

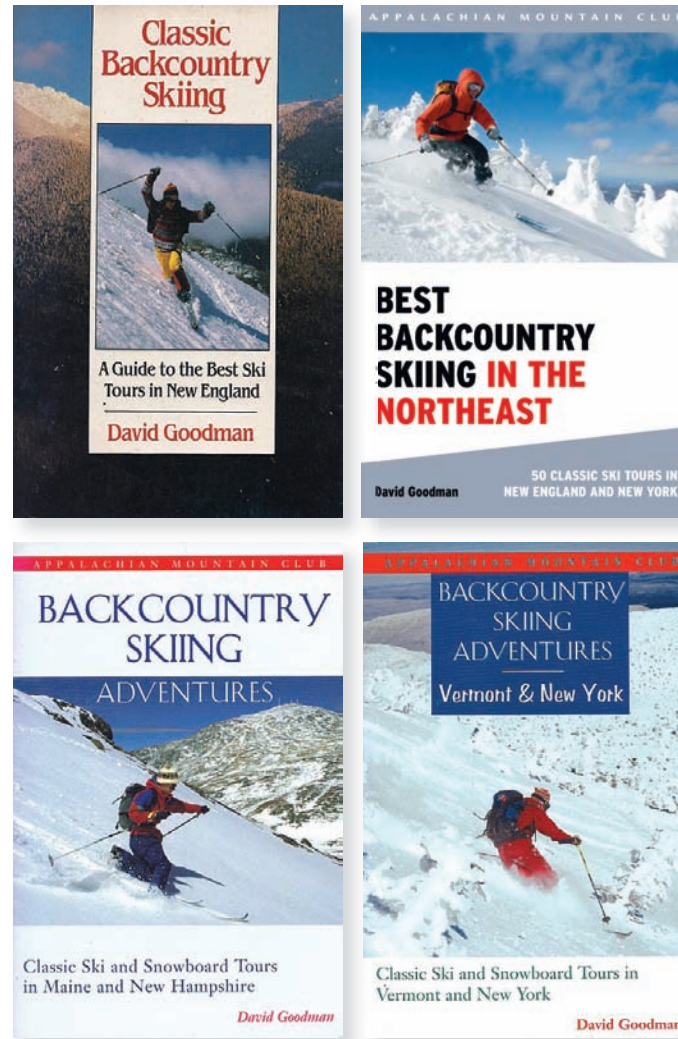


in the backcountry
**DAVID
GOODMAN**

story / kate carter

David Goodman digs an avalanche pit while skiing on Mt. Katahdin, Maine, mid 1980s. Goodman in his Waterbury Center office.

David Goodman's original *Backcountry Skiing* and its iterations, all published by the Appalachian Mountain Club Press: *Classic Backcountry Skiing: A Guide to the Best Ski Tours in New England*, 1988; Goodman's latest: *Best Backcountry Skiing in the Northeast: 50 Classic Ski Tours in New England and New York*, 2010; *Backcountry Skiing Adventures: Maine and New Hampshire: Classic Ski and Snowboard Tours in Maine and New Hampshire*, 1999; and *Backcountry Skiing Adventures: Vermont and New York: Classic Ski and Snowboard Tours in Vermont and New York*, 2001.



David Goodman on a bluebird day on top of New York, skiing on the summit of Mt. Marcy, 2010.

A

nyone who wants to slide into New England's wintery backcountry inevitably ends up buying a copy of *Best Backcountry Skiing in the Northeast*. The book has become the go-to trail guide for backcountry skiers, whether they are looking for a mellow ski tour or a toothy all-day adventure.

David Goodman, author of this venerable backcountry ski bible, has lived in Waterbury Center for 20 years. Long before he called the Center home, he logged hundreds of hours skiing the slopes and valleys around Mt. Mansfield. He and his wife, Sue Minter, chose to settle down and raise their family in the Center because of its proximity to the mountain.

"Mt. Mansfield has it all," explains David. "Lift service, accessible backcountry, groomed Nordic tracks, and the added bonus of an incredible concentration of historic trails. Eighty years after the CCC trails were built we still enjoy the fruits of those labors. So much history is found on the flanks of Mt. Mansfield and that's why it's at the top of my list of where to find the best backcountry skiing."

David is an investigative journalist who, when not skiing or writing about skiing, removes his wool hat, dons his fedora, and writes about more serious matters. His work can be found in *Mother Jones*, *Yankee*, *Outside*, *The Boston Globe*, and *Wend*, to name a few. In 1996, when Nelson Mandela was president, David and his family moved to South Africa for a year so David could complete research for his first non-skiing book, *Fault Lines*, about life in South Africa during and after apartheid. David has also written three books with his sister, Amy Goodman, host of *Democracy Now*, a daily global grassroots radio news hour. All three books made the *New York Times* best sellers list.

It boggles the mind to know that one day David is profiling the movers and movements that have defended democracy in the U.S. and helped bring about the current historic electoral changes, and the next day he's rounding up friends and family to go ski touring in the White Mountains on a fact-checking mission for his backcountry ski books. For David, though, it's just a matter of converging interests.

A 1983 graduate of Harvard, David earned dual degrees in international history and science. After college, he and his girlfriend, now wife, Sue, were weekend warriors, making the trek up Interstates 93 and 89 from Boston every weekend to ski in and around Stowe. One day he received an unexpected call from the Appalachian Mountain Club book department. Would he like to write their first ski book?

"The way I looked at it, they were offering to pay me to ski, which was like winning the lottery," says David, who at the time was a mountaineering instructor for Outward Bound. He decided to combine two of his loves—high mountains and history—and set out on an odyssey to find the trails and the trailblazers of New England's high peaks.

