



September 2003

"Auto racing, bull fighting, and mountain climbing are the only real sports.... all others are games."

Ernest Miller Hemingway (1899-1961), American writer, journalist, adventurer

1. FROM THE EDITOR:

Spring is here! For years I have celebrated the first day of spring by leaving Joburg at 4am, driving to Castle Gorge, running to the pools near the campsite, having a skinny-dip at dawn (Yep that was me), running back and being at my desk by 9am. Anyone for a spring run?

Now we need to have a talk: In the last newsletter we asked you to submit quotes for famous last words (before you call the MCSA Search and Rescue team). This was all we asked for, not that you actually get to the point where you need rescuing! This last period has seen the MCSA SAR team involved with numerous rescues, and some of this edition covers their selfless activities. But here's a hint: Just because you think of some famous last

words, doesn't mean you have to test them out in the mountains.

Russ Dodding and Heather Murch have contributed an article on climbing the Compassberg, 'The Matterhorn of the Karoo'. Seems that they have been driving past it for years and finally decided to climb it – this is their account.

A report on the veterans meet and long service awards has me stepping back in admiration: Harry Barker has been a member for 71 years! And many

others have been members for almost as long. I

guess that once mountains are in your blood, you

can't retire from them. Which reminds me of when I was once sweating and struggling up Cedarberg Crescent, when Merve Prior wandered up and said: "You realise when we opened that, we only had hawser ropes and hobnail boots (or something to that effect). Quite put me off my stride. Man, they was tough in them days!

Terry White

2. LAND & ACCESS:

Help us keep our access rights. When I give the introductory talk to new members, they invariably ask me what the benefits of joining the MCSA are. Looming large in my answer, is our responsible approach to access, and the rewards we enjoy from gaining access to mountain areas that others never see. This all hinges on our behaviour in the mountains. So can we stress again: PLEASE members always have their membership cards on them and to show them when asked to do so. Also one member and one guest applies. Get permits for your extra guests.

Exception: when attending a meet and you bring a guest we request that a R15 non members fee is paid for that guest. Please do not arrive earlier than sunrise and do not arrive or leave after sunset. NO CAMPING ALLOWED IN KLOOFS.

Please familiarise yourselves with the correct access information - or phone the Land & Access convenor or the administrator.

There have been a number of fires in the Magaliesburg this winter, the most recent being at Tonquani. It appears that the fire started to the east of Bertram at the road, swept up the mountain, went across Bertrams property about half way up the path we walk up, went over the neck where the fence is, spread to the left across towards Cedarberg and right towards Easterkloof and Dome. It is black up there but the camping spot and the kloof were not affected.

3. SEARCH AND RESCUE

The Search and Rescue team has been busy, and we extend our thanks and respect to these generous and brave people. *(These reports are compiled from various sources, but Kerry-Ann Feldman did most of the work).*

8 June

You will probably have all heard of the Cell-C chopper that came down in the Graskop gorge. The MCSA SAR team was called out at 12h00 and arrived to put in a hasty team of two by helicopter. The wreckage was impossible to see unless you were directly overhead and the slope was at a 70' angle - tricky to access and very slippery even when the slope levelled out a bit lower down.

It took a team of 6 to recover five bodies, the sixth needed specialist equipment and was extracted later. The last team member was hoisted out at 00h15 at night and they landed at Swartkops at 02h45.

Thanks to the team who handled a hard job with great spirit, and to Jacques Tredoux who led it all with patience and coffee waiting when they got back. The SAAF once again were outstanding to work with (the Engineer blistered his hands trying to stop stretcher jockeys swinging into trees and the pilots were rock steady in the face of tall trees, cliffs and the usual). Local Graskop SAPS, EMS and Rescue (trained by MSAR about 3 years back) also were most supporting and very helpful.

24 June

Congrats to Graeme and Karin King who have taken MSAR into a new arena - while some of the team was searching in Blouberg (see below) on Saturday, Graeme and Karin rescued a cyclist in the Suikerbosrand!

