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GUIDE

BULLETIN

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40TH
ANNIVERSARY

40 YEARS OF AMGA

AVALANCHE TECHNOLOGY
THROUGH THE AGES

ASK ALAN: SKI INJURIES

HOWIE SCHWARTZ:
THE GUIDING LIFE

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On the cover: The late Bela Vadasz (American Mountain Guide/ IFMGA Guide) sends it in his trademark style on Shoot Out, Tioga Pass, California. PHOTO COURTESY OF MIMI MAKI-VADASZ COLLECTION

This page: Marc Chauvin climbing at Lumpy Ridge in Estes Park, CO. PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHN CLEARY

GUIDE

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GUIDE Bulletin

Editor: Erik Lambert

Senior Editor: Emma Walker

Editorial Advisor: Corey Buhay

Copy Editor: Matt Samet

Art Director: David Boersma

AMGA Project Manager: Jane Soucy

Project By: thebonfirecollective.com



Contributing Writers: John Cleary, Ed Crothers, Adam Fox, Ron Funderburke, Rob Hess, Alan Oram, Lyra Pierotti, Doug Robinson, Howie Schwartz, Joe Thompson, Ian Wade

Contributing Photographers: Amelia Altavena (illustration), Kirk Bachman, Aimee Barnes, Don Bachman, John Cleary, Rob Coppolillo, Nick D'Alessio, Woody Lowder, Mimi Maki-Vadasz, Jason Martin, Alan Oram, Nat Patridge, Jayson Simons-Jones



THE MOOSE BAR CHARTER IS A SIMPLE DOCUMENT—LESS THAN A PAGE—written one Jackson summer morning before lunch. Guides had debated the idea of creating their own association for over a decade, but many guides had objected, worrying that this would limit their freedom. When Yvon Chouinard, Jim Donini, Harry Frischman, and Peter Lev sat down together, they felt differently. Their two and a half hours of work formalized what was then known as the American Professional Mountain Guides Association (APMGA), and launched American guiding down a new path.

The Charter set out just two objectives: “1) To promote the highest possible standards for professional mountain guides in the USA, and 2) For the APMGA to become a member of the International Union of Associations of Mountain Guides (UIAGM).” From the start, the association strove to set high standards for guides. At first this meant sharing good practices, and by the late 1980s, the APMGA had launched guide training courses and business accreditation.

We’re excited to bring you this special issue, which reflects on our history and reminds us how far we’ve come. In this issue’s feature story, you’ll hear from some of the people who were most instrumental in AMGA’s creation and early years. We’re so grateful to those folks for the work they did—and are still doing—to grow and develop American guiding.

For the last 40 years, the AMGA has remained focused on the objectives set down that morning in Jackson. Our 4,300-member association has evolved to address the unique needs of American climbing and skiing professionals. We have developed discipline-specific guiding certifications, instructor programs, member services including this magazine, a political advocacy program, and we’re leading the guiding world with our efforts to be a more inclusive and equitable community.

We have challenges, chief among them access to public lands and improved pay for guides, but we have come so far. I humbly salute the vision and tenacity of the pioneers upon whose shoulders we stand, and I am excited to see what the next 40 years bring.

Onward,

Alex Kosseff, AMGA Executive Director
alex@amga.com
(303) 323-8731

SCOPING OUT TERRAIN ON AN ADVANCED SKI GUIDE COURSE IN VALDEZ, ALASKA.

PHOTO BY WOODY LOWDER (ASSISTANT SKI GUIDE, APPRENTICE ALPINE GUIDE)

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Doug Robinson — **FEATURE** — Kirkwood, California

Doug Robinson is an AMGA Certified Rock & Alpine Guide, and was also the AMGA's first president. He stumbled into guiding by leading backpacking trips for the Boy Scouts. His luck continued when, on a solo trip into the Palisades, he ran into Don Jensen. They did a Starlight-North Pal traverse, and then Don offered him a guiding job—an opportunity that sparked a lifetime career.

Alan Oram — **ASK ALAN** — Victor, Idaho

Alan has been climbing since before camming devices hit the market. He took a break for medical school and residency. Now, he practices emergency medicine, works as an American Mountain Guide/IFMGA Guide, and serves as medical advisor to the AMGA and many private guiding companies.

Joe Thompson — **EQUIPPED** — Erie, Colorado

Joe lives in the Front Range with his wife Susan, is a member of the AMGA Instructor Team, and serves as Colorado Mountain School's Director of Guide Development. Joe became an American Mountain Guide/IFMGA Guide in February of 2014. He holds a Level 3 Certification with both AIARE and the American Avalanche Institute and is highly active in the world of avalanche education.

Howie Schwartz — **THE GUIDING LIFE** — Bishop, California

Howie lives with his family in Bishop, California where he co-owns, manages, and guides for Sierra Mountain Guides, and helps run Sage to Summit, his family-owned climbing gym and outdoor store. He was the 13th person to become an American Mountain Guide/IFMGA Guide in the US, and is a member of the AMGA Instructor Team.

PHOTOS BY: [TOP TO BOTTOM] JIM HERRINGTON, ALAN ORAM, JOSEPH THOMPSON, HOWIE SCHWARTZ



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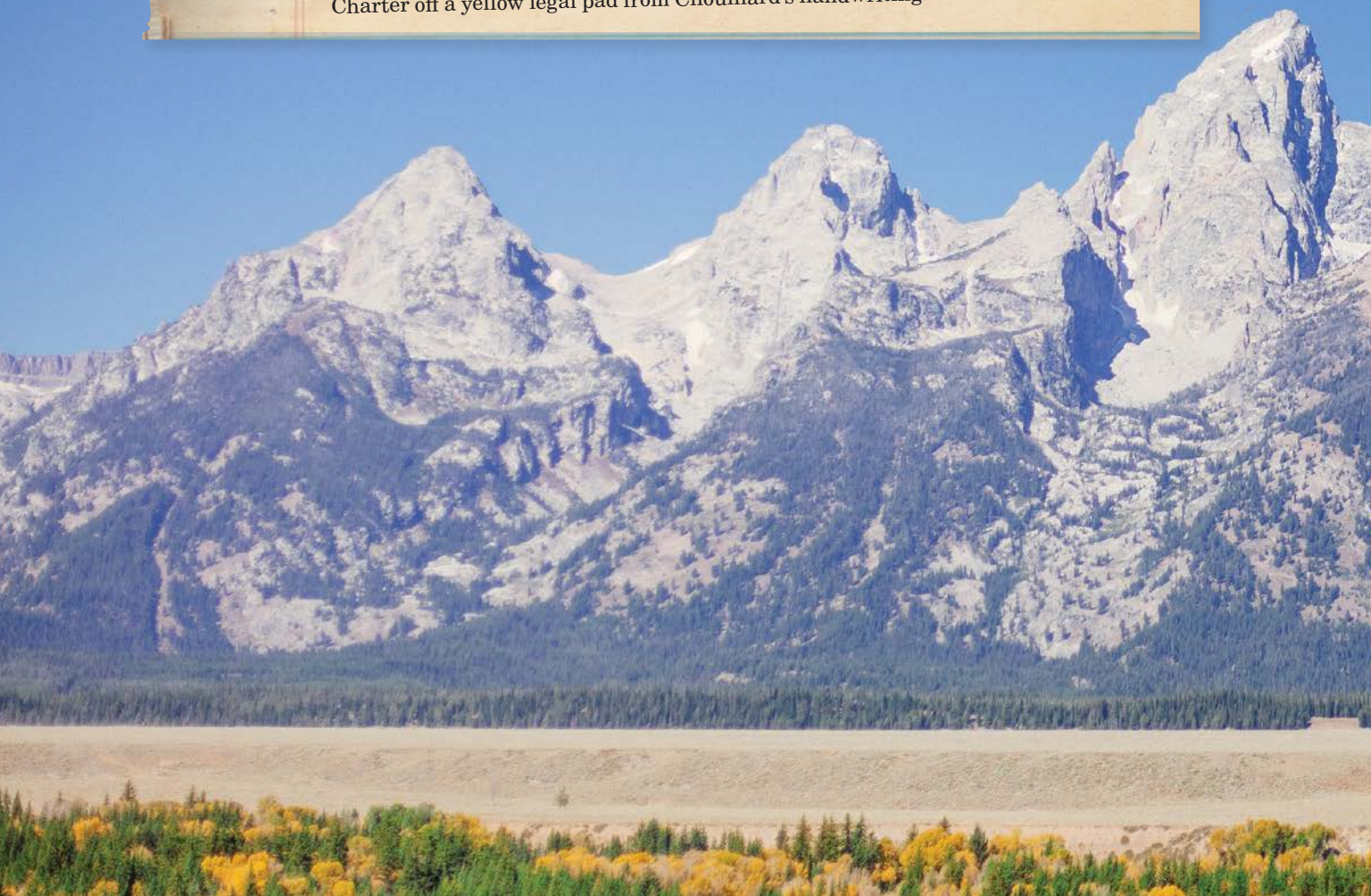
40 Years of American Guiding

How do you become the first president of the AMGA?

By Doug Robinson

You get up to go to the bathroom.

A dozen guides were sitting in a circle in a hallway in the Las Vegas Convention Center. In 1980, the outdoor industry's trade show rode the coattails of the Ski Industries of America, about the only chance all year to get a dozen guides together. The summer before, it had taken just three guides an hour or two over beers below the Tetons to write the Moose Bar Charter, which kicked off our association. I narrowly missed that meeting; **instead, I was pacing the runway of a tiny landing strip in the desert west of Salt Lake City when the pilot of the Cessna I was hitching a ride in discovered the plane had a dead battery.** Yvon Chouinard, though, had made the meeting. So the next day, in the Tetons at last, I sat at a picnic table and typed up the Charter off a yellow legal pad from Chouinard's handwriting.



Maybe it was having that portable typewriter that recommended me—scratch a writer and you find a pencil, right?—because by the time I returned from the restroom I had been elected president.

Guiding then was never lucrative. It was more of a passion on the fringe of becoming a profession. So I was trading rent for childcare when I moved into an old farmhouse on a Spanish Land Grant ranch in California's Coast Range north of Santa Barbara. The toddler was a seventh generation Californian. A mere immigrant from back East myself, I had arrived in Silicon Valley when

it was mostly orchards. My accidental babysitting job came about from connections through having worked on the startup of *Outside* magazine in San Francisco three years before. The local sandstone around Santa Barbara was crumbly, a lot of it worthless, so I drove seven hours to Bishop to work. In between I, wrote articles. An IBM Selectric typewriter—the shiniest word processor of that era, complete with a bottle of White Out instead of a delete key—sat on its stand by the kitchen table. **And in between articles, that typing stand became the first office of the AMGA, a mile up a gravel road on the Rancho San Julian.**

continued, next page...

Our Beginning



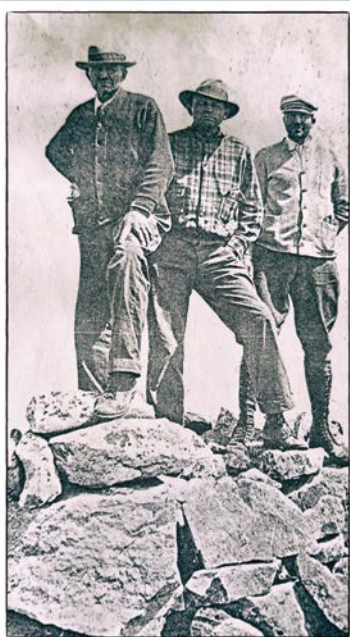
The job turned out to consist mostly of arguing for the AMGA's existence. The notion caught working guides unaware. An association of guides could be viewed, if you owned a guide service that hired them, as a threat. Like a union. Two guide services in particular loudly denounced us. So I sat by a wood stove during our association's first winter, looking out at the rain sheeting onto golden grassland and rolling oaks, writing letters. Page after page that sought to justify our very existence, in spite of its almost immediate reputation as a perceived threat to guide services. I never convinced either of those guys, but I did learn from them.

The big outfits like Rainier and Exum had already been around a long time. They had their terrain dialed, and knew their weather. They had systems of mentorship-apprenticeship that worked very well for training new guides, and they had no interest in substituting a nationwide certification. I realized that I had learned through mentorship, too, from Chief Guides in the Palisades' Bob Swift, who had been on the first American expedition to succeed on an 8,000-meter peak in 1958, and Don Jensen, whose brilliant new route on the West Face of Mount Huntington in 1965 became the hardest Alaskan climb of his generation. It was difficult to argue with the opportunity to apprentice with mentors like that.

