

# In Memoriam

LEIF-NORMAN PATTERSON

1934-1976

Leif Patterson died in an avalanche on December 12, 1976 while attempting Chancellor Peak in Yoho National Park in the Canadian Rockies. It is ironic that Leif should die in an avalanche. He was probably the leading exponent of winter mountaineering in North America and one of the safest climbers with whom I ever shared a rope.

Leif was born in Hammond, Indiana to Norwegian parents. His keen intellect enabled him to attain a PhD in Mathematics from M.I.T., but his love for nature made it painfully hard for him to live in urban areas. He fulfilled his dream when he bought some acreage near Golden, British Columbia and built himself his homestead close to the mountains he loved and knew so well. Academia restricted his sense of freedom and only when financially destitute would he accept a teaching job at a university, often commuting several hundred miles every weekend to his farm and family in Golden.

I first met Leif during the winter of 1964 while trying to climb Mount Robson. The following year we joined forces and succeeded in reaching Robson's summit for a first winter ascent. It was Leif's fifth winter attempt to scale that mountain! Leif opened my mind to a concept of winter mountaineering that relied more on living with the environment than trying to overpower it. In the worst of storms he would be comfortably and safely ensconced in a snow cave or, as in the case of our Mount McKinley ascent, in a hidden crevasse!

Some of his major first ascents include Mount Logan, East Ridge (1961); Tulparaju (1962); Jirishinca Norte (1964); Yerupajá, West Face (1966) and Huagaruncho Traverse (1970). Among his best rock climbs is the first ascent of Trollriggen Wall in Norway (1966). Together we helped establish two grade VI routes on the Squamish Chief: Northwest Passage (1965) and Zodiac Wall (1967).

Leif's many friends will remember him as the hard man of the mountains but the soft man at heart. He was always ready to assume somebody else's burden or cover a weakness with a compliment. In the mountains he was an unequalled companion. Off the mountains, he was the best friend one could wish. His death is doubly tragic for his widow, Marijke and his daughter, Miriam (9), since his son Tor (12) perished with him in the same avalanche.

ALEX BERTULIS

## MICHAEL J. ROURKE

1949-1976

That Mike Rourke was to die in the Cordillera Blanca was, I think, predestined. Mike learned to love and climb in the mountains whilst working as a volunteer physical-education teacher at the Monasterio de San Benito, Los Pinos, situated in the shadow of the Andes. In 1974 he joined forces with Curry Slaymaker in Huaraz, working for the Peruvian Ministry of Agriculture on the *Parque Nacional Huascarán* project. Without hesitation he took on that unselfish role of mountaineering coordinator, an unenviable task of being present in Huaraz during the climbing season to assist all incoming expeditions. However, being a meticulous organizer, he was able to programme these activities with frequent trips into the nearby cordillera to scale many a peak.

Without doubt Mike's most valuable asset was his easy-going and embracing personality. I think it true to say Mike had not one *enemigo*. His endless efforts with the local populace to promote their interests and welfare in the work of the Park left not even the most inarticulate *campesino* unconsidered. He organized and promoted the local porters and guides into an integrated body which could effectively serve in the climbing and trekking activities of the Park. He was also very active in the local climbing club, organizing many a trip for local aspirants. His patience and consideration for those on his rope was always the same—whether a novice or someone of his own considerable technical calibre. As a climbing partner, his patience and stability were, I think, reflections of his deep religious beliefs. He was an excellent companion whether it be languishing in the lethargy of Base Camp or bivouacking at 22,000 feet on Huascarán. But I am sure his most satisfying, but not his most difficult, climb was when we went to Ranrapalca's north face and put up a new route, Mike doing most of the leading.

During his last three climbing seasons Mike was able to combine his detailed knowledge of the Park with his desire for new experiences. He organized and successfully led several expeditions on new routes within the Cordillera Blanca, and I find it only fitting that he died within a couple of hundred feet of the summit of yet another peak. As a mountaineer, Mike was born, achieved and gave much, and then died, all in the Cordillera Blanca.

