



The High-Altitude Section of the Colorado Mountain Club

THIN AIR

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Summiting Sorak-San, Korea

By Stephen Nypaver III

Korea was hot and humid all summer long. Leaving an air conditioned office building was like stepping into your oven after opening its door and being enveloped by the wave of hot air. Rice patties all around my new home, Camp Red Cloud, in Uijongbu, Korea, contributed to the high humidity. But, in the distance, across the rice patties, I could see a few mountains.

In late September the camp newspaper had a small ad, seeking soldiers who would like to climb Sorak-San, a mountain to the north and east of Uijongbu. (San meant mountain in Korean, and was placed at the end of the name of the mountain; thus Sorak-San meant Mount Sorak.) Sorak-San, according to the ad, was the most beautiful mountain in Korea. The ad, placed by a Korean-American Hiking Club, said that you had to be “a strong hiker” to sign up for the trip. I would soon learn what it means to be a “strong hiker” for the Koreans, as I signed up for this weekend trip.

I got my Army gear – poncho, boots, canteens, mess kit, field pack – out of the closet, along with some hiking clothes that I had bought in Germany. The mess hall provided some MREs (meals, ready-to-eat). My pack seemed a little heavy, but I was young and had climbed Pikes Peak and other, taller mountains in Germany and Colorado. Sorak-San, at 1,708 meters (5,600 feet), should not be that much of a challenge.

The chartered bus pulled up early on Saturday in October at the main gate to Camp Red Cloud. Mr. Chu, the organizer and chapter president of the club, greeted me enthusiastically. Everyone else on the bus was Korean. We would pick up one more American, an infantry captain from the 2nd Infantry Division. But most of the Korean men spoke some English, as they worked for the US Army in Korea. Their wives only knew a few words of English, but they smiled a lot. The Koreans were fairly short, compared to me, and all seemed much older. Some had worked for the US Army during the Korean War, hauling huge loads on their wooden A-frames up the mountains to resupply the front lines.

It drizzled as we rode to east. At the south entrance to the Sorak Park, we paid our 5,000 won entrance fees. Fog engulfed Sorak-San, so we could not see this beautiful mountain. We started going up next to a mountain stream, first passing through vendors offering snacks and souvenirs. The drizzle soon changed into a light rain, and then a steady rain. A few of the Koreans pulled out umbrellas made out of bamboo and thin blue plastic sheets. We were all getting wet. For lunch, we found a pavilion near the stream where we could get out of the rain. Our goal for the day was to get close to the summit, where we would stay the night at a Buddhist monastery.

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Map of Soraksan National Park—Photo: Nypaver

Adventure Travel Leader Expo: May 7

Have you ever thought about leading an expedition for HAMS, but are unsure how to make it happen? If so, plan to attend the Expo on May 7.

The CMC Adventure Travel Committee is sponsoring another one of its how-to-do-it evenings. There will be short presentations, slide shows, handouts and refreshments. You will have opportunities to interact with committee members and other trip leaders to learn from them and their expertise. Long time HAMS expeditions leader, Steve Bonowski, will be there and happy to answer HAMS specific questions.

See you then.

Congratulations to 2008's HAMS "Climbers!"

Thanks to everyone who contributed their accomplishments to the fourth annual list of higher or "exotic" peaks climbed by HAMS members.

This year we had 21 people submit 31 climbs -- fewer than half as many as last year. We know there are a lot of active climbers within HAMS, be sure to submit your 2009 climbs to HAMS.Expeditions@cmc.org, and let's see how long a list we can get!

Name	Peak	Elevation	Location	Date	Notes (1) &
		(feet)		(2008)	Photos [A]
Dave Anschicks	Peak Hvannadalshnjukur	6,920	Iceland	July	See photo on page 3
Georgia Briscoe	Granite Peak	12,799	Montana	July	
Sharon Crawford	Carstensz Pyramid	16,023	West Papua, New Guinea, Indonesia	May	
	Kilimanjaro	19,340	Tanzania	December	
Sherri Durman	Kilimanjaro	19,340	Tanzania	June	
Paula Engel	Peak Hvannadalshnjukur	6,920	Iceland	July	(See photo on page 3)
Linda Grey	Peak Hvannadalshnjukur	6,920	Iceland	July	See photo on page 3
Lori Hansen	Mt. Shasta (Casaval Ridge)	14,179	California	April	
Gary Hellenga	Grand Teton (Full Exum)	13,770	Wyoming	July	
	Matterhorn	14,691	Switzerland	August	
	Monte Rosa	15,200	Switzerland	August	
Ward Hobart	Peak Hvannadalshnjukur	6,920	Iceland	July	See photo on page 3
Linda Jagger	Granite Peak	12,799	Montana	July	
Tom Jagger	Granite Peak	12,799	Montana	July	
Doug Kruesi	Liberty Cap	14,112	Washington	May	
Bill Lhotta	Grand Teton (Full Exum)	13,770	Wyoming	July	
	Matterhorn	14,691	Switzerland	August	
	Monte Rosa	15,200	Switzerland	August	
Amy McClintock	Kilimanjaro	19,340	Tanzania	September	

