



May 2006

1. EDITORIAL

Fate, chance, and reason are strange bedfellows, and remind me of a group of kids sharing a bed after drinking double espresso's, always tugging, pulling, and trying to dominate each others space. I have just returned from a wonderful trip to the South Island of New Zealand. Definitely one of those must see, must do places for mountain mad people. I am still amazed by what I saw. We went to see the mouth of the Hans Joseph glacier on the West coast, a textbook 100m high mass of heaving rock and ice crawling down the valley floor at 2m per day. Two meters a day is one of those speeds, which is about 100 times faster than grass can grow, but a 100 times slower than a snail at rush hour. Basically, its looks as solid as a rock! Nothing moves for hours, and then suddenly there is an outburst of breath taking destructive power, and then its all over for a few more hours.

So there we stood, a 'safe' distance from the mouth of the glacier, waiting for something to happen. 'Safe', defined as: calculate how high the glacier is, estimate how far the debris would travel, should a 100 ton boulder or block of ice fall from the top of the glacier and shatter, add 5%, and there you have it, 'safe'. But the mouth of a glacier is such an enticing place, the giant ice arch standing 20m high, with a crystal turquoise stream gurgling out from under the ice, ooh, just to touch that ice. And then along came Rosemary, English, retired and on a mission, she toddled past us, under the safety railing, past the graphic tourist signs indicating a large ice arch crashing down on someone's head, and headed towards the ice. It was a nail biting thriller, as she lackadaisically stopped every now and then to admire the shattered rock and ice on the river bed on her way to the mouth. Under the arch she stuck her finger in the water, just to test that it really is true, that the water comes out colder than melting point, due to the pressure of the ice on top. She then stared up for a few minutes at the twisted cracks in the giant ice arch above her head. At this stage, her tour guide had turned white, and began yelling... from a distance... 'ROSEMARRY!!!!'. She looked up above the din of the rushing water, waved back politely, and carried on, walking along the ice face, touching it with her finger tips, and poking it with her walking stick. She paused for a while to stare at the giant boulders and scree balanced precariously above her, eating away at the face of melting ice, and then wandered along to the safer side of the glacier, where Kiwi tour guides meticulously led crampon clad tours up a hand cut path of ice steps to the top. She greeted them, curiosity filled, she headed back to join her group. It was 30 minutes of nail biting anxiety for anybody watching. Not to be out done, an Asian family decided that anything Rosemary could do, they could do better, so they to headed off to the mouth of the glacier, mom, dad, grandparents and kids in tow, to video, photograph and stare in amazement at the ice arch. We left, wondering whether the next crop of applicants for the Darwin awards would be successful.

While all climbers have at least a rudimentary developed sense of survival, Rosemary had none to speak of... how she managed to get to that age can only be a series of fortunate accident... Climbing is all about chance, the more the risk the more the reward, and so that little voice in our heads keeps begging the question, is this our unlucky day. Yes, there are days when we take chances, some days more than others, on every move we think it through, risk and reward, risk and reward. We have good days and bad days. On good days we feel lucky, we feel strong, we go for it. On bad days, we struggle to take those small steps, and progress is slow, rocking back and forth like a chameleon stalking its prey. Its funny how we face those feelings. The morning you slip in the shower, cut yourself shaving, trip over the dog, find a fray in your rope, miss all the turnoffs, step in a turd, your shoe lace snaps, you forget the route descriptions at home, and drop your favourite cam down a gully. Eventually, by some strange logic, you come to the conclusion that someone up there is trying to tell you something. Pack up, go for a walk, but don't tempt fate by climbing that day. Something is bound to go wrong. On the other hand there are those who say, its just co-incidence, don't be superstitious, getting back on the rock in the face of adversary, simply makes climbing all the more rewarding. I don't think there is a single one of us who have not participated in this mind game of tug of war, between superstition and hard logic. Richard Feynman, a great physicist and human calculator put it nicely. People came to him saying 'You know, I dreamed of my great Auntie Zelda, and when I woke up, my mom phoned out of the blue to say her sister was in hospital. Now how do you explain that?' He thought about it, and finally came up with a solution. He kept a record of every person he thought of and dreamed about over a period of time, and in parallel a record of all the tragic events that took place over the same time. He did the maths, and realised, that the calculated incidence of those synchronous events occurring are 100% predictable, and 'strange co-incidence' is a self created illusion. Do we ever count the days when we don't feel confident in the morning and still have a great climb, or when we think it's a perfect day to climb, and things go wrong? Yes, we are made of sterner stuff, it is those of us that point a finger at adversary, that stay on the climb that eventually make it to the top, to enjoy that mind rush of pure elation that can only be described as climbing.

