Surviving More Than the Summit

-contributed by Val Hovland

It was fall. I was in a strange land. Climbing to very high altitudes. The mountain was Shishapangma, the 14th highest mountain in the world, one whose summit sits at 8013 meters, or around 26,290 feet. It had been many weeks that we were on the mountain. The original four of us who started the mountain were now down to two. One was forced to leave early because of high altitude pulmonary edema, his slurred speech and stumbling footsteps causing us to put him on oxygen as soon as we could and help him descend as quickly as possible. He was now vacationing in Thailand. The other was forced to leave a little later because of more trouble with the altitude; having climbed with us for most of the time, he had developed bronchitis in his lungs, and on our highest trip to 6860 meters at Camp 2, woke one morning hearing a little gurgle in his lungs, so retreated quickly. He was now back in Kathmandu, having crossed the border from Tibet into Nepal, gearing up for his plane flight home.

We had put in our time preparing on the mountain. Being up high on the mountain is hard. And gorgeous. What takes one hour to climb at home in Colorado (with a little good, hard sweat) will take four or five hours up high, where you try to only exert yourself at a pace that can be maintained for twelve. And this high is really high -- Camp 2 was the same altitude as my previous altitude record (22,500 feet).

continued on page 4

---

Editor’s Note

Thanks to Val Hovland for sharing this month’s story. This is our third in our series on near-epics and adventures in the outdoors. Val shares with us a spectacular tale about adventuring and surviving on one of the world’s highest mountains. In her account, Val shares her heartfelt fears and joys about ascending (and descending) Shishapangma in spite of sickness, hardship, and threatening weather conditions.

— Donna Marino
Compass Editor
Chair’s Report

Awe and admiration pervade my thoughts as I reflect on the people surrounding me to help run our Boulder Group of CMC. It never ceases to amaze me how much energy people give to help keep our group going strong and to move us forward to be even stronger.

Our clubroom move continues to be the biggest challenge. It has taken no small amount of work to determine what we are allowed to do, regarding city requirements, to make upgrades to the clubroom. Luckily, it is not as complex as we’d thought and we are ready to move forward in several areas. Our Clubroom Move Committee, headed by Vice-Chair, Roger Drake, met on March 3 to finalize decisions for new flooring, gear storage, and a modified kitchenette that will not require plumbing. The committee will make recommendations for Council to approve so we can get these improvements completed! These are just the immediate renovations needed to make the clubroom meet our basic requirements. There will be more down the road that will involve additional work and expense such as an improved bathroom sink and signage outside/in our windows.

Ultimately, Council must decide how much expense we can incur by dipping into our cash reserves to fund the renovations. We need to be a bit conservative, since we don’t own the space. On the other hand, we do have healthy cash reserves. We also have a six-year lease, and the possibility of renewing that lease (which I hope we will do, so we don’t have to go through all of this again!). We want to make the clubroom as attractive and functional as possible, since that is a huge draw to attract members.

Speaking from my experience, the existence of a clubroom as wonderful as our old space made me feel I would have a true “home away from home.” This not only affected my decision to join, but encouraged me to become actively involved over the following years as an instructor, school director, and eventually Council Member. The reality that I could give a great deal of time and do so in a place that is comfortable and has amenities was a huge incentive in volunteering my time. It is my hope that we can make our new clubroom as inviting and functional as our old clubroom.

In terms of our existing clubroom, we have an “Old Clubroom Cleanout” committee, which Council Member at Large, Jill Yarger, is organizing. They are making great strides in determining all the tasks needed. More volunteers are needed. Contact Jill at jill.yarger@prodigy.net.

Our group has been meeting another goal, which is being more active in learning about conservation and recreational access. In the forefront are decisions about the West Trails Study Area which will soon be made, with Boulder Open Space & Mountain Parks Trustees. They will be presenting recommendations to City Council in early March. The Community Collaborative Group (CCG) presented a unanimously adopted proposal to OSMP, after ongoing and extensive study by participants from a wide variety of stakeholder groups. OSMP Trustees held a Public Comments meeting and are still considering whether to adopt the CCG proposal as is (this is the State CMC’s recommendation), or make amendments before presenting a final proposal to City Council. I’m grateful to Nickie Kelly for helping our group become more informed on these issues since we do not currently have a Conservation Chair. Nickie arranged for Council to be briefed more extensively on the CCG proposal at our March 14 meeting, so we can determine whether we should adopt a formal Boulder Group position to present to City Council.

In other conservation/recreation matters, I’m also grateful to Rick Casey who set up a public meeting with a representative from Eldora Ski area, to help us learn more about the proposed Eldora Expansion plans. It is so encouraging to see members of our group giving their time to help us be more informed about matters that have an impact on conservation and recreational activities that are part of a delicate balance in our state and in the Boulder area.

Through all of these political and business agendas and challenges, I had the joy this weekend of being reminded of one of the greatest reasons I love being a CMC member. Yesterday, I led a snowshoe hike up from the East Portal Trailhead, to help one of our members get in a co-lead toward earning his trip leader status. Not only did it make me feel great to give an aspiring leader a step towards his leadership, but it was a joy to simply get out on a hike and enjoy the beauty of Colorado’s mountains. We had a great group of five snowshoeing up toward Rogers Lake, and I’m always moved by what a fantastic group of people I get to meet through CMC. We were blessed with spectacular weather & scenery, the beauty of fresh snow clinging to the crags of the mountains and to the tress (and falling off the trees onto our heads!). The sun graced us by peeking in & out, deciding to stay with us the majority of the hike down, making for the kind of splendid late daylight that never fails to make my heart soar. It proved to be a wonderful and restorative outing, and a well-needed reprieve from political agenda items, permit requirements, & budgetary constraints. I came home with a new motto: When the going gets tough, I’m going out to play with some of my fantastic CMC buddies!

