

Mad River Mountain
Ski Patrol Stories – 1970's & 1980's
By Rick Schieltz

Who Turned Out The Lights

The sun had just set and the light on the hill had been turned. At the loading area for the Mad River chair there was one light that was not yet turned. Being a good safety minded patroller, Dick Nau noticed this and decided that he would turn the light on so that there would be adequate light at the loading area. He took off his skis and walked back into the chair lift A-frame building to find the light switch. When he found a switch, he flipped it and all the lights on the main hill went out. This of course got everyone attention. Dick flipped the switch back on and the main lights turned but they take several minutes to reach full brightness. When Dick walked out the lift building, everyone in the lift line knew that he was the person that had turned out the lights. Soon the story spread across the hill that the Ski Patroller with the green hat was the person who had turned out the lights. Soon after that Dick went to the patrol room to get a different hat.

End of season wine celebration

On week night near the end of the ski season, five patroller (Carol Smith, Rick Schieltz, Dave Faulkner, Ed Raudabaugh & Greg Anderson) were gathered in the Boston Blackies bar/restaurant having a beer after closing the hill. It was mentioned that with the current warm weather, the ski area might not be open next week. Carol Smith mentioned that we should celebrate the end of the season since we might not be together for our regular shift next week, and that she had a bottle of wine in her car. This sounded like a good idea, so we all finished our beers and went out to her car and opened the bottle of wine. After quickly finishing the wine, we took up a collection and bought another bottle of wine. As we finished the second bottle, Carol said she it was time for her to go home because she had a funeral to co to tomorrow morning.

Well Carol was not in any condition to drive then so it was decided that we needed to get her some coffee to sober her up. A friend who was still in the bar owned an A-frame up on the side of the hill and he loaned us the key so we could go up there, make some coffee and sober up some before heading home. Between 1:00 and 2:00 AM we all left and headed home.

Within a couple days the weather got cold again and the area was still open the next week. Everyone had made it home the previous week but there were stories to tell about the following day. Greg who was attending college at Ohio State had a final test to take that day and just wanted to get the test over so he could go back to his room and sleep. As the students were turning in their test, the teacher announced that there was just one more requirement to finish the course and that was that the whole class was going to a nearby bar for pizza and beer. Needless to say, that was the last thing Greg wanted to hear. We all decided that we did not need to celebrate the end of the season again when it did actually come.

Saturday night training; hill closed

Saturday evenings in the mid 1970's were not busy at closing time as they did not have any entertainment in the evening or after the area closed. We usually had only 3 or 4 patrollers on

shift and once the hill was closed everyone would go home. One Saturday evening there were also 2 candidates on shift and Nick Nau decided to do candidate toboggan training since there were not many skiers that evening. Near closing time, he decided to take one last run down Sugarbush trail before hill closing. Near the bottom of the trail, he decided to challenge the candidates by having them take the toboggan off the groomed trail and through heavy deep untracked snow. That snow was crusty and deep and their skis and the toboggan went through the crust and became stuck in the deep snow.

They were unable to make it to the bottom of the hill by closing time so the rest of the patrollers closed the hill, shut down the chair lift and swept the hill. When finishing the hill sweep, Dick Nau and the candidates were just dragging the toboggan out of the deep snow and back onto the groomed slope at the bottom of the hill. Dick said that we should have waited to close the hill because they had a toboggan that needed to go to the top of the hill. I told him that the toboggan could be put in the aid room for the morning shift to take back. "But" Dick exclaimed, "I was riding in the toboggan and I left my skis in the toboggan hut at the top."

Unexpected Fracture

While I was working in the first aid room, several other patrollers brought a toboggan down the hill with an injured skier. I met them at the bottom of the hill to help transport the person into the aid room. The patroller in charge of the incident said the skier had only a strained or sprained ankle and no other injuries and that they had used a quick splint to support the injury. After transferring the skier to a table in the aid room, another patroller was removing equipment from the toboggan and called me over. He showed me that the blanket they had placed under the skier in the toboggan had a red wet spot on it. We quickly did another examination of the skier and found an open fracture. The wine skin the skier was carrying had fractured and was leaking red wine. We advised the skier that when skiing, it is best to carry white wine in your wine skin so as not to stain clothing or other items in the event of a fall.

