



Viking Ski Club



President's Message

In this final Newsletter of the 2003 / 2004 Season, I wish to express appreciation and thanks to all the Viking directors, Co-ordinators and program instructors for their contributions to the Club during the past season; also to the many members who have volunteered in our activities such as trail clearing, hosting, children's and youth programs, touring, Club maintenance, social events, membership and data base administration, Newsletter, website and so on. Special thanks go, as always, to Pierre Descombes and Mike MacDonald for their fine work in keeping our trail network track-set and in good shape during the winter. During most of the time we had exceptional snow conditions, while arctic temperatures put many to the test for several weeks – an infrequent opportunity to check out 'polar wax' for grip as well as glide.

Viking had a very encouraging year with increases in membership and JR / BR program registrations. The popular Cartes Réseau available through RSFL were again obtained by many of our members, permitting one day's free skiing at each of several participating commercial centres. Conversely, we had a large number of 'one day' visits from Carte holders from other areas.

The 2004 Viking / Morin-Heights Loppet on February 22 was a great success with perfect snow and weather conditions on race day. Participation levels and revenues both increased from 2003. It was the 32nd running of the Loppet event and the third time organized jointly with the Municipality of Morin-Heights. Many thanks to the joint organizing committee and the numerous volunteers from Morin-Heights, Wentworth-Nord and Viking who contributed to this special event.

On the dedicated racing program front for next season, meetings have been held and details are presently being worked out for the 2005 season. Summer training is expected to begin in June. We are optimistic about substantial increases in participation after some years at lower levels. For a general overview of the 2005 program plans, see page 4 of the Newsletter.

By the time this Newsletter reaches you, we will already have had our Annual General Meeting on May 12, 2004 at the Casa Grecque Restaurant in Dollard-des-Ormeau. Because of the delayed publishing of this Newsletter, notices were sent out by email or fax or given over the phone, reaching about 95% of the membership.

This season's Spring Fling Excursion event to Mont Megantic on the first weekend of March was attended by numerous Vikings. Many thanks to Michael and Elizabeth Dohrendorf for having organized this highly successful event. See page 9 for Derek Wills' full report on the event – "An Astronomic-Gastronomic Viking Spring Fling."

All in all, the past Viking season was an eventful and memorable one. Hope to see everyone back with Viking in the fall. Meanwhile, have a pleasant and enjoyable summer.

Erik Vikander - May 7, 2004

Touring Report

by Gordon Cohen

As I am writing this report, it's 26°. Can you believe we were skiing just a few weeks ago?

We had another terrific touring season, and snow conditions were good until mid March. Our hosts each week did a wonderful job of entertaining us. The hosts were Ernie Reigle, Sylvia Fendle, Chris and Linda Lyle, Mike Loken, Derek and Hjordis Wills, Lou and Jean Lukanovich, Gordon and Audrey Little. The Lyles also hosted a Thursday tour. Mike Dohrendorf led us on a very successful weekend to Mont Megantic. My thanks to all of you for your efforts.

Special thanks to Frank Giffen, our inspired and enthusiastic Thursday leader, and to Derek Wills for coordinating the Thursday tours and for his entertaining weekly reports.

I would appreciate receiving your comments on this past season, as well as suggestions for next year. We have a couple of exciting new tours, and leaders lined up.

We encourage participation from all members of the club and we welcome guests. If you would like to receive my weekly e-mailings, drop me a line and I'll add you to my list. (gdcohen@sympatico.ca)

Jackrabbit/Bunyrabbit Ski Programme 2004 Annual Report

by Sharon Sawyer, JR/BR Coordinator

The Jackrabbit Ski League, developed by Cross Country Canada, is the nationally recognized ski programme for children ages 4 to 13. The Jackrabbit programme provides formal instruction, fun and games to children whose families are members of the Viking Ski Club.

Instructional Programme

Lessons were scheduled for ten consecutive Saturday mornings from January 3rd, 2004. Due to inclement weather, the first lesson was cancelled and the programme lessons ended on March 13th, 2004.

