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Laura Lieff's 'Wookie Is Not His Real Name' details all

John LaConte
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In 1998, a botched surgery at Vail Valley Medical Center set Wookie on a course that led to him receiving a banned-for-life threat from Vail Resorts in 2014.

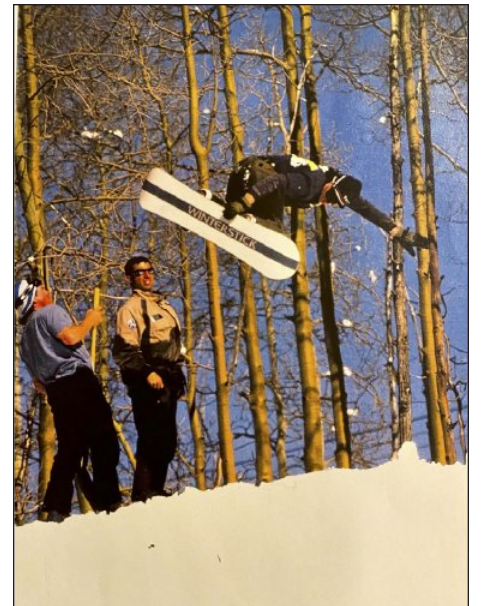
The details of the above statement are so intriguing that there's only a few mediums that can do the tale any justice (and the one you're currently enjoying is not among them.)

Laura Lieff said in choosing to share Wookie's story, she was partial to the most classic form of media, and so she began the long process of publishing a book. Lieff is the daughter of music shop owners and describes herself as an analog media fan living in a digital world. In wanting to publish something to share with Wookie and her son, Fleet Halen Fleming, she said a book has a way of sticking around longer.

Lieff proves herself to be a talented biographer; "Wookie Is Not His Real Name" will make you laugh as you read about Wookie's first encounter with his future business partner at Ride Taxi, Nash Pillsbury. And you might get tears in your eyes when you read about how "out of nowhere" in 2010, Wookie called an old friend for support after his mother died.

As promised in its jacket description, the book is also the origin story of the most notorious invite-only snowboard event in Colorado history, Wookie's now-defunct Log Masters in Beaver Creek.

But it's ultimately a love story, and not in the "I heart log" way that friends of Wookie are probably expecting. Lieff met Wookie when she was barely out of her teenage years and is able to channel the energy of young love in her work. That observation may seem like a bit of a spoiler for those who have yet to read the book (which was just published earlier in March), but it's actually revealed in the dedication, before



JEFF POTTO | SPECIAL TO THE DAILY

Wookie airs out of the Beaver Creek halfpipe during the 1997-98 season. Photo by Jeff Potto, from "Wookie Is Not His Real Name," on sale in stores and online.

the text begins.

"For Fleet — our brave, sweet boy. May he be as creative, clever, inspiring, free-spirited, and adventurous as his father," the dedication reads.

MYSTERY SOLVED

Before publishing "Wookie Is Not His Real Name," Lieff was a career journalist, and in the book we learn that she gave it up to be with him.

At a book signing at The Bookworm in Edwards on Saturday, Lieff said her years working for the Glendale Cherry Creek Chronicle taught her the value of a good profile piece. She said she found all the makings of a great character piece, perhaps the greatest she'll ever encounter, in Wookie's story.

WOOKIE, B3

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Kyle McCafferty, right, his wife, Sarah, and daughter Evelyn, 6, receive a signed copy of "Wookie Is Not His Real Name" at The Bookworm in Edwards on Saturday. McCafferty won the first Log Masters competition in Beaver Creek in 2001 and is featured in the book.

WOKIE

From page B2

The first amazing detail is the big reveal, hinted at in the book's title, the simple fact that Lieff gets to solve a mystery in her book. Many people who know Wookie quite well do not know his real name. That detail in itself adds a great bit of intrigue to the story — how did the person who is perhaps the most well-known local snowboarder in Eagle County develop a nickname that eclipsed his birth name?

But that's a very small detail compared to the story of the Beaver Creek Log Masters competition, an underground event that was one of the main topics of discussion among Eagle County snowboarders every spring for more than a decade.

One of the biggest reveals of Wookie's true birth name came in preparing for that event in 2014, when he received a warning from the U.S. Forest Service after being caught in the act of unsanctioned feature building for Log Masters. Lieff collected the original citation, which contained Wookie's real name, and printed it in her book.

"Organizing unauthorized log masters event," it reads.

Lieff sums up the result succinctly: "The threat of a lifetime ban marked the end of an era."

AN EARNED TURN

Lieff said the hardest part about writing the book was digging up the details of the brief but dark period of Wookie's life from 1998 to 2000, while he was recovering from a broken femur and a botched surgery performed by a physician's assistant, which led to nine more surgeries.

As a result, Wookie was filled with the frustration that comes with being around people who are able to enjoy things that you can't, the complicated tangle of anger toward your dashed dreams and envy of something that can no longer be achieved.

Fathers reading Lieff's book might feel a touch of these same emotions within themselves when they reach the part (spoilers ahead) about Wookie now being a retired Beaver Creek local at 48, able to spend endless hours with his 2-year-old son as a stay-at-home dad.

But after reading the preceding chapters, those dads will likely feel nothing but happiness for Wookie. He earned it.

"Wookie Is Not His Real Name" is on sale at lauralief.com/book and at The Bookworm in Edwards; Fancy Pansy and R Farmers Market in Avon; The Colorado Snowsports Museum in Vail; Transition Sports in Avon; DJ's + Dahlias Cafe Market in Gypsum; ArtSpace Workshop + Gallery in Eagle; Next Page in Frisco; Off the Beaten Path in Steamboat Springs; and Book Grove in Glenwood Springs.



SPECIAL TO THE DAILY

Wookie and Laura Lieff signed a lot of books at The Bookworm on Saturday. "Wookie Is Not His Real Name" is on sale online and in shops.



TOWN OF MINTURN NOTICE

Currently accepting applications for the Planning Commission.

Deadline: Monday, March 29th by 5pm

Application forms are available at minturn.org or at the Town Hall office.

Please submit via mail, email, or in person to: Town of Minturn

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