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GUIDE BULLETIN

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wilderness

rare

wild places

one can retreat

find healing

reconnect with the earth

find meaning and significance

FOREST MCBRIAN:
OUT OF THE WILD

ZOE HART:
BALANCING ACT

A GUIDING LIGHT:
Q&A WITH
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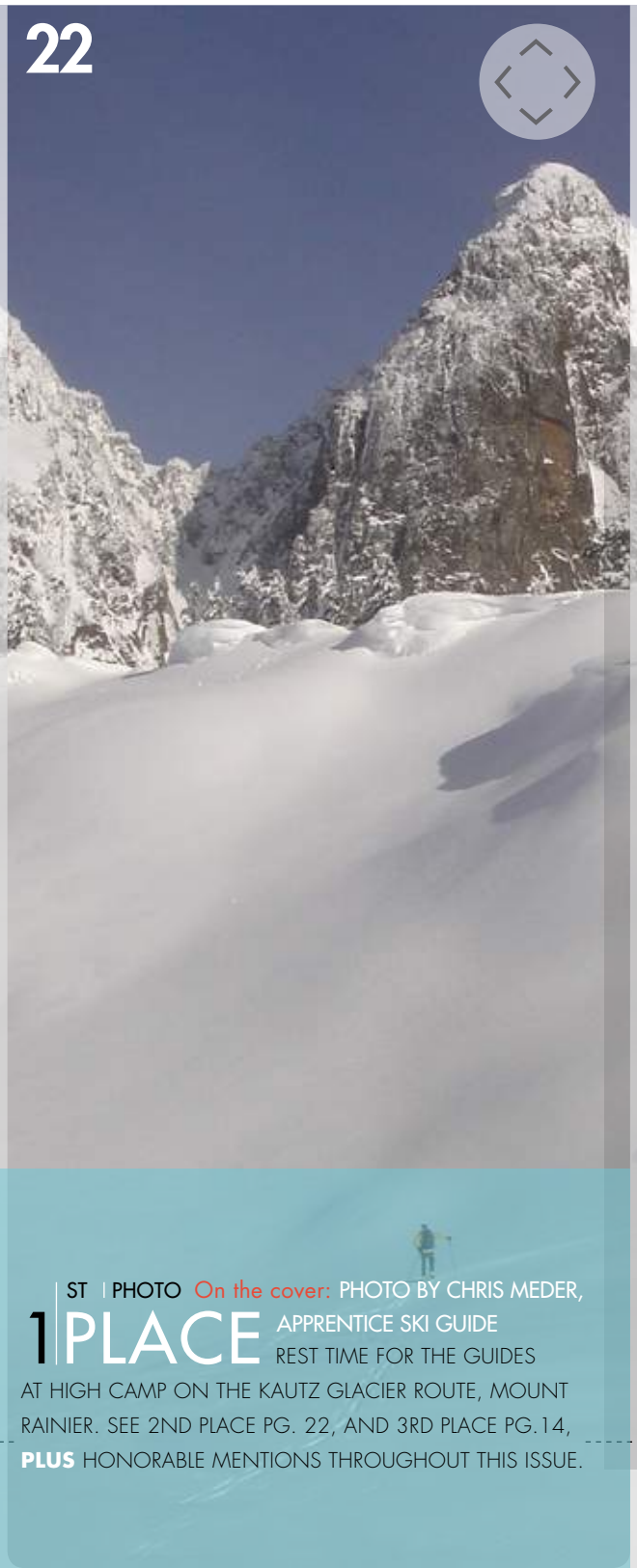

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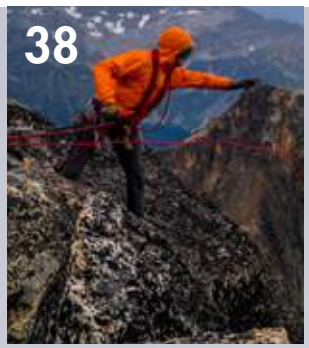

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1ST PLACE | PHOTO On the cover: PHOTO BY CHRIS MEDER, APPRENTICE SKI GUIDE REST TIME FOR THE GUIDES AT HIGH CAMP ON THE KAUTZ GLACIER ROUTE, MOUNT RAINIER. SEE 2ND PLACE PG. 22, AND 3RD PLACE PG.14, **PLUS** HONORABLE MENTIONS THROUGHOUT THIS ISSUE.

GUIDE BULLETIN

Celebrating 50 Years of Wild

"A wilderness, in contrast to those areas where man and his works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain." —Wilderness Act

By Betsy Winter, AMGA Executive Director

ON SEPTEMBER 3, 1964, PRESIDENT Lyndon Johnson signed the Wilderness Act. A monumental step for the conservation movement, it provided a means to protect lands in their natural, wild state. No other piece of American legislation has been so influential in mountain guiding—it has defined both the style and the ethic of American mountain guiding to this day. As well, it has provided guides with some unique challenges.

Many AMGA courses take place in areas with wilderness-designated lands, including North Cascades National Park, Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area, Joshua Tree National Park, Rocky Mountain National Park, and others. What makes these lands so special, when we cross that invisible line on the ground? They inspire us to exercise restraint in our activities, to strive to leave these pristine places in as good or better a condition as we found them, and to educate our guests about how to do the same.

However, protection also comes at the cost of increased regulation. As wilderness sees increasing use, along with non-wilderness areas, management agencies are mandated to put measures in place to protect wilderness's character. This may come at the expense of public access, both guided and self-guided. Guiding permits may be more difficult, or impossible, to obtain, and in places, wilderness access is even allocated between the self-guided and guided public. Despite the challenges, it is our crucial responsibility as the guiding community to set a good example, and to be the model for wilderness stewardship.

As part of the nationwide celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Wilderness Act and our wilderness lands, the AMGA is proud to look at the wilderness ethic that has defined our guiding culture and to celebrate a half century of preserving the landscapes in which we practice our mountain craft. In this issue, we honor what wilderness means to our members by sharing their Wilderness Photo Contest submissions. Plus, North Cascades National Park Superintendent Karen Taylor-Goodrich looks at the common ground guides share with land managers in educating the public; we chat with Yosemite National Park Chief of Staff Mike Gauthier about how guides support land managers in wilderness areas; American Mountain Guides Forest McBrian and Zoe Hart explore the meaning of wilderness; and Ryan Huetter reflects on coming to terms with injuries through his experience painting wild areas. Finally, enjoy the photo contest winners and runners-up; their photos are spread throughout this issue.

So, happy fiftieth anniversary, Wilderness Act! «

NATHAN POLANSKI LOOKS TOWARD RITTER AND BANNER PEAKS OVER ICEBERG LAKE IN THE ANSEL ADAMS WILDERNESS DURING A GUIDED TRIP HE SIGNED UP FOR BEFORE DEPLOYING AS A NAVY FIGHTER PILOT.

PHOTO BY AARON RICHARDS, AMGA ROCK GUIDE, AMGA APPRENTICE ALPINE & SKI GUIDE

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OUT OF THE WILD

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WILDERNESS, AUTHENTICITY, AND WHAT WE CAN'T LEARN IN THE MOUNTAINS

By Forest McBrian, American Mountain Guide / IFMGA GUIDE

CLIMBING OUT FROM AMONG PILLARS of cedar and hemlock along the Cascade River, my guest and I see a faint track that wanders toward ridges and parapets of black gneiss curling skyward like smoke. These tombstones and buttresses formed inside the earth, carved by the fine blade of Pleistocene ice; now they shelter the tattered remains of those once-vast glaciers. Our way forward is mapped in meager pictograms on crumpled paper. Depending on your preferred perspective, it's a Neolithic fantasy, a Victorian expedition, or simply a visit to a rugged and beautiful place where the world creaks along at its own geologic pace. What sets this experience apart is the utter lack of human presence. Other than one another, we will likely see no one else for six days: no buildings or cars or pavement or telephone lines. And that is exactly why we came. More to the point, that is how I sold the trip—as a wilderness journey.

Wilderness means many things to many people, and the word is used to brand all manner of products: RVs, music festivals, video games, resorts. In the media and in marketing, it has a cache that sells, encompassing adventure, mystery, retreat, renewal. That "wilderness" should effectively sell such a variety of products shouldn't surprise us; like the feeling of exposure beneath your feet on an airy climb, the feeling that you are alone in a wild place can be both exhilarating and terrifying, good and bad, fun and scary. But will "wilderness" just be reduced to another branding adjective, used to convince guests of our authenticity as guides? Is there any way we can sell wilderness without selling out—and without diminishing what remains for future visitors? If wilderness is to be more than just the backdrop for our adventures, we need to engage with it as what it is—a compelling idea at the nexus of law, ecology, history, and culture.

› LOST IN TRANSLATION

As the buzz of the plane fades into silence, I stand with my two Spanish guests and slowly take in our new reality: an ocean of ice stitched together by the jagged seams of the Wrangell-St. Elias Mountains. Digging through my middle-school Spanish vocabulary, I struggle to find the right words. With a sweep of my arm, I indicate the horizon and say, "*No hay personas—ninguna personas.*" My guests look at me, nodding. "*Solo hielo, solo roca.*" »

Photographers (clockwise from top left): Adam Clark, Adam Clark, Sandra Salvas

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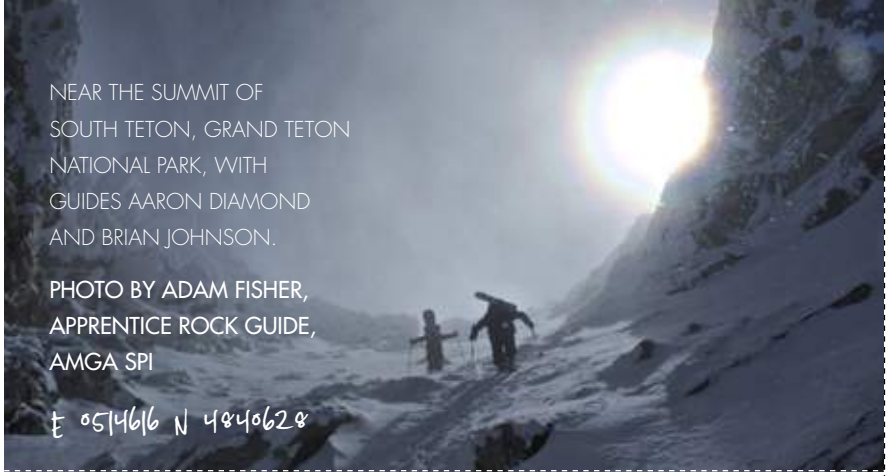

NEAR THE SUMMIT OF SOUTH TETON, GRAND TETON NATIONAL PARK, WITH GUIDES AARON DIAMOND AND BRIAN JOHNSON.

