



February 2008

1. EDITORIAL

After ranting and raving in the last edition, about the demise of true adventure, it appears I have been stunned into silence by this quarter's offerings. The countries top climbers blasted a grade 30+, up the main (blank) face of Blouberg, and their route description, sends shivers down my spine, the article also brings back fond memories of being benighted on a belay ledge on Blouberg, and waking to the most glorious sun and cloud display I have ever seen.

Not to be outdone, on the international front, Alard, Marianne and Co, must have broken a couple of records by climbing all three towers of the Tores de Paine in 14 days.

The edition has been an editors dream come true, and I have been delighted by all the wonderful member contributions. Not only is it filled with awesome climbing news, but also has a strong focus on the youth, the future of climbing in South Africa. After four years of service to the club as editor of the Newsletter, I was hoping to put together something really good for my last effort, but alas it seems I have drawn a blank. I have run out of ideas, and hence, it is a true sign, that it is time to hand over to someone with new ideas, a different vibe, and a breath of fresh air.

It is with sadness, and also with relief that this has come to an end, as now I can focus my attentions on other neglected parts of my climbing life. Having started a family, a lot of my time has been swallowed up, but I hope to continue to be of service to the club in other ways. Development, training, and mentorship is the next challenge.

There are also others who will be leaving the committee this year, Ian Hossack has been an absolute stalwart in his clubhouse duties, and it is fair to say that he has been one of the hardest working committee members. Think of it this way, four years, 52 Wednesdays a year, and 3 hours a club night, not to mention all the committee meetings, all adds up to over 600 hours of service, all done for us, for free! Greg Devine has done a great job on probably the club's most important, but also the most complicated of portfolios, land and access, and we also bid farewell to Ulrike who has served on the expeditions portfolio for her four year term.

And so from me, climb hard, climb safe, and lend a helping hand to those who are learning.

Peter Adrian

2. RORY LOWTHER MEMORIAL CHALLENGE

Once again, the "Rory" was held at Swinburne, in the Free State, and again, it was an extremely successful event, and an absolute 'must do', on our annual climbing events calendar. This years challenge was special, because it was the first year that school teams entered, and it is good to see that climbing is being established at grass roots level. The atmosphere was super and it is that youthful vibe and energy that permeates the event every year.

The winners this year were: 1st Brendan Hurner and Benjamin de Chamoy, the 'Wonderkids' from KZN, 2nd Gary Lowther and Donovan; 3rd Kaja Kopkow and Raif Miller from Jhb section, and 4th our own Laurel and Hardy (Neil Margetts and Andrew Porter) from Jhb section. Well done guys. Once again, a massive thank you to the organisers Debbie and Eric Lowther, who every year, pour their life and soul and energy into the event, and to all the helpers, who have once again made this another very successful event.

3. DOG OF THUNDER- BLOUBERG

It is an impressive cliff, rising more than 1000 feet out of the African savanna – the so called Springbok flats. It faces north and is bathed in golden sunlight for most of the year. The climate is temperate and allows for year round climbing, often in near perfect conditions. One rarely runs foul of the weather here, but summer electric storms can be very fearsome and exciting, and heat waves can wilt even the most intrepid climber. The sandstone rock is of excellent quality and lends itself to traditional gear placements, but here and there, bold sections with long run-outs favor the placement of the odd piece of fixed gear. Most of the cracks are horizontal rails that traverse the wall at regular intervals allowing for excellent nut and cam placements, but vertical cracks and chimney cracks also wander up, and provide homes to thousands of swifts. There are several other rock faces in the area which are mostly unclimbed, one of which is a nesting ground of the endangered Cape Vulture. These creatures spend hours languidly floating on the thermals and frequently come up close to inspect climbers high up on the wall.

It is here that my challenge has become my nemesis. The main wall is more than a mile wide and it is steepest at the first section on the left (east) side. There are three blank sections on a bulging and then gently overhanging headwall. The cracks and rails that cicatrize the rest of the wall are deficient here, and the holds are thin and far apart. It is my 6th attempt at finishing the route with various partners over the last 4 years. It is no mean feat to climb at Blouberg, with first time visitors rarely managing to climb even one of the moderate routes. Without local knowledge Blouberg presents a serious challenge to all but the most experienced trad climbers. Even the walk in, is complicated on poorly defined cattle trails. But once you are there, it is an expansive place that captures ones soul and is the most compelling place to climb at, that I have ever encountered. It draws me back time after time to pit myself against its challenges. It is without equal.

Clinton Martinengo is presently South Africa's best all round climber but has only become skilled at trad climbing over the last 5 years. His tick list of sport routes is un-equalled in South Africa and he has done some of the hardest trad first ascents. We first rappelled the wall 4 years ago to inspect the line. We went down with a drill as we knew that there were blank sections that would be impossible to protect with natural gear. This year we have already returned twice, again with a drill and the experience of Tini Versveld and Tony Dick, and the young rock-jock Marijus Smigelskis. Both Clint and Marijus are the best rated South African boulderers registered with 8A.NU. Both times we were spectacularly unsuccessful at linking the route despite managing to free all the moves.

It will require absolutely perfect conditions. The crux pitches start halfway up the wall with several demanding pitches to get there and the wall only escapes the sun well after mid-day. Anything short of the ideal conditions increases the difficulty substantially; heat lessens the friction on the face, and saps the energy, and cold cramps up the fingers increases body tone, and muscle in-efficiency.

But we have a plan:

A 1000 mile flight from Cape Town to Johannesburg at midday on a Thursday. Then a car rental for the 5 hour drive to the Frans's kraal, to arrive there in the late afternoon, to walk up 3 hours to the cave in the cooler evening air by torch-light. Next morning at 3am we hike to the top of the North Wall, and then rappel the wall with the view to working the moves on the crux pitches, and stashing food, water and bivvy gear on the way down. We would reach the base of the cliff by the time the wall is in shadow, and then climb the 5 pitches to the bivvy stance where the crux pitches begin. With some luck we would even crack the first hard pitch dubbed the "Ningenator pitch." Funny thing though, is that despite the fact that I conceived the route, I probably don't have a snow-ball's chance in hell of actually freeing the crux pitches. Age and attrition has weakened me. But no matter, desire and dreams can end in a satisfactory result. If failure wasn't part of the agenda then the allure would fade.

The setup has to be spot on, training is essential: more the mind than the body.

And so it was that on Friday 24 November, after waiting for the rain to stop, we rappelled down the wall with heavy packs including a drill and 12 liters of water. No further bolts were placed on any of the pitches, but three rappel points were improved with bolts. After depositing our bivvy gear at the palatial

ledge, 130m above the ground we continued to the bottom where we dumped the drill and Clint and Stew's approach shoes.

In very humid conditions and thunderheads approaching Stewart led the first pitch in fine style with Clint and I yelling beta at him. I then sweated up the next grade 23 pitch where I had intended to place a bolt but had refrained to do so because Clinton had discovered a critical, but tiny cam (Alien zero) placement. This of course was missing from the rack having been left on the rappel as a directional. The smaller black diamond Z cam did not fit well but had to do. I did not even bother testing it. Clint had on-sighted this pitch a little further to the left when we had tried the route 6 weeks previously, but I did a more direct but very tricky version with a desperate pinch and awkward foot holds above suspect runners. I attained the belay ledge pumped to the max and streaming with sweat. Clint then led the next pitch to the shattered ledge. On our previous visit we had thought this pitch also needed a bolt but it yielded to grade 21 climbing and good enough trad gear placements.