The children registered in the programme were divided by age and ability into six Jackrabbit groups and one Bunyrabbit (BR) group. The duration of the weekly lesson was as follows: BRs - 1.5 hours, Jackrabbit (JR) Groups - 2 hours. JR programme instruction was delivered by Head Instructor Brian Morin and by Assistant Head Instructor Anne Nicholson. As well, the Racing/Challenge Instructor Rick Nesbitt was available every Saturday to assist and lead different groups. An afternoon session was provided to accommodate scheduling conflicts for some families as well as JRs who were participating in races (as most races are held on Saturday mornings). Brian taught three senior JR groups; Anne taught two junior groups and one older beginner group and Brian and Rick collaborated for the afternoon session. Once again, strong parent volunteer support was an integral part of the programme. Skiers were assessed for speed at a time trial and their skill level was evaluated at the end of the season.

Club Championships & JR/BR Awards and picnic.

The Club Championships were held on March 20, 2004, with the focus being mainly on fun and participation of

the younger members of the Club. Medals were presented to the winners of each category.

The JR/BR award ceremony and family picnic followed the "Most Deserving Jackrabbit" trophy that was awarded this year to Kyle Stoyel. Thank you gifts were presented to parent-volunteer group leaders.

Enrollment increased this year to 85 total: 10 BRs and 75 JRs. Expenses reflect the registration of JR participants with Ski de Fond Quebec. Registration fees were \$15.00 per participant.

The JR programme continues to make a worthwhile contribution to the Club and, in turn, the Board of Directors and membership has been supportive. The Club should continue to offer a full range of programmes to the membership.

I wish to express my thanks to all those who gave their time to instruct, support, and/or administer the JR programme this past season; this support is needed to assure the continued success of our programme.

2004 Club Championship Results

by Sharon Sawyer

6 & 7 Years Old - Boys:

1st : Peter Krejcik
2nd : Luke Allman
3rd : David Krug

8 & 9 Years Old - Boys:

1st : Quentin Stoyel
2nd : Anders Fish
3rd : Stephen Saabas

10 & 11 Years Old - Boys:

1st : Daniel Moore
2nd : Kyle Stoyel
3rd : Daniel Lone & Michael Law-Smith

12 - 16 Years Old - Boys:

1st : Jamie Law-Smith
2nd : Matthew McInnis
3rd : Jonathan Ladouceur

MEN – 18 +

1st : Tomas Krejcik
2nd : Rick Nesbitt
3rd : Spiros Kattou

6 & 7 Years Old – Girls:

1st : Phoebe Kattou
2nd : Geneviève Gill
3rd : Soraya Kamen & Teresa Stillwell

8 & 9 Years Old – Girls:

1st : Yasmine Kamen
2nd : Aimée Wallace

10 & 11 Years Old – Girls:

1st : Jessica Krejcik
2nd : Robin Krug
3rd : Joanna Brenchley

12 – 16 Years Old – Girls:

1st : Sarah Moore
2nd : Sara Krejcik & Alba Taylor-Cape

WOMEN – 18+

1st : Sylvie Bouffard-Nesbitt
2nd : Janet Krug
3rd : Christie Johnston

Youth (and Adult) Programs for 2004/2005

by Sharon Sawyer

Viking will be putting together a dedicated Racing Team open to all kids aged 10+ who have at least a Level 4 accreditation (or by personal evaluation by a coach).

The program would consist of Saturday and Sunday training sessions at Viking, and one evening training session per week. Team members would benefit from personal attention from several dedicated coaches. Team members would be encouraged to attend as many training sessions as possible, without obligation, and to attend three races next season.

A Summer training option will be available with opportunities for the kids to meet once a month, plus one evening a week. This would be followed by a more regular Fall training program, and an early start to skiing in December.

Challenge: Back by Popular Demand - with varied activities to keep teens and preteens duly 'Challenged'. The emphasis will be on providing participants with a full-range of skiing experiences (Ski-O, Telemark, Winter Camping ...) while perfecting technique and enjoying 'the great outdoors'.

Masters : New – providing adult 'expert' skiers who wish to have a great workout with other skiers on challenging trails. The program will run on five Sundays with a focus on CSM training and a great cardio workout. Technique 'fine tuning' will also be provided in an informal setting.

Jackrabbit and Bunnyrabbit: programs will follow the established pattern of a ten-week Saturday morning

program -- modelled on the Cross-Country Canada program.

** N.B. A minimum number of 8 participants will be required to run any program.

What Viking Needs:

1- A 'FUNDRAISING' committee needs to be put into place to explore sponsorship opportunities to increase revenue and visibility. Funds would be used to improve trails and to upgrade trail maintenance equipment.