Respectfully submitted,
– Janine Fugere, Boulder Chair
Editor’s note: The following is a list of BCMC trips and events for the month. It is possible that trips may change or be posted after this issue goes to press. Please check online for current trip status, to see club trip policies, or to learn about becoming a trip leader: cmcboulder.org/Trips.

To view trips online and register:
- Browse to www.cmc.org
- Login with your CMC member number and password. For first time users, the default password is your ZIP code.
- Click on ‘Trip Signup’ in left margin
- Enter trip selection parameters (CMC group, date range, etc) & click Search
- To register, click Register
- For Boulder trips, you must contact the leader by phone (preferred) or email; for Denver trips, you may register online.
- Schools require previous signup. Info at www.cmcboulder.org

Saturday, March 5
Sourdough Trail
Rock Creek Glades Telemark
Adv. II Ski Tour
Pace: Moderate
Climb steadily to treeline. Enjoy an 1,100 foot tree and powder run back to a steep and very fast trail. Climbing skins and good tele/downhill skills required. Avalanche gear encouraged.
Leader: Michael Anstett
Contact: 303-823-8757 or mike.anstett@gmail.com. Please leave a contact phone number.
Trail mileage: 7 miles
Elevation gain: 2700 feet
Driving distance: 40 miles

Saturday, March 5
Brainard Lake ski tour
Easy III Ski Tour
Difficulty: Blue Downhill
We’ll ski up the Little Raven, stop at the CMC cabin then ski back on Waldrop trail (blue x-e difficulty). Trail choice dependent on snow conditions; basic nordic ski gear required.
Leader: Rick Casey, caseyrick@gmail.com for more info.
Trail mileage: 6 miles

Saturday, March 12
Little Raven Trail
Easy III Ski Tour
The most exciting route to Brainard Lake. After hot tea, zip back down via the CMC/South trail.
Leader: Bob Olson, boulderbob@comcast.net
Trail mileage: 7 miles
Elevation gain: 500 feet
Driving distance: 50 miles

Wednesday, March 16
Boulder CMC Open House
Boulder Clubroom (around the corner from Neptune’s in the Table Mesa Shopping Center)
7-8 pm
Inviting new and prospective CMC members to learn more about the club and its many classes, trips, and activities. Experienced members will be on hand to share their enthusiasm and knowledge about hiking, camping, peak bagging, rock climbing, snow shoeing, cross-country skiing, and more. BRING A FRIEND!

Saturday, March 26
Front Range Peak or Powder
Adv. I Ski Tour
Difficulty: Blue Downhill
Depending on early spring snow conditions we will either ski a local powder pocket or lower peak. Strong telemark/downhill skills, climbing skins and avalanche gear required.
Leader: Steven Haymes, 303-444-4765, srhaymes@yahoo.com
Register with leader BY PHONE between 9 AM and 9 PM only.
Trail mileage: 8 miles
Elevation gain: 2500 feet
Prerequisite: Avalanche School
Driving distance: 50 miles

March Monthly Program

Wednesday, March 23
7-8:30pm
Boulder CMC member Jean Aschenbrenner will share photos and stories of her trip to Colombia at the CMC Clubhouse. Jean spent the month of February in Colombia. Highlights of her trip included a six-day trek among the glacial peaks of El Cocuy Natural National Park (PNN) and a five-day trek to visit Ciudad Perdida (Lost City) on the coast near Santa Marta.
Rest days are needed to simply allow your body to adjust, taking the time to let the small headache disperse, time to allow the blood cells to adjust. I slept almost through the entire rest days at C2. But acclimatization does work if you do it right. My second time climbing up to C1 was much easier than the first. The route up Shishapangma curves just so that when we reach C2 we are finally right next to the mountain; one day she is covered in lenticulars, and the next she will be clear and calm.

After our ‘last’ rotation of six days on the mountain: six days of pee bottles in the night, six days of melting snow for hours and hours in the hanging stove two inches from your head (only one small finger burn to show), six days of body temperature regulation (on-off of the shell, mitts, or booties), six days of drinking cider to wash out last of the oatmeal or cocoa to wash out the ramen flavor, six days of protecting skin from the intense sun, six days of wet-ones baths, six days of twelve hour nights, after six days of these, it was time to return to base camp to regenerate. On the way down my partner and I encountered a tragedy at Camp1, where a Czech person from another team had died at in the night due to edema. We tried to help out as we could. The space of my backpack, which previously held items to keep me alive and comfortable on the mountain (which were stashed at C2 and C1), was filled with items of the Czech who would no longer need them: down booties, down mitts, Gore Tex bibs, avalanche receiver, long underwear, socks that were just worn yesterday, still holding his smell. Things that are simply worldly, but brought down the mountain just as his body was. Back to base. Back to basics.

