2008 was a year of change and progress for the American Mountain Guides Association. We enjoyed a 23% growth in membership in addition to the launch of two new and successful training programs. We maintained our partnerships with industry leaders and initiated a hopeful discussion with a highly regarded educational institution about an academic partnership that would approve AMGA courses for graduate and undergraduate credit.

Due to successful fundraising efforts the AMGA was able to provide over $40,000 in scholarships and subsidies to our membership and thousands of dollars worth of technical product for exam graduates. The AMGA partnered with Outdoor Recreation Insurance to set in motion a personal accident insurance plan for all members, including spouses and kids, and their paying clients.

The AMGA invested in the development and production of new marketing and promotional materials to better represent AMGA guides, climbing instructors and our credentialing programs, and distributed hundreds of copies at national conferences and events. Venturing to substantially improve our certification and accreditation program, we allocated significant funds and resources into program developments, instructor pool training, and public policy initiatives.

Looking ahead there is much work to be done. Access is one of the greatest concerns of our membership and as more guides enter the field; more climbers and skiers head to the hills; and more conflicting management plans are implemented, our responsibility to unify the guiding community and fulfill our mission of being the premier source for training, credentials and services for professional mountain guides and climbing instructors in the United States becomes paramount.

The AMGA is committed to investing the time, money, and passion necessary to advance the guiding and climbing instructor profession. We will continue to expand our programs, policy work, and member benefits. We will continue to work with our partners to provide unique marketing opportunities for our guides and instructors. We will continue to build vital relationships with industry affiliates, land managers, university and outdoor schools, guide service owners, independent guides, and partner programs. We will continue to do this because we believe in what we do and we believe in the work you do for the profession as a whole. Please email me to let me know what you feel the AMGA should be working on in 2009.

Cheers to the New Year!

ED Update
By Betsy Novak
As you work through the busy winter season, I urge all of you to consider the ways in which your goals, and your needs, align – or don’t align – with the work of the AMGA.

The idea of connectedness is also very present in the international guiding community - in late November of last year, I had the honor to represent the AMGA at the IFMGA meeting in Stockholm. In addition to meeting all the amazing guides in the organization, having ever seen a gold pin?, my task was to update the room – full of guides from 20 countries – about the developments and challenges of access in the US, and about the plans for the IFMGA meeting in Boulder in 2010. The response – given in three languages – was one of enthusiasm and encouragement.

The sum of these two experiences – the round table and the IFMGA meeting – has been my reminder of the importance of ‘working together as we move forward. As you work through the busy winter season, I urge all of you to consider the ways in which your goals, and your needs, align – or don’t align – with the work of the AMGA. Are we on the same page? How can we get there? What are we missing? And when you have some answers or ideas, drop us a line and let us know what you think, or join an event or an AMGA function to get an update of all that is taking place with your organization.

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NEWSLETTER DEADLINE
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Katie Kelly is the AMGA Membership Director.
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Ed Crothers is the AMGA Accreditation Director.
Margaret Wheeler is President of the AMGA, an IFMGA Guide and an instructor for the AMGA.
Rob Hess serves as the Technical Director of the AMGA. He is IFMGA certified and the senior guide of the Jackson Hole Mountain Guides.
Bruce Edgledge is the Vice President and co-founder of Backcountry Access.
Don Pachner is the President of Pachner & Associations, LLC.
Mike Alkaitis is a Certified Rock Guide & General Manager of Total Climbing in Boulder, CO.
Evan Stevens is an IFMGA Guide, climber and skier, always on the go for good rock and great snow.

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.
TD Corner

by Rob Hess

In my last newsletter I briefly discussed a number of topics, one of which was the minimum standards for movement skills by the three disciplines at the AMGA. By the time this newsletter comes out, we will have run 2-3 ski guides courses. My goal in writing this newsletter is to help individuals considering entering in the ski guide program better understand the level of skiing they will be assessed at and held to at the AMGA. The ski discipline is unique in many ways. In thinking about the skills of the clients we work with, they may vary greatly from the other disciplines. In most cases, the clients are better skiers than the guides. We know that there is much more to the various aspects of skiing than just skiing ability, but the ski guide must ski at a level that commands respect in all levels of skiers. The members of the AMGA Ski Discipline Instructor Pool have spent considerable time discussing and developing the expectations and process of assessing skills of student skiers. Berta Vadasz, the discipline coordinator for the ski program, drafted the technical descriptions for all AMGA ski guides. Berta states, “An AMGA Ski Mountaineering Guide must be skiing at a standard that is inspirational and motivational to all Advanced Zone skiers.”

