

Feb 4 1979.

Dear Adil & Cathie,

I thought I would share some experiences in Deep Lives with you, so please ~~to~~ bear with the conceit that accompanies this note.

I am planning to be in Philadelphia on 1st and 2nd March, so hopefully I'll see you then.

Regards,
Munoz

Feb 4 1979

Dear friend, whoever you are,

today's trail was the best yet; what can I tell you - there was so much to say when I was skiing, I would be lucky if I could tell you even half of what went on in my mind, or to share with you even a part of what I felt then. Getting back to the trail I skied on today, the first thing is that it was not too hilly - the hills, or mounds, rather, were rarely very steep, and were not very long either - when coming down, by the time I felt I was losing control and would fall any moment, I had stopped gaining speed and was stopping. Yesterday's trail on the other hand, was very hilly, with steep and sometimes very long slopes. I can remember just standing at the tops of these slopes, with a mild form of terror, contemplating the downhill run I was subjecting myself to, knowing for certain that I would land on my butt. This moment of contemplation sometimes stretched on for quite a ^{while} bit, a couple of minutes or more perhaps, before I ventured down the slope to the inevitable fate. Today's slopes were gentle, and I took them deliberately, and when I fell, it was worth the try.

The human being has a tremendous propensity for falling down and getting back again on his feet (or skis) to try again; especially when there is nobody but only nature to put him down; and when there is nobody behind, watching and waiting to pass, as so often happens on these cross-country ski trails. A beginner may fall about fifteen times in an hour, and yet come back the next day to take more punishment. The ~~bruise~~ bruised ego soon gets inflated after more practice, to which fact this communication no doubt lends some truth.

I learnt a lot of tips today, tips which not many people would teach you, and which you have to learn on your own; the kind of tips which, if you know and 'internalize' (to use a cliché used in some

circles, would make you reasonably good in what you are doing; the kind of tips which are obvious once you learn them, but which very few people take the trouble to teach you. Presumably the feeling must be that if you are going to be any good at all, you will ^{soon} learn them yourself; otherwise there is no point in telling you the obvious; or that you have to learn them in your own time, in your own way, from your experiences and mistakes and by watching others - But the law of conservation of ego must surely play some part, however small. By watching someone else stumble and fall, drag himself up and stumble his way on, there is surely some part of the mind, quietly tucked away in some corner, which feels an elated pulse. Not only does it make us happier with ourselves and more acceptable to ourselves (our lot is not that bad, after all), but (to get back to skiing) with spirits surging we find ourselves ~~or~~ even putting up an above-average performance.

Falling can be quite an embarrassing phenomenon, even if there is no one directly behind you waiting for you to disentangle yourself. And you can really get entangled. A not uncommon situation is when you land on your butt (there is about four feet of snow under you, so the fall is not so bad, unless you hit a ski), one foot up in the air with the ski on it, and the other foot on the ground but attached to the ski which is wrapped round a tree; you may be sitting one on one of your poles and the other may be wrapped around your arm. Now, how to get out of this mess, especially in time before someone sympathetically (often) or smugly (rarely: 'you know you can swim in Florida') glides by. You have a choice of trying to stand up back on your skis again, or you may give up the struggle, patiently remove your skis, stand up and put them on again. It might be better for your ego to brush the snow off your parts.

An essential thing to learn is to use the poles properly. Use them to propel yourself and to balance yourself.

Even if you feel like an old woman climbing mount Everest, use the poles to balance yourself. You will soon learn that you can save yourself from falling if you use it well when coming down a slope. It will also put you in the habit of pushing your weight forward, a very useful tip and a butt-saver. You can even use it to slow yourself when you've hit the bottom of the slope and want to reflect on your achievement, contemplate your next one which rises up in front of you, or just to take a break. And you can use it to propel yourself up a slope, and arrive with a flourish so to speak, if you have enough momentum to carry you most of the way up.

Climbing up a slope can be very tricky and can often land you on your backside. Theoretically there should be no 'back-sliding' if you have used the right wax, and if you just march (not slide) up the slope. But there are some slopes which will defy this theory, and a better tactic is to generate a lot of momentum before you climb up. This may be hard to do for a beginner, especially with some slopes which loom up at an angle of thirty degrees. The other thing you can do is to climb sideway; but use your poles like your life depended on it - your ego does; and keep your weight on the upper foot; take your time; then you won't fall - I did it twice today. Your last resort is to take off your skis and walk up - you can actually do this quite fast, before the next person comes along, and you are forced to sheepishly grin at him, and he swishes past. I also did this twice today, and quite successfully, I might add.

These thoughts flashed through my mind as I was skiing today, and I remembered you, friend, and I thought I would tell you.