

**WILLIAM (BILL) HEARRELL ROBINS 1957-2002**

Bill Robins, 45, died on July 7 while attempting a technical climb on the northeast face of Bolivia's 17,159-foot *Pyramide Blanca* of the *Cerro Condoriri* group.

Bill was born on July 3, 1957, in Salt Lake City, Utah to John (Jack) H. and Zelda S. Robins, and raised on a family farm in Kaysville, Utah where he hiked, rode horses, and developed an inquisitive scientific mind. He earned a bachelors degree in chemistry from the University of Utah and a degree in geology from the University of Colorado at Boulder.

Since 1988, Bill has worked as a senior research scientist at Pacific Northwest National Laboratories (PNNL) in Richland, Washington, where he contributed to the state of the art in explosives identification, for use in weapons inspections programs.

Bill made over 1,000 first ascents in Washington and Utah, and has climbed in Canada, Nepal, South America, Kyrgyzstan, and Australia. His ascents were always done in a strictly traditional way, from the ground up. In Washington, his first ascents include *Pink Apes* (5.11+) at the *Potholes' Hall of Frustration*; and *Bark like a Beagle* (5.11X), *Chemically Adjusted Reality* (5.10a), and *Painted Black* (5.11b) at *Frenchman Coulee*. In Utah, his first ascents include *Angel of Fear*, a WI6 ice climb in *Santaquin Canyon*; *Upper Bridal Veil Falls*, a WI5-6 in *Provo Canyon*; and *Gates of Hell*, a 2,220' 5.10d R rock climb, also in *Provo Canyon*.

I met Bill at *Frenchman Coulee* in 2002. New to the *Coulee*, I was eager to learn from the locals when Bill, all six feet (+) of him, walked by in a white French Foreign Legion hat and painters pants (hand-painted with colorful flowers and symbols). When I asked him to help me pick out a few routes, he enthusiastically pointed out several fine lines from a three-ring binder of carefully detailed color pictures. He knew the place intimately, as he had put up hundreds of routes there over the years. He also maintained a website ([users.owt.com/wrobins/](http://users.owt.com/wrobins/)) detailing many of the *Coulee's* climbing areas, plus his own efforts to preserve the area through *The Access Fund* and the *Washington State land managers*.

Bill Robins had a remarkably bold, generous, and humorous spirit—he was a true character, and will be badly missed. He was deeply loved by family and friends, including Paul Certa and Leela Sasaki of Richland, and his four nieces, to whom he brought back gifts from his far away, exotic adventures.

He is survived by his parents, Jack and Zelda, his brother T. Richard Robins, his sister Ruth Ann Eldredge, his nieces Stefanie R. Christensen, Erin E. and Jessica S. Robins, and Margaret Ann White, all from Utah.

KEITH K. DAELLENBACH, AAC, and PAUL CERTA

**ANDRÉ ROCH 1906-2002**

The 20th of November saw the passing of one of the great mountaineers of our time: André Roch. Engineer, avalanche and snow expert, high mountain guide, father, oil painter, and author were some of his many accomplishments. He pioneered climbing access routes of Everest, and cut the first ski run in Aspen, Colorado. His passion for the mountains affected all he encountered.

Born in Geneva, Switzerland the 21st of August 1906 he was introduced to the mountains at a young age by his father, a professor of medicine, and quickly developed a profound love. At 96, when he departed this world, it had never grown cold.

I met André by chance on a frosty morning in early December 1973. On the outskirts of Geneva I was hitchhiking up to Chamonix for my second winter of skiing and working as a

“plongeur” (dishwasher), when a rather worn, black Peugeot 404 pulled to the side of the road and I was motioned to climb in. After a brief silence I was politely asked as to my destination. When I replied, in my limited French, he must have divined my accent and inquired from what country I came. Aspen, Colorado, “Etas Unis” I replied, and upon hearing the name his blue eyes lit up. “Aspen...I have been there,” he said thoughtfully. “First in 1937; I cut the first ski run on Aspen Mountain. I am André Roch.”

In 1968 at the age of 19 I came to Aspen, and of course I knew of the Roch Cup downhill race, Roch run, and of André’s long association with the town. I must say I was not but a little taken aback by whom I was riding with. Regretting he could not take me all the way to Chamonix, for he was due to inaugurate a new lift in the ski resort of Flaine, he promised to pay a visit to the restaurant by which I was employed. Later that winter, he did come, and the girls who owned “Tartine” could not believe André Roch would come all the way from Geneva to visit a dishwasher. He was well known in the Alps.

We stayed friends ever since and frequently corresponded. Invited to Aspen in 1987 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Ski Club that he founded, he predicted our first child would be a boy, and be born during his stay. He was right on both counts. During each return to Chamonix, my family has always been graciously welcomed at his home in Geneva, where a fine view of Mt. Blanc can be had from his library.

