



THIN AIR

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Newsletter of the High Altitude Mountaineering Section



March 2005

THE HIGH ALTITUDE MOUNTAINEERING SECTION
OF THE COLORADO MOUNTAIN CLUB PRESENTS

PETE ATHANS
"EXPEDITIONARY LEADERSHIP AND
THE LESSONS OF EVEREST"

MARCH 8, 2005
7:00 PM
AMERICAN MOUNTAINEERING CENTER
710 10TH STREET
GOLDEN, COLORADO
303-279-3080

TICKETS ARE \$8 (\$9 DAY OF THE SHOW)
AVAILABLE AT:
THE CMC OFFICE
DENVER/BOULDER REI STORES
ON LINE AT WWW.CMC.ORG

Expeditionary Leadership and the Lessons of Everest

With 2003 marking the golden jubilee of Everest's first ascent, it appears the mountain and the expeditions that seek to achieve Everest's summit receive as much if not more media attention today than Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay Sherpa received on the first ascent. In the past the mountain has symbolized the absolute apogee of achievement and hard-won success, yet today a change is evident. The mountain also appears to have found an ambivalent strain in popular sentiment with an equal disdain, as much as veneration. How do we interpret what the mountain represents and the teachings that may be drawn from the dramatic struggle of climbing? Has Everest lost its luster as the *Sine Qua Non* of the mountaineering challenge or does it retain its standing as a figurative rooftop of the world as well as being a literal, physical symbol of ultimate achievement? What are the lessons and wisdom expeditionary mountaineers return with from Everest's inaccessible summit and how does it apply to life in the 21st century? Moreover, the age-old question of why bother to climb to Everest's summit in the first place also begs the question.

If any of these questions ever intrigued you, you won't want to miss veteran mountaineer and popular lecturer Peter Athans present his experiences on his seven ascents of Everest. After 15 expeditions to the mountain and seven personal voyages to the airy rooftop of the world, he holds the record for ascents only superseded by those of Sherpa ethnicity. His presentation is composed of beautiful still and video images from his countless forays onto the mountain, but his show transcends travelogue by virtue of his anecdotes and unique perspective. As an accomplished athlete and dedicated mountaineer, he is peerless in the Everest arena and his story is unique in that he is not only a top-flight mountaineer, but also a poet, writer, philosopher and philanthropist. He has been involved with bringing the exploits of Sherpa mountaineers on Everest to the pages of National Geographic in addition to highlighting medical expeditions with the objective of bringing eye care to the impoverished populations of Nepal, Tibet, India and Bhutan. He speaks of his harrowing rescue of Dr. Beck Weathers and Taiwanese Team Leader Makalu Gau

from high on Everest for which he was decorated from the American Alpine Club with the Sowles medal and featured in Jon Krakauer's best-selling Into Thin Air. Ultimately, Peter's story is about the essence of Everest and its importance to everyone, on a symbolic level and very real, everyday level, as well. Further, he elucidates how organizing an expedition to Everest is a creative, inspirational process of finding wisdom that has applications in quotidian life, business and in conjuring up motivation that is sometimes elusive.

The lessons from Everest as told by Peter Athans is not a one man ego affirmation of a lifetime of extreme climbing at high altitude; rather, it is the odyssey of an extraordinary climber with everyman sensibilities, who distills the experience from Everest's sinuous ridges and dramatic faces down into marvelous teachings for everyone. Peter rejuvenates the magic in the expedition narrative and brings new meaning to the often repeated statement that everyone, mountaineer or not, has his own Everest.

Neptune Mountaineering

Wednesday, March 9th – **Jordan Campbell**: The Heroes of Telemark – FREE

Thursday, March 10th - **Andy Selters** presents: Ways to the Sky: A Historical Guide to North American Mountaineering - \$5.00

Thursday, March 17th – **Kurt Diemberger** – Broad Peak

.All shows start at 8:00 PM and are subject to change, call for details.
Table Mesa Shopping Center 633 S. Broadway Boulder, CO 80303
(303) 499-8866

Words From Above

by Rich McAdams, High Altitude Mountaineering Section Chair

Having just returned from another mountaineering adventure, I reflect on the many opportunities that have been provided to me through the CMC, and especially, through HAMS. Kilimanjaro, being my most recent ascent, was always expected to be the climatic end of an otherwise ordinary and undistinguished climbing career. Not that Kili was supposed to be the climax based on it's inherit difficulty, but instead, simply the realistic end of climbing as I encroach on those golden years. I planned that Kili would allow me to exit at the top of my game (such as it is), as opposed to being labeled the resident boat anchor. Such are the worries when one grows old.