PHOTO BY ADAM FISHER, APPRENTICE ROCK GUIDE, AMGA SPI

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They nod more vigorously now, smiling. With compassion for my child's Spanish, one of them says simply, "*Bueno*."

Our word for wilderness does not translate easily into other languages. Its origins lie in Old English, and in the particular cultural context of agrarian settlements as newly separate from a wild landscape beyond. It refers specifically to nature that is uncontrolled—and perhaps cannot be controlled—by humans. The word is also heavy with biblical associations: the Abrahamic religions all develop important ideas through the dialectic between wilderness and civilization, notably by sending prophets out into that wilderness. In a sense, it was already an institution worthy of a capital W before the Wilderness Act of 1964. Both the Anglo-Saxon and the Judeo-Christian heritage of the word are reflected in the Act, which in turn has helped further cement the definition.

But try talking about wilderness without using that word. Many American guides have enjoyed this challenge, drinking *genepi* with local guides in an Alpine hut. Unpack that word for a French or Swiss guide and suddenly you have your hands full: It's a serious challenge to convey the demands of remote guiding, land-use regulation, large backpacks, and bear hangs. Dizzy with the effort of such an explanation, I am usually relieved and delighted at the reaction of my Alpine colleague: a shaking head and a smile of envy—"*C'est pas mal.*"

› HUMAN RESOURCES

A gray-black shawl of cloud wraps around the Aiguille du Chardonnet while a thread of rope teams far below wends its retreat back toward the valley. A storm has turned August to winter, and the glacier groans along, deserted. Caught off guard by the solitude, I slow for a moment to review my plans. I know my guests won't see another soul until we merge with the normal route, and a helicopter rescue is unlikely in the driving snow. I've got a bivy sack, extra clothing, and a radio giving me direct access to mountain rescue; I've got a GPS ready to guide me across the ice to a hut. As far as my pack is concerned, it's at least as heavy as the one I carry up Forbidden Peak in the North Cascades. The summit recedes into darkness and we recede with it, suddenly far from the bustling city of Chamonix.

Whether you guide in wild Alaska or in the mechanized playground of the Alps, the absence or presence of other humans is a fundamental dimension of our environment—of our workplace. It profoundly influences the guest experience and can affect decision-making, for better or for worse. This summer, I wouldn't have left the Val d'Ayas hut one stormy morning if it weren't for the unexpected company of friendly French guide; with a storm piling up on the Italian side of the crest, and with the sloppy, unfrozen snow, I would never have considered the white-out trudge alone, especially parallel to so many monster crevasses. Together, we were able to accurately navigate and provide one another with backup. But other people in the mountains can also pose challenges, and not just because they can drop rocks or clog up belay stations. Ski tracks can exert considerable pressure on a guide's terrain choice, complicating the work of negotiating avalanche terrain. In this sense, wildness and civilization are factors as basic to our work as the air temperature, as the light of day, or »

the dark of night. But what, at least from a guide's perspective, sets wildness apart is that it can create a "scarcity" of resources—a scarcity that is basic to alpinism itself.

To wit, in alpinism we employ minimal tools to climb up and down mountains. How minimally we equip ourselves defines our style, our margin for error, and our odds of success. But the other side of the equation is where we choose to go. Without mechanized transportation, telecommunication infrastructure, permanent shelter, medical facilities, or ready sources of food, the wilder places of the world nurture the biggest dreams of alpinists. As guides, we choose our tools to reflect the scarcities of the environment and still meet a reasonable standard of care for our guests; we don't leave out the extra fuel or the first aid kit in order to attain a particular style—we of course must bring certain essentials in order to ensure our own and our guests' safety.

But mediating a wilderness experience does not mean insulating your guest from reality—and, in fact, the opposite should be true. We should include them in the planning process, walk them through an emergency-response plan, teach them how to use the radio; we should study the map together, and review first aid. The bias of American mountain guides toward thorough and progressive instruction may well stem from the wilderness environment where we work, an environment that demands we develop, above all, self-sufficiency and a high level of competence—our human resources. If that is true, then wilderness is part of our heritage and our education as guides, and understanding it is crucial to understanding our métier.

› BUILT BY WILDERNESS

Still and glittering with the crystalline skin of winter, the frozen lakes offer perfect flatness in opposition to the perfect steepness above. The uncanny silence evokes Robert Frost: "The only other sound's the sweep/of easy wind and downy flake." Like the poem's narrator, I'm transported by an empty winter wild to the threshold between two worlds, where it's tempting to linger. Lacking a trail, I build one myself, a scaffold of a skin track lifting me up to the divide.

From there, I can see the hospice of St. Bernard beside a twisting, ancient road. Inside I will find stone steps worn low in the middle so that each appears to bend beneath the weight of time. The monks will welcome me as they have welcomed travelers for nearly a thousand years. Though the St. Bernard dogs are famous for their role in rescue, they were originally bred as guards; the hospice itself was founded to shelter travelers from bandits who lived in the mountains. Who were those bandits, and how did they end up in the rugged, lonely valleys of the Penine Alps? For the vision of the Alps as "the playground of Europe" to emerge, the commons needed to be defined, and the bandits evicted. For our American national parks to become museums of wild nature, the Native Americans first had to be expelled. The wild interstices of our geopolitical world often provide shelter to dissidents and to the dispossessed, and that history is as important to understanding the wild Alps as it is to understanding our own North American wilderness.

The St. Bernard hospice evolved with the wilderness surrounding it. When in time the concern over brigands faded and the cold and storms of the pass became a greater concern, the dogs went to work as rescuers. Though it's easy to forget when they are drooling and posing for photos in Verbier or Kleine Scheidegg, the very DNA of the St. Bernard is shaped by drifting snows and howling winds—as well as by the once-lawless frontier of the wild mountains.

› HUNGER GAMES

I, too, sometimes feel as if I have been formed by the wilderness. Raised on coming-of-age stories like *Hatchet* or *My Side of the Mountain*, it's all too easy for me to see the wilderness sojourn as the crucible for building character and moral fiber. But those stories risk reducing the wilderness to a mere backdrop for a personal drama, or to an easy source of the authenticity for which our outdoor culture clamors. There is a new wilderness morality tale, though. In Suzanne Collin's' *The Hunger Games,* the wilderness appears as a training »

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ground for a heroine destined to change society. Escaping from the dreary confines of her mining town, Katniss Everdeen goes to the wilderness to solve real problems—she brings home game, roots, and berries to feed her family. She considers running away to live in the wilderness at several points in the novel, but ultimately chooses, somewhat ambivalently, to engage in society. Critic Stephen Burt points out that unlike the heroes of *Hatchet* or *Robinson Crusoe*, Katniss doesn't gain maturity in the wilderness; she simply survives there, and in the process learns a few skills that prove useful elsewhere. Her growth—and her authenticity—comes out of her relationships with other people, the teachers and allies she finds when she engages with the world.

As a mountain guide whose identity has been wrapped up in mountains and wilderness for a long time, it is hard for me to admit that wilderness confers no authenticity. It really does feel like one of the last, best things, and by spending a lot of time there I always hoped to absorb some of that goodness through osmosis. But I don't, and no one does. There is nothing inherently good or morally upright about climbing a mountain in perfect alpine style, or about crossing a big, empty wilderness on skis. It may be good for us, and it may offer a chance to reflect on our values. But it is the relationships we form and the work that we do outside the wilderness that offer a chance at authenticity.

In his biography, Walter Bonatti suggested that the mountains are, at best, a difficult place to learn how to get along in civilization. But one of the greatest compliments I can pay to mountain guides generally is that they are, by and large, doing exactly that: bringing home lessons from the wilderness that can somehow make life better in civilization. We are likely to need those lessons as Wilderness and other pieces of the commons come under increasing pressure and scrutiny in an evolving, expanding society.

› THE NEXT 50 YEARS

Roaring in a motorboat down the dark water of Ross Lake in the North Cascades, I imagine the oxbows of the Skagit River far below, drowned by the concrete girth of Ross Dam. After a week in the range's rugged, trail-less mountains, we are speeding back toward pavement, toward the Internet, toward rectilinear urban space. Before I lose the chance, I tell my guest the story of Ross High Dam, an extension of the present dam that would have brought vast swaths of wilderness as much as five miles closer to civilization. When I relate how activists defeated the proposal in the late 1970s, my guest nods and looks back at the mountains. We talk for a while about the relative merits of a shorter hike, busier wilderness, and cheap electricity. "I'm glad they stopped the dam," he says.

