

LETTERS your run

SEND YOUR LETTERS TO: mac@skicanadamag.com; fax: 416/538-2475; or, The Editor, Ski Canada, 117 Indian Rd., Toronto, Ont. M6R 2V5



You people! Nasty or nice, if you want to get heard, just write the editor a letter. (But send it by e-mail, it's faster and makes my bag lighter.) Keep your scribbles short (150-200 words) and succinct (that means to the point), and include your name as well as the city, town or institution in which you live.

LEAVE A GOOD IMPRESSION

I'm a big fan of your magazine. I value and respect your opinions greatly and was wondering if I could get your opinion on this scenario. A ski resort had employees in the parking lot instructing patrons where to park. The patron parks her vehicle as instructed and leaves to ski for the day. She returns to be advised by a witness that an out-of-control skier had skied into the front of her vehicle and smashed out the front chrome grille. The skier removed her skis and promptly walked away.

The patron has e-mailed and left phone messages for the management. There has been no response. No one appears to have any interest in discussing the incident or even an apology. There has been 10 recorded attempts to get answers with no results.

An estimate from the dealer for a new grille was approximately \$600. Thinking beyond the mere vehicle damage, my thoughts concern skier safety and the resort's liability. Do you think I'm over-reacting or should the resort be held accountable?

ROB GRAY, Richmond Hill, Ontario

We tried contacting Judge Wopner but he was in Chambers with a bootfitter and Judge Judy's apparently a snowboarder, so, that pretty well exhausted the *Ski Canada* legal advice fund. Perhaps there are a few loyal *Ski Canada* readers who could write in with some counsel. (And if grille-face is reading this, maybe you could tell *Ski Canada* readers your side of the story.)
—Ed.

DEFENCE DEPARTMENT

This is a big country but a small ski and guiding community. I would like to say that George Koch's spelling and grammar are excellent, but the rest of his article ("Never stop thinking for yourself," Winter 2004) is a public example of Mr. Koch just not being a nice or respectful person or professional.

Did Ruedi Beglinger of Selkirk Mountain Experience (SME) or someone there piss in Koch's fondue? Or maybe he has not been to ski with this operation? There are other ways to get around in the mountains than helis and chairlifts. Or Koch has toured with Beglinger but was just way too slow? All assumptions. Only George Koch would know, but it shows very strongly in the article that he has a probe to poke. Why so public and so personal?

Here are some facts: Twenty-nine lives were taken in 2004 from avalanches. Stability tends to be worse in "thinner" years and adds the "melt-freeze November ground layer." This layer was across the province. Thirteen were buried in this accident; 13 likely would have died if Beglinger was not doing the rescue, but he did save six lives, all deep burials and in close proximity; nobody in the media has pointed this out. A great deal of the season the stability rating is Considerable. Does this mean there's to be no skiing? Or when it's rated High for that matter? One cannot compare our public bulletins to those in Europe. All skiers in the next week's Rogers Pass accident (same ground layer) would have died if two guides were not just sitting right there in a safe zone having lunch. Beglinger is an IFMGA-certified guide, which includes Canada, with well over 5,000 days of guiding over 20 years and this is his first accident. SME would not allow a "layperson" to ski with them. Koch is not a member of the CAA or the ACMG.

Beglinger is one of the most sincere, hard-working and caring guides out there, and to publicly compare the decisions made that

day to a "layperson" or that one didn't even need to know how to ski to figure out the stability of that slope is just rude. It's also rude to the guests as well since most have a considerable amount of off-piste skiing and backcountry skills. All guests have the right to shut a run down if they want. The waiver is sent to guests to read weeks before skiing and is reread and signed at the lodge. I lost a fellow guide and friend in that accident and would certainly not consider someone like Craig Kelly a "layperson."

BRIAN KELSCH, Vancouver

I admit I approached this article with strong personal prejudices. I had heard a lot about Ruedi Beglinger over the years, all of it good, and had become a fan of his even though we had never met. I believe some things really are just accidents, tragedies that cannot be fully explained. And I believe in taking rational, calculated risks in one's professional life and in recreational activities. Given my preconceptions, I fully intended to issue a ringing defence of Beglinger. However, the facts led me in a different direction.

Strangely, all of your factual points (many of which were contained in my original article) support my principal contention that this slope should have been skied singly or not at all. If you think I've been too hard on Mr. Beglinger, you ought to read Mitch Weber's piece on telemarktips.com.

Your claim that skiing singly is intolerable is simply bizarre. It's the most basic element of safe travel, something I've been doing for 25 years, and so has every single mountain guide I've ever skied with. On my most recent trip to the Alps, the risk was at state 3 throughout; we didn't ski a single slope steeper than 30 degrees except singly. With today's wide skis and big, fast turns, it just doesn't take that long.

Finally, as for the barrage of personal remarks that *Ski Canada* didn't have enough room to print, so I'm a fat, shambling oaf. So are Michael Moore, Bill Clinton and Danny de Vito. I've been called far worse things by far better men.

—George Koch

I want to comment on George Koch's article "Never stop thinking for yourself" in order to clarify the InfoEx. It's an exchange of information between backcountry operators (heli, cat, touring and some ski areas). The information can only be submitted by highly qualified avalanche people—and can only be understood by other such people. (The text information distributed each day would not be understood by the general public.) It's important to note that the InfoEx is the primary source of information used to create the CAA public avalanche bulletins. In essence, the CAA takes the complex data and puts it in understandable words for the general public.

**NICK HOLMES-SMITH,
Monashee Powder Adventures**

Mr. Koch clearly states what I'm sure many of us with years of backcountry experience have been thinking since last year's avalanche tragedies. Surprisingly there have been calls for all backcountry ski trips to be led by certified guides. I think if the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides wishes to have the responsibility of certifying guides, they must also accept the responsibility of investigating accidents, and if need be, disciplining its professional members. They must if they are to retain their integrity, authority and public confidence.

