

Volume 60
Number 3

Potomac Valley Skiers, Inc.
WASHINGTON MARYLAND VIRGINIA

March 2025

www.pvskiers.org

info@pvskiers.org

President's Message :

I am writing this message after just returning from a trip to Mammoth Mountain with the Snow Searchers Ski Club, a Northern Virginia ski club that is about the same size as PVS. As previously discussed in my Toot messages, we have explored whether we could have a "relationship" with the Snow Searchers, as they are also losing membership due to people aging out of skiing. Given this, I thought it would be interesting to go on a Snow Searchers trip to meet, and ski with, some of their members and see if we could attract any of them to our Snowmass trip. There were 30 people on the Mammoth trip; about 11 of them were younger people from Charlottesville. Other than one Charlottesville couple who had an older parent on the trip, the Charlottesville contingent did not ski or socialize with the rest of the group. I skied with a group of about 6 - 7 people and did get a chance to meet many of the people on the trip. Now to the trip details.

I have been told that the Snow Searchers like bargains, and, indeed, the Mammoth trip was considerably less expensive than Snowmass. The trip included accommodations at a lodge that was about a 50-yard walk from the mountain (two-bedroom condos with a central living space and kitchen), air fare, lift tickets (free for anyone over 80), a welcome breakfast and a pizza dinner at a local restaurant. In my opinion, neither the welcome breakfast nor the pizza dinner was very good. There were no other meals included with the trip. There were two ad hoc après ski parties where people made contributions from food they had purchased.

The condos were fine – unlike our rooms at the Mountain Chalet, we had both heat and hot water at any time during the day. There was a nice outdoor swimming pool and several hot tubs. Near the end of the trip, I did use both the hot tub and the pool one day, as the weather was warm and sunny. Being able to make breakfast, and even dinner, has some advantages, but does not lead to group togetherness. We shared a condo with two men, long-time friends who had sailed together for many years – they each owned a 40-foot sailboat. They cooked dinner in the condo most nights – Bob and I sampled local restaurants, and had some very good meals. The first night, a group of people went to John's, a very good

local pizza restaurant, and we all sat at a big table together. The second night, we went to a restaurant called The Mogul Restaurant with our condo mates. Bob and I shared an excellent prime rib. Near the end of the trip, we were invited last minute by Dick Hubbard, the president of Snow Searchers, to join a group of people going to a restaurant called the Warming Hut – Bob and I shared a very reasonably priced and very good prime rib and I had strawberry shortcake for dessert. Other nights, Bob and I went out alone – we went to a Mexican restaurant called Roberto's, which served huge portions and a good margarita, but was not as good as Venga, Venga. We also went to the Harmony Brazilian Steakhouse, where we shared a steak – I would not recommend this restaurant, as the steak was overcooked and the salad bar was prosaic. We probably should have opted for the all you can eat steak, pork, and



Annual Business Meeting

**Saturday, April 5th at
1:00 PM**

**Bob & Clara Jablon's home
Washington, DC**

chicken option, but that option was very expensive. Of note, the Fuego de Chao steakhouse in downtown D.C. has a similar all you can eat menu with a fabulous salad, and is very reasonably priced. The last night one of our condo mates cooked and invited a group of people for the meal.

Now, about the airline trip – we left DCA on a 7 am flight on a Saturday, requiring us to be at the Airport by 5:30 a.m. – it is amazing how crowded DCA is at that hour. Bob, who does not like early flights, was not very happy with this schedule. First, we flew to Phoenix and then to Reno, where we boarded a bus for the ski area. The bus trip there took about 4 ½ hours due to snowy conditions in the mountains; our return bus trip was about 3 ½ hours. For me, the drive from Reno to Mammoth was a highlight of the trip – we drove through valleys surrounded by tall mountains, mountain passes, a lake with mountains rising from its shores, small towns, and ranch land with grazing cattle and horses. In some places, the scenery was reminiscent of the drive from Santa Fe to Taos, with lots of sagebrush, evergreen trees, and beautiful mountains.

On our return, we had to get up at 3 a.m. to get our luggage out by 3:30 a.m. and get on the bus by 4:30 – we arrived at about 8 a.m. for our 9:57 flight back to Reno. The flight was delayed because the plane was too heavy, and we only could leave after three people volunteered to take a later flight (the airline made a cash offer of \$750/person, and two people in our group accepted the offer). Because of the late departure, we had to scurry in Phoenix to catch the DCA flight and make our way through about ten long moving walkways and more to get from the middle of the B gates to the end of the A gates. Boarding was complete when we arrived. Fortunately, American Airlines held the plane and even got our luggage onboard.

