



THIN AIR

Volume 19, No 3

May, 2007

UPCOMING HAMS SPONSERED TRIPS

Inside this issue:

- Exerpt from Gerry Roach's book, "Ride the Breath" 1-3
- Proposing on Kilimanjaro 3
- 2006 Climbers List 4
- Trip Calendar 5
- Alpine Glacier Update 6



Aconcagua, Argentina
11/28/07 thru 12/17/07



Cotapaxi, Chimborazo, Ecuador
12/8/07 thru 12/22/07



Kilimanjaro, Tanzania
12/27/07 thru 1/11/08

THESE TRIPS HAVE OPENINGS AVAILABLE!

Refer to page 5 of this newsletter for additional information

NEW BOOK BY GERRY ROACH, "RIDE THE BREATH"

The following story is excerpted from my new book Ride the Breath, which is due out in early June. It is my sequel to Transcendent Summits and visits several active, questing years in my burgeoning climbing career. This particular story seems appropriate for Thin Air, since we can all learn from my mistakes when the word 'slack' took on a new, deep meaning as I approached Mount Logan's summit in 1973. Signed copies of "Ride the Breath" will be available on my website www.climb.mountains.com, and I will offer a special introductory price as well as a special price if you buy both Transcendent Summits and Ride the Breath. Now, inhale!" — Gerry Roach

Logan's main summit was beyond the closer west peak, and we skirted the west peak's summit on its north side to avoid any unnecessary elevation gain. After marching for an hour around the west peak, we gathered for a candy and conversation break. After the congenial blast of sugar, I strode off into the lead with renewed enthusiasm. We were on a stroll and a roll. The weather was perfect.

A few steps beyond our picnic site, Logan evaporated beneath my feet, and I fell free through air—not a freedom I wanted. As I plummeted into the dreaded hidden crevasse, my mind screamed, "Oh no! The slack!" Because we had congregated during our break, the rope was not yet tight between Barb and me. As I fell, I flashed on Mike Humphreys' fall into Hengehole on Lucania, and hoped for a happy ending. I fell far too long as the slack snaked away at Barb's feet. Finally, the rope jerked me to a spastic stop.

My hat covered my eyes, but I didn't have to see to realize that I was in deep danger. I shoved my hat back and glanced up. Forty feet of taut rope reached up to the hole where I had plunged into my snow-covered trap. Below, the dark abyss breathed frigid air, and I was riding a breath that could easily be my last. This was not a downy dream; I was inside Logan.

Our summit stroll had taken a malicious turn. My first glance reminded me of my icicle-filled chamber high on Chacaraju. Inside Logan, the rest of the world came rushing back with a binary click. It was time for careful, focused action.

In the sealed crevasse, the air temperature was Logan's average annual temperature at 19,000 feet, which was minus 45. As the deep cold probed my bare hand, I remembered how warm it had been in the tent. I pulled my mitten from my parka pocket, knowing that I would lose fingers to frostbite if I dropped it. Carefully, ice ax dangling from my other hand, I pulled on my precious mitten. I heard my companions yelling above, but they could not hear me, since sound travels into snow, but not out of it.

Twisted, my first attempts to get upright failed. The long snowshoes strapped across my pack jammed between the walls of my narrow crevasse, and this serious impediment became extreme when my companions pulled on the rope. With my snowshoes jammed, their pulling just turned me upside-down. My camera and pack straps inched toward my neck, and started to slowly choke me.

I had to do something dramatic and fast. This was no longer a stroll; it was survival. I reached up, grabbed the rope, made a tough twisting move, and slipped out of my pack. My choking camera strap fortuitously broke, and I ended up with ice ax, pack, and broken camera strap clutched in one hand. It never crossed my mind to take a picture. As my companions heaved, I continued to turn upside-down, while clinging desperately to my pack below me. My pack contained survival equipment. I could not drop it—yet.

Upside-down, I clawed at the ice with my crampons, and somehow freed my pack. I wondered how much more I could do when I remembered all the training that I had done for Odyssey. I was strong. Pulling and twisting, I finally managed to right myself, get into a chimney position across the narrow crevasse, and get my pack into my lap. Frigid air rushed from below like a portent. I looked down into the darkening abyss and saw a death worse than what I had faced in Das Cave. This was clearly Logan's summit test. Our stroll had been too easy. Worse, was Logan going to gobble me up like a Huayaco? No! I was going to free myself of that demon. *Now!* I looked up and started chimneying toward the tiny spot of light.