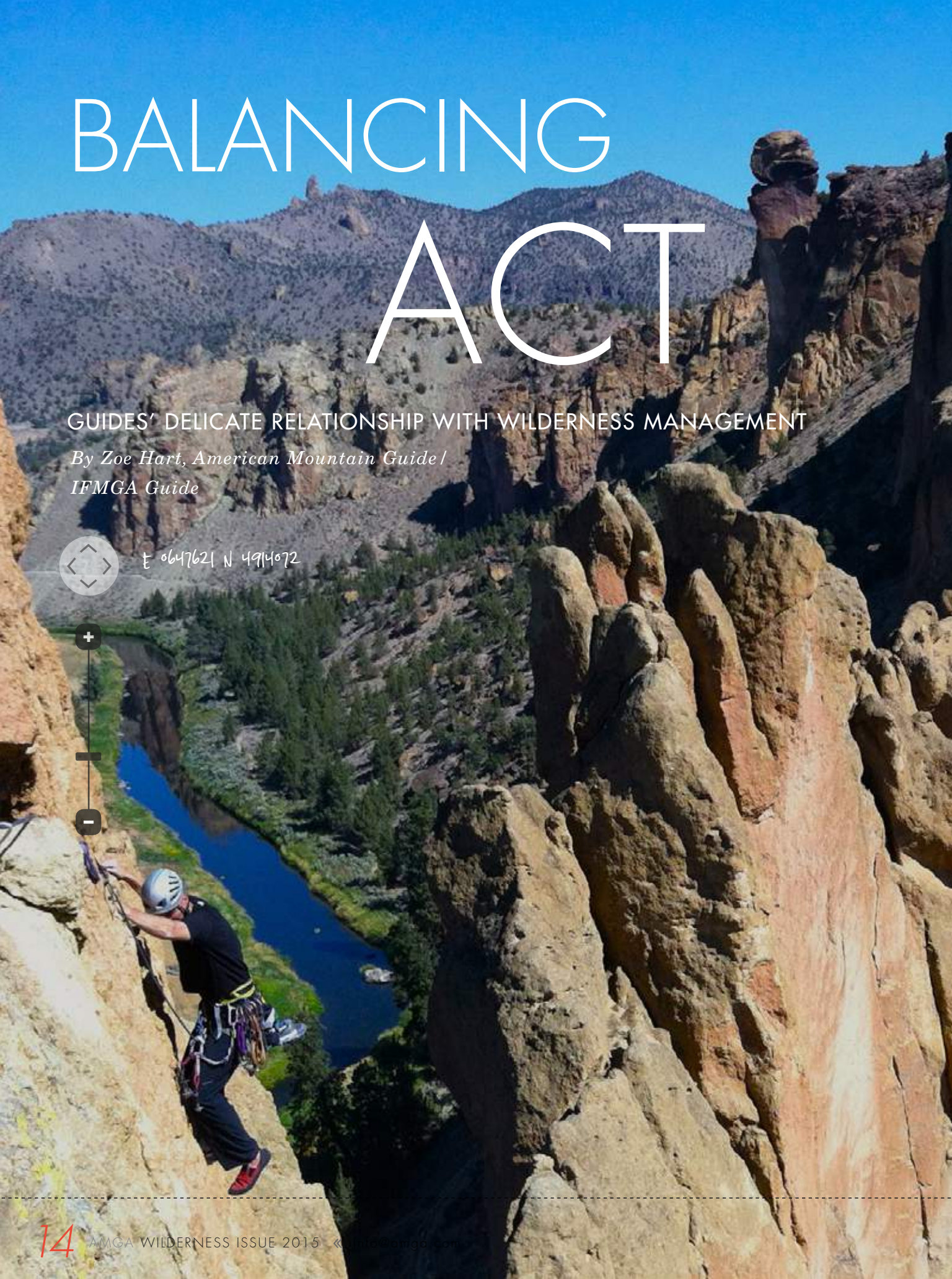
As a guide, you shape your guest's experience of the wilderness through your words and actions. By learning and relating the natural history, human history, and contemporary politics of your mountains, you can offer a richer experience. What's more, you can rally allies to the cause of sound public-land stewardship.

We celebrate John Muir as the model of the guide-activist, inspiring Theodore Roosevelt during their Yosemite travels together. But it can't be forgotten that Muir did not act alone but in concert with hundreds of concerned conservationists, with much letter writing and lobbying and protracted effort. It may paradoxically be the case that wildness is only lastingly protected by highly organized people working in a framework of law. If so, then our ongoing involvement is crucial to designate more wild areas as well as to influence the management of the ones we have. In the wilderness, it may be difficult to sell out, but it's also hard to stand for anything. Like Katniss, we will have to engage with the political landscape on its own unfair, sometimes merciless terms. It's in the offices and boardrooms that we'll show if we've learned anything in the mountains, and if indeed we love the wilderness. «

BALANCING ACT

GUIDES' DELICATE RELATIONSHIP WITH WILDERNESS MANAGEMENT

By Zoe Hart, American Mountain Guide / IFMGA Guide



THERE MAY BE SOME IRONY TO THE fact that I was born in New York City and raised in central New Jersey, yet am attempting to shed light on the concept of wilderness and what it means to me and my fellow guides. However, despite all the jokes about Jersey's many highway exits, my hometown was surrounded by forests and farmland. And today I live in the folds of some of the most spectacular wilds on Earth. Each morning as I pull back the blinds, my two-year-old son says, "Good morning, mountains," to the granite spires and hanging glaciers. I feel small and inconsequential here in the French Alps, whether I set foot on snow or place my hands in a granite crack high on the glacial plateau, or just tilt my head out the car window to see a shimmering hanging serac. From the Himalayas, to the Karakoram, to the deserts of Utah, to the Cascades, to the farmlands of New Jersey, I have found peace and beauty for different reasons. This is why I, like so many of us mountain professionals, have made climbing and guiding my career. The wilderness has become a place in which I work, play, love, and live. Here, I feel free, naked, vulnerable, at times strong, and at times weak. The wilderness has carried me to the precipice of every emotion.

Like any mountain guide, my relationship to these wild places is complex and ever fluctuating. I see the need to set such places aside in order to protect them, but I also struggle with what can feel like over-regulation and unduly limited access. In this wilderness where guides often feel more at home than in our own house or in a city, how do we protect it and ensure its longevity without suffocating it? And how do we continue to secure the access we need to practice our vocation?

As a concept in America, wilderness began in 1935, when the nonprofit Wilderness Society formed, working closely with the government, national parks, national monuments, and various other land-management systems. As society developed, population grew, technology progressed, and transportation advanced, access to unblemished landscapes became easier and easier, and a need was seen to protect them. In 1964, the Wilderness Society and Howard Zahniser helped pass the Wilderness Act, which stated, "A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain." From that point forward, the government began to set aside and protect forests, mountains, and various other natural landscapes.

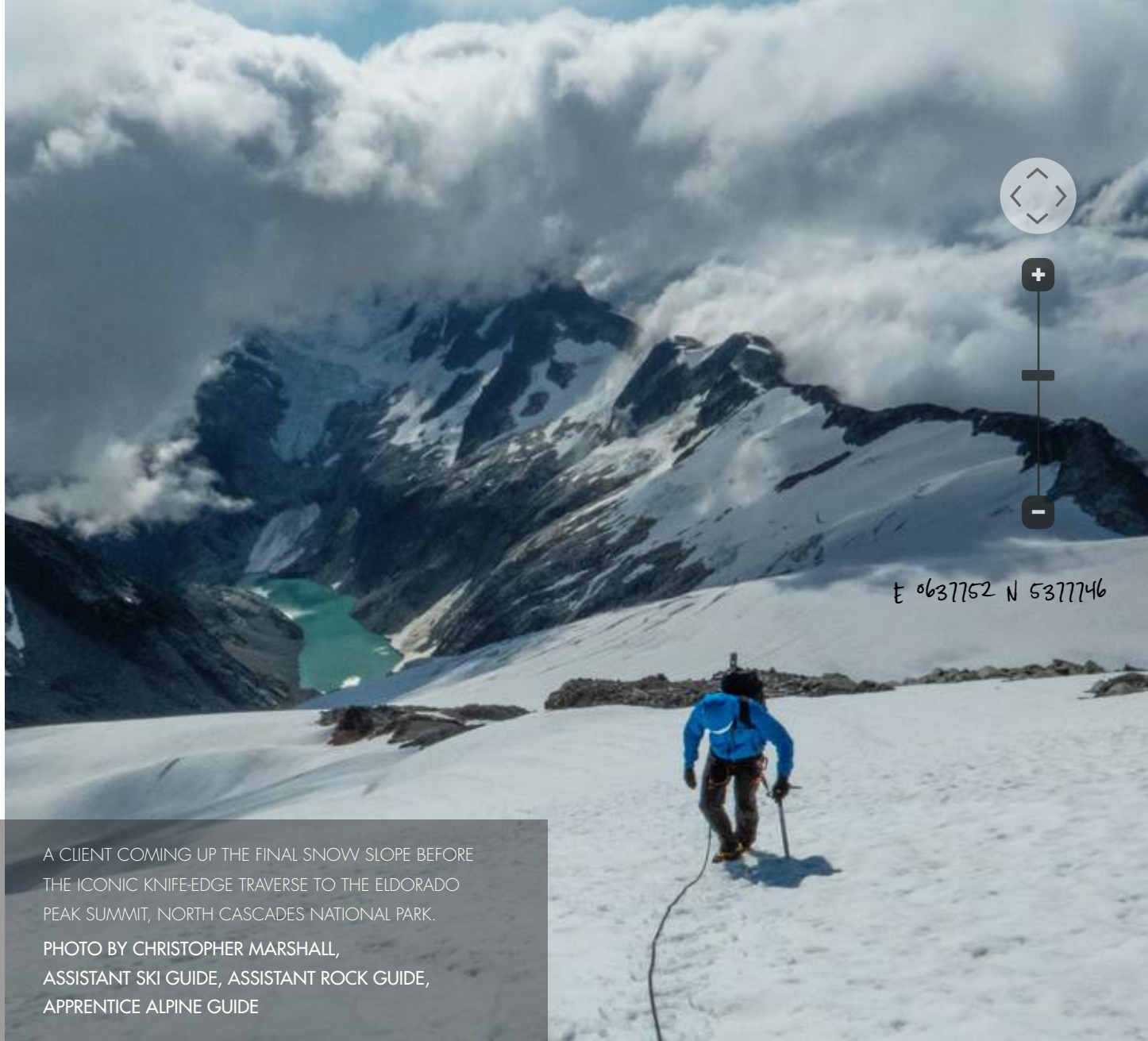
For guides, the Wilderness Act means that many of the places in which we work and play are mostly managed, and controlled, by the government, which in turn gives access to a limited number of concessionaires. The goal of this system is to keep tabs on users, to keep impact within sustainable limits, to manage safety, and to ensure that this wilderness will remain intact for future generations. Yet invariably, such regulations have created unease in our guiding world.