Well something happened on the way to the grave. I got re-energized.

So, this article discusses a renewing of the spirit. If you have ever yearned for the good old days, those days of carefree mountaineering, those days spent away from the trials and tribulations of work, then why not consider leading a HAMS sponsored expedition. Those of you that have led before probably remember the excitement as you boarded the plane for some great adventure. You remember the virtual hero-worship seen in the eyes of your trip members. You remember the post-trip appreciation and admiration for a job well done.

Trust me. The admiration and appreciation were real. YOU MADE OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE TO OTHERS, and boy, that beats any amount of thanks from me or your HAMS Committee. But thanks to you never-the-less.

So, what's the plan Sam? First, the HAMS Committee will include in the May *Thin Air*, a membership survey. This is a formal opportunity to provide feedback that can help determine future direction of the Section.

Second, the HAMS Committee is also piloting an initiative where we assist trip leaders with in-country logistical support. We have two future trips in the works (Mexican Volcanoes and Peru) where this support will be made available for your use.

How might this in-country support work? Imagine, you arrive in, let's say, Peru. You are met at the Lima airport and transported to your hotel. When ready, you are picked up and routed to the trailhead. Guide assistance to the summit is available. Following a successful ascent you are returned to the hotel and then airport. All this based on an itinerary you design.

Cool? Yes. Realistic? Well, maybe at first it's not quite this easy, but the goal is to simplify and remove much of the burden. We now need leaders to run the pilots. Interested? Then please refer to a companion article within this issue that will provide additional detail.

Please route feedback to wallack2@mindspring.com (please reference HAMS in your subject line).

Expeditions Looking for Leaders!

In order to provide our members with more expedition opportunities, CMC HAMS is trying a new approach: We've had professional outfitters put together costs and basic itineraries for a couple trips to exciting destinations -- All we need now are leaders!

If you are a CMC leader, have the organizational skills and energy to coordinate one of these trips, and the physical qualifications to participate; you can have the majority of your land costs paid!

You will work with the outfitters to organize the trip, and coordinate the CMC "stateside" portion of the trip, including team selection, training climbs, collecting money, and so on. The outfitters can help with travel details, provide local guides and "in-country" transportation, and solve language difficulties.

Trips currently seeking leaders are:

El Pico de Orizaba, Mexico (18,405'). A 9-day trip in November 2005. Non-leader participant land cost approximately \$1,750.

Ausangate, Peru (20,940). A 14-day trip in July 2006. Non-leader participant land cost approximately \$3,331.

Interested leaders are urged to contact HAMS.Expeditions@cmc.org for further information. Duties include:

- Sending information and applications to interested participants.
- Screening applicants.
- Collecting payments.
- Organizing and leading pre-trip training climbs.
- Working out details with outfitter, travel agents, and participants.
- Maintaining emergency contacts.
- Dealing with miscellaneous arrangements and payments (taxi, tips, etc.)

For those interested in participating, but not leading: We cannot take applications or provide additional information until a leader has been found. Please watch this publication, as well as the Adventure Travel section of the CMC website <http://www.cmc.org/events/events.aspx?categoryID=1> for further announcements.

HAMS: High Altitude Mountaineering Section

Submissions to *Thin Air* welcome. Send to wallack2@mindspring.com or CMC clubroom, 710 10th St., #200, Golden, CO 80201

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* = Committee Chair

Next Thin Air deadline: 4/15/05

Volunteer Opportunities exist in HAMS !! Newsletter, equipment, school, publicity. Interested? Please contact Rich McAdams (rich.mcadams@hp.com) or John Wallack (wallack2@mindspring.com)

Kilimanjaro Trip Report

by Alan Chudnow

My friends, Witt and Jen Sparks, are in Africa and driving the length of the continent from north to south. Their activities are described at www.africaoverland.org. When they first described their trip to me, I was so jealous. I had seen several slide show lectures about climbing Kilimanjaro and, of course, the IMAX film. I wanted to go to.

