

photo: Michael Alkaitis

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PRESIDENT CORNER

"I thought it might be interesting to look back at the summer from the framework of the strategic plan we passed in June. Too many strategic plans are written, then filed in a drawer somewhere and never read."

TECHNICAL DIRECTOR CORNER

"I want to reiterate that the primary reason for all we are doing with the training and certification programs is to enhance the effectiveness of our educational system."

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CORNER

"When I took over as the Executive Director of the AMGA it was my goal to help mountain guiding in the US to be viewed as a true profession instead of a hobby for part of our youth. The latest Annual Meeting in Bishop, California reaffirmed these ideas and I wanted to restate them here."

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Earning A living Wage

By Michael Alkaitis

Five years ago I wrote an Executive Director Corner stating professional guides should charge what they are worth and eventually pay will rise for all guides. Many of you responded positively to this article and took action as individual guides and guide service owners. Are we all now making the amount of money we want to survive with a family, home, insurance, and retirement? No. Are we headed in the right direction? Yes. When I took over as the Executive Director of the AMGA it was my goal to help mountain guiding in the US be viewed as a true profession instead of a hobby for part of our youth. The latest Annual Meeting in Bishop, California reaffirmed these ideas and I wanted to restate them here.

AMGA and IFMGA certification give us the international credentials to call ourselves professionals and charge a professional wage. Many obstacles face us in the quest to make our profession sustainable in the long term, but if certified guides can make a decent wage, then many of the other issues will fall into place. A common conversation I have around the need for certification is there will be fewer guides in general because of the raised standard. I could not agree more, and believe it is imperative to the success of our profession. If there are no standards, then we can't call ourselves professionals, and can't demand a professional wage.

My question to all of you is simple. Are you satisfied with the wage you are making? If not, do something about it. If we all start to promote our profession and ask for decent wages, then we will have succeeded on half the battle. I still believe we can make mountain guiding a profession in the US and hope you will all join me in trying to move the AMGA forward.

You can help this cause by promoting certification, raising your prices, advocating to land managers for the need to have certified professionals working on public lands and being stewards of the land, and finally contacting the AMGA Board of Directors for the directions you would like to see the AMGA take. I recommend you write the AMGA office, or directly to Board members any concerns, ideas, and opportunities you are aware of. The AMGA is still a small organization and you can make a difference in the direction we take.

There are many issues the AMGA continues to work on and we will try to communicate effectively with you on these issues through e-mail, newsletter, e-news, and in person. Please let us know if you have any questions and I will be glad to discuss them with you. I can be contacted at 303-271-0984 or mike@amga.com. I look forward to seeing all of you at our 2007 Annual Meeting next October in YOSEMITE. Be involved and remember you can make a difference.



The AMGA 2006 Annual Meeting in Bishop, CA was a huge success. We had a great turnout and everyone seemed to enjoy themselves immensely. For more photos go to page 12, and remember that next years meeting is in YOSEMITE!!



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Newsletter Deadline

The **Mountain Bulletin** is published in April, July, November and February. The next issue of the Mountain Bulletin will be published February 2nd, 2007.

Deadline for all submissions, including advertising is **January 12th** (Winter Issue) March 15th (Spring Issue) May 25th (Summer Issue) September 21st (Fall Issue)

Newsletter Contributors:

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

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.

Betsy Novak is the AMGA Program Director. Betsy has worked in experiential environmental education for 9 years. Prior to working with the AMGA Betsy served as a traveling educator for Leave No Trace and a climbing director at a youth camp.

Henry Beyer is the AMGA Membership Director.

Michael Silitch is an IFMGA certified guide and founder of High Alpine Mountain Guides.

Lara Usinowicz is the Sales & Marketing Manager for American Innotek, Inc. Restop™ Products Division.

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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.

President Corner

by John Bicknell



I thought it might be interesting to look back at the summer from the framework of the strategic plan we passed in June.

- Unify the guiding community in the US and within the AMGA.
 - Seek to have every working US guide a member of the organization and in support of education, certification, and standards.

The training and certification programs continue to grow rapidly. Every guide I meet is aware of the AMGA and the vast majority of the young ones at least want AMGA training. They are full of ideas for AMGA improvement and they appreciate all we do to keep down course costs while at the same time bemoaning the costs. I've tried to meet with guides

this year as part of an outreach program on trips to New Hampshire, Alaska, and the Northwest, and I do think we need to continue this and improve it—I didn't reach as many guides as I'd hoped.

I have high hopes that the reorganization of the TRSM program approved this spring can help us grow as an organization. And growth is needed if we are to realize all of our strategic goals.

- Continue to strengthen the education and testing programs.
 - Improve our ability to deliver the volume of guides necessary to meet the needs of land managers and customers demanding certified guides

The next two years will be huge as we pursue this goal. In 2007 comes the reorganization of the Rock, Alpine, Ski course structure, with the addition of a few days, a more complete separation of education and examination (via the Aspirant exams), and the continued rolling back of challenges. The Technical Committee is unanimous in believing that these changes will strengthen the educational program. At the same time, the changes increase the costs of courses for participants, which is unfortunate and possibly a limitation on AMGA growth. There can be a tension between two worthwhile objectives, and I believe those responsible for implementing this reorganization realize this fact.

The reorganization of the TRSM program is also well underway, in keeping with our June motion to make the program more accessible. Steve Long, IFMGA, who directs this program in the U.K. for the Mountain Training Board joined Rob Hess, Adam Fox, and myself in Las Vegas just before the TC and Board meetings to help us with numerous questions. There is an international standard for TR or Single Pitch Programs, subscribed to by over 30 countries, in our reformatting we are following this standard closely. The basic model is a weekend course, an interval for practice and training, followed by a weekend exam and certification. Just in terms of format alone, the course will be vastly more accessible to people. Adam Fox believes we can finalize the reorganization this year, use 2007 to prepare and advertise the program change, and then implement the new program in 2008. The process won't be entirely painless, but it is necessary and it will benefit us as an organization. Simply from an education standpoint, I believe the reformatted program will be a vast improvement over the present model.

