



## AAC Publications

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### Andy Tyson, 1968–2015

**In 2006, on a climbing expedition to China, Andy Tyson and his team found themselves on the wrong side of a raging river 80 miles from their objective. Not trusting their driver, who insisted the team needed to ford the river, Andy's expedition mates convinced him to get behind the wheel. They didn't pick Andy for his driving skills, but because they believed there was no better person to overcome any problem or a challenge, regardless of what it might be. And Andy proved them right. He found a bridge upstream.**

Andrew David Tyson, 46, died in a small-plane crash on April 10 in the Frank Church Wilderness in central Idaho. Tyson had flown into the area with a team from Creative Energies, a renewable energy company that he co-founded in 2001, to begin work on a solar and hydroelectric system for a remote ranch. Two other Creative Energies employees, Rusty Cheney and AJ Linnell, and the pilot, John Short, also were killed.

Born in Mercersburg, Pennsylvania, Andy loved the outdoors from an early age. His father, a mathematics teacher at Mercersburg Academy, where Andy attended high school, remembers his son climbing everything he could. In high school Andy joined the outing club and began boating, climbing, and hiking. He continued to pursue these interests during college at Wittenberg University in Springfield, Ohio, where he graduated in 1991 with degrees in geology and physical education—studies that allowed him to spend time in the great outdoors that he so loved. While in college he worked summers in a kite shop in Ocean City, Maryland, which led to his first international experiences: a stint at a kite shop in Australia and as a crew member on a sailboat that traveled across the Atlantic from Fort Lauderdale to Portugal.

Upon his return from that sailing trip in 1992, Andy went west to attend an instructors' course with the National Outdoor Leadership School in Lander and soon began leading rock climbing, mountaineering, sailing, hiking, and caving courses in the Rocky Mountains, the Pacific Northwest, Alaska, British Columbia, India, and Patagonia. During his time at NOLS, Andy met his beloved wife, Molly Loomis Tyson, who became his partner in adventure. The pair left their home and dog, Kali, in Teton Valley, Idaho, to travel the world—climbing, boating, skiing, exploring, and writing about their experiences.

Andy's friends remember him as a talented athlete, an accomplished mountaineer, and an all-around outdoorsman who excelled at everything he tried. But his adventures were about more than technical accomplishments. He found inspiration and motivation in the people he met on his journeys, and, in return, the people he met were inspired and motivated by him.

Andy believed in challenging himself. As he said in a TedX talk in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, in 2014, "Succeeding on a problem is rewarding but finite. We should try another problem and build on the experience.... Unless we challenge ourselves, we go nowhere."

In addition to working for NOLS, Andy spent 25 years guiding and teaching for organizations such as Exum Mountain Guides, Alpine Ascents International, where he worked as expedition manager, and Antarctic Logistics and Expeditions, leading people to the top of peaks such as Mt. Vinson, Cho Oyu, and Aconcagua. Recent personal expeditions included a trip to the Genyen Massif in China, where he and Molly completed first ascents of several peaks, and to Myanmar, in 2013, when he led an American-Burmese team that did the first ascent of Gamlang Razi, possibly Southeast Asia's highest

peak. Exploratory expeditions were Andy and Molly's passion, and their search for remote ranges took them to places such as Oman, Kyrgyzstan, the Arctic, India, Tibet, and many, many others. In 2014 he was poised to guide on Everest and was among first on scene with rescue and recovery efforts when a massive avalanche struck in the Khumbu Icefall. He is the author of two how-to books on climbing and mountaineering: *Climbing Self Rescue* (with Molly Loomis) and *Glacier Mountaineering* (with Mike Clelland).

At Creative Energies, the company he helped start, Andy strove to find innovative ways to build a sustainable energy future for our world. In supporting this vision, he served on the board of directors of the Charture Institute in Jackson, Wyoming, for eight years, was a member of the Idaho Clean Energy Association, and was the chairman of the Solar Task Force for the Idaho Strategic Energy Alliance, providing recommendations to the governor on solar. He also was a longtime member of Teton Valley Recycling, volunteered for a stint as training manager for Teton County Search and Rescue, and was a longtime participant in the Jackson Eco-Fair. Under Andy's lead, Creative Energies was a founding member of Tetons For Tomorrow. He also helped start Teton Valley Chance, and most recently was a board member for Tetons For Tomorrow. Andy volunteered to teach climbers in Myanmar and most recently, Nepal, at the Khumbu Climbing Center.

Andy was known for his physical strength, stamina, grit, and determination, but more importantly to his friends and family, he was loved for his kindness, curiosity, energy, and willingness to try whatever was thrown at him. He could jump off the couch and run 20-plus miles through the mountains, sail across the ocean, float a singletrack, make a difficult climb look easy, fly a kite, ski a steep couloir, longboard twisty roads, packraft through rapids, and build or fix just about anything. Yet he carried himself with humility and relished in others' successes. He made the people he touched better people. He was a rare mix of intelligence, kindness, mischief, and playfulness. He loved his family, community, and dog tremendously, and often spoke of how lucky he was to live in such a place among such people.

Andy is survived by his wife, Molly, his parents, David and Henrietta, his sister, Laura (Tom) Ransom, and a large circle of friends who considered him family.

– Molly Absolon

### **Andy Tyson Memorial Fund**

A fund is being created in Andy Tyson's memory to serve mountain communities in the developing world. The goal of the fund will be to provide resources for expeditions, training in mountain skills, and to match outside expertise with local interest. Contributions can be made to the Andy Tyson Memorial Fund at the Community Foundation of Teton Valley, 208-354-0230 and [info@cftetonvalley.org](mailto:info@cftetonvalley.org). Visit [AndyTysonMemorialFund.org](http://AndyTysonMemorialFund.org) for further details.

Images





Andy Tyson with Namar Jonsain in Myanmar, preparing for the first ascent of Gamlang Razi.

## Article Details

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|----------------|---------------|
| Author         | Molly Absolon |
| Publication    | AAJ           |
| Volume         | 58            |
| Issue          | 90            |
| Page           | 0             |
| Copyright Date | 2016          |
| Article Type   | In memoriam   |