[1900]

Rise of the mountaineering club

By the turn of the 20th century, American climbing had established itself firmly enough that mountain clubs began to coalesce formally and document the interests and achievements of American climbers. The Appalachian Mountain Club began assembling climbing teams in the White Mountains in 1876. The Mazamas in Oregon were born when their first 105 members ascended Mount Hood together in 1894. The American Alpine Club was established in 1902, The Mountaineers in 1906, and the Colorado Mountain Club in 1912. The clubs' and their trip leaders provided early opportunities for organized groups to explore the mountains. Americans were showing other Americans the way—simply for the fun of it. —*Ron Funderburke*



[1925]

Paul Petzoldt begins guiding in the Tetons

In the Lower 48, without established climbing schools or guide services, much of the records of local professional guides remain undocumented, but it's easy to imagine fledgling American guides asking for a wage in return for their local expertise and ropcraft. The most heralded of these self-made guides was Paul Petzoldt, who in 1925 began leading small groups of clients in the Tetons. Petzoldt's long career in guiding can be characterized by his ability to organize and train fellow climbers to the point of competency required to become part of a guide staff. His first partnership with Glenn Exum wrought the historic Exum Mountain Guides." Although his climbing abilities were lauded around the world, Petzoldt's European counterparts would likely not have acknowledged his expertise as a guide since he had no formal training or apprenticeship in the form of European guiding traditions —*RF*

PETZOLDT ON THE SUMMIT OF THE GRAND TETON IN 1932.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JACKSON HOLE MOUNTAIN GUIDES

1900

1925

I understood how those big guiding services had established efficient routines that they didn't want to give up. But I also knew that the greatest limitation of any work that was wedded to a single destination like Rainier or the Grand was guide boredom. I could be rejuvenated by taking clients who trusted me to, say, the Cirque of the Towers. It would take decades, but the AMGA would eventually be able to facilitate that kind of moving around the country, and even of guiding in the Alps.

In the 1990s, a guides' union stopped me in my tracks. Yosemite Mountaineering guides are part of a union, established way before the advent of rock guiding, of all

park employees. I tried to join them when a billionaire client of mine—you'd know his name—wanted to ski from the east side to the Valley, and later to backpack in the park. The head guide was sympathetic, but within union rules all he could offer me was to start at the bottom, teaching "Go Climb a Rock" souvenir classes. I **had to resort to bandit guiding to give my client what he wanted.**

Back during our days as a fledgling association, I found my conflict-averse nature was interfering with my functioning as president. A couple of years of handling the strife of holding together an association that was still mostly just an idea burned me out, and I began to fade away from

continued, next page...



THE "CATERPILLAR," AS THIS TECHNIQUE IS CALLED, TEACHES CLIENTS A DEGREE OF SELF-RELIANCE AND TEAM AGENCY.

PHOTO BY NAT PATRIDGE

PAUL PETZOLDT (CENTER). PHOTO COURTESY OF KIRK BACHMAN

my presidency. The whole effort might have withered right there but for a staunch VP and a pair of Bishop guides who stepped in to help. John Fischer owned the Palisade School of Mountaineering where I worked at the time. And Allan Pietrasanta shared the vision of what we could become if we just stuck together. They gently assumed control as I began to drift. And our friend the lawyer Paul Rudder wrote us bylaws, nudging the effort toward legal respectability.

Then came the raucous Teton meeting of 1985. Those boys presided. I stood in the back. The wrangling ran to defining membership and certification, both excellent questions but very divisive. Up until

then, membership equaled certification. If you were well known for the quality of your guiding, you were included by recommendation. That had worked well enough to get us up and running, but by then there were guides in, say, North Carolina, who were not known to even an expanding membership.

It was then that certification began rearing its unwieldy head. There were lots of opinions about how to make it happen but very little agreement. The morning wore on; things only deteriorated. At that point, Yvon Chouinard pulled himself up to speak. As the shortest guide in the room, you might think it would be hard for him to get noticed.

[1979]

Meeting at Dornan's produces the Moose Bar Charter

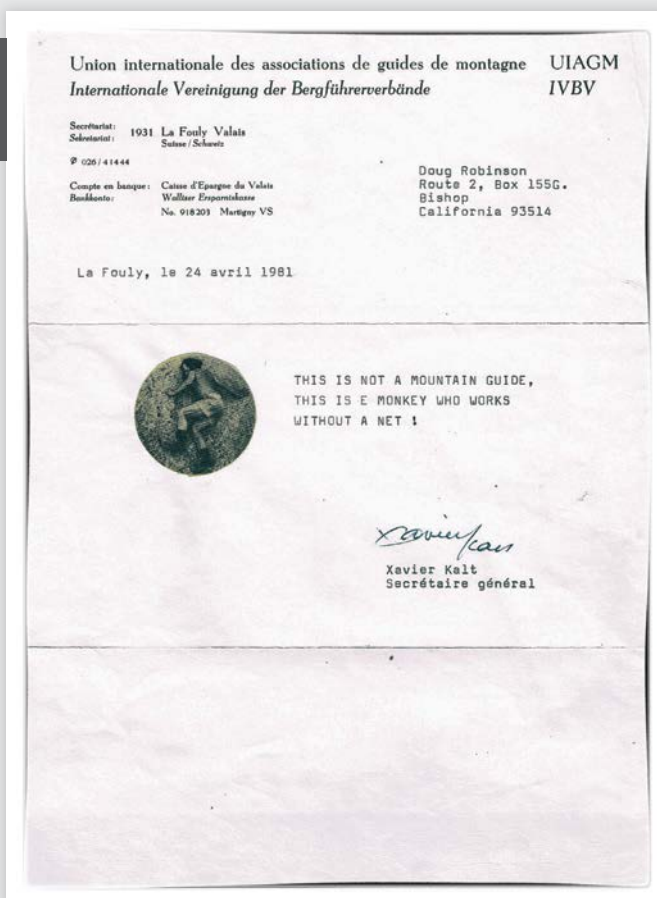
My earliest contact with professional guiding in America was around 1982, when my friend, Exum guide Peter Lev, informed me that I'd been appointed a founding member of the American Professional Mountain Guides Association (APMGA). The association had been formed in 1979 at Dornan's Bar in Moose; the fact that it took about three years for me to be notified of this honor very accurately reflects the casual organization of guides back then. —*Ian Wade*

THIS LETTER FROM XAVIER KALT
HAS BECOME KNOWN AS
THE "MONKEY LETTER."

[1981]

Infamous "Monkey Letter" received

See above



1979

1981

Not Yvon. Wrangling voices died out and all eyes turned. "The only guys harder to organize than guides," he said, "are cowboys. Now I was just on a big ranch..." He went on, with a quiet force, to explain how cowboys "are gonna die out" because they're too independent, and can't get it together to join forces. Right there, things shifted. The meeting, which had been about to blow apart into hopeless factions, began in tentative steps to knit back together.

At first, the AMGA had no letterhead, which led us into conflict with the UIAGM. In 1980, I wrote them a simple message: *Hi, here we are, how can we join your club?* But I sent it on my personal letterhead. At its top was a

Gordon Wiltsie photo, already well-known because it had been on a poster for *Ascent* magazine. In it I was pulling a V2 move in the Buttermilks, shirtless, dirty shorts, long hair flying. Europe's reply to that message (and its accompanying photo) was clipped. Literally. The photo had been clipped off the page and pasted onto UIAGM letterhead. There was no salutation, no greeting. Typed, all in caps, it read: "This is not a mountain guide. This is a monkey who works without a net." It was signed "Xavier Kalt, Secretaire General." Since **kaIt is German for "cold," we decided we had been given the "Kalt shoulder," and that letter became known as "the Monkey Letter."**

continued, next page...

AMERICAN PROFESSIONAL MOUNTAIN GUIDES ASSOCIATION

CHARTER MEETING

Formational Guides Association meeting August 12, 1980 in Grand Teton National Park. Meeting opened at 9:00 am. Present: Yvon Chouinard, Jim Donini, Harry Frishman, Peter Lev.

I

- 1) Agreed to form a professional mountain guides association in the USA.
- 2) Agreed that the four present at this meeting be the charter members of this association.
- 3) Agreed that the name of this association be: American Professional Mountain Guides Association. (APMGA).

II

OBJECTIVES

- 1) To promote the highest possible standards for professional mountain guides in the USA.
- 2) For the APMGA to become a member of the International Union of Associations of Mountain Guides (UIAGM).

III

Agreed to create an initial group of fully certified mountain guides, which in the judgment of the four present at this meeting meet the criteria of the above objectives. This group is:

Gary Bocarde	John Fisher	Royal Robbins
Yvon Chouinard	Harry Frishman	Doug Robinson
Mike Covington	George Hurley	Paul Ross
Bob Culp	Peter Lev	Kim Schmitz
Jim Donini	Jeff Lowe	Ian Wade

IV

Agreed to generate a second group of active guides which meets the Objectives (II). The time limit for the generation of this group is January 1, 1981. The Charter group will meet in Jackson Hole during January 1981.

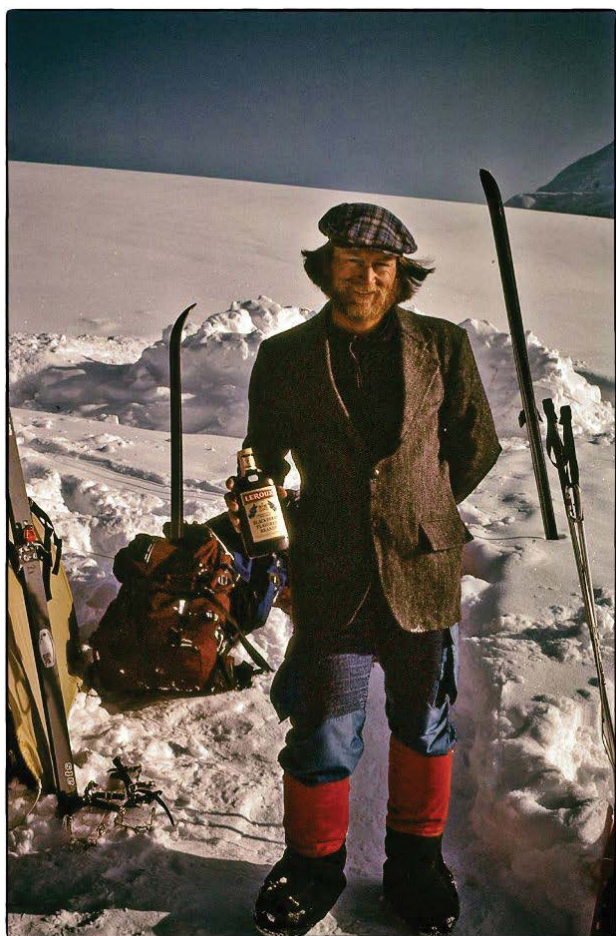
Meeting adjourned to lunch at the Moose bar at 11:30.

THERE'S A COMMON MISCONCEPTION THAT THE ORIGINAL MOOSE BAR CHARTER WAS WRITTEN ON A NAPKIN; WHILE THIS IS A ROMANTIC IDEA, IT WAS WRITTEN ON A YELLOW LEGAL PAD. IN ANY CASE, THE ORIGINAL WAS EVENTUALLY LOST TO HISTORY, BUT NOT BEFORE IT COULD BE TYPED UP. (SEE REPLICA AT LEFT.)

Being rebuffed by the Euro guiding establishment became legend, which led to a postscript at the IFMGA Annual Meeting in Boulder in 2010. Hundreds of guides overflowed the meeting room. The UIAGM had come to America for the first time to meet with us, which was a pretty big deal. President Margaret Wheeler had just toured them through Yosemite and Mount Rainier where, in a brilliant piece of diplomacy, she got the National Park Service to explain to them the difficulties of opening up their permit structure to Euro guides who wanted to take their clients up, say, the Nose. I had been leaning against a wall, chatting with a French board member of the UIAGM, when I was called up. I presented the Monkey Letter, nicely framed, to Margaret, and told its story. As I returned to my spot next to

the wall, I wondered what my French companion would think. Would he see our “Kalt shoulder” as funny? He leaned over and whispered, “He was like that with everyone.”

Once it was assured that our Guides Association would survive, certification, of course, became our main thrust. Chouinard was right—it organized us and led to aligning our standards with that of the UIAGM. Yet to me, certification put a little too much emphasis on the technical side of guiding, our everyday techniques and technologies, which I call “rope tricks.” For my money (and it *is* expensive, costing as much as a master’s degree, though nowadays it’s nearly as valuable), once you’ve learned the ropes, and the parallel skills of mountain medicine and avalanche forecasting, you’re



[1984]

Insurance crisis hits the guiding industry

Starting in 1984, the insurance industry experienced a crisis that resulted in liability premiums tripling. Some organizations couldn’t get coverage at all. The crisis was driven by several factors: lower returns on the premiums insurance companies invested, disruption in re-insurance markets, and collusion to increase profits. Guide services paid relatively low premiums, and the risk of loss was hard for insurance executives to assess. So it became impossible for smaller guide services to get insurance coverage. Having no insurance meant losing permits to operate on public lands. —IW

GUIDING AS A CRAFT WAS ALIVE AND WELL IN THE EARLY DAYS OF THE AMGA, AS ALAN KEARNY (AMGA ALPINE GUIDE) PROVED ON DENALI IN 1983.