Too often I observe individuals rushing the process and in the end perform below the standard thus forced to retake programs. I ask folks to consider carefully as to whether they are at the standard.

AMGA Ski Mountaineering Guides must demonstrate an appropriate mastery of the blending of skills for the following maneuvers: Wedge Turns, Wedge Christies, Stem Christies, Parallel Turns, Hop Turns, Pedal-hop Turns, Dynamic Parallel Turns.

A prospective ski guide must be at or very close to the standard described in the technical description. If they are not, they may be asked to drop out of the course. Too often I observe individuals rushing the process and in the end perform below the standard thus forced to retake programs. I ask folks to consider carefully as to whether they are at the standard. If you are a free-heel skier, you will be asked to perform alpine skiing techniques. Snowboarders must have intimate knowledge of skiing techniques and capable of coaching skiing. Individuals, who snowboard and are seeking IFMGA certification, will be required to demonstrate skiing proficiency. If you have any doubts, do not understand the technical descriptions or wonder if you are at the standard, get an IP member to give you a pre-assessment... but please remember that we take this very seriously. Below is the technical description for the skiing standard as authored by Berta.

To meet the AMGA Ski Mountaineering Guide Standard, a candidate must demonstrate the following level of skiing skills:

- Ski with a centered, efficient stance with appropriate ankle and knee flexion along with the ability to move center of mass fore/aft and laterally to maintain dynamic balance in all situations and snow conditions.
- Begin each turn by noticeably moving the center of mass in the direction of the new turn.
- Generate turning power from the feet and lower legs rather than from the upper body.
- Upper/lower body separation with a countered relationship to create anticipation of a new turn along with precise pole plant timing and usage in all situations.
- A continuum of skills blending from wedge and stem turns to dynamic, high speed, carved parallel turns with high edge angles and center of mass well inside the turn.
- Controlled skiing in any situation including very steep (up to 50°) narrow chutes with the ability to bring any turn to a stop if necessary.
- Rhythm and flow in turn-to-turn skiing with a guide’s pack or multi-day pack.

I hope this article clarifies the requirements for AMGA Ski Programs. Stay well and have a safe and productive winter season.
DIGGING DEEPER: UNCOVERING THE REAL ISSUES IN NORTH AMERICAN MULTIPLE BURIALS

BY BRUCE EDGERLY

People are people. They are not numbers. To find out what the real issues are in avalanche rescues, we must go beyond statistics and speak directly to people who have actually had an avalanche transceiver in their hands during real, live avalanche rescues. This is what we have done in part two of our ongoing research on multiple burials. Our findings in real multiple burial situations, it’s not about beacons and searching. It is what avalanche educators should be teaching in their courses, along with original, basic beacon searching, probing, avalanche escape strategies and airbag use.

Part of our research included statistical studies in North America and Tyrol, Austria by Bruce Edgerly and Dieter Stopper, respectively, who both teach classes in digital computer science, Jon Mullen. Both of these studies were published last year in The Avalanche Review independently concluding that “special case” close-proximity multiple burials are extremely rare and often overlooked by manufacturers.

Since then, several other reports have been published, including a study by French avalanche researcher Frédéric Jarry. He cites Swiss researcher Manuel Germaine’s suggestion that at least two shovelers are recommended per victim for that to stand a chance at survival. But according to Jarry, very few rescuers have taken this detail to heart. In the absence of shoveling manipulations, he argues, then advanced techniques (and technology) for complicated multiple burials are a distraction from the real issue: shoveling. “Never too early, never too late,” Jarry concludes, “it’s necessary to start digging!”

