

## Why do I imagine my own funeral

like a little girl dreaming of her wedding day? It wasn't always like this. I didn't always have this paranoid expectation that the young men around me, people I call my friends, would disappear one by one until I was the only one left. But now I think about it every day. I've been to so many young people's funerals that I consider them normal, as common as weddings, hangovers or spam in my in-box.

It's difficult to rationalize the effect of attending, on average, one or two of your friends' funerals per annum when you're my age. Many 31-year-olds have never been to a friend's funeral. I know this because whenever one of my friends dies, my peers express disbelief. "Not another one," they say. Or, "Man, you know a lot of people who die." It's true. And that reality is backed up by the empirical evidence, by the tangle of memorial cards and photos in the top drawer of my desk. I know a lot of people who die.

If I lived in the West Bank or Compton, I'd surely count myself lucky that my numbers are so low. But I live in Canada. I inhabit a clean, wealthy, gun-controlled country where a nonsmoking male who eats a vegetable once in a while can expect to live well into his seventies. So why the double-digit death toll?

names like The Falcon 5000, and the man was more MacGyver than MacGyver himself: He could make "snow chains" (that stayed on!) out of yellow nylon rope from the hardware store. At his funeral, I started to pay attention to the importance of true character in the end. As the older guys swapped these unbelievable-but-true Daffern stories while nibbling on cookies and brownies, I sat back wondering what it would be like if a tame homebody died instead of a trailblazer like Neil Daffern. Would people invent these great anecdotes in the absence of real stories to talk about? Would the death be as gut-wrenching if the person was less of a legend, less of an inspiration?

I didn't understand then as I do now that it is precisely these characters who are most likely to leave the living far too early. Boring people live to be old. People who live large often die young, leaving a cartoon hole in the brick wall of the living. They don't necessarily die because they take chances and live hard, although, statistically, this speaks for itself. They die because whoever is running the show up there wants epic people to hang out with. Trust me. The ancient Greeks were right: Those who die young are the beloved of the gods.

Golfers and Ultimate Frisbee players might have less use for the At Least S/He Died Doing Something S/He Loved adage but in skiing,

# BELOVED OF

Excluding the sad childhood stories of leukemia and drowning that most of us share, the first death I faced occurred in the spring of my 18th year. I was working at a snowboard shop in Calgary, earning a little money, living at my mom's and scamming lots of free trips to the mountains thanks to my job. Life was pretty great. Six members of our shop's snowboard team went to the World Powder 8 Championships in the British Columbia interior, leaving me and my manager, Jay, to hold down the fort. There was a helicopter crash and fire—three of the riders never came back. Jay took me aside after getting the phone call, and at first I kind of snickered when he told me Neil Daffern was dead. I quickly figured out from the look on Jay's older, wiser face that this was not one of his oblique jokes. No, one of the biggest characters on the planet—a man who was designing wraparound 6 x 9 plywood speaker wings into the driver's seat of his van to blast AC/DC straight into his brain, a man whose jeans were always stiff with spilled epoxy from his homemade snowboard constructions—was dead. Three of my good friends received third-degree burns and lung damage from the burning jet fuel, yet they survived, scarred but still with us.

Neil's funeral was my first encounter with the At Least He Died Doing What He Loved line of reasoning. I was too immature to give that one a straight yea or nay; it's what people always say if someone dies doing a sport that he, umm, loved. In a way it's like the action sports version of "sorry"; something you say when saying nothing seems rude. There's no question that Neil loved snowboarding—hell, in Alberta, he'd pretty much invented it as far as I was concerned. He was the first person I ever saw who could truly carve a turn at speed like a ski racer, and he made boards that were lightyears ahead of their time, the sporting equivalent of da Vinci's helicopter sketches. All of Neil's boards had ridiculous

snowboarding, surfing and other sports where you wrangle with Mother Nature directly on a regular basis, it carries a lot of weight. It's a sort of mission statement in so-called "extreme" sports like BASE-jumping. The adage presupposes that it is better to die young doing the thing that rings your cherries than to make it into your eighties and blow away like a seed husk. "Live fast, die young and leave a beautiful corpse," as the rock 'n' roll saying goes . . .

