



February 2006

1. EDITORIAL

The world has gone mad...of that I am sure, when I contemplate the bizarre laws and forms of litigation that are emerging in our society, and the ways in which it effects our use of the mountains. In many countries the easy going land owner is fast becoming an endangered species, as landowners are starting to feel the pinch, that they can no longer afford the risk of litigation, should an accident occur on their property. I remember climbing at the Shawungunks, in New York State. At the base of the approach route leading from the car park to the crags was a sign which read "CAUTION!, Dangerous path ahead" I braced myself, and contemplated putting on my rock boots, just in case I needed to scramble through a difficult section. I then plodded along the most beautifully arranged rock steps that contoured gently up the hill to the base of the cliffs. After each perfect step, I marvelled at the absurdity of the sign post below.

The signing of indemnity forms for climbing related activities has become my pet hate, not because of the feeling that I am signing my legal rights away, but because it never ceases to amaze me, just how ignorant of medical science, lawyers must be. Position a lawyer on the edge of a cliff (resist the temptation to push ☺) and ask him if a sensation of fear comes over him/her. Well duh!, it happens to all of us. Through millions of years of human evolution, the neurological circuit programmed as 'fear of heights' is probably one of our most basic instincts, and it takes one hell of a lot of higher brain activity to convince us otherwise. Have we really gone so backward, as to think that an overly complex legal paragraph is an improvement on a three million year old self preservation instinct? Or do lawyers believe that we are direct descendants of the lemming*, incapable of perceiving our imminent demise. Can you find me a single person on this planet who does not instinctively perceive an inherent danger in climbing? Surely, this is a no brainer, and no effusive tautology is necessary. You may wonder what a golf club could possibly have in common with the MCSA, but a recent court case outlines an interesting legal dilemma with regards to the provision of services by a club for its members. Men have a four times higher risk of being struck by lightning than women, whether it is because they deserve it, or because they have a habit of wondering around every weekend blaspheming on an open field whilst swinging metal and graphite poles around. This is besides the point, the long and the short of it, is that a JHB golf club decided not only to provide its members with a lightning detector and warning siren, but also to provide them with shelters under which golfers could retreat during summer showers. A bolt of lightning struck the ground near one of the shelters, and due to improper insulation, the charge spread along the ground to the floor of the shelter and killed someone. The golf course had to pay damages because they were deficient in providing a service which they legally did not have to provide for their members in the first place.

Ok, now that I have got that off my chest, and have successfully made us all fearful as to the legal demons that could haunt our cliffs, relax, Paul Carstensen has it all under control. To cheer you up, I bring you, the first news letter of 2006. A year which started with an extremely well attended meet to Grootkloof by prospective members all rushing to join the mountain madness. Once again, chameleon crack provided a days amusement for climbers and gapers alike, not even a torrential downpour could discourage us. This was followed by the most unmountain like of club meets, thank you Hanna for leading us astray, to go wetland birding! And if that was not enough water, then you should have been at the Rory Lowther Challenge. What's a bit of mist and hail between friends. Hopefully I will see you all at the AGM, and what a winner, it's our 75th anniversary this year.

Peter Adrian

*A lemming is an arctic rodent that can reach enormous population numbers during the summer months. The population explosion results in a massive suicide migration over the nearest sea cliff.

2. RORY LOWTHER MEMORIAL CHALLENGE

(3 – 5 FEBRUARY 2006)

Not surprisingly, the rain follows us there and it seems just as ominous as when we arrived at Swinburne a year ago for the first challenge. However, also not surprisingly, the challengers, helpers, marshals and supporters "rock" up with enthusiasm and gather in the hall for a warm meal and a short briefing on the weekend's events. The contestants receive a parcel, complete with an updated route guide, t-shirt, whistle, lunch and off course scored cards. The rest of Friday night is dedicated to strategy and well, other things.

A total of 33 teams enter the competition (of which only the Crack Addicts scored zero ?!) and gather at the starting point just before 8:00 on Saturday morning. The mist rolls out, the sun cracks a smile and away we go. The aim of the challenge is to hike, rock climb and boulder as much and as fast as you can within 7 hours, with safety being a first priority. Extra points are earned for wearing a climbing helmet and nobody is supposed to go anywhere without their whistles.

Some of us find out that, if you don't actually touch the signs and virtually kiss the marshals on the way up to the summit, you don't get the points. Some decide not to hike at all and some get injured and decide to rather be photographers. There is a lot of action at Spearhead and quite a few challengers climbing multi-pitch routes on the North Face. Towards the end of the challenge contestants are queuing to climb on Skittle Boulder and do bouldering problems on Bovine.

The competition ends at 15:00 and points are deducted for late arrivals. While scores are being counted, the Burn-a-Thon gets on the way, the final of which takes place in a hailstorm. Not everybody knows who won....

A tired crowd (or was that just me?) gets together on Saturday night for a spit braai and some lucky draws, where after the "official" fireworks light the Free State sky and wake the cows?!

The prize giving and memorial service takes place on Sunday morning, but not before the Search and Rescue Competition, where a bit of "bending the rules" seemed to be going on. The prize giving is just as good spirited and the memorial service just as emotional as the first time round.

The official results were as follows:

1st Place: The Durbanites (Brendon de Charmoy and Benjamin Hurner)

2nd Place: Team Splat (Steve Bretherik and Dave Glass)

Third Place: The Rockavauns (Danny Pinkus and Gary Lowther)

Best mixed: The Best Girls Team (Douard le Roux and Marianne Pretorius)

Best female: The Lads (Marion Penso and Des Jones).

A word of thanks and congratulations should go to Eric and Debbie Lowther and everyone else who helped organize the event.

I think everybody will agree that Rory would have been proud and happy, and that it ought to become a permanent event on the climbing calendar!

