

Man slain at party was snowboarding star

Thursday, 01 November 2007

Charles Coogan Kelly was a world-class snowboarder who planned to ride his board on the professional circuit this winter, his friends said Wednesday.

He knew no fear on a mountain, and off his board he always cheered people up and left them laughing.

Kelly, 21, of Truckee, was among three young men shot and killed at a Reno Halloween party on Sunday. Derek Jensen, 23, of Reno, and Nathan Viljoen, 23, of Fallon, also were gunned down. Samisone Taukitoku and Saili Manu, both 19, of Reno, were charged in connection with the shootings.

"It's senseless," said Kelly's friend Nathan Brouwer of Truckee, who owns a clothing company that used Kelly as a model. "It's the most ridiculous thing I ever heard. Coogan and the other two who were killed had nothing to do with the situation that was going on."

Police said the shooting happened after a party crasher bumped into a guest while dancing and beat him severely. The three victims weren't involved in that incident but were shot afterward.

"Coogan was (the clothing company's) main rider, so I've known him a long time," Brouwer said. "He was like my kid brother. He was always up, unlike me who gets stressed out. He'd come by to visit and he always made sure he made me laugh before he left."

"We'll all miss him very much."

Kris Walters of San Francisco, who went snowboarding with Kelly, said his partner would push the sport to the limit. A 70-foot drop, which his peers thought was impossible, was his best-known feat and was documented in "Emergence," one of several snowboarding films that featured Kelly.

"On the mountain, he wasn't afraid of anything," Walters said. "But he was the life of the party and never into violence. He hated that stuff, couldn't understand it."

Amanda Page, who knew Kelly since elementary school, said he was "an amazing snowboarder and an awesome friend." She said she remembers him on a fifth-grade bus trip, singing all the way to the destination and getting the other students to sing with him.

"He loved to make people laugh," she said.

Those sentiments were echoed on Kelly's MySpace page, where friends wrote memorials to "Coog" and "Chuck," Kelly's nicknames. They mourned his loss and talked about shredding snow and endless winters in heaven.

A memorial service has been scheduled Sunday at the Judah Lodge at Sugar Bowl resort, but the time hasn't been announced

{mos_fb_discuss:10}