Slowly regeneration happens. It is mental, it is physical, it is emotional, it is spiritual. At base, the little amenities creep in and allow me to sleep better: the tasty potato pancakes prepared by Dorji, the sleeping bag liner allowing me to curl up as if at home, the sounds of music coming from our little speakers causing me to dance a little, a hot water shower rinsing off days of dirt (and shaving just to feel good), washing clothes in little wash basins. Returning things to their natural clean state, with some added red blood cells to help us climb this mountain. After two days of recharging our batteries (cameras through our solar panel, and bodies through eating good food from Dorji), final planning of what and where all of our tents-stoves-fuel-food-gear was, and preparing our bodies and minds, we were ready for our (first) summit attempt!

***

First there is Plan A, back home, when you have some experience with mountains and climbing and foreign countries and what you think is high altitude (e.g., 6850m). By the time your team is assembled you are on Plan E (or so), which includes all sorts of logistics, travel, and the big unknown: mountain time. Mountain time is of course divided up into sections you think are logical and realistic, including time for setting up camps, resting, and of course the big one: acclimatizing.

By the time you reach base camp, you are on Plan J. You talk with other expeditions and many climbers to figure out what their acclimatization schedules are and how they compare to yours. Then you have your first trip up the mountain where you get to really feel the trail and the scree and the penitentes and the snow slogs. And the presence or lack of headaches. And you are on to Plan L with a new number of rest days and days traveling up the mountain or at various camps.

Right around Plan N we were on our (first) summit push: Monty and I were on our way up for a trip that included C1-C2-C2 (rest)-C3-Summit-return. The first few days went as planned, but then some new information (from several different sources) came along regarding the weather: tomorrow was supposed to be good weather, but the next day (our intended summit day) was forecast to have precipitation. Since C3 is at the top of an avalanche-prone couloir, getting stuck there first in a storm and then having to downclimb seemed a poor choice.

Okay, Plan O. Can we go for a summit push from C2? Let’s try. Sure many of our friends who had made the summit hadn’t put in such a long day (or night/day combo), but with potential weather coming in, we had to try. After consulting with Bemba, the decision was made for a summit push leaving that evening, directly from C2. Hurried preparations began immediately. We’d given most of our water to other summit climbers as they arrived thirsty at C2, so we needed to start melting snow for dinner, as well as two liters apiece for climbing. Finally, by 7:30 p.m. we left for the summit in pitch darkness.

One thing is for sure in the mountains: you must listen to your body. And there is a very tricky balance between pushing yourself hard to achieve a huge goal, and determining when you need (truly need) to turn around. That particular night push from C2, I felt many things crowding in on me: the size of the climb ahead of us (our biggest and obviously highest so far, plus other friends who had attempted less were completely wiped out), the encroaching darkness, the slow gain of the slope with every step, the long 12 hours until daylight, the slow gait of my steps, the wishing that we could have done this climb instead in the daytime. Slowly my worries were articulated (reaching sometimes a level of whining -- not a normal personality trait). My body wasn’t cooperating with my mind’s decision to try for such a long summit attempt. We decided to return to C2; we had aborted our summit push after a few hours and a few hundred meters from C2. It was a hard decision, but the right decision. We were partners, agreed to get each other to the summit, and protect each other along the way.

continued on page 5
Our summit push was over. Monty told Bemba to clear our tents and stoves from the mountain. We cleared our sleeping bags, food, and clothing from the mountain. Such are the (rash) decisions made at C2 after long hard days on the mountain.

So where then did we find ourselves? Could we give up so easily on Shishapangma? Down at ABC, the weather was beautiful, our bodies recovered, and our thoughts clarified.

On to Plan S: S for Shishapangma, S for Summit; we would try again. We pushed out the date of the yak transport of all our gear down to BC, we coordinated with another team to use their tents so we didn’t have (re-) carry one, we re-packed our packs, we rested for two days, we ate good food, but most importantly, we mentally prepared to go back up the mountain for one more summit push. One more push based on our schedule, our bodies, and our desires!

***

It was the hardest day of my life, and I had decided that on the way *up* to the summit. Then came the long night of survival outside at 7460 meters.

On one day (headed up to C3 for the first time) I was feeling great: strong, confident, acclimatized, and happy. The climbing was getting more exciting the higher we went. Arriving at C3 there were three standing tents and one flattened tent showing the harsh potential of the site. That night I was bracing my feet against the tent wall to hold it up against the incredible winds (and to calm Monty’s at-the-time-seemingly-over-exaggerated fear that “if we lose this tent, we’re dead’), and checking my oxygen saturation, fearing it was too low. One time in the night I felt my legs lifted off the ground, and immediately thought about the stove that we had left in the vestibule. I reached outside and retrieved it from a few feet away from the tent (bringing it inside), we staked down the tent more as we could with our available gear, and we re-zipped the tent, resigning ourselves to sitting against the tent wall to hold it up through the night. Instead of carrying our own tent, borrowing a tent whose profile was high, one that didn’t have snaps or clips on the zippers, and one that wasn’t staked down as I would have staked it down was starting to have its downsides.

Day 2: at an early rise, it is too windy to go for the summit, so we take a rest day. The day consists of resting in the tent, luckily sleeping almost all day, rolling from side to side trying to find the optimal snow configuration below my body (knowing there is none), not being much of a conversation backboard for Monty, eating some and trying to eat more (but a shared ramen with jerky for an early dinner was about what we could handle).

Middle of the night (3am): the alarm goes off, ready to send us on our way to the summit, but the wicked winds are still there. We sleep in, waiting for the sun, happy for our shelter.

