

words/images Dan Kostrzewski

In every rider's past is someone who gave the gift of snowboarding. Someone who first lent you some gear, got you up to the hill, or showed you how to turn. Often, it's the same person who pushed you to do your first big gap, moved with you to bigger mountains and convinced you countless times to hike for one last run. In turn, we pass the same stoke along, and the collective effort helps nurture a family tree that winds its way through our local scenes.

While the natural drift of life trends away from our riding roots, original snowboarding tribes will always share a bond. So when unexpected death steals away part of this circle, the impact reverberates. A group of Boise locals experienced this harsh reality when their friend, Carson Ianson, went to sleep and didn't wake up while traveling in Thailand. Rather than mourn in silence, however, they resolved to pay him homage by throwing a home-grown quarterpipe classic at their secret summer riding spot.

The Carson Ianson Quarterpipe Classic did not disappoint. Tucked into the hills between McCall and Boise, and somewhere north of 8,000 feet, the weekend's venue was wordlessly spectacular. From the ridge's crest which hosted the contest, views stretched across lush mountain valleys on both sides with the remote peaks of the Sawtooths visible on the eastern horizon. The area held tons of summer snow, which allowed contest organizer Corey McDonald and his volunteer crew of Bogus Basin park shapers to carve out a 20-foot high quarterpipe, and craft an "Erector Set" style start ramp.

McDonald, who was first convinced to try snowboarding by Ianson, explained the location's significance: "It's the kind of thing we'd thought about for years. We'd always go up there and snowboard in the springtime. It was such an accessible spot to build something, even without having lifts, we thought we could have a contest there. And then Carson threw my bachelor party up there: we camped out, snowboarded for three days and then thought 'this is super fun, we should do a contest.' And every year we'd try to do one, and people would get burnt out or move to Hood for the summer, so it just didn't happen. Then Carson died last year, and I just thought we needed to get it done. Just do it in his memory."

The key to the location was Snowbank Mountain's government radar installation that warranted a plowed out and perfectly graded gravel road all the way to the summit ridge. Reaping a return for tax-dollars well spent, it was an easy five-minute drive from the weekend's secluded cowboy campground to the ridge parking lot. Then, after booting up, a short 400-step slog took participants and spectators down the ridge to the contest venue.

Three days of painstaking work in 90-degree heat eventually brought shape to the quarterpipe. Every effort, from hauling in 20-pound bags of salt and two-by-fours, to building up the start ramp bucket-by-bucket, was undertaken collectively. But Corey explained this was not abnormal, "It's kind of a struggle at our mountain to do things, and so everyone builds jumps together. It's really a positive vibe, everyone just helps out. The day of the contest all I did was set up a book and a can, and make a sign that said 'Put your names here.'"

Corey also remarked that generosity was pervasive, "People were just volunteering things, just donating stuff." He praised two local shops, Newt and Harold's and the Boardroom, and the local Ride rep, for unexpectedly donating prizes for the weekend. Corey also detailed the artistic effort expended to create custom prizes for the top three finishers. These custom-made medals were meticulously polished by a friend from Brooklyn,

and a local glass-art studio, Zion Mountain Glass, created a hand-blown trophy for first prize.

Word of the event had spread through the Boise riding community and a diverse collection of locals and far-flung transplants filtered up to the ridge on the scheduled Saturday. Competitors arrived for the sunset contest almost eight hours before estimated sundown to session the quarter and the surrounding road-shot terrain. Out of the 50, or so people who congregated at the remote location, 25 plunked down five dollars each for a chance at local fame and glory.

The ensuing session lasted over five hours, with riders of every age, ability and style patiently taking turns dropping from the sketchy start ramp and milking the slightly sticky tranny. Canned beer flowed freely, a pirate flag flapped in the light breeze, and skin crisped in the sun. Snowskate drop-ins and sled tow-ins punctuated the fun-focused day. Big air was had, the sun eventually slipped behind the ridge and tiki torches were lit for extra ambiance. Before anyone really noticed it had started, the contest was over. Prior to the night's conclusion, a selection of competitors and spectators was polled by the quarterpipe crew to settle on the day's champion.

Corey summarized the day's events, "It wasn't just people non-stop hitting this jump. There was a line of people patiently watching, and a line of people waiting almost half an hour to hit the quarterpipe, quietly just hanging out. Everybody was just so stoked to be there." He continued, "It was like throwing a contest just as an excuse to get people together at a certain spot. To enjoy company and enjoy what we all used to do together."

At 10 p.m., most of the crowd began filtering back toward camp to de-boot, refuel and gear up for the evening's festivities. The rest of the night included a spontaneous and unfortunate truck wreck, a campfire awards presentation, a good deal of revelry, and a succession of DJs that rocked the Boise National Forest until five in the morning. Ryan Siegrist finished a respectable third, Boise snowboard pioneer Jeff Tulloch took second and, without any disagreement, the contest organizer who had worked so hard to make the weekend happen, took home the trophy until next year.

But the image that remained in the minds of most from this roots weekend, was that of the full moon rising, and the light all but gone, a small group of riders silhouetted themselves against a dusky blue sky. Paying respect to the past and extending a new riding memory, they refused to call it an evening. Dropping in, one by one, they continued to celebrate this perfect Idaho summer night in the spirit of a fallen friend. ▲

