

# GUIDE

## BULLETIN



45° 53' 15.0000" N  
7° 0' 24.9984" E

VINCE ANDERSON:  
SOFT ROCK,  
HEAVY METAL

A ROVING GUIDE  
GATHERS NO MOSS

THE WINDOW MUNTER

THE GUIDING  
LIFE, WITH  
MAJKA BURHARDT





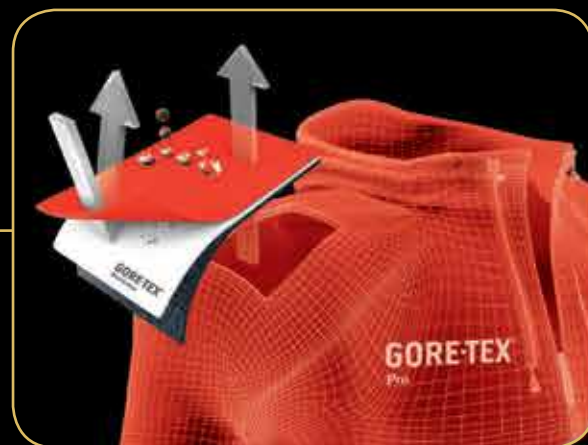
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# GUIDE

## BULLETIN



On the cover: The young client Rhiannon on the Traverse of the Aiguille de Entreves, Chamonix, France, in 2008, when Dylan Taylor guided her and her father across the classic exposed ridge.



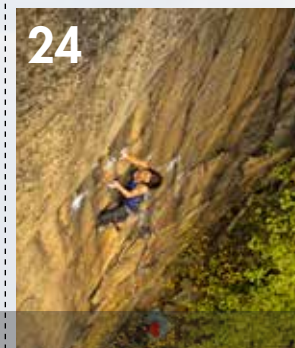
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# GUIDE

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We are bold. We are adventurous. We embody the soul of our sports: guided climbing and skiing. We are the AMGA guides and members, a unique batch of folks who are passionate about outdoor recreation, be it scaling alpine cliffs, skiing the steepest and deepest, or visiting lands only seen by the most pioneer hearted.



By Betsy Winter

**B**UT BENEATH THE DOWN JACKETS, wool base layers, and ice axes, who are we? New information from a 2013 member-based survey sheds light on the nuts and bolts of what constitutes an AMGA guide or member. Some 825 people completed the 61-question survey, and we'll be sharing a few highlights in this, the inaugural issue of our new-and-improved *Guide Bulletin*. Be on the lookout for the AMGA's first annual State of the Guiding Industry Report, to be published in August on our freshly redesigned, more user-friendly and service-oriented website and blog at [amga.com](http://amga.com).

In the meantime, we're giving you more of what you asked for, and we're providing it through in-depth content contributed by our guides, engaging profiles of guides and their businesses, and additional resources

to boost your skill set. In this issue, learn about one of Majka Burhardt's formative guiding experiences in "Cruxes Made Easy" (pg. 34). Get the scoop on why Vince Anderson advocates for a more alpine-style, light-and-fast approach to guiding in "Soft Rock, Heavy Metal" (pg. 7). And check out our Guide Beta section to learn about how to gauge the quality of old bolt and piton placements (pg. 20), and how to use the Window Munter (pg. 22).

Like what you see? Oh, good—we hoped so! Stay tuned for more. We know you go the extra mile for your clients, and so we are committed to doing the same for you.

If you would like to contribute stories, photos, guide tips, or letters to the editor, please contact Editor Lizzy Scully at [editor@amga.com](mailto:editor@amga.com), or contact me directly at [betsy@amga.com](mailto:betsy@amga.com). «

JEAN SPENCER IN BOULDER  
 CANYON, COLORADO.

PHOTOS BY ASHLEY DAVIS TILLY

39° 59' 58.2432" N, 105° 24' 46.8864" W





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MOUNTAIN GUIDING

By Chris Barlow

# SOFT ROCK, HEAVY METAL

**I**N MARCH 2008, Vince Anderson and Steve House climbed a mostly new route up the infamous North Face of Mount Alberta, in full winter conditions. They spent numerous hours breaking trail on skis, climbed hundreds of meters of dangerous snow and mixed terrain, and endured a five-hour bivy atop a small snow mushroom. The climbers then faced a taxing descent down a complexly corniced ridge, which left them in the wrong gully and with a difficult choice: to continue descending unknown terrain in the dark or bivy another night with little food and sleeping bags frozen flat. In a trip report in *Alpinist*, Anderson wrote, “We decided to stay put and shiver through it. It was miserable.”

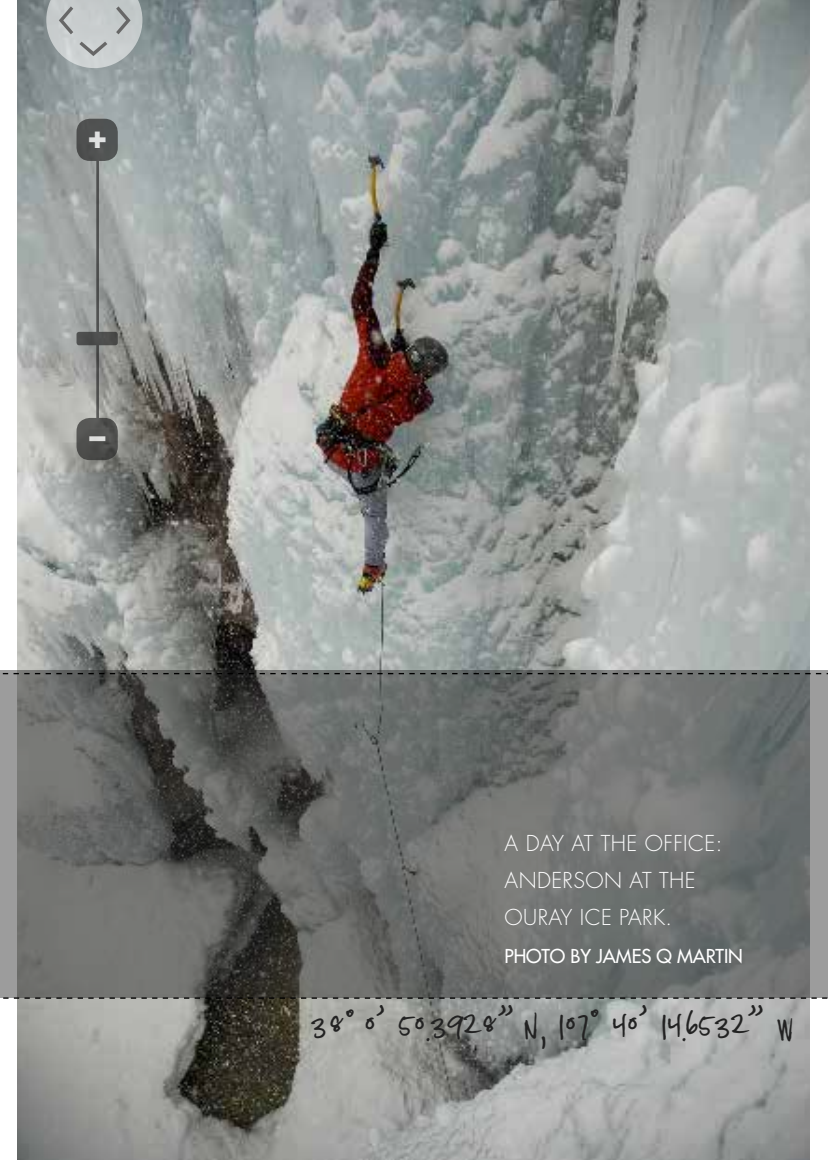
Fast-and-light alpinism, Anderson’s “preferred climbing elixir,” requires a high tolerance for adversity. Anderson has climbed numerous remote, difficult, and very cold peaks around the world, including the first ascent of the Rupal Face of Nanga Parbat. For this climb, he and House were the first North Americans awarded the prestigious Piolet d’Or. To put a point on it, Anderson doesn’t just tolerate adversity; he embraces it. So when he says the bivy on Mount Alberta was “miserable,” you know the situation was grim.

