



November 2006

1. EDITORIAL

I have often been challenged by prospective members on the business of having to do compulsory meets before joining the club. In terms of formality and bureaucracy, frankly I agree, it does seem completely unnecessary. With the refinements to our entrance policy, of no longer having to do the weekend meet (especially for those who work weekends), and the policy that mountain activities with members outside of official meets now count as official Sunday meets (explains why we never had church professionals joining before), and the time required in which to do your meets has been extended, we hope that remarks such as "Oh, you married to a member! I guess that's one way of getting into the MCSA!" may become a thing of the past. There are however good reasons for the meets system. It was on a recent meet to Groblerskloof. I've been a member for more than 10 years now, and it was the first time I've ever been there. I've driven passed it hundreds of times going over Breedsnek pass, but never actually seen what lies within the kloof. OK, so there I was, late as usual. I had followed the meet leaders directions, found the parking spot, and the kloof lay visibly in front of me. In the absence of those to guide me, the approach seemed obvious. Simple, start at the top of the kloof, near the parking, and scramble down until the kloof walls steepened, and you see people you know climbing. Hah, my bushman tracking skills soon let me down, as the path dwindled into nothingness, and the bush got thicker. We are not talking about a little bush here and, a few twigs there, with the odd scratch and scrape, we are talking about what can only be described as "Brazilian Wax" vegetation. That unique South African combination of fallen trees, low crawling wag-'n-bietjie (*Acacia caffra*), brambles and bracken. It will ease up and clear, I kept convincing myself, every time the thorns drew blood. Two hours later, with my cloths in tatters and virtually no skin left on my shins, the kloof finally widened, and I heard that magic jingle of karabiners. The afternoon walk out was a 5 minute scramble up the descent gully at the bottom end of the kloof, followed by a pleasant 15 minute walk across the open plain to the car park. Hence the bottom line. There is a lot of essential access information, both legal, and practical that is gained from joining experienced climbers on meets. Without this, one would never know what the club has to offer, in terms of access and experience, and your mountain experience could be a lot more dangerous, if you do not know all the "tricks" about getting in and out of the various gullies and gorges, in an emergency situation.

With that said, this edition is hopefully one of our best ever. Mr. Frost decided to thaw out for the summer and open a multi-pitch rock route at Magageni. The club hosted its 75th anniversary campfire meet at Cederberg, which can best be described as our best meet ever, and featured the "White and Morkel wicking song" and many others which needed to be explained to minors. The next day was filled with activities such as the kiddies treasure hunt, and our first adventure race, but more about that later in this edition. So from me, enjoy the summer climbing season, and have an awesome Christmas and New Year.

Peter Adrian

2. MCSA 75TH ANNIVERSARY ADVENTURE RACE

Adventure racing has for a long time been an activity that has remained outside the MCSA. Through repeated calls from the current committee to embrace and promote all forms of mountain activities (except quad bikes, I hope!) within the principles of the MCSA, they decided to make a bold move forward and plan and organise their own mini-adventure race. What better time to do it, than at the 75th anniversary weekend meet at Cedarberg/Tonquani kloofs in the Magaliesberg.

Having never competed in a race before, I decided to give it a try. All I needed was a team. First on my list was James Matcher, nick-named "The Duracell Bunny" by my wife on account of his boundless energy. Hiking with him, usually turns out to be a personal episode of survivor SA, where the regular zinc carbon batteries just fade along the path side. James also happens to be an experienced racer, and we immediately appreciated his experience and decision making, as soon as the race began. Next was to find a female team member. Women with Amazon like strength and endurance are hard to find, and after my list of possible candidates shrunk to zero, Neil suggested I give Megan Watkins a call, and there we had it, team Grog (myself), Grovel (James) and Grunt (Megan promised to grunt like Monica Seles during the difficult stages).

The event started with 5 teams, departing from Cedarberg campsite at 15 minute intervals. Each team consisted of 2 men and a woman, with a combined age of over 75 years. Due to the lack of women recruiting ability, team "Bonkers" set off with three men, and a member of the Magaliesberg section. The route followed the path through the top end of Cedarberg kloof, and across to the boulder field orienteering course. The orienteering proved to be a major problem for some of the directionally challenged participants, and many of them lost time failing to find the way points. As a competitor, I would say imagination challenged was far more likely a problem, the "baboon" rock was re-described as a "turtle", which to me looked more like a snail, and when we put on our ocean goggles to find the anemone shaped rock, I suddenly felt like I was on a coral reef. Everything started to look like an anemone, all waiving their silica tentacles at us, and beckoning us to climb them to find the markers. My drug of choice for this part of the course would definitely be LSD, rather than speed☺

