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Bernadette Nelson confesses that skiing the mountains of Vermont isn't exactly like skiing the French Alps. "Every now and then I look up and say, 'Where's the rest of the mountain?' Killington is probably one of the best places in the East, but it's not the Alps."

Nelson learned to ski at Chamonix, one of her native France's more popular ski resorts and largest mountains. She was in her 20s, working in advertising in Paris, and was a member of the Art Directors' Club. The club would put together weekend ski packages to Chamonix, and she took to the sport with enthusiasm.

More enthusiasm, in fact, than she had for her job, and for Paris, for that matter. "I got fed up with Paris and wanted to see the world," she said. "These were the '70s, and traveling the world was in vogue at the time. Many would go to India; I took a different tack."

What she did was split her warm-weather months working charter boats or private yachts, her winter months teaching skiing in France and Switzerland. "I crewed on charter boats from one port to the other," doing cooking and deck work on the 50- to 80-foot, one-mast sailing yachts for about 10 years. "I had to find a way to survive and at the same time do the things I wanted to do," she said. "During the summer, I sailed; during the winter, I taught skiing."

The vagabond life, though, can be wearying. "Sooner or later you get tired of living out of a suitcase," she said. "I had collected beautiful paintings and had no walls to put them on. It comes to a point where you have to stop somewhere."

### **The American Dream**

Nelson stopped, eventually, in lower Fairfield County, of all places. "I had met some wonderful people in Darien through my travels in Turkey, and I came to visit and fell in love with the area," she said. "It was close to the sea and not too far from the mountains, so I went back to Paris and started looking for a way to come back."



The way back to Connecticut proved to be a contract at United Sports Associations in Cos Cob beginning in 1986. “I did their marketing material and advertising,” she said. “It was a travel company, and I advised them on key resorts. At the time, they were handling the America’s Cup and were promoting ski trips to Europe. I was the perfect candidate.”

She married in 1989, “bought a house the following year and started my business in 1997,” she said. “It’s the picture-perfect American dream, huh?”

Her business is a graphic design studio in her South Norwalk home that’s three houses away from the Sound, where she windsurfs, and a few hours away from Killington, where she teaches skiing.

“My area of expertise is business-to-business, and I also do work for nonprofits,” she said of her Studio B/Visual Communication ([www.studiob-ct.com](http://www.studiob-ct.com)). The bulk of her clients are mid-sized companies: translating their needs into brochures, annual reports, presentations, Web sites and corporate identities and logos. “If you’re in the business of communication, you have to be very attuned to your clients’ needs,” she said. “Sometimes, what’s most important is what the client is not telling you. My goal is to figure out how to help my clients verbalize and articulate their goals and how best to achieve them.”



## A balanced life

The weekend sailing and skiing “takes my mind away from the stress of business and recharges my batteries,” she said. “A balanced life is so important.” Weekends are for pleasure and sport, not business. “I think I have the best of both worlds,” she said of her South Norwalk location. “I’m close to my two passions, sailing and skiing, and Connecticut gives me the opportunity to do both on weekends. If I were in Paris, I couldn’t do that. I’d be far from the sea and the mountains. This is perfect.”

Her passion, though, is teaching adults how to improve their skiing techniques at the Killington Ski Club in Killington, Vt. “I work with high-level adult skiers because I’m a high-level instructor and I can impart my knowledge to these people,” she said. “They’ve been skiing for a long time and they enjoy the social aspect of skiing as well as the technical knowledge I can give them to better their skiing.”

She’s taught adults at Killington for eight years, and taught at the Okemo Mountain Resort in Ludlow, Vt., before that, where she instructed “all kinds of different levels of skiers,” including beginners. “But I prefer to teach adults,” she said. Nelson is a Level 3 Professional Ski Instructor of America, and “reaching that Level 3 is like getting your Ph.D. You have to study psychology, biomechanics, ski techniques, history it’s a very well-rounded knowledge. It took 10 years to achieve it.” Nelson “had a similar affiliation in Paris, but for a French girl to get to that level it’s hard enough for Americans to do, so I think I can boast a little bit.”

“Skiing and sailing involved some risk taking, and that translates into my enjoying challenges in business,” Nelson said, wrapping her passions and profit together in a neat package. “I like challenging projects and enjoy helping my clients achieve their goals of making their business better, making their communication better.”



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