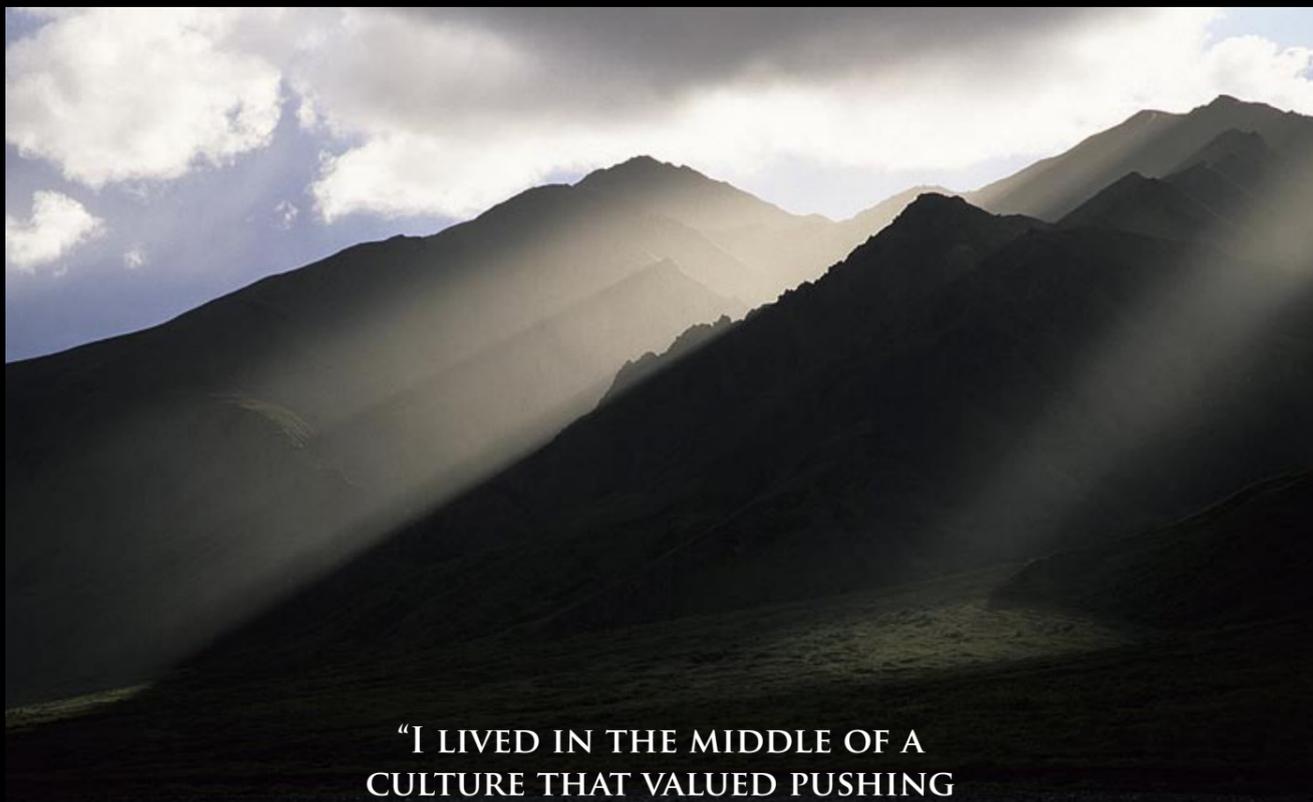
Even back when Neil died in 1990, I wasn't sure I was prepared to buy into that concept. I lived right in the middle of a culture that valued taking chances, pushing limits, literally risking your life, but death seemed an exorbitant price to pay. The question remains: Is any sport worth dying for? For some people, the answer is clearly yes. With exclamation marks. I can't speak for Neil—whose death had considerably more to do with aviation than snowboarding—and I wouldn't presume to speak for any of my departed friends, yet I can attest that he left behind a punk, un-brown-nosing attitude that rubbed off on all of us who knew him. These days, when I sense that I'm kissing ass—maybe talking to someone just because they have something I want—I can feel Neil at my shoulder, nudging me to leave the room with some fucking integrity intact. He would never say anything about it, just kind of scowl in disgust and you'd know he was right. Neil Daffern never actually did this for me in life, but he's done it for me dozens of times since. This is what I know for sure.

