

# PREFACE

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Twenty years ago H. Adams Carter answered his doorbell and ushered me into his home office, where he edited the *American Alpine Journal*. The files were stacked high, boxes brimmed over with note cards and correspondence, and his well-worn typewriter looked like it had written more letters in the last year than I had in my 26-year-old life. Certainly that keyboard had processed more languages than I ever would, because the man who used it famously juggled a half-dozen tongues in the quest to gather reports on big routes from across the globe. The *AAJ* was born in 1929, when Ad was 15 years old. Its prime mission has been constant ever since: to document and communicate mountain exploration as it happens. Indeed, this mission has been at the heart of the American Alpine Club ever since its own founding in 1902, and it is enshrined in the Club's charter. But it was Ad's 35-year tenure—from 1960 to his death at age 81 (while the 1995 edition of the *AAJ* was at the printer)—that cemented this publication's reputation as the world's journal of record, *the* place to document the big mountain events of the previous year. This history, this tradition, this connection to the great expanding web of climbing and mountain exploration—these also happen to be ingrained in my own soul, and I think in the soul of the greater mountain community. Today I can pull from my filing cabinet the typewritten notes that Ad sent me in response to my own *AAJ* submissions, and I only wish I could tell him how proud I am to be picking up his reins and seeing where the journey leads.

Of all times to treasure a legacy, you can't beat a centennial. This year the American Alpine Club celebrates its 100th birthday, and as its flagship publication, the *American Alpine Journal* is delighted to take part in the festivities. The *AAJ*'s primary objective, of course, is to document the prior year's significant new mountain ventures. Still, over the years we've tried to place today's events in the historical context, the better to understand where we are and to appreciate where we've been. On the occasion of our 100th, we're devoting the front of the book to a long gaze across the horizon already traveled. We'll pause at many interesting points in the century to remember highlights from our American journey. Our opening collection, "Ten Climbs to Remember," makes one stop per decade. If this story whets your appetite, stay tuned for next year's *AAJ*, wherein 100 such fascinating highpoints will be celebrated, albeit more briefly. A working group of over 50 prominent AAC members has already generated a list of more than 200 climbs that shouldn't be forgotten. More than a dozen people are currently making the hard choices to narrow this list down to 100 climbs representing the 100 years. Our sleuthing has produced fascinating results, and we can't wait to share them with you.

In this year's *Journal*, we follow up on the Ten Climbs with a longer collection of great books from the Club's first century. Frankly, I was stunned to discover just how entertaining it is to learn history through David Stevenson's brief distillations of so many incredible stories. It's like sitting by a campfire and listening in on 100 years' worth of great storytellers who've been given one minute each to spin their finest yarns. If you agree that a minute isn't nearly long enough, there's always the full book to take you the rest of the way.

In "100 Years of Alpine Leadership" you'll hear directly from every currently living Club president, and briefly learn of those who remain with us only via their legacies. These past and current leaders will share their perspectives on the primary issues that shaped their terms of office, helping us to understand our Club and its role in sculpting history. They make great

mountain companions, these presidents, and I'm sure you'll enjoy their conversation.

Of course, there's a time for remembering history, and a time for making it. Many of our presidents were at the top of the game during the storm years of their youths, to borrow Gaston Rébuffat's great phrase. But for many those years have long past, and you'll feel the tempo pick up markedly as we enter the bright light of today's remarkable climbers. As is the long-standing *AAJ* tradition, we'll hear straight from those who do the climbing that builds history year by year. These are direct connections to the deeds that will be remembered at the AAC's second centennial, in 2102. But keep this in mind when you think of the 22nd century's challenge in choosing their list of the second 100 climbs: if they pick a single ascent per year, they will have to pick just one out of each annual *AAJ*.

In my mind, though, it's Climbs and Expeditions—pages 198-439—that comprises the meat of each year's *Journal*. Sure, it's marvelous to stand back in awe of just how sharp today's cutting edge can be. And it's fascinating to put these routes into historical perspective, especially during our Club's centennial. But best of all is to be out there in the mountains, doing it for ourselves. And that's what Climbs and Expeditions is all about: documenting everything big (defined as an all-day climb or longer) that's new for the reporting year. Some of these climbs are truly state of the art; most are the stuff we all dream of doing whenever the pioneer in our soul cries out. Like so many climbers before me, and countless climbers to follow, I've marched to the library to research old *AAJs* before heading off to distant ranges. This year, thanks to cartographer Martin Gamache, we've added locator maps for mountain ranges in most countries, the better to understand the reports. Look for more maps in the future, as well as *AAJs* on CD-ROM and on the Web. The idea behind the *AAJ* isn't just to provide convenient documentation for historians, it's to help us realize our own dreams of high places.

Crafting the *American Alpine Journal* each year may be love, but it's not without labor. Fortunately, I early discovered how many climbers believe in the *Journal* and work tirelessly to help pull it together each year. I inherited a network of contacts and passionate *AAJ* supporters, some of whom were first brought in by Ad Carter himself, while others were added by Christian Beckwith, who took over when Ad died. Christian filled shoes that many thought unfillable, and took a venerable publication with a daunting legacy and brought it into the modern age—from an invigorated connection to modern climbing, to an updated book design and computerized networking and production. For his efforts we should all be grateful. But there's one fruit of his labor for which I'm particularly thankful, and that's his discovery of Kelly Cordes, Christian's and now my assistant editor. Kelly's passion, connections, talents, and energy were vital beyond words in making this *Journal* as rich as it is.

My personal bonds to the mountains and to the *AAJ* run deep; you could say they were bred into me. My father not only taught me to climb at age six—precisely four decades ago—but he also published annually in the *AAJ*. During those years—the early 1960s—we lived in Germany and Switzerland, and mountains ruled our lives. The Eiger finally took Dad from us in 1966, an event that has shaped my perspective in so many ways, some still to be discovered. I've carried the pride and the burden of my father's legacy wherever I've gone in the mountain world, but I have never felt it more than I do now as I craft the journal where Dad used to publish his record. Back then the *American Alpine Journal's* editor was a man named Ad Carter. I hope you'll join me in remembering Ad and all those whose footsteps we've followed to reach our own routes ahead.

JOHN HARLIN III, *Editor*