

EXPEDITION NEWS



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

ADVENTURES IN LOLOLAND

Were WWII Airmen Enslaved?

There is a legend among the people of Sichuan, China, that during WWII American pilots were captured by a slave owning tribe known as the Black Lolos, and lived out their lives as slaves in the villages of the Cool Mountains. The tale has pervaded the oral histories of both the Lolos and the American pilots who served in the China-Burma-India Theater since that time. While this legend may be as specious as the purported existence of the Yeti, it makes an interesting premise for an expedition, an expedition such as that planned by producer/writer Ann Marie Lynch, a former soap opera actor from New York and Los Angeles.

The story goes like this: when Japan invaded China in 1937 and closed the Burma Road and all routes into the country, Chaing Kai Shek appealed to President Franklin D. Roosevelt for materials to fight the Imperial Army. The only way to supply China was by airlift over the Himalayas from India. It was an extremely dangerous mission because of inclement weather and the high peaks of the "Hump." President Roosevelt promised, and the pilots delivered, but at a great cost in young men's lives. An aluminum trail of plane wrecks ran from Calcutta to Chengdu.

Some 1,500 men would disappear into the clouds, never to be heard from again. Thousands were found dead, but a lucky few would survive crashes or bailouts and then successfully escape from indigenous tribes or the Japanese on the ground. Other American Air Force (AAF) men were bailing out only to find murderous enslaving tribes who were supposed to be allies. For the pilots who landed in the region of the Liangshan Mountains, it became an often-terrifying adventure in Lololand.

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EVEREST ROUND-UP

Everest did little to cooperate last month as more than 1,000 people from a record 22 expeditions flocked to its flanks to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the first summit. Last month, fierce winds of up to 120 mph destroyed many high camps, thousands of dollars in gear were blown away or swept into crevasses, and climbers were sent scurrying back to base camps on both sides of the mountain. Adding to the agony: a helicopter crashed while en route to Everest on May 28, leaving three Nepalese dead.

Predictably, some Everest summiteers are decrying the tourist "circus" on the mountain. Japan's Junko Tabei, who in 1975 became the first woman to reach the summit, told Reuters, "It's rather regrettable that the value of climbing Mount Everest has diminished. The huge number of climbers has made climbing Mount Everest more dangerous and has also made the mountain less sacred."

Said Ed Viesturs, an American mountain guide from Seattle, "The 'circus' is more due to the fact that people seem to be trying to outdo each other to gain sponsors and/or gain notoriety. For example, The Fastest, The Youngest, The Oldest.

"The crowds have changed the mystique. But that's the way it is. There are more people everywhere - Grand Canyon, Yosemite, The Alps, etc."

Sir Edmund Hillary himself was advocating as early as 1989 that the mountain be closed for five years. That never happened, but the Nepalese government did begin to pay more attention to overcrowding. Some of the more compelling achievements to come out of Everest this season include:

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LO LO LAND from page 1

“Lolo” was a pejorative Han Chinese term meaning “barbarian” because of their primitive lifestyle and social hierarchy. The Lolos lived in the vast unmapped territory between two major air bases in southwest China, Chengdu and Kunming, known as Lololand. Today the Lolos call themselves Nuosu and are under the blanket term of Yi with six other ethnic minority groups in the region.

Aside from the Lolo’s reputation as fierce, barbaric and capable warriors, the Lolos had a caste system in place that revolved around the practice of slavery. Anyone within their grasp, including U.S. Airmen, was subject to raids, abduction and enslavement.

The myth that Lynch’s expedition seeks to prove or dispute, is the myth of Lololand; that American men became slaves and lived in the region breeding a new race of slaves. When slavery was abolished there in late 1957, 700,000 slaves were freed. Lynch hopes to gauge how slave and master co-exist today and whether there is lingering prejudice.

The first phase of the expedition is scheduled for July when she conducts a preliminary tour of the region. In September, the documentary crew and the rest of the expedition team will enter the theater and begin the search, mostly by horseback, since there are few roads.

