

cover photo: Michael Alkaitis

Mountain Bulletin

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PRESIDENT CORNER

"Everyone reading this loves the mountains, loves climbing. We do what we do; it is both passion and profession. At the same time, there are obvious costs, and nothing happens in isolation."

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CORNER

"There were a few key factors that helped Simon grow the AMGA programs over 300% from the time he came on. His true professionalism and passion for the AMGA brought the programs to a level of respect within the American guiding community."

MEMBERSHIP CORNER

"I am using my membership corner this newsletter to talk about employment at the AMGA. Big change is coming to the AMGA."

In Memoriam: Doug Coombs and Chad Vander Ham

By John Cooley and Simon Fryer



Doug Coombs 1957-2006

The life of Doug Coombs reads like the resume of five people, but he lived his life simply and with deep joy and great energy. He lived to be in the mountains and always had a ready, toothy smile when he talked about them. He once said in an interview, "The Mountains are my religion." He went to this church often and taught those around him to be respectful and humble in the mountains. Doug died while skiing with friends on April 3, 2006 in the steep Couloir de Polichinelle in the Fréaux sector of the vast off-piste region of La Grave, France. Doug will be remembered by his friends more for the endless play he brought to his work rather than the hundreds of spectacular first descents he logged.

Doug was born in Boston 49 years ago and began skiing at the humble resort - 240' of vertical drop - of Nashoba Valley, MA. He learned his trade on the icy slopes of Vermont and New Hampshire. Six years "or so" to earn a geology degree at Montana State gave Doug plenty of time in Western mountain powder. Doug raced for the Montana State Ski Team for four years and began heli-ski guiding in 1986. He moved to Jackson, WY in 1987 and began a quest to invent the subtle skills of steep skiing.

By 1990, Doug had become a master of his craft but was still largely unknown outside Wyoming. That was all to change. Convincing the folks at Life Link in Jackson to pay for his ticket to the first-ever 1991 World Extreme Ski Championship in Valdez, Alaska, Doug rocked the competitors with a bold, inventive and carefully calculated line down the near-vertical course. Emily, soon to be Doug's wife, won the Women's Extreme competition in 1992. He won again in 1993. Doug and Emily were married in 1994. He and Emily founded Valdez Heli-Ski Guides in Alaska in 1994 and are largely credited for developing the Chugach Range for heli-skiing, with help, as Doug explained it, from their cat, Kitty Coombs.



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Newsletter Deadline

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

The next deadline for all submissions, including advertising is June 30 (Summer 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.

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.

Dick Jackson is a fully certified IFMGA guide and former President of the AMGA.

Mike Powers is a fully certified IFMGA guide and former Technical Director of the AMGA.

Zoe Hart is an AMGA Certified Alpine Guide and was recently awarded the Arc'teryx scholarship.

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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 you all may know by now, Simon Fryer the AMGA Program Directors last day in the office was April 21, 2006. Simon worked for the AMGA for the past six years and is a major reason we are as well off as we are. There were a few key factors that helped Simon grow the AMGA programs over 300% from the time he came on. His true professionalism and passion for the AMGA brought the programs to a level of respect within the American guiding community. His dedication to the job helped convince others how important certification, education, and professionalism is to bringing adequate wages and benefits to guides in America.

I would like to thank Simon as a friend and coworker for helping grow the AMGA and wish him as much success in his future endeavors. Simon helped the AMGA start to realize our potential and I look forward to keeping this momentum going.

As the news of Simon departing sinks in, I would like to share some thoughts on the recent accident in La Grave France that took the lives of Chad VanderHam and Doug Coombs (For a complete report from Matt Farmer please go to the AMGA website at www.amga.com). Chad and Doug were good friends of Simon's and shared his vision of what a professional guide could accomplish. They both shared a love of the mountains and wanted desperately to live a fulfilling life in the places they love and to share these unique places with clients.

The past week has been a time of reflection and pondering of how the AMGA can help bring mountain guiding in the US to a professional level. Doug and Chad were two examples of mentors to young guides and true professionals in the outdoor arena. I do not have the words to express how wonderful they were and how much they will be missed. A friend of mine, Naoya from Japan, shared a Japanese saying and definition. I like his version, so I have simply copied it below:

"Tengokudemo Shiawaseni" means that they (Doug and Chad) for sure have a better life in heaven, way better and much better mountain to ski. We all will be there anyway. So we will see you there, until then, we have to enjoy our life for them!

I wish to send Simon off with great joy and happiness in my heart at what he will achieve, and I look forward to enjoying life for and being inspired by the memory of Chad and Doug.