At the shattered ledge the tension began. It was rapidly getting dark and the mother of all thunder heads was approaching from the north-west. Lighting crisscrossed the air with flashes arcing between the clouds. Clint was the man for the next grade 25 pitch but he had visions of being fried by lightning, and was being disobedient, and cowered next to us on the ledge. Stew and I cunningly convinced him that there was no ways that the lightning would be interested in him despite the fact that he was carrying 40 biners and a whole rack of other metal bits. We suggested that he could always leave all that stuff behind and solo the pitch! We sure weren't offering to go up.

Clint tentatively set off and after climbing up 15m or so the heavens opened and he had to lower back down to us. We resigned ourselves to a miserable night, but an hour or so later the storm had passed and we had stayed relatively dry and warm on the ledge protected by the overhanging headwall above us.

Another hour passed and Clint set off with a torch in the pitch dark and somehow, at snails pace, freed the pitch on wet rock. Amazing! As the conditions were alpine, we sent him off on the next run-out grade 20 pitch too, and gained the bivvy ledge where we feasted on boeries and bread and chamomile tea. Clint was rather disgusted that I had forgotten the Ceylon tea and if he wasn't such a nice guy he might have hurled me off the ledge there and then – I know Tini would have!

The next morning the conditions were perfect. We were woken by a cacophony of bird calls. I have never heard such a chorus. The swifts were out and there was plenty of aerial plankton to feed them. The air was crisp, and clouds kept the sunshine in abeyance. After coffee, Stew set off along the sketchy grade 16R traverse to the stance at the start of the first hard pitch, while I lurked on the bivvy ledge sorting things out and taking photos. I could not see Clint, but he red-pointed the "Ningenator" pitch and Stew and I followed clinging desperately onto quick-draws and slings. I could not even do the moves to reach the bolts and thankfully cranked on the slings. I haven't felt so inept since I began climbing.

We called the next pitch "Measuring up...22+ " The shorter you are the harder it gets, as it requires a long reach out to the right, and up off a thin left finger grip, and tiny foot holds. I actually peeled off although I had succeeded in freeing it about 2 years ago on a previous attempt. Stew led it with some hesitation, but Clint sailed through easily.

"Abraxis in the sky" - grade 30+ - is what Clint called the next pitch. I named it "Martinengo's Nemesis". He had two attempts but both times could not reach and stick the move above the last bolt. It's very hard! Stew and I used those silver juglets and footholds to complete the pitch.

Clint then did a phenomenal red-point of the final difficult pitch. It is desperately hard with varied climbing, including difficult hand jams in a soggy crack, long reaches off underclings, and then he almost blew it on the last tricky move which is only about grade 22 because he was so pumped. He hung there for about 15 minutes. He reckons it's the hardest he has had to ever try.

Stew and I embarrassed ourselves again, and yarded up to him. One of the few moves I managed was actually the one that almost stymied Clint. (I told him to climb with glucose candy in his pockets in future.)

We were home and dry – or so we thought. Those damnable thunder heads were rolling in again and it started drizzling! This time we were exposed, and lightning strike was a real danger. We set up a rappel but, I started climbing the next grade 22 pitch with a single rope doubled so as to facilitate a quick retreat if necessary. But the weather brightened up, and I managed to climb the pitch fairly quickly, and free, except for the one, very wet lay-back move that Stew also aided. Needless to say Clint freed it, but his 1.8m helped, I'm sure.

We composed ourselves at the next stance and again decided it was worth the risk to continue despite the tremendous power of the thunder storms all around us. The next two pitches are grotty, but we managed to top out, and shake hands, and then down we went back to the bivvy, to a leaner and drier dinner. Again the heavens opened and dumped tons of water all around us. Was it the gods or the dogs that were kind to us? We finished the climb in the most impossible weather conditions. It was spectacular!!

Hector Pringle arrived at Blouberg accompanied by, the Editor of Climbing Magazine. He posted this note on www.Climb.co.za: "*We were at the Blouberg parking on Friday night and were too scared to get out the car because of the most insane electrical storm ever. One lightning bolt lasted about 8 seconds, arcing horizontally right across the sky. The ascent of this route is a huge effort and it must have taken balls of steel (and a certain lack of discretion!) to keep going. Awesome job guys.*"

There is nothing in the world that could have made for a more memorable and exciting experience. The plan worked (except for one move!).

Charles Edelstein

Route Description -Dog of Thunder

Start. The start is immediately to the right of the start of "The Dream of White Dogs" about 100m beyond great gully. Three bolts are visible.

Pitch 1: 25. Clip the first bolt with some difficulty and do tricky moves into the recess. Climb up recess to the bulge and lay back and mantel strenuously to gain easier ground. Continue up the shallow recess to a semi-hanging belay after 10m or so.

Pitch 2: 23. Climb up and slightly right to place a good medium sized cam to the right of the pillar 5m above. Step left at the base of the pillar and avoid the obvious undercut flake to gain the recess on the left of the pillar. Do technical moves to gain good holds. Continue through the overlap above to gain a small but good stance.

Pitch 3: 21 55m Climb directly up for about 4 m and then tend diagonally left to avoid the white rock to gain rappel anchors. Continue up tending a little left and then back right to gain a pillar. Climb this and find an overlap that leads to easier ground. Continue to the shattered ledge and bolt and nut belay.

Pitch 4 and 5 25 35m. Step off the right end of the ledge and climb the recess to attain an obvious overhanging crack. (Shared with "Delicate Sound of Thunder" 21) At the crack step right to gain a right facing recess. Climb up to the left 2m to attain a perch. (One can stance here with small cam belay). 3 bolts are visible up and to the left. Climb up 2 m from the perch step right and then back left. Continue on good holds to the overlap below the bolts. Continue past the bolts to a ledge and good nut runners or belay. (25) Climb up the run-out face to attain a right facing corner-crack (20). Continue to the bivvy ledge.

Pitch 6 15m 16R. Traverse carefully 15m to the skyline to a peg and bolt belay.

Pitch 7 20m 30+. The Ningenator pitch. Gear = Bolts and cams. Above are several bolts. Climb up to a rail and move left to a rest at a medium cam placement. Rail right for about 5m to a bolt and move up over a bulge to gain a left facing corner. Continue easily to a bolt belay on a good ledge.

Pitch 8 15m 22++++. (The "Measuring up...pitch." Add a grade or so for every 1cm you are shorter than 163cm.) Move right past two bolts and do a reach move (for some) to reach a juggy recess/crack on gray rock. Continue easily to a ledge system and clip the bolt to keep the rope direct for the second.

Pitch 9 15m 30+ Martinengo's Nemesis "Abraxis in the Sky". Climb past the bolts on edges to a two bolt semi-hanging belay. (Take at least two small cams 1.5 and 3cm or ¾ and 1 in). The crux is a long reach to a non-hold after the last bolt before the belay.

Pitch 10 20m 30+ ("What is takes..."). This pitch has several bolts but also requires a large cam, some small cams and medium nuts. Gain the crack and continue strenuously to a hard undercling move. Continue up and to the left and follow the bolts. At the last bolt do a tricky mantel, and move right to a small cam and nut belay, directly above the previous stance. This pitch is a real fight if you are rushed after the other hard pitches.

Pitch 11 20m 22. Climb up on the grey juggy rock, and then step left to a ledge. Above is a stunning lay back crack. Step up into a crack on the left and continue 3 m or so. Move right into the layback that is extremely slippery when wet. Climb up to the overhang and clip the bolt on the left. Reach high to a rail and then continue to a bolt belay.

Pitch 12 15m 19. Climb directly up and move left to gain gnarly crack system. Continue to a bolt and gear belay.

Pitch 13 30m 21. Continue up the bird shit crack and do some funky moves through the blocks above to gain easier ground on gray juggy and a little scary rock. Continue to the top to a bolt and sling belay.