Third day, morning: I finally emerge from the tent, wrapped in down and the ridge to the summit calls me up. The winds have died down just enough, we have put in our time; it is time to go for it. First I get Monty on board --we have enough sunlight left to climb to the summit and descend to either C3 (comfortably) or C2 (optimistically). I stuff my pockets with the essentials: snacks, hard candies, mocha Clif shots, sunblock, three emergency hand warmers, a tiny one-ounce emergency LED headlamp, a lighter. I finish packing up my backpack for the way down, and leave it inside the tent.

My harness goes on with minimal hardware (one ascender, one ATC, and a few carabiners); one liter of water comes up with me attached to my harness. With crampons on, I grab my ice axe, and I am ready to go!

The climb: step by step, this is slower than I had expected, or anticipated, or certainly wanted. But little by little, section by section, and breath by breath, we climb. Monty is about ten minutes ahead of me, and occasionally we meet up to eat some, drink some, and push on. We indeed push our bodies and minds. There will be one section where snow has covered the fixed lines and Monty bends to yank the line up (oh good, I get to catch up just a bit). One section will be flat, one will be incredibly steep snow, one will cross rock bands, one will go around a corner. The route follows the ridge, and the Himalaya open up around (and fall below) us. The temperature is quite nice (for us two draped in down and technical clothing). The hardest part of the climb for me is near the top where the angle steepens (yet again) to perhaps sixty degrees, then turns through a little mixed rock band (which is hard work up so high). I keep telling myself if it is just up that section, then I can make it. Never give up, never give up, never give up. My mind pushes my body on. I mostly focus on my footsteps, but during rest breaths, the remoteness and power of the sky and the Himalaya and Shishapangma and the ridges and the snow show their beauty to me.

continued on page 6
Shishapangma, continued from page 5

And then there is more up, up, and up. And then there is Monty again and we can go down. We did it!

The descent: this is so much easier than going up, well only for now—the descent always gets harder somehow. I double-check every harness attachment (sometimes cumbersome underneath the big down coat) as I rappel down a section, or walk straight down the hill. Somewhere on the way down my water bottle fell off of my harness, but I planned on re-hydrating at C3. Using lovely friction with my body and gloves and lessons from past years, I quickly descend the fixed roped sections often catching Monty as he gets into or out of a rappel. But then about 75% back to C3, it happened -- the descent (and everything) got harder mentally as we finally got to see the C3 tents. Or what was left of them.

No tents were left standing. Our (borrowed) tent, which contained essentials to our survival, was flapping viciously in the wind. What did that mean? Were any of our things left? What would we do? After being the most physically tired I have been in my life, now I have to deal with this? What even does dealing with this mean? These questions swirled through my mind as the sun was setting over the Himalaya, slowly tipping the highest peaks in the world. Near sunset I looked east to see a colorful sky and a shadow of Shishapangma extending kilometers and kilometers to the east. But this was no time for pictures; the last few hundred meters into ‘camp’ were telling as we were blown to the ground by the severe gusts several times.

Down at C3: Like a magic trick, the inner tent had been pulled from the table of snow, slappily taking with it my entire pack, but magically leaving Monty’s backpack and compressed sleeping bag lying peacefully on the snow. Cautiously I explored a few steps leeward of the tent, but found only a fuel bottle or two, a stove, a small ditty bag of Monty’s; I found nothing of mine. My backpack, my sleeping bag, my extra food, my insulating ground pads, my contact solution, even Moosley and some prayer flags from home -- these were all gone. All I had from here on out was what was on my body and I was ready to get out of there.

Shelter at C3 (attempt #1): Violent winds kept us from descending in the dark to C2 (we tried). Those same winds were still eating away at the fly from our destroyed tent. We formulated a quick plan to create a snow shelter using our available gear. Shovel: Monty will dig a snow trench. Rope: we will line the bottom of the shelter with it. Tent fly: let’s put it above us in the trench. One plan rolled quickly into the next: okay, the fly isn’t easy to anchor above us, so we’ll use it as more ground padding. One of my tasks was to free the tent fly from its flapping location, but not to lose it thousands of meters down the mountain. For perhaps half an hour I sat on three-quarters of the fly to keep it from billowing into the darkness with the wind, and with a bamboo stick attempted to dig in the hard snow to free one of the corners. I was afraid to move to go for help, for fear of losing the fly and part of our means survival equipment, but Monty was digging out of ear shot. So I sat there and dug with the stick, feeling almost useless. Monty later came over and helped me free the fly, ripping one section out of the snow and together we used a picket to free the final corner. The rest of our first attempt at shelter included modifying our snow trench into a very small partial snow cave, trying to stuff my feet into Monty’s small backpack with limited success, lying on the snow next to Monty with half of a sleeping bag on top of me and a snow roof six inches above my face, having my full body shake with shivers and the feeling that my toes were just too cold -- this inactivity just wasn’t going to work: we had to try to go down (again).

Shelter at C3 (attempt #2): We made it slowly back into our makeshift snow shelter. The long night was filled with endless tasks I gave myself, designed to address our survival needs. I could not get Monty (and myself) down immediately and all of our high altitude drugs had blown away with my backpack, so the best thing I could do was work on the basics: shelter, warmth, and hydration. I first got Monty in his sleeping bag in the shelter as it stood (zipping it up for him after seeing he could not do it himself), then I worked on the rest of our needs. My efforts were not all successful, but every partial success helped.