Peter Adrian

2. 75th ANNIVERSARY BALL

This year the club celebrated their 75th anniversary ball. It was an amazing event, and started with the fun and games of trying to recognise fellow club members wearing suits, ties and evening gowns. The evening featured an incredible range of age groups, from the wild 20's to one of the founding fathers, Harry Barker, who was just one month short of 99 years old. Harry, as lucid as ever, spoke and sang, and reminded us of the era, where the club was formed during the great depression, and members were a close knit unit that had to rely on public transport, and where singing was the best way to pass the time on the long bus trip back to Joburg. It saddened me to realise what we have lost in this modern era of material wealth, and how bonding and brotherhood appear to slip by us in our busy lives. When 80 year old Herman Vogel stood up to sing a German alpine song, I had to pause, and be reminded of an era, when the club played, and continues to play, a role in helping new immigrants and visitors make life long friends, make contacts, find spouses, and grow roots in a land they will eventually come to love and call home.

This was followed by an address by our seven summiteer, Alex Harris, who eloquently touched us, with the spirit of why we climb. Even my wife, who's climbing experience is limited to being dragged up a cliff on the odd occasion, remarked how, with so little air time under her belt, she could taste that climbing feeling etched in every word. Finally, it was party time, on came the music, and talk about out of the wood work! Every generation of dance styles exploded onto the dance floor. Cool and trendy, we are not. But enthusiasm, energy and a significant dollop of individuality were the flavour of the night. The true mountain spirit.

When all was said and done, came the acid test! The next days (same day for some) meet at Boulder kloof. The Mountain Sanctuary car park was full of cars already with their 75th anniversary bumper stickers pasted on the back, and the kloof was full. Testimony to our enduring spirit. Only one slight difference, a rather tall member of the club seemed to be spending a rather long time working through the crux of Trio ...of a grade ten!!

A word of thanks to Uschi, Barbara, Hanna, Penny, Jenny, Diane, Sue and all those who helped make this the successful event that it was.

Peter Adrian

3. RESCUE AT CASTLE GORGE

Rescued: On Sunday 09 April 2006 my family and I joined the Johannesburg Hiking Club for an organised hike at Castle Gorge. What started out as a fun outing for the family became a very difficult and worrying situation when my son attempted to retrieve his hat from one of the pools below a waterfall. While there was not a major drop to the pool below various attempts to pull him out were in vain. Due to what can only be described as a small miracle there were members of the MCSA climbing nearby. This was extremely fortuitous, as without being melodramatic the late afternoon cold weather with a light breeze together with the low water temperature meant that hypothermia was a serious concern. The response from the MCSA team was incredible with Allan & Pablo setting everything up above (where we were) in order to do the rescue. They were fantastic and we had complete confidence that everything was under control at all times and it was just a matter of time before our son was rescued. Their contribution to the rescue was greatly appreciated particularly the care and concern that my son received when he got down to safety (they even took the time to rescue his hat).

I wish to formally thank the MCSA as a whole and each and every one of the individuals who was involved in the rescue. Many thanks to those involved who ensured that the day ended without tragedy.

Jeremy Malcolm, 082-300 0398/JHB Hiking Club

Rescuers: Pablo Casado, and I were at Castle Gorge with a few friends, Vicki Christy being the only member and having arranged permits with Jean at the Hiking Club. A brief description of the event is as follows: The youngster dropped his hat whilst swimming in the top pools in the narrow section of the gorge. The hat washed down and he climbed into the pool just above the high waterfall (which cascades into the pool just above the chain). His father was unable to help him climb out the pool.

My friends and I were at the chain pool, relaxing and practicing jumaring when we were asked for help from the party. Having ascertained that the youngster was calm but getting very cold, we decided that the quickest and safest rescue would be to lower him out of the pool rather than assist him to climb out. I therefore abseiled into the pool with a spare harness, with Pablo manning the belay stance. Having instructed the youngster, I secured the harness and my friend lowered him down the waterfall into the pool below, where my friends warmed him up until his father arrived. Pablo then threw the rope down to me and I abseiled down.

Apart from the climbing into the pool, everyone acted very sensibly, with no exposure to serious risk and no injuries, and all ended well.