DIGGING DEEPER: RESCUE INTERVIEWS

We began “digging deeper” by contacting members of the 15 parties in which multiple-victim beacon searches were actually performed. In addition, we contacted members of parties in which at least two people were reported killed from 1995 to 2008 on www.avalanche.org. The objective was to make sure these were captured in our research and to get “worst case” feedback from the field. This added up to roughly 35 incidents that we investigated through interviews with actual rescuers, coroners, search-and-rescue teams, and/or other witnesses. To get a big-picture view of the entire rescue process, we asked the following questions to each person that we contacted:

• How many victims were completely buried with no visible signs of life?
• How far apart were they buried?
• Did you perform signal triage to prioritize those victims most likely to survive?
• Did the victim(s) die from asphyxia, trauma, or some other cause?
• Was there a last-seen-area?
• Did you perform a primary/search signal?
• Was there any confusion from intermediate beacons?
• What beacon search techniques were used searching in series, searching in parallel, micro search strips, the Three-Circle Method, Special mode, “marking?”
• Did you turn off the victim’s beacon after pinpointing them/him/her?
• What technique was used for excavating the victims?
• How much time was spent searching versus shoveling?
• What was the most-time-consuming part of the rescue?

In conjunction with their lengthy and often emotional conversations, we defined the primary cause of each fatality in each multiple burial incident, with the help of the witnesses and/or conjunctive returns. These results are summarized in the bar graph below:

Multiple Burial Fatalities (total deaths: 76)

In 76 multiple-burial fatalities, excavation time was typically 30 minutes or more at the primary issue. This was followed by no beacon (14) and trauma (13), respectively. There was only one case in which a continuing beacon search was cited as a problem. And in this case, the rescuer said it was mainly the depth of burial, not multiple signals, that caused the confusion.

ADDITIONAL FINDINGS

• Close-proximity multiple burials were extremely rare. They included the case above from Kazakhstan Glacier, B.C. in 2003; the self-published incident from Afton, Wyoming, USA, (Cerri, B.C., also in 2003); a highmarking incident near Fernie, B.C. several years ago and another snowmobiling incident near Allot, Wyoming in January 2008 (in this case, there were no survivors to perform a companion rescue). Confusing signals were cited as a problem only in the incident at Kazakhstan Glacier.

• Burial depth and lack of shoveling manpower are the main contributors to excessive excavation time. Non-avalanche burials can increase the depth of burial and also hinder the rescuer’s ability to extricate and treat the victim. In at least nine cases, an avalanche airbag was used and was effective in preventing burial depth.

• While rare, multiple burials are best avoided, as they almost always result in fatalities. In only 1 of 45 multiple-burial cases did all the completely buried victims survive. In this 2004 incident, numerous rescuers were available to excavate the two victims, who were highmarking in a popular snowmobiling area near Lake Ann, Washington. The best options for maintaining shoveling manpower are appropriate group size, proper training, skill development and exposing as few people as possible to the avalanche hazard.

It’s possible that other successful live recoveries have occurred. The database at www.avalanche.org is mainly limited to fatalities; live recoveries often go unreported.

In several cases (including Lake Ann), rescuers said they had a problem with errant signals coming from the same group, which was very helpful to have multiple searchers on the scene, this can complicate the beacon search if there is a lack of site control.

• Of all the complete burial incidents, just over half of the victims were wearing beacons. This was higher in Canada (79 percent) than in the U.S. (43 percent). This difference is partially explained by the prevalence of commercial guiding in Canada compared to the U.S. Canadian avalanche educators should emphasize the importance of multiple burial incidents. In commercial groups, all participants are required to use transceivers.

• Transceivers use is on the rise. From the periods 1998-2002 to 2003-2008, beacon use rose from 52 percent to 57 percent of the victims.

• Snowmobile avalanche incidents comprised roughly 40 percent of overall avalanche incidents. This percentage did not change significantly from 1998-2002 to 2003-2008.

• Transceivers are slightly less accepted by snowmobilers than by non-motorized users. Just 44 percent of the snowmobiling victims were wearing beacons, while 53 percent of the non-motorized victims were wearing them.

• The concept of a “primary search” is irrelevant. In almost all cases, there was a last-seen-area or the rescuers had a clear idea of where to begin the beacon search. In four cases, excessive time was spent traveling before a signal was acquired. This was attributed to difficult footing or to an attempt to avoid avalanche hazards (“hangmatt”), not to the lack of a signal.