On Christmas, my wife Edie told me that I should join them to climb Kili. She said "It's what you always wanted to do. If you don't do it now, you never will. So DO IT!" OK – I knew that Witt and Jen would need some help and supplies to organize and execute the Kilimanjaro trek. So, the "Africa Overland Relief Expedition" was formed. Eric, Nick and I would join Witt and Jen in Moshi in June 2004.

Preparation. To train for the trip, I used the plan in the DVD "Training for Mt. Rainer" which you can find on the web. But mostly, I just tried to hike at least 5 or 6 hours a week carrying a 30 pound pack. Edie booked guiding service for the trek on the web using Zara Travel. They had the best web site and were recommended in the guide books.

Immediately before leaving, I spent 5 days in Leadville. I slept at 10K feet, enjoyed some easy bike riding, and hiked to 12K-13K feet on the nearby hills. I don't really know if this time was a key to avoiding altitude sickness on the mountain, but it was a very relaxing way to start off the vacation!

My flight took me from Denver to London on United and from Amsterdam directly to Kilimanjaro International Airport, Tanzania on KLM. I had some problems with excess baggage in Amsterdam and would strongly recommend that you check your tickets for baggage restrictions prior to departure.

Upon arrival in Tanzania, Zara Travel picked us up at the airport and drove us to the post Springfield hotel. This posh, clean, tourist hotel is a 30 minute walk from the center of town. It had a nice pool was very clean. All meals were included. The hotel cost about \$50/night.

Day 1 Hike to Machame Camp at 10K Feet. 4:46 hours 4000 ft gain. Zara picked us up at the hotel, along with our three guides and ten porters, and drove us to the Machame Trailhead. The path was very dry and we had almost no mud to trek through. The trail was very well maintained, cleaner and easier than the Barr Trail in Colorado Springs. It was also about as busy. Kilimanjaro is not a trek for those seeking solitude. About half way up the trail, our guide was concerned that we were going too fast. So, with a guide firmly in the lead, we initiated the "pole pole" (slowly slowly) pace. At this altitude it seemed excruciatingly slow. Later, we realized the reasons for this slow pace. (1) Acclimatization is aided by taking it easy. (2) You don't want to get up too early or the porters won't have set up your camp. (3) If you get up faster you just sit around on top with nothing to do.

Because there were so many hikers, there were almost no animals or birds to be seen and very little insect life. I did, however, get some ants inside my boots that bit the hell out of my ankle. I didn't notice

this till I reached the camp. I was very worried that the bites would get infected, so I took antibiotics to reduce the likelihood of infection.

By the time we reached camp one, our guides had set up our tents. We had one 4 person tent and 1 two man tent. As Nick had a little bit of a head cold, we let him solo in the small tent. One of the pleasures of trekking with Zara Travel was the "Officer's Mess." Each night, our guides would prepare a dining tent where we could eat sheltered from the wind and cold. Our meals usually consisted of soup, meat, rice, and some vegetables. The food was on the bland side, but considering the long-hole toilet arrangement, this was perhaps a good thing. Eric was clever enough to bring tiny vials of Tabasco, which spiced up these meals nicely.

Day 2. Hike to Shira Camp 12,480ft 3:19 hours 1800 ft gain. We climbed up to the Shira Plateau at 12,480 feet through great terrain, filled with very interesting and unusual flora. The trail was slightly steeper than the day before, but still no harder than the beginning of the Barr trail. Again, our guides enforced a very slow pace that seemed snail like, but made for easy going.

During the night on Kilimanjaro, it cools down, the clouds descend and leave the skies remarkably clear. During the day, the clouds rise again and by evening you are in fog. You are usually cold and damp at the end of the day's hike. However, the fog was the perfect consistency to follow and track the transit of Venus across the sun with the human eye. It also made for excellent photography.