2- The club needs a 'RACING COMMITTEE' to explore logistics of hosting at least one junior level race to be held during the season – open to the general public.

3- Tour leaders are needed to introduce new members to Viking's network of trails for two Saturdays at the beginning of the season.

Please Contact Sharon Sawyer (514-487-1062) if you think you can help! Thank You!

Spring skiing for some, curtains for others, but BBQ for all

D Wills

Our club house facilities manager Doug (Bowes-Lyon) can take a damaged roof or a blocked toilet in his stride, but when it comes to club house lounge make overs, only a woman's touch will do!

Since the possibility of Martha Stewart electing to do community service at Viking seemed remote (our executive was ever optimistic!), it fell to keen crafts-ladies Hjordis and Daphne to organize and "do something" about the sorry state of lounge affairs. Firstly, to restore those ragged sofas, and secondly to fabricate some new curtains, long since missing from the lounge windows and possibly "lost" in a well-intentioned member's washing machine?

A call for volunteers went out requesting they show up with sewing machines, or nimble thimble fingers; Sunday, 28th March being the proposed "labour day" ... pleasant weather permitting. We scored on both counts; great spring weather and a diligent and skilled labour force showed up comprising the following supporting seamstresses: Dorothea, Judy, Philippa, and Sorel.

As for the men folk, we felt sort of inadequate to assist in such complex material matters and so were forced to enjoy some humble spring skiing on the Viking racing trails, following which we felt a little more useful setting up the gas fired BBQ on the deck and serving refreshments!

Part of the make-over plan was to recover 6 sofa back cushions which had been previously set aside in the under-stairs storage facility, but alas, they had mysteriously disappeared? As a stop gap measure, Daphne had contributed some substitute back cushions of her own. However, the two sofa base cushions were successfully re-covered in upscale corduroy kindly contributed by Gordon (Cohen). The concluding touch was the fabrication of two sets of white curtains (ex-wedding dress?) for the lounge windows. These will help to block off the powerful sun rays... a sure destroyer of sofa fabric.

Thanks to one and all who participated in this happy and productive sequel of "This Old Lounge." Now, with the lounge all sewn up, Doug can concentrate on the septic tank.... Any volunteers?

Viking Biking & Hiking, 2004

by M Dohrendorf

For this summer Elisabeth & I have planned a Saturday bike ride on June 5th with a start at 11 a.m. at the trail head. Bring your own lunch.

June 5th: Biking along the Soulanges Canal – 68-km. From Pointe des Cascades to Riviere Beaudette and back. A mere 30 minutes from Downtown Montreal – just south of Vaudreuil, this beautiful, entirely paved bikeway runs alongside the Soulanges Canal for the first 22 kilometers and then follows a winding path through fields and forests--a perfect destination for cyclists in search of tranquility and enchanting landscapes. This is a linear tour, so we return via the same route. Those inclined may turn around earlier. A trail fee may be expected.

Where to meet: In the village of Dorion (west of Ile Perrot) turn left from Hwy 20 onto Hwy 338 (towards south). Go for about 6-km past the Summerlea Golf Course on your right and Summerlea Village on your left. Shortly after on a small hill with a green house and large rock garden at the corner turn left onto Rue Cascade After 100 meters turn right onto rue Centrale. Go straight over the canal and cycle path to stop sign. Use the parking lot on your left on rue Chemin Du Fleuve.

A second tour is planned by Real Brien for June 19th near Chambly. Further details to follow shortly. Stay tuned.

A hiking trip will be announced for the post-mosquito season. To reserve, or for more information, call Elisabeth & Michael Dohrendorf, 450-437-4092 or mdohrendorf@videotron.ca

Loppet 2004

by T Humphreys

Although the little country church in Wentworth-Nord was only a snowball's toss away from the start of the 10-km Jan Nordström event, Feb. 22, cross-country skiers felt no need to pray for better conditions. Lightly overcast skies, temperatures only a few degrees below the zero mark, a slight breeze and a light coating of powder on the track-set trails provided an ideal setting for the 32nd annual Morin-Heights Viking Loppet.

Some 260 skiers, a few as young as five and another 76 years of age, were on hand for the event. It was the largest participation since the event became a partnership between the Viking Ski Club and the Municipality of Morin Heights in 2001.

