

Rébuffat combined a mastery of modern climbing techniques with a romantic concept of the mountains rooted in the 19th century pioneers he so admired. His descriptions of ascents were never burdened with logistical trivia. He preferred to speak in more philosophical, even poetic, terms of what mountains do for man rather than what men do to mountains. Perhaps his basic attitude toward the mountain environment might be termed passionate prudence; “lucidity” was a word he often used in writing of climbing. He felt the mountains should be open to everyone, and that each was free to learn the rules his own way. He therefore neither espoused nor disparaged solo or speed climbing, but he openly deplored the competitiveness that led to the nationalistic planting of summit flags.

Gaston Rébuffat was an extraordinary human being. He was not only a happy family man but also completely self-made. He had no formal education beyond high school, yet he became a foremost mountaineering writer. He was for many years editor of the alpinism column in the Paris daily, *Le Monde*, directed a mountaineering book series for the major French publisher, Denoël, and with his son Joël, established a publishing house of his own in Geneva. He wrote twenty mountaineering works which were translated into many languages and reached millions of readers. There are probably few climbers today who have not read one of his works, seen his stunning climbing photographs, or heard him narrate his prize-winning mountain films such as *Etoiles et Tempêtes*, *Entre Terre et Ciel*, and *Les Horizons Gagnés*.

In some far-off time and place, outer space dwellers may one day marvel at the photograph sealed in the first American space probe, where Rébuffat’s linear figure, on an aiguille silhouetted against Mont Blanc, symbolizes the soaring human spirit as nothing else could.

Gaston Rébuffat, guide, friend, and for many the archetypal mountaineer, has gone on ahead. His life reminds us that “The struggle alone toward the summits is enough to fill man’s heart.” The words are from Albert Camus, but the concept is pure Rébuffat.

ARTHUR KING PETERS

BENJAMIN E. (TOM) KING
1929-1985

Tom King, a member of the southern California Section, died on September 15, 1985 while doing what he loved best. He was training in the mountains near Los Angeles for an expedition due to leave less than two weeks later to attempt the first ascent of Yulongshan in northern Yunnan Province, China. In his memory, the members of the expedition donated a copy of Tom’s book, *In the Shadow of the Giants*, to the Chinese Mountaineering Association office in Kunming, and his family is donating his extensive collection of mountaineering literature to the Club.

Tom was a gentle but powerfully built man, with a radiant smile for everyone. I first met him in the early 1970s, when we were opposing counsel in a hotly contested legal case. After the case ended, we discovered our common love of the mountains, and we climbed together from time to time. I sponsored his membership in the Club in 1982.

Born on July 10, 1929 in Camden, Arkansas, he attended Santa Monica (California) High School and received his undergraduate degree from the University of Oregon in 1951. He was a fullback on his high school and college football teams, and played the game with the quiet, dogged, straight-ahead determination which later characterized his legal career.

Following his graduation from Oregon, he spent the next eighteen months "roughing it" through 23 countries around the world. He travelled to Europe that year with two Oregon classmates, one of them Bill Byrd, then a climbing guide in Grand Teton National Park. Tom got his first exposure to roped climbing on that trip, when he ascended the Matterhorn, a climb which he repeated twenty years later.

Tom graduated from the UCLA School of Law in 1956, spent several years as a California Deputy Attorney General, and joined the Los Angeles law firm now known as Buchalter, Nemer, Fields, Chrystie and Younger. Tom headed the firm's Litigation Department, and as a skilled trial attorney, he always had time to train and advise (ever so gently) the younger lawyers in the firm.

His first love, however, was the mountains, a number of which were memorialized in his book: Mont Blanc; the Matterhorn; the Eiger, Jungfrau and Monch; Everest; the Annapurna Sanctuary; Fuji; the High Sierra; and his greatest love, the Haute Route, the grandest ski tour in Western Europe. His vacations from his legal practice were often spent climbing or skiing in these mountains. I recall that on one of his trips, for a week of helicopter skiing in the Bugaboos, he skied well over 20,000 vertical feet.

Early in 1985, he caught a ski tip on a pole during a slalom race, and injured his knee. After several months of recuperation, he began training for the Yulongshan Expedition. He was climbing alone that weekend in September, and his body was found several days later at the base of a 400-foot cliff on Strawberry Peak.

At his funeral, a passage from his book was read regarding an experience which he had following his 1971 ascent of the Matterhorn:

"On the tram up from Furri that day I met a couple from Pittsburgh that was going to Schwarzsee to relax and enjoy the view.

'Do you think you'll be attempting the Matterhorn?' they asked, unaware of my previous day's effort [three hours forty minutes to the top]. I reflected a moment. 'Yes—exactly twenty years from now.'

Sure enough, after returning to the States, I received a long letter from Charlie Brown, [his climbing companion on that 1971 climb] with an expected postscript:

'See you at the Hörnlihütte, August 5, 1991—you'll only be in your early 60s!'

Tom was a true friend, advisor, and companion in the mountains, and I have no doubt that he will make that ascent on August 5, 1991. He was a man of his word.

EDWARD E. VAILL

JOHN FRANKLIN NOXON
1928-1985

I met John Noxon in 1950 at a recruiting meeting of the Harvard Mountaineering Club. John was a first year graduate student in Physics with a developed love of hiking and winter mountaineering in New England. We climbed actively together in the next seven years over North America and the Karakoram Himalaya. John introduced me to Antarctica, which became the focus of much of my career, reading to a group of us who climbed McKinley in 1952 the *Worst Journey in the World* as we struggled each night into frozen sleeping bags.

We were friends until his death, meeting occasionally in his home, or his laboratory when I was not in the Antarctic or he was not flying at 40,000 feet in an airforce laboratory aircraft pursuing the illusive glows that occur in the outer reaches of the earth's atmosphere.

John continued the tradition of the humanist, naturalist, explorer, mountaineer. His interests were wide ranging. He built harpsicords and played Bach fugues. He was an accomplished photographer. He blew his own glass apparatus for his laboratory experiments. He married my wife's roommate, Patricia Warner. John is survived by his wife, their daughter, Mary, and his mother.

John dedicated his life to unravelling the secrets of the molecular changes that occur on the fringes of the earth's atmosphere under the influence of the sun's energy to produce that glorious nighttime event—the aurora borealis or australis, and more significantly to us survivors on earth, ozone and the recombinations of ions and molecules of such substances as the oxides of nitrogen. His colleagues, who worked with him, first at Harvard and the Blue Hill Observatory and, thereafter, at National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration where he was recognized for his work with the Department of Commerce Distinguished Service Award, will miss his curiosity, persistence and elegance of method as will those of us who had the privilege and pleasure to climb with him.

Apsley Cherry Garrard in his account of Scott's last expedition to the Antarctic, *The Worst Journey in the World*, says, "... if you have the desire for knowledge and the power to give it physical express, go out and explore.—If you march your Winter Journey you will have your reward, so long as all you want is a penguin's egg." My one regret is that John and I never had the opportunity to share together an Antarctic adventure.

HENRY S. FRANCIS, JR.