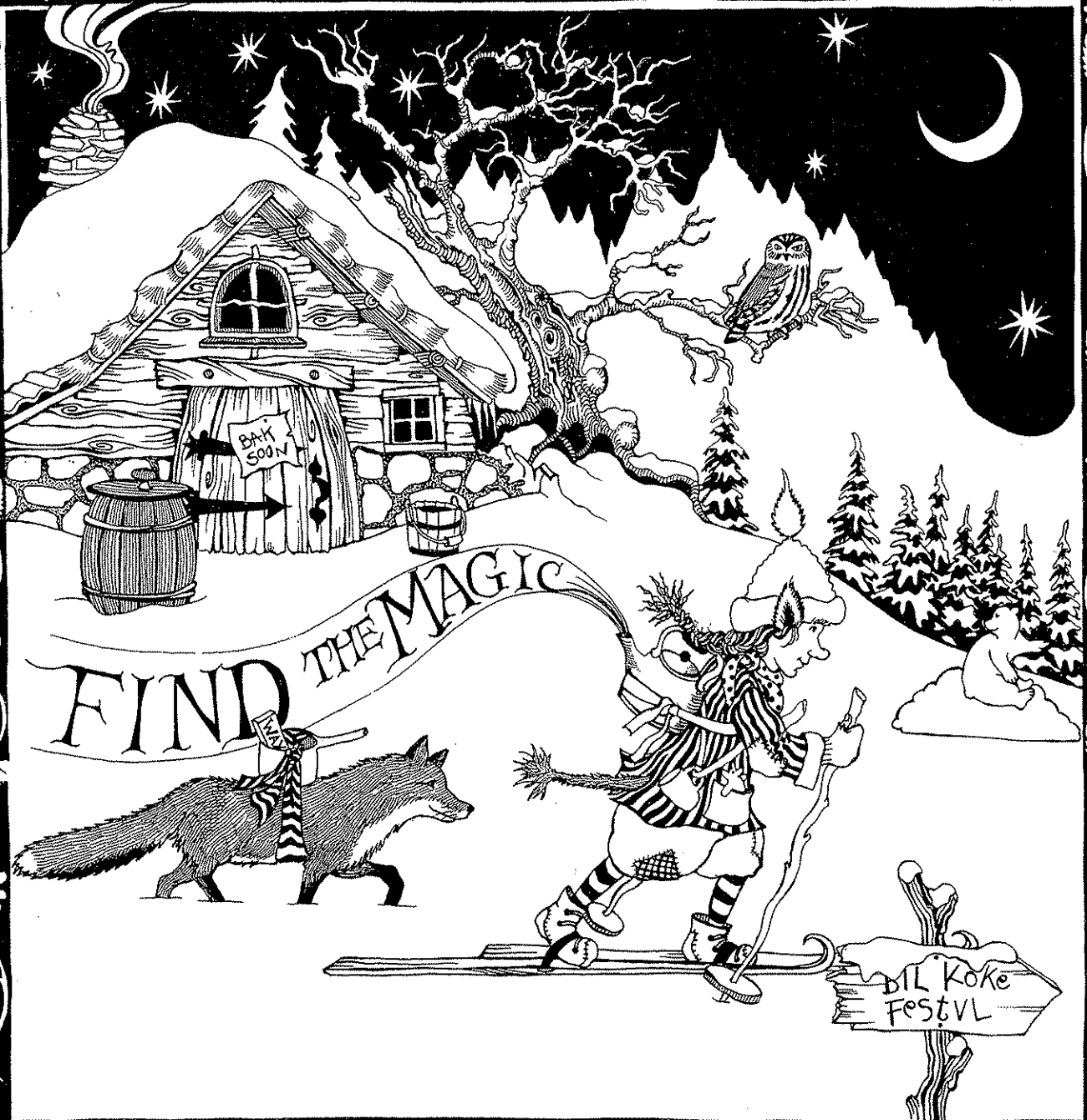


BANKNORTH



NOTCHVIEW WINDSOR, MA

BILL KOCH 2005 FESTIVAL

My Adventure



That night I had gone to bed early. The winter days are all too short, but the nights are long for sleeping and dreaming. The grating sound of a snowplow woke me. I glanced at my clock and checked the time. It was 3:06 AM. At first I felt confused as I sat in a daze, but it quickly dawned on me that a snowplow means

SNOW!! I kicked out from under the warmth of my comforter and gingerly made my way across the icy cold surface that was my floor. Together, my hot breath and my hand defrosted a small circle on my window. There it was, SNOW, and lots of it too. Although there was no wind, the snow had fallen until it had covered the lower sash of our barn window; more than enough for skiing.