The race continued across upper Tonquani via photographers corner. It wasn't only team DMM who failed to find this descent, our Chairman, race organiser, trad climbing marshal and quiz master Terry White also had difficulty finding the descent, and arrived at the start of the climb "Reunion", a grade 13, just in time, to find the first team "trad" already half-way up the pitch. By the time we got there, Terry, a little dumbstruck declared "they were flying!! there is no way you'll catch them." Terry then dished out his climbing quiz with glee, and to no avail, "Grunt" and I tested Terry's poker face, whilst reading the impossible questions aloud. Reunion was a pleasant line, on good clean rock, and despite having to chimney the last section with two packs on my back, my gamble to climb in my running shoes, to save time and weight paid off...almost, as climbing on your arms is "@#% exhausting.

From there on, it was a sprint to the top of Boulder kloof. A bad idea to follow Boulder kloof right from the top. In recent years the top part of Boulder has become unbearably overgrown, and we must have lost a lot of time against the teams that had the sense to skirt this section, and descend from the usual side entrance. After an eternity of bush whacking, we crashed through the last bush, and down we bouldered to the junction with Tonquani. A few klipspringer stared at us in confusion. Nothing could prepare us for the next section of the race. Ropes dangled from the highest point in the Cedarberg/Tonquani complex, and we stared in awe, as the last climber from the leading team disappeared over the top edge. Absolutely no mechanical devices were allowed, only old fashioned prussic loops. A good thing I spent the previous afternoon dangling from the garage rafters, experimenting with different length prussic loops. My first five prussics, did nothing but soak up the rope stretch (on a static rope!), my hopes waned. It was a relentless slog, that slowly sapped away our strength. After what seemed like an eternity, we reached the top of the rope, almost too exhausted to do the final scramble to the top of "Boggle".

At last came the event we had been waiting for, the Tyrolean traverse (known as the Vulgarian traverse if you do it naked). A zip line stretched from the top of "Boggle" to the top of "Frog gully". It turned out to be a rather cruel event, as hanging there, suspended 60m above the ground, between the kloof walls has to be the most magnificent Magalies view imaginable, but along ticked the clock, leaving little time to soak up the majesty of the environment. The large number of under age spectators, kept the vulgarians at bay. From there on, it was mad dash to the finish. "We can always out run them," declared "Grovel", as the Duracell Bunny bounded off towards the finish. Ten minutes later, to applause, we collapsed in a pile where we had started, three and a quarter hours earlier. There we sat listening out for the tinkle of karabiners among the boulders, that announce the arrival of the remaining teams. With our hands trashed and blistered from the rope work, we compared notes and went through the "Quiz Terri-ble"

Overall, the event was a stunning success, it was thoroughly enjoyed by all competitors and spectators, and is likely to remain a part of our annual events calendar. It made me realise what an enormous job it is, to set up and plan an adventure course like that, and explains why some of the professional races cost a few thousand to enter. The MCSA mountain rescue teams must have carried the brunt of the workload, and were extremely professional in their safety standards, and the way that the rope work was set up. We are proud to have them as part of the MCSA, and have enormous confidence in their ability to do their job should they be called upon. Special thanks to the organisers, Terry White, Neil Margetts, Graham Terrell (who apparently carried a 40kg pack

containing all the necessary equipment to set up the course). Also thanks to Robert Douglas for setting up the orienteering course, Gustav Janse van Rensburg and Alard Hufner for lending us nearly a 1km of rope, Hanna duToit and Megan Watkins for printing brochures.

Final results with penalties counted in:

1. Team Grog, Grovel and Grunt (Peter Adrian, Megan Watkins and James Matcher) 3h 14min 29sec
2. Team TRAD (Rance McIntyre, Andrew Porter, Debbie Mulder) 3h 35min 52sec
3. Team DMM (Dewald Kloppers, Mathew Munting, Maudie Brown) 4h 23min 12sec
4. Team The Bonkers (Dion van der Riet, Deon van der Merwe, James ? , Gereth Kirk) 4h 50min 18sec
5. Team Face, Crack and Flake (Elisa Giocos, Alan Watson, Mike Potgieter) 6h 59min 39sec

The mountain "Quiz Terri-ble" can be viewed on www.climb.co.za.

Race Winners: Grog (Peter Adrian), Grunt (Megan Watkins) and Grovel (James Matcher). Photo: Barbara Reid

Peter Adrian

3. NEW ROUTE AT MAGAGENI

This year was my first meet to Magageni and I was really amazed at how good the climbing is at this infrequently visited crag. Firstly the size of the cliffs are quite impressive and then also the quality of the rock inspires confident gear placements.

