



2004 Resolutions ...New Year's Main Range Walk.

Karl Umlauff, Carolina Roman.
Photos by Ulli Dommann and Carolina.

New Year's Eve 2003/2004 was slightly different for 6 club members this year. Stephan Adler, Karl Umlauff, Lisa Walker, Ulli Dommann and David Williams hooked onto Carolina's 3-day walk over the Summit Track taking in such sites as Mt Kosciuszko (2228m), Mt Townsend, and Mt Twynam (also known as the "trilogy"), Blue Lake the Snowy River and Seaman's Hut.

Leaving Kenso at about 4pm New Year's Eve, the two-car convoy set a new land speed record to Canberra (just kiddin'). Now Canberra can be avoided if heading to Thredbo to make the journey a tad quicker but it is not that much of a detour so

we decided to have our last supper for 2003 at a Thai Restaurant at Dickson. Chillies in the soup resulted in additional sweating on top of what was already occurring in this warm temperate restaurant.

Once we made it to Jindabyne, the little hand had reached 45 and the big hand just before 12, so

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storming out of the cars to the nearest bar we had just enough time to order a drink each to cheer in the New Year. Sydney's fireworks were on big-screen TVs in the bar but the reception on all of them was quite poor...quote Ulli: "Does this bad reception mean we are at the arse end of the world?". One question each of us had a turn in answering was whether we had any new year's resolutions. Karl's answer: "You can't improve on perfect." The following scene should have been one of dead-arm rendering and beer-tipping-on-head but Karl seemed to get away with it just with sneering and rolling of eyes. (continued page 2)

Quick News

- **Meetings officer needed**

Position still open (?). Contact Mark if you're interested (mark.worsfold@bigpond.com)

- **Canoe stuff**

Any canoe capable people interested in kick-starting canoe activities in the club? Also speak to Mark.

- **Upcoming trips:** (see the website for more details)

13/Mar	Climbing Keira – <i>Ali Parsyar</i>
13/Mar	Canberra Single Tracking, Mountain biking - <i>Marc Chee</i>
13/Mar	ASCF NSW Bouldering Series – <i>Duncan Macinnis</i>
20/Mar	Rock Climbing Rec Course (<i>sports association</i>)
20/Mar	Beginners Bushwalk – <i>Alexis Robertson</i>
?/Mar	Beginners Canyoning – <i>Anthony Knittel</i>

27/Mar	Advanced Ropes Course – <i>Ali Parsyar</i>
28?/Mar	Beginners Outdoor Climbing – <i>Duncan Macinnis</i>
28/Mar	Beginners ride, Mountain biking - <i>Marc Chee</i>
02/Apr	Boree Log – <i>Mark Worsfold</i>
03/Apr	ASCF NSW Bouldering Comp, Round 2 – <i>Duncan Macinnis</i>
07/Apr	Mt Arapiles Pilgrimage, Rock climbing – <i>Duncan Macinnis</i>
10/Apr	Beginners Caving – <i>James Tan</i>
15/May	Arrow 24 Hour Adventure Race – <i>Adam Barnes</i>

New years Main Range walk cnt'd

After a while we headed on down the road to Thredbo Diggings camp ground on the Thredbo River, pitching tents in the dark while making as much noise and laughter as possible. Not feeling satisfied to sleep, we pulled up some grass in between Wombat land mines (after Stephan had scared a few shifty-eyed characters away) on the





