



## AAC Publications

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### Justin Griffin, 1980 – 2015

**Justin Tyler Griffin wore many hats. He was an above-average athlete, a husband, a father, a son, a brother, and by profession a builder.** Justin grew up in the great state of Kentucky and attended Bowling Green High School. During high school he made his mark as an accomplished track and cross-country runner. His shining moment was winning the state championship in the mile, with a time of 4:24. He also learned to climb in the Red River Gorge. He graduated from high school in 1998 and attended the College of Charleston, in South Carolina, on a running scholarship, graduating in 2002 with a degree in business.

After college he spent a few years traveling around the globe, climbing, and perfecting his skills as a carpenter. In 2003 Justin moved west, landing in Pinedale, Wyoming, where he met his wife to be, Laura Love, a.k.a. Fats. She was working for NOLS, running horse-packing trips, and living in the tiny town of Boulder. They fell in love and moved to a town in northern California called Pescadero, where they worked on a horse farm together. Soon after they moved to Sun Valley, Idaho. During his time there, Justin and Erin Wilson opened a new route on the Elephant's Perch called Mojo.

When the two moved to Bozeman, Montana, in 2006, I had the privilege of becoming a friend of Justin's. I was immediately drawn to his voracious appetite for climbing and endless energy. He frequently climbed in Clarks Fork Canyon, repeating many of the hardest rock routes while contributing a handful of his own. Justin was most fulfilled by huge days that leave one haggard for a week afterward. One of his ideas was to link three of Clarks Fork's long free routes in a day, adding up to about 3,000 feet of climbing and rappelling. As soon as we had finished, on our second attempt, Justin was already talking about adding another climb to the enchainment. He lived for it!

In 2009, Justin and Fats were married on the western slope of the Bridger Mountains in Bozeman. Going back to school at Montana State University, he completed four years of the architecture program and received a drafting degree in 2010. He started his own design/build construction company called Griffin Creations. Three of the many building projects he completed were awarded beautification awards by the city of Bozeman.

After many seasons of ice climbing in Hyalite Canyon, Justin became increasingly interested in alpine climbing. It was in his nature to constantly push his boundaries as a climber. He connected with Kyle Dempster, and the two of them forged a strong climbing friendship. On one trip to Alaska they made two separate ascents of the north buttress of Mt. Hunter, one via French Route and the second by Wall of Shadows. They failed to summit Hunter both times, but I know they had a positive experience. In 2013, Justin came up with an idea to try and free climb an existing route on Haystack in the Wind Rivers. Kyle, Justin, and Hayden Kennedy acted on Justin's vision and were successful in climbing the route with variations, though not completely free (Lowe Spark, AAJ 2014). Fats provided the horse-packing support; I know it was Justin's dream come true to have her there. In December 2014, Kyle and Justin climbed Wild Thing on Mt. Chephren in the Canadian Rockies in 17 hours and 25 minutes, car to car.

For Justin, 2014 and 2015 were big years. Most exciting was the birth of his baby girl, Alice Maple Griffin—a girl with a smile and energy just like her dad's. Soon after this, Justin and Fats bought a horse farm called Tri-H Stables, where Fats could expand her business of training horses. Justin had plans to build a shop on the property. In 2015, he and Skiy DeTray won two AAC grants for an expedition to Nepal. In the fall, after two weeks of volunteer work, helping to rebuild the Khumbu

Climbing Center, the two climbed a new line up the northeast buttress of Tawoche. Toward the end of the descent from this difficult climb, unroped, Justin lost his footing on a section of ice and fell.

Justin took life head on; he was charging at all times.. Justin didn't go to Nepal to die—he had lots to live for and he knew it. He went on that expedition because that's how he was wired. He needed to squeeze every drop out of the life he was living. Fats saw that and loved him for it. We all loved him for it. Justin Griffin was an inspiration. Those of us who knew him are thankful for what he has left us with.

– Whit Magro

## Images



Justin Griffin.

## Article Details

Author	Whit Magro
Publication	AAJ
Volume	58
Issue	90
Page	382
Copyright Date	2016
Article Type	In memoriam