San Francisco - April 22, 2005

Kirk Usher, Jr. - Robert G. Miller, M.D. - Dan H. Moore, Ph.D.

The co-authors biked, carrying Explorers Club Flag 147, over six of the world’s highest road passes in Ladakh, India—including the world’s highest, Khardung La at 18,375 ft (5,606 m.) In the spirit of our club they have returned with data to add to man’s knowledge.

Kirk Usher (MN98) has traveled in 56 countries on every continent except the Antarctic; in 1994, he completed a 2,000-mile bike adventure from Cape Horn to Parc Provincial Aconcagua, Argentina, at the Chilean border. Cerro Aconcagua, nearly 23,000’, is the summit of South America. In preparation for the Ladakh expedition, he climbed over one-million feet on his bike over the preceding six years.

Dr. Robert Miller, a recently elected Explorers Club member (MN05), is a Clinical Professor of Neurology at the University of California, San Francisco, Clinical Professor of Neurology and Neurological Sciences at Stanford University Medical School, and the Director of Neuromuscular Research and Chairman of the Department of Neurosciences at California Pacific Medical Center in San Francisco.

Dan Moore, Ph.D., biostatistician, is an Associate Adjunct Professor in the Department of Biostatistics and Epidemiology at UCSF, a member...
of the UCSF Comprehensive Cancer Center and a research biostatistician at the California Pacific Medical Center Research Institute.

The team’s principal findings are that maximal heart rate is significantly reduced at altitude compared to sea level, particularly in older cyclists. The authors have some splendid photographs, interesting results to present, and an infective enthusiasm.

The route north from Delhi to the high pass.

When you arrive on high there is a road sign! The elevation gain is 3500’ to Khardung Pass.

Decline in maximal heart rate over time in four older cyclists.

Raft ‘NORD VI’ - Andrew Urbanczyk
San Francisco

Canadian André Urbanczyk, a land-lubber cousin, joined Andrew to cross the Pacific.

All across the vast ocean birds used NORD VI as a resting place.
Andrew Urbanczyk is single-minded in his quest to explore the oceans and seas of the world. He has circumnavigated the planet, with but four stops; he has sailed the Pacific and back; his first open-sea raft trip was across the Baltic Sea. He does this, as did early explorers: *a su costa* (at his own cost.)

This night he delighted a large turnout with the story of his redwood-raft, **NORD VI**, voyage from San Francisco to Guam: 7000 miles, 20 weeks, two people, Explorer Flag 146 and a Guinness World Record.

His mentor, Thor Heyerdahl, cautioned him of the dangers of the trip; however, upon hearing about the preparations, Heyerdahl wished him well—and urged him to head for the Marianas. Andrew asked, “Why the Marianas?” Alas, Heyerdahl died before answering. Urbanczyk did what was suggested and arrived at Guam 140 days after departing his home harbor of Half Moon Bay, just south of San Francisco, on September 19, 2002.

**NORD VI** is a forty-by-twenty-foot platform built atop seven *Sequoia gigantea* two-foot diameter logs, all lashed together by one- and two-inch manila rope. Sixteen tons total! Steering was accomplished by the placement of centerboards, placed offcenter to turn, as the raft drifted westward under 5500 square feet of sail. The record speed: 5 knots; the average: a bit over 2 mph, 50 to 75 miles each day. There was plenty of modern gear aboard: solar panels for power, satellite phones (two, for redundancy), GPS. Ample water was saved from rain. Only ten percent of their food was from the sea; the balance was mostly vegetarian meals brought along and provisioned, at sea, near Hawaii. They had predicted more seafood, but fish wasn’t their dish. Besides sea life became fellow travelers. Small pilot fish managed to keep up with the craft for long periods; birds rested on board between flights. At one time a shark passed across the raft beneath the logs: tail at one side and head at the other!

It was not advisable, actually not possible, for one man to try this journey alone. A search for willing crew seemed futile—as futile as had been getting a response for money, or just cooperation, from 300 circulated proposals. No answers to either search. By word of mouth, a distant cousin came forth and volunteered: André Urbanczyk became the willing companion. A cat travelled too; unknown to be pregnant, she was disembarked at Hawaii.

Both men gained from the experience, basking in the peacefulness of the sea and watching the heavens at night (no radio; no incoming calls.) Typhoon *Yanyan*, with 65 mph peak winds, passed too near for comfort; they were able to be sheltered from the open sea near Bikini Atoll; the hostile sea ‘passed.’ In late January Guam came into view; Andrew’s wife, Krystyna, was waiting.

