

After months of eager anticipation, 57 Space City Skiers headed to Heavenly Valley for the TSC Final Showdown Saturday morning, March 12. Following a smooth flight and a short bus ride, we were rewarded with our first spectacular views of Lake Tahoe. Heavenly received record snowfalls this season, so there was plenty of it for everyone to enjoy. Bright sunshine, gorgeous blue skies, and warm spring skiing temperatures greeted our skiers Sunday for the first full day of skiing. Pilar Gonzales had arrived two days ahead of the group and since she “knew” the mountain was appointed leader of the “Thuy Amigos”. She convinced Richard Rocque, Thuy Tran, Don Macken, and two Lone Star Skiers to go down a “fun” trail



Heavenly - Ross, Stan and Ellen enjoying cold brews

through the woods with “little bumps”. Once on the trail, it was apparent that Pilar failed to mention the little bumps were between “big trees”. The Space City skiers pulled through, but one of the Lone Star skiers went over a little bump into a very big tree. Pilar was shortly relieved of her leader status. Laurie Haischer and Judy Weison had a different sort of excitement Sunday when they found themselves next to Antonio Banderas at one of the ski lifts.

Monday would provide more adventures for our group. About half the group headed for a day at the Sierra-at-Tahoe ski area. The “Thuy Amigos” group grew to 12, including Roger Holzman, Janet McKenzie, Carmen Mikail, Pat Reinhardt, and “Bob-Cat” Wray. They tore up the mountain tackling several difficult black and blue runs on a challenging windy day with some icy conditions without getting a scratch. After a delicious Bar-B-Q lunch, they decided to do a little sightseeing down the easiest green run on the mountain. Midway down the mountain, the gang gathered to comment on the reckless skier who flew across several of them and smacked into the biggest tree on the trail. Suddenly, they realized Bob-Cat was missing-in-action. What seemed like an eternity later, a skier slowed down to tell the group that a man with a gray beard wearing a red ski jacket also hit a tree on the other side of the trail at the same time as the other reckless skier. Moments later, Bob-Cat slowly made his way to the group looking dazed and when the group asked, “what happened?” All Bob-Cat said was “this tree just jumped right in front of me!” While we will never know exactly what happened, the tree did leave a devastating blow to his left

wrist. Needless to say, Bob-Cat spent the rest of the trip learning how to brush his teeth, tie his shoes, put in his contacts, and write with his non-dominant hand - all with a great attitude and positive outlook on the rest of the trip. Although skiing was over, Bob was philosophical about it; this was his 6th and final trip scheduled for the season, he enjoyed 26 days of skiing, he can still use his right hand to shift his car transmission (as long as he's not on a curve), and he did not miss any of the remaining trip events.

Judi Ronkartz and Bruce Baird both found out how hard snow can be. On Sunday, Judi had been heading over to meet up for lunch with Suzy Gardner, Brad Williams, and Gardner Williams on a cat track when the next thing she remembered was Russ from the Ski Patrol asking her a bunch of questions, some of which caused hesitation on her part and concern on his. So, she ended up riding down to the Clinic strapped on “the board”. The Clinic checked her out, cleaned up the cut and abrasions on her cheek, nose and lip and then let her look at her new black eye, “WOW” she said, “that's some #**@! hard snow”! Tuesday found all our skiers back at Heavenly for another great sunny day. Bruce had been heading in to lunch, near the bottom of the run in the “slow” area, when he managed an acrobatic flip into a “perfect” face plant and he too found out how hard the snow can be. As in the case of Judi, the Ski Patrol assisted Bruce to the clinic where the Doctor put five stitches above his left eyelid and voila; Judi and Bruce had matching left black eyes. When debating who had it worse, Bruce conceded that title to Judi based on her getting to ride down on “the board”. One thing they both agreed on though is the need to wear a helmet! Judi bought a pretty blue one that “kinda” matched her eyes and Bruce rented one for the rest of the trip until he bought one back home. Craig Campbell also experienced a cut over, guess, his left eye, is this a pattern?

Nighttime found some in our group exploring the casinos. Rumor has it that Barb Erlich was able to gamble all night and ski all day, Donna Sears, Ed and Shann Shinn reportedly left the Horizon with more than they arrived with. But Janet McKenzie lost all of her “stake” the first night - 50 cents!