Carina Rousseau

3. PULLING OUT THE POMPOMS

On Sunday the 5th of February, a brave band of members went out to Castle Gorge to do battle with the Pompom weeds. These weeds originally come from South America and is an invasive alien plant of note, judging by the proliferation that we saw at the side of the road on the way there. They quickly invade any disturbed land like the sides of roads or ploughed fields that are left unplanted, and they particularly like streams.

This meet was a joint meet with the Magaliesberg section, with us far outnumbering them, 17 to 6, but they were far superior in knowledge (that's why we invite them – but don't tell them). Of the 17 that arrived, there were 10 prospective members, 1 guest, 13 women and 3 men. It was encouraging to see so many prospective members pitching up, but maybe this was an easy meet to get on your green card.

We found the Magaliesberg members and pompoms at the bridge over the stream that eventually runs into the pools, and the pompoms gave a magnificent display with their bright purple flowers – pity that they had to be pulled out. The whole plant has to be pulled out, roots and all, and that proved to be quite a task, as most of them had their roots firmly anchored in the riverbed, among rocks and other grasses. The flower heads have to be removed and placed in a plastic bag to prevent the plants from reseeding. Plants that could not be pulled out were deflowered on the spot. We had so many bags of flowers that a kind gentleman from Magalies dug a grave for them to be buried in after a short ceremony.

We all worked in blazing sunshine for 1 hour = 17 man hours, or more to the point woman hours and then to lunch, and a well deserved swim at pirana pools. We had all the good intentions in the world to continue after lunch, but during lunch the weather built up and the thunder became audible. Some members had flashbacks to their experience in Tonquani two weeks ago where they got caught in lightning on the walk out, and we decided to rather be safe than sorry and beat a hasty retreat. In the end the thunderstorm petered out, but apparently the Magalies people got quite wet.

This was a very enjoyable meet for everyone and thanks to: Kerry, Tamarin, Liz, Stan and David Jewell, Jihaan and Humaira Haffajee, Melinda, Samantha, Sarah, Clem, Laura, Linda, Catherine, Sarah-Leigh and Barbs, and of course a big thank you to the Magaliesberg section especially Otti and Stefan Nesar – without you the pompoms will still be blooming.

4. KYA SANDS CLIMBING GYM

There have been a lot of negative reports from climbers in the MCSA to the committee concerning conditions at the Kya Sands climbing gym. These relate to promises made by management to provide a bouldering wall to club members who purchased annual membership the overall state of the gym, in particular, standards of safety, maintenance, renewal of safety equipment, and the supervision by staff, of people using the Gym. Recently, an accident occurred at the gym, where a climber was being lowered off, the top anchor failed, and the climber fell 3m. There were no severe injuries, except that apparently the climber was unable to walk for 2 to 3 days. At the time of writing, we have not been able to contact the climber who fell, or the staff member on duty as to the exact cause of the accident. It is purported that the top rope was threaded only through a back up safety rope, which wore through after several accents. The incident has been recently posted on www.climb.co.za and the thread makes interesting reading, with comments from various individuals within and outside the club, including a response from the Gym itself.

In the light of this incident, and the other complaints that have been received, the committee feels the need to clarify its position on several issues relating to this incident, and to the general state of the Gym. The first, is that climbing has/and still is predominantly an amateur sport, with few formally written codes of practice for commercial operators. As a result, there are none, or very few government documents detailing requirements for wall climbing equipment or operating standards. While the majority of expertise on these matters in South Africa is still within the hands of club members, the MCSA has no legal permission to dictate how commercial operators should conduct their business, and are in no way authorised to police these activities. At best, individuals in their own capacity, may make suggestions to commercial operators if they feel that they are unsafe, or if necessary, report misconduct to the relevant government department, but at the end of the day these aspects fall under the laws of South Africa. Apparently, any commercial operator which makes use of safety equipment falls under the Dept of Labour. MDT accreditation www.mdt.za.org, is the body officially recognized by the MCSA through which commercial operators can acquire suitable qualifications, however, the MDT is not as yet recognised by government. In some countries, climbing gyms have set up organisations to regulate their own industry.

What needs to be clear, is that the club is steered by a democratic committee of volunteers, who attempt to do the best it can for its members. For the benefit of its members, the committee has negotiated discounted rates at the Gym, and has entered into an advertising contract with the gym to inform users of the activities of the club. As a service to its members, the club has in the past taken on a responsibility towards the safety of members, and the climbing public in general. Informing them of issues such as crime, or unsafe rock climbing conditions. This can become tricky when peoples livelihood is at stake. The committee is now faced with the dilemma as to what will serve its members best. To withdraw our support for this facility, based on reports from individuals members, means that other members who use this facility and feel that the safety standards are ok, will loose out.

Since there is no legal benchmark by which this business can be judged, members must decide for themselves. If you don't like the way the business is run, like in all market economies, show your dissatisfaction with your feet.

5. MWENI GUIDES

Dear MCSA members and administrators

For a number of years my family and I have been hiking in Mweni area. We were pleasantly surprised when, a few years ago, a cultural centre was built, thanks to Rand water and the Mweni trust. We used to have to camp at the Police station which meant not only an uncomfortable night prior to our first day's walking but a very long walk in. The development of the cultural centre means that we can sleep in clean rodavels, park safely, shorten an already long day's walk into the mountains and even make use of a guide's skills when navigating the escarpment. The guides have valuable knowledge on the local fauna and flora and ensure the safety of hikers when in the mountains. As I usually go with only one other friend safety is a big issue especially seeing as there have been many attacks on hikers in the central berg of late.

On our recent trip to the area I was saddened to see that the cultural centre is not very busy. Our guide, Mayo, informed us that currently the guides only work once a month. I think it's valuable projects such as these that will lead to sustainable eco-tourism through involvement of the local communities. It would be wonderful if you could make the rest of your members aware of the centre either by publishing their details on your respective websites or in your newsletters. Obviously we don't want every man and his dog clambering up Rockeries but if the guides could make a living from guiding it would show their friends and family that it is possibly a better (and easier!) alternative to dagga smuggling.

