



THIN AIR

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2010 High Altitude Mountaineering School

“There is snow somewhere above 18,000 ft. GOT HAMS ?

Here is your opportunity !

Begins Wednesday, January 20, 2010

\$155 Denver Group members/\$165 Non Denver Group

The Next Step: The High Altitude Mountaineering School was created to address the needs of CMC members interested in preparing, planning, and gaining skills to safely climb and enjoy bigger mountains: Rainier, Denali, Aconcagua, the Mexican Volcanoes, and more...The HAMS program will teach you what it takes to have a successful expedition: Planning, logistics, conditioning, special skills, and most importantly, TEAMWORK. All HAMS Senior Instructors have been on multiple expeditions – learn from those that have been there! This is not a school for beginners! The school includes 3 evening sessions, 2 day outings, and two 2 day overnight trips/expeditions.

Pre-requisites for graduation: 1) Member of the CMC. 2) Basic Mountaineering School or equivalent. 3) Denver Group ‘D’ Classification or equivalent experience 4) Completion of the HAMS Seminar within the past two years. And 5) Completion of an avalanche course.

Applications or question: Please contact HAMS Director Dave Pellegrini at 303-910-7140 or david7324@mac.com. Climb High and Climb Safe! Check out the details at www.CMCHAMS.ORG.

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The Ascent of Diamond Head, Hawaii
By Stephen Nypaver III

After our CMC group’s successful ascent of the 6,000 meter Island Peak in Nepal in 2007, my wife, Robin, and I were shopping at Pilgrim’s Book store in Kathmandu where I discovered a rare copy of one of the most famous mountaineering books, The Ascent of Rum Doodle, by W. E. Bowman, an Englishman. The book, in an interesting literary style, told the story of the ascent of the world’s mythological highest peak, Rum Doodle. Because the author’s literary style impressed me, I decided it would be most appropriate to use it to describe my ascent of another of the world’s big mountains, Diamond Head, in Hawaii.

Ascending such a big mountain is a major undertaking. Diamond Head rises thousands of feet from the bottom of the Pacific Ocean, and struts out of the Pacific’s surfing waves another 761 feet. Initially, its lower slopes appear to be gentle to ascend, but the upper slopes rise steeply, requiring true mountaineering skills.

Call for Submissions for the 2009 HAMS "Climbers List"

HAMS is accepting submissions of names and climbs for the fifth annual list of higher or "exotic" peaks climbed by HAMS members.

Submit your climbs to HAMS.Expeditions@cmc.org (or mail to the CMC, attention: HAMS), please include, as a minimum: Your name, peak name, summit elevation, location, & date climbed.

This is similar to "The 14'ers List" and "Beyond the 14'ers," published annually in the Trail and Timberline, but a bit more -- well -- arbitrary. The rules, such as they are, include:

- 1) Climbs must be submitted by January 31 2010.
- 2) Only climbs during calendar year 2009 will be listed.
- 3) 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.
- 4) For all climbs, commentary and/or photographs are appreciated, and may be published at the discretion of the editor as space permits.
- 5) Finally, what constitutes a "higher or 'exotic' peak"? This is where it really gets arbitrary:
 - a) No Colorado peaks. Colorado has lots of peaks and routes which clearly deserve to be called "exotic," but HAMS doesn't want to be in the position of deciding which are, and which are not. If you've climbed one of these, you are invited to write an article for Thin Air.
 - b) Any peak outside of Colorado of 14,000 feet or more.

Diamond Head, Continued from page 1

The first step in climbing a big mountain involves finding and assembling a competent team and acquiring the services of a knowledgeable guide. Since I have been a member of the Colorado Mountain Club for many years, I hoped to find a good guide among its members. More than once fellow members and I set off for major climbs of big mountains in South America and Asia. A diligent search brought me to consider the preeminent services of my Wonderful Wife, Robin. She believed that as experienced mountaineers we two could make a true alpine-style ascent, dispensing with other team members and the multitude of porters normally required for all the stages of such an expedition.

Robin assured me that not only was she familiar with the slopes of Diamond Head, but her many trips to Hawaii also made her knowledgeable in the Hawaiian language. She believed that her knowledge of the Hawaiian words such as "Aloha" and "Mahalo" was more than adequate to guide our ascent. Robin stated that she had led many hikes on the approaches to Diamond Head. These approaches involved truly daunting Hawaiian canyons, full of perils to one's wallet. She chose the canyon of Kalakaua Avenue, dotted with alluring distractions, and many side canyons with even more stores, to begin our climb from an established base camp.

