

Shaun (Shaggy) Kratzer
18th August 1976 – 7th February 2007
Photographer - “Adventurer”

Hundreds of emails flooded in from all over the world to pay tribute to Shaun Kratzer, ‘Shaggy’ to his friends, who tragically lost his life on a sunny afternoon on Wednesday the 7th February 2007 on the slopes of Mt. Apharwat, Western Himalayas, at Gulmarg, Kashmir, India. Shaun was swept away and buried by an avalanche whilst pursuing one of his many hobbies: - high altitude skiing.

Although being found relatively quickly and despite frantic efforts by his rescuers that included an English doctor and a Swedish nurse, Shaun could not be revived.

As awe-inspiring and majestic that mountains are, they can also be cruel and merciless.

A tribute posted by one of Shaun’s friends in particular, summed up the feeling of the entire skiing and rock climbing community from around the globe:-

“A tribute to the life of Shaun Kratzer

If you think you are adventurous, if you think you are diverse, if you think you are infectious, if you think you are well-travelled, if you think you love the outdoors, you only need learn about Shaun's life to find where you fall short.

Telemark Skier, Rock climber, Mountaineer, Kayaker, Biker, Cyclist, Pilot, Rally Driver, Sailor, Adventurer. Photographer, Ski Technician, Retail Manager, Arborist, Ski Instructor, Publican, Nightclub Manager, Builder, Entrepreneur....

This list of his pursuits and professions only falls short as I cannot possibly remember them all, and at age 30 it was surely far from completion. Every time I spoke with Shaun, I found out something new. I learned of a past accomplishment that I would only dare dream of. He inspired some of my own adventures, however vastly diluted.

His intelligence would dwarf most graduates, engineers and mechanics would marvel at his skills with his hands. In the academic or corporate world, he could have chosen any path and pursued it with great success. Instead he chose the outdoors.

It is fitting that he is being remembered as an adventurer, as this is what he devoted his life to. Whilst he succeeded in many fields, his mind was always on the

next mountain, the next river, the next sunset. Each period of his working life was devoted to funding the next trip. Camera, skis, ropes, harness or ice axe in hand, off he would go.

Then he would return, with the huge cheesy grin and evil chuckle as he recounted tales that fascinate, bewilder and shock us mere mortals. The grin and chuckle were infectious, he was impossible not to like.

To remember Shaun is to remember his love of life. He will leave a lasting legacy at Mt Buller, Mt Arapiles and the many, many other mountains that have been graced by his presence. The last mountain range to have this honour is the largest of all, the Himalayas. It was on these mighty slopes that he finally found his match. While many die a slow death in an office, he truly lived until his final moments.

Whilst it was altogether not long enough, I am far, far richer for having known you.”

Richard

On that fateful day, after a late start and after having gone back to retrieve his emergency beacon from his hotel room, Shaun skied over the edge of an unstable section and triggered an avalanche that swept him away. The avalanche was right in the middle of the popular ski field and other skiers had crossed it only moments before. The local authorities have honoured Shaun with naming the fatal area “Shaggy’s Face”, establishing perhaps for the first time a part of the Himalayas named after an Australian.

At Mt. Arapiles, where Shaun was known as “The Mayor of the Pines”, a particular climb had already been named in good humour (of which Shaun had plenty), “Shaggy’s Route”.

Shaun was born in Melbourne, Australia and educated at Carey Grammar and Geelong Grammar. Shaun spent his 9th school year at Geelong Grammar’s campus at Mt. Timbertop in 1991 which ignited his passion for mountains, photography, sailing and skiing and the great outdoors, although perhaps it was already in his genes.

Shaun had little patience for academia and soon realised that this was not his calling. Shaun successfully overcame a number of health hurdles and he was colour blind, which did not deter him from photography and pursuing his passions of the day: he learnt to fly light aircraft amongst many skills and particularly loved his sailing and skiing from an early age. Shaun could turn his hand to anything that came along, whether that was building a computer or building a house or building a boat.

Ever the perfectionist, Shaun never accepted anything at face value - it had to be investigated and improved upon if only possible. Not driven by the pursuit of financial gain, he would rather turn his talent to conquer any challenge thrown across his path.

In his mind you would not buy a kayak, but you build your own- only better- that was his way to go!

At the same time though, he would never fail to help a friend in need.

Shaun packed several lifetimes of experience into his life cut short so tragically. Shaun has touched so many people in a positive way and did so much in his 30 years.

He did all the things that he wanted to do – *and more*.

And that philosophy surely was the right one for him.

Vale Shaun

Rest in Peace

Forever in our hearts