

EXPEDITION NEWS



January 2009 - Volume Sixteen, Number One

EXPEDITION NEWS, now in its 15th year, is the monthly review of significant expeditions, research projects and newsworthy adventures. It is distributed online and to media representatives, corporate sponsors, educators, research librarians, explorers, environmentalists, and outdoor enthusiasts. This forum on exploration covers projects that stimulate, motivate and educate.

TWO POLES + EVEREST = 365 DAYS

Arctic explorer Eric Larsen of Grand Marais, Minn., hopes to accomplish the expedition world's ultimate hat trick – an attempt to ski to the North and South Poles and climb Mount Everest – all within 365 days. Larsen says the trio of endeavors has never been accomplished in one year. Larsen's estimated \$750,000 unsupported adventure will begin when he heads for the South Pole with Hernan Maquieira in November 2009. Next up will be the North Pole with Darcy St. Laurent, Mark Wood and Lisa Strom.

For the Mount Everest excursion, he's enlisted Aron Ralston, the mountaineer renowned for amputating his right arm with a dull blade in 2003 after it was pinned by a half-ton boulder at the bottom of a canyon in Utah.

Ralston tells Pat Graham of the *Associated Press* (Nov. 23) that the ordeal has made him a more focused climber – and person. "This trauma has turned into such a blessing for me in my life," said Ralston, who gives motivational speeches between rafting trips and climbing expeditions. "It's been the biggest miracle of my life. It's the transformation of my life – from being this fun-seeking kid in my 20s, my life and happiness all built around my self-centered desires. Now, my fulfillment comes from causes."

Larsen's undertaking fits that description. A member of the One World Expedition, Larsen and expedition partner Lonnie Dupre, also from Grand Marais, pulled and paddled specially modified canoes over 600 miles of shifting sea ice and open ocean. Now Larsen wants to

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EXPEDITION UPDATE

Antarctic Student Expedition Grounded

The grounding of the 278-foot *MV Ushuaia* in Antarctica on Dec. 4 dashed the travel plans of 60 international high school students and a team of 30 scientists, experts, teachers, artists, and journalists participating in the Students on Ice Expedition to the continent. *Expedition News* issued a special edition about 10 full scholarships each valued at \$12,500 offered by the Students on Ice Polar Education Foundation.

The accident occurred at the entrance of Wilhelmina Bay, near Cape Anna. Passengers were subsequently transferred without incident to the nearest vessel, the *MV Antarctic Dream*, located about seven nautical miles away. Two diesel tanks were punctured and spilled a light oil which, luckily, was prone to dispersing easily and quickly.

Writer and filmmaker Jon Bowermaster was there at the time traveling on the *National Geographic Explorer*, another tourist ship, and has been writing frequent blog accounts at www.jonbowermaster.com about the fate of the *Ushuaia*. He was quoted in the *New York Times* on Dec. 4, "We had hurricane winds yesterday – 103 miles per hour and gusting – which may have contributed to the grounding."

Students on Ice was forced to cancel the expedition on 10 days notice, but has offered alternative trips for participants to consider.

Honduran Emerald Rediscovered in Western Honduras – In November, a team of American and Honduran researchers and conservationists traveled to western Honduras to search for the critically endangered Honduran Emerald hum-

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raise awareness of global warming and the effects it's having on melting ice caps. He isn't content with just trekking to the world's top, bottom and highest summit. He wants to film and blog about every frozen step. He's bringing video cameras, digital recorders, satellite phones, a palm pilot and a computer, which will help him tell his tale - and add 25 pounds to his load.

"I feel like the job of an explorer in the 21st century is not going out to conquer these places but protecting them and telling a story," Larsen said. "They are going to be forever changed unless we act now."

The adventure will start at the South Pole with Maquieira, an Argentinean-born explorer who lives in Switzerland. Each will pull a sled loaded with 300 pounds of food, fuel and supplies on a journey across nearly 733 miles of tortured ice that Larsen predicts could take up to 65 days.

Larsen hopes to reach the South Pole by January 2010; then he will make his attempt on the North Pole some time around the end of February 2010. It will be a nearly 550-mile trek with Wood, a former member of the British Army turned outdoor guide; St. Laurent, a search-and-rescue technician from Winnipeg, Manitoba; and Strom, a dogsled and Arctic wilderness guide.

