

Loon Area Christian Ministry

January—February—March, 2012

Personal Note from Skip

I'm having a ball! Loon Mountain replaced its Ambassador program, which I've been involved with for the past 13 years, with a Mountain Host program. The difference? Mainly one of emphasis. The Ambassador program was geared toward skier safety, functioning as an auxiliary of the ski patrol, and also incorporated customer relations. The Mountain Host program is geared toward customer relations and while we also spend some time skiing and occasionally help the patrol sweep the trails at the end of the day, the emphasis is on serving the guests. I do miss my contacts with many in the Ambassador program who became good friends, but as I've told others, the job description I've been given is basically to act like a Christian—tough one, eh? Jesus made it clear to his followers that to love our neighbor is to serve them (“The greatest among you, therefore, must be the servant of all.”). So, anyone who is serious about their faith will seek to serve those around them. That's exactly what we're being asked to do for the guests at Loon, and I'm having a ball doing it. Giving directions, helping people lug their skis and equipment, greeting them with a friendly “Hello and welcome to Loon Mountain” and joking around with them “thanks for bringing the snow with you,” directing them to shorter ticket lines and telling them how they can avoid lines altogether (“If you're renting equipment you can avoid this line and purchase your tickets at the rental shop.”) Our guests are floored by the service we're providing. Just this past Tuesday, as I offered to help a mother with several kids in tow unload their equipment and she exclaimed: “I can't believe the service.” “That's what we try to do mam,” I responded with a smile, “shock and surprise.”

Loon's General Manager, Rick Kelley, and I were having lunch just the other day and I was telling him what I just told you. He responded, “you know, when we were looking for people for the Host positions, we were looking for people who

wanted to *serve* our guests. He went on to tell me that at a recent managers meeting sponsored by Boyne (our parent company) with about 250 in attendance, the speaker, James Hunter, spoke on the subject of “servant leadership” and introduced his talk with the statement that the principles he was going to teach were thousands of years old and that the greatest servant leader of all times was. . . (guess I don't have to finish that one, do I?). I could fill the rest of this newsletter with stories of how we've been able to help folks: two young men from Boston who lost the keys to their car, a mother and kids who got off the bus while leaving their skis on it, a lady I found sitting on the trail with a broken wrist, a guy who lost his ticket and hadn't saved his receipt, a teenager who bought a new ski jacket only to have the zipper break before he could hit the slopes, a beginner who was on the slopes and in need of a few pointers and encouragement, a 9-yr old girl in the company of her dad lying on the trail crying because she had just taken her first fall and needed some encouraging words from someone other than her dad, parents and kids unloading their SUV's in front of the Children's Center in half the time it would normally take because Hosts were on hand to direct them and help them carry things, a beginner snowboarder who would have ended up on all the wrong trails if one of us hadn't stopped to strike up a conversation with him in the parking lot.

Reflecting on the fun I'm having brought to mind another saying of Jesus: “I've come that your joy may be full and that my joy might be in you.” Hmmmm. . . you don't think there could be a connection between the joy he's talking about and this servant thing, do you?

From the better half (a/k/a Joyce)

It is nearing the end of January and finally looking like winter in the North Country. We received

about 4 inches of the white stuff the other night and a few more inches since then. There has been a serious snow drought this year. We get a little snow and then it rains. Thanks to technology, the ski resorts are able to manufacture enough snow to get them through the winter but we need the natural thing as well. A lack of snow does not bring those who snowmobile, snowshoe and cross country ski, which has a direct impact on the local economy. I know I have been feeling it with my jewelry business and classes. Our thrift store is doing well but could be better. We have more inventory than we know what to do with. So, pray for snow—we could use it.

I went through surgery in November and my doctor was amazed at the speed of my recovery. I spent two days on the sofa and that about drove me crazy. With Skip's help I was back to doing laundry and tagging clothes for the store along with some light housework. My return to the treadmill started with a crawl, but now I am walking 17 minute miles and even adding sprints!

We are looking forward to a trip to Georgia in May. It will be good to spend time with our son Michael and his Natalie and Ethan. They were here in 2010 so it will be almost 2 years since we've seen them. I'll be seeing my daughters in February to help with the kids during school break. Life is good.

"The Book"

On hold until after the ski season—learned last year that I simply can't do both at the same time and the ministry at the mountain needs to come first.

Successor

Marcus Corey, until just recently one of the directors of Moose River Outpost, a Christian camp in Jackman, Maine, will—God willing—be taking over this ministry in June of 2013. Marcus, 29, is a Bible school graduate, husband of Heidi and father of three young children ranging from 2-5 years in age. A preacher's kid, Marcus' father, in addition to a full-time sales position, pastor's the Getchell Street Baptist Church in Waterville, Maine.

