

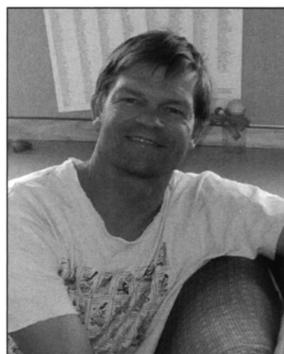
IN MEMORIAM

EDITED BY CAMERON M. BURNS

PETE ABSOLON 1960–2007

On August 11, a hiker trundled a rock that killed Pete Absolon, 47, as he was climbing a new route in Leg Lake Cirque in the Southern Wind River Mountains.

Though born in St. Paul, Minnesota, Pete spent his childhood in Texas and Maryland, and graduated with a BA from George Washington University in 1983. He promptly put his geology background to work, becoming a climbing guide at Seneca Rocks, West Virginia. There he met his future wife, Molly Armbrrecht, while climbing. Pete was known as “the first climbing guide” at Seneca Rocks. Pete established a number of difficult, bold routes at Seneca including The Viper (12b, PG), Projected Futures (12b), Icing on the Cake (11d, PG), and Terminal Atrocity (10c, X).



Pete Absolon. *Courtesy of NOLS*

Molly and Pete married in 1988. They moved to Lander, Wyoming, in 1990 and began full-time work as National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) field instructors. The following decade was filled with journeys of all kinds. Pete climbed and traveled extensively: from Alaska to the Karakoram, the desert southwest to Yosemite, and across the Canadian and U.S. Rocky Mountains. There was hardly a place he didn't explore with a rope, in a boat, on a bike, or on foot. Accompanying him on many of these trips was Molly, an accomplished writer, skier, climber, and mountaineer.

Pete helped shape wilderness education throughout his adult life, first as a mountain guide and climber and later as a NOLS instructor. His reach in outdoor education grew substantially when he took on broader, supervisory responsibilities; he was the director of NOLS Rocky Mountain when he died.

Pete was a dedicated and talented climber. He trained hard and climbed often. Needing a training facility in the small town of Lander, he convinced his local climbing partners to “invest” in his 20-foot high garage gym. Pete did the research and planning to give each of his adventures the best chance at delivering the most climbing for the time available, and he was generally the source of motivation in any partnership. He was safe and deeply experienced. When you climbed with Pete, you always climbed at your best. He bred confidence.

In September 2000, Pete and Molly embarked on their greatest adventure yet: parenthood. Avery Absolon, almost seven years old at Pete's death, brought awe and joy to Pete's life every day. Even as a toddler, Avery was an enthusiastic and skilled participant in the family outdoor pursuits. She loved skiing, climbing, fishing, hiking, and biking with her Dad. She also drew Pete into her own special world where he happily participated in elementary school activities, and put on his dancing shoes for special father-daughter dance recitals and practices. Days

at the crags now included entire worlds for the woodland fairies and Avery's imagination. Having Avery did not slow down or alter the Absolons' joyful, active lives. They continued to pursue their dreams and interests and simply expanded their incredible world to include this bright, energetic, and beautiful daughter. They became an ever-closer unit. The name Absolon conjured up not one face, but three, like a wonderful team.

In addition to Avery and Molly, Pete leaves behind his parents, Mary and Karel Absolon of Rockville, Maryland; sister Mary Absolon of Edina, Minn.; sister Martha Delahanty of Long Valley, New Jersey; and brother John Absolon of Rockville, Maryland; as well as an extended family who loved him very much. Pete was preceded in death by his brother, Fritz Absolon, of Rockville, Maryland.

LIZ TUOHY, AILEEN BREW, and PHIL POWERS

ROBERT G. ALLISON 1928–2007

Bob Allison died April 22, at the age of 78, after a long struggle with cancer. He was serving at the time of his death as chair of the AAC's Grand Teton Climbers' Ranch Committee. He had previously served for many years as president of the Kansas City Climbing Club.

When I first met Bob he was already past 70, and my entire experience with him thereafter was at the Climbers' Ranch in Wyoming. Bob's principal qualities, as they struck me, were his excellent health, his wry sense of humor, and his good heart. That first June, just five or six years ago, while we were in the Tetons together, Bob was also planning another of his many trips to the Wind River Mountains for later that summer. His objective was again to climb Gannett Peak, 13,804 feet, the highest mountain in Wyoming. If I recall, that was to be the seventh or eighth time he climbed that mountain. Of course, the "difficult" part of the climb only begins after a 22-mile approach carrying a 60-pound pack. I was impressed with his physical stamina and strength, and the happiness he found among the mountains.

During one of Bob's trips to the Wind River Range he and his group came upon a large, obviously man-made pile of rocks. Skeletal remains of a horse stuck out from the bottom of the pile. Bob paused to study the scene, as if in meditation, then wondered aloud, "Didn't they know that if you pile a bunch of rocks on top of a horse you'll kill it?"

At the Climbers' Ranch, Bob was always a quiet presence. Though always sociable, ready to laugh and exchange stories, he was just more inclined to listen than to talk. It is a tribute to his easy-going manner and openness to friendship that people who met him at the Climbers' Ranch enjoyed his company whether they were in their 20s and had just met him for the first time or were older and had known him for years. He was universally regarded with affection and respect. His knowledge of the Teton Range and other mountains was well-known, and we were often entertained by descriptions of his journeys to the Russian Caucasus, to Mexico, China, and the old British base camp at Mt. Everest.

When Bob was diagnosed with cancer two years ago he reacted with a perfect balance of acceptance and determination. He even found humor in the situation. When the American



Robert Allison at the Ranch.
Courtesy Robert E. Hyman