As Marc Chauvin, an American Mountain Guide/IFMGA Guide based out of the White Mountains, puts it, "conflicted" is his term of use. "To me, Wilderness as a law is misguided, because it treats humans as aliens on our own planet," Chauvin says. "People often use 'natural environment' as a descriptor, but I refuse to believe that we as a species are 'unnatural'!" Chauvin supports rules that keep infrastructure to a minimum and protect wild areas from destructive activities, but is disturbed by what he deems as overregulation. He wonders, for example, why one needs approval—a permit—to camp in the wilderness, thus creating separation between the user and the land. Like most guides, he feels passionate about and deeply connected to the environment, and loves the freedom and challenge »

3RD PHOTO
PLACE

A TIMBERLINE MOUNTAIN GUIDE GUEST FOLLOWING THE LAST PITCH OF SKY RIDGE, SMITH ROCK STATE PARK, ORE.

PHOTO BY MAX TEPFER, AMGA ROCK GUIDE, ASSISTANT ALPINE GUIDE



A CLIENT COMING UP THE FINAL SNOW SLOPE BEFORE THE ICONIC KNIFE-EDGE TRAVERSE TO THE ELDORADO PEAK SUMMIT, NORTH CASCADES NATIONAL PARK.

PHOTO BY CHRISTOPHER MARSHALL, ASSISTANT SKI GUIDE, ASSISTANT ROCK GUIDE, APPRENTICE ALPINE GUIDE

of moving unfettered through the mountains; to him, limitations imposed by wilderness laws infringe upon this ultimate freedom, as well as the experience.

In contrast are the Alps, where I've lived and worked for the past 10 years. Here, in Europe, there are very few rules and little wilderness legislation. Is this better? It angers me to see helicopters flying overhead day after day to rescue inexperienced climbers who foray into the "wilderness" because there are ski lifts giving access, a rescue system in place, no one to ask questions, and no one to fine you. And the crown jewel of the Alps, Mont Blanc, has become overrun, trashed, and almost a trail of human waste. People die on a regular basis, and refuges are crowded, uncomfortable, unenjoyable, and nearly unsanitary. With no rules, no permits, and no maximum numbers, can the mountains sustain this?

American Mountain Guide/IFMGA Guide Caroline George, a native of Switzerland with an American and a French passport, has spanned continents and cultures. She offers a unique, worldly perspective on the two different approaches. "The perfect picture of wilderness to me is the long stretches of red desert I remember seeing in cowboy movies as a child, where you wouldn't see traces of civilization for days," says George. She says Europe has plenty of beautiful, wild places, but that you rarely go more than an hour without some sign of civilization—you never feel quite as remote. "In Europe," says George, "you are usually only a hut or ski lift away from civilization. In the USA, you have to accept that you will be alone and have to rely on your expertise to come out of the wilderness."

For many guides, this need for self-sufficiency is precisely the attraction. Steve House, an American Mountain Guide/IFMGA Guide living in Ridgway, Colo., and co-owner of Skyward Mountaineering, calls stepping into wilderness a "stark, physical reminder" that the natural world can and does exist without human »

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MOONLIGHT OVER THE TOP OF LIBERTY BELL, WASHINGTON, DURING A PLANNED BIVY ON THE SUMMIT DURING AN ALPINE MOUNTAINEERING AND TECHNICAL LEADERSHIP 2 TRIP.

PHOTO BY JARED DRAPALA, APPRENTICE ALPINE GUIDE, ASSISTANT ROCK GUIDE

intervention, especially as our sport becomes more convenience and technology oriented. "Last week, I dropped into a less-visited side canyon of Black Canyon National Park, was notified that my GPS device had lost its signal, already hadn't had a cell signal since the day before, and scrambled past virgin granite walls that would be brilliant sport crags, were only power drills allowed," says House. "Climbing here forces me to operate on nature's terms, and in the process dig further into my own skill set. Teaching me, once again, how to do more with less."

So perhaps America's many regulations—and even "over-regulation"—do serve a purpose, one that synchs up with the independent ethos of mountain guides. Says Eastern Sierra–based American Mountain Guide/IFMGA Guide Neil Satterfield, "The Wilderness Act is needed and great in concept. As a guide, I am a steward of the wilderness in all ways. That extends from coaching my guests, to educating the general public in the importance of preservation." Yet Satterfield, like Chauvin, takes issue with the act's delivery, saying that it's hampered by an incredible bureaucracy that speaks its own language and limits access to the very people with the greatest will to preserve it. "Navigating and understanding how to effect change as a guide is a full-time job in itself," says Satterfield. "In order to gain public support to preserve the wilderness, you must allow both public and commercial access." In other words, Satterfield feels that there must be a strong mutual relationship between the common user (the public) and the commercial user (the concession or the mountain guide). Thus if we, the guiding community,

> "Chauvin wonders, for example, why one needs approval—a permit—to camp in the wilderness, thus creating separation between the user and the land."

can use the laws and regulations as guidelines, adapting them to our personal, intimate relationship with wilderness, we can translate this wealth of experience to the general public. And then, maybe, we can help the laws become more relevant in practice.

The precarious balance between successful management and limitation was deeply felt when 401 parks were shuttered for 16 days during the political shutdown of the national parks in October 2013. In this case—despite the fact that no one really "owns" the wilderness if we follow the true spirit of the definition (man as temporary visitor)—its manager, the US government, kept out everyone, guides included. Through this incident, it became clear that we are all allowed access only on borrowed time, and that at any point and for any reason the government can revoke it. For we guides who so love and rely on these wild, magical places, this has been a bitter pill to swallow. »

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PHOTO / DAN HOLZ Matt gearing up for a day of climbing in Ouray, CO.

Howie Schwartz, an American Mountain Guide/IFMGA Guide from the Eastern Sierras, says that wilderness has become such an embattled resource because it's disappearing so quickly—threatened by human advancement, overpopulation, and information technology. "People have the ability to 'virtually' experience wild places from screens in their homes and local coffeehouses," says Schwartz. "Wilderness has never been more accessible, and people are visiting it in increasing numbers." Schwartz, however, sees irony in the fact that the fewer people who visit the wilderness, the better it is from a preservation standpoint—yet this also makes these wild lands harder to protect, because of the ensuing lack of awareness. "Wilderness advocates ride a thin line of spreading the love of wilderness just before the point of loving it to death," Schwartz says. "What other advocates have this problem—where the harder you advocate, the more you may hurt the cause?"

We guides, as frequent visitors to these places, are of course also advocates and stewards. Yet at the same time, we market photos and stories, and we promise bliss on some level. As Schwartz puts it, the benefits of wilderness to humanity are manifold: physical, physiological, psychological, and profoundly spiritual. "To experience wilderness is to experience an important part of the essence of being human," he says. Who—guides and clients alike—wouldn't want to feel such things? We guides have chosen a life that so many others want to taste for just a day, or even a moment, and we are making a living off that desire; we, too, are helping to popularize and create impact in these wild places.

Todd Rutledge, an Apprentice Rock Guide, owner of AMGA Accredited Business Mountain Trip, and a concession holder in Denali National Park, says that there's not much true wilderness—terrain that is both "uncontrolled and potentially unforgiving"—left. Rutledge says that it's still easy to find the unforgiving, but not much that is uncontrolled. To him, the West Buttress on Denali is not real wilderness, with planes overhead on any clear day and rangers prowling about. "It would be hard to get into an uncontrolled situation," he says. "[Yet] when climbers find themselves in one, they are blamed for it, rather than [people] accepting that the mountain is wild"—i.e., unforgiving.

We guides—with our fixed ropes, fixed anchors, and safety protocols—want to tame, to manage, to control wilderness, and to sell it to our clients, but paradoxically we want it to be as wild as possible, so that we're selling an authentic experience. In some ways, wilderness management has created a misconception of control, of safety. It has made wilderness less wild simply by defining, delineating, and regulating it, and we've had a role in that process: People flock to the mountains to follow guides, to be in our presence, to count on us for our expertise or for rescues. Whether in Chamonix, France, where a few hundred guides step into the range each day, or the less-frequented American peaks, having a guide presence changes the game. It's a simply a given that we know these places better than most other visitors, land managers included. But with that relationship comes a special responsibility: As John Race, an American Mountain Guide/IFMGA Guide living in Leavenworth, Wash., and owner of North Cascades Mountain Guides, puts it, "I think we often miss the fact that what we were first attracted to is land that was preserved by the very environmental factions that today push back against more guide access."

In the end, however, the true conflict lies between humans and nature—the wild lands, the wilderness we are trying to tame. Whether we blame governmental constraints for our conflicted relationship with wilderness or take the blame ourselves for helping turn what is wild into a paycheck, it remains that wilderness doesn't exist to be managed, to be constrained, to be controlled. It simply is—the world as it once was, in all its wildness, preserved in a select few places for us to visit but never to remain. «

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Athlete: Benjamin Roumier. Photo: KME Michael Müller

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A CRITICAL PIECE OF THE PUZZLE

WHO GETS TO OPERATE IN WILDERNESS AREAS?

By Scott Massey

2ND PHOTO PLACE

OUTDOOR EDUCATOR CURTIS PAULS BELOW MOUNT SHUKSAN IN NORTH CASCADES NATIONAL PARK, WASHINGTON.

PHOTO BY JERRY ISAAK, APPRENTICE ROCK & ALPINE GUIDE, ASSISTANT SKI GUIDE

HOW DO LAND MANAGERS DETERMINE how many commercial service providers, including mountain guides, they allow to operate in designated wilderness? The story begins with the Wilderness Act. Section 4(c) of the act describes prohibited uses, including "commercial enterprise," in the interests of keeping lands pristine—"with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable." Section 4(d) makes a few exceptions, stating, "Commercial *services* may be performed within the wilderness areas to… the *extent necessary* for activities that are proper for realizing the recreational or other wilderness purposes of the areas," (emphasis added). Since the time of the act, outfitting and guiding of many types have been considered to fall under this exception as acceptable commercial services, and local land managers have used their discretion as to the number and type of permits to offer.