If you are interested in contributing funds to the Chad VanderHam or Doug Coombs memorial funds information about them can be found on the AMGA website at www.amga.com.

Best, Mike Alkaitis

President Corner

by John Bicknell



Former AMGA Board President Phil Powers recently wrote an essay for National Public Radio's "This I Believe" series. When he was a young climber, NOLS founder Paul Petzoldt taught him the rest step. In the essay, Phil suggests that for him the rest step has become a metaphor for life. When we are most rushed, that is when we most need to slow ourselves for an instant and seek balance.

Every IFMGA and AMGA Board meeting begins with a moment of silence. The purpose is to recognize and honor guides who are no longer with us. We do not just rush into business—we slow down and focus on people we've known.

It's a recognition of priorities—the people in our lives are far more important than any of the business or conflicts we've gathered to resolve. When we're lucky, we actually remember this throughout the day and that's when we sometimes move forward. When we do not remember, the meetings often remind me of what a post-doc once told me in graduate school: "academic feuds are so bitter because fundamentally the pie is so small and in reality so little is at stake." Substitute the things we fight over as guides for academics and I believe a truth is there.

The sad thing is there's almost always someone to remember. Near Thanksgiving, Mike Donahue passed away after a long illness. He founded the Colorado Mountain School and guided in Rocky Mountain National Park for over thirty years. A wonderful man who influenced almost everyone he met, he died surrounded by a loving and remarkable family. I miss him but in some ways that has to be the passing most of us hope for.

On April 3rd, Doug Coombs and Chad Vanderham died skiing in La Grave. Chad had lived in the CMS guide shack for most of a summer. Doug I knew best for his willingness to help young guides—he was generous and a true mentor. So I knew both but neither was a close friend. Yet I found myself powerfully saddened and moved attending a memorial for Chad in Eldorado Canyon last weekend. Chad was an only child survived by both parents. Doug leaves a wife, Emily and a two year old son, David. From the memorial, Chad had deeply touched a lot of people in 33 years. Certainly, Doug had. I feel for the families and know no way to express it without clichés.

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(continued from page 1) - Doug/Chad

Doug went on to win contests, earn accolades and forge first descents for well over a decade. He won the National Powder 8 championships three times, placed second and third in the grueling 24 Hours of Aspen, was named the "World's Best Skier" by Outside Magazine, and traveled to Kyrgyzstan, South America, Europe and New Zealand as one of the star skiers in dozens of films.

Most recently, Doug made the first guided ski descent of the Grand Teton in 2004, the same year his son, David, was born. Doug was named one of the top 25 skiers in North America in 2005 by Skiing Magazine. Doug and Emily took their Steep Camp instruction weeks from Jackson to Valdez, Alaska and Verbier and La Grave, France. Doug, Emily and David had made La Grave their second home. Doug was a fully certified IFMGA/AMGA guide.

Doug leaves his wife Emily and their young son, David. A memorial fund for the benefit of Emily and David has been established at the Jackson State Bank and Trust, Jackson, Wyoming.

Doug Coombs Memorial Fund:

Jackson State Bank and Trust

P.O. Box 1788

Jackson, WY 83001

Tel. 307-733-3737

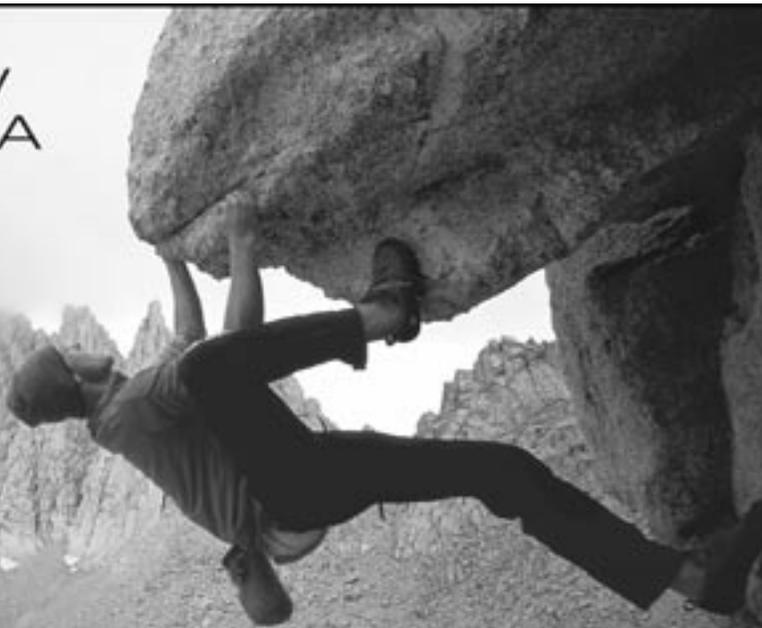
Fax 307-739-3733

Make checks out to: Doug Coombs Memorial Fund

Find out more and participate with the Outdoor Industry and Doug's friends, visit: www.dougcoombsmemorialfund.com