The Loppet has become an institution in the Cross-Country Ski Capital and skiers from as far away as the northern United States, Quebec City, Trois-Rivières and Perth, Ontario competed for gold, silver and bronze medals. The prominence of the cross-country event even drew the attention of a Télé-Québec television crew, which filmed skiers throughout the day for a travel segment to be aired next year to promote the 2005 Loppet.

Each of this year's participants, medal winners or not, was rewarded with rosy cheeks, a hearty warm meal and a silver Loppet pin. And, judging from the smiles at the finishing area behind the Auberge Morin-Heights, winning wasn't a priority, having a good time was.

More than a hundred volunteers, some wearing Nordic period costumes and Viking helmets, worked tirelessly to ensure that skiers were registered quickly, road-crossings were well protected, and trails were clearly marked for the competitors. They also manned feeding stations stocked with fruit and water, and whistled, clapped and shouted encouragement as the participants glided by. Even the occasional yodel could be heard.

The work of the volunteers was outstanding with a greater contingent of local residents teaming up this year with veteran club volunteers. And, their efforts didn't go unnoticed. "Just a few words to express my congratulations and thanks for the great Loppet you offered us, " wrote Richard Wilson. "Everything went fine and smooth, from A to Z (well at least from the participants' stand point) but I know that there is certainly much hard work behind that. "It was my first experience ever in a cross-country ski race but you will see me in the Loppet next year for sure." he added.

Skier Lina St-Hilaire Bérubé wrote, "Everything was well organized. All the volunteers conscientiously did their jobs with a smile, with kindness and with help for one another, including the young girls (Girl Guides) who cleaned the tables..."

In appreciation, Morin Heights hosted a well-deserved reception for volunteers at City Hall following the event. It provided an ideal venue to trade anecdotes and observations, which were shared with Loppet organizers. Mayor Michel Plante said the Loppet keeps getting better and better and that, "this is a credit to the work of the volunteers."

The Loppet offered participants three races to choose from: 10-km, 20-km and 38-km. There was also a "Mini-Loppet" for youngsters.

The 10-km Jan Nordström Loppet followed the area's scenic Aerobic Corridor from Wentworth-Nord to Morin-Heights and offered occasional skiers and families just out for a nice ski and easy outing.

The 20-km Jack Walhberg Loppet was more technical than last year's design and some skiers said it skied more like a 25-km course.

The 38-km trek, named in honor of Jack Rabbit Smith-Johannsen, took advantage of the Viking Ski Club's more difficult racing trails, and skied more like it was 50-km in length.

Three skiers completed the 38-km together, arm-in-arm at 2:32:22, to collectively claim the gold, a testament to the spirit that has made the Loppet a premiere event. They were well-known competitive skier Phil Shaw, dressed in a bright yellow ski suit and blonde wig; former Canadian Olympian and World Cup competitor, Chris Blanchard; and veteran cross-country skier Michel Millier. Honorable mention, however, goes to Denis Bush, who at 76 years of age, successfully completed the 38-km event with a respectable time of five hours, 26 minutes.

"This really went well, very well" said James Jackson, who along with the Viking Ski Club's Robert Weiler, was responsible for ensuring that the various courses were ready for the skiers. "We're reaching a point now with the Loppet that all we need to do is a little tweaking to make improvements for next year.

"We had set a firm cut off time for participants of 2 p.m. at Bennet Road (in Morin-Heights) and everyone made it, some barely mind you, " he added, "and that means we had the courses designed right. More importantly, though, no one got hurt although I know some took a few nasty spills."

The Loppet's core organizing committee comprised Maryse Emond and James Jackson, of the Municipality of Morin Heights, and the Viking's Wilma Wiemer, Robert Weiler and Tim Humphreys. They met a few days after the event to evaluate the day's events, address some of the hiccups that occurred and set a course to further improve things for next year.

Topping the list of new priorities is finding a "Signature" sponsor for the next Loppet. Morin Heights will be celebrating its 150th anniversary in 2005 and the Loppet will no doubt figure prominently in the municipality's planned activities.

The key sponsors of this year's event were:

- Gourmet du Village,
 - Camping et Cabines Nature Morin-Heights, and
 - David Whissell, Deputy for Argenteuil County.
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More Loppet News

by Wilma Wiemer

The partnership with the Municipality of Morin Heights began three years ago with the hope to capitalize on the combined expertise of both partners, to make the Loppet the number one cross-country ski event in the Laurentians. After three years of hard work, I am pleased to report that we have almost reached our goal. Perfect snow and weather conditions on race day made the 2004 event a huge success and participation and revenue increased over previous year. The Loppet also continues to move forward thanks to a new, attractive website, improved distribution, and good local media coverage.