As mentioned in the last issue, the more I find out about Marcus, the more I'm looking forward to his arrival. When I left Sugarloaf in 1990, my successors were a clergy couple from nearby Farmington, Earl and Pam Morse. Their gifts enabled them to turn a full-time seasonal ministry into a full-time year-'round ministry, something I

could never have done. On occasional visits to Sugarloaf since then, I remind them that the two best things I did at Sugarloaf were to come and to go. I started things and when I left, Earl and Pam expanded the ministry into a year-'round outreach that's touching the lives of more people than ever before.

When Marcus takes over at Loon, I fully expect he will be turning the ministry into something much bigger in scope and effectiveness than I could ever have provided—at least that's what I'm praying for. As difficult as it will be to leave the friends I've made here, I'd like to be able to look back in a few years and say the same thing about Loon as I now say about Sugarloaf: the two best things I did were to come and to go.

In anticipation of the move to Loon, Marcus resigned at the end of December from his position with Moose River Outpost and at the invitation of his father, moved his family into the Getchell Street Baptist Church parsonage in Waterville, Maine, left vacant by his parents as they care of his grandmother in her home. With the approval of the church's board, Marcus' father has taken him on as an intern for four months. At the end of those four months, dad will take off on a six-month sabbatical, turning the church over to son Marcus and thereby providing him with the pastoral experience he'll need when he comes to Loon.

This coming October, Marcus and family will move to the Loon area. When the snow flies, he'll be working with Loon's ski patrol during the week and helping me with the service on the weekends. This will give him a full season to become familiar with the mountain, the people he'll be working with, as well as our winter ministry. Then, at the end of June of next year, I'll pass the baton and Joyce and I will move to the Bangor, Maine area to be near kids and grandkids.

In his two visits to Loon so far, Marcus has been warmly received by those he's met (the patrol has already given him the nickname "Bear"). He and patrol director David White hit it off well, and plans for the transition have received the blessings of Rick Kelley, Loon's GM. As I recently wrote to Marcus and Heidi, the smooth way in which this whole thing is unfolding has me feeling more like a spectator at a play than a participant in it.

Needless to say, Marcus' pay as a full time ski patroller is not going to be enough to support his family, not to mention the fact that he won't start with Loon until two months after arriving. His

intention is to find some part-time work in the interim, but even with that, he'll still need to supplement his income until taking over the ministry at the end of June, hence funds have been incorporated in this year's budget (under "successor") to provide the necessary bridge.

Loon Mountain

As Joyce mentioned above, the snow drought has hurt not only Loon, but other New England ski resorts. Last year Loon upgraded their snow making capacity and can now make in two days what used to take them five. Consequently, with better conditions to offer our guests than our competitors, we're managing the drought much better than other resorts. At a recent staff meeting it was reported that our numbers for Christmas week—one of the two busiest weeks of the year, were almost the same level as last year—no small accomplishment considering the lack of help from mother nature, while other resorts didn't fare nearly as well.

Winter Services

We're off and running with our Downhill Worship services. For our new readers, that's an outdoor church divided into three stops going down a ski trail. Attendance has held up well in spite of the cold temps and lack of natural snow.

Uh-oh

I had the twenty skiers line up as far as possible to the side of the trail for our second stop, where I give the message. Accompanying us that day was Linda Macomber, a good friend, committed Christian, and fellow Loon Mountain Host. She had never attended our services before and explained that she should know what they're about since guests will be asking about them. While I was giving the message, she had positioned herself uphill of the group, keeping a protective eye on the skiers and riders coming down the trail toward us. Unfortunately, she didn't see the snowboarder come at her from the side after losing control. I opened my eyes after the closing prayer just in time to see my congregation going down like a bunch of dominoes after crashing into Linda's back. She went down and, standing as close as we were to each other, so did everyone else. Fortunately, Diane Reid, a registered nurse, was with us, and tended out on Linda while I called ski patrol. While we waited, we prayed for Linda and those prayers were answered--she escaped with only a bad bruise. I was impressed with the concern shown by the

snow-boarder himself—a teenager—who sincerely regretted the incident, apologized repeatedly and followed patrol down to First Aid to fill out a report. After we found out Linda was going to be okay, I called him to pass on the good news and thank him for his response, a welcome change from the "hit-and-run's" that occur all too often.

Downhill Worship

Following the conclusion of many church services, the coffee and fellowship hour is a common experience, giving people a chance to connect with one another. When I was at Sugarloaf, we would typically follow our service by meeting around a long table at Gepetto's, a popular eatery, to share lunch and laughter. But no two ski areas are alike, and that experience wasn't going to happen at Loon.