- Improve the benefits of membership
 - Improve access for certified guides and accredited schools
 - Make the AMGA an information source for members
 - Negotiate group discounts for members (e.g. insurance)
 - Market certified guides and accredited schools

There have been a few minor inroads on access this summer—Ranier for example, but this remains a difficult goal. Again, to me, this relates to growth. It is hard for an organization as tiny as ours to influence public policy in a country of 300 million.

A tremendous member benefit that was finalized this summer was the offer of Tom Hackett, M.D. and the Vail Valley Medical to become Diamond Partners of the AMGA and to also serve as the AMGA (and all certified guides') medical advisor. I have some hopes that this benefit can be extended to all accredited guide services as well. In recent years, prominent attorneys like Reb Gregg and organizations like Wilderness Medical Institute have informed us that on the job guides are not protected by Good Samaritan Laws when utilizing their WFR or EMT skills unless they are working within protocols approved by an advising M.D. This puts both guides and their employers in a severe bind; and it is difficult to get an M.D. to agree to serve as an adviser (there's really very little benefit to the M.D.). So again, I see this as a tremendous benefit and I thank and congratulate Mike Alkaitis for being able to create this.

This benefit also extends beyond what I've mentioned. In a deal open to all certified guides, Tom Hackett is performing my shoulder surgery this fall. Basically, he'll bill my insurance and comp me for anything the insurance does not cover. He is being incredibly generous to all of us in the AMGA; he deserves our sincere gratitude.

- Continue to develop the long term financial strength and stability of the organization.

We are doing this. Mike Alkaitis and Boardmember John Winsor have continued to be very successful in corporate development (Cassio and Vail Valley have both contributed for the first time at the Diamond level). On the course and exam level, we have done what we can to minimize costs for students but prices were raised so that courses could run without losing money. This is one of those goals that is not particularly sexy but it is absolutely fundamental. If we could really succeed with this part of the Strategic Plan, we could build an endowment fund that would enable us to keep course and exam prices within the range of a working guide, and that is crucial for us as an organization.

Too many strategic plans are written, then filed in a drawer somewhere and never read. I believe the AMGA's 2006 Strategic Plan has been successful, it is concise enough and insightful enough for all of us working for the AMGA in whatever capacity to use it to guide our actions and priorities. And this summer has seen some notable successes.

(continued on page 4)



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(continued from page 3) - President Corner

Annual Meeting, etc

I also want to compliment Mike Alkaitis on the complete restaffing of the AMGA office. Nancy Lee and Simon Fryer were AMGA fixtures for many years, they did wonderful work and they are certainly missed as individuals. But Betsy Novak, Henry Beyer, and Justin Yates have been excellent replacements and I heard very little grumbling from guides that the Office was inefficient or that the transition had been rough. All of us know how hard it is to do that, to completely change the personnel in your office and still run smoothly—it is a tribute to all involved.

I want to congratulate Keith Garvey, Angela Hawse, and Rob Hess on their election to the AMGA Board. And I want to wish Pete Keane the absolute best and thank him for his years of service on the Board. All of us who have been on the Board know how hard he has worked and how valuable a Board member he has been. I will miss him greatly.

I'm writing this two days after the Annual Meeting, which was in Bishop this year, and a great success. Thanks to Doug Nidever and the other Bishop guides who hosted this year's event. The East Side is gorgeous, the climbing endless. The weather was perfect. Vince Anderson gave a tremendous talk on his climb with Steve House of Nanga Parbat, the clinics were educational, the Olympics hilarious—I hope you were here. Thanks to all who came and helped. And while this year's annual meeting will be hard to top, the 2007 Annual Meeting will be in Yosemite, also hard to beat.

Yours, John Bicknell, AMGA President.

Casio's Pathfinder Joins the American Mountain Guides Association as the Official Watch For Professional Guides

Pathfinder Becomes Newest Diamond Sponsor

Dover, NJ – Casio, Inc. has announced that Pathfinder will join the American Mountain Guides Association (AMGA) as the newest Diamond level Sponsor and the official watch of the AMGA. Pathfinder watches will be supplied to AMGA instructors for field-testing and training seminars.

Pathfinder watches are genuine tools for use in the great outdoors. Equipped with sensors to help observe nature and monitor its changes, they are extremely versatile tools for both the weekend warrior and seasoned professional. Main watch features include; Tough Solar Power, Digital compass, Altimeter, Barometer and Thermometer. Digital compass readings are displayed as one of 16 directions and altimeter readings are graphically displayed in units of five meters every two minutes. Barometric pressure is automatically measured every two hours and graphed continuously up to 26 hours. Used in conjunction with the thermometer, this makes for easy analysis of weather trends.

“We’re looking forward to a great relationship with AMGA and we are excited to provide AMGA guides with an essential tool to help evaluate their outdoor situations,” said Mike Princiotto, Product Marketing Manager, Casio. “This partnership provides Casio with access to a talented pool of certified guides in real world situations, from which we can obtain valuable feedback about our watches.”

In addition to providing watches for their instructor team, Pathfinder will also work closely with the AMGA to develop a scholarship program in line with the core features and functions of the Pathfinder. They will also assist with specialty programs for women, minority groups, education and environmental awareness.

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When Nature Calls

by Lara Usinowicz

As proponents of Leave No Trace ethics, the American Mountain Guides Association is committed to minimizing impact on the backcountry. As more and more people head into the backcountry, the issue of human waste is a growing problem that must be confronted.

The World Health Organization estimates that the average adult produces about one liter—some 2 pounds worth—of excreta per day, half of that being solid waste.

To put that in perspective, consider that in 2005 Grand Canyon National Park had 238,381 backcountry overnight stays. If most of those visitors stayed in the park for 24 hours, then 120 tons of human feces was defecated in the Grand Canyon backcountry in 12 months.

Similarly, the Great Smoky Mountains National Park reported 3,220 overnight stays, 2,311 of those in the backcountry, in one winter month. That amounts to one ton of excreta in just one off-season month.

