



AAC Publications

Jess Roskelley, 1982 – 2019

Jess Fenton Roskelley was born in Spokane, Washington, on July 13, 1982. He graduated from Mt. Spokane High School in 2001 and attended the University of Montana for two years before embarking on an expedition to climb Everest with his father, John, in 2003. Jess became the youngest American to climb the peak at the time, a defining moment in his career as a professional alpinist.

Jess lived by Ernest Shackleton's family motto, *Fortitudine Vincimus*: "By Endurance We Conquer." He was considered by his peers and partners to be an exceptional and safe alpinist. He spent the better part of his life climbing around the world and made first ascents across South America, Alaska, Asia, and the Canadian Rockies. Between climbing expeditions, Jess worked as a certified welding inspector, specializing in very technical, high-angle rope-access jobs. He spent seven years working in Prudhoe Bay on the north slope of Alaska as a mechanic and welder. He also guided for RMI on Mt. Rainier for three seasons and was the first snowboard patroller on Mt. Spokane.

Jess had a kind soul, a sense of humor that rivaled Jim Carrey, and a heart as big as the mountains he climbed. His integrity was unparalleled, and his loyalty to his family and his climbing partners was unmatched. His love for the mountains was only rivaled by the love he had for his wife, Allison, his immediate family, and his English bulldog, Mugs.

Jess had one obsession that cannot be denied: lifted, monster-tire trucks, which he used to his advantage when visiting his favorite "topless" coffee stand in Spokane, for which he coined the nickname "Naugh-tay Latte." (He always said they had the best chai latte—sure, Jess!) The Dave Smith Motors dealership for Dodge Rams in Kellogg, Idaho, where Jess tricked out his trucks to the delight of the salesmen, had his name on speed-dial.

Jess' life came to an end during a tragic climbing accident on Howse Peak in the Canadian Rockies on April 16, 2019. Jess and Austrian alpinists Hansjörg Auer and David Lama, all elite members of the North Face athlete team, had reached the summit via a new route in record time. The three were caught in an avalanche that afternoon while descending (see p.150.)

The way in which Jess felt about climbing is best conveyed in his own words: "Mountains help me navigate what is most important to me. They balance the chaos that is regular life. Balance is what I strive to accomplish with climbing—a balance of life, love, and mountains. Alpine climbing is a lifelong commitment. I live and breathe it."

– Alli Roskelley and Family

Images



Article Details

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| Author | Alli Roskelley and Family |
| Publication | AAJ |
| Volume | 62 |
| Issue | 94 |
| Page | |
| Copyright Date | 2020 |
| Article Type | In memoriam |