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



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committed to the core



Chad VanderHam
11/20/1974 - 4/3/2006

Chad VanderHam grew up in Minneapolis, Minnesota and began ski racing at a young age. He was instantly drawn to skiing and the outdoors. Chad followed his passion to explore the high peaks throughout his life. In 1993 he moved to Colorado and attended Colorado State University where he received a BA in Economics but all along he kept his focus on his true calling, powder turns and a beautiful line.

While working on his degree, Chad began to explore the European Alps and found a second home in La Grave, France. While in La Grave, Doug Coombs became a close friend and mentor to Chad and soon he honed his skills for ski mountaineering and guiding. On March 11th, 2006, Chad realized a dream and achieved his AMGA Ski Mountaineering Guide Certification and Aspirant Guide status.

Chad was the captain of the Wayzata Senior Highschool Slalom Racing Team and also a member of the Buck Hill Ski Team. On several occasions, Chad's ski racing pursuits brought him to racing camps in Austria. These camps encouraged his desires to further explore the adventurous mountaineering opportunities that existed throughout the world. A fund has been set up in Chad's name at Wayzata Senior High

Donations can be sent to:
Wayzata Athletic Department
ATTN: Alpine Skiing
4955 Peony Lane
Plymouth, MN. 55441

Checks should be made out to the Wayzata Athletic Department with a note that this funding is for the Chad VanderHam Memorial Fund.

Chad had an amazing quality of modesty, kindness, and an open approach to everything in life. He was constantly educating himself, encouraging others, and pursuing new ventures. He never missed an opportunity to share his skills and knowledge and enjoy the each present moment. We learned so much from Chad about enjoying each day and making the most of every situation. He will be dearly missed and remembered by his loving family and friends. His legacy will live on through each of us in all our future endeavors.

Chad Ray VanderHam Memorial Fund:

American Mountain Guide Association (AMGA): Chad received his Ski Mountaineering Guide certification on March 11th, 2006. In honor of his pursuit of AMGA education and certification, Chad's friends and family members have created The Chad Vanderham Memorial Fund

Donations can be sent to:
The Chad VanderHam Memorial Fund
C/O AMGA
PO Box 1739
Boulder, CO. 80306

Checks should be made out to the AMGA with a note that this funding is for The Chad VanderHam Memorial Fund. This is a tax-deductible donation and a letter will be mailed to you from the AMGA for tax purposes. If you have any questions please contact the AMGA: 303-271-0984





GUIDES TIP

Improvised Climbing Skins – Tips From A Local Guide

By: Don Sharaf

Sunday morning started with an extra dose of fuss factor, as we organized our group for a tour into Darby Canyon. Friends invited friends, and as the numbers added up, the logistics became more convoluted. Worried that a three person ski jore behind a borrowed snow machine might be too much for the tired drive belt, Christian volunteered to skate the six mile approach and meet us at the road head. Christian set out 30 minutes before the rest of us and made it more than half way before we caught him with the snowmachine. The Powder Special had a little more power than anticipated, so Christian accepted the offer of being towed in on skate skis at 30 MPH.

The first event of the Teton X-Games completed, Christian made the transition to alpine-touring mode. We had an inkling of the day to come, when Christian asked:

“Hey Sue didn’t manage to catch up with you at the roadhead did she?”

“Uhh, no. Should she have?”

“Well my skins were on the dining room table... I was wondering if she might have noticed them.”

“Oh Really?!”

Christian didn’t miss a beat and said that he would strap spruce branches to his skis for traction on the 3000’ ascent. Knowing Christian’s work ethic, conditioning, and downright stubbornness we didn’t doubt him for a second. As we pulled out our ski straps and assembled spruce boughs, Christian went to work creating a properly oriented climbing skin. The initial effort used small branches and zip ties and was a work of art. Ten minutes later, the work of art was worthless, and he went for pure bulk. The net result was a climbing skin the Vikings would have been proud of. Pure uphill power, low on the glide to weight ratio, and constructed from earth-friendly products.

After 3000’ of climbing on these long, furry snowshoes/crampons Christian topped out and savored the sweet summit air.



Starting down the north side into unknown terrain (“map... what map”) Christian suspected there could be more climbing ahead, so he strapped the two trees to his pack and skied down with us.

