

March 20, 2006

Stowe Annual Vertical Regatta

Faced with very cold and hard water, we northern sailors have to recreate creatively in the winter. Apparently we are up to the challenge. On March 1st, 2nd and 3rd, a gathering of former, current and potential Fireball sailors met in Vermont for the twelfth edition of the Stowe Annual Vertical Regatta. It might have been the most successful yet. Our group numbered up to 16, with some coming and going at odd times making the count difficult. First time participants included Debbie Kirkby, who flew in from Calgary, Averil and Grant Lamont, from Ontario and B.C. simultaneously, and Tof Nicoll-Griffith.

Our sailors are enthusiastic skiers. And they are somewhat competitive too. The pace was quick; the skiing level was high. There was a lot of discussion about equipment and technique, a precursor of what we can expect in a few short months on and off the water.

Tom and Andrew retired from the mountain early on Thursday, to begin preparations for what should be remembered as "*The feast*". It has become a tradition that our ski events permit us to sample their gourmet cuisine skills. Great care is taken with the menu, the provisioning, preparation and presentation of the dinner. Every course, from soup and salad, to the entrée and finally dessert was superb. Every year we enjoy extraordinary dining, but our chefs outdid themselves this year. Non-skiers should take note. The eating alone is well worth the drive. I nearly forgot the wine. We consumed some. Lots actually. The back of my SUV was pretty well filled to the brim with empty bottles en route to the recycling depot. There were a lot of happy sailors this year.

Regatta reports invariably discuss the wind and weather. So too with our wintry, vertical regatta. On Friday, the wind howled. Chair lifts ran when they could, and windswept conditions were the order of the day. It always puzzles me that there is either way too much, or not enough wind. We outdoor sports enthusiasts just have to contend with what Mother Nature provides. It was also cold. And not just outside. Averil and Grant slept in my basement with tuques on their heads to combat the lack of downstairs heat. It is a very good thing that they are hearty young Westerners.

Thanks to Rob and Philip for their hospitality; to Andrew and Tom for their artistry in the kitchen; and to all who traveled from near and far to make this year's event a "howling" success.

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