

GUIDE

BULLETIN



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WHY SINGLE-PITCH
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OUR PROFESSIONAL
REALITY: MODERN-DAY
INSTRUCTION
AND GUIDING

FINDING SUSTAINABLE
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THE GUIDING LIFE:
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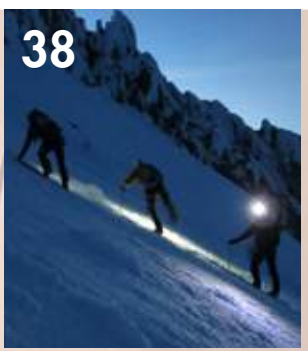


On the cover: ALEXIS FINLEY (BELAYING) AND JONATHAN MANCUSO (CLIMBING) AT MT. LEMMON, ARIZ.

PHOTO BY JONATHAN MANCUSO



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This issue of the *Bulletin* was conceived of and composed with an especial emphasis on climbing instruction. Each year, hundreds of Single Pitch Instructors (SPIs) and Climbing Wall Instructors (CWIs) join the ranks of our guides association. Our accredited businesses and programs all earn a significant portion of their revenues through climbing and ski courses.



By Ron Funderburke (AMGA Rock Guide, Rock Instructor, Apprentice Alpine Guide, and SPI Discipline Coordinator)

AND EVERY GUIDE IN EVERY DISCIPLINE, including each American Mountain Guide, will at some point on every single guided outing play the role of an instructor. Instruction is just part of what we do.

We are a small community, and we get to know familiar voices and faces at our annual meetings, in our debates and dialogues, and out in the mountains. When our community is so small, it's easy to forget the faces that we do not see as often, the voices not always heard at our meetings, and the interconnectedness of all climbing professionals. It is easy to forget the hundreds of instructors who don't necessarily participate in the association as visibly or as consistently, but who are still a critical part of what we do.

American climbing stretches from sea to shining sea, and the AMGA now offers education, credentials, services, and resource stewardship in all 50 states. If the certified guide is ubiquitous in the Front Range of Colorado, she is no more so than the certified CWI in Miami, Fla. For every certified Rock Guide in North Conway, N.H., there are 10 certified SPIs in Joshua Tree, Calif. For every client who summits Mount Rainier, there is an entire class learning snow travel at an accredited climbing school. And for every snow class

on Mount Washington, there are 10 times as many belay classes happening each night at indoor walls across the country. Climbing instruction is just part of what we do.

In this issue, I invite all AMGA members and climbing professionals to recommit to the craft of teaching, to reach out to your fellow guides and instructors for mentorship and collaboration. From Donny Roth's perspective "Teaching and Guiding in the Mountains" (*page 18*); to my feature "Our Professional Reality" (*page 7*), which details the main differences between the two career tracks as well as how to get started in each; to Avi Katz's "Finding Sustainable Employment in Climbing Instruction" (*page 24*), which describes the pros, cons, and pay scale for the various mountain professions, the articles in *Bulletin* 5 reveal the overlap between the worlds of guiding and instruction, and how both disciplines share a common root in adventure and education. I therefore invite you to appreciate the collective strength we discover when we return to our roots and nurture those who are beginning their journeys as professionals. After all, climbing instruction is not only part of what we all do; it is also a common bond, a bridge between disciplines, geography, cultures, and characters. «

A FOX MOUNTAIN GUIDE LEADING TWO CLIENTS
 UP THE LOOKING GLASS ROCK, N.C.,
 CLASSIC *THE NOSE* (5.8).

PHOTOS BY KARSTEN DELAP

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A PORTRAIT OF MODERN-DAY INSTRUCTION AND GUIDING

By Ron Funderburke (AMGA Rock Guide, Rock Instructor, Apprentice Alpine Guide, & SPI Discipline Coordinator)

IF YOU ARE AMONG THE MAJORITY OF Americans not born in the mountains, climbing rarely figures into your reality. And if you've never met or seen a professional mountain guide or climbing instructor, you probably can't believe that people make a living at such things. I was reared in a coastal North Carolina town, so it was a fluke that I fell in love with climbing, much less pursued a career in the mountains.

I discovered climbing in college, and soon made it my métier. I began teaching classes at my university and a local gym. Once in a while, I'd take an enthusiastic kid from the gym to the crag, and his parents would slip me gas money, a free meal, or a modest tip. I also worked for a summer camp, boarding school, and another university, and taught private lessons. I fancied myself a "guide."

I was muddling through a journey that had been inspired by my first mentor. He worked for the university, drove a Subaru, and ran his own bona fide guiding outfit. When he was my age, he told me, he'd bought helmets and Swiss seats, printed some brochures, and voila! It was a classic American story—one that framed my perception of the profession for years to come. All I needed was audacity—in my mind, I became a guide the day I heard my mentor's tale. Self-declared. Certifiable. Rock Guide Ron.

Three years into my professional life, I took a five-day AMGA Top Rope Site Manager Course. As I listened to Adam Fox and Jim Taylor explain professional climbing instruction, I realized that my concept of the profession, and my career up to that point, had been a sham.

It happened dramatically, like the denouement of an M. Night Shyamalan film. For five days, I suffered through the deconstruction of my career via a series of themed flashbacks. Risk Management: I recalled my cursory lead-belay lessons and how I'd relied entirely on my climbing ability to keep myself off the ground. Climbing Movement: I grimaced at my history of onsighting pitches while playing tug-of-war with an unskilled belayer. Technical Systems: I winced at every goofy anchor, the daisy chains, the sketchy rappels, the students clipped in with quickdraws. Professionalism: the trespassing, »



Black Diamond Athlete Whitney Boland climbs at her home crag in the Millbrook area of the Gunks.



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the liability, my lack of a helmet, the flip-flops, and all the witless mental gymnastics I'd gone through to justify this behavior.

I had convinced myself that I was a guide, but I had never done an actual day of guiding. And I'd never met anyone else who did so either. I was hopelessly attached to an idea that fell apart in the first five minutes of an AMGA course. So, I rededicated myself to the profession, and tried to cover lost ground.

Many aspiring mountain professionals begin their careers with the same missteps. But today, it doesn't take a twist of the cosmos for climbers to discover their aspirations, because climbing is everywhere—there are more ways than ever to make a living at it. So, how is an aspiring mountain professional supposed to know what to do, how to do it, or how to describe herself to employers? Should she take an AMGA Climbing Wall Instructor (CWI) course? An AMGA Single Pitch Instructor (SPI) Course? An AMGA Rock Guide Course (RGC)? Should she apply for a job? An internship? A NOLS semester?

As we all once did, aspiring instructors and guides require education, support, mentorship, and respect. Their energy, their zeal, and their desire to learn and prove themselves are the lifeblood of the profession. So, remembering my own inauspicious origins, I'd like to propose an appropriate pathway to the next generation. The first question should be, "Do you want to be a guide or an instructor?" No matter where you start—or end up—you'll likely be a bit of both.

GUIDING VERSUS INSTRUCTION ›

Any discussion must begin with a quick inventory of the 20th century. At the birth of our association, in the late 1970s, American climbing was isolated to the mountains and the crags in between. Today, the sport and the profession have infiltrated all 50 states, every major city, and places far from the mountains—like cruise ships. With these expanded boundaries, the breadth of our work can no longer accurately be described by a concept as specific as "guiding," especially when what most American climbing professionals do is "instructing."

It's a distinction that matters. It's hard to accurately summarize one's professional experience, credentials, or skill set without appreciating the difference between guiding and instructing, certified guides and certified instructors, and how AMGA training and credentials meet the calling of these two populations.

The first, most obvious difference involves mountains and the history of mountain guiding. Like the Berg Führer and Guides de Montagne that preceded them, American guides were originally wrought in American mountains. Just as 19th-century European tourists gazed longingly at alpine summits from the vales of Chamonix or Interlocken and hired guides to take them there, American tourists have always hired guides to help them reach American summits. In other words, all guides have an objective goal for every outing: the summit.

For example, when David Weaver hired Tod Bloxham to climb the North Ridge of Mt. Stuart, Wash., last year, he had the summit in mind. Weaver knew he'd have to condition his body and learn new skills. But he didn't seek Bloxham as a physical trainer or a master teacher—Weaver thought of Bloxham, an AMGA Rock and Alpine Guide and Rock Instructor, as an avenue to the summit. As an experienced and credentialed guide, Bloxham represents one of the most effective ways for people like Weaver to achieve an objective goal.

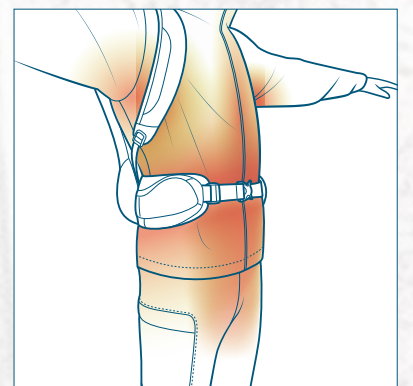
Now, sometimes "the summit" can be a flexible notion. Jim Crosslin likely didn't dream of summiting lowly Windy Peak in Red Rock, Nev., but he did dream of scaling a big climb. With that goal in mind, he hired Tracy Martin, AMGA Rock Guide, SPI, and Rock Instructor, to take him up *Jubilant Song* (III 5.8) this spring. Similarly, ski guides taking clients to powder stashes have inverted the notion of ascending to a summit, and yet their objective goal of a great climb and an inspiring descent have always been the allure for clients.

