

RAPID FIRE

SKIING EVERY LINE IN ANDREW MCLEANS *THE CHUTING GALLERY* IS A RARE FEAT. WHILE MOST CHASE IT OVER A LIFETIME, SALT LAKE CITY SKIER MALI NOYES COMPLETED ALL 93 LINES IN SIX WEEKS.

BY MAEVE CALLAHAN

[Left] At the Northern Warfare Training Center in Black Rapids, Alaska, Cold Weather for their first day of ski training.
▣ Army Photo/John Pennell



AS MALI NOYES INCHES HER SKIS FORWARD ON A NARROW RIBBON OF SNOW, SHE SHIVERS DESPITE THE BLAZING SUN.

After 5,000 feet of vertical climbing, a 75-foot drop lingers to her right and a granite cliff face looms above her to the left. The sun works the snow along the rocks into a slush, and she prays that her edges don't lose grip before she's able to clip into the piton just feet ahead.

Noyes's boyfriend and ski partner, Spencer Harkins, is already tied into the anchor point, rope in hand. When Noyes reaches him, she releases the breath she's been holding. Harkins retrieves his radio to signal to the rest of their party that they've both made it to the checkpoint. Heartened, Noyes stows her poles into the snow and reaches down to retrieve her carabiner from her harness, but before she can clip into the anchor, an ominous, crackling noise comes from above. In the milliseconds before the avalanche hits, Noyes grabs the rope and Harkins grabs her, clinging to her pack straps to keep her from being carried away.

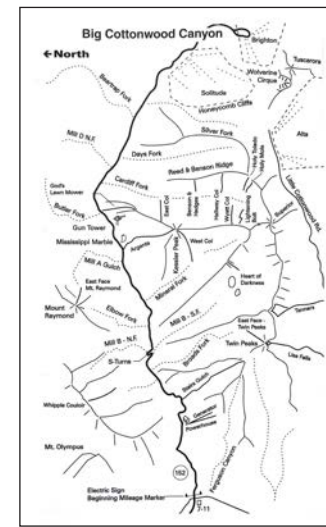
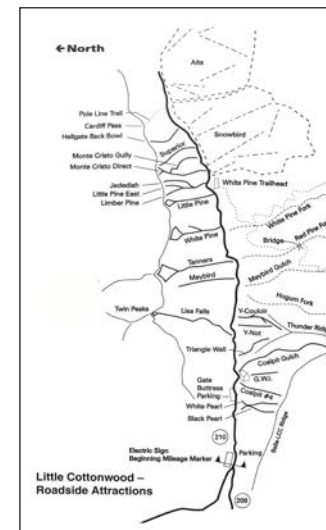
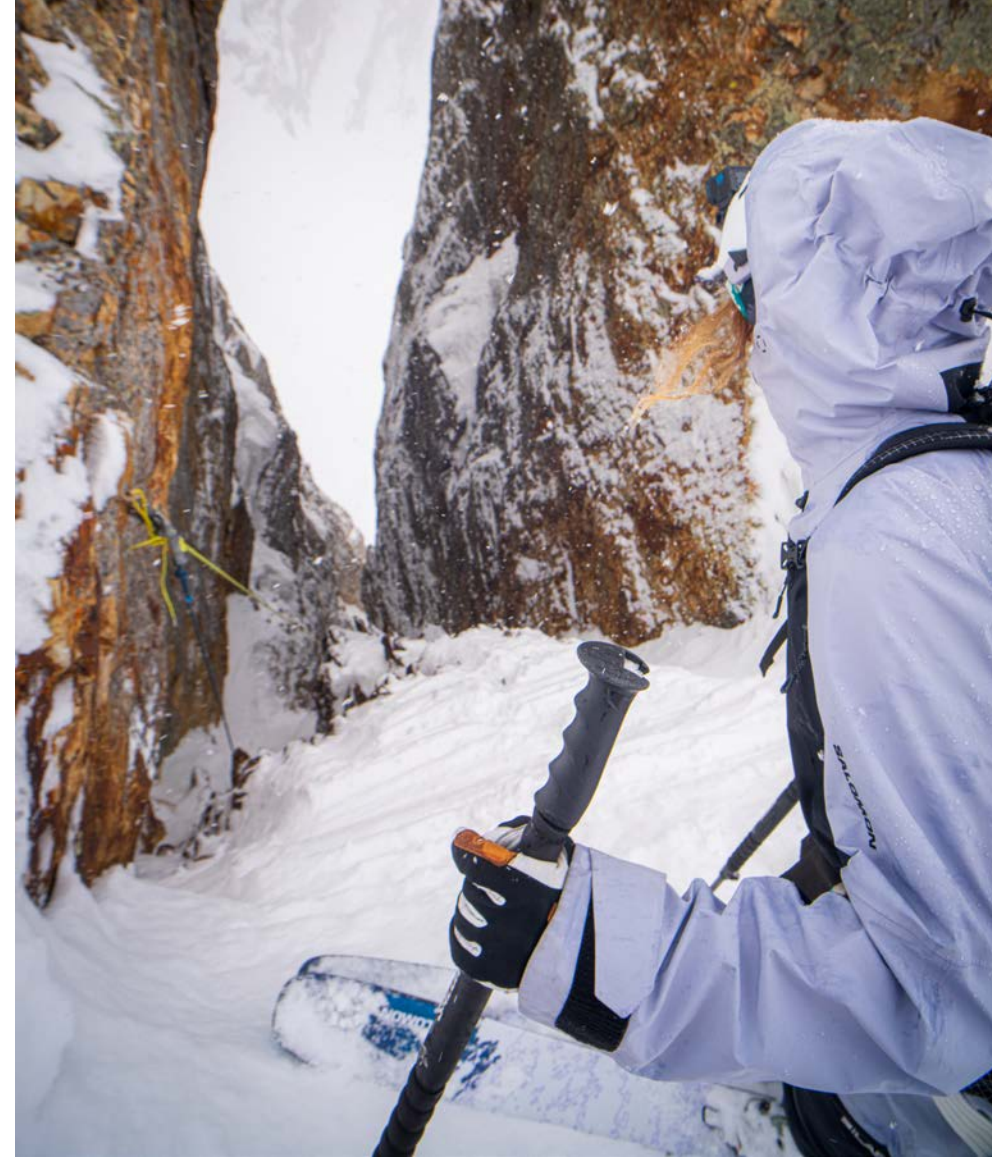
If the slide had hit 10 seconds earlier, Noyes says she would have likely been swept off the mountain. In the midst of a rush of adrenaline, Noyes managed to clip into the anchor before safely completing her descent of Montgomery Chute.