A big MERCI goes to Tim Humphreys for designing and maintaining the new Loppet website. The website has become our main communication tool with more than 250 visits per day, leading up to and immediately after race day. The website is not only a useful source of information, but provides good exposure for our key sponsors.

The Loppet brochure was distributed to cross-country ski centres, major sports stores in Montreal, Ottawa/Hull, Laurentians, and past participants in early December, well in advance of the "Early Bird Special" deadline. These initiatives played a significant role in increasing the participation level by 23% over 2003.

Loppet 2004 Registration by category:

Distance	Skiers	Percent
2.5-km	7	2%
10-km	86	31%
20-km	129	47%
38-km	55	20%
Total	277	100%

The Loppet enjoyed success on the financial front thanks to increased participation and the support of three key sponsors, Gourmet du Village, Camping et Cabines Nature Morin Heights, and David Whissell, Deputy for Argenteuil.

A key ingredient to the Loppet success is the support we receive from our volunteers. Special thanks to all the volunteers for returning year after year to make the Loppet happen.

by Sébastien Waerstad-Campeau

It's an honour to be interviewed for the Viking Newsletter! Here is my contribution:

I'm 22 years old, born in Montreal on August 15th 1981. We moved to Norway when I was about two months old and stayed there for approximately three years before moving back to Montreal and have stayed there ever since. Starting at age 9, I spent my summer vacations in Norway every year with my grand parents. I moved back to Norway alone in July of 2002 to join the military and study engineering in the army.

According to my parents I was first introduced to skiing at age 1-½ . I wouldn't think I was very agile. The first years were probably mostly spent sitting in a pulk. Nevertheless I've been skiing for as long as I can remember. I had a few adventures on alpine skis several years ago without much luck, but got back into it on and off. Then I was introduced to telemarking by Rick and Sylvie (the great Viking coaches) and have been practicing the technique ever since. I actually entered a race only a couple of years after I started. I had borrowed Rick's old back country skis. It was only that the slope was quite icy and I spent more time on my behind than on the skis. Last winter I entered the Galhrpiggrønnen. It's a telemark race down the side of Norway's highest mountain. We have to walk up for a couple of hours and then race down through the slalom set up in the mountain side.

I'm studying civil engineering at the Norwegian Army Engineering School (kind of like military college). As well as a bachelor in engineering, I also get officer training. Once I graduate, I become sergeant (as long as I'm in school, I'm a corporal) with a bachelor in military civil engineering. I then have to serve three years.

I went for my second Coureur des bois gold this year -my first gold bar- and made it. The first time I participated in the marathon was in 1998 right after the ice storm. I've participated every year after that except for last year when I was on military exercise for two weeks in the same period.

There's something about the Canadian Ski Marathon that makes you want to come back year after year. It's probably a combination of the spirit, the camaraderie, the challenge, and many other factors. I really wanted to get my first gold bar and when I knew I had the chance to fly over for the marathon I jumped on it. It was of course a very short stay in Canada since I arrived around noon on Friday and had to take the plane on Monday evening. I couldn't get any more leave because we were on an exercise that same week and had an important course the following week that I couldn't miss more than absolutely necessary. It turned out that we started our exam in that class on the Wednesday. I only learned about that when I got back to the base on Tuesday evening. Nevertheless, it was all worth the trip to the marathon. It was great to see familiar faces from Viking on the trails

I hope you've all had a great season so far and send you all lots of love from Norway.

Viking Spring Fling

by Derek Wills

An Astronomic-Gastronomic Viking Spring Fling to parc du Mont-Mégantic (Réseau Sépaq)

Act 1, Scene 1

Typical suburban living room, Christmas day, husband to wife: "for your Xmas gift, I have signed you up for Michael's Spring Fling"

Act 2, Scene 1

Boxing Day, wife to husband: "would you care to join me?"