Conceived of in this way—specific mountain objectives—it's fair to say that there is no guiding outside of America's mountain ranges. There is no »

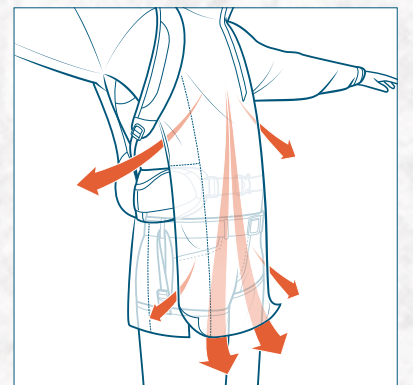


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AMGA ROCK GUIDE NORIE KIZAKI AND
AMGA/IFMGA GUIDES MARC CHAUVIN
AND SILAS ROSSI IN THE FIELD.

PHOTO BY ASHLEY DAVIS TILLY

As we all once did, aspiring
instructors and guides require education,
support, mentorship, and respect.

“guiding” in Florida or Wisconsin or Tennessee or Massachusetts. So what are professionals there doing, if not guiding? Well, they’re instructing.

On America’s single-pitch cliffs, crags, boulder fields, bluffs, and gyms, instructors are introducing Americans to rock climbing in droves, helping clients attain subjective goals. This is where most of today’s mountain education is happening. The instructor is striving to teach, to facilitate, and to introduce the sport, its norms, and its culture. It doesn’t matter how many times a participant makes it to the top, because the top is not the point—climbing is.

Consider Jim Burnett, AMGA SPI in northern Georgia. Burnett has re-certified at the SPI level three times (2008, 2011, and 2014), because he enjoys teaching the climbing merit badge for the Boy Scouts. Burnett views himself as an instructor because he’s working with beginning students, “introducing them to the sport, and hopefully creating an interest in continuing their experience that will ultimately lead students to dream of bigger endeavors”—be those hiring a guide down the road or further instruction before becoming self-sufficient.

Meanwhile, to bring students along, instructors like Burnett are often tasked to assemble multiday skills progressions and curricula for a complex skill set, like traditional lead climbing or improvised rescue. The work emphasizes lesson planning, effective teaching, and optimizing student retention. As Jason Martin, AMGA Rock Guide, Apprentice Alpine Guide, SPI Provider, and director of operations for the American Alpine Institute, puts it, “We usually use ‘instructor’ to indicate that one is actually instructing or teaching a program with a curriculum and learning objectives.” This is not guiding: Getting someone up a 50-foot cliff is not nearly as difficult as instructing them how to do so, and in this respect, instructors perhaps have the more demanding job.

On the flip side, guides tend to work at low ratios—which is demanding in its own right. Working 1:1 is one of the most common arrangements, and »



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the iconic portrait of a guide depicts him or her in the service of a single client. This intimacy and relentlessness mean that every action, decision, and error are more conspicuous, so guides must learn to work under a constant and inescapable pressure compounded by the challenges of the objective. But these low-ratio outings are almost unheard of at crags and climbing walls, where instructors work at 6:1 outdoors or even 20:1 indoors, often in teaching teams and delegating supervision, instruction, and coaching to a cadre of instructors.

GUIDING AND INSTRUCTION ›

Still, for all their differences, the two worlds often overlap. “Every guide does some instruction, and every instructor does some guiding,” says Jason Martin. “The glacier guide commonly teaches crevasse rescue, and the Single Pitch Instructor commonly guides several single-pitch routes throughout a day to meet client expectations.” Markus Jolliff, an AMGA Rock Instructor and SPI Provider/Trainer, echoes the sentiment: “The instructor in me wants to share knowledge so that others can take a leadership role in their experience,” he says, “while the guide in me wants to cover ground, see the scenery, discover around the corner.” Both roles, says Jolliff, share the common ground of adventure, and both speak to how mountain professionals can help their clients learn to step outside their comfort zones. “Being guided and learning climbing sometimes instigate fear, and both lead roles can facilitate how to accept it,” he says.

In fact, some of our profession’s most respected professionals have a foot firmly in both worlds. Consider any given six-month stretch in the life of Marc Chauvin, an American Mountain Guide, former president of the AMGA, and AMGA Instructor Team member. During that period, Chauvin will undoubtedly guide a rock outing on Cannon Cliff, near his home in New Hampshire, and then instruct an AMGA Rock Guide Course on the same cliff the following week. Two months later, he’ll undoubtedly guide a guest up Mount Washington via the Huntington Ravine, and then instruct an avalanche course in Huntington the following day. It’s important to understand why Marc is one of the most revered guides in the profession; neither his credentials as a guide nor his experience as an instructor fully explains Marc Chauvin. He is revered as a »

Before There Were Labels

The words “guide and “instructor” existed long before such certifications. Tom Hargis, American Mountain Guide and owner of Exum Mountain Guides since the early 1970s, was marching students and clients up and down Wyoming vert long before the AMGA was even born, much less before we formally distinguished guiding from instruction. Similarly, Aram Attarian (SPI) was already teaching rock climbing in North Carolina when the AMGA was founded, and trained climbing specialists at the North Carolina Outward Bound School and North Carolina State University well before the AMGA had devised an instructor curriculum or credentials. Thus the AMGA SPI program didn’t train Aram so much as it validated the skills he had already honed. Similarly, there are instructors throughout the United States, like Stuart Cowles (SPI), who have taken AMGA Top Rope Site Manager Courses and Exams every three years until 2008 (when the SPI program was created), and who have taken SPI Assessments every three years since. Cowles opened one of the first climbing gyms in the Southeast more than a decade before the AMGA CWI Program, for which he is currently a licensed provider, was even invented.

Seasoned instructors like Attarian and Cowles are thoughtful educators, trad climbers, and risk managers, and often know more about the nuances of being a teacher than their newly certified counterparts. It therefore would be a woeful oversight to think that these men and women are somehow less worthy of emulation than recently certified Rock Guides.

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AMGA Guide Mark Smiley on
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master, because he is both. Furthermore, in his vernacular, he manages not to conflate the two aspects of his work: “I’m *guiding* on Cannon this week, then I *instruct* a Rock Guide Course next week.” “I’m *guiding* on Mount Washington this week, then I start *teaching* an avi course on Monday.”

Today, with increasing scrutiny on our profession from land managers, legislators, and an American populace that’s increasingly drawn to the outdoors, it’s important to understand that the two terms are not interchangeable, both for those of us within the professions and for the public. An AMGA CWI uses the word “instructor” to represent 20 hours of training and examination, in addition to all his prerequisite/preparatory experience. By contrast, an AMGA Rock Guide (the guide program with the fewest corresponding prerequisite courses) uses the word “guide” to represent more than 400 hours of training and examination, in addition to the years spent trad climbing and training to meet the IV 5.10 movement standard. The level of commitment for becoming a guide is simply much higher.

AMGA-CERTIFIED INSTRUCTORS ›

The AMGA Instructor programs (see “Acronym Soup,” below) were innovated primarily to serve the many climbing professionals who do not necessarily live in the mountains or may never wish to be guides, though these programs are also critical stepping-stones early on in the careers of aspirant guides. »

ACRONYM SOUP: CWI, SPI, AND RI—OH MY!

Most US commercial climbing outings happen in areas not characterized by mountainous terrain—i.e., indoor walls and single-pitch or short multipitch crags. In response to this emergent reality, the AMGA devised the Climbing Wall Instructor (CWI) program and the Single Pitch Instructor (SPI) program, with the Rock Instructor (RI) certification at the pinnacle of both. Today, the CWI, SPI, and RI certifications are the minimum professional credential on the nation’s climbing walls, single-pitch crags, and smaller multipitch crags.

CWI The CWI consists of a 20-hour curriculum with a hefty list of prerequisite skills. It is the only AMGA program in which the exam is not separated from the course. To pass, would-be instructors must demonstrate skills in lesson planning, teaching, supervision, climbing movement, and basic technical skills like knot tying, belaying, and belay takeovers. Some CWIs are credentialed to work only at climbing walls where lead climbing is not offered or taught, while others are credentialed to teach lead climbing. CWIs in top rope facilities must be able to climb 5.8 on top rope; CWIs in a lead facility must be able to lead 5.9. All CWIs must recertify every three years.

SPI Originally devised as the Top Rope Site Manager Program, the AMGA Single Pitch Instructor Course (27 hours) and Assessment (16 hours) address the needs of single-pitch terrain: climbs that do not require intermediate belays, with no significant hazards posed on either the approach or descent. SPIs must be able to onsight 5.6 trad and top rope 5.8. All SPIs must recertify every three years.

RI Sometimes, Apprentice Rock Guides may decide not to matriculate through the rest of the Rock Guide Program, opting instead to take the Rock Instructor Exam (six days). RI certification gives a Rock Instructor credentials to work on routes 3–5 pitches in length, with approaches and descents that are not complex in nature; additionally, an RI must be able to onsight 5.9 trad.



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BAFFIN
LIVING THE BRAND

Alex Schwartz (AMGA SPI) began his instructional career in wilderness therapy, before becoming an Outward Bound instructor. Today, he is assistant director for outdoor adventures at the University of Arizona in Tucson. As Schwartz notes, "Because of [my instructor] training, I'm better able to train novice rock-climbing instructors and introduce people to rock climbing in a safe and positive manner." Instructor-level trainings and credentials have enhanced and professionalized Schwartz's skill set, and that will remain the case even if he never seeks a guide-level credential. Instructors like Schwartz, who spend their entire careers instructing instead of guiding, focus most of their ongoing development into teaching, lesson planning, and becoming intimately familiar with their local crags. Many of them become masterful educators and programmers, and their attention to detail is derived from years of repetition, experimentation, and trial and error.