For base camp, Robin chose a place I was familiar with from my military service and earlier impromptu attempts to scale Diamond Head. This camp, known as The Hale Koa ("The House of the Warrior" in Hawaiian) Hotel, was on Waikiki Beach and could be easily reached after a ride of many minutes from the Honolulu Airport. In my youth, as a young officer assigned to the "Tropic Lightning" 25th Infantry Division, my fellow officers and I spent many a night at The Hale Koa's Barefoot Bar consuming strong local drinks, known as Chi Chis and Mai Tais, before our departures to the far-flung outposts of American Might on the Pacific Rim and in the Far East.

Once, during these years, my youngest brother, Ron-Boy, came to Hawaii to see me. We made it to an Advanced Base Camp, then known as The Cannon Club, high on the slopes of Diamond Head. After being delayed for many hours by a champagne brunch, we decided a rapid ascent of Diamond Head would be possible. Somehow, despite the dangers, we encouraged each other to reach the summit. Now, however, age would make such an ascent impossible to repeat, and the guide services of my Wonderful Wife would be absolutely required to make a successful ascent.

After I agreed to let Robin act as guide, she wholeheartedly threw herself into making all the necessary arrangements for our expedition. This was no easy task, when one thinks of all the transportation, supply, equipment, finances, and porters that would be needed during the approach to base camp. She was marvelous, except that our return arrangements were somewhat unclear. Only after our arrival did this oversight become clear, but Robin acted promptly, adding more days to our stay in Hawaii, saying that we would now be assured of a successful climb.

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HIGH ALTITUDE MOUNTAINEERING SCHOOL SYLLUBUS

The 2010 HAMS School will take place over three evenings and four weekends at sites to be determined. Students will be organized into rope teams of 3 or 4 presided over by a senior instructor. All of our senior instructors have extensive expedition experience and the low ratio of students-to-instructors allows for plenty of hands on experience.

CURRICULUM: LECTURES & FIELD SESSIONS

Introduction to School : Wed., Jan. 20, 2010, Rooms A & B – CMC, 7p.m.-10p.m.

During this evening students will meet their instructors and other students and form preliminary rope teams. A pass/fail knot test will be conducted. Elements of successful expeditions will be presented and will be the basis for instruction: Skills, Attitude, Physical Conditioning, and Weather. Equipment and clothing required for the class will be reviewed. Equipment furnished by the school will be distributed.

Fixed Rope Travel, Belays and Anchors: Sat., 1/23, St. Mary's Glacier, 7am-5pm

The Z-Pulley method of crevasse rescue will be demonstrated and practiced. The use of ascenders on fixed lines and for self rescue will be demonstrated and practiced. We will review belay methods learned in BMS and discuss those unique to snow travel and study various snow anchor methods. Time will be allowed for Z-pulley practice.

Glacier Travel, Climbing Styles, Food, & Review: Wed., Jan. 27, CMC 7pm-10pm

Best practices for glacier travel will be discussed that will include climbing styles, route finding, anchors and snow conditions, sleds, wands and GPS's. Food planning and stove types for expeditions will be explored. Team dynamics will be discussed. Z-Pulley rescue systems will be practiced.

Intro to Expedition Ice Climbing: Fri. 1/29, 1/30/ 1/31, Ouray Ice Park

A weekend trip to Ouray, at extra expense, will be organized. The days will be spent learning techniques required to safely and competently climb low and high angle ice. Topics covered will include the use of ice tools, placing ice screws, climbing styles and mixed terrain techniques. Top ropes will be set up.

Overnight Camp Planning/Crevasse Rescue Review: Wed., 2/3, CMC 7pm –10pm

Make final plans for Expedition Overnight(s), and review crevasse rescue. Discuss expectations for team travel with or without sleds. Z & C Pulley crevasse practice indoors.

HAMS SYLLUBUS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Snow Practice : Sat., Feb. 6th, St. Mary's Glacier, 7a.m. – 5p.m.

This all day session will be held at St. Mary's Glacier and will cover crampon techniques, self-arrest, ascending fixed lines, and rope team travel practice in a simulated crevasse environment and Z-pulley field practice.

