

Jim Norman Jack: 1965-2012

Contributed by The Editors

On Sunday, February 19, 2012, the world lost a visionary, iconic leader, whose kind-hearted, free-spirited demeanor helped guide the sport of freeskiing to where it's recognized today.
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We at Backcountry Magazine send our condolences to the family and friends of Jim Jack, as well as those close to Chris Rudolph, John Brenan and Karl Milanoski. The four men perished in avalanches on Sunday. This obituary of Jim Jack comes to us from the International Freeskiers Association.

On Sunday, February 19, 2012, the world lost a visionary, iconic leader, whose kind-hearted, free-spirited demeanor helped guide the sport of freeskiing to where it's recognized today.

Jim Norman Jack, the former International Freeskiers Association (IFSA) President, and current head judge for the IFSA, Freeskiing World Tour (FWT), and Junior Freeskiing World Tour (JFT), was tragically killed in an avalanche in the backcountry just outside the Washington ski resort of Stevens Pass. Victim's lives that were also claimed by this accident were the Marketing Director of Stevens Pass, Chris Rudolph, and Johnny Brenan, a local to the ski resort.

This accident has sent shockwaves throughout the freeskiing community and mainstream media, and has skiing publications like Powder Magazine claiming, "Tragedy Hits Ski World Again." In the past few years, the freeskiing industry has suffered great loss, from XGames gold medalists, to Big Mountain champions. Now the loss of groundbreaking individuals whose involvement in the sport has guided freeskiing to an international platform, has left an enormous scar in the industry.

After competing for many years in freeskiing events, Jack turned to judging the sport he was so passionate of, and also was nominated to be President of the International Freeskiers Association (IFSA); a governing body for the sport of freeskiing established by freeskiing pioneer, the late Shane McConkey. In recent years Jack was hugely involved in the development of the Junior Freeskiing Tour (JFT) and helped guide, safely develop criteria and standards, and mentor the junior athletes in the sport.

"It was hard to hear especially as someone as inspirational as Jim Jack who basically started what we're doing today." stated JFT competitor Riley Rose in an interview with Salt Lake City, Utah's ABC Channel 4. "The reason why I wake up and go skiing is because of Jim Jack. He was the epitome of big mountain skiing. He is what we are today." continued his brother Casey Rose.

According to reports, twelve individuals, properly prepared with equipment, traveled into the backcountry and were directly involved in the avalanche. Of those twelve involved, was professional freeskier, and former Freeride World Tour Champion, Elyse Saugstad, that stated her survival was due to the usage of an avalanche airbag system, which after deployment kept her upper body above the slide. The remaining skiers caught in the avalanche were located through the usage of an avalanche beacon search and attempts were made to resuscitate the victims.

In the 24 hours leading up to the avalanche, snow reports stated 26 inches had fallen. The Northwest Weather and Avalanche Center reported the avalanche danger to be "considerable to high."

Jim Norman Jack, was 46 years old and lived in Leavenworth, Washington with his life partner Tiffany Abraham. He is survived by his loving parents, Barbara and Norman Jack, his brother and sister in law Jay Jack (Nan), sister and brother in law Jodi Simmons (Chris), niece Ciera, and nephews Sean and Travis.

Memorial funds have been established to aid in relief in this tragedy. To donate please visit the following link:

Jim Norm Jack Give Forward GiveForward.com/JimNormJack.

Or you can donate through an account established at Wells Fargo:

Jim Jack Memorial Donation Account

Wells Fargo

Account #: 9247189252

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