Thanks for doing such a great job of protecting our mountains and bringing people together to enjoy them!

Regards

Lisa Steingold

lisa@hms.org.za

(w) 011 469 3880

082 602 4213

P.S. The Mweni cultural centre can be contacted by calling Aggrippa on 072 712 2401.

6. SEVEN YEARS IN TIBET

I read with sadness in yesterday's British Telegraph the passing of one of the worlds great mountaineers. Austrian born Heinrich Harrer, was in the first party to climb the Eigerwand in 1938 along with Fritz Kaspereck. Later in 1939 he was in a German expedition to climb Nanga Parbat, the worlds 9th highest mountain, when he was intended by the British due to world war II. He managed to escape in 1944 and along with Peter Auafschneider he crossed over into Tibet, to seek asylum. It took 20 months to make their way across the roof of the world negotiating a distance of 1600km above 16000ft. They reached the city of Lhasa in January of 1946, where he became tutor to the present Dalai Lama. Later he wrote his famous book "Seven Years in Tibet" which has become a classic for travelers.

Mike Dibb

7. WETLANDS CONSERVATION AND

MARIEVALE BIRDING

As part of our conservation awareness efforts, a very interesting talk on wetlands conservation was given on one Wednesday evening by Megan Taylor of Rand Water. This talk touched on removing alien invasive plants, saving water and conserving wetlands. Wetlands control flooding, purify water by acting as

natural filters, and are also a great treasure of biodiversity. To see what Rand Water is doing to conserve our wetlands a visit to the Marievale Bird Sanctuary was scheduled for Sunday 23 January. This was a first for the Mountain Club as there was not a mountain in sight, unless you count the giant mine dumps, or you felt like climbing the Escom power pylons.

With this lack of mountaineering attractions I was slightly concerned that it would only be me, Megan from Rand Water, and the sanctuary manager from Gauteng Nature Conservation that would pitch up. I was very pleasantly surprised to see 16 members, non-members and prospective members turn up at the picnic area at Marievale – some only after getting a bit lost on the way there. Ages ranged from 7 to about 77, and birding interests from real dyed in the wool birders to "first time looking at a bird through binoculars".

Marievale is a Ramsar registered wetland and is one of South Africa's best birding spots. It is located south east of Nigel on the banks of the Blesbokspruit. It is actually an artificial wetland as in the 1930's the Blesbokspruit was just another stream flowing through the highveld and bursting it's banks only in summer. Then the mines built a causeway which effectively dammed up the spruit and voila, a wetland was born! The Marievale sanctuary covers 1009 hectares, and is home to some 280 bird species as well as some mammals such as the cape clawless otter, water mongoose, porcupine, and of course blesbok.

The day was perfect for birding – overcast with no wind. We were taken on a slow relaxed walk by Rodene, from Gauteng Nature Conservation, stopping every now and then to identify a bird or two and make the obligatory tick in the bird book. Some of the highlights were seeing African Spoonbills, Hottentot Teals, a Yellowbilled Stork, Black Winged Stilt and Whiskered Terns who were defending their territory against a Red Knobbed Coot. There were also Grey Heron, Black Headed Heron and Goliath Heron, as well as the ubiquitous darters, yellow billed ducks, and red knobbed coots. But the most interesting was the two Greater Flamingos – I didn't expect Flamingos here in Gauteng!

We didn't see any of the mammals that live in the reserve, except for two paragliders flying over from Dunottar, but saw their signs. Serval footprints were perfectly preserved in the mud along with those of a water mongoose. We saw otter and mongoose middens next to the footpaths, which apparently are used by both species, but could tell the different animals by their scats. Otters eat crabs complete with shell and pincers, while water mongoose do not, and therefore otter scats contain lots of shell fragments and that those of water mongoose not.

We wandered down to the old causeway where Rand Water has installed some gabions, which are wire cages with rocks in them used to stem soil erosion while letting water run through. Afterwards lunch was enjoyed at the picnic area.

Statistics

Distance walked: probably not more than 4 km

Vertical meters climbed: 0

Enjoyment: lots

Thanks: To Dobek Pater for arranging this all, Megan Taylor from Rand Water for her talk and Rodene from Gauteng Nature Conservation for taking us through the sanctuary.

Facts: Marievale Bird Sanctuary is open from 5:30am to 6pm and entrance is **free**. To read more about Marievale go to <http://web.uct.ac.za/depts/stats/adu/marie.htm>. To read more about wetlands conservation go to <http://www.sanbi.org/research/wetlandprog.htm>.

8. LIGHTNING SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS

–**Check the forecast and watch the sky** Before heading out, check your local forecast. While outside look for darkening skies, flashes of lightning, or increasing wind, which may be signs of an approaching thunderstorm.

–**Use the 30/30 Lightning Rule above** Count seconds between 'flash' and 'bang' and seek shelter when the time is less than 30 seconds. Do not resume activity until 30 minutes after the last audible thunder.

–**Know the lightning-safe position** When lightning threatens and you can not reach suitable shelter you should assume the lightning-safe position: crouch on the ground with your weight on the balls of the feet, keep your feet together, and your head lowered and ears covered. Other experts recommend that you place your hands on your forehead and your elbows on your knees to create a path for lightning to travel to the ground through your extremities rather than through your core (heart). You should also assume the lightning-safe position if you feel your hair stand on end, your skin tingle, or you hear crackling noises. There are no easy answers when you are caught in a lightning storm, however you should never lie flat on the ground.

–**Find a safe shelter** Sturdy buildings are the safest place to be. Avoid sheds, picnic shelters, and bleachers. If no sturdy building is nearby, a hard-top vehicle with windows closed will offer some protection. The steel frame of the vehicle provides some protection if you are not touching metal.

