MARTY SCHMIDT

Marty Schmidt’s career as an extreme sportsman ended tragically last summer, July 26, when he and his son Denali disappeared while attempting to summit K-2 in Pakistan.  Marty and Denali had planned to be the first father/son team to make it to the top of this treacherous mountain, known as the “Killer Mountain,” the most dangerous of the world’s 8000+ meter mountains.  Marty was 53.

Marty was a truly homegrown talent.  His mother, Mathilde, says he started climbing as a toddler by scaling the kitchen table in their Castro Valley home. By age 12, Schmidt was rising at 4 a.m. to take four buses on a four-hour commute to Indian Rock in Berkeley where he would work on his climbing skills and by age 15 he was leading people through the Sierra Nevada on treks.

Schmidt joined the U.S. Air Force as a Parachute Recovery Specialist (“PJ”) in 1981 and served in that capacity until 1987. He did extensive climbing in Alaska during his stint in the Air Force and received an Air Force Medal for rescuing nine people from a burning hotel fire in the Philippines in 1984.  Marty embraced the PJ motto, “That Others May Live” as he continued to rescue scores of climbers on mountain tops all over the world during the rest of his career as a mountain climbing guide.

Schmidt was both a guide and a solo climber after leaving the Air Force, working for Peak Freaks and starting his own company, MSIG (Marty Schmidt International Guiding).  He guided and climbed the Seven Summits (the seven tallest mountains on each continent), including summits on Mt. Aconcagua in the Andes, Mt. Denali  in Alaska (29 times) and Mt. Everest (twice).

Conquering mountains was only part of his personal challenge.  Marty holds world records in speed climbing with ski descents and ascents without the help of Sherpas, huts, helicopters or supplementary oxygen.

Schmidt’s philosophy of guiding was unique. He considered teamwork the key.  Climbing with a client was all about developing a relationship and exploring the full gambit of the mountaineering experience as a team. He often said, “Rather than reducing the mountain down to the standard of the client, I try to raise the client’s skills up to match the mountain.”