

EXPEDITION NEWS

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EXPEDITION NEWS, now in its 17th year, is the monthly review of significant expeditions, research projects and newsworthy adventures. It is distributed online to media representatives, corporate sponsors, educators, research librarians, explorers, environmentalists, and outdoor enthusiasts. This forum on exploration covers projects that stimulate, motivate and educate.

EXPEDITION UPDATE

Feed a Hungry Hiker

American climber and author John Harlin of Hood River, Ore., is perhaps best known to the general public for his role in the IMAX movie *The Alps*, where he retraced the route on the North Face of the Eiger that claimed the life of his father in 1966. Now Harlin is in the third phase of his attempt to follow Switzerland's complete borders while exploring what makes a people a nation, a border a boundary (see *EN*, July 2010). He is blogging each day on swissinfo.ch/harlin and [Facebook.com/SwissBorders](https://www.facebook.com/SwissBorders). After he finishes he will write books and lectures, perhaps even produce a film.

The journey was meant to take 100 days and be completed in summer 2010. He launched from his childhood home village of Leysin and hiked to the border on Lake Geneva where he set out into the mountains heading south along the French border. “Ten days later, on July 1,” he writes, “a boulder-sized rock came loose and I fell about 50 feet until a badly frayed rope stopped me. With five broken bones in my feet, I was helicoptered to safety by Rega (Swiss Air Rescue).”

Last fall he started again, but with a new plan. “Because it would be six months until my feet were fit for hard hiking, I decided to paddle and bike along Switzerland’s relatively flat northern borders (Germany and France) taking about a month to descend the Rhine River by a kayak and then mountain bike the Jura Mountains back to Lake Geneva. It was a marvelous voyage filled with rich cultural insights, and finished where I had started four months before.”

He launched again this summer at the Rhine River to ascend the border with Liechtenstein and over to Austria, traversing Piz Buin and many high summits before reaching the Italian border where he will spend weeks hiking and climbing back to Mont Dolent at the French border, which overlooks the site of his accident.

Due to unexpected exclusions, his insurance and rescue policies did not pay for this emergency. Thus Harlin turned to Kickstarter.com to raise funds to supplement the assistance he's receiving from his main partner in this project, Swissinfo.ch, with logistical help from Switzerland Tourism. However, the Kickstarter deadline passed with just \$880 raised out of a target of \$10,000. He's seeking funds via Facebook to feed his appetite for adventure. (For more information: <http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1942576490/swiss-borders-adventure-feed-a-hungry-hiker-climbe>; <http://www.facebook.com/pages/John-Harlin-III/199723386705440>).

Vern Tejas' 50th Summiting of McKinley Probably a Record

Guide Vern Tejas logged his 50th summit of Mount McKinley this summer, prompting an obvious question: Does that make him the ruler of North America's highest roost? Beth Bragg of the *Anchorage Daily News* (July 20) reports officials with the National Park Service don't know if anyone has been to the top of McKinley more often than Tejas, because they didn't begin tracking summits until 1995. They think Tejas, who boasts numerous claims to fame gained in the Alaska Range and beyond, probably owns the record for the most McKinley summits. (See *EN*, September 2009).

Tejas, 58, a guide for Alpine Ascents International, said his first two McKinley summits came in 1978, one as a client and one as a guide. An impressive – but not unprecedented – four summits came in 1988, when Tejas became the first person to complete a solo climb of the mountain in the winter. No. 50 came June 30, when he was the guide of an eight-person team that made it to the summit.

"Mt. Vinson in Antarctica would be my next most climbed mountain, however it's not even close to Denali at a mere 27 summits," Tejas tells the *Daily News*.

In 1988, Tejas made it to the top of McKinley four times, an achievement that began in March when he became the first person to make a successful solo winter ascent of the mountain. "My endless winter," Tejas calls it.

Tejas guided adventurer Norman D. Vaughan in 1994 when, at age 89, Vaughan climbed a 10,320-foot Antarctic peak that Admiral Richard Byrd named in his honor 65 years earlier during their historic 1928-1930 South Pole expedition.

Tejas also continues to pursue adventures outside Alaska, but nothing inspires him like McKinley. "Denali is the most beautiful mountain in the world," he wrote, "and I want to climb it as long as I can – 65 summits when I am 65 sounds great to me. A nice round number."