CWI, SPI, and RI certifications are the most accessible credentials to beginning down the path of becoming a guide.

But instructor programs are also gateways, giving aspiring guides a chance to establish themselves and matriculate into guide-level programs. Many guides either began working in areas without mountains nearby or used instruction as an entry-level job, relying on CWI, SPI, and Rock Instructor (RI) certification as an employment credential—in fact, many employers will not hire instructors without these certifications (or will insist upon training new hires to meet that standard internally). New employees will often spend their early careers shadowing senior guides or instructors and teaching beginner programming and lessons, all while they hone their skills in the mountains.

Consider the path of Azissa Singh, AMGA CWI and SPI, a CWI Assistant Provider, and recently enrolled in an RGC. Singh began teaching climbing for the University of South Carolina as an AMGA CWI, credentials that made her a competitive applicant for employment in mountainous North Carolina. Today, she works for Fox Mountain Guides and Climbing School, and Western Carolina University. Having joined a community of professionals as a certified instructor, Singh can now make a transition into multipitch rock guiding with mentorship from an accredited climbing school, plus enjoy the support of certified peers and access to a wealth of multipitch rock terrain. "The unlimited access I have to the countless experience of seasoned instructors and guides has provided invaluable benefits," Singh says.

Derek DeBruin, AMGA Rock Guide, Rock Instructor, and SPI Provider, is an assistant director of the outdoor program at Weber State University in Ogden, Utah. Today, DeBruin is training instructors to duplicate the path that he himself followed—he began teaching climbing with AMGA SPI training and credentials before matriculating through guide-level programs. "[SPI] is a good standard for student staff/new staff in an institutional setting," DeBruin says. "The curriculum covers the minimum skill set necessary to competently work in single-pitch terrain, and translates readily to multipitch terrain when the time comes." DeBruin also values how SPI training forces students to meet a standard and undergo evaluation, as well as how it provides a common vocabulary for describing, discussing, and adapting techniques.

Simply put, since becoming a guide often involves simultaneously accumulating training, professional experience, and certification, CWI, SPI, and RI certifications are the most accessible credentials for an instructor trying to begin the much longer path to becoming a guide. They are integral stepping-stones on the career path of any mountain professional, and ones I wish I had found earlier on in my roundabout trajectory. «

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TEACHING AND GUIDING IN THE MOUNTAINS

THE RIGHT PARTNERSHIP AT THE RIGHT TIME

By Donny Roth (AMGA Ski Guide)

AMGA ROCK AND ALPINE GUIDE DAWN GLANC KEEPS HER COOL ON A -15 F DAY ON CURTAIN CALL (WI6), TANGLE RIDGE, ICEFIELDS PARKWAY, CANADA.

PHOTO BY DYLAN TAYLOR, AMERICAN MOUNTAIN GUIDE/IFMGA GUIDE

I SPENT NEARLY 15 YEARS TEACHING skiing as a Professional Ski Instructors of America-certified Ski Instructor. My career took me from the Front Range of Colorado to Montana and then the Andes and the Alps, and most recently Colorado's Elk Mountains. With each move, the untouched snow and wild peaks outside the resort became more alluring, the backcountry full of new challenges and rewards. I wanted to share these experiences with my guests. To do so, I would need to get a job as a guide. After seven years of training and apprenticing, I am now an AMGA Ski Guide, based in Crested Butte and spending summers in Chile and occasionally guiding in Canada, Alaska, and Iceland. I love that my work is always in an inspiring, challenging, unmanaged environment; yet, because my guests often need to learn new skills in order to succeed, I still find myself "teaching" on a regular basis. Teaching and guiding are different activities, but they should function in harmony.

It isn't difficult to understand how the different jobs have aligned into a hierarchy of sorts, with a perception of 'guides' being a step above 'instructors.' It simply requires more training and evaluation to become a guide. There are more than 5,000 fully certified ski instructors in the United States, while there are only 126 certified ski guides. The AMGA lists 1654 certified rock instructors (including Climbing Wall and Single Pitch instructors), while there are only 229 certified rock guides. By these measures, guides are more elite. But this doesn't mean the work of an instructor is any less important, and it certainly doesn't mean it's less rewarding—it's just different.

From my experience, the primary difference is the level of risk management required. While both instructors and guides need to operate in the safest environment possible, there are some clear differences. Instructors have more infrastructure to rely on: for example, a ski patrol at the resort, or a tight operating policy at the gym or crag. Much of the risk management has been taken care of at an institutional or management level, which frees instructors up to focus on students' needs. As an instructor, I may have a student who wants to make better short-radius turns so he can ski steeper, tighter terrain. I would begin on terrain that was comfortable, and even when we got to more challenging terrain, I could push him because we didn't need to worry about things like avalanches. Conversely, guides must constantly work to manage risk and mitigate potential hazards. For guides, the environment dictates the plan, whether

or not it aligns with the client's desire. A guest may want to ski the famous "Super C" couloir near Portillo, Chile. To succeed, so much needs to align: The client needs to have the ability, the snow needs to be in condition, and the weather needs to cooperate. It's a special day to get a client up and down the C. As a ski instructor, I was always 100 percent certain I could help someone realize their goal for the day, but as a guide, I am rarely so confident.

Meanwhile, instructors are involved in a *process*, while guides are a catalyst to accomplishing a *goal*. Students typically come to instructors with more intrinsic motivations: to learn something that will benefit them in the long term—e.g., how to ski steeper slopes or how to rock climb. But people hire guides because they want to accomplish a specific goal. They are typically extrinsically motivated—they want to do something they can show their friends back home, like a photo of skiing waist-deep powder or standing on a dramatic summit.

The rewards are different as well. Instructors have the ability to create situations in which students learn and succeed. Most of the time, these are "small" accomplishments like making a parallel turn in steep terrain or learning to climb an off-width crack—experiences that open a door to a new world. Instructors get to see these types of things on a regular basis; they are rewarded with genuine smiles. Guides usually have a much more dramatic risk-versus-reward ratio. They often facilitate grand accomplishments like serving up the "best run" of someone's life or helping them reach a summit. People remember these moments for a lifetime, creating stories to share with friends and family. However, guides also spend a lot of time helping clients through down times of inhospitable conditions—with the waiting that comes with mountain weather. How many days do guides spend tent-bound? How many trips fail because the conditions never permitted an ascent? How often do guides feel the pressure of a closing window of opportunity? I find myself "pushing" into less-than-ideal conditions near the end of a trip if I feel the clients haven't gotten all the reward they came for, and I'm sure guides from the Tetons to the Himalaya can share similar stories.

Because of this dynamic, instructors tend to focus on techniques, and can tailor lessons to students' needs. Picture a day at the crag: The instructor might set up a top rope series that gets progressively more difficult. The focus is on improving technique so the climbs become easier. Instructors consider the »



WE'RE CONSTANTLY PUSHING BOUNDARIES.

Thanks for another inspiring winter. Our team of AMGA & ACMG guides help us challenge and refine our gear to continue expanding possibilities in the backcountry.



students' physical abilities, cognitive capacity, and emotional needs to create individualized lessons, working with analogies, games, and exercises to facilitate progress. But guides gravitate to a tactical approach, working the terrain to find the most suitable conditions. They will choose the line with the most plastic ice or best rock. People come to guides with a particular skill set, and often, a specific objective: The client wants to get up a particular mountain within a narrow time frame and basically asks, "Can you get me there?" The guide must then consider his client and conditions, and choose an appropriate objective. The guide's thought process becomes: How can I do this? or What else might we try today?

Instructors are involved in a *process*,
while guides are a catalyst
to accomplishing a *goal*.

The two jobs should function well together. Our customers need to invest time in learning skills, and they need to be rewarded for hard work. I often get clients seeking untracked snow but who don't have the skills to enjoy it. They struggle in the deep stuff—the very stuff that attracted them. While guiding, I can often share a little trick (like skiing a little more diagonally) or change our tactic (like finding a more forgiving aspect) in order to help them, but they really haven't improved. I often recommend that they spend time with one of my ski-instructor friends at a resort like Bridger Bowl or Telluride to get more mileage in backcountry-like terrain, and then return to me to test out their newly acquired adeptness.

For myself, I enjoy guiding because of the freedom and challenges. I enjoy that I'm not confined to a ski area or crag, but instead have an entire mountain range. Now, every day is a new puzzle. Yet, I often miss teaching. It's rewarding to create environments in which people can learn and master new skills. This brings to mind the proverb "Give a man a fish and he eats for a day; teach a man to fish and he eats for a lifetime."

Yet clearly, the two jobs share common elements—namely, providing a good day for the client—and they are not mutually exclusive. Guides should teach new skills to clients. They should learn about addressing a student's cognitive, emotional, and physical needs. They should build progressions. And instructors should use tactics to change the situation, for example having students downclimb a route, so they can apply new skills to a dynamic environment. Also, instructors can be aware of risk management and share this practice with students so they are more comfortable and ready to learn, and eventually head off on their own.