• Keep your gloves on! In several cases, the excavation process was compromised by non-functional handwear after the rescuer took off all her gloves to assemble gear, then lost them.

CONCLUSION

To understand the real issues in multiple burials, statistics are just a starting point. By interviewing the rescuers who have actually performed multiple-victim beacon searches on the scene, we see a clearer picture of what matters: excavation time and carrying beacons. For avalanche educators that are teaching courses to recreators, time is limited. To best serve their students, educators should emphasize the following:

1. Organizing the rescue: Allocating manpower, controlling the site, and calling for assistance when appropriate.

2. Basic beacon searching: Owning beacons, understanding single burials, and—more advanced groups—double burials performed in series or in parallel. In addition, on the special case” close-proximity techniques should be limited to professional courses.

3. Shoveling techniques: Several recently published reports propose valuable techniques for efficiently excavating avalanche victims, including “strategic shoveling” and the V-shaped conveyor method. (see References, below)

4. Probing: Basic probing for life-sized targets, not Tupperware, using a spiral or concentric circle pattern.

5. Reducing the depth of burial: This can be accomplished through proactive escape strategies, reversible releases, and avalanche airbag technology.

Most important, however, is preventing avalanche incidents in the first place through on-mountain education, terrain selection, proper route finding, and effective communication. Ideally, educators shouldn’t need to teach avalanche rescue in their courses at all. But this, of course, is more “ivory tower” thinking—and there’s no place for that on the debris pile!

Grim reality. On the avalanche debris pile, it’s about shoveling, not beacon searching. (Photo courtesy Flathead County Coroner).
Arc’teryx Fission SL Jacket
By Henry Beyer
The Fission SL is the lightest, fully waterproof, insulated jacket offered by Arc’teryx. New for 2009 and featuring Gore-tex ProShell and Thermatek non-quilted insulation, the Fission SL should, not surprisingly, soon become the favorite jacket for all kinds of outdoor enthusiasts. I have to say that I love these pants. They are constructed from Polartec Power Shield fabric and are both wind and moisture resistant. The can be worn as an outer or inner layer equally well. While climbing the Gamma SV work great as an outer layer but if the wind picks up or the precipitation gets too heavy, they are trim enough to easily fit under an outer shell. In fact they are so trim that you might want to consider suspending if you prefer a more “roomy” fit. I like them under my ski pants at the area because they keep my legs warmer while riding the lift, but they do come with a stretch cuff with lace hook and adjustable cord thus supplanting the need for a gaiter if you choose to wear them on the outside of your boot. A particularly nice feature are the two mid thigh cargo pockets where you can easily stow a bracade or carry on the climb snack. These highly versatile pants get two thumbs up.

Arc’teryx Kappa AR Pant
By Henry Beyer
Kappa AR Pants are in a word- warm. Weighting slightly under a buck and a half these pants offer a big bang for that buck and half. The outer shell is fashioned from Windstopper material and they are insulated with PrimaLoft Sport insulation. You can easily dump them in the bottom of your pack and pull them out for those cold ice climbing belays (made easy with full separating side zippers) or for slipping them on at night during a multi-day ski tour. Or if ice and snow are not your thing, the Kappa AR make great camp pants for those cold autumn nights in the desert. Well reinforced knees and seat, you won’t be afraid of trashing them while telling stories around the campfire. As for me I just like being warm.

Arc’teryx Gamma SV Pant
By Henry Beyer
I have to say that I love these pants. They are constructed from Polartec Power Shield fabric and are both wind and moisture resistant. The can be worn as an outer or inner layer equally well. While climbing the Gamma SV work great as an outer layer but if the wind picks up or the precipitation gets too heavy, they are trim enough to easily fit under an outer shell. In fact they are so trim that you might want to consider suspending if you prefer a more “roomy” fit. I like them under my ski pants at the area because they keep my legs warmer while riding the lift, but they do come with a stretch cuff with lace hook and adjustable cord thus supplanting the need for a gaiter if you choose to wear them on the outside of your boot. A particularly nice feature are the two mid thigh cargo pockets where you can easily stow a bracade or carry on the climb snack. These highly versatile pants get two thumbs up.