There was the first try to light the stove with lighter#1: inside the snow trench, with no pot, the shovel as a base: no luck. There were the second and third tries with the same lighter. Sparks but no nice flame. A search for another lighter in the backpack led nowhere. I dug out a protected area from the wind: was the stove getting too much or too little air? The fourth and fifth tries in the protected area still didn’t light. Six, seven, eight. Back and forth between shelter and hydration, I dragged a mylar blanket from one of the destroyed tents. I both sat on this sometimes and sometimes isolated the stove from the snow with it. Nine, ten, eleven. In the flotsam of one of the tents I found a pot (yay!). Twelve, thirteen, fourteen. Scrounging the remains of the other tent I found a wood block: good, some more insulation from the snow. Fifteen, sixteen, seventeen. My thumb stuck in the tent position. Monty found his lighter (#2) in a pocket. Eighteen, nineteen, twenty.

Descent attempt (#2): The winds were still there, of course. They were there to whip tiny snow particles into our faces, there to knock us down to the snow, there to impede our verbal communications, there to obscure our visual path, there to chill us. But it was Monty’s cerebral edema that truly turned us back. Hearing your climbing partner say “I’m going to die” as they fall into the snow at 7400 meters is not something I’d ever like to repeat. Now it was my turn. My turn to assure life and safety, to guide, to help. I felt an instant change in myself.

continued on page 7
A 1/4 inch flame appeared for a few seconds, but then it was gone. And it went on for hours. I was so thirsty that the hard snow wall four inches in front of my face looked so good, I couldn’t help but help myself (even knowing it wouldn’t cure my dehydration and would chill me some). I just leaned forward and ate some snow, seeing some blood from my lips remain on the snow. It tasted wonderful. I never got the stove to stay lit. And shelter and warmth were similar, if slightly more successful.

**Nautical dawn:** Finally, the stars were disappearing, and I could see the horizon. Soon the sun (both light and warmth) would help us get down from C3. Monty was doing much better, and we would soon be away from our cold shelter. With the light, however, I discovered that my eyesight was clouded -- I had worn my contacts through the cold night, and now was having trouble (later I found out that one contact had fallen out, and the other eye actually had some swelling due to limited oxygen making it blurry until I descended). Now it would be Monty’s turn to guide me down the mountain, Monty’s turn to find our path. However, communications on the mountain sometimes get muddled.

**Getting down:** After ten minutes (on our second try) heading down to C2, I found myself alone on a 40 degree snow slope, ice axe in hand, wind still whipping around me, able to see the range of about three footsteps below me. I yelled to the wind “Monty! Stop! Where are you? I can’t see!” No response -- he couldn’t hear me in the 60+mph winds. I slowly downclimbed a few minutes, trying to follow the footsteps I could see, then repeated my yells, searching visually for any rock shape that might be moving or yellow and red (like Monty). And then I would do this again. “Monty! Stop! Where are you? I can’t see!” Finally, I determined I needed to speed up and get down this slope on my own. I needed to catch up with Monty on my own. And so I did. Monty had downclimbed much too fast for my limited-sight climbing speed, not realizing that even 20 feet of distance was enough to isolate me in my limited eyesight. He thought he was waiting for me (too far down and not hearing me), while I was on my own. We were in completely different worlds.

**Reunion, rehydration, and rewarming:** After about half an hour I finally caught up with Monty, the extent of my sight was clarified, and we headed down to the sunshine. We had another unfortunate surprise in that our Camp 2 borrowed tent had been removed from the mountain behind us. We had no tent to go to, so continued down. We found a lone tent (almost the last on the mountain) which we borrowed for rehydration (it was part of the Marmot team, and their team members were great in helping us out). We climbed down to Camp 1, stayed the night in a dead man’s tent that was left on the mountain (literally the last tent left). After one more day we were warmed with hot soup from Dorji, a hug from Bemba, and heat packs on our toes. We had both experienced frostbite, me on my toes, Monty on his toes but more severely on his fingers. In the end (about eight weeks later) I had a small amount of bone on one big toe removed; Monty lost parts of two of his fingers. Rewarming can sometimes hurt, but we recovered over time.

From the summit all the way back to Boulder eight days later, we flew off the mountain and made our way home.

I learned that the process and pain of rewarming frozen toes will wake you from sleep, even if you are extremely tired. I learned that if you don’t want to hike the long way from ABC to BC, you can pay for a nice (slow) horse to take you down. I learned that even though I love most teas, I really, really don’t enjoy yak butter tea (with salt). Not on the fourth or fifth refilling either. I learned that the best meal in Lhasa is had when your Tibetan porter Bemba orders everything. I learned that if you are in Lhasa and want to change a complicated airline ticket that includes four different airlines, neither your Tibetan guide nor China Air can help. And there are no other airline ticket offices. The best plan is to just fly to your next city and work it out from there.

Bit by bit I adjusted to being back in the first world. First, half a world away at base camp, there were the 4-wheel drive vehicles. Then, in Tingri, there was a small bed to sleep in. And we were eating inside a building. Next there was the sound of music playing as we bumped along the dirt road, first Chinese voices, then English voices, both changing cadence as the engine speed varied. Shigatse gave us our first showers, if mostly lukewarm, and warm, comfortable beds. Lhasa had hot water and a modern airport. Chengdu had skyscrapers. Shanghai had transport vans and short-stay lodging. Seoul had fast-access internet and cappuccinos. San Francisco had quick airport security lines. And finally Boulder had family and friends waiting with strong hugs.

