

1970s – A game changer

By the 1970s, future snowboard icons and legends were beginning to explore the sport further, adjusting techniques and even creating custom equipment.

Dave Alden, a professional snowboarder on the Burton team during the 1980s, can remember a particular ski trip to Alta around the late '70s – before he began snowboarding. From the chairlift, he spotted “some guys hiking up with big yellow snowboards.” After catching up with the snowboarders, Alden discovered they were “original Wintersticks,” and quickly discovered his own love for snowboarding.

Since snowboarding was still fairly new, ski resorts had not yet allowed this strange (and presumably dangerous) sport on the slopes. Snowboarders were relegated to poaching resorts, cruising the backcountry and discovering new spots to ride, which is exactly how snowboarders began riding the first halfpipe.

Mark Anolik happened upon a great spot in the Tahoe City landfill that had been covered with snow. It had an entry point and a pipe-like shape, and pretty soon future famous snowboarders like Bob Klein, Terry Kidwell, and Allen Arnbrister (as well as pro skateboarders) dedicated all their time to shaping and riding it. After Tom Sims saw the pipe, he introduced the idea at the first World Championships at Soda Springs, California in 1983. Snowboarding became not just an alpine sport, but also freestyle, and pipes were an essential element.

The '70s were a game-changer: Jake Burton, Tom Sims, Chuck Barfoot, Dimitrije Milovich and others were all helping to establish snowboarding as a sport that was here to stay.

Sources:

“Snowboarding: It’s Older Than You Think,” Paul J. MacArthur. Skiing Heritage Journal, March 2009

“When The Ski Business Got It Wrong,” Seth Masia. Skiing Heritage Journal, Dec 2007

Colorado Ski & Snowboard Museum archives.