

# Opinion: Every ski day is worth celebrating

By Mandi Winnicki

When I was a kid growing up in Flagstaff, Ariz., we had a little ski resort that had sporadic snowstorms. We never really “prayed for snow” because we knew our prayers wouldn’t ever be answered. At least not the way they were in the Sierra or anywhere else for that matter. But, if it was a day off of school and the lifts were running, we were skiing.

Dad would load us up in the Subbie, drive the 40 minutes to the hill and drop us off by 9am sharp. There was no need to be there any earlier than that because we were already geared up and ready to ski. When I was a kid we’d put our boots on at home. There was no time to get dressed when you got there because Dad would drop you off right in front. We’d hop out of the car, grab our skis and sack lunch and in three minutes we were skiing.



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We skied all day. There were no breaks. We ate our lunch on the chairlift.

We skied in all conditions, sunny, powder, snowing, blowing, raining, hard pack, dirt, grass mixed with slush, it was all the same to us. It didn’t matter because we weren’t at school – we were skiing.

When I was a kid we never took a day of skiing for granted. You never went home because the conditions were crappy, or the powder was all tracked out. Once we got to the slopes our only option was to ski. So we would, all day until Dad came to pick us up at 4. There were no cell phones to call for a ride home and it was a long distance call from the payphone at a lodge anyway. If you were lucky enough to have a dollar in your pocket, you wouldn't waste it on a phone call; you'd buy a darn candy bar and ski.

I feel like I should have brought this up a few weeks ago and now that we have been blessed with feet and feet of beautiful powder it's easy to forget about the last month. We went six weeks with almost no snow. It almost seemed like the end of winter. The slopes were empty; you pretty much had to stick with the groomers.

If you didn't have your G.N.A.R. scorecard it was getting a bit monotonousness. But the one thing I noticed were the people who were out there riding anyway and not complaining. Just talking about where was good and where might be a little better. If you look out there today on this perfect powder-filled day, those guys and girls out there shredding through the pow as if they were on fire, the ones who you wish you could ski like. Those are the ones that will be out there anyway. I know it's hard to motivate to drive 45 minutes to ski boilerplate conditions. The last month of no snow, I've tried to remind myself that I ski because I love to ski and if I have a chance to ski and have fun, I'm not taking it for granted no matter the conditions.

*Mandi Winnicki moved to South Lake Tahoe in 1996 when she was 19.*