THE BETA

To free climb this route in a day ground up without any beta, and in anything but near weather conditions would be an enormous feat, and is then probably grade 30++. And an on-sight flash ascent without the beta is an even greater challenge. So, don't read the rest if you are a purist!

Probably the best way to do this route would be to rappel from the top as we did on the first ascent, and stash water and snacks and bivvy gear and climb the first 5 pitches to the bivvy ledge on the same day, finish the route on the second day and the rappel route to collect the bivvy gear. However, the problem would be to find the top rappel point.

If done ground up, then hauling is no problem, if one has 60m ropes, except it is a little tiring. All of the crux sections are less than 30m long, so hauling can be done in 30m sections up to the bivvy ledge. The second can tie in the middle of the rope or climb on a single rope. If one is not going to rappel the route, and top out, then leave your bivvy gear on the bivvy ledge tied to the end of one of the ropes, and climb pitch 6 tied to the end of one rope, and tie directly in to the other rope when the leader reaches the stance at the end of pitch 6. Do the same for pitch 7 and only haul once you get to the top of pitch 8! Just carefully direct your ropes as you go.

The last two pitches detract from the route, so one can rappel from the bolts on the 11th pitch or even the 12th pitch, unless you are a purist and feel you must top out.

Ground up I would suggest one climbs this route as close to December as possible in cool partly cloudy weather with a temperature forecast of no more than 28 degrees C. The sun gets off the face before midday in summer, as the wall is north of the Tropic of Capricorn, so start climbing by midday. This allows access to the bivvy ledge on the day. Take a full rack of cams to 3 1/2" with doubles in the 1/2 to 1 inch range and a standard set of nuts. RP's are not essential. Carry at least 4 litres water per person.

Pitch 1: A small cam (green sling Alien) protects the start of the layback crux. Look for it in an under-cling slot. A large cam can be placed in the bottom of the lay back and a rock 8 placed side-ways on the left, provides good comfort for the mantel move!

Pitch 2: Once one steps left at the base of the pillar and into the recess above the flake, there is pro with small cams and also a big cam on the left. The good holds were very slippery on the first ascent due to heat and humidity. There is a bomber tiny cam placement here, with the purple sling alien fitting best.

Pitch 3: Watch for rope drag. It is a little run out but safe enough.

Pitch 4: Slippery if humid, and hot, but good pro except the start. Be careful.

Pitch 5: A bit run out but straightforward.

Pitch 6: Take care on the traverse. Get your bivvy gear across to the stance at the end of the traverse, as this is also a rappel point.

Pitch 7: Take Clint or a cheat stick

Pitch 8: If you lead it, and you are short, there is a bolt at your knees, so not too scary. Can probably use rope tension to reach right.

Pitch 9: Take Clint or a cheat stick.

Pitch 10: Same as pitch 9.

Pitch 11: Nice pitch, safe good gear.

Pitch 12: A bit grotty, but safe enough

Pitch 13: More grotty, but requires some care, and also safe enough.

Rappelling: Do not combine the first last two pitches; your rope will get stuck. Use a 60m rope doubled for the first two rappels. The next rappel is overhanging so keep the rope in, by placing gear (medium cams) on the way down. This gets you to the stance above pitch 9. The next rap is sideways and requires directing the rope, and clipping to the bolts at the stance at end of pitch 7, and then placing gear on the rail to reach the bolt above the stance below, and clipping both ropes to this as well. The last person to rappel unclips the one rope, but leaves the other clipped to the lever biners at the stance above pitch 7, and also the bolt above the stance below. The rope to be clipped is not the pull down rope as the knot won't feed through the biners. The next rappel is almost 60m and is a little overhanging. Rappel about 3m and then use a medium cam in the rail to keep the rope in to the wall. Continue to the bolted rappel point about 5m below the shattered ledge. The next rappel is only about 25m to a bolted stance. Don't miss it. The last rappel is 55m to the ground!

The bivvy: The bivvy is very comfy and there are 3 mats there. Don't throw off any rocks as these can be used to shit on and then thrown off. One can also bivvy less comfortably on the shattered ledge. The shattered ledge and the main bivvy is protected from rain unless there is very strong wind. There is a good but exposed bivvy at the end of pitch 11 but it is a bit pointless. Either top out or rap down. Climb with one torch per person!!

4. TOWERS OF PAINE

In 2003/2004 a team of us climbed the 1200 meter high east face of the Central Tower of Paine in South America Patagonia. We did the second ascent of the South African route. On the 14 January 2004 we got to the top at about 21:00 at night in bad conditions, and did not stand on the true summit. The fact that we had not stood on the true summit had been bothering me, niggling at me for years.... And so we put a plan together to go back and climb the central tower, via an easier route on the NorthEast face.

Marianne and Voitec were keen to come along as they had also not been to the true summit, Douard Le Roux and Shelly Plumb made up the rest of the team.

Flying to Sao Paulo and then onto Buenos Aires, where we spent a day chasing Shelly's missing baggage. Then we flew further south to El Calefate, where we hopped onto a bus and headed into Chile to Puerto Natales. We did some final food and supply shopping, and the next morning headed into the Torres Del Paine National Park. Here the hard work began, carrying all our gear and 3 weeks of food into the park. We got 3 porters to help, and some horses to carry more gear a 3rd of the way to Chileno camp. Our base Camp was set up in Japanese camp between some beautiful trees next to a glacial stream. The next day we went and collected the last of our gear from Chileno Camp. The weather had not been good for many days and there was rumour of improved weather coming up..... we held our thumbs as we carried gear to our advanced camp just below the North Tower. Five of us squeezed into Douards 3 man tent, that we erected onto a little clearing between some rocks on a huge scree slope. This was going to be home for the next week. That afternoon the Barometric pressure started rising and the low lying clouds lifted... a very good sign for good weather. We decided that we would attempt the North Tower the following day. The Alarm was set for 5am. The approach to the col between the central tower and the North tower is via a gully, six mixed snow and rock pitches later, we were at the start of the climbing. We split into teams of 2 and 3, and made good progress up the steepish first two pitches, then the climbing became easier till the last pitch, a bit tricky and onto the summit..... We were over the moon, our first summit and a fine view. It was about 17:30 and after the summit Photos we headed down. The wind started picking up and it tormented us the whole way down, sometimes the gust would whip and lash in the col between the Central and North Tower, quite frightening the power of the wind. We got back to our tents around midnight.

We rested for 3 days, waiting for the weather, sleeping, eating and lounging around in the boulders, or in the tent away from the wind. On the opposite side of the valley was a huge steep face called Escudo. Dave, a climber from USA was busy opening a new aid route straight up the middle of it, and he had been on the wall by himself for 20 days, and was about 2/3 of the way up. We had radio contact with him, and every day we would chat to him, and get updates on his progress. We would also talk to him about the weather as he had been here for many days and had a better idea of what it was up to. On the 3rd day of resting, some of us had decided to go down to base camp to relax there and bring up more food, but as we started hiking we noticed that the pressure had been rising and that the weather was improving, and so we returned to our advanced base camp and started getting ready for the Bonington-Willans route on the central Tower. Our Alarm was set for 12:00 midnight.... not fun getting out of your warm sleeping bag at that time of the night. Marianne and I climbed together whilst Voitec and Douard climbed together, Shelly decided to skip this one.

The climbing was good, the movement felt excellent after being squashed in the tent for days. The route has some great climbing pitches, and fun aid pitches on excellent rock. Higher up there were some tricky sections that were wet, icy or snowy, or all of the above. The summit has three big summit boulders and only the last one is the true summit. It felt great to move past that spot that we had stopped at 4 years earlier, and to move onto the true summit. It was emotional standing on the true summit of the central tower of Paine. Fantastic, we were smiling from ear to ear. The View was amazing, we could see Cerro Torre 170 km to the north, and there was hardly a breath of wind. Marianne and I stayed up there for about an hour, until Douard and Voitec arrived. We started abseiling at 19:00 and our descent continued until 3:00am when we reached our tent. We slept late that day and then carried our gear down the scree slope, where we made a stash site, and left some of our gear for the South Tower. We continued down to our base in Japanese camp.

