

Val di Fassa

by Peggy Montgomery

A group of 44 from Space City Ski Club found a great European destination for skiing - Val di Fassa! However, for about half the group this fantastic Italy experience began with a pre-trip extension to Rome. Three days before the ski trip **Robert Clements, Don Crabtree, Don Cole, Cheryl DeWitt, Linda Guice, Cheryl Harland, Lynda Henry, Terri Hesse, Steve Kenny, Donna Kidwell, Bruce and Marsha Kilgore, Gai-Lyn Marshall, Jim McLaughlin, Lynn Messer, Nelson Messinger, Deborah Monahan, Eric Prentis, Liz Scarborough, Dan Stoltzfus, Lee Swords, Joe Walker** and I did a whirlwind tour of Rome's highlights. *(We also found this experience helped us get ready for skiing --- exercise by walking and adjusting to the time change before we got to the mountain!)* Various adventures were by foot, bus tours, moped and even by train. *(If you see Lynn Messer ask her the benefits of having new Italian speaking friends when experiencing a minor fender bender on a moped with an Italian National!)* The Rome Group also set the stage for a week of gastronomical indulgences --- Italian wine, pasta, veal, more Italian wine, more pasta, and of course, GRAPPA *(this stuff is the second cousin to "White Lightning"!)*

After our fun filled visit of Rome some of the group caught up with **Larry and Deborah Christi, John Brescian, Barbara Johnson, Patty Baker, Tommy Thompson and Susan Benhke** at the Rome airport for a quick trip to Venice. Because of so many Texans trying to get to Val Di Fassa, we ended up on a couple of different flights, not only from Rome, but from the States. We were all scheduled to meet in Venice by noon to start the bus trip to the Valley, but while we all made it some of our luggage did not. A small group of us making the shortest flight of the day ended up having to spend a couple of hours at the Venice airport making claims for lost luggage. Fortunately, particularly for **Cheryl Harland**, the luggage arrived in Val Di Fassa the next morning. *(Cheryl -- who packed everything to be checked for her brief Rome-Venice flight discovered one carry-on might not be a bad idea!)*

Cheryl, Jim McLaughlin, Lynda Henry, Terri Hesse, Don Cole, Lynn Messer, Deborah Monahan, Donna Kidwell, Joe Walker and I finally reached the Hotel Catinaccio just in time for dinner. There we finally met up with the SCSC group that traveled through Milan to get to Venice --- **Don Ballentine, Mark Chambers, Linda Day, Robert Gottlieb, Fred Hoffman and Lori Liatto** *(a couple of Corpus Christi Ski Club members traveling with Space City, Fred is a TSC officer)*, **Joe Kulpinsky, Bill Lively, Gary Pfeffer, Helen Schilling, Robyn Shaw,**

Gene Soo, Andrea Yowman *(another TSC officer and a member of the Houston Ski Jammers)* and of course my husband, **Jerry Montgomery** *(TSC officer and the Italy Expedition Coordinator.)* After dinner we all pretty much relaxed and went to bed early so we could hit the slopes the next day.

Those who skied had a very pleasant surprise waiting for them the next day -- surprisingly good snow conditions *(except for extreme fog the first few days.)*. We were surrounded by several ski resorts -- all within 10-20 minutes by bus. Each day we had the opportunity to ski a different resort by using buses reserved exclusively for TSC members, provided by tour operator Central Holidays. According to **Steve Kenny** this was a great convenience as he had to use the city shuttle once to get home.

The skiing, I think most on the trip would agree, was a great European ski experience. Most slopes were wide open, groomed and accessed by gondolas and/or chair lifts. Ski Latemar, a relatively new ski area, seemed to be the favorite of our group and when offered a choice late in the week to go back most took the opportunity. **Nelson Messinger and Liz Scarborough** also found cross-country skiing to be great, but encountered some Italians who made it clear what we thought were lift tickets for all the areas to be incorrect when it came to cross country skiing. But, they still enjoyed the cross-country terrain.

Early in the week most of our group headed to Cortina to ski and shop, but bad weather *(icy roads)* made for a long trip. When we finally got to Cortina we found shops closing shortly for the afternoon equivalent of the Mexican siesta, but **Linda Day** made the most of the brief shopping time by purchasing a chandelier *(not the one she has been thinking about since her last trip to Cortina several years ago, but close enough.)* Those skiing also encountered extremely poor visibility, but fortunately Cortina had set out a "welcome" feast for the Texas Ski Council, so when we arrived *(almost at lunch time)* we were

treated to fantastic pastries, small pizzas and free wine. While the trip ended up being a long bus ride for little skiing/shopping, most on the trip would agree that Cortina would be a great place to go back.

