

cover photo: Eli Helmuth

# Mountain Bulletin

A Publication of the American Mountain Guides Association

Vol. XXIV No. 4 Fall 2005

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

|   |    |
|---|----|
| President Corner                                      | 1  |
| Board of Directors, Staff,<br>Newsletter Contributors | 2  |
| Executive Director Corner                             | 3  |
| Guide's Gear  | 5  |
| Tech Tip  | 6  |
| Technical Director Update                             | 8  |
| Membership Corner                                     | 10 |
| AMGA Membership Form                                  | 11 |
| AMGA Merchandise                                      | 11 |
| Scholarship Announcement                              | 12 |
| Program Update  | 14 |
| Program Schedule                                      | 14 |
| Contributors & Corporate Partners                     | 15 |

## PRESIDENT CORNER

"A quick snapshot of the AMGA today resembles the classic half-empty/half-full glass. How you view it depends on your perspective."

## TECHNICAL DIRECTOR CORNER

"We still seem to get feedback that the exams are harder than expected and much more difficult than the courses. We the members of the technical committee and instructor pool have experienced first hand the difficulties of examination."

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CORNER

"What advances has the AMGA made in the last 5 years, and where will we be in the next 5 years?"

## The State of the AMGA

by John Bicknell, AMGA President



Hello, everyone, I am your new president. "Congratulations, ... and condolences," as Marc Chauvin said to me at the annual meeting in North Carolina. While I accept the condolences, and laughed as he said it, the truth is I am looking forward to the position, to being the AMGA President at a time of growth, opportunity, and challenge for the AMGA. I also look forward to meeting and hearing from a number of you.

Before focusing on some of the opportunities and challenges I see, I would like to thank a few people I have worked with on the AMGA Board the last three years, who are now moving on. There is Peter Absolon, long-time NOLS instructor and supervisor, whose presence on the AMGA Board reflects what I hope will be the AMGA's eventual outreach to the broader community of climbing professionals. Boots Ferguson and Kyle Lefkoff brought us their great expertise in law and finance respectively, and I believe also taught us how to simply work in a professional manner as board members. Most of all, I would like to thank Dick Jackson, who served as Board President for five years, the longest term in our short history. He became Board President when the USMGA was forming, AMGA Board members came very close to fistfights at meetings, it was not clear if the organization would hold or fly apart. We are far more stable today, and Dick deserves much of the credit.

*(continued on page 4)*

## Mammut Joins the AMGA as Newest Diamond Sponsor

Boulder, CO - Mammut has announced that it will join the AMGA as the newest Diamond level Sponsor. They will become the official rope sponsor of all American Mountain Guides Association programs. All 2006 AMGA courses and exams will be outfitted with Mammut ropes.

In addition to providing ropes for all programs, Mammut will also continue to support a full tuition scholarship. This scholarship will be open to any AMGA course or exam.

Mammut has joined the AMGA as one of five Diamond Level Sponsors. The other four sponsors at this level are Black Diamond, Gore-Tex®, Marmot, and The North Face. Each of these companies has subsidized exams in the Rock, Ski, and Alpine disciplines. They all offer full-tuition scholarships. The Diamond level of sponsorship was created by Mike Alkaitis, AMGA Executive Director, in 2003. So far this sponsorship category has raised over \$50,000 for the AMGA with a large percentage of these funds going directly to AMGA guides in the form of subsidized exams and full tuition scholarships.

"I am excited that Mammut has come on board as our official rope sponsor of all AMGA programs. The Diamond level sponsorship offers a unique opportunity for a company to support the guiding community through product placement and scholarships." said Mike Alkaitis, Executive Director of the AMGA.



## AMGA BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2005-2006

### Executive Committee:

|   |                |   |                  |
|---|----------------|---|------------------|
| John Bicknell   | President      | Rob Hess<br>Jackson WY<br>(307) 733-4979<br>Rob@jhmg.com                    |                  |
| Estes Park CO<br>970-586-5758<br>bicknell@indra.com                         |                | Alan Jolley<br>Nederland, CO<br>541-312-9242<br>alanj@nednet.net            |                  |
| Jim Williams  | Vice President | Pete Keane<br>Bend, OR<br>541-312-9242<br>bostromkeane@yahoo.com            |                  |
| Jackson WY<br>307-733-8812<br>pmg@atrav.com                                 |                | Phil Powers<br>Denver, CO<br>303-905-6330<br>ppowers@americanalpineclub.org |                  |
| Maury McKinney  | Secretary      | John Race<br>Leavenworth, WA<br>509-547-5823<br>jr@mountainschool.com       |                  |
| N. Conway NH<br>603-356-7064<br>guides@ime-usa.com                          |                | Pete Takeda<br>Boulder, CO<br>720-273-7663<br>petetakeda@comcast.net        |                  |
| Jim Pearson   | Legal Counsel  | Margaret Wheeler<br>North Bend, WA<br>206-818-7947<br>marg@proguiding.com   |                  |
| Boulder, CO<br>jpearson@ph-law.com<br>303-478-1115                          |                | John Winsor<br>Boulder, CO<br>303-579-9227<br>jwinsor@radarcom.com          |                  |
| David Bengston<br>Yosemite Valley CA<br>209-372-8344<br>dbengsto@dncinc.com |                | Kyle Lefkoff  | Acting Treasurer |
| Matt Brooks<br>Freemont CA<br>rewmb@aol.com                                 |                | Boulder, CO<br>kyle@boulderventures.com                                     |                  |
| Clint Cook<br>Ouray, CO<br>970-325-4127<br>info@ourayclimbing.com           |                |   |                  |
| Angela Hawse<br>Ridgway CO<br>970-626-5770<br>anghawse@ascentdesigns.com    |                |   |                  |

### Newsletter Deadline

The **Mountain Bulletin** is published in May, August, November and February. The next issue of the Mountain Bulletin will be published February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2006.

Deadline for all submissions, including advertising is January 21 (winter issue) April 2 (Spring Issue) June 30 (Summer Issue) October 31 (Fall Issue)

### Newsletter Contributors:

Mike Alkaitis is Executive Director of the AMGA and a Certified Rock Guide.

Simon Fryer is the Program Director for the AMGA.

Rob Hess serves as the Technical Director of the AMGA. He is IFMGA certified and is the senior guide/owner of Jackson Hole Mountain Guides.