Of the events leading to his fall, together with Curry Slaymaker, I think that we can safely say that it was just one of those freak accidents, but of which, as mountaineers know only too well, the probability of occurrence is quite high. This seemingly is a contradiction, but it is something with which we must climb. Mike knew this and always accepted the challenge of the mountains on the mountains' terms. He was one for neither hyperbole nor understatement. If it had not been

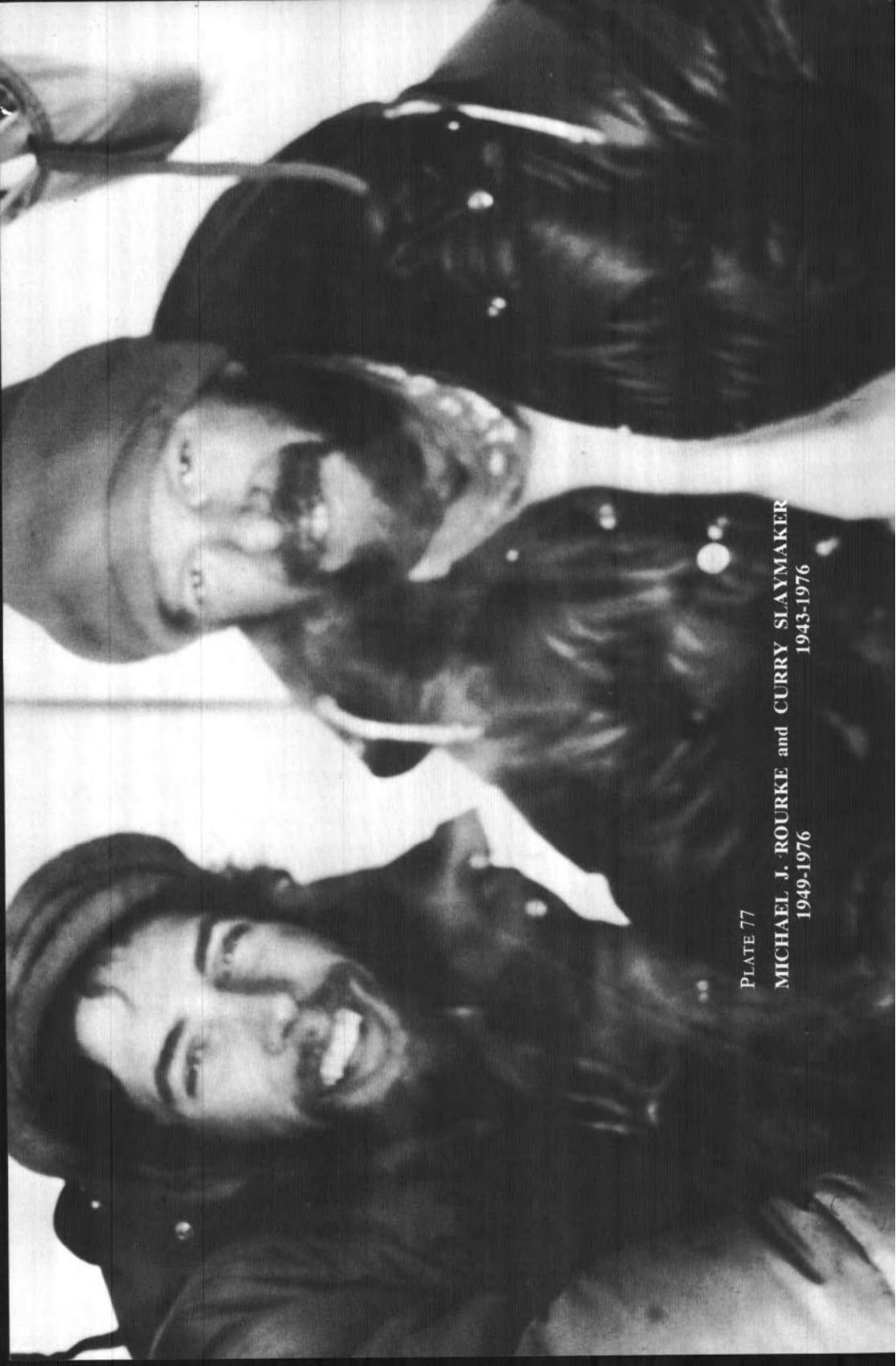


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MICHAEL J. ROURKE and CURRY SLAYMAKER  
1943-1976

for this quirk of fate, I confidently feel he would have gone on, one day, to be a truly great climber.