–**Avoid isolated trees or other tall objects.** Never take shelter under a tree. Also avoid bodies of water, sheds, fences, convertibles, tractors, bikes and motorcycles. Avoid leaning against vehicles, and get off and away from bicycles and motorcycles.

–**In a wooded area** seek shelter under a thick growth of relatively small trees. Don't wait for rain to seek shelter. Many people take shelter from the rain, but most people struck by lightning are not in the rain. Go quickly inside a completely enclosed building, not a carport, open garage or covered patio. If no enclosed building is convenient, get inside a hard-topped all-metal vehicle.

–**Get out of the water** Water is a great conductor of electricity. stay off the beach and out of small boats or canoes. If caught in a boat, crouch down in the center of the boat away from metal hardware. Swimming, wading, snorkeling and scuba diving are NOT safe. Lightning can strike the water and travel some distance beneath and away from its point of contact. Don't stand in puddles of water, even if wearing rubber boots.

–**Avoid any metal objects** Drop metal backpacks, stay away from clothes lines, fences, exposed sheds and electrically conductive elevated objects. Don't hold on to metal items such golf clubs, fishing rods, tennis rackets or tools.

–**Do NOT stay in a group** Stay several yards away from other people. Don't share a bleacher bench or huddle in a group.

–**Lightning Safety in the Mountains** According to the Colorado Lightning Resource Center, "It is a hard fact that there is NO safe place in the high country to be during a lightning activity. There is nothing you can do to guarantee safety if you are caught hiking in the mountains during a lightning storm." Their advice is to try to plan hikes and climbs early and get off mountain peaks by 11:00 am. If you are caught in an approaching storm, quickly get below treeline and get into a grove of small trees. In the mountains there are accounts of people being injured and killed while hiding in caves, under rocks, in tents and under trees. Putting a rubber mat under you to avoid being struck by lightning is an old wives tale. The only thing one can do if caught in the open while hiking in the high country is to get in the lightning-safe position and wait the storm out.

The above was taken from the website:

<http://sportsmedicine.about.com/library/weekly/aa040402a.htm>

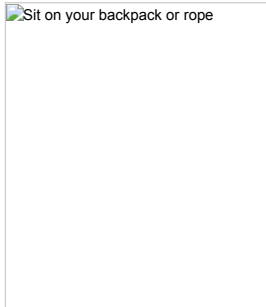
A phenomenon sometimes seen is 'St. Elmo's Fire' - a bluish-tinged corona accompanied by humming or crackling sounds. Often metal equipment starts to 'sing' or your hair stands on end. Although this does not indicate a definite strike where you are standing, it should be a sufficient warning to encourage evasive action! Even a strike a few meters away will generate sufficient free electrons to move a good few billion through your body. This shock can disrupt the action of the heart, knock out brain activity, or cause severe burns. When lightning threatens, climbers should:

- 1) Avoid moist areas, such as gullies and cracks.
- 2) Sit or crouch on insulated objects, such as a kit bag or rope.
- 3) Avoid ridges, stay off the top.
- 4) Keep out of overhangs or small caves - lightning may strike the ground via you from the cave roof.



- 5) On a ledge, crouch at the outer edge. Tie on via a short lead.
- 6) Try to find an area with something a bit above your head height, e.g. a small tree or rock.
- 7) Move away from metal objects if possible - they do not 'attract' a strike, but might intensify the effect via induced currents.

If someone is struck by lightning you should begin cardiopulmonary resuscitation, and treat the burns.



From Garth Hattings' Book – *The Climber's Handbook*

9. DRAKENSBERG GRAND TRAVERSE FOR CHARITY: APRIL 2006

Imagine walking across the entire Drakensberg mountain range in just 13 days. Well, a group of 16 will start walking on 2 April 2006, their aim, to raise R250 000 that will help Hearts of Hope, a HIV/AIDS children charity in Johannesburg, to build homes for vulnerable and abandoned children affected by HIV/AIDS here in Gauteng. It is estimated that there will be 1.7million HIV/AIDS orphans here in South Africa by 2007. The walk, dubbed the Grand Traverse, is the name given to the traverse of the entire Drakensberg escarpment – that is, from the Amphitheatre in the north to Bushman's Nek in the south, a distance of 250km as the crow flies. It is the ultimate in hiking challenges, and involves hiking in extreme weather conditions – including below freezing temperatures, high velocity winds and even snow. The terrain varies from steep mountain ridges to long flat valleys. Backpacks of between 18kg to 30kg are carried for the 13 days that it takes to complete the hike. If you would like to be involved or assist Hearts of Hope in achieving their aim of raising R250 000 please call Paul on 084 955 9765 or email This email address is being protected from spambots. You need JavaScript enabled to view it.">+addy_text16557+'<Va>'; //--> . More details on the Grand Traverse can be found on their website www.heartsofhope.org.za.

There is still enough time to get fit for the start 2 April 06. We currently have four/five places left. As it is for charity each person will be required to raise sponsorship of R4850. This amount will include all transport to and from the 'berg from JHB, accommodation and food at the start, Sani Top Chalet and at Himeville Arms at the finish. Take up the challenge and make a difference to a child's life and to your own!!

Paul Reid 084 955 9765

10. MCSA SUPERTRAMP AWARD 2007

A brief history of the Supertramp award

Not all those who wander are lost.

–JRR Tolkien

In April 1992, 24-year-old Chris McCandless ditched his car, burnt the money in his wallet, donated his savings to charity, hitched a lift to the outskirts of the Alaskan outback and, armed with little more than a hunting rifle and a sack of rice, walked into the wild. He renamed himself Alexander Supertramp and deliberately lost contact with everyone he had ever known. He wanted nothing more to do with what he saw as a sick, sad world and sought only to survive as his (flawed) heroes had done: on their wits and survival instincts alone. He did not even carry a map in his rucksack. He was a disillusioned idealist, a passionate, zealous young man who yearned for adventure without the encumbrances of modern living or the inevitable complications that come from human interaction. His emaciated, lifeless body was discovered 100 days later, having starved to death through a series of unfortunate events.