They're hoping to be across by early May 2010. The last stage of his journey will be to Mount Everest. If everything goes as planned, that leg should begin in September 2010 and end in late October. (For more information: www.savethepoles.com) ▲

Quote of the Month

"The tops of mountains are among the unfinished parts of the globe, whither it is a slight insult to the gods to climb and pry into their secrets, and try their effect on our humanity. Only daring and insolent men, perchance, go there."

— Henry David Thoreau

mingbird, a species restricted solely to Honduras (see *EN*, December 2008). The principal cause of its decline is habitat destruction, with approximately 90% of its original habitat lost, and the remaining habitat occurring in isolated patches of the arid thorn-forest and scrub of the interior valleys of northern Honduras. The expedition team was able to find six patches of forest inhabited by the Emerald.

The rediscovery increases both the known distributional range and population size of the species, giving hope to its future conservation. However, due to the highly fragmented nature of its habitat, its status as critically endangered remains warranted. The team included ornithologist David L. Anderson of Louisiana State University, Honduran biologists Mario Espinal and Leonel Marineros, hummingbird specialist H. Ross Hawkins, Ph.D., and conservationists Deborah M. Atwood, Fito Steiner and Robert E. Hyman of The Explorers Club. (For more information: Robert E. Hyman, robertehyman@gmail.com). ▲

EXPEDITION NOTES

Team Probes Why Climbers Die on Mount Everest

— For reportedly the first time ever, an international team of experts has probed every known death on the world's tallest mountain, shedding some light on what makes Mount Everest one of the most dangerous places on earth.

The team's surprising findings shatter commonly held beliefs about the prevalence of deaths caused by avalanches, falling ice and pulmonary edema (lung problems) and highlight severe weather deterioration as a major factor in deaths.

"We know that climbing Mount Everest is dangerous because more than 200 people have died trying to scale it, but never before has anyone studied these deaths with such a collaborative or fine-tooth approach," says University of Toronto Mississauga Physics Professor Kent Moore, one of two U of T co-authors on the report. "We now know with much more certainty what factors play a major role — and which factors do not."

The team, made up of North American and British experts in medicine, physiology and meteorology, examined 212 reported deaths on Everest between 1921 and 1996. Among their key findings, published online in the *British Medical Journal*:

- Over the 86-year-period, the mortality rate above base camp on Mount Everest was 1.3 per cent. This is significantly higher than that of other tall mountains.
- For deaths above 8,000 meters, cognitive impairment and cerebral edema (swelling of the brain) were often present where pulmonary edema (lung problems) was not.

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- Marked fatigue, late summit times and the tendency to fall behind companions were common among those who died on Mount Everest.
- Most Sherpas were killed on the lower slopes, while most climbers died above 8,000 meters, usually while descending.
- A typical expedition to Everest usually lasts at least 60 days, but more than 80 per cent of climber deaths happened the day of the summit attempt or the day after.
- A severe deterioration in weather played a role in 25 per cent of all deaths.

“Because of our combined diversity and experience, we’ve really been able to pinpoint the most critical factors that cause death on Mount Everest,” says Dr. John Semple, Professor of Surgery at U of T. “These findings will provide a foundation of improved safety for both mountaineers and Sherpas.”

The international team was led by Dr. Paul Firth from Massachusetts General Hospital and included researchers from the U.K., Canada and the U.S. (For more information: Kent Moore, Physics professor, 647 808 5132, gwk.moore@utoronto.ca; Dr. John Semple, Surgery professor, 416 323 7555, john.semple@wchospital.ca; and April Kemick, media relations officer, 416 978 0100, april.kemick@utoronto.ca).

Thames Stands in for Arctic Ocean – An explorer from the U.K. has taken to the River Thames in a homemade canoe built for an Arctic expedition. Jim McNeill, 48, invented his boat, called a Qajaq, to tackle terrain made treacherous because of melting ice in the Arctic. A 2006 mission to the Northern Pole of Inaccessibility, which NASA has verified as the region’s furthest point from any land mass, almost ended in tragedy when McNeill plunged through thin ice. Undeterred, McNeill hopes his boat will transport him there safely in 2010.

McNeill tells the Press Association Ltd., “I have been exploring the Arctic for 25 years and in this time I’ve seen the dramatic effects of global warming. It used to be one solid sheet of ice that you could walk across, now it’s interspersed with stretches of icy water – if you look at it from satellite images it’s like crazy paving – hence the need to build the Qajaq.”