Of course, I went to ski and I have not yet talked about the ski area. Based on the trail map, Mammoth appears to be a very large ski area, with 25 chairlifts and a gondola. The reality is that many of the chairlifts are short and the runs not very long. Some of the blues are classified as “blue/black” – these are really not any different than the blues at Snowmass. The top part of many of the blue and blue/black runs had an interesting pitch, but the bottom part of many runs was quite flat – a lot of polling involved. For the expert skiers, there is a good bit of black terrain on the top of the mountain. Other than one bump run and a short groomed steep black, I did not ski the black runs. I also skied a bump run that was classified as a blue/black, with larger bumps on top than “Jack of Hearts” at Snowmass. Our group did take the gondola to the top of the mountain, and skied down the one intermediate trail, the first part of which was a narrow catwalk.



The first day, there was snow most of the day. The trip leader had arranged for us to have mountain tours, and we self-divided into four groups. I picked the blue group along with one other trip member (Warren) and we had a wonderful guide named Tako, who, over the three hours of the tour, took us from one end of the mountain (where our lodge was located) to the other end and back. The mountain was extremely crowded that morning, as it was a Sunday and the mountain attracts a lot of weekend skiers from L.A. and Orange County. The next day, I skied with Warren and a group of four other people who joined us. We were amazed to see that the crowds had left and the lift lines were negligible. In the morning, the temperature was 16, but warmed up later in the day. Over the course of the week, I skied with the same group of people, with a few additions or subtractions each day. We had nice weather, with lots of sunshine, and the temperature rising over the course of the week. On Thursday, I was very hot in the afternoon, as the temperature went into the 40s. The snow was heavier than Colorado snow, but the grooming on the

mountain was good. Friday, there was a considerable amount of slick snow (in the east, we call it ice), inevitable when the temperature gets well above freezing during the day and then falls below freezing at night. The mountain also was considerably more crowded, as many people appeared to be coming for a long weekend. That day, I fell making a turn slipping on a patch of ice. My thumb is still bruised, and I had to make a trip down to a ski shop in Mammoth Lakes to fix my boot heater because I broke the apparatus that attaches the heater to the boot on the fall. Fortunately, it was still covered by the Hotronic warranty and was easily fixed.

For lunch on the mountain, there are five lodges spread across the bottom of the mountain, one in the center, and one on top. However, the ski area does not have a base village or mall like Snowmass. For restaurants and services, it was necessary to take a bus, or in some cases, two buses, from our condo lodge to the town of Mammoth Lakes. At night, there was a “trolley” (a bus that looked like a trolley) that ran from our lodge to town every half hour; there was also a

night shuttle bus on call that serviced the hotel and was very convenient to get down to the restaurants in town and back to the lodge. The “town” itself is very spread out, and consists largely of various little shopping centers or streets with low-rise condos intermixed with restaurants and other businesses – there is no distinct town center like Aspen.

The bottom line is that, although I had a good time, I would not recommend a trip to Mammoth Mountain – it is not easily accessible, the blue runs are not all that interesting, the mountain is very crowded on weekends, the transportation into town is somewhat complicated, and the snow is not as good as Colorado. If you happen to find yourself in Mammoth Lakes, there are some good restaurants, many of which are quite reasonably priced. I enjoyed skiing with the Snow Searchers and getting to know some members of the group. There may be some members of the Snow Searchers who would be interested in our Snowmass trip. We also may be able to arrange a joint trip to another destination with them. My understanding is that BRSC is planning a trip to Banff next winter – the Snow Searchers went there a few years ago and apparently are not particularly interested in going there again. I hope that we can work something out, as I believe that members of PVS and the Snow Searchers would be compatible and enjoy a trip together.

Cara Jablon, PVS President

Coming Events

Mark Your Calendars!

After our festive holiday party in January, we are taking a respite from PVS meetings in February and March. We return in April to our “every-other-month” meeting in members’ homes.

Saturday, April 5, 2025, 1:00 p.m. at the home of Cara and Bob Jablon (directions to follow). This will be our annual meeting with elections, Members will bring either an appetizer, salad or dessert. Please let the Jablons know if you are coming, and what you will bring. 202-333-5332 or rcjablon@aol.com

And, for the rest of the year.....

The planned calendar for meetings in 2025:

May – No meeting

June – Summerfest (members bring an appetizer, salad or dessert)

July and August – vacation time! No meetings

September – meeting with a \$5 charge, so no food to be brought

October – No meeting...too busy getting ready for Halloween!

November – meeting with a \$5 charge, so no food to be brought

December Holiday Party – bring lots of food and lots of cheer!