André was an amazing person, not only for his vast experiences in his long life, but for his philosophy of life itself. The positive always outweighed the negative. Once while walking together in Chamonix, I commented on how the town had changed over the years and lost much of its charm. “Peut-être...mais les montagnes sont toujours aussi attirantes” (perhaps, but the mountains are as alluring as always). The changes at the valley floor could never alter his feelings for the mountains above.

Life, however, was not always kind to André. His camp in the Himalaya was hit by avalanche, carrying the party some 1,650 feet, killing two (Kumaun, 1939). His son Jean-François was buried 45 minutes in Davos by a slide in which they were both caught. André managed to free himself and dig his son out. A head-on car crash nearly took his life. Worst of all, his daughter Suzanne and her female climbing partner fell to their deaths while climbing with André in 1962, himself saved only by the parting of the rope. Madame “Mims” Roch never shared his passion and reproached him for his frequent extended absences. She never accepted the loss of their daughter. Despite these setbacks, it never diminished André.

In 1937 he was hired by railroad magnate Ted Ryan to map the ski runs and lifts for a resort to be built in Castle Creek valley, near the ghost town of Ashcroft, approximately 12 miles from Aspen. During the winter months, André would ride a horse up the valley, skis slung over the saddle. When at a spot he wished to climb, he would dismount, turn the horse around and slap the horse’s rear to send it back to the ranch. Then he would skin up to the bowls below Hayden Peak to map out the area. I recently toured in the same region, thinking of him and what amazing terrain the resort would have encompassed, had not the outbreak or WWII ended the dream.

An engineer by profession, André is most remembered for study of snow and avalanche, and to that end wrote numerous books. As a consultant he traveled world wide. He was employed for years by the Swiss Federal Institute for Snow and Avalanche in Davos. The work afforded him the pleasure of returning home by skis each evening.

As a climber and guide he has numerous first ascents to his credit; in the Alps there are

25, notably the NE face of the Triolet, and South Pillar of the Courtes in the Mt. Blanc Massif. In the Himalaya and Karakoram he is credited with 27 firsts.

André was still bouldering in his 70s, and skiing in his 80s. In his later years he continued to write technical articles. Always a landscape mountain painter, he continued avidly until his death.

I will remember his charm, wit, and unsurpassed love of the mountains, which continues to influence my own passion. I am blessed to have known and called him a friend.

ROBIN FERGUSON

#### GALEN AVERY ROWELL 1940-2002

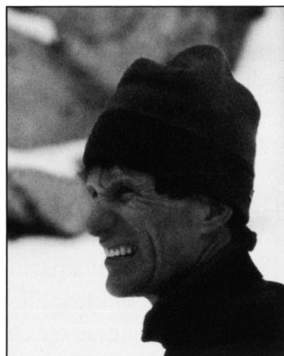
In the early hours of August 11 we lost one of our most energetic and influential mountaineers and photographers when Galen Avery Rowell died in a plane crash. His wife Barbara also was killed, as was the pilot and a third passenger. The chartered flight was turning into its final approach to bringing the Rowells back home to Bishop, California, when it crashed a couple of miles short of the runway.

Galen was born in Oakland on August 23, 1940 into a family with a couple generations of experience exploring the Sierra and the world. From their home in Berkeley they started taking him at a young age onto the peaks, and in 1956 he started technical climbing in Yosemite. Three times he won scholarships to Berkeley, but three springs running he couldn't contain himself in school as the mountains called.

In the early 1960s he roped up with many of Yosemite's luminaries, including Warren Harding, Layton Kor, and Chuck Pratt. He started carrying a camera to record the scenes and positions he'd encounter, but for this Pratt admonished him, saying that picture-taking distracted from the climbing experience, and that the results were almost always disappointing anyway. Galen took this as a challenge, and his ensuing career might be seen as a Herculean drive to weave together the contradictory demands of both participating in and observing the mountaineering experience. During this time he also married Carol Chevez, and they had two children. By 1971 he claimed over 100 new routes in the Sierra and Yosemite.

In the 1970s he sped his pace into a legendary frenzy, supporting himself as a photographer and writer, racing to the Sierra on weekends, and taking trips north. Many of his new routes in this period were with Chris Jones, including the first ascent of the west face of North Howser Tower. He also compiled his first book, *The Vertical World of Yosemite*. The pace took a toll on his marriage, and he and Carol divorced.

In 1973 he got a huge break into the national media when he filled in for a *National Geographic* staff photographer on a feature about Yosemite. He climbed with Dennis Hennek and Doug Robinson on the first hammerless ascent of Half Dome's Northwest Face route, and Galen's pictures and writing ended up gracing the magazine with its first-ever story on technical rock climbing, and a cover photo. Galen knew that many of his climbing partners were upset at this publicity explosion for their esoteric world, but he believed that telling the world about clean climbing would bring positive, not negative effects. The following winter he joined Bishop locals for a trip he remembered fondly, the first ski traverse of California's White Mountains.



Galen Rowell in the Sierra, 1988.  
Andy Selters