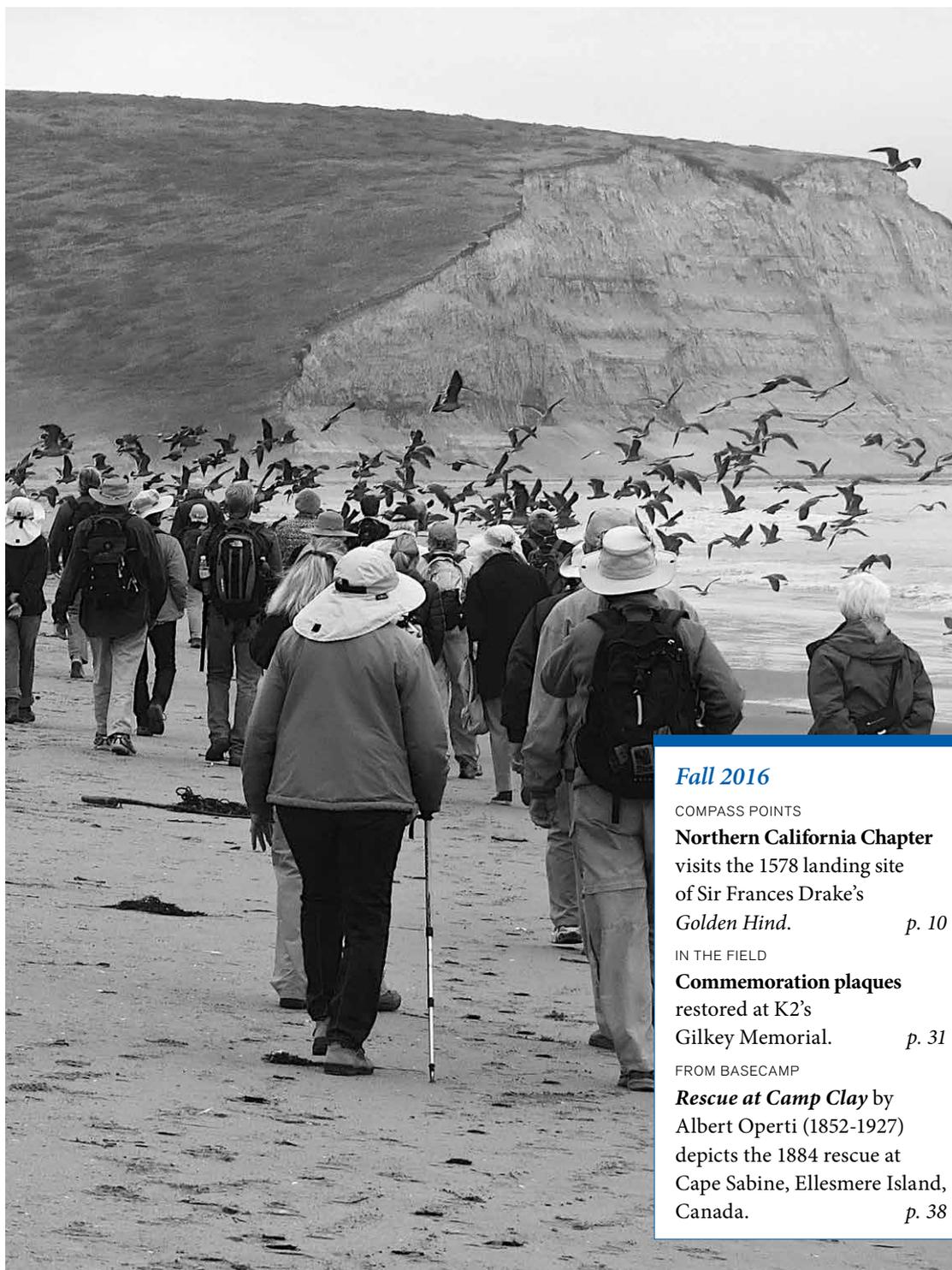




THE EXPLORERS LOG

The Explorers Club | World Center for Exploration Published Quarterly | Volume 48 Number 4



Fall 2016

COMPASS POINTS

Northern California Chapter visits the 1578 landing site of Sir Frances Drake's *Golden Hind*. p. 10

