

To encourage and assist Himalayan travel and exploration and to extend knowledge of the Himalaya and adjoining mountain ranges through science, art, literature and sport.



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**Dear reader,**

**Evolution**, changes, concreting, revolution—The Himalayan Club's journey is going through all these phases. More pillars are strengthening the club as the reigns pass through different generations.

**Here is the message from our President Dr. Gill, as he hands over his Presidentship to Mr. Suman Dubey--**

*"I am happy that we have a change of guard this year. Suman Dubey is one of our most distinguished mountaineers. The Club will flourish in his able and steady hands. I have no doubt that the new committee will take the club forward in the coming years. Once again, I want to thank the committee and all our members, for the support extended to me over six long years. I am of course very pleased that we have our own permanent headquarter in Mumbai. Once again I must thank all our members, in India and around the world, for responding so handsomely to my appeal for funds."*

**Excerpts of the Acceptance speech by New President Suman Dubey-**

I am acutely aware what a great honour it is to be the President of the Himalayan Club. All those who have led the club over the decades were men of distinction (though it has to be admitted that we have yet to have the good fortune of a lady president). They were selfless and true in their dedication to the Himalaya. There are few private or non-governmental institutions in

India--and certainly none in the realm of mountain exploration that I can think of--that have such a long and continuous history and such a rich record of achievements as ours. It is a heritage institution, whose future we are privileged to protect and enrich.

The Himalaya is not, of course, what it was in 1928, not politically, not in terms of exploration, not in terms of mountaineering, not in terms of people's attitudes, and, sadly, not even in terms of snow and ice, rock and forest. So the club cannot remain what it was in the past, even in the recent past. Like everything, we must adapt and evolve. Dr. Manohar Gill had presided over one of the most significant events in the Club's history, the establishment of our own headquarters. Dr. Gill played no small role in this, especially in finding resources to bring it about, and in the club's many other activities. To him goes our tremendous gratitude. Meher Mehta departs one of the vice presidencies after a dynamic tenure, and we thankfully acknowledge his role in guiding the Kolkota section of the club to new heights. To the new office bearers of the club, I extend a warm welcome and look forward to working with them.

The Himalayan Club's mandate is a wide one, with prime importance given to climbing and exploration. But it includes extending knowledge of the mountain ranges through science, art and literature. Our core competence is and should remain climbing and exploring the high mountains, and many of us are thinking of ways of how this can be better encouraged on a larger scale, not only in our own country but with our neighbours as well. We are thinking of how our membership can be increased and how we can cooperate with other, like-minded climbing clubs.

Yet, the time has also come to think more purposefully about the latter part of our mandate. In the early years of the last century, there was little awareness and perhaps no pressing need to pay attention to the mountain environment. We know now that if we don't protect it aggressively, we may have little left to explore and climb. We also are today more acutely aware of the needs of the Himalayan communities, the people who inhabit the mountains who in the past provided essential services of portage and access, but today demand and require our attention in other ways. They made our activities possible and we owe them an obligation. We should, therefore, consider being a more diversified NGO which takes the lead in bringing about greater awareness on these issues and functions as a nodal point, working with others, in trying to influence public policy and thinking on the problems we know are already becoming difficult to handle. We are not flush with funds and we don't have material things to offer. We will be limited by what our members volunteer to do. But we do have skills and knowledge in our ranks, and hopefully the ability to influence policy and network with others, including decision-makers in authority.

In the immediate future, however, we have our work cut out for us. Next year, in February 2008, the Himalayan Club will be 80 years old. In keeping with contemporary attitudes, I don't think I'm wrong in believing that today's 80 is like yesterday's 50 if not younger! We are a young institution and will remain so if we periodically rejuvenate ourselves. Let's not forget that our anniversary coincides almost to the year with the 150<sup>th</sup> year of the founding of an even older institution, the Alpine Club, which manages to remain ever youthful even as the years pass.

As an international association, the Himalayan Club will celebrate its anniversary with an international event. We will flesh out our programme in the coming weeks. It will almost certainly take in a get-together around an appropriate theme and hopefully an excursion or two into the high hills. Personally, I would love to see the more active among us mark the year with some impressive exploration and ascents. I look forward to more get-togethers and to working and interacting with all our members.

