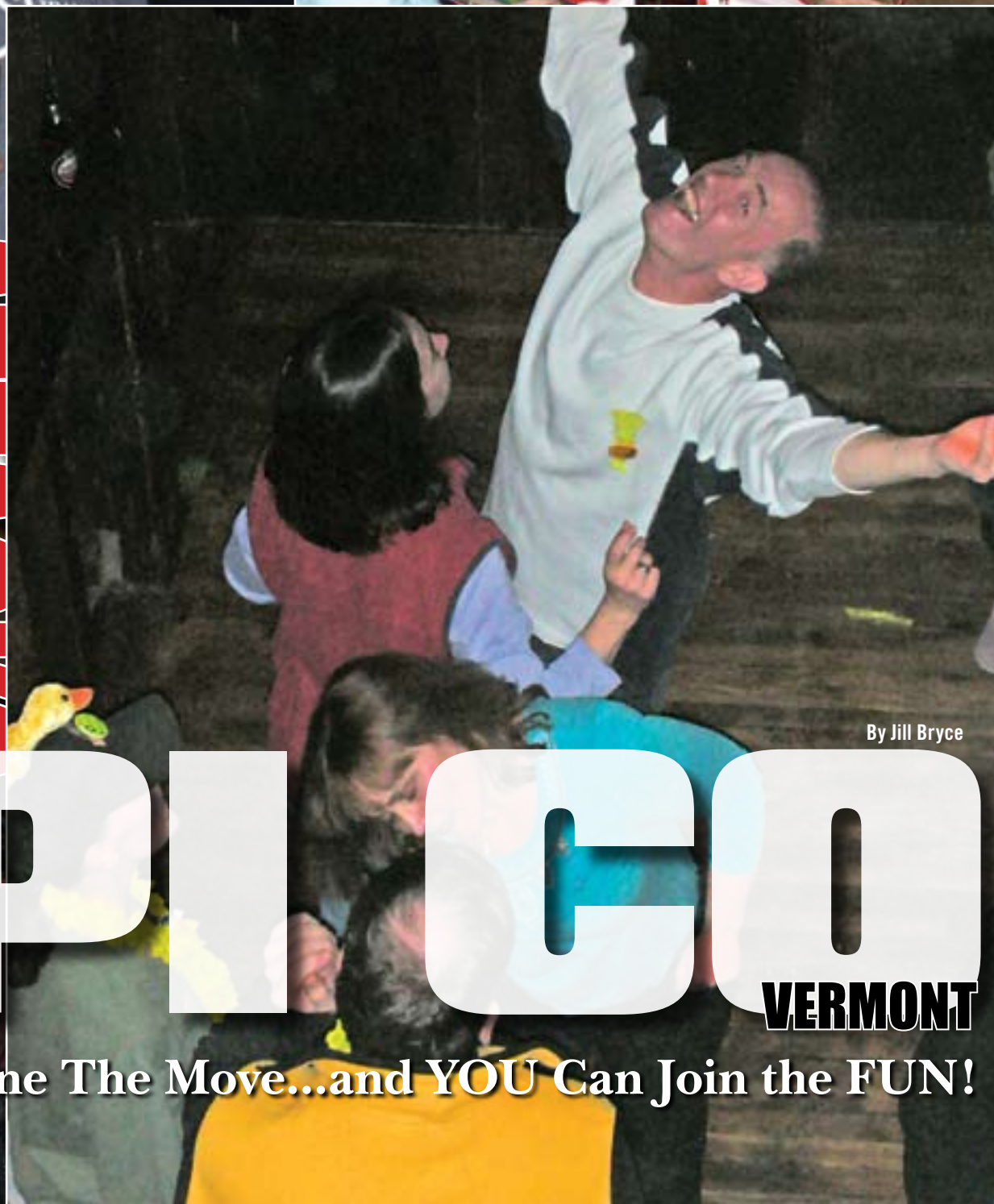




THE OC SKI CLUB ATTACKS PICO

VERMONT

The Big Club From Albany Is One The Move...and YOU Can Join the FUN!



By Jill Bryce

It's dawn. The stars and moon hang in the winter sky. It's 5 degrees out. Who cares? Certainly not the dozens of Out of Control Ski Club skiers and snowboarders who board a bus at 6 a.m. Saturday morning in a dark parking lot in Albany, New York, ready to conquer Pico Mountain, Vermont.

Hey, why not? For \$52, the OC Happy Hour bus includes a lift ticket, trail side barbecue, free ski lessons, pizza and après-ski dance party. When many Eastern ski mountains charge \$70 for the ticket alone and the price of gas is nearly \$3 a gallon, you can't beat it.

You should know that the Albany-based OC Ski Club is one of the most popular ski clubs in the Northeast. While the Out of Control Club often lives up to its name, the truth is that what drives the club is the sense of camaraderie and friendship it offers skiers and boarders. Too often this is tough to find in a high-tech world of text messaging and voicemails.

"I believe the best thing about being an OC'er is the memories that still make me smile and laugh. Without them, skiing would just

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be another slide down the hill,” said member Charlie Schoonmaker.

“Mainly this club is full of wonderful, exceptional people we call friends, and many are more like family to us now,” said Eileen Finn, who met her husband Chuck in the club. “They are pretty reasonably priced ski/party days and everyone seems to have a blast.”

Established in 1960, the main objective of the OC Ski Club is to promote skiing and snowboarding for its members and run inexpensive ski trips. There are well over 2,000 members, which helps keep rates low for trips that run on weekends around the East and week-long trips out west and to Europe. For skiers in search of convenience, great ski rates, friendship, free ski lessons and transportation to and from ski mountains on a regular basis, the OC Ski Club is one of a half dozen ski clubs located in New York’s Capital Region that offer these options.

And on to Pico! After a quiet early morning bus ride, two OC buses pull into the resort around 8:30 a.m. Skiers and boarders pile off right near the main lodge. No need to struggle for a parking spot and they’ve saved on gasoline, too. Soon, OC’ers hit the slopes.

“One of the reasons people enjoy the club so much is that it helps make us feel younger than we really are,” said Schoonmaker.



“We push the limits of our athletic ability until something hurts. We heal and then go back for more.”

The OC bus trips give everyone a common interest. “It makes it easier to talk about something, especially if you’re really boring and never did anything but ski,” Schoonmaker said with a laugh. “And it saves on lift tickets and you can’t beat that with a ski pole.”

Back to the hill. Around noon, the savory smell of a barbecue drifts from the woods off the 49’er trail. Club members Lynda and Dan Heaney grill burgers and hot dogs for a “Heaney Weanie Roast”. A bunch of OC’ers pull off the trail, chow down a burger and share some laughs. It’s BYOB.

“The barbecue is just for fun and has become a tradition,” said Lynda. “Some people are so anxious to get to the hotdogs, they ski down trails they would never ski down.”

Mike Koutelis, an EMS at Windham Mountain, a regular on the OC Happy Hour bus, stops for a burger before he leads a crowd to the hot tub at Pico, available for \$3. “You can ski, take a whirlpool and party with friends. What could be better?”

By mid-afternoon, the winter sun fades behind the clouds. The light is getting flat. Skiers and snowboarders take a few last runs before packing up. But it isn’t over. The bus isn’t bound for home, but for an après-ski dance party at the Wobbly Barn on the Killington access road.

The fun has just begun, but we can’t tell you about it here. As every OC member knows, what happens at the Wobbly stays at the Wobbly.

Guess it’s time to join the OC Ski Club to find out what you’re missing. *