**NORD VI** has been donated to the Museum of Ancient Boats in Guam

Read about Andrew & André’s journey. It is scheduled for the Spring issue of *Explorers Journal*. Andrew has a book in publication too.
In our January newsletter, we reported on a proposal to modify the process by which chapter officers are elected. Under this revision, a new slate of officers will be presented for consideration at the last meeting of the season (May). Elections are to be held during the first fall meeting (October). Members may express their vote in person or by returned ballot. Officers assume their responsibilities effective the coming January. This process and schedule provide for a better transition between administrations, while respecting the requirements of our national charter agreement.

There are four officers (Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer) and a number of additional critical appointees (roster, newsletter, membership, meeting coordinator, picnic planner) that keep this Chapter running smoothly. We are certainly open to suggestions for other positions as well (perhaps someone for fundraising?).

Now is the time to express your interest in any of these positions and/or to suggest others who may wish to become more involved with the chapter. Contact any of your officers at the email address on the masthead, or by phone, to let us know of your suggestions and interest. Thank you in advance for your support and participation.

**Elections on the Horizon**

In announcing last month’s lecture, Thor Heyerdahl was quoted as stating Andrew’s voyage was ‘The Last Great Adventure.’ Andrew concurred with his mentor, but another great ocean explorer took exception to this observation (but was still sorry to miss the talk!)

**A Letter to the Editor** from Capt. Don Walsh (HON61) who sank to the lowest ocean depths aboard the Trieste:

“I found it interesting in [the] musing about no more great expeditions left to do, that he [Urbanczyk] did not mention the oceans, the place where he voyaged. There’s lots left to do inside the oceans: deep explorations, UW archaeology (history frozen in time) and more than a few ‘firsts.’ For example, next year Deep Ocean Expeditions hopes to be the first to go to the real North Pole using the Mir submersibles. All those who have gone to the North Pole so far have been walking around on frozen water some 14,400 feet above the real North Pole. I am not detracting from the difficulties and heroics of these earlier explorers but simply point out that the real Pole remains to be achieved. The advent of manned submersibles such as the Mirs will make this possible.

“And then there are all those deep ocean trenches just waiting to be explored....

“No, I don’t share his view that it all has been done. I think self-designating his trip as “The Last Great Adventure” is a bit optimistic.

“It does not service our efforts to promulgate and nurture the spirit of exploration when people lament that if the ‘big ones’ have been done.

“The point of exploration is to use the initial impulse of curiosity to evolve knowledge that will benefit mankind.”

Well stated! Don further commented that this does not detract from the contribution the NORD VI voyage accomplished and offered his congratulations.

—Lee Langan (FN99)

Dan Liebowitz (MN66) brought two delightful guests in March that contributed to our program. They are both ‘walkers’, long-distance walkers. Ayumi, joined Tyler on several legs of his search for his father’s birth place. Known as “Kintaro” throughout Japan, he is about to release a documentary based upon his 2000-mile hike. (It took about the same length of time that our speakers raft travel did—145 days.

To see a hint of his adventure, visit: http://www.kintarowalksjapan.com/
Also you do not want to miss his story at Buck’s (Woodside) site: http://buckswoodside.com/kintaro/
Tyler/Kintaro was a waiter at Buck’s.

Thanks Dan. Good luck Kintaro.
Thanks Ayumi!

—Lee Langan (FN99)

**Evolution**

@ The Explorers Club

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Thanks Dan. Good luck Kintaro.
Thanks Ayumi!

—Lee Langan (FN99)
The Chapter Chair

Dear Northern California Explorers:

Visiting our club’s headquarters in New York City is always a pleasure. But it is even more exciting during the ECAD weekend, when members from around the world gather to celebrate exploration and the camaraderie of common purpose. As spectacular as ECAD is, equally important are the meetings that take place in the background. Committees report on results and new goals, officers meet to chart the course of the coming year, votes are counted for a new class of directors, and the Chapter Chairs meet to discuss progress, issues, and solutions to the unique challenges of maintaining an active club chapter.

As always, the Chair’s meeting was informative, frank, and sometimes amusing. Each Chapter Chair reported on the activities and accomplishments of the past year. I was pleased to report that the Northern California Chapter continues to grow, has achieved an improved level of financial stability, and remains one of the largest and most active of the 33 chapters. A number of specific issues of concern to our local membership were also discussed.

At the broader level, our club continues to flourish as well. Overall membership has increased by 17%. International membership is up 25%. Our chapter grew by only 2%, in part due to our new additions being offset by a number of losses of senior members during the past year. The Northern California chapter remains in 4th place in terms of chapter size with 172 members on the books. We follow just behind Texas’ 181 members. I believe our membership goal for 2005 should be to surpass the Texas chapter. The only way this can be achieved is with your individual help in recruiting new members.