Fitted with runners, the boat acts as a sledge for dragging the gear and equipment of his planned four-man team.

Women of Discovery Honorees Named – WINGS WorldQuest (WWQ) announced the 7th annual Women of Discovery Awards, which acknowledge excellence in a number of fields related to international exploration. On April 28, 2009, at Tribeca Rooftop in New York, WWQ will honor

five women explorers whose daring adventures and pioneering discoveries have led to global and scientific advancement. This year’s awardees were selected based on their groundbreaking work in one of five categories:

- Award for the Sea: Maya Tolstoy (United States), Acoustical Geophysicist
- Award for Humanity: Aparajita Datta (India), Wildlife Biologist & Ecologist
- Award for Air & Space: Rosaly Lopes (Brazil), Volcanologist
- Award for Earth: Bolortsetseg Minjin (Mongolia), Paleontologist
- Award for Field Research: Leela Hazzah (Egypt), Wildlife Biologist & Carnivore Conservationist

(For more information: www.wingsworldquest.org)

Everest Was Nothing; Try Running Across the U.S.

– Almost 117 marathons in 52-and-a-half days. That’s what ultrarunner and Seven Summits mountaineer Marshall Ulrich, 57, completed during his 3,063-mile run across the U.S. Ulrich started in San Francisco on Sept. 13, 2008 and completed his run across America in New York City on Election Day. He averaged over 58 miles per day or about two marathons plus a 10K race, every day, for more than 52 days in a row.

Ulrich reports, “It was by far the toughest thing I have ever done, even tougher than climbing Everest.” Ulrich reached the summit of Mount Everest from the north side in May 2004. “A hard day on Everest was like an average day running across America. I have never pushed my limits that far before.” Typically Ulrich ran 19 hours per day and slept four to five hours per night. He wore – and wore out – more than 30 pairs of shoes and dozens of pairs of socks. The run was sponsored by Super 8, AXA Equitable, Vita-Mix, and VQ Orthocare. (For more information: www.runningamerica08.com, www.marshallulrich.com). ▲

EXPEDITION FOCUS

Oprah Blesses Buettner’s Blue Zones

Trip Report by Dan Buettner

Minnesota explorer Dan Buettner, 48, was an early pioneer in using technology to link his expeditions directly to home and school-based audiences. In 1995, his MayaQuest, an interactive expedition through Central America, used laptop computers and satellite equipment to enable online audiences to direct – and contribute to – Buettner’s scientific expedition in real time.

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He's come a long way since then. Joining the ranks of the country's most famous authors, Buettner made a television appearance on Nov. 25 with Oprah Winfrey to promote his latest book, *Blue Zones* (National Geographic, 2008), which reveals the nine secrets of the world's longest-lived people.

The appearance worked wonders for his marketing effort. "I figure the *Oprah Show* boosted my sales in the tens of thousands. Book sales soared to number one on the Amazon.com Healthy Living list and spawned a major order from Target Stores. It also yielded several speaking appearances, TV offers and offers to license the Blue Zones brand," he tells *EN*.

Late last year, Buettner blogged about exploring the Costa Rican Blue Zone with Mehmet C. Oz, M.D., Oprah's medical consultant and co-author of *You: The Owner's Manual* (HarperResource, 2005):

"I wanted to show Oprah's audience how centenarians had lived most of their lives. Our plan was to hike to the home of a legendary persnickety 97-year-old named Aristide. His house was hidden in the jungle with no running water or electricity and surrounded by corn and bean fields. It's a place that looked like the last 50 years hadn't happened. I didn't foresee the adventure that lay ahead of us.

"Jorge Vindas, our guide, pointed to the San Juan's cloud-shrouded mountain and said, 'It's going to be pouring rain.' Dr. Oz, producer Leslie Grisanti, two cameramen, a soundman, and I started off across the cow pasture towards Aristide's house that was hiding in a cluster of trees over the ridge. Five minutes into the trek, it started to rain. It wasn't a gentle shower; the clouds unleashed its watery wrath upon us. This was not a big deal for Oz or me, but for the cameramen and sound people, who schlepped over \$100K of electronics on their shoulders, it was a disaster. One camera instantly short-circuited and the sound mixer fried.

