



Tom Sims, 1950–2012

A life of passion and progression

As snowboarders, we are defined not by the deck strapped to our feet, but by the lives we live. Whether trekking to the mountains in search of snow, sleeping on floors to save cash for lift tickets, or sharing a chairlift with friends, our lives as snowboarders transcend the turns we make. We have Tom Sims to thank for much of this.

In 1963 Sims crafted his first snowboard in junior high during his woodshop class. While his teacher likely pondered the strange board, Sims dreamed about finding the same stoke on the snow that he cherished in skating. Little did he know that he was not just creating a new board, but also a new culture—one that would be driven by passion, style, and substance.

Sims worked relentlessly to share snowboarding with the world. His passion became our own. Yet as snowboarding evolved, we often took his contributions and accomplishments for granted. We are in debt to Sims for snowboarding's freestyle roots, for crafting exceptional boards that fueled progression, for lobbying ski areas to allow snowboarding, for creating the first snow halfpipe, for assembling one of snowboarding's finest pro teams, for helping pioneer metal edges and highback bindings, for developing snowboarding's first pro model, and for making James Bond a snowboarder. These are just a few examples of the gifts Sims gave snowboarding. His contributions to skating were equally impressive. Yet those fortunate enough to know him emphasize that his greatest gifts were the friendship and enthusiasm he shared so willingly. Sims' life was much too short, but his legacy will forever endure. Thanks, Tom Sims, for enriching our lives and making us smile.

—Michael Sudmeier.
Pioneering snowboarder
Tom Sims passed away
September 12, 2012,
from cardiac arrest.
He was 61.



Legends on Sims' Life and Legacy

"Tom Sims had an energy that was different from anyone else's. He had a style that was different than anyone else. Sometimes that energy created great visions that morphed into reality, and you can still see the results through the Sims videos and old ads. But it wasn't only about marketing and selling his brand for profit and glory, it was about selling his passion for something to the world. It is obvious to anyone who looks at Tom's long list of achievements that he was always the real deal and full of passion."

—Bob Klein, rider, instructor, retail owner, brand manager, and agent

"I will never believe Tom Sims invented snowboarding, I will always believe that he invented the snowboarder. This is the essence of what he was about. Tom Sims was a true pioneer."

—Brad Steward, snowboard pioneer; founder, Bonfire Snowboarding

"Snowboarding wouldn't be where it is today without Tom, and I have so much respect for what he brought to the sport. In the early days, we pushed each other at competitions, on product development, and with team rider sponsorships. It's no secret that Tom and I had our differences, but that is what snowboarding is all about—different styles, different approaches, different directions. When I look back on it now, I think the Burton/Sims rivalry helped the sport develop so fast, and I'm forever grateful to Tom for inspiring us to innovate. I hope he's getting some incredible pow turns wherever he's at now."

—Jake Burton, founder and CEO, Burton Snowboards

"Tom Sims is the Jimi Hendrix of snowboarding. He transformed an obscure snow-surfing tribe ridiculed by skiers and the media into a mainstream sport by being such a force of nature driven by his ever-inquisitive personality, sheer will power, electric energy, passion, devotion, technique, skill, grace, charm, humor, and, most of all, ultra-smooth style."

—Kevin Kinnear, founding editor, TransWorld SNOWboarding

"I think people have the impression that Tom was a guy that was all about getting rich off of snowboarding, but really the sport got rich off of Tom. He put his heart and soul into the sport."

—Jeff Grell, snowboarding visionary and inventor of the highback binding

"He was one of the most natural competitors I've ever met in my entire life. That guy's best always came out under the pressure of competition. I think that was one of Tom's strongest points. Most of us crumble under the kind of competition he thrived on."

—Dave Weaver, former Sims team rider and employee

"He was just all about passion—whether it was for himself and having the funnest powder day in the world or his passion just to see other people stoked to snowboard."

—Terry Kidwell, former Sims team rider

"Tom lived a spirited and charmed life. He was a visionary whose surf lifestyle set the tone but not the rhythm. He is the original action sports legend—skate, surf, and snow."

—Bud Fawcett, snowboard photographer; founder, History of Snowboarding

"Tom had that something special when it came to just being ahead of what would happen in the future. . . . Those of us who were close to him knew a very open, funny guy with a good heart."

—Chuck Barfoot, founder, Barfoot Snowboards