
Summit Huts Association
HUTMASTERS' JOURNAL

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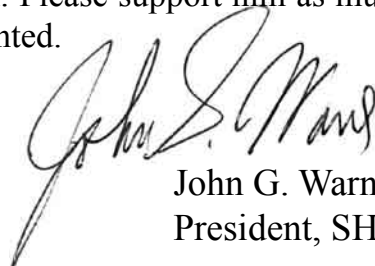
A Newsletter & Update for Friends of Summit Huts

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Greetings Friends of Summit Huts,

I was fortunate to spend some time with several bridge playing friends at Francie's Cabin this past January. We had a wonderful time; the skiing was good and the food was great! When skiing out the next day I had an epiphany; I witnessed a band of senior citizens (18-19) skinning up the Burro Trail from town the "long" way in. This was no AARP defined group of Seniors (50 years old and above), this was a hearty group of people well into their 60's and perhaps 70's. My first reaction was, "Wow, they have good gear". My next reaction was, "What a great thing to see, a bunch of older hut users going into Francie's the "long" way". Finally, I began to think to myself, is this a demographic of hut users we (SHA) aren't aware of? Or worse have we overlooked this group of users? Then coincidentally, about four weeks later, I had a 74 year old female patient tell me about a cabin that I didn't even know existed. It's called the Continental Divide Cabin. This privately owned cabin sleeps 8, is very near Tennessee Pass and newly open for public reservations. My patient's point in telling me about this hut was that it serves her group of "older" friends well. In other words, it's so close to Tennessee Pass, her less fit senior friends can make into the hut and they can all have fun together. My point with all of this, is that I wonder if we (SHA) should be marketing Francie's Cabin to this great group of older users? Further, should we be investigating new hut sites which lend themselves to our aging population? Food for thought.

On another note, because of my "landslide" victory in the mayoral race for the Town of Breckenridge, this may be my last newsletter column. Therefore, I am pleased to announce that Jack Wolfe will be taking over the reins as the President of Summit Huts Association. Jack is a great guy with a passion for hut skiing and the mountains. He is a 10+ year resident of Breckenridge, married to Wendy and father of Alex. Please support him as much as you have supported me over the years, you won't be disappointed.



John G. Warner
President, SHA



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BEYOND DASHER & DANCER: TRAVELS AMONG THE REINDEER PEOPLE OF MONGOLIA

Editor's Note: For most of us, a trip into the backcountry, whether for a day, a week, a season or longer, is a temporary, recreational diversion from our everyday lives; we can have our on-demand wilderness experiences in lives that are otherwise filled with all of the conveniences and trappings of modernity. But in climates at least as harsh as that in which we have built recreational backcountry huts, there are still people who live everyday without much of what we have grown accustomed to and often welcome with some relief upon returning to the front country.

The horses snorted as they slogged out of the knee deep bog. Through the chilly fog, a cluster of six worn, shabby teepees emerged. Children had stopped their play and watched us. Huge antlers surfaced in the distance; a dozen reindeer regarded us as we rode into the camp.



Six of us, each with roots in Summit County,

A reindeer grazes just beyond camp. Photos: Neide Cooley Collection

had set out on our Mongolian horseback adventure in late August 2006. We'd been riding for eight days through the high steppes of Mongolia – no roads, no fences, no power lines, no cars. Nothing, except an occasional *ger* (yurt), housing a family who cared for a herd of goats, sheep and some horses. We had entered into a nomadic horse-based culture that was a step back in time.

We had the unique opportunity to visit one of the last settlements of indigenous Reindeer People, a nomadic tribe moving along the Mongolian, Siberian border. Because the diet of the reindeer is based solely on a specific variety of moss, the group moves their camp every six weeks as the reindeer exhaust the moss supply. Their culture is completely dependent upon the reindeer. Reindeer provide their food supply – food, milk, cheese and meat. Their hides and antlers are used for crafts to generate income.

This band of families owned a herd of twenty five reindeer. Each day the men and boys took the reindeer out to graze – going farther and farther from camp each day as the moss supply was depleted. The women and small children cared for

TRAVELS AMONG THE REINDEER PEOPLE, CONTINUED

the camp, cooked, milked the female reindeer and nurtured the young reindeer. The women also created elegant crafts from reindeer hides. The men carved intricate, beautiful statues, necklaces and knives from the antlers and from local stone.

After our horses were picketed and our gear unpacked, we were ushered to our guest teepee --the newest of the band, with clean canvas laced over long poles. It was outfitted with a small, wood burning stove. Blankets were spread on the ground and bright, new quilts were laid out. Cold and damp from our long ride, we settled around the stove and drank their traditional drink – warm reindeer milk.

Because it was my daughter Gillian's birthday, the evening was filled with sharing a warm meal (mutton as usual), a bottle of wine which had been carried across Mongolia for this special occasion, and gifts and serenades by our guides and the local children. The evening culminated with a chocolate cake which had been gingerly carried in the saddle bags of our cook as we rode across the bogs.

We slept warm that night; every hour, one of the reindeer people entered the teepee and stoked the fire.

The next morning after serious souvenir shopping for reindeer carvings and crafts, we saddled up and pointed our horses back through the bogs to continue our adventure across the vast steppes of Mongolia.



Neide Cooley & Gillian Cooley Morrison

Our group consisted of six Summit County riders: Maureen Nicholls and her daughter Kristie Hoffman, Diane Blessing, Ed Hastian, and my daughter, Gillian Morrison, along with guides and a cook.