"We all stood ankle deep in mud and cow dung, water dripped off our noses and clothes clung opaquely to our skin. At one point, Aristide's son tore down the mountainside on a motorcycle. Our guide had warned us that we weren't really welcome and that this family is slightly eccentric (the father won't even let his 60-something kids leave home without permission). And the rumor was they were well armed. But the son gave us permission, so we proceeded.

"We went up over a hill, and down a steep dirt road that the rain had turned into a cascading river. We crossed the knee-deep river with the cameras rolling the whole time. At Aristide's home we waited outside. A bull stood out in yard, between a door and us. It could have been dangerous – many bulls are – but fortunately this one wasn't. We waited in the rain for Jorge to walk around and find out if we could go further.

"Meanwhile, I pointed out a 'Jocote' tree. Jocotes are small fruits the size of crabapples but taste like mango custard. I picked a few and gave them to Dr. Oz. The cameras rolled: 'Fruits like these are rich and antioxidants,' he began, 'Food like this is made for a short shelf life but a long human life.'

"One more hurdle confronted us before we got into Aristide's house: Dogs. I've heard people say, 'Dogs that bark don't bite.' Well, these dogs didn't bark and as we approached, Aristide signaled for us to be careful of the 'perros bravos.' We took our chances. I played the same sort of translator/tour guide role again. There was no electricity and I pointed out that these people go to bed and wake with the sun and sleep a good eight hours. Dr. Oz turned to the cameras and reported. I told him about the high-calcium water. He did another report – all pitch perfect.

"On the way back, I asked Dr. Oz about his life. I wanted to know something about the man who is regarded as 'America's Doctor.' I asked him how a typical day unfolds for him. He's up at 5:45 am, does his yoga and push-ups. Goes into the office and works while its quiet. He eats some nuts and oatmeal before going into the operating room, which he describes as 'zen-like.'

"He eats a big lunch at noon, does some writing early afternoon and then goes into his second surgery in the afternoon. Then he does his 'Oprah work,' mostly phone calls and the like. He goes home most nights, eats a small dinner with his family (four kids) and then does the elliptical trainer as he watches TV. He's in bed by 10 or 10:30. He only has a couple drinks a week.

"Dr. Oz is a quick thinking and a fast, precise speaker. Sometimes, it seems as if his tongue can't keep up with his brain. He's also very good at toggling between congeniality and seriousness. I bid him farewell that day convinced that his media success comes not only from his vast medical expertise but insatiable curiosity and a genuine goodness that the audience can sense. With this OZ, there's no secret man behind the curtain."

(For more information: dan@questnetwork.com, www.blue-zones.com, www.questnetwork.com). ▲



MEDIA MATTERS

Fossett Conspiracists Remain Non-Plussed – There are "lunatics" who are convinced Buzz Aldrin never walked on the moon, so we suppose it should come as no surprise that some believe adventurer and aviator Steve Fossett faked his death for one reason or another, despite positive DNA in bone fragments found at a crash site near Mammoth Lakes, Calif. James Vlahos writes in the *New York Times* (Dec. 28), "Among *X-Files* types there has long been speculation that Fossett staged his accident to dodge financial

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problems or escape with a mistress. The most ornate explanation is that Fossett willingly disappeared to provide a cover story for the U.S. military, which needed an excuse to fly surveillance planes to search for a missing nuclear warhead.” Vlahos reports another spurious account that says Fossett is alive and well and living in Argentina with an illegitimate 29-year-old son.”

Three Cups of MRE – Greg Mortenson, cofounder of the Central Asia Institute and author of the best-selling *Three Cups of Tea*, was featured in a *Wall Street Journal* article (Dec. 26) about his somewhat surprising new avocation: military adviser.

In a subtle shift in strategy for the war in Afghanistan, the U.S. military has been focusing more on relationships with local leaders and educators, rather than exclusively dealing with the central government. Recently, many top Pentagon officials have sought counsel from Mortenson, whose Central Asia Institute has built 78 schools in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Mortenson has met with Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and with top officers of the Special Operations Command. “Several of the officers said they have ... come to share Mr. Mortenson’s belief that providing young Muslims with a moderate education is the most effective way of curbing the growth of Islamic extremism,” the story said.