The Kings came across a lone bicycle on a downhill section and upon investigation found the owner who had crawled back towards the road after exiting spectacularly just before they arrived, flying through the crash barrier and ending up in the bush... End result - one detached calf muscle.

Holding it all together, Graeme and Karin called in EMS and got the cyclist to medical care.

24/25 June

There was a call out to the Blouberg area: One of the local grass cutters had gone missing on Wednesday the previous week, and local police searched but could not find her. MSAR were called in and drove up to Blouberg. Two days of searching yielded an unfriendly buffalo and some fairly recent bones which were been sent to Forensics for identification.

The callout was successful in terms of running the search (12 volunteers committed themselves for the weekend), but unfortunately the lady was not found. The search did finally resolve, but rather sadly. They found the decomposed body of the missing lady about 2 months later in a gully – in the area occupied by the wounded buffalo at the time of our search.

1 July

At 08:51 an urgent call was fielded by the MCSA SAR team. A desperate owner was panicking about her cat that had been stuck in a tree overnight in the cold Johannesburg winter. The local fire department and tree felling services were unable to help so the call went out and a team was on its way. Geoff & Jenni Comins put together a rescue kit and headed to Dunkeld where Geoff was faced with a tall fir tree and an indignant cat. A quickish climb, some chatting to the large vocal Siamese perched high above the ground, and the cat was stuffed into a bag and returned to its very grateful owner.

Lessons learnt from this rescue:

1. Once the cat is in the bag, don't let it out
2. Suspend the bag below you when you descend (claw, claw)
3. Owners are very grateful!
4. Mountain Rescue can be rather versatile!

Well done Geoff!

12/13 July

News Report

"An injured mountain climber was rescued from a ledge 150m up a vertical 400m cliff on Blouberg, 120km north-west of Polokwane, the Mountain Club of South Africa said. Spokesman Rob Thomas said the climber was taken to Unitas hospital with broken arms and legs. He said the rescue operation lasted several hours as rescuers abseiled more than 250m to reach their patient before using specialised helicopter rescue techniques to take him off the cliff to a landing zone nearby. He said a pair of climbers was climbing a 10 rope-length route called "Eight Mile High". They were three rope-lengths off the ground when one of them fell, hitting a ledge.

A team from the Mountain Club and the SA Air Force flew in from Pretoria and landed on top of the mountain where an abseil was set up and rescuers abseiled painstakingly slowly down to the injured climber. Thomas said because the cliff was so high and very close to vertical, the helicopter could not hover close enough to the cliff to winch the climber off the ledge. Instead a long rope was lowered to the ledge from the helicopter and the climber and doctor were picked off and flown, hanging like cargo, to a flat spot where the stretcher could be put down and loaded into the helicopter. The remaining rescuers then abseiled down from the ledge to the ground where they were picked up before flying to Unitas hospital, where the climber was dropped off. SAPA"

Search & Rescue cards with details of phone numbers in the event of an emergency will be included in this newsletter. Those members who get the newsletter by email please collect yours at a club evening.

For Mountain Rescue emergencies call (011) 315-0203. Please have all relevant information available including your name, contact number, location and the nature of the injury.

We suggest you capture this phone number into your cell phone now. Yes, do it, now. Go on, the newsletter will wait.... Done it? Fine – read on...

4. AN ASCENT OF THE COMPASSBERG by Russ Dodding and Heather Murch

Compassberg (2 504m; 8 213 feet) is known as 'the Matterhorn of the Karoo'. Situated north-west of Nieu-Bethesda, the great appeal of the peak is its unusual shape – a great whaleback ridge of a thing that looks like a cone when viewed from several directions. It stands out in stark contrast to the many flat-topped mountains typical of the region.

Every time we have been hurtling to the Western Cape we have said, "That peak looks amazing – one day we have to climb it", and then continued on our journey, only to repeat the sentiment on the way home. So this year we set out specifically to ascend to this elusive summit.

We camped one night en route in Nieu-Bethesda; a quiet Karoo village which has its own diversions.