Alan Lloyd

4. MYSTERY 30m WATER FALL

At 12:30 on Human Rights day last week Janet, Sean and I walked up to Damhoeknek on the way back from Castle Gorge. It was raining and we noticed a very dark cloud over Magaliesberg crest east of Damhoeknek. We crossed the top of the concrete road passed the disused stile and up the last slope before the steep descent to the old parking place. As we walked up we heard a thunderous crashing ahead of us and there, directly across the valley we saw a most beautiful waterfall dropping at least 30 m, down into the gully that descends and flattens out just east of the old parking place. We watched this brief wonder for 20 minutes then walked down the path. When we got to the barbed wire a crystal clear stream gushed downwards towards the site of Laughing du Toit's farmhouse. The stream dried up before we reached the road. By 2.00 pm the waterfall was gone. I have been going up and down Damhoek since 1948, had not seen the waterfall before, but had seen the stream flowing just west of Laughing du Toit's farmhouse. Laughing du Toit and his stream vanished in the late 1950's.

REV MASON.

5. ICE CLIMBING COURSE 2006

BEGINNERS TRAINING

The past couple of years have seen some successful beginners ice climbing courses being presented to club members during the winter season and another is to be held this year in July. Climbers are introduced to the style of water ice climbing, where techniques for the sport can be learnt and practiced on some genuine ice falls in Lesotho. The course consists of two parts: a workshop session where ice climbing theory, safety and equipment are discussed followed by a weekend at the Bokong ice fall in Lesotho where skills can be practiced.

Participants must meet the following basic requirements to qualify for the course:

- Must be a paid-up member of the MCSA JHB section (members from other sections are also welcome but an extra levy is charged for gear hire).
- Must have a minimum of 1 years climbing experience and can belay well.
- Must have the following equipment: climbing helmet, harness, suitable clothing, rigid boots that are water-proof and warm. A detailed kit list is available on request.
- A valid passport to enter Lesotho.
- Ice tools and crampons are available for hire if participants cannot supply their own.

Participants must be able to attend both sessions to enjoy the full benefit of the course.

When: Session 1 - Sunday, 16 July

Session 2 - Weekend, 29-30 July

Where: Session 1 – TBA

Session 2 – Bokong Nature Reserve, Lesotho

Costs: Course fee R250.

Gear hire R600 (incl. R500 deposit. JHB members only).

Contact: Gareth Frost (Lofty)

073 5722515

garethfrost@telkomsa.net

Places are limited and booking is essential. Ice climbing is very dependant on favorable winter conditions so although an ideal period has been chosen, no guaranty can be given on climbing conditions for the course.

6. SEARCH AND RESCUE

During the period 2 – 11 October 2005 the PGHM (Peleton Gendarmerie du Haute Montagne) in France hosted a delegation of 3 MCSA members prior to the CISA-IKAR meeting that was held in Cortina d'Ampezzo. The 3 members of the MCSA who attended were: Dr Arthur Morgan (MCSA Jhb, representing MCSA on IKAR Medical Commission), Mr Rob Thomas (MCSA Mag, representing MCSA on IKAR Flight Rescue Commission), Dr Rik de Decker (MCSA CT, representing WSAR on IKAR Medical Commission). The purpose of this was primarily to share information on the PGHM's workings, techniques and equipment. After the workshop with the PGHM the MCSA members moved through to Italy for a brief visit to the CNSAS (Corpo Nazionale Soccorso Alpino e Speleologico) before attending the CISA-IKAR meeting in Cortina d'Ampezzo in the South Tyrol area of the Dolomites. Their full report makes fascinating reading, to see how search and rescue is conducted in the busiest mountains of Europe. Interesting facts such as, most of the rescues are done by full time professionals, and that during high season the call tempo is such that it is normal to have several rescues (as many as 5) under way at once, with the helicopters being used in a complex sequence coordinated by the rescue base. Of these, 30% were hiking, 21% skiing, 5% off-piste skiing, 8% alpine climbing, 7% paragliders and hang-gliders, 3% rock-climbing, 1% canyoning and the rest from diverse activities. It is interesting to note, that from the South African stats, the majority of those rescued, are hikers. Trad gear is seldom used. When rock protection is required it appears to be the norm to place the bolts required to get the job done (using a petrol-powered drill as batteries cannot be charged in the field nor do they survive the cold) and then leave them in place afterward – even during training. While a probable consequence of this approach are mountains littered with bolts placed and then abandoned, this is not evident. Since many of the alpine rock routes already have bolted belay stations this does not result in as many randomly-placed bolts as could otherwise happen, since the existing bolts are probably used wherever possible. However, training sessions in unusual locations do result in copious numbers of bolts being placed. Most canyons and some popular sport-climbing areas do experience a serious over-use of bolts but this is not specifically attributable to rescue activities. Some interesting equipment includes a catapult for tree and cable-way rescue: One of the problems frequently faced by mountain rescue teams is that of paraglider pilots getting themselves caught in trees and on cable-ways. To reduce the access time required for these rescues the PGHM has a 3m catapult with which they can fire a small (250g) lead-shot bag trailing a line a full 40m into the air and over a branch or cable. This messenger line is then used to pull a load-bearing line up and over the limb or cable. A rescuer can ascend the other side of this line once it has reached ground to reach the patient or self-rescue equipment and a radio can be pulled up for those cases where the paraglider is over a non load-bearing cable or thin branch. When the catapult is not available then rescuers can thread some of the line through an eye on the shot-bag to improvise a slingshot, achieving good height in this manner. Other fascinating gear, is a rudder on the stretchers to prevent wind spin while hoisting, pneumatic winches, and some very grizzly looking tools