Late night dinner at The Mad River Inn

When the restaurant was still operating at Mad River, it would stay open after the hill closed so you could get a late night dinner. One evening after closing the hill I decided to have dinner, and got a table at the restaurant. After I ordered my meal, a new patrol candidate who had been on the evening shift with me came into the restaurant and I invited her to sit with me. She said she wasn't going to order a meal but was just going to have a drink. When the bread and butter was delivered to the table I offered her some bread but she declined saying she was not hungry. The butter was served in a small bowl and was dipped from a larger tub with a scoop so that it looked like I scoop of ice cream. While we were talking, I jokingly said "You can have my ice cream. I'm waiting for my meal to come. I thought she would know that that was joke, but she took the butter disk and picked up a spoon. I wondered if she was continuing the joke however she took a spoonful, put it in her mouth, paused and then gave me a really silly look. The only thing I could think to say then was, "Are you sure you don't want some bread to go with your butter?"

Socializing after hill closing

After closing the hill in the evening, patrollers would often stop in the Boston Blackies bar to have a drink before going home. One evening, two patrollers, Terry and Dave (not real names) were sitting at the bar and two women were sitting to the right of Terry. Terry was having a good

conversation with the women but after a couple of beers Terry excused himself to go to the bathroom. Once he left, one of the women said to Dave, "Terry seems like a really nice guy." Dave being the joker that he was, said "Yeah, I know, too bad that he's gay". Well when Terry returned, the two women would not speak to him, they finished their drinks and left. At this point, Dave went to make his bathroom stop, and Terry asked the bartender what happened with the women. After hearing the story from the bartender, Terry decided to get even with Dave. Terry looked around the room and saw a heavy set and unattractive woman. He paid the bartender and told him to give that woman another drink when Dave returned and tell the woman it was from Dave. When Dave returned, the drink was served and soon the woman came over to Dave. She pulled a barstool up close to Dave, sat next to him, put her arm on his shoulder and began talking real sweet to him. Dave did not know what was going on and was not enjoying the situation.

We don't need the helicopter

While skiing down the Sugarbush trail one evening, we came upon a girl sitting on the snow. We skied up to her and asked if she was OK or if she needed help. She said she was just resting and she was OK. Just at this moment, we heard a National Guard helicopter flying overhead. Looking up, Bob Basinger saw the helicopter and waved his arms and yelled, she's OK, we don't you.

Bob made me learn ballet skiing.

When ballet skiing became popular in the 1970's, Bob Basinger's sons were involved in it and one Tuesday evening Bob had a pair of demo ballet ski and was practicing some ballet skiing maneuvers himself. I was watching him, and when he fell he saw me watching him. He got up, picked up the skies which had come off and walked over to me. He said "You take off your skies and put these on and let's see what you can do. I took off my skies and put on the ballet skies and Bob put on my skies. I said "OK, what do I do now?" Bob gave me some instruction on doing some maneuvers and then let me practice for a while. Two days later, on Thursday, Bob brought a second pair of ballet skies and we both practiced ballet maneuvers. That evening I ordered a pair of ballet skies and Saturday I had my own pair of new ballet skies. Bob's action has made me the skier I am today. I still have that pair of skies.

Opening/Patrolling Sugarcreek Ski Area

The Sugarcreek ski area was a small ski hill south of Dayton Ohio. Being small, it did not take a lot of snow making to get one run open. As a result, it was often the first area to open in Ohio. One year on the day after Thanksgiving, I decided to see when Sugarcreek might open and I gave the area a call. When they answered, I asked when they thought they might open. They answered that they were going to open at 4:00 PM that day. I thanked them and said that I would plan to come out then.