-Neide Cooley

News Briefs:

- * SHA is on track to have the strongest winter season on record. As of April 30, there had been 6,323 reservations made for the 07/08 season, a 3.6% increase over 06/07. The previous high was 6,236 in 05/06.
- * The 08/09 winter season has 3,723 reservations already made through the lottery
- * It's never too early to start planning! Mark your calendars now for the 7th Annual Backcountry Ball, Saturday, October 18, 2008

OPERATIONS UPDATE SPRING 2008

Wow, what a winter! As I type in late April, the huts are still buried in a deep snowpack. At this point I can't say I'm over skiing, but I am definitely over winter! While this may not have been the biggest snow year we've had in the existence of SHA, there were times when it seemed that way. Winters like this past one can really test the organization and the facilities.

The biggest issues we faced this last season were keeping the lights on and keeping enough wood stocked for the stove. Mid-winter with those short, cloudy days where we didn't see the sun for multiple days on end pushed the storage capacity of the batteries to the limit. Janet's was the only cabin that actually experienced a rare brown out; the lights were out for about four days in February. One thing that has helped a lot is gradually changing out the incandescent light bulbs with Compact Fluorescents. These bulbs use a lot less energy which was a huge help this past winter.

We didn't do as well with wood. Although we ordered extra wood for this season and we constantly encourage hut guests to conserve wood, folks tend to continually stoke the stoves, expecting the cabin to heat up to central heating standards. When it's -10F outside it just ain't going to happen, but folks do try! Not only that, but with good snow come strong reservations – we've had a good year! As a result, we (temporarily) ran out of wood at both the Section House and Janet's Cabin.

With SHA advisory board member Scott Downen

allowing us to make use of his snowmobiles and cargo trailer, we pulled enough wood up Boreas Pass to finish off the year. There were several comical moments before we figured out the best way to load the trailer with wood and also with my lack of snowmobile prowess, but we got it done.

Janet's is a bit more problematic. Snowmobiles are illegal in the area surrounding the hut and even if we wanted to take advantage of the administrative exception to the rules, the routes into the hut are not practical for driving a heavily burdened snowmobile to the hut. This led to the cutting of a standing dead tree that the Dillon Ranger District Snow Ranger Shelly Grail Braudis had identified as a "hazard tree" last year. All I can say is letting a helicopter drop cargo nets full of nice split wood in front of the hut is the preferred method of supplying the hut with firewood.

Other highlights for the year:

- * Spotting a lynx ¼ of a mile from Francie's Cabin during our Level I Avalanche course in January. That was a real treat for the students and instructors!
- * Powder days too numerous to remember individually. Skiing at the huts was phenomenal!
- * Best of all – working with many great volunteers and staff members of Summit Huts.

-Mike Zobbe



Lynx spotted walking up an avalanche bed surface 1/4 mile from Francie's Cabin, January 2008

FRIENDS OF SUMMIT HUTS

DECEMBER 1, 2007 - MAY 1, 2008

The generosity of all our contributors is key to the success of our organization. We apologize if we missed anyone. Please notify us of any errors or omissions.

\$500-\$999

Tim & Patti Casey
Phil & Barbara Gibbs

\$250-\$499

Charles & Kathleen Cannon

Hut Tripper (\$100-\$249)

Joan Bothner
Tor Brunvand
Betsy & John Cochran
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Kate Dernocoeur
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Paul & Martie Semmer

Hut Nut (\$50-\$99)

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William & Elizabeth Slaughter
Renee Steeve
Karen & Steve Wilkinson
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Olav Pederson
Sigurd Rockne

*Thanks also to our
many great volunteers.
We couldn't do it with out
you!*

The Summit Huts Association is a Colorado non-profit 501(C)(3) tax-exempt corporation (I.D. # 84-1072451) dedicated to providing venues for educational, community and professional programs and refuge to self-propelled backcountry recreational users. All donations are tax deductible as allowed per extent of the law

Summit Huts Association Spring/Summer 2008 Newsletter



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100% Cotton
Available in
Black & Pink

Black cap logo is Red, White and Black
Pink cap logo is Pink, White, and Black

\$20.00 each

SUMMIT HUTS CALENDAR

JULY 2008

FIRST NIGHT OF SUMMER RESERVATIONS

JULY 1 AT FRANCIE'S
JULY 12 AT JANET'S

**WILDFLOWER WORKSHOP
WITH NANCY REDNER**
JULY 26-27 AT FRANCIE'S

AUGUST 2008

VOLUNTEER DAYS

AUGUST 16-17 AT FRANCIE'S
TBA JANET'S, SECTION
HOUSE & KEN'S

SEPTEMBER 2008

LAST NIGHT OF SUMMER RESERVATIONS

SEPTEMBER 1 AT JANET'S
SEPTEMBER 30 AT FRANCIE'S

OCTOBER 2008

7TH ANNUAL
BACKCOUNTRY BALL
OCTOBER 18

NOVEMBER 2008

FIRST NIGHT OF WINTER RESERVATIONS

NOVEMBER 26
ALL SHA HUTS

JANUARY 2009

AVALANCHE LEVEL 1 BACKCOUNTRY TRAVEL COURSES

JANUARY 10-12 AT FRANCIE'S
JANUARY 23-25 AT JANET'S

FEBRUARY 2009

VOLUNTEER DAYS

FEBRUARY 7 AT FRANCIE'S
FEBRUARY 21 AT JANET'S

Space is limited (to 20 people or fewer) for all volunteer days and workshops. Please contact SHA in advance to sign up

Hut Reservation Information

Availability: www.summithuts.org Reservations: 970-925-5775



Summit Huts Association operates Janet's Cabin, Francie's Cabin, The Section House & Ken's Cabin under special use permit with the Forest Service, USDA. SHA is an equal opportunity provider.

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