The club is in need of hosts who will have a meeting in their home in September and November. Please check with Marianne Soponis for information and support (202-353-5250 or Marianne.soponis@gmail.com)



CANDIDATES FOR PVS OFFICES IN 2025



BOB JABLON – CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENT

This is based on my past biography – I apologize for the repetition, but unlike some I change my history only to a limited degree. I am told that I was born in October, 1939. I have no real proof because my birth certificate did not contain my name. If, as they sometimes were, my parents were to be believed, up to then I was the most premature baby to be born and survive. Thus, nobody completed my certificate. As is true in life, skiing has survival risks. Therefore, I find my premature birth is thus relevant to PVS. I was born on a small island off the Atlantic coast, Manhattan, but my family soon moved to Brooklyn, home of the Dodgers. THE Dodgers taught me to identify with underdogs. Unlike the Chicago Cubs,

who just lost, the Brooklyn Dodgers built hopes high before losing. My relationship with THE Dodgers prepared me for the future and waiting till next year. I wended my way getting degrees in economics from Lehigh University and in law from Harvard Law School.

More relevant to skiing, I was a postgraduate drop out from two major universities. Not finishing, leaves open untold opportunities. During this period of my life, I tried to find life's meaning. I participated in all night college and post college discussions, often interrupted by hearts games. Post-school, I practiced natural gas producer rate regulation and appellate law for the Federal Power Commission; regulatory law as Assistant General Counsel to the New York Public Service Commission and antitrust and energy law for Spiegel & McDiarmid, where I largely represent cities and cooperatives, who own their own electric systems in competition with privately owned utilities, and also state governments. Our work is public spirited. I am now working less, but I maintain my Spiegel & McDiarmid connections. My wife, Cara, is CEO of Cara's Creations, the finest jewelry source at the lowest price. Cara's Creations arose like the Phoenix from Cara's biochemistry doctorate and environmental law practice. Cara also teaches English as a second language and serves on craft boards. She has multiple other activities including serving on our Temple Board and co-chair of the temple sisterhood. As readers know, she is again currently President of PVS, but this does not necessarily mean that I can learn. Cara and I have three children. Unlike us, over time they seem to have gotten older. Stephen is a chess maven, teaches chess and runs chess tournaments. He lives with us in Washington. Lara teaches, runs an Airbnb and engages in soil and land preservation issues, farming and women's carpentry and landscaping, in Washougal, Washington. She has our only grandchild, Nathan. Joel, our youngest child, teaches literature and foreign language speakers at Portland, Oregon's Lincoln High School. A number of years ago, Cara and I were at a dinner party also attended by Dick and Rosemary Schwartzbard. Having failed to reform my skiing, Cara told Rosemary that she was desperate to find people with whom she could appropriately ski. Rosemary said that PVS was perfect. Cara could ski moguls and abandon me both at the same time. It was all downhill from there. We joined PVS, where we found kindness, support and much friendship. I have tried to help with PVS, including by a past term as President, a current one as Vice President and Ex-com membership. I have not skied over the last two seasons due to balance issues, but with physical therapy I have daydreams of being able to ski again next year. (Please see Brooklyn Dodgers write-up, above.) If not, borrowing from The Music Man, I can use the skiing Think Method. If I am elected, we need to work together to attract younger members and preserve PVS for its very valuable characteristics.

CARA JABLON - CANDIDATE FOR VICE PRESIDENT

I have been a skier for more than 58 years. My initial ski experience was at Mount Holyoke College (in South Hadley, Massachusetts) at a no longer extant ski area called Mt. Tom. After a single ski experience, I went home for Christmas vacation and bought my first pair of skis – long wooden skis - and lace-up boots. For years, I have enjoyed the challenge of the moguls and worked on improving my bump technique. Currently, the biggest challenge to this type of skiing is the loss of strength that comes with aging. After graduating from Mount Holyoke with a major in chemistry, and a minor in philosophy, I headed to New York City to attend Columbia University in a doctorate program in Biochemistry. Although I eventually finished the doctorate, I decided that I was not destined to be a scientist. What else to do but go to law school! After marrying Robert Jablon, and several months after my first child, Stephen, was born, I started law school in Albany, New York. During that year, Robert joined a law firm in Washington, D.C., and I dropped out of law school. I resumed law school at George Washington University the following year and also finished writing my doctoral dissertation that year. Halfway through law school, I had another child, Lara. After finishing law school, I started work in the Office of General Counsel of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, where I practiced pesticide law for thirteen years and was involved in limiting the use of wood preservative chemicals and Compound 1080, and taking arsenic ant baits off the market. My third child, Joel, was born in 1984. Near the end of my time at EPA, I did a detail at the U.S. Attorney's Office in DC. Over the course of four months, I tried numerous misdemeanor drug cases. My subsequent legal career, over a period of about twelve years, was at three different law firms, where I wrote countless briefs and memoranda in the area of chemical regulatory law. I retired early from law – despite my father's advice never to retire – and turned my attention in a different direction to beading. I have a small jewelry business and make necklaces, earrings, and bracelets that I sell at local craft shows. I have chaired or co- chaired the Northern Virginia Handcrafters Guild Thanksgiving weekend show for five years and was president of that organization for several years. I am also the vendor chair for a holiday show at Temple Sinai in DC. I enjoy spending time with my dog Tila, doing dance aerobics, swimming regularly in the summer, reading, going to