PHOTO COURTESY OF AMERICAN ALPINE INSTITUTE COLLECTION

1984

ready to become a guide. Then begins the post-graduate process, when you develop the more humanistic realm of client-handling. Just don't call them "soft" skills.

As I stepped out to the outhouse at my Eastern Sierra cabin this morning, I began thinking again about mentorship. After all, this cabin is where I had often gathered clients before launching onto week-long ski expeditions over the crest of the Range of Light. As I would make them breakfast, shake down their gear, probe for altitude headaches, and calm their performance anxieties, I often had a new apprentice guide by my side. I reflected on my good fortune to have had the opportunity myself, as I was starting out, to learn firsthand from seasoned guides the

tricks of client handling that, to me, lie at the heart of what we do. And then to pay that forward.

Though, in truth, it's not quite right to call those techniques "tricks," when they so often come down to listening carefully to my clients, and treating them with full respect. So easy to say, yet subtle to roll out. No wonder not all of those apprentices went on to become guides. The ones who did not often saw the day-to-day workings of guiding and decided on their own that it was not the profession for them. Which showed me that the process had worked. I reflected that the resurgent interest in mentoring within the AMGA is the new movement of our maturing association that I'm most proud of: honoring guiding's roots. «

[1985]

Guides meet to discuss insurance crisis

The insurance crisis led to a meeting of guides from all over the country in the Tetons in the fall of 1985. It was a raucous session, and one of the few things everyone could agree on was the need for a stronger national organization. The APMGA had done very little to this point. Perhaps because of my experience managing the national Outward Bound organization, I found myself elected president of what became the AMGA, a role I served in for five years.

Early tasks for the AMGA involved collecting dues (some found this a novel concept), fundraising to open an office and hire a half-time staff person, electing a board that met to clarify direction and set policy, and holding annual membership meetings to continue building consensus on how guiding would evolve into a professional activity. —IW

[1988]

Accreditation process begins

The newly elected board of directors started mapping out strategies to reassure insurance providers that risk management procedures were in place for an industry most insurers barely understood. The first step was to review major guide services' procedures and accredit them. Outward Bound had developed this inexpensive process for its multiple bases, and we found that adopting a similar system for guide services improved communication between the major guide services.

I led these accreditation reviews during the summer of 1988 in the Shawangunks, New Hampshire, Colorado, the Tetons, Rainier, and California. Senior guides from other services joined to form a review team. Inevitably, the dialogue suggested some practices that could be improved. For example, we recommended to one guide service owner that he not test whether his belay lesson for a group of novices was successful by personally jumping off to see if the belayers could hold him!

Insurance became available through one company that saw an opportunity for profit in the crisis. The board developed experience in talking to more established companies, and, gradually, guide services were able to purchase liability insurance again—at higher rates, of course. —IW

1985

1988



KC BAUM (AMGA ROCK GUIDE) SETTING UP A RAPPEL OFF THE MAIDEN. ALSO PICTURED ARE EXAMINER MARK HOUSTON (AMERICAN MOUNTAIN GUIDE/IFMGA GUIDE) AND AN UNIDENTIFIED CLIENT.

JOHN CLEARY COLLECTION

[1990]

First Rock Guide Exam

Given that the majority of guiding in the U.S. is on rock, our young organization's first priority was to develop the Rock Guide program. The AMGA enlisted Karl Klassen and Hans Gmoser, both of the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides (ACMG), as mentors for the program, plus a guide-instructor corps of nearly a dozen qualified guides. It would be another three years before the first Rock Guide Exam was held in Boulder, Colorado, in October of 1990. Six instructors tested 12 candidates over the course of a nine-day pre-clinic and exam.

The takeaway from the first guide courses and exams was the need for development of both hard and soft skills to support client care and well-being. Although the minimum rock standard was leading 5.10a, being the hottest climber was not the main objective. KC Baum, Mark Bowling, and I were the three candidates (out of nine) who passed the first rock exam. —*John Cleary*

1990

[1991]

First Alpine Guide Course and Exam

Mark Houston, Steve Young, Bela Vadasz, and Marc Chauvin, among others, spearheaded the Alpine Guide program, and the first Alpine Exam was held in the North Cascades of Washington in September 1991. The nine-day course included four days on the glaciers of Mount Baker, a day of rock rescue techniques at Mount Eire, two days in Washington Pass, and, finally, a two-day ascent of Mount Shuksan. All this was followed by a nine-day exam. Of the four participants who took the exam, just two—Kathy Cosley and David Staeheli—passed. Two other examinees, George Dunn and Eric Simonson, fulfilled their field obligations under the Grandfathering Program. —JC

[Editor's Note: Mark Houston and SP Parker were, as Houston puts it, "reluctant to self-certify," though, as the course instructors and examiners, they were clearly qualified. At a later AMGA annual meeting, Eric Simonson would move to certify the two of them; the motion passed by a vote of the membership.]

[1991]

AMGA formally applies for IFMGA admission

With those fledgling programs underway, the AMGA formally applied for admission to the IFMGA in 1991 under the leadership of Matt Culberson and Dunham Gooding. For the next six years, AMGA directors and senior guides underwent the rigorous process of IFMGA certification, which included attending many meetings of the IFMGA in Canada and Europe. —JC

THE FIRST ALPINE GUIDE COURSE AND EXAM WERE HELD IN WASHINGTON'S NORTH CASCADES.

JOHN CLEARY COLLECTION



1991

[1993]

First Ski Guide Course and Exam

Guided skiing has occurred in the U.S. since long before the AMGA existed. But during this pre-ski discipline era, there was much less understanding of what ski guiding was (and should be) compared to alpine and rock guiding.

Some of us viewed ski guiding as a form of trekking on skis with big overnight packs; some were more objective-oriented, encompassing high traverses in ranges like the Sierra. Some were touring to ski powder, but others utilized skins on the way down to better control themselves with those heavy packs. There was some mechanized travel, and—of course—there was the age-old debate over free-heeling versus alpine touring.

Bela Vadasz and Jean Pavillard were tasked with developing the Ski Guide program, which proved to be a source of great friction within the AMGA. This friction was on display during the first combination Ski Guide Course and Exam in 1993. The course ultimately disbanded due to differences in opinion. Eventually, Bela and Jean developed a program that mirrored that of the other disciplines, which led to the AMGA's acceptance into the IFMGA/UIAGM. —*Rob Hess*

1993

[1993]

AMGA Certification Program presented to IFMGA in Vent, Austria

Gooding and Houston, along with Steve Young, presented the AMGA Certification Program in Vent, Austria, in 1993. The following year, Gooding and Houston attended the meeting in Chamonix, France, to report on progress with the training programs, as well as guide access issues in U.S. National Parks. Senior guides from several IFMGA countries observed and critiqued all of the AMGA's training courses and exams over the same period. —*JC*

[1995]

IFMGA says AMGA Ski Guide program needs more work

Houston traveled alone to Sterzing, Italy in 1995. There, Gmoser (ACMG) and Ernst Konzett (IFMGA Technical Committee) reported that the AMGA Rock and Alpine training programs were up to IFMGA standards, but that the Ski Guide program needed additional work—both the ski skill standard and the progression of the ski course needed improvement. —*JC*

1995

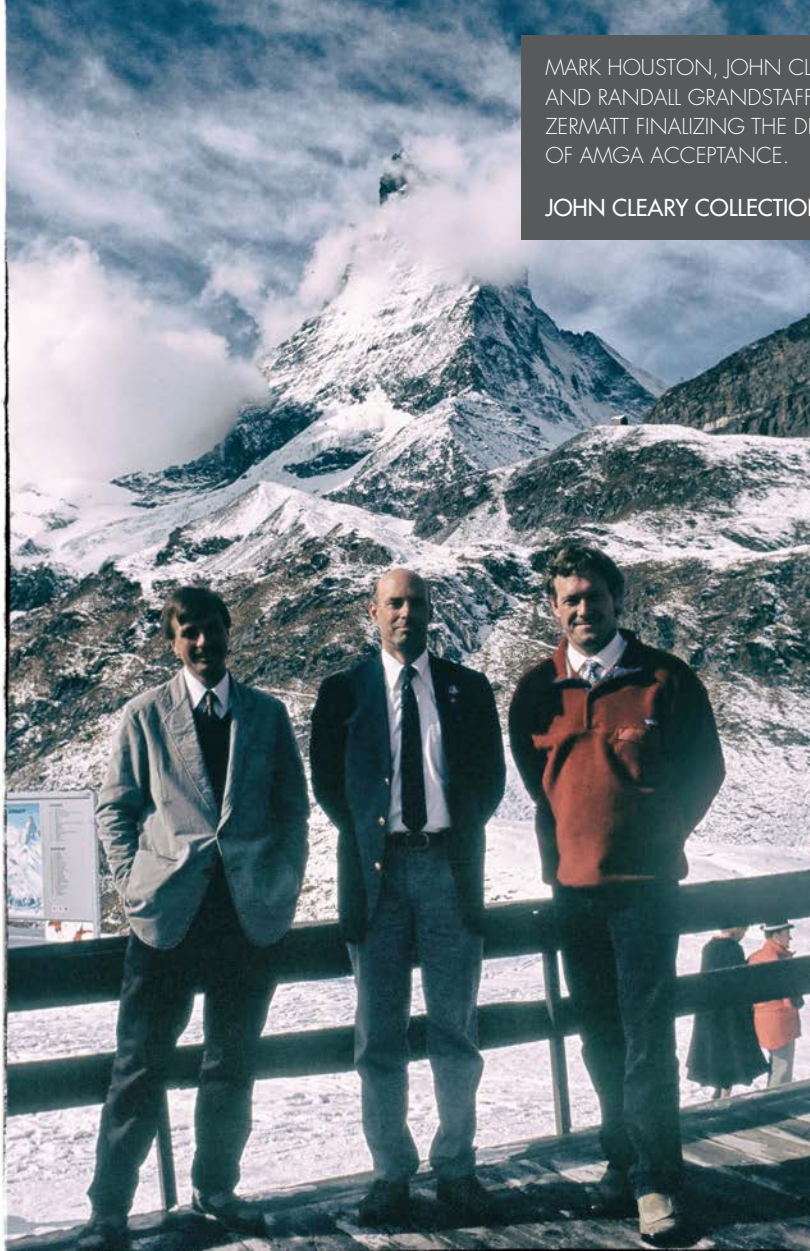
[1996]

Ski Guide program drama continues to unfold in Banff

I, along with Mark Houston, Randall Grandstaff, and Bill Putnam (a past president of the American Alpine Club and an advisor to the AMGA) attended the 100th Anniversary of the ACMG in Banff, Canada, in May 1996. Gmoser reported that the Ski Guide program still needed improvement, and it was decided that the exam would be observed again in 1997. It was an eventful meeting, and not just because of the Ski Guide program drama. Tom Hargis and Peter Lev, with Exum Guides, attended as representatives of the U.S. Mountain Guides Federation to advance their agenda to have a second guides' organization. They were, in part, opposed to the AMGA certification program because of their concerns about competition from certified guides within their national park concessions.

The IFMGA rejected their proposal and made it clear that they would recognize only one guiding organization in the U.S. It wasn't personal—many years earlier, the IFMGA had agreed to recognize three separate guiding organizations in Italy. It was a disaster because it fragmented the three regions in Italy and allowed for disunity among the Italian guides. The IFMGA was determined not to allow this to happen again. —JC

1996



MARK HOUSTON, JOHN CLEARY, AND RANDALL GRANDSTAFF IN ZERMATT FINALIZING THE DETAILS OF AMGA ACCEPTANCE.

JOHN CLEARY COLLECTION

[OCTOBER 1997]

Last Rock Guide Course and Exam observation by IFMGA representatives

I attended the next meeting, along with Jean Pavillard, in Formigal, Spain, in June 1997. The delegates agreed that the AMGA program was up to the IFMGA standard, but they wanted to observe one more Rock Course and Exam at Red Rock, Nevada, in October of 1997. —JC

1997



AMGA REPRESENTATIVES AT THE IFMGA MEETING IN AUSTRIA, NOVEMBER, 1997. FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: MATT BROOKS, RANDALL GRANDSTAFF, JOHN CLEARY, JEAN PAVILLARD, BELA VADASZ, RAMSAY THOMAS, KATHY COSLEY, MARK HOUSTON. THE GROSSGLOCKNER, THE HIGHEST MOUNTAIN IN AUSTRIA, IS IN THE BACKGROUND.