Fast forward now several months to a rainy Friday morning, 5 March; time now for gift delivery as we gas up

for the 250-km trip from Montreal to Mont-Mégantic which, looking at the map, seems to be at the edge of the Eastern Townships galaxy. At slightly less than light speed, Autoroute 10 whisks you toward a great black hole called Sherbrooke which must be navigated around at all cost to avoid being caught in a time warp! Peace of mind will only prevail when you are headed due east on Route 212 which, being straight as an arrow horizon to horizon, could only have been built by the Romans.

Finally through the misty rains we find our turn-off at the last vestiges of civilization on asteroid NDB (Notre-Dame-des-Bois). Here we continue northward along what should be called "Rang des Ruts" as driving skills were put to the test trying to cross-navigate ice coated ruts left, we assume, by retreating Roman chariots last summer! At several points along the way, wooden sticks were stuck in the middle of this quagmire; none of us were sure what they were meant to indicate. Michael's final right-hand turn-off clue: Bean Street...or was it Chemin des Haricots...and the sign we had awaited with eager anticipation: Le Domaine des Montagnais... where 4 reserved chalets, spaced out in an enchanted forest setting, awaited us. . . well not quite! First of all, the total of 31 Vikings, showing up at different times during the day (and evening), had to find which was their designated chalet. This proved no mean feat since it seemed the signage contractor for the chalet numbering was the same one that did the Rang des Ruts! As if we had not had enough of negotiating lethally wet and icy roads, each chalet had inclined Teflon access driveways flanked by high snow banks. Most challenging to discover, and reach, were the Siamese twin chalets 208 and 210 (being co-joined at the dining/kitchen hips) atop the Chemin des Forêts Enchantées.....only enchanting for those that had 4-wheel drive vehicles! Putting yellow klister on summer tires was not practical.

Those 50% of the Vikings billeted in the Siamese chalet complex were lucky to enjoy direct access and start to unpack and "settle in." The balance of arriving Viking were less fortunate as in one case they were fended off by a yet-to-finish chalet cleaner, and in the other case had to endure even more delay due to previous occupants having, by one descriptive account, "trashed the place" (March break Barbarian invasion?) and thus necessitating extensive clean up. Clearly a shame since the chalets appeared to be in modern "just-built" condition, and fully equipped with all the kitchen accessories that self catering types like us could desire; even a flourish of luxury with gas fireplaces and Jacuzzis.

Later Friday afternoon, the Siamese twin chalet became the rendezvous for traditional Viking Happy Hour which in turn merged into the pre-agreed Potluck Supper wherein the twin kitchen tables groaned under the load of everybody's varied and delicious food and beverage contributions. At times like this, I have always thought that Viking should get out of skiing and into catering!

Ernie, a rare individual in the constellation of male-prepared culinary delights, was about to debut his re-heated masterpiece Quiche when the glass plate it was on unexpectedly shattered into a thousand pieces. Alas, Ernie's tasty looking Quiche was sacrificed in an impromptu demonstration of a supernova, but that's science teachers for you!

Eventually, our full complement of 31 Vikings arrived....us early day birds had sympathetic thoughts for those who had to first find the place, then their chalet, then us... all in the nocturnal mists! The local parish constabulary records reflect that we Vikings comprised: 8 couples, 2 solo males and 5 solo ladies. Some of the solos ended up as "Cinderellas" i.e. they slept on pull-out sofas in the kitchen/dining area!

At around 8 p.m., roughly abiding by Michael's schedule, it was time for the entertainment segment, to which end the kitchen/dinning area was transformed into a slide show cinema with provincial laws regarding maximum occupancy numbers being, no doubt, far exceeded! Lights off, Kodak carousel loaded and we were off this time to Iceland with our birding aficionado Audrey at the helm of an ex-Russian research trip. She took us, with National Geographic clarity, on a circumnavigation of Iceland plus some oblique wanderings off to even more remote northerly islands to observe, amongst much else, its feathery residents.

Before retirement, Michael required only one last tough decision of us -the advanced chef advisory for Saturday's dinner out at the local Auberge Toits Rougesfor main course....would it be: game pie, Guinea fowl, sea food combo, or simply salmon rolled in shrimp?

Next morning, following do-it-yourself breakfasting and trail-lunch making activities, the Viking car convoy assembled at 10 a.m. and, despite the dismal wet weather conditions, we all set off for the 10-km drive to the

Mont-Mégantic park entrance. Upon arrival at the entrance complex, which comprised the Astrolab, a restaurant and welcome/information centre, we were at least encouraged by how crowded the car park, (ice skating rink?) was with fellow committed skiers and snow-shoers. With group rate tagging, maps and rain gear donned, we set forth on the 38-km network of broad (Roman legion width) groomed trail network; all laid out on the lower southern flanks of 1,105-m high Mont-Mégantic.