That evening we washed in the icy river and ate lots of food in order to rest. It was fantastic, having climbed 2 of the 3 granite spires, we were actually hoping for a few days of bad weather But this did not happen, and the very next day at about 19:00 the pressure started rising again. We chatted to Dave on the radio and he expected the weather to be good the following day. This meant we would have to attempt the south tower from base camp, a good 4 or 5 hour hike from the start of the climb. Some of us went to bed at 22:00 and then got up at 23:00 some of us just stayed up. We started hiking at midnight, we got to our stash at around 2:00 am where we ate some food and then headed up a looong snow slope, strapping crampons onto our approach takkies. We got to the base of the climb as the sun was rising. The start of the route was quite tricky as gear placements were very scarce. The next 4 pitches of climbing were

not fun, due to loose rock, and pulling on old pitons for aid. Once we reached the shoulder, the rock quality improved and the climbing became fun. Marianne, Shelly and I were climbing together, whilst Voitec teamed up with Douard. After 22 pitches we were finally on the top. Another fantastic view of the ice cap. It was about 21:00:we had been on the move for 21, hours and still had a looong way to the ground. Abselling through the night became a blur, setting up stances, abselling, pulling ropes and hoping that they don't get snagged on any flakes. Sitting at a stance waiting for the others to abseil you would sometimes slip into a dream for a few minutes till the cold or one of the others would nudge you awake, back into reality... Hundreds of exposed meters above the ground, freezing cold. It was difficult to handle the ropes as you feel like a Michelin man in all the layers of clothes. This descent was the most gruelling and dangerous part of the trip. It was a huge relief, when we finally reached the ground. It also meant that we had successfully climbed the North, Central, and South tower of Paine. The sunrise welcomed us to the ground, 29 hours on the go... On our bums we slid down the snow slope, descending in 5 minutes, what had taken us one and a half hours up. Then we trapped back to our stash, where we devoured a hot meal. We packed all our stuff together and headed back to our base camp arriving there around 13:00. A total of 37 hours on the go. We were utterly exhausted.

Fourteen days in the park and having climbed the 3 towers of Paine.... Almost unheard of. As we were leaving the park we talked to Dave, he had used the good weather to summit his route. It had taken him 34 days to open his new route solo, at grade A4+.

Shelly and Marianne are one of a few ladies to climb the South Tower and we think Marianne is the first woman to climb all three towers.

The Patagonian weather has been good to us and we are very happy as we make our way back home to South Africa.

A big Thank you to the following for their many years of support: The Mountain Club of South Africa, Cape Storm, Beal ropes, Black Diamond, Montrail shoes and Saltic climbing shoes.

Till soon, cheers.

Alard Hufner

5. YOUTH IN THE MOUNTAIN CLUB

Up to the present time, the youth, defined by the ages 0-18 years, have relied solely on their parents membership in the Mountain club to facilitate their involvement and interest in mountaineering. Although this arrangement has facilitated some continued membership through generations, it has not encouraged youths whose parents do not have an interest in mountaineering, to pursue their own interest through the club.

It is ironic, with the above points in mind, that the necessary family membership has not manifested the prioritisation of families (and through that youth) in the club through so called 'family meets' which are few and far between. Usually only two dedicated family meets (if that) are scheduled per year, in each sections meet list. The result, is a club with members whose youth 'gets lost' during teenage years, when youths chose not to accompany their parents on weekends, and then rediscover the mountains through university clubs or friends at drivers license age, and/or at the age where their family membership benefits fall away and are required to pay their own way.

The loss of prospective members between the ages of 13-18 may be curbed by the introduction of youth meets (leading perhaps to a youth program) dedicated to and led by youths themselves (chaperoned by an adult or two). The youth will show an energy and enthusiasm in developing this very quickly. It is our work as adult members of the MCSA to provide the opportunity and the mentorship to allow the youth to develop this program.

Furthermore, there is an overlap between 'outreach' initiatives in the MCSA and youth and these two themes can easily be combined in proposed meets. Some sections of the MCSA find it difficult to meet the 'outreach' goals due to lack of contact with youth who could grow into MCSA members.

A document was tabled at the past October CENCOM meeting, and the ideas embedded in this article were discussed, and in principal agreed, to be based on two key issues: dedicated monthly youth meets planned and advertised, as well the appointment of a committee member with youth as his/her portfolio. The article was also distributed at the recent Xmas party to an informal gathering of interested parents, who were asked to comment on it, at a future brainstorming session.

In my opinion it is necessary to make a start, rather than find 'a perfect solution' to a youth program – to give the enthusiastic youths an opportunity to interact and excite one another and let the movement develop. It was agreed that dedicated monthly youth meets be advertised on meets lists country wide. These youth meets are to initially 'piggy-back' on our usual meets, but a nominated youth leader will lead a separate excursion for the youths. This arrangement immediately solves travel issues which will have to be prioritized early on in the youth program.

It is envisaged that other outdoor youth groups such as scouts, church groups, school level climbing leagues will be invited to attend these youth meets. The intention is to increase youth membership, by inviting those already interested in outdoor activities, saving much time and energy in attracting outdoor orientated youths.

In the long term, it would be wonderful to create a 'youth development fund' which would include so called 'outreach' initiatives from gifts such as that of the recently deceased Harry Barker and/or Benno Magg. Monies would be used to help facilitate school climbing leagues, climbing competitions, and ordinary operational costs such as travel for the youth.

A subcommittee of interested parents will meet initially (mid January 2008) to give this movement some impetus - with their youths in tow. This team will brainstorm, research and troubleshoot the implementation of the youth program. From then on it is most important is to provide the opportunity for youth to drive this process themselves (with some mentorship), thereby encouraging leadership, and a program by the youth for the youth ensuring its relevance and continuity.

Diane Arvanitakis, Jo'burg section

Diane has been nominated on the newly created youth portfolio on the committee, please support this endeavour with your time and energy. Ed.

6. INTRODUCING CHILDREN TO CLIMBING

There are a lot of parents in the MCSA, who are passionate about mountains, sometimes to the extent of religious zeal. Most would love to have their children share in the same passion. After all, some of the defining moments of our lives have been experienced in the mountains, and the thought of our offspring missing out on such experiences would appear such a waste. Surprisingly, a lot of youngsters in the club do not seem to share the same feelings for vertical bliss. There are a lot who do, and go on to become even bolder, stronger and more adventurous than their parents, but there are also parents who couldn't priss their kids away from their computer games with a crow-bar, let alone turning them into rope guns.

My story though different, still holds a lesson to be learned. I was one of those kids who did not have that advantage. I started climbing relatively late in life, on my own initiative, due to a rather neurotic mother and a dad who was an absolute golf nut, I rarely set foot in a natural environment. Every Sunday, from an early age, I got dragged around the golf course. It wasn't all that bad, and the combination of my adventurous spirit, and very wayward tee shots, resulted in me exploring parts of the golf course that were little known to man. In retrospect, it was a lot better than what many other kids my age had on offer. Somehow though, golf wasn't really my game, and my hell for leather brawny attitude was just not compatible with the mental switches of concentration that are essential to golf, and hence the more effort I put into it, the worse the result. Towards the end of the game I often found myself throwing clubs further than I could hit the ball.