Mortenson served as an Army medic after high school and before the K2 expedition that eventually led to his work building schools in remote mountainous regions. “I get some criticism from the NGO community, who tell me I shouldn’t talk to the military at all,” he told the *Journal*. “But the military has a willingness to change and adapt that you don’t see in other parts of the government.”

Mortenson will be the keynote speaker at the American Alpine Club’s second annual benefit and awards dinner, Feb. 21 in Golden, Colo. (For more information: www.americanalpineclub.org)

Everest in 3D – Next May, MacGillivray Freeman Films, Laguna Beach, Calif., will attempt to capture the first-ever helicopter-mounted Spacecam aeriels of Everest’s summit for its new film *Return to Everest 3D*. “High altitude helicopters don’t typically fly above 23,000 feet, but our pilot, an expert Swiss helicopter guide with experience in the Alps, is confident he can do it,” says producer Shaun MacGillivray. The crew also plans to shoot the first-ever 3D images of the Khumbu Icefall, the most dangerous place on the mountain due to shifting ice and avalanches. The film, which will be released in spring 2012, follows a team of medical researchers who are studying the effects of extreme altitude on the body. MacGillivray Freeman has produced 11 of the IMAX industry’s top 25 films starting with *To Fly* in 1976, and including the industry’s number one film, *Everest*, which has grossed over \$146 million.

Climbing Therapy – Philippe Cousteau, Jr., 28, is carrying out the legacy of his father and grandfather – legendary explorers Philippe and Jacques-Yves Cousteau – through his work with EarthEcho International, a non-profit environmental group, and as *Animal Planet*’s chief ocean correspondent. He tells Jen Murphy of *WSJ Magazine* (Winter 2008) that his favorite non-aquatic exercise is rock climbing. “It’s not just physical,” he says. “It’s mental and spiritual. It’s a time where I don’t have to be thinking about raising money, climate change, traveling for my next documentary. It’s kind of therapeutic.”

Adventurers of the Year Chosen by NGA – Last November, *National Geographic Adventure* magazine honored British schoolmates Rob Gauntlett, 21, and James Hooper, 21, as 2008 Adventurers of the Year in recognition of their epic 394-day, 26,000-mile madcap dash from the north geomagnetic pole to the south geomagnetic pole using only human and natural power. Skiing, dog sledding, cycling and sailing their way from northern Greenland to the Antarctic’s Southern Ocean in one continuous run, the pair completed the first-of-its-kind pole-to-pole journey in an effort to raise awareness about climate change and inspire the human spirit. The magazine also honored mountaineer and conservation champion Rick Ridgeway with a Best of Adventure Hall of Fame award.

Ridgeway, a writer, filmmaker and one of the best known American explorers, was recognized for a life lived adventurously and for spearheading the Freedom to Roam project, a bold initiative backed by Patagonia that aims to protect big wildlife by preserving hundreds of miles of undisturbed, interconnected migratory corridors across North America. (For more information: www.nationalgeographic.com/adventure) ▲

EXPEDITION MARKETING

Helen is a Doll

Explorer Helen Thayer was on hand at Marbles Kid’s Museum in Raleigh, N.C., to share her tales of adventure with young outdoor enthusiasts. Through her stories, participants learned how products made with Cordura fabric have supported Thayer in successfully trekking to the North Pole and walking 2,400 miles across the Gobi desert. Invista’s Cordura brand partnered with the Museum in an effort to provide young minds the opportunity to experience the durable textile and learn about its benefits. Students were presented with a creative project that involved constructing apparel out of Cordura fabrics for “Helen” dolls.

“It is never too early to start educating today’s youth on the importance of sustainable products – a pack that will last longer and still look good after one school year reduces both cost and waste,” said Cindy McNaull, global brand manager for the Cordura brand. “We hope to instill knowledge about the brand that they will carry with them for a lifetime.” ▲

ON THE HORIZON

AMC Lecture Series – A recent trip to the Joe Dodge Lodge at Pinkham Notch, base camp for hikes to Mount Washington’s Tuckerman Ravine, reminded us how great a resource the Appalachian Mountain Club facility is for budding adventurers and explorers. The AMC’s monthly seminar series includes a Jan. 28 talk by famed climber Mark Synnott on his quest to climb the world’s biggest cliffs, such as those in the Alaska Range, the Amazon, China, India, Patagonia, Pakistan, Pitcairn Island, Nepal, Tibet and West Africa. All programs are free and open to the public. (For more information: www.outdoors.org).