body recovery in crevasses. All in all, the well illustrated 26 page report is awesome reading for anybody interested in search and rescue, and is well worth the wait to download all 3.5Mb of it. It can be downloaded from <http://dept.ee.wits.ac.za/~grant/downloads/ikar.pdf>.

7. JOBURG CLIMBING WALL PROPOSAL

Introduction

Two separate initiatives were aired at MCSA committee meetings during 2005:

1. Building a proper rock climbing training venue in Johannesburg.
2. Re-launching competition climbing in South Africa, starting in Johannesburg.

The construction of a decent training facility has been hampered by the difficulty in finding a suitable venue. Organizing a climbing competition is a daunting affair due to the costs involved, and the reliance on individuals to drive the organizing effort.

Combining these two initiatives may help solve both problems. Building a competition standard wall at a permanent venue will ensure that competition climbing has a natural home in Johannesburg. It will greatly reduce the cost, effort and risk of organizing regular competitions since setting up temporary walls was the greatest single expense of the competition circuit of the 1990's.

Having a quality wall in a permanent venue will also satisfy the training requirements of Johannesburg climbers. A good training facility needs a bouldering wall of at least 3.5m high, with a 45 degree overhanging section, a 30 degree section and a 15 degree section, all sections at least 6m wide. It must also include a lead wall of at least 15m high and 9m wide, with three top rope anchors and bolts strong enough to handle lead falls every 2m. The bottom of the lead wall can be used for bouldering. Proper mattresses should cover the whole bouldering area.

There are two universities and 10 schools in Johannesburg that used to take part in the competition circuit of the 1990's. We propose that all these institutions be approached as possible venues, and partners in this venture.

Proposal

Here is what is needed to set the ball rolling:

1. The MCSA (Johannesburg section) should approve R100,000 for the development of a competition standard climbing wall
2. A subcommittee must be appointed to oversee the project. Such a committee should consist of no less than five members with the following skills:
 - a. Wall construction
 - b. Structural integrity (civil or mechanical engineer)
 - c. Relationships with schools and universities in Johannesburg
 - d. Competition organization
 - e. Sponsorship and advertising
3. The subcommittee will approach the 12 possible venues with a request to:
 - a. Match MCSA funding
 - b. Make a suitable venue available (indoors, structurally sound, 12m high ceiling)
 - c. Ensure that the wall will always be available to MCSA members and competitions
 - d. Adhere to MCSA safety and maintenance standards
4. At the same time, the designer and engineer on the subcommittee will:
 - a. Design the wall (making certain assumptions)
 - b. Estimate construction cost
5. Once a venue has been decided on, update the wall design and costing with the specifics of the venue
6. Build the wall
7. Open the wall by hosting a difficulty competition

By Neil Margetts, Willem le Roux, Joffrey Hyman and Graham Terrell

8. ACCESS TO THE CAGE CLIMBING GYM

The MCSA has entered into an agreement with the Cage Climbing Club to use their wall as a training venue, on a six month trial basis. The wall is located at the St Peter's sports centre (DC –Sports Hall) 105 Witkoppen Road, Rietfontein.

Available training times:

Monday and Wednesday 15H00 to 20H00

Tuesdays 15H00 to 20H00 except times of Bouldering League

Thursdays 19H00 to 20H00

Sundays 09H00 to 16H00

(These times may not be exclusive to MCSA members and may be shared with training non-members)

Access to hall:

During the week access into the hall at above stipulated times will be possible.

On Sundays access to the hall will have to be by an alternative arrangement.

The hall is not accessible from December 10 to January 10, except by arrangement.

Access to Wall:

Access to wall is through either the fence gate or roller door. As the roller door is often opened for ventilation, securing the fence gate is not an effective means of securing access. However MCSA members will be required to have membership cards with them and to sign the "Users Book"

Disclaimer:

Climbing is entirely at own risk. Each member who intends to use the wall must sign the indemnity provided, this prior to climbing.