concerts, opera, and theatre, and eating at restaurants. I am also a member of a Toastmasters Speaking Club. For the past six years, I have been a volunteer teacher of English as a second language (ESL) at the Washington English Center and tutor individual students as well as conduct a conversation class. Bob and I enjoy collecting art, particularly folk art, and have not been able to resist the sand paintings sold on the square in Santa Fe and other art objects from western ski trips.

Stephen, our oldest son, lives with us in DC and runs chess tournaments.

Our daughter, Lara, and her husband live on a 40-acre farm in southern Washington State, replete with goats, sheep, llamas, alpacas, chickens, dogs and cats.

In addition to raising livestock, Lara runs a bed and breakfast business and gives farm tours when not taking care of eight-year-old Nathan.

Joel teaches high school English in Portland, Oregon.

A number of years ago, I served as president of PVS. I have participated in the PVS

Snowmass trip for many years, and have also been on many other club trips, including trips to Sun Valley, Sun Peaks, Andorra, Austria and France. Bob, who also served as the club's president, and I have run ski trips to Mt. Bachelor, Steamboat, and Park City. I am still working on perfecting my bump skills and recently took a three-day bump clinic in Aspen. Articles about my experience appear in the TOOT this month. Probably the best piece of advice was to look at the next bump, rather than the steep descent down the hill.

ROSEMARY SCHWARTZBARD – CANDIDATE FOR EXCOM - APRIL 2025

I am a retired Clinical Psychologist who practiced over forty years in Arlington, Virginia. I have always had a special interest in mind body relationships and sports psychology and worked with clients to help improve activity level and get started on a healthier lifestyle. I started running in my 40s to stay in shape for skiing and ran marathons into my 70s. I continue to do some road races, such as the Cherry Blossom, and am involved in parkrun where I do a 5K every Saturday on Roosevelt Island. I first tried skiing in my 20s when on a trip to Europe with a friend. I signed up for an Austrian ski school. It was humiliating but exciting. I couldn't speak the language; I was black and blue from falling; and I was the worst in the class. However, I knew it was something I wanted to learn to do. It took several years for me to get back to skiing. After getting married and having two boys, Dick and I bought a ski house at Hidden Valley in Pennsylvania. We took lessons with our young sons who excelled immediately. Our first trip out west was when our go d friend and neighbor, Kay Christensen, invited us to go to Vail with her and we are forever grateful. Skiing out west was such a different experience.

Dick and I joined PVS in 1999. Since that time, I have been on many PVS trips and have skied a variety of resorts throughout the United States, Canada and Europe. My favorites are Val d'Isere, France and, of course, Snowmass, Colorado. I was Chair of the Ski Trip Committee for 12 years, from 2011 to 2023. I have served two years on ExCom.

JILL NELSON – CANDIDATE FOR EXCOM - APRIL 2025

I like to say that I learned to ski on New England rocks & ice, venturing down the slopes before snowmaking, chair lifts & shaped skis. Skiing with family & friends over the years has taken me to Kitzbuhel, Austria, Utah, Mammoth Mountain, and Colorado, among other areas. When my kids were young, a new ski magazine/guide hired me to write stories about "family skiing," which gave us comped ski trips for the whole family to Killington, Mount Snow, Canaan Valley and New Hampshire; their expert ski schools paved the way for Martha & Fred to become real skiers. I also wrote a history of Camelback Mountain in Pennsylvania for its 25 th anniversary, now some decades ago. I have enjoyed the camaraderie offered by PVS since I joined it about 10 years ago. The Snowmass trip became a winter highlight for me and my family – now 6-year-old Bjorn is plowing down the mountain with his parents and enjoying its great ski school. Although I've put away my skis & boots, I hope to keep seeing my PVS friends at meetings and to hosting springtime gatherings.