Name	Peak	Elevation	Location	Date	Notes (1) &
Craig Patterson	Boundary Peak	13,140	Nevada	October	
	Granite Peak	12,799	Montana	July	
	Montgomery Peak	13,420	California	October	
	Mt. Muir	14,012	California	October	
	Mt. Russell	14,086	California	October	
	Mt. Whitney	14,494	California	October	
Cindiman Pinneke	Kilimanjaro	19,340	Tanzania	September	
Jim Rickard	Liberty Cap (Liberty Ridge)	14,112	Washington	May	
Terry Root	Peak Hvan- nadalshnjukur	6,920	Iceland	July	See photo on page 3
Uwe Sartori	Aconcagua	22,834	Argentina	February	
Beth Schlichter	Peak Hvan- nadalshnjukur	6,920	Iceland	July	See photo on page 3
Kurt Wibbenmeyer	Liberty Cap (Liberty Ridge)	14,112	Washington	May	

Make your submissions for next year's list to HAMS.Expeditions@cmc.org (or mail to the CMC, attention: HAMS), the "rules" are below:

- 1) Climbs must be submitted by January 31 of the following year.
- 2) Only climbs during the calendar year will be listed.
- 3) Include, as a minimum: Your name, peak name, summit elevation, location, & date climbed
- 4) An effort will be made to recognize valiant attempts that failed to reach the summit. If this describes your climb, please also indicate the approximate elevation reached, and reason for turning back.
- 5) For all climbs, commentary and/or photographs are appreciated, and may be published at the discretion of the editor as space permits.
- 6) Iztaccihuatl (17,345) or Ixtaccihuatl (17,126)? Since spelling and elevation (particularly of foreign peaks in English) vary, I'm going to accept what is submitted by the climber (unless it's obviously wrong or a typo).

Peak Hvannadalshnjukur:

Peak Hvannadalshnjukur on the Vatnajokull Icecap is the Highest point in Iceland. The climb starts close to sea level, half on volcanic rock, half on glacier. This is considered to be the largest glacier in Europe.

- Dave Anschicks





The High Altitude Mountaineering Section of the Colorado Mountain Club Presents

Dr. Skeet Glatterer

**2008 Denali Climbing Ranger
and Denali Rescue Team**

**March 10, 2009
7:00 PM**

**American Mountaineering Center
710 10th Street
Golden, CO**

Free & Open to the Public

www.CMCHAMS.org

Join us for an entertaining evening with Dr. Skeet Glatterer. He will present a slide show review of a one month patrol on Denali as a Volunteer Ranger, member of the Denali Rescue Team and running the medical facility at the 14,000 ft. camp. He will review medical issues & rescues and give you the inside story from the Ranger and Guide Service perspective.

HAMS – Spring Rendezvous 2008 – May 23-25

Join us for the first HAMS Spring Rendezvous, a 3 day weekend of mountaineering, socializing, story-telling and planning future climbing trips with other members. We will backpack into Grizzly Gulch on Saturday, set up camp and plan climbing adventures of the many couloirs, ridges and peaks or ski runs. We will also do a Crevasse Rescue refresher. Come for a day or the whole weekend. Bring all your gear and your sense of adventure.

We will have CMC leaders to guide on the climbs. See the CMC website: www.cmc.org or the HAMS website: www.cmchams.org



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.

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

APPROVED HAMS TRIPS



SUCCESS ON KILIMANJARO !!

The recent HAMS trip to Kilimanjaro was a great success.

17 of 20 made the summit. No serious injuries or sickness.

A full write up will be in the next edition of 'Thin Air'

UPCOMING HAMS TRIPS

Watch for more information on these trip in future editions of 'Thin Air'

July, 2010: Mt Elbrus, Russia (18,510, and one of the 'seven summits')

2011: Mt Kilimanjaro (19,340, another one of the 'seven summits')

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The rain did not stop. Mr. Chu said that we had to get to the other side of the stream, which now, swollen by the rain, was over its banks and flowing rapidly. So we linked arms, making a human chain. The water came up to my waist, but it was almost chest high for the Koreans. We held on tightly, and we all made it across without a break in our chain of linked arms.