EXPEDITION NOTES

Montana Students Design Bozeman Ice Climbing Tower

A team of Montana State University students have designed an 85-foot climbing tower

that organizers hope will be built as part of an attempt to lure the 2013 World Cup of Ice Climbing Championships to Bozeman, Mont. The winning team won a \$1,000 cash prize in the competition that was sponsored by the MSU School of Architecture, Friends of Hyalite, as well as prominent climbers Conrad Anker, Chris Hamilton and Alex Lussier.

The winning design includes a tower that can be used for ice or traditional climbing surrounded by a spectator area that will also allow the structure to serve as an outdoor concert venue.

The project was the result of an initiative by mountain climbers Conrad Anker of Bozeman and Joe Josephson of Livingston, coordinator of the popular Bozeman Ice Festival held each year in Hyalite Canyon outside Bozeman.

Anker previously worked with the MSU School of Architecture on the design of the Alex Lowe Charitable Foundation's Khumbu Climbing School in Phortse, Nepal. (To see the proposed tower design log onto: <http://bozemanicetower.wordpress.com/>).

Slide Shows Have Been a Part of Exploration for Over 100 Years

Explorers and adventurers today who return with Powerpoint presentations are continuing a long tradition. It's not enough to come up with a novel concept, plan it correctly, raise sponsorship, launch the expedition and do it safely. The process also requires telling the rest of us – those unable to travel on the expedition – about the sights and sounds experienced, and discoveries made.

Shackleton had his Magic Lantern shows, and later, American journalist Lowell Thomas launched the “Lawrence of Arabia” legend in 1919 when he personally presented the multimedia show called “With Allenby in Palestine and Lawrence in Arabia” to millions of people in New York and London, and propelled himself into a journalistic career of fame and fortune.

The show made use of images and film from Thomas' extensive filming in the Middle East, where he followed T.E. Lawrence and Arab forces during World War I. The presentation was ahead of its time; Thomas innovated by synchronizing his words, spoken from a podium in the theater, with the exotic photos and movie clips from a distant land.

Thomas' show would garner so much attention as to forever change the lives of its creator and the hero it portrayed.

Can Geography Be Exciting?

“The (Royal Geographical) Society must not only emphasize the relevance of geography, but also the excitement of geography,” said Michael Palin, president of the Society speaking this summer at the RGS-IBG's annual meeting in London.

“We must never forget our traditional role in encouraging people to travel, whilst at the same time educating them to travel well. To appreciate what an enormous privilege it is to be able to see the world, and what a waste of time and effort it is if you don’t understand what you’re seeing.”

He admits, “geography may not be the sexiest word in the English language, but when you think of what geography can help you understand the list is almost endless. From volcanoes and earthquakes to surfing and white-water rafting. From water wars to where you get the best cocktails, from world music to choosing where to ski.”

Palin continues, “From commodity trading to conflict resolution, from migration to music, from the melting of glaciers to the food on your plate, from why Kenyans win marathons so often to why people face death to cross borders.

“Geographers may not have all the answers, but in all these areas they can give you the information that matters.”

Everest Summiteer Was Lying

Sign seen at Neptune Mountaineering in Boulder, Colo.: “All explorers who have ever claimed to have reached the top of Mount Everest have been lying. Why? Because Mr. White, during a two-week, \$17.50 packaged tour to Katmandu years back, trekked up Everest, broke off its very tip and lugged it away in a plastic shopping bag. Natives, scoffing at his story, obliquely named the range for him by chanting, “Him a liah! Him a liah.” (Editor’s note: sometimes we crack ourselves up over here).

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

*The day shall not be up so soon as I,
To try the fair adventure of tomorrow*

– William Shakespeare

EXPEDITION FOCUS

Trip Report – New Zealand Sisters Achieve Second Summit of Koh-e-Baba-Tangi in Afghanistan

New Zealand sisters Patricia Deavoll, 52, and Christine Byrch, 51, recently climbed Koh-e-Baba-Tangi in Afghanistan. Deavoll reports, “Christine and I summited Koh-e-Baba-Tangi (21,375-ft. /6515m) in the Wakhan Corridor of the Hindu Kush Range of Northern Afghanistan on August 9. Five days to the summit with some good steep ice, then two days to descend the West Ridge (line of the original 1963 ascent). Ours is only the second climb of the mountain, done via a new route up the NNW ridge.”

Koh-e-Baba-Tangi is considered by many mountaineers to be the most fascinating peak in the Afghan Hindu Kush. It was first climbed by an Italian team via the West Ridge in 1963.

