 40 km in 5 hours, during which Al successfully experimented with kite power.

Camping spots were not too plentiful, as Kinbasket water levels were about 50 feet below maximum. This meant that most lakeshore was steep and rocky. The best spots were where streams entered and have formed their own deltas. These were also the best places to fish for Rainbows and Kokanee. The fishing was not particularly great (6 Rainbows and Kokanee altogether) which

made the "fishing license fee/pound of fish" rather high. We suffered several wet camps with the worst bringing water through the tent floor. We half expected this as the current ACC General Mountaineering Camp, a known rain magnet, was in the vicinity.

The Mica Dam was a long portage (10 km, 600 feet vertical), but Hydro is supposed to provide a lift around their dams. While Al portaged his boat on a cart we brought for this purpose, I managed to get a Hydro employee to drive mine around.

Revelstoke Lake is maintained at a constant water level, and was more like a lake than a reservoir. There were several Provincial Forestry Camp sites and natural pullouts making camp selection a lot easier



PHOTO CREDIT: BOBST, JEAN

A Canadian moment.

than on Kinbasket. The weather did not improve, and the last day gave us head winds, rain, and whitecaps. To facilitate a speedier portage of Revelstoke dam, I pulled out at a Provincial Park 10 km above the dam, while Al portaged using the cart, and made it to

Revelstoke where Chris picked him up. The weather forecast was for more of the same. I decided to make this the end of the trip for me, and Al would continue down the Arrow Lakes to Castlegar, a further 250 km, when and if the weather improved. All in all it was a worthwhile experience. Nicer weather would have made it a great experience. I did have several "Canadian Moments" where, as loons called out, my kayak cut an early morning, mirrored surface reflecting high snowy peaks. Really, ...it did happen, honest.

After a week, the weather cleared up, and Al finished the trip in leisurely style with full-on summer sunshine.

There is still time left to submit your cross-country ski quiz to Ken Park. Prize draws will be held on February 13. You can win dinner for two just for entering. Call Ken at 244-6809 if you need more information.

A Former Rambler Remembers...

The following e-mail message was received in the Ramblers' mailbox recently. Art Borron, the author, has graciously consented to publish this memoir in the Packrat.

While browsing the Internet I came across your excellent web site for the first time and was particularly interested in that part of the latest PackRat wherein Wally Drew wrote a *Thank You Note* with reference to his brain surgery. I was pleased to read that he is making a speedy recovery.

In the early 60's, I was on several of his day trips. One memorable ski trip was at Christmas time. Tod Mountain had just opened their ski hill and Wally led a trip there. Tom and Ruth Thurston and possibly one other, my memory is failing, set off in Wally's new Plymouth for a skiing holiday. Except for one other time in Manitoba, this was my first skiing. With rented boots and skis that pointed in every direction except the direction my body was pointed, I took the poma lift up the bunny run.

After the first hour, I would have given up skiing completely except there was nothing else to do. That and the next several days was a humbling experience although Wally, et al seemed to have no difficulties. On the way home Wally who was a fresh air fiend drove with his window down. Tom and I rode in the

back seat with our hats pulled over our ears and with either down bags or blankets wrapped around the rest of us. Ruth who was in front discreetly kept her window closed. Along the way Wally treated us to a Christmas Dinner. Even forty years later such events are remembered with appreciation. So, thanks again, Wally.

In those days, Wally set a high standard as a trip leader for the rest of us and I expect that after all this time, he has set the bar at a very high level as a challenge for the present generation of leaders to emulate.

In a subsequent e-mail, Art elaborates on Wally's new Plymouth.

I mentioned that we went in Wally's new Plymouth. This might help establish the year. Wally was not the type to walk in to a dealer's showroom to pick up anything that was available. It was a special order as to engine, colour etc. In due course the new car arrived in Calgary but "the best laid plans of mice and men, etc." On the first outing outside of the city the motor seized up because of a defective oil seal. The motor was replaced and the car ran perfectly after that but the event was traumatic enough that Wally should be able to pinpoint the year.

