



LOWELL HART

PIONEER OF SNOWBOARD INSTRUCTION

Bud Keene, who coached Shaun White to two Olympic gold medals and who gave the keynote address at PSIA-AASI's 50/50 Celebration, remembers the first time he ever saw a snowboard. It was crossing a snowy road in Stowe, Vermont, under the arm of a tall blonde rider named Lowell Hart. Keene, who was a surfer, ran after Hart to introduce himself, and then almost every day for the next three years found himself hiking up Stowe Mountain behind him, both men earning their turns the hard way until 1987, when the area became one of the first in the U.S. to allow snowboarders on the lifts.

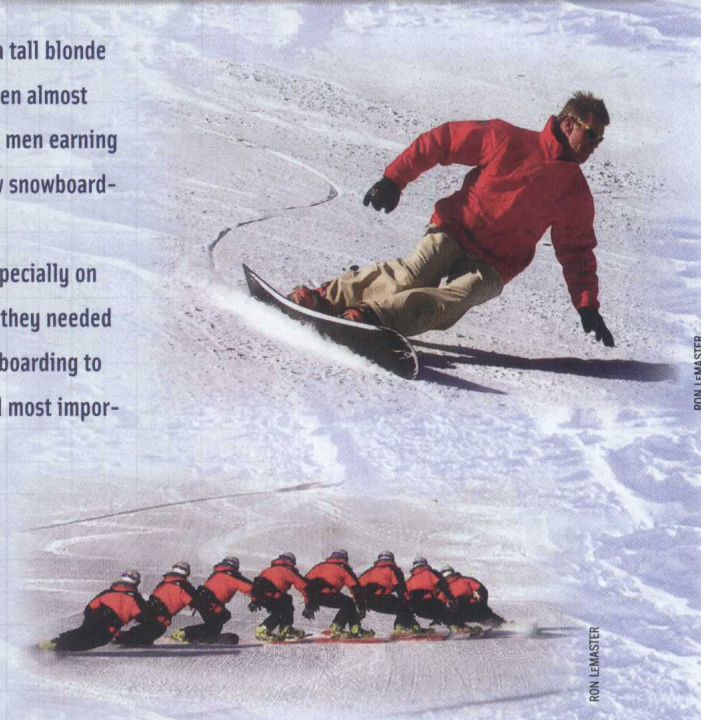
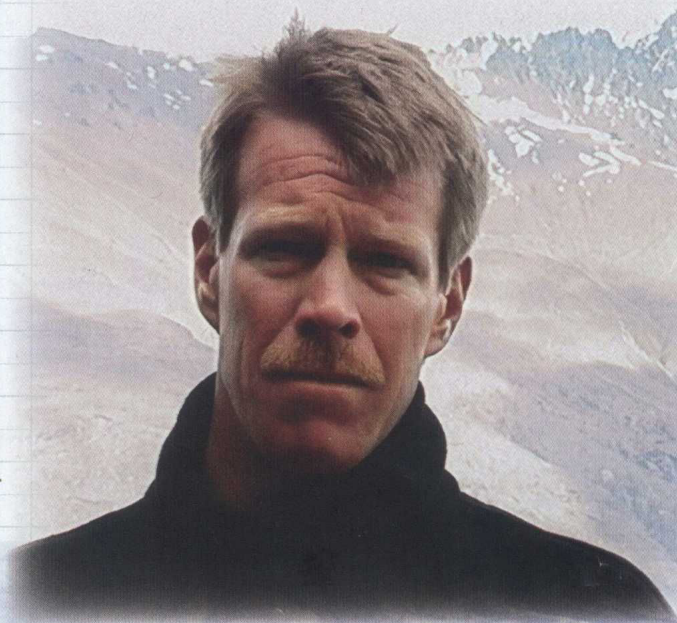
Keene wanted to prove snowboards "belonged" by carving better turns than any skier, especially on the steeps and ice. But it was Hart, he said, who realized that if the sport was going to grow, they needed to find a way to teach it first. "Lowell understood from the beginning that if we wanted snowboarding to succeed, we needed to go to the resorts with an instruction plan, and an equipment plan, and most importantly, a way to make it profitable," Keene said.

"Ski areas had a huge concern about liability," said Hart, casting back to snowboarding's infancy in America. "But in those early years the people who were snowboarding had a very high inner level of motivation, so we would keep doing things like hiking up under the chairs on powder days, sometimes having confrontations with the ski patrol, and then going into the management offices all covered in snow to ask if we could ride the lifts."

When he wasn't riding, Hart worked on developing a progression for teaching snowboarding, borrowing ideas from PSIA's American Teaching System, as well as sports like diving and the study of biomechanics. In 1987, he was one of the riders PSIA invited to Copper Mountain to write the first official *Snowboard Ski Instruction Manual*, and in 1989 was one of the first 12 snowboarders PSIA certified to teach the sport. He also authored the *Snowboard Book: A Guide for All Boarders*, in 1998.

A man in constant motion, Hart is as likely to return a phone call from a trailside in Wyoming as he is from his home in Colorado, where he is still fascinated by improving instruction, especially with regard to the powerful teaching tool that digital video cameras represent. "The instructional value is powerful, and it's also so inspirational to show someone an image of themselves," Hart said.

It's also inspirational how after three decades of helping to grow the sport of snowboarding, Hart still says, "This is where my heart is. I can't imagine doing anything else." ■



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