

TOM SIMS & SIMS SNOWBOARD COMPANY

Meanwhile, Tom Sims, who maintains that he invented snowboarding after creating a “skiboard” in 1963, moved to California in 1970, running a skateboarding shop in Santa Barbara. Skateboarding quickly exploded, with Sims himself as world champion in 1976 and a skateboard icon. Sims Skateboards became one of the top producers, setting the bar high for skateboard manufacturing.

During this time, Sims continued to make “skiboards,” the result of a middle school shop project and possibly the world’s first snowboard. In 1977, Bob Weber contacted Tom Sims and his employee Chuck Barfoot about teaming up on a snowboard design. Weber had patented his Mono-Ski and put a trademark on the word “skiboard,” and he was looking to collaborate. Thus, the Flying Yellow Banana Skiboard was born, and introduced to the public during the 1978-79 season. This consisted of a wooden Sims board on top of a plastic shell, and even without bindings or metal edges, it was a huge advance. Barfoot and Sims continued to spend time working on their fiberglass prototype snowboards.

After Barfoot split from Sims and started his own snowboard company during the 1980s, Sims continued to improve and experiment with prototypes. Throughout the 1980s, Sims added the first metal edges, created a heel and toe binding system, highback bindings, and a baseplate to adjust binding angles. He dominated at early contests like the U.S. Open Snowboarding Championships and King of the Mountain, and was James Bond’s snowboarding stunt double in *A View To Kill*. Many skateboarders at the time were recruited by Sims and Mike Chantry, who would pass out Sims boards.

Sims was also an integral part of the snowboarding halfpipe, as one of the lucky few to ride the first at the Tahoe City landfill. He then went on to introduce the halfpipe and freestyle at the first World Championships at Soda Springs, California in 1983. Between that, and Burton recruiting former Sims team member Craig Kelly, the infamous decades-long Burton vs. Sims clash began. Snowboarding moved from a grassroots movement to a mainstream sport, and the rest is history.

Never satisfied with the current equipment, Sims has produced a variety of revolutionary boards including reverse camber, freeride, freestyle, big mountain, all mountain, and carbon boards. Numerous Sims snowboards, including his 1963 homemade skiboard, are on display at the new snowboard exhibit at the Colorado Ski & Snowboard Museum, on loan from Tom Sims. A yellow Sims skiboard also on display is on loan from Steve Link.

Today, Tom Sims remains very involved in the company. The Sims Snowboard company is licensed to Collective Licensing, which distributes all boards and gear. The Sims Team has included a huge list of the best snowboarders in the world, and the company continues to produce innovative snowboarding equipment.

Sources included:

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

“Barfoot Snowboards Turns 30,” by Ethan Stewart. *The Santa Barbara Independent*, March 6, 2008.

“Sims Did It First,” <http://www.simsnow.com/#/history/firsts>

“Powder and Rails Full Episode: Tom Sims,” Transworld Snowboarding.
<http://snowboarding.transworld.net/1000140805/featuresobf/powder-and-rails-full-episode-tom-sims/>