

# ACE KVALE skier, climber, photographer

*Ace Kvale slide  
show will be at the  
Cinema Lux at 9 PM*

*Ace Kvale è un gran  
fotografo di  
montagna e  
telemark, la sua  
proiezione di  
diapositive avverrà  
alle 21 presso il  
cinema Lux*

text by NOLEN DAYDA

When I went to visit Ace Kvale at his home in Ophir, a small village tucked away at 3000 in a remote, deep, narrow gorge in the San Juan mountains, Colorado, he and his partner Anne had just returned from successfully summiting Mount Ama Dablam in the Everest Region.

However planning, participating or returning from an expedition of some type, Kvale is full of wondrous stories and enthusiasm. A freestyle competitor-turned ski bum-turned ski model, Kvale is now regarded as a world leader in the photographic fields of skiing, climbing and exotic travel. It's work has appeared in 18 different countries and his list of clients and models reads like the who's who of the industry.

With a treasure chest full of accomplished and fascinating photo jobs it's important to remember that Ace's fruitful career all started when he was young, broke, washing dishes and living the life of a ski bum.

"At the age of 18 I left high school, moved to Steamboat, got a season pass, some really shitty jobs and had a great time. The next winter I moved to Telluride because the mountains were wilder and after spending three winters and summers there I went to Europe. "Hitching from London I ended up in Verbier, Switzerland. With enough money in the bank from pounding nails in Telluride, I didn't really need to get a job, at least not right away. I just wanted to go skiing..

"Not long after arriving, I met Australian skier John Falkiner, who was into skiing all day every day and we became ski buddies and life long friends. That same year we skied for photographer Mark Shapiro and in the following year Powder magazine printed a double page spread of John and I.

"Marko hounded me to come back which began a pattern of spending summers in Telluride as a carpenter and winters in Verbier for almost a dozen years." Ace said.

SX: When did you start photographing ?

Ace Kvale: Well, after a few years of modelling for Marko he asked me, "What are going to do? You can't be a ski bum all your life." At that time I had taken photographs of my journeys to New Zealand, Africa and Nepal. I had a pretty good eye thanks to an art background in high school so I started having my own slide shows which were really successful.

SX: What camera system did you have then?

KVALE: First I had an Olympus system that I sold in Africa because I was broke. With the change I bought a Rollie 35 T. For years I just travelled with the Rollie with its snap out lens and miniature size. It was good because it was completely manual and I had to calculate the speed, f. stops, depth of field and so on, it really helped me learn how cameras work.

SX: Do you still use the Rollie ?

KVALE: Yeah, I've got seven or eight cameras now.

SX: What do you remember as being the turning point in your career ?

KVALE: In 1981 I bought a Nikon body so I could start using Marko's gear. I was starting to get my stuff published in Powder magazine and some other publication and then one day we had this beautiful powder day in Verbier and my camera failed. Soon after that, Marko bought me a Nikon 3 with a motor drive. He gave it to me and said, "OK, you owe me big time" and deducted the price of the camera from money he owed me for ski modelling until finally, after two years, I owned the camera.

SX: So how often do you ski now ?

KVALE: Well, it's pretty sporadic. One year I might ski a lot and the next year not so much. I get different types of jobs and I now have other interests. Skiing is just one of the things that I enjoy, it's one way to be outside, but more than anything I enjoy ski touring, especially in wild new places.

SX: What are the favourite places you've skied ?

KVALE: In resorts, definitely Europe over the states because it's about mountains with lifts on them rather than lifts with cut trails. For touring, I like Asia, Russia and India, because of the wilderness, the sense of the adventure, the great snow and great mountains everywhere and not just the huge Himalaya but also the smaller ranges.

SX: What are the opportunities that your ski photography have led to ?

KVALE: It's lead me out of the ski industry in a way. Skiing became a jumping off point to doing other things. One great ski photographer from Idaho now only shoots cowboys and western life and produces people books - much more artistic than maybe this wasteful fashion industry where our photographs get thrown away periodically. Though photography I've met some great modern day adventurers, not just media people but people who are really doing wild things, like climbing and skiing friends, Pat Morrow and Giorgio Daidola; these guys are into it for the adventure rather than the money. They're real 70th century explorers. It's opened up access to great contacts and people which totally propagates on itself. Also the word class skiers, climbers,



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