

PETER LIMMER, JR.

1920-2000

While not a member of the American Alpine Club, Peter, as assistant to his late father and with the help of his late brother, Francis, shod scores of us. Born in Vachendorf, Bavaria, a small town he would describe as being “under a bridge on the Munich-Salzburg autobahn,” Peter came to this country at an early age with his shoemaker father and his mother, née Maria Bücherl, the daughter of another shoemaker.

The family set up in Jamaica Plains, Massachusetts, where the boys matured until wartime duty called, Peter into the U.S. Air Force and Francis into the 10th Mountain Division, while their father kept the business together at home. Many were the delightful tales the elder Limmer told of his service in the Kaiser’s army—including being taken prisoner by the Russians a generation earlier.

In 1950, the family decided to move nearer the mountains and purchased the Harmony Acres Dance Hall property in Intervale, New Hampshire, which they converted into a shop and showroom. Until the advent of more sophisticated merchandising, the Limmer family also carried a line of quality climbing equipment which they sold at minimal markup. There the family hospitality to clients and old friends became legendary.

In keeping with his parental tradition, Peter retired several years ago from active work in the business, turning it over to the second and third generation of American-born family craftsmen, whose distinctive footwear is cherished by hundreds of hikers and climbers all over North America.

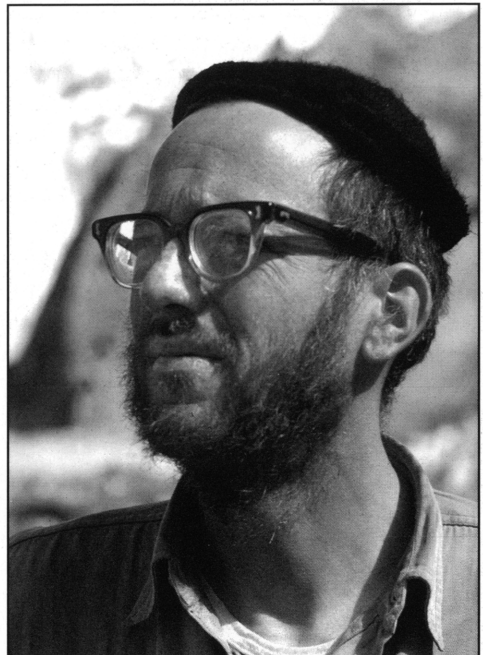
WILLIAM LOWELL PUTNAM

GEORGE IRVING BELL

1926-2000

When George Bell, who made significant first ascents in the Andes and the Karakoram, died on May 28, in Los Alamos, New Mexico, from leukemia complications following routine surgery, it was a quiet end to a remarkable life. George is survived by his wife Ginny, and his children, Carolyn and George, Jr.

On Masherbrum in 1960, a group of us was standing in the snow between Camps IV and V looking up at the great southeast face, which led to the summit. The face was impressive enough, but what really caught our attention was the giant ice cliff that ran across most of it—high up. We were going to be spending a lot of time underneath it. There weren’t many avalanche scars, but it was not a reassuring sight. So we stood there contemplating the significance of it. Finally



George Bell on Masherbrum. NICHOLAS CLINCH

George said, "If that thing comes down it will be an act of God." It was typical George, quiet, humorous, and, fortunately, absolutely right. The man was a tower of calm competence.

George excelled at two things, theoretical physics and mountaineering. He was born August 4, 1926, in Evanston, Illinois. He first started climbing in high school when he visited the Tetons while attending a summer camp. Then he went to Harvard University, where his smoldering interest in the mountains was stoked into a roaring fire by the Harvard Mountaineering Club. In the late 1940s he made numerous climbs in the Tetons, Wind Rivers, and Cascades. He went on the Harvard expedition in 1948 to the Waddington area of the Coast Range of British Columbia, where he made four first ascents. But the start of his major mountaineering began with the remarkable expedition to the Cordillera Huayhuash of Peru that succeeded in making the first ascent of the very difficult and dangerous Yerupaja (21,769'). George was a prime mover of the expedition and reached the high camp at 20,600 feet.

This was the beginning of a series of expeditions to the Andes in which George was a key participant. In 1952, he made the first ascent of Salcantay (20,574') in the Cordillera Vilcabamba of Peru, another outstanding achievement. Later, after losing some toes on K2, he made the second ascent of Chopicalqui (20,998') in the Cordillera Blanca in 1954 and returned again to the Pumasillo group of the Vilcabamba in 1956. George also was the chronicler of those expeditions. In the 1950s the *Saturday Evening Post* liked to run one article a year on mountaineering expeditions, and George wrote four of them.

