

# In Memoriam

EDITED BY ANGUS THUERMER, JR.

DONALD HUBBARD  
1900-2000

Donald Hubbard, whose achievements as a rock climber and alpinist spanned nearly half a century, died of cardiopulmonary arrest on July 20 in McLean, Virginia, less than three months before his 100th birthday.

Hubbard did some of the earliest ascents at Seneca Rocks in West Virginia and Old Rag Mountain in the Shenandoah National Park. During World War II, when climbers were restricted from traveling far from home, he pioneered some of the most difficult routes at Carderock, an area just outside Washington, D.C., and a perennial favorite of local climbers.

Following the war, Hubbard focused most of his climbing energies on remote areas in western Canada, where he made more than 80 first ascents and repeated several of the most difficult routes of the day. Nearly every summer between 1946 and 1960, Hubbard and partners Sterling Hendricks and Arnold Wexler set off on an expedition to the Selkirk region of British Columbia. In 1957, Hendricks and Hubbard were involved in a tragic accident that took the life of another in their party and nearly cost them theirs.

Climbing on Mt. Howson with Rex Gibson, who was then president of the Alpine Club of Canada, Hendricks and Hubbard plummeted 250 feet down the side of the mountain. Gibson, who was leading the rope team, was struck in the head by a loose rock and when he fell he pulled the other two with him. Gibson died of injuries from the fall. Hubbard suffered a broken knee and remained with Gibson until he passed away during the first night. Hendricks, with a broken shoulder, went for help and made slow progress, using his one good arm and his teeth to hold onto the rope during several precipitous rappels. Once Gibson passed away, Hubbard used a tent pole for a crutch and for two days hobbled down the mountain.

"His specialty was coaching beginners," said Herb Conn, who started climbing under Hubbard's tutelage in the early 1940s. "More often than not, he would have them leading some climb far beyond their ability—but he could always get them to the top through sheer word power."

Bill and Ruth Schlect, two psychiatrists from Washington, D.C., who were also climbers, recognized this quality about Hubbard and sought his help in their work with juvenile delinquents. The Schlects believed that climbing could be used to transform these troubled kids from self-perceived losers to winners. "He [Hubbard] used to bring a group of delinquent boys to Carderock, kids who had done things like murdering their mother," said Conn. "One day, to give such a lad confidence in his own self-worth, Don showed him how to belay a top rope, then deliberately threw himself over the edge. The lad held him."

Hubbard refused to take much of the credit for the work he did with these adolescents. "Most of the kids found out they could do things the adults couldn't and this boosted their egos," he explained. In addition to the time he spent with these troubled youngsters, he worked the other side of the fence with the Boy Scouts to establish a climbing merit badge.

Hubbard also figured prominently in one of the first made-for-television depictions of

the climbing life. In the early 1950s, CBS launched a short-lived drama called *The I-Series* that included various outdoor adventures as part of its theme. The pilot episode, *I-Christopher Bell*, starred Charles Bickford as the protagonist Bell, with Hubbard appearing as the stand-in for Bickford during the climbing sequences. The show was a half-hour and had a simple plot. The aging Christopher, a legendary mountaineer, returns to his old haunts in the Colorado Rockies to try and regain some of the glory he achieved there in his youth. He has been out of climbing for a while, and naturally his health has deteriorated. Not long before arriving in Colorado to visit an old climbing partner, Bell had suffered a stroke and has become partially paralyzed as a result.

"The television crew fell in love with Hubbard," remarked Joel Gross, one of the producers of the show, "although they found him a bit of an oddball." Two weeks before the shooting started, Hubbard was asked to join Gross and the director, Don Medford, in scouting locations for scenes. After hours of hiking around in the mountains, they opened cans of sardines that Gross had packed with their lunches. Medford was horrified to find a large fly soaking in the heavy oil with his sardines. Hubbard lifted up the insect, examined it closely, and then swallowed it. "Hmm," he mused. "I believe that's *musca mediterranean*. Delicious. I haven't had one in years." Nobody on the crew ever heard, except for Gross later on, that one of Hubbard's responsibilities at the National Bureau of Standards during World War II, where he was a research chemist, was to study what GIs could get by on in a pinch for food. Whatever they were expected to eat, Hubbard ate too, and flies were considered one of the delicacies on the menu.

I met Hubbard only a couple of years ago. Although he didn't hear well or move around much at all, he was still quite sharp and quick witted, and fun to be with. I enjoyed calling on him, hearing old stories of what it was like to climb at Seneca Rocks, Carderock and other places popular with my generation of Washington, D.C., climbers, before these places were developed and when the number of climbers was insignificant. Losing an old friend like Don Hubbard is a loss to our whole area. He was one of our patriarchs and will be sadly missed.

TODD POST

LLOYD A. ANDERSON  
1902-2000

Lloyd A. Anderson, an American Alpine Club member since 1942 and the founder of Recreational Equipment Inc., died September 13 at the age of 98. Although he climbed more than 400 peaks in this lifetime, making many first ascents, it was his approach to buying that made him famous. When, in the late 1930s, Anderson went shopping for an ice axe, he found them hard to get and expensive. So he imported better, cheaper axes from Austria. Soon he was distributing climbing gear to various small stores before heading to his day job as an engineer for the Seattle Transit System. Within a short period, Lloyd was buying high-quality outdoor gear at reasonable prices for hundreds of friends and acquaintances. REI, the country's biggest outdoor-related cooperative, was formed. Anderson, when asked why a co-op, not a corporation, said, "I never thought a man should make money off his friends."

CAMERON M. BURNS