Anderson is an IFMGA/AMGA Mountain Guide and, with House, also an IFMGA/AMGA Mountain Guide, operates Skyward Mountaineering, a small guide

service based in western Colorado. Skyward specializes in custom trips to off-the-beaten track destinations like the Black Canyon of the Gunnison and more well-known areas such as the Ouray Ice Park, as well as private expeditions to peaks in the world’s great ranges.

The experience Anderson offers his clients differs in magnitude but not much in quality from his own trips into the mountains. As he puts it, “Alpinism is my religion, and the mountains my church. When I take people there, I feel obligated to share with them a view toward climbing that counts ethics, courage, and aesthetics among its virtues. The fact that alpinism is a discipline of virtue is something that makes it quite special among leisure sporting activities, and something that is best learned through example.” Accordingly, Anderson leads his clients through an apprenticeship of ascents that ramp up in difficulty and commitment level. When designing a trip with a client, Anderson aims to find a “sweet spot” of challenge, one in which the client experiences the true spirit of alpinism: adventure, the unknown, the possibility for failure, and building a strong partnership.

With a guiding career spanning nearly 20 years, a



A DAY AT THE OFFICE:  
ANDERSON AT THE  
OURAY ICE PARK.  
PHOTO BY JAMES Q MARTIN

38° 0' 50.3928" N, 107° 40' 14.6532" W





# EQUIPMENT FOR CHOSS ENCOUNTERS

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decade on the cutting edge of alpinism, and a lifetime in the mountains, Anderson offers a distinct, and sometimes controversial, perspective on style and the meaning of climbing. The AMGA recently had a chance to dig deeper into his perspective on climbing, guiding, and his inclination toward heavy metal (check out the videos under “Cool Stuff” at the Skyward website).

**AMGA:** *You grew up in the mountains and started climbing at an early age. How did that recreational pursuit evolve into a professional one?*

**VINCE ANDERSON:** My initial attraction to becoming a guide was simply to find a full-time way to enable my climbing and skiing habit. When I was four or so, my parents took me up the Devil’s Head mountain on the Front Range. On top, there is a fire lookout that you can hike up to and go inside. On the way up, I asked, ‘Who lives there?’ My parents replied, ‘The mountain man.’

My mother kept a children’s journal for me. Where it asked, ‘What do you want to be when you grow up?’ I wrote down, ‘The Mountain Man.’ So I guess I’ve wanted a career in the mountains for quite some time.

*You’re a very accomplished guide as well as an elite climber. How do these two pursuits support or conflict with each other?*

The better a climber one is, the better one is prepared for many (though, certainly not all) of the technical challenges involved in guiding: you move efficiently and smoothly and can ‘stay within yourself’ when working. By that, I mean the types of routes you’re likely to guide will be well within your abilities. You can focus more of your energy and attention on guiding-specific details like your client’s comfort and well-being. It is, however, difficult to dedicate the time necessary to being a full-fledged professional climber when guiding a lot. You end up tired from work and cannot do as much focused training. You can, though, use guiding for low-end, longer, aerobic-type workouts, and factor that into your training plans.

Of course, in my opinion, the body is rarely the weak link for people training for alpinism; the mind is. Guiding can offer a lot of opportunity to expand your mental muscular threshold. You can go into environments with which you are less familiar and where you have to make decisions on your own regarding the safety of and success or failure of the outing. Unlike climbing with an equal partner, your clients usually cannot help you with these decisions, so you’re forced to think hard about them.

*Tell me about the history of Skyward Mountaineering—what inspired you two to start the company, and how do you see it growing?*

Early in my guiding career (the mid-90s), I wanted to get better at ice climbing. At the time, Ouray seemed to be the place to go, so I went there. I knew there were some guiding opportunities, but not many. I had a hard time getting work with local guide services; there just wasn’t that much regular guiding work. So I decided to start my own service, market it, and see if I could get business on my own. I never started out wanting to create the next big thing. I just wanted to offer personalized, custom climbing and skiing outings to people. To a large extent, that’s what I’m still doing. Most trips are custom, and the majority of my client base is repeat customers who I’ve developed a relationship with over time.