Atlas BC24 Snowshoes
By Ed Crothers
The BC 24 is the Atlas snowshoe targetted toward backcountry users, in particular ice climbers, mountaineers and snowboarders. To meet the needs of those users, the BN 24 was made shorter than other Atlas snowshoes and a bit wider to provide good flotation while cutting down the weight. I used these snowshoes in fresh powder, on hard wind crust and on early season approaches when a good deal of travel involved moving over rocks barely covered by snow. Overall, I liked this snowshoe. While it is 1 pound heavier than the plastic snowshoes I have used over the years, the extra weight was hardly noticeable. The binding system is simple and user friendly. The three binding straps held my feet securely preventing sideways rotation even when traversing moderately steep wind crust and the straps are easy to use with heavy gloves on.

There are a few changes I would like to see. In line of work, it is critical that we use equipment that can be easily serviced in the field. On this model, attachment points for binding straps and buckles are steels. I’d like to see these replaced by nuts and bolts making replacement much easier. While I found the Spring Loaded Suspension (SLS) to work well, the straps holding the bindings in place wrap around the outside and bottom of the aluminum frame making them susceptible to abrasion. My suggestion would be to drop the fancy suspension system and go with a simpler design. I’d like to see the crampons that run parallel to the frame be longer to provide better traction for traversing hard packed slopes.

Despite these suggested changes, the BC 24 is a well made and durable product that is best suited for travel over snow covered, but not mired terrains. It would be a very good choice for an extended trip to Denali or other snowy peaks.

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Professional Snow Data Field Book - Hacksaw Publishing - See pg.14
By Evan Stevens
There are two types of people who take notes out in the field, ones who are organized and know what essential notes they take, and those who need their hands held when their notes are in the snow. The Hacksaw Ski Book is the perfect field notebook for the second set of snow geeks. Personally, I found it a great book to start out my season with, loaded with reminders of all the SWAG standard tests and recording guidelines - no need for cheat sheets! It is a great book for the guide in training, especially as they are charging through their AIARE courses and prepping for SGIC's and SGMC's. Even if you are a pure “snow professional”, i.e. avalanche forecaster, patrolier, or backcountry observer, the pages in the book are going to be great for documenting your professional quality pits.

Remember though, this is strictly a snow ohs book, no room for tour plans or random scribblings, don’t forget your standard blank notebook!

Garmont Axon Boot Review
By Mike Alkaitis
It is amusing to sit down and write about a boot I have become so fond of over the last year. The Axon was Garmont's new addition to the beefy freeride line and is Dynafit compatible. The boot skied with precision and feel, while the uphill was smooth and easy with the Dynafit bindings. The Axon is a bit heavy at 91bs a pair, but the comfort, durability, and stiffness all make up for the weight.

One of the best features of the boot is the durability. I skied on the boot over 40 days last winter and spring and the shell and sole have stood the test of time. From short trips up and down the Dragon Tail Coulee in Rocky Mountain National Park to the longer spring tours on Drift Peak these boots always seemed to be the perfect model for me.

The liner is greatly improved over the prior year and fills the boot out nicely. Remember to get the liner professionally formed for a great fit and lasting comfort. Overall, the Garmont Axon is a great AT boot.

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Professionalism, or conducting oneself professionally, is fundamental to all AMGA programs and its mission. So much so, that as of today, you are expected to conduct yourself properly, as we move into 2009 and, more importantly, as the AMGA continues to grow its presence in the guiding industry as a whole. On the other hand, if we are viewed as elitist, or as holier than thou, or as just plain incompetent we risk alienating those we most want to influence positively and consequently we risk becoming ineffective in our mission to raise public awareness, thus losing the ability to influence the public, unaffiliated guides, and government agencies the easier it is for the AMGA and brings credit upon our organization.