Wednesday found the short trippers joining us for their first day of skiing. Sixty-one of us headed up to the northwest side of Lake Tahoe to famous Squaw Valley, home of the 1960 Olympics, while brothers Gary and Charles Butler decided to try North Star. Diane Baker caught up to the group, so husband Ross Baker no longer had to worry about luggage problems on the way home. Joe Kulpinsky and Pat McKechnie did some sightseeing around the mountain. Other skiers included Dave Whitehead, Ken Oldroyd, Don and Ruth Ann McGee, Margie Cohen and Kathy Luhrs. Kathy was also enjoying her first SCSC trip. After a great day of skiing, we boarded the Tahoe Queen Paddle Wheeler for a fantastic evening cruise of dinner and dancing while cruising along Lake Tahoe's beautiful shore - as beautiful at night as in the daytime.

The ski club races were held on the morning of St. Patrick's Day at Heavenly's World Cup Run. The weather and ski conditions were great for racing. Space City was chosen to be the first of the 10 Texas Ski clubs to race. We had excellent participation with 26 racers competing. Retired racer, Janet McKenzie helped get us prepared at the starting gates and made sure we were in compliance with procedures. Many other non-racers cheered us from the stands

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at the base of the run. We did well as we had many medal winners. Winners of silver medals included Diane Baker and Phillip Vice. Winners of bronze medals included Pilar Gonzalez, Sharon Simandl, Pam Smith, Ross Baker, Bill Bomberger, Barry Caspar, Robert Cloutier, Don Macken, Pat Reinhardt, Richard Rocque, and David Rodriguez. Our non-medalists also did well as we got excellent club point totals from them (we needed the points too). When all the club races were over, we were in first place for our division (the "large club division"). Our first place finish was a result of a total team effort spearheaded by the hard work of our Race Director, Don Macken. Several of our racers entered the afternoon individual races. Space City racers had much success with these races too. Silver medal winners included Ellen Eastham and Phillip Vice. Bronze medal winners included Pilar Gonzalez, Shannon Powers, Bill Bomberger, Barry Caspar, Don Macken and Richard Rocque. All involved with the races had a very good time and no one got hurt. The fact that Space City took first place in the Club Races was icing on the cake. Many of us will remember St. Patrick's Day, 2005 for quite some time.

Since Thursday was indeed March 17, our club dinner that night had a St. Patrick's Day theme. Thanks to a suggestion by Linda Licarione, we played a card matching game (find the person who has the card that matches yours) to help us get to know each other better. Successful pairs then participated in drawings for fabulous prizes. Winners included Phillip Vice, Joyce Margace, Shannon Powers, and Susan Blome.

On Friday, 34 of us headed to Kirkwood Ski Resort. It was fitting that our intrepid group conquered some of the most challenging ski runs in California on our last day of the trip. At the top of the "black" Sentinel Bowl, Leyla Ozkardesh was heard repeating her "mantra" in preparation for her epic decent. Those subduing the

famous "Wall" at the top of the mountain included Bill Bomberger, Ellen Eastham, Sharon Simandi, Barry Casper, Don Macken, Thuy Tran, Richard Rocque, Ross and Diane Baker. Sharon even videoed their second run! Kirkwood's gift shop did a brisk business, selling out of commemorative "Wall" sweatshirts to several of our conquering heroes. (Don, are you sure yours fits?). Michael Edwards, Jane Kidd, and Lea Ann Matura had skied Kirkwood earlier in the week.

Friday found Sherry Black and Pam Salvage going on a snowmobile adventure. Don and Pati Mengden-Eckhardt hosted a book signing for Don's newest Temper/Rowdy Mystery-Thriller books - The Hannibal e-Puzzle and The Atomic Hell Puzzle (the later fittingly set at Lake Tahoe). The signing was at the Neighbors Bookstore, South Lake Tahoe Village Center.

The Final Showdown Awards dinner was held Friday night with all 350 plus Texas skiers at the Horizon ballroom. The "theme" was "Saturday Night Fever/50's/Grease". Pam Smith should have won first place for her Poodle Skirt, Pat Reinhardt should have won for his shirt, hairstyle, and sunglasses and Stan Broniak, where did you get that wig? The highlight of the awards presentation was the announcement that Space City Ski Club won overall first place in the Large Club Division.

As we headed out to the Reno airport Saturday morning, Lake Tahoe was beginning to get another epic snowfall. Jim Parise, was gracious in letting a woman needing to get to her sick mother have his seat on our flight in exchange for some travel vouchers and a later flight. Houston was experiencing severe thunderstorms so the plane landed in San Antonio to wait it out. Several people got off the plane and the flight crew did a drawing that allowed Roberta Ramin, Bob Rexford, and Sue Salvage to move to seats vacated in first class to finish out the flight. Roberta didn't mind leaving husband Ron Ramin in coach apparently. Soon, we were safely home to good ol' warm Houston, no snowshoes needed here!



High Maintenance Ladies League