However, the lack of a standardized interpretation of this clause has led to legal challenges. The first defining case was High Sierra Hikers Association v. Blackwell (2004). The High Sierra Hikers sued the Inyo National Forest, alleging the latter was not in compliance with the act because they issued too many commercial pack stock (horse) permits, and thus too many commercial guides operated in the forest to preserve wilderness values. The Ninth Circuit Court found the United States Forest Service had failed to conduct a specialized finding that showed that "commercial services were no more than necessary to achieve the goals of the Act."

A second case arrived at a similar conclusion in regards to an excess of commercial stock permits. High Sierra Hikers Association v. U.S. Department of Interior – SEKI (May 2012) (National Park Service, Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Parks) required that an analysis must be done, and that the maximum amount of commercial services must be defined.

These cases set key precedents that inform how land-management agencies conduct planning efforts. For example, the National Park Service (NPS) is calling this analysis the Extent Necessary Determination (END), and in most cases it is included as part of a Wilderness Stewardship Plan, the document that frames how each park's wilderness will be managed for the next several decades.

A large challenge in this analysis process has been developing the standards by which commercial services are analyzed. In 2014, the NPS released its framework for this decision-making process, which includes these key points:

- The activity should be closely analyzed for its effect on wilderness character; the commercial nature of the activity should not be a factor when looking at the effect on character. In summary, when analyzing the necessity for commercial services, the visitor experience must be considered. Park managers must address what types of opportunities will be made available to the visitor. Should visitors without specialized skills or equipment be given an opportunity to experience an appropriate activity with a commercial provider? Should visitors be afforded an opportunity for an introductory experience in wilderness with a commercial provider?
- In order to determine an extent or amount of commercial services, managers should ideally determine the visitor capacity in order to allocate use (commercial and noncommercial alike).
- If use is at or near capacity, use allocations could be redistributed between commercial and noncommercial users, or it could be determined that no commercial service is necessary. Director's Order 41 states that "…wilderness areas at, or near, visitor capacity may not be able to accommodate any commercial services either at all or during peak capacity periods." However, if there are compelling reasons for commercial services to support proper activities, noncommercial allocations could be adjusted in order to allow for a necessary amount of commercial-service allocation.

These are all reasonable thoughts that provide a structured decision-making framework for park managers. So, how is this structure beneficial? And how does it serve the park, the guiding community, and ultimately the public? The existence of a structured decision-making framework sets the common language for discussion. By understanding the considerations that go into decisions affecting guiding, the guiding community can frame its thinking about and communication with land managers to address such considerations.

Finally, does the END mean that guiding opportunities will be reduced? There is no definite answer yet. Certainly, there will be situations in which they will be more limited; however, there may also be cases in which permit opportunities will stay the same or increase. It's too soon to know. However, one current planning process of note is the SEKI Draft Wilderness Stewardship Plan. The parks' proposed plan maintains the current level of nonstock guiding opportunities, with the exception of reducing the amount of commercial service days in the Mt. Whitney region by 20 percent. This presents a significant challenge to the public that wishes to access the region with a guide, as well as the guide services that operate in the area. While this may seem like an insurmountable challenge, what we have through this process is an opportunity for all of us to be more involved with our land management, and to show that the mountain-guiding community is a committed voice at the table—and that we are all dedicated to the common goal of conserving our wilderness resource. «

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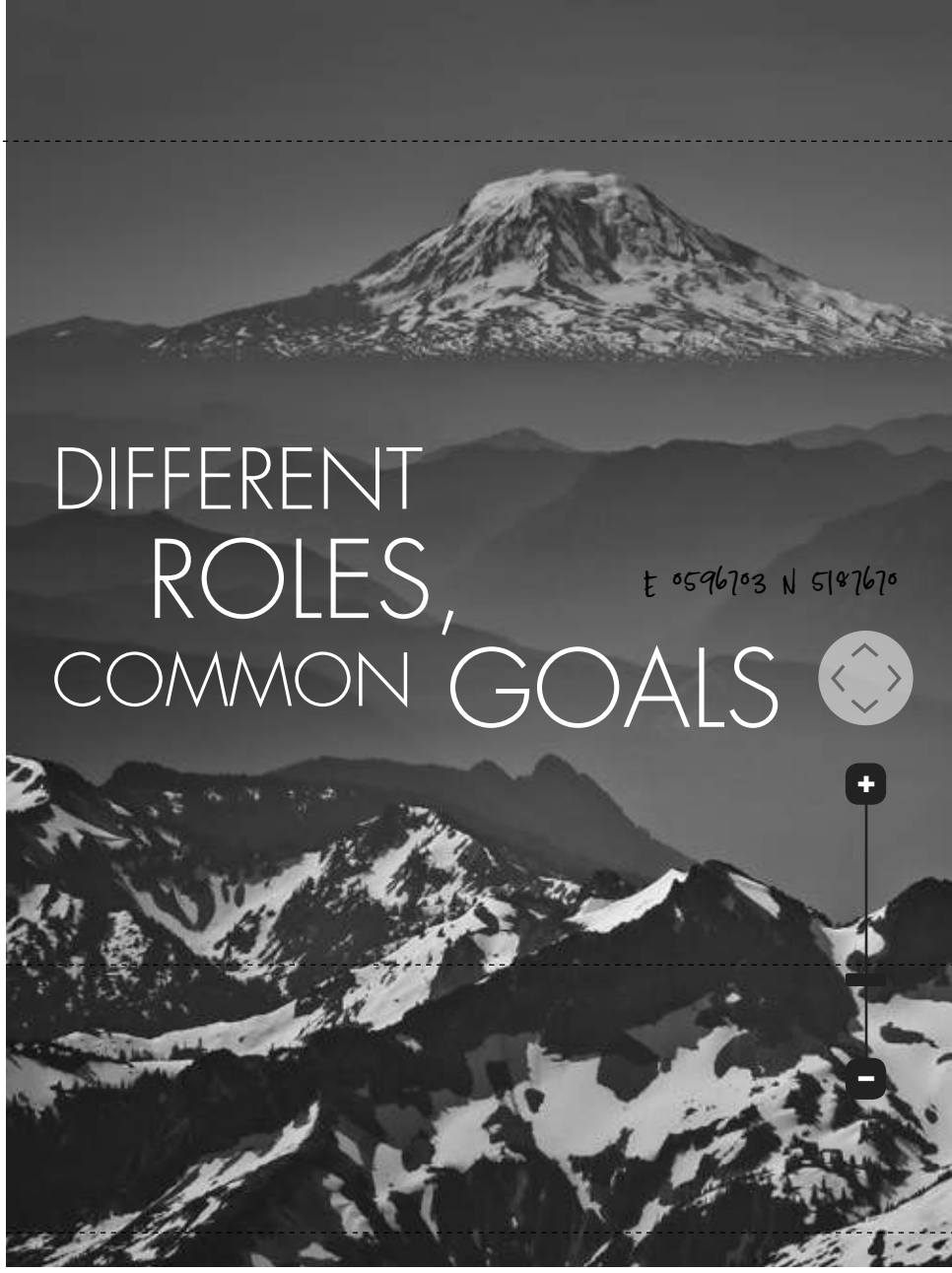


A NATIONAL-PARK SUPERINTENDENT REFLECTS ON HOW MOUNTAIN GUIDES AND LAND MANAGERS WORK TOGETHER TO PROTECT OUR WILD AREAS

By Karen Taylor-Goodrich, Superintendent of North Cascades National Park

WITHOUT WILDERNESS, THERE WOULD BE NO mystery. No swirling clouds parting to give glimpses of glistening glaciers and solitary pinnacles, no grumbles in the night as the mountains shed their snowy cloaks, no lonely whistles echoing across talus as marmots dive for safety at your approach. This mystery and beauty, together with the physical and mental challenges of traveling through this landscape, are what bind together climbers, guides, wilderness managers, and wilderness aficionados in an inextricable interplay of wilderness use and protection. Each player has a role, and only by working together toward a common goal can we protect these special places to the degree merited.

MOUNT ADAMS AS VIEWED FROM CAMP MUIR ON MOUNT RAINIER.

PHOTO BY JAYSON SIMONS-JONES, AMERICAN MOUNTAIN GUIDE/IFMGA GUIDE

Mountain guides in the North Cascades have a special privilege, and I'm not talking about the perks that accompany a Commercial Use Authorization permit in North Cascades National Park (NOCA). Guides here at NOCA get to introduce their clients to a remote, spectacular landscape that will surely imprint upon the clients' psyches a sense of wild ruggedness and inspiration, a feeling of renewal brought about by sheer physical challenges overcome, and perhaps a realization that the mountains that provide so much can also reduce us to cold, miserable animals just trying to survive. Ultimately, these mountains leave a lasting impression and provide a landscape both accessible and undeniably wild—in other words, a perfect place to guide.

American Mountain Guides and aspiring guides working in NOCA have a unique opportunity, and in fact responsibility, to pass on the legacy of a true wilderness ethic to climbers and mountaineers more often concerned with personal accomplishment than protection of the area that provides that very experience. Guides acting as alpine mentors can and should incorporate a sense of respect and a set of Leave No Trace skills into each work trip. After all, these clients could be the future climbers who will be drawn to the very same special wilderness areas that mountain guides cherish and recreate in. No other advocates for wilderness (and all mountain guides are advocates by default, as their field of work is decidedly wilderness dependent) have the degree of interaction and influence with the client and future-climber user group as do guides and aspiring guides. Guides are the best defenders of wilderness in this respect, and the National Park Service depends on them to help move toward the common goal of responsible wilderness use and long-term protection of wilderness resources.