BARRY LAKE - CANDIDATE FOR EXCOM APRIL 2025

I was born in Leavenworth, KS, into an Army family. After a few years in Colorado Springs, the family took up more or less permanent residence in Arlington, VA. I attended George Mason University receiving a BS in Mathematics and then received an MS in Information Technology Administration from George Washington University. I am currently a Cyber

Security Subject Matter Expert for a small Herndon based Information Technology Company, which provides software development, cybersecurity and operational services to the federal government. We currently reside in Oakton, VA. and when not skiing or working, we also enjoy time at the beach. While I originally learned to ski during my college days, I did not take up skiing in earnest until I met my future wife Kathy; both of us have enjoyed skiing together for over 30 years. We started out skiing mostly on the east coast, but after our first trip out west to Colorado, we pretty much gave up on east coast skiing. Over the years, we have been lucky enough to be able to take at least one to two ski trips a year, mostly to Colorado and Utah. We have also taken three European trips, to Val d'Isere, Switzerland and Austria, as well as two Canadian trips. Since joining PVS in 2015, we have thoroughly enjoyed many trips to Snowmass, having led the trip for the last 9 years, and are looking forward to many more in the future. I am a past club President, have served several terms on ExCom previously, and am currently the club's Membership Coordinator. I am an applicant for a new two-year term on ExCom in 2025.



PVS - BYOB (Bring Your Own Book) group

Still reading! PVS' readers meet once a month on Zoom to share their latest (or old favorite) reads in a relaxed setting. So many of us have learned from each other and picked up books we didn't know about before. No required reading and no commitment. **See the info at the bottom for how to join in on March 13th, 2025 (the second Thursday of each month) at 4 pm!**

Here are the books we shared in February:

Ellie Thayer enjoyed Charmaine Wilkerson's debut novel "Black Cake" which begins in Jamaica in 1965 and picks up in 2018 in California. A young woman, the daughter of a Chinese father and a Jamaican mother, abruptly disappears after the mafioso she's forced to marry dies at the wedding. **5***

Karen Knopes just read "Revolutionary Characters: What Made the Founders Different" by Gordon Woods. Karen learned about their diverse backgrounds and lack of governing experience as they navigated their escape from the crown. Tidbits: Ben Franklin was 78 years-old and Aaron Burr was (unsurprisingly) a thoroughly bad character. **5***

Bob Jablon brought us a famous but not frequently discussed Pulitzer Prize-winning author, John Marquand whose Mr. Moto mystery series takes place in Beijing and, though a page-turner, shows the stereotypes of the 1940s when it was written. This book - "Thank you, Mr. Moto." **4***

Marianne Soponis enjoyed another page-turner "Three Hours in Paris" by Cara Black in which a young American marries a British Naval intelligence officer who is killed along with their daughter during WWII after which she is conscripted to go to France with the goal of assassinating Hitler. **5***

Mary Hubbard brought "The Life Impossible" by Matt Haig about a 72-year-old woman in England. Characterized as magical realism, the plot takes her to Ibiza where she's inherited a home and discovers a lot about herself. Mary called it "an easy read." **4***

Dorian Janney had further comments about the National Book Award-winning "James" by Percival Everett. Dorian elaborated on how enlightening it was and a fresh way of looking at the horrors of slavery. **4.5***

Bonnie Sweeney was happy to read another book that takes place in Michigan where she lives. "Murder in the Merlot" by Aaron Stander, sponsored by Bonnie's local winery, revels in the beautiful countryside which is then marred by the murder of an international wine maven. 4*

Nancy McKinley tried something different, George Saunder's analysis of Russian short stories from the late 19th century. "A Swim in a Pond in the Rain" provides not only the pleasure of reading Tolstoy, Chekhov, and others, but adds the discussion of what makes each story great. 5*

The next BYOB Zoom call will be held on Thursday, March 13th from 4 to 5 pm. Let Nancy McKinley at nancymckin@gmail.com know if you'd like to stop by and check us out and she'll put you on the list to get the Zoom link. No commitment!

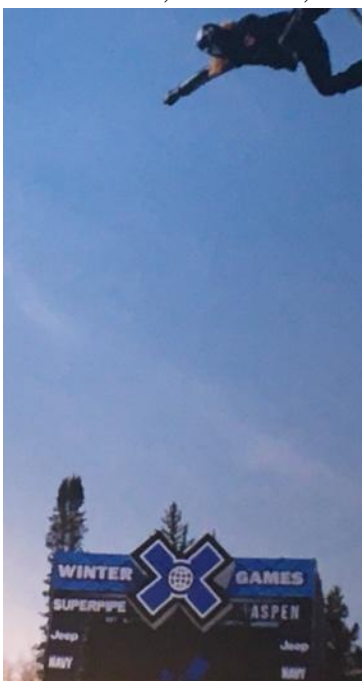
SKI TALK

by

Kathy Lake

Lakes' Adventures at Buttermilk

Barry and I went out to Snowmass a few days early to explore Buttermilk, home of the X games. We stayed at the Inn at Aspen which is at the base of Buttermilk offering ski in/ski out accommodations with a short 50 yard walk to the lift. The Inn is undergoing some renovations, so the pool and hot tub were closed. There is an on-site restaurant, The Home Team, offering barbecue, chicken ribs and other Southern style specialties. Many locals claim it has the best bar-b-que around! We enjoyed the pulled pork, ribs and chicken, as well as, the hearty breakfasts.