IN THE FIELD

Commemoration plaques restored at K2's Gilkey Memorial. p. 31

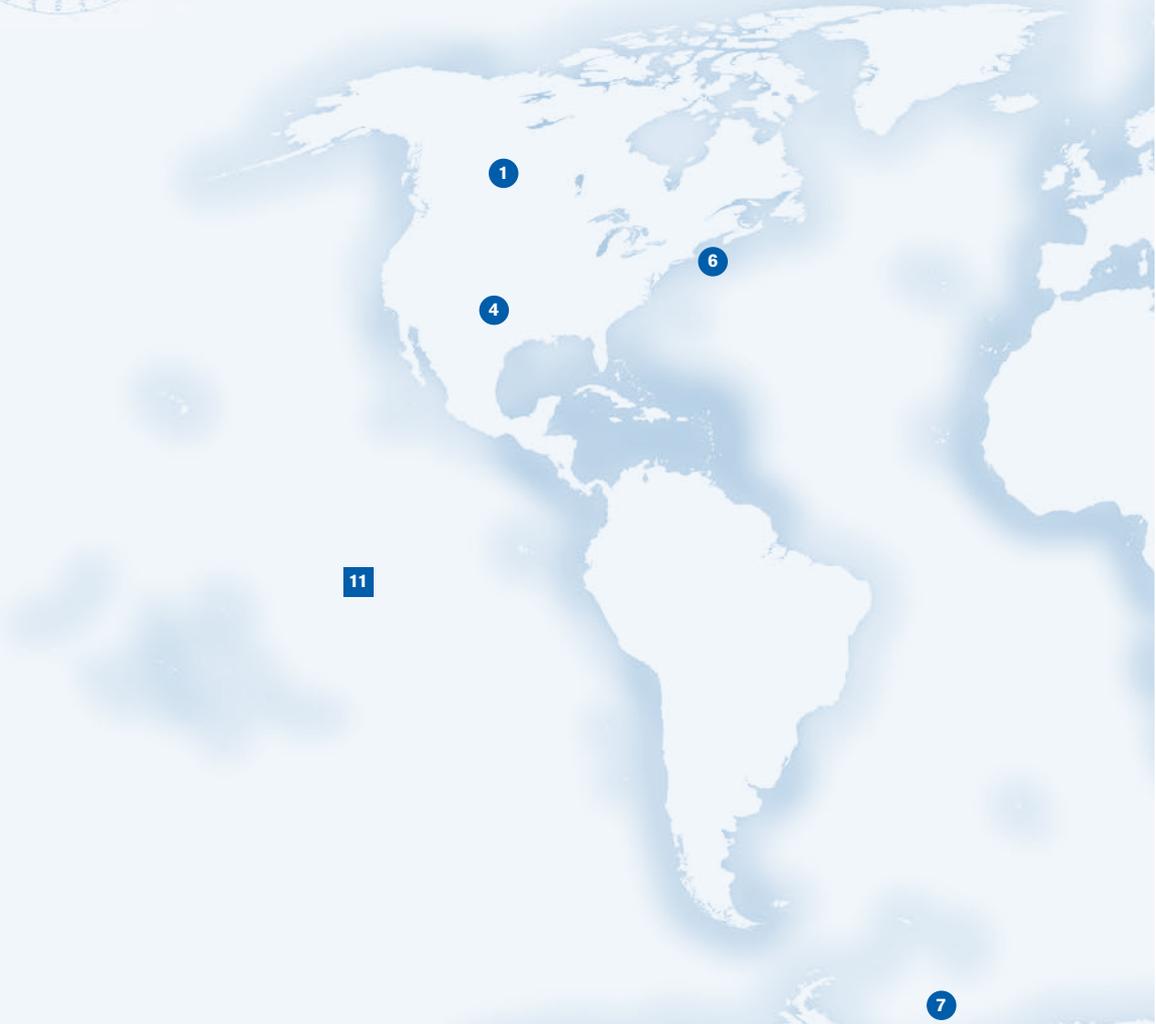
FROM BASECAMP

Rescue at Camp Clay by Albert Operti (1852-1927) depicts the 1884 rescue at Cape Sabine, Ellesmere Island, Canada. p. 38

Flag Expeditions



APPROVED SINCE LAST LOG



1 David “Hap” W. Wilson, FP’12 – Mapping Canada’s Canoe Route – The Heart of the Continent

2 Paul Allen Haynes, MI’15 – *USS Perry Expedition 2017* – Anguar Island, Palau Archipelago

3 Andrew W. Fock, FN’12 – *Battle of the Java Sea Revisited*

4 George Veni, FN’12 – *Deep Guano, Deep Science – Bracken Cave, Comal County, Texas*

5 Michael Z. Markovina, MI’13 – *East African Marine Transect Expedition 2017* – Coast of East Africa

6 G. Chris Fischer, MN’10 – *Expedition New York – Montauk – Flag 212*



Flag Reports Posted on the Website

- 9** **Llewellyn M. Toulmin Ph.D., MN'04** – The Female Chiefs of Vanuatu – Flag 101
- 10** **Vanessa A. R. O'Brien, FN'13** – K2 2015 – Flag 132
- 11** **J. Judson “Jut” Wynne, FN'06** – The Race to Save Endemic Insects of Easter Island – Flag 139
- 12** **Peter C. Keller Ph.D., FN'84** – Ethnographic Survey of Geelvink Bay, Northwest New Guinea – Flag 217