To please my Dad I persisted, and even managed to get my handicap down to a respectable 14, but it was only when I started climbing, that my life lit up. The last game of golf I played with my dad, was one of those annual father and son grudge games. I had been climbing every weekend for nearly a year, and my dad had to beg me to miss a Sunday climb to play. Little did I know, that your triceps, core and leg muscles are important for a good golf swing, but in truth, for sheer golfing bliss, what you really need are strong forearms!! I stood on the first tee, feeling completely rusty and out of touch, and had zero expectations of even connecting. "Keep your head down, and swing easily" I told myself. I followed through and was surprised to hear the sweet crack of contact with the middle of the club. Amazed, the ball rocketed off the tee, and just kept going, a tiny white dot that cleared the heads of the four ball in front of us, and stopped 50m short of the green (on a par 4!). Most pros don't hit that far! I looked up, my dad could not have looked more pleased, or surprised for that matter, the opposition stared into the ground already defeated, and my caddie beamed a massive toothless smile. The joy was short lived, I hit my wedge in the teeth, 50m over the green, my return chip shot was short, and I three putted to make a double bogey, and words of Gary player echoed "you drive for show, but you putt for dough".

Despite the "supreme power" that emanated from my physique, the rest of the day turned out to be the usual wild hitting disappointment. By the final hole, one of the old guys who had been playing behind us admired my handiwork, and declared, "power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts even more!" That was the last time I ever played golf. Whilst the body could get stronger, I knew that the head thing and temperament could not be changed.

I guess I need to get to the lesson in this. Not everything my dad encouraged me to do was a loss. I share his passion for good food and wine, an activity I hope we will enjoy together for many years. We secretly compete as to who can take the best photo's, and he kicks my butt when it comes to growing giant vegetables, and baking bread. You see, we are different from our kids but yet so similar. Each child is a beautiful unique individual, and the **greatest joy we can ever have as individuals, is to find the thing that floats our boat**, an activity which always challenges us, but one in which the effort you put in, repays itself with equal reward, in a language we understand. So where to next? How do we put this into practice? How do I get my young family into the mountains. There are no guarantees? My only duty to them is to expose them to as many different aspects and joys of life that I possibly can. Show them the different aspects of club life: take them camping, hiking, sport climbing, bouldering, kloofing, mountain biking, adventure racing, birding, weeding, but most of all, which ever direction they show an interest, feed their passion! Not everybody has a head for heights, or the masochistic streak of a mountaineer. The trick is to sow seeds of imagination, of what they could be doing, and help them find what floats their boat, as there is no greater joy to indulge in something you were made for.

Peter Adrian

7. CLIMB SAFELY: A FEW TIPS TO STAYING ALIVE

Events on the crags this year that I have either witnessed personally or have heard of from eye-witness reports prompted me to dig out an article I wrote in 1987. That article dealt with the 'art' of gear placement whilst climbing in a style which we now refer to a 'trad-ing', but also gave some insight into how to stay alive whilst out on the crags; it is time to update that article.

Whether routes are trad or sports it is generally safer to fall off the harder routes – they tend to be steeper and a fall will result in little more than a mid-air dangle and, perhaps, some mild embarrassment. It does not always follow however that you are necessarily safe on the steeper routes: beware of swinging-in after traverse sections, or after failing to make it through that roof. Beginners and climbers in their first two years of vertical fun should take extra care on the milder routes: there are often more ledges to hit if you fall. Statistics collected in Yosemite reflect that these types of features cause the greatest number of fall-related injuries.

The next 'trick' to staying alive is to check your gear regularly – this includes ensuring that the rope is in good condition, undamaged, **and** long enough for the route you are contemplating doing (ie will it allow you to lower the climber to the ground, on a sports route, **or**, on a trad route allow you to get to the belay and reach the deck if you have to abseil?). If you are going to be lowering the leader back to the ground it is imperative that you knot the end of the rope or tie into it, to prevent it from inadvertently slipping through your hand and the belay device. The next imperative is to ensure that you have correctly fastened your harness – this usually means ensuring that the waist-strap has been doubled back through the buckle – don't let anyone distract you whilst you are doing this, and a 'buddy-system' of check one another's harness may seem a little pedantic, but just may one day save someone from a plummet.

Also included in the gear check is the wearing of a helmet. Down the years I've heard all the excuses in the world not to wear one – you've heard them and used them, as I have, viz: 'Can't afford one' (If you can afford to get out to the crags you can afford to buy a helmet); 'Helmets are uncomfortable' (Most modern helmets are so comfortable that you forget that you have them on); 'Helmets don't look cool' (Neither do corpses). Do the climbing community (ie your mates) a favour – buy one and use it. Thanks.

So, once safely equipped, you can concentrate on climbing safely. On 'trad' routes this can be summarized in the following points:

- (a) Have an absolute minimum of two belay points on the stance; three is better (obviously) and of those three, one should be capable of taking an upward force – this stops you joining the leader if he falls.
- (b) Don't just place gear in the euphoric belief that it **may** hold. Think carefully and apply good mechanical principles to the placements. Remember that a piece of gear gets loaded both outwards and downwards during a fall.
- (c) Check that the sitting of the gear is sound. Look out for rotten rock, loose flakes and crystals in the crack that may prevent the piece from 'seating' properly.
- (d) All your placements must be checked; a couple of firm tugs in the direction of the likely loading should suffice (but don't yank yourself off the rock!).
- (e) With camming devices in flared cracks, check at **ground level** what does and doesn't work for that particular rock type.
- (f) Abseiling is **dangerous**. If at all possible walk around and down. If you have to rap, back up your abseil points (leave gear if necessary) and **don't** trust old ab cord – rather use some new stuff.
- (g) Don't execute the famed 'push-on' – hoping for a rest above a steep or difficult section **without** having placed the gear (or having clipped the bolt). So put the gear in, climb down to a rest if possible and then go for it.

In summary then, to help stay alive on the rock remember the following:

- Only fall off steep routes.
- Use a rope that is long enough.
- Tie a knot in the bottom end of the rope.
- Wear a helmet.
- Buckle-up your harness properly.
- Check gear placements.
- Only rap if absolutely necessary.
- Don't 'push-on'.

OK, enough pontification. Get out on the rock and enjoy safe climbing.

Russ Dodding

(Previously published in the Transvaal Section Newsletters, 1987 and 1990).

7. PETZL'S ROCKING ROAD TRIP

2008 and PETZL have teamed together to bring us South Africa's second-time round (PETZL) Rock and Road trip, to be held this year in the land of sun, surf and beautiful climbing: Kwa-Zulu Natal. The event kicks off at the yearly Durban Bouldering Comp on the 25th of July and lasts until the finals on the 3rd of August. The only question you should be asking yourself is: do I have what it takes to last the week? This action-filled event will be inundated with brilliant climbing and bouldering, a bounty flash competition (with cash prizes for winners!), a climbing mentorship session for aspiring, young climbers (those of you concerned about social empowerment in South Africa can consider this a literal upliftment contribution), super finals at a most picturesque spot and, of course, (this is debatably the highlight of the entire week) the post-DBC party which promises music, drinks and, frankly, the best company in the country (and probably the world). Applicants are required to register on www.8a.nu before the end of June. See www.climb.co.za for more details on the competition and to further inspire you to climb, climb and climb some more. Diarise the 25th of July to the 3rd of August now for the (PETZL) Rock and Road '08 KZN – South Africa's most rocking road trip!