Lynch spent the last two years making a documentary and writing a book about the war in the Philippines during WWII. Lynch is currently speaking to the Boeing Corporation for help building schools in the villages of former slaves – the same slaves who helped save the pilots who flew Boeing aircraft during WWII. Other sponsors are being sought as well. (For more information: Ann Marie Lynch, 631 473 8480 (h); 631 974 8480 (cell); amhoney22@yahoo.com). ▲

EVEREST ROUND-UP from page 1

- **Go Speed Racer Go** – A Nepalese Sherpa set a record for the fastest ascent of Everest by reaching the top in 10 hours and 56 minutes. Lhakpa Gelu, 35, smashed the earlier record of 12 hours and 45 minutes set just three days before by another Sherpa, Pemba Dorjie. Lhakpa was part of a German expedition. Normally, climbers take about a week to get from base camp at 5,350 m (17,550-ft.) to the summit of the 8,850 m (29,035-ft.) mountain.
- **To the Max** – Another Nepalese, Appa Sherpa, set a record for the maximum number of Everest climbs when he reached the summit of the Himalayan peak for the 13th time. Appa, 42, improved his own record of 12 ascents

when he reached the summit from the popular Southeast Ridge route, pioneered by Hillary and Norgay. Appa was part of a U.S. expedition attempting to remove some of the decades-old trash left by climbers on the mountain.

- **First Black African** – A South African game ranger became the first black African to reach the top of Everest. Sibusiso Vilane, 32, reached the summit and wept tears of joy, the South African Broadcasting Corp (SABC) said, quoting a journalist who had spoken to Vilane by phone.
- **Old Man of the Mountain** – A 70-year-old became the oldest person to reach the summit. Yuichiro Miura, accompanied by his 33-year-old son, a Japanese cameraman and six Sherpa guides, reached the summit after a nine-hour ascent, his office in Tokyo said.

Miura broke the previous age record set by another Japanese climber, Tomiyasu Ishikawa, who was 65 when he reached the summit in May 2002.

- **Youngest American** – John Roskelley, 54, and his son, Jess, 20, a mountain guide and University of Montana student, reported their successful summit from the northern side in a satellite telephone call to Dan McConnell, a Seattle spokesman for their climb. “Being able to do it together was a dream for both of them,” McConnell said of the Spokane, Wash. team. Staying healthy was their biggest challenge. “If you’re sick as you ascend, the worse your sickness gets,” said the elder Roskelley.

Nepalese mountaineering officials can recall no American younger than 20 reaching the summit, though they do not keep official records. Government regulations prohibit attempts on Mount Everest and other peaks by anyone aged less than 16, which has protected the record set by Temba Chheri, who scaled Everest from the Tibetan route at the age of 15 years 18 days in 2001.

The Roskelleys were members of the Generations on Everest Expedition. Team members Dick Bass, 73, the Dallas businessman who conceived the Seven Summits concept, and Seattle attorney Jim Wickwire, 62, had to abandon their attempts because of physical difficulties. Bass e-mailed friends that he injured his back on Mar. 31 diving into a low two-man tent, “like a playful little boy.” He wrote with exceptional candor, “Frankly, I was tearful with pain, swearing at myself for having such mock heroic, vainglorious, and extremely unrealistic expectations by being here ... On this climb I’ve been feeling like a 100-year-old in a 73-year-old body with all the frailties that entails.”

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- **Summiting was the Easy Part for Hillary** – Fifty years after conquering Everest, Sir Edmund Hillary is setting a pace that would leave many younger men trailing far behind.

Nearly 84 years old, partially deaf, and his once-towering frame stooped by age, Hillary called on his legendary reserves of stamina and strength for a round-the-world jaunt to mark the 50th anniversary.

Hillary's commemorative trips to Nepal, Britain and the United States cap months of intense global media interest and celebrations to mark a feat which recalls a pioneering spirit of adventure. Among his many 50th anniversary honors: in early June, Sir Edmund was scheduled to receive LIFE Magazine's inaugural LIFE Achievement Award in New York. This new honor recognizes individuals whose contributions to the world community surpass the public record of their deeds.

"All of it has been extremely tiring up to now," Hillary told Reuters last month from his Auckland home. "We've had calls from reporters and newspapers and everything from all over the world over the last few weeks. It really has been quite a demanding procedure."