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## Lets Do Some Powder

--Jasmine Hegde

**Looking** at the icicles hanging on the window roof of my Hilltop Hotel room, I was imbibing, unusual hues in whites of the surrounding. Everything- family, friends, and my luggage arrived here in Gulmarg, safely- in the presence of huge army. Just yesterday I was asking a veteran skier Akshay Kumar in Delhi, where to go for skiing in India and how secured Gulmarg is? The fact, that there was not enough snow falls in Solang and Auli and the desire to ski mounting each day, Gulmarg was the only option, which turned out to be the most enthralling one.



**Stay**

**photo-Maninder Kohli**



**Apharwat Top and the gentle slope for beginners**

**photo-Vinay Hegde**

'The world's highest green golf course' or 'the meadow of flowers', blends into a full fledged ski resort in winter. On the first day we all began learning here on the gentle slopes equipped with two Poma ski lifts. One can hire ski gear and the instructor from J&K Tourism Department or from Yassin Khan's Kashmir Alpine Ski Shop. Yassin Khan is a big name here with all skiers. He has got all latest gear and helps in everything from booking of cars to renting of hotels to shopping of

shawls. I was amazed to see Kashmiri kids attending ski courses. My daughter Mihika [7 years] also found skies and boots of her size and was on the slopes with other kids. I met some Aussies and Canadians snowboarding-skiing telling me they will be here till the powder lasts. Oh, and I would be here only for five days.

So without wasting much time next day we moved in to the world's highest [in northern hemisphere] *Gandola Cable Car Lift* from Gulmarg at 8,800ft to all the way to Apharwat top at 13,000ft.



**Heaven**

**photo- Andrew Keegan**



**Ski slope through pine trees**  
**Photo-Maninder Kohli**

We got down at first section of the Gandola, *Kongdoor 10050ft*. The place was very cold and windy and cloudy but on the horizon, I could see the silhouette of some mighty peaks- Nun Kun, Nanga Parbat, K2, Harmosh. Drinking

warm Kashmiri Kahwa and wearing all gears, we did a downhill ski run of about 3 kms, through pine trees, all the way to Gulmarg village. There are many routes here and with the help of the guide one can go uptill Tanmarg. Everyone from absolute beginners to the elite ones, can find a slope for themselves. Our kids had a ball plunging in the snow crème and falling awkwardly was the *mantra* to learn skiing.



**Safely snowing**

**photo-Maninder Kohli**

You can miss here sun, sand and sea or a massage parlour with steam as suggested by Shamila but what we have in Gulmarg, is the world's best slopes to ski, best equipment, best instructor and best price. Only it is less explored by fur coat wearing Indian tourists. One girl, taking off her fur robe, requested me for my ski gear. I realized it was only for a photo that she will take home to keep as a souvenir. My ski filled holiday was getting over and I am taking nothing home, but a promise that I will be back here again next year ***till the powder lasts.***

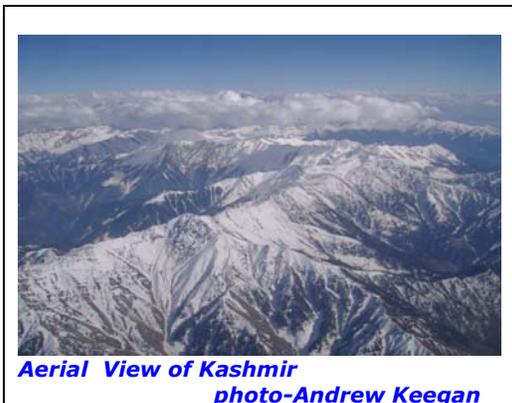
### **Train all the way, in the Heaven.**

**Just** think about sitting in the train with huge transparent glass windows chugging through magnificent Himalayan peaks, the Kashmir valley, 45 tunnels and having around 50 stations. Yes, the Rs. 5000 Cr Quazigund-Baramulla Rail project- a distance of nearly



**Move fast Gondola, train is coming.**

**Photo- Maninder Kohli**



**Aerial View of Kashmir**

**photo-Andrew Keegan**

100 kms., is slated to be opened by 2008. This link will contain the longest tunnel in India, [over 11 kms] which will run in the Banihal pass region. The other engineering challenge is the crossing of the Chenab which involves building a bridge 359m above the river bed, 1,315m long. This bridge will be the highest railway structure of its kind in the world, 35m higher than the tip of the Eiffel Tower

in Paris. This link will boost the trade, commerce, economic and tourism activities in the state of Jammu and Kashmir and will add pleasures to the journey to the Paradise.