Day 3. Hike to Lava Tower and Barranco Camp (13000 ft) 7:41 hours 3300 ft gain. This was a great day of hiking on the Shira Plateau with fantastic views of Mt Meru and Kilimanjaro. The terrain was similar to that of the Colorado Fourteeners. We scrambled to the peak of the Lava Tower. It was a fun little peak that didn't require a rope as it had very little exposure.

On the way down from the lava tower, we descended back to the Shira Plateau. There we encountered the very cool giant senecea plants, which have the look of giant alien cacti.

Day 4. Short Hike to Karanga Valley Camp at 13,450 ft or 4100m) 3:35 hours and 1660 ft gain. From Barranco



Kilimaniari in the distance



Hiking on Shira Plateau

Camp, we hiked and scrambled up a high wall to the Karanga Valley to acclimatize for another night. Most hikers go from here directly to Barafu camp. We arrived at the site at about 2:00. I tried to dry some of my clothes in the sun, but soon the clouds rose to our level and my efforts were only a partial success.

Day 5 Short Hike to Barafu Camp at 14,200 ft 2:45 hours 2300 ft gain. The hike up was above almost all flora and fauna. At camp we rest for the remainder of the day. About midnight we start our summit attempt.

This was actually about the only dramatic moment on the hike. Eric was vomiting, Jen was apprehensive and I was queasy. It was difficult to enjoy a good meal. The talk was sober. We were all ready for a nice calming nap prior to the summit attempt.

Midnight Hike to Summit at 19320 ft Hike 6:00 up, about 5 down, 4321 ft gain. We awoke and put on our warmest clothing for the hike up to the summit. Eric was feeling much better and decided to ascend. While we may have been nervous before, all jitters were blown away by the excitement of the attempt. It was as dark and crisp as on a night scuba dive. The sky was clear and we could see lights ahead of us on the path. We walked at a slow pace to start. One of the amusing things about “pole pole” is that what seems excruciatingly slow at 9,000 ft is an exhausting pace at 19,000 ft. We took our time and had only short breaks in order to stay fresh on the way up. After about 5 ½ hours of climbing, I looked up and could still see lights far ahead. I thought that these were fellow climbers, but then the guides told me we had reached Stella point. I laughed and laughed at the stars I had mistaken for head lamps. Spirits soared as we reached this key goal. We were on the rim of the volcano before dawn!

Another half hour of much easier walking and we were there – all five of us. It was great to watch the sunrise over the volcano. Watching the shadow of the Big K overtake Mt Meru in the background was beautiful. After a quick rest, it was on to Uhuru Peak just as the sun appeared over Mawenzi.

After about 30 minutes of photo taking, the crew was getting cold and it was time to come down. We still had a long

hike down to Barafu, and an even longer hike down into the thick air for our overnight at Mweka.

We practically skied down the thousands of feet of scree. Everyone’s spirits were high, but after 6 hours up and two hours of scree, we were very tired when we reached camp. After breakfast and a short nap, we hiked another 2 hrs and 45 minutes to get to Mweka Camp

Day 5 Hike to Trailhead 2:30 and 5000 ft down. From Mweka, it was a walk down through the rain forest and we were out. We had about a forty minute wait and we were on the bus heading for the hotel.

Summary. Within another hour, we were enjoying hot showers. That evening we took great pleasure in a night of rooftop dining and celebration at the hotel Kokomo. We followed this up with a short three day safari to Lake Manyara, The Serengeti, and Ngorongoro crater. We enjoyed nice hotels and hot showers every night.

On the flight to Tanzania, I read Rob Taylor’s “The Breach.” This good read was about a climb of Kilimanjaro that went way wrong. Fortunately, Rob’s experiences and mine were so foreign, that it is difficult to believe that it happened on the same mountain. I loved trekking on Kilimanjaro. Zara Travel took excellent care of us. To be honest, I loved having porters to carry my load, set up tents and do the cooking. The extras, such as the dining tent, made the trip so much more pleasant.