John Bicknell is a Certified Rock Guide and current president of the AMGA

Nancy Lea is the AMGA Membership Director. Prior to working with the AMGA Nancy served as Program Director for City Cliffs.

Art Mooney is an IFMGA guide and the Rock Discipline Coordinator for the AMGA.

Eli Helmuth is the Alpine Discipline Coordinator, IFMGA Certified, and Head Guide for Colorado Mountain School.

### National Office Staff

Executive Director: Mike Alkaitis

Program Director: Simon Fryer

Membership Director: Nancy Lea

Technical Director: Rob Hess

### American Mountain Guides Association

P.O. Box 1739

Boulder CO 80306

Tel: 303.271.0984

Fax: 303.271.1377

email: [info@amga.com](mailto:info@amga.com)

website: [www.amga.com](http://www.amga.com)

### Read this Disclaimer!

The AMGA, its officers and employees, authors, editors, artists and volunteers assume no responsibility or liability for accuracy, effectiveness, or safety of any technique or advice described in this publication. It is the responsibility of the individual climber or guide to investigate technical techniques and evaluate them for safety and applicability.



# Executive Director Corner

by Michael Alkaitis, AMGA Executive Director



As I landed in Greenville, South Carolina on my way to the American Mountain Guides Association

(AMGA) annual meeting and Board of Directors meeting in Brevard, North Carolina many thoughts and ideas swirled through my mind. What advances has the AMGA made in the last 5 years, and where will we be in the next 5 years? This simple thought produced so many responses and side thoughts it was impossible to track. Would the annual meeting be a success after Moab, Red Rocks, and Yosemite the past 3 years?

The AMGA Board of Directors meeting was a great success starting with a day of climbing at Looking Glass Mountain. A unique area offering slab climbing, using "eyebrow's" for protection placements and the occasional crack. Everyone enjoyed the atmosphere, climbing and ability to talk to each other on an informal basis. A nice part of the day was listening to current Board Members discussing the exact questions and concerns I had thought of on my plane ride. Luckily it was not all work as Dave Bengston and I were able to climb classics such as Sensomillia Sunset, and Cornflake Crack. I have the utmost respect for climbers from North Carolina.

The official meeting began with the realization that Dick Jackson our President for the last 5 years was stepping down and moving along as his term had expired. The direction from Dick over the last 5 years has been amazing and the AMGA has grown stronger and neared some of our goals of unifying, educating, and certifying the guiding community. One of the last pushes from Dick is to review the AMGA long-range plan and rework it for the next ten years. This meeting was also the last for Boots Ferguson as the law council to the AMGA and Pete Absolon as an at large member. Kyle Lefkoff officially ended his tenure on the Board, but will stay on as the Treasurer of the association. A great point of focus for the Board, spearheaded by Boots Ferguson has been the point of access for guides in America. The focus has been two pronged and focuses on growing access for all guides in the America, and creating an avenue for foreign and American certified guides to work legally.

The focus of gaining access for all guides starts with the AMGA commenting on land manage-

ment plans, climbing management plans, and commercial use plans when these plans open up for public comment or when the AMGA is asked to participate on a task force. The AMGA along with the law council sends in written comments focusing on certification and accreditation, resource impact, and creating opportunities for individual certified guides an avenue of access. The access model we push for is using the Commercial Use Authorization guidelines as a model.

The areas we have succeeded in are the New River Gorge N.P, Joshua Tree N.P, Mount Rainier NP, Mohonk Preserve, and Eldorado Canyon State Park. We will continue to pursue this agenda wherever land and climbing management plans are open to comment.

The second focus of creating an avenue under the current land management regulations for American and foreign certified guides, has gone through many transformations. The end result was Boots Ferguson or Holland and Hart Law Firm along with the AMGA Board of Directors created a separate non-profit called the Certified Guides Federation (CGF).

The purposes for which the CGF corporation is organized are: to apply for and secure access permits and authorizations from public and private land managers for access for guided climbing activities on such lands by its members.

This umbrella organization would be for certified guides to join to reduce costs and paperwork associated with guiding. The idea of forming a non-profit with certified members would ideally enable the organization to have permits across the country to be used by its members. The formation of this organization was finalized this past October and the new CGF Board of Directors is in control of its future. The AMGA will provide support, consultation, and assistance to the CGF. The formation of the CGF will enable the AMGA to focus on access for individual certified guides.

Board members of the CGF are responsible for taking the next step toward making the CGF a viable, usable organization. If you would like to help the new CGF Board or have questions, please contact the AMGA office at 303-271-0984 or mike@amga.com and we will be glad to put you in touch with the correct person.

A ten-year or long-range plan is in place for the

AMGA and is available on the web site at [www.amga.com](http://www.amga.com). The Board of the AMGA decided at the October meeting to review and update this plan to reflect the current vision. This important step is necessary to give the office a clear directive to work from.

Part of the long-range plan will be for the AMGA to maintain fiscal responsibility. We are currently reviewing the AMGA financial structure and ways to improve the performance of employees and reduce the amount of overlap. In 2004 the AMGA lost \$30,000 according to our audited financials (available on the AMGA website) and we hope to earn \$1,000 in 2005. Part of this new structure is for the programs to become self-sufficient. You will notice an increase in program costs for 2006. This is the first time since 1997 the AMGA has raised program costs and is a necessity due to the increasing prices to run these programs.

The annual meeting in North Carolina turned out to be a success with many guides and climbers enjoying the camaraderie of their peers, climbing in a new location full of history, learning from AMGA instructors at clinics, and even walking away with some great product at the silent auction.

To everyone who is part of the AMGA I would like to thank you for your participation and support. It is because of guides like you the AMGA is growing as a resource to land managers, advocate group for climbing and backcountry skiing, and gaining public awareness of who professional guides are. We need to keep this momentum going and I look forward to working with the new and current Board members in 2006.