Professional errors & omissions liability (malpractice) coverage for guides involved in instruction covers claims arising out of errors in instruction or certification. This type of claim is excluded by all Commercial General Liability Policies. For example, your guide service trains and certifies a climber or another guide, and that climber or guide is later involved in an incident involving bodily injury. The claimant alleges it was caused by faulty instruction or an error in certifying an unqualified guide. These types of claims would be denied by your Commercial General Liability insurer, but covered under an Errors & Omissions Liability (sometimes called Malpractice) policy. Claims Made Coverage is an important feature of most Errors & Omissions Liability Policies, as well as at least one Commercial General Liability Policy form. This is perhaps the most misunderstood concept we have encountered in the guiding community, and one that anyone running a guide service should understand.

The market is still competitive, and AMGA certifications earned by your guides in the past year can result in up to a 5% or 10% additional credit on your renewal insurance rate. The first question guides always ask is the price of insurance and I have some good news to report. Insurance rates have been falling for the past 2 years. They are not likely going to increase in the next 6 months, despite the financial crisis that has impacted insurance company investments. The market is still competitive, and AMGA certifications earned by your guides in the past year can result in up to a 5% or 10% additional credit on your renewal insurance rate. An AMGA certification and accreditation is highly respected by insurance underwriters, and this is reflected in the insurance rates.

When guiding, you wouldn’t venture out with a client without first inspecting your equipment and taking inventory to make sure you have the equipment required for the climb. The same holds true for your insurance policy. One of the most common questions we are asked by guide services is whether the owners, guides or 1099 guides are covered by their Commercial General Liability Policy.

Make sure that the name on the policy is the exact legal name of your guide service and includes any additional names you operate under, including any subsidiaries or affiliated entities involved in guiding & outfitting, mountaineering instruction, mountain guiding, etc. The insurance company will deny any liability and declare a claim for an entity or DBA not listed on the policy.

Insurance underwriters may add coverage for a wholly-owned entity with similar operations at no or minimal additional charge, depending on the increase in gross receipts or user days. For this reason, it is important to let your insurance broker or agent know all legal entities or names to be insured on the policy at inception, and to add them during the policy year should you create any entities after the effective date of the policy.

Most Commercial General Liability policies covering mountaineering guides & outfitters automatically include coverage for a number of “insureds” whom are named in the “who is insured” section of the insurance policy.

The “insureds” defined in your insurance policy include the sole proprietor, directors and officers, staff and volunteers (although some older policy forms do not cover volunteers), in the event they are named in a claim or lawsuit. The insurance company often considers guides temporarily employed on a 1099, if they are under the direction and control of the guide service as insured employers, particularly if they use their equipment. When listing them on your guide roster sent to insurance underwriters, make sure you show their professional AMGA certifications.

If coverage has been included for additional insureds (government agencies, landowners, landholders, booking agents, concessionaire, agreements, etc.) they are afforded coverage under your policy also. All these insured entities share the policy limits for any one claim, so each time you add an insured you are diluting the policy limit if they are all named in a single claim.

Professional errors & omissions liability (malpractice) coverage for guides involved in instruction covers claims arising out of errors in
Accreditation & Certification

By Ed Crotthers

At the Annual Meeting in Bend a hot topic of discussion at the Board meeting and among various individuals dealt with the issue of an Accreditation Program and Certification Program existing within the same professional association. Our side of the argument was that accreditation is an inexpensive way for a guide service or climbing program to gain access to the use of the AMGA “brand” while being held to a much lower standard than certified guides. As a result, it was argued that these programs had an unfair advantage over certified guides in the marketplace and accreditation devalued the certification process. On the other side, it was argued that accreditation meets a long standing goal of the AMGA to unite all working guides in the United States by providing access to the AMGA through many of the largest employers of guides in this country. Both sides raised good, valid points.

Our area where common ground was found was that all membership would be better served by bringing certification and accreditation into closer alignment. It was pointed out that under the current accreditation standards, an AMGA Accredited Program was not required to have a single AMGA Certified Guide on staff. The standard is that “Lead Guides” must be either AMGA certified for the terrain they guide on or be able to document extensive experience. Also, an AMGA Accredited Program must provide two days of staff training for all the terrain categories operated on and that an AMGA guide certified in the appropriate terrain categories must conduct this training. For example, a program that offers multi-pitch rock climbing has to provide two days of multi-pitch rock training annually and that this training is provided by an AMGA Certified Rock Instructor or Rock Certified Guide. Staff exempt from this training requirement would be AMGA Certified Rock Instructors and Rock Guides.

