



AAC Publications

Theodore (Nick) Nicolai, 1935–2012

Theodore (Nick) Nicolai, scion of a prominent Oregon family, who died in September 2012, was Oregon Section Chair in 1969 and 1970, succeeding Lute Jerstad. In 1971 he was first elected to the AAC Board of Directors, and in 1974 he was re-elected to the Board and made vice president. Unfortunately, he was forced to resign later that year in order to deal with a crisis in the family business.

During the Korean War he had trained with the Army's cold-weather forces in Alaska, which gave him a taste for high-standard climbing in cold conditions, and he subsequently led three *direttissima* climbs in the Oregon Cascades that were possible only in winter conditions. In April 1970, he led an expedition to Mt. Hayes in the Alaska Range, which, owing to fierce storms, did not succeed in its principal objective of a new route on the west ridge, but did achieve the first ascent of nearby Mt. Skarland. Although he, Jim Wickwire, and Dusan Jagersky organized a second attempt in 1974, he was once more forced to withdraw owing to business problems.

Temporarily turning his back on the mountains, Nick acquired a 53-foot ketch, which he named Free Sprit, and with his family spent 16 months sailing to Polynesia. When Bhutan finally opened, he was one of the first to organize an expedition for trekking and climbing there.

After successfully negotiating a sale of the family business and subsequently losing his wife, Cicely, he divided his later years between the mountains of Ketchum, Idaho, and the coastal waters of the Queen Charlotte Islands, British Columbia. He leaves two sons, Thad and Henry. Energetic and a born leader, he invariably made a vivid impression on all who knew him.

T.C. Price Zimmermann

Images



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