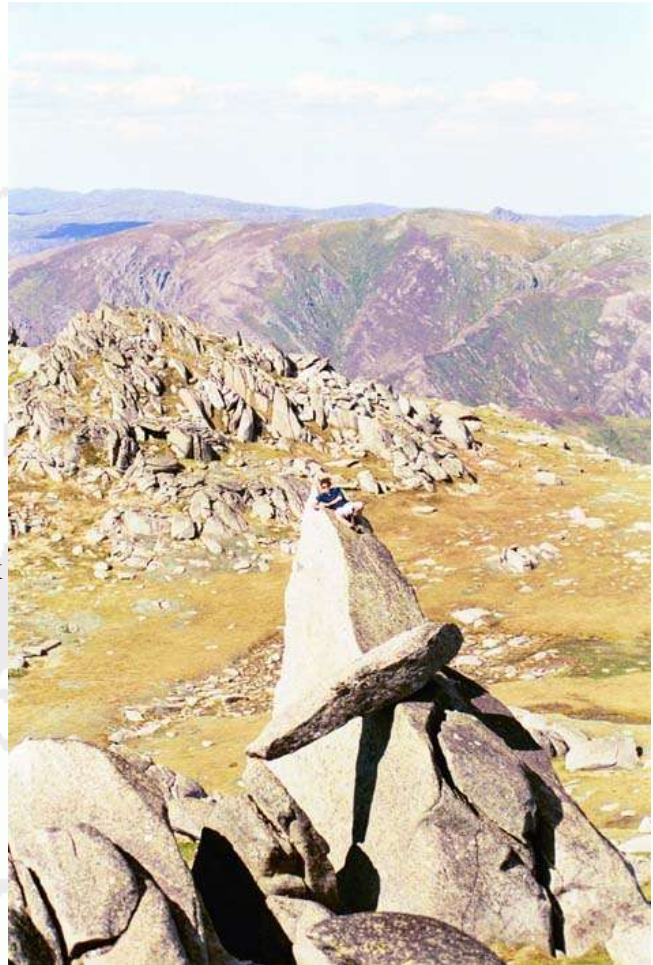
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banks of the Thredbo River while watching meteorites and toasting in the wee hours of 2004. Must say it was a great start to a new year. Then “Splash, splash, splash”... “*What the hell was that?*” all manner of torches and headlamps lit up the darkness over the river to reveal a Kangaroo hopping across the water. (No it wasn't a miracle, the water was shallow).

Day 1's walk was going to be tough as the heat was already cranking up at 8:00am. Parking at Thredbo and gearing up, we were off to start the 6km walk to Mt Kosciuszko. The walk along the track to the intersection of tracks from Thredbo, Charlotte's Pass and Mt Kosci is a raised steel grated platform to protect the soil and mountain flora from the thousands of feet that walk the track each year. Otherwise, the ground would be enormously eroded and difficult to walk on. Once at the top of Australia we had a break and faced the gale force winds hammering the range in perfect blue skies. Note – see Stephan's hair in photo for indication of wind strength.

Day 1's walk continued to a valley facing Mt Townsend where camp 1 was set up in a low point sheltered from winds between rocks and the hill. We had finished the first day's walk at 1:00pm. Sun baking on a nearby rock was an awesome relaxation to end the day. Not satisfied with sitting



on this comfortable rock, Stephan, Carolina, Lisa and David walked to the peak of nearby Mt Townsend. The time to cook dinner was realised to be after sun set when it was still light enough to see but late enough that the seemingly infinite number of flies had departed. The window of peace was approximately 1 hour until when the tag-team partner of mosquitoes resumed in place of the flies... Ah the joys of the healthy mountain wildlife.



Day 2 of the walk started with a hike back up to the track and continued on towards Mt Twynam. On the way we passed Lake Albina as we battled the dry winds on the ridge where only the toughest