Opinions about this story (chronicled by Jon Krakauer in his extraordinary book, *Into the Wild*) are diametrically opposed. Some think Alexander Supertramp was an arrogant, selfish, rich kid. Others think he is someone to whom hymns should be sung and statues erected and that his story is not about his death, but about his life. That he made the bravest of all decisions: *not* to be a victim, at least not to civilisation's mechanical march. That he subscribed to the philosophy that to live is to do and to do is to do *now*. "Most men" said Henry Thoreau – one of his champions – "lead lives of quiet desperation".

The Supertramp Award was instituted in 2005 by an anonymous donor to those young, impecunious wanderers whose cynicism is still directed outwards, in the hope that they will purchase at least a map, and as a tribute to the voyager who was Alexander Supertramp who wisely gathered his rosebuds whilst he could.

The award of up to R12,000 is available to a single South African citizen under the age of 25, to fund an original mountaineering dream.

Further enquiries:

MCSA Supertramp Award Committee

c/o PETRO GROBLER

PO Box 2294

Zwavelpoort 0036

E-mail: supertramp@mcsa.org.za

Tel/Fax: 012-809 1022

11. ALPINE PRACTICE, 100 YEARS AGO

Brian Culross, a member of the Johannesburg Hiking Club and of the SA Military History Society, is researching Italian participation in the First World War. Much of the Italian front ran through Alpine regions, where the troops on both sides were not all experienced Alpinists, yet had to survive – let alone fight – in extreme conditions for weeks on end. He is trying to find out what sort of survival techniques would have been advocated in those years (1915-1918) for

Alpine climbers, as he suspects there may have been practices which would not be followed at the present time. (For example, it can be fatal for a partly hypothermic person to be made 'to jump around to get the circulation going' as this pumps cold blood from the limbs into the body core with potentially lethal effects on organ systems. Would this have been appreciated in those days? Again, avalanches are killers now as they were then, but were there contemporary theories on how to increase survival chances that have been superseded?). As well as practice, there is clothing and equipment. What might have happened to hemp ropes in those conditions that nylon ropes are not susceptible to? Footwear would have been leather and clothing mostly cotton- or wool-based; how did Alpinists keep warm and dry when moving/living in deep snow? Photographs of that time show sentries keeping watch while standing or crouching in barrels of straw; what other survival practices might have been passed on to the troops by 'mountain men'? If you have special knowledge of Alpine climbing in those days which you could share with Brian, or material you could lend, or references you can point him at, please contact him on 083 649 6164 or at brian.culross@isat.co.za"

12. MEMBERSHIP NEWS

New members: We welcome the following new members: Eric Riemann, Xanthe Mayer, Pamela Pillay, Carina Rousseau, Björg Röde, Richard and Lorraine Patton, Michelle Horn, Peter, Judith and Richard Pentz, Phylis Coven.

Applications received from: Helen and Steven Dempster, Greg Lawless, Richard Asman and Elizabeth Easton. Bronwyn Smith, Desire Tyrer, Agnes Fiamma and family member Teya Bargon.

Resigned: Victoria Ford (living in Spain), Robert Gray (living in the UK), Anthony Reason, Aphra Schumacher.

Passed away: With regret we advise the passing on of Dell Houmoller in December. Our sincere condolences to Margaret and family.

ELIZABETH CUTHBERT-Nee JUPE

18th February 1915 – 23rd September 2005 Elizabeth Cuthbert, (nee Jupe) - 'Jupey' to some of her older friends, died of bone marrow cancer in her home in Cape Town on 23rd September 2005, at the age of 90. Liz went to school at Bedales in England and then the Bergmann Osterberg Physical Training College (1933-1966) where she obtained a Physiotherapy diploma.

She taught physical education at Queen Ethelburga's school in Harrogate before emigrating to South Africa in 1939. During the war years, between 1939 and 1945, she taught at Kingsmead, in Johannesburg. It was at this time that she joined the Transvaal Mountain Club where she met her husband, Bill Cuthbert. Their weekends and holidays were spent in the Magaliesburg and the Drakensberg, where they owned land at Champaign Castle. She had nine years of marriage before she was prematurely widowed, leaving her with two young daughters.

She developed a specialist interest in sport for the physically disabled, teaching at St Vincent's school for the deaf and the Hope Home in Johannesburg. She designed and found sponsorship for a solar heated swimming pool, a poorly developed and rarely applied technology in the 1960's.

In 1979 she moved to Cape Town, where she continued to use her specialist knowledge of swimming and physiotherapy. She pioneered work with severely disabled coloured and black children who had previously been denied the opportunity to swim because of Apartheid. She continued with this work as a volunteer, well into her 80's. Several of her pupils made it into international paralympic teams but her real interest was in helping handicapped children gain independence and improve their self esteem.

In the last 40 years, Liz travelled widely, often in the company of fellow MCSA members. She had a particular affection for Greece and the Middle East. She taught herself Modern Greek and became an amateur authority on Eastern Mediterranean archaeology.

Liz was member of the MCSA for 65 years and was recently awarded honorary life membership by the club. She was a member of the Natal section July camp advance team for many years. The mountains were always a very important part of her life. She lived and died in a charming fisherman's cottage below the mountain and overlooking the sea in Kalk Bay. She is survived by her two daughters, Jane and Kate and four grandchildren.

13. CLUB NEWS

MCSA's Annual Dinner & Johannesburg Section's 75th Anniversary

Date: 6 May 2006 at 19h00 for 19h30

Venue: Johannesburg Country Club, Lincoln Str. Woodmead, Sandton.

Cost: R200.00 per person includes a buffet supper, dancing/music, and lucky draws.

Guest Speaker: Alex Harris, our 7 Summits Summiteer.

Bookings: Cheryl Devine 011 974 3695 (h) 083 260 5678, Uschi 011 807 1310 (weekdays 8-10am) Diane 073 186 8409, 011 656 6544

Please join us on this special occasion.

