

Ski Buff

"Whatever it was that moved 40 skiers to sail down Crested Butte's slopes in nothing but nature's own on Easter Sunday, it will not be tolerated next year, resort officials said. [They] will devise a plan to keep naked skiers off the mountain."

"We're trying to come up with some creative solutions because, frankly, trying to chase 40 naked skiers around the mountain is not something this department is equipped to do," admitted Crested Butte police chief Hank Smith, after a mass civil disobedience. 'None of us ski.'"

—Rocky Mountain News

EVERY SEASON, SKIERS ONCE AGAIN STEP NAKED INTO THE SNOWY mountains. And every ski season, the authorities attempt to stop them. Reporters didn't manage to track down the bare-assed Butte-icians to ask them why, instead of putting more clothes on in the great but chilly outdoors, they took them off. But is it really such a mystery?

You're in the mountains, it's sunny, and you're charged with the exuberance of youth. Like Adam and Eve, the first nudists, you are confronting nature pristine, in all her innocence—and vice versa. The creative act of carving a turn through the snow fills you with a sense of physicality and joie de vivre. And there is usually someone nearby dying to take his or her clothes off. There always is. You've met these people; if you're on the basketball court, they volunteer your team to be "skins."

The presence of authority, though not required, is a definite plus. Authority converts simple nudity into Public Nudity, an offense against order. It adds the piquancy of naughtiness. Lady Godiva knew this, and streakers did, too. Out in

the woods, however, it can be hard to find an authority to offend. Skiing the 10th Mountain Division trail near Vail two springtimes ago, my friend Seth and I had just this problem. Fortunately, there was an Englishman around.

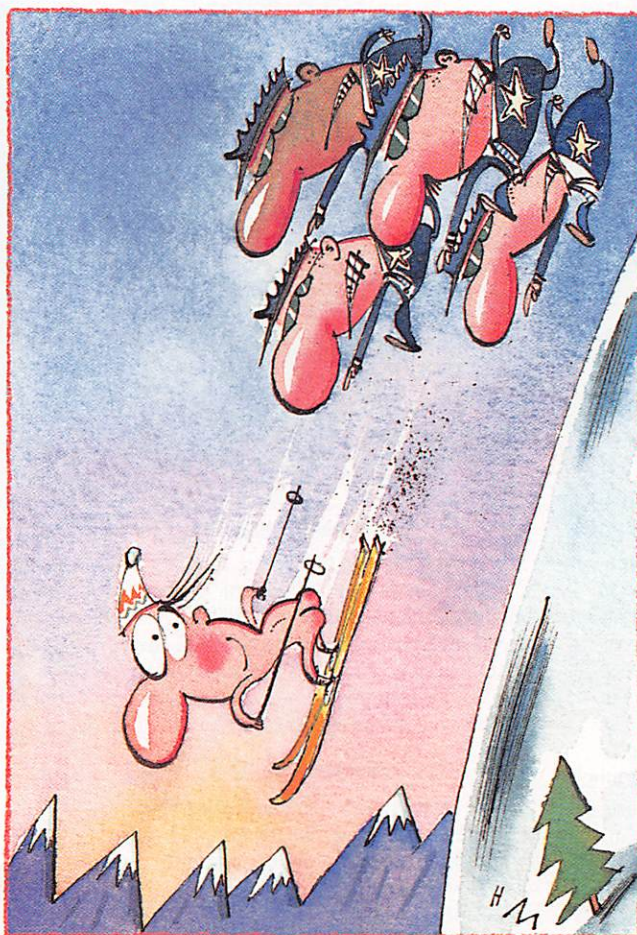
"I dare you," he said.

Say no more. The bet was for a meal of, believe it or not, beef Wellington, which I will now vouch can be a tasty dish indeed. Below the trail a glade wound between stands of aspen to a stream; the sun shone so brightly you couldn't see without dark glasses, and, once our clothes had been shed, you probably wouldn't have cared to see at all. Compared to our whiskery brown faces, our skin glared pale, but as sunlight beat down upon our white shoulders and reflected back up into those proverbial areas where the sun

never shines, we knew it wouldn't stay pale for long. What I remember best about the ensuing turns is the soft flow of air around those parts of myself that are all too often, I admit it, air-deprived and dank. Here they were liberated, open to the weather and the wind and the inspection of small woodland creatures.

And then—mid-telemark—the fall. To remind me that corn snow is abrasive, and the nude skier is vulnerable. Bits of my elbow and thigh and buttock skin are perhaps even now making their way slowly toward the Denver water supply. It hurt, and if you get hurt naked you look especially silly.

But would that stop me now? No. Because skiing naked is not a calculation. It is seldom premeditated. It is, like a glorious spring day, a natural phenomenon the police, and I dare say the Crested Butte ski patrol, cannot prevent. 🐾



By Ted Conover