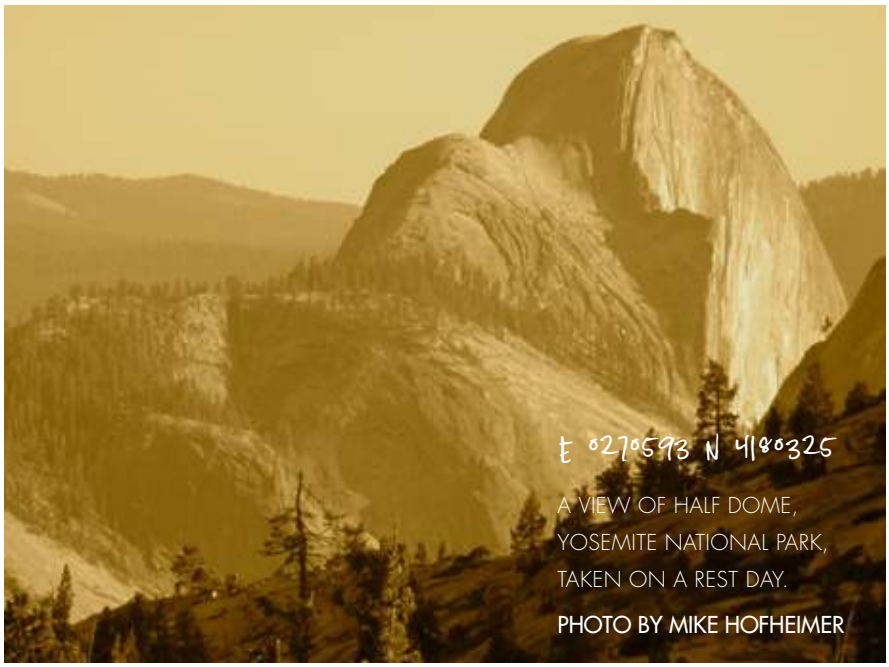
The partnership between guide organization and management agency is codependent and ideally beneficial for both. Because the Wilderness Act explicitly limits the amount of commercial use that can occur in wilderness areas, guiding companies depend on agencies to allow for Commercial Use Authorizations and the ability to conduct business in these areas. They also depend on the management agency to make sound management decisions according to the wilderness-protection mandate of allowing for primitive and unconfined recreation while protecting wilderness resources to the highest degree possible. Likewise, management agencies depend on guides to help visitors gain the skills and confidence necessary to enjoy and protect wilderness areas on their own, and to conduct business respectfully and maintain support for the concept of wilderness protection and for the agencies that manage these areas. Lack of support and respect from either the guide or the agency erodes the common goal of wilderness protection, and undercuts the basis of this partnership.

By upholding their end of the bargain, guides and aspiring guides can be one of the greatest assets to wilderness-management agencies. The agencies, in turn, will continue to do their best to uphold the mandate of the Wilderness Act and to recognize guides for the benefits they bring. A strong partnership built on mutual respect and understanding of this commonality of purpose can help protect the beauty and mystery of the North Cascades that keep us all coming back! «

A GUIDING LIGHT

BEING A GOOD STEWARD, WITH MIKE GAUTHIER

By Lizzy Scully



A VIEW OF HALF DOME, YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK, TAKEN ON A REST DAY.

PHOTO BY MIKE HOFHEIMER

FORMER SUPERVISORY CLIMBING RANGER AT MOUNT Rainer National Park and author of *Mount Rainier: A Climbing Guide,* Mike Gauthier is today Yosemite's Chief of Staff, a longtime climber, and a proponent of professional guiding. He was instrumental in the planning and rollout of the three mountain-guiding concessionaires (versus the previous one) on Mount Rainier in 2006, and also worked at Denali and Olympic national parks. As an idealistic young ranger, Gauthier once questioned the commercialization of mountains through guiding and other services. But after witnessing the growth and professionalism of the American guiding community (particularly after the 1996 Everest tragedy), he did a 180. We asked Gauthier a few questions about the importance of the relationship between land managers and professional guides.

AMGA: *Why did your perspective on guiding shift?*

MIKE GAUTHIER: I began to see guiding as less about selling the summit and more about seeing people learn about the glaciers, the Leave No Trace ethic, and the history and resources of Mount Rainier National Park. I've seen the profession change and grow. In the 1990s, the community really came together and professionalized their activities as well as the entire American guiding industry.

AMGA: *What is your perspective now on guiding?*

MG: There can be tremendous value for land-management agencies and for the clients in providing this opportunity. For many, it's the only way they will be able to establish a vital connection to the land and experience wilderness and remote public areas.

AMGA: *In what ways do professional guides safeguard our wilderness areas?*

MG: Responsible, professional guiding can be an excellent tool in land-management stewardship. Guides develop and exhibit safe practices, and are often leaders in popular climbing areas, which can equate to fewer rescues for land managers. They also promote new "best practices" such as Leave No Trace—the AMGA does a very good job teaching and mentoring those stewardship values, which clients will take home with them. My experience with trained professional guides is that they understand the history, culture, and practices of climbing, and they teach others to be well-informed and responsible users.

AMGA: *In what other ways does the guiding profession support and enhance the National Park Service's values?*

MG: Mount Rainier is a great example of where the profession raised the bar for everyone on the mountain. After 2006, when the park increased its number of concessions to three guide services, the companies changed their client-to-guide ratios (from 4-1 to 2-1). This resulted in an increase in the number of guides available to lead trips and work directly with clients. The companies also expanded their rescue and resource-protection training. When you have professionally trained guides (AMGA-certified) who practice better stewardship, have more safety training, and who can care for clients more closely, it demonstrates leadership on the mountain and compels other climbers to match [this behavior]. When the guide services are doing something better and at a higher level, the public and other groups will follow. This trickles out to other big mountains. These guides bring their best practices to all of the mountains on which they work.

AMGA: *Do you feel it's important for guides to be appropriately trained for the terrain in which they work?*

MG: Of course. That's inherently obvious. Climbing is dangerous, and the places where we climb aren't forgiving. Guides who are appropriately trained in the terrain where they work will be better and more successful, and better stewards. They'll have a greater understanding of the special and unique resources. They will have a greater skill set to deal with the complexities of that terrain.

AMGA: *Do you think that professional guiding standards will ever become a national standard on public lands?*

MG: That's a big question. Many different land managers have climbing resources, whether National Forest Service, BLM, county, or state parks. There are going to be variations and differences in how those areas are managed; land managers are going to be nuanced. But I do think in the major areas, where guiding is a big business, there will probably be much more attention paid toward ensuring that professional guiding standards are met—safety, understanding resources, and natural history, liability insurance, etc.

AMGA: *What's the biggest difference between guiding now and back when you first became a ranger?*

MG: In the past, I saw more illegal guiding, and in some cases, guides who would literally drag clients up and down the mountain. The world of guiding improved and professionalized substantially in the late 1990s. Groups such as The Mountaineers, Mazamas, NOLS, Outward Bound, and, of course, the AMGA greatly improved everyone's connection between stewardship and recreation. Those professional standards established by the AMGA, for example, became something to be measured against. To be taken seriously and be successful, you have to be professional and skilled. Today, if you go to Everest and toss your oxygen tanks off or leave your client in a precarious situation, you'll be called out. Professional guides care deeply about their clients and the special areas where they work. And that translates into better stewards of public lands.

THE ACCESS OPPORTUNIST

BLACK DIAMOND SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT NATE MCKENZIE BRINGS CLIMBING TO THOSE WHO MIGHT NOT OTHERWISE HAVE THE CHANCE.

By Lizzy Scully

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NATE MCKENZIE (AMGA SPI & GWI, APPRENTICE ROCK GUIDE) WORKING WITH ADAPTIVE CLIMBER ENOCK GLIDDEN. A PARA-CLIMBER BORN WITH SPINA BIFIDA, GLIDDEN IS PARALYZED BELOW THE WAIST. BUT 450 PULL-UPS LATER, HE CLIMBED CATHEDRAL LEDGE IN NEW HAMPSHIRE.

"Getting certification meant I was plugging into a national standard and a national brain trust of professionals."

ORIGINALLY FROM THE SEATTLE AREA, Nate McKenzie started climbing in the foothills of Mount Rainier in 1992 at age 14. Since then, he has traveled and climbed extensively in the United States, and the Alps in France and Switzerland. He finally settled on the East Coast in the late 2000s. There, he partnered with The Connecticut Rock Gym in New Haven (now closed) to develop Ascent Climbing, an outdoor program for the gym's members. McKenzie's current goal—to provide high standards of instruction and safety for aspiring rock climbers in Connecticut—is lofty, but it inspires him to stay busy; the state, says McKenzie, has "some of the most exciting rock and ice climbing in the country." Meanwhile, McKenzie is also working with the Access Fund to increase access to local areas.

AMGA: *Tell us about your access work.*

NATE MCKENZIE: I've become very involved in just creating access to climbing, which is honestly what guiding is all about. As the vice president for the board of directors of the Ragged Mountain Foundation—the local access group and an affiliate of the Access Fund—we've worked to purchase the cliff at Ragged Mountain and promote conservation there and elsewhere in the state. Guiding is an important part of that because guides are on the front lines of crag management. We need to introduce a strong conservation ethic. But guiding is also about creating opportunities for people to access terrain that they would not be able to access on their own.

AMGA: *When did you become involved with the AMGA?*

NM: I heard about the Climbing Wall Instructor program while it was still a pilot program in 2007. That program set me on a path to professionalize what I was doing. I felt like it was important to learn as much as I could. Getting certification meant I was plugging into a national standard and a national brain trust of professionals. I learned a lot. But more than the skills, it was incredibly confidence inspiring. It was confirmation that I knew what I was doing.

AMGA: *What inspired you to get further certification?*

NM: We started out doing indoor instruction at the gym. It was a natural progression that people who got hooked indoors would want to climb outside. So we launched an outdoor program. But before we did that, I felt it was important to become an AMGA Single Pitch Instructor [SPI] and SPI provider. I could add terrain knowledge and skills to grow my business. I wanted the best training possible, and to prove myself by being tested against the standard.

AMGA: *What other climbing organizations are you involved with?*

NM: I'm the executive director of the Northeast Chapter of Paradox Sports [a nonprofit that provides opportunities for athletes with physical disabilities to participate in adventure sports]. I just got off Cathedral Ledge. We took a climber with paraplegia up the *Book of Solemnity* (5.10a). I love creating opportunities for people to do things they wouldn't normally be able to do, whether that's opening up a new climbing area or helping someone with a physical disability to climb.

