



AAC Publications

Bjørn-Eivind Årtun, 1966–2012

On February 7, 2012, my good friend and best climbing partner, Bjørn-Eivind Årtun, was killed along with his partner, Stein-Ivar Gravdal, while attempting a new big-wall mixed climb on Kjerag, a seaside wall in southwest Norway. A large block of rock came loose and crushed them both. The futuristic line they were attempting, as well as the fantastic big-wall ice and mixed climb they had established on Kjerag in 2009, Strandhogg, were indicative of Bjørn's extremely high skill level and creative dreams. Bjørn was a dreamer more than any other climber I've ever met. A photographer by profession, he was an artist whose creativity could also be applied to extreme alpine projects. I think that Bjørn will be remembered by his friends and climbing partners in the way that Mugs Stump is often remembered: a true visionary, who was carrying alpinism to the next level.

Bjørn grew up in a small town in southern Norway, which is probably to thank for his quiet, polite nature. He competed in Nordic skiing, giving him a lifelong cardio fitness base that was unparalleled in anyone I have climbed with. Although Bjørn had been climbing for over a decade, he only traveled down the path of hard alpine climbing for the last six years of his life. He made a big impact in a short time. In addition to his exceptional ice and mixed climbing exploits in Norway, Bjørn climbed the North Buttress of Mt. Hunter in a single push in 2009, and climbed a new route on the southeast face of Mt. Foraker in a single push in 2010. Bjørn made several trips to the mecca of technical alpinism, El Chalten, Patagonia, where the best of his many successes was Venas Azules, a futuristic ice and mixed climb on the south face of Torre Egger, established just a few weeks before his death.

I first met Bjørn in 2007, at the Niponino bivouac below Cerro Torre. From our first conversations I knew that Bjørn was a special person, and after witnessing his climbing successes in Patagonia, I knew that he was one of the most talented and motivated climbers I had ever encountered. We finally climbed together in Alaska in 2009; it was such an enthusiastic and successful trip that we returned the next year and had more mind-blowing mountain experiences together. Bjørn, the big dreamer, had no fear and limitless motivation, and on several occasions I have him to thank for convincing me to try, when my inclination was to be more hesitant.

It is impossible not to make connections between Bjørn's big dreams and fearless approach and his tragically early passing. Alpinism is a harsh obsession, and most of us who climbed with Bjørn had an enormous respect for a cherished friend, as well as worry for his safety. Bjørn was not a reckless climber, but the level to which he was taking his climbing was inevitably rife with risk.

In addition to a community of friends and climbing partners, in Norway and worldwide, who miss his companionship, Bjørn parts with his daughter, Iben, who was 12 years old at the time of his death. From endless tent-bound conversations enduring Alaskan storms, I know that Bjørn loved Iben more than anyone else on Earth, and would have given up climbing in a second if he thought it would separate him from her. I am deeply sorry for Iben's loss, and I hope that she may live like her father, with endless enthusiasm, beautiful dreams, and the skills and motivation to turn them to reality.

Farewell, Bjørn. We all miss you dearly, and you are a lasting inspiration to all of us.

Images



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