Anna-Luisa Fatti

8. MCSA X-MASS PARTY

The 2007 MCSA Christmas party was an absolute blast, once again, thanks to some great organization by Neil Margetts, and other committee members. Never before had I seen so many kids and babies at a club evening. It was an absolute circus, and of course, every circus needs an act. The Lowthers put on a fine show, with "Rory" the lion ventriloquist who had us all giggling, and the puppet show, complete with a full stage set up had the tiniest tots absolutely

riveted. It was here, that young Mr Warren jnr, age 12 months, decided to make a beeline across the floor to little Clara (age 6 months), and bop her on the head, rendering tears. Boy is he going to kick himself in 16 years time! Not to be outdone, Roy Kendall donned a Santa Claus suit, and roared into the hall on his motorbike. The poor man, spent about an hour in the pouring rain outside, trying to figure out a complicated series of hand signals, as to when to start up, when to put on his beard, and when to roar in (without running over any of the club offspring). As he sat down on his chair, a little blond girl (A-type personality) went straight up to him and said "I want my present now!" Following Santa's departure, the kids went wild again, with the van der Riet boys putting on a fine display of distance diving off the stage, onto the crash pads below, while the little girls in the club looked on.

Despite the downpours that evening, nothing could put a damper on the Christmas spirit, and as usual, within a few minutes the club members had figured out how to make the perfect braai, in the worst of conditions.

A special thanks go to the organisers Neil Margetts, Lindsey Gaydon (decor), Uschi Magg, and Barbara Reed. We look forward to next years Christmas party. Will Roy arrive on a sleigh, due to the high petrol prices? Will Clara get her revenge? Come see, it is an event not to be missed!

Peter Adrian

9. MCSA JHB CLUBHOUSE ANNUAL REPORT 2007

A total of 45 Wednesday Club evenings were held during 2007.

There were the usual slide show presentations as well as innovative video assisted ones – the highlights of the year include the ebullient Alard Hufner's out there big wall shows, Marianne Pretorius, James Pitman and 'micro-light' Mike's outrageous flying/mountain adventure spanning the sub-continent from Blouberg to the Spitzkoppe, and of course the rare appearance of AdK promoting his book 'Sharper Edges'.

The Clubhouse played a sterling role as the Prospective Members Forum, and as always this was ably managed by Uschi and Barbara on the first Wednesday of every month – judging by the numbers our section of the club is very much in demand. As a social venue our Club evenings are still buzzing with lots of connections being made – red wine is now available by popular demand (read feminine). On the subject of refreshments it has finally become necessary to raise our prices which remained at low levels during my tenure.

As we progress into the digital era and DVD screenings of Rock stars like Chris Sharma (the 'King Lines' show brought to us by a franchisee) become available it was time to upgrade our sound system – Eric Lowther assisted with a professional system at cost and now our screenings (and of course our parties) are much more lively and real. Amazing the difference sound makes when watching the rock jocks claw & pant their way up some insane (heinous) route – every chalk break suddenly becomes that much more dramatic as we all collectively hold our breath and gather our wits. Admittedly the clubhouse chairs are damn uncomfortable besides showing signs of metal fatigue – every now and then some poor unsuspecting soul ends up on their xxxx. Something to consider anyway will be new chairs.

The Clubhouse partnered with that go-getter Neil Margetts on a few memorable occasions this year – the absolutely brilliant Cook-a-Thon which without doubt is the candidate for Club event of the year and a must on the clubhouse calendar, the Rock 'n Road Trip party which revealed the strange fact that the young 'uns (that is the hardcore stars of the climbing show these days) don't dance – they climb.

Finally I would like to thank the Club for the time I've spent managing the Clubhouse Portfolio, my four year term is up, and as I've managed to get away with standing up front delivering vaguely lunatic announcements for this long without censorship it's probably time to make way for a more sober approach. Ha-ha... By the way I did arrange for a Structural Engineer to inspect the 'Clubhouse Crack' and although it appears drastic the Pros' arch is not going to collapse anytime soon.

Ian Hossack

10. THE PHASES OF LIFE OF AN MCSA MEMBER

Age: 0-12 months

Catering: Boob juice, leaves, stones, and anything else I can grab off the kloof floor.

Refreshment: More boob juice. The containers are a winner!

Thoughts: If being carried around in a pouch all day is climbing, I'm all for it!

Mountaineering ambitions: 100 fully assisted ascents of South Africa's finest.

Time spent climbing: Seems like an eternity between weekends.

Attire: Nappy, sunblock, more sunblock and three changes of clothing.

Gear: Baby pouch/carrier/oversized sunhat.

Fees: I'm so cute, no patroller would ever have the guts to throw me out!

Mountaineering hero's: Mommy.

Age: 1-6

Catering: No place for Mom/Dad's lunch. They get to eat my leftovers.

Refreshment: Have standards dropped? Oh no mom forgot again...

Thoughts: To walk, or not to walk, what will annoy my parents most! And how long can I drag this out...

Mountaineering ambitions: To get to the top before mom and siblings.

Time spent climbing: Parents keep trying but I keep them busy at the bottom of the kloof.

Attire: Naked is fun, but mom still has this sunblock fetish.

Gear: Baby backpack, but when I reach 15kgs Dad really starts encouraging me to walk, and anything else that's Dad's.

Mountaineering hero's: Daddy.

Age: 6-12

Catering: Try to avoid lunches packed by Dad.

Refreshment: Water! Dad refuses to carry/finance those expensive little juice packs that mom buys.

Thoughts: Never been to Mc Donalds, jumped on a bouncy castle, or seen the inside of a shopping mall (except Drifters). Are my parents normal?

Mountaineering ambitions: Try not to drop my little sister whilst belaying her.

Time spent climbing: Do I have to? None of my friends to this?

Attire: Anything from woollies, PEP or Ackermans, sunblock applications limited to one/day.

Gear: Mom thinks climbing gear makes great toys, dad is not convinced!

Mountaineering hero's: Daddy

Age: 12-18

Catering: See food diet -What ever you see you eat (and remain skinny). Mom tired of buttering 10 000 sandwiches for one trip.

Refreshment: Sneaking a sip of whatever Dad is drinking.

Thoughts: Why can't my parents just stay at home and leave us alone out here.

Mountaineering ambitions: Getting my chick into the kloofs on a hot day and some skinny dipping.

Time spent climbing: All depends on Dad's Magaliesberg taxi service.

Attire: Standard issue woolies Shorts and T-shirts / any branding will do...

Gear: Crumbs dad has got some real antique stuff here. And is it heavy!!!!

Mountaineering hero's: Clinton Martinengo

Age: Student Years

Catering: Open moms cupboard, empty contents into backpack.

Refreshment: Anything with alcohol in it.

Thoughts: So many great plans, so little money! Try to do the babe and the climb in the same weekend.

Mountaineering ambitions: Lead trad routes up to 28+, Climb sport in the 30's and bag a few unclimbed peaks in remote parks of the world.

Time spent climbing: Got petrol, will climb!

Attire: Anything frayed, worn and with holes.

Gear: There's nothing wrong with that 10 year old 2nd hand rope, the sheath looks like a tennis ball, but the core is still 100%!

Mountaineering hero's: Andy de klerk et al – they've retired before they worked.

Age: Unmarried

Catering: Stale bread and peanut butter

Refreshment: Got money, got booze

Thoughts: I thought I'd meet chicks in this club?

Mountaineering ambitions: Realise that you probably won't make it as a professional sponsored climber, but still plan to improve grades and open new routes within your means.

Time spent climbing: Sneak off work early on Friday afternoon, climb Saturday, Sunday, try hard to stay awake at work on a Monday. Holidays are for expeditions. Boss can't understand why you want extra unpaid leave!

Attire: What looks like a moth attack on your cloths is actually thousands tiny carabiner nicks.

Gear: At last I can afford to retire my student rack, and buy a full set of sparkling new cams!

Age: Married no kids

Catering: Bring the elaborate picnic basket – and the man must carry it...

Refreshment: Tea for two and a nice bottle of wine.

Thoughts: Surely I don't need to impress her anymore – isn't it time she did something?