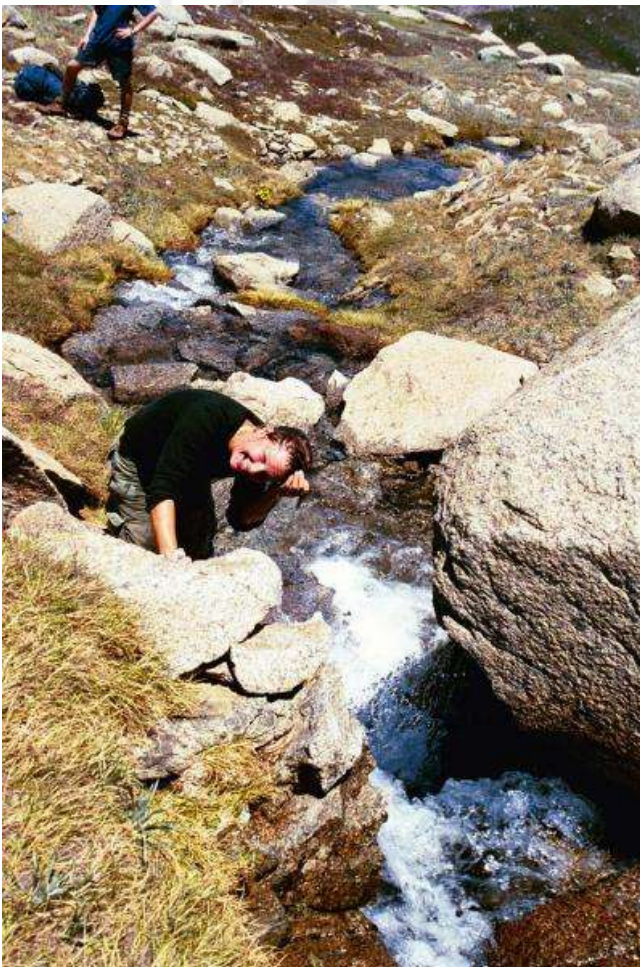


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little alpine plants can survive, holding on to the ground in a mat of stems. Here, the “Feldmark” has foliage metres away from the root system. Stephan pointed out we were passing a steep grade on the face where Daniel Marlay had telemarked down between rock sections leading to Club Lake on a previous winter trip. Impressive stuff Dan. After reaching Mt Twynam, we headed down towards Blue Lake and boot-skied down the ice without totaling ourselves. Finding a mini waterfall of moderately icy water it was compulsory to dunk the old head under the cascading water, being a very warm day once again. Once Blue Lake was reached, lunch was

had and perfection once again apart from the fly-fest once the food emerged. Moving on we headed for camp. We found our place on a patch of spongy alpine grass between Club Lake Creek and the Snowy River. In Club Lake creek near to the camp was a pool, which we could sit in and rest those asparagus-like feet and enjoyed the ‘massage train’ for those tired shoulders. Day 3, and the last day of our walk along Australia’s roof, involved closing the loop at Rawson’s Pass via Seaman’s Hut. Seaman’s Hut is the highest building in Australia and was built as a survival hut following the deaths of Laurie Seaman and Evan Hayes during a 1928 ski ascent of Mt Kosciuszko.





Eventually we rejoined the track back to Thredbo, after yet another top day of sun and alpine air! Back to Sydney after some Cooma burgers, with a clean new page and a great adventurous start to 2004!

KU & CR

Sweet Dreams

Scott Saunders

There are many things about climbing that appeal to me. Naturally the technical challenge is prime motivator, and then there's the people that I meet and the amazing places it brings me to, but another aspect I love about the sport which asserts itself to various degrees at different crags, is the exposure.

Although it doesn't directly add to the level of danger, exposure definitely makes things more interesting, and I can think of no better way to attain the ultimate in exposure than through multi-pitch climbing. Ever since my first multi-pitch climb almost a year ago, I've been looking for an opportunity to consolidate the experience and a couple of weeks ago, that chance presented itself.

Sweet Dreams is a 177m route up the escarpment on the Katoomba side of Sublime Point, near Leura. At grade 14 (with an alternate final pitch of grade 17) the climb is far from technically difficult, although this is compensated for by every other feature of the ascent.

After parking at the top of the escarpment, Anthony, Yael, Emma and I took a brief moment to absorb the view of the three sisters across the valley – our picture postcard that was to become the backdrop for the days climbing. We decided not to rappel in, as we were uncertain of the location of the top of the route, but instead descended a rough path and finally traversed to the base of the climb. Ironically, the descent is perhaps more dangerous than the climb itself as it's steep, quite chossy and mostly unprotected (a cable has been installed for a particularly hairy section just before the start of the route).

At the bottom of the climb, we all tied in, revised our climbing calls and excitedly watched Anthony lead the first pitch. By this stage it was after 1pm but despite the late start, we weren't too concerned about running out of light. Emma and Yael followed Anthony respectively before I cleaned up the gear behind them.

The first pitch brought us to a tight little ledge bathed in sunshine where we could for the first time see the scale of the face we were tackling. From the ground, the vast majority of the climb is hidden behind an overhang so it is difficult to get a



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good idea of what lies ahead. Pitch two consisted of a slightly ascending 40m traverse with a plethora of hand and foot holds to choose from. Yael even decided to complete the pitch without shoes. Anthony was eager to push on as we were making fairly slow progress, and as we found out later, he had plans for the evening. After I arrived and handed over the pro from the last pitch, he continued with pitch three while the rest of us appreciated the beautiful weather that the Blueys had provided us from a ledge slightly inset into the cliff.