The mountains of Afghanistan's High Hindu Kush are located in the northeast of the country, in the long finger of land known as the Wakhan Corridor, which separates Pakistan and Tajikistan. These mountains are gradually being revisited by climbers, who report the area to be remote, safe and worlds apart from the on-going war with the Taliban. Peaks in the Wakhan Corridor were hugely popular in the 1960s and 70s, particularly among European climbers who would often reach the area overland via the "hippy trail."

They were enticed by generally easier access than found in other parts of the Himalaya/Karakoram, more stable weather and the ability to climb without the constraints of a restrictive permit system. But after the coup d'etat in 1978 and the Soviet invasion in 1979, the climbing became strictly off-limits and remained so for almost 30 years.

However in 2003, Carlo Alberto Pinelli, an Italian mountaineer who in the 1960s climbed extensively in the area (and was one of the first climbers on Koh-e-Baba Tangi), organized an expedition he called the Oxuz: Mountains for Peace, with the objective of climbing Noshaq (24,580-ft./7492m), Afghanistan's highest mountain. He wanted to let the Afghans know they had not been forgotten by the climbers who had benefited from their generous hospitality.

The successful expedition effectively marked the beginning of a new era of climbing in the region. Over the past five years a steadily increasing number of expeditions have, once again, enjoyed climbing in the Afghan Hindu Kush.

Deavoll and Byrch are two highly accomplished mountaineers; between them they have over 50 years of climbing experience. Deavoll, a resident of Christchurch, has been on 10 expeditions to Asia in the past nine years, all to climb mountains between 6000m and 7000m in height. Three of these (2007, 2008, 2009) have been to Afghanistan's close neighbor, Pakistan. Byrch, a resident of Queenstown, has also traveled extensively in Pakistan. Both were aware of the risks of traveling in a Muslim country during periods of political unrest and knew how to conduct themselves as western women in an Islamic culture. (For more information, see Deavoll's blog: <http://www.patdeavoll.co.nz/>)

MEDIA MATTERS

Expedition Helps Build Network of Ocean Sensors

A 274-foot research vessel named *Thomas G Thompson* has recently completed a Visions '11 Expedition to aid the installation of a whole host of web-enabled sensors that will monitor the ocean in the Pacific Northwest. According to *Wired.com*'s Olivia Solon (Sept. 6), the expedition was part of the installation of the Ocean Observatories Initiative's (OOI) high-power and high-bandwidth cabled ocean observatory, funded by the National Science Foundation. Once in place, it will measure the physical, chemical,

geological and biological fluctuations in the ocean and seafloor. The OOI's aim is to collect and connect data from around the world. The idea is to move away from ship-based research and put a network of permanent sensors in place that can collect data for many years.

This particular observatory – some 300 miles away from the Oregon coast – will have 16 sensors analyzing the seafloor and 17 analyzing the water. The team used a robotic vehicle called ROPOS that can lift up to 3,964 lbs./1,800 kg off the sea floor at up to 16,404-ft./5,000 meters below sea level. Power is supplied to ROPOS through an umbilical cord that also has an optical fiber for transmitting data. (For more information: <http://www.wired.com/wiredscience/2011/09/ocean-sensor-network/>).

Long, Cold Summer on Rainier

Total visitors to Mount Rainier National Park in Washington State were down from January through July more than 30 percent, to 601,877, compared to the same period last year, according to a story in the *New York Times* by Katharine Q. Seelye (Aug. 14). The reason? Colder summer temperatures have wrecked havoc on Rainier and throughout the West and the Northwest. One hiker is quoted, “There has never been this amount of snow, and it has stopped us from doing things we would usually do.” Snowpack still on the ground well into August set a number of records.

But the park's mountaineering district ranger, Stefan Lofgren, also believes the economy plays a role in lower visitation. He believes not only is climbing expensive – equipment alone can cost \$2,500 – but gas prices have been high. And then the stock market began its wild gyrations, creating new anxiety. Studies show that those who climb Rainier make an average of \$90,000 a year, so it would not be surprising if many were invested in the market, writes Seelye.

Says Ranger Lofgren, “The number of climbers on the mountain has just as much to do with the Dow Jones and the Consumer Price Index as it has to do with weather conditions.”