That was Noyes's 25th day skiing classic lines above her home in Salt Lake City as part of project Rapid Fire, a mission to become

the fastest person ever to complete all 93 lines in Andrew McLean's iconic 1998 Wasatch guidebook, *The Chuting Gallery*.

GOING FAST HAS been woven into Noyes' identity since she was a little kid competing in Nordic skiing out of Sun Valley, Idaho. She continued the pursuit at the college level on the University of Utah's cross-country ski team. After graduation, she decided to switch her tune to alpine skiing. That same drive led her to qualify for the Freeride World Tour, opening doors to sponsorships and the world of professional skiing. With her Nordic background, it's no wonder that massive backcountry linkups have become a focus of her career, including a ski traverse of the 32-mile Wasatch Ultimate Ridge Linkup (WURL) in 2020.

"I get to see on a daily basis the amount that Mali puts into everything she does," says Harkins. That effort doesn't end with skiing. Noyes works as a part-time oncology nurse at the Huntsman Cancer Institute and is an avid trail runner in the summer. She's even completed the WURL in the warmer months as well. While she says there wasn't necessarily one moment that she decided to break *The Chuting Gallery* speed record, it was a natural progression in her endurance-based pursuits.



Widely known amongst skiers in Utah and beyond, *The Chuting Gallery* is more akin to a ski bible than a mere guidebook. At first, McLean only intended to distribute the book as a flimsily stapled set of printer pages amongst a small circle of skiers. However, as he continued to explore the range in its near entirety over the course of five years, the list became more serious, and so too did its format and audience.

Those who have managed to ski all the chutes within *The Chuting Gallery* are known by McLean as "Survivors." In 2008, backcountry skier Noah Howell became the first to ski all 93 sadistic lines, besides McLean himself, after 13 years of work. In June 2023, Mark Hammond completed every line in just 5 months, taking the mantle as the fastest to check off the book front to back.

Throughout Noyes' exhausting six-and-a-half-week Rapid Fire push, the thing that got her out of bed and through the grind of completing each day was her own internal ambition. And yet, Harkins says, she brought a sense of levity to the process that makes the effort appear almost invisible to outsiders. "It's a funny juxtaposition of how much fun and lighthearted this can be, while still being an insane effort. I wonder if it would almost take you

away from how hard the effort is because of how much fun she's having," he says.

Despite the intensity of her drive, Noyes doesn't claim to be an inherently risky skier. "Contrary to what people might think, given what I've skied and accomplished, I'm a pretty conservative skier. I take it pretty seriously," she says, adding that she's invested in snow, avalanche and ski mountaineering education, which has been put to the test in some of North America's biggest ranges.

But the rapidly warming spring snow combined with an unforgiving schedule of big linkups, midnight starts, bad weather and weak snowpacks created a mounting sense of pressure that weighed on her usually unflappable outlook. Add in a series of close calls and the effect would have sent many weather-hardened pro skiers into a tailspin.

"I had this stint of having three close calls in four days," says Noyes. After the avalanche on Montgomery, her mental fortitude started to crack.