Expedition Camping: Sat. – Mon., 2/13, 2/14, 2/15 Location TBD

A two-night expedition style camp will be established in simulated crevasse terrain. Topics covered will include rope team travel with sleds, choosing and designing a campsite, cooking, kitchen, and latrine set-up. We will explore alternative shelters like snow caves, trenches and igloos and build an emergency shelter. An alpine start for a summit bid will be made on a nearby mountain. On returning to camp we will break it down, re-pack and move camp for a second night. Focus will be on the unexpectedly long time it will take to accomplish this seemingly routine task. The last day will focus on setting up a Z-pulley crevasse rescue system and extracting a fallen team mate from a low angle slope with-in 15 minutes as the final test for passing this course.

Makeup Date: N/A Generally, HAMS field days are not canceled.

To graduate from High Altitude Mountaineering School, students must attend all lectures and field day trips, and demonstrate satisfactory proficiency in all exercises and/or climbs. You must learn and demonstrate the skills taught as well as set-up a Z-Pulley Crevasse Rescue system and begin hauling with one reset of the system within 15 minutes of a simulated crevasse fall. You must always demonstrate preparedness, consideration of safety, and have the necessary stamina and physical conditioning required for the field sessions.

Diamond Head, continued from page 2

On November 7, 2009, we departed Colorado Springs with the able assistance of Robin's two-year old granddaughter, Sophie, who rode with us to the airport to ensure that we would buckle our seat belts. No expedition can be successful without the efforts of many people. Robin and I were both pleased how readily Sophie, her beautiful mother Beth, and others volunteered to lend their efforts to our expedition.

After our long journey, we arrived at base camp with all of our supplies and equipment. The cooks prepared many Hawaiian delicacies for us, all of which Robin told me would give us the strength needed for our climb. I was not sure that the Chi Chis and Mai Tais were the best foods, but Robin asked me to trust her in this regard. All the natives were most attentive, always encouraging us to shout "aloha" when we met them.

Climbing a big mountain involves a period of acclimatization to the higher altitudes. Acclimatization routinely involves several short ascents, and then descents, to help one's body adjust to the altitude. After our one day's acclimatization period of climbing up to our room from the Barefoot Bar and then going back for another drink, Robin declared that we would be ready for the ascent. First, however, she desired to fortify us with a champagne brunch offered by The Hale Koa. I was leery of this offer, but I had to trust my guide. As expected, the champagne brunch used up a good deal of time, as the natives brought us tall glasses of champagne with every course. A rest period after the brunch used even more of the precious daylight.

Now we were ready to begin, and set out from base camp in our rented Ford Focus with all of our gear packed into Robin's purple pack, a veteran of many a hike and climb. We had our suntan lotion, sun bonnet, sunglasses, hiking sandals, and one water bottle. Only after we started our ascent from the interior of the Diamond Head's crater did we realize that we had no headlamp. We would have to trust to luck that neither of us would fall during the trek through the dark tunnels and spiral staircases that led to Diamond Head's summit.

Robin, always thinking of the struggles ahead, suggested that we stop at the Monoa Surfrider for a tall latte with extra sugar, which would give us the needed energy for our ascent. How wonderful she was as a guide. She would never stop thinking of details that would ensure a successful ascent for us.

After emerging from the box canyons of Kalakaua Avenue, we now started the gentle ascent along the western slopes of Diamond Head, driving along Monsarrat Avenue. As Monsarrat Avenue changed into Diamond Head Road on the northern slopes of the crater, I had to push down on the accelerator to keep the Ford Focus moving up. Robin, using her GPS, unerringly guided me through each twist and turn, bringing us to a large tunnel that led us into the inside of the crater of Diamond Head. Now, at an elevation of 200 feet, our climb would begin in earnest, as we had to park and abandon our trusty Focus and carry everything we would need for the ascent.

After what seemed to be minutes, but what were actually just a few steps, the sun's heat quickly sapped our strength. I was fearful of this development, as I knew that the sun here, near the equator, was a factor to be reckoned with when one was exposed to it for even a few minutes. Robin, ever alert to any difficulty, spied a convenient water fountain where we could quench our thirst. Now we had to tread upward on a concrete sidewalk to reach the start of a seemingly unending series of switchbacks. The U.S. Army, in earlier expeditions, first placed these switchbacks on the steep interior slope in 1908. Here we noticed that many of our fellow climbers, tourists and natives alike, traveled in small groups that included some very short people, presumably porters, whom the natives called keikes. Robin did not know the translation of this term, but it did not concern us, as we were doing our own alpine-style ascent and were not using porters. These keikes slowed down the climbing groups, and sometimes even had to be carried. I was never sure why these keikes accompanied other climbing parties, as they were not able porters.

