

ANDREW JOHN KAUFFMAN, II 1920-2003

One never knows how things will end in this world. How could I have known, back in 1941, when I paired up with Andy Kauffman in the ice gullies of Mt. Washington, that our teamwork would end by my writing his obituary? In Andy's junior (and my freshman) year, we met through the Harvard Mountaineering Club. With Mal Miller, then the president, the three of us became that club's nucleus for weekend rock climbs and winter forays to Mt. Washington. With a war on, that was a hurry-up period for collegiate males. Andy succeeded Mal in June of 1942, and I was elected president just before many of us went off to war at the end of the year.

Andy, a member of the American Alpine Club since 1941, was the son of distinguished literary parents. His mother, Ruth, and his father, Reginald, were noteworthy foreign correspondents during World War I, and well-known authors. After the war they remained in Europe, where Reggie was the League of Nations correspondent for the New York Herald-Tribune, based in Geneva. Their three children attended local schools, and this early grounding in French, until his father took the position of editor of the Bangor Daily News, served as the cornerstone of Andy's life work—analysis of the internal politics of France for the United States Department of State, where he was employed for 30 years after 1943.

Andy graduated from Harvard in January of 1943 and then sought to join me in the Mountain Troops—he even had his obligatory three letters, one each from Henry Hall, Ken Henderson, and myself. Andy, however, flunked his physical exam—some obscure form of heart murmur that never bothered him for the next 60 years. I went off to war and he wrote me dutifully, at least once a week for the next three years. In the mountains of Italy a packet of his precious letters, carefully folded deep in my knapsack, stopped a shell fragment that had my name on it.

During those war years, Andy acted as the clearing house for correspondence between Mal Miller, off in the Pacific, and myself in planning what turned out to be the 1946 Mt. Saint Elias Expedition. And it was he, when told of Ben Ferris's desire to join us, immediately ordered me: "Grab him; he's a doctor!" Andy really enjoyed that Saint Elias trip and asked that his ashes be deposited on that mountain, which will be done. Though he climbed other peaks that were higher, for him it was "the last great mountain."

Following the trip to Saint Elias, Andy returned to the Selkirk Range of British Columbia, where he, and his then wife, née Betty Conant, had spent several tortuous weeks over the previous years trying to gain access to the Battle Range. He finally got there in 1947. The next year, with Ben Ferris, Henry Pinkham, and a malamute, the four of us traversed through the northern Selkirks, making numerous first ascents and meeting with a Sterling Hendricks-led party along the way.

Andy was off to the Coast Range in 1954, where he climbed with Nick Clinch and made the first ascent of Serra IV with David Sowles. A year later he was in Peru, again with Clinch, and made the first ascent of North Pucahira. Andy's acquaintanceship with Sowles gave rise to his establishment of the American Alpine Club's prestigious Sowles Award, when David was killed a few years later in an Alpine thunderstorm.



Andrew Kauffman on the summit of Hidden Peak, 1958. Pete Schoening

With the ascent of Hidden Peak, for which he was later elected an Honorary Member of the Club, Andy's climbing career peaked, and he was content thereafter to join others of us on rock climbs from Seneca Rocks to the Gunks. Several times in the 1960s and 70s we took less strenuous "starvation" trips into the easier terrain (for backpacking, anyway) of the Canadian Rockies, in the course of which he became "Uncle Andy" to a number of my younger friends. During these years he served as vice-president of both the Himalayan Club and the American Alpine Club and undertook the leading role in setting to right the story of the 1939 K2 Expedition, whose leader, Fritz Wiessner, was our mentor and friend.

Andy's career as a diplomat intertwined only once with his distinguished career as an alpinist. While he was stationed as Second Secretary of the American embassy in Paris in 1958, Nick Clinch invited him to join in an attempt on Hidden Peak. Andy promptly sought the necessary leave of absence—and was told, informally, that it had been granted. Having then gone to the Karakoram and having—with Pete Schoening—been the summit party on the only first ascent of an 8,000-meter peak ever made by Americans, he then learned that his application for leave had been denied by the bureaucrats back in Washington. Then they decided that since he was so interested in things in that part of the world, he could stay there for a few years, as consul in Calcutta.

For the Department of State, Andy read through countless French newspapers every day, searching for tidbits that might have a bearing on future government actions. He was the first to predict that the return to power of de Gaulle in 1958 would bring on a spate of problems for NATO and the United States. His memo on the potential return of de Gaulle is a classic of far-sightedness.

After his three-year "exile" to Calcutta, Andy was briefly assigned to Managua before returning to Washington, where he spent his remaining years in government as one of the State Department's men at the end of the "hot line" to Moscow.

Early in our acquaintanceship, Andy instructed me that the leader's job was to pioneer the route; the followers were to carry the burdens. Thereafter, I decided it was easier to be the leader; and thereafter Andy's backpacking feats became legends of endurance. We would load him up and point him in the right direction—once even up five flights of stairs at Harvard with a 400-pound box of climbing gear strapped on his pack. He might have occasionally been slow, but he never stopped moving.

Though he did not make much of it, Andy was an excellent communicator. His letters to me—all carefully bound—take up a four-foot span of my bookcase. He starred in the line drawings for Ken Henderson's *Handbook of American Mountaineering*, and was the prime proofreader for that opus. Working with him on two books—*The Guiding Spirit*, in 1986 and *K-2: The 1939 Tragedy*, in 1992—were my most enjoyable literary endeavors.

Andy's last years were sad. The heart that didn't sound right to the military medics kept his body alive long after the ravages of Parkinson's Disease took his mind. He left us on December 24.

Andrew John Kauffman, II, a generous alpinist of great distinction, is survived by his estranged second wife, the former Daphne Ennis, whom he met in India, and a niece, Xenia. Ours alone, now, are the fading memories of step-chopping and snowslopes, of solid belays and freezing bivouacs, and of all the little favors that make up a lifetime of friendship and confidence. How do you say goodbye to an old friend with whom you have shared 60 years of soggy campfires and alpine crises, of grungy labor and shared misery, of mutual confidence and high adventure? It ain't easy.

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