Through an arrangement with Brenda McCabe and Alf James of the farm Compassberg, we took guest farm self-catering accommodation on the nearby farm Lucernevale. This is without electricity and has a wood-fired donkey for supplying hot water. The quiet of the environment was only surpassed by the inky blackness of the night sky – awesome star viewing.

The day of our ascent was cloudy and cool to start. Heavy rains in previous years had rendered the approach road unusable without a four-wheel drive, something we didn't have. The additional 12 kms of walking was a pleasure however, and we spotted a herd of kudu, saw sunbirds and heard baboons. When the relatively flat approach is almost over there is a wonderful expanse of fynbos on the right of the track.

The sun came out as we ascended the open hillside heading for a short gully that leads on to the broad ridge. This becomes a narrow, steeper, rock ridge higher up and just below the final summit ridge becomes quite exposed with some rudimentary scrambling. The view from the summit was fantastic - 360 degrees of clarity. We had been warned by several people to avoid the summit ridge in windy conditions – fortunately on this day the breeze was not too strong. The trig beacon lay on the ground – an indication of the wind strength? Truly it is a wild and deserted place. From farm to summit took 2½ hours.

The summit book reads like a who's-who of MCSA members.

There are several rock climbing routes on the mountain, especially on the south face, which looked very impressive as I peered down it. We vowed to climb some of them in the future. Some of the pioneers who opened these routes are: John Moss, The Maclennans, Keith James and Ross Suter, during various epochs and with varying partners.

Later, driving home from Montagu on the N1 between Richmond and Colesberg, we could see Compassberg, calling us from a distance of at least sixty kilometers, saying: "Why drive when you could be climbing?" Why indeed? So go and sit atop Compassberg, marvel at the view, and let its spirit soar with you.

5. MEMBERSHIP NEWS

We welcome the following new members:

Andrew Scott, Natasha Rogers, Michael and David Hewson, Laura Tyrer, Robert Buckley, Donald Tindale, Mary Clarke, Michael Sporen, David Ker Kyle Menehan(jnr), Tyrone Clarke(jnr), Suzanne Wavre, Sean Nourse, Nicolas Grech-Cumbo, Anja Seppa(jnr); Helmut Landgrebe (family).

Resigned: Nick and Sandra Laminski. They have moved to the UK.

With regret:

Greig Stewart

Greig Stewart, (62), KZN mountaineer, runner, conservationist, lecturer, photographer, lover of life and of all wild places, died on Saturday 09th August while ice climbing in his favourite Drakensberg mountains.

On Saturday 9th August, Greig went up to Sani Pass on a MCSA KZN berg ice climbing meet to gain experience for a forthcoming trip to Peru planned for next winter. He was climbing with Anthony van Tonder in an ice gully in the Twelve Apostles near Sani Pass in the Southern Drakensberg. After lead-climbing a steep 8 metre section of ice, and placing two ice screws for protection as he went, he had continued walking up easier gently inclined ice. Then, for reasons unknown to those who were out of sight below, he must have lost his footing and slipped. He was run out too far beyond his last ice screw for it to save him. Hearing the sound of him sliding down, his companions ducked down, thinking it was a rockfall. They were shocked when he landed next to them on the rock slab below the steep ice wall. He was killed instantly. Mark Misselhorn and Bruce Ross were with Anthony, waiting to climb the route. All their attempts to resuscitate Greig were to no avail. His body was recovered on Sunday by Mountain Club members and the SAPS, assisted by an Airforce helicopter.

Greig was a man who lived every aspect of life to the full, pouring his passion and seemingly limitless enthusiasm into all he did. Whether it was taking the perfect photo of basalt spires, leaping into an icy berg stream, running an early morning race or trudging through the snows of a Chinese landscape, Greig brought to each and every activity a deep sense of enjoyment. In this he also gave so much more to every one of us who have had the privilege and pleasure of knowing him, for a few months or for decades.

Greig Stewart was a part of many, many lives. He brought the joy of his presence and inimitable sense of fun to so many people. He was one of those rare people who could relate to anyone regardless of their age. His loss is enormous. His shoes can never be filled.