Which career track you choose ultimately depends on your personality and your career goals. We are all different personalities playing different roles, and we could learn a lot from each other. I am personally thankful I enjoy teaching and guiding equally. I try to spend a little time doing each with my clients. We devote energy to learning new skills, like more efficient techniques for skinning or dealing with variable snow, and then we go apply those skills on our objective. And even though I feel I am a good instructor and ski guide, there are still times when I know my clients will be better served by spending time with a dedicated ski instructor, or maybe an alpine guide in more technical terrain. In the end, our level of certification or the consequences of the terrain we work in are not nearly as important as meeting the guest's needs and expectations by matching him with the right mentor at the right moment. «

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THE GYM-TO-CRAG EVOLUTION

ANOTHER BUSY DAY
AT THE LOWER SLABS,
PAWTUCKAWAY, N.H.,
A POPULAR TEACHING
VENUE FOR NEW CLIMBERS.
PHOTO BY NATE FITCH

HELPING EASE THE TRANSITION TO OUTDOOR CLIMBING

By Nate Fitch (AMGA SPI & CWI Provider)

I'VE RECENTLY HAD THE PLEASURE of working with Ron Funderburke, AMGA Single Pitch Instructor (SPI) Discipline Coordinator, on our book, *Gym to Rock*, due out this summer. Our goal was to help individuals wishing to transition from the gym to real rock. We are both involved with the AMGA instructor programs (Climbing Wall Instructor [CWI] and SPI), and like many of our fellow professionals, have felt a need to crystalize and relay the most important aspects of this transition. The proliferation of gyms and the wave of users looking to go outside present both a threat to the vertical/mountain environment as well as an opportunity to share our professional skills. We should relish the opportunity to help protect our climbing resources even as we help these newcomers enjoy the sport we love.

But, how do we accomplish this? First and foremost, by modeling at the crag. The importance of practicing what we teach is clear when working with clients or

unnecessarily covered by gear. Oftentimes, used athletic tape is shed on the ground—this is of particular concern, because climbers are the only user group around the rocks that uses this tape. (I once spent a day walking around Hueco Tanks, and in no time filled a one-liter Nalgene with discarded tape.) Our role is clear: Instruct belaying and other technical skills to our high standards, emphasize low-impact practices, and pick up your trash and that of others!

Our first climbing outings are among our most rewarding and formative. They can also be some of the most destructive to the individual, the environment, and the climbing community. I'll often see many beginners at a local crag, the Lower Slabs at Pawtuckaway State Park, N.H. This beautiful site has easy access, with ample solid anchor components and a stack of sub-5.9 climbs. Here, a typical group will have a "captain," possibly some "crew," and some "passengers." When the captain and/or crew are untrained, the ship is not seaworthy, and yet the passengers have no idea. This results in all kinds of misadventures at the Lower Slabs and the many crags like it across the country.

students, as well as when recreating. Leading the way when it comes to Leave No Trace, technical practices, risk management, etc. will pass along a strong foundation to others. Second, we accomplish this by encouraging new outdoor climbers to seek the mentorship of experienced climbers or AMGA professionals. AMGA accreditation can be very helpful: AMGA professionals perform a central role in an educational process, one at the core of the CWI and SPI programs.

Climbers are often introduced to our sport through SPI or CWI instructors. We thus need to maintain a high standard across all aspects of these programs, developing professionals to teach, instill, and model the gym-to-rock transition processes. For instance, you only get to teach someone how to belay for the first time *once*. It is therefore key that the best practices be put in place from the get-go.

The most common bad habits I've witnessed from self- or poorly taught climbers center on belaying and terrain impacts. These individuals can display a variety of sloppy belay practices: poor mechanics and stances, ground-anchor misuse or nonuse, etc. And fragile cliff-base terrain is often trampled or

› GYM-TO-ROCK NUTS AND BOLTS

A skills-building progression needs to be based on a strong foundation. As an AMGA instructor, you can incorporate the following steps into your teaching to mentor new climbers.

BUILD AN ETHICAL AND LOGISTICAL FOUNDATION ›

Our first goal is to help new climbers understand their responsibilities in the outdoors. We should thus, before we even shoe up:

- Help them understand and practice Leave No Trace
- Encourage an awareness of and adherence to guidelines put forth by land-management agencies
- Connect them with advocacy organizations (Access Fund, American Alpine Club, AMGA, local climbing organizations, etc.)
- Help them realize the type of crag (toprope, lead-only, multipitch, etc.) and how to smartly access it (bottomless, topless, easy access all-around, etc.)

RECOMMEND A LOGICAL SKILLS-BUILDING PROGRESSION ›

Next, we should encourage climbers to learn technical and movement skills and grow patiently, understanding the essential truth that there is no arrival and no destination, and that, in climbing, the journey is the point. A thoughtful and responsible progression guided by AMGA professionals might move along the following trajectory (the text in *italics* is the student's trajectory, while the plain text that follows offers recommendations for instructors):

- *Climb in the gym with a CWI:* Instruct toprope belaying with an ATC and an assisted-braking device; teach the figure 8 and how to move in vertical terrain. Have fun!
- *Engage with a professional outdoors:* Hire an instructor or guide, or join a professionally led outing. Instruct local-crag and other common best practices. Revisit LNT practices and ethics. Other outcomes: student gains ability to belay and use ground anchor outdoors, and the ability to rappel and move on natural rock. Student sees a high standard of climbing technical skills in action.
- *Get personal gear & toproping. Step 1:* Climb with a mentor or professional. Instruct further knot-craft, how to build and clean anchors, how to navigate cliff environment, and how to deal with emergencies. Client/student should be able to independently do all toprope setup and takedown.
- *Get more gear & toproping. Step 2:* Continue to practice with a mentor or professional. Council these new anchor-builders to make informed purchases of slings, accessory-cord loops, climbing ropes, and carabiners. Encourage the student to take a forward role at the cliff, using his or her own equipment under a competent and watchful eye.
- *Toproping. Step 3:* Climb with equally skilled people. Council these independent toproppers to enjoy themselves, and visit lots of places and explore.
- *Lead climbing. Step 1:* Learn to lead in the gym with a CWI. Instruct how to lead and lead-belay (with ATC and assisted-braking device) in the gym. The gym is a great place to hone fitness, understand fall consequences, and learn how to fall. If your students can't lead here, council them that it is imprudent to try to learn to lead outdoors.
- *Lead climbing. Step 2:* Instruct how to lead sport climbs.
- *Lead climbing. Step 3:* Instruct how to lead traditional climbs. «



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FINDING SUSTAINABLE EMPLOYMENT

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But now: how to make a living? While a lucky few may find year-round employment, most of us must instead juggle a variety of jobs, often in the trades, to make ends meet, especially given the seasonal nature of our work. While there is no broad solution, there are options—ways to find steady work in guiding and instruction that don't limit you to certain seasons only.

By Avi Katz (AMGA SPI and Apprentice Rock Guide)

GUIDE SERVICES >

Many have entry-level instructor positions. These are a great opportunity to refine skills, find mentorship, and get trained. Duration varies based on location and season, but summer is usually the big one.

- > **Intern:** A good option if you lack official training or extensive personal experience. Your stipend may only range from \$100–120/week.
- > **Professional instructor:** The entry-level instructor can expect a wage ranging from \$90–120/day, training, mentorship, and countless hours of top-rope instruction.

CLIMBING GYMS >

Sure, they evoke images of dusty warehouses, kids' parties, and loud techno, but gyms can be goldmines.

- > **Route-setter:** Usually part-time, route-setting is great for anyone interested in climbing movement, and for instructors burned out on high-intensity face time.
- > **Instructor:** Gyms usually offer frequent belay or movement classes. This is a great opportunity to hone your teaching ability. Depending on certifications and experience, pay may range from \$10–20/hour.
- > **Coach:** Train the mutant kids who warm up on your projects. As the American competition world grows, so, too, does the need for coaches.
- > **Summer outdoor instructor:** Some gyms have launched outdoor camps for younger climbers. Single Pitch Instructor (SPI) training may be required.

UNIVERSITIES >

Many universities have flourishing outdoor programs. They generally hire student instructors, but may occasionally hire outside instructors for longer or specialized trips. They may even provide cheap SPI training or work-study programs. These jobs generally pay about \$10/hour.

- > **Outdoor instructor:** Lots of group top-rope and other fun outdoor pursuits. Be prepared to stand your ground with stubborn peers or faculty.
- > **PE instructor:** Some schools offer a PE climbing course for college credit. It helps to have teaching experience and be a Climbing Wall Instructor (CWI).
- > **University climbing gyms:** These offer similar opportunities as commercial climbing gyms.

SUMMER CAMPS >

Some camps focus on top-rope, while others (including Boy Scouts of America) may be more educationally oriented, introducing advanced movement and basic technical skills. Staff is usually paid by a summer contract, roughly \$1,500–3,000.

- > **Climbing/rope-course staff:** Room and board is usually included. Expect long hours of belaying, but being the highlight of the campers' day.
- > **Adventure trippers:** Many camps have overnight hiking or canoeing programs. These are an excellent opportunity to fine-tune group-management skills, lesson planning, and outdoor-skills instruction.

IN CLIMBING INSTRUCTION: A PRIMER

Instructors list their various *métiers* through the years, and give a dash of advice:



STEPHEN ACKLEY

AMGA SPI; Wildland Trekking Co, Ariz. University outdoor instructor and climbing-gym manager, professional SPI, outdoor-education food logistics, and backpacking instructor: "Be willing to work in different fields—don't only set your sights on private instruction."

BILL BJORNSTAD

Colorado Outward Bound School, Colo. Professional climbing instructor, institutional instructor, and outdoor-education instructor: "Contracts allow for guaranteed income, and being flexible and available between contracts will allow mobility."

JENNY MERIAN

AMGA SPI; American Alpine Institute, Wash. Professional climbing instructor, university outdoor instructor, climbing-wall instructor: "Pursue AMGA certifications—for the credibility and legitimacy to continue your development and get hired."