Kilimanjaro Expedition – Winter 2005-06

(Trip dates: 12/27/2005 – 1/12/2006)

Come explore the heights and wilds of Tanzania while climbing the highest peak in Africa - Mt. Kilimanjaro (19,340ft). Our trip will include an 8-day trek via the rarely traveled Lemosho Route and a 4-day budget safari to three Tanzanian game parks: Serengeti, Lake Manyara, and Ngorogoro Crater. This will be the first time a CMC trip has used the Lemosho climbing route. The route provides an opportunity to see big game animals low on Kilimanjaro and camp in the crater rim by the highest glaciers in Africa, while they still exist. Trip Length: 17 days. Cost: \$4850. Costs includes: Kili trek, wildlife safari, most meals, all transportation and lodging, visas, tips, CMC outings fees, and airfare. Final costs may vary slightly depending upon airfares and currency exchange rates. Prerequisites: CMC basic mountaineering course or leader approval of equivalent experience, excellent physical condition and a minimum of 2 required training hikes deigned for participants. Contact info: Leader-Heidi Baruch (303) 413-0205; Assistant leader-Joshua Baruch. Please call leader for information and application. Limit is 13 participants, plus leaders. Come experience the magic of Africa!

BOOK REVIEW: *Transcendent Summits* by Gerry Roach

Gerry Roach's new book *Transcendent Summits* is filled with youthful enthusiasm, yet tinged with the experience of his many years of climbing and mountaineering. The climbing stories of his youth, set in the 1950s and 60s, are brought to life by his great narrative writing style. The title cannot be easily explained; one must read the book to completely understand the significance of it to the author. When I reached the end of the book, I finally understood the meaning of the title and realized I have had a few transcendent summits in my own mountaineering experiences.

The overriding structure of the book is revealed in the foreword written by Rick Ridgeway. Gerry Roach had always learned an important climbing lesson from each of his transcendent summits. Each lesson learned is concisely summarized down to one word. He assembles the first letter of each word to form the acronym "WHO CLIMBS UP". From there we are off reading the adventures of a young boy with his head in the clouds. There is an obvious correlation between the climbing lessons and applying those lessons to everyday life.

At an early age he finds his parents "Life" magazine from July 1953 with a picture of Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay on the cover. Reading the article about the famous first ascent of Mt. Everest, he is captivated by the controversy over which man first set foot on the summit. The explanation that the two climbers can be as one when connected by a piece of climbing rope is a puzzling concept for a boy. He then questions the authenticity of their claim of climbing Mt. Everest. His mother tells him, "Mountaineers are men of honor". Honor is a transcendent summit lesson that Gerry Roach learns on Mt. Rainier a decade later.

One of the fascinating aspects of the book for me was his description of climbs that I have also experienced in Colorado, Washington, Mexico and Alaska. However, he puts them in the context of the late 50s and early 60s by writing about the transportation methods to get to the trailhead and the descriptions of the gear he used. There are also descriptions of a couple of climbs he did that are no longer legal to do, one climb that became legal in the time context of the book, and a mountaineering hut that no longer exist.

Another time context writing technique he employs is to include world events that shaped his life. For instance, his father was a member of the scientific community in WW II and had some part in developing the atomic and hydrogen bombs. Gerry would do some Hindu chanting while climbing so when the Chinese invaded Tibet, he was saddened that the Dalai Lama left his homeland. He mentioned the scene of the Russian Prime Minister, Khrushchev pounding his shoe on the table at the United Nations. The escalation of the Vietnam War affects his research on top of an isolated Alaskan volcano in the summer 1964. At the end of the book he joins the newly formed Peace Corps to go to work in India.

The book is also a coming of age story of a boy transforming into a man, and his experiences with women. As a young teenager, he lived in Paris with his family and encountered prostitutes while wandering the streets in search of stone masonry walls to climb in the old city. He mentions the difficulties of high school dating while attending Boulder High School. On a family trip to Norway one summer during high school, he is amazed how forward the young women are that he meets while peak bagging the country's high points. The young Scandinavian women are out to party in the land of the midnight sun. The summer after his high school graduation, while building an observatory on top of Maui, he meets and falls in love with a woman and intends to marry her but never does. Then there was that mysterious older woman with the psychic connection he met the day before climbing Ship's Rock when it was still legal to climb.