JOHN CLEARY COLLECTION

[NOVEMBER 1997]

IFMGA Acceptance

After all that, a large delegation from the AMGA traveled to the IFMGA meeting in Austria in November 1997. At long last, representatives from the IFMGA member countries voted unanimously to admit the AMGA into the IFMGA. Because they had already received their Alpine, Rock, and Ski certifications before AMGA was accepted, Mark Houston and Bela Vadasz were also named IFMGA guides at this time. This was the most significant event in the history of the AMGA, and it represented the hard work of all of the people mentioned in this article, plus many more. —*JC*

First generation of the AMGA Masterbrand Logo



1997

[2008]

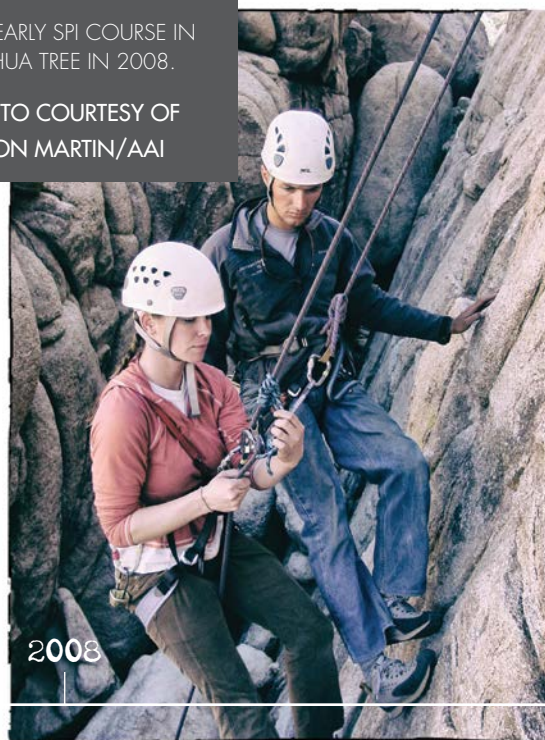
Top Rope Site Manager program becomes SPI

The Single Pitch Instructor program was originally called the Top Rope Site Manager. The change from the TRSM to SPI Program in 2008 took nearly three years and included input from the industry, land managers, program participants, and the UIAA Training Standards Working Group.

At this time, we did a complete overhaul of the curriculum. The first change was the requirement that participants lead traditional climbs at an entry-level grade—something not required in the original program. This improved candidates' general skill levels and competency in placing gear, and made it possible to run the program in terrain where fifth-class climbing was required to set up climbs. —*Adam Fox*

AN EARLY SPI COURSE IN JOSHUA TREE IN 2008.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JASON MARTIN/AAI



2008

[2009]

AMGA gains a full-time Accreditation Director and Climbing Instructor Program Director

Within the first year of their existence, the Single Pitch Instructor (SPI) and Climbing Wall Instructor (CWI) programs faced a major problem: they were too successful. At that time, all the people managing the programs—including Adam Fox, John Bicknell, and Joe Lentini—were doing so as volunteers. Along with the minutiae of processing several hundred courses, they were all simultaneously trying to manage their own guide services. The AMGA hired CU student Justin Yates as a part-time administrative assistant to help lighten the load. Despite his good work, the volunteers continued to carry a significant workload, so the board directed then-Executive Director Betsy Winter to find a solution.

That's where I came in. In September 2009, Betsy asked me if I would be interested in turning my half-time job into a full-time position as Accreditation Director and Climbing Instructor Program Director. After some soul-searching—and accepting the fact that I would be giving up working in the field—I said yes. I knew I had some big shoes to fill. I dove in head-first, but I must have hit my head on something: the next thing I knew, 10 years had gone by. —*Ed Crothers*

[2009]

SPI Program gains UIAA endorsement

In its early days, the Top Rope Site Manager program included an exam on the last day of the course. We also removed the examination component, when we overhauled the curriculum to become the present-day SPI program. It is now a separate two-day assessment. This improves focus on learning during the course, rather than obsessing about what would be on the exam the next day.

The program has always been designed to be an entry-level training and certification program for individuals working as employees in a single-pitch rock environment. (Think outdoor programs, summer camps, and guide services.) Individuals who wish to start their own businesses are encouraged to pursue the AMGA Rock Instructor or AMGA Rock Guide Certifications, at an absolute minimum. —*AF*

SINGLE PITCH INSTRUCTOR PROGRAM BACKGROUND

In its early days, the Top Rope Site Manager program included an exam on the last day of the course. We also removed the examination component, when we overhauled the curriculum to become the present-day SPI program. It is now a separate two-day assessment. This improves focus on learning during the course, rather than obsessing about what would be on the exam the next day. We found that candidates better retained and dialed their skills when they had to prepare for a separate exam in the future, since it gave them time to practice and understand the skills fully. The other downside to the exam being on the last day of the course was that some candidates had the ability to replicate a skill they had been taught the day before, but maybe not six months later.

The program has always been designed to be an entry-level training and certification program for individuals working as employees in a single-pitch rock environment. (Think outdoor programs, summer camps, and guide services.) Individuals who wish to start their own businesses are encouraged to pursue the AMGA Rock Instructor or AMGA Rock Guide Certifications, at an absolute minimum. —*AF*

2010

First AMGA Ice Instructor Course (IIC)

Recognizing the need for the addition of a course focused specifically on ice guiding, the first AMGA Ice Instructor Course ran in Ouray, CO. Previously ice guiding was covered broadly in the alpine progression. With the addition of the IIC, students now receive a 5 day curriculum focused on managing one or two clients in single and multi-pitch ice terrain—today, the IIC is a core program in the alpine discipline.

2009

2010

[2010]

First CWI Manual published

The first AMGA CWI course manual came out in 2010. Before that, the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides (ACMG) had allowed the AMGA to use their CWI manual for our CWI pilot programs in 2007 and 2008. In November 2009, I discovered that our agreement with the ACMG to use their manual would terminate at the end of the year, and so Joe Lentini and I pounded out a new manual over the following month. The end result was adequate, but not to the standard I thought an AMGA manual should meet. Having two three-quarter-time jobs (welcome to the world of working for a small nonprofit), some projects fell by the wayside, including upgrading the CWI manual. —EC



A Note on the AMGA Logo:

That familiar mountain is the Grand Teton, where it all began. The 17 stripes represent that the United States was the 17th country to be admitted into the IFMGA, and the rope symbolizes the craft of technical guiding and the partnerships required to climb or ski in the mountains.

[2014]

SPI Manual published

At the beginning of 2012, I noticed that prolific guidebook publisher Falcon Guides was about to release Bob Gaines' *Toproping*. Since Bob was a current SPI Provider and writer, I contacted him to see if he could send a draft to Adam and me. Bob had incorporated a great deal of AMGA SPI curriculum into a book for recreational climbers, and we asked him if there was any way we could turn the book into an AMGA SPI textbook. The book had already gone to the printer, but the foundation was laid for what would become *Rock Climbing: The AMGA Single Pitch Manual*.

We worked out a contract with Falcon by the end of the following summer. Adam had moved to New Zealand and removed himself from the project by then, leaving Bob and Jason Martin as the primary authors. Ron Funderburke and I served as technical editors. That fall was a blur of writing, editing, rewriting, and proofreading, with a 100-year flood in Boulder thrown in for good measure. We managed to meet our deadline, and the book hit the shelves in May 2014. Based on the success of the book, Falcon did a second printing last summer, and ideas are being collected for a second edition. —EC

[2014]

SPI revalidated; CWI receives UIAA endorsement

Thanks in part to help from American Alpine Club Executive Director Phil Powers, the UIAA voted to endorse the AMGA SPI program's revalidation request in 2014. The CWI program received UIAA endorsement at that time, as well. —EC

[2014]

AMGA begins allowing Splitboard use on Ski Programs

In order to support the growing number of splitboarders in the US, the AMGA began allowing splitboard use on AMGA Ski Programs. To this day, the IFMGA does not accept splitboarding as a mode of travel to achieve IFMGA Certification. Thus, Splitboard Guides pursuing American Mountain Guide Certification must pass an additional ski movement assessment.



2010

2014

[2016]

Second edition of CWI Manual published

Opportunity came knocking in 2012 when Andy Loue, a CWI Provider Trainer and, at the time, the manager of the Outdoor Adventure Program at the University of Akron, contacted me regarding a proposal to re-write the CWI Manual as a part of his masters' thesis. Things got off to a great start, but fizzled as life got in the way and Andy had to drop out of the project. Three years later, with the help of a select group of Provider Trainers and a new executive director who I bamboozled into letting me pour a bunch of time into the project (thanks, Alex), we completed the new CWI Manual in January 2016. I am pleased with the end product, but the dream is to one day have a textbook similar to the SPI manual. —EC

[2018]

AMGA establishes advocacy program

As displayed in the preceding pages, the AMGA has engaged in advocacy efforts on behalf of the American guiding industry since the beginnings of the organization. In the 1990s and 2000s, the AMGA tackled such issues as: Wilderness permits, use of waivers by minors, commercial use authorization regulations, insurance limits, and commercial use fee increases. Many of these projects were undertaken with the assistance of professional lobbying firms, resulting in efforts that were sporadic and budget limited. In 2010 the AMGA took a significant step to build consistency in its advocacy efforts and hired an Advocacy Director. Initial efforts included a mix of successes and challenges. Victories such as the preservation of guided climbing in the Black Canyon showed the power of consistent AMGA engagement and challenges not met, such as an inability to gain Federal agency support for AMGA credential-based access, showed where the limits may lie. The program was put on hold in 2014. Resurrected in 2018, the AMGA Advocacy and Policy Program's primary focus is on increasing access opportunities for instructors and guides. Recent accomplishments include expanded availability of temporary and priority use permits on the Shoshone National Forest in Wyoming, new guiding opportunities at the Gate Butte in Utah, and preservation of guiding access at the Ouray Ice Park in Colorado. —Matt Wade

[2019]



AMGA
celebrates
its 40th
anniversary

Today

2016

2018

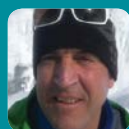
2019

About the Authors



Ian Wade - South Jordan, Utah

Ian was one of the first Certified Rock Guides and was the second President of AMGA, serving from 1985 to 1989. His climbing resume includes many Yosemite walls in the 1970s, the Eigerwand, Choricho (first ascent) in Baltoro, and the Everest North Ridge as climbing leader of Peace Climb. He began his varied career as an aerospace engineer; later, he was Executive Director of Outward Bound. He designed adventure facilities in Asia and conducted a risk-management consultancy, Adventure Safety International. Ian has four children and lives with his wife, Ginger.



Rob Hess - Jackson, Wyoming

Rob's extensive experience in the mountains includes guiding clients to 8,000-meter summits and guiding on and around Denali. He is an owner and chief guide for Jackson Hole Mountain Guides. Rob served as AMGA Technical Director for eight years and was on the Board of Directors for 14 years, four of them as president. Rob was the 2007 recipient of the Guide of the Year Award. In 2018, he received an AMGA Lifetime Achievement Award. He is an American Mountain Guide/IFMGA Guide.



Ron Funderburke - Golden, Colorado

Ron is the Director of Education at the American Alpine Club, an elected member of the AMGA Board of Directors, a Certified Rock Guide and an Assistant Alpine Guide. He doesn't get to spend as much time on the rock as he used to, but still spends some of his days guiding for Colorado Mountain School. Additionally, Ron is a part-time writer, and his instructional books are available through the Falcon Guides in print.



Adam Fox - Raglan, North Island, New Zealand

Adam is an AMGA Rock Guide and has served as a member of the AMGA Instructor Team, Board of Directors, and Technical Committee. He began guiding in North Carolina in 1994 and later helped spearhead the SPI program, for which he was the National Discipline Coordinator. Originally from the United Kingdom, Adam is currently making use of his third passport on an extended vacation in New Zealand, where he is waiting for regime change in the USA.



John Cleary - Reno, Nevada

John started climbing when he attended an Outward Bound course in Colorado in 1968. Highlights of his climbing career include a first ascent of Mount Hunter with the Dartmouth Mountaineering Club in 1973 and three Himalayan expeditions. He joined the AMGA in 1987 to improve his guiding skills and was in the first class of Certified Rock Guides in 1990. John joined the AMGA Board of Directors in 1992, served as president from 1996 to 1997, and was one of the many guides who worked to gain IFMGA admission.



Ed Crothers - Boulder, Colorado

Ed has played countless roles as part of the American guiding community, most recently as AMGA's Climbing Instructor Program Director & Accreditation Director. A Certified Rock Instructor, Ed was the 2017 Employee of the Year and received the 2018 President's Award. Learn more about Ed and his career on page 38.

The authors, editor, and AMGA would like to acknowledge Mark Houston, Eric Craig, Randall Grandstaff, Alan Jolley, SP Parker, Marc Chauvin, Steve Young, Charlie Fowler, Doug Robinson, Alain Comeau, and Rick Wilcox for their involvement in the early development of the Rock Guide Course; Karl Klassen and Hans Gmoser of the Canadian ACMG, who helped develop the Alpine Guide Course; and Alan Bard and Tim Villanueva for their contributions to the development of the Ski Guide Course. Many of those named here also assisted with fact-checking for this story. «




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 AMBASSADORS
JESSICA BAKER & MARTIN VOLKEN
PHOTO // JOEY SCHUSLER &
THOMAS WOODSON JACKSON, WY

SKI INJURIES—AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT THEM



Is anything tantamount to one's well-being? In "Ask Alan," longtime physician and guide Alan Oram delivers wisdom on industry-specific health concerns that you've probably pondered but perhaps never asked about.

