

Paul lived life as it came, not planning far in advance. He had no desire to be a slave to a time schedule. He chose a way of life for the creative freedom it would allow. He was bound by principle to do what he enjoyed doing and in this way found much in life and in living. He was a most enjoyable companion and always strove to maintain an equitable balance between the academic and the physical endeavor. Such was his mettle.

STEVEN ALTMAN

JOHN VINCENT HOEMAN

1936 - 1969

The Dhaulagiri tragedy still seems to many of us unbelievable. That Vin Hoeman was one of the seven who died beneath the ice avalanche makes it only more so. All his experience and ambition, lost to the whims of a mountain! The only consolation lies in the lives of those with whom Vin shared his love for mountains, for caves, for deserts, for people, for nature. We are richer by far with what he has taught us, but poor when we realize these experiences will never be the same without him.

John Vincent Hoeman was born September 2, 1936 in Alabama. "I lived there three weeks and have been traveling ever since," Vin liked to tell. His father's work moved the family from state to state, eventually to Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio where Vin graduated from high school. From there, his family moved to Utah and Vin went on to obtain a B.S. in Forest Management from Colorado State University. He later did graduate study in zoology there and at the University of Alaska. Vin worked a year in research for the U. S. Forest Service in Idaho before being drafted into the Army. He was always proud that, with the influential help of Robert Bates and Bradford Washburn, he was able to steer himself to Alaska to teach mountaineering and test cold weather gear for the military. In 1962, after his active duty, Vin worked for Arctic Health Research Center in Anchorage. Though he never had a formal course in ornithology, his self-taught birding skills qualified him well for work there and later for the Division of Birds, Smithsonian Institution. In 1964-5 with the Smithsonian, he visited the Aleutians, Pribilofs, Nunivak and St. Lawrence Island and extensive areas of the South Pacific, banding birds. From 1965-6, he worked for the Institute of Arctic Biology at the University of Alaska while attending school.

Studying birds, caves, the Utah Desert, plants and animals were all important to Vin. His knowledge of each of these subjects was vast. But from his early teens, his interest in mountaineering dominated the others. On a family vacation, Vin climbed Longs Peak with his Dad, returned home to Ohio instilled with the spirit of the mountains and ordered his first ice axe. This axe became his treasure of those days. During college years, it accompanied him on many of his 36 Colorado 14,000ers and the eight 14,000ers of Mexico. His first axe aged and eventually was lost, but his mountain spirit grew and was still growing when he went off to Dhaulagiri. I have never seen the equal of his mental drive. Had the Dhaulagiri expedition succeeded, there is no doubt that Vin would have been in the summit team.

Vin's leadership was more than his being out in front, finding what almost always turned out to be the best route. He had a strong voice and a deliberate manner of speaking that inspired his parties' confidence. His keen and always-alert mind, which made him a prolific conceiver and effector of plans, also enabled him to judge situations and make decisions quickly when necessary. His fine memory and sense of direction contributed too. Vin kept harmony on expeditions by setting a contagious example of individual independence and, when possible, annoyances were averted by converting worry time to climbing time. Vin began leading expeditions in 1963 with an April ascent of Robson and a traverse of McKinley and Hunter. In 1966, he led the Alaskan Andean Expedition which climbed Chimborazo and Huascarán, Vin's highest point, and a climb of Mount Walsh in the St. Elias Mountains. In 1967, he co-led the Yukon Centennial climb of Mount Vancouver, led a new route and traverse on Mount Logan, a search ascent on McKinley and a climb of Chimborazo. During 1968, Vin led the first traverse of the Harding Icefield and was on expeditions to the Brooks Range and Mount Kimball in Alaska. In various years, he led climbs of Shiprock, Devils Tower and a first ascent in the Needles of the Black Hills.

Vin's mountain activity extended beyond his climbing and leading. His work with organizations included being Alaskan Section Chairman of the American Alpine Club, President of Colorado State University's Hikers' Club, Chairman of Alaska Rescue group, Secretary of Mountaineering Club of Alaska and editor of their monthly publication *Scree*, and on the Editorial Board of the *American Alpine Journal*. Vin was a born historian and kept a daily journal from the age of 16, including detailed accounts of all his climbs. While hospitalized in the Army, he began a card file of Himalayan climbers. Each climber had a card, his biographical

information on one side, his climbing record on the other. As his interest in Alaskan mountains grew, Vin switched to cataloguing Alaskan climbers. He recorded over 1200 of the latter, finding the information useful for work on his guidebook to Alaskan mountains. In his thorough search for complete and recent information for the guide, he edited advance sheets for the USGS and accumulated the biggest mountaineering library in Alaska. He was also active in naming Alaskan geography, battling doggedly for years with the Board on Geographic Names, encouraging them to accept descriptive names instead of the usual "Jones Mountain." Vin's stock of information was invaluable to the many climbers who wrote for advice. He enjoyed sharing his explorations and inspiring others by writing numerous articles for *Scree* and the *A.A.J.* His letters appeared in the *Christian Science Monitor* and his slide lectures were stimulating and educational experiences. Vin was also preparing a book on the recent history of Mount McKinley and, as the only person to have ascended them all, a guide to the highest point in each of the fifty states. Though many benefitted from Vin's writing, and one section of his Alaskan guide was published in the *A.A.J.*, it is tragic that none of his books were completed before his death.

Vin found a perfect mate in Dr. Grace Jansen, who is now an A.A.C. member. They were married December 30, 1966 and during their short but full and happy marriage explored together the mountains and nature of Alaska, Europe and South America, including the 20,563-foot summit of Chimborazo. Their Alaskan hospitality and Anchorage home cum basement-packing-house were becoming a traditional part of Alaskan expeditions. Grace worked with Vin on his writing and his interests are still hers. Perhaps she will be able to continue where he left off, to complete some of his much-needed books. Besides his wife, Vin leaves two step-daughters, his mother and father, two sisters and a brother.

We will remember Vin for many things, best perhaps for these things he loved: finding Morrell mushrooms in the dark by smell, memorizing maps and elevations, reciting *A Race of Men* or *Sam McGee* around a campfire, recording a raven flying north-northwest at Mile 426.2 on the Alaska Highway, surprising visiting climbers with their own history, sharing a delicious supper of road-killed rabbit and fireweed salad or dreams of climbing Everest's North Face. The Himalaya were always Vin's dream. It is only fitting that his end should come in the ultimate range on earth.

DAVID P. JOHNSTON