Following more than an hour of scouting along cliff edges and chutes that didn’t go through, Christian smiled and started strapping on the spruce. Another 2000’ of climbing later, we feel confident that Christian has more experience with uphill improvisation than any one we know. Here are some hints that he wanted to share with the guiding community if ever faced with a similar plight. (You know... when your client forgets his skins...)

- 1) Bigger is better. If the branches are too wide they will be trimmed soon... as you step on them repeatedly.
- 2) Nylon ski straps work far better than zip ties, tape, cordlettes, or bailing wire.
- 3) Never admit defeat or suffering. Smile through your sweat and think of happy things.
- 4) When your friends suggest trying a new route that may or may not go, gently remind them that they must be tired from skiing so much that season and should probably leave the first descent for another day.
- 5) Drink lots of water... LOTS!
- 6) Have a spare branch with you, if one wears out above treeline, you could be in a heap of trouble.
- 7) Reflect on what a solid learning experience this has been... and how it will NEVER happen again.



GEAR FOR THE GUIDE

I was recently asked by a few AMGA members why we have product reviews in our newsletter if most of them are so positive. It was an interesting question as I always assumed our members wanted first hand information on product available to them. The AMGA offers reviews of products to our corporate partners and a rule of the review is, if the review is bad, allow the company to pull the review. We also try to have different reviewers write about product they use the most in the terrain they work the most. Finally, we try to have a good mix of product reviewed that is for personal use and professional use. I know all of you out there still enjoy getting out on your own and don't necessarily bring the same gear you work with.

In this issue we have reviewed rock shoes, approach shoes, and new micro cams from Black Diamond and Metolius. In these reviews we have tried to point out where the products excelled as well as where they were challenged. Please let us know if you agree or disagree with our findings. I would also ask all of you to write in if you have experience or information about a product we have already reviewed and would like to share it. We will gladly share this information with our members.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Mike Alkaitis

Shoe Review 2006

La Sportiva

www.lasportiva.com



Rock Shoes

Viper: This slipper is designed on the popular Katanana last and uses the new Vibram® formula XSV and is 3.5mm thick. The shoe was used bouldering, traditional and sport climbing, indoor climbing, and was great at vertical to just over vertical face and crack climbing. The midsole keeps the shoe still for standing on edges, but loses sensitivity on the steeper faces.

Pros: Climbs great on vertical and slightly overhanging climbs. Padding over the toes makes the slipper great for thin hand and big finger cracks.

Cons: The slipper is difficult to get into as the upper has two layers of elastic and a small volume opening.

Miura Woman: The new Miura designed for women comes from the classic Miura with a few key changes and comes with the new Vibram® formula XSV and is 4 mm thick. The key changes are the last is for a lower volume foot, padded collar, and a soft super breathable tongue. The shoe was used bouldering, traditional and sport climbing, indoor climbing, and was great at edging, thin cracks and steep face climbing. The women's Miura was not a favorite for long climbs on less than vertical terrain.



Pros: Incredibly sensitive yet powerful on steep face and thin crack climbs.

Cons: Not comfortable on long less than vertical climbs.

Approach Shoes

B5: The new B5 from LaSportiva is a return to the traditional approach shoe with a bit of new technology and design thrown in. The shoe is great for short approaches and moderate 5th class terrain and is stiff enough for a bit of time in aiders. The impact brake system sole actually worked well and the only wear and tear the shoe had was in the laces.



Pros: Climbs well and is durable.

Cons: Not great for long approaches as there is a lack of cushioning. This is the trade off for climbing well.

Mammut

www.mammut.com

Rock Shoes

Goblin: The Goblin is one of two new aggressive shoes from Mammut in the US market and is a Velcro closure slipper and has Vibram® sole. The slippers were used bouldering and sport climbing and were nice for overhanging faces. The Goblin is for a lower volume foot and was soft for vertical to less than vertical terrain.

Pros: Good shoe for bouldering and steep faces.

Cons: Soft for vertical and less than vertical faces.



Shogun: The Shogun is built on the same last as the Goblin yet was a powerful edging shoe when fit tight. The shoes were used bouldering and sport climbing and were



nice for vertical edge climbing and slightly overhanging edges. The Shogun was not great for long routes or steep overhanging faces.

Pros: Good edging shoe with lots of power.

Cons: Not comfortable for long routes and a bit stiff for overhanging terrain.

Montrail

www.montrail.com

Rock Shoe

Magnet: The Magnet is one of two new and unique shoes built on the same slightly downturned last, and using the heat moldable CTX foam around the heel, and above and under the toes. To create the custom fit you simply put the shoes in a conventional oven at 225 degrees for two minutes, put them on your feet for 3 minutes and you are ready to go. The shoe was used bouldering, traditional and sport climbing, indoor climbing, and was great at edging, and vertical to less than vertical face climbing. The Magnet was incredibly comfortable for the snug fit, but did not excel at rock that was overhanging due to the stiff midsole.