In the past month, I've had two different people ask me if I skied after the service. "No," I replied, "I usually go back to the office and email the pictures of the day's service and add names to our mailing and prayer lists and then go home and crash."

And then it hit me. . . maybe people are asking because they'd like to spend some time with me after the service. (Duhhhhh. . .). So I've started doing so and am thoroughly enjoying myself, getting to know not only our "regulars" but some first-timers as well.

Encore Thrift Shop

We're coming off another record-breaking year in terms of sales, with a lot of credit going to our manager, Linda McIntyre and our hard working staff, not the least of which is my wonderful wife Joyce. When Joyce was laid up following her surgery, she still wanted to work, acutely aware of the need for her tagging talents. So, I started bringing home bags of clothing for her to tag, creating an at-home job that has greatly helped in getting the clothing from our storage garage onto the racks. Since then, another of our employees has joined the at-home crew. As a result, the clothing in a few hundred 30-gallon trash bags is now hanging from our racks instead of filling our storage garage.

Finances

Enclosed find a copy last year's budget, our actual expenditures, and this year's budget, as approved by our Board of Trustees, together with a pledge form. The purpose of the pledge form is threefold: to encourage you to support this valuable outreach to

the employees and guests of Loon Mountain; to solicit your prayers for us and those whom we have the privilege of praying for and thirdly, to enable us to cull from our mailing list those whose interests have gone elsewhere.

A word of explanation about “Real Estate Income” in the enclosed budget—

For the benefit of our newcomers, back in 2000 our ministry was given most of the commercial space in the mall we occupy—about 24,000 sq feet—which we then sold, with most of the funds being given away to a plethora of missionary needs and opportunities. We took back one mortgage and later invested in another and now, while some monies are still earmarked for missions, most go into our general fund. Within the next two years, these sources of income will come to an end, at which time the ministry will be supported completely by your donations and income from the thrift store. It's my expectation that increased income from both these sources, together with further reductions in the budget (no longer a “successor” expense, for example) will leave us in good shape.

Across the Desk. . .

My Utmost for His Highest by Oswald Chambers

July 13 “The Price of the Vision”

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord.
(Is 6:1)

Our soul's personal history with God is often an account of the death of our heroes. Over and over again God has to remove our friends to put Himself in their place, and that is when we falter, fail, and become discouraged. Let me think about this personally— when the person died who represented for me all that God was, did I give up on everything in life? Did I become ill or disheartened? Or did I do as Isaiah did and see the Lord?

My vision of God is dependent upon the condition of my character. My character determines whether or not truth can even be revealed to me. Before I can say, “I saw the Lord,” there must be something in my character that conforms to the likeness of God. Until I am born again and really begin to see the kingdom of God, I only see from the perspective of my own biases. What I need is God's surgical procedure— His use of external circumstances to bring about internal purification.

Your priorities must be God first, God second, and God third, until your life is continually face to face with God and no one else is taken into account

whatsoever. Your prayer will then be, “In all the world there is no one but You, dear God; there is no one but You.”

My Utmost for His Highest--Nov. 20

Beware of the pleasant view of the fatherhood of God: God is so kind and loving that of course He will forgive us. That thought, based solely on emotion, cannot be found anywhere in the New Testament. The only basis on which God can forgive us is the tremendous tragedy of the Cross of Christ. To base our forgiveness on any other ground is unconscious blasphemy. The only ground on which God can forgive our sin and reinstate us to His favor is through the Cross of Christ. There is no other way! Forgiveness, which is so easy for us to accept, cost the agony at Calvary. We should never take the forgiveness of sin, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and our sanctification in simple faith, and then forget the enormous cost to God that made all of this ours.

Forgiveness is the divine miracle of grace. The cost to God was the Cross of Christ. To forgive sin, while remaining a holy God, this price had to be paid. Never accept a view of the fatherhood of God if it blots out the atonement. The revealed truth of God is that without the atonement He cannot forgive— He would contradict His nature if He did.

The only way we can be forgiven is by being brought back to God through the atonement of the Cross. God's forgiveness is possible only in the supernatural realm.

Compared with the miracle of the forgiveness of sin, the experience of sanctification is small. Sanctification is simply the wonderful expression or evidence of the forgiveness of sins in a human life. But the thing that awakens the deepest fountain of gratitude in a human being is that God has forgiven his sin. Paul never got away from this. Once you realize all that it cost God to forgive you, you will be held as in a vise, constrained by the love of God.