



## AAC Publications

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### **Bean Bowers, 1973-2011**

I remember when it started, with a cryptic message from a friend in Ridgway, Colorado: “Have you talked to Helen or Bean in the past few days?” I hadn’t. But I had spoken with Bean the day after Christmas, when he fessed up and told me that he had broken his femur skiing and was in the hospital after surgery. I called back later and had the talk of why we live, and how risk is part of our lives, and that these things happen. This was not the first time that Bean had called me with medical issues over the years. They came in waves, mixed between his exploits and his nine lives of living on the edge while passionately exploring the mountains.

After I received the message, I called Helen while driving down the hill from Bridger Bowl. I had to stop and sit still while she told me what had happened. I sat in the van in tears, saddened by the news and impact on my good friend. About eight days after surgery, Bean woke in the middle of the night with a splitter headache that resulted in him being taken by ambulance from his home in the mountains above Ridgway to the hospital in Montrose. For Bean to take an ambulance for a headache was monumental, given his tenacity and grit. His stories are legend. Tales of falling through lake ice on an approach in Patagonia, a 100-foot fall on Torre Egger after horrendous climbing above shitty gear—the list is long.

A diagnosis of a brain tumor followed, and that was the tip of the proverbial iceberg. He had tumors in many places. I spoke with him briefly in the haze of his course of treatment. What can you say to a man who was in his prime, kicking ass and living his life just the way he envisioned, with many years ahead of him, only to be given a kick in the ass after he was kicked in the balls? He was only 38, and in those years he had accomplished much and touched many lives, lived hard and sought out the challenges that most would shudder to think possible in 10 lives.

I remembered all the good, the humility of watching Bean’s grace as he climbed, and the power in those arms on steep limestone. We tried to ski the Grand once, and the weather and conditions were horrendous, so that after we reached the top of Tepee col and the snow was still bulletproof and dangerous, we just laughed and called it a day. There were loads of good days with him, and I revel in the knowledge that I can call him my friend and brother.

I had a dream about Bean a few weeks ago, and he was sitting in front of me, bullshitting like he did so well. His sinister laugh, piercing stare—he was a good soul. I don’t remember what we spoke about in the dream, but it hardly mattered. What struck me was that it seemed real enough and that I am still saddened by this process. Today, I was cleaning out the piles of paperwork that had accumulated from a fund-raising effort we put together for Bean, and even though it was nearly a year ago, I was still touched by the degree of support the climbing community offered. We should all hope that we touch the world as much as Bean did.

## Images



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