Brevard, NC



(continued from page 1) - President's Corner

A quick snapshot of the AMGA today resembles the classic half-empty/half-full glass. How you view it depends on your perspective. Gross income has grown from \$140,000 to over \$500,000 in six years but the AMGA lost over \$30,000 in 2004 and will perhaps break even in 2005. Almost all courses lose money and course prices will go up in 2006 if we are to remain financially stable. Far more guides are taking AMGA courses and exams, but membership rates are flat and only 120 ballots were cast in the last Board election. That last number concerns me a great deal. In Las Vegas last week, I was talking to an excellent and experienced guide of many years standing who is not an AMGA member. He said he had nothing against the AMGA, but he also had \$8000 in credit card debt and could not see the benefit. I said I completely understood but that it was a great shame; the AMGA needs to find tangible benefits for members that will bring in people like him. The catchphrase on the back of this Bulletin says "the AMGA is YOUR Guide Association" and so it is or needs to be—I very much want to see that true in actuality.

Along the same lines, here is a topic I found myself discussing with a number of folks at the annual meeting in North Carolina. The overlying question concerned the long-term future of the AMGA, who the organization is for, and who should be a member.

In Great Britain, for instance, there are two associations for climbing instructors. The Mountain Guide track, the track to IFMGA certification, is the smaller of the two. The organization serves IFMGA guides and those on the path to becoming IFMGA guides. It has 140 members, as only the IFMGA guides are officially members. A much larger organization, the Mountain Training Board, trains the equivalent of our Top Rope Site Managers, along with training summer and winter mountain leaders, and hiking group leaders. The Mountain Training organization has over 9000 members. Several individuals who run the Top Rope Site Managers Course for the AMGA believe a similar division would be beneficial in the U.S.—the AMGA would only serve those on track to international level certification; a second organization, as yet uncreated, would serve

the broader community—OB and Nols instructors, individuals working in climbing at summer camps, rock gyms, adventure programs, etc.

I believe a legitimate question is what path should the AMGA follow. One future might resemble the British path outlined above. In the other, the AMGA might eventually have thousands of members, but IFMGA or IFMGA-track guide would be significantly outnumbered. On the other hand, only that larger organization truly has a chance to influence land managers concerning access or credentials for access, or a chance to gain member benefits such as affordable insurance. Which option strikes you as more attractive? I am curious to hear from you.

In recent weeks, I have attended the AMGA annual meeting in North Carolina and then met a number of AMGA guides in Las Vegas where the TC meetings were held. I asked everyone I met this same question. Most were certified guides, a few were not. The responses I received were unanimous, which surprised me. Everyone I asked believed the AMGA's future and their own self interest would best be served in the larger organization, even if it meant their own voice would be less influential. They saw a number of benefits to the larger organization. One rationale several mentioned is that at the moment their AMGA certifications are of limited benefit, since not many of the public knows their significance. If the AMGA tops out with a membership of a few hundred, they cannot see that changing. They saw the larger organization as a source of public education, a pool that would serve to funnel clients to AMGA certified guides.

I also agree the larger organization should be our future. Access continues to be one of the issues of greatest concern to the working guide. I remember a quote from Boots Ferguson at a long-ago Board meeting. Talking about the AMGA's ability to influence public policy, he said, "You know, guys, you are not even plankton on the national level." Unless we find a way to be more inclusive, to grow as an organization, I believe this statement will remain the truth. Given our size, I am sometimes amazed at the influence we do have. In recent years, we have helped create credential based access in Joshua Tree, the

Gunks, Eldorado Canyon, New River Gorge and several other climbing areas.

In summary, I agree with our Executive Director, Mike Alkaitas, who wrote this spring, "The AMGA is at a critical juncture in time. We have the opportunity to become a powerful national organization, or simply a small club of highly skilled individuals."

All right, that's my opinion. Let me know yours. We can continue this discussion in future bulletins, not to mention private emails. If the results are similar to what I have so far heard, and we do choose to reach out to the larger population, the next question is how we might go about that. I have opinions there as well and will share them with you.

Yours,  
John Bicknell  
bicknell@indra.com

## Ice Endorsement for AMGA Guides

The 2005/2006 winter season has arrived. The AMGA is excited to offer a new Ice Climbing Workshop. This is a great way to sample some of the country's best water ice while developing professional guiding skills and techniques. From classic flat footing techniques to steep multi-pitch water ice, we will cover it all. Join us for five days in New England for climbs at Lake Willoughby, Crawford Notch and Frankenstein, or in Colorado for climbs in the Ouray Ice Park, Camp Bird Road, and Eureka areas.

There are two 5-day workshops scheduled for the 2006 winter season, the first is in Ouray, Colorado on January 16 – 20 2006, and the next in North Conway, NH on February 13 – 17, 2006. The prerequisites for this ice workshop are guides who have completed either the Rock Instructor Course or the Alpine Guide Course and comfortable leading at the grade 4 WI level. A personal climbing resume of 20 different waterfall ice routes rated WI4 or harder is required with your application material. The cost of the 5-day program is \$1000. Please contact the AMGA office if you are interested in enrolling in only of these programs by calling 303-271-0985 or emailing [simon@amga.com](mailto:simon@amga.com).

# Guide's Gear



reviewers enjoying a day of fresh powder

As the fall season ends and winter abruptly enters the mountains our focus turns from rock to snow and ice. Skiing and ice climbing in the backcountry are some of the greatest joys an individual can experience and we hope these gear reviews give you an idea of some new ideas for the winter season.



## Garmont Mega Ride:

This AT ski boot is made for the guide looking for the boot to do almost everything. The boot is stiff enough to maneuver the big skis, while maintaining an easy walking flex for multi day tours. The Dynafit compatible boot is the lightest, and stiffest we have tested.

The popular Mega Ride has gone through significant changes for the 2006 season. Garmont has beefed up the tongue for a stiffer forward flex, upgraded the liner to the G-Fit2 liner for a more supportive and padded ride, upgraded the forward lean mechanism for easier use, and last but not least upgraded to the Adrenaline type buckles. If

you want a similar boot, but are not interested in the Dynafit compatibility, then you should try the G-Ride (men) or She Ride (women) for a more economical purchase.