There are areas where you can bury your waste. The proper method is to dig a cathole 6 to 8 inches deep at least 200 feet from water, camp and trails. After use, cover and disguise the cathole and pack out all toilet paper and hygiene products. While digging a cathole is a viable option, it is interesting to note a wilderness impact study commissioned by the Sierra Club in the 1970s.

A group of researchers observed the defecation methods of the Sierra Club Outings participants—most of whom were traveling in large groups and using latrines to do their business. The researchers mapped all the latrine sites scattered across the Sierras, then returned one to three years later and uncovered the latrines. The researchers found that the waste, along with the bacteria, was alive and well and had decomposed very little, if at all.

Another study about a decade later in Montana's Bridger Range discovered the same truths, except this time the focus was on catholes rather than latrines. Researchers from Montana State University buried bacteria-rich deposits of human waste in catholes that varied in depth from 2 to 8 inches and were located in six different types of Rocky Mountain soil environments and elevations. When the samples were dug up a year later all the feces remained alive with various disease-causing bacteria (namely E. coli and salmonella).

The report, entitled "Potential Health Hazards from Human Wastes in Wilderness" said, "The idea that shallow burial renders feces harmless in a short time is fallacious." It continued, stating, "Site did not make the difference that we expected. The results seemed to apply to all elevations and exposures on the mountain. From our data, it is unrealistic to hope for a rapid die-off of intestinal bacteria in catholes. Pathogens might be transferred to later campers in three ways: direct contact with the feces, by insect, or by water."

Both studies agreed that putting waste in catholes was preferable to a latrine because the smaller the fecal deposit, the greater its contact with surrounding soil, organisms, and air, which are central to the decomposition process.

There are many areas where burying your waste is not an option. These include: heavy use areas; at trailheads and other areas where digging a cathole might entail digging up someone else's waste; in deep river gorges; where it is impossible to travel the required 200 feet away from the river; along any waterway where there is only sandy soil which doesn't have the nutrients to decompose waste; in canyons and high deserts where the soil is also without the microorganisms necessary to biodegrade human waste; above the treeline; and in any mountaineering or climbing venue where the soil is too rocky to dig the required 6-8 inches for a proper cathole.

While any method of carrying out your waste is better than the alternative—whether it is a plastic baggie, a PVC tube, or the "blue bag" that is offered in several mountaineering venues, such as Rainier—compliance remains an important issue; thus removal methods should be as pleasant as possible.

Restop products offer a safe and sanitary means to deal with human waste in the wilderness. The Restop 2 solid waste bag contains the odor as well as the waste. Inside the bag is a powder, a polymer/enzyme blend, which biodegrades and gels the waste, giving it EPA approval to be simply thrown away in the trash after use. Restop provides the user with an inexpensive and effective means to comply with the outdoor ethics of Leave No Trace. For More Information Contact www.whennaturecalls.com



Guide's Gear

The ski gear review for 2006 was our largest to date and full of new product. These products are chosen by the manufacturers to meet certain criteria. No ski or binding will do it all for us, but we can choose the right tool for the right job. All of the equipment tested is incredible compared to even a few years ago and the new touring Telemark bindings are a true step in the right direction. Hope you all enjoy the upcoming ski season. If you are aware of any problems with product in these reviews, or want to send in a note of what you think, please send to mike@amga.com and we will be glad to pass this information along to our membership.

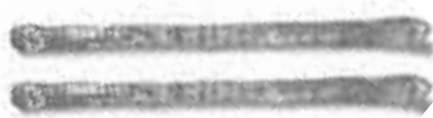
Skis:

The 2006 ski review consisted of three distinct skis and all were excellent in the right conditions. The best powder ski was the Verdict, the best crud ski was the Rapid Transit, and the best long touring ski in spring conditions was the Stelvio Freeride. If the review team had to choose just one ski to own it would have been the Verdict, but we enjoyed all of the skis and wish we owned them all.



Black Diamond Verdict:

Specs 180 cm 128-98-116 mm, weight 3.8 kg
The Verdict is Black Diamonds big ski for big terrain at a weight you can carry around in the backcountry. In the 180 cm length, the ski was quick enough in tight terrain and stable enough at high speeds. For those looking to just let the ski go, I recommend the 190cm length and remember to not go too near any mogul runs. The Verdict was the favorite ski in the test if you can only have a one ski quiver. While the ski excelled in bigger open terrain on soft snow, it was not the best at quick aggressive turns on harder snow surfaces.
Contact info: phone:801-278-5552 e-mail: bdmo@bdel.com web: www.bdel.com



G-3 Rapid Transit:

Specs 178 cm 128-91-116 mm, weight 3.6 kg/ 8lbs
The Rapid Transit is the newest addition to the G-3 line of skis and is the fist fat asymmetric ski on the market. The Rapid Transit excelled in big terrain and steep chutes in soft snow conditions. The Rapid Transit is not the ski for you if you love skiing at Mary Jane or seek the long mogul runs at your local resort. The ski found its groove when faced with crud skiing. It plowed through crud without feeling like a tank and somehow felt light and agile while maintaining its line.
Contact info: phone: 866-924-9048 e-mail: service@genuineguidegear.com web: www.genuineguidegear.com



Ski Trab Stelvio Freeride:

Specs 115-84-105, weight: 1510g/3.3 lbs
Ski Trab joins the AMGA as a new corporate partner in 2007 and is famous for its hand-crafted, Randonee racing line of skis. They have branched out to create handcrafted skis designed to excel in the backcountry as well as hold an edge on the hardest of surfaces. We tested the Stelvio Freeride and found the ski to be a great all around, easy to turn, with just enough surface area, touring ski. The reduction in weight was significant and the holding power on harder surfaces was impressive in not quite ideal spring conditions. The ski is not the best for crud skiing as the waist of the ski is a bit thin, and does not float as much as the other skis tested.
Contact info: phone: 801-272-3800 e-mail: info@wasatchski.com web: www.skitrab.com

Boots:

The boots for 2006 met the needs and demands of what we have all been asking for. Big AT boots to meet the demands put on them by big skis as well as the continued evolution of Dynafit compatible boots. We hope there is a

new Dynafit compatible, four buckle boot next year to compete with the Garmont Mega-Ride. It was tough for the review team to make a choice between the Endorphin and Tornado Pro. It all came down to what shell fit your foot the best (no surprise with hindsight), as both boots skied well and held up to abuse. All the testers agreed to truly get everything out of each boot, you need to buy an aftermarket liner and make sure the shell size is correct before you buy. If you follow these two rules you will not be disappointed.