New Zealanders warmed to the self-effacing "ordinary bloke" who liked to be known simply as "Ed," whose number was listed in the Auckland telephone directory, and whose craggy, weather-beaten face appears on the New Zealand \$5 note.

- **The Everest Box Score** – Around 175 people have lost their lives trying to scale Everest, according to record-keeper Elizabeth Hawley in Kathmandu. Some 1,300 people have summited so far. Hawley predicts the next truly historic climb of Everest lies in the future." It has been thought of but no one has ever tried it: a traverse not just of Everest but also of two mountains, Lhotse and Nuptse, that adjoin it to form a horseshoe," she writes.

- **Breashears Sets the Record Straight on the First Live Everest Broadcast** – China last month claimed to have achieved the first live television broadcast from the summit of Everest days before the 50th anniversary of the first ascent. The broadcast was made by Chinese mountaineers, who reached the peak via the northern slope, which lies in Tibet. The pictures on state-run China Central Television (www.cctv.com), which reaches hundreds of millions of people, showed jubilant but exhausted Chinese climbers resting at the summit in yellow, red and purple parkas, some wearing oxygen masks and goggles.

CCTV beat the Outdoor Life Network, which was hoping to become the first to beam images from the summit as part of its reality adventure show *Global Extreme Challenge*. But if either were expecting entries in the boob tube record books, they are at least 15-20 years late, depending upon your definition of "live."

Technically speaking, the first live images from the summit of Mount Everest were sent via microwave transmission on May 7, 1983, by Boston filmmaker David Breashears. Ang Rita Sherpa, who later became the first person to climb Everest ten times, pointed the microwave transmitter while Breashears ran the camera for ABC's "American Sportsman."

"The summit images were transmitted live 15 miles to the Mount Everest Hotel where they were recorded on videotape," Breashears tells EN. "Imagine the delight, and surprise of the video technicians who were the first to see live images from Earth's highest point. There was no satellite uplink at the Mount Everest Hotel. It was deemed unnecessary since in the early-80s, climbers reached Everest's summit in the afternoon; ABC-TV was off the air during those a.m. hours in the U.S.," Breashears tells EN.

The transmission was followed in 1988 by a large, well-equipped Japanese expedition that broadcast extensive live coverage of the summit ascent, reaching tens of millions of Asian viewers. "It was an exemplary achievement that predated China Television's effort by 15 years," said Breashears. ▲

EXPEDITION NOTES

Strand at the Pole – British explorer Pen Hadow, 41, got himself into a bit of trouble last month when he was stranded at the North Pole for a week. After completing his trek on May 19, he was drifting in a tent on an ice floe with his rations running low and no direct communication with his base team. Two earlier attempts to pick up Hadow by plane failed when broken ice and thick clouds prevented the aircraft from landing at a refueling stop. The third attempt, by Kenn Borek Airlines, was successful.

Hadow began his 64-day, 478-mile trek on March 17 from Ward Hunt Island in northern Canada, completing the journey to become the first person to reach the North Pole alone and unaided from Canada.

In a related story in the *New York Times* (May 25), subtitled, "Everest is Over. Hello, North Pole," Andrew C. Revkin writes that after Everest "...the North Pole is next in line, but it is holding fast." To accommodate adventurers, the story reports that Russian and French entrepreneurs have set

up a temporary base camp on the ice, called Borneo, about 60 miles from the Pole. The facility features generators, microwave ovens, and satellite phones as 20-ton airplanes loaded with skydivers, snowboarders, and cross country skiers come and go from an ice runway.

Amex Expedition Credits Sir John Franklin – After 18 days and over 170 miles of sled hauling, the American Express Franklin Memorial Expedition successfully commemorated one of Britain's most significant, but little known polar explorers, Sir John Franklin. The expedition retraced his last steps and those of his men in an attempt to resolve some of the mysteries surrounding his final expedition.

Franklin, who was famously celebrated by the British press for eating his own boots in order to survive a previous expedition, set off in his ships the *Erebus* and *Terror* in 1845 to discover the North West Passage, a much sought after trade route that would link the Atlantic to the Pacific. When their ships became trapped in ice, the men were forced to make the trek southwards towards Canada. None of the men were to survive and despite an 11-year search led by his wife, little was discovered about how they met their fate. Instead, rumors of cannibalism and lead poisoning abounded.