Pitch three was again a fairly straightforward affair but after we'd all completed it, it was obvious that we weren't going to finish the climb in daylight. Anthony quickly began leading the alternate final pitch and then belayed Yael and Emma simultaneously, who completed the final few meters in virtual darkness.

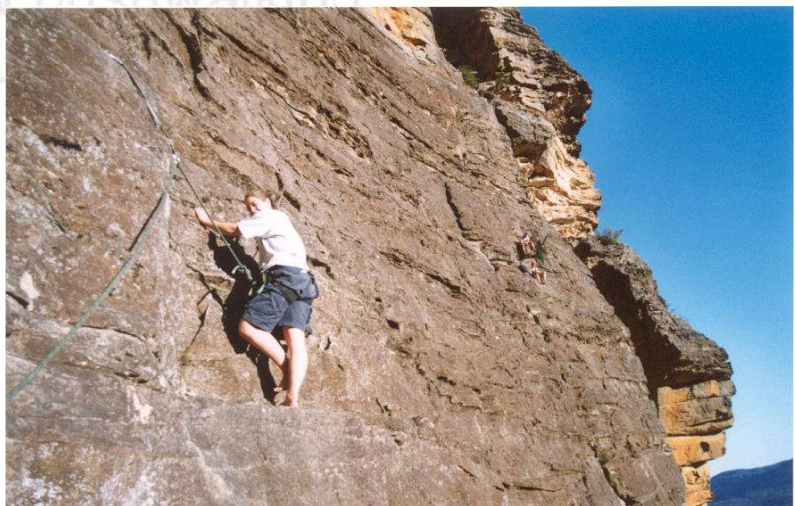
The temperature was starting to drop and as I watched the glow of the setting sun as it retreated behind a silhouetted three sisters, I began to get a little nervous about how I was to do the last pitch with zero visibility. As the darkness

descended further, I began to notice a strange glow emanating from the top of my bag. I'd been carrying my own backpack all day but exchanged it with Yael for the last pitch and after investigating the glow, I was more than a little relieved to find that Anthony had brought his headlamp along. He must've been a boy scout.

The final pitch offered the most technical climbing of the afternoon and although the darkness prevented any visual appreciation of the exposure, by this stage we were well aware of the distance to the ground below.

We topped out, bush bashed for ten minutes to find the path and then power walked (and stumbled) back to the car where Anthony informed us that he was going to be late for a birthday dinner – his own! We made record time getting back to Sydney where he celebrated with... you guessed it... Peking Duck.

For anyone who is interested in doing a multi-pitch climb but are nervous about tackling anything too difficult, I highly recommend Sweet Dreams. Although we used a few pieces of natural pro, it's a fairly well bolted route (ringbolts and carrots so bring along some bolt plates) and although the line





is occasionally a little less than obvious, the simple description that can be found on the internet should allow most people to find their way.

SS

Climbing Nature

Anthony Knittel

*A bit of a harsh dose of the blue reality pill, but sometimes its worth taking a step back and looking at some of real risks in climbing. Or maybe I just shouldn't write so late at night *yawn**

This comes as no surprise i'm sure, but climbing is an inherently dangerous activity- most of the time you're hanging off tiny pieces of rock high off the ground, often at the very limit of your ability to hang on. All of the forces of nature would just as soon have you, and the tiny bits of rock you're hanging onto, drawn down to ground level along with all the energy that comes with being 20m+ up in the air, and reuse that energy in randomly redetermining the way that your body is held together.

Human abilities aside, the only thing keeping you from your 'natural lowest energy state' is a length of (admittedly well-engineered) rope, and a few oddly shaped pieces of metal that try to keep attached to the rock under the forces involved in a fall, often only using friction and a few mechanical

tricks. Bolts are a slightly different story, i'm mainly talking here about self-placed or 'natural' protection.

A lot of ingenuity and engineering has gone into designing protection that is flexible enough to be used in the range of situations likely to be encountered by climbers, and reliable enough to provide the necessary protection. This all works fine most of the time, but the problem is that, as always, there are exceptions.