Garmont Endorphin:

Weight 4000 grams (size 27/pair)

Garmont's new Endorphin is the newest addition to their freeride series and next generation of the Adrenaline (still in the line). The new updates create the favorite big Randonee boot in the test. The Endorphin is comfortable driving the biggest skis on the market and still has a great range of flexibility in touring mode. A positive note we did not expect to find was from Joe Vallone, "The Endorphin is the best park boot on the market". There are two drawbacks to the Endorphine. First is the new liner with laces is a return to the old days and does not meet the high standards of the rest of the boot. The second is the mountaineering soles (It comes with 2 interchangeable soles, an ISO norm alpine sole, and a ski mountaineering sole) rubber. The rubber chips off when used in rocky terrain. The Endorphin is the boot for you if you like a big boot, big skis, big lines, and not planning on climbing as the main objective of the day.

Contact info: phone: 802-658-0431 e-mail: info@garmontusa.com web: www.garmontusa.com



Scarpa Tornado Pro:

Specs weight 3628 grams (Size 27/pair)

The updated Scarpa Tornado Pro is their new addition to the big boot for big skis and big lines genre. The rubber DIN-standard Vibram Ride outsole is certified for use in all alpine and alpine touring bindings. The downside to this knee saving material is the slickness when boot packing without crampons. The

still shell and nice forward lean ski well at high speeds, while the testers would like to see a liner to meet the shells high standards. The Tornado Pro is a great boot for those with a medium to high volume foot, who are not afraid to carry a little weight for the turning reward.

Contact info: phone: 303-998-2895 e-mail: customerservice@scarpa.com web: www.scarpa.com



Scarpa Spirit 3:

Weight: 3370 grams (Size 27/pair)

The Scarpa Spirit 3 is the new 3 buckle Randonee Boot with Dynafit compatibility.

There were two major changes from the Matrix. The first being, the new shell design and shape allow for a much lower volume fit. The second being the front position of the Dynafit contact points on the toe box. The contact points are moved back to allow for an even smoother stride in touring mode. The Spirit 3 had enough power to drive medium width skis and had great range of motion in touring mode.

*Note: please read Spirit 3 instructions prior to mounting Dynafit bindings; unique instructions are required due to the touring-optimized toe insert location.

Contact info: phone: 303-998-2895 e-mail: customerservice@scarpa.com web: www.scarpa.com

AT Bindings:

The two AT bindings in this years review are really updates of existing models and were for two different uses. The NXO2 is Naxos entry into the more backcountry versus area skier, and the new Freeride Plus is Fritschis update to address the concerns from big skiers putting big forces on AT bindings. Please check out all of the bindings on the market as each is designed to offer something slightly different for different jobs.



BCA NXO2 Tour:

Weight: 5lbs/2200g per pair, including brakes, DIN setting 4-10

The NXO2 Tour is the latest addition to the Naxo line. It is a light version of the classic Naxo binding and designed for the skier who stays in the backcountry and only occasionally joins the fray of ski areas. The NXO2 comes with ski brakes, has a maximum DIN setting of 10, the virtual rotation system (VRS) and a limited 2 year warranty. Changing between touring and skiing mode on the NXO2 takes a bit of getting used to, but once mastered is easy enough. In ski mode the binding felt tight with no play and transferred power from the boot to the ski quickly. If you have a pair of skis that stay in the backcountry, this is a good choice. Contact info: phone: 303-417-1345 e-mail: info@bcaccess.com web:www.bcaccess.com



Fritschi Freeride Plus: 1.99 kg (4 lb 9 oz) Std pair, DIN setting 4-12

The new Freeride is out and comes with a few key updates making this one of the best performance AT bindings on the market. BD says "Power Transmission Control allows the boot to attach directly to the binding bar, which slides freely as the ski bends, allowing the optimum natural flex of the ski". The testers all agreed the binding skied exceptionally well and there was no play between the boot and the binding, and are still not sure if it is from the "Power Transmission Control" or not. We also decided it was simply a great skiing binding. The Freeride Plus is a sturdy binding worthy of the heaviest skiers who do not mind a little weight. It is a great companion to the Endorphin or Tornado Pro.

Contact info: phone:801-278-5552 e-mail: bdmo@bdel.com web: www.bdel.com

Telemark Bindings:

Both additions to the telemark bindings this year are leaps and bounds better than what previously existed. We can now tour in our telemark gear and not have to use twice the amount of energy as our AT brothers and sisters. While neither binding is perfect, they are certainly worth investing in if you are going to tour in your telemark gear.



Black Diamond New O1: Specs weight 1.68 kg (3 lb 11 oz) Std., 27.5 mm lift

The new O1 binding from Black Diamond is their entry into the touring telemark binding. The binding switches between touring and skiing mode via a toggle in the front of the binding and is easy to use with a ski pole. The cartridge binding stays under your foot and provides a good even flex while skiing. The binding iced up on occasion in spring conditions (BD claims they have addressed the issue by creating a smoother metal so the ice can not build up) and we had to remove the ski to clear out the ice to go from touring to skiing mode. This is a great upgrade from previous telemark bindings for those wishing to tour in comfort again.