Besides his family in Indiana, he leaves behind his young Peruvian wife, Nora, and his baby daughter, Cathy. Nora is continuing Mike's work of help for foreign climbers and trekkers—as Mike did—with fortitude and faith. She'll be putting the finishing touches to the general information type guidebook, about climbing and walking in the National Park, which Mike had almost ready for printing. And I feel sure that every climber who ever entered the office of the Parque Nacional Huascarán in Huaraz will never forget Mike's smiling welcome, meticulous help and common-sense advice. Andean mountaineering has suffered a terrible set-back.

MURRAY JOHNS

### CURRY SLAYMAKER

1943-1976

Curry Slaymaker was tragically killed along with Mike Rourke in a 1200-foot fall whilst nearing the summit of a 5600-meter peak at the head of the Quebrada Parón, in the Cordillera Blanca. Curry was truly a remarkable person. He worked at life with intensity—and excel he did. His varied interests saw him apply his considerable talents to many aspects of life and, finally to the mountains. It comes as some consolation to know that Curry fell whilst pitting his strength against a peak in the true Slaymaker style, sheer guts and determination. To have been killed in any other way would, I feel, have been a far greater tragedy.

Curry knew South America like a native, having travelled extensively throughout the continent. His first stint in Peru came with the Peace Corps in the mid-sixties and then he returned to the Callejón de Huaylas in the early seventies to take up duties as chief of the *Parque Nacional Huascarán* project. This task he attacked in typical style—a burning intensity and dedication to the preservation of the Cordillera Blanca. He overcame innumerable obstacles set in his path by interests contrary to his background and what conservation represented in general. It was an immense moment in his life when the Park finally received official recognition in 1975. From then on, Curry was able to work, together with Mike Rourke, on more pertinent Park matters, instead of having to fight xenophobia and bureaucracy.

It was only natural that the magnetism of the Andes attracted Curry. Coming from Oregon, he had a climbing and skiing background and so naturally when he found the beauty of the high mountains, he began to excel there too. He was always extremely strong on a climb, whether it be ferrying loads from Base Camp or breaking trail in thigh-

deep snow up a south-facing glacier. He was never one for large expeditions, always preferring a closely-knit party of friends. Curry preferred it this way for reasons of friendliness and expedition expediency, for he was never one to linger in Base Camp more than was necessary. It was with this characteristic intensity that he was able to put so much living into his relatively short life.

Curry will not be remembered just by his national park and climbing acquaintances. His magnetic personality and love of people and good times made his house in Huaraz a focal point for many Peruvians and the small foreign community living and working in the area. A weekend when there were not two or three people staying in his house was a rare occasion. People who had no affinity to national parks or mountains were just as welcome as those who did.

I think one of Curry's most remarkable talents lay in photography. Whether it was a shot of a passing condor or something taken inside the tent, it always came out top-quality. He put together a spool of 120 slides of the National Park—from wide-angle panoramas to close-ups of spiders' eggs—and it was this display above all else that promoted the cause of the Park and conservation to the local populace throughout the Callejón.

Curry leaves behind him many friends, scattered far and wide throughout the world. And we, the friends, are the losers. But I receive some consolation knowing that he lies somewhere in the mountains of the National Park Huascarán, which he created. Really, when it is all said and done, was there a finer way for a man like Curry to go?

MURRAY JOHNS

### NANDA DEVI UNSOELD

1954-1976

Nanda Devi Unsoeld died of an acute abdominal complaint at 24,000 feet on the north ridge of Nanda Devi. She was twenty-two, strong and happy; she now lies buried in the snows of the most beautiful part of the Himalaya.