MORGAN MILLER

AMGA CWI Provider & SPI; manager, Vertical World, Wash. Swim instructor, ski instructor, summer-camp climbing and adventure instructor, professional instructor, and climbing-gym manager/instructor: "Dial your personal and instructional skills, and always work on them, with intention."

MATT RAUE

AMGA SPI; manager, The Rock Club, N.Y. Professional instructor, gym manager, coach, and route-setter: "Don't assume that any student is not worth your time. Every single student is a different challenge, and we have to deliver high-level instruction to everyone regardless of their ability."

BEKAH TAYLOR

Outdoor program and aquatics coordinator, Texas A & M, Texas University outdoor instructor, institutional instructor: "Find a mentor who can help you network, refine your goals, and help you work toward them."

MARK WARNER

Acadia Mountain Guides Climbing School, Maine University outdoor instructor, professional instructor: "As long as you enjoy what you're doing more than 50 percent of the time, you're doing pretty good."

SEASONAL OUTDOOR EDUCATION >

While not exclusively climbing based, this work pairs nicely with a seasonal instructional job. Some organizations have busy spring and fall seasons, with programs lasting from 2 to 24 days. Lots of instructors do some serious seasonal dirtbagging, driving coast-to-coast chasing the work, weather, and playtime. Pay ranges from \$60–110/day.

- > **Outdoor-education instructor:** Companies like the Boojum Institute, Crossroads School for Arts & Sciences, or Naturalists at Large provide outdoor intro-level experiential courses.
- > **Institutional instructor:** Companies like the National Outdoor Leadership School and Outward Bound provide a more in-depth experience. It can be competitive to get a foot in the door.
- > **Logistics/support:** Many companies hire support staff with a focus on food or gear. You will learn how to plan, feed, and coordinate trips.

OUTDOOR RETAIL AND RELATED INSTRUCTION >

Working at an REI or EMS pairs well with a high-intensity instructional job. While the pay may range from minimum wage to \$11/hour, you get a solid community, industry discounts, and a predictable schedule.

- > **Outdoor retail/instructor:** Some retailers (like REI) have developed outdoor schools in conjunction with their retail locations.

ROCK INSTRUCTOR TO ROCK GUIDE

After successfully leading a client up *The Diagonal*, a multi-pitch 5.8 on Wall Face Mountain in the Adirondacks of New York, American Mountain Guide/IFMGA guide Jesse Williams prepared for the descent. As usual, he went first and began the 150-foot rappel. However, unlike previous trips, he stopped halfway through and built a temporary anchor. Once established, Williams had his client descend and clip into the anchor. Williams then hopped back on the rope and began descending again.



By James Roh

WILLIAMS HAD GUIDED *THE DIAGONAL*, before, but this new approach, Williams reasoned, would allow him to maintain visual contact with his client and improve communication.

Williams was inspired to reevaluate his tactics on that climb and others after completing the AMGA Rock Guide Program (RGP), which has been running for nearly two decades. The course increased his efficiency by improving skills in belay management, transitions, and complicated descents on longer and more difficult routes. Until then, Williams's Rock Instructor Certification had provided him with ample knowledge to guide single-pitch climbs and straight-forward multi-pitch routes. However, he yearned to progress, and ultimately earn IFMGA certification.

"The RGP gave me a deeper skill set to manage not just more complex terrain, but also to manage terrain that I had guided before, better," Williams says. "It added a lot of value for my clients."

Aspiring IFMGA guide Ray Hughes seconds Williams's assessment: "The biggest thing I took away was managing clients in vertical terrain," Hughes says. "Whether it's their first time out or a seasoned climber, you want to practice in a safe way but [also] move efficiently."

Both certification tracks—Rock Instructor and Rock Guide—begin with the 10-day Rock Guide Course (RGC). For most applications, the Rock Instructor Program provides extensive education to take clients out for a day at grade III or below—a large chunk of the American market. Anything more difficult or technical, however, necessitates Rock Guide certification. Thus, the RGP mandates an additional 10 days for the Advanced Rock Guide and Aspirant Exam (ARGAE), before you take your Rock Guide Exam. This additional study helps aspiring guides learn to take clients up and down more complicated terrain in a safe, timely manner. Course time

is dedicated to becoming proficient at the application of parallel rope techniques, short-rope, advanced technical descents with multiple clients, and so on.

ARGAE courses are offered in spring and fall, at Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area or the Front Range Mountains of Colorado. Due to a high demand and a low student-to-teacher ratio of 3:1, the courses typically fill up months in advance.

While many aspirants are eager to progress in their coursework, Dale Remsberg, AMGA Technical Director, encourages students to focus on improving weaknesses first, before enrolling in the ARGAE. For some, this can take anywhere from six months to several years. Instructors at the end of the initial RGC will note students' shortcomings in a written evaluation; common areas of improvement include physical movement, ropecraft, and risk management. For physical improvement, Remsberg suggests attaining stamina at a fully comprehensive level. This can be achieved by logging mileage on long and demanding routes that are 5.10+/5.11-. For ropecraft and risk management, Remsberg recommends working with mock clients and finding a mentor. Both will be able to provide instant feedback.

Meanwhile, both Hughes and Williams emphasize that a guide's personality is crucial to their success. Clients can range from experienced sport climbers looking to learn trad to climbers tying in for the first time. Regardless, guides must be patient, likeable, and capable of presenting information in a non-intimidating manner.

"There's a lot of things that contribute to being a great guide," Hughes said. "You definitely have to love dealing with people from all walks of life." «

> **JAMES ROH** IS A PHOTOGRAPHER AND WRITER WHO CALLS UTAH'S WASATCH MOUNTAINS HOME.



AMERICAN MOUNTAIN GUIDE/IFMGA GUIDE AND RGP GRADUATE JESSE WILLIAMS TRAINING ON HIS LUNCH HOUR, PETZL INSTITUTE, UTAH.

PHOTO BY JAMES ROH

SINGLE PITCH, NOT SINGLE-MINDED



Spend enough time outdoors, and you begin to see wilderness everywhere. People have always been drawn to the wild, places we as a species had no hand in creating and that remind us of our insignificance, and yet into which we can venture thanks to our adaptability. Single-pitch venues are not these places. They are neither exclusively wild nor ordinary. They are a bit of both.

By Lucas Novak (Colorado Mountain Club Instructor and AMGA SPI)

I GREW UP ON THE EAST COAST, RIDING in our family's Volvo, looking at the roadcuts along the highway thinking, "Could I climb that?" Those imaginations eventually translated to a lifelong devotion to the natural world. I began to imagine wilderness everywhere. In the labyrinth of East Coast highways, I saw flora fighting to reclaim a landscape once theirs, while roadkill represented the faunal casualties. The public narrative labeled these things "weeds" and "pests," as though the infraction were their own fault. We humans do that: give out labels freely so as to distance ourselves relationally. Hell, even in the single-pitch world we have the "crag," with its connotations of the outdoor gym and not natural terrain.

Yet the AMGA does not define single-pitch terrain as wilderness. Intermediate belays are not required; approaches and descents present no route-finding, scrambling, or other obstacles. The crags are instead front-country: the most accessible places to climb, rich teaching venues free of the objective hazards found in the wilderness. They allow folks like my childhood self, urban youth, and vacationing families the opportunity to try something amazing. But the crags can also lure us into a false sense of complacency and, worse, a utilitarian approach. Just like the manipulation of roadcuts, we modify the rock because we see it as "ours." Routes are bolted, polished, and chalked, and at the cliff base, there's litter, de-vegetation, erosion, noise pollution, and crowding.

Our footprint is everywhere.

These, however, are not the ramblings of some dirty hippy. I'm simply trying to understand the relational nature between the natural world and our place in it. In a college ecology course, my professor once stated, "Weeds are not a different species. They are plants growing in places we don't want them to grow." This was the beginning of my re-orientation to the natural world, and it confirmed what I had long suspected: Wilderness is everywhere. I started to recognize the importance of how I relate to nature; I began to wonder in what ways might I be the weed or how I might be introducing to the natural world that which did not belong.