Buttermilk is a much less crowded and smaller mountain than the other 3 in the Aspen collection. It has wide open trails, fewer skiers, no lift lines and beautiful views. From the lift we could see the top of Aspen Mountain and Aspen Highlands plus a quick glimpse of the Maroon Bells. Absolutely gorgeous!

On our first day we enjoyed skiing quite a few runs down the center of the mountain. We were talking about venturing over to the West Buttermilk lift when Barry and I collided getting off the lift. Yes, it's embarrassing. Barry is calling it elder abuse saying that I ran in to him! In actuality, Barry fell, I tried to get around him, our skis got twisted and tangled up. It's a "he said/she said" story! You decide! 😊

The lift operators were very helpful in assisting us up. However, I had

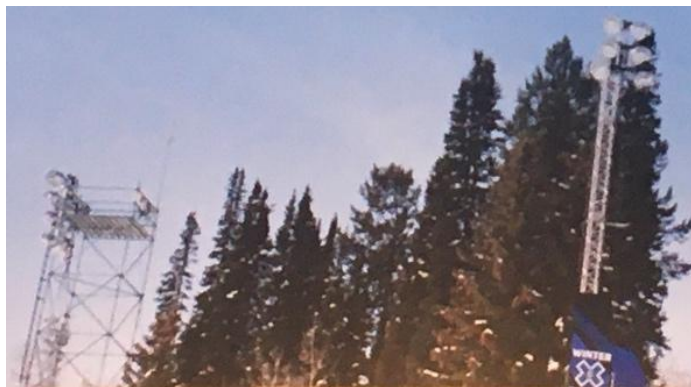


trouble standing on my right leg. After realizing that there was no way I was going to be able to ski down the mountain we asked the Ski Patrol for help. Conveniently they were located close to the top of the lift. The ski patrol who helped us was Moon, aka Buzz Killington from Vail, Colorado and he was quite a character. He did his best to try to make us laugh and take my mind off of my ankle. Basically he recommended that I take Advil, ice and elevate my leg. Since I wasn't able to ski down, I ended up getting a free sled ride! Certainly not the way I planned to start off the trip.

The next day my ankle was not any better even after icing and elevating. So we decided to venture to the Snowmass Clinic. After X rays and exams, it turns out, I had fractured the tip of my fibula at the ankle and had to wear a walking boot for the duration of our trip. No more skiing for me that week.



On Wednesday we moved over to the Mountain Chalet to meet up with our PVS friends. A good portion of my days were spent sitting in the lobby icing my ankle. I did have a boot buddy - Lexi was wearing a similar boot due to an injury from a fall just before coming to Snowmass. At least we had a great view of the slopes and could see folks coming back to the hotel for lunch or for the end of the day. While I couldn't agree or disagree, I did hear that the snow and the skiing was good.



During the week everyone was so caring, concerned and helpful. We really do appreciate all of the help and assistance you gave us - from going to the store, helping set up and clean up, to your caring and kind words with advice, support and compassion. Thank you! All of you are AWESOME!!!

PS - I'm still in a walking boot, icing and elevating. Healing can take up to 6-8 weeks. I'll be ready for next year!

On another note...

Since being back home I have plenty of time to catch up on my reading. I just read an interesting article about Wayne Wong. In the early '70s he was named "Freestyle Skier of the Year" by Skiing magazine. It's a legacy he's still working to live up to. He has been inducted into the U.S. and Canadian ski halls of fame. However, the coolest thing for him was recently being hired by Deer Valley to become their newest sponsored athlete at the age of 74! He acts as a good will ambassador on the slopes and is absolutely thrilled. He helps people have fun on the slope and tries to challenge himself to do things better than he did the day before. He says that "even as you get older, you can always improve. That's the mystique of skiing". Deer Valley will be hosting the freestyle events for the 2034 Winter Olympics. His goal is to stay active and be a part of it. Gotta love that attitude!



Members' Corner

The Wildest Kind of Trail Running You've Never Heard Of

Ride 'n' Tie racing was the precursor to the Western States 100, but its cowboy roots persist in a niche sport that's thriving today.

Previously published in *Trail Runner* magazine, Jan 26, 2023

Martha Nelson

The morning sun blazed over "Fair Hill," a 5,000-acre fox-hunting estate built by Delaware's famous du Pont family. The estate's pristine wooded trails, open meadows, bubbling creeks, and 17 horse barns offered an ideal venue for last fall's Chesapeake Endurance Ride.

On the morning of September 17, 2022, the barn was abuzz with riders and horses dodging between rows of chrome horse trailers in search of curry combs, electrolytes, and the rest of the pre-race checklist. Anxious horses whinnied across the meadow.