Pros: Incredibly comfortable and excelled at steep face climbing with edges and pockets.

Cons: Was stiff for overhanging rock and the rubber seemed to not be as sticky out of the box as the others in the test.

Wasabi: The Wasabi is

built on the same last as the Magnet and carries the same custom fit CTX moldable foam around the heel, and above and below the toes. The differences from the Magnet are the closure is with 3 straps of Velcro and the midsole is a doughnut shape for excellent sensitivity on steeper terrain. The shoe was used bouldering, traditional and sport climbing, indoor climbing, and was great at steep sport climbing and bouldering. The shoe did not supply enough support for vertical to less than vertical climbs.



Pros: Comfortable and precise slipper that excelled on steep face routes and boulder problems.

Cons: Soft for vertical to less than vertical terrain and the rubber seemed to not be as sticky out of the box as the others in the test.

Approach Shoe

CTC Mid XCR: The CTC Mid XCR is a Gore-tex® XCR mid height approach shoe built on the popular CTC last. The shoe is one of the newer model



(continued on page 8)



(continued from page 7) - Gear For The Guide

approach shoes that excels on long approaches and has a lot of cushioning to absorb rocks while carrying a load. The shoe is good for 4th class and easy 5th class terrain and the XCR keeps your foot dry when you are traveling through a bit of snow.

Pros: Good comfortable mid height shoe for long approaches.

Cons: Climbing performance is sacrificed for comfort and cushioning.

Scarpa

www.scarpa.com

Phone: 866-998-2895



Rock Shoe

Thunder: The Thunder is the new all around shoe from Scarpa. The shoe reminded the testers of a stiffer more durable Mythos. The shoe was used on traditional crack and face routes and has a 5mm Megabyte rubber sole. The Thunder was a good all around comfortable shoe, but struggled on more technical terrain.

Pros: Comfortable for all day trad climbs.

Cons: Not the most precise shoe.

Five Ten

www.fiveten.com

phone: 909-798-4222



Rock Shoe

Altia: Five Ten has returned to the high top trad shoe market. The new Altia is a true traditional high top with 5.5mm thick C-4 sole and padding all around for comfort. The shoe excelled at off-width, hand, and fist cracks. The shoe with its boxy toe box and comfortable fit did not excel on steep or overhanging faces or thin finger cracks.

Pros: Comfortable high top that protects your ankles in wider cracks.

Cons: Boxy toe is less than ideal on steep face or thin cracks.

Cam Review 2006

Black Diamond C-3:

The new C-3s are finally here and worth the wait. The design highlights are a 30% narrower heads than other cams on the market, compression driven springs, and a U shaped stem. I noticed along with the other testers right away the C-3's fit in places other cams simply would not go. In a place like Eldorado Canyon, CO this is like finding gold at the end of the rainbow. The color coding is easy (if you use other Camalots) and follows the larger C-4 coding. The stems are stiffer than Aliens and softer than Metolius. The cams were easy to place and the spring tension felt as if you were pulling a larger size cam and made the testers feel comfortable climbing above small cams.



Pros: Narrow head size, good feel, easy to use.

Cons: Not as flexible as Aliens, but you can't have it all.

Metolius Ultralight TCU:

At first glance the new Ultralight TCU's are no different from their predecessors. Once you take a closer look, there are several differences of note. The new units are lighter, have a narrower cam profile, and all come with the Range Finder. The Direct Axle Technology (DAT) is responsible for the lighter weight and narrower cam profile, and is supposed to give more holding power. The new Ultralight TCU's still have the U shaped stem and are durable. The stem is still stiff as with the old models.



Pros: Light weight and easy to place.

Cons: Stiff stem.



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® K² 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 W. L. Gore & Associates. www.marmot.com Photo: Art Hoyle, Miles Smart.



(continued from page 3) - President Corner

In the last three years, this was the third memorial I have attended in the same spot in Eldorado. My friends and I agree that it's time for a wedding or a baby shower.

Everyone reading this loves the mountains, loves climbing. We do what we do; it is both passion and profession. At the same time, there are obvious costs, and nothing happens in isolation. A few years ago, I sat in a hospital room with a man dying of head trauma, the only death in the history of CMS. I told myself then, "this is the business you've chosen." I'm at peace with that, but I am very tired of memorials. I remember the line in every episode of Hill Street Blues, "Be careful out there." Please do so and I'll try to do the same.