*What kind of experience do you offer your clients? What do you hope they’ll get out of a trip?*

I strive to personalize their experience to [meet] their needs and desires. I know that most people come to climbing through a desire for adventure. They’re hiring a guide for many reasons, often because they want someone else making the important decisions or are unable or unwilling to lead securely. I like to get a sense of how they feel and perform, and then push them a little—sometimes more than a little—out of their comfort zone to a place of vulner-

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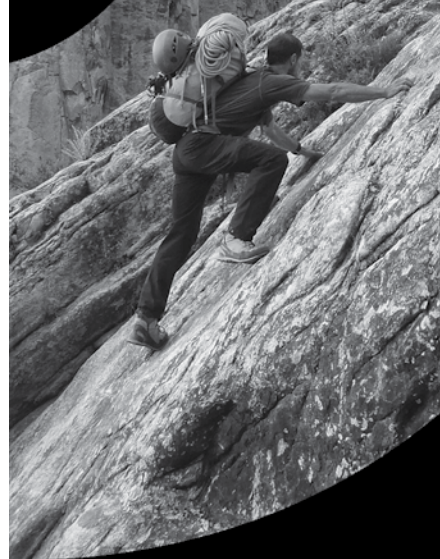
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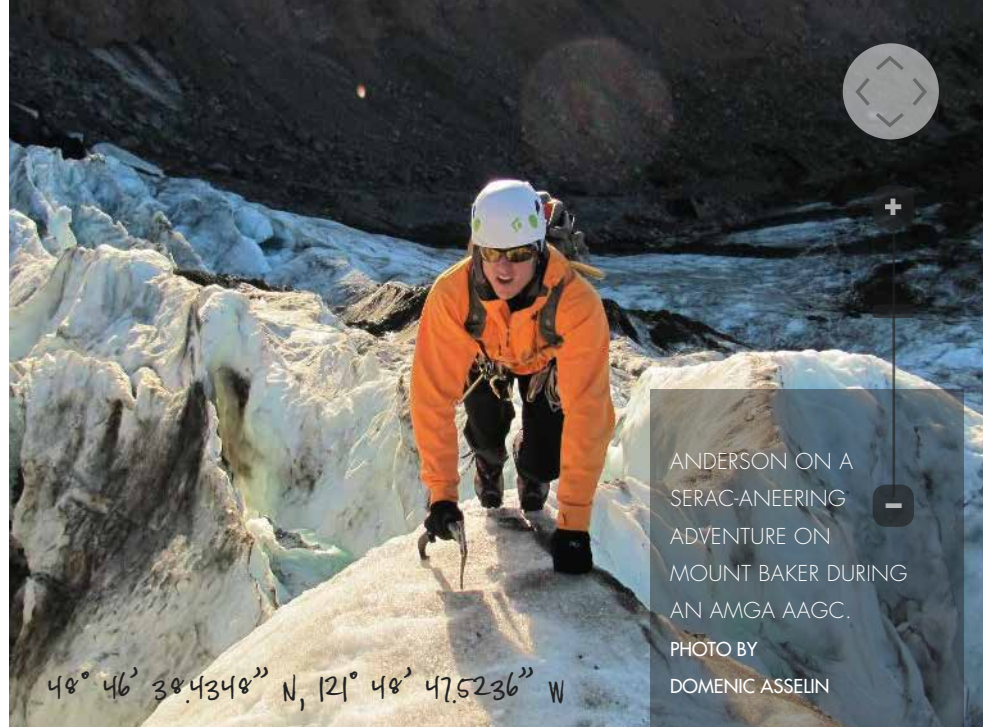
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ability. It's a delicate game, though. I find with judicious attention to the individual and their stress indicators, you can do this in a way that lets them grow tremendously from the experience and come away with a true sense of what I think alpinism is all about: adventure/risk, trust, partnership, and respect. I want them to feel as if they've shared the rope with me as a real partner as well as feel rewarded by the challenges of a climb.

*What do you see as your niche in the guiding industry?*

It has been and still is predominantly custom trips to alpine classics for individual clients.

*What other niche opportunities do you see in the guiding world?*

I see guiding high-altitude peaks becoming more and more in vogue. It would be great to see someone developing a niche of doing so in 'good style,' though I won't get too much into what I consider that to be. You can probably guess, though: training someone to ascend the ladder of apprenticeship that leads to climbing something like Everest without excessive porter support, fixed ropes, or artificial oxygen. That would be a cool niche, but it would be hard to convince the typical Everest client to actually serve a more lengthy apprenticeship prior to embarking on a climb there....

Still, I'd like to think that there are people who actually want to 'climb' mountains like Everest instead of ascend them in the way that's commonly done now. You could easily take this same approach to Mount McKinley. Perhaps a lightweight expedition with a high camp at 14,000 feet, acclimatizing properly and climbing to the summit from there, and avoiding the fixed ropes. Basically, I see doing the same objectives, but doing so in a style that represents the modern state of the art in alpine climbing.

*You like big mountains and heavy metal. Do you have a softer side?*

I really like climbing soft sandstone and other crumbly rock! I think Americans have way too low a tolerance for less-than-perfect rock.

Probably as a result of my OCD attitude toward training, I got way into nutrition, and that has spawned a great interest in culinary arts. I love cooking and enjoying good food at home. I guess that is softer. I love heavy metal, but really it's because I'm a riff freak, and riffs live on in today's music mostly through heavy metal. That being said, I can get into just about any music with a good guitar riff, which often leads to playing stuff like Fleetwood Mac or even Journey on my turntable. Besides, my wife doesn't do the hard stuff. «

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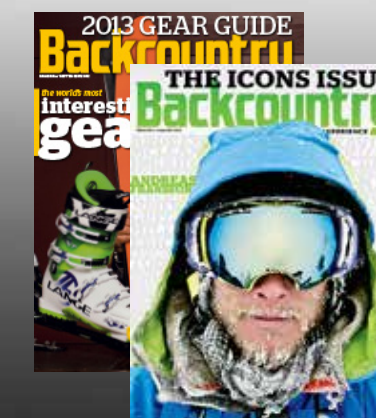
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# A ROVING GUIDE GATHERS NO MOSS

FROM VAGABOND TO LOCAL EXPERT, THE GUIDING LIFE IN PERSPECTIVE

CLIENTS TAKING THE  
EXPOSED FIRST STEPS ONTO  
THE "AUTOBAHN" BELOW  
DENALI PASS (18,200 FEET),  
DENALI, ALASKA.

63° 49' 32.5812" N, -149° 43' 54.4188" W

**M**OST GUIDES FALL INTO ONE OF two camps, each at either end of the spectrum. The first group prefers to remain comfortably on their home turf, dialing in the local terrain, using their intimate knowledge of it to create the most efficient and effective outdoor experience for their clients. No matter the weather, the snowpack, or the idiosyncrasies of their group, these guides know exactly which routes to do, and which will be most rewarding on any given day. They work with a smaller

*Story & Photos by Dylan Taylor*





46° 3' 27.1004" N, 7° 23' 38.0580" E

LAC DE DIX, SWITZERLAND, ALONG THE  
HAUTE ROUTE AS SEEN FROM THE COL  
DES ROUX, APRIL 2010.

canvas yet maximize the experience they deliver by knowing their environment so well. If you're a visiting guide, these are the people to call for beta. But be forewarned: some of these folks can grow a little complacent if they use their local knowledge as a crutch too often.