Magageni first saw action long before I started climbing but then lost appeal during the early days of sport climbing and access to the area was banned for a number of years before restricted access was again negotiated a couple of years ago. I decide to attend the meet this year, lead by Ulrike Kiefer, with my climbing buddies Darryl Margetts and Ron Nathan. Darryl had been to Magageni a number of times before so we looked up to him to introduce Ron and myself to the climbing. Darryl and I are both keen "new routers", having opened many trad climbs at Manoutsa, Blydepoort and the Magaliesberg so we were naturally inclined to find something at Magageni to put our names on. Ron didn't mind what we did as long as it wasn't too hard.

After a leisurely drive out to Middelburg and the Mpopomeni farm, a true bush veld camp site, we started our approach to the crags via "Hannes se pad". After exiting the gorge where the 4x4 trail descends, I was pleasantly greeted by the view of the main Magageni walls stretching out from the waterfall below the owners house. Wow, what an awesome place.

We studied the cliff faces in conjunction with the route guide to see where we could find a new line to climb. We decided to head up to the crags on the right hand side of the road as no routes had been opened there yet. The approach up the hill was not too bad. The bush had not yet recovered from the winter and finding the way up to the route we spied out was easy through the absent foliage.

When faced with a new area with no existing routes on, the hardest part of route finding is deciding which line to attempt. Consensus was reached and I started up the first pitch. I lead up the lower faces to reach the open book feature we saw from below that gained a ledge above. The off-width in the corner intimidated me at first but some bridging moves eased the climbing up to the ledge. The second pitch was also good with nice cracks for protection and a relatively plumb line to follow to the top of the crag. A short walk along the top of the crag lead us back to our camp site where a well earned lunch awaited us.

Afternoon climbing at Magageni is only for those climbers with leather hands and that don't melt in the sun. The rock bakes in the sun in the late morning and early afternoon, making it unbearable to touch. My little party had still to learn this and after an unpleasant walk back to our new crag and a failed attempt to find a shady route, we headed back up the road to sloth around at our camp for the rest of the afternoon.

Sunday morning's plan was to send one of the classic routes on the main Magageni wall. We looked for something simple to give us the best all round climbing experience. We found ourselves at the base of "Groovy" which Darryl had climbed a number of times previously. The line is easy to follow and the RD is not really required to find a way to the top. Once again I took the sharp end and lead our party up the faces and corners that compose the route. What a fantastic climb. Great moves, fantastic features and generally well protected. I will definitely do this route again on future trips. A great way to end the weekend at this lovely venue.

I would love it if the club could renegotiate our access to Magageni, perhaps getting us a couple more trips there in a year and also allowing access to fresh water at the top for our camping. All-in-all a really worthwhile experience and a must do for any trad climber wanting a little more than what our local crags have to offer.

Gareth Frost

4. VERREAUX'S EAGLE DEATH AT GROOTKLOOF

I was brimming with excitement at the prospect of patrolling at Grootkloof: not only had I never been to this beautiful part of the country before, I was also hoping to glimpse a pair of nesting Verreaux's eagles (*Aquila verreauxii*, formerly known as black eagles). My recent experience where I abseiled down to the Verreaux's eagle chick at Roodekrans (Walter Sisulu National Botanical Garden) and placed a metal ring on its leg (Peglerae, Sept 2006), has left me with an even keener interest in these magnificent birds than ever. Arriving at the Grootkloof campsite, we were greeted with the majestic soaring of a Verreaux's eagle and hoping to get closer, we walked up to the gully. The eagle, a beautiful adult male, landed just opposite from where my wife and I were standing. We watched in awe, until he finally took flight, sending some nearby hyrax running for cover.

The next morning my wife and I left for the opposite side of the gorge in the hope of viewing the eagles on their nest. During our walk we were disappointed by a sky devoid of eagles. But the real shock wasn't in the sky: I spotted a dead Verreaux's eagle on a rock outcrop on the Western side of Grootkloof. The bird was an adult male and had died so recently that rigor mortis had not set in yet. At first glance, the position of the carcass suggested that the bird had been shot: head thrown back, body fallen backward, talons clenched. I photographed the dead bird in case its position could provide an explanation for its death. Closer inspection revealed both the absence of a bullet wound, and the presence of congealed blood on the talons. Since these raptors feed on live animals and occasionally scavenge whole animals, it's likely that this bird had fed recently. The most likely explanation for such a sudden death following a recent meal would be poisoning.

