

I was reading one of my favorite knitting authors' blog today about her ski trip. Her humorous post reminded me of the ski trip my husband and I took just a couple months after we had gotten married. We were poor...I had a full time job that wasn't even paying minimum wage yet, and of course back then did not have benefits either. My husband was a full time college student with a part time job. But we had friends who skied often in the usual places; Colorado and the Virginias. But they had heard of a place to go snow skiing just one hundred miles away from our home town in Southeast Missouri for those on a budget. It was a golf course during warm months turned snow skiing in cold months, which in Missouri means only January/February IF there is snow.

It was still expensive by our way of thinking...we were living on love...newlyweds! But still it sounded like fun and my husband and I are always up for fun, especially when we don't know any better.

We drove up to a resort just south of St. Louis and spent Friday night in a very small hotel room. The next morning we followed our friends to the ski resort. It was, interestingly enough, not snowing, nor was there snow on the ground but our friends assured us there would be snow to ski on. This resort had snow blowers, machines that mixed water and fans that blew frozen pellets into your face and onto the ground. We saw one just inside the resort and watched how it kept the ski hills covered in snow. Genius.

We arrived at the lodge/restaurant/golf pro shop and waited in line to get our ski stuff. First we had to get tickets, everything connected with skiing means you need a ticket. Next it was time for the skis and the poles. The people behind the counter look at how tall you are and hand you skis and poles then point out the lockers to leave our shoes and excess baggage in and left us to figure out how you actually got your feet into the ski boots, lock them up and walk penguin style outside, down the wood steps to the ground, which was grassy with no snow outside the lodge. We waved our friends on outside as we were still trying to lock in the boots and stand up. My husband and I of course thought this was so very funny, waddling around in skis and very stiff boots helping each other out the door we watched everyone else navigate down the steps in skis.

It was very cold. Did I mention that part? While there was no snow anywhere except on the trails, it was cold and my husband and I, being very new at this ski thing and on a very shoestring budget, were only wearing jeans, not ski pants. We also only wore cotton gloves, cotton hats and sweaters. We thankfully had on down vests, but we were seriously underdressed and inappropriately dressed for snow...or cold or getting wet which we unfortunately didn't factor into what it means to ski.

We had signed up for lessons...my husband and myself, not our friends because, have I mentioned that they were experienced skiers? I don't think we saw them the rest of the day. We followed our ski instructor around to the side of the lodge/restaurant/golf pro shop with several other newbies and stood there or rather tried to just stand upright leaning heavily on our poles which are not meant for that purpose. While there was snow where we were standing, just a short distance down the hill to our left was mud where the snow blowers had quit blowing snow and to warn skiers about the end of the blown snow were several bales of hay. We trudged up a

slight hill with great difficulty. It took several minutes for all the newbies to do this because there seemed to be no flat place to have lessons. We finally spread out in two lines facing each other with our instructor in the middle and he began teaching us techniques to skiing, which included a lot of "All you have to do," language which I have since learned doesn't mean anything when you are brand new at some activity.

We were practicing making V's with our skis when suddenly we heard a long drawn out yell coming from up the hill. The instructor kept talking until the yell got louder and louder. We all looked up the hill to see a man legs wobbling, poles flapping in the air screaming at the top of his lungs, "I can't stop!" He sailed down the snowy hill in-between our two lines of newbies. Our instructor quickly got out of his way as he flailed past, eyes bugging out in terror, hit the end of where the snow blower had stopped blowing snow. As soon as his skis hit the mud, they stopped, but he didn't. He executed a perfect front flip and face planted into the hay bales and the mud.

Not missing a beat our instructor turned to us and said, "Now it's time for you to head to the slopes!"

One by one we penguin-walked our way about face and no body said a word. We head over to the ski lift. At this place they actually had two different kinds of ways of getting to the top of the hill...hill, not mountain, we don't have mountains in Missouri. There was the usual ski lift then lower down the hill there was a tow rope. We were instructed to head to the ski lift, show our passes and hop on while carrying our ski poles. My husband and I moved up the line and when instructed stood in front of an oncoming empty lift chair and hop when it hit us in the behind. That was fairly easy and the view was spectacular as we lifted higher and higher up the hill. The ride was fairly short since it was a hill, not a mountain, and as we got to the upper lift station we were supposed to hop off. Hop being an imperative verb because if you only leaned forward you fell on your face. What they neglected to tell me was if you aren't perched on the edge of your seat while you try to hop you also fall on your face. My husband hopped and landed gracefully on the landing area. I however remained on the lift, stuck because my legs were short and I was trying to scoot forward on the bench so I could hop. I got worried because the landing area wasn't very long and I could see that I that longer I took to get off the bench, the higher I was getting back in the air. I knew that I had to get off that lift because they told us not to ride it back down, whether they didn't want you riding it back down or because it was dangerous, so in a panic to get off I finally moved forward off the bench and face planted. Yup, hopped right off into a snow mound face down into the snow bank. At least it wasn't a mud pie.

Finally I joined my husband as we plodded our way over to our first trail. I don't know, it was a green or easy trail but it looked really steep to me. I began by tacking, left then right, something our instructor had said to do if we were afraid to go straight down. I don't care if we don't have mountains in Missouri, that hill was tall I tell you. I tacked all the way down, falling down on each side because I have absolutely no sense of grace when scared.

We made it half way down the hill to a point where we could stop and take pictures. I had my husband strike a pose but by the time I extracted my camera from my jacket pocket, and focused, his skis had another idea and he began sliding down the hill. I yelled, "Stop!" but he yelled back, "I can't!" So we have several pictures of him getting smaller and further down the slope.

At the very bottom of the hill the only way to get back up the slope was a tow rope. In the words of our instructor, "All you have to do is sidle up to the moving rope, keep both your poles in your right hand and grab the rope with your left and let it glide you up the slope."

Guess what? It really doesn't work that way. First of all you are trying to 'sidle' up to something going uphill when your skis are really wanting to slide backwards, the rope whips along at waist height which means you also have to lean over a little and grab the swiftly moving rope with only one hand and hang on for dear life as it jerks you uphill. After falling off the lift I didn't really want to do that again, so we tried. It required several numerous attempts on my part, two more face plants and about half way up I was exhausted. The only other way was to penguin-walk up the rest of the slope which we did. By the end of the afternoon all we had to show for our exhaustion and work were three not so spectacular runs, or should I say run, fall, run, fall down the slopes. We were cold, wet on, and my face hurt from all the ice pellets the snow machines kept blowing at me.

My husband and I went back to the lodge/restaurant/golf pro shop and got some hot chocolate and waited for our friends. What an adventure. On the way home in our wet jeans, and with frozen chapped hands we did have some stories to tell. We had survived snow skiing in Missouri! After thirty years we've never had the desire to go to any big skiing areas. This one satisfied our snow adventure!