

Craig Kelly

Born April Fool's Day in 1966, Craig Elmer Kelly grew up in Mt. Vernon , WA , a rural agricultural valley near Mt. Baker . With his father the owner of a local moving company. Craig Kelly grew up like any other kid in the area, and like several of his friends, dove into snowboarding in the early days of this culture. Riding Mt. Baker in the early 1980s as it was beginning to become an epicenter for snowboarding with friends like Carter Turk, Dan Donnelly, Eric Janko and Jeff Fulton, the crew formed an informal group which came to be known as the Mt. Baker HardCore (MBHC). Showing an early hint of his later snowboard prowess as a national level BMX racer, Craig made the competitive switch and was soon tearing up races and freestyle snowboard events across the N. America . While simultaneously pursuing an honors degree in Chemical Engineering at the University of Washington he began to train at nearby Hyak Ski Area.

Shortly after making a name for himself on the contest circuit, Craig signed a contract with Burton snowboards and with financial backing in place, went on a N. American tour of ski resorts in an effort to open the sport to spots where it still remained banned. His late 80s and early 90s contest record was simply dominating, winning four World Championships, three U.S. Open championships and three Mt. Baker Banked Slalom wins -- no one else maintained this kind of consistency in this era. He formed one of the first summer snowboard camps at Blackcomb, BC in 1988 and, perhaps more than anyone at this time, helped guide the sport forward towards a larger acceptance and widespread interest. As the sport began to explode in the 1990's and European ski associations began to take over the competitive bodies, Craig abruptly walked away from the scene, choosing to focus on travel, filming, product development and eventually, backcountry excursions. Craig came to embody the true spirit of freeriding, pushing the equipment, technique, and appreciation of off piste riding like no one had.

He took an amazing trip in 2001 from Alaska to the tip of Patagonia in a Ford van with his partner Savina and friends Brett and Patty Livingston. While on the journey Craig and Savina's daughter Olivia was born in Chile. Upon return, he settled in Nelson, B.C. with the intention of becoming snowboarding's first fully certified backcountry guide. On January 20th 2003, while training as a guide in the mountains of interior B.C. Craig was killed along with six others in an avalanche on a slope that had not slid for decades. The snowboard community was stunned by the loss, but today recognizes the immense contribution that Craig Kelly made to the sport and culture of snowboarding. His influence can be seen today in the fact that nearly every resort in North America allows snowboarding and its competitions have attained Olympic and international recognition. As well, other snowboarders have since gone on to become fully certified backcountry guides, following, literally, in his tracks.