Suggested retail price Mega Rides \$669.95, G-Ride and She Ride \$569.95  
Garmont (800) 343-6752 or  
[www.garmontusa.com](http://www.garmontusa.com)



## Backcountry Access Naxo nx21:

Many guides and skiers these days are searching for the burly AT binding suitable for many days of area skiing, but designed for touring as well. The Naxo nx21 is just such a binding. It weighs in at five pounds per pair, including brakes: five ounces more than its predecessor, the nx01, and seven ounces more than the Fritschi Freeride. The extra weight is made up for in durability with solid tubing in the rails underfoot (also wider than the nx01), added aluminum to the heel and toe pieces in wear and stress areas, and larger springs for a DIN value up to 13. There is also a new feature called the "dh lock", and it is a spring-loaded latch on the heel piece that keeps it from switching to touring mode inadvertently. I found all of the upgrades from the nx01 to be superb and well thought out. The only issue to be aware of is locking yourself into walk mode with the "dh lock". This feature is also removable if you wish.

Naxo's innovative Virtual Rotation System has not changed. This triple-pivot toe piece design helps create a natural and comfortable stride while touring. This pivot action has the added benefit of making it easier to break trail in soft snow, as the ski tip tends to rise to the surface.

Suggested retail price: \$475.00. Pro pricing available to AMGA members.  
Backcountry Access (800) 670-8735 or  
[www.bcaccess.com](http://www.bcaccess.com)



## Black Diamond Havoc:

The Havoc is a medium width (122-88-114mm) twin tip stiff tailed ski designed to create a one ski quiver. The ski has enough width to float in the powder and the dual torsion bow technology gives the ski enough rigidity to pound through crud. The stiff tail keeps you on your toes, but can give you a ride if you are in the back seat. The advantage to this is the ability to snap from edge to edge when you are in hardpack conditions or skiing at a high rate of speed. This ski is not for the timid, but is designed for the aggressive skier looking to get out into the backcountry.

This ski can be mounted for either Tele or AT and is 3.4kg per pair in the 173cm size.

Suggested retail price: \$579.95  
Black Diamond (801) 278-5552 or  
[www.bdel.com](http://www.bdel.com)

AMGA Certified guides can check out [www.patagoniapro.com](http://www.patagoniapro.com) for pro purchase information.



## K2 Mt Baker:

The Mount Baker is K2's newest addition to their AT line and is a high performance soft snow ski designed for the all day tour. It is a medium width (122-89-108mm) ski that has an even soft flex that excels in powder conditions. The Mt Baker is designed for the guide looking to make skiing look effortless. The ski handles speed better than we anticipated and seems to enjoy spring corn along with softer snow. The aggressive skier may find the Mt Baker to be a bit sluggish in tight spots, but will enjoy the flex in less demanding terrain. The ski is designed for the skier looking for a smooth ride in the backcountry.

The ski can be mounted for either Tele or AT and is 3.45kg per pair in the 174cm size.

Suggested retail price: \$469.95  
[www.k2skis.com](http://www.k2skis.com)

*(continued on page 13)*

## Tech Tip 4: Alpine Anchors part 2

by Eli Helmuth

In my last article about simplifying alpine anchors by using materials other than cordelettes, we looked only at anchors which are designed to be belayed off of directly with an auto-locking belay device. A horn and smaller cams were the sole anchor points in the examples provided in the last piece. In this article, we will look at the use of pitons and using the rope as our primary anchoring materials.

The use of pitons in climbing and guiding does hold some potential ethical questions as the U.S. climbing community has increasingly moved away from using pins regularly due to the scars it leaves in cracks and the desire to “leave no trace” of our passage. I would certainly not advocate using pins on climbs or on crags where routes are always done without them, just as I wouldn’t recommend adding bolts to traditional climbing areas to increase the ease of guiding certain routes.

The exception to this “rule” regarding pitons is more prevalent on the less traveled routes in areas such as the North Cascades, Canadian Rockies, Coastal and Alaska Ranges and of course the high peaks of the Andes and Himalaya. In these areas (and I’m sure others), pitons can be a very necessary anchoring tool; quick, relatively light, and reusable, they can be essential equipment to the alpine climber and guide. More importantly, they are often the only type of anchor (other than bolts) than can be placed in the types of rock which are often encountered in the alpine environments; limestone, quartzite, schist, and some types of granite (to name a few) will often only have thin parallel cracks and nothing else available for gear placements. In these situations, being on lead without pins leaves one with little or no opportunity for lead or anchoring gear and this is not an ideal situation to find oneself in during a “day in the office”. And as a few alpine examinees have discovered over the year’s; “I should have brought some thin pins for this route”, is a tough thing to find out while in the middle of an exam.

Learning to place pins well takes some time and this skill can best be developed on lead on big-wall aid climbs around the world. In the alpine realm, thinner style pins such as knife blade and stiletto styles made by Black Diamond and Grivel are the sizes that fit best when other gear won’t and usually up to a half dozen of different sized pins (not the shortest) are helpful along with the usual selection of nuts and cams (usually 2” and below with cams in the alpine realm due to weight considerations).



In the anchor above, I’ve used three different styles of pin in two different crack systems to build this anchor. The 48” orange sling going up on the right is attached directly to a medium length lost arrow. The two other pitons in the picture are a longer knife blade and a medium length lost arrow. The knife blade and lost arrow are connected together with a green shoulder length sling which looks from this side “magic-x” but is actually “pre-equalized” with an overhand knot which separates the two loops connected to the pitons. I tied a figure 8 bight on the orange sling to quickly shorten it so that it would be equalized with the green sling and together they compose a three-piece pre-equalized anchor. I used the two non-locking carabiners for my attachment point with the rope, partly because I didn’t have a locker handy and partly because they are stronger and less affected than a single carabiner would be from the tri-axle loading in place from the slings. My new BD Guide ATC is stacked on top of my tie-in carabiners for smoothness of operation, ideally using a large round stock carabiner on the rope side for less friction.



A close-up of the two bottom pins shows their orientation in regard to direction of pull in relation to the crack. The pins have some good strength here due to their length, the solidity of the rock, and the orientation (almost perpendicular) in which they are being pulled in relation to the crack. Pins primarily rely on leverage for their strength as only friction is otherwise holding them in place.

Of course, coaching one’s client on how to remove these pieces will be essential if there is any hope of bringing the pin’s home, and if I think that if a particular pin will be very difficult to remove, I will often instruct my client to leave them in place, especially on a climb that I will be returning to or if there is some time constraint (approaching storm) which makes the value of the piton diminish rapidly.