.....

Not all departures are heart-wrenching. After 6 years in the AMGA office as Program Director, Simon Fryer is moving on to partner with Topher Donahue in a photography business. I've worked closely with Simon for almost a decade. I want to thank him for all he's done, for me and for the AMGA, and I wish him well as he leaves. In the words of another old friend, I easily know of a half dozen guides who only joined the AMGA after Simon brought his good nature, dependability, and enthusiasm to the organization. He will not be easy to replace.

.....

Normally, in this article, I plan to write about what's happening in the AMGA and on the Board, about our long range plans and significant events. I will attend IFMGA meetings in Austria with Dick Jackson early in May. I'll write about what I find concerning IFMGA attitudes towards the AMGA. Consider this article a long-winded version of the moment of silence that precedes each meeting, written for the same reasons, to recognize and honor those no longer with us.

Yours, John Bicknell





Membership Corner

by Nancy Lea, AMGA Membership Director



Dear AMGA Member,

I am using my membership corner this newsletter to talk about employment at the AMGA. Big change is coming to the AMGA. As you know by now, Simon Fryer my dear friend and colleague is moving on to other opportunities. I am very excited for Simon but will also miss him very much and selfishly I wish we could keep him here a little longer. However, I know that Simon is excited to start a new chapter in his career and I am happy for him. He has brought so much great energy to this organization and office environment. Thank you Simon for all of the great years working along your side!

We have found a new person to fill Simon's position and I am looking forward to Betsy Novak joining our team. Betsy comes to us from Leave No Trace, a partner organization of ours. She was formerly a traveling trainer and has attended the AMGA Annual Meeting in the past. She will be filling Simon's very big size 11's. I am confident that with our support, Betsy will do a fantastic job and she will be answering all of your questions and helping you with the programs in no time. Betsy has great enthusiasm and experience in outdoor and experiential education. Her passion is working in a non-profit setting and she believes in our mission. We welcome her with open arms and you will be hearing from her after her start date of May 8th.

In addition to filling Simon's position we will also be looking for a Program Assistant to fill the position that Brandon Walton left last fall. We will begin accepting applications for the Program Assistant position in the summer. Please watch for postings and if you or someone you know is interested in the position contact us for more information.

Lastly, I wish to give you all advanced notice that I too will be moving on from the AMGA in the coming months. For the past two semesters I have been taking courses part-time while working full time. In the fall, my hope is to pursue my degree full time and either work very part-time or not at all. The Membership Director position is a fulltime position that takes dedication and effort. As much as I would like to, I don't believe that I can balance both once I begin fulltime course work.

Typically when you leave a job you don't tell your boss until just before you give notice, let alone announce it to the entire board of directors or the membership base. However, working at the AMGA is not your typical job. My hope is to leave the AMGA on the best possible terms. I hope to seek, hire and train my replacement. I want to make sure that when I move on the next Membership Director will be set up for success. I feel that I owe this to all of you and to my colleagues and the board of directors.

It's not quite time for goodbyes yet. I have much work still left to do. You will be seeing me well into the fall and hopefully at the Annual Meeting as well.

Have a safe and happy spring. More to come in the summer newsletter...

Best Wishes,
Nancy Lea

The AMGA Meets with other National Climbing Non Profits

Recently a group of Executive Directors from national climbing non profits met to start a dialogue of how we can work together to better the climbing community. The non profits involved are the American Mountain Guides Association, American Alpine Club, Access Fund, USA Climbing, and the Climbing Gym Association. These key organizations represent the majority of national climbing non profits and an open dialogue is a great start to working together. The group has agreed to work on our area of expertise and share information with the others. I look forward to filling you in on our conversations in the future and wanted to let you know we are dedicated to working together for you.

Sincerely,
Michael Alkaitis, AMGA Executive Director



2006 AMGA SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Below is Arc'teryx Scholarship recipient, Zoe Hart's account of the Ski Mountaineering Guides Course in La Grave France, Feb 2006

DROPPING IN by Zoe J. Hart

Once again I felt small. As I peered over the Bresche, straddling the sun-shade line, a chilling breeze swept up the face and slapped my cheeks. The pit of my stomach knotted, a feeling I have masochistically grown to love. This is why I go into the mountains. Perspective, both internal and on a greater level. Though I felt small, it was not a feeling of insignificance, it was clarity. The struggles of the previous days, stresses, wants, complaints dissipated into presence. There was not time or space for distractions.