Mountaineering ambitions: Get her to climb - anything...

Time spent climbing: One day per week, and only if there are no other birthdays, engagements, weddings, or any other "essential" family functions.

Attire: Stylish colour coded, impractical all as X-mas and birthday gifts.

Gear: New gear for birthday's that always need to be exchanged for what I really want.

Age: Married with young kids

Catering: Too busy to make food, so anything pre-made from Woolies

Refreshment: No space for beer with all this #%\$@ baby stuff.

Thoughts: Will I ever be able to climb again, how did my parents do this without all this fancy equipment?

Mountaineering ambitions: Climb as hard as I could before the kids.

Time spent climbing: Between nappy changes and if you're lucky enough to have a child that sleeps when you're out – then during that sleep.

Attire: That kikoy always comes in handy, no place for my warm jacket – but kids will be more than warm enough

Gear: Extra carabiners for latching on baby goods on every spare space outside the pack

Mountaineering hero's: Andy de Klerk – married with 4 kids (including twins) and still climbing

Age: Married with older kids

Catering: "kids please pack the lunch"

Refreshment: Nothing wrong with hiking to the top of Blouberg with a nice bottle of red wine in your pack.

Thoughts: Where the hell did this spare tyre come from? A bit awkward to climb with.

Mountaineering ambitions: To have the family all together again in the kloofs – just one more time.

Time spent climbing: I not sure I should – I get so stiff after I try climbing.

Attire: Sh*T, nothing fits!

Gear: Sh*T, the little bastards have nicked all my gear.

Mountaineering hero's: my children

Age: 70+

Catering: Sweets for the grandkids, an apple or two for me – I can't manage to carry more.

Refreshment: I'll top up with water from that spring in the gully. Oh no, that was in Fernkloof, no Easterkloof, where the hell was that spring?

Thoughts: I should probably give my gear to my children as they have more use for it, but just one more climb for old times sake!

Mountaineering ambitions: I hope the grandkids remember my legacy.

Time spent climbing: if I could only just get to the base of the climbs.

Attire: These jodpers really aren't that old fashioned...maybe my son would like them.

Gear: A few rusty pegs, a few old nuts (ones that used to have bolts through them) on cord, carabiners at 250g/piece, and a 20 year old rope that your son insisted you buy to replace the kernmantle rope you now use for tree felling.

Mountaineering hero's: Dick Barry

Peter Arian and Diane Magg/Avranitakis

It is tradition that the MCSA President normally writes a short message around Xmas time, but things have been really hectic and I only get round to writing a message now. Which is maybe a good thing, because in the past I typically wished everyone well over the Xmas period, but with a message in January we can focus more on the year ahead.

Over the last year and more specifically at the last Cencom meeting substantial time was devoted to look at 'Youth in the MCSA'. The basic feeling has been that the MCSA has not done particularly much with respect to youth in the mountains (or the MCSA).

Most of the activities for youth have been peripheral to other meets and it has been difficult for youth to join the Club and feel welcome as many Sections' constitutions only allow active participation if the youth's parents are members. And there is also always the big dark cloud of 'liability' that makes people 'run for cover'.

As the MCSA is a federal body, it is never the intention of Cencom to dictate to sections what they should do, but often through discussions and sharing of information at Cencom some great ideas come to light. The current thinking regarding youth is for each Section to hold regular dedicated youth meets (about once a month for the larger sections) and to see if the interest is there to develop these further like some of the large European alpine clubs. The second idea is to harness our UIAA links to facilitate a meeting for youth leaders to kick-start the process.

It was then with some shock that I learned this week that absolutely no applications for the Supertramp Award for 2008 had been received. It seems impossible to comprehend that there is not a single youth out there who feels they can come up with an idea to travel adventurously locally or abroad and spend the R12 000 that was available. Or at least have the guts to submit any application. Is it that most youths are happier to stay at home and play Playstation, go to parties and generally live a cool life? Or is it that they are spoon-fed, taken from rugby to music to swimming and told what to think, that they need their parents to do everything for them? Are we wasting our time trying to push youth activities in the MCSA?

On a similar note, are older people getting out there and doing stuff? Or does the self-perpetuating need for material wealth and status cause people to shack up in offices or make excuses about their importance in projects and prevent them from planning and taking leave before they are too old to do so?

I know most people will just have come back from holidays but this is the time to look ahead and plan the year. To think about what is important in your life and make sure you get to doing it.

Regards, Roland Magg

12. MARETLWANE LODGE

Maretlwane Lodge is situated on the Magaliesberg farm, Maretlwane ('Lower Castle Gorge'). This is the property bought by Francois Junod for Pretoria Boys High School (PBHS) for the development of the Maretlwane Bush School, a project initiated in 2000 to take small groups of Grade 9 pupils from PBHS for two months into the bush for a broader outdoor educational experience. PBHS has developed Maretlwane Lodge as a way of earning funds towards up keeping of the Bush School. So far its use has been available only to parents of school boys, Old Boys of PBHS, etc, but they would like to increase the occupancy and therefore would like to include MCSA members.

Maretlwane Lodge is tucked into a bend in the Maretlwane River and provides comfortable accommodation for up to 10 people. Two separate wings share a common living area. Each wing has two bedrooms sharing their own stoep, kitchenette, shower and toilet, which makes it semi-independent. The common area has a central fireplace warming two lounges, a dining room and a fully equipped kitchen with every convenience to ensure a comfortable stay. The lodge is self-catering, serviced daily and is tastefully furnished to make people feel at home. Solar lighting and gas heating add to the bushveld experience. There is a 'swemgat' in the Maretlwane River only 50m from the Lodge. Access to Maretlwane is via the Hartbeespoort Dam - Rustenburg road (old N4).

A network of dirt tracks on the 1400 ha property allows game viewing and bird watching in a vehicle or on foot. Some routes are 4 x 4 only. The walk to Maretlwane waterfall takes only half-an-hour and, of course, going further upstream, Castle Gorge (of which the MCSA are co-owners), can be accessed.

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13. LIGHTNING' BACKPACK

A biomechanics expert has invented an ergonomic backpack that uses rubber bands to reduce the effects of heavy loads on shoulders and joints and permits wearers to run more comfortably with heavy loads. The backpack's design, which suspends loads using bungee cords, reduces the energetic cost of carrying weight such that users can carry 12 more pounds in the suspended backpack than in a traditional backpack. The suspended backpack could reduce the risk of orthopedic and muscular injuries to children, emergency workers, and others who use backpacks to carry loads (See Nature, December 21).

With traditional backpacks, the mass of the backpack, which is typically attached tightly to the body, must undergo the same vertical displacement as the hip, which moves up and down 5 to 7 cm during walking. As a result, the peak forces exerted on the body by the load can be twice as high when walking, and three times as high when running, as when the backpack is not moving, exerting extreme forces on the wearer's shoulders and joints. By using stretchy bungee cords, the ergonomic backpack suspends the load and allows it to stay at a nearly constant height from the ground while the wearer walks or runs. This reduces the vertical displacement of the load and the resulting dynamic forces exerted on the body by a remarkable 82 to 86 percent which is easily felt.

The suspended backpack's reduction in forces exerted on the body reduced the metabolic cost of carrying a load, allowing a substantially heavier load to be carried: 60 pounds in the ergonomic backpack for the same energetic cost as 48 pounds in a normal backpack. "The reason for this reduction in metabolic rate is that the suspended backpack reduces the accelerative forces during the more energetically expensive phase of walking, which is when both legs are simultaneously in contact with the ground and performing mechanical work against each other"

The company, Lightning Packs LLC, will further develop and commercialise the backpack and will focus on reducing the backpack's weight and making a smaller daypack version. In 2003 they invented an electricity generating backpack.