In the event of finding a poisoned animal in the field, it is vital to remove it from the ecosystem to prevent the successive poisoning of other animals. I collected the dead bird and took it to Onderstepoort Veterinary Institute in Pretoria to establish the cause of death, which required both a post-mortem examination and a toxicology report. The post-mortem revealed fresh meat in the crop, some of which was identifiable as guinea fowl. The toxicology analysis revealed a positive test for organophosphate poisoning, specifically monocrotophos. Monocrotophos, an insecticide, was mostly used by aerial application on maize against the stalk borer moth larvae (caterpillars) and resulted in the death of many non-target animals. According to Dr. Gerhard Verdoorn of Birdlife SA (www.birdlife.org.za), the use of monocrotophos is now banned. The National Department of Agriculture instructed registration holders to terminate the importation, formulation and sales of monocrotophos on 31 March 2004 and the poison was totally banned from use on 31 March 2005. Dr. Verdoorn also informed me that there have previously been poisoning events in the Grootkloof area attributed to this specific compound – illegal immigrants from Mozambique have used this chemical to poison guinea fowl which they then collect and eat.

The most likely scenario that occurred with the Grootkloof eagle was that it died after eating a poisoned guinea fowl, which was freshly dead or weak from the poison and therefore an easy target. Poisoned bait set out to kill jackal or caracal (we saw the latter at Grootkloof!) will not attract a Verreaux's eagle since these birds do not take chunks of meat, but they do occasionally take whole dead prey animals. It is unfortunately impossible to trace the direct source of the poisoning event since these eagles fly up to 30km in search of prey, and although monocrotophos is banned, many farms still have large quantities of banned poisons in storage.

There are three steps MCSA members can follow to avoid a repeat of this unfortunate poisoning event:

1. Ensure that the MCSA property is uninhabited by vagrants. Patrollers (and visitors) must make an extensive effort to search for and report any signs of habitation.
2. Collect all dead animals (especially carnivores) that have appeared to die in an unusual manner and contact the Poison Working Group (PWG) of the Endangered Wildlife Trust (011 486 1102; www.ewt.org.za). It is essential for the PWG to collect information on poisoning events. Without this information they cannot take action.
3. Ensure the continued education of the farming community (and their labourers) in the correct use of dangerous chemicals by financially supporting the Poison Working Group.

Finally, it is most important that we determine the welfare status of the Grootkloof eagles. We did not sight any eagles on the Sunday and we never saw the female. It would be greatly appreciated if any Verreaux's eagle sightings at Grootkloof (or nearby) since 3 September 2006 could be reported directly to me (084 842 7457; lverburgt@zoology.up.ac.za). If the female is still alive there is hope that she will find another mate and remain a common sight at Grootkloof. Young males disperse and search for mates over great distances, while adult breeding females remain close to their nesting site. Such an event is well documented where the male eagle at Roodekrans died unexpectedly and was later replaced by another male. These eagles now breed successfully every year (www.blackeagles.co.za).

Luke Verburgt MAG 458

On a more positive note I spent an awesome Sunday in spring, climbing in the Reunion area, and watching the pair of Verreaux Eagles at Upper Tonquani, calling, and performing magnificent aerial displays. My patience was rewarded with the arrival of their newly fledged chick, which virtually fell out the sky, and tumbled clumsily in the nest. Lets hope the youngster succeeds in repopulating the area. Luke's article on the ringing of the juvenile Black Eagle at Walter Sisulu National Botanical Garden can be found at:

<http://mag.mcsa.org.za/newsletter.html#eagles> (Ed.)

5. WHY ARE SO MANY PEOPLE DYING ON EVEREST?

Why are so many people dying on Mount Everest, asks doctor and climber, Andrew Sutherland in the British Medical Journal? It used to be thought that it would be physiologically impossible to climb Mount Everest with or without oxygen. In 1953 Hillary and Tenzing proved that it was possible to reach the summit with oxygen and in 1978 Messner and Habeler demonstrated it was possible without oxygen.

Although Everest has not changed, and we now have a better understanding of acclimatisation, improved climbing equipment, and established routes, it would therefore seem logical that climbing Everest might have become an altogether less deadly activity. However, this year the unofficial body count on Mount Everest has reached 15, the most since the disaster of 1996 when 16 people died, eight in one night following an unexpected storm. The death rate on Mount Everest has not changed over the years, with about one death for every 10 successful ascents. For anyone who reaches the summit, they have about a 1 in 20 chance of not making it down again. So why are there so many people dying on Mount Everest? And more importantly, can we reduce this number?

