

WINTERFEST '02 BEHIND THE SCENES

Directing a snowshoe race is roughly equivalent to inviting about a hundred or so friends and potential friends to a big family reunion in a large outdoor area with primitive or possibly non-existent facilities. To pull this off successfully, a race director must know how to beg for loaner snowshoes, mark a trail and not get lost while doing so, recruit volunteers who enjoy doing large-scale cooking on a Coleman stove, orchestrate an effective snow dance, coordinate travel plans of out-of-towners, etc. Rather like the mix of skills required of your average, everyday housewife.

I was determined not to let this ever-expanding to-do list get the better of me as I pressed on with my plans for Winterfest 2002. This year, however, winter hesitated, then stalled. By the time the final countdown rolled around, I had become intimately familiar with every weather site on the internet, including the one that says "outdoor temperature (pick a number)...feels like (pick another number)." I imagined dozens of weathermen rolling dice to see whose turn it would be to poke their hand out the door. With such scientific predictions, why should I worry? I felt more reassured when the Oneida Indian Nation of Lake George was summoned to do a snow dance for that area's winter festival. Unfortunately, their sphere of influence didn't quite extend to Saratoga. We got some great snow, followed by freezing rain to seal it in, topped off by lots of rain to polish it up. The only good thing about this mix was that most of the rain just rolled off the thick, icy crust.

The rain began just as I headed out to decorate the course with blue streamers. Undaunted, I pressed on. At that point the "snow" was an icy mixture that was still penetrable by serious crampons. The iced tree branches were hanging at a convenient, easy-to-reach height and I soon finished my work. The following day I returned with Jeff to position trail flags and lay down directional arrows. I always worry about those arrows. Composed of an environmentally friendly mixture of ground chalk and sugar, they usually attract hungry dogs of all descriptions. But this time the slick, icy surface kept the dogs and their people off the trails. With that worry nicely taken care of, we got down to business, valiantly trying to ignore the fact that every few steps uphill were accompanied by a backwards slide whenever our crampons refused to grip. Concerned about the safety of the runners, we secured a park snowmobile to break up the surface. Not having been designed for Arctic conditions, however, it soon impaled itself on a particularly thick iceberg and was declared missing in action.

And so, on to the next problem. Where were all my painstakingly tied blue ribbons? Had the Greylock Bandits extended their territory? And was I worried? You bet...until I happened to glance upward to check for snow clouds. There, waving cheerfully twenty feet above my head was a blue ribbon! Glancing further downhill, I spotted another and still another. Bingo! The ice had melted overnight, freeing all those captive branches. No way would any runner ever see those markers. No way would we ever get those ribbons down, either, short of balancing an extension ladder on the slanting, icy surface. That course was permanently marked—a souvenir for all future Winterfests and a conversation piece for summer hikers.

And so, on to Plan C, which involved planting roughly 1,000 strategically placed orange flags. Only trouble was, it had not occurred to us to take along an ice pick! Many weary hours and dented crampons later, we accomplished our mission. As we were trudging back to the car, we encountered a family heading out for a preview of the course.

"Great snow you have here," said the Dad.

"Could have fooled me, " I thought...I guess it's all a matter of perspective!

P.S. One question still remains: Was Farmer Ed's attempt to pass still upright competitors while sliding downhill a legal move, even if his fall was not intentional? And what if it were?

Thanks to all the WMACers who kept the faith and sent in their entry forms despite the weather. I figured you must know something that I didn't!

Laura Clark

HAWLEY KILN RISES FROM THE ASHES

Good things come to those who wait. We were able to have a Hawley Kiln in 2002, and I still can't believe it. I tell people that when we started organizing snowshoe events (about 8 years ago), all we had were fun runs that were very low key and minimally attended. We usually had 3 or 4 people, but once a season we would get close to the magic "double digits". That was a real achievement, getting 10, or 12 people at once.

Those snowshoe fun runs were not really planned in advance. Usually a few days prior to heading out someone would make a few phone calls (we didn't have internet at the beginning), and if you could free up time for that day, you attended. It was usually a last minute thing whenever it would snow. When we were done we would stop someplace along the way and eat.

The Kiln sort of worked out that way this year. On Wednesday (3/20) we were getting snow, and I started to wonder if it would be enough? I called my father to see what the total accumulation was in Adams, and I emailed Tom McCrumm to see if he could check Hawley State Forest for us. I typed out a quick message for the snowshoe list of emails – and let people know that the final decision would be Friday at 6:30 PM.

On Thursday, by noon all the snow we had in CT was gone. It was about 60 degrees and I was wondering if Tom was going to laugh at me for thinking the Kiln event could happen. Tom responded with an excited "lets do it! There is about a foot of snow in the forest..." The rest was up to all of you who were willing to improvise and remain flexible for last minute plans.

The little bit of fun we all had on March 23rd is important to me, and I would like to thank all of you who participated. It helped me travel backwards, to a simpler time, and the trip was fantastic! It was a beautiful day in the forest, and on each of your faces when Paul, Tippi and I passed you by. That's another thing; for real races sanctioned by the RRCA don't allow dogs to be on the course. I would like to thank everyone for being tolerant of my dog and not getting ripped at me for letting her play in the snow with us. That was really cool.

I returned to the forest on Monday to remove the ribbons. It has always been my favorite part of a race or event, to take the ribbons down. I usually like to wait about a week, so that when I return and trace over the tracks everyone made I can think about all the different things that happened before, during and after the event. Monday was another incredible day, and the lack of winter this season isn't looking so bad now.

It was very nice and thoughtful of Marc Lombard to bring all the soda, and it really was something else for Mark Syrett to bring his stove and Chowder to cook off his tailgate; that really made the day for me! Thanks guys! Many of you ventured out to South Face Farm, I hope the visit was enjoyable and the food delicious! I know Tom McCrumm appreciates your business!

5th ANNUAL HAWLEY KILN MARCH 23, 2002

1.	Dave Wallace	7 miles	1:25:17
2.	Wayne Stocker	7 miles	1:32:00
3.	Marc Lombard	7 miles	1:41:09
4.	Larry Dragon	7 miles	1:46:56
5.	Mark "Slug" Syrett	7 miles	1:58:30
6.	Laurel Shortell	7 miles	2:07:18
7.	Marty Glendon	7 miles	2:07:56
8.	Richard Busa	7 miles	2:18:30
9.	Aaron Fitts	7 miles	2:20:39
10.	Emily Meachem	7 miles	2:20:39
11.	Paul Hartwig	7 miles	2:27:03
12.	Edward Alibozek	7 miles	2:27:04
13.	Tippi	7 miles	2:27:05
14.	Jules Seltzer	7 miles	2:36:55
15.	Jeff Clark	7 miles	2:36:56
16.	Bob Massaro	4 miles	57:13
17.	Judy Alibozek	4 miles	1:40:00
18.	Ed Alibozek Jr	4 miles	1:40:01