Examining the demographics of the club reveals a number of issues of on-going concern. While the average age of the overall membership has decreased, (primarily due to an almost doubling of student members) the median age of the dues-paying membership, which is responsible for 2/3 of the club’s operating budget, continues to move upward. This issue must be addressed in order to maintain the long-term viability of the organization as a whole. The club has responded on a number of fronts, including the ‘under 45’ campaign which includes a waiver of the initiation fee, and the new National Explorers Scout initiative which has the theoretical potential to generate more than 3000 new applicants.

In another area, the club is instituting a number improvements to our website to facilitate communication among members and with headquarters. In addition to improved access to membership data, historical information, and information on current expeditions, members will soon be able to take part in moderated on-line exchanges with other members. You will also be able to search for explorers with common interests who may be able to give advice and support for your own expeditions. An improved calendar of events will keep you in touch with the events of the other chapters when you are on the road. Overall, these and other changes should contribute to increased exchange of ideas and information among members around the world.

During my tenure as Chair of the Northern California Chapter, I have observed first hand the many challenges associated with managing and leading such a unique organization. Expressing a personal opinion, I would say that, under the leadership of our current President, Richard Weiss, the tenor and focus of the club, and its relationship to the local chapters has undergone a significant improvement.

The club has focused on expanding its membership, while maintaining the highest standards of admission. It has also improved its visibility by pursuing partnerships with quality organizations having allied interests. The increased concern and responsiveness of headquarters to our local needs is refreshing and continues to impress me. Dedicated staff, both paid and volunteer, who obviously enjoy their involvement, have helped provide the energy and ideas required to lay the foundation for our second 100 years. We need to pause from time to time to express our appreciation for their efforts and to the contributions of all of the individual members whose personal investments make this club possible. At the same time, I would also encourage each of our own chapter members to consider increasing your involvement and possibly serving in positions of support.

In keeping with our great speaker line-up, please plan to join us this month to meet Kirk Usher and his colleagues who will recount their Himalayan cycling adventure. If you bring a prospective member, I’ll bring the applications. I’ll look forward to seeing you on April 22nd.

—Stephen E. Smith, FN96

Please reserve _____ spaces for April 22, 2005, at Sinbad’s, San Francisco. Cost $45 each; $50 on meeting day. Prospective members are welcome. Dinner wine is, once again, courtesy of Redwood Creek Winery!

Annual Chapter dues are payable: just $20!

Name: ___________________________________________________________

Address (if changed): _____________________________________________

Guest(s): _______________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________

meal choice (please circle): meat – fish – vegetarian
Northern California 2004-2005 Event Calendar

(Mark the dates! Venues will be identified at time of event.)

October 19, 2004  Peter Pyle  “Birds on the Farallons & Across the Pacific”
The City Club, San Francisco
November 19, 2004  Cagan Sekercioglu  “Angolan Ornithological Expedition 2004”
Sinbad’s Restaurant, San Francisco
December 19, 2004  James Chester  “Extreme Digital Photography”
Sinbad’s Restaurant, San Francisco
January 28, 2005  Duane Silverstein  “Saving Ocean Islands”
Dolphin Club, San Francisco
February 25, 2005  David Moyer  “Operation Deep Freeze”
Sinbad’s Restaurant, San Francisco
March 19, 2005  ECAD  “101 Years of The Explorers Club”
Waldorf Astoria, New York
March 25, 2005  Andrew Urbanczyk  “Transpacific Raft Expedition (A Guinness World Record)”
Sinbad’s Restaurant, San Francisco
April 22, 2005  Kirk Usher  “Biking Performance Physiology in the Himalayas”
Sinbad’s Restaurant, San Francisco

May 29, 2005  Gene & Sibyl Boudreau  Northern Kenya Exploring
Sebastopol
June 18, 2005  Chapter Picnic  Contact Anders Jepsen to help: <ajviking@aol.com>
Angel Island

Please note venues and dates with care. April 22nd is a FRIDAY meeting at Sinbad’s Restaurant in San Francisco

(When copying the URL addresses be sure to keep them all on one line; most are also available as links on our Chapter web site.)

April 2005
Dr. Stephen E. Smith  
The Explorers Club  
Northern California Chapter  
402 Via Royal  
Walnut Creek, CA  94596

In full and lively color! To experience this newsletter in color, see the PDF version at our web site.