As I chimneyed to the rhythm of my pulling teammates, I steadily lost my grip on my gear. I knew that, if it came to it, I would let the camera go first, then my ax, and hold my pack to the end. When I was ten feet below the hole, I finally established voice contact with Singing Tiger above. When Bill heard me yelling, he hollered into the hole, "Gerry! Are you all right?"



Gerry Roach nearing Mount Logan's summit in 1973

Struggling to keep from losing my various grips, emotional as well as physical, I shouted evenly, “Catch-the-camera!” Maintaining a tenuous grip on my pack, I knew that I only had one option to save my camera, and that was to throw the camera out of the hole with my right hand. My dangling ice ax complicated the toss considerably. I had to keep my swing well clear so my ax would not catch on my clothing or my pack, and I also had to keep the broken camera strap from catching on the ax. I carefully computed my camera’s fate, lowered my right hand and peered up. I had one chance.

Whoosh! My camera sailed up through the hole into Logan’s light, and plop, landed at Singing Tiger’s feet. My delivery from the depths amazed everyone, and it was certainly a sign that I was alive. Barb said later that our camera flying out of Logan was the best sight that she had ever seen.

My next problem was that the rope disappeared into the snow eight feet below the hole. In spite of the ax that the others had placed under the rope near the hole to prevent this problem, all the pulling had trenched the rope deep into the snow. Solving this problem, Singing Tiger lowered me a second rope and pulled my pack out. Finally unencumbered, I thought that I could just muscle out the last few feet. Ha! I got my head through the hole when the deeply buried rope from below stopped me. Even with a second rope, the crevasse still had me.

I peered back into the abyss, and wondered again what Logan wanted of me. Just then Bill Hamann marched up with his unspoken passion, and began cutting away the snow that trapped the rope and me. I just gasped, “Don’t cut the ropes!” As Bill chopped with steady, careful energy, I was glad that I had invited him on the trip.

An hour after I fell in, I crawled back into Logan’s light to the cheers of my tired companions. Looking like a frozen ghost, I offered the best yodel that I could muster. After a short rest, we continued toward the summit. Strangely, we did not name my crevasse. It was mine alone, and to me, it felt unnameably deep.

Our last steps to Logan’s summit were sublime. On top at last, we congregated in a gangly mass of cheers, whoops, thumps and photos. We congratulated Singing Tiger on his triple victory. He was clearly a tiger, but we insisted that he live up to the other half of his title. He obliged with his unique monotone song, “Ahhhhhhhhooooooooommmmm!” The Tiger’s single, off-key Om note floated free into the Transcendent Range.

Gerry Roach



KILIMANJARO EXPERIENCE

“On July 20, 2006, we made it to the summit of Mt Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, of course. At the summit, I got down on one frozen knee and proposed to Mindy, who after removing her face mask said “yes!” We are now engaged and to be married in May of 2007”.

-Dennis Lima & Mindi Klowden

2006 HAMS “Climbers”

Congratulations to 2006's HAMS "Climbers!"

Part 2 of 2 of the 2006 Climbers List

Thanks to everyone who contributed their accomplishments to the second annual list of higher or "exotic" peaks climbed by HAMS members. This is the remainder of the climbers list. There are many great pictures and trip reports from these peaks that will be published in upcoming HAMS newsletters as space permits.

Submit your climbs for the 2007 list to HAMS.Expeditions@cmc.org (or mail to the CMC, attention: HAMS)

Name	Peak	Elevation (feet)	Location	Date (2006)
Beth Bershader	Mount Rainier	14,410	Washington	July
Keith Bershader	Mount Rainier	14,410	Washington	July
Shane Burns	Mont Blanc	15,780	France	July
Don Chambliss	Mount Rainier	14,410	Washington	July
Bob Dawson	Mount Rainier	14,410	Washington	July
Chip Drumwright	Phang Xi Pang	10,312	Vietnam	December
Linda Jagger	Ixtaccihuatel	17,126	Mexico	November
	Pico de Orizaba	18,405	Mexico	November
Tom Jagger	Ixtaccihuatel	17,126	Mexico	November
	Pico de Orizaba	18,405	Mexico	November
George Kasynski	Phang Xi Pang	10,312	Vietnam	December
Mindy Klowden	Kilimanjaro	19,340	Tanzania	July
Dennis Lima	Kilimanjaro	19,340	Tanzania	July
Laurie Loshaek	Phang Xi Pang	10,312	Vietnam	December
Steve Martin	Mt. McKinley	20,320	Alaska	June
	Aconcagua	22,834	Argentina	December
Angela Myers	Mururata	18,965	Bolivia	June
Brian O'Malley	Mururata	18,965	Bolivia	June
Ricardo Pena	"Alive" crash site		Argentina	March
	Nevado de Toluca	15,354	Mexico	June & Nov.
	Ixtaccihuatel	17,126	Mexico	June & Nov.
	Mount Elbrus	18,510	Russia	August
	Pico de Orizaba	18,405	Mexico	November
Jim Rickard	Huayna Potosi	19,973	Bolivia	June
	Cerro Pomerape	20,413	Bolivia	June
	Nevado Sajama	21,463	Bolivia	June
Kurt Wibbenmeyer	Cotopaxi	19,347	Ecuador	January