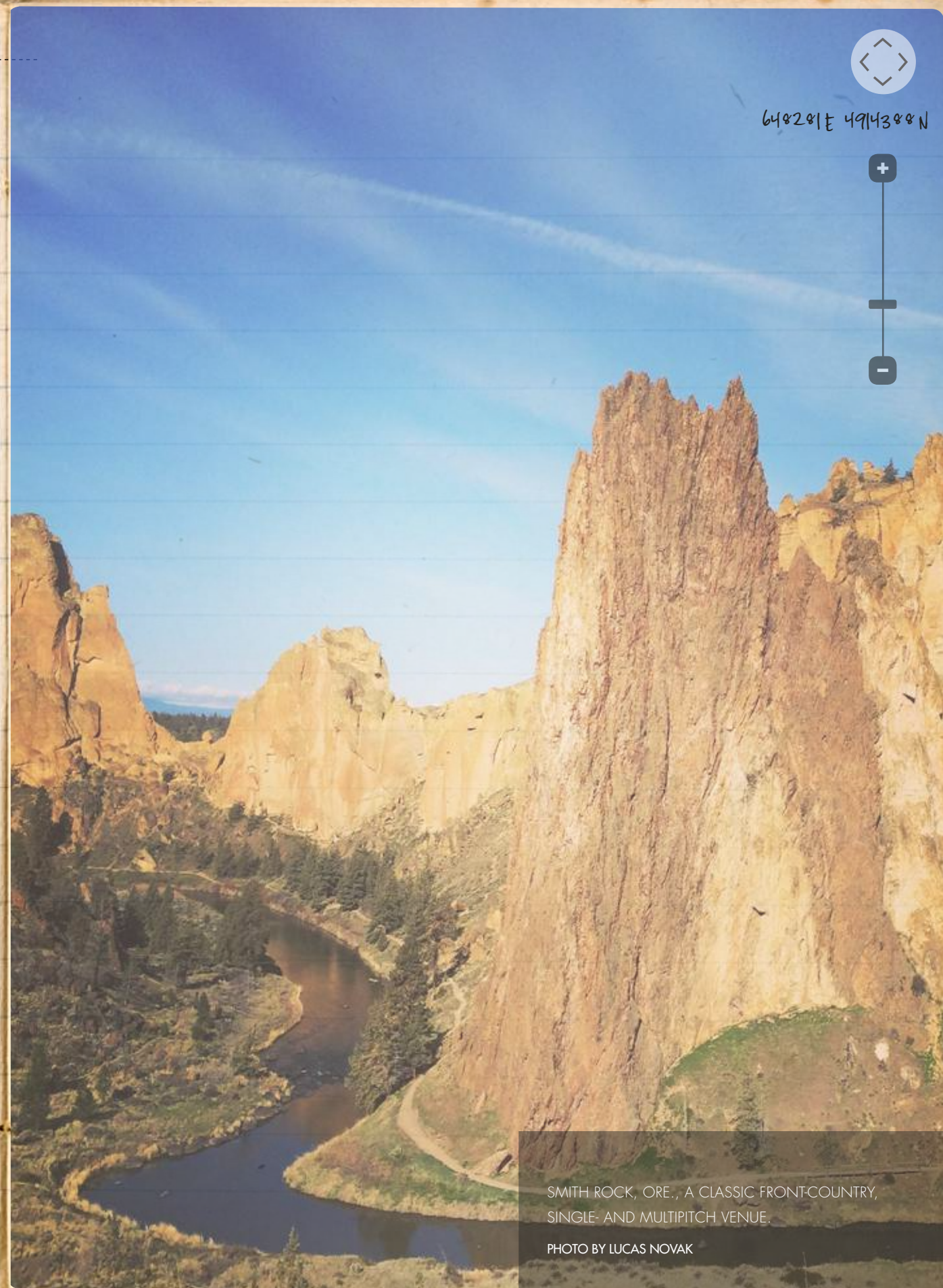
Single-pitch terrain is the liminal space between wilderness and civilization, an entry point into the natural

world that's so often taken for granted. We single-pitch instructors are in a unique position to help aspiring climbers awaken to this fact. On our outings, with the hike and descent so easily managed, there is room for greater education. We can pose questions like: How do you encounter the rock? What do it and its environs look like? And, is this rock here for you or is it just here, and you happen to find it appealing enough to climb?

As role models, we can also encourage our charges to consider flora and fauna. Those little blue flowers in that crack are fighting for their life, and those raptors on that ridge, while we might bemoan nesting closures, have just as much right to raise their offspring in peace as humans. What's more, we instructors can set the example of leaving the crag looking more like terrain, in better shape than when we arrived. We can remind clients that just as partners check each other's safety systems, so too can we check each other's impact. One day, a partner was eating an apple. Then the apple was gone. "Don't worry, I ate all of it," he told me before I could ask. I will climb with him any day.

There is not a more basic human expression of goodness than caring for that which is not your own. And the natural world is not ours; the places we play in are not ours. That we want to keep playing in them for years to come calls us to a higher standard of stewardship, and not just in the wilderness. Anyone who has climbed the roadside Bastille Crack in Eldorado Canyon, Colo., has literally felt years of environmental impact: the rock marbled with boot rubber, the rounded and chalky crack edges. Our impacts add up, especially at the crags. Thus it is on us, the current generation of climbers and teachers, to preserve what we enjoy now for future generations. Take newbies to places on the fringe of civilization, yet not quite wilderness, and there is rich opportunity for cultivating an awareness of the wild around and within. And understanding oneself as existing within—not apart from—the natural world becomes an awareness worth remembering and sharing. «

> **LUCAS NOVAK** IS AN ORDAINED MINISTER IN THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST AND AN AVID OUTDOORSMAN.



648281E 4914388N



SMITH ROCK, ORE., A CLASSIC FRONT-COUNTRY, SINGLE- AND MULTIPITCH VENUE.

PHOTO BY LUCAS NOVAK

CLIENTS AND LEAD BELAYING

As a guide, it's important to be professional, from maintaining client safety to providing the right gear.



Similar to the vetting on a first date, a client will be checking out your equipment: A fuzzy rope and disorganized rack don't scream professionalism. Instead, show up with a neatly coiled newer rope and an organized, clean, and relatively new-looking rack—not a mishmash of gear your pops used back in the day.

By Jonathon Spitzer (American Mountain Guide/IFMGA Guide and AMGA Instructor Team member)

A LONG WITH MY ROPE AND RACK, I always ensure I have the right equipment. For example, on a multi-pitch day, I'll bring more single- and double-length slings for anchors if I'm expecting bolted belays. But when out top-roping, I'll bring two 7mm cordelettes and a couple of heavy-duty lockers. Another key piece of gear is the client's belay device, as this directly relates to guide safety—and as we all know, a guide who manages risk well will provide clients with a successful experience.

I will confess that like most of us, when guiding, I typically consider the climbing to be in the “no-fall” zone. But random things do happen. A hold can break or you can slip off a familiar move. For these reasons, I like to ensure that my client lead-belays me, properly, with an assisted-braking device. To my mind, the Petzl GriGri, Mammut Smart (Smart Alpine), and Edelrid Mega Jul are the best options on the market.

While I use the GriGri quite a bit for my personal climbing, its weight (170 grams for the GriGri 2) and single-strand-only rappelling tend to limit its usefulness when guiding. I also have seen a lot of accidents with GriGris when climbers inadvertently held down the camming device during a fall. The Mammut Smart and Edelrid Mega Jul are relatively simple assisted-braking devices without a camming mechanism, more akin to tube-style options but with more capabilities.

The Mammut Smart weighs in at 135 grams, while the Edelrid Mega Jul is 65 grams; neither adds much additional weight to the rack, and both retail for less than \$50. They do, however, take some getting used to when feeding out slack to the leader, requiring you to hold each device at a particular angle. Patient coaching on your part is essential.

Generally speaking, I will initially do some coaching and demonstration on the ground, followed by climbing up just a few feet so that the client can get real-life experience at close proximity. And when guiding with two clients, I will often utilize my second climber to provide a backup belay, which adds an additional safety component while also keeping that climber engaged. I also have my clients use a large oval or pear round-stock locking carabiner, as it creates extra distance between the brake hand and harness, providing a smoother and more secure belay. Finally, if rappelling will be part of the day, I make sure clients are versant with each device. Ultimately, it's the guide's responsibility to become familiar with these devices, while also being able to teach the associated techniques.

Despite the additional coaching required, I still believe the Smart and the Mega Jul are the best assisted-braking devices on the market, not only for their assisted-braking capabilities but also for their versatility. For example, while rappelling, the devices can be set up to provide added friction on thin ropes or in lieu of a forgotten prusik. Another great feature is that the devices can also be set up as a ratchet at the anchor or off the belay loop, to ascend a fixed line in an emergency.

As the AMGA continues to grow, professionalism will remain an integral component within the industry and beyond. Gear selection, which includes guide safety, is an especially important part of our job. A tidy rope, rack, and a proper belay device will go a long way toward providing client satisfaction, and in return upholding the standards of the AMGA. «

> **JONATHON SPITZER** IS AN AMERICAN MOUNTAIN GUIDE/IFMGA GUIDE IN SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH.



WITH A SECURE BELAY, RACHEL GREENBERG SETS OUT ON AN AIRY TRAVERSE AT PAKLENICA, CROATIA.

PHOTO BY JONATHON SPITZER

JACLYN KUUSINEN

PATAGONIA WOMEN'S SCHOLARSHIP

By Matt Shove (AMGA Rock Instructor and SPI and CWI Provider)

62°14'21" N 109°6'31" W



PATAGONIA SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT
JACLYN KUUSINEN (SPI AND APPRENTICE ROCK GUIDE) ON SCARFACE (5.11C), INDIAN CREEK CANYON, UTAH.
PHOTO BY DOUG SINOR

"Some tips and tricks for instructors: Get comfortable with the silence after asking a question. Don't rush in to fill that space."

PHOTO BY JACLYN KUUSINEN

JACLYN KUUSINEN, RECIPIENT OF THE 2015 Patagonia Women's Scholarship, is a Coloradan to her core—she was born and raised in the state, and today lives in Steamboat Springs. Kuusinen has completed the old AMGA Top Rope Site Manager (TRSM) program and is currently a certified Single Pitch Instructor (SPI). She began climbing at age 12 in an afterschool program near Estes Park, Colo., and began teaching climbing in 2005, as a natural extension of her work as an outdoor educator facilitating backpacking trips at Colorado Mountain College (CMC). Today, as an adjunct instructor at CMC's Steamboat campus, she teaches rock- and ice-climbing programs. She has also worked as a guide for Mica Guides in Alaska, and Southwest Adventure Guides and Rocky Mountain Ventures in Colorado. Kuusinen holds a master's degree in library science and manages a library north of Denver; she is also an avid skier and performs in a cover band with her brothers (also climbers).