As we approached the Buddhist monastery, the rain started to let up. Clouds, however, enveloped everything, limiting visibility to a few yards. Mr. Chu led us to our rooms in the monastery sleeping area. We entered a long hallway. The lower rooms were entered through a three foot high door. The room was only four feet high and about twelve feet square. There was nothing in it. Nothing at all. To sleep, we would just spread our sleeping pads on the floor and wrap up in our blankets or poncho liners. For heat, hot air from a charcoal fire at one end of the building would flow in clay pipes under the floor from about ten pm to three am.

The two Korean men with me, Mr. Yi and Mr. Kim, offered to share their Korean supper with me. We started with hot tea and a hot barley soup. The main course was bulgogi (barbecued beef strips). They had a little stove to barbecue the bulgogi, and another stove to cook the rice. We ate the bulgogi by placing it on lettuce leaves, adding some cabbage kimchi and turnip kimchi, and wrapping the lettuce over to make a delicious meal. The rice was in small bowls, which we held close to our mouths and shoveled in with our chopsticks. Everything was absolutely delicious.

A little after three am I woke up. The heat had vanished, and it was damp and cold. The monks now began to hit their gongs for morning prayers. The clouds still hung low, limiting visibility. I found an outhouse, precariously perched on wooden stilts over the stream. Everything just dropped into the stream and floated down. I was glad that I used two water purification tablets every time that I filled my canteen as we hiked up along the stream.

It was a short hike in the clouds to the summit, but we could not seem much at all. One of the Koreans took a summit picture of the infantry captain and me, with the white clouds filling the background, the foreground, and the sides.

Now we were to go down a different trail, leading to the north and east, to the Sea of Japan. The clouds dissipated, and the sun now shone as we made our way down a steep trail alongside another stream. I was going slowly, and most of the Korean women were even passing me. Each step seemed to be a foot or more down. In some places, metal handrails were set where we had to walk over huge sloping rock faces. Other rock places, still wet, had no protection. The stream was far below.

It was hot and humid again, and we were soaked with sweat. I soon found myself alone. These old Korean men and women could go down a lot faster than me. Now I was concerned that I would stay on the right trail. My small scale map of Sorak Park was not of much use. I thought, just keep going down along the stream. I imagined scenes from the movie, "The Bridge on the River Kwai," where William Holden and the Thais were going through the rain forests, sweating, hearing bird calls. Then I came upon the men, who were bathing in the stream, just like Holden did in the movie. I was happy to join them and take a stream bath to get rid of the salty sweat. The bright sun dried out our clothes. We felt great.

The last part of the hike went for miles along a trail shaded by large trees and dotted with Korean vendors and snack shops. You could buy Fanta, Pepsi, beer, snacks, and sit down on rock benches or picnic tables and feel good. A lot of smiling young Korean couples walked slowly on the trail. Sorak-San was also known as "the Honeymoon Mountain," and we walked along with dozens of newlyweds. I was glad that we had a chance to clean up before we encountered all of these nicely dressed Koreans.

Small hotels and restaurants now filled the wider trail as we could see down to the sea. Our bus awaited us. Going home, I could look back and see that the clouds still covered much of Sorak-San.

Though I never had a great view of beautiful Sorak-San, I continued to hike with the Korean-American Hiking Club. During the next year, I hiked and climbed mountains near Seoul, Korea's west coast, and the Demilitarized Zone. One of my best memories came as we approached an isolated high valley in which a large Buddhist monastery was located. From a distance, I heard the peaceful sound of the ringing of a large bell. As we scaled a tall rock wall around the monastery's fields, in the distance I saw the Buddhist monks ring this huge iron bell. They would swing a log as large as a short telephone pole, suspended horizontally by ropes from the top of a small, ornately decorated pavilion, and hit the side of the bell, also hanging from the roof. The bell's sound would reverberate through the valleys and the mountains for miles. As we got closer, you could almost feel the vibrations from the bell.

I learned a Korean Buddhist saying: "In all conditions, we should be polite and humble." This is one of the most beautiful sayings of the patriarch Huineng, who is revered for his simple teachings and had obtained enlightenment. The Koreans that I met in the Korean-American Hiking Club lived this saying, as they were always polite and kind.



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710 Tenth Street #200
Golden, Colorado 80401

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