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When skiing is sheer bliss

Anne Z. Cooke, Tribune News Service on Sep 15, 2016

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BASALT, Colo. -- Winter was still in charge when we spotted them, raggedy brown patches staining the snow at Snowmass Ski Resort, in central Colorado's Pritkin County. In any other year we might have been greeted by mounds of powder on the Cirque, with a generous swath under Sheer Bliss, our favorite chairlift. The basics, indeed, for a last-of-the-season caper.

"All we need is a couple of days skiing the summit," moaned Dillon, the teenager, who'd skipped a school day to make the trip. "Is that too much to ask?"

Spoiled by annual trips to Park City Mountain Resort, in Utah, where a decade of February snowfalls have been as predictable as a ham sandwich, he stumped away toward Fanny Hill to "inspect the snow melt."

But as the sun glared down, the growing puddles of water and dripping icicles confirmed the worst: Spring had invaded overnight.

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Then shortly before midnight I heard muffled whooping outside and opened the door to find the skiers from the adjacent condo celebrating the unexpected: an icy wind whirling a cloud of snowflakes over the mountain.

And what a difference a day makes. By 6 a.m. we were up and dressed and by 6:30 I was online, blogging the news on the Huffington Post, to wit:

"The blizzard that began late Tuesday night, on March 23rd, was sheer bliss for skiers at Snowmass and Aspen ski resorts who awoke to the best of all possible worlds: feathery-soft powder snow blanketing mountain peaks, valley trails, forest glades and ski lifts.

"The storm, which blew in just before midnight, was still swirling over Snowmass Village at dawn on the 24th, laying down 4 to 5 inches of new snow on the base area runs before noon, and more -- as yet unmeasured by early afternoon -- on the two resorts' upper slopes.

" 'It's paradise,' exulted Glenn, a resident from Denver, who said he'd spent the earlier part of the week skiing on hard-packed trails, 'groomed at night ...but mushy by late afternoon.' Joining another group of other early risers who'd seen the snow and jumped into their gear, he snapped on his skis and followed them down to the lifts, hoping to 'ski first tracks off the top.'

"The storm was the latest of several small snowfalls, adding a total of 9 inches to a previous 66-inch base. The last big storm here in the Roaring Fork Valley fell a month ago, in late February, dumping a season-saving 43 inches.

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HOLLY RIDGE, N.C. -- We pulled up to a picnic table on Skeeters

Drive, emptied our minivan -- known affectionately and accurately in our family as "Big Stinky" -- and took stock of our camping gear.

Out came the 10-man ...[Read More](#)

Six Flags unveils new attractions for every park in 2017

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