75th Commemorative Magazine

Photos and articles are required for the commemorative magazine. PLEASE send in your contributions to admin@jhb.mcsa.org.za, or phone Uschi at 011 807 1310.

Slide Shows:

22 March: Winning Slides and photos of the Rory Lowther Memorial Challenge. Prize giving.

29 March: 'WITH SHACKLETON IN ANTARTICA'

Viv James will lead us in his father's footsteps on Shackleton's "The Imperial Transantarctic Expedition, 1914 -1916 ". 23 years old and fresh out of the Cavendish Laboratory in Cambridge in 1914, Viv's father Reginald William James joined the expedition at the last minute just over 90 years ago. Viv has his father's written materials, as well as other expedition records and many of the well-known Hurley photographs. Sharing in the Shackleton legend, Reginald James later became one himself as Professor of Physics at UCT from 1937 to 1956, was made a Fellow of the Royal Society, and became an X-Ray crystallographer and physicist among the giants of his generation, with two of his research students going on to receive Nobel Prize awards. This is world history with a local flavour - a presentation not to be missed.

5 April: Slide Show "New Zealand – Zero to Mt Aspiring" Chris and Chris

19 April: Slide Show: 'Bogged down with NO MOON – Trekking in the Rwenzori 2005. Dobec

10 May: Slide Show 'Training course with the Swiss Alpine Club' Gareth Frost

17 May: Slide Show and talk: 'Climbing in Norway and Norwegian climbers' Björg Röde

24 May: Slide Show: 'First Descent of Rio Lurio' Alard, Mark and co.

Annual Subscriptions: We thank members who have paid their subs. Also a big thank you to members who have made donations to our various funds. Those of you who have not paid please do so asap. If you pay by direct deposit/transfer PLEASE quote your name or membership number on the transaction. Otherwise we cannot allocate the amount to the correct member. If you no longer wish to retain your membership, please advise **early** in the year, as otherwise you are still liable for the year's subs.

Change of contact details: If you change your contact details especially email address, phone numbers, postal address, please let the administrator know.

Hamerkop week:

Jhb section week at Hamerkop is from 30 May to 5 June, with an official meet there 3 & 4 June. Members may book for the week/part week. R100 minimum per night for 4 people, R25 for each additional member. Guests fees are double. Contact Uschi 011 807 1310 weekdays between 8-10am.

St Peters School Climbing Gym: we are negotiating a deal for MCSA members. We will keep you informed.

14.MCSA NEWS

BMC meet: Plas Y Brenin North Wales. 7-14 May 2006. There is place for 2 MCSA members from South Africa. Interested members should contact Ulrike Kiefer.

Mt Kenya Meet July 2006

This year is the 75th anniversary of the Johannesburg Section of the MCSA and as a celebration we have decided to have a meet to Mount Kenya. This will be for approximately 2 weeks during July 2006. The meet is open to all members as well as non-members either in the process of joining or going with a member. There is no qualification although it would help to have camped out in cold conditions before. Both climbers and walkers are welcome.

We will fly to Nairobi and travel by minibus to Naro Moru River Lodge, where we will stay one night in the back-packers facility. The next day we go by Landie to the Park gate, complete formalities there and walk up to the Met station at about 3450 m. The next day sees us take a slow but quite hard schlep up the Vertical Bog to camp at the river near Picnic Rocks (3950m). Day 3 is a short walk up to Mackinders Hut where we will camp. That afternoon we will go up to the American camp and the black hole bivvy to see the Darwin Glacier. Day 4 we will climb Point Lenana (4900m), the highest point to which one can walk.

The weather should be reasonably dry then, with days being pleasant and nights being cold higher up. You will need a stove, tent, a decent sleeping bag, sturdy boots, rain gear and warm clothing plus food for 8 to 10 days. Climbers will require ropes and gear. We will sort all this closer to the time.

When in the region of Pt Lenana, we will judge which would be the best side of the mountain, and best route to climb. The south-east standard route is sometimes out of condition at that time, but we will have to see. Anyway, we will then plan accordingly. Parties of stronger climbers can go off on their own, as can walkers. There is a lot of both hiking and climbing to be done. We will aim to exit by the very scenic Chogoria route and head back to Nairobi for a bit of a job at Buffalo Bill's Saloon.

It is hard to give an estimate of costs at this stage with currency fluctuations and airfares going up. The current airfare is somewhere around R3500, transport will be about \$50, Park fees \$100, accommodation about \$50. Food and living expenses say another \$100 makes a total of less than R6000. Porters are available if required. People can stay on afterwards and go to the game parks or the coast. Here is a great opportunity to visit a very beautiful mountain.

Contact Greg Devine on devine@mega.co.za or 083 378 2587.

National Ice Climbing Meet

MCSA members and non-members are invited to join a National Ice Climbing Meet at Giants Castle, Natal Drakensberg, from 12-16 July 2006. The Meet will be hosted by the KZN Section and lead by Gavin Raubenheimer.

The objectives are to:

- 1) show beginner ice climbers the wonders of winter climbing and to coach more experienced climbers in the finer points of ice climbing.
- 2) show visiting climbers some of the more out of the way climbs of the Giant's Castle massif and to open new routes.

Program:

12th - Hike in from Giant's camp: a long and difficult hike of about 8 hours;

13th - Coaching beginners at Makaza ice-fall. (Half day) followed by general climbing;

14th - Coaching the finer points of climbing ice including lead climbing skills, belay methods, V thread and bollard abseils and snow skill techniques. Makaza;

15th - Climbing in the Loteni ice fall area;

16th - Return hike.

