



## AAC Publications

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### **Denali Schmidt, 1988–2013**

Denali was enchanted with the world—he was obsessed with the color blue, because it was the color of the sky. He held wonder in his striking blue eyes, love in his smile, and a playful wisdom beyond his years. The day we met, he talked delicately about the quiet of winter in the Sierra and the clarity of the stars, holding the words in his mouth like precious gems.

Denali was a child of the world who grew up between Australia, New Zealand, and the United States. From a young age, he displayed talents in the arts and outdoor sports, two opposing but complementary interests that would pull him throughout his short life. His father, Marty Schmidt, named him after his first love, the mountain on which he started his alpine adventures. Denali possessed the natural climbing abilities of his dad, and joined him to summit his namesake in 2011 and 2012, putting up a new route, Dad and Son, on the lower southwest face (AAJ 2012). They also became the first father-son team to summit Broad peak together, immediately before their attempt on K2, the mountain that took their lives in an avalanche. The fed off one another's energy, and their combined skill and stamina made them an unstoppable force. Together they sought to find the edge of what was possible—the fine line between life and death that taught them both a deep appreciation for life itself.

Denali came to the United States to work as a ski patroller in Bear Valley, California, and became known for the extreme lines and jumps he would take. He climbed throughout the Sierras, and fell in love with the rugged California landscape. At California College of the Arts, he studied painting, embracing a type of gut-driven expression that made sense with the grunt of the climb—the drive came from a similar place. He had just graduated with promising talent and the second-highest GPA in his class, with plans to continue to travel the world, exhibit his artwork, and explore as much as possible. He made the future seem shiny and golden with all the things he wanted to do.

Denali had a unique ability to notice and be inspired by the world's poetic composition. He found opportunities for reflection and creativity in every part of life—and more than this, seized them all. He lived as if on the edge of something deep and glorious, an intricate canyon glowing in every hue. There was no line he would not ski, no route he would not try; his appetite for adventure was insatiable, and his love poured out of him as if from glaciers, not shrinking but growing. He brought lightness to everyone around him, boldly chasing life and drinking it in like sunshine.

Whenever he called from his climbs in Pakistan, it brought me back to the day we met—he couldn't contain his excitement with each experience, his love for the world. And now he is a part of it, boundless forever, sharing with us the beauty he found all around him.

Larisa Minerva

## Images



Denali Schmidt



Denali and Marty Schmidt

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