- 7** **Rosaly M.C. Lopes Ph.D., FN'04** – *Antarctica as a Planetary Landscape*
- 8** **Marc A. Yaggi, FR'15** – *Protecting the Himalayas from Pollution and Climate Change* – India – Flag 93

POSTED FLAG REPORTS

Explorers Club Flag expedition reports become part of the century-old archive at Club headquarters. Our collection, the world's most complete archive of exploration, is a resource used by both scholars and contemporary explorers for related fieldwork. Many recent flag reports are posted on the Club website: https://explorers.org/expeditions/flag_expeditions/flag_reports.

The Gilkey Memorial



Di Gilbert (left) and Vanessa O'Brien inspect names at the Gilkey Memorial

Photo: Lt. Fahad Ur Rehman

*Because I could not stop for Death –
He kindly stopped for me –
The Carriage held but just Ourselves –
And Immortality.”*

— Emily Dickinson

K2, the killer mountain, has been given its name for a good reason. For every four people who have summited the 8612m, another one dies. I have been to the mountain twice in as many years, most recently last month, and both times not one of us reached the top. The weather gods, notorious for being spiteful, closed the peak down like the lid on a box. Perhaps they were angry about the 49 summits in 2014.

At the bottom of K2, at about 5000m, is something called the *Gilkey Memorial*, testament to those who tried to conquer K2 and paid the ultimate price. It is named after Art Gilkey, who suffered thrombophlebitis (blood clots in his leg), followed by a pulmonary embolism. His fellow climbers, including Charlie Houston and Pete Schoening, wrapped him in a sleeping bag to bring him down the mountain.

While resting at the sleeping bag at camp, Art was swept away by an avalanche. Years later, his teammates would claim Art's disappearance saved their own lives, as lowering him was virtually impossible. His remains were discovered 40 years later, in 1993, at the base of the south face of K2.

How Gilkey died, although tragic, was not unique. The top three causes of death on K2 involve falling (33%), avalanches (18%), and disappearance (16%). In fact, it was avalanches that resulted in the end of the 2016 climbing season. Twenty-seven distinct nationalities have lost

Vanessa O'Brien (left) and Sher Khan of Nazir Sabir Expeditions source metal plates for engraving in Rawalpindi, Pakistan.

Photo: Sultan Khan



their lives there. Statistics tell but one side of the story. As a K2 climber, it's important to pay tribute to those that came before me. These men and women risked their lives with less sophisticated equipment, simpler clothing and very little insight into weather forecasts. They were true pioneers, breaking trail, and have lessons to teach posthumously.

The Gilkey Memorial had left an impression on me from the previous year. It's a sobering thought that any of my climbing colleagues, or indeed myself, could end up here, too. I contacted two climbing historians—Bob Schelfhout-Aubertijn and Eberhard Jurgalski—to learn 84 climbers had lost their lives on K2. We set about to ensure that each of the 84 names had a dedicated plaque at the Gilkey Memorial, with help from Major Sohaib and Flt. Lt. Rahim Anwar, two liaison officers from the Pakistan Air Force, and Di Gilbert, the leader of the 2016 K2 British Team.

Searching the memorial, we found duplicate plaques, team commemorations and foreign language inscriptions to delay our efforts, as did high winds and heavy snow. When we completed our tally, there were twenty missing names dating back 37 years. The next challenging step: finding plaques to match those at the Gilkey Memorial. Sher Khan explained that the plaques at the Gilkey Memorial were metal plates, engraved using a piton to punch details about the climber once they went missing or were found dead. He suggested we go to Rawalpindi, the famous military city located in the Majha region of Punjab, Pakistan, to source similar plates; success. These plates would likely be modernized with engraving rather than punching. Nevertheless, the look and feel would remain the same. Mission accomplished.

There remains the matter of returning the plaques to the Gilkey Memorial. Perhaps by the next expedition to K2. A team heading up next may try to break K2's reputation as the only 8,000er never summited in winter. Any team that can accomplish that will surely have enough stamina left to hang 20 plaques at the Gilkey Memorial.

—Vanessa O'Brien MR'13, vobonline@gmail.com