

Snowboarding pioneer Tom Sims leaves lasting legacy

By Pat Bridges, Snowboarder

On Sept. 12, snowboarding pioneer Tom Sims passed away after suffering a heart attack. Tom's legacy looms large for anyone who has ever aspired to achieve a sideways descent down snow-covered slopes.

Born Dec. 6, 1950, in Haddon Field, N.J., Tom has often relayed the story of how he conceived of and created the first snowboard while only 13 years old in his junior high school woodshop class.

After traveling to the West Coast, Tom was introduced to surfing and skateboarding and eventually relocated to California and became immersed in what is today known as the action sports lifestyle, going on to create Sims Skateboards and sponsoring Lester Kasai, Jeff Phillips, and Christian Hosoi.

During the early 1980s as the founder of Sims Snowboards, Tom took the initiative of lobbying an apprehensive ski community to allow snowboarders on their hallowed slopes. Given the litigious paranoia of the era, this was no easy task.

Due to the diligence of Tom Sims, Jake Burton, and others, one-by-one, ski resorts began to accept the fledgling sport. According to an interview Tom gave in 1995, "The world has woken up and realized that the best way and most enjoyable way down a mountain is on a snowboard. Prior to 1985, I had to beg a ski area owner to let me on their precious chairlifts. The same guy that kicked me off the hill 10 years ago now begs me for a board for his grandson."

In addition to his innovative snowboard equipment designs,

which include the first kick tails, pro models, women's specific decks, and folding highbacks, Tom Sims created the world's first halfpipe of snow at Soda Springs ski area in Lake Tahoe, was featured riding in the opening of the 1985 James Bond film "A View To A Kill," earned national and world downhill championship titles, and founded one of the most iconic snowboard brands of all time which sponsored influential riders including Terry Kidwell, Shaun Palmer, Chris Roach, Noah Salasnek, Tara Dakides, Marc Frank Montoya, John Jackson, Craig Kelly, Tina Basich, Shannon Dunn, Kurt Wastell, Todd Richards, and an unending list of other notable pro snowboarders.

Nearly five decades after first testing his invention, Tom Sims continued to be an avid snowboarder and the virtues he brought to our sport still ring true. According to Sims, "Riding, just pure riding, is what snowboarding is all about."