



HOLE SHEBANG

By Kim Stravers

Good morning, skiers and snowboarders! This is your Jackson Hole snow report for Wednesday, March 15th!

7:15 a.m. It's been snowing since last night, when a handful of Last Tram Ales and Brewpub pizza kept us up past bedtime. There'd been a number of false storm—alarms in recent weeks, I'd heard, and chances seemed slim that the flurries in town would stick.

We got seven inches of cowboy powder last night—it's gonna be a great day on the mountain!

I'm sorry...what? Whose seven inches? For me? Confused, intrigued, I hop out of bed—er, couch—and directly into a cup of French press. I decide not to ask the friend I'm staying with, who's lived here longer than I've been snowboarding, what the hell kind of snow we're about to ride until we've gotten at least a couple runs in. No shame before noon, you know.

It's 21 degrees in the village, 7 degrees at the top of the mountain...

On goes the gear, into the truck go the boards, and onto the road we turn to head up for first gondola. People are freaking the hell out. "Ten inches!" yips the parking-lot attendant, leaning on a plow. "Have fun up there!" I'm just glad the minus-18 Fahrenheit phenomenon has not come out to make my acquaintance this trip. Because 10 inches, on this hill, is just too good to have to go inside before lunch.

It's still snowing. Overcast skies, calm winds, with all lifts expected to operate this morning.

It's now 10 'til 8, and the lifts don't start running until 9. Not too many people in line this morning—a far cry from some of the photos I've seen of this spot after a dump. It looks more like a college poetry reading than the circa-'86 Debbie Gibson mall autograph-signing I'm used to hearing about.

Well, that is until 8:30 rolls around and the bus pulls up, unloading those without vehicles and an ungodly number of Utah Spring Breakers. Good thing we've got third gondola. Too bad we'll have to witness hero-style rock drops under Sublette all day.

"Hope I can keep up," I not-so-casually remark as we strap in and head for Thunder.

My friend figuratively squares me off at the shoulders and looks me in my goggled eye.

"You know I love you," she says. "But the mountain's closing in two—and-a-half weeks, and this might be the last powder day we get."

With that, she floats off on nearly a foot of the lightest, driest powder I've seen all winter.

I didn't see her again for three hours.

It's like this: You've got this huge, textured, gorgeous mountain. And it wakes up with you, every day, and rolls over and says, "Good morning, baby. What do you want to do today? Chutes? Trees? Cat-track boosters? Slashes? Cliffs? Gullies? What's your poison, sugar? I'm here for *you*." That's love.

With all that new fun stuff coating every feature, filling in lines that have been unrideable for much of the season, it was a challenge just to decide where to go. I lost my friends, yes, but was rewarded with navigating a new mountain that turned me around like the maze in *Flowers for Algernon*...with *no wind*, save for the top of the tram—a.k.a. The Siberian Outpost. I mean, I live in Mammoth, where every storm comes with blistering squalls that shut down everything above mid-mountain for days. Are you effing kidding me?

Rock Springs, where have you been all my life?

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Back in the rig for the ride home, down a couple PBR tall boys and a slice of mean VC pizza, I finally bring up the cowboy-powder conundrum.

Apparently, there's some confusion between Snow Report Voice and Local Legend.

"Cowboy powder?" someone says. "They called it that? I thought cowboy powder was when you got snow that sucked everywhere but the groomers."

"I mean, what—are they going to trademark that shit, like Steamboat?" asks another.

Well, then. Misnomer or no, if 888-DEEP-SNO is right, I don't wanna be wrong.

I decide when I get home, California home, that I should investigate this etymology a bit further. I quiz one of my roommates, who's lived in Jackson all his life minus this season, just what Snow Report Voice means by her excited phrasing.

"Cowboy powder?" he blinks. "I dunno...shitty coke?"

Well, it was Spring Break. And it kept me up all day and left me chit-chatty for two hours after we got home, not to mention craving more of it the next morning.



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