Today, 15 years later, my list of friend fatalities looks like this: helicopter crash, avalanche, murder, overdose, drunk driving, regular driving, avalanche, avalanche, head trauma, asthma attack, head trauma, unknown causes, avalanche, head trauma. All guys, all young, and they're all dead. Some were pretty good friends, though none were best friends.

PHOTO BY CHRIS ANKENY

# THE GODS

By Colin Whyte



**“I LIVED IN THE MIDDLE OF A CULTURE THAT VALUED PUSHING LIMITS, BUT DEATH SEEMED AN EXORBITANT PRICE TO PAY. THE QUESTION REMAINS: IS ANY SPORT WORTH DYING FOR?”**

Some were just guys whose boards I regularly repaired at work, maybe shot the shit with in the gondola or at the bar every week. Two were expert skiers who liked to borrow my tools and needed daily

reminders to return them, but most were snowboarders. One was the most recognized snowboarder of all time, Craig Kelly, who died January 20, 2003, in the first of two Revelstoke, British Columbia, avalanches that claimed 14 lives total. Four-time world champion, icon, father and true scholar of the road less-traveled, Craig’s death made snowboarders everywhere feel like their world had lost a dimension.

My mum is 73 and it seems like I go to more funerals than she does. I guess by now, we’re about neck-and-neck: natural causes/massive head trauma, stroke/avalanche, cancer/overdose. I’m always surprised by how well my mum handles my all-too-frequent, tragic news about guys she’s often never met but who must remind her of me on some level. She never begs me to quit snowboarding, never gets overwrought or hysterical; she just expresses her genuine sorrow that yet another young man has died. Having ironed enough of my dark shirts to get the picture, she obviously knows that what I do can be dangerous. Given the phone call she received from me in 1997, I’m surprised she ever let me out of her sight again.

We were in Chamonix, France—pro rider Neil Edgeworth, photographer Ken Achenbach and me *qua* writer—doing a little follow-up riding for fun and to supplement the action shots we already had in the bag from Alagna, Italy. We were cobbling together a feature on Alagna for *Snowboard Life* magazine. Alagna’s only lift to the top closed every day at noon when the old operator’s wife brought him a steaming bowl of pasta from their stone house down the road. And the parish priest of

Alagna was such a devoted skier that his church had a barometer on its north wall and he actually asked his congregation to pray for snow at the end of high mass. Not surprisingly, the Vatican eventually

sent a couple of starched representatives up north and demanded that the skier priest stop praying for snow. He said no.

Positive that the blasphemous priest would have done the same thing, we left Alagna because Chamonix had reportedly received a bigger hit from a recent storm. In a Renault rental van that looked like a milk carton on wheels, our scruffy Canadian trio burrowed through the 12-kilometer Mont-Blanc tunnel into France. Little did we know that life on the other side would never be the same again.

Our crew found itself having a late breakfast at Le Bistro des Sports in Cham’s town center. This bistro was the only joint we knew of that served bacon and eggs, and if Neil Edgeworth had to eat another croissant au fromage, pain chocolat or anything else from a patisserie, he said he’d go nuts. Neil was the talent and, as such, was allowed to call some shots in the pre-riding nourishment department. Breakfast for the prior week had been exclusively buns and coffee; he could have his stupid bacon and eggs.

Ken and I and the rest of our group were eager to get up on Le Brévent to see how it looked with the fresh snow and clear skies. I slurped my coffee and watched the Guides de Haute Montagne stream into the bistro, down their café au laits, and head up to the lifts with that austere demeanor French mountain guides have, like war veterans on parade. I grew bitter at Neil for taking so long on a powder day. I thought he was being a whiner with his insistence on a sit-down Canadian breakfast

and told our French friends so. Neil didn’t speak French, so he didn’t know I was slagging him—or at least I hope he didn’t. We were usually thick as thieves, laughing about everything and nothing, poking fun at European ski fashions, trying to out-drink each other on the coffee front. This was the first time in eight years of friendship I could remember being remotely mad at “Sludgy.” I guess powder days bring out the worst in people: impatience, selfishness, myopia.

