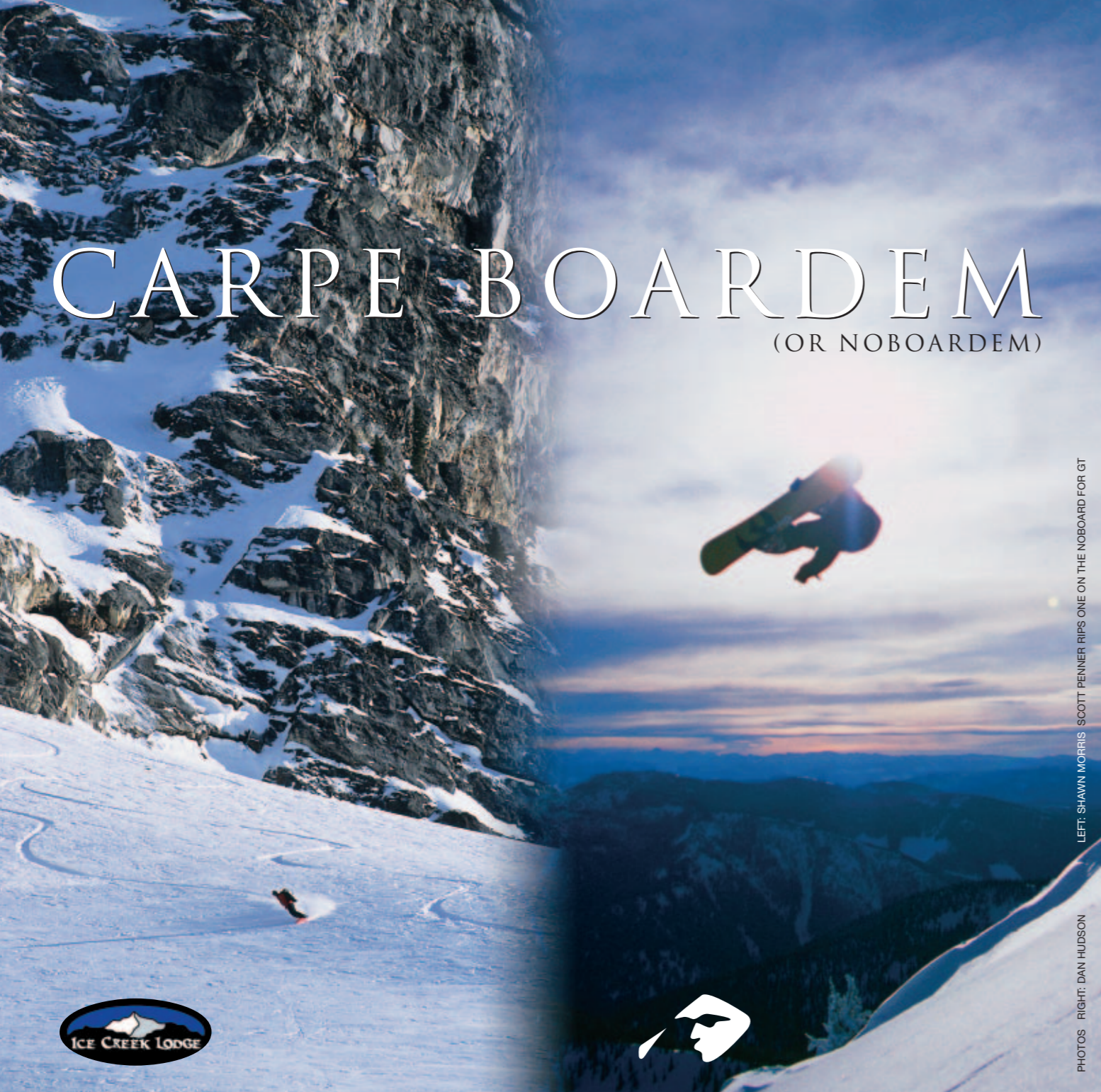


CARPE BOARDER

(OR NOBOARDER)



LEFT: SHAWN MORRIS SCOTT PENNER RIPS ONE ON THE NOBOARD FOR GT

PHOTOS RIGHT: DAN HUDSON

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NOBOARDING

How a band of Revelstoke powder lovers created a sport all their own

By Spencer Francey



Tribute to a fallen founder: Greg Todds (GT), 1971–2005.

The snow is so deep I can hardly move. Post-holing in powder up to my thighs, I swim, with board in hand, to the crest of a perfect tree run. Hustling to be the first to hit it, I drop my board and pack down a spot to get ready. Bottomless, dry snow fills in around me with every move. It's the scene everyone knows—and lives for—on the powder day. I hurriedly clean out my bindings and brush the snow off the nose and tail of my board. When I look up to choose my line, I see smoke-cloaked shadows disappearing through the trees. What? I'm the last to go? Contrails and hollers left by my comrades are the only evidence I'm with friends. Why am I left alone strapping in? Maybe it's because I'm the only one with bindings.

