

Birkie Buddies Story

Published Under Skier Stories in the February 2009 Carp Skiem

Story Can Be Found at <http://www.birkie.com/?page=1102> on the official Birkie.com Website.

Birkie Buddies

by Edward Eroe

There are so many things that come to mind when writing about the American Birkebeiner Ski Race. Training, determination, will power, equipment, wax, weather, and for us the most important is friendship.

This story is about the three of us – three guys that typically only see each other during Birkie week. First off, my name is Ed Eroe and I presently live in Overland Park, Kansas, which of course is not exactly the mecca of Nordic ski racing. I am originally from Michigan and over my now 21 Birkie ski races I have also lived in Northern Virginia, Kalamazoo, Michigan, and Durham, North Carolina.



I met Tim Burke close to 27 years ago when we both worked at a U.S. Public Health Service clinic in Northern Michigan. Tim currently lives in Superior, Wisconsin. The third wheel is Mike Tarnow. He and I joke that Tim moved to Superior so he can be as close as he can to the Birkie Trail. The license plates on his car read "HWY OO". Mike is from Traverse City, Michigan and he met Tim when their families lived on the same street. Mike is also the fast one of our crew with years in the first and second wave. Tim and I bounce around waves four–seven.

Tim and I completed our first Birkie in 1986 and Mike joined us in 1990 and we have been together for one week every year since. It is a very strange phenomenon to get together for the same week every year and try to remember what we did on Tuesday night back in 2001 or was that 1992. In between skiing all week we catch up with our lives, our families, our careers and just the general state of things in the world. I guess some call it male bonding, we call it great fun.

The Birkie has also been a catalyst to meeting skiers in all the cities that I have lived. There is Tom Gushurst from Kalamazoo, Michigan; Gunnar Boysen from Chapel Hill, North Carolina (now Little Rock, Arkansas); and Monty Stanley from Overland Park, Kansas, who I have all trained with over the years and also get together to renew friendships each year at the race.

We have seen several positive changes to the Cable and Hayward area over the years we have been attending. The most notable have been the development of the North End Hut and trail system, the revival of Telemark, and the growth in Seeley. We try out new restaurants and visit a lot of our favorites each year with almost complete precision on which restaurant which night of our Birkie Week!

To help us remember what we have done for one week in February every year we started a website about 11 years ago. In it we have some tips for the race, our racing times, links to other Nordic sites, and lots of pictures of beautiful Northern Wisconsin. It has been a labor of love and keeps the Birkie Spirit alive for us all year. The address is <http://www.birkieweb.com> so please stop by for a visit and sign our guestbook.

We try to chronicle all the nice people we meet at the Birkie. It is amazing how many skiers have similar stories to ours in that they have been coming up to do the Birkie for years and years.

Tim and I are now Birchleggers and very proud to join this elite group with 20 and 21 years under our belt respectively. We have been able to meet many new Birkie skiers through this affiliation and have the opportunity to talk to some of the founders of this great race. I also serve as the new webmaster of the Birchleggings Club and have been helping to get news out about the organization and provide historical information for the past two years now. The Birchleggings Club website is located at <http://www.birchleggings.com> so please visit.

Tim, Mike, and I are looking forward to the race this year and another wonderful week in Northern Wisconsin!