### **Need To Know ≥**

- **Travel** : All major airlines fly to Srinagar. One can hire a taxi from Srinagar to Gulmarg [50 kms]
- **Stay** : For not so expensive, option is JK Tourism [www.jktdc.org] or Green Heights and on a higher side there is Hotel Highlands Park and Hotel Hill Top etc.
- **Ski** : To hire ski gear there is JK Rental shop and Yassin Khan's Kashmir Alpine Ski Shop.[www.kashmiralpine.com]



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### **Trekking the alpine trails of Kashmir -- Garry Weare.**

*[This is a summarised version of a chapter from his upcoming book " A long Walk in the Himalaya" ]*

**Until** 1989 the trek from Sonamarg to the sacred lake of Gangabal was one of the most popular in Kashmir. Each season between June and September the trails were followed by hundreds of trekkers intent on appreciating the magnificent alpine scenery beneath the North Kashmir Range. The first stage of the 5-day trek involves a steady climb to the vast meadow of Shok Dharan. From here the true dimensions of the upper Sindh Valley extend north to the snow capped peaks of the Great Himalaya Range. The range is breached only once, at the Zoji La and the historic road link between Kashmir and Ladakh.

An early start is imperative to complete the long, gradual ascent to the Nichanni Pass at just under 4000 metres.

Wedged between impressive granite cliffs and hanging glaciers the pass provides a dramatic vista in the crisp mountain air.

Climb a ridge just above the pass and you may even glimpse some of the high peaks of the East Karakoram Range.

From the pass it takes a couple of hours to reach the glacial lakes of Krishen Sar and Vishen Sar. Just below the shores of Krishen Sar there is no shortage of magnificent campsites. It's a steep and in some places muddy ascent to the Vishen Sar Pass (4300 metres). Views extend to the peaks of the North Kashmir Range that stretch like a gigantic layer-cake towards Sonamarg and the Sindh Valley.

For anyone familiar with Stainton and Polunin's definitive 'Flowers of the Himalaya' the meadows on the far side of the Vishen Sar Pass are renowned for their wildflowers. Hardy



huge lammergeier soar on the thermals. Legend has it that Hindu pilgrims trekked to the shores of Gangabal Lake long before they undertook their pilgrimage to the

gentians merge from the winter snows, while acres of anemone, ranunculaceae and delphinium carpet the meadows.

The climb to the ridge above Sat Sar on the 4<sup>th</sup> stage is the most demanding on the trek. Yet the views make it worthwhile. From an exposed ridge the glistening snow capped summits of Harimukh rise high above Gangabal Lake while hanging glaciers seem on the verge of tumbling into the serene waters of the nearby lake of Nundkol. Way below thousands of sheep and goats graze on the rich pastures while

Amarnath Cave.

Ensure your guide is in close attendance on the 5<sup>th</sup> and final stage of the trek until you reach a vantage point high above the Sindh valley. There follows a steep descent through conifer forests to the 9<sup>th</sup> century forest at Narranag. From here you can catch a bus to the village of Ganderbal and an onward connection to return to Srinagar.

### **An Appeal to help Topgay Sherpa --Harish Kapadia**

I recently met Topgay, know as "Guruji" to many in Darjeeling. We invited him for an army celebrations and he came with his grandson. He looked frail and in his late eighties, could not walk much. He was missing his daily walk and gossip sessions at Chowrasta in Darjeeling.

Topgay was in the HMI at first and due to tragic circumstances was forced to be at Uttarkashi for rest of his life. He was a well known and renowned Instructor at Nehru Institute of Mountaineering till he retired about 20 years ago. NIM pays him a meagre pension (about 1000/- or so) and this hardly makes his ends meet and meet his old age medical expenses.

Topgay is a proud "Tiger Badge" holder of the Himalayan Club. In Darjeeling only other surviving Tiger is Nawang Gombu.

There is one more Tiger living in Solu Khumbu. Thus Topgay is one of the last of the celebrated Sherpas of his generation. Can we at the Himalayan Club contribute whatever we can to see that our Tiger Sherpa has comfortable old age and is looked after. I suggest lets start a small fund for him and donate to the Himalayan club specifically for his welfare. Club can add contribution of its own and devise some ways to send him a monthly sum as long he lives.