Name issue is getting silly

By Bob St. John

The club has an assortment of options that members can employ to control how their name and personal information appears, if at all, on club documents, both printed and online.

Real Name: The Association needs your full name (first name, last name) for club records. Neither regular members nor the general public can see it. Executive members may use it from time to time to mail the Packrat or notices to you.

Public Name: This is the name that will be used on club documents such as the Membership List, The Packrat, and Trip Reports. Regular members and the general public may see these documents both in printed and online versions.

Members can choose from three basic options for their Public Name:

- ❖ **Real Name:** This is the default.
- ❖ **Blank, or None:** Your name will not appear in any documents.
- ❖ **Abbreviated:** Such as found in phone books.

Club documents, both printed and online, are 'out there'. Some members want to split hairs by arguing that some documents, mostly the online versions, are 'more out there' than others, and are

fearful of imagined consequences. Contrary to their perceptions, studies show that it is those closest to you that present the most risk of harassment. These members feel that having their full name with their address and phone number printed on hundreds of Membership Lists circulating who knows where, is less of a threat than having their Public Name alone buried somewhere in an online Packrat.

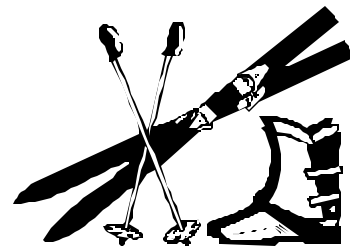
I am in no way trivializing the need for members to decide for themselves what exposure, if any, they wish for their name in club documents. What I do think is needed is consistency. A guide for your choice of Public Name may be in how your name appears in the mother of all public documents, the phone book. If you are unlisted, then a Blank Public Name may be appropriate. You would not be listed on the Members List, or appear in Packrats or Trip Reports, either printed or online. Otherwise you will be listed, and perhaps mentioned in Packrats or Trips Reports, with your choice of either your real name or an abbreviation.

You control whether your address, phone number, or email address appears on the Membership List, either printed or online. Otherwise they are not used in docu-

ments, either printed or online, without your permission.

I believe the club has acted responsibly in offering these privacy options to its members. Unfortunately there is at least one member who wishes to complicate matters further by having the club provide even more options for names depending on the document. I do not understand how they can justify their name and phone number appearing in nearly a million Calgary phone books, yet quake at having their choice of name appearing alone in a Packrat. It's getting silly.

**FOR
SALE**



HEAD skis 185 cm, poles and Salomon SX41 boots size 10, all in very good condition, hardly used. \$100. Call Irene at 281-4199.

BC Government Cutbacks Threaten CAA'S Public Avalanche Bulletin!

If you haven't already heard, the Canadian Avalanche Association (CAA) in Revelstoke, BC has been told that it may lose the \$37,500 in annual BC government funding it uses to support its Public Avalanche Bulletin service.

The CAA has indicated that, should the BC government funding not continue, it is a very real possibility that it will have to eliminate the service as early as mid-winter this year.

The Alpine Club of Canada, which provides financial support to the CAA, believes the Bulletin is an essential public safety service and that its elimination would have serious negative impacts on all alpine backcountry users and the mountaineering community. Lives will be unnecessarily lost! In addition, the money the BC government might "save" each year through the funding cuts would be more than used up on avalanche search and rescue missions that would be unnecessary if the service stayed in place.

We strongly urge you to email, call or write to those in the BC government with decision-making authority and encourage them to reconsider their planned funding cuts. The CAA is not just looking for government handouts. If necessary, it is fully prepared to look at a partnership arrangement in which the government continues to provide funding and the CAA raises new matching funds from the mountaineering community.