AMGA: *What's the story behind your Black Diamond Scholarship?*

NM: I actually got a rejection letter at first. But a couple weeks later, the AMGA and BD got in touch with me again and told me they thought my essay was exceptional and that they'd created a special, full-tuition scholarship for me. [McKenzie took his Rock Guide Course in November with Marc Chauvin at Smith Rock.] Marc is a legend, so I [was] really psyched to continue to develop as a guide and to work with him. I feel like I have a strong base, but there's still so much to learn just apprenticing with these guides.

AMGA: *Super cool. What do you think got Black Diamond's attention?*

NM: Well, hopefully they noticed my commitment to share the outdoors and adventure with folks who wouldn't ordinarily have access, such as my work with the Access Fund and Paradox. Outside of guiding, I'm incredibly busy fundraising and putting programs together with Paradox.

AMGA: *Anything else you want to share?*

NM: Rock guiding in a state not known for its vertical terrain is challenging. We're sandwiched between the White Mountains, the Adirondacks, and the Gunks, so people drive through Connecticut to get to other places. But there's really a rich, incredible climbing history here, and a lot of potential. Many forefathers of climbing established routes here. These legends have inspired me. They had a very bold, clean, adventurous ethic, even on the single-pitch crags. I love sharing that history with guests. «

PHOTO BY KEVIN WRIGHT

› READ MORE Q&As ON THE GUIDING LIFE BLOG: **AMGA.COM**/BLOG

FALLEN FELLOW-GUIDES

2014: A TRAGIC YEAR FOR THE GUIDING COMMUNITY

PHOTOS CURTESY OF ERICKA HEGEMAN, DAVIDE DE MASI, KATIE GRIFFITH, BETH GREEN, JOHN COLLIS, JOHN MACKINNON

TO HONOR THE LIVES OF OUR FALLEN FELLOW-GUIDES, WE WILL, BEGINNING WITH this issue of the *GUIDE Bulletin*, include personal stories by their friends and colleagues in these pages, as well as on our blog. Last year, 2014, was a particularly difficult one for the guiding world; we lost six people. Since our community is so small, the impact was huge. Everyone reading this will know one or more of the men and women on these pages.

But with their deaths, we have the opportunity to reflect on what is truly important—love, friendship, community, and living every day to the fullest. That is what these guides shared with their peers, and this is what they taught their clients. As Alex Lowe once said, "The best climber in the world is the one having the most fun." Likewise, the best guide in the world is the one sharing the most fun with others. Each of these guides shared big; each of these guides loved big. Let us celebrate their positive impact on the community. —*Betsy Winter, AMGA Executive Director* »


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MATT HEGEMAN, intense, philosophical, and often with a huge smile, was an amazing teacher and extra-careful guide who gently encouraged all around him to keep moving forward. In 2008, he started guiding for AMGA accredited Business Alpine Ascents International, where he transitioned into a leadership role because of his personality and technical skills. He proceeded to lead expeditions around the world. American Mountain Guide/IFMGA Guide Jonathon Spitzer explained in his eulogy that Matt changed people's lives, followed his dreams, and was a devoted guide and husband. "Matt lived in the moment, whether that was in the mountains somewhere around the globe or spending time with his wife, Ericka," Spitzer stated. "His death reminds us that it is possible to follow our dreams and live a meaningful existence."

LIZ DALEY, a force of nature, shared with us her massive smile, an often-mischievous glint in her eye, and effortless grace on a snowboard, even in the steepest, most technical terrain. As American Mountain Guide/IFMGA Guide Danny Uhlmann wrote in his eulogy, "Liz came into my life like a meteorite. Just as breathtaking as her life was, she left us just as quickly, like in the middle of a great dance party when the music suddenly turns off and there is just… silence." Everyone whose life she touched felt that same sense of immediacy when Liz was around, Uhlmann recalled: "I looked up to Liz: her passion for the mountains, her keen magnetism toward quality in life, and her humility. One thing that's true for all of us who knew Liz: We all looked forward to the next time we would see her, work with her, be in the mountains or in town, with her."

JAKE MERRILL, with his great sense of humor and down-to-earth nature, worked tirelessly to further develop his outdoor-leadership skills. According to his mother, Jill Heckathorn, Jake's love and respect for the outdoors started young and drove his choices in education, professional work, and recreation. He graduated from Western Washington University with a BA in outdoor recreation and proceeded to accrue a long list of other trainings, including stints at various guide services. "Jake packed more into life than most people twice his age," Heckathorn said. "His zest for life attracted others, created relationships, and generated seemingly endless adventures. Jake loved most any outdoor adventure that challenged him, allowed his spirit to soar, and inspired others into nature. He felt at peace in the mountains. He will be missed more than words can say."

EITAN SHALOM GREEN, fearless and quick to grin, sported a third-degree black belt, bossa nova drumming skills, and an enthusiasm to share his love of the mountains with everyone. According to his father, Jeff Green, Eitan loved the guiding community. "He understood that the beauty of the mountains masked the inherent dangers of his job, and he understood the importance of managing risk where it could be identified," Green explained. "But, he never overlooked the splendor of the mountains. He loved his work and was passionate about revealing to others the great majesty of the mountains he saw before him." In her eulogy, Sheldon Kerr (Assistant Ski Guide, Apprentice Rock Guide) recalls the first time she heard Eitan say her favorite saying of his, when they were caught after dark on an 800-foot route in Black Velvet Canyon, Nevada. "There's no parents here!" he said before putting the rack in her hands and telling her to, "Get it, girl." She adds: "Eitan encouraged me to be just, be pro, be riotous, because somehow, we've been left in charge."

COLE KENNEDY, spirited and driven to pursue his dreams, always pushed us to try harder. An avid climber and skier, he was dedicated to advancing his physical and mental limits, yet also able to have fun in the mountains. His good friend John Collis (AMGA SPI) recalled in his eulogy that Cole defied categorization. "In some ways he was a meticulous, organized, straight-A student, but in many others, a true rebel without regard for rules, expectations, or measures of success placed on him by others," Collis wrote. Regardless, Collis added, Cole was always calm, encouraging, and matter-of-fact in a way that made the people around him feel comfortable pushing their mental and physical limits. "Those instructed and encouraged by Cole could sense the true excitement he felt for others achieving their goals," Collis said. "Those who got to know him will miss his hilariously dry wit, reckless driving, and dedication to everything he did."

KYLE MATTINGLY, with his big, goofy grin, shock of red hair, and perpetual stoke, loved skiing big lines or climbing long routes as much as he enjoyed sharing his passion for the mountains with his clients. John MacKinnon (AMGA Ski & Rock Guide, Apprentice Alpine Guide), wrote in his eulogy that Kyle had moved around the mountains a lot and was searching for acceptance in his life. He finally found his path and his community in guiding. "I watched Kyle mature into a solid avalanche educator and patient climbing guide," MacKinnon said. "Kyle transformed himself into a professional whose 'return-client' list grew by the season. It was obvious why so many clients wanted to climb with Kyle year after year—Kyle loved the mountains and loved sharing his joy with clients." «

› TO READ THE FULL EULOGIES ON EACH OF THESE INDIVIDUALS, VISIT **AMGA.COM/BLOG**

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(LEFT TO RIGHT) JOEY THOMPSON, MARK SMILEY, JAYSON SIMONS-JONES, MIKE ARNOLD, AND ROB COPPOLILLO BEING PINNED DURING THE 2014 ANNUAL MEETING.

Path to the Pin

Congratulations, 2014 American Mountain Guides

Mark Smiley, Rob Coppolillo, Mike Arnold, Jayson Simons-Jones, and Dan Starr earned their American Mountain Guide/IFMGA Guide status in 2014, along with Joey Thompson and Chris Wright (featured in *GUIDE Bulletin* No. 3). We got a chance to chat with these new IFMGA guides about their paths to the pin.

For Smiley, the process was long and frustrating, but finishing feels good. "While going through the process, I had to constantly ask myself, 'Is this worth it?' " Smiley said. "With the better climber I am today, due to the training and prep for courses and exams, I'd say, 'Yes, it was.' " Now that he has his pin, Smiley seeks to take a select number of highly motivated and competent climbers into the mountains to achieve their goals. "If I can do all these things to a level such that the folks I climb with want to come back again and again, and make a livable wage, then I'm achieving my goals," he said.

Coppolillo jokes that getting his pin was "like an extended climb-and-ski trip with my buddies, punctuated by periods of extreme stress and nightmarish anxiety." His advice to younger aspiring guides is: "Don't rush, forget your ego, be open to learning and making mistakes, try to relax, and focus on your weaknesses." And, find a supportive, tough mentor with a good sense of "the standard" and what it takes to get there.

For Mike Arnold, receiving his American Mountain Guide/IFMGA certification was "One of the best days of my life. It was the true start of my Mountain Guide career." The process, he added, was unlike any other challenge he has faced, but his love for the community and the opportunities he had to grow and improve made it all worthwhile. "It shaped the guide and person I am today," he said. Now his main focus will be pushing his personal level of climbing and skiing. His advice to aspiring guides? Balance your work and life, and to quote American Mountain Guide/IFMGA Guide Angela Hawse, "Have more fun than anyone!"

Jayson Simons-Jones pursued IFMGA status for various reasons. "Upon taking over the helm at Crested Butte Mountain Guides in 2007, I found it essential to obtain training and certification to be able to train and mentor my staff, and to be a role model to those I worked with," he explained. He also wanted to better his own professional skills and improve the experiences of his clients. Now that he has the confidence of knowing he can perform at, and has been tested at, such a high standard, "it's all definitely more enjoyable going forward."

Although we didn't get a chance to chat with Dan Starr before press, you can read full Q&As with all of the newly certified guides on our blog. «

PHOTO BY KARSTEN DELAP

› NEWLY PINNED GUIDES ARE FEATURED ON THE **AMGA.COM**/BLOG

Thanks for All the Photo Contest Submissions!

Dozens of AMGA members submitted more than 100 photos for the contest

We found it difficult to just choose three winners, as there were a dozens for our Wilderness Photo Contest. Congratulations to Chris Meder, Jerry Isaak, and Max Tepfer. We felt these photos illustrated the junction where humans and wild united; and they depict some fundamental guide experiences.