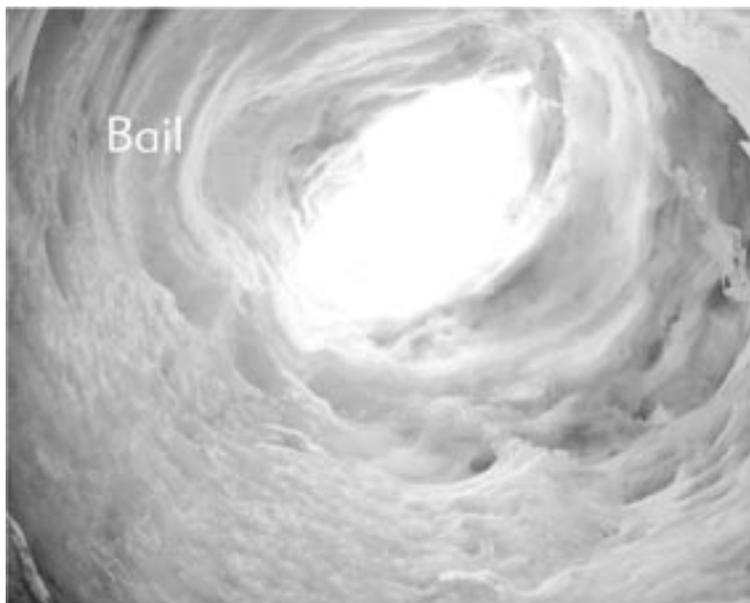
The sun of the south side disappeared as I stepped off the ridge, into the shadows of the rocky peak above, Le Meije. The Enfecheur, the North Face, looked even more imposing from above. Dropping into the dark side I left the warmth and security of the moderate terrain behind me. Eyes fixated on my watch, three hours of daylight, and the anchor, two pieces of webbing tied around a protruding pile of rock, I weighted the anchor. Rappelling down to the glacier. Committing.

"Your lead Zoe." Day 8 of the AMGA Ski Mountaineering course. The final day. The final descent. 6,000 feet of steep, technical terrain

lay below us, yet to be navigated this year. I felt like I drew the short straw. Standing atop the face, staring at scribbled etchings in my notebook more similar to a treasure map than a topo, I was left to recall images from a view two days earlier. Two crevasses at the top split them. Roll over the nose, tickle the slopes. Two exposed sections of ice, slip between. Ice falls to the left, cliffs to the right. Don't miss the zig-zag.

We safely crossed the bergschrund, a massive snow bridge and put our skins on. My heart raced, legs shook, and lungs burned as I stomped trail through calf deep breakable crust. Scanning left to right, looking for hidden crevasses.

Cresting over the roll I could not see the entrance, but felt the presence of another bergschrund just below my ski tips. Wind crusted snow cut at my shins, reducing me to kick turns down hill. I yearned to be a better skier. The seven others, students and instructors, followed behind my bobbing pink jacket.



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Within sight of the Telepheriques and the quaint town of La Grave I made promises to a higher power that I would probably never keep. I could feel all eyes upon us. Friends watching from the valley floor, peering through binoculars. I wished I was with them, fabricating how I would do it if it were ME up there.

Traversing, side slipping, through the dense snow and occasionally skittering on glare ice, I looked over my shoulder at everyone following me. Waiting for my decision. The crusty snow metamorphosed into a dusting of fluff over ice, out came the ice axes. Swing, step, step, swing, step, step. We picked our way through the worst of it.

More rappels off a burried stuff sack full of snow, more webbing around rock piles, dwindling daylight, encroaching fog. Decisions were made with confidence, and ground covered. I began to reconsider whether I loved or hated this sort of commitment, this

sort of exposure, in the chill of the shadows and setting sun.

Finally, amidst dozens of other tracks, we hit the piste before dark. The pub by 6 pm. Stories flowed with beer. Fear and frustration turned into a learning experience. Angst and doubt

dissipated and I was left with perspective. I was thankful for the temporary enlightenment. In the warmth of the pub and exaggerated story tellings I knew I'd soon yearn to feel small again in the shadows of the mountains where stories tell themselves, and we find reverence and humility.

