
Preface

Over the course of H. Adams Carter's 35-year tenure, *The American Alpine Journal* evolved as one might expect from an editor who was an expert skier, accomplished climber, and mountain scholar. Fluent in five languages, Ad relentlessly pursued information from climbers worldwide, sending them letters and postcards and badgering them in general until finally he wrestled the essence of their endeavors into articles, photographs, and topos for these pages. When he took over from Francis Farquhar in 1959, the task was a manageable one, even for a full-time teacher and coach: the number of big expeditions each year to Alaska, South America, and the Himalaya could be easily recorded. Most of the lead articles in the early years were about the first ascents of major peaks and walls in the major regions. Within the U.S., Yosemite Valley and Alaska dominated the front pages. This is not to say there was little climbing activity in the rest of the world. For example, climbers had accomplished over 400 ascents in the Andes alone. But the focus was on American climbers.

By the time he was 15 years into his reign, the project had mushroomed — and he was close to retirement from his duties as a teacher. This was fortunate for the *Journal*, because it was becoming a full-time effort. Countries for which climbing was a major activity had several teams deployed worldwide. Thanks to developments in equipment, ease of transportation, sponsorship, and the fact that climbing had become for many a vocation rather than just a pastime, new lines were being attempted on major peaks and big rock walls, even in the most remote regions. At some point in the 1970s, the “Climbs and Expeditions” section began to look more like miniature lead articles. The number of pages, photographs, and topos increased markedly, and climber/authors from other countries began to figure more prominently in the leads. But it was still possible for the *AAJ* to be the “journal of record.”

As the *AAJ* entered the final decade of the century, the scope of the project had reached a proportion that challenged even the encyclopedic mind and boundless energy of Ad Carter. As Ad came to the realization that the reproduction of photographs, the keystroking of documents, and the redrawing of topos were better done at the printer's if a timely and professional publication was the goal, the costs increased. Over the years, those of us close to the project knew that when the time came for finding a new editor, there would be a significant change in how the *Journal* was produced. We

also knew that deciding its future mission would take more than one transition year to determine.

Shortly after Ad's death on April 1, 1995, Ann Carter said to me, "Ad knew that once he was no longer the Editor of the *AAJ*, it would become whatever the next editor made it." For the *Journal*, the first decision to be made was quite apparent: we had to find a capable (and willing) person to take on the daunting task of editorship. Christian Beckwith was recommended by a frequent contributor to the *Journal*, Yvon Chouinard. In 1963, in his article "Modern Yosemite Climbing," Yvon predicted that the great climbs of the future would be accomplished by dedicated full-time climbers in superb mental and physical condition using new techniques and developments. This turns out to be a metaphor for what the *AAJ* requires of its new editor. Beckwith, a young and enthusiastic climber, was already a dedicated and accomplished man of letters. In his adopted home of Jackson, Wyoming, he had started a community-based climbing organization, The Wayward Mountaineers, and founded a widely-acclaimed climbing 'zine, *The Mountain Yodel*. Now, in six months' time, he has produced this volume, and we are appreciative of his efforts, especially given the legacy he has inherited.

Other decisions about the *Journal* will take longer to make. Can the *AAJ* continue to be the "journal of record" for mountaineering? We feel it could — and more importantly, that it should. But the on-going discussion centers around just what the *Journal* should be the record of. In the climbing dialogue worldwide, we have moved from discussions of first ascents of unclimbed classic peaks to descriptions of new lines on these same peaks; we have seen the transition from large expeditions to alpine-style ascents; we have heard the great debates on clean climbing, solo ascents, "freeing" routes, and whether to use bottled oxygen above 26,000 feet. The *AAJ* has recorded them all.

Now we must look at the inevitable issues we face as we turn into the 21st century. Every generation needs a frontier. As those of us interested in mountains find fewer unexplored spaces on the map, this has meant creating new variations on old themes. The *AAJ* faces similar challenges. Do we include articles on guided climbs and commercial expeditions? Do we record first ascents of one- and two-pitch climbs on desert towers and horizontal routes on great granite walls? Do we continue to report on traverses of the polar caps and circumnavigations of alpine massifs? As you read the feature articles and expedition accounts in this year's volume, you will see how we have begun to answer these questions.

The lead articles are the result of screening and discussions with the small editorial board. The entire issue has been made possible by contributions on a number of levels, not the least of which is financial. Thanks to Henry and Lydia Hall and Ad Carter himself, we have a significant endow-

ment. But without the Friends of the *AAJ*, and without the help of numerous volunteers, we could not have completed the task.

For today, it is our hope that readers will continue to look to the *AAJ* as a primary source of reporting on climbing's accomplishments, debates and developments. We intend to remain the first stop for researching mountaineering objectives, and will continue to provide a history of the AAC and its activities; we will note the passing of our members, review the various climbing media, and, as always, offer just plain good reading. As for the future, let us never forget the contributions of those who came before us. Our world and the mountaineering scene are changing. Let us endeavor to change with them, as those who pioneered the way before us would have wanted.

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