Imagine if you will that the 60 pound poodle and the bag of trash are instead solid chunks of stone frozen into the ground on a cold alpine day. The simple overhand on a bight knot that I’ve tied into the rope and thrown around these otherwise almost unusable anchors is an easy way of using large horns, solid blocks (think baby grand piano size) and large groupings of adequately sized, attached and hopefully incut rocks (so that the rope can’t slip over the top) for adequate security. The rope is a much more ideal anchoring material than the cordelette in this application due to it’s greater length, strength and resistance to cutting. The bot-

tom strand on the left is going to me and I tied a knot in the other strand to attach my belay device.



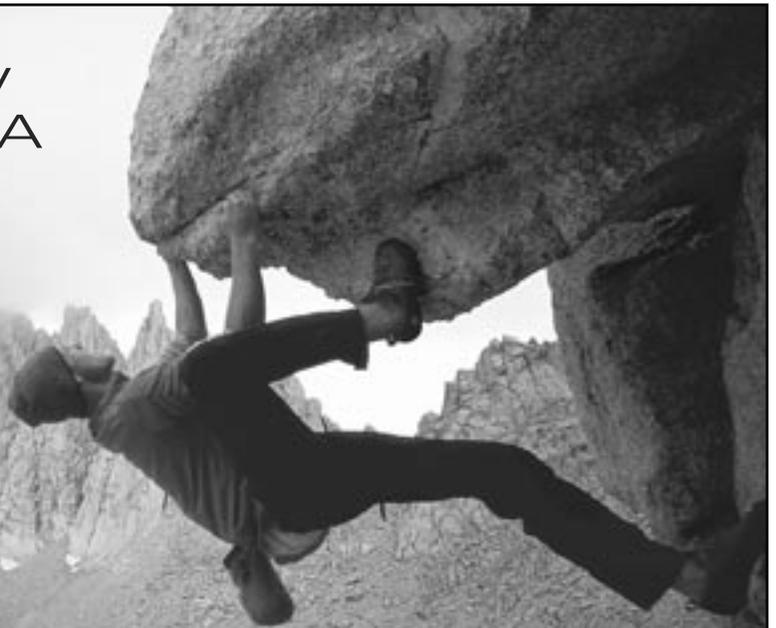
In all of the four anchors shown thus far in these two articles, I've demonstrated belaying directly off of the anchor in all four. This is not

to imply that a guide should always belay in this manner. I only use this method when I am absolutely sure of the strength of the anchor on its own. There are many situations, especially in alpine guiding where anchors may not be strong enough on their own and/or when complex anchors aren't necessary. In these cases, either belaying off of terrain features directly (trees or horns) or belaying off of the body directly (shoulder, sitting hip, or harness belays) with or without any additional anchor is often the best solution.

The problem-solving inherent in figuring out what type of anchor is necessary and/or possible can be one of the most challenging parts of a day of alpine guiding and surely it is one of the most fundamental parts of our job.

In the previous anchoring article, I also discussed the ideas of kicking the rock and shock-loading (yanking) pieces to test their integrity. It should be noted that these techniques are not always necessary and in fact they are always secondary to the skills of macro and micro rock and placement evaluations. Unfortunately, in the alpine environment, solid looking rock and placements can often be deceptive and I've seen dozens of candidates blow it on courses and exams in this regard -this happens more often than one might believe with fixed anchors and visually solid looking rock and placements. Dirt, ice, plants, loose micro-features, and looser than believed macro-features are common in the alpine rock environment and they can all conspire to make our anchors less than adequate. Loose rock is something that we can't afford to let ourselves be fooled by as it can compromise our team's security in the most essential way.

## Patagonia proudly supports the AMGA



800 638 6464 patagonia.com

Todd Smith makes the most of a rest day after being rained off the Keeler Needle in the Sierra Nevada, CA. Photo: Greg Epperson



Patagonia pledges at least 1% of sales, \$20 million in grants and in-kind donations to date, to the preservation and restoration of the natural environment.  
© 2005 Patagonia, Inc.

**patagonia**  
committed to the core®



# Technical Director Update

by Rob Hess, Technical Director



Hi all hope everyone is having a great fall. Let us all burn a few pairs of old skies as a sacrifice to the snow gods in hopes of a great winter. Sounds like most areas are off to a good start.

Now that the fall season of courses and exams has been completed, I want to comment on some of the observations and feedback given from this fall and discuss the examination process. We still seem to get feedback that the exams are harder than expected and much more difficult than the courses. Before I discuss this subject, I want to point out that no matter how well the courses are presented, exams will always be harder than the courses. Participants simply need to expect that this will be the case and prepare accordingly. It is very important that individuals realize that the advanced courses are not meant to prepare individuals for their exams alone. There is huge personal responsibility

We the members of the technical committee and instructor pool have experienced first hand the difficulties of examination. To this end, the TC met for 3 days this past fall to address these issues. Without going into specifics and since our plan has not been formally approved by the board, I will simply say that we are looking very hard at our course and exam structure in the hopes of developing the ideal educational method and optimal flow chart for attaining certification, whether it be for individuals disciplines or IFMGA track. I will update all of the new structure this winter, for now one can expect that in the future courses may well have an examination component or what may be referred to as an aspirant exam. This component will help participants to get used to the examination process before embarking on their final exam.

So how does one best prepare for an exam? For starters I would say that one should not force the process. Be sure you spend ample amounts of time developing before signing up for an exam. If you have any questions as to whether you are ready, hold off. The biggest mistake I have observed is individuals getting anxious and examining before they are ready.

Take a hard look at what was listed on your course evaluation as areas needing improvement. Work with your friends in a mock examination setting and focus on these needed improvements. If you have not successfully completed your course, you will need to meet the requirements before continuing to the next level. These requirements may not be all that is needed to progress, you must ask yourself if you have done everything possible to prepare. The bottom line is that you must climb and or ski with a vengeance in a mock, professional and personal capacity in a variety of locations.

Finding a certified guide or better yet, an instructor pool member to work with you as a mentor is ideal. Finding a mentor can be very difficult but will help your development immensely. One option is to occasionally contract an Instructor Pool member of certified guide to observe you in a mock guiding scenario. You should also seek out opportunities to shadow guide behind such individuals. Their feedback as to your level and what is needed will be invaluable. You will need to document all the time spent with or without a mentor and be prepared to submit you career notebook as a part of your prerequisites.