A list of those you should contact in the BC government to voice your opinion is shown below. As well, please contact applicable decision-makers in the Alberta government to encourage them to consider providing financial support for the Bulletin service. It is estimated that approximately 42% of those that currently use the service are Albertans, yet the Alberta government does not provide any funding support to the CAA.

Finally, contact federal government decision-makers as well the Feds provide no financial support to the CAA, yet the public safety aspects of the Bulletin service are no different than similar services the Feds provide to other groups such as boaters and pilots.

Bruce Keith, Executive Director,
ALPINE CLUB OF CANADA

PACKRAT ADVERTISING RATES

The club offers advertising space in PackRat and the following rates apply:

Quarter Page \$10

Half Page \$20

Full Page \$40

Payment **MUST** be received prior to publication.

**Deadline
for next PackRat
March 20, 2002**



BC GOVERNMENT CONTACTS

Hon. Gordon Campbell, Premier

email: premier@gov.bc.ca

phone: 250-387-1715

write: PO Box 9409, Stn Prov Govt, Victoria, BC V8W 9V1

Hon. Michael DeJong, Minister of Forests

(currently provides \$5,000 in funding)

email: mike.dejong.mla@leg.bc.ca

phone: 250-387-6240

write: PO Box 9529, Stn Prov Govt, Victoria, BC V8W 9C3

Hon. Rich Coleman, Minister of Public Safety & Solicitor General

(currently provides \$20,000 in funding)

email: SG.Minister@gems1.gov.bc.ca

phone: 250-356-7717

write: PO Box 9282, Stn Prov Govt, Victoria, BC V8W 9J7

Hon. Stan Hagen, Minister of Sustainable Resource Management

(currently provides \$2,500 in funding through its "BC Assets and Land Corporation", or BCAL - see below)

email: stan.hagen.mla@leg.bc.ca

phone: 250-356-9076

write: PO Box 9362, Stn Prov Govt, Victoria, BC V8W 9M2

Mr. Bill Valentine, President and CEO, BCAL (and Deputy Minister of Sustainable Resource Management)

email: BCALinfo@gems1.gov.bc.ca

phone: 250-952-6246

Hon. Joyce Murray, Minister of Water, Land & Air Protection

(currently provides \$10,000 in funding)

email: joyce.murray.mla@leg.bc.ca

phone: 250-387-1187

mail: PO Box 9360, Stn Prov Govt, Victoria, BC V8W 9M2

Travel Night Slide Shows

Hostelling International - Southern Alberta is pleased to Travel Night slide shows on the last Wednesday of every month. All shows will be held at the Hillhurst-Sunnyside Community Centre (1320 - 5 Ave. NW) and start at 7 pm sharp. Admission is FREE for HI members and \$3 for the general public. For more information, call the regional office at (403) 283-5551.

Feb 27 Burma, Bhutan & Nepal

Mar 27 Venice, Prague, Amsterdam & Rome

Apr 24 Greek Islands

May 29 Mount Logan



February 22-24

X-C Ski Weekend Getaway

You can still sign up for this fabulous trip and enjoy the many trails of Banff and Yoho with Ken Park. Call him at 244-6809 to reserve your spot.

It Can Happen to Everybody

By Evan J. Weselake

I am writing this with the intention of sending some sort of 'incident report' to CAA. In the meantime, I know that many friends will find their way out into the backcountry to ski in the next few weeks and would benefit from the particulars. If anyone has questions or comments, feel free to mail me. I'll answer anything that is positive or curious evanjw@telusplanet.net

This incident occurred Tuesday, December 18th, 2:30 in Kananaskis, just south of Engadine Lodge/Mt Shark at an area off the Spray Lakes Hwy. -15C. 40 km West wind. Scattered Clouds.

We had dug multiple shovel tests and I had personally ski cut each slope before proceeding down, including the one in question. During the shovel test, we had identified one suspect layer approx. 65 cm down. This came off as a moderate shear, and broken. Together with probe tests and ski cuts we decided that skiing one at a time would be safe, and acceptable.