Meder's cover shot epitomizes those moments where guides, immersed in their mountainous office, really get to enjoy the hard earned sunset at the end of a long day; Isaak's photo of a guide heading onto untouched, snowy terrain, elicited in us a feel of wonder of the wildness about to be encountered; and Tepfer's scenic shot of a client following him up the volcanic welded tuff of Smith Rocks reminded us how inconsequential we, guides, are in these vast places, yet how integral we also are to enabling others to experience what it means to be, as Forest McBrian states in his article, with only the rock and only the ice. «

› CHECK OUT MORE SPECTACULAR IMAGES SUBMITTED BY YOUR FELLOW GUIDES **AMGA.COM**/ PHOTO CONTEST

ADAM BRINK'S CLIENT MAX CAPLAN, 9, ON HIS FIRST RAPPEL IN VEDAUWOO, WYO.

PHOTO BY ADAM BRINK, AMGA ROCK INSTRUCTOR, AMGA SPI

We get these really intense, super scary storms in Colorado, and then they go away. In the Northwest it just drizzles all day. At first I'd ask my friends, "What do you mean we're going to climb in the rain? Why would we do that?" But then you climb, and it's just fine.

PAUL KOUBEK (AMGA ROCK GUIDE, ASSISTANT ALPINE GUIDE) SETS UP A RAPPEL ON CUTTHROAT PEAK, NORTH CASCADES NATIONAL PARK, DURING AN ADVANCED ALPINE GUIDE COURSE AND ASPIRANT EXAM.

PHOTO BY DANIEL ZOKAITES, AMGA ROCK GUIDE, ASSISTANT ALPINE GUIDE, APPRENTICE SKI GUIDE

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SOLACE IN PASTEL

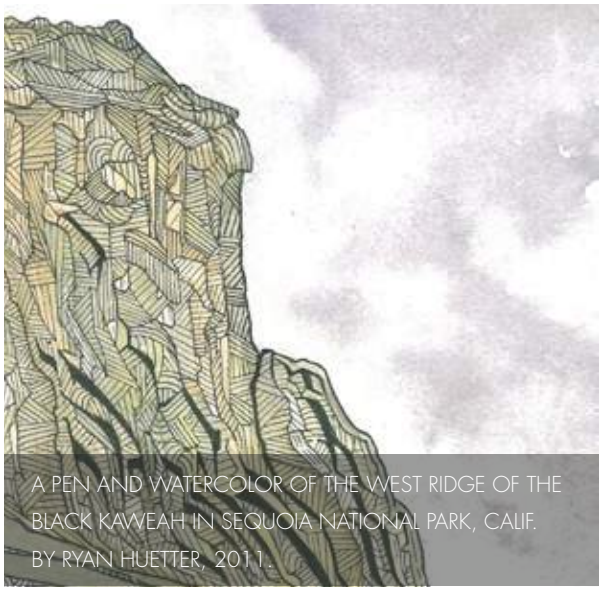
My life was injury free until my first AMGA program, a Rock Guide Course at Smith Rocks in 2011. Nothing had prepared me for the understated difficulty of pulling two fat ropes through a high-friction device day after day, after having spent the prior three weeks with hardly a rest day. Diagnosis: acute tendonitis in both elbows. I could barely drive home without them throbbing. I cringed thinking about touching rock or holding onto ski poles.

By Ryan Huetter, AMGA Rock Guide, Apprentice Alpine Guide

MY INJURIES CRUSHED ME. Climbing had defined me and given me my sense of purpose. And this was supposed to be the season—MY season—to climb harder and to transition into more-technical guiding programs and away from the softer guiding of Outward Bound, where I had cut my teeth. I lived just 40 minutes from El Cap Meadow, Yosemite National Park. Though I called off a planned trip up *Mescalito*, I refused to accept that climbing was now off-limits. But when I decided to visit the Cookie Cliff for an afternoon of shady toproping, I lost weeks of gains I had made in recovery. Pain sent me back to the couch for more ice cream, more cable TV, and ice packs on each elbow.

It took almost two months to emerge from the funk. Despite going for long runs in the mountains or riding my bike on the twisting, dangerous road along the Merced River, nothing comforted me. But then I met Leia on a 22-day mountaineering course deep in Sequoia National Park's wilderness. We worked together, hiking our group over corniced passes and making basecamps among the high, lonely stands of foxtail pines. I watched as she found shady spots below boulders or ancient conifers, where she unfolded a paint set to document the landscape on postcard-sized sheets. I had been so preoccupied with filling the void left by climbing and spring skiing that I hadn't even considered the alternative: not climbing. But Leia gave me a watercolor set and a Ziploc bag full of pens. Then, instead of steadily ticking off the list of technical routes I had planned for that summer, I painted my way across the range. For the first time, sitting in Blackcap Basin and in the upper reaches of Big Arroyo beneath the towering ridges of the Kaweah Range, my anxiety over my situation finally abated.

Guides spend an obscene amount of time pursuing the high standards that our profession requires. Time not spent climbing or skiing with clients is most often spent climbing or skiing with friends and family. But these two pursuits are different, and those who cannot make that distinction are the earliest lost to the attrition of guiding. But even if we can draw that line, the odds are still not in our favor. The longer we spend out there, in the skin track or on the sharp end, the greater our chances of experiencing fatigue, guide burnout, or injury. I now keep chronic tendonitis at bay with proper stretching and rest, and I have learned to identify and respect some of guiding's most common occupational hazards. Plus, the awareness I've gained has proven invaluable, especially at the dawn of my guiding career. Since coming to terms with taking time away from the mountains, be it forced or voluntary, I am now in a better position to play the long game.



A PEN AND WATERCOLOR OF THE WEST RIDGE OF THE BLACK KAWEAH IN SEQUOIA NATIONAL PARK, CALIF. BY RYAN HUETTER, 2011.

Four and a half months after the onset of my elbow tendonitis, my physical therapist gave me the go-ahead to climb. I started with long 5.easy ridge scrambles, and a prescription for skinny ropes and a GriGri. By late August, I frequented my favorite easy routes in the Sierras—paddling up the slabby cracks and corners of Tenaya Peak and dancing up orange knobs on Cathedral Peak. One day, I found myself on a summit free of any other parties. As I sat alone looking out over Tuolumne Meadows, I almost wished for my paper and set of paints. «

Photography: Andy Mann | Expedition: The Incan Odyssey

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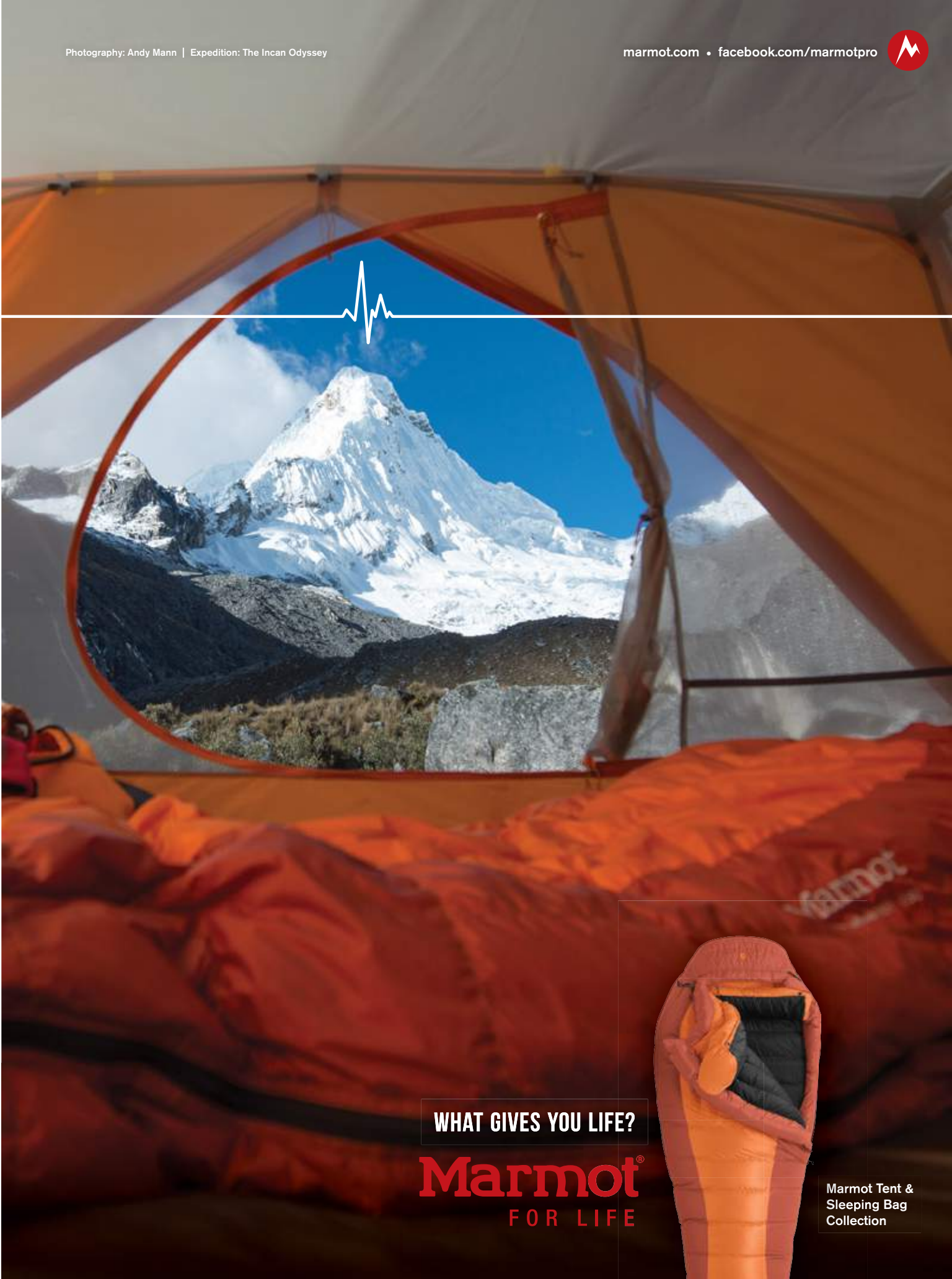

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