When Charlie Houston and Bob Bates were picking their team for K2 in 1953, they included George Bell in that elite group. After the accident in which Pete Schoening held five falling men, George managed to crawl down the mountain with frozen hands and feet. He had to be carried out to Skardu on the backs of porters. When they came to the rope bridge over the Dumordo River, George sat on the bottom strand and pulled himself across using the two side lines. When asked about his ordeal, he said, "I would have walked if I could." Two years later he was on an international expedition that attempted Lhotse under the leadership of Norman Dyrenfurth.

George graduated from Harvard University in 1947 with a degree in physics and received a doctorate in theoretical physics from Cornell University in 1951. He moved to New Mexico and worked at the Los Alamos National Laboratory until his death. Most of his work was in nuclear physics, but he was also involved in biology and biophysics and was a founder, in 1988, of the Center for Human Genome Studies. He married Ginny Lotz in 1956, and for the rest of their lives the two of them went on many family climbing and backpacking trips, including dozens of treks to the Himalaya and other mountain ranges. George also was active in The American Alpine Club. He joined in 1950 and served on the council in 1956 and 1957 and as Central Vice President from 1959 through 1961.

We knew Masherbrum (25,660') would be hard, so with George as leader, we got some of the finest climbers in the country, including Dick Emerson, Tom Hornbein, Dick McGowan, and Willi Unsoeld. Again and again, the expedition was hit by storms and avalanches. Again and again, we regrouped and started back up the mountain. It was a tremendous group of climbers and the quiet catalyst of the effort was George, leading by example. He could hold his own with anyone. George and Willi reached the summit together on July 6, 1960, and all of us had had an unforgettable experience of effort, hazard, comradeship, and success.

No one in that group of characters was ever at a loss for words. Yet it was George who made the most memorable remark of the expedition. He and Willi were on the summit, and Willi had put a small cross given to him by a friend into the snow. He was saying a prayer over it when George said, "Well, Willi, shall we go down—or up?"

There is no question which way George went in his life. Whether it was at work, in the mountains, with his family, or with his friends, George always went one way: up. We all were lucky to have had him.

NICHOLAS B. CLINCH

GILBERT J. ROBERTS, M.D.

1934-2000

Gil Roberts, a fine expedition mountaineer from the 1950s and 1960s, died on July 15, 2000, in Berkeley, California, from cancer at the age of 66. Gil dealt with death in the same uncompromising way he dealt with the other crises in his life and his mountaineering, unblinking and head on. He is survived by his wife, Erica Stone, and his children, David Dorji Roberts, Kathy Roberts, and Kim Roberts.

I first met Gil in the fall of 1951 when he came to Stanford University as a freshman and joined the Alpine Club. He already was an experienced climber, and I used the excuse that he should be checked out as a leader in order to go climbing with him in Yosemite. There were three of us. We were halfway up Washington Column. Gil was in the middle and was sitting on a flake perched on a ledge. I was sitting a foot behind him on the flake. The climber who was leading went out more than 20 feet without protection. He was stopped by a smooth slab and decided to jump for the gully beyond. He leaped, failed to stick, spun, and dropped into space, trailing the rope behind him.

For a moment I thought the flake would come off and we all would end up on the talus. Gil held and the flake held. The nylon rope stretched out like a rubber band and the leader bounced up and down like a yo-yo on the end of a string. Gil's hands were badly blistered but he never let go. Just then I received sudden enlightenment as to where the route went and asked Gil for a belay. All he said was, "Be careful. I don't think I can hold two falls like that in the same day."

It was classic Gil. Face the crisis. Deal with it. Make a few dry remarks and move on. He was made a leader.

He started climbing in 1948 at 14 with the Southern California Rock Climbing Section of the Sierra Club and did numerous climbs at Tahquitz and Yosemite. While still in high school, he made first ascents, including Mt. Smythe in the Canadian Rockies with Chuck and Ellen Wilts, as well as doing climbs such as the East Buttress of Whitney, the East Ridge of Edith Cavell, and the East Ridge of the Grand Teton. Gil was a strong member of the 1954 Stanford Coast Range expedition that made numerous ascents, including several firsts, in the Waddington area. He later made the first winter ascent of the East Buttress of Whitney and an ascent of the Kain Face of Mt. Robson.

Although he was a fine rock climber, his real strength was as an expedition mountaineer. He was the driving force behind the first ascent of the East Ridge of Mt. Logan in 1957, a major achievement for the time.

Gil went to Stanford Medical School, and his medical background plus his mountaineering ability made him a prize candidate for any expedition. After his medical internship, he served two years in the Air Force as a flight surgeon at its survival school in Reno. He was a member of the successful 1958 Hidden Peak expedition, but he and Dick Irvin had to come in after the rest of the party and arrived just as the mountain was climbed.

He joined the 1963 American Mt. Everest expedition and was in the Khumbu Ice Fall fixing the route when a wall of ice collapsed, killing Jake Breitenbach. Gil was a couple of steps