The gods of rheumatism made sure most of us had a good soaking through before the rains did finally abate. Those with wax-less skis claimed it was a perfect match for the moist snow conditions; we had no fear of lack of snow as according to snow depth indicators, we were supported on at least 1.2-m of it! The undulating nature of the trails can be attributed to when, some 150 million years ago, fingers of liquid magma pushed up sedimentary layers, solidified, and over time were sculpted by natural erosion. Geologists welcome you to the family of the Monteregion Hills which stretch from Mont-Mégantic to Mount-Royal!

With loop trail junction/refuges having names like Pléiades, Andromède, Grand Ourse and Orion, there were stellar opportunities for short, medium or long tours to suit all Viking endurance tastes. The drop-in, wood stove heated refuges seemed to be occupied by over-nighters who didn't seem to mind that their accommodations found no mention in the Michelin Guide! For those desiring the true "Nordique" experience, the park offers an 8-km totally un-serviced trail which winds up behind the north side of Mont-Mégantic. The first half of this trail is a calorie-burner to get you up to around 975 m and to within half a kilometre of Mont-Mégantic summit itself, a busy place in the summer season with all its astronomic observatory facilities, but all frozen shut for winter.

Two intrepid Vikings (Sharon and Derek) chose to take this challenging "Nordique" way back to the welcome centre.....and just in time too as at 2:30 p.m. Vikings, in various states of dampness, were walking up to the Astrolab facility. It turned out that Michael had successfully negotiated with the friendly and obliging park staff, for a special Vikings-only viewing of Cosmic Rhythms. This was a 20 minute high-definition multimedia show, sort of IMAX lite, that took you on a unique voyage out from our humble solar system home-a mere suburb in the Milky Way galaxy-to the edges of the expanding universe. Then, with clocks on fast forward, we time traveled through 14 billion years from the "big bang" to the present time. Although it seems we have not been around that long as evolved skiers, it was at least comforting to learn that the sun has enough low priced gas left to permit us to ski for another 5 billion years!

Following the film, our knowledgeable animator fielded a question and answer session, focusing on illustrations of asteroid-formed craters in Quebec. Then the Astrolab exhibit facilities were unlocked for us to wander around and view. However most minds, rather than dwell on warped space-time and quantum physics concepts, were more looking forward to soothing hot showers and Jacuzzis back at our chalets!

After naps, natters, and nibbles (which we later regretted) we drove off around 6:15 p.m. to Auberge Toits Rouges, seemingly located in the middle of nowhere, for what was to be a truly gastronomic experience like no other. Our hosts, couple Charles and Sylvie, were determined we should know every detail of the delights to be served. Starting with the wine selection, Charles patiently went to each of the four table loads of Vikings to explain the complete details on two especially recommended wines; it was perhaps only the detailed nature of the soil conditions of where the grapes that were lacking!

I will spare non-participants of this Spring Fling the mouth-watering details of what followed since it would find better place in a newsletter devoted to haute cuisine than in a newsletter which endeavours to espouse the healthy life path through the sport of cross country skiing! Suffice to say, it took a leisurely 4 hours to indulge this four course marathon and please don't ask about the dessert choices with names like "Décadence!" A wiser dinning group from CMC (Le Club de Montagne le Canadien) went off for some nocturnal calorie-consuming snow shoeing before returning to better tackle the desserts!

The evening concluded by our summoning out the young chef who had orchestrated this Olympic eating affair for a round of Viking applause. At this point, our host Charles revealed that he was indeed a chef of Olympic stature having earned numerous provincial, national and international accolades for his gastronomic skills. We retired back to our chalets, no sleeping pills required!

Overnight, the winds picked up and the outside temperatures had swung sub zero; Sunday morning we awoke...

back in Iceland? By the time we had breakfasted, packed endless stuff in vehicles and tidied up the chalets, the previously obscured views of the surrounding countryside from our enchanted forest perches finally revealed themselves.