The main reasons for people dying while climbing Mount Everest are injuries and exhaustion. However, there is also a large proportion of climbers who die from altitude related illness, specifically from high altitude cerebral oedema (HACE) and high altitude pulmonary oedema (HAPE). This year, the author was on the north side of Everest as the doctor on the Everestmax expedition (www.everestmax.com) and was shocked by both the amount of altitude related illness and the relative lack of knowledge among people attempting Everest. He writes: "On our summit attempt we were able to help with HAPE at 7000 metres, but higher up the mountain we passed four bodies of climbers who had been less fortunate. The last body we encountered was of a Frenchman who had reached the summit four days earlier but was too exhausted to descend. His best friend had tried in vain to get him down the mountain, but they had descended only 50 metres in six hours and he had to abandon him."

"Some people believe that part of the reason for the increase in deaths is the number of inexperienced climbers, who pay large sums of money to ascend Everest," he says. "In my view, climbers are not climbing beyond their ability but instead beyond their altitude ability. Unfortunately it is difficult to get experience of what it is like climbing above Camp 3 (8300 metres) without climbing Everest. Climbers invariably do not know what their ability above 8300 metres is going to be like." He suggests that climbers need to think less about 'the climb' and more about their health on the way up. No matter what the affliction, whether it be HACE, HAPE, or just exhaustion, the result is invariably the same – the climber starts to climb more slowly, he explains. If you are too slow this means that something is wrong and your chances of not making it off the mountain are greatly increased. But with the summit in sight this advice is too often ignored.

When the author visited the French consulate in Kathmandu to confirm the Frenchman's death, the consul, not a climbing or an altitude expert, shook his head and said, "He didn't reach the summit until 12.30; that is a 14 hour climb – it is too long."

This article is the personal view of Dr Andrew Sutherland, a Wellcome Research Training Fellow, Nuffield Department of Surgery, Oxford, UK, Tel: +44 (0)1865 204 095; Mobile: +44 (0)7816 517 916, Email: andrew.sutherland@nds.ox.ac.uk and was published in the BMJ, Volume 333 p 452.

6. CAMPFIRE WEEKENDS AT CEDERBERG

Before the memories slip away (as if they ever would), I would like to use this opportunity to appeal to the organisers of the campfire weekend to organise at least two of these magnificent weekends per year. Isn't that what we always use to have, one in March / April, and one in October?

The 75th anniversary campfire weekend which we have just had, was one of the most magnificent campfire weekends ever organised since I have joined the club (1979). Firstly, it was so well attended by such a wonderful crowd of members from all walks of life. For a change, Som and Terry lost their voices not because they had to keep us going, but because they had serious competition from a crowd in their 20's, a young guitar-playing girl with a beautiful voice, and least but not, from Deon and Kerry van der Riet's 6 year lad singing lustily away 'Smoking the boo-oom, smoking the boo-oom, who's ... smoking the boo-oom with me!'. This says so much for the future generation of MCSA, let's face it. And all of this happening whilst we had a monkey audience on the surrounding rocks, the hairy ones and their human counterparts.

The Sunday was also delicious, with games for the kids, a treasure hunt, and then the amazing adventure race. Wow MCSA, 11 out of 10 for good organisation. I believe that there is no better way to market the club and ensure it's future existence than these events.

Please let's have more of them, one a year is not enough. It's the only time I get to see some of you beautiful people.

Tineke Wulffers

7. BOVEN ROC RALLY 2006

The premier climbing event of the year, the Boven Roc Rally, kicked off on Friday 22 of September 2006. This year promised to be exciting and different from the outset, as the Rally was held at a brand new venue. Rather than the traditional Elandskrans venue, the newly renovated Tranquilitas campsite, owned by Mike Behr and Gustav and Alex van Rensburg, hosted the excited competitors and proved to be a wonderful location for the Rally.

A total of 164 competitors, among other climbers and spectators, with 22 of the entrants coming all the way from the Cape, crammed into the new 85 acre venue, which includes an entire crag! A rock-climbers paradise, Tranquilitas' brand new bar area and splash pool were much appreciated by all in the early summer's heat. The guys also enjoyed the au' natural atmosphere of star-lit showers, as the gents ablutions were not quite complete at the time of the rally.

The campsite is accessed via 6 km of dirt road which was initially in good condition, however, after much traffic, including a number of logging trucks, it became uneven and pitted. Huge sand clouds billowed up from the road and reduced visibility to about 1 meter. This led to the first bit of excitement for the weekend, when two vehicles were involved in a minor collision on the dusty track. Fortunately no one was hurt in the incident, but everyone looks forward to the road being tarred in future. The venue was well secured with guards stationed at all the hotspots and no crime was reported throughout the weekend.