Devi brought joy to many people while she lived, and she lives still in the many little ways she changed the lives of those she knew. She loved people; she loved learning and teaching; she loved old stories and songs, and new ideas and places. She was a child of the wild parts of the earth, and she was at home in the mountains. Like most of us, she dreamed of faraway places: unlike most, she set out to explore the world. Like most of us, she was fond of elephants and tigers and rhinos: unlike most, she sought them out at home in the jungle. And the wild animal in her was never far from the surface; she had an in-



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**NANDA DEVI UNSOELD**  
1954-1976

tuitive understanding of the natural world, she had grace, and she knew that life is to be lived.

She had the freedom to be unabashedly sentimental, but she had also a simple pragmatism which helped her to see how to do the things she wanted to do and gave her the discipline to get those things done.

The mountains were always a part of her life, but when she turned to them it was not to turn her back on the world. Devi liked to work for a cause, and she chose good ones. She had high principles, but I doubt she was motivated as much by them as simply by the honest happiness she found in helping others or the kinship she felt with all living things. When she picked a target for her energies, she could be an enthusiastic partisan and a strong competitor.

Devi spent the earliest summers of her life in the guides' camp at the Tetons. Later, she grew up in Kathmandu, as that old and wonderful city was itself growing up to awareness of the outside world. Still later, she roamed the hills of the northwest, where she worked and played and went to school.

In 1974, she explored the Nanga Parbat region and helped lead a group up an unclimbed peak. In 1976, on Nanda Devi, the mountain whose name she bore, few worked as hard as Devi. More than once the delicate balance of the team's morale rested solely on the powerful combination of her almost inexhaustible reserves of good will and her skill as a mediator. To our Garhwali porters, she was "Didi," which means "sister," while the rest of us were "Sahib."

Her last letter, a note written high on the mountain a few days before she died, ends: ". . . I am sitting here with the sun warming my toes, looking across at the rolling cloud banks and feeling at peace with the world. . . . Aieee, its good to be alive."

As it was for her, so it is for us.

ANDREW HARVARD

#### GRAHAM M. STEPHENSON

1921-1976

Graham Stephenson and three other members of the expedition he was leading fell to their deaths on Dunagiri in the Garhwal Himalaya on October 16. This was his fourth trip to India, a country which had a special attraction for him. His home was filled with works of art and rugs from India and nearby countries, and he had even studied Sanskrit a little. On a couple of these trips he went up into the Himalaya with only a porter or two, just to get acquainted with the mountains.

Graham enjoyed dealing with all the details, large and small, of organizing and running an expedition. He knew there would be problems and confidently undertook their resolution with a style to be admired.



He had friends in several countries and contributed to international understanding through his expeditions and trips.

Graham's expeditions included a trip to the eastern Brooks Range of Alaska in 1963, on which he made a first ascent of the second highest peak of the range. In 1965 he led an expedition to the Hindu Kush of Afghanistan where a number of unclimbed 18- and 19,000 foot peaks at the head of the Pech Valley were ascended. In 1966 he organized a joint Mexican-American expedition to the Cordillera Blanca of Peru. In the same year he was elected to the AAC. There were also exploratory trips to Patagonia, Chile, and Nepal. He had led raft trips down wilderness rivers of Canada and Alaska. He made numerous trips to Mexico and hosted Mexican climbers who came to climb in the Sierra Nevada.

Graham grew up in Oregon where he got to know the mountains. He was a naval officer in World War II, the executive officer on a combat ship in the Pacific. In business for himself, he was a very successful certified public accountant with offices in Los Angeles.

He was a long-time Sierra Club member and had held a number of offices in the Angeles Chapter. He had climbed over two hundred peaks in the Sierra Nevada and the desert mountains of the southwest, primarily with small groups of friends, rather than on Club trips. In recent years he had hiked extensively in the sandstone canyons of southern Utah.

