




SNOWBOARDING



*I wanted to fly down the mountain,
but first I had a few things to learn.*

LESSONS

By Shane W. Muir

I had just started college when I decided to learn to snowboard. There wasn't snow on the ground yet, and I had no idea how I would learn, but I had recently acquired the gear and had the desire. What I didn't realize then was how learning to snowboard would become an important metaphor for later lessons.

When my friends found out about my recently acquired equipment, they promised to help me learn how to ride my board. We began planning a boarding trip as soon as the local resort opened. I was already envisioning the speed with which I would race down the slopes and the heights I would reach from launching off the jumps.

Finally, the slopes opened, and we loaded up our gear in the back of my Jeep and drove along the slushy roads to the resort. When we arrived, I was immediately impressed by how large everything was. Looking at a map of the runs and being aware of my lack of experience, I determined to learn quickly.

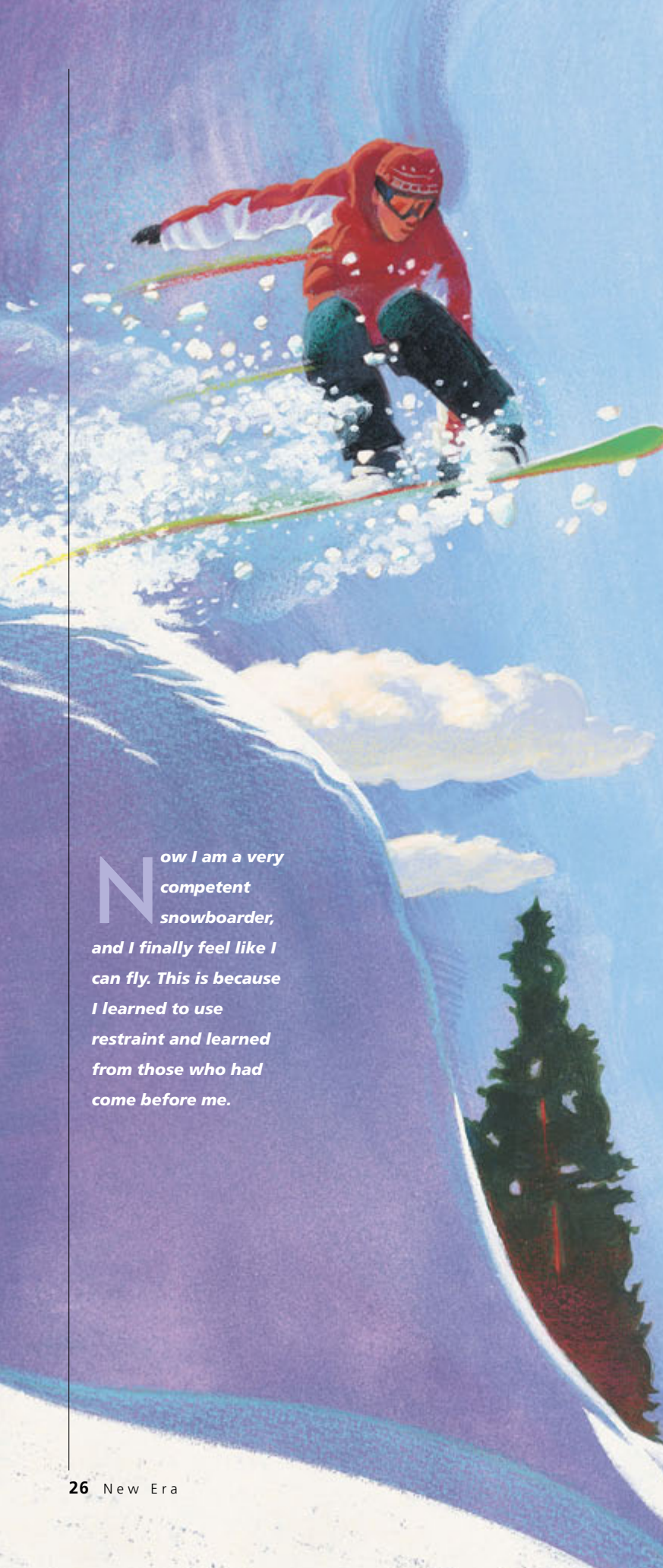
My friends didn't want me to learn on the "bunny hill"—the green run. They reasoned that there wasn't

enough of a slope to get any speed, and without speed I wouldn't learn to board. I went along with their plan and rode the ski lift to a blue run. I listened to the advice of my two buddies and then started down the hill, squatting in a tuck to get more speed.

Speed was one thing I understood. It was simple to go fast down that slope. Unfortunately that was all I could do. I soon caught an edge and face-planted in the snow. There was at least a foot of fresh snow everywhere on the hill, so there wasn't much of a consequence to crashing. That was how I spent the day: racing down the hill as fast as I could go, trying to achieve that flying feeling I had imagined, crashing because I didn't know how to stop, and then jumping back up and starting again. Pretty soon my friends left me and went to tackle the advanced runs—the black diamonds. I had more fun than I expected that day. I didn't mind eating snow frequently if it meant I could zip down the mountain full-tilt.

The next week my family took a weeklong vacation at a different resort with very different snow conditions. The area hadn't received fresh snow in a week, and the entire mountain was covered in a thick layer of icy man-made snow. There were even areas where the snow was so compacted it would have been possible to glide across on skates.

I continued my method of boarding, but it didn't take long before an ice patch surprised me, causing me to lose control of the board and to land so hard on my tailbone



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that I couldn't walk normally for two weeks. I limped and slid my way down the hill and went to our room. I thought I would be stuck inside for the rest of the vacation, lying on my side because it hurt too much to sit.

Eventually my stubborn nature got the better of me, and I went back out to the hill before it grew dark—this time with a different attitude. I rode up to the top, slid partway down the hill, knelt down, and watched every boarder who passed by, analyzing their every move and technique. The pointers my friends had originally given me became clear as I watched other boarders implement them. When I felt like I understood a particular technique, I would try it out myself, taking particular care not to crash. I spent hours watching and practicing. It was very slow work, and I definitely didn't have the feeling of flying, but I followed this pattern that entire week.

After that week I had learned the necessary skills to ride a snowboard effectively. My friends couldn't believe the difference when I rode with them again.

It has been several years since that first season. Now I am a very competent snowboarder. I traverse double black diamonds without batting an eye, hit jumps, and zoom down the mountain at incredible speeds, and I finally feel like I can fly. All of this is because I learned to use restraint and realized the need to learn from those who had come before me.

Sometimes in life it seems easier to do things on our own, heedless of the consequences. That doesn't mean that the consequences don't exist or that they won't catch up to us. If we exercise restraint and take the time to learn from those with more experience in life, like our parents and Church leaders, then we can eventually be ready to venture out on our own and take on life's challenges. We can learn to fly. **NE**