GRANT McCORMACK, Surrey, B.C.

ABS IN ADS

A couple of things caught my eye in the Letters section of the Winter 2004 issue. The first was the letter regarding the ad on page 95 of Buyer's Guide 2004. Even I can understand why females would be upset by the ad, especially the caption that accompanied it. The second was the letter about the ad on page 66 of the Spring 2003 issue. Since the writer only gave a first initial, I gather it was a male. On the other hand, if I had abs like that I'd be happy as a pig in swill. Is it a sign of the times that everything seems to offend everybody, or is it just the way I see things? Skiing and sex go hand-in-hand: the skin-tight Lycra of an earlier day, even today's racers, the hot tub at the resort, any number of

things link the two undeniably. I'm not suggesting for a moment that anything should be let go in a family-oriented magazine, but perhaps people should just chill and not make a big deal about each and every little thing. In fact, on my way through the Buyer's Guide I totally missed the ad, and had to go back and see what the hubbub was about.

PAUL WALLER, Lakefield, Ontario

ODE TO THE SASKATCHEWAN SKIER

While thumbing through the Winter 2004 issue of Ski Canada (the choice of all real skiers in this country), I stumbled on D. Grant Black's "Spot the SPORE" article about that unique Canadian phenomenon known as the Saskatchewan skier. Great stuff. I laughed my ass off.

The story triggered memories of an experience that my wife, Diane, and I had at Lake Louise a few years ago on a spring ski trip. We were in the Main Chalet Bar enjoying some après-ski ales when these two guys in one-piece insulated green work overalls (so perfectly described in Black's article) sidled up beside us. The boys shook the snow off their Turbo tuques with attached cracked-lens \$5 goggles, flipped open the fronts of their old rear-entry boots, hung up their one-piecers, stripped down to their thermal long underwear and plaid shirts, and ordered some beer. Yes, they even had the obligatory wineskins, too. They were obviously having a real good day.

Coming from Quebec, where we then lived, this was not a common sight for us. We got talking, swapping stories and jokes. Found out they were from Biggar ("New York is New York but Biggar is Biggar!")—wheat farmers, of course, out for a five-day hit of some Rocky Mountain skiing. They did this three or four times a year apparently.

While we were talking, I noticed some young preppy-type skiers behind us in their Descente/Spyder suits and top-of-the-line gear laughing at these

two. Finally one of them poked one of the Saskabushers in the back and pointed out that he still had the price tag from the local Co-op store on his overalls. Not missing a beat, our newfound friend replied, "Oh yeah, I do that on purpose so I know it's mine and don't get it confused with someone else's." That shut them up. Touché.

I have never met a Saskatchewanian that I didn't like, and these guys reminded me why. Unpretentious, down-to-earth, fun-loving and completely oblivious to the need to "style" that so many downhill skiers today love to flaunt in the chalets and lift lines. Long live their continued presence. These so-called "rubes" provide the perfect antidote to the oversized-ego "dudes" that populate most of our resorts today. They remind me of what the earlier days of skiing in this country were like, when the emphasis was on fun not fashion. Plus, as Mr. Black points out, they qualify as bona fide tourist attractions to visiting Europeans.

JAMES DORAN, Ottawa

Dee Grant...when were you last home, baby? Definition of a Saskatchewan soul who exits to Alberta: a quitter, not tough enough. Definition of an Albertan who moves to Saskatchewan: a whiner, "It's too cold, too flat, I have to work Fridays." Calgary-based culture journalist? Say culture to the typical Calgarian and they think yogurt. You gotta be kidding?

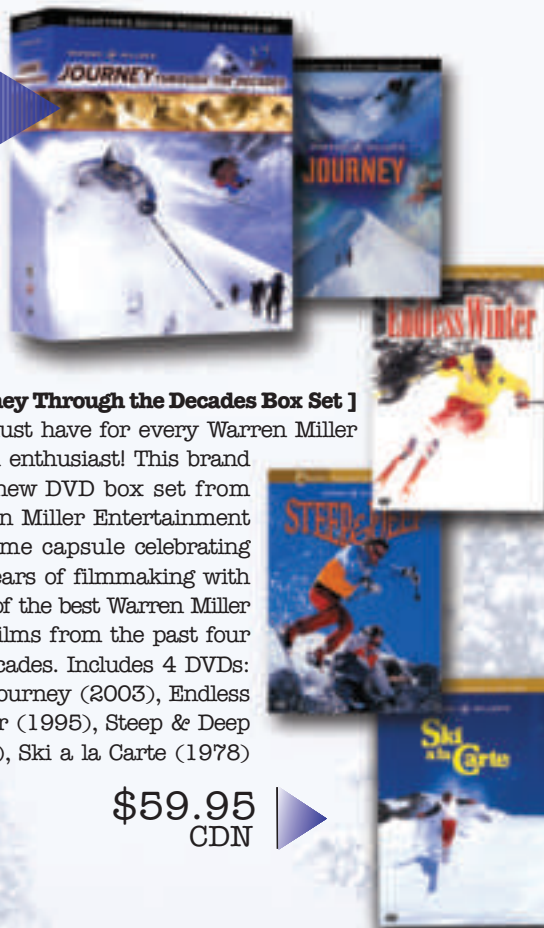
DAN CAMERON, Regina

We have been subscribers to Ski Canada for many years, however, the recent article about Saskatchewan skiers makes us question the value of continuing that practice. This feeble effort at demented humour should be disgusting and sickening to all Canadians. You owe the people of Saskatchewan a very humble apology.

STU INKSTER, Brentwood Bay, B.C.

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