We now came to the first major ascent of the climb, 74 concrete steps. Here Robin ably demonstrated the mountaineering rest step, which involves locking ones knee as one lifted one's other leg to the next step. This rest step conserves energy, and Robin assured me that we would use it again on another

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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

UPCOMING HAMS TRIPS



MT ELBRUS

18,510'

AUGUST 17-29, 2010

\$3097 (not including airfare to Russia)

Here is the 7th High Altitude Mountaineering Section trip to Russia and the spectacular Caucasus Mountains of southern Russia, between the Black & Caspian Seas. The mountain is one of the fabled 7 Summits and offers strenuous, but not overly difficult, climbing. The climbing requires basic knowledge of ice axe, crampons and roped travel. The trip will use the standard southern approach from the Baksan Valley and pass the ruins of the famous Priut (Hut) of 11 that burned in 1998. Extra days are allotted for acclimatization and summit attempts. Transit is through Moscow and will include a day long city tour at the end of the trip.

Cost includes domestic air fare within Russia, all lodging and most meals, ground transport, guide fee in Valley, Russian visa & permit fees, leader expenses and CMC fee. Final cost may vary slightly depending on air fares and currency exchange issues. Participants must have good physical conditioning and be recent graduates of a CMC advanced mountaineering school (HAMS, AMS, etc.). Preference will be given to instructors in CMC advanced and basic mountaineering schools (BMS). Recent BMS grads may be taken depending on instructor recommendation. Equivalent experience will be considered on a case-by-case basis and will require submission of climbing resume or certificate of recent graduation from a commercial snow climbing course. Climbers not known to the leader may be asked to submit a list of references. Participants should be tolerant and patient regarding back-country travel and able to attend meetings & training climbs/hikes.

To obtain the trip itinerary and application, contact Steve Bonowski at nztrekker@earthlink.net or P.O. Box 280286, Lakewood CO 80228-0286. Trip packet is available only by regular mail (due to e-mail

much longer series of steps. The 74 steps ended at the start of a 225-foot long dark tunnel hewn into the lava rock. Here, I believed, we would miss our headlamps and would have to cautiously proceed by keeping our hands along a handrail as we stepped with trepidation into the darkness. Luck was with us. The natives had installed small light fixtures, adequately spaced, to light this tunnel. Perhaps this was one of the reasons we had to pay the expensive climbing fee at the start of the trail in order to obtain our climbing permit.

Now we reached a set of 99 steps, going steeply up. Robin said that, due to the altitude, we should use the rest step again and, if needed, pressure breathing. Pressure breathing involves pursing ones lips and sharply exhaling air from one's lungs. This increases the amount of air - and precious oxygen - that one can inhale to be able to ascend at higher altitudes without the use of supplemental oxygen. Only a truly competent guide has knowledge of these techniques that would enable us to reach our goal, the summit of this high peak.

After what seemed an eternity, we finished the 99 steps and reached the crux move of our climb. The crux is the most difficult move on the route. For Diamond Head, the crux was especially dangerous. We first stepped into the bottom of vertical shaft that was hewed into the lava rock. Next, we had to ascend a spiral staircase of more than 50 steps in the complete darkness! To prepare for the darkness, I had closed one eye before we came to the end of the 99 steps. I had learned from my training as an infantry officer that not only could one's night vision be preserved by closing one or both eyes when a sudden light, e.g., an aerial flare, appeared, but that one could start the adaptation to prepare for entry into darkness by closing one eye before leaving a lighted area. Again, however, the natives had placed a series of electric lights to light up the spiral staircase. The crux of the climb could now be made in relative safety, without fear of plunging down into the darkness were one to misstep.

At the top of the spiral staircase, Robin led us through a short tunnel to the uppermost Observation Station, a large concrete bunker which had once sheltered artillery observers who directed the firing of the Coast Artillery protecting Honolulu. We bent over to squeeze through the observation slit, thinking we were at the summit. Alas, we still had more stairs to climb to reach the true summit. But after a grueling thirty minutes of some of the most strenuous and challenging climbing that I have ever experienced, Robin and I stood at the summit of Diamond Head. Our expedition was a success!

We could see Koko Head to the east. To the west was our initial approach, alongside Kapiolani Park, through the hotels and avenues of Waikiki. The glimmering Pacific was to the south. A huge range of seemingly unclimbable, vegetation-encrusted mountains was to the north. We enjoyed our success. I congratulated my courageous guide, realizing how much I owed her for getting us to the summit.



**The High-Altitude Section of the Colorado
Mountain Club**

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