



This was my life in Breckenridge. In order to construct my winter residence, I had removed the passenger and rear bench seat from my Jeep. There was then just enough room to sleep with my feet against the tailgate and my head beneath the glove box. In the midst of such luxury, the days proceeded with a repetition matched only by that of boot-camp recruits and the chronically drunk. In the morning, the water once contained in my lungs melted from the hardtop of the Jeep, creating a reliable alarm calibrated with the sunrise. If, on rare occasion, the water falling on my face or delicately thumping on my sleeping bags did not wake me, tires crunching through the snow and car doors slamming did.

With a little finesse, I wiggled out of my mess of sleeping bags each morning. This pile of bags formed a makeshift nest constructed around the center console and wheel well of the Jeep. I would peel my condensation-crisp pants and down jacket from the tailgate, where they prevented my sleeping bag from freezing to the exposed sheet metal. Awkwardly, I would then slip on my snowboard gear and open the passenger door to lace my boots.

With frozen water bottles in one hand and a bag of groceries and toiletries in the other, I would walk across the parking lot to the bus station bathroom. While others were relieving themselves before heading up the hill, I brushed my teeth. Although staves were frequent, few people had the necessary blend of curiosity and courage to ask what the hell I was

wind frequently sculpted pillow lines from small cornices tucked among the trees.

Even if the conditions left much to be desired, the T-Bar provided entertainment that made the pilgrimage to the upper mountain worthwhile. To the uninitiated, a T-bar lurks like some mythical beast waiting to slaughter the innocent. In the presence of such a thing, determination presents itself in various — albeit misdirected — guises. The T-bar frequently pulled proud spring breakers up the mountain on their bellies. Equally impressive, however, were the efforts of young riders who refused to be left in the dust of their two plank progenitors — even if this meant the T-bar dragged them like forgotten dogs leashed to the bumper of a truck.

Although Breck boasts varied terrain, much of it comes in the form of the rails in the park rather than the trails carved out of the mountain. Nonetheless, Chair 6 provided reliable amusement. Whether it was little hits along trail edges or lines that snaked through trees to drop wind lips, there were plenty of ways to blend terrain with imagination to forge a new line each lap. By afternoon, however, it was time to ride the lower mountain.

Dropping into the Freeway Terrain Park is akin to walking into a circus tent only to realize you are the main attraction. Breck does a good job shielding the inexperienced from their unbridled enthusiasm by making the park as menacing as possible. Although the jumps are meticulously groomed and the rail approaches manicured with the greatest care, the park simply pushes things to another level. The bar is raised just far enough for vacationing Texans to realize that dropping into a sixty-foot booter is a bad idea. Jeans, cowboy hats and liquid courage do occasionally meet their match. Consequently, the fence that marks the entrance to the Freeway Park gathers lurkers like flypaper. Even with an audience, it did not take long to feel at home in paradise.

A certain camaraderie exists anywhere people wait to drop in — even if the occasional snake session snaps riders out of their patient revelry. Waiting to session a rail or standing on top of the drop-in for the superrime always brought me back

after getting caught bumping rails of another kind. Our friends from back home were just as likely to be pulling 9s off of ten-foot tables as they were to be fixing radiators or laying tile. After these sessions, we always parted, wondering, wondering if we had lost too much of this past or if this thing we loved had simply changed with age, just as we all had.

After the last chair and the final lap through the park, I would climb aboard the bus back to my home in the parking lot, as my time in Breck preceded the gondola that now links the town with the base of Peak 8. Once again, a sense of community surfaced — even in the midst of exhaustion and the wet dog smell that pervaded the cramped bus. Smiles and nods of approval conferred that today, like every day, was a good one. Yet, on Sundays, this sense of community faded, as it became evident that some of us would return to another life. Some of us would go back to a world of careers and obligations and cities, places where the day of the week mattered, while some of us would remain in the mountains to ride another nameless day. For those of us who stayed, our pockets may have been empty, but each day we could work on our goggle tan and assert with authenticity that life was wonderful.

Once back in the parking lot, I would shed my snowboard gear and begin dinner. This occasionally involved firing up a backpacking stove to cook pasta, but more often entailed sitting down in the bus station to a can of cold beef stew and a smashed loaf of bread. Once a week, I would fill a backpack with a change of clothes and set off across town to poach a shower wherever one became available. And then it was night — both a blessing and a burden.

Although some evenings were spent riding at Keystone, most were simply dedicated to loitering. I frequently hunkered down in a chair in the bus station to read and relax. Most nights I would also walk

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