After breakfast, on top of Le Brévent, our group of seven had a panoramic view of Mont-Blanc, the pop-up-book town of Chamonix, the Fiz massif and the Aravis mountains. The sun was as bright and alive as I’d ever seen it. From our vantage point of 2,500 meters we could see all the way back to Italy through a sky the color of old Levi’s. I had the strangest feeling in my stomach, though. It was speaking to me in the low, angry growls of a guard dog.

The route we were eyeing down the right flank looked really steep and potentially very fun. Our local for the day, a Finnish Cham resident named Jaarko, who had numerous big-mountain snowboarding contests under his belt, knew the route well. There were tracks in the main couloir and we’d seen people skiing the same off-piste “run” from the tram, so we all kind of ticked our safety boxes and deemed the snowpack safe. It wasn’t. Those tracks merely belonged to some very lucky people; they’d just skied down a house of cards.

I was strapped into my bindings and ready to go. Neil was taking a more exciting route into the couloir so he went first. He shouted “Dropping!” at the top of his lungs, a standard warning protocol to anyone below. I didn’t see Neil drop in, really, as I was ducking behind a rock so that my dorky head didn’t obscure Ken’s lens. I heard the familiar *whirr-click* of a Canon motor drive and saw Neil land his backside air perfectly on the shoulder of snow leading into the main couloir. And then came the loudest *whoooooomp* I’ve ever heard as the snowpack dropped like an unsupported roof.

In the second or two it took me to get to my feet, Neil had triggered and been inhaled by a Class 3+ avalanche—a slide that would later be rated powerful enough to destroy buildings. We could hear it tearing down the mountain, obliterating everything in its path. A cloud of sparkling snow crystals rose a hundred feet into the air. All we could do was hope Neil had outridden the torrent or that he was safe on the other side of a large outcropping. We all knew this was serious, as serious as it gets.

Ken, Jarkko and I picked our way down the icy couloir now stripped of snow and tried to get to the debris field at the bottom. The other three ran from the top toward the nearest Bureau des Guides for help. Little did we know the guides had already seen the massive slide through binoculars from town. They’d already dispatched a helicopter—veterans ready for the worst.

The debris field was littered with chunks of snow the size of washing machines. Pine boughs littered the snow like a mall parking lot on Christmas Eve. The air felt and smelled of static electricity, crackling and desperate. The three of us flicked our avalanche transceivers over to “receive” mode and started the search grid we’d all learned and hoped never to use. We couldn’t see gloves, goggles or other indicators of Neil or anybody else possibly caught in the avalanche. After its friction-filled slide down a kilometer of vertical, the debris was hardening in the shade of the trees, clicking like the amplified cracking of ice cubes in a glass. We knew we had to locate Neil and begin digging before the snow set up.

Ken and Jaarko located Neil almost immediately without their Pieps—he was on top of the snow! But his long slide down the mountain had made a mess of him. His shirt and jacket had been ripped off by the force of the avalanche. His head was smashed up. His board was totally destroyed. They were doing CPR on his bare chest before I even knew

he’d been found. I undid Neil’s bindings and pushed his board off to the side, wanting to do something—anything—to help.

The helicopter arrived like something out of *Apocalypse Now*, hovering 200 feet up after dropping off rescue experts—including a lead guide I’d seen at the bistro an hour earlier. The bottom of the couloir must have been too dangerous to land in and we all knew that another chute could release its snow load sympathetically. The EMTs shooed us out of the way and attached an oxygen mask and some other paraphernalia to Neil. I sat off to the side, praying or something. I tried to will into being a scenario in which the rust-colored snow around him was just the result of a playground accident or a drunken punch-up: one more test of toughness for this very tough kid to joke about once he got back on his feet.