Kuusinen's path was clearly defined in 2007 by a former employer: "Get AMGA certified as a Single Pitch Instructor if you want to guide with us." As she went through the TRSM and SPI assessments in 2007, 2009, and again in 2012, she recognized the value in having dialed technical skills, group-management strategies, meta skills, and most importantly, the soft skills to interact positively with students, co-instructors, and the public. Kuusinen often rolls the teachings of her SPI providers (including Amos Whiting, Keith Garvey, and Eli Helmuth) into her pedagogy. By owning her own lessons, she has created an educational style of: demonstrate, provide structured practice, provide feedback/reflection, and then repeat the practice. This structure lets her break down complex topics like belaying into smaller, more manageable pieces that students can easily comprehend.

Kuusinen believes in cementing learning into memory through story, metaphor, repetition, and questioning, connecting larger concepts (such as risk management) with specific lesson components. She'll hold discussions with her students, asking questions like "What does it take to be safe in the cliff environment?" This student-generated list of factors can sometimes be used to segue into a personal story. After climbing, the group reconvenes to review key concepts, and maybe share their experiences. "Some tips and tricks for instructors: Get comfortable with the silence after asking a question. Don't rush in to fill that space," says Kuusinen. "If people feel like they are in a nurturing, nonjudgmental environment, the discomfort [of the silence] pushes them to hopefully make some new connections." She also urges instructors to, instead of answering a question for students, ask another more basic question or series of questions that might lead them toward the answers. Kuusinen also finds reflection to be important, incorporating it into her end-of-the-day recap and debrief.

Learning has always been dear to Kuusinen's heart. During her last SPI reassessment, her instructor encouraged her to complete her résumé for the Rock Guide Course. Kuusinen applied for and was awarded the Patagonia Women's Scholarship in the amount of \$2,500 for her Rock Guide Course in May. Kuusinen hopes to pass on these new skills to her students, and to gain a sound comprehension of what's needed to take students into multi-pitch rock terrain. She also hopes one day to become an SPI Provider like her mentors. «



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K2 BACKSIDE

Fallen Guides

Though we are only halfway through 2015, the year has already proven difficult for guides everywhere. So far, our community has lost three people, and though we as guides know the risks we expose ourselves to, when we lose one of our own, the pain of that death is never softened by this knowledge. Here, we honor our fallen friends Peter Inglis, Mark Miller, and Dave Rosenbarger.

> PLEASE VISIT **AMGA.COM/BULLETIN-SUMMER-2015** TO READ MORE ABOUT THESE FALLEN GUIDES. SHOWN FROM TOP: PETER INGLIS, MARK MILLER, AND DAVE ROSENBERGER.



Guides Establish New Route in Honor of a Fallen Friend

After a series of visits in early January, guides Mark Allen and Chris Wright established a new bolted mixed line on Bear Creek Falls Wall in Telluride, Colo. The pair dedicated their ascent to Eitan Green, a friend and fellow guide. Green, who spent a great deal of time working and climbing around southern Colorado, was killed last summer when an avalanche swept him and five others off Mount Rainier's *Liberty Ridge*. Allen and Wright named their route *Ha Dov* (M8), meaning "The Bear" in Hebrew.

In an email to *Alpinist*, Allen wrote, "[Green] was such a huge part of the winter community here. He was the type of guy [who] leaves a big space in his absence, and I know all of us are missing him."

Splitboarders Break New Trail as AMGA Ski Guides

Following the spring Ski Guide Exams, splitboarders Eric Layton and Brendan Burns have become the first in AMGA history to complete their certifications entirely on a splitboard. See our blog for more.

PHOTOS FROM TOP: ANGELA HAWSE, BILL GRASSE, COURTESY OF PATAGONIA

New Terrain and Supervision Guidelines

A panel comprised of 11 members of the AMGA met in early May near Jackson, Wyo., to discuss needed updates to current terrain and supervision guidelines.

These guidelines exist to clarify and standardize the appropriate working range of terrain types and routes for guides at each step along the different certification tracks, in an effort to ensure that guides do not overextend themselves into terrain for which they are not trained. To further simplify the way in which these guidelines should be viewed and utilized by members and guide services, Terrain and Supervision Guidelines will be given the new designation "Scope of Practice." It is hoped that this change will help ensure training standards across the guiding industry, and that these standards will cover the entire range of terrain types.

The primary goal of these updates will be to define the guidelines such that they may be applied more broadly



AMGA STUDENTS DISCUSSING BEST PRACTICES DURING THE 2014 ANNUAL MEETING, ELDORADO CANYON, COLO. PHOTO BY KARSTEN DELAP

across the entire American guiding industry, and adopted in a manner that will better standardize guiding practices.

Among other changes discussed and agreed upon are plans to create new interim certifications to better support guides who work predominately in ice-cragging or moderate-glacier terrain.

Given the full support of all AMGA board members, these recommendations will be redrafted in a legally sound manner and voted into practice during the annual meeting in October.

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Know The Ropes, a New Initiative by the American Alpine Club

By Nate Smith, PhD (AMGA SPI Provider, Assistant Ski and Alpine Guide, and Apprentice Rock Guide)

The American Alpine Club (AAC) is currently developing a new program that targets recreationalists interested in rock climbing both indoors and out. This program has been coined Know The Ropes (KTR). The intention is to establish a common curriculum and language for single-pitch rock climbing. This program is also supported by the Unione Internationale des Associations d'Alpin (UIAA) in Europe.

KTR was established to address a demonstrated need for commonality among climbers. Climbing gyms have expressed a continued increase in users both new and experienced. Subsequently, more people are transitioning to outdoor climbing, and accident rates appear to be rising, along with frustrations throughout our community. As just one example, crags throughout the Cottonwood canyons outside Salt Lake City, Utah, have seen tremendous growth in use by both new and returning rock-climbing users. The Salt Lake Climbers Alliance



NATE SMITH TEACHING DURING AN AMGA SINGLE PITCH INSTRUCTOR COURSE IN ST. GEORGE, UTAH.
PHOTO BY MOUNTAIN EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT LLC

(SLCA) is feeling this pressure from its member base, and is being asked to provide support through educational initiatives, crag cleanups, and site management (trail building, rebolting, etc.). The SLCA currently supports two educationally focused weekends, including the Access Fund's Rock Project and the AAC's Craggin Classic. The most recent events completely sold out of clinic space, totaling 175+ unique registrations.

Like the SLCA and other local alliances, the AAC has been summoned by its membership to address this issue and create a supportable standard for the fundamentals of rock climbing. This is more common

and/or educator credentialing processes like those provided by the AMGA. Instead, KTR is meant to support certified guides and instructors by providing a universal and peer-reviewed curriculum that can be taught to clients and nonguided recreationalists.

This project is complex and will require a lot of effort, energy, and time. A representative committee, established by AAC Executive Director Phil Powers, has initiated the conversation. This committee includes representation from technical guiding (AMGA), climbing gyms, climbing clubs, and climbing associations (Climbing Wall Association). My role has involved initial coordination of this effort.

This project is complex and will require a lot of effort, energy, and time.

in other countries—for example, France, Spain, and England, with UIAA-accredited training standards at the recreationalist level for Mountain Walking and Trekking (summer), Winter Mountain Walking and Snowshoeing, Sport Climbing (indoor and outdoor), Rock Climbing (leader-placed protection), Ice Climbing, Alpine Climbing, and Ski Mountaineering.

KTR is not intended as a replacement for guiding

Discussions yielded a mutual understanding that a universally accepted belay curriculum was step one. Our committee wrote, reviewed, edited, and considered the curriculum. The next steps will include validation by members of the climbing community, including experienced recreationalists and professionals, after which the AAC intends to produce an instructional video for the community at large. «



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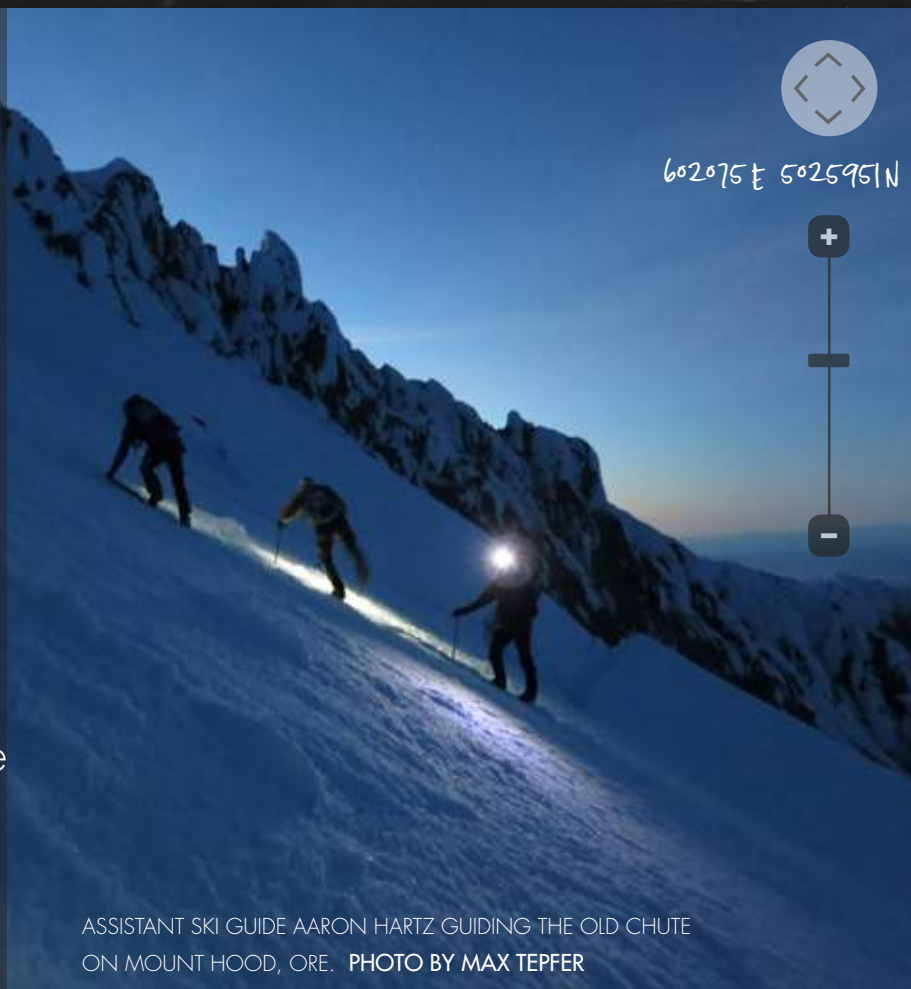
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ASSISTANT SKI GUIDE AARON HARTZ GUIDING THE OLD CHUTE ON MOUNT HOOD, ORE. PHOTO BY MAX TEPPER



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Mikey Schaefer © 2015 Patagonia, Inc.