**T**HE SECOND GROUP COMPRISES chronic wanderers and vagabonds. These guides often live in trucks or vans, usually with out-of-state plates. They go through a steep

I learned how to avoid most problems, or at least to “MacGyver” my way out of the ones I couldn’t sidestep.

learning curve in each new work environment, but they’re addicted to the process. These guides spend a few weeks, months, or maybe even a couple of years as rookies before passing a comfort-level threshold at which the urge to move on arises. Members of this group rarely grow complacent, because by the time they begin feeling comfortable with an area they’ve already made plans to guest-guide on the other side of the continent.

I once fell into the second group, but I’m sure we all share characteristics from both. I spent a few years learning the trade in the North Cascades, and just as I started to scratch the surface of the range, decided to shake it up and try expedition-guiding in Alaska. I schlepped my way up and down Denali twice in 2002. One year later, my co-guide Brian Eckerling and I were excavating our camp from beneath avalanche debris on the West Rib. It was a

grey hair-growing experience, and I decided not to make a habit of it so—*Whoosh!*—I was off to Bolivia to breathe aerosolized lama dung at 20,000 feet while attempting to parlay my nascent expedition-guiding skills into meeting the logistical challenges of navigating a developing nation whose first language is Aymara.

In 2005, I committed myself to following the AMGA training process to its ultimate conclusion: IFMGA certification. I learned a lot and became safer, faster, and more efficient, but the biggest thing I took away was the ability to engineer the necessary techniques in any guiding situation. In other words, I learned how to avoid most problems, or at least to “MacGyver” my way out of the ones I couldn’t sidestep.

I was a geologist before I was a guide, and so had to suppress my inner rock geek during my first few





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years of guiding. In 2008, I took a job as a field safety instructor for the US Antarctic Program at McMurdo Station. The job entailed survival-course instruction, search and rescue training, sea-ice monitoring, and risk management for groups of scientists. I watched penguins jump out of the sea to escape pursuing orcas as I peed into a bottle (leave no trace!) next to an idling tracked vehicle spewing diesel exhaust. It was the most blue-collar, redneck, brown-cloud, save-the-world-from-us-humans green job I could have imagined, and I loved it. The only thing I loved more was going freelance the following season, working directly for science groups that needed a “field mountaineer.” I held their hand through the McMurdo Logistics Labyrinth and field-planning process, and mapped out our food and equipment allocation. I accompanied them on month-long scientific expeditions to the most remote and spectacular mountains on the planet. I found my calling down there: I was paid to manage risk in a way for which only a decade of guiding and training could have prepared me.

I still choose to expose myself to new situations and work environments that will challenge my existing skill set, and that force me to adopt new skills and new ways of thinking. I’m convinced that for many guides, complacency kills. New challenges keep us fresh, sharp, learning, and alive. I’m always on the lookout for situations in which I’ve become too

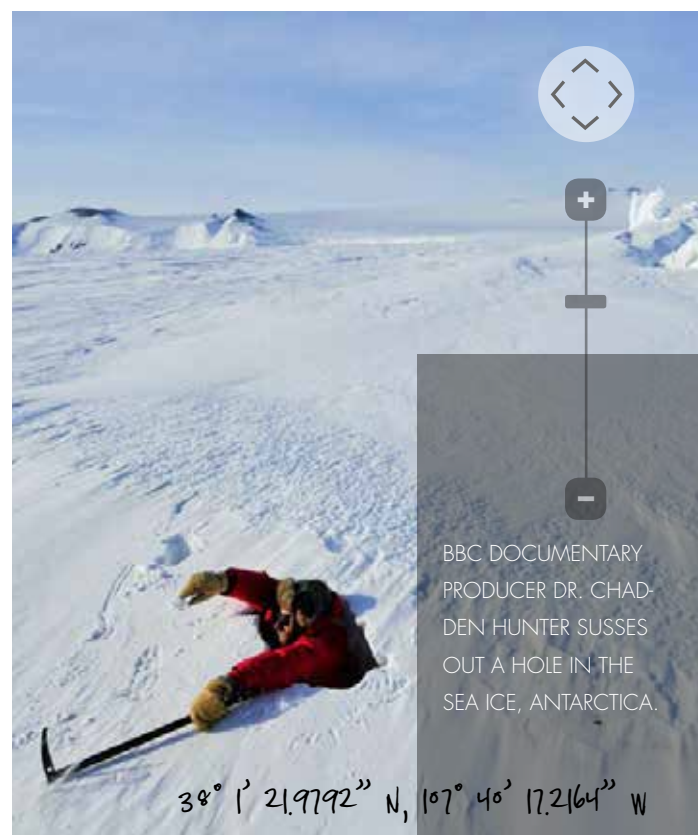


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TWO CLIENTS ON  
THE QUIET, RARELY  
TRODDEN VOLCANO  
OF ANTISANA,  
ECUADOR, 2005.

0° 30' 0.0000" S, 78° 1' 59.9988" W

at ease; but neither do I want to pick up and move every time I'm feeling too comfortable. I'm getting older, and moving around all the time is exhausting. I think many of us who guide will, over time, migrate from the "vagabond group" to the "local experts group"—especially when we find contentment guiding in our own backyard, by devising clever ways to keep the work environment fresh. We need a solid foundation of experience and education as well as the occasional set of fresh eyes to shake things up and to remind us how little we know about our local environment, even if we've been there for decades. «

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# BOLTS AND PINS

With 43 years guiding in the world's great ranges, Exum Senior Guide and IFMGA/AMGA-certified legend Tom Hargis is also the only American to summit Gasherbrum IV. The 2004 recipient of the AMGA Lifetime Achievement in Guiding Award, Hargis here presents his expertise about fixed protection—how it works and how to evaluate in situ pieces, from the good to the bad to the ugly.