By Alan Oram

SKI INJURIES RUN THE GAMUT FROM HEAD TO toe—and everything in between. They include fractures, sprains and strains, frostbite, and closed head injuries, and the list goes on from there.

Existing research does not discern between resort injuries and backcountry injuries, but the mechanics are similar, even if the speeds are not. Your day will be brought to a screeching halt if you or your client gets injured, so it's key to understand common snowsports injuries and possible treatment plans.

HEAD INJURIES

Head injuries account for up to 34 percent of snowsports injuries. They are also the leading cause of death among snowboarders. Even minor head injuries can have significant consequences, especially in younger athletes.

Treatment: Head injuries—and spinal injuries (see below)—necessitate a call to local search and rescue, unless you and your party are able to immobilize the patient's spine and evacuate them to the trailhead.

SPINAL INJURIES

Spinal injuries in skiers and snowboarders represent up to 17 percent of all injuries seen in snowsports athletes. Physicians also see some minor tweaks, as well as devastating spinal cord injuries. Most represent compression-related injuries, such as compression fractures to the thoracolumbar spine; fewer involve the cervical spine. Jumps and falls from height are the most common cause of these, but even a ground-level fall can result in a catastrophic spine injury. Falls backwards, rather than collisions, are thought to be the most common cause of these injuries.

UPPER-EXTREMITY INJURIES

Typically, the mechanism of injury for upper-body injuries is direct impact, axial load on an outstretched, extended arm, forced abduction (imagine your arm extended away from your body above your head), or external rotation from a firmly planted pole during a fall. In a backcountry setting, many of these injuries require immediate transport to medical care.



CLAVICLE FRACTURE, ORAM PERSONAL COLLECTION

The shoulders and upper extremities are attached to the rest of the body only by muscle and soft tissue. This flexibility provides a great amount of movement—but it can also contribute to a variety of injuries. Shoulder injuries represent four to 11 percent of alpine skiing injuries, ranging from clavicle fractures to rotator cuff strains as well as dislocations and fractures of the humerus.

Direct impact onto the shoulder can result in myriad injuries that range from shoulder dislocation or separation to humerus fracture or rotator cuff injury (these injuries take weeks to heal and limit lifting abilities and range of motion). Many of these can occur as well with falls onto an outstretched arm, such as might occur when your arm is extended as you brace a fall.

Rotator cuff tears can occur from direct impact, but generally involve some degree of excessive motion in one of the many planes that the shoulder moves. The tendons of the rotator cuff insert into the top of the humerus. If they're torn, there may also be an associated fracture. These injuries can range from minor sprains to complete tears.

Forearm and wrist fractures happen frequently to snowboarders, though skiers who fall and attempt to brace themselves can sustain them, too. Hand injuries (the thumb, specifically) are commonly associated with pole strap use resulting in sprain or complete tear of the ulnar collateral



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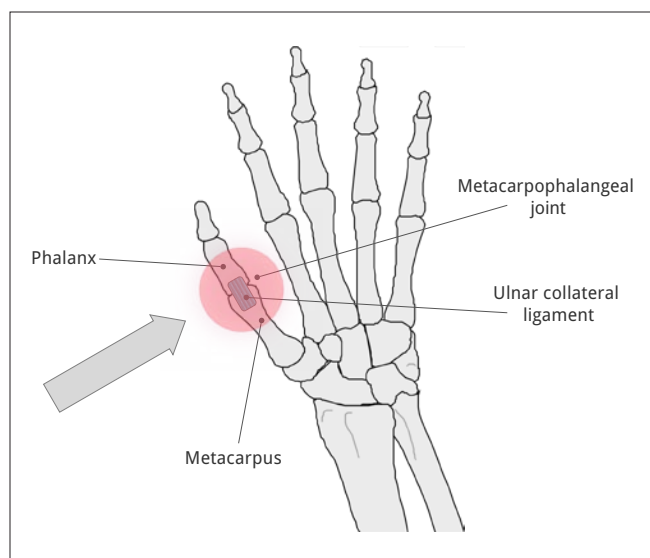


ILLUSTRATION OF SKIER'S THUMB

ligament of the thumb, a condition commonly known as skier's thumb. These injuries may also result in small fractures to the base of the thumb. Temporary splinting is often necessary and may allow skiers to return to activity fairly quickly.

Treatment: Shoulder injuries are sometimes obvious, and sometimes less so. In almost any case in which you have an upper extremity injury, though, attempting to ski or board with a fractured clavicle can be brutal. In most cases, the best option is to immobilize as best you can and get your patient out of the backcountry as efficiently as possible.

LOWER-EXTREMITY INJURIES

If we look at injuries from alpine skiers worldwide, knee injuries are by far the most common. The dreaded ACL rupture or partial tear is one of the most common. Other knee injuries that occur with high frequency are medial collateral ligament strains, meniscal tears, and tibial plateau fractures.

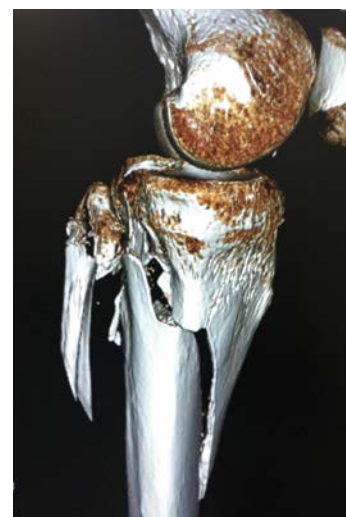
The classic ACL rupture is: "I caught an edge and my ski rotated, my binding didn't release, I hyperextended my knee, and felt and heard a 'pop.'" Typically, an ACL patient feels pain, which then recedes. When they try to stand, the knee feels unstable.

The mechanism of injury is typical for most ACL injuries in skiers and consists of internal rotation of the leg and hyperextension of the thigh at the knee. The other common way an ACL tear occurs is a backwards fall followed by an attempt to stand upright, which exerts force on a flexed knee when getting back up. In general, the pain is brief if the injury is limited to a complete rupture of the ligament. If pain remains, there is a high likelihood that an additional injury exists; probably 50 percent or more of ACL injuries have an associated injury.

Other less common knee injuries are tibial plateau fractures, which can be isolated or may be associated with additional injuries. What seemingly would be a minor twist and fall in the proper setting can result in this fracture. Depending on the type of fracture and joint involvement, surgical care is often needed.

Tibial and fibular fractures, sometimes called "boot-top" fractures, are a result of twisting falls in rigid boots. They often occur when bindings don't release or in case of sudden stops, such as when your ski tips dive under a fallen log in the forest. The ski and boot stop, but the body rotates and/or has enough momentum to generate forces that are transmitted to the top of the boot. These are unstable injuries and will generally require surgical care.

Skiers often believe that since the ski boot is rigid, it's not possible to break an ankle. Wrong. Rotational forces transmit energy directly to the ankle and can lead to serious ankle injury. These injuries may be to soft tissue, such as in a ligament sprain or an Achilles tendon rupture. Snowboarders' softer boots may lead to a higher incidence due to the greater rotation and the movement inherent in boarding.

TIBIAL PLATEAU FRACTURE,
ORAM PERSONAL COLLECTION

Treatment: Evaluation by a skilled clinician is paramount. Get out of the backcountry and get a real diagnosis that identifies any additional injuries. If you have an ACL rupture, discuss this with a qualified orthopedist who performs ACL reconstruction routinely. The question of what to do after the ACL rupture is a big one, and having some understanding of the process can help with the big picture. The same goes for fractures—get to a professional. You need your legs.

PREVENTION

In a backcountry setting, any of these injuries probably means a complicated evacuation.

Here's a plug for protecting your brain. Helmet use in skiing has increased dramatically over the past 15 years. Helmet technology has progressed, and although it's still not perfect, helmet use has likely decreased the degree of the injury in many instances. Even with this increased use, the incidence of injury has not decreased, in part because the forces involved in head injuries while skiing are often more rotational than linear. Look for a helmet with newer



COMPLEX ANKLE FRACTURE, ORAM PERSONAL COLLECTION

technology such as Multi-directional Impact Protection System (MIPS), in which a sandwich of material is inserted into the shell. This allows the skull to rotate within the helmet, reducing the rotational forces on the brain upon impact and, in theory, decreasing the extent and degree of injury.

For any injury described here, pre-trip planning and using resources you've brought with you to immobilize and transport a patient are critical for safe and effective guiding. Pre-trip conditioning and strength training will likely contribute to a decrease in injuries, so talk to your clients and don't blow off pre-season ski conditioning in favor of rock climbing in the fall.

RESOURCES

Should an injury occur while you're on the job, there are a number of resources available to the professional guiding community. The Kees Brenninkmeyer Foundation's mission is to financially assist alpine guides and patrollers or instructors who require surgery to continue their careers. Visit keesbfoundation.org for more information. «

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AVALANCHE SAFETY EQUIPMENT THROUGH THE YEARS

By Joe Thompson



PHOTO BY NICK D'ALESSIO (CERTIFIED SKI GUIDE)

Snow science has come a long way since the 1950s. Here's a look at the latest (and some lesser-known) avalanche rescue technologies.

AVALANCHE TECHNOLOGY TODAY IS DATA driven and gadget rich, but it wasn't always that way. In the mid-20th century—which avalanche pioneer Ed LaChapelle has called the Golden Age of Forest Service avalanche studies—forecasting methods and rescue technology began to undergo something of a renaissance.

EARLY AVALANCHE RESCUE EQUIPMENT

The best known example of early avalanche rescue gear, as it were, is the avalanche cord. Essentially a ball of colorful (usually red) 3.5mm paracord, an avalanche cord was typically 20 to 25 meters long. Skiers or mountaineers traveling in avalanche terrain would tie one end of the cord around their waist and pull the avalanche cord along behind them. The idea was that, should the wearer be caught in an avalanche, rescuers could follow directional arrows marked on the cord to find a buried victim.

During World War I, Austro-Hungarian mountain troops carried avalanche cords as part of their personal equipment. The best you can really say about the avalanche cord is that it's better than nothing—it was not particularly effective, especially compared to the modern-day transceiver. More on that later.

The avalanche cord eventually gave way to the avalanche ball, another predecessor of today's beacons. The idea was the same: in the event of an avalanche, a skier or climber could pull a cord to release a spring-loaded canvas ball from the top of their pack, which would then float to the surface and give rescuers an idea of where to search.

Again, this idea was better in theory than in practice. When the ball came to rest, it was often not directly above



THE AVALANCHE CORD WAS ONE OF THE EARLIEST ITERATIONS OF AVALANCHE RESCUE TECHNOLOGY.

PHOTO BY PAEBI VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

the buried victim, and it didn't help the victim stay afloat. This technology, too, has gone by the wayside.

RISE OF THE TRANSCEIVER

After the creation of the analog beacon in 1968, when Dr. John Lawton's work in the Cornell Aeronautical Laboratory paid off, finding an avalanche victim became faster and easier. This



THE SKADI IS, AS DOUG CHABOT PUTS IT, A "MUSEUM PIECE." DON BACHMAN, WHO APPARENTLY OWNED THIS BEACON AT SOME POINT, ADDS THAT INVENTOR JOHN LAWTON CAME TO CRESTED BUTTE TO FURTHER DEVELOP THE DEVICE AND ANTENNA DESIGN IN 1969. THIS RESULTED IN THE LATER SKADI HOT DOG.

PHOTO BY DON BACHMAN



THE RAMER ECHO 2, INVENTED AND PRODUCED BY PAUL RAMER IN BOULDER, COLORADO. DON BACHMAN ACQUIRED THIS ANALOG BEACON IN 1981 FOR USE ON AN OIL DRILL RIG SITE IN THE SALT RIVER RANGE IN WYOMING; IT WAS THE ONLY BEACON AT THE TIME THAT WOULD TRANSMIT IN THE PRESENCE OF THE DIESEL ELECTRIC GENERATORS, WHICH PRODUCED STATIC INTERFERENCE THAT BLOCKED TRANSMISSION TO OTHER BEACONS.

PHOTO BY DON BACHMAN

early beacon, the Skadi, is no longer in wide use, though if they're asked nicely, avalanche centers will occasionally break them out for educational purposes.

The idea behind avalanche transceivers—the word is used interchangeably with beacon—is simple. Everyone in a group carries one. When the device is turned on, its default mode is to transmit a signal at a specific frequency. (Early on, this was 2.275 kHz; beginning in 1986 and widely adopted as the standard in 1996, beacons now function at 457 kHz.) Should one member of a party be caught in an avalanche, the rest of the party switches their beacons into their other mode, which allows them to receive the signal being transmitted by the victim.

