



Jack Tackle

ALPINIST, 17 MAJOR FIRST ASCENTS IN ALASKA; MOUNTAIN GUIDE; LIVES IN CASTLE VALLEY, UTAH, AND BOZEMAN, MONTANA, AGE 67.

My first expedition was to Mt. Waddington in 1975. We failed miserably. I went back in 1977 with Ken Currens, and we did three other new routes in the area and a new variation on the South Face of Waddington. It was the first time it had been climbed since Fred Beckey and his brother in 1942. Failing before getting up something—it became a theme in my climbing career. I learned how to transform failure into success.

[On the FA of the Isis Face, Denali] My first attempt was with Ken. Two thousand feet up, Kenny took a 250-foot leader fall, which I caught on a hip belay. He broke his femur and had a severe head injury. He was able to cut himself off the rope and drop into this crevasse.

I went back the very next season with Jim Kanzler, and we got to about the same point and got stormed off. Two years later, in 1982, I came back with Dave Stutzman, and we got up it. I learned a lot failing on these things, in terms of how to do it better the next time.

A number of years ago I came up with this mantra to articulate my thoughts about alpine climbing: commitment, vision and trust. Trust is not only trusting your partner, but yourself. Vision has a lot to do with picking a worthy objective that's a new, unclimbed route. And commitment means a lot of things in a lot of different contexts, but it has to be there.

The partners that I ended up doing these types of trips with have been super important to me. The ones that are still alive are my best friends to this day. Alex [Lowe] isn't here anymore and Jack [Roberts] isn't here anymore. But Jim Donini and Doug Chabot, Ken Currens, Jay Smith, Charlie Sassara ... It was a gift that these partnerships became friendships beyond just climbing.

[On suffering Guillain-Barré syndrome in 2001] It taught me that pain can't kill you. Nobody dies from pain. But it allows you to find a reference point that's different, gives you a new appreciation about what you can survive. That was important because it prepared me for what happened on Mt. Augusta

[On Mt. Augusta, 2002] I got hit by rockfall and took a 40-footer onto a medium-sized Stopper. I was temporarily paralyzed. I lost the use of one of my arms, had a bunch of busted teeth, some broken ribs, three broken vertebrae, and a bunch of other minor shit compared to everything else. My partner Charlie Sassara stabilized me. He left to go get help, so I had a little time to think about things as I sat there for two-and-a-half days. ... It showed me what the human body and mind can endure and survive. That's an empowering thing because it transfers over to every other aspect of your life: You can whine about anything, but it's usually just not that big of a deal.

It's not cool to be stuck in your old ways. All this shit about back in the day we did this or we did that or whatever. I hate that. It's not an intelligent way to look at anything. ... You have to be open to new ideas or ways of doing things.

I first tried the North Ridge of Mt. Kennedy in 1978 with three other guys. We tried to do it alpine-style but we were a bit inexperienced. I went back in 1995 with Jack Roberts and we didn't have the conditions or a good sense of what the strategy would be. We went back again in 1996 and figured it out. We climbed a new route on the north face, but didn't summit—I like to say it was the best climb that neither one of us ever did. ... The thing is, though: A route doesn't need to go to the summit. They've known that in the Alps for a long time. When it comes to reporting climbs, I think it's important to try to do the right thing, but above all, just say what you did.

Of the best climbs I've done, probably half of the people I did them with aren't here anymore. It's a heady experience learning to deal with that kind of loss, what you do with it, how you turn that into something to be valued. When you're young, you think everything lasts forever.

When you're young and full of yourself, you're trying to do things that will get you noticed. Some of that is being goal-oriented, but a lot of it is really just hubris. And that's O.K. as long as you admit it and understand it. Later, humility replaces hubris if the process goes properly. ... [You develop] skills like listening as opposed to talking. You ask better questions.