The areas participants seem to struggle with most are in transitioning smoothly and moving efficiently in 4th class terrain. Proper tour/route planning can only help your performance here. Not including the social aspects of client care, guiding is essentially a series of problems to be looked at and dealt with during the day. When you are out with friends training or working professionally, try to break the day down into a series of components, which are essentially the various guiding problems. This is more easily done when one is working on a route they have done before. Try to approach the components of the day like a chess match or in other words, try to envision many moves in advance. Your ability to do this will allow you to utilize techniques that will better set you up for your next moves and thus transition more smoothly. Be sure to practice these concepts on routes you are on-sighting. Good route/tour planning will give you the best chance of breaking the day into components in advance when on sighting. You will need to use and develop your instincts. Development of on-sight skills is absolutely integral to meeting the standards of a certified guide and will be tested on exams. Try to look



The Skylight Jacket by Marmot. Part of the Miles Smart Signature Series of gear inspired, designed and tested by Miles, an Alum mountain guide and the recipient of the 2004 American Mountain Guide Association's Guide of the Year award. Miles is a minimalist, focusing on fast, light and nimble gear with an emphasis on simplicity and performance. Engineered with waterproof and highly breathable GORE-TEX® K<sup>2</sup> fabric and featuring stretch anatomic articulation, the Skylight Jacket is designed to meet the demands of professionals who work outdoors for a living. It's all part of the deal when you're a Marmot for Life.

\*GORE-TEX, GORE and designs are trademarks of GORE, Inc. & Associates. www.marmot.com ©2004 All Rights Reserved Marmot



ahead and anticipate your moves but always be sure to look back in case you must reverse what you have done. So once again, a good balance of repeats and on-sights is necessary training for exams.

Travel in 4th class terrain is arguably the hardest area to master. There is this myth out there that the short roping skills we expect in the alpine are different from those in the rock. This is simply not the case. The terrain should be telling you how to proceed. What does ring true is that the terrain that we short rope in during rock programs presents different opportunities for the way we use the terrain. There is little opportunity for terrain belays to be used and transitions are few and very straightforward. This does not even consider the terrain that is given to us in the ski. Participants often misinterpret what examiners expect with regards to movement. Going fast is not the main objective, efficiency is. The “herky jerky” or stop and go thing should be avoided. Sometimes this is inevitable, but try to anticipate and keep in perpetual motion. We should be waiting for our clients, not our clients waiting for

us. When training for your exams, you must get out of your home areas. This should not be confined to the time spent just before the exams. Some areas simply allow for better terrain types than others... if you live in Colorado, get to the Cascades and log serious time on the loose 4th class terrain we all know and love so well. This is real and is what you might find should you start traveling abroad.

What is often overlooked, is matching the experience to the terrain. Do we need to be pushing hard on that grade 2-3, utilizing the techniques we know that propel us through the demanding grade 4 terrain? Instructors and examiners often will tell an individual that they are being too “aggressive” when they short rope. There is confusion here. What is often meant is that one need not push so hard (fast) as the terrain does not demand it. This is particularly the case when one comes from the alpine to the rock, where normally if one is to make the route they better move. The participants are interpreting this as, “they are short roping on too steep or demanding terrain”.

It is all the same, let the terrain tell you what to do!

I hope this will help you with your preparations for the upcoming year. Stay tuned for the changes I alluded to in the beginning of this article. I will publish the changes in the winter newsletter. All for now, Rob





# Membership Corner

by Nancy Lea, AMGA Membership Director



Dear AMGA Member,

Greetings from the AMGA office! The holidays are upon us and just like that another successful year is wrapping up here at the AMGA! Since our last newsletter, we held the AMGA Annual Meeting and elected new members to the Board of Directors.

I would like to welcome Margaret Wheeler, John Race and Jim Pearson to the AMGA Board. Dick Jackson recently stepped down as AMGA President after five years of service. We would like to send a heartfelt thank you to Dick for all of his hard work and effort as AMGA Board President. Pete Absolon, Kyle Lefkoff and Boots Ferguson have wrapped up their board terms, however, Kyle will continue to serve as the organization's Treasurer. The new executive committee was elected. John Bicknell is our new acting President. Jim Williams has taken over as Vice President and Maury McKinney will continue his service as AMGA Secretary. We are very appreciative of all the work our AMGA Board does and I would like to personally say thank you to the members that are leaving and welcome to our new board members.

The meeting in Brevard, NC was a great opportunity to attract members from the east coast and specifically the southeast. It was a unique opportunity for me to visit an area that was only 30 minutes from where I grew up and experience it in an altogether new way.

Growing up in Greenville SC, I wasn't aware of the beautiful Pisgah National forest and the climbing that is available there. I had visited Caesar's Head, Table Rock, Chimney Rock and driven throughout the Blue Ridge Parkway but I had never climbed up Looking Glass Mountain. I felt like a tourist in my own hometown. I couldn't believe that all those years I lived in the area that I was unaware of all of the great climbing in my own backyard. It was a really nice experience to be back home and I always get a little nostalgic going back to the south. I love the thick vegetation, the good southern cooking and all the college football madness. I felt so fortunate to come back as an adult and experience the climbing that was right under my nose all along. I climbed with my colleagues up the classic eyebrows of Looking Glass' North Face. It was delicate and pretty and my kind of climbing.

I am thankful to have met and worked with all of the folks from Fox Mountain Guides and from Brevard College. Everyone was very helpful. I would like to especially thank Abby Watkins for giving an outstanding slide show, Adam Fox for his incredible efforts to gather the AMGA in the southeast and also Clyde Carter and his wonderful staff of student volunteers from Brevard College.

I am looking forward to next year's event and I hope that everyone can join us. The exact location will be announced after the January Board of Directors meeting. In the meantime, have a safe and happy holiday season! Stay warm and we'll see you next year!

Best Wishes,  
Nancy Lea



2005 AMGA Guides Olympics



Marc Chauvin races for the top



Looking Glass Mountain





# 2006 AMGA SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

This year the AMGA is proud to announce that over 15 scholarship opportunities are available to AMGA Members in 2006.

A committee made up of AMGA representatives reviews all scholarship applications. If you apply for a scholarship you will be notified of the outcome via mail. Recipients for all 2006 Scholarships will be announced in the spring edition of the Mountain Bulletin.