Defined by the Line

Josh Ewing had a good gig in Salt Lake—a corporate-job income, the comforts of a city, regular climbing partners. Then he moved to Bluff, Utah, where now he scrounges for climbing partners, makes long approaches for chossy rock and has to drive hours to get full-strength beer—all so he could be closer to the remote climbing areas he loved, like Valley of the Gods, Texas Tower and Indian Creek. But after seeing first-hand how aggressive oil and gas extraction and careless visitation were destroying the region, he drew the line. Now every hour he's not out exploring his adopted red-rock country, he's working to defend it.

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— Jonathan Siegrist

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SOUL AND SERVICE: WHY TOPROPE INSTRUCTION MATTERS

I'm bad at guiding many things, but particularly working with first-timers. If, like me, you've been climbing since you were young, and don't toprope-guide often, you're probably bad at it, too. It's just not something we spend that much time considering. Or perhaps we see it as so basic—so obvious—that we don't also stop to ponder how nuanced this type of instruction can be.



By Tico Gangulee (AMGA Rock and Alpine Guide, IFMGA Aspirant, and SPI)

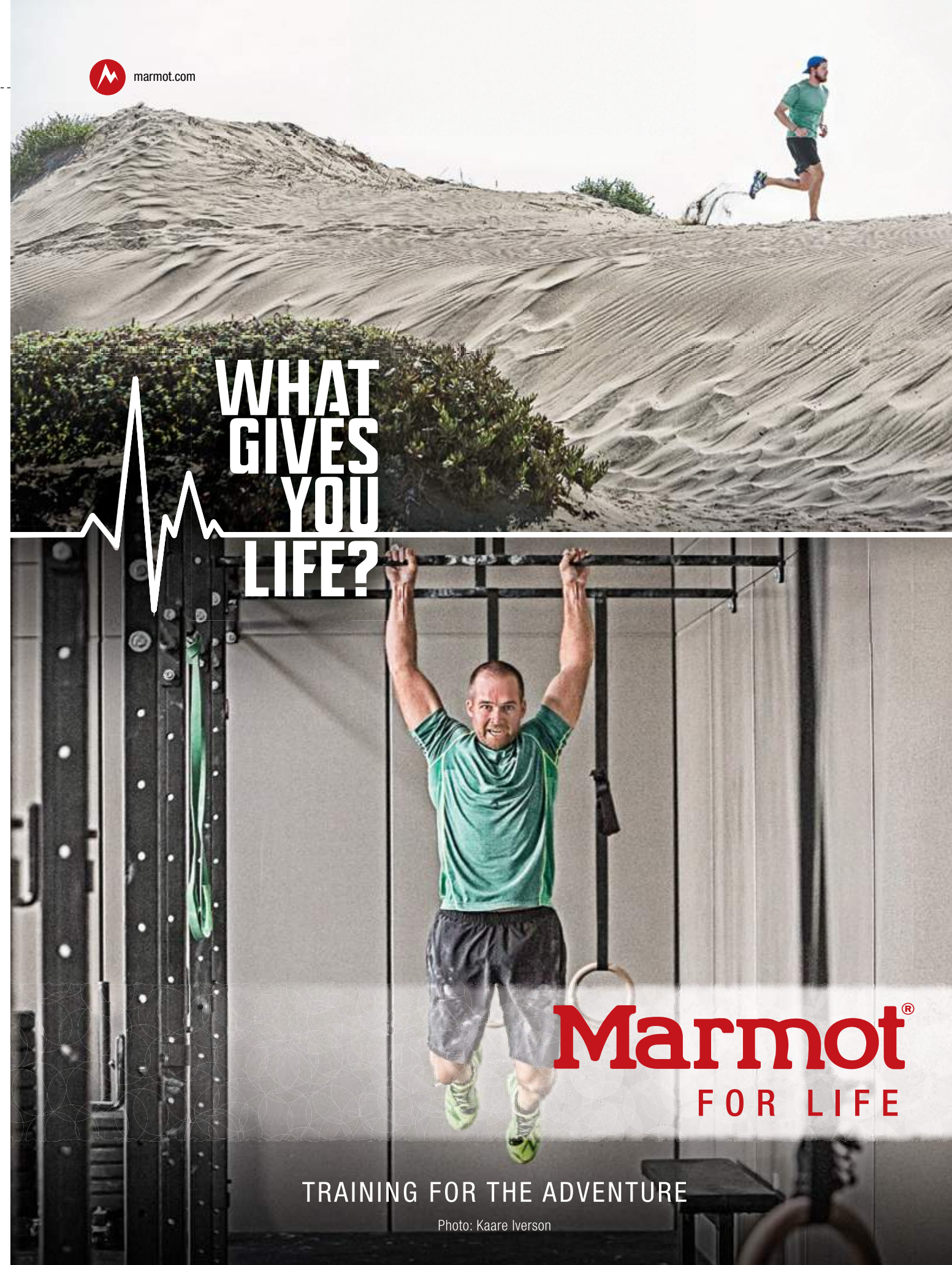
CLIMBING HAS ALWAYS BEEN PART OF my life, and I've never been unable to climb 5.10. Although I have had some mental blocks, I've been fortunate never to have felt the abject, paralyzing fear I often see in clients. I used to find it inexplicable when a client couldn't "Just stand up." I didn't know how to rephrase it to create a breakthrough teachable moment, to unpack the move into, "Weight the big toe, flex the quads, push with your bottom foot." (Unlike climbing, I learned to ski as an adult, and because of this I can be a very effective ski guide. I had instructors specifically trained to instruct movement, so I know the words and moves and progressions that work, beyond "Just lean forward.") I was also bad at hiding my feelings, so clients generally knew how I felt about them. There was a sign in the office of a service I work for that said I was not to guide toprope groups. This was a point of pride for me until recently.

Now, however, I'm trying to rediscover the beginner's mind. Each year I make a goal for my guiding, and generally it's technical (e.g., to effectively short-rope fifth-class terrain) or operational (e.g., don't go to work hungover). This year, I looked at what I consider "difficult"—what I'm bad at. I'm bad at toprope guiding. Frankly, it's challenging to stay positive when you're bored watching somebody flop around on a route you'd barely consider climbing. Perhaps I'm not good at toprope instruction because it feels too repetitive or too "easy"—and nothing easy ever seems worthwhile. But we all love discipline and deprivation—it's how we climb the guiding rungs—and that certainly exists in learning this facet of the craft. Toprope guiding, I've come to realize, is important work. Many IFMGA guides started their careers as a client on a TR day. It's in the realm of possibility that the kid you teach today will be sending the bleeding edge tomorrow. As instructors, we have the opportunity to bring clients to a level they can't presently imagine, to start and nurture them on a lifelong journey.

Like yoga or the campus board, progress for the beginning climber is achieved through gradual and progressive overload—finding and playing the edge of discomfort enough to elicit a positive response, but not pushing so hard that you create trauma. It's crucial to get to know your client, go to the most appropriate venue, and give the proper doses of reassurance and independence with either words or modeling. Often in the toprope arena, how you set the tone for the day is everything: Gaining the client's trust though professionalism allows him or her a pathway around the fear. Many of us haven't learned to properly manage risk and maximize reward, as we do on larger objectives, in the generally static setting of the toprope crag, with fewer hazards but perhaps more nebulous goals for the trip. This type of instruction is much more akin to ski guiding than anything else: The product isn't as discrete as a summit, but is the complex combination of a fun time and the creation of a desire for more in the client.

The soul of guiding is rising to a challenge in the service of the client. Sometimes the service isn't as straightforward as leading runout kitty litter or humping loads in the rain; sometimes the service requires the focus and dedication to take yourself out of the comfort zone in a seemingly "mundane" situation like toprope instruction, as the client has done. A key to longevity in guiding is the ability to act with humility and continuously develop your skills. Once you've decided you know the totality of a discipline, even one as "low level" as toprope instruction, you have begun to fail the client. There is no end to refinement in any facet of our profession—we can use every day of work, any piece of terrain, as an opportunity to walk away as better guides. «

> **TICO GANGULEE** HAS BEEN A MEMBER OF THE AMGA SINCE 2006, AND WORKS PRIMARILY IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST AND SOUTHWESTERN COLORADO.



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