



## AAC Publications

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### Scott Adamson, 1981 – 2016

**In 2002–'03 the leashless revolution was just starting, and it brought together a small group of Salt Lake and Provo, Utah, climbers. Focusing on the steep choss of Provo Canyon limestone, they farmed ice and created new routes, and one of Scott Adamson's childhood friends decided to document the scene. I had heard of Scott through mutual friends but did not officially meet him until Dustin Lyons started filming Comfortably Numb. Scott was a young crusher, unsponsored, unknown, but already more accomplished than people twice his age.** While others of his talent focused on gaining sponsorship, Scott preferred to focus on his craft. He trained, traveled, and continued to improve. Scott's many ice and mixed routes in Utah were some of the most difficult in the state, many still unrepeated. After meeting during filming of the video, we climbed together off and on, and I was lucky enough to be able to photographically document some of his climbs, as well as to have him join me in a first ascent in the Uinta Mountains.

Scott was born on January 24, 1981, to Tom and Kathy Adamson. An adventurer at an early age, Scott Adamson was drawn to rock climbing and joined a group of kids his age who pushed each other to train, climb hard, and live life to the fullest, all under the motto NWS ("No Weak Shit!"). "NWS" adorned everything: their helmets, packs, clothing, and gear. This small group lived up to the saying, one winning the American Ninja Warrior TV game, others climbing 5.14 and developing some of Utah's hardest boulder problems, and Scott quickly becoming one of the best mixed climbers and alpinists in the state, and then in the world.

Early on, Scott partnered with his younger brother, Tom. The two traveled through South America, slogging up snowy peaks and icy couloirs and faces, a few by unreported possible first ascents. In 2005 they went to Kyrgyzstan for an early attempt on Kyzyl Asker, a route finally climbed by Ines Papert and Luka Lindič last year. Later, Scott would do first ascents in Alaska, including a new route on the east face of the Mooses Tooth after 10 years of attempts (AAJ 2014), two first ascents in the Rolwaling Himal of Nepal, and two attempts on the Ogre II in the Karakoram, the final attempt claiming his life and that of his partner, Kyle Dempster.

Everything seemed so effortless when he climbed, and I think he believed it should be the same for everyone else. That sentiment was mine and many others' secret weapon. Not only was I sure he could make it up anything, but when climbing with Scott, so would we. He could see the potential in people; he knew when to push and when to back off. He often believed in his partners more than they believed in themselves, and you fought hard to not let him down.

Scott lived and breathed climbing. He was in constant motion, climbing nonstop, researching the next big route, establishing entire regions of ice climbing, including the world-class ice of Zion National Park, which he explored for several recent seasons. Yet he always seemed to be there for his friends and family when they needed him most.

Like most alpinists, Scott had his brushes with disaster and injury. Describing a few of these in an essay for one of his sponsors, Scott wrote: "Although these are the experiences that might make us hate climbing, they are also the ones that make the best memories. They become our tall tales told around a fire. These are the experiences that live on forever and make us go back for more. As much as we feed off success, we dream of adventure; and what is adventure without the epics of waiting?"

To the outside observer, Scott could seem aloof and distant, but those who took the time to talk to

him quickly found out otherwise. Scott was gregarious, quick to instigate a party, and extremely generous toward his friends and family.

Scott was extremely hard on gear and went through it quickly. Once Scott found sponsorship, he would often place large orders before a trip. His sponsors, knowing how fast he destroyed gear, never questioned the need. Only later did some discover that he would purposely use gear that was in poor shape longer than he should have and then give the new gear to someone he thought was deserving of support.

Throughout his life, Scott spent a lot of time mentoring others. He was as generous with his time as with his gear. While in Ouray, Colorado, for the ice fest, Scott was introduced to a young climber just starting out, Angela VanWiemeersch. Immediately he saw her potential and did everything he could to help her grow as a climber. This relationship quickly turned romantic and Scott and Angela were inseparable from that point on.

Living the "climbing life," Scott worked construction when he needed money, scrimped and saved, then hit the road again. Lean and fit, Scott was always one of the most fashionable at the crags. His jacket could be filthy and covered in duct tape, but he would be wearing fashionable jeans, rolled up at the legs, with a sharp scarf and a bushy mustache that would make Tom Selleck or Sam Elliott jealous. Whether it was on a first ascent in Alaska, a BBQ party on the summit of Castleton Tower, or a rave in the San Rafael Swell, when Scott's eyes came alive, sparkling like the first golden light on a mountain stream, you knew you were going to have a good time.

Scott is survived by his parents, Tom and Kathy, sisters Shayla, Andrea, and Sheresa, his brother Tom, as well as the love of his life, Angela VanWiemeersch.

His absence is felt strongly in the climbing community. Though we may never again see his wide smile and sparkling eyes behind that big bushy mustache, those who knew him will always aspire to his calm and ability to enjoy life under the most difficult circumstances. NWS.

– Nikki Smith

**Images**



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