

His organizational talents always helped keep things on track but he was no martinet—he was always tolerant of the failings of others. We fondly remember the happy expeditions of which he was a part. His death is a great loss to all his friends.

FRANK CARY, PERCY OLTON, FRITZ WIESSNER

RAFFI BEDAYN

1915-1982

A son of Sarkes Bedayn, the food merchant of San Francisco, Raffi took up climbing in the mid 1930s. He soon became one of the leading rock-climbers of the Sierra Club and made his mark in the company of such luminaries as Bestor Robinson, David Brower, Dick Leonard and Jack Arnold. His reputation in climbing circles was nationwide a decade before his carabiners were distributed worldwide.

Raffi's first non-Californian climbing was on the 1936 attempt on Mount Waddington, a trip organized by his associates contemporaneously with that of the first-ascent party, but not as fortunate, although given first chance on the peak. In the fall of 1939, a Sierra Club party made the first (white man's) ascent of Shiprock in the New Mexican desert, and Raffi was the strong anchor and belay man. The next summer found him in the Bugaboos for the first ascent of Snowpatch, which had turned back the even-then legendary Fritz Wiessner in 1938. He served with distinction in World War II as a climbing instructor at Seneca Rocks and as a line officer in the 86th Mountain Infantry in Italy. After the war, he made fewer outstanding ascents, devoting his considerable energies to the construction and scrounging business he operated in the East Bay Area. The natural demands of raising the four children presented to him by his admirable wife Barbara were a further drawback to sustained absences on the rocks; but they all became skiers.

The famous Bedayn carabiner first appeared shortly after the war. A product of necessity for sustained high-angle climbs, as he knew only too well. Pricing of this item and quality control were not based on normal marketplace standards but rather on that characteristic which won Raffi such a warm place among us, service to the climbing community.

Raffi served the American Alpine Club with the same enthusiastic vigor he applied to every task. After some years as the godfather and confessor to the denizens of Sunnyside (Camp IV) in Yosemite, he joined the Board in 1972 and served for six years. His unflinching candor, ready smile and constant willingness to work showed in this facet of his life with the added grace that only one of exceptionally large heart can muster. At the time of his retirement, he received our first Angelo Heilprin citation for his exemplary service to the Club.

After leaving our Board, Raffi turned his energies to the California Blacksmiths Association and became its guiding light. Indeed, at the Celebration of his Life, there seemed to be as many smiths as climbers. But the secluded and delightful home in Orinda, whence their children have now gone, remained a transient hotel for visiting alpinists and other strays from all over the world. The warmth and generosity of the host, aided by the calm incisiveness of his wife, made every moment memorable.

His terminal illness was known to close friends for over two years, but it was nothing to him—the same groaning truckloads of gifts and groceries, the same overstrong handshake, the same hearty welcome for an old “horse’s petoot.” It was very hard not to love Raffi Bedayn.

WILLIAM L. PUTNAM

JOHN M. WATERMAN
1952-1981

In April John disappeared while attempting a solo climb of the east buttress of Mount McKinley. Crevasses were common on the route, and other climbers reported a period of frequent avalanches.

John was a climber of great natural ability who, for personal reasons, never fit into the mainstream of American mountaineering. He began backpacking and rock climbing with his father in the mountains of New York and New England. At a time when teenagers were rare at the Shawangunks, he led his first 5.10 (Retribution) at age 15. His first taste of the snowy mountains came on an Appalachian Mountain Club trip to the Northern Selkirks. The following summer, at age 16, he climbed McKinley’s west buttress with a group of AMC friends.

John might have coasted through the mountains on sheer natural ability, but he took the craft of climbing seriously and trained himself to be a fast, safe, consistent climber on any terrain. He loved to lead, but his piton placements were wonderfully considerate of his seconds.

After high school graduation his climbing career blossomed: a trip to England, Scotland, the Alps and Turkey (with Dennis Memhet); a second ascent of the south face of Snowpatch Spire; a first solo ascent of VMC Direct on Cannon Mountain; the Nose of El Cap; a solo ascent of the north face of the Grand Teton; the first south-to-north traverse of the Howser Towers (with cousin Dane Waterman); a first ascent of the north face of Mount MacDonald; a first ascent of the east ridge of Mount Huntington; a third ascent of Mount Robson’s north face; and in 1973 the first ascent of Mount Hunter’s south face.

After 1973 John moved to Fairbanks and became a member of the Alaskan climbing community, but increasingly he preferred to climb