On Saturday, a costume theme heightened the carnival atmosphere with many teams entering the spirit of the event and showing off some innovative and eccentric outfits. Prizes were awarded to the "Chuck and Norris" (Henk van Aarde) and "Hot Chicks" (Anna Fatti and Maria Penso) teams for the best

costumes.

Adrenaline was pumping on day one of the competition, but tragedy struck early on for Marianne Pretorius and her partner James Pitman. Marianne, one of South Africa's leading women climbers, was simul abseiling to the start of the route with James when the accident occurred. James's rope had not reached the ground on both ends which caused him to fall a few metres. He went off the end of his rope, causing Marianne to fall about 12m and sustain a head injury severe enough to shatter her helmet, cause multiple fractures to her skull and break her jaw. Fortunately James sustained only minor injuries, but Marianne was stabilized and flown to Millpark hospital by a Johannesburg MCSA Search and Rescue helicopter. She underwent surgery on Monday 25th September and regained consciousness on the following Thursday. Fortunately Marianne was wearing a helmet and did not sustain any brain damage. Her prognosis is good. Important lessons were learnt by all such as the importance of wearing protective gear and always tying a knot at the end of your abseiling rope.

The delicious potjie dinner went down a treat after a long hard day of climbing and the evening was rounded off with a fascinating slide show by world-renowned climber, Simon Yates.

Day two started bright and early and saw fierce competition and great climbing efforts by all the competitors. The day ended in a prize-giving function after which the climbers celebrated a great weekend of climbing with a party which lasted until the wee hours of the morning.

Although he was suffering from a bout of flu Allard Hüfner together with Mark Seuring (Team Eating Pap) took their third victory in four years, scoring 8425 points after doing 90 climbs at 16 crags. Andrew Pedley won the Men's difficulty section and Naureen Goheer from Cape Town took the Women's difficulty title.

Well done to the organizers and everyone who took part in an unforgettable Roc Rally 2006. *Mandy*

8. SNIPPETS

Ice is nice

According César de Carvalho from the KZN, the Giants Castle mountain rescue register shows that more and more parties are making their way to RSA's premier "Ice Mecca" (Giants castle) to sample the not-too-shabby ice it offers. It is a chilling thought, but he recons that the Giant's ice climbs had numerically more ascensionists during the month of July 2006, than all the rock routes in the berg for the annum. (This excludes the groups that have been present at Sani Pass and elsewhere in Lesotho).

From the mouth of babes:

During the kiddies' treasure hunt & quiz:

Question: Who is Uschi and what does she do?

Answer: She tells the Mountain Club what to do!

Prizes for the hardcore!

If you follow the thread on www.climb.co.za, Grigri and Guy, are offering prizes for South African sport climbers who push the grades. I believe the prize is currently a R100 and bottle of Jack, for the first man to climb 34 and the first woman to climb 30. Actually Tessa Little claimed the woman's prize in 1998 with her route 'Jack of all trades' at Boven.

Kilimanjaro: on July 23, 10-year-old Jordan Romero, became the youngest climber to reach the summit, Uhuru Peak, in 3 days (www.jordanromero.com).

Super tramp award 2007: Young and raring to go? Original? South African citizens who are no older than 25 years will be participating in or leading an expedition of South African mountaineers who all are no older than 25 years as at 31 December 2006 must not miss applying for the 2007 MCSA Supertramp Award awarded under the auspices of Magaliesberg Section. The award is worth R12 000! For more info or an application form, see: http://www.mcsa.org.za/cent/g_youth/guidelines/guidelines.php or contact Petro Grobler (012-809 1022, Supertramp@mcsa.org.za). Closing date: 30 December 2006 for an expedition planned for 2007.

News from Plett: This is one old lady who does not line the bird cage with the news letter. I am now living, in what every one seems to claim is THE most beautiful part of the world, Plettenbergbay. I still read your news letters with great nostalgia as, I still think the Magaliesberg is the most unique place in the world and I love it. I was so pleased to read about one members first experience of patrolling Tonquani. She described how she loved that mountain. It was heartening to know that there are people out there who love it and will guard it jealously against development. I am so glad you published the Walter Sisulu saga, I hope the MCSA committee sent their objection and that every caring member does.