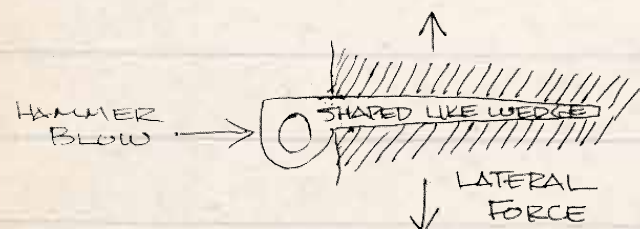


By Tom Hargis

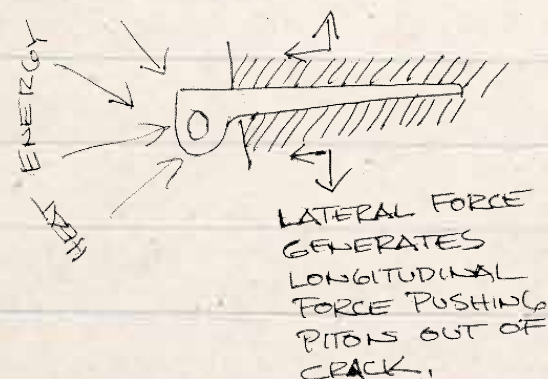
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## FIXED BOLTS & PITONS

WHEN CLIMBING AS GUIDES WE OFTEN COME ACROSS FIXED GEAR. IN GENERAL THIS TAKES THE FORM OF BOLTS OR PITONS. WHAT WE DON'T KNOW IS THE HISTORY OF THESE ITEMS. PITONS CAN NEVER BE TRUSTED UNLESS WE HAVE A HAMMER HANDY TO TEST THEM. WHAT HOLDS A PITON OR BOLT IN PLACE IS FRICTION.

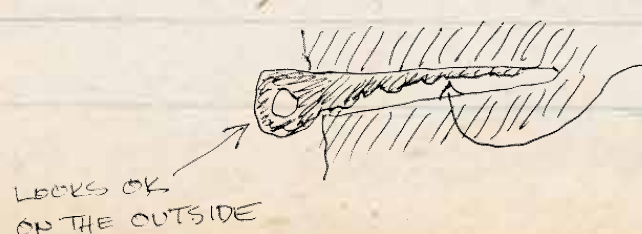


THE GREATER THE LATERAL FORCE THE GREATER THE FRICTIONAL FORCE HOLDING THE PITON IN PLACE.



AS A FIXED PITON HEATS UP THE STEEL IT IS COMPOSED OF EXPANDS, I.E., HEAT ENERGY IS CONVERTED TO MECHANICAL ENERGY. THE CRACK CANNOT ACCOMMODATE THE EXPANSION, SO THE WEDGING PRINCIPLE STARTS WORKING IN REVERSE TO PUSH PITON OUT OF CRACK.

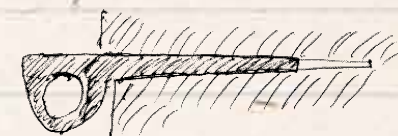
AS THE AMBIENT TEMPERATURE DROPS THE STEEL THE PITON IS COMPOSED OF BEGINS TO SHRINK & CONTRACT. THE RESULT OF THIS PROCESS IS THAT THE PITON LOOSENS. PITONS BEING PRIMARILY COMPOSED OF IRON WILL CORRODE OVER TIME WHEN EXPOSED TO AIR AND WATER. AS PITON RUST (FORM IRON OXIDE) THEY DEGRADE AND WEAKEN.



HALF THIS PITON HAS RUSTED AWAY DUE TO CORROSION.

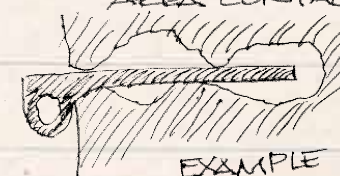
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WHEN PLACING PITONS AN IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION IS THAT JUST AS WITH A STOPPER OR HEX TWO SIDES OF THE PITON ARE IN CONTACT WITH THE ROCK. IDEALLY IN A PERFECT WORLD 100% OF THE TWO SURFACES WOULD BE IN CONTACT WITH THE ROCK.

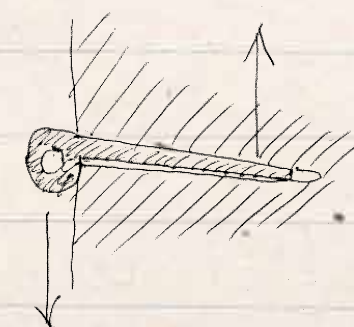


IDEAL PITON PLACEMENT

FRICTIONAL FORCE HOLDING PITON IN PLACE IS PROPORTIONAL TO EXTENT OF SURFACE AREA CONTACT.



EXAMPLE OF POOR PLACEMENT



IF A PITON IS PLACED IN A HORIZONTAL CRACK LIKE THIS EVEN IF IT IS SLIGHTLY LOOSE YOU GET THE BENEFIT OF A CAMMING EFFECT.

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# ELAINA ARENZ

38° 1' 21.9792" N, 107° 40' 17.2164" W



ELAINA ARENZ CLIMBING LEAVE IT TO JESUS, 5.11C. ARENZ IS APPEARING IN CHRIS NOBLE'S NEW BOOK, *WOMEN WHO DARE: NORTH AMERICA'S MOST INSPIRING WOMEN CLIMBERS*, TO BE PUBLISHED BY GLOBE PEQUOT PRESS NOVEMBER 2013. PHOTO BY CHRIS NOBLE

"While many things in life are elusive, in climbing, you can actually see some measureable growth, both personally and physically. It feels great to help people discover that."

## A PROFILE OF THIS YEAR'S FIVE TEN SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT *By Lizzy Scully*

**A** LUCKY FEW PEOPLE SEEM TO ALWAYS be smiling—warmly, openly, and with infectious happiness. One of those people is Elaina Arenz, a West Virginia climber and guide who's always grinning big, be it in magazine photos, on her sponsors' websites, or while organizing and running major events at her home crag, the New River Gorge. Hire her to take you crack climbing or attend her Sterling Rope Women's Weekend, and Arenz's beaming smile sets the stage for a simultaneously laid-back and cheerful afternoon.

After nearly two decades of climbing, operating a flourishing guide service, and extensive international travel, Arenz has a lot to be happy about. Most notably, she recently received the 2013 Five Ten Scholarship, which will pay \$1000 toward her next AMGA Rock Guide Course. The scholarship comes at a good time, Arenz says. She aspires to guide in other parts of the country and expand her local business, New River Mountain Guides. The scholarship offers her the opportunity to enrich her skill set.