As I gazed out over the moonlit fields, from the corner of my eye, I caught a quick movement behind our woodshed. I stayed at the window, very still, although I was startled. There it was again, but this time I let out a sigh of relief and happiness as I realized that it was Little Bear, a six-inch bear seated casually on a tiny cottony cloud. I remembered meeting him just before the 2001 Bill Koch Festival and I felt a rush of

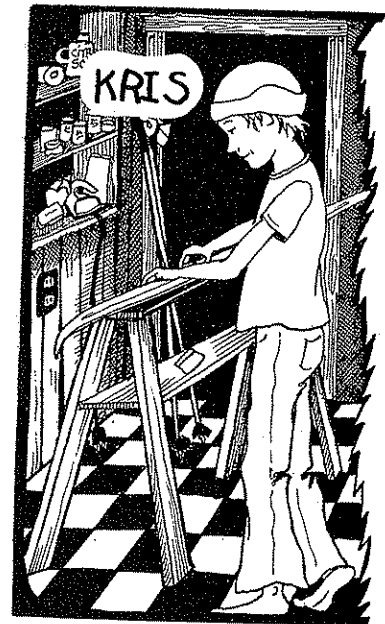
warmth as I recalled all of the fun we had exploring.

As he caught the gleam in my eye, I heard him yell, "Let's go for a ski." He didn't need to ask me twice. As quickly as I could manage, I jammed on a hat, snuck downstairs while pulling on my pants, laced on my boots, grabbed my trusty skis from the back porch, inched the back door open, and stepped out into the crisp, frosty air. Piles of snow were everywhere. It was pillowing every nook and cranny of every tree and wall and fence I could see. It was magical! I poked at the snow on the clothesline with my ski pole and it fell slowly to form a neat little beanlike row on the ground. I was mesmerized. So I did it again so the other clotheslines

wouldn't feel left out. Again, magic!

I clicked on my skis and pushed off smoothly gliding effortlessly down the back meadow away from our cozy home. Soon enough, I noticed that something didn't

feel quite right. "Cheez wiz," I groaned as last week's klister attracted a mess on my ski bottoms. I came to a stop." Not to worry," said Little Bear as he approached me on his fluffy tuft. "You can scrape off the klister with this

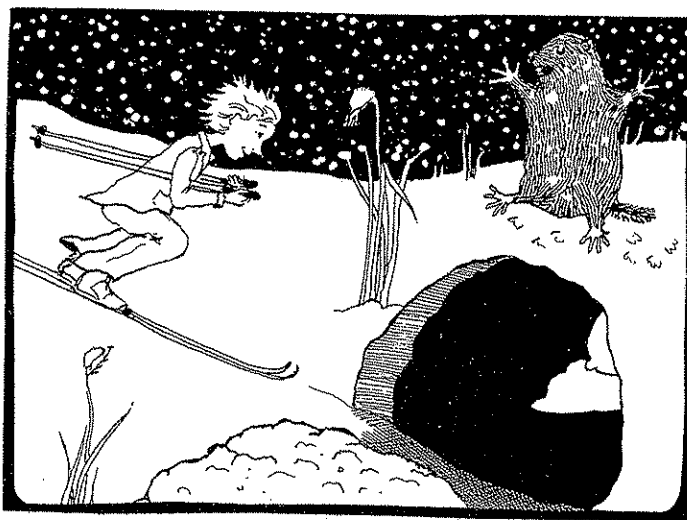


Little Bear and Fox tell me they will bring a human child to visit us. Why?

magic spruce cone." With the cone, the wax rolled right off of my skis. I was gliding straightaway after Little Bear in no time at all. We skied over all manner of things, the stonewall at the bottom of the meadow, the cord wood that I had helped Dad stack last September. The thought of skiing over the things I have to climb in the summer was invigorating and wonderful. The tips of my skis barely poked out from under the fresh glistening snow as I swooshed effortlessly along. The snow in my wake slipped away in tiny rolling trails.

Ahead of us in the sparkling snow, I spied a tiny black dot. It was a meadow vole poking its head out from a newly dug tunnel in the snow. Little Bear saw him too and quickly came to a stop directly in front of me. As I crashed safely into his cloud, I realized that I was now tinier than Little Bear was. Why hadn't I noticed it before? "Have you ever skied through a vole's tunnel?" Little Bear cried excitedly. "Well," I snorted, "certainly not in my 4 foot tall lifetime." "Here's your chance then," said Little Bear as he guided his cloud in just ahead of me. "Be my guest," echoed the vole's voice as we cleared the entrance to the winding way.

Down the tunnel I raced. There seemed plenty of room for me as I wound my way through the sloping trail. I picked up speed as I banked first up one side and then the other. As the slope began to steepen, I began to go much faster. My speed and roll brought me up one side and down the other until I had begun making complete loops in the tunnel. Exhilarated, I did two more in a row and caught sight of lighter air at the end of the tunnel and the pile of snow that the vole had removed. I remember thinking to myself in a split second, "I hate it when voles don't clean up after themselves." In the next



moment, I found myself upside down in the snow bank, feet flailing in the air and voice quaking in the snow. I must have been a sight! As I climbed out from the snow and hurriedly brushed myself off, I heard Little Bear's fading voice announce, "Quickly, there are others for you to meet." And he pointed to a nearby wood.

Approaching from the woods was the most beautiful red fox. "Hi Kris," the fox said, "Come with me." I wasn't too sure about how I felt at that moment. I knew I was a bit scared. After all, Little Bear had left me. But the fox was wonderful and smaller than I so off we went into the dark of the woods. Shortly, we came upon a tiny house tucked into the roots of a sturdy maple tree. Now, I had visited these woods many times and I had never noticed any such little dwelling anywhere near it. When I asked the fox why that was, he simply smiled.