The particulars: 1st and 2nd runs were down 35 - 40 degree slopes, no settling, no movement of even surface sluff. Slopes ran approx. 75 m in length to an opening, no terrain traps. All our skiing was below the tree line, with

open glades. Given the topography there were blatant chutes that were avoided. Everything faced North. Depending on your exact position, one could feel the wind, but most often, we were sheltered.

So why did the third run/slope slide?

- a) Steeper, 45 degrees.
- b) In that immediate area, (start zone) there were no trees for 10' left, 25' right and 10' down. Post slide you could see that this was due to the rock formation under the snow. In short no anchors for the slab.
- c) Looking down from the top one could see a minor wind lip. Indicating that given a different wind direction, there would be significant wind affect in that specific area. Wind affect that did not occur 20 meters left or right, on the slopes previously skied.
- d) Even though I did ski cut the top, I did not cut the steepest section. Although at that point you are already 'In'.

After examining the run out, I would rate it a Class 1.5 The Crown measured 80 cm in depth X 250 meters width, and the slide went approx. 60 meters down to where the

slope ended. I took about a 35-40 meter ride, the first set of larches tore off my left ski, and I stopped wrapped around the second set of larches.

It is amazing to me how much time one has to think in a situation like that. I know from courses and practice scenarios what people say and recommend: 'try and ski out', 'swim on the snow', and 'make yourself into a ball'. In a 15 - 20 second ride, will you really be able to do, or think any of that. YES, it all happens, your mind goes into overdrive, and you think many other things as well. I had time to try and ski it, that didn't work! I had time to try and swim, that didn't work. I had time to curl into a ball, that did work! I rose higher in the snow, could feel it happening, and could see green again. Green is nice. I did feel the snow mass slowing and coming to a stop. You do have the opportunity, to create an air space, and at the last moment to reach up. Fortunately the same tree that stopped me, created an opening to see through, reach through, and breath through.

I thought about my pack, my other ski, where both Ryan and Naomi were, the last thing I saw, and which way was up. Mostly I thought, 'they'll find me, my job is to not get hurt, and keep breathing. Breath

slowly'. 'Ryan saw the whole thing, both know how to use their gear, both practice.' It was quite comforting actually. Backcountry has become popular and many people now own beacons, shovels, and probes. Does anyone, actually practice with them? Yes, I do, and so do those two people. Thank you. I was out there with two people who I trust implicitly and that had every thing to do with my staying calm.

I was blessed three times in that afternoon. First by not being severely injured during the slide, second when I stopped and had a clear air way, and third, when two long minutes after being freed of the snow, Indiana (dog), walked up around the trees, uninjured, unburied, unshaken. Thank you.

I fully intend to keep touring and ski mountaineering, I also intend to practice even more. I've done probably three major search scenarios per year for the last five years. Multiple burials, probing for packs, search patterns with Indy, etc. When you are the one who is under, you are at the mercy of your friends practice, and I would like to pass on the confidence that I had in their abilities.

Thank you Naomi and Ryan for all the time you have ever put into playing and practicing with your gear, it made a difference to me.

See you all out there!



Bring your favourite dessert to share; also, a plate, fork and cup. Coffee and punch will be supplied. For more information, call Anita O'Reilly 281-9378.

Did you know?

- ❖ Cross-country skiing is one of the oldest winter sports. Cave paintings of skiers dating back to before 1000 BC have been discovered in Sweden and Norway.
- ❖ The ancestors of today's cross-country skiers used only one pole and large animal bone skis.
- ❖ Cross-country skiing was introduced in North America in the 19th century. Some prospectors traveled on skis during the Gold Rush.
- ❖ Cross-country skiing became an Olympic discipline at the 1924 Olympic Winter Games in Chamonix.
- ❖ Cross-country skiing is as important to Norwegians as hockey is to Canadians.