"I get so much out of these courses," she says. "The first AMGA course I ever took was a top rope site-manager course. I thought, 'What the hell am I going to learn about top roping?' But in reality, she learned a lot.

"The cool thing about climbing is you're never done learning," Arenz explains. "Things change and evolve, so you always have the opportunity to learn. The AMGA is a great place to go to challenge and question what you think you know, and help you learn and grow through that."

Plus, AMGA courses give her the chance to connect to peers outside her local network. "People are doing things in other places, and you never know what you might be missing out on," she says.

Arenz started climbing in 1993. "Climbing was the first thing that really spoke to me," she says. "The lifestyle really attracted me. I love spending time outdoors with friends, traveling, challenging myself, and problem-solving. I was never good at organized sports. I never stuck with anything." Over time, Arenz gravitated toward guiding as a career.

"Climbing helps people break through barriers in their lives," she says. "It gives people a sense of accomplishment. While many things in life are elusive, in climbing, you can actually see some measureable growth, both personally and physically. It feels great to help people discover that."



Arenz organizes various events, including her guide service's signature event, the New River Rendezvous. She is an AMGA Certified Rock Instructor and a member of the Single Pitch Instructor Provider Pool. She is also a Warrior's Way Certified Trainer. For more information, visit her website at [newriverclimbing.com](http://newriverclimbing.com). «

tenaya

# FALL 2013

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## State of the Guiding Industry Report

We're excited to present our first annual State of the Guiding Industry Report. An analysis of 61 questions answered by 825 of our 2,606 members revealed a slew of interesting facts and perceptions around guiding, and will help us better serve our members. For example, did you know that guides are three times more likely than the average American to be college educated, but are less likely to own a home? Or that despite the median guiding wage of \$126–\$200 per



day, three-fourths of respondents still take another job? Or that last year AMGA guides alone spent \$3.6 million on guide-related gear and clothing? Overall, the best news was the positive feelings respondents had for the AMGA and for the industry's future. For an in-depth analysis, visit [amga.com](http://amga.com).

## IFMGA/AMGA Guide Interviewed in 5280



In its May 2013 issue, the magazine *5280* featured Marmot and GORE-TEX brand athlete Angela Hawse in the article "Risky Business." The article details various careers that "might make you love your nine-to-five desk job just a little bit more" and focuses on Hawse's job as a heli-

ski guide. (Also included: wildland firefighting, rockfall management, and ranching.) Hawse told us in a recent email that she thinks the publicity from the article puts the guiding community in a positive light.

"Your typical Joe Public doesn't know guiding is a profession," Hawse says. And, they don't necessarily understand that risk management is a guide's No. 1 priority at all times. "*5280* did a good job of explaining how the risk is managed in my particular case, which gives credibility and accountability to the work."

To read the full article, visit [www.5280.com/magazine](http://www.5280.com/magazine). And to read more about Angela's thoughts on risk and the guide career path, visit our blog.

## The Wright Moves: A New FA on the Moose's Tooth

"I would be lying if I said it wasn't the hardest thing I've done in the mountains," says Certified AMGA Rock and Alpine guide Chris Wright of his new route on the Moose's Tooth, Terror (4921 feet; VI WI6 M7 R/X A2). "The memory is fading just a little bit now, receding into, 'That was like fun.' But it was full-on. That first day was a beast. The whole thing ended up being sheer terror from the beginning to the end. A lot of it was pretty heady."

Wright climbed the route with Scott Adamson, who, just days before, had climbed another first free ascent, NWS (4593 feet; V A16 M5), also on the Moose's Tooth. Wright had originally starting climbing with Geoff Unger, making an unsuccessful attempt on a poorly protected ice line. Unfortunately, Unger's elbow injury precluded another attempt, so Wright partnered

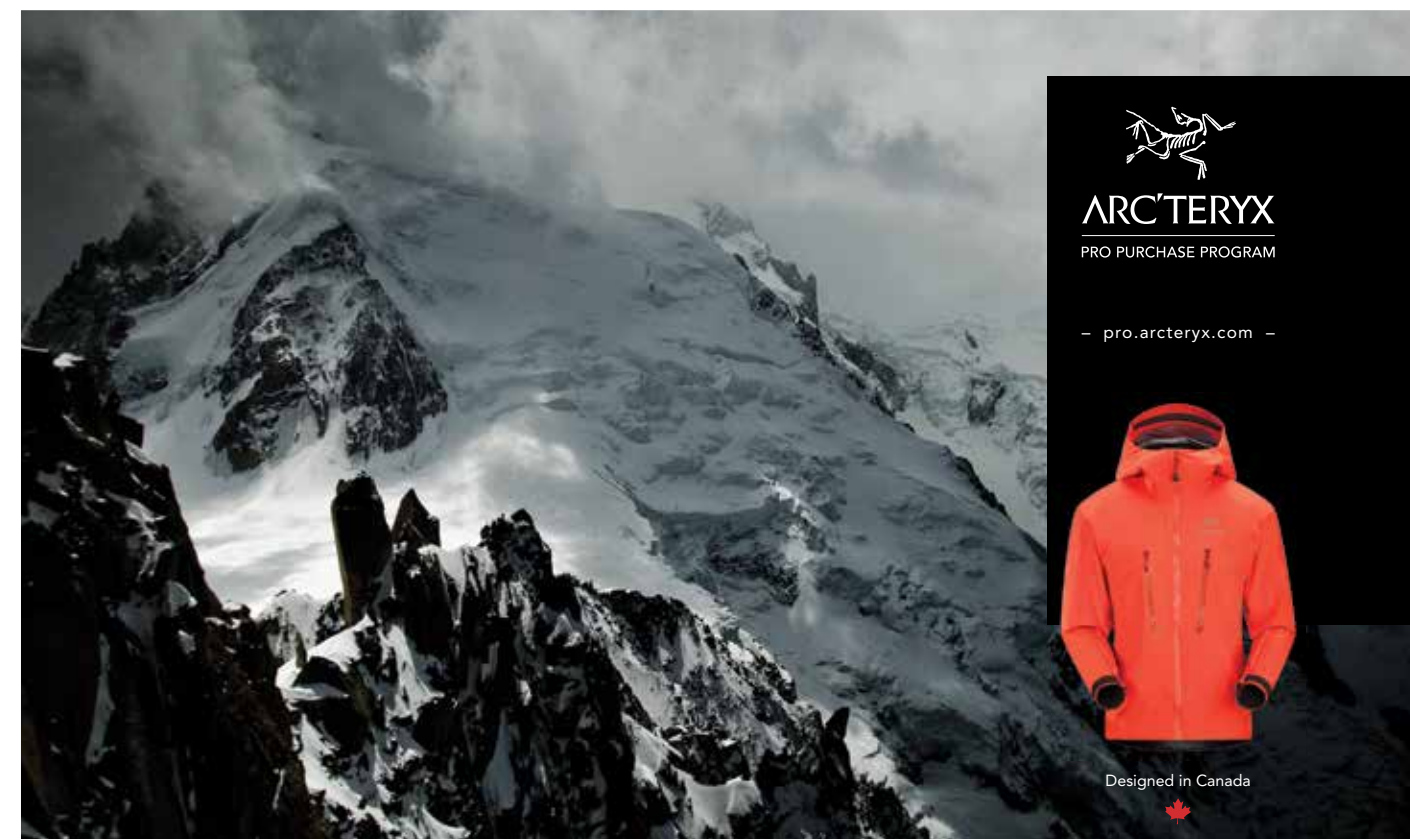
with Adamson. With conditions better than they had ever seen on the Moose's Tooth, the new team started up the wall on April 18, spending 67 hours on the route.