Jean Prior

Mont-Aux-Sources 50k Mountain challenge: On 9 September Heather Murch and Russ Dodding completed the gruelling, 50-kilometre Mont-aux-Source Mountain Challenge. The route starts at Royal Natal (on the soccer field adjacent to Reception), goes up the Mahai valley to Witsieshoek Hotel, up to Sentinel car park, up the zig-zags, up the chain ladder to the top of the Tugela Falls, over the shoulder of Beacon Buttress, down the gully between Beacon Buttress and Sentinel and then reverses the up-route back to Royal Natal. The combination of heat, altitude, uphill running (and walking!) and lack of calories at certain stages, made for a very long day. The route has an overall altitude gain of 1600 metres (5 300 feet). This course is tough! The size of the field was 370 runners only, all by invitation. Russ finished in 9 hours 23 minutes and Heather in 10 hours 3 minutes. The scenery and the collective will of the entrants to complete the course, make this a very special event. Will we do it again? ... ask us a month or two!

Russ Dodding

New edition of 'BARRIER OF SPEARS': That classic of the Drakensberg, 'Barrier of Spears', written by Malcolm Pearse's late father Reg Pearse in 1973, will be available in a completely new edition – revised and updated, and in a new, modern format. The complete book is printed in full colour and contains about a hundred previously unpublished photographs, including many of Malcolm's 'Ansell Adam's' style pictures from "A Camera In Quathlamba". Cloth cover with laminated dust jacket. 398 pages. 250mm tall by 260 mm wide. Published by Art Publishers. The book will available from the 31st October. All main CNA's and Exclusive Books will be stocking this book, as will other bookstores and Berg resorts. Retail price at the big stores will be in the region of R370 including VAT.

INTERNATIONAL MOUNTAIN DAY 2006: The UN General Assembly declared 11 December from 2003 onwards as 'International Mountain Day', and designated FAO as the lead agency to coordinate worldwide observance. This special UN Day serves to highlight the global importance of mountain ecosystems and to promote ongoing attention to the unique needs of mountain communities. In particular, International Mountain Day presents an excellent opportunity to create awareness of mountains, their diverse people and their natural resources and the challenge they face in attaining sustainable development, for a wide audience – the public, governments, intergovernmental organizations, NGOs, UN agencies, the private sector and the media.

"Managing Mountain Biodiversity for Better Lives" is the theme of UN International Mountain Day 2006 – an opportunity to raise awareness about the need to manage mountain biodiversity in a sustainable manner, to highlight promising models and to build partnerships at all levels to promote biodiversity management that will reduce poverty, improve livelihoods, and protect mountain environments for us all. FAO is currently working with partners to develop communication products on this theme for use at the country level. For further information on International Mountain Day 2006, contact: alemneh.dejene@fao.org. (Source:

<http://www.mountainpartnership.org/newsletter6-2006.html>)

9. LAND AND ACCESS

Tonquani from the south: We advise that Otto Bertram has sold his farm. Our parking and access arrangements there remain the same. There is no one on the farm at present. So do not leave valuables visible. The parking fee of R20 is to be handed to Uschi please.

Castle Gorge: The Johannesburg Hiking Club patrols this area, but MCSA members are also requested to keep an eye on visitors. Permits to visitors are issued by the Jhb Hiking Club and the co-owners. If the co-owners are not present with their guests, they will issue a permit to their guests (name, date, number of people) signed by the co-owner to go to the undivided share. The co-owners we know are Scalla van Schalkwyk, Roelof van Wyk, Francois Junod, Alex Junod, Ian and Mike Patchitt, Rob Bentley. No vehicles are allowed. However Scalla vanSchalkwyk and Roelof van Wyk have been going to

Castle Gorge for many years and will drive up, so please do not confront them with the 'no vehicles' bit. If you find people without a permit -either from the JHB Hiking Club or from the co-owners, explain they are trespassing, private property etc, tell them how to apply for a permit (JHB Hiking Club 011 462 2993), try to get names and telephone numbers, registration numbers and ask them to leave but don't get into a fight. Don't take the story they are the friend of a friend, they must name the person and have the relevant documentation.

Fencing the wilds: After a lot of effort from private donors, namely TJ de Klerk, and the residents of Upper Houghton in conjunction with City of Johannesburg, the East koppie (bouldering/climbing side) of the Wilds is going to be fenced off along Houghton Drive and Munro drive. As a result, access will be from the parking lot on the West side, via the pedestrian bridge. We hope that restricted access will impact on the crime situation there, in a positive way. The club welcomes any measures that will improve upon the safety of its members using this venue.

10. MEMBERSHIP NEWS

We welcome the following new members: Marc Caplan, Shelly Plumb, Carl Prigge, Sharlene Houghton, Roberto Ambrosio, Gareth Kirk, Eric Lowther, Dominik Viring, Tessa Little; and family members Chloe and Emma Buchel.

Life membership: Heather Murch.

New arrival: congratulations to Roland and Diane on the birth of their daughter.

Resigned: Elizabeth Easton, Kristina Pukstys and Andrew Thornewell.