EXPEDITION INK

Mother Nature Loading Up

Popular New York City weatherman Bill Evans, co-author with Marianna Jameson of the new weather thriller, *Dry Ice* (Tor Books, 2011), writes about TESLA, a secret weather “research” station in the frozen heart of Antarctica that creates weather across the globe. In the book, the secret encrypted computer program activates, sending fatal weather worldwide, striking every continent's grain-growing region and livestock farming area.

During a presentation in New Canaan, Conn. last month, Evans disputes the claim that the Earth is fragile. “It's not fragile, it's growing, with over 300 active volcanoes at any one time. We're up to “I” on the hurricane list. In the last two years, the weather has been

such an overachiever. With all our technology, we still have trouble forecasting the weather – every storm so far has been underestimated.”

He warned the audience not to get lulled by nice weather. “Every sunny day – that’s Mother Nature loading up for the next weather event.”

South with the Sun

by Lynne Cox (Knopf, September 2011)

Reviewed by Robert F. Wells

This is but a "needle pulling thread" book. The needle? A polar explorer named Roald Amundsen – who a hundred years ago became the first human to dance on the South Pole. The thread? A lady with an itch named Lynne Cox – who has a habit of dipping herself into icy waters in remote places. (If you read her earlier book, *Swimming to Antarctica* you'll get my drift).

Cox' fascination with the Norwegian Amundsen began early, in her teens. Understandable, as this early explorer was tangling with a handful of polar greats – Shackleton, Peary, Scott, Cook. Each of these frost heave legends had "firsts" on their mind. And races to win were quietly acknowledged. In Amundsen's case, early efforts were to be the first to navigate a Canadian Northwest Passage (which he did), followed by being the first to set foot on the North Pole (which he didn't). But in a sweep of secrecy, he executed a perfect "u-ie" from north to south – keeping his plans from his crew – and became the first to conquer the South Pole in 1911.

Amundsen's planning was impressive – primarily because he took the time to understand and adapt to the ways of Eskimos who had been surviving in Arctic conditions for centuries. What to wear. What to eat. How to prevent frostbite. How to travel and survive in the face of impossible conditions. Eskimo dogs were employed alive – and sacrificed to be used after death as sustenance. Ice sheets were marked with snow cairns to mitigate magnetic lapses in uncharted latitudes. On and on... in temperatures that froze the mind.

So, back to "the thread.” The author takes off on a journey to replicate Amundsen's course. Only she does it by taking off in a TYR Lycra swimsuit. Church Bay – where the water was a tepid 28.8 degrees F. (stop your fast-twitch muscle fibers from vibrating...). Baffin Bay – going with the floe. The Chukchi Sea – with perilously poisonous jellyfish bubbling up everywhere. Well, you get the point. Lynne Cox is driven by something different than most of us. Anyway, Cox finds ways to jump out of the water each time before her core freezes up. Readers get to go along for the swim without getting their tootsies wet. And with each page they learn a bit about the people who find ways to eke out livings without the help of frivolous things from Victoria's Secret or Tommy Bahamas. Pull your parka snugly up over your ears – it's cold in here.

Robert Wells, a member of The Explorers Club since 1991, is a resident of Darien, Conn., and a retired executive of the Young & Rubicam ad agency. Wells is the director of a steel band (see www.blueflamessteelband.com) and in 1989, at the age of 45,

traveled south by road bike 350 miles from Canada to Long Island Sound in a single 19-hr., 28-min. push.

WEB WATCH

Jetman Video is Home Run for Breitling

In 2006, Swiss pilot Yves "Jetman" Rossy became the first man in history to fly like a bird, albeit with fiberglass and carbon fiber wings powered by kerosene-fueled engines. Since then he has crossed the English Channel and, most recently, flew over the Grand Canyon. This beautifully produced video has it all – great scenery of the Grand Canyon shot in May 2011, p.o.v. footage from his 190 mph flight, stirring Cirque du Soleil-like music (with even a pan flute thrown in), and lots of visual identification for Breitling, his sponsor. View it here: <http://timetosignoff.com/video/?id=16545>

BUZZ WORDS

“Sour Toe Cocktail”

Another amusing artifact on the walls of Neptune Mountaineering in Boulder is the recipe for Sour Toe Cocktail credited to early settlers in Dawson City, Yukon:

“... a concoction of a stiff drink and a formerly frostbitten human toe. People have been drinking the Sour Toe on a dare for over 20 years, thanks to an old rumrunner named Louie Lykins.

“Back in the 1920s Louie was caught in an overflowing river and froze his big toe. Rather than risk gangrene, Louie sawed the toe off and kept it in a Mason jar full of rum.