To his wife and family, our sincere condolences - our warmest thoughts are with you.

To Greig, thank you for your friendship, your view of the joyousness of life. Be at peace.

Compiled by the KZN section

(Note: Greig's autopsy showed that he had suffered a massive heart-attack – presumably at the top of the climb).

Dr Bob Laburn

With regret we advise of the passing away of Dr Bob Laburn of Groblerskloof. Our condolences to Beryl and family.

6. CLUB NEWS

Let there be light

The section is looking into acquiring a video projector. Has any member a contact for us to obtain a 'good' price? Or possibly a donation of one?? Please contact Andrew Warren (W) 877 0965, 083 305 7084.

Computer: the section's computer is getting a bit long in the tooth. It is a P1, very slow and we appeal to members if they have contacts in the computer field or have a suitable one for sale to contact Andrew Warren

Increase in permit fees:

As from 1 August 2003 cost of permits have increased to R20pp per day per adult, R12.50 high school scholars and students per day and R5.00 children under 13 years per day. These areas are Tonquani/Cedarberg, Castle Gorge, Grootkloof, Mhlabatini and Dome Pools

Veterans Meet report-back by Margie Hammond-Tooke

The club had its first Veterans meet on Sunday 20th July. It was a special occasion and was a great success. After a few weeks of telephoning, arranging lifts, giving directions and encouragement, Uschi Magg and Margie Hammond-Tooke gathered together 33 Members most of whom have been part of the club for over 40 years.

Everyone met at Francois Junod's farm Calabash and he and Olly Oppler ferried the oldest over 80's to the bottom of Easterkloof in a Kombi and a van. Once they started out it was a real procession of mountain experience! At one stage Olly led Harry and about 20 trotted behind them. Robin had Marion to empty his overweight pack of some unnecessary items, though the extra socks he had packed would have been useful as the stream was crossed at least four times and feet got wet! Bob Davies, was fit and full of good humour and smiles. The Weiss' really knew everyone and the amount of chatting that went on was prodigious. Benno kept smiling and obviously enjoyed the company and the beautiful kloof. Harry was a star and, if not leading, was 'up front', maybe to be ahead of all the chatter that went on among the lesser mortals! Everyone who needed a hand crossing a stream or going over rough ground found one.

Francois encouraged everyone to go further up the kloof than planned and although we got everyone there we were not sure we would get down again. Looking back down from the lunch at the be-hatted, bent, be-sticked but steadily moving procession coming up one felt they looked vastly intrepid and could have been part of an expedition with Livingston. The under 76's and some of the 80's went up to the top big pool and swam. The rest rested.

Everyone was fed crayfish in a wonderful sauce by Francois. We tried to take a group photograph but never got the lot together at the same time.

Many thanks to Francois and Sheila for their unlimited support.

And of course to Uschi and Margie for their organisation. Can we make this an annual affair?

Longstanding Members Awards

On the 30 July we invited veterans to an evening to reminisce, catch up on news and to 'award' some 23 with certificates 'long standing membership'.

Certificates were handed to members who have been members of this section for 50 years and longer. Harry Barker (71 years membership!), Liz Cuthbert (63 years), Robin Forsyth (57), Malcolm Witt (57), Jannie Graaf (56), Michael Estil (55), Ted Scholes (55), Horst Weiss (55), Emil Perlestein (55), Babsie Bambus (54), Bob Davies (54), Mike Kruger (54), Frank Villa (54), Phillip Weinberg (53), Ted Rudnick (53), Mervyn Prior (52), Eve Symmes (52), Jean Humphreys (51), Mabs Abercrombie (50), Ted Adcock (50), Issy Cohen (50), John Patchitt (50), and Sinclair Perry (50).

Peru National meet: next year June 2004.

Interested? - Contact Greg Devine.

Special Slide Show 17 September

Andy Davies from Cape Town is showing slides 'Rocking around the world' slides -travel and sport climbing pictures of 'Best of SA climbing spots; World Cup 1992 (UK, France, Austria, Spain), Thailand, Spain, Italy USA on 17 Sept at the clubhouse. Entrance R10 members, R15 non members. Don't miss this show.