A group of American free-skiers who had seen the slide—and possibly had their lives saved by the volume at which Neil had announced his drop-in—showed up to help. The redheaded skier gave my heaving shoulders a squeeze, as if he knew that nothing could be said. He was right. I overheard the EMT radio to his pilot for pick-up, grumbling, “Il est presque mort déjà,” and I wished to God that I didn’t understand French.

The helicopter took off with Neil inside and we bushwhacked our way down to the rental van at the edge of town. I carried Neil’s shattered board in one hand and mine in the other. Even though we were absolutely pinned on adrenaline, we put our seat belts on for the two-minute drive to the hospital. All I wanted to do was toss my stupid board out the window.

By the time we got to the hospital, Neil was pronounced dead.

I used to think my obsession with death was a by-product of sheer numbers, some computational incapacity on my part, but it’s not. Nor is it some rogue Goth gene from my teenage days of listening to The Cure in my bedroom. Several of my snowboarding friends have known most of the same guys who died, yet they seem outwardly less devastated by death when it happens. They seem to bounce back quicker, too. After examining this phenomenon year after year, funeral after funeral, I now believe it’s because many of my living friends still inhabit a zone where death can remain abstract. Having never identified a buddy’s body in a dark French basement or undone his bindings for the final time, death doesn’t *look* like anything to them. In North America, death is handled by police, funeral directors, grief counselors and other professionals; unnatural and un-animal though it may be, this abstraction and virtual erasure of death might be the best defense mechanism out there. It’s why little kids can cut three holes in a sheet and go as ghosts for Halloween without losing their minds. It’s enviable. Once that particular metaphysical casing gets cracked, there’s no going back to abstractions. Ever.

We should all be dead—me and every one of my friends. I know this now. Bumper-surfing the Coquihalla during a snowstorm; jumping off a railway bridge into the Bow River during spring thaw; splitting a pack of Guinness and cat-walking the gunwales of a B.C. ferry traveling at 18 knots. All foolish activities that could easily kill a person. I ought to have died that day in Chamonix and probably half a dozen times before and since. And I can honestly say that a part of me did die that day in Cham. The more literary or romantic sensibilities might say that it was my innocence that died—a normal thing. Maybe they’re right. But it feels more like a real part of me—some meaty chunk with veins and arteries—was lopped off and left bleeding up there in the French Alps.

A life without risk is a life not worth living. I believe this. If you never push it you’ll never even know what “it” is in the first place. As Canadian skiing legend Trevor Petersen, another unfortunate casualty of a Chamonix avalanche, wrote in his journal: “There comes a time when one must risk something, or sit forever with one’s dreams.”

Our bodies have adrenal glands for a reason and, now that we don't stalk saber-toothed tigers with only a big stick and our huevos, we need to fire these glands up somewhat artificially. The ubiquitous "high" that action sports athletes often speak of is nothing but the fight-or-flight response kicking in. It's true that people like this can get addicted to their own adrenaline. But so do Wall Street CEOs and firefighters and ER nurses. If you're going to get hooked on a drug, it might as well be one your own body produces for free, right? At least you don't have to pawn your sister's VCR to get your fix.

Just as death can remain abstract for those lucky enough to have never rubbed up against its bony certainty, life can remain abstract when you're not really living it. Sure, we have our little routines, our quotidian pleasures—first cigarette, first coffee, chardonnay on the deck, married sex—but how often do we get that metallic taste in our mouths, that rush of blood away from our extremities and into our vitals? Some people never commune with their adrenal glands, never engage this raw, ragged epinephrine side of themselves. The adrenal glands should never turn into a useless body part, like the appendix. You have to keep them primed for a real emergency, blow out the cobwebs. You have to use it or lose it, in a sense. As Canada's most famous bank robber once said, at some point you have to choose whether you'd rather live as a cow or as a gazelle.

Paddling into an overhead wave in sharky seas, taking a tipsy shortcut through the toughest favela in São Paulo and eating at Jack in the Box all have one thing in common: They make you feel alive. You come out the other side of the brief flirtation with death (or grievous bodily harm) lit up like a Christmas tree. Charged up. Electrified. It's no coincidence that people who have beaten cancer or awoken from a year-long coma so often live their lives with a renewed intensity once the ventilator is rolled back into storage. Maybe their peek behind the curtain showed them that there's nothing back there. Maybe they just decided to make the most of a sure thing.