Contact info: phone:801-278-5552 e-mail: bdmo@bdel.com web: www.bdel.com



G-3 Targa Ascent: Specs weight 1400g/49.4oz, 40mm rise (lift)

The Targa Ascent binding is essentially G-3's Targa T/9 binding mounted on a pivot system for easy touring. The binding switches between skiing and touring mode via a left to right switch at the front of the binding and is easy to use with a ski pole. As with the T/9 bindings the cartridges are on the sides of the boot and are easily adjustable. The Targa Ascent also iced up on occasion in spring conditions and was easy to clear with the tip of a ski pole with your boot still in the binding. This is a great upgrade from previous telemark bindings for those wishing to tour in comfort again.

Contact info: phone: 866-924-9048 e-mail: service@genuineguidegear.com web: www.genuineguidegear.com

(continued on page 9)



(continued from page 4) - Casio's Pathfinder

Pathfinder has joined the AMGA as one of six Diamond Level Sponsors. The other five sponsors include; Black Diamond, Mammut USA, Marmot, WL Gore and Associates and The North Face. The Diamond level of sponsorship was created in 2003 by Mike Alkaitis, AMGA Executive Director. To date, 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 very excited to have Casio's Pathfinder as the official watch sponsor of the AMGA," said Mike Alkaitis, Executive Director of the AMGA. "This partnership provides our guides with the opportunity to utilize the latest equipment available to outdoor enthusiasts."

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

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.

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PLANET

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(continued from page 7) - Guide's Gear



Packs:

BCA Stash Valhalla:

The Stash Valhalla is the new addition to BCA's line of ski and snowboard packs with the hydration tube in the shoulder strap to reduce the possibility of icing. The Valhalla is a classic top loading design and comes with the new Nalgene compatible

hydration system. The testers all became huge fans of this hydration system, as we were able to sit on our packs again without the fear of

popping a bladder, and did not freeze the hose in the shoulder strap once. The top loading design is easy to use and comes with an external shovel and probe pocket. The external pockets were not used by the review team as there was plenty of space inside the pack (2600 cu in/37 liters) to accommodate everything for a day tour, including helmet.

Contact info: phone: 303-417-1345 e-mail: info@bcaccess.com web: www.bcaccess.com

**Things to Think About:
Skinny Single Ropes**

By Michael Silitch

There is a new breed of ultra light single ropes on the market today and you should definitely think about adding them to your guide's equipment arsenal. These ropes can save you a lot of work (remember physics: work = force x distance and force = mass x acceleration). So the more distance you move with your equipment and the more mass it has the more work you do and the more energy you use carrying gear that could be used instead to care for your client, route find, etc.

Beal makes the Joker and Mammut makes the Revelation. These are single ropes that weigh 53 and 55 g/m respectively and are as skinny and light as some half ropes. But as ropes become skinnier and more slippery (single, half, or twin), they become hard to hold on too. Beal even warns about this with the Joker, suggesting that it might not work well in many standard belay devices and maybe not at all in some "auto locking" ones. Thus, belay devices should be chosen carefully.

Fortunately, there is a new breed of belay device specifically designed for skinny single ropes. It is important to do your own research and make sure the device you have works with the diameter rope you have. A slicker (treated to be more water resistant) rope increases difficulty to catch a slip or fall too.

While it is true that these ropes are rated as single ropes, as skinny as they are, they still might not be as appropriate in some situations as a fatter rope due to greater risk of cutting over an edge. Being narrow, they are also harder to hold when short roping, short pitching and require extra friction in lowering clients with a device.

That being said, when used properly these new skinny ropes can save time and energy.

Two other skinny single ropes to look for are the difficult to find Mammut Serenity, the up and coming Petzl Fuse (which I found just as light as the Joker, but more durable).

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Technical Director Update

by Rob Hess, Technical Director



In my last newsletter article dated July of 2006, I discussed some reasons for the various changes that have and will be occurring within the training and certification programs. I alluded to a major restructure that

would be occurring. I would now like to discuss this so everyone has a good idea of how the AMGA programs will work in 2007 and beyond. I want to reiterate that the primary reason for all we are doing with the training and certification programs is to enhance the effectiveness of our educational system. Our goal is to insure that individuals entering into the examination process are as prepared and ready for the exams, as well as future guiding, as possible.

There will be essentially two ways to enter into the AMGA training and certification process—either through the rock or ski disciplines. The first step, which is a prerequisite for both the rock and the alpine disciplines, will be to take the Rock Instructor Course. This is a foundational course that will cover basic guiding skills pertinent to all disciplines in addition to first level rock guiding curriculum. This course will be 10 days in length and is mandatory before going further in the rock and/or alpine disciplines. If one decides to enter the ski discipline, they will first take the Ski Guides Course. The ski program has been built to accommodate those wanting to be ski discipline specific with their training and certification. This course has been lengthened to 12 days so as to better train participants in foundational guiding skills that are more pertinent to the ski program.

Once the initial steps I have discussed (Rock Instructor Course) have been taken, one may either progress to the advanced level rock course or the first level alpine course. The most profound changes participants will experience will be with how the advanced level courses will be conducted. The advanced level courses will include two distinctive components:

1. Time dedicated largely to coaching and instruction on real objectives and or appropriate scenarios.
2. Time dedicated to assessment/examination for the purpose of determining skills necessary for obtaining aspirant status.

In general, the course and aspirant exam will be structured so that the bulk of the coaching and instruction will occur during the initial days

of the course, while specific examination will occur in the latter days of the course. Due to the short amount of time for the course and potential limitations of the venue, instructors/examiners may alter this pattern to accommodate teachable moments and or situations and scenarios that achieve the goals of the aspirant exam. Participants will be assessed on certain prerequisite skills, such as climbing and or skiing, early in the course. This is done to determine whether the individual is up to the prerequisite standard, as this is a risk management issue. Structuring the course with a distinct educational and examination component ensures that an atmosphere of open education will be achieved. The aspirant exam portion of the course will have two components: objective skills assessment drills, such as the rescue and knot pass drills; and examination on exam standard objectives. The objective skills assessment drills will be straight up pass / fail in nature, where as the time on assigned objectives will utilize a grading system like we currently use on the final exams. Though participants will be assessed on exam standard objectives at a final exam standard, we have adjusted the scoring system to reflect the fact that one is on an aspirant exam. In addition to determining aspirant status, this system will give participants a better idea of where they stand with regards to passing the final exam. Showing participants how to deal with the stress of an exam will also prove invaluable to one's success on the final exams. This system will address the needs of the IFMGA and the rules of gaining aspirant status. Full aspirant status is gained when one has passed all three aspirant courses/exams.