While Noyes's toolbox of backcountry skills gave her the ability to confidently ski in consequential terrain, she found herself struggling to trust her abilities. As Noyes put it, "All my tools fell out of my toolbox." >>

[Opening Spread] A pair of soldiers sets out on skis during winter training in Colorado's Yampa Valley. Courtesy DPS

[Left] At the Northern Warfare Training Center in Black Rapids, Alaska, Cold Weather for their first day of ski training. Army Photo/John Pennell

[Right] Training specialist Steven Decker and Army Staff Sergeant Brian Bailey survey a route from Denali's Kahiltna Glacier base camp before setting out on skis. Army Photo/Matthew Winstead



[Opening Spread] A pair of soldiers sets out on skis during winter training in Colorado's Yampa Valley.  **Courtesy DPS**

[Opening Spread] A pair of soldiers sets out on skis during winter training in Colorado's Yampa Valley.  **Army Photo/John Pennell**

[Left] At the Northern Warfare Training Center in Black Rapids, Alaska, Cold Weather for their first day of ski training.  **Army Photo/John Pennell**

[Right] Training specialist Steven Decker and Army Staff Sergeant Brian a Glacier base camp before setting out on skis.  **Army Photo/Matthew Winstead**

“The biggest challenge with these projects isn’t the physical challenge, it isn’t just the risk and danger, even though those things are really, really hard,” says professional skier Cody Townsend. “It’s truly the mental challenge of it, and it’s something you cannot prepare for and can’t even understand until you go through it.”

Townsend, who became Noyes’s mentor after they met as members of Salomon’s Freeski Team in 2020, is no stranger to the pressures and challenges of skiing a tick list after his own attempt to complete each of the lines in *The Fifty Classic Ski Descents of North America*. “I came into Utah after she had a pretty scary moment in the mountains,” says Townsend, who skied Lone Peak and the Grunge Couloir with Noyes the day after the Montgomery incident. “Having gone through those experiences, I was able to relate and just, not coach her through anything, but just relate to her. I think just being able to have someone to talk to was pretty important.”

Townsend was just one member of a larger community supporting Noyes. The project started when Greg Hill told her to “dream big” while Noyes and Harkins were skiing with him around Revelstoke. Over the 47 days, 25 different ski partners joined her. Some, like Harkins, live locally. Others, like Townsend, traveled in to support the project.

Kiwi Sam Smoothy flew across the globe to join Noyes for the infamously sketchy Ciochetti’s Ribbon. The incredibly narrow, barely navigable strip of snow stretches 600 feet across a chossy face before connecting with the Devil’s Castle Couloir. When Noyes began to get caught up in the idea of falling, Smoothy coached her through it. “Smoothy was like, ‘Stay in your bubble, you’re good at this, just keep moving through it.’ And I’m like, this is a weird sense of fun, like a high adrenaline thing. It was pretty fun actually,” says Noyes.

“The biggest picture from talking to everyone is everyone knew this feeling I was going through, and they had all moved through it,” reflects Noyes.

“Taking some time to ski some chiller lines, I recovered and eventually started putting tools back in my toolbox.”

ON APRIL 27, 2025, Noyes’s hard work finally paid off. Over 200,000 vertical feet and 93 of the steepest chutes in the Wasatch with only eight rest days throughout, mostly for storms and dangerous weather. In just 47 days, Noyes ticked off every line, becoming the fastest person to complete *The Chuting Gallery* to date.

When asked about how she’s recovered from such an undertaking, Noyes paused for a moment. “It took me a long time,” she said, “but yeah, I’m feeling like myself again. I’m back to sleeping and eating normally.”

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With that recovery, she’s also had time to reflect on what the achievement means. Throughout her career, Noyes, like many female athletes, never wanted her gender to define her performance as a professional skier, especially next to her male peers. She wants to be known for her record as the fastest person to ski *The Chuting Gallery*, not as the fastest woman.

However, Noyes did feel like a larger purpose of her project was to contribute towards closing the gender gap that exists in professional skiing and increase visible representation of female ski athletes.

“I did have a ‘why’ that was bigger than me, and that’s what’s cool. I got to be not just the fastest female. I think that women are so capable, we just lack the confidence, and we lack the representation to show us that we can do it,” says Noyes, who names Emily Harrington, Hilaree Nelson and Janelle Smiley as some of the women who have inspired her own journey. “If the media is getting more eyes on and representation for little girls to see you can be a female out there charging harder than the guys, then it has such a strong purpose.”

Noyes has no plans of slowing down. She’s currently releasing a web series, “Rapid Fire,” documenting her speed record. This winter, she signed with DPS skis and plans to take her efforts beyond Utah and into the mountains of British Columbia, where she wants to explore a path less traveled—or written about—while filming a “Rapid Fire” season two. “I’m done following a guidebook,” Noyes writes over email. “This winter will be about looking outside the guidebook but still doing big linkups and back to back to back big days.” ❄