These early beacons were analog, meaning they converted the radio frequency to a tone the human ear could pick up. By following the tone to where it was loudest, the transceiver operator could use it to locate the buried transceiver by using a grid searching technique. The transceiver had only one antenna, and the beep got louder as you got closer to your victim.

The first digital beacon made its debut at the Winter Outdoor Retailer Show in 1997. The Backcountry Access Tracker DTS included microprocessors, which helped to reduce search time. Digital transceivers have three antennae, which allow them to take into account the strength and flux pattern of a the signal being transmitted. They then display that information on a screen in the form of a distance and direction to the buried beacon.

Of course, although transceiver technology has developed over the years, practicing and being familiar with your



THE ORIGINAL BCA TRACKER.

PHOTO BY DON BACHMAN, FOUNDING BOARD MEMBER OF THE CENTER FOR SNOW AND AVALANCHE STUDIES

beacon remains the key to staying alive, as it allows users to perform timely rescues and, hopefully, prevent fatalities.

FROM RESCUE TO AVOIDANCE

As technology developed, the industry became more focused on techniques for avalanche avoidance: methods to keep people from being buried in the first place, thereby minimizing the risk of trauma or death. (Conventional wisdom holds that one in four buried victims dies of trauma before they can even be uncovered.)

Airbag packs, which allow skiers to deploy an inflatable bag to help them float to the surface of an avalanche and avoid being buried, were introduced by



DREAM SET-UP.



QST 106



AIRBAGS ARE WORN JUST LIKE REGULAR BACKPACKS, BUT THE WEARER CAN PULL A CORD TO INFLATE A BALLOON AND HELP WITH FLOTATION IN THE EVENT OF AN AVALANCHE.

PHOTO BY ROB COPPOLILLO (AMERICAN MOUNTAIN GUIDE/IFMGA GUIDE)

ABS in 1985. It would be another dozen years before ABS had numerous competitors and this technology began to see significant media coverage, and it's only recently that airbags have become more affordable. It may well be worth the cost: studies in Europe have indicated that use of an airbag may reduce the chance of dying by 400%.

Reducing the number of avalanche burials is achieved by improving education, introducing rescue systems to beginners early on, and providing new tools for group communication. Special radios for backcountry communication have become popular in recent years. These devices help to improve group management, and also decrease the likelihood of burial in an avalanche by providing real-time communication.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Practice. At the Colorado Mountain School, we have a community of guides that update their beacon skills in the beginning of the autumn season using a remotely controlled BCA training park. This is an opportunity for us to practice scenarios, brush up on our skills, and demonstrate our competencies, all while performing under peer review. I like having options when searching, since most scenarios are different. I can choose to suppress the signal or apply non-flagging function methods.

Reflection. Podcasts are another great way to stay informed about current relevant updates. Some of my favorites are the Avalanche Podcast, Avalanche Hour, and the Utah Avalanche Center podcast, where forecasters chat about recent incidents and discuss case studies throughout the avalanche industry.

Discussion. We encourage our guides to update their training with bi-yearly snow safety workshops. Most states with a high frequency of avalanche danger, including Colorado, offer these types of snow and avalanche workshops in the fall. This is a great way to collaborate with others and witness cutting-edge innovation in our profession. «

ERIK LEIDECKER
Eddie Bauer guide
& AMGA National
Instructor Team
member



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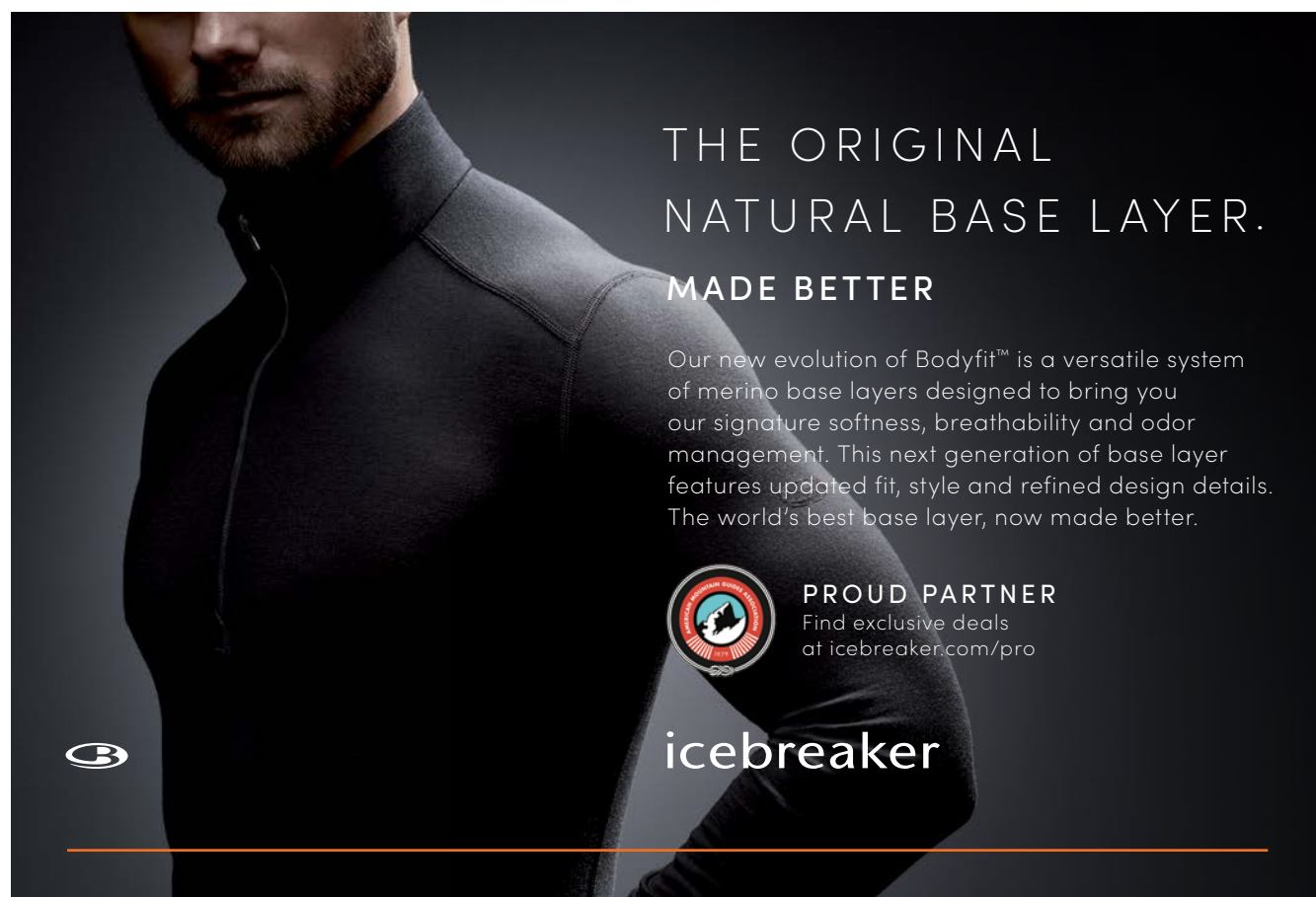
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Bob Gaines	Paul Koubek	Kyle O'Neill	Jane & Michael Soucy	Anonymous (2)



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NINE NEWLY RE-ACCREDITED BUSINESSES IN 2018

Eight businesses successfully completed re-accreditation reviews in 2018: Alpine Endeavors, American Alpine Institute, Eastern Mountain Sports Outdoor Schools, Fox Mountain Guides, Exum Mountain Guides, Mountain Trip, Timberline Mountain Guides, and Kent Mountain Adventure Center. Additionally, Chockstone Climbing School/First Ascents also completed the review process and rejoined the ranks of accredited businesses. Congratulations to all AMGA Accredited Businesses for their commitment to high technical standards, quality programming, stewardship, and ethical business practices.

In other news, 80 AMGA members took advantage of the tuition discount available to full-time and seasonal full-time employees of accredited businesses. Discounts averaged \$285 per course or exam. Another benefit available to accredited businesses is in-house entry level Mountain Guide Program courses. Seven were run in 2018. New eligibility requirements for both of those benefits will take effect in 2019. That information has been passed along in e-newsletters. We are excited to see the concerted efforts among AMGA members and employees of accredited businesses to be in compliance with the Scope of Practice by 2022.

AMGA ATTENDS IFMGA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

In November 2018, the AMGA sent delegates Angela Hawse (President), Dale Remsberg (Technical Director), Alex Kosseff (Executive Director), Jane Soucy (Operations Director), and Mike Soucy (IFMGA/AMGA Instructor Team Member) to the IFMGA General Assembly in Schruns, Austria.

Sixty-nine delegates representing 20 member associations participated in the assembly. Over three days, delegates took part in spirited collaboration with the goal of improving the platform and mobility of professional IFMGA Mountain Guides worldwide. There were numerous networking and relationship-building opportunities, both officially and socially. Topics addressed at the assembly included:

- › **Mobility.** The IFMGA has successfully lobbied for Mountain Guides to be included in the European Professional Card (EPC) alongside nurses, physiotherapists, pharmacists, and real estate agents. Requirements vary by country. IFMGA/AMGA guides can find information on mobility requirements for different IFMGA countries on the AMGA website (amga.com/advocacy/international-mobility). AMGA Advocacy and Policy Director Matt Wade also provided a report for the IFMGA and delegates that detailed recent AMGA work on access including ways in which foreign guides can work in the U.S.
- › **Technical Commission.** Discussion of quality assurance and strengthening the platform, diversifying competencies (trekking and expeditions, canyoning, rope access, environmental, guide as instructor, guide as organizer, risk manager, and avalanche educator), and ensuring IFMGA standards are recognized and maintained were also major focuses.

- › **Accidents.** A Risk Management Commission was proposed to address issues, create a culture of information sharing, and find commonalities in occurrences through a database of reports from all member associations over time. Many of the accidents that occurred this year were discussed at length.
- › **Environment and Access Commission.** Newly elected Board President Angela Hawse has been on this committee since the Spring 2018 meeting. Each delegate was provided with Patagonia's Grassroots Tools for Activists and given a document on incorporating LNT practices into instruction. Access issues are closely linked with environmental issues throughout Europe, and this work has been very well received.

APPLYING FOR AN OUTFITTING OR GUIDING PERMIT

At the 2018 annual meeting, many AMGA members indicated that they would benefit from additional education on the permit system. With that in mind we've put together a short primer on permitting in the U.S.

Types of Outfitting and Guiding Permits

Three primary Federal agencies manage the public lands where outfitters and guides conduct business: the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the National Park Service. Below, we provide a brief overview of the types of permits offered by each agency.

U.S. Forest Service

The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) issues two types of permits for outfitting and guiding. A Temporary Use Permit authorizes activities for up to 180 days and a maximum of 200 service days. A Priority Use Permit authorizes activities for two to 10 years and allows a greater number of service days. The USFS typically begins by issuing a temporary-use permit. After assessing an operator's performance for a season or more, a Temporary Use Permit may be replaced with a Priority Use Permit. Fees are typically 3% of annual gross revenue, although flat fees based on the number of service days are used on some forests.

Bureau of Land Management

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) issues Special Recreation Permits (SRPs) for outfitting and guiding. The BLM typically begins by issuing a single-year SRP. After assessing an operator's performance for one year or more, a multi-year SRP may be issued for up to 10 years. Fees are typically 3% of gross revenues.

National Park Service

The National Park Service (NPS) issues two types of authorizations for outfitting and guiding. A Commercial Use Authorization (CUA) authorizes activities for up to two years with varying amounts of service days. A concession contract provides a significant business opportunity and is typically issued for 10 years or more. The application process for a CUA

is shorter and less involved than the process for obtaining a concession contract. Fees for CUAs vary from a \$100 one-time application fee to 3–5% of gross revenue. Franchise fees for concession contracts also vary - commonly 3-9% of gross revenue.

ADVOCACY PROGRAM AMPLIFYING GUIDES' VOICES

The AMGA Advocacy program continues to move forward on national policy objectives and local access issues. The work of the Advocacy program emphasizes collaboration and bridge-building with agencies, guides, and other stakeholders. The following examples of recent advocacy work illustrate ways in which the AMGA is promoting collaboration to amplify the voice of the guiding community.

Permitting Legislation in Congress

The AMGA has been working in cooperation with outdoor industry groups such as The Wilderness Society, Outdoor



REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE AMERICAN ALPINE CLUB, AMGA, AND THE WILDERNESS SOCIETY PREPARE TO DISCUSS PERMITTING LEGISLATION WITH STAFF FOR SENATOR MARTIN HEINRICH (D-NM).