The meet is entirely self catering and no climbing equipment is provided. If you would like to come along please contact Gavin Raubenheimer (082 9905876; peakhigh@futurenet.co.za)

Grootrivierberg National MCSA Mini-Camp 2006

23rd - 30th September

This year the Eastern Province and South Cape Sections are hosting the annual mini-camp in the remote and magnificent Grootrivierberg in the Eastern Karoo. These dry mountains, only really known to the members of these two sections, lie roughly equidistant from Willowmore, Steytville and Aberdeen. While they are not our highest mountains they are nevertheless, rugged, majestic and unique, and provide access to a seldom-visited part of our beautiful country. The base-camp will be held on the farm "Glenmore" about 40 minutes drive from Willowmore. Ordinary two wheel drive vehicles can access "Glenmore" without any difficulty. This base-camp is in a well prepared campsite on the banks of the Grootrivier. From this base members will be able to explore these mountains in a series of meets of varying extent and degree of difficulty. Any queries and applications forms regarding the mini-camp can be addressed to Gavin McLachlan at minicamp06@gmail.com or contact the administrator.

UIAA Youth commission seminar in Italy: Methods for training young mountaineers

The Italian Youth Commission - through the Central School for National Youth Leaders of Club Alpin Italiano - will be hosting an international training seminar on methods for training young mountaineers from 18-25 June 2006 in the Italian Dolomites. MCSA members involved in outreach and/or in training of mountaineering of the youth can contact Petro Grobler (youth@mcsa.org.za; 012-809 1022) for an application form. Applications to the MCSA have to be in by 15 April 2006.

OBJECTIVES: Exchange of experience through teaching and workshops about methods for training young mountaineers along the following themes: mountaineering on snow ridges and glaciers, via ferrata and fixed ropes, group guiding, landscape surveying. Practical approach to teaching methods during mountain trips, excursions on via ferrata and glaciers in the marvelous scenario of the Italian Dolomites, between the Sella mountain group and the Marmolada glacier. Improving of teaching methods by means of the guiding thread of the seminar, which shares the different themes: playing games. Facilitate the relations between the participants: simultaneous translation within the most required principle languages will be available during the learning's and workshops.

PARTICIPANTS: Youth leaders who are interested in improving teaching methods of basic meters involved in mountaineering with children.

PREREQUISITES: Applicants must have the alpine skills required for the activities in the programme and good experience in youth leading and mountaineering with the youth. **LOCATION AND ACCOMMODATION:** Centre "Bruno Crepaz" of the Club Alpino Italiano (CAI) at the Pordoi Pass in the beautiful Fassa valley, on the highest point on the great tourist route linking Bolzano and Cortina d'Ampezzo in the Dolomites. Dormitories with wool blankets. Full board is provided also for outdoor activities.

MEETING : Bolzano airport or railway station

COST: 230 EUR per participant for accommodation, organisation and full board.

UIAA International youth meets 2006

Some information on the 2006 International Youth Meets are still outstanding, but meanwhile the following wonderful opportunities are available to young members and children of members:

* Climbing the highest peak in Europe, Elbrus (5 642m), in the Caucasus Mountains: hosted by the Ukrainian Mountaineering and Climbing Federation from 23 July-1 Aug (Age 16-25, cost 250+euro)

* An environmental work camp: hosted by the Austrian Alpine Club in the Kaunergrat National Park from 30 July-5 Aug (Age 16-30, no cost)

* A climbing camp: hosted by the Alpine Association of Slovenia from 5-12 August, based at Bavsica Mountaineering Centre in the Julian Alps (Age 18-26; cost 220 euro)

* Climbing Kazbek Peak (5 047m): hosted by the Mountaineering and Climbing Association of Georgia from 3-10 July (Age 16+; cost 230 euro)

More details from and applications to Petro Grobler (youth@mcsa.org.za; 012-809 1022 (tel/fax)). Applications to the MCSA close 15 April 2005. There is some funding available from the Cencom Centenary Journal Youth Meet Fund. See also the UIAA Web Site (<http://www.uiia.ch>) under Youth Commission for more detail.

Expedition to Cordillera Blanca, Peru

Anyone interested in a trip to Peru's Cordillera Blanca from 2-23 July 2006, can contact Amanda Fitschen (amfit@yebo.co.za after 28 Feb when she returns from climbing Pumori) or, in the interim, Tod Collins (vets@nudvet.co.za). Objectives: 3 trekking peaks (5000m+) and Chopicalqui (6300m)

Golden Gate to Lady Gray

Todd Clark plans to do this walk on the high berg end-April and says particularly the area from Qachasnek, Makomereng, Three Sisters, Nene's Gatelooks forbidding in terms of numerous deep valley's running back into Lesotho. He asks that anybody with experience or information on this hike please contact him: toddkimclark@iafrica.com; 082-440 2143; 033-397 5017.

2005 MCSA Journal – The MCSA journal committee is looking for volunteers to help with editing and proof reading the MCSA journal.

2004 MCSA Journal: these have arrived. Please collect yours at a club evening or arrange with Uschi (011 807 1310)

15.LAND AND ACCESS

Hanglip North: We would like to have a 3 day meet at Hanglip North, a prime climbing and hiking area close to Naboomspruit. Camping is next to cars. The access road can be sandy and cars with sufficient ground clearance are advised. The climbing is on trad, the grades from 15 upwards, the routes all multi-pitch. Hanglip is one of the best climbing areas and bush-camping areas that we have access to. If you are interested, contact Ulrike at ukiefer@icon.co.za. Please specify how many people are intending to join, which weekends between 1.5.06 and 30.9.06 you prefer and which weekends you will definitely not be able to make. You should be able to take the Friday preceding this weekend off work. The two long weekends in June and September respectively are not possible. If there is sufficient interest, we will negotiate access for a suitable weekend and let you know. Please let us have your replies ASAP.

Trident: Please remember to fax Dr Luyt (Fax no 012 362 1313) if you wish to go to Trident Kloof. Please provide your membership number, vehicle registration, and the names and number of people in your party. This should preferably be done a week ahead of your intended visit, but definitely not later than the Wednesday before. This is purely a security measure, as there have been a lot of nasty incidents in that area, and the owner needs to know who is on his land. (Recently a grave was dug up and a skull stolen) Respect the one member one guest rule.