We are changing our prerequisites so that those entering the program will not be expected to have guiding experience. As they progress, the prerequisites expected would be looking at what participants have done since their last course. To this end, participants will be expected to furnish documentation of such prerequisites through cataloguing of their activity in their guide's notebook and subsequent submission of such information to the AMGA office. I have discussed the guide's notebook in the past, but essentially this is a journal of the history of ones guiding education. This includes trainings and certifications with the date, personal climbs, and apprentice guide climbs and climbs done with a mentor or observer, which includes their signature.

As to which exam to take first and what might be the optimal path to full certification, this is largely a function of where participants feel most comfortable and where their strengths lie. Discipline specific goals are more straightforward. Most would say that the Rock exam is

(continued on page 11)



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the least strenuous, the Alpine the most demanding and the Ski the least obvious. For those individuals working through the rock and alpine programs, I would recommend that they alternate back and forth between rock and alpine courses, i.e. Rock Instructor Course-Alpine Guide Course-Rock Guide Course-Advanced Alpine Guide Course-Rock Guide Exam- Alpine Guide Exam. These programs tend to build on each other, providing for educational opportunities that are less available in a straight discipline track i.e. short-roping and pitching. In the ski, unless one is seeking discipline specific education, I would recommend the first level rock and alpine courses before the ski. This is for the same reasons mentioned; the courses build upon each other. As discussed, hopefully the exam process will be ever easier in the future, do keep in mind that the rock exam is 6 days with no overnights, the alpine 10 and the ski 8 with numerous overnights.

If anyone has questions regarding this process, please do not hesitate to get in touch with the AMGA office or with me via e-mail or phone. Good luck to you all and have a great fall climbing season.

Rob



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Membership Corner

by Henry Beyer, AMGA Membership Director

Dear AMGA Member,



This fall has been filled with many firsts for me, including this installment of the Membership Corner. For those of you who may not know on August 1st, 2006 I joined the AMGA Office Staff, replacing Nancy Lea as the Membership Director. I've been busy learning my new job as well as tackling the substantial job of organizing and running this years' Annual Meeting in Bishop, CA with Nancy and the rest of the office.

I'd never been to Bishop before and most of my previous visits to eastern California were to the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center at Twenty-Nine Palms as a Gunrock, other wise known as a Field Artilleryman. Although similar in desert landscape, Bishop is far more picturesque than Twenty-Nine Palms and the outdoor activities are a bit more my speed these days. From all accounts the 2006 Annual Meeting was a success and I enjoyed meeting, climbing, and competing with many of you throughout the weekend.

Many individual efforts combined to host this event, so thanks to everyone who lent a hand throughout the meeting. I'd like to especially thank Kurt Wedberg for generously providing AV support as well as office space from which we based our day-to-day, behind the scenes operations, all of the Clinic Providers for volunteering their time and expertise, Doug Nidever and crew for putting together a great Guides Olympics, and the staff at both the Whiskey Creek and the Mountain Light Gallery for all their help.

Furthermore, we are grateful for the support from the Annual Meeting sponsors: Patagonia, Marmot, Arc'teryx, Black Diamond, Mammut, Petzl, The North Face, and all the various companies that donated gear for the Silent Auction and Raffle Prizes. Without their generous support we would not be able to host such an event.

I feel like I am making an Oscar or Golden Globe speech but if you'll bear with me just a few moments longer I'll be done. We certainly appreciate the efforts of TJ Kolenko of Patagonia and Jeff Heinrichs of Back Diamond for making the trip out, as well as Tim Smith of W.L.Gore for his Technical Committee presentation.

Finally I'd like to thank Vince Anderson for a fantastic slide show during the Main Event. It conveyed the sublime suffering that seems to be a requisite of such committing endeavors. I would be remiss at this time if I did not include Donna Vander Ham and her sister Dorene Diers for making what must have been a bittersweet journey to join us at the Annual Meeting. We were honored by their presence.

As Mike and I climbed out of Bishop on our way to Reno to catch a flight home we reflected upon the meeting and how such events fit into the larger picture of the AMGA. We decided that the sense of community developed between the many facets of the AMGA during the Annual Meeting through serious debate, social get-togethers, and lighthearted competition only serves to strengthen our organization, which only has room to grow.

I Certainly enjoyed myself and meeting you all.

Until the next time, Fare Thee Well!



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Silent Auction



On Behalf of Her Son, Chad Vander Ham



AMGA Membership Form

INDIVIDUAL, ASSOCIATE AND STUDENT ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name _____ Date of birth _____

Address _____ City _____

State _____ Zip _____ Gender _____

Guide service I work for _____

Work phone _____ Home phone _____

Fax _____ Email _____

I began guiding professionally in the year _____ .

I guide professionally about _____ days per year. (not required for Student and Associate Memberships)

Check the type of membership you are applying for:

STUDENT ASSOCIATE MEMBER

- \$40 check or money order
- Include proof of enrollment with Student Associate Member

ASSOCIATE MEMBER

- \$60 check or money order

INDIVIDUAL MEMBER

- \$115 for new individual members, \$100 for renewing members (check or money order)
- resume of guided climbs, minimum 40 paid days in the last two years
- resume of personal climbs, minimum 20 climbs
- at least two letters of reference
(at least one must be from a fellow guide; the other can be from a client)

CERTIFIED INDIVIDUAL MEMBER

- \$115 for new individual members, \$100 for renewing members (check or money order)
- resume of guided climbs, minimum 40 paid days in the last two years
- resume of personal climbs, minimum 20 climbs
- at least two letters of reference
(at least one must be from a fellow guide; the other can be from a client)

Check that you have enclosed ALL listed items in appropriate column in same envelope to:
AMGA Membership, P.O. Box 1739, Boulder, CO 80306.