As we approached the tiny house, I saw someone about my age working on skis by the doorway. Now this was remarkable, she had a tail!! She introduced herself to me as Lupin and told me that her family had been living on the land for many years before my own parents had moved here. "My father planted this very tree," she said as she motioned to the huge maple towering over us. "It must be over 100 years old!" I exclaimed. "214 years this May to be exact," she replied as a person would when referring to his own birthday. "Let's get inside and warm up!" So, in we trooped and the fox presently curled up near the door.

The "tree house" was a cozy one with everything in one large room and warmed by a large stone and brick wood burning stove. After a short time, Lupin introduced me to her parents. Her father was only slightly taller than I was and had a long beard and, of all



things, a tail. "By gosh," I thought, 'he doesn't look a day over 213.' (It was difficult for me to even imagine anyone that old) Lupin's mother was just slightly shorter with a roundish face and the rosiest cheeks I had ever seen. As she smiled she said, "Let's all have some



tea and a nice visit shall we." Then she proceeded to put a large kettle of water over the flames. Lupin's father began, "We are so very pleased at how well your family has taken care of this forest, and we know how much you appreciate the gifts that the land provides. We have spoken to Little Bear, and we happily wish you and your fellow Nordic skiers a wonderful, wintry, time at the Festival this year. As for us, well, we shall celebrate the gifts of the land and of Nature, including this snow which renews our plants and makes them again thrive in the spring." "We also love the snow for the skiing it brings." Lupin chimed in.

The teapot began to boil and a cloud of steam billowed from its spout. "Look," cried Lupin. In the steam, each of us began to see an image of mountains and of valleys. "The teapot is showing a vision of our New England." The vision shifted all too quickly to a tall mountain rising high above lush forested lands. Lupin's father spoke, "This is Katahdin, the highest mountain in all of Maine. Skiers come from the forests and fields north and south. Two mighty rivers, the Kennebec and Penobscot flow to the Atlantic Ocean." "My family came from the pine forests of the Maine coast." Lupin's mother spoke with a faraway look.

We saw the steam shifting to reveal another ruggedly mountainous area. One particularly beautiful mountain had a track laid upon it. "This is Mt. Washington, the highest point in New Hampshire. It is so incredibly windy and cold on a winter's day." As we peered over the White Mountains and

south across the lakes and forests of New Hampshire, we could recognize families readying themselves for travel to the Festival.

"For many years, the Merrimac River has powered the great mills of New Hampshire," broke in Lupin's father. He loved to tell stories and I loved to listen. My heart began to swell with anticipation and wonder.

Soon we found ourselves in yet another picture as the steam again changed itself. Here we saw another mountain, shorter and softer than the two we had already visited. "This is Mt. Mansfield, the tallest point in Vermont and part of the Green Mountains that divide it."

As we "steamed" down the Connecticut Valley, it widened as we crossed into Massachusetts. To the west we ascended the Berkshire Hills and found ourselves atop Mt. Greylock, Massachusetts' highest peak. As I looked around me, I noticed that, indeed, I was on top of Mt. Greylock surveying the wonder that is Berkshire County, and Lupin was here with me. Somehow, somehow, our skis were on our feet as we stared ahead. "Look, you can see Judge's Hill at Notchview from here," Lupin pointed out to my amazement. Notchview was the site of the Festival and Judge's Hill, its highest point. "Did you know that Notchview was once used as a hunting ground by the Mohican Indians who lived in the valley to the west? Afterwards, most of the forest was cut down to make way for fields and pasture land. What remains today are the cellar holes and stone walls. But the forest has grown back and all of the forest animals have returned, even the moose. My father has told

me all of this," said Lupin in her small excited voice.

"Right here on Mt. Greylock is the Thunderbolt Trail. In the 1930's, it was a famous ski racing trail. Many



backcountry skiers love the challenge of the Thunderbolt even today, so...let's try it!"

exclaimed the fearless little Lupin. I looked in astonishment down the slope of the trail and its steep pitch. "Uh, I don't think so," I replied in a respectful decline of the offer. But before the last word was out of my gaping mouth, I felt a push from behind and Lupin sped past me. "See you at the Festival!" she called, racing out of sight. Down the Thunderbolt I went ever faster, faster, faster than I had ever skied before. The winds stung my

face and my eyes watered with the cold. But I was so very happy. At once, I hit an unseen

bump and flew none too gracefully through the air. As I spun, I could see the figure of Little

Bear positioning his tiny cloud for my landing. I fell safely onto what felt, for all the world, like my own bed. As I raised my head to thank Little Bear, I found myself in my warm, snug bed listening to the whistling of my Mom's teakettle down in the kitchen. "Mom", I shouted, you wouldn't believe the dream I had!" As I again raced down the stairs for breakfast and sat down to a plate of pancakes, my small hand closed around a tiny spruce cone, coated in klistar, and making itself quite at home in the pocket of my fleece shirt.



"Mom", I called again, "the kids are coming to Notchview for the Festival. They're really coming!"