Family Meet And Camp Fire At Cedarberg

Please note that the date for this event has changed to 27-28 September.

Tree Identification Meet Magaliesberg Trees

A slide show on 3 September to introduce the species followed by a meet on the 14th September at Tonquani with Bob Scholes. We would meet at Bertrams Farm at 9 am (or earlier if preferred), hike over to Tonquani for lunch, treeing on the way, and return by another route in the afternoon.

Jonkershoek National Meet (Mini Camp)

Final announcement: HURRY UP to book for this unique opportunity! Stellenbosch Section is celebrating their 50th anniversary this year. The 2003 National Meet will be hosted by them in the beautiful Jonkershoek Mountains from 20-28 September (There are options to attend from 20-24 or 24-28 with the 24th being a public holiday). Base camp will be at Assegaalbos.

The camp is self-catering except for a braai on Wednesday 24 September. One and two day hikes/climbs from easy to strenuous will be offered. Children (accompanied by a parent/parents) are welcome. For further details, including a list of activities and an application form: Jaap van Wyk (minicamp@ste.mcsa.org.za or 021-887 5335) or the Stellenbosch Web Page: <http://ste.mcsa.org.za/Minicamp.htm> More details about the Jonkershoek Mountains and all routes therein can be found in the booklet, "Jonkershoek en sy berge", available at the camp or to be ordered in advance from Ernst Lotz (ernstx@mweb.co.za 021-886 5909) at R27 (postage included).

Notice of Special General Meeting

to be held on 1 October 2003 at 20h15 at the Waverley Girl Guide Hall. Agenda enclosed.

Annual Dinner

Notice that the MCSA Annual Dinner will take place on 20 September 2003 at Simonsvlei. Contact Paul Erens (021-887 7131; cpt@iwc.co.za) to book.

Meet Leaders Forum Wed October 15

There are numerous new members who are quite capable of leading a meet but may not feel "qualified", and so do not come forward. There are also many regular leaders who could possibly do with a bit of a brush-up. With this in mind it was decided to have a Meet Leaders Workshop. It will begin with a short presentation by Terry White, followed by a discussion and question session.

So, new members, if you feel you would like to become a leader, please come along. "Old" members, please come along to share your experience.

Refreshments will be served!

Events committee member

Galeo Saintz, who was our events organiser has relocated to the Cape. Galeo thanks for all your work in organising events for our club evenings. The committee appeals to any member who can help with this portfolio please to contact Greg Devine.

Drakensberg Rock And Ice Climbs

The 3rd edition of "Rock and Ice Climbs of the Drakensberg" is available from KwaZulu-Natal Section. It contains corrected RD's for all routes in the Berg as well as the latest rock and ice routes. It also contains topo's and diagrams of most of the important routes and areas. Of general interest is that it contains a record of every route opened since the first berg climbs of the late 1800's. It has a colour front cover and is laminated to make it field serviceable. The prices excluding postage are: R80 to MCSA members, R100 to non-members and R80 to retailers (minimum order of 10). Orders can be placed with the Honorable Secretary, KZN Section. Some copies will also be available from the Jhb office.

NOTICE OF SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING OF**THE MOUNTAIN CLUB OF SOUTH AFRICA JOHANNESBURG SECTION**

Notice is hereby given that a Special General Meeting will be held on

WEDNESDAY 1 OCTOBER 2003 AT 20h15

At the Waverley Girl Guide Hall, Stirling Street, Waverley Johannesburg

AGENDA

Changes to certain clauses of the Constitution are necessary as the Section has to re-apply to the South African Revenue Services to remain a tax exempt body and to register as a non profit organisation. As such the constitution has been redrafted.

1. To consider and pass with or without amendments the proposed redrafted Constitution.

The existing constitution, the proposed redrafted constitution and the analysis of changes to the Constitution are on the sections website (<http://jhb.mcsa.org.za>), or can be emailed, faxed or posted to members on request. Please contact Uschi at the MCSA administrative office for copies.