Back home, some ask: How can you explain why this is fun? Why do you do this? For me, mountains inspire me and I love the lessons of the mountains. The lessons come in all shapes and sizes: personal and beautiful; physical and mental; fun and scary. Sometimes hard, sometimes simple.

I learned to never pay more than 50% of the asking price in Tibet.

I learned that you must stake your tent down with whatever it takes to keep it there. It is a good idea to check for yourself important things in your life, redoing what truly needs to be redone.

I learned the importance of being with a partner. Sometimes you will be there to support them, and sometimes they will be there to help you, and you don’t know when these times might be.

I learned that it is extremely important to keep some reserves to face the challenges life throws at you. You need to have enough reserve so that even when the going gets extremely tough, I may need a minute to regroup (or a day at BC to re-formulate the plan to attempt the summit again, or a half hour sitting on a billowing tent fly), but when I need to survive, I will.

I learned to keep a keen ear to my body’s needs.

*continued on page 8*
I learned to have a good attitude, and not to despair. I never once thought I might die; I did recognize when something wasn’t working and needed to be changed. As the Dalai Lama says, “We can observe that bodily suffering often comes from the mind, or that if two people are enduring an equal degree of physical suffering, one whose mind is calm and happy suffers much less than one whose mind is agitated and anxious.”

I learned that there are no certain items you need to survive. Even if I am stuck at one of the highest, coldest places on earth, I do not need a tent or sleeping bag, ground pad or stove and pot. The will to live and protect myself and my partner is in the heart and in the mind.

“And what is good, Phaedrus, and what is not good? Need we ask anyone to tell us this?”

Meet the New Trip Leaders

Several Boulder Group CMC members have recently become new Trip Leaders. We’d like to congratulate Gary Johnston, Chris Marotta, Rick Casey, and Eileen Monyok for volunteering their time and for fulfilling the requirements to lead trips for the Boulder Group.

Gary Johnston

Gary Johnston was approved as an A/B Hike Leader in December. Gary joined the CMC in 2008 with his brother, Don, for social reasons. Don had just moved to Colorado, and Gary wanted to introduce Don to the Colorado outdoors and wanted to help Don connect with his new community. The Wednesday After Work Social Hikes first caught their eye. They both now love the group and have developed some good friendships there! Gary’s outdoor interests include mountain biking, hiking, and downhill skiing. Gary climbs one or two fourteeners each year. His bucket list includes summiting all 54 of the fourteeners. Gary is an early retiree who also enjoys travel, photography, and cooking. Gary serves as a volunteer park patroller for Jefferson County Open Space, primarily on a mountain bike. As a mountain biker and a hiker, Gary has a good understanding of what comprises a quality trail experience for both groups. He enjoys playing a role in helping all trail users have pleasant trail experiences.

In other Trip Leader news, three members of the Outings Committee who you met in the February Compass have also been approved as new Trip Leaders. Chris Marotta, the new A/B Hike Coordinator, was approved as an A/B Hike and a Ski Touring Trip Leader. Rick

Casey, the new C/D Hike Coordinator, was approved as a Ski Touring Trip Leader. Rick is already a C/D Hike and a Group 2 Rock Leader. Eileen Monyok, the new Rock Climb Coordinator, was approved as a Group 1 Rock and a Ski Touring Trip Leader.

Please welcome the new Trip Leaders. The club truly appreciates them graciously giving their time to help all members enjoy more outdoor opportunities.

Eldora Plan Discussed

Submitted by Rick Casey

Jim Spenst, General Manager of the Eldora Ski area, addressed a small but devoted gathering of CMC members in the Clubroom on the evening of Thursday, February 24. Though he spoke to only five of us, Jim gave a thorough review of the proposed plan, and respectfully answered the many questions that were posed. I learned several new facts about Eldora, such as that only half of it is on USFS land, the other half on private land. The USFS asks that any ski area on their land hold a periodic review of their operations about every ten years; since the last one for Eldora was done 14 years ago, this one is a little overdue. The plan includes several new lifts that would extend the northern boundary of the ski further into USFS land towards Middle Boulder Creek, which would add several hundred feet of vertical drop to the proposed ski trails. Also, access and return to the ski area from the western boundary, that faces the Lost Lake area, would be improved; this would better accomodate those skiers who are already skiing this area “side country” style. Also included in the plan would be a new restaurant and improved snow making; there are no plans to increase the parking area at present. If the current plan is accepted by the USFS, the next stage would be to perform a full EA (environmental assessment) or an EIS (environmental impact statement), depending on the USFS recommendation.

For those interested, the entire plan can be seen at http://eldora.com/uploads/pdf/Eldora-2010MasterPlan_JulyDRAFT.pdf

Volunteer Opportunities

To volunteer call 303-554-7768 or email clubroom@cmc Boulder.org

Clubroom Hosts Needed

Clubroom Hosts are needed Monday through Thursday from 5-7 pm

Wanted: Your Stories!

The Compass newsletter wants to hear from you! Please consider sharing your personal stories or consider writing an article of interest for a future issue. Email compass@cmc Boulder.org.
Spring Equipment Sale

The Spring Equipment Sale will be Friday, April 15, 6-8 pm at the AMC in the conference room on the ground floor.