Passed Away: Ivy Hunter, passed away 2 weeks ago at the age of 92. She was married to Prof. Harry Biesheuvel.

Change of Address: if you have changed your telephone no, postal, physical or email address PLEASE let the office know. If you read this in your friends newsletter, it probably applies to you!

Search & Rescue

2. A weekend training session for people unfamiliar with Search and Rescue and wishing to join the team has been planned for the 27th and 28th of January 2007. The course is designed to provide people with no search and rescue experience with the necessary skills to function on the team. It includes basic rope skills, rescue organisation, helicopter theory, mountain survival and search skills and operation management. Contact Michael Grant olmec@alink.co.za 0829409493 for more information

11. CLUB NEWS

Subscription fees for 2007

At the committee meeting held on 30 October 2006, the following increases were proposed and approved:

Entrance Fees R260.00

Ordinary single member R330.00

Married Members R495.00

Country single R250.00

Married country R310.00

Students (full time) R165.00

Juniors (over 13 years) R83.00

Children (under 13 years) R20.00

Seniors (single) R165.00

Senior married R248.00

Non members at meets R25.00

Prospective members R80.00

Hon Senior (20 years membership and over 70 years of age) nil subs.

Permits for the Magaliesberg areas: R25.00 per adult per day, R15.00 for high school scholars and students; R5.00 for little ones (under 12 years)

Notice of AGM: The Annual General Meeting of the Mountain Club of South Africa Johannesburg Section will be held on Wednesday the 14th March 2005. At 20h15 at the Waverley Girl Guide Hall, Scott & Stirling Streets, Waverley.

Forthcoming Slide/Digital, DVD shows

17 Jan: DVD : 'Stone Monkey' , Portrait of Johnny Dawes. Claimed to be possibly the greatest climbing film of all time.

24 Jan: 7th Summit: Tony van Marken is the first South African to climb the original Seven Summits.

31 Jan: Mt Kenya by white plastic chair - Adventures on the fully catered trip July 2006

Sue, Hannah and Penny

DVD 14 Feb: Lakeland Rock presented by Chris Bonnington.

21 Feb Slide Show: 'The Last Degree: Skiing to the North Pole. Matthew Holt

7 March Slide Show :: 'Backpacking on Water' Robbie Herreveld.

DIAMOND YEARS JOHANNESBURG SECTION 1931 – 2006. HISTORY: 'The Diamond Years, 1931-2006' tells the story of the Johannesburg Section from its earliest beginnings through to the present day. This 64 page (210 x 297mm) full colour book contains a wealth of archived material, photographs and stories, which chronicle the achievements and adventures of the Section's intrepid members. Pioneering expeditions from the first ascent of the Devil's Tooth to the first South African ascent of the Trango Tower are all recorded and illustrated. Copies of the standard edition of 'The Diamond Years, 1931-2006' at R75 per copy (incl VAT) for members and R100.00 for non members can be ordered from the Johannesburg Section at Club evenings, or phone Uschi 011 807 1310. To Jenny Paterson, Russ Dodding and Heather Murch and the Sub Committee a BIG THANK YOU.

75th Anniversary T Shirts: still available. Blue or white, long (not all sizes any more) R95.00 and short sleeves R85.00. Available from Uschi, or at club evenings.

11. THANKYOU

We thank all members for their help during the year, the committee members, the search and rescue team, those who helped pull out weeds, the meet leaders, the patrolers, the members who manned the bar and tea table . Thank you for being available.

SEASONS' GREETINGS

HAVE A GREAT FESTIVE SEASON.

TAKE CARE.

April 1958 - Returning from a holiday in the Little Berg

*I see my children walk away to school
Holiday done - the anxious rounds returns,
Takkies and books and soap and tidy hair
And Time imperative, teacher and friend and fool.*

*Margot is washing clothes - must get the meat;
The telephone has rung and rung again,
And Liberal Party circulars entreat,
While money and enthusiasm wane.*

*I tear the circulars up and see the "0" -
The futile round and round the generations go
The clouds obscure the summits, sparkle and gleam
Are fading from the vision of the stream.
Sunseeking flowers, the lilies of the rocks,
The mountains forests dark that spread their laps
And gather up the night when sun has set.
The ghosts I saw upon the silent paths,
Living and dead and past and present there,
Exchanged for all this barren city here.*

*Rock hardens into concrete and dull brick
Earth becomes dirt, and work mere seeking self,
My roof of leaves, harsh corrugated iron,
The open sky and insulated vault,
And the magnificent revolving stars
Advertisements for whiskey.*

- HARRY BARKER (1907-2006)