I arrived the night before with neither a horse nor a trailer, just a belly of nerves and a pup tent I pitched between beefy pickup trucks. I was a trail runner who, earlier that summer, barely survived my first "Ride 'n' Tie," a topsy-turvy trail race where two runners share one horse and switch back and forth between riding and running. But like a moth to a flame, I kept coming back. When Chris lost his partner to COVID-19 and asked me to fill in at the last minute, I couldn't say no. As soon as I hopped on our trusty steed, Ray, Chris went AWOL and Ray caught on that the woman in his saddle had no idea what she was doing.

The Rise of Ride 'N' Tie

In my 28 years of trail running, I'd heard stories of the legendary "Ride n' Tie" and its connection to the birth of 100-mile runs for people 50 years ago in California. I learned it's no coincidence that the Western States 100-mile Endurance Run (WSER) began in California shortly after Ride n' Tie" was invented there in 1971.

The first Ride 'n' Tie was dreamed up by Bud Johns, a young California marketer at Levi Strauss & Co, to promote the American denim company's rough-and-ready cowboy image. The race begins with one team member running. The other rides the horse a short distance (typically 5-10 minutes) before dismounting, tying the horse to a tree, and setting off on foot. The trailing runner reaches the horse, unties it, and rides in pursuit of the leading runner, eventually passing them and tying the horse to another tree. Rinse and repeat for 20-100 miles.



An observer in Bud Johns' book, *What Is This Madness?*, remarked, "If you took the Kentucky Derby and the Boston Marathon to Outward Bound, you'd have yourself a Ride & Tie."

Teammates decide for themselves where to tie the horse, and it takes years for a team to perfect their timing, making the sport just as much chess as masochism.

Trial by Fire

I scanned the vacant rolling meadow all the way to the horizon, puzzled by the absence of Chris. The math didn't add up. Chris was supposed to be ahead of me on foot. He was a fast runner, but not faster than the horse. I should have caught him by now, or at least been able to spot him running ahead in the open meadow. I glanced down at my watch again, re-checking my math. Ray, the horse, flicked his ears and swished his tail, signaling his agreement that something wasn't right.

Ray spotted them before I did, and rolled into a canter in pursuit. A group of women endurance riders was visible on the far hillside, gossiping and laughing and having a grand time as the race's caboose.



The endurance ride started ten minutes before Ride 'n' Tie, and I was surprised to catch any of them so quickly. I noticed their classy riding gloves, britches, and boots, which made me feel sheepish and disheveled in my muddy trail running shoes, torn running tights, and bike helmet. Riding is all about style, but mine got sacrificed in an effort to protect my body on the horse while preserving some comfort on the run.

"Seen a guy running in a bike helmet?" I shouted as I approached. The women shook their heads and my chin dropped in despair. "Ride with us!" the women chorused. That seemed smarter than wandering alone in unfamiliar forests and fields in search of a man I barely knew, while riding a strange horse who ignored me (and rightfully so, since the last time I rode consistently was years ago, in childhood). But if Chris hadn't passed the endurance riders, he'd strayed off course and was probably behind me. I wheeled Ray back towards the forest, over his objections. It could be worse, I reminded myself as I turned Ray around.

Earlier that summer I'd learned why the sport is dubbed "Ride 'n' Die." My maiden race was Virginia's Old Dominion 20-mile Ride n' Tie, I survived the most terrifying minute of my life when the horse broke into a high-speed gallop down a dirt road in pursuit of a rival mare. My last-ditch effort managed to turn the animal around and jammed him into a steep hillside alongside the road. My mount stopped short, and I flew up his neck, grabbing its mane to avoid flying off. "I've had enough of this nonsense," I declared as I shimmied down my steed's side. Hoots of lighthearted laughter burst from the other rider as he tied his horse next to mine, affirming that I passed my trial-by-fire.

The sun slid behind the mountains and I rode the final miles by headlamp, entrusting myself to the horse's night vision as we picked our way over loose stones in the pitch dark. The horse was as exhausted as I; his stumble down a rocky hill nearly took us both down. But the melodies of the forest came alive under the stars. Whippoorwills echoed eerily through the darkness and barred owls caterwauled. I slipped into a dreamlike trance, wondering how I could ever convince my trail-running friends to try this magical mayhem.

In Search of Lost Ties

I must have learned something from my first Ride 'n' Tie, because at Chesapeake, I guessed right. Chris had missed a turn in the forest maze and was chasing me from behind, wondering if I'd ever turn around, or if he'd need to run the entire course on foot, like Gordy Ainsleigh.