One way of looking at safety practises in climbing is that there is a basic set of principles and rules about good procedures and how it should work, and then there are a whole lot of special cases that can be particularly nasty but you wouldn't notice until it nearly happened to you or someone pointed it out. And sometimes, especially with natural climbing, simply a given combination of seemingly harmless events can make the whole system fall apart.

I've been speaking in general terms so its probably easier to explain with examples. One accident that occurred last year at Arapiles involved a fall from a route that was reasonably well protected and well within the grade range of the climber. The factors that contributed to the accident (as far as I am aware) were as follows:

- Climber fell unexpectedly. These things happen. I believe he was climbing an easy section of the climb about 35m up and had run out a fair amount of rope, causing a fairly large fall.
- The top piece and bottom piece held, however zippering¹ led to the intermediate pieces failing.

¹ pieces of protection are generally placed such that they will hold a downwards force, however sometimes they will undergo a strong sideways or upward force as a result of the rope straightening, which can dislodge the piece in certain situations.



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The path of the rope was a kind of arc, so releasing these pieces led to a reasonable amount of slack being introduced.

- The belayer was not tied down and was lifted up in the air, introducing more free rope.
- The climber fell well below the top piece and decked out. He was not wearing a helmet.

In another more recent accident, a climber fell on a fairly thinly protected climb in the bluffs after testing a placement and losing balance when it came out. He didn't fall particularly far but decked out due to the run out from the lack of placement options and received bad injuries from not wearing a helmet.

I'm not going to point out the problems or suggest what could have been done differently in each case, I just wanted to offer examples of things that have gone wrong and let people make their own interpretation.

One of the appealing things about climbing is that its enjoyable at all levels and has a fairly continuous learning curve. Its easy to pick up the basics, and soon after the principles of leading or even placing gear. A common method of learning in climbing is a kind of apprenticeship, where a newer climber spends time around those more experienced and picks things up over time. This is a useful way of learning, as although the principles can be fairly easy to learn, as the phrase goes, the devil is in the details. I'm sure this is nothing new, but its important to know that as a novice, you don't know what you don't know, and thats the problem. Who am I to speak, you can always look back at people that've done less and forward at people who know more, i'm not claiming to know it all. But it is worthwhile pointing out the importance of being humble and open to finding out more about what you're doing. Inevitably you'll come across your own problems and have

your own close calls, and thats all part of the game. But learning of mistakes and spending time around other climbers, a wide range with various experience, can be a much safer way.

Aside from the possible complications involved in using natural protection and from unexpected situations, a far greater risk is from simple careless mistakes. Of all the incidents i've heard of, human errors are by far the most likely cause of an accident. Its not when a climber is trying something harder than normal and pushing his/her limits- in these circumstances people are generally well aware of the risks they're taking and make reasonable decisions to keep themselves out of real harm. The most common scenario for mistakes seems to be relatively experienced climbers doing something they would find straight-forward, and neglecting some simple rule out of complacency. Examples are not tying a tie-in knot correctly, lowering through the end of the rope or abseiling off the end of a rope. I can't really say any more than to be careful, but its worth knowing that not paying attention to something trivial is one of the most real risks to watch out for.

Because of the obvious dangers of climbing a lot of care goes into managing the risks, and in a way that can be one its features- being in confronting or hazardous position and creating a situation, through technical skill or know-how, where the risk is kept under control. Just because you know you could fall and pieces could pop and leave you on the deck doesn't mean that you should hide in a corner and never look at a rock again. It doesn't mean that your climbing should be inhibited by fears of everything that could go wrong either. If you know what the risks are, make a balanced choice and do what you can to minimise them, you can put yourself on the end of the rope and commit to the next move with a clear mind, knowing you've taken it all into account. AK



Arthur's Pass to Mt Somers

Sean McPhail

I had intended to make it to Lake Tekapo this hop but some difficult river crossings delayed me by 5 days and meant that I had to divert to the nearest town to buy more food. But I got 15 days in the hills - ten without seeing a human face - so I've got no complaints.

Rather than a load of anecdotes this time I'm going to ramble generally about hiking in NZ (so I'll spare you the details of the time that I was climbing a 1-in-3 fully bushed slope and, clinging to a sapling with each hand, looked down to find that I kicked in the side of a wasps nest, or the time I stumbled through some immature gorse bushes and came out with so many splinters that my palm felt that it was covered in 3 day stubble).