Despite the lasting legacy that was left to polar exploration, there has been little known about Franklin's final journey, until now. Having observed increased lead levels in people indigenous to colder climates, researcher Dr. Mark Wilson used the expedition team to explore his theory that it was environmental factors, not the tinned food, that caused the high levels of lead found in the remains of Franklin's men. Back in the U.K., Wilson's colleagues are also analyzing the markings on the bones, which suggest the scars of fighting rather than cannibalism. Findings of this research will be released at a later date and it is hoped that myths surrounding the original expedition can be finally put to rest.

Historians have suggested a course across the sea ice, but the Amex team, traveling at the same time of year and in similar conditions, found this to be impassable. Ice pressure ridges forced the team to travel overland along the coast of King William Island. This is the first time the full land route of Franklin's men has been retraced at the same time of year, giving the team an insight into the route choices made in 1848. The expedition trekked from the first land point after Franklin's ships were abandoned, Victory Point on King William Island, to Starvation Cove, where the last traces of Franklin's men were found – bones and boots and an upturned boat.

They now fully recognize what Franklin's men would have suffered, and appreciate the efforts required to get as far as they did.

Adventure Golf – If this is an expedition, then sign us up: an American adventurer named Andre Tolme, 33, is golfing his way on foot this month from east to west across Mongolia. To reach the first "tee," Tolme trained north from Beijing to Ulan Bataar, then bused to the eastern city of Choybalsan. From there, it's five months, 420 golf balls, 18 holes and 2.3 million yards (1,319 miles) until he reaches the western city of Dund-Uus. After visiting Mongolia in September 2001, "... seeing the low rolling terrain and short grass of the steppe, the golfer in me immediately saw the country as one big golf course," Tolme tells EN.

He had met plenty of people around the world who were bicycling or running across entire countries, but he had never come across a nomadic golfer (probably for good reason). Tolme, a resident of Berkeley, Calif., decided "winter rules" would apply – he's allowing himself the luxury of taking a preferred lie within one club length of where the ball lands. "This avoids having to hit every shot from the rough, which would be tedious and uninteresting."

"Some may call this extreme golf, adventure expression or just plain crazy," he wrote on his Web site (www.golfmongolia.com). "One thing is certain, this has never been done before and may never be done again." While Sierra Designs provided some gear, Tolme's trip is mostly self-funded. To raise cash, for \$25 he'll let anyone sponsor one of the hundreds of balls he needs. He'll play each consecutively until it's eventually lost in Mongolia. Tolme will e-mail its last known GPS location to benefactors (should they want to search for it, as unlikely as it sounds). (For more information: andre@golfmongolia.com, www.golfmongolia.com).

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Quote of the Month

"You read those books when you're up here, about Peary and those guys, and it does kind of cheapen this experience. Twenty-four hours from Seattle I'm on the Arctic icecap. Some people might think it's rather bold and daring, but these days all exploration is kind of forced, finding things to create a challenge because living doesn't require much challenge."

– Jim Osse, a marine engineer and diver from the University of Washington, quoted in the May 25 *New York Times*.

AAC Grants Awarded – The American Alpine Club (AAC) last month announced awarding 21 grants totaling \$9,530 for new alpine research projects and young climbers' pursuit of challenging objectives, including several first ascents, around the globe.

The AAC grants program provides resources for climbers and explorers to attempt new challenges, conduct scientific research, and push the envelope of human accomplishment in mountain and polar environments. Grant recipients include:

