

# A TALL WINDY ORDER

Summiting the highest peak in Wyoming and making peace with its wild surroundings.

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Once a year Jones Snowboards awards one of its athletes a budget to embark on a backcountry expedition in his or her backyard.

The Wind River Range contains some of the most remote wilderness not only in Wyoming, but all of North America. Nestled right in the middle of the northern portion of this 140-mile-long, 40-mile-

wide range is Gannett Peak, the tallest mountain in Wyoming.

When I learned I had won the grant, I started mentally organizing my crew. I needed to find unique, adventure-minded individuals who wouldn't mind a little suffering (OK, a lot of suffering).

Every time I talked to someone with

experience traveling in the Winds, I was met with expressions of awe followed by concern.

"It's big... it's beautiful... it's a really long walk," was the general consensus.

This only fueled my interest to explore the region, considering the primary access points are an hour and a half from my home

*Jimmy Goodman descends Gannett Peak in Wyoming's Wind River Range.*





n Jackson Hole. Yet the grueling nature of snowboarding in the Winds deters many from exploring its vast expanse. Indeed, the Winds are a special place and demand respect from those who attempt to safely and confidently navigate the terrain.

After a couple of attempts fishing for the right weather window, my crew, including fellow Jones team rider Jimmy Goodman, local Jones guide Brendan Burns, videographer Aharon Bram, and

photographer Chris Figenshau, set out on June 2nd to test our luck at documenting and riding the highest peak in Wyoming.

We thought it would be a long yet manageable one-day, 13-mile tour to our base camp on Dinwoody Glacier starting from Cold Springs trailhead. Instead it became a two-day post-hole struggle fest through knee-to waist-deep isothermic snow, hillsides of rushing water, muddy dirt paths and swampy marshes. On the second

day we caught a glimpse of Gannett Peak far in the distance. Realizing the magnitude of the journey ahead, my more than 65-pound pack suddenly felt 10 pounds heavier.

The amount of gear involved in this expedition was daunting. The snowboarding, mountaineering, camping, media and communication supplies added up quick. Along with our food, fuel and stoves, these proved to be the heaviest packs I have ever



carried. Early in the trip, I stepped off a grassy knoll onto what I thought was a patch of spring slush. It turned out to be a two-foot deep isothermic pond. At that moment I succumbed to the reality of soggy wet boots for the next six days.

After settling into our basecamp the evening prior, the crew enjoyed an ethereal sunrise as we embarked on our three-mile commute up the Dinwoody Glacier. Once we reached this zone, our eyes widened at

the scope of this mountain range.

After six months of planning, plotting and rescheduling, we could not have asked for better conditions on our projected summit day. Heading up the Gooseneck couloir, we had perfect boot-packing conditions. With not even a breeze or a cloud in the sky, from the summit of Gannett we could look across Wyoming roughly 70 miles and see the Grand Teton dwarfed by our proximity.

Gannett's summit is a long, gradually inclining ridge that eventually tops out on its northern most point. After Brendan and Chris checked out the north couloir and deemed it too slabby for a safe descent, we headed over to the south couloir. Creamy and edgeable, the spring snow was all-time—we enjoyed perfect spring corn on our descent of Gannett Peak.

The following day Brendan and I took in the view of Mt. Warren. With plenty of





terrain options to salivate over, only the snow conditions limited our choices that day. On this morning we were working with a rain crust from the night before and rapidly warming temps maxing out around 50 degrees by noon. Mt. Warren's couloir felt too firm, Dinwoody Peak's couloir felt too soft, and Le Dames Anglaises couloir whispered to us with the most promise.

After tying on crampons, securing our boards to our packs, and munching one

more snack to sate our ravenous hunger (which was insatiable at this point), we began the firm boot-pack up Le Dames Anglaises couloir. About halfway up the couloir the sun began to crest the saddle on this north facing aspect and with each kick step, magnificent morning light spilled down the slope until the entire ridge and couloir were aglow. It was an awe-inspiring moment—a reminder why the physical exertion was all worth it.

We reached the summit bench and agreed the couloir could use a little more time to soften. These spring-like conditions were keeping us on our toes and the bergschrunds were widening by the day.

After about an hour of solar exposure, we thought we'd test the waters, and the crew granted me first descent. Unfortunately, the couloir was at a perfect angle, aspect, and time of year to hold its firmness no matter how long it baked in the sun. Barely



holding onto my edge as I mocked down the couloir, I almost lost control while airing over a bergschrund. Time slowed down as I peered into the abyss beneath me. Luckily, before I knew it, I was back on my toes carving down the remainder of the glacier.

On our exit day, after two-and-a-half miles of post-holing through hip-deep isothermic snow in timber fall zones, we chose to post up for the night at this iconic Wind

River campsite along the Glacier Trail. The following morning, slightly more mentally and physically rested, we plodded on through the remaining 11 miles.

This expedition tested our mental and physical strength in every way. Yet through that struggle, and pushing myself past my perceived limitations, I eventually reached a place of peace and acceptance. Stripped of all societal distractions, only thoughts of our basic needs for survival occupied our

brains—the pleasure of eating around a fire at night, of finding warmth and comfort as we thawed out our wet bones. It's in those moments of simplicity, those moments in nature that we ultimately discover ourselves.

HB

*Halina Boyd values time in nature with friends and does not have time for bullshit.*

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Photo: Chris Figenshau  
 Rider: Halina Boyd  
 Location: Wyoming