## FULL TUITION SCHOLARSHIPS:

**Black Diamond Scholarship** – Deadline January 9, 2006, This scholarship is for all AMGA Rock courses and exams

**Patagonia Woman's Scholarship** - Deadline January 9, 2006. This woman's scholarship is for all AMGA courses and exams

**The North Face Alpine Scholarship** - Deadline January 9, 2006. This scholarship is only for AMGA Alpine courses and exam

**Marmot Scholarship** - Deadline January 9, 2006. This scholarship is for all AMGA courses and exams

**The Arc'teryx Scholarship** - Deadline January 23, 2006. This scholarship is for all AMGA ski courses and exam

**W.L. Gore Scholarship** – Deadline January 23, 2006, This scholarship is for all AMGA courses and exams

**Mammut Scholarship** - Deadline January 23, 2006. This scholarship is for all AMGA courses and exams

**PETZL Scholarship** - Deadline February 13, 2006. This scholarship is for all AMGA courses and exams

**Malden Mills Scholarship** Deadline February 13, 2006. This scholarship is for all courses and exams

**Mountain Hardwear Scholarship** Deadline February 13, 2006. This scholarship is for all courses and exams

## ADDITIONAL SCHOLARSHIPS

**AMGA Jim Ratz Memorial Fund Scholarship** Deadline February 13, 2006. This scholarship is all courses and exams for \$250.00

**AMGA Mike Hattrup/XO Net Ski Mountaineering Exam Scholarship** – Deadline February 13, 2006. This scholarship is only for the AMGA Ski Mountaineering Guides Exam. You must have taken the Ski Mountaineering Guides Course to receive this scholarship

**AMGA JCC Fund for women.** Deadline January 23, 2006. This scholarship is for all courses and exams for \$250.00

**AMGA Scott Fisher Alpine Scholarship**- Deadline February 13, 2006 This scholarship is only for the AMGA Alpine courses and exam

Below are some things to keep in mind when applying for AMGA scholarships:

\*All Applications must be submitted electronically to [mike@amga.com](mailto:mike@amga.com)

\*You must be registered and enrolled in the AMGA course or exam before your scholarship application will be accepted. To register for a course you must submit a completed course application, signed waiver forms, and a 25% deposit for courses taking place more than 60 days from now. Please submit separate scholarship applications for all scholarships you are applying for.

If you have any questions regarding scholarships please feel free to contact the AMGA office at 303-271-0984.



**It is a marriage in which the knot is tied with excruciating care.**

Conrad Anker, Brady Robinson, and their ultra-durable Caber Hybrid Jackets are up to the challenge. K7, Pakistan. Photo: Jimmy Chin.



**NEVER STOP EXPLORING™**  
[www.thenorthface.com](http://www.thenorthface.com)



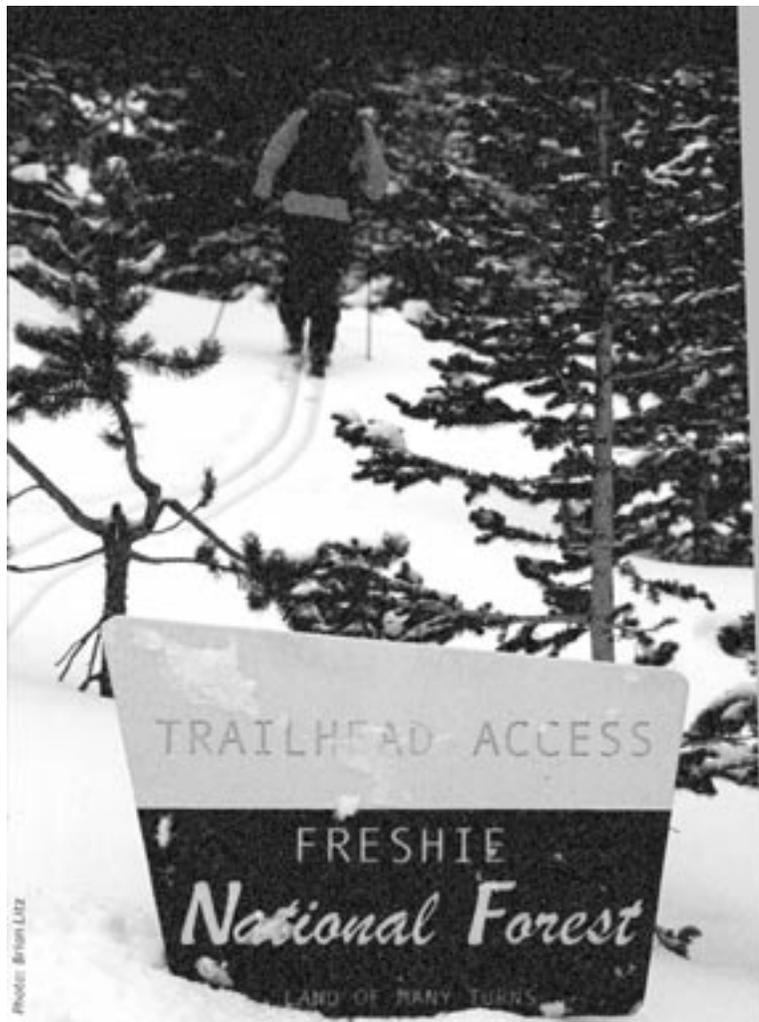
### Trango S Evo GTX

Reviewed by John Bicknell, Certified Rock Guide

This summer, La Sportiva's Trango S became the Trango S Evo GTX. Apart from the tongue twisting name, this boot, whose predecessor I had already used for several summer seasons, did become much better. Like many mountain boots, it edges well. Perhaps due to the ankle hinge system, it also performs surprisingly well on slabs. It climbed better than any comparable boot I had tried. The added gore-tex lining increased the water-proofing. On one occasion, in a completely saturated summer snowpack, my feet still got wet, but that was the only time, and I was in these boots a lot. I used this as my primary boot in this September's alpine exam, and it met all needs-- flat footing and front pointing on Shuksans' North Face, rock climbing and scrambling on the Torment-Forbidden traverse, a good technical performer but still comfortable enough for long Cascade approaches. For a pure alpine ice route like the Coleman Headwall, I preferred a stiffer boot like the Trango Extreme, but for an overall summer boot-- the S Evo is a great choice.