Whether you have ADD, OCD or are just one of those people, like me, who think too damn much, putting your life at some risk also has the undeniable benefit of shutting off the infernal chatter between your ears. The static stops. You hum with the same purity Thoreau pursued. When you're traversing over the top of an 800-foot cliff on boilerplate ice or passing a logging truck on the Tofino highway, every cell in your being is focused on one thing: not dying. The overdue thank-you card to Grandma, library books and cable bill disappear from your mind. The slutty way your husband's receptionist dresses and that dodgy mole on your shoulder blade cease to be for the moment and you concentrate—really concentrate, like a ninja or a neurosurgeon—on making it out of this situation you probably put yourself into to feel this very way.

It's stupid. And you do grow out of it, to some extent. But it's also tangible and real in a world where "almost," "kind of" and "virtual" rule the roost. The Romans risked the life of "others" for punitive sport and entertainment, throwing Christians to the lions 2,000 years ago. And now we inhabit a space where people from all walks of life, from stoners to stenographers, agree to pay a hundred dollars for the privilege of jumping off a bridge with rubber bands wrapped around their ankles. Sure, some people bungee jump (or BASE jump or scuba dive with sharks or whatever) for the bragging rights or on a dare, but I suspect most people do it—at least the second time around—to remind themselves that they are, in fact, alive. Maybe our vaccines, air bags and airport security procedures have made our lives so safe and sanitized that we yearn to live in fear, at least for a few seconds. But if so, wouldn't volunteering at a field hospital in Afghanistan be a more fruitful way to get our jollies?

Listening to seniors like my mum, who lived through World War II in England, these civilian survivors talk about the war years like they were the highlight of their lives. They clearly miss the intensity: Death lurked behind every cloud in the silhouette of a Luftwaffe bomber. They were

united against a common enemy. Everybody pulled together. Between this breath and the next one, a bomb could have leveled their entire world and, as a result, life in peacetime has essentially been an anticlimax for many of them; safe but a little boring when you get right down to it.

Logic dictates that growing up with your life on the line engenders a tenacious sense of life, of living. Some people embrace it, continually finding new ways to keep the spark alive. Others, once their world stops throwing up life and death moments, let it flicker and die.

If you've ever witnessed parents attending their child's funeral, there's a pathos attached that is almost unfathomable. Chances are you've never met these parents until now and, looking around the handmade memorial displays in the lobby, you can start to piece together their relationship with their child. You see the old BMX racing photos, the gap-toothed class pictures, the handwritten letters to Santa and stiff First Communion shots. You sense parental pride in every photo, the effort taken to pick up a camera and immortalize their son in his Van Halen T-shirt or his hand-me-down hockey gear. Every season, I like to think I'm under control emotionally: a seasoned veteran. I'm convinced that this time, I can deal with the loss of friend X or buddy Y in my head. But when the parents file into the chapel, I always lose it. Their slump-shouldered walks, their essential brokenness, speak of a grief so profound and unnatural that I can't contain it. Who can? Nobody should ever have to attend their child's funeral.

Funerals have become normal for me. Funerals follow a set pattern; they have certain expectations, conventions and rules. You don't think you'll make it through and then—somehow—you actually feel a lot better at the end as an opiate numbness replaces the pit of acid in your stomach. You feel a calm you haven't felt since before you heard the news.