"My idea was to learn the story behind each trail," explains David. "It was like opening a treasure chest. I met the old-timers who revealed the heyday of 'downmountain' skiing, which we now call backcountry or adventure skiing. I wanted to capture and share the stories of the trailblazers before they died, to describe their era of skiing in their own words," he adds.

When researching the book, David met many of the men who created New England skiing. The list reads like a skiing hall of fame: Charlie Lord, who David calls Stowe's master trail designer, and who has a trail named for him on Mansfield; Brooks Dodge, who pioneered skiing on Mt. Washington in New Hampshire; Sel Hannah, a former Dartmouth skier, Olympic skier, and designer of New Hampshire's Cannon Mountain ski trails; Craig Burt, son of legendary Craig Burt, Sr., father of the lumbering family that built numerous trails in the Burt block of Mt. Mansfield state forest; and Fraser Noble, a ski writer who enlightened David on the skiing culture of those earlier days.

That was 1987, when Reagan was president and gas cost 95 cents a gallon. Good thing, because David was willing to spend his waking and sleeping hours in his 1974 Dodge Dart. "I thought nothing of driving three to six hours to go check out a ski trail," he says. He spent the winter researching the routes, and in the spring he wrote the text. Within a year of the initial phone call, the book was published.

"It was fun and a privilege, but I really didn't think anyone would buy the book. Well, maybe a

hundred people would buy it," he reflects. Much to his amazement, the book sold well, and it wasn't unusual for David to spot a copy lying open on the dashboard of a car at a trailhead parking lot.

In fact, the book sold so well that 10 years later the publishers called again. It was time for a revision. However, instead of updating the first edition, David split the book into two parts: New Hampshire and Maine came out in 1999, and Vermont and New York came out in 2001. And in a move that sent shock waves through the skiing community, as David describes it, he deleted Connecticut and Rhode Island altogether. What did he do with Massachusetts? Not important!

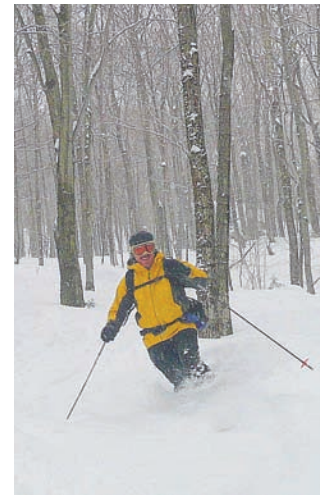
Since that first book came out in 1987, David married Sue Minter, a Harvard graduate, accomplished tele-

Clockwise from top: Goodman skiing on the summit of Mt. Moosilauke, New Hampshire.

Goodman skis the historic Steeple Trail, one of the original 1930s-era ski runs in the Ranch Valley in Stowe.

Goodman conducts an interview, Colorado Springs, 2009.

Opposite page: Brothers-sister team of Amy and David Goodman on tour with their third book, the bestseller *Standing Up to the Madness*, 2008. Goodman is currently writing for and editing a book of flood stories from Waterbury. Proceeds will help homeowners flooded-out by this fall's tropical storm, Irene.



mark skier, and now the Deputy Secretary of Vermont's Agency of Transportation. Sue holds a place of honor on the cover of David's first ski book, and appears in numerous other photos throughout the following editions. They have two children, Ariel, now in her second year at Oberlin College, and Jasper, a sixth-grader at Crossett Brook Middle School.

Three is a charm

The phone rang. It was the publisher calling yet again. The second edition had sold out. Could he write a third?

This time it took David three years to complete the book. "Life is wonderfully more complicated now," says Goodman, who the *Boston Globe* recently called "the godfather ... of Northeast backcountry skiing."

The third edition was released in December 2010, and bears a new title: *Best Backcountry Skiing in the Northeast: 50 Classic Ski Tours in New England and New York*. It's a single volume that includes Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and the Adirondacks. There's even a nod to Massachusetts, with the inclusion of the Thunderbolt Ski Trail on Mt. Greylock.

Once again, David skied all the routes that made the final cut. "I feel responsible that my readers have a good experience," he explains. "I revised everything, took some things out, and put some new things in."

Along with changes in the book came changes in gear. When researching the first edition David skied on Karhu XCD-GT skis and Asolo lace-up leather boots. "I still have those skis and boots and use them for easy tours. My older, lightweight gear is perfect for easy tours. I always try to go as light as possible and never lug around more than I need," he says.



"People always ask me what skis I should get, and I am a cheap as anyone, but eventually it becomes clear that it's more fun to have skis for all conditions," David says. "I'm the Imelda Marcos of skis. I never feel like I have enough. I probably used four or five pair, ranging from metal-edged to super light. If you do a lot of skiing like I did for the book, you have to have a quiver. Ski swaps are good for that."

Beyond the books

When David is not writing or skiing, he runs to stay in shape. "Running helps me keep from succumbing to my inner slacker," he jokes. He also plays the clarinet in a Klezmer group and several orchestras. At one point he thought he would become a professional clarinetist, but music became the road not taken. He chose Harvard over Juilliard, and backcountry skiers should be thankful for that. It's doubtful a Juilliard graduate and member of the Boston Symphony would have written three books about backcountry skiing. Although knowing David, he would have found a way to do it all.

About the latest book

Best Backcountry Skiing in the Northeast: 50 Classic Ski Tours in New England and New York by David Goodman (Appalachian Mountain Club Books, 2010, paperback, 352 pages) is available at bookstores throughout Vermont and online at the Green Mountain Club, greenmountainclub.org, and Appalachian Mountain Club, outdoors.org. ■

