

# Thoughts Out of Season

Occasional Reviews & Notes

Of Mutual Interest

Compiled by Tim & Terry Forward



The mountain at the western end of the Stubai glacier is called "Zuckerhuettl," one of Austria's tallest peaks, on the Austrian-Italian border. Tim Forward and I climbed this mountain.

## **Skiing in and around Austria: Stubaital and Zugspitze**

In the spring of 1968, my friends and I did some interesting skiing outside of Innsbruck, Austria. One day, Bob Wingerson, Tom Forward, and I (and possibly one or two other guys) went skiing on the glacier on the great *Zugspitze*, on the German-Austrian border. That day was so warm that we took off our shirts and skied for a while shirtless. Somewhere we have photos of this wonderful day of skiing. On another day, Tim and I borrowed seal skins from Liselotte Schartner or Caecilia Werth and headed up to the end of Stubaital for an

# Thoughts Out of Season

incredible weekend adventure. The seal skins were long, thin skins that fit over the tips of skis and then ran underneath the length of them. Because of the grain of the skin, you could actually walk *uphill*--and that's what we planned to do--walk up the Stubai Glacier to the great mountain called *Zuckerhuettl*, one of Austria's highest and most spectacular mountains, right on the Austrian-Italian border.

On the first day of this adventure, Tim and I took a train up to the very end of the *Stubaital* (Stubai Valley). From there, we hiked uphill for many hours until we came to one of the mountain huts that exist all over the Austrian alps. This place might have been called a hut, but it was really a substantial structure that could accommodate maybe 20 or so guests, sleeping on *Matratzen* placed one next to the other. The hut even offered simple meals--and, of course, beer! Someone had to port all these things up the mountain (or maybe there was some sort of utility lift that moved the food, beer, and other supplies up to the hut). So Tim and I spent the night there (probably for about a dollar) and then left early the next morning to climb up the glacier to the top of *Zuckerhuettl*.

It was a perfectly clear day as we climbed up the mountain. The seal skins worked perfectly, and after a couple hours we reached a ridge that we couldn't ski over. We took off our skis, climbed over the ridge, then proceeded with our journey. The sun was really totally unfiltered, with no clouds, and it reflected off the snow. Tim and I were smart enough to wear tinted ski goggles--but not smart enough to wear any kind of sun screen. It hadn't entered our minds. And Tim, with his fair skin, would pay a price for this later.

After another couple hours hiking up the glacier, we arrived at the foot of the final "horn" (as in *Matter-horn*). The peak of *Zuckerhuettl* was a very steep glacier-carved horn, and we had to climb the last 100 yards or so by foot. So we removed our skis, and began the last difficult climb. If I remember correctly, there was a rope that we could grasp on this last trek.

After 15 to 30 minutes, we arrived at the top of the great mountain, and looked over the entire Stubai Valley, the vast glacier, the many peaks. Looking down the steep south slope of *Zuckerhuettl*, basically a cliff hundreds, maybe thousands of feet in length, we looked into Italian territory.

*Tim and I were at the top of the world!*

Then we skied down the glacier. It was a long, spectacular ride down the glacier (except for the middle ridge, which again involved a little climbing). After about an hour or so, we were back at the mountain hut. And a couple hours later, we were at the base of the mountain, catching the last train back to Innsbruck.

The next day, Tim paid the price for wearing no sunscreen . His face and lips were badly sunburned. His face looked like a raccoon's (because his eyes were

# Thoughts Out of Season

protected from the sun by ski goggles). Somehow my darker complexion saved me from a terrible sunburn.

The sunburn was soon healed and forgotten and Tim and I were left in indelible memories of our trek up *Zuckerhuettl*.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Coughlin, Bob (2011, Mar. 5). Skiing in and around Austria's Stubaital, Northcoastview.blogspot.com

<https://northcoastview.blogspot.com/2011/03/skiing-in-and-around-austria-stubaital.html?m=1>

A View from the North Coast. This blog is based in Northeast Ohio, what was "La Nation du Chat," the Cat Nation, as the French-Canadian furtraders called the Land of the Erie Indians. The blog will touch on many issues: nature, the environment, literature, poetry, society, and politics. Around here we think of the Lake Erie shoreline as the North Coast of the United States--a Frontier in the midst of the Rust Belt.