“Fifty years later, Louie was gone but the pickled toe remained. It was discovered in an old cabin, and the legendary Sour Toe Cocktail was born.” (Editor’s note: we were going to have two “fingers” of Scotch tonight, but just lost our thirst).

“Urbaneering”

Why is New York suddenly Tevatown, USA? REI chief Sally Jewell credits a phenomenon she dubs “urbaneering”: the aspirational desire among city dwellers to take up more ruggedly pastoral pursuits, from blackwater kayaking the Harlem River to mountain biking in Highbridge Park to snowshoeing in the Palisades. EMS CEO Will Manzer puts it more bluntly. “I used to live in the city,” he says, “and I remember how desperate I was to get on my bike and get the hell out every weekend.” (Source: Lauren Murrow writing in *New York Magazine*, Aug. 21, 2011)

ON THE HORIZON

TNF Launches 29-City Speaker Series

The North Face announced that its top athletes will visit cities all over the U.S. as part of the 2011 Never Stop Exploring Speaker Series. The live nationwide 29-city tour invites

adventure fans from across the country to share in the tales of seven top athletes from The North Face Team – Ingrid Backstrom, Kit DesLauriers, Karina Hollekim, Dean Karnazes, Cory Richards, Mark Synnott, and Diane Van Deren.

The North Face Never Stop Exploring Speaker Series, presented by Gore-Tex and sponsored by Primaloft, is scheduled Sept. 15 through Nov. 10. (For more information: www.thenorthface.com/speakerseries).

Lowell Thomas Awards Dinner, Oct. 15, St. Louis

The St. Louis chapter of The Explorers Club will host the Lowell Thomas Awards dinner at the Missouri History Museum (Forest Park, 5700 Lindell Boulevard) on Oct. 15th. This is the first time the award, established in 1980, has been given outside of New York.

The theme of the dinner is “Exploring the World’s Greatest Mysteries.” Master of Ceremonies is Explorers Club Honorary Chairman Jim Fowler, former star of the TV show *Mutual of Omaha Wild Kingdom*.

Previous recipients of The Lowell Thomas Award include Isaac Asimov, Clive Cussler and Wade Davis; astronauts Buzz Aldrin, James Lovell and Kathryn Sullivan; and mountaineer Sir Edmund Hillary.

This year’s honorees are:

- **Edmundo R. Edwards, Patricia Vargas Casanova, Claudio P. Cristino** for studies of the culture of Eastern Polynesia, and the enigmatic moai that stand on the shores of Easter Island.
- **Albert Yu-Min Lin, Ph.D.**, a research scientist attempting to find the tomb of Genghis Khan and protect a sacred region of Mongolia.
- **Thomas E. Levy, Ph.D.**, who has revolutionized the dating of the Biblical land of Edom, pushing the sequence some 500 years earlier than the scholarly consensus – and brought researchers closer than ever before to testing for the potential existence of “King Solomon’s Mines.”
- **Brent S. Stewart, Ph.D., J.D.**, a senior research scientist praised for studies of the mysterious whale shark and other migratory marine species.
- **William C. Stone, Ph.D.**, one of the world’s foremost expeditionary cavers and a proponent of using technology to help explorers survive and thrive as they challenge new frontiers.
- **Kenneth R. Wright and Ruth M. Wright, J.D.**, partners whose work on water conservation has brought enduring benefits to the environment, water resources, and communities in both North and South America.

Tickets start at \$200 and can be ordered through <http://ltad2011.explorers.org/>

World's Fair of Clubs, Oct. 19-22, Chicago

Exploration and adventure clubs from around the world will be converging on Chicago, Oct. 19-22, for the first World's Fair of Clubs, hosted by the Adventurers Club of Chicago. Through seminars, guest speakers and networking opportunities the conference hopes to continue to blaze a trail for the next generation of adventurers. Among the speakers will be Dr. Anatoly Sagalevich, Emory Kristof, Don Walsh, IMAX cinematographer Stephen Low, Humboldt Squid authority Scott Cassell, and Chris Welsh who will dive next year to the Marianna Trench and who is partnered with Richard Branson. Cost is \$350. While there, see if you can get into Club HQ to view the largest privately owned collection of shrunken heads, letters from President Theodore Roosevelt, and a Spanish Cannon that dates back to the 1600s. (For more information: <http://www.theadventurersclub.com>).

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