This year Wright received the American Alpine Club's McNeill-Nott Award and the Mazamas Alpine Adventure Grant, and will be returning to Nepal to attempt a new line in the Rolwaling area.

CHRIS WRIGHT  
SHARPENING UP AFTER  
TWO DAYS OF SUSTAINED  
MIXED MOVEMENT  
ON TERROR.  
PHOTO BY SCOTT ADAMS



Mike Libecki, Southeast Greenland  
Photo: Keith Ladzinski



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## Alaska FAs: Doucette/Rossi Send Two Years Running

On April 20, Silas Rossi and Peter Doucette climbed Twisted Stair (2300 feet; V WI6 R/X M6+), a new route on Mount Johnson (8460 feet), Alaska.

Of the route, Rossi says: "On a route where you're doing a first ascent like that, it's always in the back of your mind, 'Is the next pitch going to go?' The crux pitch ended up being this really thin ice smear. It was just above where we bivied for the night. We went to bed thinking we'd just go down in the morning. We thought it was desperate. The next morning we got up, and Peter ended up leading that pitch and did a really great job. After we were through that, we had this realization that we actually might complete this route. That was pretty pivotal."

For Rossi, the trip was a continuation of his focus on doing first ascents on bigger peaks. Rossi and Doucette had climbed two other new routes in the Ruth Gorge in April 2012.

- The Sum of Its Parts (4000 feet; Alaska Grade V AI6 M7 A2)
  - Heavy Mettle (4600 feet; Alaska Grade V WI5+ R M6 A0)
- "The last couple years I went through the IFMGA process, and so my focus was on smaller objectives," Rossi says. "Now it's really cool to have time to myself to



DOUCETTE AND ROSSI HIGH ON THEIR 2013 FA, TWISTED STAIR, RUTH GORGE, ALASKA. PHOTO BY PETER DOUCETTE

fully immerse in climbing. I love that singular focus; it is often really intense. Either you're really climbing and focusing for a long period of time, or you're fully in camp resting. I like being able to put all my energy in one place. The new routes we are trying to do are on terrain that demands that much focus to be successful."

## Well-Loved Front Range Guide Dies in Avalanche

On April 20, Rick Gaukel, 33, was snowboarding in the backcountry of Loveland Pass, Colo., with a group of snowboarders and skiers when a 600-foot-wide, eight-foot-deep avalanche cut loose. The group was raising money for the Colorado Avalanche Information Center during an event called the Rocky Mountain High Backcountry Bash. The avalanche trapped and killed Gaukel and four others.

"The avalanche and death of these men was a blow to the climbing/skiing community," says AMGA Executive Director Betsy Winter. "Rick was an up-and-coming guide who showed a clear dedication to and passion for his chosen career path."

Equipped with a BA in outdoor leadership and various certifications, including the AMGA Single Pitch Instructor and AIARE Level 1, Gaukel, a native of Santa Cruz, California, guided for Kent Mountain Adventure Center and the Colorado Mountain School. This past winter he successfully completed his AMGA Ski Guide Course; Rick was also an avid rock climber, ice climber, skater, and surfer. He will be deeply missed by the guiding community. Rick leaves behind his 33-year-old wife, Jonna Book, of Estes Park, Colo. «



GAUKEL (LEFT) AT AN ASPEN AMGA SKI GUIDE COURSE IN 2013, DOING BEACON DRILLS. PHOTO COURTESY AMGA



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Photo: Stefan Schlumpf

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📷 Patagonia ambassador Hayden Kennedy descends, spent but happy, after establishing a new route on the south face of the Ogre 1. A month earlier, he'd established a new route on the east face of K7, making his season in Pakistan one for the books. Karakoram, Pakistan. KYLE DEMPSTER

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# CRUXES MADE EASY

In 2002, I had a shot at the best day of my guiding career. A client, Harry, had called and wanted to climb 5.10 all day. After knocking off five pitches by noon, we paused at the top of The Book at Lumpy Ridge, Rocky Mountain National Park. “Want more?” I asked. “Definitely,” he said.



By Majka Burhardt

THE COLORADO SUN WAS ABOUT TO go full strength on Lumpy’s south-facing granite. I paid no attention and started rattling off 5.10 testpieces nearby. I began with single-pitch climbs and then mentioned the three-pitch Romulan Territory. Never mind that it’s a solar oven whose nickname is Romulan Scaritory. I had a badass client. I was badass. Romulan was going down.

It was August, and more than 90 degrees F. Halfway up pitch two of Romulan, the crisp, easy undercling turned into a desperado upside-down clutchfest. My feet skated, the crack shrank, and progress ground to a halt. Down at the belay, Harry had craned his neck, his full attention focused on me. I mumbled something about needing to extend the piece below for rope drag, even though my rope elegantly threaded all seven pieces in the previous 25 feet. I debated downclimbing, but didn’t want to look unconfident. I swatted at the rock above the undercling, willing a better edge to appear. The sun burned the back of my neck, and I hallucinated the granite suppurating bubbles of gooey slime. All I needed was a good right foothold...

“Take,” I said.

“What?” Harry yelled back “I can’t hear you.”

I took a breath. “Take!!!”

