

SKI MEMORIES

Farewell old friend

John Wiltsie

March 9, 1940 - July 11, 2009

It is with a very heavy heart that I attempt to write this. I have tried several times to do this but just could not stop the tears long enough to do it. I cannot even comprehend the sorrow that your loved ones must be going through.

How do I say farewell to an old friend of over 40 years? The only way I can think of is to take a trip down memory lane. So if anyone tries to read this please bear with me as I take this stroll.

John, you and I first met in the summer of 1967. You were a young engineer who had just moved to Millinocket and I was still studying engineering at the University of Maine and working summers at the mill. It was a hot summer day and you still did not know very many people in town so I invited you to my parents' camp for a swim and supper after work. That was the beginning of a very long and special friendship.

We spent the summer fishing in the evenings after work and hiking the mountains on weekends. You said that you wanted to learn how to ski and I said that I could teach you.

At that time Squaw Mountain in Greenville had a promotional deal with the university that any full-time college student could ski free if you brought an all day adult ski ticket purchaser with you. I had a friend in Greenville (Verdell La Case) who owned a barbershop where we could stay at night as long as we were out before he opened in the morning. We reached an agreement that if you came to Orono on Friday nights and picked me up and brought me back on Sunday nights, we could sleep in Casey's barber shop and ski Squaw every Saturday and Sunday. We did that for two winters. Some mornings it was a challenge to get out of the barber chairs and dressed before the shop opened. That was the beginning of a long and avid skiing relationship.

After college we skied another winter at Squaw. I informed you that the mountain was too small and that the number of single girls was limited. We needed to go to the big mountain where the challenges were greater and the girls were more numerous. Thus began the love affair with Sugarloaf.

IT WORKED! Life was great! For the next two winters we had standing reservations for Friday and Saturday nights at The Herbert Hotel in Kingfield. We made lots of friends our age, skied every winter from opening day till closing and then hiked Mt. Washington for spring skiing and eventually met the girls we married. The second year we purchased lots in Eustis and started building my camp. The third year you, Donna and I rented the Pugru —a small A frame on Route 27. That winter I realized that I had met the love of my life. Especially after she carried a case of beer up Mount Washington. I married Donna and hit a tree on Double Bitter on my honeymoon and ended up in a full leg cast for the rest of the winter. Thank you for getting me out of the loft the next morning so Donna could take me to the hospital.

The next summer we finished my camp and the three of us moved in for another great winter of skiing. You met Muffy that winter and married. We started your camp the next summer. We were now both happily married, had our own camps and started families, Donna and I with Josh and Brian, you and Muffy with Michael and Jenny. Life was still great but storm clouds were brewing.

Your marriage fell apart. Muffy ended up with the camp and you with the house in Medway. You were devastated. Your heart was broken beyond comprehension. How could this happen to such a kind and gentle man? But being the great person you were, you eventually pulled it together and provided a home full of love and caring for Michael and Jenny.

You instilled in them the same great loving, caring and moral values that you possessed.

Through every dark cloud there must be a silver lining. You met Diane at work and became great friends. That friendship resulted in a very loving and caring marriage. Donna and I were so pleased that you were both so happy together. You both deserved the happiness you shared. We are both grateful for having met Diane. She will be our friend and in our thoughts forever.

Time has a way of getting away from you. The stress of following a successful career and of providing a secure home for our families took its toll. Although we continued to ski Sugarloaf, we drifted apart and saw less and less of each other. When our boys reached college age I sold our camp and Donna and I stopped skiing for about 10 years. Oh how I regret letting this happen!

After retirement we went south for the winter for a few years and then Donna said that she thought we should get back into skiing. Little did I realize that her ultimate goal was to see us get back together again. I am so grateful that she did. Last winter was the greatest I have had for a long time. We were back together again just like old times. Two 69-year-old men cruising the mountain finding the last patch of powder, skiing the moguls and knowing what trails and lifts to go to to avoid the crowds and get the best skiing. Life was great again!!

Thank you my old friend for being a part of my life for the past 40-plus years. These great memories will be with me for the rest of my life. And especially thank you for last winter. I promise that every day I ski, I will dedicate the first run of the day to you.

Farewell old friend.

You are greatly missed by all who crossed your path.

*May you rest in peace.
Ted Walls*

Ted Walls (left) and John Wiltsie on Christmas morning in 1973 skated from camp in Eustis to Stratton. They had a couple of beers in the local pub and then skated back to camp on Flagstaff Lake.



John Wiltsie on the Face of Sugarloaf in the morning after a Northeaster.
(Photo courtesy of Ted Walls)



SUGARLOAF



The Shipyard Brew Haus

Open daily for Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner.
Come visit us at the Sugarloaf Inn.

- Live Entertainment
- Nightly Specials
- Big Screen TVs
- Pizza Delivery Call 237.2395
- 8 Shipyard Ales on Draft



© 2009 Sugarloaf Mountain Corporation

207.237.6837

sugarloaf.com