Yes, I'd like to make an additional, tax-deductible contribution to further support the AMGA.
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If you wish to pay by credit card please fill out the following:

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I agree to support high standards of safety and professionalism in mountain guiding and instruction. I understand that the AMGA does not condone guiding without appropriate authorization and that the AMGA does not endorse any illegal guiding, whether in the US. or another country. I also understand that I, or any AMGA member may be subject to the loss of membership, accreditation or certification if such practices occur.

Signature _____ Date _____

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2007 AMGA Scholarship Program

This year the AMGA is proud to announce that over 15 scholarship opportunities are available to AMGA Members in 2007.

A committee made up of AMGA representative's reviews all scholarship applications. If you apply for a scholarship you will be notified of the outcome via mail. Recipients for all 2007 Scholarships will be announced in the Spring Edition of the Mountain Bulletin.

January 9, 2007 Deadline

Black Diamond Scholarship— This scholarship is for all AMGA Rock Courses and Exams.

The North Face Alpine Scholarship --This scholarship is only for AMGA Alpine courses and exam

Patagonia Women's Scholarship -- This women's scholarship is for all courses and exams

Marmot Scholarship --This scholarship is for all courses and exams

AMGA Jim Ratz Memorial IFMGA Scholarship --This scholarship is for advanced courses and exams. The recipient must be on the final discipline of their IFMGA journey.

January 23, 2007 Deadline

W.L. Gore Scholarship --This scholarship is for all courses and exams

Mammut Scholarship --This scholarship is for all courses and exams

The Arc'teryx Scholarship --This scholarship is for all AMGA ski courses and exam

AMGA JCC Fund for Women --This scholarship is for all courses and exams and awards \$250

February 6, 2007 Deadline

Petzl Scholarship --This scholarship is for all courses and exams

Mountain Hardwear Scholarship --This scholarship is for all courses and exams

AMGA Mike Hatstrup/XO Net Ski Mountaineering Exam Scholarship -- This scholarship is only for the AMGA Ski Mountaineering Guides Exam. You must have taken the Ski Mountaineering Guides Course to receive this scholarship.



Scholarships we are working on for 2007

Casio-Pathfinder Scholarship—Deadline TBA. This scholarship is for all courses and exams

Malden Mills Scholarship -- Deadline TBA This scholarship is for all courses and exams

Walker Family Foundation Scholarship-- Deadline TBA. This scholarship is for all courses and exams

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

- All Applications must be submitted electronically to mike@amga.com
- You must be registered and enrolled in the AMGA course or exam before your scholarship 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 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.



2006 AMGA Awards

This year's Award recipients were honored and celebrated at the Annual Meeting in Bishop, CA with a great turnout in a most inspiring venue, The Mountain Light Gallery. The Lifetime Achievement in Guiding Award went to Rod Newcomb for his 42-year career as a mountain guide and avalanche professional. At 72, Rod still guides the Grand Teton and runs the American Avalanche Institute. You are an inspiration and the AMGA salutes you, Rod. The Outstanding Guide of the Year Award went to Tim Connelly, who this year finished his IFMGA certification. This summer Tim guided Mt. Blanc, the Matterhorn and the Eiger all in only 7 days. Congratulations Tim! The President's Award honored Doug Coombs and Chad Vanderham in recognition of their guiding, their skill and their love of the mountains. We cherish our memories of them and miss them forever.

Angela Hawse
AMGA Awards Committee Chair

AMGA 2006 Exam Graduates

Rock Discipline

Certified Rock Guide Exam

Jamie Pierce
Majka Burhardt
Geoff Unger
Olivia Cussen
Jeff Banks
Jamie Selda
Carolyn Parker
Zoe Hart
Mark Puleio
Trevor Hobbs
Mark Synott
Peter Doucette
Adrian Ballinger
Joe Thompson
Paul Adams
Jason Martin
Evan Stevens
Steve Johnson
Kent McBride
Travis Piper
Josh Helling
David Miller

Certified Rock Instructor Exam

Jessie Williams
Ryan Stefiuk
Lynn Hill
Ron Funderburke
Eric Debergh
Rod Thomas

Alpine Discipline

Certified Alpine Guide Exam

Matt Farmer
Jeff Banks
Dave Miller
Kent McBride
Margaret Wheeler
Evan Stevens
Dylan Thomas

Ski Discipline

Certified Ski Mountaineering Exam

Chad Vanderham
Steve Banks
Dale Remsberg
Matt Wade
Tim Connelly
John Race
Jon Tierney
Todd Passey

IFMGA Certified

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Jon Tierney
Tim Connelly
Dale Remsberg
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Kent McBride
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Program Update

by Betsy Novak, AMGA Program Director



Things change quickly around these parts. Last week golden leaves carpeted the ground and the temperatures were in the 70's, and now I am watching a sheet of white fall from the sky. Last week I thought the AMGA program restructure was finally complete and I could publish the 2007 Program Catalog, and now I am back at the drawing board, making important changes to 2007 programs. Change is good, but it is not always an easy process and it is my job to make sure AMGA members and guides are "in the know" about these changes. So without further ado I bring you the Fall Program Update.

The changes I am referring to were brought about at this year's Annual Meeting in Bishop, California. The Annual Meeting was a great success and for those of you who could not join us, I highly recommend taking part in next year's festivities in Yosemite. During the Annual Meeting I had the opportunity to meet many of our instructors, guides, Board members, supporting partners, and members of the Technical Committee.

The Technical Committee is a working committee of the Technical Director. The Technical Committee assists the Technical Director in making important decisions with regards to program curriculum, training, certification, maintaining IFMGA standards, material development and program structure.