Sellers
For each item you are selling, attach an envelope on which is printed your Name, Item, Selling Price and whether you will accept a check; attach envelope to item. All items must be tagged before bringing them to the sale. Bring your items to the AMC on Thursday, April 14 from 4-7pm or Friday, April 15 from 3:00-5:30 pm in the conference room on the ground level. All unsold items must be picked up from the clubroom the night of the sale, by 8:30 pm unless prior arrangements are made with the Sale Coordinator only. Any items left after sale on Friday night will be donated. Please be sure to share this with any other members you tell about the sale. The office staff will retain sale envelopes for one week after the sale. Any monies not picked up by April 22, will be donated to the CMC.

Any outdoor gear that might be used on a CMC trip is appropriate for the sale, technical clothing only, no street clothes. Also no older model straight downhill skis. All monies go directly to sellers. If you want to donate the sale of your item(s) to the CMC, please note “CMC” on the envelope with the price; checks to be made payable to CMC. CMC is not liable for lost/stolen sale items or items left behind after the sale pick up deadline. It is suggested you keep a list of items in the sale to keep track.

Buyers
Bring varying bill denominations or checks for purchases. No change-making by CMC will be available. Doors for sale will open at 6:00 pm; no “early birds” (including sellers dropping off items).

Volunteers are needed to help with pre-sale setup, sale monitoring, cashiering, and post-sale cleanup. Hours needed for volunteers: 4-7pm Thursday, April 14, and 4:00 pm-8:30 pm, Friday, April 15. Pick a few hours you can help and contact Zoe Katsulos by email (preferred) at zfoto@aol.com or phone, 303-666-7672.

Centennial Celebration Climbs

The guidelines for trip leader participation in the Centennial Celebration Climbs to help celebrate the CMC’s Centennial Anniversary have changed. Groups will no longer be allowed to reserve peaks for their leaders, and more than one leader can lead a trip to a particular Centennial Peak. To participate in this celebration, qualified Boulder trip leaders may now lead a trip to one or more of the Centennial Peaks (top 100) between now and December 31, 2012. Interested trip leaders should email bdwyer192@gmail.com and indicate which trip(s) they wish to lead. Leaders will be responsible for scheduling the trip in the CMC online schedule. Instructions, formats and assistance will be provided to help streamline the leader’s participation. Starting March 1, there will be a link on the CMC website (www.cmc.org) to a spreadsheet for the Centennial Peaks. This will show the sign ups, schedules, completions, trip reports and photos of the trips. Participation in this program will help provide advertisement for the CMC and help allow members to climb the Top 100 peaks.

Fourmile Canyon Fire Restoration

500 volunteers are needed to help restore areas damaged by the September 2010 wildfire that swept through the mountains west of Boulder, burning through an area of 6,000 acres and destroying more than 170 homes. The fire directly impacted hundreds of residents and gripped the larger community for weeks. The wildfire left thousands of acres prone to severe erosion and invasion by weeds. A multi-agency team, led by Boulder County Parks and Open Space, has developed a restoration plan for the area. Wildlands Restoration Volunteers (WRV) and Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado (VOC) will team up to coordinate a dozen full day volunteer events. Volunteers will plant native grass seeds on over 500 acres to resist the invasion of weeds and reduce the threat of erosion. Volunteers may also apply straw mulch and construct sand-bag barriers in flood prone areas. For more information, and to register contact: Mary at WRV at 303-543-1411 or mary@wlrv.org For VOC, contact Sue at 303-715-1010 x 119 or sue@voc.org

Dates for the restoration are listed below. Other dates will be added later.

Sat, March 19
Thu, March 24
Sat, March 26
Thu, March 31
Sat, April 2
Tue, April 5
Sat, April 9
West TSA Update

“The CMC supports the suite of recommendations provided by the CCG and the staff for the West TSA. We believe that over the past two years, countless community meetings, professional research, and on the ground surveys have been conducted to address these complicated land use issues. The recommendations brought forward represent a balanced approach to recreation and conservation in the City of Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks and we hope the trustees adopt them without amendments. While the north south mountain biking trail is not part of this recommendation, we are encouraged that mountain bike opportunities will exist between Eldorado Canyon and Walker Ranch and between flagstaff road and boulder canyon and we strongly support this balanced approach to providing recreation opportunities for everyone.”

Since Bryan Martin wrote the above statement, the OSMP Board of Trustees voted to forward the OSMP staff recommendations to City Council for approval.

Clubroom Move Volunteers Needed

Boulder CMC is moving! Much help is still needed to get ready for the move, including sorting out records, archives, and all the other “stuff” in the old clubroom. Please contact Jill Yarger at jill.yarger@prodigy.net to help. We also need volunteers in the new clubroom to help build our new gear storage area, to install laminate flooring in the entry and kitchenette areas, and to build a small kitchenette area using some existing cabinets that will be raised to counter height with a base and have counter top added. Please Roger Drake at chair@cmcboulder.org if you or anyone you know can help with new clubroom.

New Brainard Lake Map

A new Brainard Lake Area Ski and Snowshoe map is now available. Thanks to hard work from Jim Groh and Steve Priem, the most accurate map of the Brainard area trails is now available at the Boulder CMC website (under menu item Resources/Miscellaneous).