I was particularly interested in the background information of the native people's legends surrounding some of his climbs. The Native American legend of the creation of Ship's Rock is fascinating. He was emotionally touching at the crux of the climb that was the location of a legionary battle. He also writes of the Aztec legend of the Mexican Volcanoes, known now as Orizaba, Popo and Izta. From Hawaii he writes of the legendary struggle between the demigod Maui to capture the sun in the Haleakala Crater. In the chapter on his Mt. McKinley climb, he

continued on page 6 ...

Peak Lenin: To Be or Not To Be

First, the good news. -- As most of you are aware, Steve Bonowski is leading a one of a kind trip to climb 23,407' Peak Lenin. Although this is considered a high altitude expedition, if all goes well, it could simply be a very fun high altitude walk-up. Steve's formidable experience successfully leading big trips will be complemented by long-time CMC friend, Mike Shifman, who will act as the Russian language interpreter, Kyrgyzstan problem solver, and all around wonderful guy.

Now, the bad news. -- At this stage there is a serious concern that the trip will not go due to a lack of participants. Obviously, in today's economy, we all have a lot on our plate, the trip isn't until next summer, it costs \$4300, and is 23 days in length. However, if you do have aspirations to climb this peak, but just haven't gotten around to the sign up, you need to request an informational packet ASAP.

March 15th will be the go/no go decision point. OK, so what makes Peak Lenin so interesting? 23,407' for one! Considered the easiest 7000 meter climb is another. To experience a guided trip to a remote, unspoiled, seldom traveled area within Russia; an area where tourists are still considered a pleasant, non-nuisance, curiosity is an opportunity not to be missed. For many, this could be the adventure of a lifetime.

Details: July 24 through August 16, 2005 (these are new dates). Approximate cost for land and air is \$4300 (this is the new cost). For a more detailed write-up with pictures of a 1992 expedition, please refer to the link <http://www.bielefeldt.de/lenine.htm>

For the informational packet, please e-mail Steve Bonowski at nztrekker@earthlink.net

writes of his affection for “Denali’s queen”, Sultana (Mt. Foraker) from the Indian legend and of their child, Begguya, known as Mt. Hunter. The telling of these legends help bring a much larger context to the book.

The mountains have been a place of joy as well as an educational forum for Gerry Roach that he applied to his every day life. For example, as a result of an incident on Little Bear at age 14, he learned how a person’s ego could compromise one’s safety. While still a teenager, Gerry Roach learned to do risk assessment from climbing, at an earlier age than his non-climbing peers. He writes of risk assessment in conjunction with the death of several of his climber friends. He believes in the importance of safety to live a long life to create and spread joy to others. As an instructor with the CMC, I was interested to read his statements on safety, risk, and mortality in the mountains.

A strong theme throughout his stories is the human bonds that develop from climbing with a trusted team. Gerry Roach’s first climbing partner was his high school classmate, Geoff. Together they formed “The Summit Club” and climbed together

for many years. He writes about the fellowship with the guys on the drive to the Mexican Volcanoes in the old milk truck they fixed up. He develops a close trust with Layton Kor on the first ever climb of “T2 in Eldorado Canyon. During a fierce storm at the summit on Mt. Rainier, one rope mate drops in exhaustion. It crossed Gerry’s mind to leave him, but his honor would not let him leave someone to die. The four men on his Denali team had developed a positive attitude and a special relationship to overcome many difficulties near the summit. My favorite quote in the book came from the chapter on Denali. He wrote, “One of life’s extant experiences is to be on an expedition where the energy is positive and the momentum is always accelerating toward the summit.”

“Transcendent Summits” is much more than a collection of an old climber’s stories; it is about life. It is about the human connections we make, keep and treasure through climbing. I recommend this book to all climbers interested in discovering the lessons Gerry Roach has written about and comparing them to their own life’s lessons.

Kurt Wibbenmey

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Above by Rich McAdams

