

FALL
LINE

I get by with a little help from
my friends of friends of friends.
Brian Keet, living the good life
in the woods of Vermont.
PHOTO: JUSTIN CASH

AT VERMONT'S LODGE THEORY, IT'S ALL ABOUT THE POW

THE CAT'S OUT OF THE BAG

The idea originated 18 years ago in a dorm room at Merrimack College. Amidst swirling smoke and scattered beer cans, Kevin Joudrey and a few buddies conjured an almost mythical vision: a private co-op ski club. Their mission, remembers Joudrey, was "to procreate the good life with respect to nature and mankind."

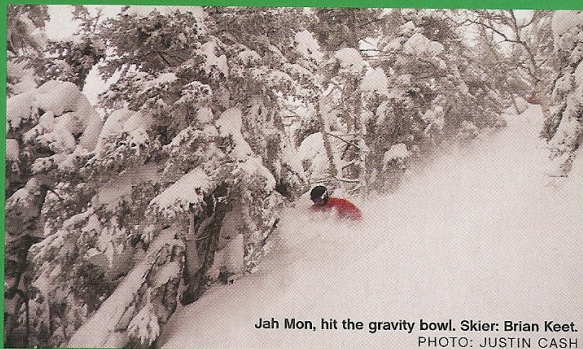
The good life is, of course, skiing powder with friends. And Joudrey, now a 35-year-old computer programmer, has seemingly accomplished it with Lodge Theory—a term that encompasses his vision for 500 acres of private steep slopes and glades in Northern Vermont. Five years ago, Joudrey purchased the property, which he named Gravity Bowl, directly across the street from Jay Peak on Little Bear Mountain. While the physical attributes of this property do it justice—1,000 feet of vertical, cliff bands stretching up to 30 feet high, hardwood glades, and more than 300 inches of annual snowfall—it is the philosophy behind Theory that sets it apart.

"Gravity Bowl has similar terrain to Jay Peak, but no one goes there," says CJ Bradbury, one of 137 members in the co-op. "It's a private stash."

Unlike other private skiing clubs or co-ops, membership is free and works on what Joudrey calls the, "friends and friends of friends network." Members pay a \$20 nightly fee to stay at one of Theory's two hostel-style lodges. This season, Lodge Theory plans to offer its members cat skiing—replacing Joudrey's yellow ATV equipped with tracks, the sole means of transport up the hill—and a summit warming hut, named the Ja Mon.

"We have members who trade work for powder. Day tickets per se do not exist and may never," Joudrey says. "Some folks come to ski but may not stay overnight. These are locals and members who have helped out and as such they are on the 'Work 4 Powder' mission."

Theory's original shelter, the Burnt Mountain Lodge, sits on the floor of Gravity Bowl. The propane-heated structure was purchased along with Theory's initial land purchase. The previous owner built the shelter by hand, and only after a series of interviews with Joudrey ensuring "that he was the right buyer" was it procured. Unique and classic, it will



Jah Mon, hit the gravity bowl. Skier: Brian Keet.
PHOTO: JUSTIN CASH

soon be overshadowed by Lodge Theory's newest structure, The Cat House, a lodge with bunks, bar, and hot tub.

These changes are not the only transition on the horizon for Joudrey. Jay Peak Ski Area, connected to Little Bear Mountain by a ridgeline from which drops a backcountry area known as the West Bowl, has announced plans to expand into the West Bowl with lifts and trails right up to the border of Gravity Bowl. This cirque is the only thing separating Gravity from the ski area, at least for now.

"It's not likely to change Lodge Theory or the vibe much," says Joudrey. "Those lots are ours to sell. Just like we were handpicked as deserving to take over what's now Burnt Mountain Lodge, we can choose who we sell to. We'll know all our neighbors."

As for the future, Joudrey's not ruling out a possible chairlift up Gravity Bowl. But when asked if lift-served terrain in Gravity was his ultimate goal, he replies, "No clue. There is no ultimate goal other than to ski pow and live a better life. I'm just putting one ski in front of the other." —BRIAN IRWIN