I've mostly been staying in the excellent system of mountain huts here, they cost \$5 or \$10 per night, or \$65 for a yearly pass. They typically have 6 bunks with foam mattresses, a rough table and a wood burning stove, a little crude but livable. Just think though - if you were writing a novel or teaching yourself how to play guitar or something you could live out in the wilderness all summer and just hike to the nearest town every 2 weeks to pick up food. Wouldn't that be awesome?

I've been using 1:250 000, 100m contour maps to navigate. This has worked quite well as my route has been mostly along river valleys and through a few quite obvious mountain passes. For more finicky stuff they don't really work though, particularly in low visibility, but it's been educational. The main thing about route planning here is: plan the route around the river crossings as much as around the mountain crossings.

Speaking of river crossings (river => knee deep, > 4m wide), I must have done about 100 (no

exaggeration) in the last two weeks, here are some of the things I've learned:

- Knee deep - easy, thigh deep - hard, crotch deep - v.hard/swept away.
- Don't cross where the opposite bank is steep - indicates deep water.
- Avoid gravel/sand river beds, not enough traction.
- Find or cut an inch thick waist high staff (or ice axe, though they are a bit short)
- Don't use wrist strap on ice axe or staff - this could get you killed.
- Carry all gear in zipped pockets
- Unsnap chest and waist belt of rucksack when crossing. Really.
- Be very cautious when water is opaque (flood water or suspended glacial moraine).
- Best place to cross is as high as possible (headwaters) or as low as possible (floodplain).
- Face upstream and edge across sideways, leaning on staff in front of you. Keep two points of contact with riverbed.
- Rivers rise and fall rapidly - consider waiting for better weather tomorrow.
- Don't hesitate to back out of a crossing if it is getting hairy. There's plenty of time and you really don't want to get swept away.

If you do get swept away you might experience something like this:

One moment you are crossing the river and the next you fall into a different world. Up becomes a crazy whorl of sky and clouds, sun and mountains. Down becomes a savage blur of foaming water, rocks and unexpected violence. The two swap over every few seconds. You can take a moment or two



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here to reprioritise. Everything you wanted to do that day, all your goals are suddenly just gone. The only thing that matters in your life now is being alive in ten minutes time.

The first thing you have to do is get your rucksack off. It is much more buoyant than you are and is pressing you face down into the water.

Fight it off, choking, spitting and clawing. You need to get at least one arm free, if the other arm gets trapped for the duration in a looped strap, well you can deal.

Once you're out of your rucksack position yourself behind it and follow it downstream - this will happen naturally as your body acts as a sea anchor. Tuck your legs up under the bag so that either your feet or the sack takes the impact of the large rocks in the current. It will be numbing cold, you'll be blinded by spray and bashed by unseen rocks from every direction, the water is humped and tossed a metre high all around you. Don't try standing up or fighting for one bank or another - you aren't strong

enough. If you panic now and exhaust yourself you'll die. If you find your self muttering something like "dontgiveupdontgiveupdontgiv" through numb lips, well it doesn't matter what is coming out of your mouth as long as there is air going into it.

What you are waiting for is a sharp s-shaped bend. The fast current slaloms between the outside of the curves and as it crosses the middle it brushes a sand bar. Kick, knee, and claw your way up onto as if your whole life and future depended on it (which of course it does). When it gets shallow enough that the current isn't pulling you downstream anymore drag yourself out of the river on bloody penitent knees.

Congratulations, you're going to live.

SM

Editors Notes

More content! Please! AK



"The pleasure of risk is in the control needed to ride it with assurance so that what appears dangerous to the outsider is, to the participant, simply a matter of intelligence, skill, intuition, coordination... in a word, experience. Climbing in particular, is a paradoxically intellectual pastime, but with this difference: you have to think with your body. Every move has to be worked out in terms of playing chess with your body. If I make a mistake the consequences are immediate, obvious, embarrassing, and possibly painful. For a brief period I am directly responsible for my actions. In that beautiful, silent, world of mountains, it seems to me worth a little risk." — A. Alvarez.