At this year's Technical Committee Meeting important topics were addressed that directly affect 2007 programs. During the meeting the Technical Committee revisited the program restructure with regards to the new prerequisites, length of the Ski Guide Course, and the Aspirant Exam. The Technical Director, Discipline Coordinators and remaining members of the Technical Committee all agreed that the prerequisites they initially adopted were not at the appropriate standard and needed to be updated to ensure candidates ability to climb, ski, and guide at the required level for AMGA courses and exams. Therefore, all of the prerequisites for 2007 programs will be revised and posted on the AMGA website just as soon as I have the time to edit the text. I apologize for any confusion and frustration this may cause and will do my best to help out with the application process.

The Technical Committee also made the decision that all candidates enrolled in the Ski Guide Course will take the 12-day long course. The Ski Guide Course is now 12-days in length and costs \$2200 per student for all candidates.

For questions, comments or concerns with regards to the revised prerequisites and length of Ski Guide Course please contact Rob Hess at rob@jhmg.com. Please note that it is the Program Director's responsibility to put these decisions into action and to communicate these changes to our members and guides, however the Program Director does not have the authority to finalize these decisions. The Technical Director must approve all decisions regarding training, certification, upholding standards, appeals, prerequisites, curriculum development, and contents of course manuals. I would be glad to pass on any written feedback with regards to these topics to the Technical Director and Technical Committee. Please email or mail feedback and I'll make sure the Technical Director receives it.

I would like to take this opportunity to inform you of the changes from 2006 programs that will be implemented in 2007.

- A \$100 non-refundable application fee will be deducted from your course or exam deposit.
- All candidates taking advanced level courses will take the 3-day Aspirant Exam. If a student fails any one of the objectives they will be required to take the Aspirant Re-examination. Aspirant Re-examination dates and locations will be posted on the 2007 Program Schedule. For more information on Aspirant Exam, please contact Rob Hess at rob@jhmg.com.
- There is no longer an Application Review Deadline. Applications will be accepted up until 8-weeks prior to the start of the course or exam being applied for. AMGA programs are now open enrollment, which means that applications will be reviewed in the order they are received. Those who meet the course or exam prerequisites, submit all of the required paperwork (application, waivers, resumes, documentation of completed requirements from previous AMGA courses, medical certification, and avalanche certification), and pay program deposit (25% of program tuition) will be enrolled in the course or exam they are applying for.

I will continue to work diligently on keeping you informed of the 2007 Program Structure. Please feel free to contact me at anytime with questions.

Wishing you a happy start to the winter season!
Betsy



The Finish Line



The End



AMGA Program Schedule 2007

Ski Discipline:

S1: SGC- Red Mountain Pass, CO	1/2-13	\$2,200
S2: SGC- Aspen, CO	1/18-29	\$2,200
S3: SMGC/AE- La Grave, France	2/18-27	\$2,200
S4: SMGE -Marmot- La Grave, France	3/4-11	\$1,600
S5: SGC- Cascades, WA	3/5-16	\$2,200
S6: SMGC/AE- Cascades, WA	3/12-21	\$2,200
S7: SMGE- Marmot-Cascades, WA	3/12-19	\$1,600
S8: SMGC/AE- Valdez, AK	5/1-10	\$2,200
S9: SMGE- Marmot-Valdez, AK	5/1-8	\$1,600

Rock Discipline:

R1: RIC – Joshua Tree, CA	3/20-29	\$2,000
R2: RIE – Joshua Tree, CA	3/31-4/5	\$1,600
R3: RGE –Black Diamond- Red Rock, NV	4/9-14	\$1,400
R4: RGC/AE – Red Rock, NV	4/16-25	\$2,000
R5: RGC/AE –Eldorado Canyon, CO	4/30-5/9	\$2,000
R6: RIC – N. Carolina	TBA	\$2,000
R7: RIE – Boulder, CO	5/14-19	\$1,600
R8: RIC – Boulder, CO	5/21-30	\$2,000
R9: RGE- Black Diamond- Boulder, CO	6/4-9	\$1,400
R10: RIE- N. Conway, NH	6/18-23	\$1,600
R11: RIC- Shawngunks, NY	8/13-22	\$2,000
R12: RIC– N. Conway, NH	8/27-9/5	\$2,000
R13: RIE – Boulder, CO	9/3-8	\$1,600
R14: RIE – N. Conway, NH	9/10-15	\$1,600
R15: RGC/AE –Eldorado Canyon, CO	9/10-19	\$2,000
R16: RGC/AE- Red Rock, NV	9/17-26	\$2,000
R17: RGE – Black Diamond- Red Rock, NV	10/1-6	\$1,400
R18: RGC/AE – Red Rock, NV	10/8-17	\$2,000

Alpine Discipline:

A1: AGC – RMNP, CO	5/7-16	\$2,000
A2: AGC – RMNP, CO	5/21-30	\$2,000
A3: AGC- Cascades. WA	6/18-27	\$2,000
A4: AAGC/AE – Cascades, WA	7/9-20	\$2,200
A5: AAGC/AE – Bugs/Icefields, Canada	8/20-31	\$2,200
A6: AGE – The North Face-Bugs/Icefields	8/20-29	\$2,000
A7: AAGC/AE – Chamonix, France	9/17-28	\$2,200
A8: AGE, section1–North Face Cascades, WA	9/20-29	\$2,000
A8: AGE, section2–North Face Cascades, WA	9/20-29	\$2,000
A9: AAGC/AE- Cascades, WA	9/20-10/1	\$2,200

Course Description Legend

Ski Discipline:

SGC: Ski Guide Course
 SMGC/AE: Ski Mountaineering Guide Course/Aspirant Exam
 SMGE: Ski Mountaineering Guide Exam

Rock Discipline:

RIC: Rock Instructor Course
 RIE: Rock Instructor Exam
 RGC/AE: Rock Guide Course/Aspirant Exam
 RGE: Rock Guide Exam

Alpine Discipline:

AGC: Alpine Guide Course
 AAGC/AE: Advanced Alpine Guide Course/Aspirant Exam
 AGE: Alpine Guide Exam

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