When the accreditation standards were revised several years ago, the majority of the members of the Board of Directors felt there were not enough AMGA Certified Guides in the U.S. to set a higher standard for AMGA Accredited Programs. However at the November meeting, the consensus opinion was that the increased number of certified guides within the rock and alpine disciplines warranted a revision of these standards. To that end there are a couple initiatives underway.

Properly managed both can strengthen the AMGA by expanding membership while maintaining high educational testing, and business standards.

The first involved a rewrite of the Accreditation Educational and Terrain Standards that requires a “Lead Guide” for five of the seven Terrain Categories be AMGA Certified for the terrain they guide on. Ski Guide and Ski Mountaineering Guide are exempted from this requirement. The reasoning for this is the limited number of AMGA Certified Guides in the ski discipline at this time. It is expected that within the next three years those numbers will increase to the point that this exemption will be lifted. This proposal was submitted to the BOD at the January Board meeting and this revised standard could be in place as early as this summer.

The other project is tied to the long term goal of the AMGA to one day have all guides in the U.S. certified for the terrain they guide on. Ski Guide and Ski Mountaineering Guide are exempted from this requirement. The reasoning for this is the limited number of AMGA Certified Guides in the ski discipline at this time. It is expected that within the next three years those numbers will increase to the point that this exemption will be lifted. This proposal was submitted to the BOD at the January Board meeting and this revised standard could be in place as early as this summer.

The Accreditation Committee is looking at how the Accreditation Program can help in the pursuit of this goal. To accomplish this a survey is being put together by the committee to gather information from current accredited programs. Among other things, this information will be used to help develop a long-range strategy for tying certification and accreditation together.

The Accreditation Director it is my opinion that certification and accreditation do not have to be mutually exclusive. Both programs provide very different services. Properly managed both can strengthen the AMGA by expanding membership while maintaining high educational, testing, and business standards. Resolving the long-standing issue to everyone’s satisfaction is an unrealistic goal. However, the November meeting has once again brought this issue forward and the Accreditation Committee and Board of Directors are responding. Should be an interesting year.

Stay tuned.
CONGRATULATIONS
Eli Potter, Winner of the 2009
Chad Vanderham Scholarship!

TO THE Niiice Fund Board
& THE AMGA
- from Eli Potter

It is with great honor and elation that I receive your choice as the recipient of the Chad Vanderham Memorial Scholarship. Immediately upon learning of the scholarship, I had it in my mind to put forth the effort to try and win the award. Thanks to a lousy snow year and bad stability in Canada this winter, I was able to devote a little more time than I might have otherwise. In fact when I submitted the video it was -46 C in Banff that day. Now I am back home in AK actively preparing for the AMGA course and the next chapter in my guiding career. I can’t thank you enough for the added impetus your financial support gives to that effort. I was also surprised and really stoked to find out about the Coomba ski bones. I am a big fan of those and know Cooboy would be psyched on where I will take them in the Chugach this spring. Man I sure do miss that guy. I never knew Chad but certainly knew of him through the Valdez-La Grave connections. Thanks again and may the rest of the winter bring you all good ski lines, great partnerships and safe days!!

The AMGA would like to congratulate this year’s recipient of the Chad Vanderham Scholarship – Eli Potter. The Niiice Fund Board and the AMGA wish you the best of luck in all your guiding pursuits. Eli’s video can be viewed at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wKkGiIpme-s

A NEW SCHOLARSHIP IN 2009 – LOR FOUNDATION!

The AMGA is proud to announce that thanks to the kind support of the LOR Foundation we are able to offer an additional scholarship in any discipline for 2009! The AMGA would like to extend a huge thank you to the LOR Foundation for its recent support of our organization. Without the invaluable support of our benefactors the AMGA would not be able to provide the over $40,000 annually in scholarships and subsidies to our members. Thanks to our patrons the AMGA is capable of fulfilling its mission of being the premier source of training, credential and services for professional mountain guides and climbing instructors in the United States.
“LEADING THE WAY”

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