

Big White, BC, Canada

February 23 – March 1, 2020

Well, Bill put together another great trip. There were eighteen of us. I signed up late when Bill said he needed someone to room with Danny Taylor. I don't think my low standards when it comes to "non-spousal" roommates were a consideration, because Danny turned out to be a fine roommate. Danny didn't snore, and he slept with his good ear in the pillow, so my snoring didn't bother him.

Because of the need for each person to use multiple airlines for the trip, Bill could not arrange group transportation as part of the trip package, but Danny and I did take him up on his offer to coordinate our flights on Westjet. We started on a late morning flight which was nice, but long layovers made our travel run late. Bill must have helped others too since over half of us took the same flight into Kelowna and shuttle to the lodge.

Believe it or not, it is possible for 18 people to go to Big White from 10 different origin cities, via 5 different origin airports, transiting 8 different en route transfer points, and still arrive at their destination essentially on-time!

Believe it or not, you can actually clear customs (US and Canadian) in Calgary without having your luggage in your possession. And only using a touch screen for paperwork. And almost everyone arrived with their luggage. Almost! But believe it or not, if the airline delays your luggage and you fuss at them enough, they will give you money to rent and/or buy ski clothes. And offer you more if the initial amount is not enough.



Accommodations in the White Crystal Inn were very comfortable. (The wi-fi was great.) There was a nice furnished kitchenette which allowed Danny and me to fix oatmeal for breakfast in the room. We found out later that the Bullwheel Family Gastro Pub on the first floor served a wonderful breakfast (even if the menu was somewhat rigid) to many of our participants. The ski in/ski out arrangement was great. From the ski storage in the White Crystal, it was only about ten paces and then just a short skate to the slopes. The hot tub apparently was a popular gathering spot après ski if you did not mind being cozy when the body count got to eight. And some guests on the third floor seemed to appreciate the taste

of Jameson's, aka "liquid courage," offered by a nice gentleman they met on their way to the tub. It also was a hot spot for gossip.

The Village had plenty of great restaurants and a well-stocked grocery, and it was just next door to our lodge. There was a mild complaint that the village lacked entertainment, but others seemed to have a great time, enjoying the "shotgun coffee," at least. The mountain offered winter activities besides the great skiing. Participants mentioned how they enjoyed going on a sleigh ride drawn by Clydesdales, and/or going snowmobiling, and cross-country skiing, though it was disappointing to find that the warming hut was off-limits to cross country skiers. Apparently not all Canadians live up their reputation for politeness. Everything was within a short walk or accessible by Lara's Gondola which took us to the Happy Valley Day Lodge for several night's dinners.



The first day Danny and I got a bit of a late start, but we got out in time to take the tour that Bill arranged with the hosts Dennis and Coleen. It was a good thing because the visibility was poor, so having a guide to help us get used to the mountain was nice. They also gave us each a coupon for a beer and an appetizer at the Moose Lodge in Happy Valley. That came in handy on Saturday, one of the two days when we weren't provided with an evening meal.

Speaking of food, we had plenty and it was delicious: "horse dwarves" (with beer and wine) from the Bullwheel at our reception on Monday, dinner at the Blarney Stone (a tavern that was imported from Ireland; well, maybe not literally) on Tuesday, on Thursday we had our Cruz the Blues party at the



Moose Lodge, and on Friday we had a group dinner at the Happy Valley Day Lodge, which looked and sounded just like the Moose Lodge except they wrapped us up in a curtain so the regular crowd did not have to see us. The food at all the meals was excellent, and plentiful enough that a few of us took leftovers for lunches the next day. Danny and I ate lunches on the mountain where you could get a delicious Thai chicken salad, a bowl of chili as big as your head, or a hamburger and beer served al fresco that cost just \$13 Canadian. I did have a slight problem with

lunch at the Black Forest Day Lodge. I had to move when the HVAC started raining on me. Dorsey thought I was being aloof and said he didn't see any drips on the chair. I swear there was a drip in the chair when I was sitting in it.

One last thing about dining: I had made reservations at the 6 Degrees Bistro but cancelled when David Motley invited Danny and me to join him and Anne at the Globe Café. Walking over, Dave said he did not care for tapas so he would order from the menu. Guess what! The menu was all tapas. But we had a great time. We each ordered a couple of tapas and from the wine list Dave selected the Stag Hollow Tempranillo 2016, a fine red from nearby Okanagan Valley. It was delicious. I had a great time sharing the tapas and wine, and watching Anne and Dave flirting with each other, while Danny did magic and made balloon animals for the waitress.

Enough about the food. The skiing was great. The snow at Big White was setting records this season with 300cm Canadian (that's roughly 10 feet American at current exchange rates.) It got clearer Monday afternoon, and Tuesday was clear and sunny. The sunrise that morning was beautiful from our side of the Inn. At the top of the slopes, the views of the surrounding mountains and the fields of "snow ghosts" were spectacular. The rest of the week there were times when snow and a little fog made skiing a little iffy. Unseen bumps and dips kept me on my toes. But as our friend Steve found out two weeks earlier at Mount Snow, apparently, we don't need to see in



order to ski. The conditions did make having an experienced skier like Dallas or Carol to lead the way very handy, though they both occasionally led the way down a more difficult slope. Dallas and I took a wrong turn down Black Magic/Black Jack and then another into uncharted woods, trying to find a trail named Showdown. I confess that I got onto Showdown halfway down, but I counted it. Dallas agreed that two rough trips down the mountain just for that short run was sufficient effort for me to check it on

my Cruz the Blues card. It snowed off and on all week, so sometimes we had fresh powder, sometimes groomed runs, and sometimes just light clumps here and there. There were plenty of the blue runs we all seem to prefer these days, with rolling hills or bumps if that's what you wanted and quite a few glades that were of varying difficulty. And when the sun came out, which it did often enough, it was glorious.