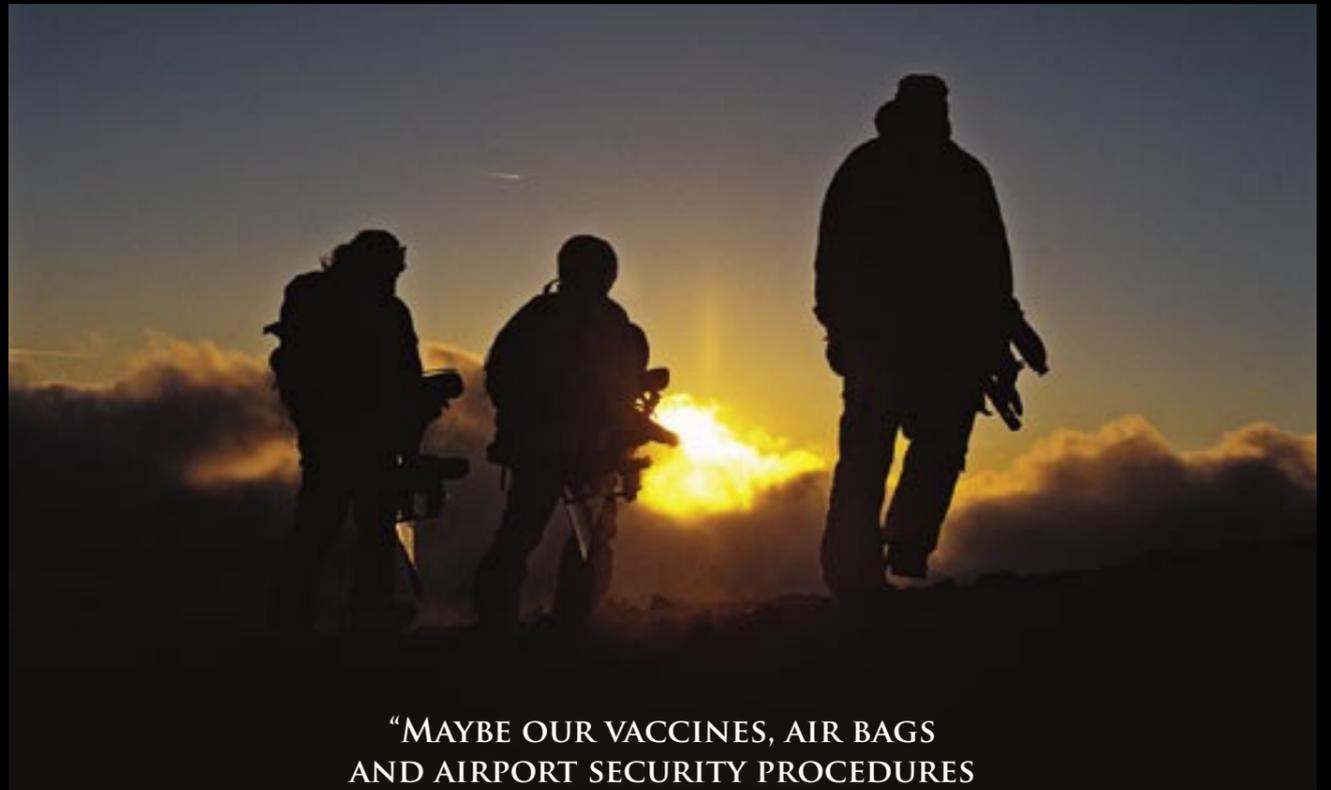
Going to a funeral inevitably makes you think of the previous funeral you attended: Who was it who died and how? Was the priest so damn hokey, a dead ringer for Ned Flanders on *The Simpsons* like this joker? How many pretty girls were there?

There is an entire stratum of my old snowboarding friends whom I see only at funerals. They got married or moved away or got seriously into weed, so they only come out of hibernation for Big Reasons, like a friend's passing. My chats with these friends once or twice a year make me feel like a character in *Fight Club*, some compulsive funeral attendee who shows up just because he needs a place to make him cry. The way the funeral friends mill about outside the church, smoking and looking at the ground, pale punk-rock pigeons, I think they feel the same way. We plan to hook up for the hell of it, without the cover of death to precipitate a meeting, but we never do. We just see one another at funerals.