9. BOOK REVIEW – NAVIGATION ANYPLACE WILD

With a great deal of passion and attention to detail, Andrew Friedeman from Wildways Adventures, has finally put together his training workbook on navigation in places where, "you can't stop and ask for directions"! After doing geography for matric (in 1987!), it was most refreshing to recharge my aging memory cells, and brush up on my map reading skills. It was also nice to learn about things the old T.E.D. (Transvaal Education Department) had omitted to tell us, as there are quite a few mapping and grid systems which are used in other parts of the world which many of us have not been exposed to. I would

have liked to have seen a lot more written in the brief chapter on uses and applications of Global Positioning Systems (GPS), as I reckon that in the future most of us will be carrying affordable GPS's around, and probably most cellular phones will come with a GPS module as standard. I'm sure the club could probably benefit from GPS co-ordinates in route guides, instead of using trees (that fell down in 1953) or other moveable objects. The section on measuring walking distance, speed and time, are useful tools which everybody should know, but sadly don't. Same holds for most of the navigation tools and techniques described. These are well described, and well illustrated, and most of us could benefit from a good read through. Judging by the number of hikers that get lost every year and need to be rescued, only proves this point. All in all, the workbook is clearly written and nicely illustrated and has a good question and answer section. A must read for anybody planning to lead a group up a mountain. Copies (signed by the author if you really insist) are available from andrew@wildways.za.net. If you would like to see a copy, I will be making my copy available to the MCSA JHB section library, as soon as I have finished with it.

Peter Adrian

10.MEMBERSHIP NEWS

New members: We welcome the following new members: Helen and Steven Dempster, Greg Lawless, Richard Asman and Elizabeth Easton. Bronwyn Smith, Desire Tyrer, Agnes Fiamma and family members Teya Bargon, Kaegan, Cole and Calvin Kiefer, Kevin Jacobs, Peet Badenhorst, Pieter Coetzee, Sue Wadley, Marc Booysen, Herman A Wessels, Herman C Wessels, Donovan van Graan, Nicole Burri, Earle Wainstein, Bärbel Riemann, Berenice de la Croix, Bronwyn Frost Jeffrey Makuch; Peter de Wet, Michael Cane (family) Joshua and Alex Weiss and new family member (and terrorist in training) Sarah Warren.

Passed away: With regret we advise of the passing on of longtime member Ted Rudnick at the age of 80 years in March 2006. Ted joined our section in 1950. Ted was involved with the building of our Wolkberg Hut. Our sincere condolences to Ann, family and friends. Ray Dando, a member who joined our section in 1956 passed away in February, after a short illness. Our condolences to his wife Erika, family and friends.

With great sadness we advise the sudden passing away of Herbert Seuring on 25 May. Our sincere condolences to Gerlinde, Mark, family and friends.

11.CLUB NEWS

Slide Shows: If you want to give a slide show, or know anybody who has something that may be of interest to the club, please convince them to phone Uschi, and book a date for a Wednesday night show.

2004 Journals: many were posted to members but alas a fair number were returned 'unclaimed'. If you have not received your Journal, please contact Uschi to make arrangements to collect.

Land & Access: please note that if you need extra permits for your guests (one member one guest) please contact the relevant permit secretaries. Mountain Sanctuary is allowed to issue 5 permits to their overnight guests and not people just arriving.

11.MCSA NEWS

Reciprocity between MCSA and the Rucksack club: I have noted that many MCSA climbers had visited the UK and not always found it easy to obtain accommodation in the mountains, and vice versa. I am a member of a couple of UK clubs and mentioned to Mike Dent, the Rucksack Club secretary, that some sort of reciprocal arrangement could be to the benefit of both clubs. The Rucksack club has a hut in each of Wales, the Lake District, and Scotland. Mike is clearly happy about this. So, if any MCSA member would wish to make use of this, Mike can be contacted at the attached e-mail address. mikedent@dsl.pipex.com

UIAA 2006 International Youth Meets: For details logon to <http://www.uiia.ch> under Youth Commission. Funding available from the Cencom Centenary Journal Youth Meet Fund. Contact Petro Grobler youth@mcsa.org.za.

KZN July camp: 1 -15 July, Cathedral Peak area. Contact Ricky Abbott ronwedd@netactive.co.za 082 538 5389, 033 330 3921 (evenings & weekends). If you need an application form, Uschi can email you one or contact Rikki.

National Ice Climbing Meet: 12-16 July KZN section Gavin Raubenheimer 082 990 5876 peakhigh@futurenet.co.za.