Graham considered expeditions to the wild and high places of the earth one of life's great experiences. He sought companions for these expeditions who would share these experiences; he was more concerned with compatibility than climbing reputation or experience. Graham will be remembered for these things and for his indomitable spirit.

DENNIS BURGE

### CHARLES LOUCKS

1932-1976

"Chuck" was born in China, the son of American medical missionaries, educated in the United States and taught in a Long Island school. For the past fifteen years, climbing was his real vocation. Spring and fall his habitat was the Shawangunks, though on long weekends he could be found at Poco-Moonshine or the White Mountain cliffs. Come summer he climbed mountains. He ranged from the Alps to the Brooks Range, the Canadian Rockies to the Wind Rivers. He fed on gorp and glop and could cook a one-pot feast under any conditions. He climbed gracefully, smoothly, with a rhythm and balance always admired by onlookers. He brought enthusiasm and puckish humor to every climb. On Easter he was known to have climbed Bunny in the Gunks to distribute jelly beans and a plastic rabbit. He shared his enthusiasm by introducing young people to the sport and teaching them the wonder of the classic routes.



Essentially a private person, few people could say they knew him well. Yet he was highly prized as a climbing, tenting, traveling or bivouacking companion.

For several years he served as the New York representative of the AAC and was a past member of the house committee. He was a serious collector of Alpine literature and spent many evenings at the Club library sharing his knowledge of the books and photographs.

Charles Loucks died of injuries sustained in a fall while climbing with friends in the Tetons on August 27, 1976.

EARLYN CHURCH

#### HAROLD A. FOSS

1922-1974

Hal Foss died suddenly of a heart attack on July 14, 1974, at 6500 feet while climbing 9700-foot Mount St. Helens in southern Washington. He was with his 18-year old son Lynn and another young climber at the time.

Foss was coordinator for the Search and Rescue Division of Washington State's Department of Emergency Services and was president of the National Association of Search and Rescue Coordinators. He was former president of the Mountain Rescue Association, chairman of the Washington Mountain Rescue Council, a member of the Yakima Cascadians and the American Alpine Club (since 1965). Foss was a 32nd Degree Mason and also active in the Boy Scouts and other outdoor and service clubs.

Born in Homedale, Idaho in 1922, Hal Foss spent his youth in Pocatello and later attended Idaho State University before enlisting in the Air Force in 1943. He instructed glider pilots and served in the Southwest Pacific during World War II and also served during the Korean conflict. He received his bachelors degree from Idaho State in 1950 and subsequently earned a law degree through a correspondence course.

Hal's job with the State was a time- and energy-consuming task that absorbed him completely when he accepted the post in 1967, after a brief fling in the insurance business in Yakima. His devotion to the enormous and complex task of serving as liaison between diverse groups of climbers-rescuers, State Patrol, Civil Defense, and county sheriff offices took him on speaking tours around the Pacific Northwest and countrywide, on behalf of mountaineering safety; during many rescues he was called out after such jaunts and went without sleep for long periods. But he enjoyed the job which allowed him frequent trips to Washington mountain areas and close association with climbers.

Hal Foss was a big, easy-going, friendly guy who would give the shirt off his back to a friend in need; I still use the white shirt he had

loaned me as a glacier reflector for our orbit of Mount Rainier in 1968. As a climbing companion, Hal was superb, always doing much more than his share of the camp chores and route selection. His climbing record listed in a 1965 AAC Membership Proposal was not spectacular . . . the usual local peaks and volcanoes over a 5-year span. But Hal's activities in mountain rescue both before and during his position as State Coordinator took him on countless climbs in marginal weather and climbing conditions made all the more difficult under the circumstances of search and rescue operations.

I last talked to Hal two days before his untimely death, on the occasion of the annual MRC picnic in Bremerton. Our discussion as usual was concerned with which of several volcanoes we would next orbit above the snowline. All who traveled the hills with Hal will miss his friendly presence and will think of him particularly whenever there's a need for help in the mountains. He is survived by his wife Shirley, son Lynn and two grown daughters.

DEE MOLENAAR