The part of the funeral that is the most consistent is, surprisingly, the wake that comes at the heels of the formal service. By then, the parents have usually retreated and friends feel free to drink to the departed's life with abandon. It is always called a wake, even when the departed is not remotely Irish, and it always gets very, very messy. Fast. If you normally don't drink, you'll get hammered before the slideshow even starts. If you normally drink, you'll get so drunk that you pass out in a snowbank. You will unashamedly tell people you barely know that you love them—and you'll still mean it in the morning. The normal social-lubricant effects of alcohol are multiplied exponentially. Women who were bitter enemies swap phone numbers before the night's half over. Guys who haven't spoken in years play-fight on the glass-strewn floor of the men's room by nine o'clock.

Young people at wakes pair off like it's the end of the world. At Neil Edgeworth's wake, held in his buddy's huge Kelowna, B.C., garden center after close, I was deeply offended by this—at first. I thought it was weak, inappropriate and totally uncalled for. But I was just being self-righteous. Losing a friend makes you want to have sex. It's that simple. I saw four of my friends hook up after Neil's wake and I can assure you that

PHOTO BY JEFF CURTIS



**“MAYBE OUR VACCINES, AIR BAGS AND AIRPORT SECURITY PROCEDURES HAVE MADE OUR LIVES SO SAFE AND SANITIZED THAT WE YEARN TO LIVE IN FEAR. BUT IF SO, WOULDN'T VOLUNTEERING AT A FIELD HOSPITAL IN AFGHANISTAN BE A MORE FRUITFUL WAY TO GET OUR JOLLIES?”**

we're talking about people who don't normally see much action. I sense the reasons people want to have sex after a funeral are more ontological than hormonal. They want to cement their place among the living, fix themselves to the earth, prove that they're alive—even if they can't bring their friend back. People's usual veneers of urban cool are cracked right open by the gut-shot sadness and, in feeling exposed, in feeling the love in the room, they turn to sex to plug the hole. This sexual healing makes perfect sense once you've watched it happen time after time. I'm convinced that most of us never feel as alive as we do during hour nine of a ten-hour wake. Nor do we ever feel beauty so deeply.

I often ask myself a few days after a friend's funeral whether knowing so many people who have died in peacetime has made me a better person or just bitter. Have I learned anything from their deaths or, more importantly, from their lives? I want to know how this most recent death in a long string of deaths has changed me. I'm not really certain of the answer. I'm more safety-conscious than I used to be, that's for sure. I'm really apprehensive whenever I meet a new person named Neil and tend not to become his friend too readily. I know now that it's very important to go to the funerals. If the person who died mattered to me in any real way, I go—even if it means driving a long way, feeling like the odd man out, and sleeping on a kind stranger's floor. I believe that not going to your buddy's funeral is the ultimate dis, as bad as crossing the street to avoid him in life. Overall, I'm more likely to keep in touch with people who matter to me now, and I try to make sure that friends know when I think they're worth the air they breathe.

I admit, it's not much.

The thing with fixations, with these weird mental hangnails that take over your psyche and redesign it from the inside out, is that you aren't in control of how they affect you. I sometimes feel sorry for myself and I know this is the most inappropriate

response, and fundamentally dishonest. My non-mountain friends who can't relate seem to feel sorry for me, too, and this just seems like a more manipulative version of the self-pity I despise—it's like grave digging. I guess I want everyone I know to have been able to know the person who died. I want them to be able to share the anecdotes, the crazy wake and its slurred declarations of love. I want them to understand how you have to take your dead friend's nonsensical sayings, Kamloops martini recipes, inexplicable taste for Hostess Fruit Pies from gas stations and stupid way of rolling a joint and keep him alive by keeping these apparent trivialities in currency.

I don't open the drawer that contains my memorial cards very often. And I don't store much else in there. Normally, I'll keep the official photo of my departed friend up on my fridge with pizza magnets for a while, and then it'll bum me out and I'll relegate it to The Drawer. I always feel harsh relegating it, yet seeing your friend jumping a crevasse or mugging into the camera with a trophy steelhead in his hands are hard things to look at when you go to get milk for your cereal. It makes you smile, but in a sad, sad way. You feel honored to have known them and glad to have at least this picture, yet you have to put them away eventually. You have to get on with your life, as they say. You have to find something with which to fill in the hole they left behind. Sometimes it's one hell of a hole. The problem is, you can only fill it in with other people. Nothing else fits. ★