Exploring Biodiversity – The 105th Explorers Club Annual Dinner on Mar. 21, 2009 at the Waldorf=Astoria in New York will focus on “The Balancing Act: Exploring Biodiversity.” Award recipients will include: Maj. General William Anders (USAF Ret.), Clive E. Cussler, Ph.D., Rev. David A. Dolan, Scott W. Hamilton, Peter E. Hillary, Lee M. Talbot, Ph.D., and Edward O. Wilson, Ph.D. Tickets go on sale Jan. 26. (For more information: www.explorers.org) ▲

EXPEDITION CLASSIFIEDS

Available for Expedition Field Support – 29-year-old male, 10+ years experience as freelance scientific/commercial/expedition diver, strong mix of technical field expertise and a creative personality-author, photographer, artist, environmental advocate. Seeking undersea-related field programs to lend technical support or photo/written documentation. Skills/experience include surface-supplied diving, mixed-gas scuba, rebreather, cave, and Antarctic diving experience & field training, u/w photo. Marine science degree. Solid all-around watermanship/seamanship skills. Also competent rock climber, backpacker, kayaker, half-marathon runner. Contact: Michael Lombardi, explore@oceanopportunity.com, www.oceanopportunity.com.

Seeking Expedition – New Explorers Club member, 47-year-old male, FBI Special Agent, deep trimix rebreather diver (experience in excess of 400 feet of seawater), surface supplied helmet diving experience, USCG 100 ton Master with numerous endorsements and offshore navigational experience, moderate emergency medical training, limited recent trekking

experience, recent training in mountaineering and rock climbing, swift water training, recent SERE type military survival training, some experience in war zones and limited resource environments. Undergraduate degree in Geology and state Geological Survey work experience. Schedule flexible for up to a month at a time. Contact: Mike Pizzio MN’08, pizziom@bellsouth.net.

Death Valley and Mt. Shasta Cycling Trips – Join AdventureCORPS for five days of road cycling, yoga, and hiking in one-of-a-kind Death Valley on February 21-25 or magical, mystical Mt. Shasta on July 29 - August 2. <http://www.adventurecorps.com>.

Costa Del Mar Sunglasses – The leader in high performance polarized sunglasses is interested in sponsoring expeditions. Help us “See what’s out there™.” See Costa Del Mar’s online video network dedicated to water sports and angling adventures (www.costachannelc.com). Submit film footage of “you-had-to-see-it-to-believe-it” extreme water sports and fishing expeditions. Contact Laurie Fontenot at lfontenot@costadelmar.com for information. Learn more about our commitment to exploration and adventure travel at: <http://www.costadelmar.com/adventures/>

New LEKI Antishock System – LEKI, the leading international manufacturer of trekking poles, has introduced a Soft Antishock-Lite (SAS-L) System that provides much more comfort along the trail. The impact energy is absorbed directly into the lower shaft. The perfect combination of steel spring and elastomer provides precise synchronization between spring strength and compression – making trekking with a pole more comfortable than ever, reducing stress on the joints, muscles and ligaments. (www.leki.com)

Insulated Support for Cold Weather Athletes – CW-X Conditioning Wear is specifically tuned to provide total support to the key muscle groups and joints of the lower limbs and upper body. Tights and Tops, and the company’s Sports Support Bras, are made for a wide variety of high-energy activities, including running, fitness walking, hiking, cycling, skiing, snowboarding, track and field, and other fitness activities. Studies show that when wearing CW-X tights there is 26 percent and 36 percent lower oxygen usage compared to regular Tights and Shorts respectively. New for fall/winter 2008-09: the Insulator line of insulated support Tights and Tops. (www.cw-x.com). ▲

EXPEDITION NEWS is published by Blumenfeld and Associates, Inc., 397 Post Rd., Suite 213, Darien, CT 06820 USA. Tel. 203 655 1600, fax 203 655 1622, editor@expeditionnews.com. Editor/publisher: Jeff Blumenfeld. Assistant editor: Jamie Gribbon. ©2009 Blumenfeld and Associates, Inc. All rights reserved. ISSN: 1526-8977. Subscriptions: US\$36/yr. available by e-mail only. Credit card payments accepted through www.paypal.com. Read EXPEDITION NEWS at www.expeditionnews.com. Layout and design by Nextwave Design, Seattle.