Ever the optimists, and before "abandoning ship," Vikings returned around 10:30 a.m. to the Mont-Mégantic park to judge whether trail conditions might, despite apparent icy conditions, be skiable. Thanks to extensive machine grooming and a fresh dusting of snow...for many of us...they were! Those not quite so convinced opted to venture off on snow shoes, either their own, or readily rentable from the park welcome facility. Things only got better as the day progressed, the skies cleared, the sun shone and the snow softened up. Even the Appalachian Mountain ranges of Maine to the south were now visible from the trails; our patience had been rewarded and guiltily gained calories at least partially worked off on long up hills! Some of the down hill trail sections, being exceedingly long and fast, necessitated long time maintenance of the snow-plow posture; several of us had to pull over mid run in order to rest our strained muscles...or were we just getting old?

By early afternoon, a contented residue of Vikings congregated at the park restaurant to enjoy a last soup, hot chocolate or coffee. We sang Gordon a happy LXIXth birthday before departing for the long return drive home. At least now on safe dry roads and with clear vistas of the Townships countryside, all of which had been denied us during the rain obscured outward bound drive.

Concluding thanks to Michael and Elisabeth for scouting out, planning, communicating, balanced budgeting (now the envy of Finance Ministers!) and organizing yet another "full of surprises" Spring Fling!

For the rented chalets we stayed at: www.domainedesmontagnais.ca

For the incredible restaurant we dined at and were encouraged by our host to "spread the word":
www.auxtoitsrouges.com

For the Mont-Mégantic Park we visited: www.parcisquebec.com and www.astrolab.qc.ca

Facilities Report 2003 -2004

by Douglas Bowes-Lyon

Maintenance followed the normal progression as in other years. This includes such things as cutting the grass in the summer, washing and waxing floors, washing windows and cleaning up the club house in preparation for the coming ski season. Major maintenance projects are undertaken during the off season and this year was no exception.

The first item on the agenda this season was the water supply. Last spring our shallow well ran dry and temporary measures had to be taken to tide us over for the few week left in the season. The clubhouse also has a second, deeper well that was brought back into service after many years of disuse and is now ready to supplement the shallow well should it run dry again.

The shallow well also got serviced. During the low water this Fall, the shallow well casings were cleaned out and a new foot valve was installed. It has been many years since this well was serviced and there was an accumulation silt and muck at the bottom. After the well was cleaned out, the system was flushed to clean sediments out of the pipes and pressure tanks. Members may have noticed that the water in the clubhouse ran clear this past winter.

After the wells were repaired and cleaned, it was necessary to change the toilets. These units had been in service for many years and were in bad shape. Poor flushing, slow filling and leaking valves were all causing inefficient operation and the pump to run unnecessarily. The water supply and plumbing should now be ready to supply many more years of service.

A great deal of thanks must be given to Robert Weiler for all the work (that is most of it) he did on these and other projects/job around the clubhouse

Another item that was showing its age was the kitchen stove. It also gave out. Many thanks to Wilma Wiemer who donated a new stove and the crew that installed and connected it.

Finally, in order to counter loss of part of our parking lot to the town's new ditch, we had several loads of gravel dumped and graded along the back of the parking lot.

These are some of the projects proposed for 2004:

- Stain and seal the deck.
- Clean up and renovate the waxing room.
- Repair footings on the racing hut as necessary.

If any members wish to assist in these or any other projects/job that may come up please contact me at dboweslyon@videotron.ca.

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Richard Bougie

Ann Carson-Tempier

Gordon Casbourne & Ann Noseworthy

Gregory Cosentino & Janet Rennick

Jeff Deeprose & Wendy Petersen

Stewart Dowbiggin & Amanda Glew

Martin Franklin & Hannah Franklin

Martin Gabelier & Joanne Bolduc

Michel Grenier & Sylvia-Anne Duplantie

Nicoline Guerrier & Peter Freud

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Katherine Kasirer & Glen Smibert
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Marc Trudel & Tricia Van Der Walde
Michelle Walsh & Bernard Blouin
Richard Wilson & Johanne De Champlain

Newsletter Submissions

The Viking Newsletter is the official newsletter of the Viking Club. The newsletter is distributed four times yearly to some 200 addresses of cross-country (x-c) skiers, mainly around Montreal, Quebec. Comments and submissions are welcomed by the editor, John Symon, at 4512 Patricia Ave. Montreal, H4B 1Z1 or at jsymon@alumni.concordia.ca

Veillez noter que des soumissions sont également acceptées en français.