TOP FIVE TIPS FOR PERMIT APPLICATIONS

1. **Meet with your land manager in person before submitting an application.** This will show your commitment to building a relationship and being a good partner.
2. **Demonstrate you are committed to resource protection.** Describe in detail how you will apply each of the seven LNT principles in your operation.
3. **Focus on how you will serve the public.** Examples include improving public safety, providing education, and enhancing opportunities for underrepresented communities.
4. **Demonstrate how you will be a good partner to the land agency.** Examples include assisting with stewardship projects, promoting responsible visitation, and supporting search and rescue.
5. **Set yourself apart from other applicants.** Showcase your AMGA training and certification, your unique brand of service, or your good performance as a permittee in other areas. Consider getting letters of support for your application from the public (your clients), other permittees, local officials, or other users of the area.



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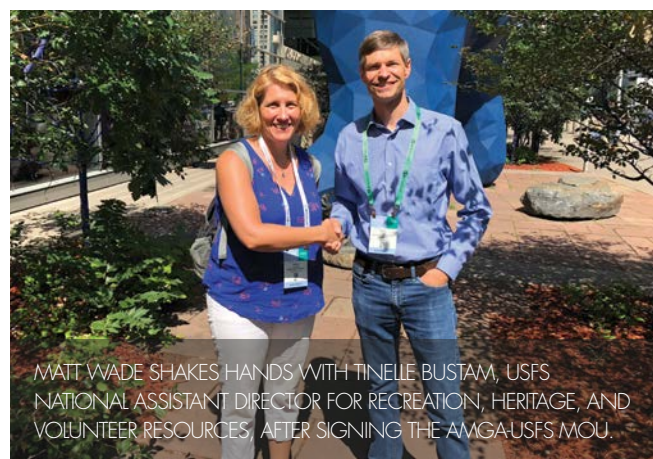
Industry Association, and America Outdoors to lobby for the passage of legislation in Congress that seeks to reform the outfitter and guide permitting systems of the public land agencies. By combining efforts with like-minded partners, we are strengthening our position with lawmakers and expanding our range of influence. The AMGA will continue to work alongside our strategic partners to push for passage of permitting legislation.

Access in Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Park

Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Park (SEKI) released a new Commercial Use Authorization (CUA) program in 2017 that imposed unnecessary restrictions on guiding activities in the park. The AMGA, local Sierra guides, and eight local guide services rallied together at public meetings and submitted two unified comment letters to advocate for changes to the CUA program. In response to the first comment letter, the park adjusted stipulations to support industry standard ratios, allow technical rock climbing, and improve educational trip requirements. The second comment letter is presently under consideration. By speaking as a unified group, the guiding community has increased its influence on local policies that affect guiding.

AMGA-USFS Memorandum of Understanding

The AMGA has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to create a formal channel for AMGA members and accredited businesses to collaborate with the Forest Service on mutually beneficial programs, projects, and activities. The agreement will facilitate communication between guides and the USFS on planning efforts, stewardship projects, and other topics related to guided climbing and backcountry skiing.



NEW STRIDES IN SCHOLARSHIPS AND WOMEN'S PROGRAMS

The AMGA Membership Team is working hard to further develop the benefits and professional opportunities available to our instructors and guides. In 2018 we hosted two regional events with a variety of technical clinics in Bend, OR and Boulder, CO. These events convene local instructors and guides to further develop their technical skills and promote social networking. We offered women-specific clinics, led by Angela

Hawse and Karen Bockel, at the event in Boulder.

Last August, we were happy to offer 30 scholarship opportunities for the 2019 program year. Of the 30 scholarships, 12 were women-specific. The increase in women-specific scholarships were largely due to a generous donation from First Ascent Charitable Foundation. We are working to increase the scholarships available for the 2020 program year and continue to support scholarships like First Ascent. Remember that you must be a current member in order to apply for a scholarship.

CLIMBING INSTRUCTOR PROGRAM UPDATES

The Climbing Instructor Program (CIP) had another busy year in 2018. While the number of participants in the CIP was down from 2017, this was the fourth year in a row that participant numbers exceeded 1,500.

In 2018, a number of individuals completed the training process to become Program Providers. In the SPI Program, those people were Grant Price, Nelson Day, Sue Kligerman, Ted Teegarden, and Tracy Martin. Trent Ellsworth, Garrett Werner, Carol Fittell, John Tarkington, Ryan Shipp, Tom Rowan, Sam Albert, Adam Beck, and Daniel Ezell all became CWI Providers. Congratulations to all, and thanks for the commitment and work it took to complete the process.

Additionally, two individuals became SPI Provider Trainers in 2018. This year, Karsten Delap and Elaina Arenz joined the other 10 Trainers in the U.S. Of particular note, Elaina became the first woman SPI Provider Trainer. It is great to have both of them on the team.

WHAT'S UP WITH DEI?

Informational Roundup by Lyra Pierotti, DEI Representative to the AMGA Board of Directors

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee continues to lead our community's efforts in improving our organization's gender inclusivity.

Numerous other groups and individuals within the AMGA have converged in these same efforts, sharing a heightened awareness that bias exists in our community as well and expressing an interest in exploring the ways in which we can do our part to maintain a route through our guide education that is accessible to all interested and qualified individuals.


The current focus has been on gender, but sights are set far beyond. What follows is a quick recap of this year in DEI.

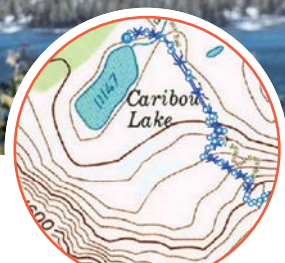
Highlights from 2018:

- › An increase in scholarships specifically for women
- › An all-women's SPI course (which also had significant representation from people of color and queer communities)
- › Kathleen Nalty's bias training for all members at the 2018 Annual Meeting
- › Ongoing training on how to give feedback for Instructor Team members (including training in bias)
- › Establishing a national office staff position specifically tasked with incorporating DEI initiatives, currently filled by Monserrat Alvarez

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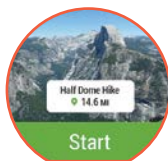


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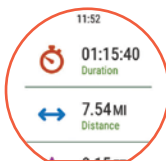
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ORIGINAL APPLICATIONS

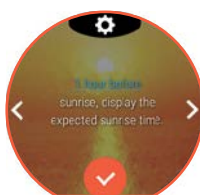
Apps have been developed to support users in various outdoor activities.




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**Casio Moment
Link**

FEATURED APPLICATIONS

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HOLE19



Fishbrain



Equilab



Zombies, Run!



SkiTracks



MySwimPro



Exercise Timer



Glassy

On the radar for 2019:

- An all-women's RGC coming up this Fall
- Ongoing training for Instructor Team members and SPI Providers in creating positive learning environments and inclusive culture in programs
- DEI guidelines for accredited businesses to help maintain or create positive and responsive work environments (where all employees can enjoy a respectful climate designed to respond to the backgrounds and needs of every employee)
- Targeting specific goals for underrepresented populations in the AMGA membership, certified instructors and guides, SPI Providers, and Instructor Team Members
- Increased scholarship funding for communities underrepresented within the AMGA

Stay tuned for more updates on ongoing efforts—and always feel free to email the office with questions, concerns, or inspirations as we all navigate forward.

REMINDER: SKI MOVEMENT VIDEOS REQUIRED WITH 2020 SGC APPLICATIONS

Planning on applying to the Ski Guide Course for a 2020 program? Don't forget: You must include a video demonstrating that you meet the movement standard with your application. For more information, visit goo.gl/NpKf35

Stay tuned for an example video with tips for filming featuring Margaret Wheeler (American Mountain Guide/IFMGA Guide), Rob Hess (American Mountain Guide/IFMGA Guide), and Mike Hatstrup (Certified Ski Guide)!

PROGRAM MANUAL UPDATE

The AMGA is in the process of updating our entry-level Guide Program Manuals. To add to the updated Alpine Guide and Ski Guide Course manuals, we have completed the Ice Instructor Course Manual for 2019.

Upon completion of any updated manuals, students enrolled in applicable programs will receive a hard copy of the manual at the start of their course. If you have taken one of these courses in the past, please email the AMGA office and we will send you an updated PDF version. Hard copies of the new IIC and the SGC and AGC manuals are available for members to purchase in the AMGA's web store.

AMGA WELCOMES NEW STAFF MEMBERS

We are thrilled to welcome Andrew Megas-Russell to the team as the new Climbing Instructor Program Manager. As the Climbing Instructor Program Manager, Andrew works with the Operations and Technical Directors to manage the AMGA Single Pitch Instructor and Climbing Wall Instructor programs. He is the primary contact for students interested in CWI and SPI Programs, as well as the SPI and CWI Providers, and any hosts who sponsor CWI programs.

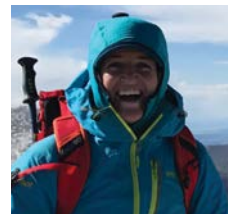
Andrew comes to the AMGA from Tucson, Arizona, where he wore many hats as Field Instructor, Special Projects Coordinator, and Program Supervisor for the past eight years at NOLS Southwest. With over 130 weeks in the field

(910+ days) instructing for NOLS, one of his favorite things is watching a student's face light up after baking their first backcountry pizza. In 2015, he earned his AMGA Rock Guide Certification and has worked for Colorado Mountain School for the past few summers. You can reach him at andrew@amga.com.



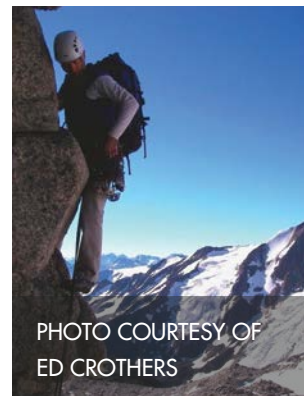
We are also excited to add a new team member in our membership department. Holly Barrass oversees all work dedicated to supporting AMGA members. This includes member communications, benefits, events, accreditation, and scholarship programs. Holly is also working on efforts in inclusivity and equity at the AMGA.

Holly is originally from New Zealand, where she received her degree in Outdoor Education. She has spent the last decade working in outdoor education, program management, and nonprofit management for a variety of organizations. She is a Certified SPI and an Apprentice Rock Guide. Her passion is driving projects and people that create a stronger outdoor community and industry. Get in touch with her at holly@amga.com.



SPECIAL THANKS TO ED CROTHERS

After 11 years, Ed Crothers has retired from the AMGA. Ed most recently served as Accreditation Director and CIP Director. The national office staff and guide community would like to thank him for his quality service to our industry. Ed has played many roles at the AMGA, and he has raised the bar through many long hours and dedication.



Ed's career in guiding and instruction was very distinguished. He did two stints as a Nordic ski instructor at Devils Thumb in Colorado from 1980 to 1983 and from 1989 to 1993. In 1986, he climbed Denali with two Outward Bound instructors, which led to a decade of work with Outward Bound, where he quickly moved into leadership roles there. Ed became lead field guide at the American Alpine Institute in Washington in 1998, and in 1999, he became the owner and lead guide at the Colorado Mountain School, where he continued to work until 2008. That year, Ed became the part-time accreditation manager at AMGA, a role he grew significantly. We would also be remiss not to mention Ed's attendance of the original Woodstock in 1969, which likely shaped his life of outdoor adventure. He was 15 years old and never looked back!

You won't have to look too far to find Ed, as he has agreed to stay on in a part-time capacity working on special projects. Look for more excellent work. «



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Jumbo finds a good boulder and an even better view on the way to bigger objectives from El Chaltén. Masazumi Sato © 2018 Patagonia, Inc.