Suggested retail price: \$284.95

Trango (800) 860-3653 or [www.trango.com](http://www.trango.com)



### Fresh tracks. Fresh ideas.

That's what Backcountry Access is all about.

In 2004-05, we're celebrating our tenth year. From the beginning, our approach has been to question conventional thinking, test longstanding assumptions, respect wisdom--and challenge tradition.

We proved that with avalanche beacons, ease-of-use is more important than range. We popularized Companion Rescue with light, integrated shovels and probes. And we solved the winter hydration problem with our freezeproof Stash packs.

A lot has changed since 1994, but our approach hasn't.



Backcountry Access, Inc., Boulder, CO USA [www.bcaccess.com](http://www.bcaccess.com) (800) 670-8735

Tracker DTS beacons • BCA shovel/probe systems • Stash packs • Alpine Trekker • Naxo Mountain Bindings • Low-Fat climbing skins



# Program Update

by Simon Fryer, AMGA Program Director



With the winter season upon the front range of Colorado, and the first Application Review Date (ARD) passed there are still quite a few openings for qualified candidates. The programs in the spring with space available are:

- Ski Mountaineering Guides Course (Feb 20-27) and Exam (March 4-11) in La Grave, France.
- Ski Mountaineering Guides Course (March 20-27) and Exam (March 20-27) in the North Cascades, WA.
- Rock Instructor Course (March 20-27) and Exam (March 31-April 5) in Joshua Tree, CA.
- Advanced Rock Guides Course April (16-25) in Red Rocks, NV.

If you are interested in any of these programs or have questions please contact the AMGA office at 303-271-0984 or [simon@amga.com](mailto:simon@amga.com) or [mike@amga.com](mailto:mike@amga.com). These programs will be open for enrollment on a first come first serve basis until full or cancelled.

January 9th, 2006 is the next ARD. This is the review date for all AMGA programs running from May-August, 2006.

We are announcing the AMGA programs will be going through a restructure in 2007. Many of you will not notice a dramatic change, but we felt it important to revisit the structure and see if we were meeting the needs of our members. The new structure will take place in 2007, and is designed to avoid some of the redundancy in our programs and allow for guides in the IFMGA track a smoother progression from one discipline to the next.

The AMGA Board of Directors also voted to allow for the Alpine Guides, and Ski Guides Course to become customized. The customization allows for current AMGA instructors of these programs to teach these courses along with and to supplement the AMGA program schedule. The hope is these programs will grow with the instructors having the flexibility to teach in a manner fitting with their schedule. If you would like a list of current instructors for the Alpine Guides Course or Ski Guides Course please contact the AMGA office at 303-271-0984 or [simon@amga.com](mailto:simon@amga.com) or [mike@amga.com](mailto:mike@amga.com).

Thank you for all of your support and I look forward to hearing from you.

## 2006 Programs

### Ski Discipline

S1: Ski Guides Course  
Tetons, WY 1/9-1/16 **spots available**

S2: Ski Guides Course  
Aspen, CO 1/23-1/30 **FULL**

S3: Ski Mountaineering Guides Course  
La Grave, France 2/20-2/27 **spots available**

S3: Ski Mountaineering Guides Exam  
La Grave, France 3/4-3/11 **spots available**

S5: Ski Guides Course  
Tetons, WY 3/6-3/13 **spots available**

S8: Ski Mountaineering Guides Exam  
Cascades, WA 3/20-3/27 **spots available**

### Rock Discipline

R1: Rock Instructor Course  
Joshua Tree, CA 3/31-4/5 **spots available**

R2: Rock Instructor Exam  
Joshua Tree, CA 3/20-3/27 **spots available**

R3: Rock Guides Exam  
Red Rock, NV 4/9-4/14 **FULL**

R4: Advanced Rock Guides Course  
Red Rock, NV – 4/16-4/25 **spots available**



## THANKS TO OUR TOP CONTRIBUTORS!

Diamond Sponsors give over \$10,000.

Benefactors give between \$2500 and \$9999.

Patrons give between \$1500 and \$2499.

Supporting Sponsors give between \$500 and \$1499

Contact the AMGA office to learn how you can become a Contributor.

### Diamond:

John & Patty Bicknell  
Black Diamond Equipment  
Kyle and Cindy Lefkoff  
Marmot  
Mammut  
The North Face  
W.L Gore and Associates, LLC

### Benefactors:

Arc'teryx  
Malden Mills/Polartec  
Mountain Hardwear  
Nike ACG

### Rock and Ice Magazine

Jon & Bridget Winsor  
Wells Fargo

### Patron:

Alpinist Magazine  
Backcountry Access, Inc.  
Backcountry Magazine  
Boulder Rock Club  
La Sportiva

### Supporting:

Arborwear  
Big Agnes

### BlueWater

Brooks Range Mountaineering  
Clif Bar  
Deuter  
Five Ten  
Forty Below  
Garmont  
Gregory Mountain Products  
Jansport  
Julbo  
Koflach/Atomic  
LEKI USA, Inc  
Macpac

### Supporting (continued)

Metolius Climbing  
Mont Bell  
Montrail  
Misty Mountain Threadworks  
Mountain Tools  
National Geographic Maps  
Omega Pacific  
Ortovox USA  
Oxford Foundation  
Princeton Tec Lights  
Protech  
Red Ledge  
Sterling Rope Company  
Eric Simonson  
Tecnica  
Trango  
Vasque Footwear  
Yates Gear, Inc.

Please contact Mike Alkaitis if you would like to contribute to the AMGA at [mike@amga.com](mailto:mike@amga.com) or 303.271.0984

**Mammut**  
**ropes up**  
**with the**  
**AMGA**

  
**MAMMUT**  
[www.mammut.com](http://www.mammut.com)

**AMGA Diamond Rope Partner**  
Pre Forms available! 800-451-5127  
[info@mammutusa.com](mailto:info@mammutusa.com)

Bail

Brag



It's a great day

You know history is all that has nothing to do with the weather. Comfortable protection that breathes and comes with the Guaranteed To Keep You Dry® promise. If your gear doesn't say GORE-TEX® brand, it's not.

g o r e - t e x . c o m

"The AMGA is YOUR Guide Association"



American Mountain Guides Association  
PO Box 1739  
Boulder, Colorado 80306 USA