

Veggie Tour - Monashee Medicine

Contributed by Conor Hurley
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The Veggie Road

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Dispatch 10

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Yes, at this house there is a never-ending line of people crashing on the couch. In the midst of high-end vacation is a nest of ski bums. While the owners are away working at their desk jobs, people like the folks I've stayed with for the

past couple of weeks are living the high life.

Sunrise at whale an pinky's.

As darkness turns to light and the alarm clocks sound off, the kitchen comes alive with the sounds of breakfast, coffee and morning chatter. The zipping of ski pants accelerates into a frenzy as the hour of departure nears; and then the quietness sets in as they all head off to work for another day of patrolling Silverstar's slopes.

It's a life most any skier has dreamed of—waking up before sunrise, drinking a cup of coffee as you carry out your morning commute to work via chairlift, donning the red and black jacket—making a living skiing. While those guys have been piling off to work each morning, I'm left to enjoy their abode. Although they say they are ski bums, I find their life as rich as it gets. With a hot tub out the backdoor and the ski area not more than stone's throw away, life couldn't get any better. But then it does.

As my injuries heal, I've gotten back to a more normal life by taking part in some of the activities I love to do. Although skiing has remained off limits, there have been plenty of other things to occupy my time. Sunny skies, warm temperatures and the blank canvas of a backyard hillside spawned a vision.

Camp Pilsner, the subject of a hot tub fantasy, came to fruition one sunny day last week. Brandon had a day off and I had nothing to do; so it was simple, we began digging. As the snow piled up and the clothes came off, the Quincy grew. What started out as small talk about a snow cave with a disco ball became a terraced backyard feature, complete with stairways, a luge track and multiple sun decks. Pinky and my father soon joined us and as the day wore on and the laughs built up—life couldn't get any better.

My father showed up at my hospital bedside six weeks ago. We planned to meet up somewhere out here this winter to do some skiing. However, someone had other plans in mind. Even though I never got to slide down a mountain with him, it was an unbelievable way to spend some time together. As the day of his departure neared, it struck me how quickly time goes by. It seemed like just yesterday I was lying in bed trying to figure out what happened. With a final wave, we parted ways, and I was alone on my journey again. The funny thing is, I feel like I never missed a step.

Skiing has been a carrot dangling in front of my nose since the moment I hurt myself; never once has it left my sight. Each day I wake up and watch my roommates walk out the door to go ski, inspiring me to carry out my rehabilitation. While walking, shoveling, stretching and soaking my way back to health, returning to my passion has been the only thing on my mind; but doing it before I was ready was out of the question.

Dr. Dewar flipped through my charts as he stood in the doorway and my chest tightened, my heart beat faster, my palms began to sweat; I could hardly bear the anticipation. The words, "So, do you want to go skiing?" brought me out of my trance as he entered the room. It was magic to my ears. The gates to the mountain under which I've stood for the past six weeks were finally open. With my newfound appreciation and better sense of reason, I can resume ski touring.

We didn't waste anytime. At 5:45 the next morning the alarm went off. Whale and I shuffled around the dark kitchen trying not to awake Brandon, who was camped on the living room floor. We were off to Malakwa, a ski touring area not too far from Salmon Arm, BC. Cam was picking us up at 6:30 a.m. and we were meeting Rick and Shauna down in Vernon at 7 a.m. Five people and a dog crammed into a truck might sound like a squeeze, but there was nothing but high spirits and laughs, because we were going ski touring.

Glimpses of the summit appeared through the clouds, as we toured up the slopes of lower cut block. Soon we were on the shoulder of the ridge and the sun's rays were on our backs with the clouds at our feet. To the northeast, the Selkirks rose high above the cloud layer, flaunting their snow-laden slopes. The sun cooked my back, making me sweat while breaking trail across the final pitch to the summit. My lungs breathed in the cool mountain air and my spirit soared off into the atmosphere above. I was alive, more than I had been in a long time. Ealu was right at my heels, waiting for the powder that waited below.

Seated on a snow bench carved into the sheltered south side of the ridge, we shared our lunch. Staring out across the valley at the different lines we wanted to ski someday, I couldn't help but let my mind wander off. The moment I was experiencing was what it is all about—the people beside me, the warm tea in my belly, the clear blue sky, the turns to come—and the fact that I was back. Descents, ascents, turns, powder, corn are some of the finite things I seek out when I ski tour; but the moments and the feelings I get during those moments are what keep me coming back day-after-day.

Just as my father left a week ago, my time has come to depart this winter wonderland in search of another moment. Although it is hard leaving the friends I have made and the people who kindly took me in, the moments we shared will remain deep in my memory. Today will bring the finishing touches to Camp Pilsner and a three-hour drive to Revelstoke. Tomorrow some ski touring at Roger's Pass, and then off to Golden, to meet Tannis Dakin, the owner of Sorcerer Lodge.

In the words of Willie Nelson, "I am on the road again, seeing places that I've never been";

Couch surfing.

Building a Snow fort.

Sunny afternoons at Silverstar.

Who said ski bumming is a hard life.

Getting Red Wings fired Up.

Conor and Ealu breaking trail.

Going up.

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