

strength of character and his determination. He was a born leader, and he prided himself on accomplishing his ascents during his first push. So it was in 1935 at Torre Trieste and on the north face of the Cima Ovest di Lavaredo in the Dolomites, in 1937 on the northeast face of the Piz Badile, and in 1938 on the Walker Spur of the Grandes Jorasses. Those are only the most famous of his long list of first ascents.

After World War II, during which he led a squad of partisans, Cassin resumed climbing and fully displayed his talent as a leader. This also caused him grief, when after a reconnaissance up the Baltoro Glacier with Ardito Desio in 1953, Desio was named leader of the Italian expedition to K2 the following year and excluded Cassin from the team. It was clear that Desio, a dictatorial boss, could not bear another leader in his group.

Cassin's revenge was the Gasherbrum IV expedition in 1958. Under his leadership, the summit of the extremely difficult 7,925-meter mountain was reached by Walter Bonatti (another victim of Desio's authoritarian intolerance—see the K2 book review earlier in this AAJ) and Carlo Mauri. But Cassin's masterpiece was what is now called the Cassin Ridge on the south face of Mt. McKinley, where in 1961, he led his entire team of Ragni di Lecco (Lecco Spiders) to the summit and down. Other expeditions followed: to the Caucasus (1966), Jirishanca in the Andes (1969), and Lhotse in the Himalaya (1975). In 1987, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of his first ascent on the northeast face of Piz Badile, he climbed it at the age of 78. After the ascent Fulvio Mariani, a filmmaker and friend of his, complained about not having been informed.

"We could have filmed you," Mariani said.

"Why not?" said Cassin. "Let's do it again."

So he climbed the Badile once more. But he scolded journalists who wrote that he had repeated his own route twice. "The second ascent was not valid," he said, "because there was not the descent: a helicopter came to the top to fetch me!"

That was Riccardo Cassin.

MIRELLA TENDERINI

JONATHAN COPP 1974–2009

Of all my friends who *live* their lives, I never thought that he would die. And even if he did, I thought he would surely rise like a Phoenix and keep on living.

We last climbed together in the summer of 2008—life gets busy, I guess—and not much had changed with our usual late-start junk-show reminiscences of airport and travel fiascos. By mid-morning we stood in the Chasm Lake Cirque.

"What should we climb?"

"Maybe something up there?" came Jonny's characteristic reply. "We'll figure it out."

Strong as hell. Good at everything. Wild eyes that burned with life. A mystic who embraced the unknown and unknowable. The best hugs. Huge, toothy grin. Without a doubt the partner you wanted if—and when—the shit hit the fan. He'd just laugh. The greatest laugh. He had an unrelenting optimism.

"Nah, I think it'll work out!" seemed the most common phrase when we climbed.



Jonny Copp on the summit of Fitz Roy in 2005. *Self portrait*

Some partners offer an unspoken gift that, just by being with them, somehow makes you better than you thought you could be. And then, sometime, before you really know it, you begin believing in yourself.

As we racked up I saw what looked like a dowel hanging from his harness.

"Dude, what in *the hell* is that?"

"It's a flute!" he said, and kicked steps up the snow toward the wall.

Oh, well, of course.

I tried my best to mock the hippie flute, but I got quiet when the crux randomly came on my lead. "This is too hard for me," I thought. But I knew he'd tell me to try, and I knew he'd be right. Toward the top of the pitch, as notes drifted upward from the belay and without even realizing it, I danced.

Now he's gone. Some things are too big, too powerful and there is no Santa Claus. Later we console ourselves with talk of inspiration and memories, and how the ones we lost wouldn't want us to be sad. We whisper wistful "if onlys," but it remains undeniable that risks are part of the equation, as are all the experiences that make us who we are—that the close calls and willingness to *go* come with the love and laughter and joy and inspiration, and you cannot go back and remove one component from an integral whole. It *was* him. All of it.

Higher, he saw a chossy corner: "Let's head up that!"

We'd find another way to return to our packs—it'd all work out. Now I struggle to believe that everything will all work out, but I guess it has to, somehow.

The summer of his death I returned to the cirque. While kicking steps up the sun-cupped snow, as firey alpenglow bathed the rock, I stopped. I looked everywhere, studying the air and the wind and the rock, and though Jonny didn't rise from the ashes, I still heard the sounds of his flute.



Jonathan Copp was born on March 26, 1974, in Singapore. His parents, John and Phyllis, loaded him into their camper van when he was one year old, and they took a 28,000-mile road trip from Bangkok to Amsterdam. Jonny was held by holy men in India, monks in Nepal, and nomadic horsemen in Afghanistan. From the start his world became one of adventure, love, and life. He climbed around the world, establishing standard-setting alpine climbs practically everywhere. A world-class climber and photographer, and a brilliant writer, he created the now international and growing Adventure Film Festival, touched everyone he met, and left too soon when an avalanche in the pre-dawn hours of May 20, 2009 took him, Micah Dash, and Wade Johnson below the unclimbed east face of Mt. Edgar, in China. The Jonny Copp foundation has been established in his memory (www.jonnycoppfoundation.org). He will never be forgotten.

KELLY CORDES