When I got to the ski area a little after 4:00, I went to the patrol room to sign on as a visiting patroller. When I got to the patrol room, the door was locked and no lights were on in the room. I went to the front desk and explained that I was a patroller from Mad River and had come to sign on but that the patrol room was locked. The woman at the counter told me to wait while she checked

with a manager. Soon she returned with a manager and I explained the situation again. He replied that they had been so busy getting the area ready to open that they forgot to call and notify the Ski Patrol, and that it was OK for me to go out and patrol. I then asked if they could unlock the patrol room and if they had any toboggan on the hill. He said he would go with me and unlock the patrol room and would get someone to take a toboggan up the hill. I patrolled the rest of the evening and was the only patrolman there. Later in the season when I did meet other Sugarcreek patrollers, I said, "I don't know why the Sugarcreek patrol always brags about being the first area to open because when they do open, they have to have a patroller from Mad River cover the hill for them". They were not too happy about that.

Warm up the Car

One Saturday evening after closing the hill, Dick Nau decided to spend the night in the patrol instead of going home and then returning on Sunday morning. Saturday night had been a really cold night and Dick decided to make sure his car would start and after starting the car he decided to let the engine warm up. Dick then decided to go over to the restaurant to get breakfast. After a short while Dick called the patrol room and said he was waiting for his order to come and asked if someone could go out and turn off his car as it should be warmed up enough.

This just gave the patrollers in the patrol room the perfect opportunity to pull a joke on Dick. The key to unlock the car doors was removed from the key ring with the rest of the key left in the ignition and the car doors were locked. Dick was called back and told that they could not turn off his car because he had locked the doors. Dick responded that he had a magnetic key holder with an extra set of keys under the front fender that they could get to unlock the car. The patrollers couldn't let their joke end this way, so they found the magnetic holder and removed it from the car and then called Dick back and said they couldn't find the holder. Dick said that he had run into a snow bank about a week ago and the holder must have been knocked out then and that he knew how to open the door with a coat hanger and would be back over to open the door. Once Dick returned and opened the door with a coat hanger, he saw that the door key was missing from the key ring and knew that a joke had been played on him.

Bindings & Buckles

In the mid 1970's, two events happened the same year. The ski patrol first aid pack at that time had a toggle buckle with a nylon strap. The nylon strap was the same width as a car seat belt buckle and some patrollers replaced the toggle buckle with car seat buckles because they were easier to connect and disconnect. However with a release button on the front of the buckle, other people could easily push the button and drop the first aid pack off of the patroller. Therefore the patrollers who had replaced their buckles became the target of other patrollers. The other event that year was a new Tyrolia binding that had a heel cover that would hinge up and back to release the binding. This cover was very easy to release and could be done with the basket on a ski pole. Because of this, people could come up behind someone with these bindings and flip the latch covers back without the skier knowing. Then when that person skied off down the hill or got on the chair from the lift line, their skis would come off. This situation made these people also the target of other skiers.

Fortunately I had not replaced my buckles or have Tyrolia bindings. However one day while standing at the top of the hill, I felt something hitting my bindings. Looking back I saw Dick Ike

behind me trying to release my binding with his ski pole. I backed up next to Dick and said “These are Marker Binding and you have to lift the heel of the boot to release them.” I then reached down to his bindings while saying “They are not like your Tyrolia binding where you can easily flip these covers back like this.” I then stood up, pushed his belt buckle button and skied off down the hill leaving him with his patrol pack at his feet and his bindings unlatched.

Senior Test Celebration

I took my Senior test at Mad River Mountain (then known as Valley High) during the 1974-1975 ski season. The weather was raining that morning so the testers completed the exam as soon as they could so they did not need to stay out in the rain. After results were announced and I had passed, I brought in a case of homemade wine for the group to celebrate. As the celebration was ending, it had stopped raining so I decided to go back out skiing in reverse parka because I had had a good bit to drink. Because the snow was soft, there were a few moguls forming and I would jump the moguls and get some air. After going off one mogul I landed wrong, tumbled and fell down. As I was laying there resting, Bob Basinger skied up to me and asked “Are you OK?” I just looked up and replied “Yah, I’m too loose to get hurt.”