Kranskloof: It is not necessary to inform anyone of your intention to visit, but there is a fee payable through Uschi. It is R20 per car plus R5 per person. It works on the honesty system, so please be honest! We can only go there through the grace and favour of the owner, so let's not muck it up!

Greg Devine (083 378 2587)

General reminders: Members of the Jhb or Magaliesberg sections may go to the areas we are allowed to go, at any time, and may take ONE guest. Permits are required for your extra guests (i.e. if it is a permit area – these are Cedarberg/Tonquani, Castle Gorge, Grootkloof, Dome Pools, and Mhlabatini). Extra guests to the other areas are not possible unless permission is obtained from the landowners. Permits cost R20 pp per day etc. Get in touch with the relevant secretaries in good time to avoid disappointment of not getting extra permits. There is a reciprocal agreement between MCSA sections which allow us to use other sections areas. The first weekend no permits are issued to the general public, unless it is a special circumstance. Members may get two extra permits on that weekend for their extra guests with a limit of 10 extra permits. People who are commercial operators who wish to use the areas we administer, need to contact the secretaries to ascertain the requirements. Commercial operators MUST be members of the MCSA.

There is a daily limit to the number of people on permits to the areas administered by us: Dome Pools (20), Castle Gorge(20), Grootkloof(20) Mhlabatini(6), Cedarberg/Tonquani(40, divided +- 20 via MSP and 20 via Calabash). Please note that parking fees payable to landowners by MCSA members at present is R20 per car.

Obtain prior permission to places like Trident (only MCSA Jhb and Mberg members), Kranskloof. Further info from Land and Access or Uschi (administrator).

Patrolling at Cedarberg/Tonquani: A 'request to patrol' is sent to members and we thank those members who are able to patrol, inform us that they can/ cannot. But many do not respond and one wonders whether there are patrollers out there at weekends. *'As a member of the MCSA, you are a co-owner of some of the most beautiful kloofs in the Magaliesberg. Please do your bit to look after them'*.

Waterval Boven: The armed robbers that struck at night on Sat 5th of November at Elandskrantz resort have been caught!! Three cheers for the SAP!! Lets hope that the security situation there returns to normal.

JHB'S 75TH / CENCOM MEETING

The next meeting of the MCSA Central Committee will be held in Johannesburg to coincide with our 75th celebrations. Chairmen from the various Sections will be attending.

We're looking for assistance with the following, please:

- collecting delegates from the airport on Friday afternoon, 5th May
- transport back to the airport on Sunday 7th May
- accommodation for Friday and Saturday nights.

If you can help, please contact Jenny Paterson at e.mail: secretary@mcsa.org.za or telephone (011)

888-3693(afterhours)

Thanks!

Johannesburg Section's 75th Anniversary

Here are some of the events we have planned:

6 MAY: MCSA Annual Dinner and our 75th Anniversary at the Country Club Johannesburg

Mt Kenya Expedition 15- 30 July. Contact Greg Devine

75th Anniversary Magazine

7 & 8 October: Birthday Bash at Cedarberg

Free 75th Anniversary car decals – courtesy Paul & Caryn Carstensen. Collect yours at club evening.

4 November: Barn Dance

Veterans evening date to be advised

Commemorative shirts; other goodies?

And anything that might still come up??

RE: SALE OF UNIT WEEK 5 HAMERKOP

JANINE ROYAL (Neé LUDE) WISHES TO SELL HER HAMERKOP UNIT, WEEK 5. THE SALE WILL BE IN TERMS OF THE HAMERKOP TRUST DEED REQUIREMENTS, THE MOST RELEVANT OF WHICH IS THAT A PROSPECTIVE BUYER MUST BE A MEMBER OF THE MOUNTAIN CLUB OF SOUTH AFRICA AND BE IN GOOD STANDING.

IF YOU REQUIRE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON CONDITIONS OF THE TRUST DEED PLEASE CONTACT MARGIE OWEN-SMITH OF THE TRUST AT EMAIL : margos@metroweb.co.za

A RESERVE PRICE OF R14 000.00 HAS BEEN PLACED ON THE SALE.

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED AND MEET THE REQUIREMENTS, PLEASE POST YOUR OFFER IN A SEALED, REGISTERED ENVELOPE TO :

THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
HAMERKOP TRUST
C/O OLIVER BARKER
P O BOX 322
BRUMA
2026

HAND DELIVERED RESPONSES CAN BE MADE TO:
OLIVER BARKER
102 ECKSTEIN ST
OBSERVATORY.

A DATED RECEIPT WILL BE PROVIDED IN THESE CASES

THE OFFERS WILL REMAIN SEALED AND WILL BE OPENED BY THE COMMITTEE AT A WEDNESDAY MEETING OF THE MCSA. THIS DATE WILL BE ANNOUNCED ONCE ALL THE OFFERS HAVE BEEN RECEIVED.

A PERIOD OF **30DAYS** WILL BE ALLOWED FROM THE DATE OF ISSUE OF THIS NOTICE - ***Date of this Notice 24 February 2006***

FOR RESPONSE TO REACH THE COMMITTEE. THIS PERIOD WILL CLOSE ON THE DUE DATE AT 12H30.

OLIVER BARKER:
ON BEHALF OF THE HAMERKOP MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

PLEASE NOTE:
THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE SALE/PURCHASE MAY ATTRACT TRANSFER DUTIES IS BEING INVESTIGATED BY THE COMMITTEE. IT IS HOWEVER THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PURCHASER TO ESTABLISH THIS REQUIREMENT FOR THEIR OWN PROTECTION. WE ARE UNOFFICIALLY ADVISED THAT THE SALE WOULD NOT ATTRACT ANY FEES OR TAXATION.