Midweek, **Helen Schilling, Gary Pfeffer, Donna Kidwell, Cheryl Harland, Terri Hesse, Don Cole, Lori Liatto, Fred Hoffman and Andrea Yowman** headed to Venice for the day while **Lynda Henry, Jim McLaughlin,**

Don Crabtree, Deborah Christi and Bruce and Marsha Kilgore rented a driver/car and toured Verona and Vencenza. Jim commented that it was a great way to travel -- seems Italian wine was one of their primary purchases, which flowed freely



Val di Fassa (continued)

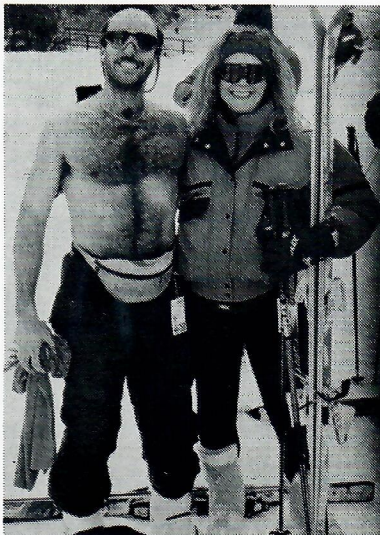
on the way back. The trip was also a big success for Marsha as one of the places visited was a gold factory.

On Thursday, **Barbara Johnson** and **Deborah Christi** opted to join a group headed to Trento for a castle/wine tour and left **John Brescian** and **Larry Christi** to try out the "Sella Ronda" with **Gene Soo**, **Robert Gottlieb**, **Mark Chambers**, **Don Ballentine**, **Fred Hoffman**, **Eric Prentis**, **Robyn Shaw**, **Cheryl DeWitt**, **Dan Stoltzfus** and **Bill Lively**. The Sella Ronda is a guided circular ski in which participants had the opportunity to ski in excess of 20 miles without ever skiing the same slope twice --- as you can imagine, this event created stories to tell because it was a beautiful day. Not only did approximately 200 Texans show up for this event, but the locals were out in force making for long lift lines. Not to worry, though. Some of our group were with an inventive and creative guide (*or he's been in this situation before!*) At times he had them use taxis to bypass the lift lines!?! (*You'll have to ask someone who did this how exactly this worked without missing any of the skiing.*) In fact, to complete the circle you had to keep moving at a significant pace. At one point **Dan Stoltzfus** stripped to the waist to cool down. Who commented, "the man has no body fat"? Quite by accident (?) those of us who went to Trento had our own "Cellar Ronda". After descending to the Wine Cellar at Ca' vit Winery to see the huge oak barrels and, of course, to sample the wines, purchases were made. On the bus home purchases were opened and passed around freely -- in sort of a "circle".

The bus wine tasting put us in the perfect mood for the predinner party put on for us by hotel owner **Nora Jellici**. The wine and champagne flowed while we nibbled on appetizers and then went in for a memorable special dinner. While not missing out on the party, **Joe Kulpinsky**, **Lynda Henry**, **Jim McLaughlin**, **Bruce** and **Marsha Kilgore**, **Robert Clements**, **Linda Guice**, **Cheryl DeWitt** and **Steve Kenny** had the ultimate gastronomic experience by taking a moonlight snowmobile/sled ride deep in the San Pellogrino mountains for a gourmet dinner at a charming restaurant.

After a last day of skiing or sightseeing in the valley our

last evening we had a SCSC predinner party which was quite an event. Once again, **Nora** and her staff made us feel at home and provided us with all the wine or champagne we wanted and delectable hors d'oeuvres (*a meal in itself*). As a part of this memorable evening a local artisan gave us a brief concert of Laplin music on a hundred year old musical instrument. From there we once again had a terrific dinner and some went to the TSC Final Party at a local discoteque where more wine flowed freely (*the local Italians treated us to a lot of wine during the week!*)



Shortly after the witching hour about half of our group boarded buses for the Venice airport and long plane rides home. Again, about half the group did post trip extensions (*and a late bus on Saturday!*). **Jim McLaughlin** and **Lynda Henry** took a train to Florence and then Milan. **Cheryl DeWitt**, **Steve Kenny**, **Eric Prentis**, **Dan Stoltzfus**, **Gai-Lynn Marshall**, **Susan Behnke**, **Larry** and **Deborah Christi**, **Robert Clements** and **Linda Guice** spent a few days sight seeing in Venice while **John Brescian**, **Barbara Johnson**, **Don Crabtree**, **Bruce** and **Marsha Kilgore**, **Nelson Messinger**, **Liz Scarborough**, **Patty Baker** and **Tommy Thompson** toured Venice and Florence. My thanks to **Gai-Lynn Marshall** and **Patty Baker** for agreeing to handle vouchers etc. for the extensions.

I should mention the "man of steel" on our trip. On the last ski day **Joe Walker** took a spill and injured his shoulder. While he indicated it was painful he thought he'd just pulled ligaments and decided to wait until he got back to the States to have it checked. He went straight to the doctor and found he'd not only pulled muscles, but had a broken humerus bone (*the large bone in the upper arm*). Even the doctors were amazed that he made the trip back with only over the counter medication. This was Joe's first trip with the Club and even with this experience he says he can't wait for his next SCSC ski trip.

In closing, I would like to let the individuals on my trip know how much fun I had guiding them to a new skiing experience and to thank them for all their help throughout the week to make this a memorable trip! As they say in Italy -- this trip was magnifico!



More Italy...