- Keith Bosak (Boone, N.C.) – effects of conservation policy in the Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve, India.
- David Daly (Lemoore, Calif.) – research of Walter ‘Pete’ Starr, Jr. gravesite, on Michael Minaret in Inyo National Forest, Calif.
- Adam French (Missoula, Mont.) – research and documentation of human impacts of recreation in Cordilleras Blanca.
- Paula Hartzell (Worcester, Mass.) – glacier ecology: macroinvertebrates and their habitats.
- Anna Marie Heckman (Seattle, Wash.) – recreational impact to indicators of ecological impairment in high elevation ecosystems in North Cascades and Mount Rainier National Parks.
- Steve Israel (Vancouver, B.C.) – structural and metamorphic geology of the Atnarko complex, Coast Mountains, B.C.
- Matt Kinsey (New York, N.Y.) – cerebral blood volume changes during treatment of acute mountain sickness measured with near infrared spectroscopy.
- David Lovejoy (Prescott, Ariz.) – snowpack structure, snow metamorphism, and climate on Nevado Cayambe, Ecuador.
- Jeffrey S. Munroe (Middlebury, Vt.) – detecting latest Holocene climate change in North Uinta Mountains through repeat photography.
- Amy Townsend-Small (Port Aransas, Texas) – stable isotopes as an indicator of nutrient cycling, organic matter transport, and hydrologic regime in the Andean headwaters of the Amazon River.
- Simon Trautman (Bozeman, Mont.) – creep velocities as indicator of wet snow stability in Bridger Range, Mont.
- Emanuel Voyiaziakis (New Hyde Park, N.Y.) – review of current frostbite treatment therapies, research and patient case histories from Mont Blanc Massif.

(For more information: www.americanalpineclub.org) 

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Magnetic and Geomagnetic North Pole Confused – Last month we reported that David Hempleman-Adams was the first person to reach the Magnetic North Pole solo. In fact, from what we can confirm through conversations with polar explorer Helen Thayer and his spokesperson, Alex Foley, he was likely the second person to reach the Geomagnetic North Pole – not to be confused with the Magnetic North Pole and Geographic North Pole. Huh?

The Magnetic North Pole, vital to navigation, is at the center of the magnetic region of the earth and compasses point to its general vicinity. The Geographic North Pole (the legendary home of Santa Claus) is where all the lines of longitude meet at the top of the world. Meanwhile, the Geomagnetic North Pole, is seldom visited and is an obscure mathematical position not directly used in navigation. It lies at the north end of the axis of the magnetosphere, the geomagnetic field that surrounds the Earth, in Kane Basin, south of the Darling Peninsular, and north of Qaanaaq (Thule), Greenland.

The late Bezar Jesudason of Resolute Bay, who was an historian of the various north poles, reported that in 1985, Japanese explorer Mitsuro Ohba walked from Resolute Bay to the Geomagnetic North Pole in Greenland solo and unsupported, making Hempleman-Adams the second to do so, not the first. In 1986, Ohba was the first to walk to the Magnetic North Pole solo and unsupported; in 1988, Helen Thayer was the first woman to reach the Magnetic North Pole, also solo and unsupported. The 1986 Steger International Polar Expedition was the first confirmed dog sled expedition to the Geographic North Pole. Whew!

In a related story, Hempleman-Adams, 46, arrived in Pittsburgh late last month to make a second attempt at crossing the Atlantic from West to East in a Roziere hot air balloon. The expedition will depart from Pittsburgh in early June. This will be the second British attempt at a solo crossing of the Atlantic in a traditional open wicker basket. Last year, Hempleman-Adams attempted the crossing but was forced to land in Connecticut due to technical difficulties with the craft's autopilot. (For more information: www.boi.ie/specialolympics).

James Cameron's Explorers Club Membership – The Apr. 2 *USA Today* was incorrect when it referred to filmmaker James Cameron as a member of the Explorers Club. When the article came out, he was not yet a member. However, his application has subsequently been approved. 

EXPEDITION CLASSIFIEDS

Expedition Public Relations – Alex Foley & Associates specializes in expedition PR. Alex Foley is honorary secretary of the Explorers Club British Chapter and has executed PR programs for many ventures including the 1996 Titanic Expedition, Ice Challenger across the Bering Strait, and David Hempleman-Adams' Atlantic balloon crossings and first solo and unsupported expedition to the Geomagnetic North Pole. Contact: Alex Foley & Associates Ltd. (London, UK), alexfoley@btinternet.com; www.alexfoleypr.com; Tel: +44 207 352 3144; Mobile: + 44 7976 713478.

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Climbing: Expedition Planning, by Clyde Soles and Phil Powers - new from Mountaineers Books. This is the only reference on planning, organizing, and leading climbing expeditions, large or small. Receive a free catalog including more than 500 outdoor titles from The Mountaineers Books, online or by phone: www.mountaineersbooks.org; 800 553 4453. ▲

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