We were jubilant when we finally found each other. I would have hugged him had I not been on top of a horse. Ray must have thought Chris and I were idiots because we kept missing turns in Chesapeake's forest maze, which leads to problems bigger than losing time, when a horse is involved. Once, Ray and I went careening off-course into a hunting area where two bowhunters stood with camouflage paint smeared on their faces and arrows slung behind their backs. Ray reared up in fright and my heart stopped. Ray eventually decided that the hunters were harmless and moved on, but something came loose in the process, and Ray began limping like a car with a flat tire.

I hollered for Chris and hopped off so he could suss out the problem. I bit my lip while he lifted Ray's hooves to inspect for damage. I feared nothing more than harm coming to a horse in my care.

"Yes!" Chris cried. Ray wobbled, thrown off balance by the horseshoe he'd hurled. Chris pulled a rubber boot from the saddle bag and wrapped it around Ray's shoeless hoof. We were back in action.

Running was supposed to be my strength, and I worried more about saddle sores than overheating when I got dressed that morning. When every running lubricant in my kit failed to protect a saddle sore that got infected and wouldn't fully heal on my left calf, I wrapped my upper shin in duct tape and layered a soccer sock and pants over top. I feared excessive sweating on a hot September day might unravel the bandage and make the friction worse, but the tape held. I thought dressing for swim-bike-run triathlons was tricky, but at least those events have transition zones to swap into outfits specialized for each event. Ride 'n' Tie transitions are too fast and too frequent to change stirrup length, let alone pants.

I'll never lose the scar from my calf's gangrene saddle sore, but I'll also never forget the patience and kindness of everyone who took a rookie under their wing and forgave all my blunders.

There is no right way to dress for a Ride 'n' Tie. Just different degrees of wrong. I made an uncomfortable situation worse by not carrying a bottle because I thought designated water stops were for runners and horses. Chris laughed at me when I told him I was stopping for a drink. I never came so close to drinking from a horse trough.

Ray braved one last rickety bridge over screaming trucks and trotted across the finish line. He passed his final vet check, and Chris and I high-fived in celebration. I officially survived my first summer of ride 'n' tie. I'll never lose the scar from my calf's gangrene saddle sore, but I'll also never forget the patience and kindness of everyone who took a rookie under their wing and forgave all my blunders. I thought decades of east coast ("Beast Coast") trail running prepared me for anything, but it takes a new level of crazy to bring a horse into a trail race. I've never feared for my life in a trail race, but I've also never had so much fun or excitement, either.



I'll still be the roukiest rider when the 50th Ride 'N' Tie World Championship kicks off on September 22-24, 2023 at the Biltmore Estate in Asheville, North Carolina. Don't be fooled by the posh venue. If no one gets helicoptered out, it will be a win.

Year after year, WSER runners retrace Gordy Ainsleigh's steps from Olympic Valley to Auburn in honor of his venture into the unknown. But if they truly want to follow in his pioneering footsteps, it's time to saddle up.

Calendar

Mar 13 Thu BYOB on Zoom, McKinley, 4:00 pm.
 April 5 Sat Annual Meeting, Jablon, 1:00 pm.

Ski Trips

Snowmass 2026 **Led by Kathy & Barry Lake**

ExCom Officers, Board
 Members, and Chairpersons

<p><u>Officers:</u> President – <i>Cara Jablon</i> Vice Pres. – <i>Bob Jablon</i> Secretary – <i>Ellie Thayer</i> Treasurer – <i>Dick Schwartzbard</i> Ex Officio – <u>Board Members:</u> <u>First Term 2023-2025:</u> <i>Bob Knopes</i> <i>Jill Nelson</i> <i>Rosemary Schwartzbard</i> <u>Second Term 2024-2026:</u> <i>Salli Diakova</i> <i>Kathy Lake</i> <i>Don Vierimaa</i></p>	<p><u>Chairpersons:</u> Ski Trip Coordinator – <i>Kathy Lake</i> Events – <i>Marianne Sponis</i> Membership Records – <i>Barry Lake</i> TOOT Coordinator – <i>Jan Marx</i> TOOT Layout Editors – <i>Jan Marx, Kerry Hines</i> <i>Kal Nossuli</i> TOOT (E-Distribution) – <i>Barry Lake</i> Nomination Chairman – <i>Barry Lake</i> Webmaster – <i>Mary Ellena Ward</i> Meeting Records – <i>Sue Lyon</i> Historian – <i>Jan Marx</i></p>
---	--

Useful Ski "Links"
[Potomac Valley Skiers](#)
[BRSC Sanctioned Trips](#)
[DC Ski Online News](#)

Reminder: It is club policy that contact information in the club's roster not be used for promoting personal business, for advertising, or for personal financial gain without the advance permission of the individual member to be contacted. Membership contact information shall not be distributed outside PVS.