Congratulations to all of our 2006 Scholarship Recipients

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Awarded to Zoe Hart

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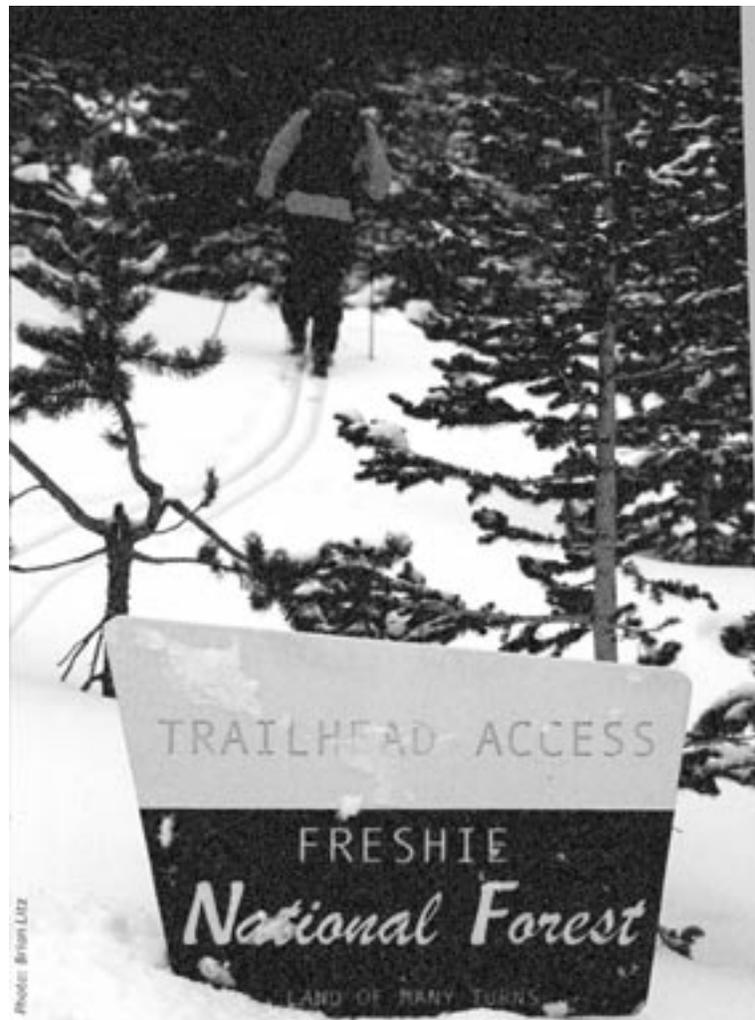
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Program Update

by Simon Fryer, AMGA Program Director



After six years as the Program Director for the AMGA, I have decided to pursue a new direction in my career. Working for the AMGA and with a devoted group of individuals throughout the US has been an amazing experience. In the past six years, the organization has grown, developed, and gained tremendous momentum. I know this direction will continue in the years to come.

With the passing of Chad and Doug, I'm reminded of the importance of friendship, enjoying the present moment, and appreciating the achievements we've accomplish. I'm grateful for the relationships that have developed and strengthened with my involvement in the AMGA. It has been inspirational to be involved with such a passionate group of individuals. There are too few in our world today that follow their hearts and allow their dreams to drive their direction. I'm a better person from being involved with an organization that promotes such a path. I hope to embrace the same energy in my next endeavor.

I want to thank all of those who I've worked with especially Mike and Nancy. It's unique to work with individuals you can call close friends and count on through good and bad. I will miss seeing them daily, working through issues, and enjoying successes. They do a tremendous amount of work in and out of the AMGA office to keep the organization focused and on track. Their support and friendship have made the past six years fly by. They have made the AMGA a great place to work each day.

I look forward to crossing paths with many of you in the future and wish you well in your professional pursuits.

Safe travels and enjoy the adventure,

Simon

Course and Exam Schedule:

Rock Discipline:

R11-06: Rock Instructor Course
North Conway, NH 8/28/06-9/6/06

R12-06: Rock Instructor Exam
North Conway, NH 9/11-9/16/06

R13: Advanced Rock Guides Course
Yosemite, CA 9/18-9/27/06

R14: Rock Instructor Exam
Boulder, CO 9/25-9/30/06

R15: Advanced Rock Guides Course
Yosemite, CA 9/18-9/27/06

R16: Rock Guides Exam
Red Rock, NV 10/2-10/7/06

R17: Rock Guides Exam
Yosemite, CA 10/2-10/7/06

R18: Advanced Rock Guides Course
Red Rock, NV 10/9-10/18/06

Alpine Discipline:

A4-06: Advanced Alpine Guides Course
Bugs/Icefields CANADA
9/4/06-9/14/06

A5-06: Alpine Guides Exam
Bugs/Icefields CANADA
9/4/06-9/14/06

A6-06: Alpine Guides Course
RMNP, CO 9/16/06-9/25/06

A7-06: Alpine Guides Exam
SECTION 1
Cascades, WA 9/20/06-9/30/06

A7-06: Alpine Guides Exam
SECTION 2
Cascades, WA 9/20/06-9/30/06

Please see the AMGA Website for the entire 2006 schedule at:

<http://www.amga.com/courses/schedule.html>

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