

Gayle's Adventure in Snowboarding

by Gayle Haarr

First, let me give you a little background: I grew up skiing since I was a little tyke. Don't get the wrong idea, I never was really good at it. Well anyway, I quit skiing in college because none of my friends skied and I didn't have the money or the car to go myself. The woes of a poor college student. So, I've been out of school now for 3 winters and I still haven't gone skiing. So it has been a good 6-7 years since I've been on a pair of skis. My boyfriend, Doug, hung up his skis about 6 years ago also, but he took up snowboarding. So, I decided that I'm going to give snowboarding a whirl myself. "No problem", he tells me. Famous last words.

So, I signed up for NY State's "Learn to Snowboard" program. Let me tell you, it is nothing like skiing. I went and rented myself an oversized pair of sneaker-boot looking things. They are a heck of lot more comfortable than ski boots. Then I got my board. I think I got the first board ever made. This thing was big and heavy. My board was as long as Doug's (who is taller than I am) and it weighed twice as much as his. I knew at that point I was doomed.

I walked my board up the hill to snowboard school and joined up with three other shredder wanna-bes. I was decked out in Gortex from head to toe to keep me dry while rolling around the mountain (okay the beginner's bump). Class went pretty well. My strength was hopping on the board to head me in the right direction. Not the best strength to have, but it could have been worse. Doug and I stuck around for a while after class to further my hopping skills and attempt a few more turns. Well, wouldn't you know I got so good at heel-side turning that I just kept going. I had mastered the art of the 180 degree turn. As a matter of fact, I got so good at it that I attempted a few 360's. Of course all of this was unintentional and not what I was supposed to be doing.

My second attempt was after a long Saturday morning of skiing. My second lesson was a private lesson from Doug with a real "chick board" one for a woman my size and weight. I was stylin', my board had a rainbow scene with red flying piggies! A young little shredder said that I had a cool looking board. I was felling good. I even tried to use the tow rope they had running that day in the beginner's section. Let me tell you a tow rope is about a million times easier on skis than on a snowboard. The tow rope pathetically dragged my bobbing and weaving body up a few times before Doug found it easier to leave me strapped into the board and push me up himself. He got sick of that quickly so then we decided it was time for me to head to the lift.

I was really nervous at this point. After managing to get to the lift without falling or tripping over

my board, I managed to get on the lift with Doug's encouragement. The worst part came when I had to get off the lift, I tried to stand on the rubber stomp pad like I'm suppose to, but I missed. I saw a disaster coming. Luckily when I did fall, my butt landed on the back of the board and I rode off the lift like a sled. YEAH! I'm sitting pretty -- literally. Now, it was time to strap myself into this snowboard contraption and go down the entire hill. I only made it a few feet before I would either make a lovely face plant in the snow or a full body snow angle, but I did it. I made it down the hill two times that first day. Later on I realized I had a black and blue bruise about the size of a tennis ball on my butt. Ouch!! At this point I wasn't looking forward to work on Monday and sitting in front of my computer.

My third lesson was a little too close to my second. I was still using the flying pig board, however, someone was so nice as to wax it up for me. Great, just what I needed, a slippery board to go faster. Well, with a positive attitude we headed right for the lift to the top of the hill again. My positive attitude disappeared when I was slipping, sliding, and tripping along to get on the lift. Getting off was even worse. I went flying down and ended up twisting my knee and laying right in front of the lift. So I crawled out of the way for the next people, dragging my board behind me like a ball and chain.

Okay, time to stop dreading it and get up. So that is exactly what I did. Rolled myself over and strapped myself in, and I was off. (Let me mention that every crazy person was out there learning to ski or snowboard with me. So not only was I trying to not kill or mangle myself, but also dodge all the insane out-of-control speed demons around me.) After going along pretty well and linking turns, I made it to the bottom twice. Then I got over confident. I was picking up speed and couldn't get the board to turn with my feet. I tried three times to twist my feet and switch by balance and nothing was happening except for me going faster. I began to get scared so I bent my knees a bit too far and then just lost my balance. I hit the ground and I hit it hard. I was skipping along the snow like a pebble in a pond. I could not even stop I reached the bottom of the hill. Once I did stop I just laid there for a minute. I was trying to figure out if everything was intact before I sat up. I managed to knock the wind out of myself and scare myself half to death.

Unfortunately, that was the end of my snowboarding experience. I went in for a while to relax and catch my breath before I gave it another try. I went back out later by myself, but not up the lift. This time I walked quite a ways up the hill to try again. But that fall shook my confidence and I just couldn't manage to turn or anything. I started to get really mad and frustrated, I was being really wimpy. Doug saw that and we decided to call it quits for the night. I haven't been out since. But I hope maybe to go snowboarding one more time this year, but if not I'll be back out there next year trying again, maybe with some padded bloomers.

Ed Note -- Gayle's seems to like snowboarding. However, she does have one complaint -- she can't use her patented "Butt Stop." Many skiers should know what this is. You have the snow plow stop, the turn stop, and in Gayle's case, the "Butt Stop." Use your imagination ;)