

Hyperbaric Medical Society.

Pace is survived by his wife, Mary Jo de Rouhac Pace of Berkeley, daughters Susan Rossi of Oakland and Cynthia Barber of Union City, and grandchildren Carla and Dino Rossi and Robert Barber.

THOMAS JUKES

ROBERT LYON SPURR
1937 - 1995

My father, Robert Lyon Spurr, Alaskan mountaineer and mountain runner, was killed on North Maroon Peak outside Aspen, Colorado, on August 11. He apparently lost his footing shortly after beginning his descent and fell 250 to 500 feet.

It would be an understatement to say that Bob Spurr loved the mountains. The mountains of Alaska, where he lived, and Colorado, where he vacationed, were his playgrounds. He would get excited about every detail of each outing: the route he took, the animals he spotted, the altitude gained, the invigorating way it made him feel. He was always planning the next journey even while eagerly recounting the one just completed.

My dad was a “climber’s climber,” a purist, an enthusiast. He knew the mountains of Alaska better than his own backyard.

“It’s a different world up there,” he would say to my mom. “I wish you could see it.”

He would talk to anyone about a climb or hike, always with particular interest in the route they had taken. To him, the quality of the route taken was more important than reaching the summit. Just a few days before his death, following the climb of Maroon Peak, he expressed disappointment in the guidebook’s suggested route. He wrote in his log, “Too many traverses! Need to repeat climb — do ridge more directly.” I dare say he did not even feel he had climbed the mountain. Sure, he had reached the summit, but climb the mountain? Not yet.

My dad began hiking and climbing as a boy, primarily in New England (Mount Washington, Mount Katahdin, Mount Chocurua), but also in Seattle (Rainier National Park) and Anchorage (Chugach Mountains) where his family lived for brief periods of time. His first and second “first recorded ascents” took place in the Chugach on Mount Gordon Lyon and P 3,990’ (nicknamed “Mount Robert”) in 1953, when he was just 16 years old. Shortly after, he returned to New England to finish his secondary education at Phillips Academy in Andover. Although he attended college (Drew University, 1959) and graduate school (Northeastern University, 1963) in the

Northeast, he had long dreamt of returning to the mountains of Alaska. No surprise, then, that he jumped at the chance to teach physics at Alaska Methodist University (now Alaska Pacific University) and moved us to Anchorage in 1965.

My dad was not one to pat himself on the back or talk about past accomplishments, so it wasn't until after his death, when I read his journal accounts and heard from past climbing partners, that I learned about his "early" climbing years and the contributions that he made to mountain climbing in Alaska. He was past president of the Mountaineering Club of Alaska and taught a class in mountaineering at Alaska Methodist University. I recently read a scrapbook article that described a class he taught on the Matanuska Glacier for crevasse rescue practice — prussik and pulley techniques. A student reported that my dad rushed back and forth along the crevasse line, "inspecting the pulleys, jumping up and down, and yelling, 'Classic! Classic! Physics in action!'" He climbed Mount McKinley in 1968 and had a number of "firsts" in the Chugach, Talkeetna, and Kenai mountain ranges in Alaska, including first recorded ascents of Temptation (1969), Isthmus (1967), Mooswa (1967), Yisbo (1967), Lower Tower (1968), Trident (1969), Sheep Mountain (1969), Katadoyana (1969), Alabaster (1970), and Adjutant (1973), and first recorded winter ascents of Pastoral (1967), Kickstep (1967), and Byron (1968).

Through the years, he continued his mountain adventures. He had climbed 41 of the Colorado Fourteeners, well on his way to achieving his goal of conquering all 54. He was also an accomplished mountain runner, competing yearly in the Pikes Peak ascent and holding the second fastest recorded time in the 50-and-over age group. He always enjoyed going up far more than coming down, and in an interview once said of himself, "I'm a bottom to top kind of guy."

My dad's greatest achievement, however, was not in first ascents, races won, or mountains scaled, but rather in the way he lived his life, the countless people he introduced to the mountains, and the healthy respect for the mountains he instilled in others. His unwavering commitment to fill his days doing what he enjoyed is the legacy he leaves to his family and all the climbers, hikers, and runners he met along the trail. He taught through example how life was meant to be lived. He lived a life true to himself. He died doing what he loved.

At the time of his death, he was Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Alaska, Anchorage. He leaves his wife of 36 years, Elizabeth Hatch Spurr, two daughters, one son, one grandson, his father, two brothers, and many other relatives.

TRICIA SPURR THOMPSON