



## AAC Publications

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### Gibson Reynolds, 1924–2014

**Gibson Reynolds, who took part in pioneering expeditions that helped open the Saint Elias Range to mountaineering in the 1950s and made first ascents of several of its peaks, passed away on April 20, 2014.** Born and raised in the flatlands of Alabama, Reynolds served in the U.S. Army Signal Corps in Europe during WW II. In the final months of the war, he found himself stationed on the summit of Zugspitze, the highest peak in the German Alps, manning a communications relay station. As the war wound down, Reynolds taught himself to ski and rock climb using discarded Nazi equipment.

Returning to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Reynolds joined the Outing Club and eventually became friendly with a group of Seattle-based climbers that included legendary U.S. mountaineer Pete Schoening. With Schoening, Reynolds took part in an expedition that made the first ascent of Mt. Augusta (4,290 m), in 1952, followed by the second ascent of King Peak (5,173m) three weeks later. Schoening later wrote that of all his expeditions, including a famous attempt on K2 the following year, he considered the 1952 King Peak expedition the “most adventurous.”

Reynolds returned to the northern end of the Saint Elias range in 1954 and 1955, aiming for the first ascent of University Peak (4,411m), at the time the highest unclimbed summit in North America. In 1954 the team was battered by avalanches and falling seracs that left Reynolds with a broken arm. He returned the following year on an expedition that survived ice falls, crevasses and bad weather to reach the summit via the north ridge. It was a feat not repeated until 1998. The expedition also made the third ascent of Mt. Bona (5,005m).

Reynolds was a life member of the AAC, joining in 1947 and serving as chairman of the New York section from 1960 to 1965. He continued to hike and climb throughout his life. After getting his degree from MIT, Reynolds became an aerospace engineer who helped pioneer the exploration of outer space. Working first for Bendix Corp. and later Allied-Signal Corp., Reynolds was part of the team that designed control systems for Apollo space missions, including the manual throttle used by U.S. astronaut Neil Armstrong to land the first lunar module on the moon.

In 1962, Reynolds married Monica M. Monahan of Dublin, Ireland, an early member of the Irish Mountaineering Club who served as secretary of the AAC; they settled in Tuxedo, N.Y. He is survived by his wife, five children, and five grandchildren.

– Maura Reynolds Kelley

Images



Article Details

Author	Maura Reynolds Kelley
Publication	AAJ
Volume	57
Issue	89
Page	0
Copyright Date	2015
Article Type	In memoriam