That was eleven years ago. I reached the top, eventually. So did Harry. I wish I could say that Harry and I went on to climb all of the world’s 5.10s together, but the truth is I never saw him again. What I am sure of is that I spent 25 minutes wrestling my ego and ended up hanging twice, over-chalking, hanging again, and eventually French-freeing those final six feet.

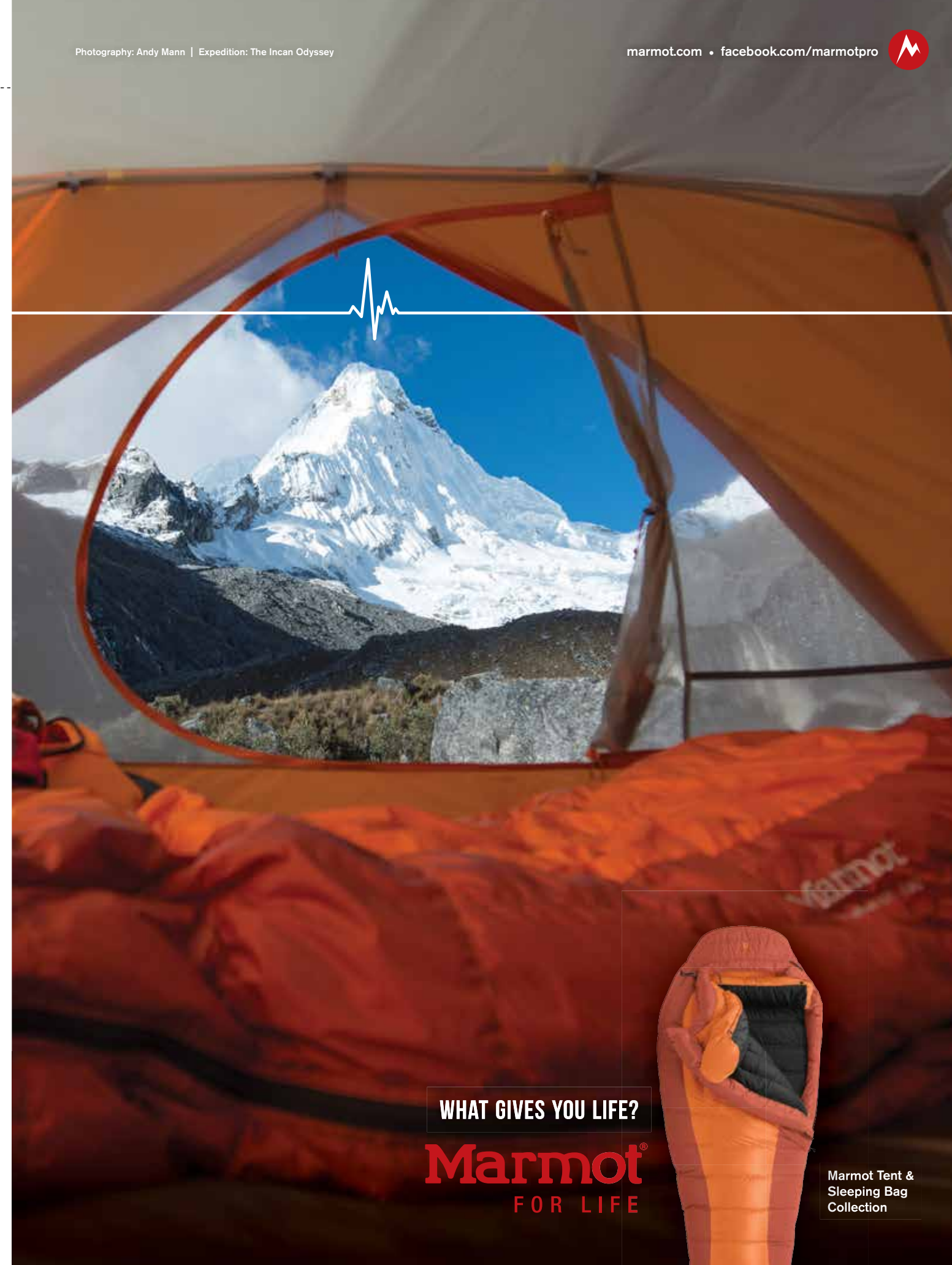
It never occurred to me, having climbed Romulan plenty of other times without issue, to French-free the crux from the get-go. Had I done so, my client would have had a shorter belay, spent less time baking in the sun, and had a better overall climbing day. I was a young guide then—24—and I was fixated on proving myself to my fellow guides and clients. I was also a young female guide, which in my version of reality meant that I had to prove myself all the more. Don’t bother going back in time to tell me to chill out: I would just push harder if you did.

These days I guide semi-part time (there wasn’t a category for that on the recent survey), and climb and write full-time. I’d be lying if I said I don’t still get the ego pull while guiding. But I try to temper it better, by being honest with my clients about where I’m at in a given moment. I do so by reminding myself that sometimes it’s not about what you can do, but rather what you should do on that route, on that pitch, on that move.

If I’m out climbing with a friend, I don’t (and can’t) pretend to be stronger or bolder than I am that day. I try to take that same attitude with me when I guide. But it’s harder to be unpretentious in the guiding environment, in part, I believe, because guides are expected to be pretentious. However, I learned pretty early on that my stoicism was a handicap. I’ve also had brute reality thrown at me in the form of injuries and the loss of too many friends. There is nothing like recovering from a broken foot, back surgery, or a damaged finger ligament to keep you honest. Losing friends, colleagues, and mentors in the mountains has also left me scared and scarred—neither of which I can or want to hide anymore. All of this—and that day on Romulan—has shaped how I guide and how I interact with my clients.

If you are truthful with your clients, then they will come to better understand our universal risk and fallibility in the mountains. If they see you weigh the choices you make, then they too will be poised to make better choices of their own one day. This can show up for me in all guiding situations, and even more so when guiding at my limit. Still, if need be, my goal is to pause in any medium, of any difficulty. Sometimes I pause and adjust my style—more gear, a different line...a bit of French-freeing. Sometimes I change course. And more and more when I do so, I speak up. So far it’s had a much better outcome than my Lumpy mini-epic, and as a result my clients climb and learn more.

It’s an evolution. I’ve had to learn that my job as a guide is not to be rad, but to make “the rad” safer, and more enjoyable and efficient. If he were game, I’d love to take Harry out again. We’d probably go big. Or at least, we’d definitely get through the crux faster. «



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