

Bela G. Vadasz

1953-2015



Bela G. Vadasz, of Truckee, California passed away unexpectedly on Sept. 15. He was 62 years old.

Bela was born in Budapest and escaped from Hungary in 1956 with his parents, Bela and Eva Vadasz. He grew up in San Francisco, attending Lincoln High School and San Francisco State University, where he met the woman who would become his life partner and soul mate, Mimi Maki Vadasz.

It was a union forged over a pair of scuffed up boots, the trademark of a mountain climber. And it was the couple's mutual love for the mountains that inspired them in 1979 to form Alpine Skills International (ASI), a mountain guiding, climbing and ski school. The school has grown tremendously from its early roots at Donner Pass, where the couple hosted thousands of climbers for nearly 25 years at The Donner Spitz Hutte. Today, ASI continues to thrive, guiding and teaching climbers and skiers not only to be competent mountaineers, but to love the mountains and carry that spirit with them in all aspects of their lives.

Bela was unique and pure to his core. He loved to share his passion, whether it was skiing, climbing, surfing, or music. He believed in people, sometimes more than they believed in themselves. He loved the ocean, as it was forever changing; he loved the mountains, because they would always be there, and he loved everyone he ever talked to because everyone was important to him. He was hard on his guides, but he loved them and wanted them to be old alpinists. He loved history and was an encyclopedia of rock, snow, ice and alpine climbing.

He also loved surfing, and used to say that he was never more in the present moment than when he was riding a wave, which was one of the best feelings in the world to him.

He loved the Sierra Nevada (he would correct you, it is not the Sierras, but The Sierra Nevada), the Range of Light. He loved the idea of the creation of the American Mountain Guides Association (AMGA), he lived by the AAC and for ASI, well it was all about the guides, they were his lifeline.

He wanted to see his students push their limits, both mentally and physically. He wanted you to not just say something, but really feel, mean and believe in your words. Bela loved ASI because he could have an impact on the future of how people could move

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GRACEFULLY through the mountains. He wanted to get everyone hooked, so they would love where they were, not just the physical skills, but also to appreciate what mother nature has provided us and to know it was truly about the quality of the experience.

Then there was his music, Montaña and the Truckee guys that made it happen.

His recent new adventure and love was Vadasz Surfboards, which manufactures surfboards designed and tested by his sons, Tobin and Logan.

Bela's personal climbing and skiing achievements were many and included notable first ascents and descents. He was an instructor and examiner of guides for the AMGA. In 1997, Bela was among the first American guides certified by the International Federation of Mountain Guide Associations. In 2008, he received the AMGA's Lifetime Achievement Award for his contributions to the guiding profession.

The US Military also called on Bela's talent for teaching mountaineering skills. He developed and taught mountaineering training at the Marine Corps' Mountain Warfare Training Center and more recently for the special operations forces at Camp Pendleton.

In addition to his mountain prowess and entrepreneurship, Bela will be most remembered for his spirit and passion, and for sharing them with others.

He is survived by Mimi and his sons, Tobin, 24, and Logan, 20, both of whom were born and raised in Truckee.

A memorial celebrating Bela's life will be held Saturday, October 17th on Donner Pass, Sugar Bowl Ski Resort, Judah Lodge at 1:30pm. If you knew or were touched at all by Bela, we encourage you to come celebrate his life. ☺

