

## TRAVEL

# Mastering moguls on the slopes of Aspen

**By Dan Leeth**

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Instructor Alan Bush leads Pat McGrath down a bumpy, black-diamond trail at Snowmass. *(Dan Leeth, Special to The Denver Post)*

Aspen will always hold a powdery spot in my skiing heart. It was here, 18 years ago, that I learned to downhill ski. In a three-day program for adult never-evers, I went from tripping off the platter-pull to cruising the blues.

And blue is where I stayed, my skiing progress stuck like a Chevy in a snow bank. Carving nothing but the groomers, downhill had become about as challenging as walking the dog.

That changed four years ago with another Aspen ski class, this one called Bumps for Boomers. Designed by former Apple executive Joe Nevin, Bumps for Boomers teaches seniors to negotiate terrain most would consider the purview of younger skiers with strapping muscles, lightning reflexes and full complements of meniscus.

With the exception of one student's 40-something daughter, everyone in my class of seven qualified for AARP membership. The oldest was 84, and several were in their 70s. While we were all reasonably fit, none of us were gifted skiers. We were just gramps and grams wanting off the groomers.

"Bumps are less crowded than the main runs, the snow is usually better, and they're safer," touted senior instructor Alan Bush. "You're much less likely to be killed by someone flying down the mountain like a bat out of Hades."

We would not be zipper-lining the bumps like Olympic mogul medalists. The secret for us geezer skiers is to steer down the slope slower than a white Buick in the left lane, descending leisurely from bump to bump.

"You're going to learn to control speed. You're going to learn how to stay in balance. You're going to learn terrain tactics so you know when and where to turn," Nevin promised. "We want to give you a quiver of tools so that you have options."

For the first two days, we wore stubby "skiboard" skis about 3 feet long. The idea was to rip us from bad-habit comfort zones. The final two days, we returned to our normal gear. While the initial training came on mini-moguls that would barely impede a 5-year-old, we were successfully tackling black and double-black trails by class end.

After Bumps for Boomers, my skiing radically changed. The entire mountain was now mine. Black diamonds had become my best friend.

As with most learning endeavors, things get forgotten, especially for folks like me who can't remember where we stashed the ski-rack keys. As a birthday gift to myself, I returned for Nevin's graduate-level, Master of Bumps Academy (MBA). For three days, six of us bump-bashing veterans would remaster moguls under the watchful guidance of Nevin and Bush.

Our first day came on Aspen Mountain, where we did a handful of remedial exercises before gliding down bumps. The second day brought more of the same at Snowmass. By the final day at Aspen Highlands, we were tackling the toughies with aplomb.

Our last run finished, we took a groomer to the base. The slope was crowded, and the snow scraped to ice. Kamikaze skiers and snowboarders flew by like bats out of Hades. How I longed for the safety and solitude of the bumps.

*Dan Leeth is an internationally published writer/photographer whose travels have taken him around the globe. Samples of his work can be found at [LookingForTheWorld.com](http://LookingForTheWorld.com).*

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