Upcoming Trips

Upcoming trips approved by the ExCom, as well as tentative trips in the planning stage are listed below. For more information, and for other trips offered by Adventure Travel, be sure to check listings on the CMC website at www.cmc.org/events/events.

To request an application for approved trips, or for even more information, contact the leader at the phone number or email shown.



2007 June 27—July 10 Mt Elbrus, Russia

\$3,415 Land & Air

Steve Bonowski nztrekker@earthlink.net

Full

Don't forget to submit your story to Thin Air!

You do not have to climb an exotic peak in a foreign country to be eligible for a submission! Please submit your latest adventure or other article to spykerd@comcast.net



2007 July 16—July 28

Matterhorn and Mt Blanc, Switzerland

\$1080 plus air and some meals

Gary Helenga helenga_gary@bah.com

Full, accepting applications for waiting list



2007 July 10—July 15 Mt Rainier, Washington

\$400 plus air and 1 night hotel

Greg Olson greg@ubiquity-design.com

Full, Accepting applications for waiting list



2007 November 28—December 17 Aconcagua, Argentina

\$4220 Land and Air

Steve Bonowski nztrekker@earthlink.net

Approved, Accepting Applications

2007-2008 Dec 27—Jan 11 Kilimanjaro & Tanzania

\$4,999 Land & Air

Joshua Baruch

jbbaruch@yahoo.com

Heidi Baruch

hbuffalo@yahoo.com

Approved, Accepting applications



2007 December 8—December 22 Cotapaxi, Chimborazo, Ecuador

\$1300 + Air

Greg Olson greg@ubiquity-design.com

Approved, accepting applications

Alpine Glacier Update

[Quoted from Austrian Alpine Club *Bergauf*, and the ÖAV Section Britania Newsletter 172, Winter 2006]

Austrian glaciers continue to lose mass and in Summer 2003 there were around 100 days of ice melt as opposed to the 'normal' 20-30. Last year, high snow- fields began to melt in May and glacier snouts in mid-June, unusually early. The Taschachferner retreated more than 100 metres and its actual snout dissolved on reaching a rock face! Glacial mass is under 70% of what it was in 1980, the snowline has retreated by 150m and in general it snows less and rains more. This leads to further glacial retreat and if this trend continues glaciers will have disappeared from Austria by 2050.

A further consequence of higher annual temperatures is the effect on the permafrost, which is usually only a few metres below the surface in the Austrian mountains. Underground ice binds stones together and strengthens slopes. A rise in subsoil temperature melts the ice and causes subsidence, due to loss in volume and loosening of stones. This leads to stone and rockfalls (as seen last year en route to Kürsinger hut).

A majority of guides and leaders questioned in the Glockner region said they no longer used certain routes with clients, on safety grounds, e.g. Wiesbachhorn NW ridge route, and the ascent to Erzherzog-Johann hut via Hofmanns Kees. At a lower level, the Gamsgrubenweg above Franz Josefs Hohe, estimated by OeAV to attract in the region of 200,000 visitors annually, was closed in August 1999 after stonefall incidents and not reopened until July 2003, following extensive work costing 2.1 million Euros.

Huts built on permafrost, (fortunately under 10% of Austrian huts), are increasingly vulnerable to subsidence. Both Erzherzog-Johann hut and Zittelhaus have undergone expensive restorative work recently, and will need more in the future.



Hohe Tauern National Park, Austria

THIN AIR

The High-Altitude Section of the Colorado Mountain Club

710 Tenth Street #200
Golden, Colorado 80401