

# Having the time of their lives

By Ray Eakman  
For the Emerald

The morning after Eugene's big snowfall, I skidded my way to work in my Toyota. Through steam-glazed windows I noticed a man who had discovered a better method of travel in those circumstances. He was cross-country skiing.

That took me back.

I've only skied cross-country once. It was several years ago, when I shared a small room in Carson Hall on campus. Someone had come up with the brilliant and totally original idea of a dorm ski weekend. We'd charter a bus, and everyone who wanted (and could pay) could go. We all would have the time of our lives.

It all sounded so easy.

When the alarm shrilled at 4:21 (a.m., and on a Saturday) my first thought was, "this is not a good idea." But after a shower and some encouragement from my roommate Chuck, I once again looked forward to the time of my life. Shortly before our expected departure time of 5:30, we arrived in the lobby dressed for an arctic expedition, clutching our skis, poles and boots.

And we waited.

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We spent a lot of time in snowbanks.

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Soon it became evident that the bus was not going to be on time. I began to keep careful count of all the extra minutes I could have slept, while observing that more and more pseudo-Eskimos were falling asleep by the door. The rest had managed to figure out how to get into the locked cafeteria. Though not at all appetizing, eating stale Rice Krispies with the previous day's re-warmed coffee at least gave us something to do.

At 6:30 the bus arrived. The driver apologized, saying she had locked herself out of the house and had to break in to get her car keys before she could get to the bus that was to take us to Mt. Bachelor.

We left at 7:00, as the sun began to rise, and in a few hours we arrived safe, sound, and ready to ski at Mt. Bachelor. The majority headed for the lifts, anxious for the thrill of hurtling out of control down a precipice. Myself, Chuck, our friend Charles, and a freshman French-Canadian javelin thrower were there to ski cross-country, however, and we set off to slide through Christmas card settings.

For awhile, the idea of screaming in terror in anticipation of compound fractures as I slammed into a chair-lift support seemed a heck of a lot more fun than this sport.

Cross-country skis are hardly wider than your foot. They are long, and to a novice, extremely awkward. Louise, the javelin thrower, had almost been born wearing such equipment, and had no problem slushing in the tracks, but the rest of us spent a lot of time in the snowbanks when we weren't crawling up the occasional slope.

Finally, after a couple of hours and countless falls, Chuck jokingly asked our expert in attendance if we had our skis on the wrong feet. She replied quite seriously that we might. Chuck checked as I rolled down a hill to meet them. His skis and feet were mismatched. So were mine. And when Charles tumbled down to us, we

## One man's saga of a ski tour adventure

discovered his were also. Louise muttered something about IQ's as we made adjustments.

Wearing the skis correctly didn't solve our balance problems completely, but by the end of the day we'd gotten the hang of it. By late afternoon we returned to the bus and actually looked forward to skiing the next day. The excitement was back — it really was going to be the time of our lives.

After a short drive to the fringe of Bend, we arrived at an outdated motel our trip organizers had reserved. Only then did everyone realize that no one aboard was in charge. None of Carson's resident assistants had



partyers proceed to one end of the units, mellow and/or exhausted skiers to the other, and in-betweeners in between. Order was restored.

I walked into our gas-heated room to find a two members of the group wrestling with the pilot light fixture. In time they conquered it, fortunately before the room filled with enough gas to blow us up. We sat around a television set, watching the Ducks play Arizona, and while John Murray was casting off a thirty-footer, the power went off.

The power returned in time to let us see the Ducks lose (in keeping with the trend of the weekend's events), and we called it a day.

Showers were practically non-existent the next morning after Chuck's five minute splash depleted all the hot water. But we set that thought aside when Chuck entered the room after checking on the others and burst out with "One of the guys got arrested!"

Unfortunately, one of the group, who had driven his car rather than take the bus, had been stopped for drunk driving during the night. "And Clay is missing," he added. "No one can find him."

The weekend was becoming very interesting.

When the bus driver loaded up the bus in the falling snow that had already accumulated three inches deep, she discovered chains for only one wheel. No problem, she said. She had a number to call for assistance. Yes, a problem, she said, returning from the phone booth. She had been given the wrong number. Some very sleepy and irate citizen of Bend had answered, and would be absolutely no help at all.

But her ancestors had crossed on the Mayflower, fought Indians, came west in wagon trains and weathered storms — she was going to drive that bus up the mountain, chains or no chains.

We boarded the bus and somebody yelled "There's Clay!" He had passed out under one of the beds in the party end and had awakened just in time. Minus our arrested friend, we started up the mountain and, to my surprise, arrived at the lodge with no difficulty.

And the skiing was great. The four of us tracked six miles through forests, over frozen lakes — even experimented with some downhill jumps, which were challenging with our equipment.

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By the end of the day, we were exhausted. We located the bus as our strength gave out. After collecting all the downhillers, all of whom enjoyed two days of injury-free skiing, we rode back to Eugene. Beside having a car filled with snowball throwers that repeatedly attacked us, we arrived at Carson with no incident.

I slept very well that night.

I remembered all this as I pumped my brakes to barely avoid spinning the car through a red light, proving the cliché about your life passing before your eyes. While I waited for the light to turn green, I watched the obviously experienced skier gliding down the sidewalk. And I felt envious.



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