I for one, will be contributing. Please contact the HC for sending a contribution or raise some sponsorship from a Trust or a corporate for him.

## Brad Washburn

--Mark Richey

**On January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2007 Henry Bradford Washburn Jr.**, one of the worlds most prolific mountaineers, explorers, mapmakers and photographers passed away at the age of 96. Washburn was famous in particular for his climbing and exploring in Alaska including first ascents of Mount Lucania, Mount Crillon, Mount Deception and an early ascent on Mount McKinley with the US Army in 1942.

Later he would return to make the first ascent of the West Buttress of McKinley, now the most popular route on the mountain. He climbed it again with his wife Barbara in 1947 who would be the first women to reach the summit.

A graduate of Harvard University and a man of science, Washburn became the founding director of the Museum of Science of Boston in 1939. As a professional cartographer, Washburn surveyed and created the most accurate maps available of the mountains of Alaska, the Presidential range of New Hampshire, the Grand Canyon and finally the definitive map of Mount Everest which in turn provided the information for a spectacular 1-2500 scale relief model of the mountain.

It is Washburn's Mountain photographs, however, that may be his greatest legacy. Combining his thirst for exploration with his aviation and aerial photographic skills,

Washburn captured the most vivid and precise black and white photographs of high mountains in existence. From his native Mount Washington to the Matterhorn to McKinley, Washburns haunting images are unequalled and place him in an elite group of mountain artists along with Vittorio Sella and Ansel Adams.

He began taking the pictures in the 1930s, using a large 8-by-10 camera. Washburn would hold the camera out an open airplane door while a rope was tied around his waste and to the other side of the plane.



And yet with all these accomplishments Brad often remarked his greatest achievement in life was marrying Barbara, his wife and companion of 66 years and raising a loving family.

Brad is survived by his wife Barbara and their 3 children, Dotty, Teddy and Betsy

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Himalayan Environment and Adventure Trek

- **Adventurer and explorer Ajeet Bajaj has become the first Indian to reach both the North and South poles.** .Bajaj, 40, part of a four-member team that included three US nationals, reached the South Pole on after a month-long expedition. "I unfurled the national flag here and that was a very proud moment," he told the NDTV network from the pole. "I consider myself blessed to be an Indian and I feel there are no challenges we Indians are not capable of taking on," added Bajaj, who had made it to the North Pole in April 2006. The temperature at South Pole was minus 35 degree Celsius and the wind chill was about minus 45 degree Celsius. Asked to compare the two poles, Bajaj said "unlike the wilderness of the North Pole, there is an active US research station at the South Pole and it is higher at 2,835 meters but reaching the North Pole is technically more difficult."
- **Giving Inspiration to Fellow Cancer Survivors, Sean Swarner** has climbed each continent's highest peak with only one lung functioning. He was diagnosed with two different kinds of cancer at ages 13 and 15 but survived both Hodgkin's disease and Askin's sarcoma. Now that Swarner is thirty-two he wants to help other people. He established the charitable Climber Foundation to help others with the disease achieve their dreams. He scaled Everest in 2002 and hopes to be at the base camp on May 1 to climb North America's Denali this year. Being the first cancer survivor to reach the summit of Everest, Sean Swarner not only realized his dream but also gave hope to millions of people affected by cancer. He proved that there is life beyond a cancer diagnosis and that there is always reason to believe. This month, Swarner also has seen the publication of "Keep Climbing", a memoir of his journey from grave illness to the top of the world.

- **Indian Army will attempt to summit Everest in April** which will be lead by Lt Col I S Thapa. Twenty personnel for its mountaineering team have been chosen. The team who trained in Siachen also scaled Bhagirathi-II and Mana. The team will attempt to scale Everest from north as it is considered to be the most difficult direction to summit.
- **The American Alpine Club (AAC) has released the online version** of its world renowned American Alpine Journal. Go directly to the page at [www.americanalpineclub.org/AAJO](http://www.americanalpineclub.org/AAJO). There are no fees or registration requirements. Published since 1929, the *American Alpine Journal* is the premier annual record of significant mountaineering and long rock-climbing ascents worldwide. The 500-page *Journal* is has long been prized as a benefit to members of the AAC who look forward to its arrival by mail every summer. Now, the world will have access to an electronic version. The initial launch of the *AAJ Online* includes volumes back to 1966.

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