14. CABLEWAY RESPONDS TO SEWERAGE COMPLAINT

DECEMBER 10, 2007

Table Mountain Aerial Cableway has apologised to climbers who were rained on by dirty water over the weekend, and reassured the climbers that steps will be taken to ensure this does not happen again.

The Cableway received complaints from climbers on Saturday afternoon and immediately sent their upper cableway station manager to assess the situation. He confirmed that the cableway's restaurant water tank had filled and instead of the grey water feeding into the Cableway's main holding tank, the water flowed over onto the mountain.

"The water comes from the restaurant," said Sabine Lehmann, CEO for Table Mountain Aerial Cableway. "It is waste water that goes through a fat trap first, similar to a grey water system used in a garden."

"We have a monitoring system which alerts us when the tank is full so that we can manually reduce the level in the tank. Unfortunately this system had tripped and the alarm was not activated.

"We apologise to the climbers for this unpleasant experience. It is completely unacceptable to the Cableway company and we are grateful that the climbers reported this problem quickly."

"To prevent this happening again we are going to build a redundancy into the system so that there are two warning opportunities in future."

Lehmann said the Cableway Company operates within a national park and a world heritage site and takes its commitment to the environment very seriously.

All sewage is taken off the mountain in a tank that gets hooked onto the bottom of the Cable Car. This is done at night when visitors have left the mountain. The sewage is then pumped into the municipal sewage system at the lower station.

"Monitoring grey (waste) and black (sewage) water is of great concern to us," said Lehmann. "We monitor the water usage on a weekly basis and through innovative water measures have reduced the water usage, and thus the run off, from seven litres per visitor 10 years ago to 1.2 litres per visitor."

"We have specially designed toilets which are imported from the United States. They are less comfortable than standard toilets but they use far less water, just one cup for each flush as opposed to 11 litres for a standard toilet. All visitors to the mountain are asked to help us reduce the use of fresh water – and thus the creation of waste water."

The Cableway is the only facility within the Table Mountain National Park that has ISO 14001 accreditation for its environmental management system. This system is independently audited on an annual basis. The company also employs an environmental officer who checks its environmental policy and procedures twice a week.

"Table Mountain Cableway is committed to operating with as small an environmental footprint as is possible," said Lehmann. "This has been recognized through numerous awards and the ISO 14001 accreditation for our environmental management system."

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sabine@tablemountain.net

15. SEARCH AND RESCUE

KZN area and the Drakensberg: there are set procedures and numbers to phone in the event of a mountain rescue. The main rescue number to use for all mountain rescues in KwaZulu-Natal is 0800 005133. From this number the MCSA is contacted. If in the Drakensberg, it is, however, best to contact the nearest KZN Wildlife Ranger in person or by phone and to report the matter to him first. Failing this, phone the 0800 005133 number. (Note that phoning such numbers as 10177, 082 911 or 031 3077744 will not get a satisfactory result.) Info by: Gavin Raubenheimer KZN Rescue Convener (082 9905876; 033 3433168; <http://www.peakhigh.co.za>)

Gauteng Emergency Search & Rescue Numbers: please contact 011 315 0203 (Gauteng Emergency Services) and 082 571 5089 (North West Emergency Services).

If these fail, use 082 652 1490 (Rob Thomas); 083 230 1104 (Gert van Schalkwyk)

16. MEMBER NEWS

New members: Amanda Blankfield, Joanne Reid, Gregory Hulley, Bibi, Alex and Lisa Buerkle, Kim Hoepfl (at last – well done Kim), Andrew Raubenheimer, Althea Gebbie.

Applications received from: Cara Bradley, Willem vd Meulen, Bernice McLean.

Passed away: Hugh Williams, who joined our section in 1960, passed away suddenly on 25 January 2008. Erica Biesheuvel (aged 99 years and 4 months) passed this week. Our sincere condolences to family and friends.

Thank you: *Uschi and family wish to thank you all for your kind messages of condolences, phone calls and support during our recent sad bereavement.*

Congratulations: **Alex Harris, and Sibusiso Villane**, on their unaided walk to the South Pole in Antarctica.

Alard Hüfner, Marianne Pretorius, Voytek Modrzewski, Douard le Roux and Shelley Plumb on a VERY successful expedition to Patagonia during which they climbed ALL three Towers of Paine in only a 14-day sojourn in the Paine National Park. Wow, wow, wow!!!

17. CLUB NEWS

Annual General Meeting: to be held on Wednesday 5 March 2008 at the Waverley Girl Guide Hall, Scott & Stirling Str Waverley at 20h15.

Veterans awards will be presented to people who have been members of this section for 50 years. And for the first time, 'The Chairman's Award' will be made. Join us for snacks and a glass of wine.

Committee: Thank you for the hard work, to the members who have to step down after 4 years on the committee. Barbara Reid (Secretary), Peter Adrian (Newsletter), Ian Hossack (clubhouse), Ulrike Kiefer (Expeditions), Greg Devine (Land & Access) and David Jewell (Treasurer) who is not available to continue on the committee

Also a big thank you to all members who have helped at club evenings, patrolled our areas, served as meet leaders, involved in search and rescue, and helped in many other ways.

To Teresa and Arthur Morgan, who have stepped down from search & rescue, we thank you for your dedication, hard work and involvement in club matters both locally and nationally for over 34 years.

JHB Section's Youth Meets: the first one was held on 24 February 2008 at Cedarberg under the leadership of Anna Thea Oppler (assisted by father Oli).

The next YOUTH MEET for the slightly older young people 16-21 years will be held at Waterval Boven (Sport climbing) on 8 & 9 March. Contact Kyle Meenehan 083 454 1809.

We are hoping to have youth/children's meets once a month and will advertise in the newsletter as well as in the weekly reminders.

National Mini Meet: Wolkberg: 26 April to 4 May 2008. Application forms can be obtained from Uschi at admin@jhb.mcsa.org.za

MCSA quiz Terri-ble: There were seven complete entries to the Terri White quiz. Well done to Donavan van Graan, Dawie Swan, Brett Nicolson, Robin John, Peet Bardenhorst, Ilse Wagener, and Roy Kendal. Please note that there are only 4 prizes, so the four lucky names will be drawn at the MCSA AGM

PATROLLERS: Easter weekend as well as the holidays at the end of April. If you are available to patrol at Cedarberg/Tonquani this would be appreciated. Please contact Uschi

Please contact Uschi Magg* (Administrator) for contact person and contact details of committee members.

*Contact for access information.

FOR ANY INFORMATION REGARDING THE CLUB CONTACT:

Uschi Magg (Administrator) 011 807 1310 weekdays 8am - 10 am Email: admin@jhb.mcsa.org.za

Postal Address: MCSA Johannesburg Section P.O. Box 1641 Houghton 2041

Clubhouse: Waverley Girl Guide Hall, Scott & Stirling Str. Waverley,Johannesburg,Wednesdays from 19h30

Webpage: <http://jhb.mcsa.org.za>www.mcsa.org.za

REMOTE AREAS SEARCH & RESCUE: 011 315 0203 (Metro) NW 082 571 5089

.KZN mountain rescues in KwaZulu-Natal is 0800 005133.If in the Drakensberg, it is, however, best to contact the nearest KZN Wildlife Ranger in person or by phone.

W.Cape 021 101777

Wolkberg HutUschi Magg011 807 13108-10am weekdays

PERMITS:Tonquani/CedarbergUschi Magg011 807 13108-10am weekdays

Grootkloof,Lenise de Kock012 34545868-10am weekdays

Dome,Lenise de Kock012 345 45868-10am weekdays

Mhlabatini,Lenise de Kock012 345 45868-10am weekdays

Castle GorgeJean Williams011 462 29938h30 – 12h30 weekdays