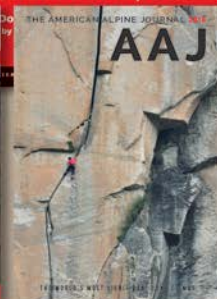
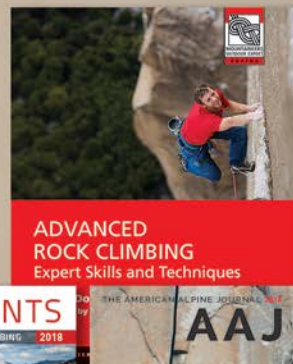
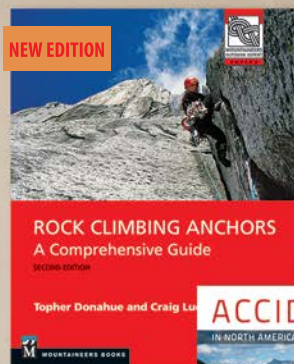
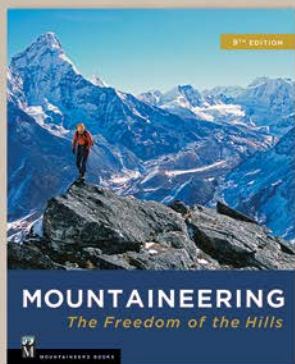
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Gaar Lausman
Todd Reeves

Ice Instructor

Doug Ferguson
Tim Farr

Rock Guide

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Jake Beren
Cody Bradford
Wesley Calkins
Brian Campbell
Scott Chapman
TJ Ciotti
John Collis
Jayci Ferrimani
Joe Frost
Will Gordon
Casey Graham
Steffan Gregory
Ian Havlick
Raymond Hughes
Riley Jordan
Kyle Kent
Taylor Lais
Geoff Lodge
Zachary Lovell
Max Lurie
Benjamin Markhart
Craig Muderlak

Nate Pakula
Andrew Powell
Mark Pugliese
Jesse Ray
Philip Ruegger
Mike Schneider
Jonathan Schrock
Matthew Scrivner
Andrew Stephen
David Stimson
Lance Sullins
Alexander Teixeira
Lisa Van Sciver
Steven Van Sickle
Bradley Ward

Alpine Guide

Adam Butterfield
Brian Campbell
Chad Cochran
Lindsay Fixmer
William Haas
Andrew Hansen
Sam Hennessy
Ryan Huetter
Geoff Lodge
Zachary Lovell
Jason Martin
Ian McEleney
Brenton Reagan

Ski Guide

Josh Beckner

Peter Biskind
James Brown
Christopher Burk
Logan Cookler
Zach Crist
Nina Hance
Joshua Hirshberg
Buster Jesik
Trevor Kostanich
Derek Lennon
Sara Lundy
Zachary Novak
Evan Ross
Robert Smith

Splitboard Guide

Zach Crist
Robert Smith
John Lemnotis

IFMGA Mountain Guide

Jake Beren (132)
Robert Smith (133)
Buster Jesik (134)
Josh Beckner (135)
Christopher Burk (136)
Geoff Lodge (137)
Brian Campbell (138)
Brenton Reagan (139)
Raymond Hughes (140)

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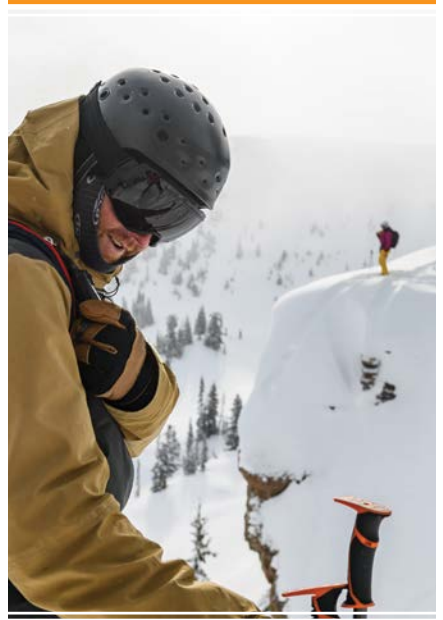

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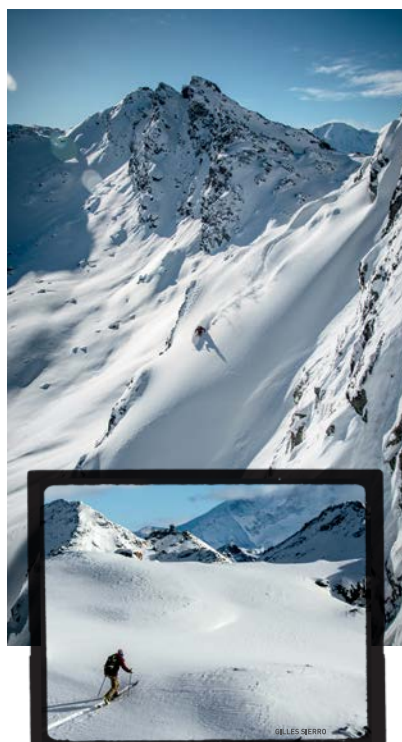






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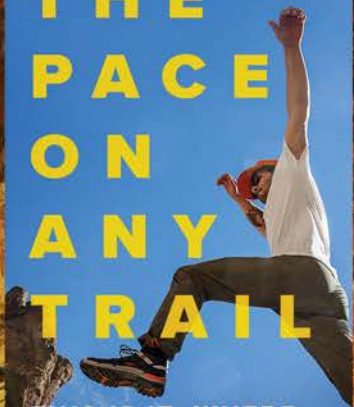


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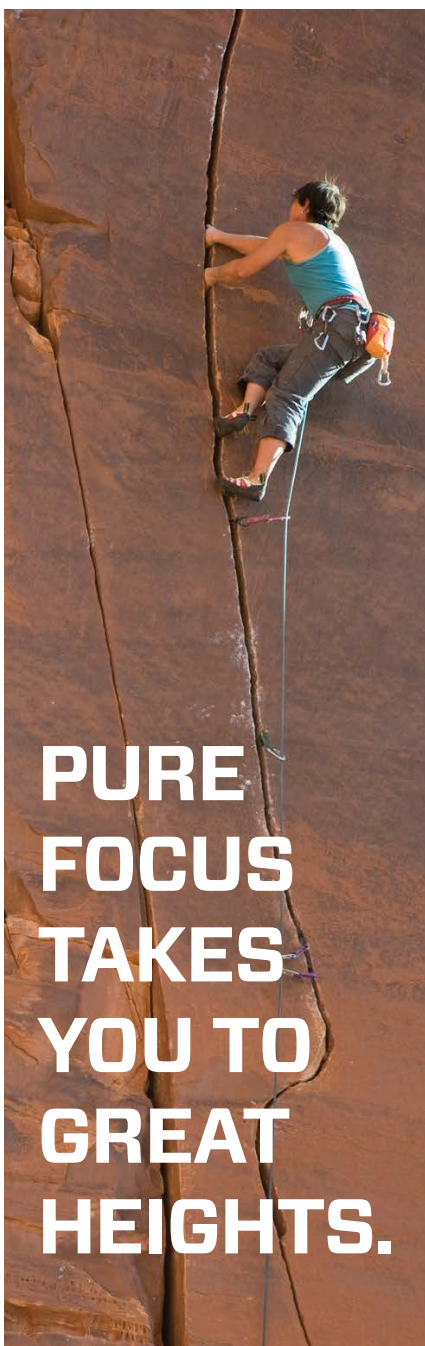


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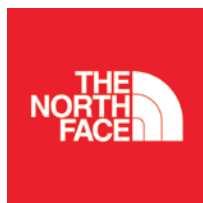
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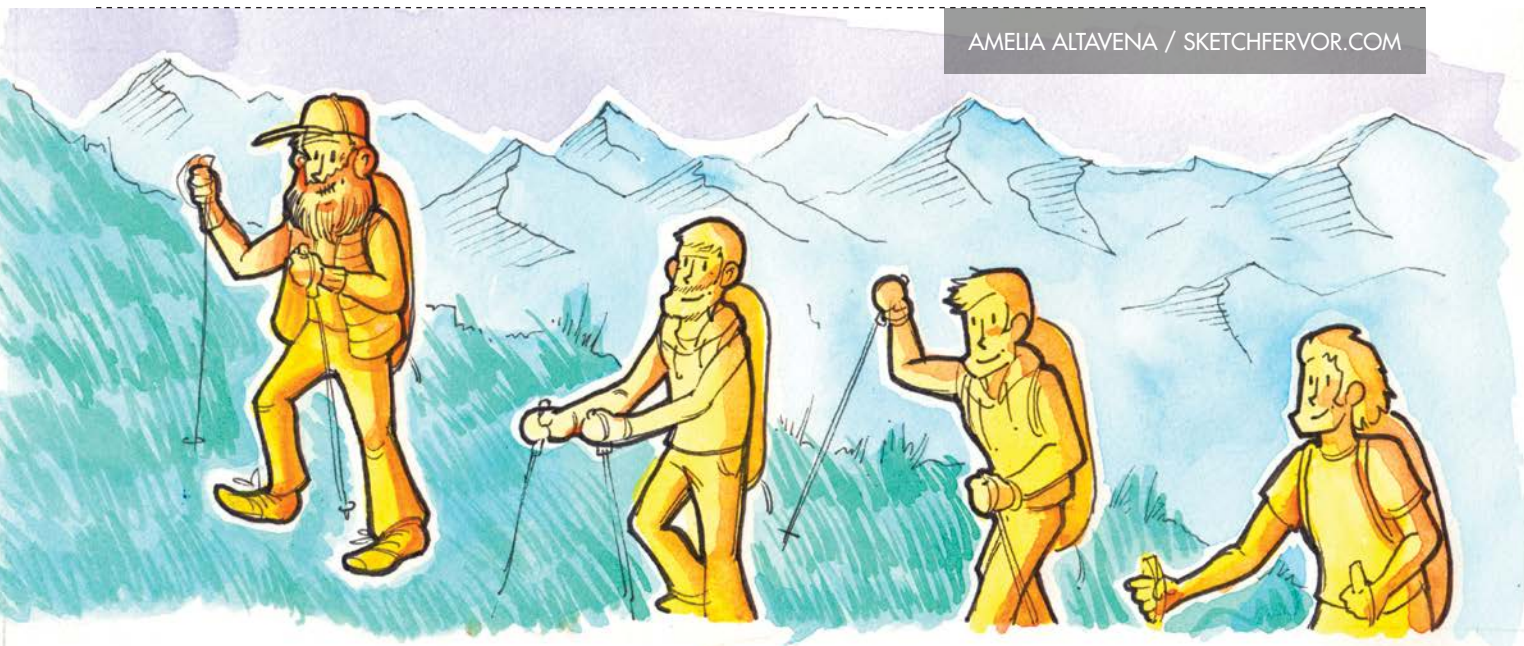
Only tools rigorously field tested can truly become essential equipment.

Steep Skier and Mountain Guide, Vivian Bruchez product testing on the Aiguille d'Entrèves route up Mont Blanc outside of Chamonix, France.

MOUNTAIN HARDWEAR

Photo: Alan Buisson

SPRING 2019



GOOD GUIDES AND OLD GUIDES *By Howie Schwartz*

AT 28, I WALKED OUT OF A ROOM FULL OF ELITE international Mountain Guides. I was one of them now. I had just finished my AMGA guide training. At my final debrief, my Swiss mentor—the one who took the pin off his shirt and stuck it to mine—offered me some wisdom that had likely passed through several generations before me: “There are no good guides,” he said, “only old guides.” He looked at me with a sidelong glance, as if to check my comprehension.

My head was high above the clouds. I hopped into my Tacoma and let out a cathartic coyote howl: I was about to commence a long-awaited journey from Mazama, Washington, to meet my wife in our home in Bishop, California. The roadside blurred by, in flashes of changing light and vibrant color, interrupted only by the giddy feeling of a mission accomplished and a bright future ahead.

Then it hit me. I stopped the music. I squinted hard and tightened my focus on what my mentor had said. Suddenly, I got it.

• • •

Youth and inexperience were the defining characteristics of my early guiding. Most of the mountain guiding I had been doing was “onsight.” My first full-time seasonal guiding job was in a remote and challenging landscape: Alaska’s Wrangell-St. Elias National Park. My colleagues and I found ourselves in complex, high-consequence guiding scenarios. We confronted challenges beyond our abilities, buffered only by a sense of conservatism and the ignorance that comes from profound inexperience. It was not, in other words, the path to becoming an old guide.

Once in these early days, I did my best to prepare for a “first ascents” climbing trip with a couple from Washington. I pored over maps of the area—ancient, 15-minute USGS maps made from aerial photos with no ground surveys. They

were highly inaccurate, especially on the glaciers, which had lost hundreds of feet of ice over the years.

I had my map in my lap as we flew, taking Polaroids of the terrain out the window. We landed, set camp, and as the plane shrunk into the distance I realized we were in neither of the locations we talked to the pilot about.

Despite an early start, our first climbing day found us crossing a warming east-facing snow slope riddled with avalanche runnels. I crossed a few runnels, arrived at a belay stance, and connected to a picket and ice axe. A sloppy, wet-snow avalanche naturally released from above. It sputtered downward, taking out my track and bending the rope between me and the guests.

“Climb... quickly!” I shouted. And they did. I found myself wishing I had more training to deal with a situation like this. Still, we managed to summit the peak. The group was elated.

As we descended the ridge, I suddenly felt air under my feet. It went dark. My guests felt a slight tug on the rope. When they turned and looked up, I was no longer behind them: I’d fallen six feet through a snow bridge. I emerged like a marmot, and rejoined my guests.

At the end of that trip, I knew I had to up my game—or someone, sooner or later, maybe me, was going to be seriously hurt. I resolved, with urgency and purpose, to enter the AMGA’s professional guide training program and seek out mentorship to become a better guide.

• • •

As I neared the end of the drive home from my final guide exam, I was about to begin a far richer journey. The lessons that my experiences in the mountains with guests, friends, colleagues, and mentors have given me are beyond anything I could have imagined. I hope to live to be an old Mountain Guide—that is a pin I’ll wear very proudly. «

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