Silver Plume Ice Climbing

- submitted by Kent Crites

We had a super Boulder CMC trip hitting the spring ice at Silver Plume! It used to be that a group could mosey up to Silver Plume after breakfast. Well, now it takes an alpine start to beat the crowds, but that’s okay. The ice gets drippy pretty early in the day, so the early start turns out to be nice. This time of year, Silver Plume offers a nice selection of mixed climbing as well as straight forward ice climbing. What more could you ask for than your club buddies sharing their enthusiasm, skills, and a great day climbing!

9th Annual Mountainfest

Get your adventure on at the 9th annual Mountain Fest. Whether you’re an experienced mountaineer, ready to climb your first 14er, or new to the Rockies, Mountain Fest will help prepare you to enjoy Colorado’s great outdoors. Mountain Fest will feature a climbing contest, membership discounts, skills clinics from our popular outdoor schools, free happy hour from Upslope and live music from Racecar Spelled Backwards. Bring family, friends, or yourself to this fun and free event! Visit our stewardship booth! Mountain Fest takes place on March 19 from 1-6:30 pm at the AMC in Golden. It’s all free including happy hour and a live band 4-6:30 pm.

Flyfishing School

The annual school is designed for beginners and “never-ers.” Basic information regarding gear, knots, entomology, stream structure, fish behavior and casting is covered in three evening classes and two field days. Students supply their own rod, reel, line, waders, boots, and fishing license. Tuition includes a detailed handbook, 24 flies and many accessories. This is a great way to prepare for club fly fishing trips.

Dates for classes & field trips are: 4/4, 4/6, 4/13, 4/16, 4/23.

Locations: CMC HQ in Golden for classes and Front Range for field trips.


Contact: Jorge Dominguez at 720-675-8740 before 9 PM or email cmc.flyfishing@gmail.com for information.

Backcountry Incident Review Conference

The first annual Backcountry Incident Review Conference for trip leaders and members who are thinking of becoming a leader is set for April 23 at CMC headquarters in Golden. The day-long conference will feature the leaders of trips who faced difficult challenges – including life-and-death decisions – discussing what happened and how they responded. The conference is designed to respond to the request of trip leaders, who indicated in surveys that they want more information about what happens on trips led by other leaders. The conference will also be an opportunity for trip leaders to get together and discuss their own experiences and compare notes with other leaders. Visit http://www.cmc.org/events/eventdetails.aspx?EventID=2365 for more information and to register.

Free for trip leaders; $10 for others.
Italian Alps Trip

Mountaineering Trek & Ferrate - Bernina to Dolomites
Dates: Aug 29 - Sep 12, 2011
Cost: $3795 inclusive, except for airfare; max. 8 participants, incl. leader.

Trek Italy’s Alps from the beautiful lakes of Como and Garda to the majestic Bernina Range and awesome pillars and spires of the Brenta Dolomites, replete with itinerant “rifugio” hut-based lodging and “via ferrata” climbs certain to inspire a memorable adventure for 7 energetic and validated C-E > D level hikers.

Ascend through forests and alpine meadows over passes and across glaciers with breathtaking vistas to summit awe-inspiring peaks, many via the famous “path of iron” ferrate where multi-colored rock face and ledges are outfitted with anchored cables, ladders and bridges. These climbing networks dating from WWI to facilitate troop movements to strategic reconnaissance positions in the Alps have been restored and expanded; today they are maintained by CAI (Club Alpino Italiano) as a safer alternative to unprotected climbing and to enhance the alpine experience.

Trekking and exposure will be complemented by interludes of cultural exposure motoring between trailhead gateways: Bellagio (by boat), Merano, wine-tasting at Lake Caldaro, Verona, Bergamo and many quaint medieval towns. Italy’s rifugi at various altitudes provide rustic lodging with basic amenities and warm food, so this trip requires only a light 40-55L backpack with 10 essentials, climate-appropriate clothing, gloves, poles, bag liner, crampons, harness, and a spirited smile of determination and anticipation.

Most everything except airfare is included. Our Italian guide, an experienced mountaineer/trekker, age 50, fluent in English, created the itinerary with fall-back options to cope with Mother Nature and otherwise optimize a successful adventure.

Visit http://www.cmc.org/AdventureTravel/AdventureTravelDetails.aspx?EventID=2405 and click the More Information Link to review the complete itinerary with illustrative photos, notes and terms.

Leader: Eugene Culbertson
Tel: (970) 690-3272
Email: geneculb@gmail.com

Wilderness First Aid

First Lead’s Wilderness First Aid / Wilderness First Responder Recertification, with Red Cross CPR will be offered 3/11-13 and 5/6 – 8: Three-day training taught by Wilderness EMT. Acquire a practical, and principle-driven array of skills, and a working command of the Patient Assessment System. Cost is $325. To sign up, go online to www.firstlead.com, or contact Peter Muckerman at 970-729-0081 or firstlead@centurytel.net.

Instructors Wanted for Spring/Summer BMS Session

The spring/summer session of the Boulder Mountaineering School (BMS) is looking for instructors to help teach our courses. The school directors will be contacting past instructors, but feel free to contact them first. The course schedule may be found online at www.cmcoulver.org/bms/springSchedule.html. For more information or to volunteer, contact the school directors: Hiking Schools: Ben Mayer, bhs@cmcboulder.org; Basic Rock School: Brenda Leach, brs@cmcboulder.org; Snow Schools, Jim Leffingwell, snow@cmcboulder.org; Rock Leading School, Clint Locks, rls@cmcboulder.org. Instructors, your time and efforts are much appreciated!