Not everything was perfect, though. We had some scheduling problems. First, our Monday morning mountain tour was scheduled at 10:30 a.m., only eight hours after the end of our long travel day. Some of us could not fit in adequate beauty sleep. (Check out the pictures and maybe you'll be able figure out which babushka it was.) Also, our Irish pub dinner overlapped with the Democratic Presidential debate broadcast by half an hour. Now, how will we decide which one of them to vote against or for? Believe it or not, one member suggested we delay the dinner, but the rest of us were too thirsty. And believe it or not the night skiing is scheduled after dinner, too late for me.

The Cruz the Blues contest Bill arranged for us naturally generated intense interest among our competitive membership. The rules were a little different for this competition that is run about once a month for the whole resort. The mountain did not have the personnel to install the usual verification stations for just us, so since everyone in our club is so honest and trustworthy and never cheats on their taxes, we were allowed to compete on the honor system. Also, we were not required to ski the entire length of every trail, but only a "significant" portion thereof. So of course, we studied the trail map to see how many trails we might string together in a single trip down the mountain. The most I could string together was six when I skied Upper Distributor to Roller Coaster to Lower Distributor to Speculation to Ridge Connector to Perfection. I also had stopped along the way to ski a little of Kangaroo. I got down to the crest and baled, cutting over to Roller Coaster. I was about to mark it off my card, but Dallas said ten feet at the top was not a "significant portion thereof." I plied him with some Jameson's and offered a bribe, but his integrity got in the way. As I said, the competition was ferocious, rumors were flying about false claims, but like some cable news outlets, people were reporting with incomplete data.



My deep-dive investigations revealed that no false claims were made. When Bill polled us at our celebratory dinner, Carol was the only one who claimed to have skied all 37 runs, even insisting on skiing the entirety of each slope, and apparently nearly ruining Dorsey who was trying to keep up with her the whole way. Bill reported to me that other top competitors included David, Jerry, Beth, and Dallas. Everyone got a t-shirt anyway, except for me. I batted my eyelashes at the hostess who was handing them out and after she recovered from her swoon, she insisted that I take two. Sweet!

A recurring theme among the comments people offered was how nice we all are. I do agree. Bill seems always ready to assist, of course, but others too. Charlotte was telling me how much she enjoyed skiing with Betsy, even though she knew she slowed her down. I always appreciate Dorsey and Carol letting me ski with them despite my political leanings. But for the "sweetest man in the club" award my vote goes to Dallas. He guided Danny and me around the slopes for three days. He coaxed Charlotte down Blue Ribbon when it turned out to be more chopped up than usual. But what clinched it is the way he stepped in and helped that young lady with her boots one day. He didn't care how long it was going to take, he was going to make sure her first time ever on the slope was as pleasurable as he could make it. What a guy.

LESSONS LEARNED: (No report can be considered complete without it.)

Never be standing up near Bill as he asks the group for a volunteer to write the trip report.

Well, that's my report. Be sure to check out the photos that will be posted with this report on the website. Thanks to everyone who provided input. It really helped and I hope I didn't omit anything you really wanted in there. I hope Bill likes it. He deserves all the credit. I have run several trips and I can tell you with authority, Bill does a lot more work than I did. It's a shame he's hanging it up after next year's trip to Whitefish. Better sign up if you want to have the "Bill Bryan" experience one last time. Finally, check the Bonus Competition below to see how you can win a fabulous prize.

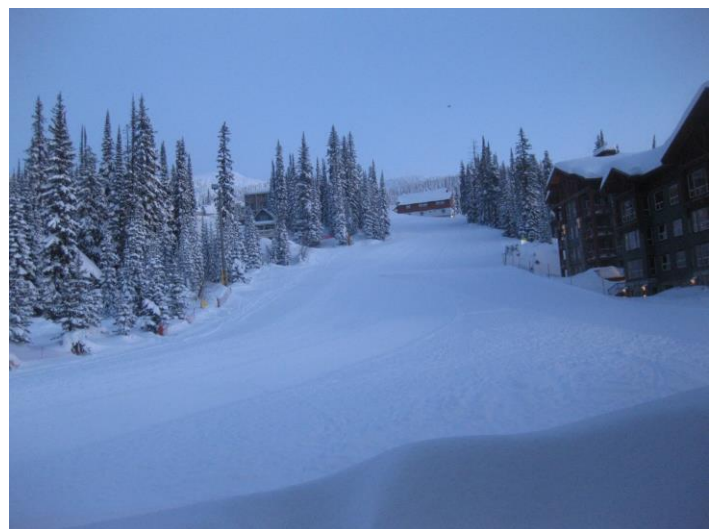
Submitted by Rick Irby

Bonus Competition: For a little entertainment I have added a contest to this report. To win it, just solve the cypher at the bottom of this report. This is a simple substitution cypher like the Celebrity Cypher offered in the entertainment section of the Daily Press and other publications. The quote is from one of the club members who gave me input for the above report. Its subject is in line with the "recurring theme among the comments." I have not included the authors name here since that could be used to solve the cypher by comparing it to the list of participants. The author's name is, however, hidden in the cypher. To win the prize, a 1.75 liter bottle of vintage* Gilbey's London Dry Gin that I inherited from a friend, simply solve the cypher and email me your answer. The first to do so may retrieve the bottle at the following PSC meeting or by appointment.

*Vintage means it came in a glass bottle, but it does have a UPC so it can't be too old.

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RUWSQ GWZ ES QAU BOEYUB KUHU PTPSL ES QAU TWDU.



Early morning views from the White Crystal Inn