A few years back I get a call from some friends near Revelstoke, BC. "You have to come down here and see the lines Greg is riding," they tell me. I hear stories of crazy pillow lines, cliff drops and fast, fluid descents down big alpine faces. At first, I am surprised by their

enthusiasm. Their descriptions sound like standard fare for our snowboarding brethren. Then I learn Greg Todds, an internationally-known snowboarder based in Revelstoke, is doing it all without bindings. I get interested. Today, deep in some of the world's wildest mountains, inspired by the bravery and imagination of Todds, there's a group of riders dropping rowdy terrain on boards without bindings. They've shed the physical attachments of traditional snowboarding to get back to the basics of the sport. They are the world's first noboarders.

Greg Todds and fellow Revelstoke local, Cholo Burns, are the forefathers of one of the newest movements in alpine riding. Together, the two have re-birthed the art of snowboarding by removing one of its most integral components. Noboarding is an evolution of snurfing, snowboarding's original predecessor. A surfboard-meets-waterski bindingless board where the user holds onto a rope attached to the

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From left to right: Cholo Burns prepares to ignite; Greg Todds (GT) hand on rope, no feet in bindings; GT raising the bar by the vertical foot; Lis Harris shows noboard don't mean no girl; Skye Sheele unleashed. Photos by Spencer Francey.



IN A MOMENT OF DIVINE INTERVENTION, OFF CAME THE BINDINGS AND THE TRIAL AND

nose, snurfing made its debut between 1969 and 1974, inspiring snowboard guru Jake Burton, and in turn, the sport of snowboarding itself.

Noboarding, however, is a sport all its own. Between the two co-founders and the host of riders that have made the switch, there's a deep commitment to progression. They're building and designing boards, refining technique and pushing the limits of what noboarders can do—all without the interface of being attached to the board. "We needed to rekindle the passion of living in the mountains," says Todds, describing some of his first inspirations for the noboard, "a new challenge to keep things exciting and evolving. You can sling your board over your back and carry it like a guitar too!"

In the late nineties, Greg Todds—a longtime snowboarder whose contributions to the sport include the invention of the Superpipe—began to bore with snowboarding down the powdery Selkirk silk in his backyard. He yearned for something new and fresh. In a moment of divine intervention, off came the bindings and the trial and error of noboarding began. At first, cut-up plastic and wooden grip pads were affixed to the board with drywall screws. It quickly graduated once Greg's friend, Cholo Burns, an entrepreneur and avid boarder himself, became intoxicated by the noboard movement. Together, the two brainstormed designs for a mould and took it to a production level.

Today, the noboard is a regular snowboard deck with an average height of 157

centimetres. It comes affixed with a large rubber pad that covers the area where bindings would be. Knobby little grips protrude from the pad for traction, while an elastic rope connected just in front of the lead foot and behind the back foot is incorporated for balance. It's what noboarders call, "the rope."

My skepticism of the concept is blown away the minute I watch Todds and Cholo ride everything a regular snowboarder would: technical lines, big cliffs and fast, powerful turns in untracked snow. About to drop into a steep bowl for the first noboard run of my life, Todds gives me some advice: "Just go with it," he says, "and drop the rope. It's the only way." It's like my first day of snowboarding; the thrill of just making it down,

ERROR OF NOBOARDING BEGAN.

the energy that comes with imagining how far I can take it.

Not surprisingly, many people don't grasp the concept of noboarding. Why someone would want to make snowboarding more difficult than it already is, seems odd to the pundits. But in the last few winters, as I find myself drawn deeper into the noboarding vibe, I see the first-time noboarder who falls face first after a few turns and gets up wanting more. The addictive part is the challenge of staying on the board. Once you have the flow going you can attempt it without the aid of the rope. The term "no roped it" is now definitive noboarding jargon.

Skateboarders are building bigger ramps for higher air and surfers are using bindings to ride bigger waves. Snowboarding already has these components. What could snowboarding take from surfing and skateboarding that it hasn't already used? It could take a step back to the roots of board sports, to a pure sensation where the interface between board and body is unencumbered, loose and free. Noboarding brings back that kid-on-the-toboggan-hill thrill and that zest-for-winter feeling that brought us to the mountains in the first place.

To purchase production noboards or a DVD for the non-believers, go to www.noboard.ca

Author's Note: In January 2005, Greg Todds was taken by an avalanche at the young age of 33. He is survived by his two young children, Lily and Ashton. If you'd like to contribute to the **Greg Todds Family Trust Donations**, email: cholonoboard@yahoo.ca

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